

INTERVIEW WITH LUCY VENABLE

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Q1 This is Nena Couch. I'm interviewing Lucy Venable. Her date of birth is October 28, 1926. And today's date is August 29, 2002. The interview is taking place in the Theatre Research Institute in Lincoln Tower. I guess I'll begin by thanking you, Lucy, for agreeing to do this. I think that University Archives has found that this is a really important and valuable process to interview people that have been here for a long time and contributed so much to the University, and it's really great to have your input. So I guess I'll start with my question number one. What and who were the influences that caused you to make dance your profession?

A1 One thing just seemed to lead to another. I started with ballroom lessons at age four because a playmate's Aunt, Teresa Doddridge, had a dancing school, and for some reason it was fashionable for children to study ballroom dancing at an early age. Miss Caroline Christmas, a younger teacher at the school, taught tap, ballet and acrobatics all in one class, as I remember, and I soon shifted to lessons with her. I seemed to like ballet the most and soon moved to another school and then another to study that before I went off to boarding school, Stuart Hall in Staunton, Virginia, in the 8th grade. There I continued with a teacher who had studied at the Chalif School in New York which taught dances that were of a freer style. She sat at the piano and played the music for the dances that Mr. Chalif had choreographed and written out in words for publication. One was Brahms' 5th Hungarian Rhapsody and another was in the style of what was called Greek dancing or plastique in those days. At Wellesley College I encountered Modern Dance for the first time in the Physical Education Department and so tried it out to fulfill some of the Physical Education requirements

and because it was the only dance available there. I remember we learned swings and basic modern dance falls, and were usually asked to solve movement problems in a group at the end of each lesson. I found trying to come to a group decision very uninteresting, as I had always been used to someone being the director in charge in a dance situation. So though I joined the Modern Dance group, which put on a production each year. I investigated some of the ballet schools in Boston and often went for a weekly lesson.

Spanish became my major and I went to Mexico with a group sponsored by Smith College for my "junior year abroad" since Spain was not yet an option again after World War II. Two of us in that group located a dance studio and learned, among other things, a version of the Mexican dance "Las Chiapanecas."

Back at Wellesley my senior year I went into Boston for Saturday ballet lessons for children. One Saturday another adult in the children's class suggested that I might be interested in taking class with José Limón, a modern dancer who came up from New York once a week to teach at the Duncanbery (sp?) School of Music. I went to watch a class and saw immediately that it was too advanced for me. But Miriam Pandor who performed with Limón also came to teach a lower level class once a week so I took lessons with her and began to enjoy this form of modern dance.

Graduation was approaching, and I had no definite plans for the future. My parents had stipulated that after I had a college education I could do what I wanted. A six-

week summer course at the Connecticut College Summer School of Dance was being offered where I could study with José Limón and Martha Graham and her teachers, and would be dancing every day for the first time in my life and seeing performances by professional modern dance companies. After that experience I decided that I wanted "more" so I moved to New York -- for the next twenty years it turned out.

Q2. Okay. Great. I'm going to stop this for just a moment and check. Okay. Do you remember who it was that introduced you to José Limón?

A2. No. It was a lady that was taking the same children's ballet class that I was, and she was also taking the modern class with him, and she said, "You might want to come over and have a look."

Q3. My next question is actually about the Dance Notation Bureau but maybe we should follow sort of chronologically what happened when you went to New York.

A3. When I got to New York I started taking regular classes with José Limón and at the Martha Graham Studio where there was a different teacher every day of the week, though usually Miss Graham appeared once a week in the beginners' class if the company was not on tour. I went to any modern dance concert that was announced, attended lectures about dance that were given by dance critics and historians, took composition courses with Louis Horst and Katie Litz and Doris Humphrey, and spent time in the 42nd St. New York Public Library where they were just beginning the now famous Dance Collection housed at Lincoln Center. Few books had been published on dance compared to what we have today. I had subscribed to *Dance Magazine* for years and now I read back copies of the *Dance Observer*, which contained in its

articles and reviews much of the history of modern dance as it was taking place. Genevieve (Gigi) Oswald was the first curator for the Dance Collection which had only recently become separated from the Music Collection. She was its aggressive collector and champion until her retirement in 1987.

In the Limón class a woman named Joanne Emmons who was studying dance notation (later called Labanotation to distinguish it from other dance notations vying for attention at that time) tried to interest any of us who would listen to study it. Actually it was the same notation (Rudolf Laban's) that I had run into in college my freshman year. A graduate student in physical education, Hildegard Blum, was developing a ten-lesson course on the subject, and she needed guinea pigs to teach so she could see how well her materials worked. I thought it was terribly boring and not at all dancelike. Part of this was because we were in a rather confined space and part of it was because we didn't do very interesting movement in the lesson, and she couldn't answer all our questions as she was not that advanced in the subject herself, and as yet there was no textbook on the subject. Now here in New York I was running into it again. And so I included the first course of 10 lessons or so in my New York dance education, and dance notation has been a part of my life ever since.

Doris Humphrey was a well known modern dancer and choreographer, who with Charles Weidman had headed the Humphrey-Weidman School and Company. José Limón first studied dance with them. Doris had been forced to stop dancing because of arthritis in her hip by the time I arrived in New York. (Who knows how different

things might have been if she had been able to have a hip replacement as we can today.) Now besides being Artistic Advisor for the fairly recently formed Limón Company she was beginning to offer modern dance repertory classes, teaching some of her well known group works in New York in the winter and at the six week Connecticut College Summer School of the Dance. The course always ended with a public performance somewhere so that way I learned and performed a number of her older group works.

Ann Hutchinson and Els Grelinger, who were interested in promoting the value/use of notation to choreographers, were given permission by Doris to come to the repertory classes and to notate the dances as they were being taught. The first score produced as a result of this kind of trial demonstration was *The Shakers*. Humphrey herself had discovered the need for some form of dance notation and had even invented a system but could not give the time to fully develop it or put it into practice because she was always making new dances. But because she allowed notators to practice by recording her dances from then on, we have a written record of many of her works from 1920 to 1987.

The first year (fall of 1948) in New York I lived in the Bronx with Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Childs, a couple whose twin daughters had vacated a room in the apartment when they went off to college. In the spring Mrs. Childs introduced me to a friend of hers who had taught dance to children for many years. The woman had also spent many years caring for her ill parents. They had died recently, which gave her the

opportunity to become a cloistered nun, which had long been her desire. She wanted to find someone to take over her classes in Old Greenwich, Connecticut. She "gave" them to me after one brief meeting, so for two years I commuted to Connecticut on Mondays and Tuesdays. That, coupled with two summers at camps (one outside of Philadelphia and the other in New Hampshire), was my introduction to teaching dance to children, something I was not very good at, but which I did for a few years because it was a way to gain experience in the field I wanted to be in. One thing just led to another.

Next Doris Humphrey, who was also head of the Dance Department at the 92nd Street YM-YWHA (Young Men and Women's Hebrew Association) which was part of the Education Department headed by Dr. William Kolodney, well known for his nurturing of the arts, suggested that I apply to Dr. Kolodney to teach there. I interviewed and before I knew it ended up with nine classes, each of which met once a week and each was a different age level ranging from 4 year olds to adults. (During my years at the Y I met Rosalind Pierson, recently come from Utah with her family, who as a teenager was taking dance classes there with Bonnie Bird. Years later Rosalind became one of our dance faculty here at OSU, where she has been a ballet teacher, choreographer, and director of the University Dance Company among other things.)

It was my good fortune that Bonnie Bird was hired to head the children's dance program the year that I arrived at the Y. Until that time the various teachers taught

their classes with no relationship to what anyone else was doing. Bonnie came with performing, teaching, choreographic and organizational experience. She knew how to bring people together, she had innovative ideas and she made them happen. We had faculty meetings where we talked about teaching problems, in which classes to place students, and we worked together on the annual "showing" for relatives and friends on the stage in the Kaufman Auditorium so that it had some cohesion. Bonnie also gathered together those teachers who were interested in beginning a modern dance company to perform for children. At that time only ballet companies performed dances for children with maybe the only exception being the Henry St. Playhouse's Company performing for children directed by Alwyn Nicolais. We named our modern dance company The Merry-Go-Rounders, and it was housed at the Y with Dr. Kolodney's blessing from 1952 until 1964, I believe, when it moved to New Jersey under Shirley Ubell's direction.

