



SPECIAL ISSUE!

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BEHIND THE SCENES

a publication of the Board of Directors
AMHERST BALLET THEATRE COMPANY

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the forgotten INTELLIGENCE

Having fun makes you smart. More courage to dance could inspire not only dance educators but most of all the children themselves. *by Irene Sieben*

We have known it, suspected it, or hoped it for a long time. Now it has been verified scientifically by Hans Günther Bastian, music educator and special ability researcher. Music — and thus dance also, as the earliest of all musical arts — promotes intelligence and improves social skills. A six-year research project in Berlin elementary schools, called the “Bastian Study,” has now been evaluated. It examined the influence of extended musical education on the development of children and came to an astonishing conclusion. The “effective power” of music and actively playing music in school increases IQ scores, improves school performance and independent learning, sinks the readiness for violence, promotes social behaviour and refines the ability for concentration. The results are available in shortened form in a pocket book called “Kinder optimal fördern mit Musik”

(The Optimal Promotion of Children — With Music), published by the Atlantis-Schott publishing house. These results are also politically explosive, for they rebut all assumptions that art and its practice are superfluous accessories in human life, and that these classes could be deleted for the benefit of more intellectual (or practical) classes.

Bastian argues for a radical change of direction and for the “formulation of new educational policies” so that both “aesthetic thought (thought initiates first through the senses, and first through them makes sense)” and the education of “sensual capacities” be as prized as basic specialty knowledge and computer skills. In the sense of Laban (Every person is a dancer) and Beuys

(Every person is an artist) gifted talent is presumed to be a potential that can be developed. A well-invested pool for more humanity.

Movement SENSES

Besides the well-known linguistic, mathematical-logical, and spatial intelligence asked for in classical IQ tests, Howard Gardner’s model of seven “multiple intelligences” names the musical, physical-kinaesthetic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal intelligences. The last two were later fused together as “emotional intelligence” by Daniel Goldman. It includes the sum of meta-abilities that other talents first develop, such as the ability for enthusiasm, endurance, and compassion. Ernst Waldemar Weber conducted research in Switzerland similar to Bastian’s. Weber calls musical intelligence the “forgotten intelligence” because its significance has been underestimated up to now. The sense for movement first enables the playing of music, as recent research brings to light: The differentiated fine motor co-ordination of people who play music, and their skills in reading and interpreting musical notation, are not the only things reflected in whole-area neurone networks between the hemispheres of the brain. Just the act of listening to music effects similar links (Mozart rates higher than minimal music). Music, according to Weber, leads to an “opening of the mind” and this is the

reason it assumes a central role in the circle of all other intelligences. The earlier musical education begins, the stronger this networking is.

Playing TOGETHER

Deep devotion, presence from head to toe, being-with-yourself, and at the same time listening to others are all visible and perceptible criteria for learning without emphasis on performance results. It leads to growth and development. Anyone who watches children play and dance is touched by their intensity. Ingrid Krause is a medical doctor and chairperson of the Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft Tanz Berlin (Berlin Regional Association for Dance). For her there is only one small step missing to prove that dance, as kinetic experience of music, is even more effective than music alone. “Yes, you can say it is the learning of a very complex musical instrument: the body. People dancing move in the same structures as when they learn a piece of music. Dancing in a group, with changing nearness and distance, and not just in front of the mirror, could also correspond to the collaboration of an orchestra, since hands and arms, feet and legs, have the same approximate representation in our brain’s motor areas, and are probably connected in networks with identical switches in the brain.” If we imagine a “little person” projected into the cerebral cortex tomogram image he could give a spatial rendering of motor and sensory activities in the

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BOYS at amherst ballet

LOOK AROUND at Amherst Ballet and you'll notice something a little different. A new sort of energy, a slightly different uniform, and special exercises designed specifically for boys! They're still quite young, they're delightfully sweet, they're all very hard workers, and yes — they're boys.

Four boys between the ages of eight and ten are currently enrolled in Lower School classes.

Amherst Ballet began the year with two boys and added two more following the announcement by the Board of Directors that it unanimously voted to create a boys program.

Director Catherine Fair has been charged with the job of creating a program that will meet the needs of young males aspiring to receive dance training while fitting in with the general mission of Amherst

Ballet. Fair is planning a weekly class that will offer forty-five minutes of ballet followed by forty-five minutes of jazz and hip-hop. This class will be offered in addition to weekly technique classes in the Royal Academy of Dancing (RAD) Syllabus which boys currently attend with girls. Although this syllabus is designed to teach special boys' exercises during classes where a majority of girls are in attendance, Fair feels that boys also need the chance to study in a "boys only" environment. Fair hopes that this environment, combined with a male teacher serving as a role model, will be effective in keeping boys interested in dance and helping them to withstand the inevitable negative pressure dished out by society.

Meanwhile, the boys at Amherst Ballet are learning to do lots of things that most boys naturally love to do: jump, leap, turn and move! They are also learning what a plié means, how to turn out their legs, point their feet, and how to carry themselves with the proud stance of a dancer. Perhaps in a few years, they'll be on stage leaping, soaring, and lifting their young Amherst Ballet partners into the air!

