

2nd October 2007

Dear LUTSF

Please find enclosed my report on my conference attendance and presentation, made possible with support from the Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund (LUTSF).

The LUTSF funded travel to the 25th biennial conference of the International Council of Kinetography Laban/Labanotation (ICKL) held at the Escuela Nacional de Danza Clásica y Contemporánea in Mexico City from July 30th to August 4th, 2007. Attendance to the conference enabled me to fulfil two goals: firstly, to present my research paper *Hanya Holm's Jocose: Preserving the Work of the Dance Director* and secondly, to gain essential experience in my role as member of the ICKL Research Panel.

The conference was very successful and in terms of what I hoped to achieve, exceeded my expectations. Two sessions in particular have inspired development of my own practice and research in a new direction, specifically in response to changes in the UK 14-19 dance curriculum: Susan Gingrasso's *Scaffolding Language of Dance and Laban Movement Analysis Concepts to Teach Dance Technique*, and Tina Curran's *Developing Dance Literacy through Motif and Masterworks*. Additional highlights include debate (often heated!) and discussion of future developments of Labanotation and ICKL itself; catching up with former colleagues and establishing new relationships; recognition of the strength of the field, despite the various challenges it faces; and, of course, Mexico City with all its vibrancy and rich cultural heritage.

My research paper will be published as part of the ICKL conference proceedings and I intend to present my paper and share developments in the field with colleagues in the Faculty of Education at the Royal Academy of Dance as part of staff development. As part of my role on the ICKL Research Panel, I also plan to disseminate ideas and encourage further discussion with UK-based notation specialists.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all your support in making my journey possible.

Sincerely,

Shelly Saint-Smith

Report:

Attendance at the International Council of Kinetography Laban/Labanotation (ICKL) Conference, Mexico City, 2007

Shelly Saint-Smith

Background

The International Council of Kinetography Laban/Labanotation (ICKL) was founded in 1959 with the purpose of bringing together practitioners of Kinetography Laban/Labanotation, a system of movement and dance notation originated by Rudolf Laban. Lisa Ullmann, a former student of Laban, organized and chaired the very first ICKL conference that same year at the Art of Movement Studio in Addlestone, Surrey. The aims of ICKL are "to promote the use of the system; to increase research for its development and applications; to act as a deciding body with regard to the orthography and principles of the system; to support experimental projects in related areas; to encourage information exchange among centres and individuals using the system."

(<http://www.ickl.org/Pages/ickl01.html>) ICKL currently has approximately one-hundred members and Fellows who use and apply the system in a variety of ways. As such, the ICKL conference is the most appropriate international platform for the dissemination and development of Laban-based practice and research.

I was first introduced to the activities of ICKL while completing my Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in dance at the Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. The dance department hosted the 2001 ICKL conference and I observed, listened, and welcomed the discussion, hoping that one day I would have the confidence to present my own research. At that stage in my career, I had successfully completed my Labanotation teacher training and was in the throes of directing Hanya Holm's *Jocose* (1981-84) from Labanotation score in partial fulfillment of my MFA. I was oblivious at the time, but my work on *Jocose* was to become a long-term research project which would prove pivotal in establishing a relationship with ICKL.

In April 2002 I was awarded a grant by the Dance Preservation Fund of the Dance Notation Bureau Extension to undertake a project to create an addendum to the original score of *Jocose*, the aim of which was to provide additional information, score corrections and notes using computer software for Labanotation to benefit further reconstructions/restagings/revivals of the work from score. In 2003 the project developed in collaboration with the Dance Notation Bureau, which had received funding to enable transcription of the *Jocose* score into LabanWriter for continued preservation. LabanWriter is a computer software program for Labanotation, enabling the user to generate computerised notation scores to benefit teaching and professional practice. This collaboration allowed for the entire score to be digitised in a newly revised and updated form, incorporating the corrections and score notes from my 2001 reconstruction as well as those of Sandra Aberkals, who reconstructed the work prior to 2001. The focus of the addendum shifted and it became a supplement to the score with detailed information in relation to the movement style and interpretation, as well as alternative movement possibilities where appropriate.

I attended the ICKL conference again at Laban, London in 2005 under my remit as Lecturer in Dance Studies at the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) and was invited to apply for Fellowship and membership of the ICKL Research Panel. As an ICKL Fellow and Research Panel member, I knew that it was essential that I submit a proposal for presentation of my work on *Jocose* for the next conference to further my development in academia, as well as in the Labanotation field, and in 2006 my paper "Hanya Holm's *Jocose*: Preserving the Work of the Dance Director" was accepted for the 2007 conference in Mexico City. My paper draws upon the *Jocose* project to explore the ways in which dance directors may use a score addendum to document their interpretation of a dance work and therefore record the evolution of a dance work without changing the original score. My attendance and participation at ICKL was made possible by the generosity of the Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund and staff development funding awarded by the RAD.

The Conference

The conference was hosted by the Escuela Nacional de Danza Clásica y Contemporánea (ENDCC), Mexico's national training centre for dance, and this was the first ICKL conference to be held in Central and Latin America. From July 30th to August 4th the Centre buzzed with 46 attendees representing nine countries; I was the sole representative for the UK. The six days comprised 23 sessions which ranged from presentations of research papers to practical workshops to technical sessions exploring theoretical issues in Labanotation. The topic areas included Labanotation, Motif Notation and Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) and their application within education, performance, choreography, documentation and reconstruction, dance and disability and ICT.

In addition to attending sessions and presenting my research paper, I taught an introductory session to Labanotation for those attendees from a Motif or LMA background who were not familiar with the fundamentals of Labanotation. I also contributed to Fellows meetings and gained valuable experience in chairing technical sessions as part of my responsibilities as a member of the Research Panel. Lastly, I found time to explore the City – an extraordinary place full of contrasts, colour, fascinating history and people who are proud of their cultural heritage – and time to socialise and sample traditional Mexican food and tequila!

Outcomes

My journey to the ICKL conference fulfilled three main objectives:

- **Presentation of research**
This was my first formal presentation of my research. My paper was received well by a supportive audience and feedback was encouraging, facilitating valuable discussion which provided me with ideas for further avenues of exploration. The experience has given me tremendous confidence in my research capability and presentation skills.
- **To serve my first term on the ICKL Research Panel**
Attendance at the conference enabled me to work closely with the Chair of the Research Panel to learn the formal processes involved in chairing technical sessions, recording discussion points and formulating reports. This experience will prove valuable for the remainder of my term on the Research Panel and the possibility of co-chairing the panel at the next ICKL conference.
- **To engage in international dialogue with experts in my field**
Discussions with colleagues took place as part of the conference, through mealtimes and during social events – in fact whenever possible! The opportunity to share experiences, ideas, research and the challenges within the field on such a deep level is rare. I left the conference feeling inspired, comforted and invigorated by the determination of individuals from different parts of the world to develop and secure the future of notation. This is particularly apt in light of the removal of notation from the new GCE AS and A Level Dance specification here in the UK.

Since the conference I have presented a lecture demonstration on the value of notation in dance education as part of the RAD Faculty of Education's recent conference *Dance Futures: 14-19 Educational Reform*. This has provided additional opportunities to promote the value of notation studies, which I am pursuing with the support of the RAD.

Thank you LUTSF.