The main accompanist in the dance department, Beatrice Rainer, played for rehearsals and performances, composed the music for our signature song, and for some of the dances especially choreographed for the company. We engaged a male actor for the Ringmaster (Kurt Lowens was one of them) and one of the dance teachers Bunni (Bernice) Mendelsohn, wanting to try acting, was the Magic Mechanic and main scriptwriter. These two characters opened the program and taught the Merry-Go-Round song and introduced each dance through movement activities so the children got to move in their seats and there was no reason for an intermission or programs.

Florence Peters, another teacher, chose to dance in the company. Fred Berk who led hugely popular Israeli folk dance sessions weekly at the Y created *Holiday in Israel* and *Tyrolean Wedding*. Eva Desca, who assisted Doris Humphrey with her composition class at the Y, choreographed *The Goops* based on the children's book by that name. Bonnie Bird choreographed *The Enchanted Balloons*. And Alwyn Nicolais gave us one of his works for children, Aesop's *The Fable of the Donkey*, for the first program to help us get started.

I appointed myself company notator and attended rehearsals to make as many notes as I could on what was being taught to each dancer. We also recorded the works on 8-mm. silent film.

Eva Desca was Company Director the first two years. Then she and her family moved to California. Since I had all the notes, I fell heir to that unpaid position even before I had done any performing to speak of myself. I had listened carefully during all those rehearsals and writing the movement meant I had to have studied it in some detail. It was a great apprenticeship for me.

Bonnie had the vision for the company and kept us organized and did a wonderful job of coaching and counseling the young modern dancers who had joined the company to gain performing experience. We held auditions and chose 10 dancers, 9 women and 1 man. (He may have been the only man that auditioned at that time.) We were one of the first "integrated" dance companies at the time which had been one of our

intentions. In "The Goops" the mother was an African-American dancer, Elizabeth Ray and all her children were white. We thought some in the audience might question that, but as far as I know nobody ever did. It was as simple as that.

Rehearsals were 10-12:30, Monday thru Friday. Eventually we were able to have a company class 1-2:30 taught by people like Robert Joffrey, just beginning his teaching career and before he had begun his ballet company, Jimmy Truitte, newly arrived from California who taught the Lester Horton Technique, Alfredo Corvino, with his wonderful way of keeping ballet alive maybe because of his previous experiences with the Jooss Leeder Company which was based on German modern dance.

The only payment the MGR dancers received was \$10 per performance "on tour" which usually took all of Saturday and meant loading a truck with costumes and sets, driving to Long Island or New Jersey, unloading, setting up, ironing costumes, warming up and spacing, eating lunch which we always brought along for everyone, usually giving a 2 p.m. performance, striking, loading, driving back and unloading. Everyone involved got the full experience! Payment of \$5 was made for a 10 a.m. "school show" given at the Y where the children were bussed to us. We all learned a great deal through presenting the dances many times, for different audiences, in different spaces and for several years.

At the same time I was often teaching Limón classes downtown on 56th street, just south of Carnegie Hall, when the Limón Company was on tour and also some of the Limón technique classes at Julliard which was uptown at 122nd St. just north of Columbia University. Julliard had begun its Dance Department under Martha Hill's direction in 1951.

In 1957 the Limón Company was enlarged when more dancers were needed for the repertory that was to be taken on a three month, nine-country tour in Europe sponsored by our State Department. This included West Germany, Poland and Yugoslavia, countries near the Iron Curtain.

Q4 Did you see Ann Hutchinson when you were in England?

A4. (I checked in my diary and I did not mention her, so probably she was not in London at the time which was from August 27 to September 14, 1957). I was on the first (for me) of three cultural exchange tours that I went on with the Limón Company. The next was in 1960 to Central and South America and the third was to Australia and the Orient in 1963. This was during the Cold War and the United States was showing off various aspects of our culture abroad. Suddenly dance had become an asset! It involved meeting dance people in each of the countries we went to as well as attending Embassy or Cultural Affairs functions as this was an excuse for inviting people in the countries to attend an event sponsored by the U.S.

There were still ruins from World War II. The Berlin Wall was still up. Going from Poland back into West Germany was quite an experience. Poland had been rather

bleak with very little in the stores and restorations in progress. Bonn, West Germany was a small town but as the capitol was bustling with activity and stores seemed filled to the brim with colorful merchandise and goodies.

One of the connections that I made in Yugoslavia was with Vera Maletic. Ana Maletic, her mother, directed a well-known modern dance school in Zagreb. What she taught was greatly influenced by her studies with Rudolf Laban. I first met Vera and Ana at a party (given by the US Consul, I think) following our first performance in Zagreb. It turned out the Company was invited to visit their school the next morning for a performance by their students. Vera performed two solos based on folk dances. We continued to keep in touch over the years principally at the biannual conferences of the International Council of Kinetography Laban, which were usually held in England or Europe at that time. Some time later Vera moved to England to study and teach at the Laban Centre (1966-1977). When I went to Lincoln, Nebraska to study the Alexander Technique more intensively with Marjorie Barstow during the academic year 1977- 1978, Vera (at my suggestion) came to OSU for a year to teach. She remained at OSU to earn a one-of-a-kind doctorate and to accept a new position in the Department of Dance that had just opened up as she finished her Ph.D.

Q5 She never went back?

A5. To visit friends and family, yes, but not to live there. She has been here ever since, recently retiring in 2000. So our meeting in Zagreb in 1957 has led to a long, long friendship and association.

There were also Limón Company tours in this country to colleges and universities, which we traveled to mostly by chartered bus. During the annual six week summer sessions at the School of Dance at Connecticut College we taught classes during the day, rehearsed old and new works in the evening and performed them in a dance festival at the end of the six weeks which was important for all companies present because it was attended by the newspaper and magazine dance critics from New York. These reviews were important in securing future bookings.

I returned from the 1963 Far East Tour with hepatitis and had to stay in the hospital for a little over two weeks. During that period I decided that it was time to stop performing. I was 37 and somehow I felt that I would have to start training all over again. Though I loved dance, for me it was not instinctive, but more bits and pieces held together, and they had sort of lost their glue. There was something about being too intellectual or imitative or "doing what I was told" rather than truly integrated about the way I moved so if I lost the will, I lost the way. It wasn't something that I just had to do. Move, yes; but perform, no, where so much time is spent in technique classes and rehearsals in preparation. There must be more productive ways to spend my time.

Making this decision meant a change of direction, but I didn't really know which way. The responsibilities at the Dance Notation Bureau (DNB) had become greater, just trying to keep the organization going. The DNB had been founded in 1940, and as I have recently discovered was one of the first national dance organizations in this

country. Ann Hutchinson, Helen Priest Rogers, Eve Gentry and Janey Price, the founders, had studied the notation from different teachers in different parts of the world and found they had different understandings about some aspects. It seemed a good idea for this group to meet and discuss their problems and questions. As I understand it, John Martin, then dance critic of the *New York Times*, was invited to one of these meetings where he suggested that they should form a sort of clearinghouse, which would deal with dance notation in general. Two weeks later, much to the women's surprise, he announced the formation of the Dance Notation Bureau in his column in the *Sunday Times*. Soon a few inquiries arrived which required a response and thus it all began. In 1960, after twenty years in operation, we were advised to become legally incorporated as a non-profit organization.

When I began to get involved with studying Labanotation, the DNB address was Ann Hutchinson's apartment at 33 West 8th Street in the heart of Greenwich Village. Then the DNB moved around the corner to 430 Sixth Avenue to a room, which had formerly been a freight elevator shaft, to give you an idea of the size. There were dance studios in the building, which were available for rent by the hour for classes and meetings as the need arose. Later the "shaft" room one floor below was rented as well. The DNB acquired a secretary, a wonderful person who was available part-time and willing to work for a pittance.

Q6 Who was that?

A6 Maria Nicholson.

Q7 Maria Nicholson?