CF

MICHAEL ROCK in Catherine Fair's ballet class. Photo by Kevin Gutting, courtesy of *The Daily Hampshire Gazette*.



BEHIND THE SCENES

EDITOR Barbara Kauff DESIGN Pamela Glaven

WRITERS **CATHERINE FAIR** is Director of Amherst Ballet. **ROSE MARIE FLACHS**, Assistant Professor of Ballet at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, was a principal dancer with Nashville Ballet and a soloist with Louisville Ballet, Ballet West and Cincinnati Ballet. Rose teaches ballet at AB. **KATRINA HAWLEY** teaches modern dance at AB. She is a certified Laban instructor and teaches Pilates at Momentum in Hadley. **KAREN LIST**, Professor of Journalism at UMass served as President of the Amherst Ballet Board of Directors for two years. She's the mom of Emily (18) and Madeleine (9), and they love to dance together in the kitchen. **KATHERINE MAYFIELD**, head pianist at AB, is the author of *Acting A To Z: The Young Person's Guide To A Stage Or Screen Career* (Back Stage Books). **IRENE SEIBEN** is a dancer and dance teacher, she studied with Mary Wigman. She is presently working as a somatic movement teacher and Feldenkrais Practitioner in Berlin. *Of special interest: the body-mind centering work of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen in Amherst.* As a journalist and author, Irene has been writing for 30 years about dance, music and body-mind themes.

all that's behind us

...a note from the editor

WE DIDN'T CALL for an issue about teaching, but one serendipitously arose from all the materials sent to us over the last few months by our faculty who train our lovely dancers, who create an exhilarating learning process and who are the bed-rock of our endeavors.

This special edition discusses creative movement and its unique benefits for the young child; Rudolph Laban's theories of effort, shape and space harmony; the Royal Academy of Dance syllabus dedicated to elevating the standards of ballet teachers and their students around the world, and the children's curriculum that our faculty teaches today; improvisation and composition where students own identities are stimulated in preparation for their own choreography and future work with choreographers; the new and exciting boy's program and promoting healthy competition in the classroom.

This issue, then, is in large measure about learning and teaching — how we attempt to communicate, provoke and decipher dance education. And how our students discover through their dancing what leads them forward, and what, invisibly, is moving them from behind.

BK

continued from page 1

cortex, thereby profiling which areas have been more stimulated and which areas less; whether a child has been trained classically, that is to say, has learned a highly-stylised technique, or if it follows natural laws, such as gravity, in Contact Improvisation; whether the “tools” of the feet dominate, as in Israeli circle dances, or whether feet and hands are equally employed, as in flamenco.

Body CONTACT

Not all dance is the same, not all music is the same. Ingrid Krause shows the proof in the German proverb ‘Music goes to the heart or the legs.’ “If it goes to the legs, then it is nothing other than the neurophysiological description that the intellect is switched off and the stimulus of the movement impulse progresses along automatically switched routes. One can observe that clearly in the Love Parade, when techno music hammers and a million people are moved by it. The rhythm causes them to make almost identical, repetitive movements. An automatic mechanism is taking place. That is the lowest form of consciousness, as is known from animal experiments. If the music goes to the heart, it probably reaches the brain one level higher, in the limbic system, where the emotional content of sensual impressions is processed.” Conscious learning of a movement sequence — and the finer, more differentiated, or complex, the more effective it is — goes “from the top down in the brain. An automatic movement sequence is developed, not an automatic mechanism. If we register emotion during dancing, then a network connection takes place from the bottom up in the brain. That is a much later stage in the learning and playing of a musical instrument, namely, when practised fine motor coordination enables the formulation of musical expression.” International folklore dances are Ingrid Krause’s speciality, and when children dance, what German politicians call for happens naturally: children are raised as open-minded Europeans. Those who meet each other dancing in a circle lose their fear, become tolerant, and learn to share joy. This is a good basis for overcoming cultural barriers. The questioning glances of (classical) dance educators directed at the folk dance director are thus groundless. Folklore as an ethnic (usually without cost) educational offer has as much value in daily school curricula and in free-time as the creative, contemporary dance that schools sometimes bring in to channel off aggression, strengthen the feeling of group togetherness, and to open horizons. Kristine Sommerlade and her “Mind the Gap” company have brought thousands of students into movement. Her project “Dance in Education” in North Rhine-Westphalia aims at igniting interest for a usually unknown art form. She produces body contact that

“means not just shoving, shoulder clapping, or maybe holding hands, but the shaping of space and body sculptures.” She sees herself not so much as an educator, but as an artist. “I try to use the communication techniques given by the theatre for the children; to focus, to project, and to have space sensually and emotionally under control.

Psycho-MOTILITY

Pioneers in the spread of children’s dance in schools were England, the Commonwealth, the USA, and Holland. It was recognised that kinaesthetic and cognitive learning go hand in hand. Leanore Ickstadt was the first, at the end of the 70’s, who slipped into the nation-wide experimental project “Künstler und Schüler” (Artists and Students). Ickstadt is a dancer and choreographer from the USA and had previously worked using group dynamics and movement theatrics to reconcile and unite black and Puerto-Rican young people in New York. In Germany, she is one of the most experienced experts in creative children’s dance.