A7 Yes, "Nickie", and she was sort of the mainstay for many years until, because of ill health (emphysema) she had to stop working and moved out of the city. When the DNB moved to the 2nd floor of 35 West 20th, St. Nickie, and her son Peter, lived in the back half, and the DNB office and little studio (curtained off) inhabited the part facing the street. Nickie was still with us when the DNB moved uptown to 47 West 63rd Street. There we had a proper size studio which we used for classes, meetings, and renting out. The location was right near where Lincoln Center was going to be built. But as it went up, our building came down. It was during this period that Nickie had to stop working.

Q8 When did you actually become involved with the Bureau?

A8 Soon after I started studying notation in New York, I guess.

Q9 So pretty much when you first came to New York?

A9 Yes. If you showed interest in the subject you were automatically invited to Bureau meetings, and if you attended, you usually got involved with helping out with something or other! At some point I volunteered to start the library, which consisted of two file drawers of materials, I think, and even dared to ask Genevieve Oswald to give us her advice about how we should go about it! She graciously came down to the office to look our "collection" over.

After I stopped focusing on performing in 1963, I continued investigating movement as the opportunity arose to find out more about it in relation to recording movement and how we really function as movers, not only as injured dancers trying to recover which had been most of my experience so far. Because of occasional injuries

followed by rehabilitative activities that would be recommended by fellow dancers (there was no Dance Medicine yet) I worked with Milton Feher who had figured out how to rehabilitate himself after seriously damaging both knees because of the way he danced. He offered a short anatomy course as well as rehabilitative movement classes and I remember having my first really intelligent look at a skeleton there.

When recovering from pulled back muscles from somehow incorrectly performing a pirouette in ballet class, a friend had directed me to Joe Pilates who had helped many dancers with specific problems as well as overall body conditioning. He had developed machines to work the body in specific ways. Some of these you controlled yourself, and with others you were given assistance. They were not electric. There was also mat work that you could do by yourself at home as well.. So I began to better understand the need for an overall balanced tune-up for physical activity no matter what kind you did and that flexibility of muscles, both contraction and extension, was desirable in all muscles not just a few that seemed to be emphasized in the teaching of whatever physical activity you participated in.

Another influence was Irmgard Bartenieff, a student of Rudolf Laban, who had fled from Germany to the U.S. with her husband in 1936. She with Irma Otte-Betz had introduced Laban's notation at the Hanya Holm Studio and published the first book on Laban's notation in this country. Irma joined the Bureau in 1943. She had been a dancer and teacher in Germany, but she had to train in this country as a physiotherapist to support herself and her two sons. She worked on rehabilitating

children during and after the polio epidemic in this country (in the 40's and 50's?). She attended Bureau meetings when she could, but with her work schedule she was usually arriving late and leaving early. She was always enthusiastic and encouraging. She is a whole story in herself.

(These injury experiences and subsequent movement recoveries were the beginning of two courses that I later developed at OSU, one for incoming undergraduates and one for incoming graduates. This allowed me to continue to explore how we can learn to function better.)

During the DNB's 63rd Street period Irmgard had been studying with Warren Lamb in England via correspondence, and during summer vacations she had studied with him in person. Laban had fled from Germany to France and then gone on to England in 1938. Warren Lamb was one of three particular Laban students who developed aspects of Laban's work that I am somewhat familiar with. (The other two were Marion North and Valerie Preston-Dunlop). Warren was investigating the Effort and Shape aspect and how to work out personality profiles in relation to studying a person's movement, then how to work out job profiles and then how to study team profiles in corporate management. Irmgard was also interested in this Effort and Shape aspect in relation to her work. The first Effort Shape "course" of maybe 5 lessons that she gave at the Bureau was offered at the Bureau on 63rd St. on Saturday mornings. The three students were Ruth Currier (well known member of the Limón Company, choreographer and on the dance faculty at Bennington College, as well as

assistant to Doris Humphrey in repertory & composition classes), Claire Hirschorn (recent graduate as a dance major from Bennington College who was trying to take Nickie's place in running the office), and me. I remember little of these lessons except that we picked up pennies and placed them elsewhere, that we held a rag under the water faucet and then squeezed the water out, and that I was generally confused by it all. To my mind it had nothing to do with movement as I had never considered that there might be different ways of going about an activity and had always focused on whether the activity had been accomplished or not. That was to come later in my life and this was the beginning of Irmgard's development of the Effort/Shape program she and others began developing during the time that the Bureau resided at 8 East 12th Street, which was where we moved next.

This Effort/Shape work began to attract "strangers" to our dance notation world. They were in the sciences and worked in hospitals and therapeutic places where Irmgard did or were connected with anthropology. She had already been using the part of Laban's work that he had applied to rehabilitation in Germany when they had worked together. And she had developed a movement course, which she called "Correctives" which came out of her work with the children recovering from polio, but which she was finding was useful for adults as well. This gradually developed into what is now known as Bartenieff Fundamentals. She offered the course from time to time and rented the studio at the Bureau.

Q10 Did you ever get anything back out of that in terms of any part of the fees?

A10 I don't remember all those details now. The Bureau offered Labanotation courses: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced, and Teacher Training for those who wanted to teach, and Notator Training for anyone who wanted to learn to write full dance scores. We developed teaching materials and occasionally got commissions to notate a dance. Somehow the Bureau miraculously continued to survive though there was usually a great financial crunch in August before things started up again in the fall. Where are we?

Q11 Well, let's see. We were with Irmgard Bartenieff and her work. I guess you were looking for what you would be doing.

A11 Yes, I was the Director of the Bureau from 1961 to 1968. And it was during that time that I discovered that being a director was not something that I liked or was really cut out to do. During these years arts organizations were being advised to develop proper Boards so they could show proper management when they applied for funds from such organizations as foundations, State Arts Councils, or the National Endowment for the Arts. Boards should include interested people from outside the organization who had money, connections and business experience. Our Board of Directors since incorporation in 1960 consisted mostly of people who were directly involved in the notation work, and all were women.

I had gotten to know Helen Alkire and some of her dance students and teachers from OSU in the summers at Connecticut College. They came to study and to connect with what was going on in the modern dance world in the East and because this was the continuation of a summer program begun at Bennington College which had been

helpful in the beginnings of modern dance and its connections with dance in higher education. Helen had performed in Hanya Holm's *Trend* there and first studied composition with Louis Horst, Martha Graham's musical adviser, who would tease her for years about coming from Oblivion, Ohio.

A number of the OSU people, both faculty and students, studied Labanotation with Helen Priest Rogers or me. Helen Alkire was very interested in the subject and took an intermediate course, I believe at the Bureau on 63rd St. when she was in New York on a sabbatical or was working on her doctorate at Columbia (which she never took time to complete). We invited her to become a DNB Board Member, and we certainly benefited from her participation and advice.

(Another person at Connecticut College, one who worked with lighting designer Tom Skelton, was Louise Guthman who years later showed up at Mershon Auditorium with the Ballet Folklorico Company with whom she had been touring for years. She was ready to settle down some place (near Cincinnati where she originally came from would be nice) and wondered if the Department of Dance had any need of her abilities. It turned out that we did indeed, so she joined the faculty to design the lighting for the department's productions, to teach dancers about lighting design, and to train a number of lighting designers, one of them being David Covey who is now on the faculty.)

In 1967 Helen told me the College of the Arts was being formed at OSU. Dance was coming out of Women's Physical Education and Theater was coming out of Speech to join with the Art divisions and the long established School of Music. Film and video came along then or soon after as did Design. Helen wanted to be able to expand the Labanotation offerings and she offered me one of the new positions that Dance had been given.

After considering the offer, I decided it wasn't the right time to leave the Bureau. We were trying to figure out how to have a director who was not a notation person, who might be better at running the place which was like an octopus with too many tentacles to handle, and you couldn't decide which ones to amputate. The Effort/Shape Program was going through a growing stage and demanding more of the organization. This program developed into a whole new organization several years after I left, and is now The Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies where people can study to become Certified Movement Analysts.

A year later, I had decided that my staying at the Bureau was not helping solve the dilemma of the Bureau, and I also thought I should not turn down a fulltime job, the first I had ever been offered! By chance I ran into Helen Alkire at a theater in New York one night and screwed up my courage to ask if the position was still open. She said, "Yes." So I told her I was ready to accept it. (Checking my files now I see that I was hired as an Assistant Professor of Dance for three quarters for \$10,008 including

major medical and life insurance premiums. My final year's Professor salary for three quarters for 1991-92 was \$50,536.)

It never occurred to me that I could or should apply to any other college or university. I had gotten to know Helen and the various students and dance teachers from OSU. They seemed a talented and open-minded group of people. (Maybe I shared some other things with them since I'm originally from West Virginia close by.) I had visited OSU to see their annual Mershon performance in 1964. People in Photography and Cinema had made a very good film of their production of Humphrey's *The Shakers* and Humphrey and Currier's *Brandenburg No.4* , 1st Movement, and a documentary of Anna Sokolow's visit to teach *Odes*. Where else was I going to find such interest, enthusiasm and support for dance notation and documentation?

Knowing the financial insecurity of the Bureau, Helen discussed bringing the originals of our small library of notated dance scores to OSU to house them in the Main Library, which would guarantee their protection. She had already discussed this with the powers that be at OSU and when she presented this proposal to the Bureau Board, they approved the idea. So the materials came with me, and we made copies here during my first year and sent them back to the Bureau.

Before leaving New York I had the opportunity to take Warren Lamb's personality assessment test that he had devised to see if that could suggest other career

possibilities and point out strengths and weaknesses. I also wanted to learn more about this testing procedure that he had developed. It consisted of meeting with him in my apartment, where he engaged me in conversation while making notes about the Effort and Shape qualities present in my gestures and changes or patterns in body attitudes. A few days later we met to discuss his findings and general recommendations for work that I was most equipped to do successfully and which would give me personal satisfaction. Administrating at the top and nursing were not my greatest talents.

It turned out that Ruth Currier, a good friend, beautiful dancer and choreographer who had also been in the Limón Company, had accepted a position in the Division of Dance to develop a professional dance company which came to be named ADIR (American Dance in Repertory). So both of us moved from New York at the same time, and each found a charming little house to rent in German Village where houses with little gardens were beginning to be restored and rents were very reasonable.

Helen Alkire, now Chair of the Division of Dance, shared her office with a secretary in a small room in Pomerene Hall just outside Room 205, the large dance studio. The rest of the dance faculty had their office in a room on the floor directly above, outside of the gym. Ruth Currier and I were given offices in a suite in Lincoln Tower, on the 12th floor, I believe. Needless to say we did not spend much time there nor did many people come our way.

I was given a graduate assistant, Angelika Gerbes, also new to OSU that fall. She had come to Columbus with her husband, Larry Brown, who had accepted a position in the Department of Geography. Both had been teaching at the University of Iowa, Angelika in the Department of Dance. She was already a certified teacher of Labanotation, and I had known her from summers at Connecticut College where she attended year round. She came at a time when husbands and wives could not both be employed by the university so she was pursuing a doctorate through the Department of Theatre and working closely with Shirley Wynne, the dance history person in the Division of Dance. That first year Angelika probably spent the most time of anyone in the tower office -- doing copywork and helping prepare teaching materials for me. (When Shirley Wynne left her position some years later Angelika, having completed her doctorate, was hired to head the dance history area, which she has done for so many years.)

Our agreement with the Dance Notation Bureau covered the housing of the original scores that came from New York in Special Collections in the Main Library, and we had permission from the DNB to make copies of those scores for classroom use. We have also added various Labanotated materials ever since as copies of new scores have become available from the DNB or have been published elsewhere around the world. We have not received any more original scores from New York, but we do house microfilm copies of new scores coming into the library in New York. The collection still belongs to the DNB because of copyright agreements of ownership of

the works so the Extension has to list and care for them even though they are housed in the OSU Library.

There were periodic attempts to finalize the arrangement for these materials during the twelve years that I was Director of the Extension. When Odette Blum, who had joined the faculty in 1970 as a second Labanotation teacher, became Director, she pursued the matter until something was gotten down on paper, but the scores still cannot belong to the OSU Library because the performance rights belong to the choreographers or their heirs. And the DNB is legally bound to protect those rights, and therefore cannot turn them over to any other organization.

Wisely Helen Alkire made the DNB Extension a part of the Division of Dance in terms of budgeting and not a separate entity, which could be conveniently lopped off in times of a budget crunch. We have always been the same as the rest of the faculty as far as teaching loads. We did get more space to house the teaching materials and to move about in when meeting with students or writing scores and a graduate associate to assist with teaching, cataloging, notating, etc. Odette Blum and I were hired as Assistant Professors and eventually worked our way up to Full Professors. For a number of years there was money in the budget for a trip at least once a year to attend meetings at the DNB in New York. We collaborated with the DNB in offering three 3 week Dance and Notation Workshops here (1972, 1974, 1977) which included the Labanotation Teacher Training Course, and two Labananalysis Research Workshops (1973,1976) exploring the relationship of Labanotation and the Effort/Shape work.

Odette Blum was in charge of the three-week Labanotation Teacher Training Course from the beginning, which was offered every two years and attracted teachers and students from other universities where notation was being taught. This was an era when dance departments were being formed, when dance was coming out of physical education and joining theater or the arts. These new programs were developing curriculums especially for dance. A course to learn dance notation was often more acceptable to college and university administrations than the daily technique classes. At OSU, for example, technique and repertory were packaged together in a 3 hour daily course to be able to include the necessary amount of ballet and modern technique.

Beside these separate DNB Extension activities we were an integral part of the Division. We often directed a dance from [a] score for the University Dance Company, or taught a particular dance in the "old" repertory course, which benefited both the DNB, as the scores got corrected, and the students got to experience the dance. Faculty let students notate their works and then coached those who revived the dances from score for performance or to practice directing works from score.

In the beginning all of the faculty knew a certain amount of notation or had been around when Labanotation was being used. So they understood what the students were studying and could use some of the same vocabulary in their classes when they chose to. We tried to time teaching an area in notation with what was being tackled

in composition or history, for example. This happened especially well with Vickie Blaine's dance composition class.

Q 12. It sounds like within the division itself the collaboration was very vibrant.

A 12. Yes, I think it was. Everybody was interested in figuring out what this new division was going to do. Helen prodded faculty to do things we wanted to do, and she would figure out how we were going to get the money. But the idea of having a professional dance company didn't quite work out somehow. There was not enough studio space for both the company rehearsals and for the growing number of dance majors to work on their dances. It was difficult to raise outside funds when the company was part of a university. Touring dates in and around Ohio did not develop as quickly as projected. After 5 years, ADIR's life came to an end, and Ruth Currier returned to New York to take on the position of Director of the José Limón Dance Company. (José Limón had died recently.)

Q 13. We've moved on down this list. It looks to me like you've really covered down through question 7, as well as some of 8. Although I guess maybe it would be interesting to talk about specific reconstructions and notation projects that you remember fondly.

A 13. I think one of our biggest notation enterprises was "The Green Table." Odette Blum had a great love for this Kurt Jooss masterpiece, which was choreographed in 1932. She wanted to test the latest score that had been written so she could learn all the parts of the dance and so the score could be published. The first score had been written by Ann Hutchinson in 1938 just after she had graduated from the Jooss-

Leeder School in England. Since then at least two other scores had been notated as Anna Markard, Jooss' daughter and keeper of his dances, continued to teach his works to dance companies around the world. *The Green Table* was still being kept alive and still close to the source. Our problem here was that we were not a professional company so Markard would have to come to see our version and coach the dancers and then maybe we could get her permission to give a public performance the following year when she would come yet again to check our version mounted on our best dancers. To fit in with the dance curriculum, using the score Odette taught the first cast in the repertory course so they benefited from coaching by Anna Markard and earned the right for the University Dance Company to perform the work the following year. Heywood (Woody) McGriff, an alum, was invited back to perform the pivotal role of Death.

Then there was the fund raising to pay for all of this! A notator was brought in to make any changes to the score while Anna Markard was here. Musicians had to be found, etc., etc. The performance did take place and everyone lived through the Markard demands (her husband came as part of the package to make the masks and supervise the lighting). In the end it was a great success, but it took the support of the whole department and the unwavering determination of Odette Blum

Then for years Anna Markard withheld permission for the publication of the score even though Ann Hutchinson Guest had secured a publisher and had supervised the camera-ready copy. (In 2003, after this interview, finally it was printed!!)