Ickstadt is director of the world-wide network Dance and the Child International (DaCI) and is very engaged for connections between cultures and for the almost thousand people who work under UNESCO to dance with children as teacher and researchers. These workers witness the spontaneous joy of life before their eyes, but they also have to deal with sad realities. Bent backs, fallen arches, lack of co-ordination, and hyperactivity are all results of our visually overloaded “achievement society” and its imprint of fear, disinterest, and tendency to violent behaviour.

DaCI trainings with highly qualified teachers are the antidote. Rhythm, live music in children’s dance classes, dancing and visual forms, psychomotor functions, Laban Analysis, and the art of making dances are all popular themes for widening horizons. The Munich dance educator Christine Hasting calls her seminar series “Food for Fantasy.” And for intelligence. The neuromuscular learning of child development has high value with the diversity of its elementary movement — rolling, crawling, hopping, and jumping. The malleability of the brain develops in the first year of life through non-verbal experiential learning, as the stages of evolution are lived through, from swimming to walking upright; the fine motor functions are developed by the economy of the more basic motor functions of torso and the spine. Leanore Ickstadt found improvisations to playfully imitate the movement patterns of animals. “You don’t have to learn any particular codex of movement to be able to dance. The experience of dance is important, the fun, the spontaneous laughter.” Her credo is “You have to develop the head, too. Children have to know what they are doing and why they do it.” She advocates that

dancers should be allowed to teach in schools. “Artists are effective examples, they are their own idealistic and disciplined living models.”

Experiencing JOY

Choreographer Nadja Raszewski studied with Ickstadt and she has developed 15 dance theatre pieces with Berlin school children in the course of music classes, and as extra-curricular activity, most of them at the Schweizerhof Elementary School. The pieces range from modern ‘Cinderellas,’ to revues, crazy fashion shows, and ‘Little Sister House,’ a parody of the “Big Brother” TV show. Schools, teachers, and parents call for Nadja as if she were the fire department when there are conflicts to solve. They understand that these theatre projects do an incredible amount for the social structure of the class, that they promote community, give the shy a chance, and also help teachers to perceive and experience children that have been written off in a completely different way. She fully accepts children as artistic personalities. Aggression is not condemned; rather it is “applied in dancing and channelled so that it isn’t destructive.” This strategy has led to “extremely emotional experiences” with students who have disturbed behaviours. “The most important point is the performance itself, the concentration, the applause — the recognition. They are of inestimable worth.” Already there are positive consequences of the Bastian Study. The Cultural Minister of the German federal state of Hessen, Karin Wolff, canceled reductions in the music budget for elementary schools. Bastian explains: “In Berlin, two more elementary schools with a focus on music education have been approved of.”

To the wide-spread slogan of politicians in Germany “Mut zur Bildung” (Courage to Educate), Bastian would like to add “Mut zur Musik” (Courage for Music). And, we could add, “Mut zum Tanz”— Courage to Dance.

Originally in *Ballet tanz*, May 2001, kindly reprinted with permission.

ELIZABETH LENSON, pictured as a five-year-old Amherst Ballet student, is now a Level Five dancer.



amherst ballet and the ROYAL ACADEMY OF DANCE SYLLABUS

A great combination to grow and dance with!

AMHERST BALLET students have been studying the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) Syllabus ever since the school's inception when founder Therese Brady Donohue chose it as the primary method of training. The commitment to continue with this syllabus is carried out by Director Catherine Fair. Having been trained throughout childhood and into her early teens in the RAD method, Fair elected to pursue her teacher training in the syllabus she found so inspiring as a young student. In 1998, after spending six years in a training program, she passed her examinations and became a Registered Teacher with the Academy.

Take a walk through the hallways at Amherst Ballet, and you will see photographs dating back to the 1970's of young dancers wearing a variety of the costumes required to perform dances from the syllabus. Tarantellas with tambourines, Russian dances performed in skirts adorned with colorful ribbons, dances from Brittany (a region in France). These dances have now been retired (a new syllabus was designed in

1992) but are part of the heritage that makes the RAD syllabus so unique.

When dance professionals in England in the early part of the

twentieth century explored the teaching of ballet, what they found worried them. Unqualified teachers with no real training were setting up schools and passing themselves off as professionals. At best, students gained no real knowledge of classical ballet technique; the worst cases resulted in damage to malleable young bodies. The solution was the formation of The Royal Academy of Dance, established in 1920 with the aim of developing and maintaining the highest possible standard of teaching. This remains the

objective today. While Britain has since required that all dance teachers hold a license, this is unfortunately a far cry from what happens in the United States. Working with an RAD Registered Teacher provides parents and students with the assurance that they are working with a professional who is qualified, has passed rigorous examinations, and is held accountable to his or her peers in the larger dance world. The RAD syllabus was designed through collaboration by a variety of professionals: dancers, choreographers, child development specialists and orthopedists. Even the music is original and was composed to specifically bring out the quality of movement desired for each exercise.