Another rather ambitious project was *There is a Time* by José Limón. In 1983-84 Vickie Blaine, Director of the University Dance Company believed she had the cast to perform the work so she contacted the Limón Company to see if we could get permission to do it, and if there was someone available to teach it. Jennifer Scanlon, then a member of the company, said she would come if we would make a score of the version that she taught. I said that I would since I would be at all of her rehearsals and would be in charge of rehearsing the dance once she left. I had witnessed the premiere of the work at Juilliard in 1956 as well as a good number of performances, and had performed in the dance as a member of the Limón Company.

Jennifer spent a great deal of time studying all the videotapes she could locate and using her own experience and judgment after having performed in this 40 minute work for a number of years. She had studied Labanotation at Juilliard as all students did at the time that she attended. She had assisted me at Connecticut College one summer when we worked on the score of the first movement of the Humphrey/Currier *Brandenburg Concerto No.4*, which was being taught in repertory class. So we spoke the same language, which was a big help when I asked questions. (Though I had got a rough score together I had to take off the following autumn quarter to finish the good copy.)

At an earlier time Senta Driver, an alum, and then a member of the Paul Taylor Company, got permission from Paul Taylor to teach *Post Meridian* to members of the

University Dance Company. Sharon Kinney, then a faculty member, who had been one of the earliest members of Taylor's company, was able to help with it and performed in it as well. Mary Jane Warner, a graduate student, wrote a score.

One summer we had fun working on Charles Weidman's *Flickers*, a spoof about the silent movies. This production had something to do with our participation in a summer project in the Department of Theater though we performed it in Sullivant Hall.

Q 14. Oh yes, it was sort of a series.

A 14. John Giffin directed *Flickers* using the score by K. Dunkley who had notated it at a time when Weidman himself had taught the dance. Linda Mann Reed came to coach it. I watched rehearsals and added things to the score that seemed helpful for reviving the dance. That way we were "checking" the score. Then John directed the work again for the University Dance Company the following year so we did two productions of that dance.

Q 15. So there was a score that John used to reconstruct?

A 15. Yes.

Q 16. And then you checked it?

A 16. Yes, I read it, and John and I discussed any questions that we had about the information given. When Linda Mann Reed solved some of the problems or made changes because she remembered the dance differently then I added that information to the score.

Our students have written scores of works by faculty. Tim Maurer, a member of UDC, notated Vickie Blaine's *I-71* as a master's project in 1971.

Q 17. I've seen photographs of *I-71*.

A 17. It was created for a program by the Columbus Symphony under Evan Whelan's direction in January 1968 to a full orchestral work, *The Comedians*, by Dmitri Kabalevsky.

Students have written Rosalind Pierson's *The Return* and *Gift of Wings*, and *Progressions* by Vickie Blaine. Vicki Uris' *Breakers* and Susan Hadley's *Commonplace* have also been recorded.

There was another project that we were part of. It involved six universities and was instigated by Jill Beck then working at the Dance Notation Bureau in New York. It was funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts' Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education. The University of Hawaii, University of Iowa, Ohio State University, Arizona State University, Cornish Institute and one more participated. To create new scores and related teaching materials, a choreographer was to teach a dance at one of these institutions at which time it would be notated and produced, a video recording would be made, background material would be written up. In effect, a whole educational package would be produced. The score would be completed with background information on the choreographer and the dance. This package was passed on to one of the universities involved for them to reproduce the dance from the score. That way the score could be checked as the

choreographer would see the results when he/she came to coach the dancers further. And since the works had been composed for university students, they should not be beyond the ability of university students to perform. It seemed like a good plan.

Buzz Miller did a jazz work for us, and Odette Blum directed *What's Remembered* by Rachel Lampert a year or so later using the newly written score of that work. The scores were to be sold for \$500 and related materials for \$500, which included rights to performance. This was actually quite a bargain. However, the project was somewhat hampered by some of the restrictions/decisions that were made somewhere down the line. For example, because we did not offer training in jazz dance, it was thought a good idea to give us a jazz work, thus providing us with a new experience. This meant Buzz Miller had to choreograph down to us, something that put him at a disadvantage from the very beginning. Also because this project was superimposed on the department's other plans for the year, our best dancers were already spoken for. So for any number of reasons that part of the project was not successful.

Q 18. About what year was that?

A 18. 1982-83 ish.

We collaborated in various other ways with universities where Labanotation was taught. For instance the University of Hawaii invited Ming-shen Ku, a choreographer from Taipei, to teach her successful work *Bamboo Grove*. At the same time they arranged for Professor Mary Corey from the University of California at Irvine to notate it. The score was "tested" at the University of Iowa and again here where

Robin Mueller, a graduate student directed it. Ming-shen Ku came to coach at both universities so the students benefited from her visit, she was relieved of teaching the dance over and over again, and she did not have to spend so much time away from her work.

Q 19. What was the title of that?

A 19. *Bamboo Grove*.

Q 20. How are you doing?

A 20. I guess all right. I don't know how coherent the history is.

Q 21. I think very coherent. You've really got it organized. I'm not sure you've said everything you want to say but you certainly talked about every dance faculty and artist in residence. And the notation work. I guess one of the questions I was interested in was about the students and the ones who were particularly memorable.

A 21. They were each fascinating. Some have gone on to perform with dance companies for a while like Heywood (Woody) McGriff with Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane. Then he taught in the Department of Dance at the University of Texas at Austin until he died of AIDS. Some formed their own companies like Dianne McIntyre, Catherine Turocy, Bebe Miller. Once in a while there is a solo performer like Claire Porter, who creates and performs her wonderfully humorous dances. Then there are teachers like Loren Bucek, Karen King Cavin, Marlene Robbins, Amy Polovick, Sharon Unrau who have contributed so much to dance education in the public schools in Columbus. There is Catherine Turocy who has continued to research, teach and perform Baroque dances in such a delightful way that they do not seem historical at all.

Lynn Dally, an alum, who joined the faculty before I came, left to form the Jazz Tap Ensemble with Fred Strickler, also a student before my time. One of Fred's solo tap works that he performed to a piece for orchestra was notated by Billie Mahoney.

Q 22. Fred Strickler is at UC Riverside, isn't he?

A 22. I think so. The last time I ran into him he was still there.

Q 23. You mentioned Senta Driver earlier.

A 23. I think Senta had just finished graduate work here before I arrived but she has always kept in touch with the Department. She was a member of Paul Taylor's Company for a number of years and then formed her own company, which performed here several times. Later she went into nursing for a while. Currently she is a Board Member of the Dance Notation Bureau and writes the newsletter for that organization. Writing is another of her talents. Several years ago we performed her work *Resettings* (choreographed in 1981), which has a score, and she came to coach the dancers. She's also interested in politics and helped with Hilary Clinton's campaign for Senator from New York.

Q 24. Oh, interesting.

A 24. And then there are some of our current faculty who came here as graduate students after performing and choreographing whom we hired: John Giffin, Vicki Uris, Susan Van Pelt. Susan Hadley got her graduate degree, then performed with Senta Driver and later with Mark Morris and is now on the faculty. Candace Feck earned her M.A. in Dance here and has recently completed her Ph.D. in Art Education. She finally has a full faculty position though she has been teaching as an

adjunct for quite some time. It sounds a bit incestuous but it seems to work well as they each come from different backgrounds and have unique things to offer.

I am sure that I have left out many special people, and I apologize.

Q 25. Well, do you want to jump to LabanWriter (LW) and all of that wonderful work?

A 25. That seems to be my current project. I wrote a summary of its history last year when writing a grant application.

Q 26. Would it be possible to get a copy of that?

A 26. You can have this one if you want, which gives the history of LW at OSU, and I will also attach an article that I wrote about how Laban Writer came to be for the English journal *Dance Research*, (volume IX number 2 autumn 1991) which starts even further back and shows pictures of the interface of LW 3 so anyone reading it will get a better picture of how the program and the notation works. (See attached.)

I first began to think about a machine to make our symbols so they wouldn't all have to be drawn by pen, pencil or stylus (to cut stencils) when I found a folder in the Bureau files with thoughts about a typewriter for Labanotation. Either there was no name attached to them or it was someone that we did not know. It pointed out the need for the machine to go from the bottom of the page to the top rather than from left to right and then a need to figure out how to be able to produce all of the different symbols and their variations. Later on Earl Ubell came onto our Board. His wife Shirley had a dancing school in New Jersey and he was Science Editor for one of the New York TV stations. He was interested in making the whole notating process simpler and was always on the lookout for new technology for us. When IBM came

along with the Selectric ball for their typewriters, he thought this might be the solution so he arranged a meeting with someone from IBM. I began to work on the idea after he got IBM interested, but though this gave us the possibility of using an already made typewriter and just developing a ball with the ingredients to make our symbols, you still had to type left to right which meant we had to turn our page sideways in the machine. Many things had to be added by hand like bows that stretch from one staff to another to connect dancers that are doing partner work, for example. This meant there was still a certain amount of handwork. I gave up on that project though later it was finished by Muriel Topaz after I came to OSU. IBM used it for promotional material in a few television commercials usually shown during athletic events. A few full scores were typed out, and a number of people purchased the ball and experimented with it if they had a Selectric typewriter. But it was not the solution. One of our graduate students, Scott Clark notated Vickie Blaine's *Progressions* and used the Selectric ball to type the final copy. That was really the most that we did with it at OSU.

Almost immediately when I got to OSU, I was introduced to Chuck Csuri who was very much into computer art by that time. He was very encouraging about putting the notation onto computer. At that time, it was still too mathematical for me, so I waited and watched. Computer work with Labanotation was beginning at the University of Iowa, and we were in touch with Judy Allen there about the teaching program for notation that they had made. Then Mary Sweeney, a graduate of the University of Iowa who had worked on that project, entered our graduate program to study more

notation. At the same time the College of the Arts was given six computers to try out for graphics work, I believe. Dance received one of them, which was given to Mary to experiment with. She struggled by herself, since no one could help her, and eventually gave up, as it wasn't able to produce what we needed. Then Mary graduated.

About that time the Macintosh computer came on the scene, and it could make graphics. Miraculously George Karl arrived from SUNY at Geneseo as a graduate student with more computer than dance experience. The Department of Dance had acquired one Macintosh 512K for the secretary. George was given use of it on evenings and weekends. He started with information turned over to us by people at the University of Pennsylvania where they had already worked with various aspects of Labanotation on the computer and had given this one up. I would talk with George about what we needed to be able to do, and he would try to make it happen. And when the secretary got a new computer, we inherited her first one.

Then we got a few grants. Vickie Blaine was our new chair, and she wanted to find out how to apply for University and College grants so she offered to write applications for us for equipment and Research Associate assistance. She got us several small grants that way. And George proceeded to create LabanWriter (LW) 2.0, our first release. And I copied a score, *Invention* by Doris Humphrey, using it to write the movement and SuperPaint to draw the floor plans.

About the time that George was leaving, we received a one time \$40,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation due to help from Ilene Fox, Director of the DNB, who recommended our project to the foundation as one that needed support.

(Somewhere about this time there were numerous discussions about changing the Dance Notation Bureau's name as some said that "Bureau" tended to confuse people, and we weren't a bureau like the FBI, for example. Nobody came up with an acceptable change of name so the solution was to change our habit. Instead of calling it the Bureau, we now say the DNB.)

The next programmer was Scott Sutherland, a Macintosh enthusiast who was currently in charge of the computer lab in the Student Union two buildings away. He knew one of our music staff who mentioned our need. He applied for the job, and we hired him. It was a real luxury to have a computer programmer in the department when computers were just coming into the offices and nobody knew much about them or what to do if something didn't seem to work. Scott introduced us to the computer world.

After the grant money ran out, Scott stayed on to maintain the computer equipment and the Department supported his LabanWriter work part-time. He also was around to help faculty design projects involving computer work, which put us ahead of many dance departments in that area. He and I offered weekend LabanWriter Workshops, usually in the summer, for people outside of Columbus and presented the program at

various dance conferences. Somehow during the years he was with us he completed his B.A. at Ohio State. It may have been One-of-a-Kind.

LabanWriter 3.0 was released in 1992. Scott continued developing and maintaining that program until 1995 when his wife, a medical doctor, accepted a pediatric residency in Seattle.

David Ralley, a childhood neighbor of Scott's in Worthington, had helped with at least one project in the Department during a summer, and Scott recommended him to take his place in both capacities – computer maintenance for the Department and to continue with the LabanWriter project, which I was beginning to see was becoming my life's work. There was always something to be made better, and there were always new ideas or tools or software to be dealt with. And there were new requests from users and adaptations that had to be made when new computers came out.

We had got permission from the University right in the beginning to distribute the program for free. We knew that there would never be a big market for LW. We wanted to help the notator write scores and to make work easier and more up-to-date for Labanotation teachers and their students.

We began by giving copies of LabanWriter to anyone who sent us a blank disk. Next we offered a yearly subscription for \$30, which I think originally meant we would send a copy of the current program and two updates. But we did not always

fulfill our yearly commitment of two updates, and each year with new subscribers it got harder to figure out what we owed and to whom. By the time David Ralley was ready to release LW 4.0 in 2000 fortunately we could invite people to download the program from the Department's website and forget all the subscription business.

David Ralley came with a B.A. in Electronic Music and a B.A. in Computer Science from OSU, and an M.S. in Computer Science from the University of Illinois, Urbana. He was instrumental in designing and implementing the computer lab for the Department and he rewrote LW in C++ language, which he and Scott had decided was the next step. This involved redesigning the interface and making the fonts for all of the symbols as well. He started in the fall of 1995, and we released LW 4.0 in the spring of 2000. He took a year off to work in Paris full time again with music, then a year to work halftime in Paris and halftime for LabanWriter.

Of course by 2000 computers were common, and even being carried around from place to place so you had your office with you. Macintosh machines were wonderful for designers, architects, artists, etc. but they were expensive compared with the PCs, which had copied some of their features and were cheaper. So more people and computer labs acquired PCs. We acquired a contribution to fund David's salary and the renting of software from a company to make LW cross platformed so it would work on PCs. We had hoped to introduce the program for PCs at dance and notation conferences in Beijing and Taipei during the summer of 2003 (postponed to 2004 because of the SARS epidemic), but before that time we had given up – at least for

the moment. And David took a well paying job in Petaluma, California. He still does part-time maintenance and mini improvements on the program from afar and assists people who are having trouble using the program or with some bug in the program itself. He and I keep in touch by email and somehow money is scraped together to pay him for the hours he puts in. It has been an interesting journey.

Q 27. And an important commitment to the notation field.

A 27. You ask about LabanReader. That's a teaching tool that Sheila Marion and David Ralley developed to assist students in learning to read the notation. For example, you can project reading examples made with LabanWriter from the computer onto a screen in the studio. You can choose to have the symbols for movement of the left support in one color and those for the right foot in another to make them stand out one from another. Or you can take out all but the arms and/or the torso movements so you can focus on arms for the moment before putting everything back together for the full movement.

Sheila is also developing an online course for learning Labanotation. This includes video examples to confirm what you have read as well as examples for you to observe and record. You can exchange homework and questions by email with a teacher.

Valarie Mockabee, who accepted a position including teaching notation here after Odette Blum retired in 1995, is in the process of qualifying as a Certified Labanotator. She also directs works from score and makes CD packages (or now DVDs?) containing video recording of a dance as well as the notation, background

history, interviews with the choreographer, pictures, reviews and any other pertinent information.

Q 28. And you have an NEH grant proposal pending?

A 28. That's right.

Q 29. So we'll see if that gets funded. Hopefully we both will get our proposals funded, but I think motion capture may be pushing the envelope a little too much.

A 29. At least we have made the attempt! (Later note: We did not receive the NEH grant.)

Q 30. Okay. The summer courses you mentioned, the motif workshops, is there anything you want to say about them?

A 30. We offered three, three week summer Dance and Notation Workshops at OSU in 1972, 1974 and 1977. These were co-organized by the Extension and the DNB and were offered in order to promote the integration of the use of Labanotation and Laban's theories in the training of the dancer through dance fundamentals, notation, repertory from scores and to provide a venue for the three week teacher certification course in Labanotation which attracted people from different parts of the country. We were trying to bring some of the Effort/Shape teachers into more contact with the Labanotation ones by inviting them to teach dance classes which embodied the Effort/Shape work – teachers such as Peggy Hackney, Janis Pforsich, Kedzie Penfield and Carol Boggs (an OSU alum).