Designed to educate a broad range of students, the syllabus provides graded levels for students aged five through adult, which are developmentally appropriate for growing bodies and minds. Knowing

that your child can safely study dance is greatly reassuring. However, there are many additional reasons to study with the RAD. "Syllabus content is structured progressively to ensure that the level of technical expertise required is within the grasp of the student. A balanced carefully

planned program of study

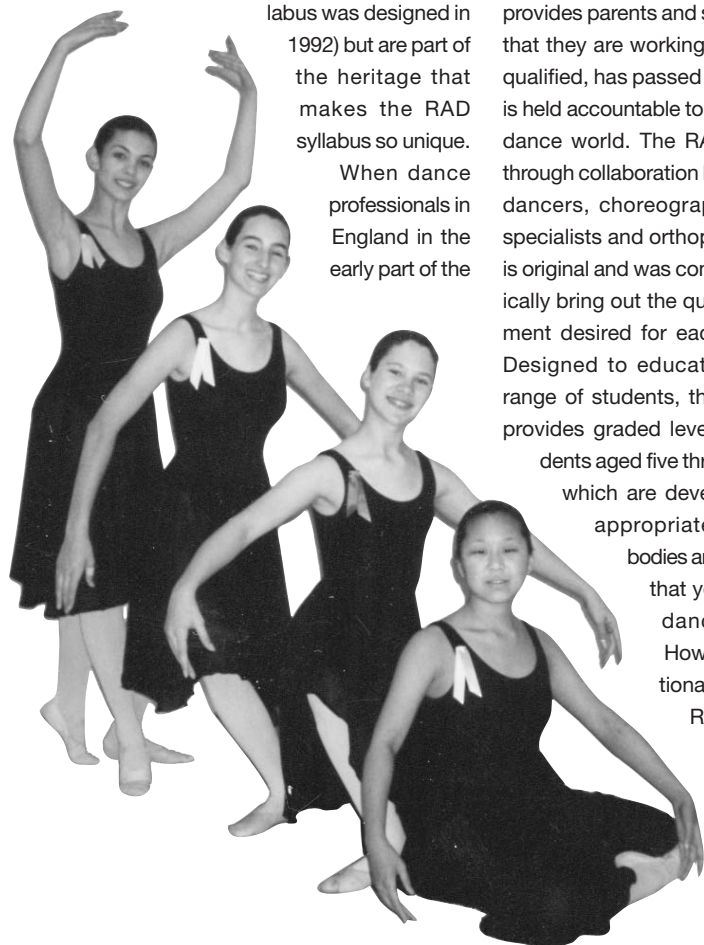
is provided by teachers who have a sound understanding of the principles of movement and fundamentals of Classical Ballet. Classes offered are enthusiastically and sympathetically taught with the student's needs as a central basis."

The Graded Examinations in Dance Syllabus (for ages five through twelve) which are taught in the Lower School at Amherst Ballet consist of three dance disciplines — Classical, Free Movement, and Character. Classical offers a thorough training in classical ballet as the foundation and is the most important part of the syllabus. Free Movement

incorporates movements in common with other dance styles such as modern dance, and allows students to explore the dynamics of movement outside of the confines of classical ballet. Important elements are use of body weight, gravity, swing and use of space. Character is the theatrical presentation of national dance using original ethnic dance and music, which has been freely adapted for the theater. The three styles in the syllabus—Hungarian, Russian, and Polish—were selected because of their historic importance in the development of the nineteenth century full-length classical ballets. Character is taught in a heeled shoe and stresses the teaching of musical concepts such as syncopation. The dancer incorporates the rhythms into the dance with stamps, claps and heel taps. Children generally find this to be great fun and develop a strong stage presence and proud carriage of the upper body.



1974 RAD CANDIDATES Judith Wolff, Sheila Donohue, Debbie Stein, Margaret Holland, and unknown (above left to right); **1998 RAD candidates** Melissa Chapman-Smith, Laurel Steinhauser, Melanie Lahti, and Meghan Oefinger (below left to right).



Dame Margot Fonteyn De Arias served as President of RAD for many years.

2003'S LEVEL 5 RAD CANDIDATES
from left to right front row: Rachel Bean, Montana Tanetta, Sarah Cycon, Julia Sillen; back row: Lauren Wilfong, Elizabeth Lenson, Elizabeth Duda, and Hannah Powers.

Examinations are an optional benefit for RAD students. The RAD stresses the importance of every student having an achievable goal. Examinations offer students an opportunity to show their understanding of their work and are open to all students studying the syllabus. Students must meet criteria set down for each level to enable them to confidently proceed to the next level. RAD examiners travel the world and examine children in approximately fifty-four countries. Students are judged on a variety of criteria such as technique, musicality and performance. They are required to perform a variety of solos including a classical dance and a character dance. While this can be somewhat intimidating for a young dancer, it provides tremendous motivation and usually results in accelerated improvement for those involved in preparing for exams. While the possibility exists that dancers may be unsuccessful in their exams, most students come through successfully, which results in a big boost in confidence. Written comments and marks from the examiner also provide the student and teacher with valuable feedback.

This year, Amherst Ballet offered the opportunity to Level Five Students to participate in exams. All students chose to accept the challenge and are now working hard for examinations scheduled for early April. The final rehearsal will be open to parents.

Visitors to Amherst Ballet on any given day will find students hard at work studying the RAD syllabus. Visit an RAD studio in South Africa, Mexico, or China, you'll find the same thing. There is a certain confidence in knowing that Amherst Ballet is part of something much bigger, a method of training so well esteemed that it transcends both culture and distance to unite students and teachers throughout the world who share the same goals.

We invite you to observe a class and find out more about the RAD. Or, for more information, you can visit the RAD website at www.rad.org.uk/

CF

HEY KIDS! If you visit the RAD website be sure to visit this special kids only feature: www.radacadabra.org/



THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF DANCE

by Sarah Cycon

LAST SUMMER my family took a trip to London. My mom and I went to visit the Royal Academy of Dance. We took a long bus ride along the River Thames and out to Bayersea. The building was beautiful. It was stone with vines running up the sides and there were flowers everywhere. You had to walk through a big courtyard to get to the building. The lobby had a gift shop selling ballet slippers, toe shoes, ballet syllabus books, music, ballet picture books, shirts and ballet bages. In the middle of the room was a circular receptionist desk with three people working at it. We waited until the lady that was going to show us around came and introduced herself. Her name was Tracy.

Exams were going on at the time so we couldn't see the bigger studios. I could hear the music coming from the studios and since the same music is used all over the world for specific RAD exercises I knew exactly what they were doing.

Tracy showed us the library that was filled with thousands of books on ballet history. She told us that there are RAD schools all around the world in such places as Australia, South Africa, South America, and all over Europe.

The one thing that I will remember most is the dressing rooms. They were huge. There were dressing rooms for boys and dressing room for girls. Everyone had there own locker, there were

two bathrooms in each one, showers and a water fountain. It was amazing.

There was a main building and a smaller one that had 4 or 5 studios. To get from one to the other you had to walk through a glass hallway overlooking the courtyard. There were staircases everywhere that seemed to be taking us to a new place every time.

The people were very nice and welcoming. I loved being there and was proud to be a member of the Royal Academy of Dance. I wish everyone in my Level 5 class good luck on their exams this spring. I am very curious as to what the exams are going to be like. GOOD LUCK LEVEL 5!!



Sarah Cycon is a 6th grade student at Swift River School in New Salem and a student at Amherst Ballet. She will be taking Level 5 RAD exams this year.

some thoughts about DANCE IMPROVISATION

ON THE FRIDAY before this newsletter's deadline, I agreed to write a short article on American modern dance improvisation. I felt a bit overwhelmed by the scope of the topic. So, I asked around to find out what some other dancers and choreographers thought was the essence of dance improvisation.

Words such as *immediacy*, *responsiveness*, *interaction*, *process*, and *exploration* came up more than once. Improvisation is "dancing in the present," "spontaneous choreography," "messing around," "making it up as you go along." To music writer Albert Murray, improvisation means choosing among possibilities at the moment in contrast to executing certainties determined beforehand.

Taking these comments, I thought I would ask specific questions to help me describe different ways to improvise. What kinds of possibilities can be explored? What aspects of movement get made up? In what kind of setting does this dancing occur and for what purpose? I perceived two broad categories of dance improvisation. The first category as improvisation for personal and choreographic exploration, teaching method and theory. The second category as improvisation which is presented as performance.

Improvisation as exploration has its roots in the first half of the 20th century. It was seen as creative expression which allowed for individual self-generating, creative experience as opposed to rote imitation. Early modern dance choreographers used improvisation to find movement because the vocabulary did not yet exist for making the new modern dance. Improvisation also took its place as something modern dance choreographers had to do in order to discover movement they would finally set. Improvisational practices continued in teaching children's dance and the psychological theories of Dance Therapy.

The second major category is dance improvisation as performance. In this period improvisation

often carried social and political meanings, experienced by dancers and spectators as subversive, anarchic, democratic, anti-tradition, and anti-authoritarian. The influence of theater and dance encouraged dramatic and psychological sources

for improvisation. Within these origins, and in the work of numerous artists who followed in subsequent decades, improvisational performances spanned a continuum from the simple presentation to highly structured dances.

Certain misunderstandings surround improvisation because there are so many different varieties. Spectators expecting one kind of improvisation and seeing another may be disappointed. Process-oriented improvisation tends to be praised for its beauty and purity, on the one hand, and criticized as "self-indulgent" by others for ignoring the obligation of performing for an audience. More structured pieces may be praised for their choreographic skill and content and their ability to perform and invent simultaneously.

The charge of self-indulgence often pops up in discussion of performance improvisation and in some cases this may be accurate. When dance improvisations are poorly performed critics often remark "that it's

more fun to do than to watch." Does anyone say the same of poorly constructed or performed set choreography? Do critics of jazz music complain that the problem with a composer or performer is that jazz is improvised?