Q31 Yes, I thought I knew that name.

A31. We were trying to bridge the gap between the Effort/Shape people and the Labanotation people through a common activity because a split was coming about

within the Dance Notation Bureau because these two groups seemed to be going in different directions.

We also collaborated with the DNB on a very similar workshop sponsored by Mills College near San Francisco in 1975, which I co-directed with Muriel Topaz. This was one of our few efforts to promote more interest in Labanotation on the West Coast by actually going there.

We also held 2 three week Labananalysis Research Workshops at OSU, the first in 1973 and the second in 1976, each with 9 participants. These were explorations in combining the Effort/Shape information with Labanotation scores. We used "Labananalysis" to describe this inclusiveness of all of this information. Our objective had been that Labananalysis can be imbedded as part of the craft – the knowledge of the dancer to be used for learning as well as preserving and retrieving the dance. Vickie Blaine taught a phrase in her style of modern dance, Ruth Currier taught a phrase in her style. Allan Miles taught a ballet phrase to Maria Grandey. These were the three phrases that we all learned and looked at and then we notated as thoroughly as we could in Labanotation and in Effort/Shape and in Motif Notation. The participants were Helen Alkire, Irmgard Bartenieff, Vickie Blaine, Odette Blum, Carol Boggs, Ruth Currier, Maria Grandy, Peggy Hackney, Allan Miles, and Lucy Venable. We then looked at the scores to see what they told us about the three different excerpts. We were surprised to find that the ballet phrase was the most dynamic full.

(Allan Miles and I had been colleagues at the Dance Notation Bureau in New York until he had left New York to teach ballet and notation at Stephens College and then at a college in Texas where he was told that he needed a graduate degree to be retained in an academic position. He came here to obtain a Master's Degree, which was all that we offered at the time, and his projects added greatly to our teaching materials. He also began teaching ballet in Columbus and after he finished his degree, he opened a studio and taught for a number of years here before moving to upstate New York on a farm. He had had enough of academia!)

There was a kind of follow up or similar project at the University of Hawaii a few years later where they worked in detail on an excerpt of an East Indian dance in somewhat the same way (Irmgard Bartenieff, Peggy Hackney, Carl Wolz, Judy Van Zile, the East Indian dancer, others?).

Then in 1976 we had a second Labananalysis Research Workshop in two parts. The first two weeks dealt with how to integrate information concerning dance style into the Labanotation score. The people involved were Odette Blum, Angelika Gerbes, Elizabeth Kagan, Janis Pforsich, Lucy Venable and Irene Wachtel (graduate assistant who had studied notation with Albrecht Knust in Germany). It was a smaller group than in 1973. We looked at films of a Damba dance from Africa, *Tsunemasa* – a Japanese dance sent by Carl Wolz, and the opening duet performed by Yuriko and Bertram Ross in *A Dancer's World*, a film about Martha Graham.

Irmgard with Forrestine Paulay had been involved for some time with the coding of dance styles in many cultures, part of a larger project by folk musicologist Alan Lomax. They had developed coding sheets for this purpose. We were very interested in finding out how they looked at the dances, what they found to be the distinguishing features, and how they used the sheets.

The second part was 5 days long and participants were Odette Blum, Ann Hutchinson Guest, Billie Mahoney, Irene Wachtel, Muriel Topaz, and Lucy Venable. It was focused on discussing specific problems within the Laban notation system as well as differences of usage between the Labanotation usage (American) and the Kinetography Laban usage (European) in preparation for the coming International Council of Kinetography Laban Conference.

I think that covers the kinds of summer workshops that we had up through 1976.

By 1977 more places around the country were offering summer dance workshops so there was more competition both for faculty and students, and I was getting tired of being responsible for organizing ours. I wanted to take a year off to refresh myself and to study the Alexander Technique more intensively with Marjorie Barstow in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Q32. That's 1977-78?

A32. Yes. We didn't get sabbaticals then and so if you wanted one, you just had to take time off.

Q33. Wow. There are some things that are better!

A33. Yes.

I had first met this extraordinary teacher when Dr. William Conable, cello teacher here in the School of Music, brought her to OSU for a week in April 1974 to work with the musicians. Bill was a student of hers, and he and his then wife Barbara were teaching the technique in their home on Sundays in Columbus. When asked if we would like to have Marjorie Barstow visit the Department of Dance, Helen Alkire immediately said yes. Some time after Marjorie's visit Helen arranged for Barbara Conable to teach a weekly group session for the Dance faculty as part of faculty development. Barbara gave a total of 20 lessons in 1976 (and maybe she taught 1977-78 when I was away?) so we could all learn more about the work.

I found Marj as we called her, to be a most interesting person who had taught dance in Lincoln, Nebraska, and had been the first student to graduate from F.M.

Alexander's first Teacher Training Course in London in 1934. After that she had assisted A.R. Alexander (F.M.'s brother) for about seven years (1934-42) when he taught in the U.S. in Boston and the East Coast. She had also helped her father who was in the grain business and when I knew her, she and a man ran a farm that raised quarter horses. She lived alone in the large old Barstow home in Lincoln where she gave lessons in the Alexander Technique.

I had attended Marj's Christmas and/or summer workshops for at least 10 years. And when I returned after my year's leave in Lincoln, Helen Alkire asked me if I wasn't going to do something with all of this knowledge. In Spring Quarter 1979 for some mad reason we started off offering 4 sections of Alexander Technique, each meeting twice a week for an hour plus a one hour drop-in time for faculty on Fridays. By fall we had cut the sections to three as I did teach other courses. This course was open to anyone in the university. I taught 2-3 sections a quarter until my retirement in 1992. Since then I have continued to teach a few lessons a week in my home usually to people older than college age. I attend Alexander organizations' Annual General Meetings, exchange weekly lessons with a friend and colleague as we continue to explore our understanding of Alexander's discoveries, and continue to participate as one of the faculty at the Alexander Christmas Workshop between Christmas and New Year's organized by Dr. Conable and housed at the School of Music. 2004 will be our 16th workshop.

In 1981 the DNB Extension and the Department of Dance hosted the 12th Biannual ICKL Conference (International Council of Kinetography Laban). This was the first time that ICKL had convened in the United States. In 2001, twenty years later, we hosted the 22nd Biennial ICKL Conference.

Exploring Motif Writing within our curriculum was another interest of mine. Ann Hutchinson Guest and Valerie Preston-Dunlop had been developing this aspect of the notation for a number of years before I came to OSU. We were finding it useful to

use as an introduction to teaching the full notation. It was a way of introducing the notation through movement exploration and improvisation. It can be introduced to children as they are learning about dance and can help them shape their own dances. We (Odette Blum, John Giffin, Vera Maletic and I) with the help of a little money from the Ohio Arts Council and a challenge made by Scott Brandon who had said he thought the notation was too difficult, started by offering three all day Motif Workshops in 1985-86 to which we invited people in the Columbus community. Then in 1986-87 I taught a series of 6 experimental lessons to 3 different 3rd grade classes at Duxberry Park Arts IMPACT Alternative School and 6 lessons to 1st graders and 6 lessons to 3rd graders at Indian Springs Elementary School. Loren Bucek was particularly helpful in setting up the project at Duxberry Park. I found the children in both schools very responsive to the material. I did not have the time to do more of this, but I tried to encourage others to explore the possibilities whenever I could.

Next I taught a daily three week summer course for dance teachers in the community from 1988 through 1991 which developed into a half quarter (5 week) course 1992 – 1994 which attracted a number of our graduate students already knowledgeable about Labanotation who needed courses to take in the summer, and we invited children from the local public schools that had winter dance programs to join us two days a week. That way we had "guinea pigs" to teach and they enjoyed coming to a new place. All of us had fun and learned a great deal.

Q34. The summer courses you've mentioned. Is there anything about the Motif Workshops?

A34. In 1994 Loren Bucek, Ann Kipling Brown and I began to offer a five-day motif notation summer workshop for teachers from further away. Loren, then at Columbia Teachers College in NYC, and Ann at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan were both dance educators involved in the training of teachers of dance for children. We held the first workshop at Columbia Teachers College in NYC, the next at OSU, the third at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan, and the last three at OSU ending in 1999.