Writing this broad sketch has whetted my appetite for knowing more about specific practices and ideas of particular teachers, choreographers and dance groups for whom improvisation has been of central importance. Let's find out more about this ubiquitous but little documented part of our dance history and current performance.

BK

Source: *American Dance Guild Newsletter* by
Cynthia J. Novack

"Improvisation means
choosing among
possibilities at the
moment in contrast to
executing certainties
determined
beforehand."

— Albert Murray



IMPORTANT DATES

NO CLASSES

Friday, March 21

MASTER CLASS

with Susan Brooker (see next page)
Saturday, March 29, 12:30-2:30

RAD EXAM

Wednesday April 2, 1:00
at Amherst Ballet

SMITH COLLEGE PERFORMANCE

April 3, 4, 5
Faculty Sam Kenny Performing

HAWLEY/MARTIN DANCE CO

April 11-13 Thornes
Faculty Katrina Hawley Performing

www.nationaldanceweek.org
April 25-May 2

APRIL VACATION

Friday, April 18 through Sunday,
April 27
Classes Resume Monday, April 28

ANNUAL MAY PERFORMANCE

May 3
Amherst Regional High School
6:30 Lower School Presentation
8:00 Amherst Ballet Theatre
Company Repertory

BOSTON BALLET'S ROMEO & JULIET

May 18
Check your mailbox for order form

PERFORMANCE TOUR TO MAINE

June 5-8. Depart Thurs, June 5;
Great Salt Bay Elementary School
Performances Fri, June 6;
Round Top Center for the Arts
Performance Sat, June 7;
Return home Sun, June 8.

SUMMER WORKSHOPS

THE VERY LONELY FIREFLY
July 7-11 *By invitation only*

RUSSIAN NATIONAL DANCE WKSP

July 14-25 (8-11 yr. olds)

TEEN TECHNIQUE WKSP

July 28-Aug 8 (10-16 yr. olds)

SCHOOL NOTES

- ◆ Amherst Ballet in collaboration with the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art is creating a new ballet based on the book *The Very Lonely Firefly*. Conceived by Therese Donohue, the piece will be choreographed by Catherine Fair and will have an original score by Karen Tarlow. The premiere will take place in early August at the Museum, and will be performed by students in the lower school. (More about this special project in the June issue of the newsletter).
- ◆ Thank you John Urschel for updating and enhancing our Web site. There is new material appearing all the time. Visit the site at www.amherstballet.org
- ◆ A belated thank you to faculty member and former alum Meg Starkweather who graciously spent part of last summer painting the downstairs studio. Hope you all noticed the new color.
- ◆ Barbara Kauff and members of MIFA spent two weeks in Europe as guests of the French Ministry of Culture seeking extraordinary new dance and theater to present at the Massachusetts International Festival of the Arts next Fall.
- ◆ Students Jamie Schoen and Lucy Segar have been accepted to the Boston Ballet Summer Program. Congratulations!!! (Lucy and Jamie, above right, backstage with the Moscow Ballet's *Great Russian Nutcracker* at the UMass Fine Arts Center, this past December.)
- ◆ Students Soleil Sonada, Ella Stocker and Libby Woodbridge participated in the recent ARHS production *Chicago*.
- ◆ Faculty members Jennifer Rockwell and Sam Kenney performed in February's Five College Dance Dept. concert at Mt. Holyoke College. (*Jennifer and Sam backstage, below right*)
- ◆ BOSTON BALLET'S ROMEO AND JULIET—Dancers! Be sure to look in your mailbox for order forms. We'll be getting a group rate for the Sunday Matinee, May 18. (*pictured middle right*)

NEXT: MAY/JUNE 2003 ISSUE

Students, faculty, parents, your writings (lengthy or pithy) on dance performance, teaching, improvisation, education, books, and your photos, drawings, graphics, etc., are encouraged and heartily welcomed throughout the year. Keep them coming!



healthy competition STARTS IN THE CLASSROOM

COMPETITION IS something you'll encounter many times in your dance career. Your attitude and understanding of it can help you grow, improve and even add to your enjoyment of dancing throughout your life.

Some people have a negative view of competition. They think that it turns people against each other, destroys friendships or causes distress. This does sometimes happen when competition turns to rivalry, but having a healthy attitude toward competition can inspire and motivate you to work harder and perform better.

Let's say you're in class with other students who in your eyes are extremely talented. These students may be more advanced in their technique, dancing with a seemingly effortless quality of movement that might make you feel jealous for a moment. Instead of giving up, thinking you will never attain that level of technique, apply yourself and continue working hard to improve. Tell yourself, "I like the challenge. I can do this—I want to

improve." Find ways to thrive on the difficulty of studying dance. Ask yourself, "How can I compete and keep my concentration and positive attitude in class? How can these classmates positively influence my work?" Notice which dancers you can learn from. In class, place yourself next to those who possess a kinetic sense of movement or a high energy level. Let them inspire you. Rise to their level of energy and apply it to your own style.

Make the competition exciting for yourself. For instance, before you attempt a pirouette, tell yourself that you will do one more turn than usual and concentrate on achieving the necessary balance. If you do this in every class, you will improve and eventually reach your goal. Competition is about striving for perfection and gaining excellence in your work; it's not about being "better" than others.

Keep in mind that it takes time to train your body and mind to work in better ways. Be patient and work hard. Through dedicated study and a commitment to continual improvement, you will use

your attributes to the highest level and achieve many of your goals. Be proud of your accomplishments—you made a commitment to reach a goal, worked hard to achieve it and you did! That's no small task. Find a way to be comfortable with and even proud of showing what you can do. Self-confidence—accepting yourself in body, mind and soul—is essential.

The challenge will be exhilarating if you think of it this way: every accomplishment in dance is significant. Each success you have, no matter how small, is a positive step in preparation for the career you aspire to. The thrill of competing and exhibiting your talents, reaching deep inside to reveal abilities you may have never thought you possessed, will lead you to the realization of how enjoyable and satisfying it is to dedicate yourself to dance. Competition is a great learning and motivational tool. Use it wisely.

KM and RMF

rudolf laban's EFFORT THEORY

Effort Theory is a system that gives students and observers a pathway into understanding the dynamics of movement and ways of communicating these discoveries. It is intended to bring energy, senses, feelings, thoughts and intuition to each facet of the technique class experience.

CURIOS FRIEND: What is effort?

ME: Effort is our body's outer expression of our inner world. Let me explain. As human beings we move through the world interacting with the environment as it poses challenges and obstacles. Effort is the way in which our body expresses its needs to move through the world. Dance educator Rudolf Laban generalized four basic challenges that are always present in the world. These four challenges are the basic motion factors that are found in the theories of physics. The first is the weight motion factor or gravity. We as human beings move in this world in constant relation to the pulls of gravity, and our body must react to gravity differently in different situations. The second motion factor is space or environment. The third motion factor is time, also known as the fourth dimension, and the fourth motion factor is flow.

CURIOS FRIEND: Anyone who has taken physics understands these basic motion factors, but how does this relate to effort?

ME: Laban named four effort factors that are parallel to the four motion factors. There is the weight factor, the space factor, the time factor, and the flow factor, but more importantly Laban saw each of these factors as continuums between two extremes. Thus, effort factors each have two effort elements, which are the extremes of the two continuums. One end of each continuum represents the indulging elements, which offer no resistance to the motion factors, and on the other end exist the condensing or fighting effort elements, which move against the motion factors. For example, when the body is reacting to the weight factor, it can either react to the motion factor of weight by being light and indulging in the force of gravity or by being strong and fighting against the force of gravity. Space also has two elements: indirect (indulging) and direct (condensing). Time has sustained (indulging) and quick (condensing), and flow has free (indulging) or bound (condensing).

CURIOS FRIEND: That makes sense, but let's go back to the inner world that you were talking about earlier.

ME: Effort is the outer manifestation of our inner needs. I can tell by the look on your face that I need

to explain further. Let me use an example. Have you ever seen someone who was running late and trying to gather all of their things before they left for the day? This person may dart around the apartment with quick time initiations expressing a sense of urgency. They have an inner need to get out of the house and on with their day. Now this shouldn't be confused with duration, because this person who is darting around the apartment may not save any time on the clock per se. Let me contrast this person with one who is not running late. This second person may walk around her apartment indulging in her time effort. There is no sense of urgency in her movements. She appears to the outer world to have all the time at her fingertips. Now if we spoke quantitatively both of these people may have spent the same duration of time getting out of the apartment, but the former expressed an inner need of urgency with her quick time effort and the latter was expressing an inner indulgence of sustained time effort with her attitude towards time.

CURIOS FRIEND: OK I am beginning to understand that the inner needs a person may have may be expressed in their effort life. I guess it is like their attitude towards the motion factor, but if there are four motion factors that are constantly acting on our body at once shouldn't we constantly have a combination of four effort elements?

ME: Well not exactly. You are right that single effort elements are rarely expressed alone; most people express themselves in combinations of two or three elements. It is understood that the more elements that exist in combination the more extreme the expression. Remember effort is the expression of our inner ideas and attitudes, and most people do not express every inner attitude they have to the outside world at once. Imagine if they did. There would be no mystery to human expression; we would understand everything. Instead, built

into Laban's theories of effort expression is the idea of combinations. A person can move with a combination of two, three or four effort elements. Rarely does one see all four effort combinations because of the extremity of expression. More commonly one sees two or three effort elements in combination. A combination of three effort elements is called a drive, and drives happen when a person must express their inner need to the outside world. Drives are the most communicative and exciting to watch. Combinations of two effort elements on the other hand are situated more closely to the inner attitude that they are expressing.

CURIOS FRIEND: What do you mean, "Situated more closely to the inner attitude that they are expressing?"