We brought the workshops to an end, as we needed to develop what we were doing further and to produce more teaching materials; we were not attracting many people and individually we were being pulled in other directions. Also the Language of Dance work that Ann Hutchinson Guest had been developing in England for years was crossing the Atlantic. In the late 90's a U.S. Branch of Language of Dance was formed which is now headed by Tina Curran. Ann Guest had published a textbook *Your Move* (which we had used for many years here), developed various teaching materials, and offered different levels of Language of Dance teacher certification. We were beginning to compete with ourselves.

Q35. How has the DNB Extension functioned over time in relation to the DNB and other notation work worldwide?

A35. Well, we have probably done best when we have collaborated on specific projects like the various workshops. I think we all envisioned more contact in the beginning

but in reality once you get busy with what you are doing, it's hard to keep everyone informed about what you are doing and to have extra time to help each other out. Funds were cut for trips from here to New York. The DNB went through a tough time when the Effort/Shape program split off from it. Then there was a good time when the DNB's education program for training notators was going well and funds were available for notating scores. Then much of the federal funding for the arts was cut, and the DNB had to cut back on many of its activities and the people that it could hire. It has never quite recovered from that crunch, but it has managed to survive due to a small but devoted Board and the Herculean efforts of Ilene Fox, the Executive Director.

We pretty much try to support each other and to take on what we each do best. We all participate in the biennial ICKL conferences, which rotate in venue from Europe to North America to Asia Pacific. We are not as in touch with people using other systems of movement notation these days as we were from the 60's through the 80's when we were each competing for supremacy. After two dance notation conferences, a very successful one in Israel in 1984 and a second in Hong Kong in 1990 (less successful from my point of view because it was combined with other dance organization conferences so that the World Dance Alliance could come into being), we became more respectful and supportive in general of the various ways of recording dance/movement. As independent notation groups we stopped protecting our turf and fighting for recognition. As we were recognized and became part of the educational system and professional dance world we acknowledged that movement

could be looked at and described from different points of view and that all of us involved in this activity could learn from and support each other. At least three of the systems developed software programs: MacBenesh, Eshkol-Wachman, LabanWriter. Animation software was also being developed for various purposes.

Q36. You talked a lot about this development of the department. You may have answered this last question unless you have anything else you want to add.

Was it prominent in 1968? From your perspective, what were the factors that led to this excellence and its continuity and high points in its development?

A36 When you asked about the department of dance coming into being in 1968, I found it interesting to go back to this developmental conference on dance that took place in two parts: November 24 – December 3, 1966 and May 28 – June 3, 1967 in California. "The idea of a developmental conference on dance was born out of the recognition that, in this period of rapid change, dance educators who must make critical decisions that affect the future of dance needed an opportunity to discuss basic issues. The leaders in the Arts and Humanities Program, Office of Education had been engaged in developmental projects in music, art, and theatre. They were also concerned about the unique needs of dance, so with the support and assistance of Kathryn Bloom, Director, and Jack Morrison, Theatre Education Specialist and Acting Dance Specialist, the developmental conference on dance became a reality." (p.v DANCE *a projection for the future* IMPULSE 1968. This entire issue is devoted to reporting in detail the two conferences.) Alma Hawkins, Head of Dance at UCLA, was Project Director.

As Director of the Dance Notation Bureau at that time, I was invited to attend the first conference in 1966. It was quite an experience for me to be part of this event. It turned out that I had already met most of the people involved when touring with the Limón Company to the colleges or at Connecticut College in the summers or at dance conferences. But I had never been involved with them or anyone else at this curricular level. I must confess that I was totally a fish out of water. It was great that notation was included, but I certainly did not contribute much of anything to the discussions. Mostly I tried to listen as hard as I could! Because notation was supported by this conference was probably the reason that it was included in the curriculum of many of the major dance programs just beginning to blossom around the country. That and the fact that notation had been spearheaded by Ann Hutchinson Guest and Els Grelinger at the High School for Performing Arts in New York and by Guest at the Julliard School when the dance department was developed there. Helen Priest Rogers had taught notation for many summers at Connecticut College and also promoted the filming of dance for documentation purposes. The idea was already introduced in education and was incorporated in the curricular plans discussed at these two conferences.

So this conference, I'm sure, helped bring notation more into the main stream, and it also strengthened the network of heads of dance programs at colleges and universities around the country – UCLA, Utah, SUNY Purchase, Illinois, Boston, Julliard, Colorado, Wisconsin, Mills College, North Carolina School of the Arts, Maryland, Perry Mansfield School & Camps, Wayne State University, Michigan, Florida State,

Ohio State, Ohio University, Hawaii. This Council of Dance Administrators (CODA) continues to meet each fall to discuss common problems, support each other, report achievements, etc. I have never been a part of these meetings, but each year we have gotten a report about dance departments around the country, trends, complaints, administrative problems, etc. from our chair (whoever it has been) who has faithfully attended every meeting, I think. It has served to keep us in touch with and benefit from what is going on nationally.

Q 35. The question of prominence. Looking backwards from my perspective because I have only been here since 1986, but it's been a very high profile department in all the time that I've known about it.

A 35. Because this was a newly formed department in a newly formed college there was a lot of good energy in this small group. We were all starting off together to build something new and that's always exciting. Helen Alkire had a vision of what could be done, I think, and somehow she seemed to lead us there without imposing her ideas on us. She tried to place us in positions where we could develop and function best.

There weren't the old faculty and the new faculty, or the tenured and untenured faculty yet, or those about to retire or those retired but still teaching some courses, etc. And we developed many of our current faculty. Dancers who came here for graduate work after professional careers like John Giffin, Vicki Uris, Susan Hadley, Susan Van Pelt had the varied backgrounds that we were looking for and having been

here already for two or three years just melted into the structure. Gradually we had to look farther afield and had to learn how to mentor new faculty who came in from the "outside." This has not always been as successful.

We now have our 4th chair as of 2003. Vera Blaine had followed Helen Alkire as chair and Karen Bell moved up after Vickie retired -- each from within the department and all women. Now Scott Marsh, the 4th chair, has come from outside and is the first male chair though Michael Kelly Bruce was temporary chair while Karen Bell was temporary dean for two years before being selected as dean.

Q 36. Now we get to the boring stuff that you tried to get away from when you left the Bureau. What is your perspective on the various department and university administrations under which you served? How do you view the administrative and financial support for Dance and the DNB Extension by these administrations?

A 36. I don't have too much insight about the administrative support. The fact that dance could have its own place along with art, music and theater seemed like pretty special support to me. As far as I could tell dance has been well supported by each of our deans, Rigsby, Broekema, Harris and now Bell. We've been very fortunate, I think.

Salaries in the College of the Arts don't compare well with salaries in the other colleges and that can always be improved and fought for, but then we don't bring in the kinds of grants that people in other colleges do. They just don't exist for the arts. Or if they do exist, they are often the first to be cut or pruned during budget crunches.

- Q37. Any general comments on the state of the University, its administrators, events?
- A37. The only event that I've witnessed that I think really stayed with me was the upheaval and closing of the University in the 1970's. That seemed to involve everyone at the time. Otherwise edicts keep coming down from above that you have to deal with or complain about through the proper chain of command.
- Q38. Let's go on to accomplishments or disappointments.
- A38. I don't know how to answer that. I don't have any particular disappointments and I think I have tried to mention more or less what I have done.
- Q39. I'll just say, because it's been interesting to me as you've been talking, and maybe it is because dance like theatre, is such a collaborative form, but it's hard to say, "This is my accomplishment. This is what I'm proudest of for me," because it's being proud for everyone who is involved.
- A39. And it is also being dependent on everybody else.
- Q40. Exactly.
- A40. So there isn't any particular accomplishment. I've enjoyed being a part of it, and I found it interesting. It has been fun, seeing teachers – students – take ideas and go do something with them. I like that part. The faculty has been a great group to work with. I still enjoy hovering on the fringe now that I've retired.
- Q41. Is there anything else that you'd like to talk about, now that I've totally worn you out?
- A41. No. I have no more words left.