ME: Well states, as combinations of two efforts communicate the mood of a person rather than the action. For instance if a person exists in a mobile state (flow and time), he or she exhibits a mood of mobility as opposed to a stable state (weight and space), which exhibits an entirely different kind of mood. States are inner attitudes while drives are action or transformation oriented. Thus, not only does effort theory have a continuum within each effort element, it has a continuum from inner to outer that exists when looking at the possible combinations of effort.

CURIOS FRIEND: So let me see if I understand. Rudolf Laban developed a theory of expression in movement in which each individual person is constantly reacting to the four motion factors acting on the earth. To react to these motion factors one can either indulge and offer no resistance to them, or fight against them. Thus, a human being's expression of effort is an outer manifestation of his or her inner needs to react to these factors. Furthermore, these effort reactions exist in combinations that also affect the degree of expressiveness. When a person moves with a combination of two effort elements he or she is expressing a mood-like quality that reflects his or her inner attitudes, but when a person moves in a combination of three effort elements, he or she is making a stronger connection to the outside world by expressing action as opposed to mood.

KDH

KEEPING UP WITH

EMILY LIST...company dancer

DANCE IS SO MUCH a part of who Emily List is that it's impossible to think of her without it. It's in the way she walks down a street, runs through a park or moves across a stage. "You must be a dancer," people always say. And she smiles. Because she is—and has been since she was 4.

Emily, who carries her Degas dance bag everywhere she goes, is now a senior at Amherst Regional High School. She's been at Amherst Ballet for eight years and in the Company for five, and she's taken all types of dance. Ballet is her favorite. "Ballet combines strength with elegance," she says. "It's very demanding, but also very rewarding because all the strength, grace and emotion you put into it comes from inside of you."

Emily's favorite role was as a Wood Nymph in both performances of *The Magician's Nephew* at the UMass Fine Arts Center. "The role was technically demanding and so lively," she says. "It required so much energy." Her favorite performance overall was *An Evening with Johann Sebastian Bach* because of the interplay between dance and music: "I liked the fact that each of us represented a different part of the music."

Rehearsing for these shows and sharing mirrored and flower-bedecked dressing rooms with her friends in the company also have been memorable. And Emily has found that her relationships with Company friends continue long past the last dance together. "We've been brought closer by something we all love," she says, "and that helps us stay in touch."

Emily has made younger friends at Amherst Ballet too through her three years teaching primary classes in the teacher training program. She'll dance

with her students for the first time at their May performance. "I've loved working with the kids in my classes," she says, "and it's great to see them come back year after year. It makes you think that dance will become a special part of their lives too."

Dance also has been central to Emily's work in the theater, both with Amherst Community Theater (ACT) and Hampshire Shakespeare Co. (HSC). As Liza, the Darling family maid, in this year's ACT production of *Peter Pan*, Emily not only had a dance solo on the ground, "The Neverland Waltz," but one in the air, as she flew from one side of the stage to the other. She was lead dancer in last year's *The Secret Garden* as well and has appeared in six other ACT shows. In the past three years, she also has choreographed for HSC's Young Co. and for Shoestring Players and danced for both in a variety of Shakespearean roles.

Emily's other activities include ARHS theater and National Honor Society. Her hobbies are reading, writing and traveling, often in England.

Next year, she plans to attend a small liberal arts college where she hopes to major in theater and



British History. She'll dance too and, depending on the school, may audition for the dance company.

Wherever she goes, you can bet that her Degas dance bag will be on her shoulder and that dance will be in her step as she walks across campus—and in her heart, always.

"I will always," she says, "carry dance with me."

Emily was interviewed by Karen List

SUSAN BROOKER master class saturday, march 29

MS BROOKER received her formal training at the London College of Dance and Drama, the teacher's college of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing. She is a Fellow and Major Examiner of the Cecchetti Faculty of the I.S.T.D. She has taught for many years in Italy in various schools and finally as Director and Administrator of the Scuola di Danza Hamlyn di De Vita Lukens in Florence, Italian Organizer for the Cecchetti Society and Vice President of A.N.C.E.C. a National Society promoting the work of Cecchetti in Italy.



In 2001 Ms Brooker was invited to teach on the faculty of the School of Dance Connecticut and the University of Hartford, Hartt School Dance Division. A year later she became Director of the School of Dance Connecticut. Ms Brooker is a guest teacher in schools all over Italy as well as representing the Cecchetti Society in teaching seminars in Europe and Japan. She continues to guest teach in England, Italy and the U.S. and in 2001 was invited by Bruce Marks to teach at the Jacobs Pillow Dance Festival Summer Dance Program.

Students of Ms Brooker have won prestigious international ballet competitions, including the Prix di Lausanne and have been offered scholarships in schools such as the Royal Ballet School, English National Ballet School, School of the Hamburg Ballet, the Martha Graham School, Alvin Ailey, the School of the Hartford Ballet and many others. Many students have progressed to careers in companies in Europe and the U.S. including The Royal Ballet, English National Ballet and the Hartford Ballet.

Ms Brooker is a specialist in Ballet Pedagogy based in the Cecchetti method.

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**Congratulations,
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 for all your hard work!**



Love, Mom, Dad, and Ally