

## REPORT TO THE LUTSF "INTEGRATED MOVEMENTS" AT ENCONTRO LABAN 2002

"Encontro" literally means encounter; and I have never been so aware of its significance as when I was caught up in the vibrant energy created by the coming together of people who apply Laban's human movement analysis. Essential truths about understanding human beings lay like a sparkling jewel at the meeting place of many different paths; and the ways we had all reached it ran through many disciplines. That to me was the joy and strength of Encontro Laban.

Rio is itself an expression of this spirit. Unconcernedly multiethnic, the rich and poor also live close to each other. I rode in the buses on weekdays, and walked the crowded streets to revel in Art Nouveau buildings surviving among the brutal concrete cubes - but not on Sundays when few people were about. "Don't wear jewellery" I was told. Friends saw one home in a taxi, and then even into the hotel door, for at the next hotel guests had had their necklaces and earrings torn off by thieves on the very steps. But I met unfailing kindness from the Cariocas - Rio residents - who would even rush off to get an English-speaker if they did not understand.

On each of four days, the Conference Papers were read; three to the hour and a half session. At the same time three separate Practical Workshops were being held. This was the only way that the amazing Regina Miranda and her team could organise so many entries to the Conference, but it made choosing what to go to very difficult. I am awaiting a knee operation, so was unable to take part in the practicals, except to observe one or two of particular subject interest: Ellen Goldman's on "The Axis Scale for Everyday Problem Solving"; and "Evolutionary Movement and Yoga", given by Marcia Monroe. But I attended nearly all the Papers given in the Lecture Theatre.

This was a long narrow, old-cinema style room, with rows of innovative leather seats, slung on straps that could make a lovely concert of squeaks, given the restlessness attendant on a less-than-absorbing speech. The only lighting for the speakers was directly overhead, the microphone covered the rest of the face, and the air-conditioning had either stuffy or freezing as its options. The headphones for your simultaneous translations, English/Portuguese, conveyed more or less of the meaning, according to the talents and intonation of the translator. You will not be surprised to hear that one's attention sometimes did wander from a few Papers written in academic-speak!

My own paper, "Integrated Movements (Posture-Gesture-Mergers): their place in the development of our species", was programmed for the Saturday, and I was grouped on the platform with Ellen Goldman and Martha Eddy, two well-known teachers whom, I felt, at least ensured an audience for my paper, and its 15 minutes of fame! Our panel title was "Communication", and we did what we could to improve the environment to that end. We got together, organised the platform table and the lectern to our own taste, and spoke to the translators about any special words in our scripts. I thought I had been quite clear about what signals I would give the technician - who would control my PowerPoint presentation from afar. This was an error. But although the illustrations were unnecessarily hurried, I was told that they were still clearly a help to the audience's understanding of my presentation. I tried not to resent the hours I had spent on taking a special PowerPoint course and on perfecting the animated slides!

But before this we, the trio of nervously waiting presenters, had an experience coming which we shared with a delighted and full theatre. The amazing Virginia Reed, President of the Laban-Bartenieff Institute of Movement, was giving her keynote speech: "Therapist as Jester; paradox or paradigm?" Virginia stands a handsome, blond, slim and flexible 6 foot 2, and works for, among others, JP Morgan Chase, one of the most formal organisations in New York. So who was this person who appeared on the platform; this narrowed, apologetic, constantly-smiling woman in a hairnet, droopy skirt and with a plastic bag dangling from her arm? And then, who was this thug in a tracksuit, hooded head and feet-apart door-plane posture, mouthing obscenities, clutching at the groin, and gesturing with gun-shaped hands? Two illustrations of Virginia's alter egos, manifesting as clown and acute observer of human nature expressed in movement. Serious play is the apogee of group interaction, was her message. She employs her created repertoire of characters as jesters, using them to comment (as she speaks to audiences from commerce and college) without offence; as marginalised characters pointing to the accepted absurdities in life and in society.

But not at Morgan Chase, her employers with the up-tight culture - until September 11th last year. She works there on a Wednesday, and so escaped death on the Tuesday. She and many other movement therapists and counsellors were at Ground Zero for days on end, listening, teaching people whose culture was otherwise, how to touch and be comforted; counselling the counsellors themselves. She and others taught workers the words to express the dimensions of their feelings, how to breathe and gain some respite from the awfulness. Hearing this speech was a highlight for me: the most moving expression of one of the themes of the Conference. I put that theme thus: "Movement awareness, consciousness of our body and what it can do, is the starting point. Our body is our reality, and we have forgotten how important it is."

So this is what we, in the very next session, had to follow! My paper is about our archeologically-defined stages of human development; and how human movement behaviour is equally as visible, and as capable of interpretation, as are bones and stones. As all that week I had carried about my increasingly-tatty presentation notes, I had realised that I had the answer to one of the questions that had brought me to Rio. Yes, my work was original, was relevant, and it tied in well with both applied and academic work based on Laban's human movement analysis. This was a mighty relief! I noted down every day in my diary the fascinating connections I could make here in Rio with the work other people are doing.

As I spoke (in my presentation) about how Postural and Gestural movements alone can be culturally specific rather than universal, I could illustrate this by the dance-lecture of Ciane Fernandes. She had learnt Indian Classical Dance in a very short time - compared to the other students - through being able to analyse its pathways, axes, movement-qualities and so on. She illustrated that the importance of the pelvic area in both Indian and Brazilian culture was expressed in very different ways. Because it is the centre of the dance, for Indians it must be held, controlled in bound flow; for Brazilians its importance is expressed in being the initiating area for all samba-like movements, free-flowing and indirect.

As I went on and explained how Integrated Movement patterns express an aspect of our authentic personality, I could relate it to Jessica Berson's "Search for Authenticity" paper. She had looked for an intellectual, historical and logical definition of personal authenticity; I could offer an instant, real and visual definition, in Integrated Movement.

As I explained Warren Lamb's discovery of the connection between Integrated Movement patterns and the problem-solving or decision-making process, it tied in with Ellen Goldman's "Everyday Problem Solving" workshop, using the spoken meanings of the movements around the eight axis scales.

I ran through the stages of human development, as discovered by archaeologists and anthropologists. Maria Mommenhson, in discussing the relationship of the dancer's body visible to the audience, and what it communicates, cites the hand, with its opposition of thumb to palm and fingers, as a key evolutionary step, prerequisite to being human. How I agreed with her. It is our link to our common ancestry with the other great apes, yet later we used our hands to create tools (rather than just using found objects as apes still do): a defining human trait. Walking, talking, control of fire, elimination of each other, and living in groups supporting each other, completed my list of human characteristics.

All Laban Movement Analysts (and many of those present had achieved this distinction) are familiar with Effort Actions and Shaping in Planes. The part of my argument that equates the former with the functions of the Left half of the brain, and the latter with the Right half, I illustrated with a text taken directly from a learned book on language development. This makes an unmistakable connection between language and its precursor of movement; and states that separate development of the two hemispheres was essential for the neurological changes necessary for language to take place. Interestingly, Virginia Reed, in her speech, said that in her efforts to understand human beings she had taken degrees in Psychology and Anthropology. If only I had too!

Telling myself that if this was meant to happen it would, in the last moments of Conference farewells I thrust myself in her way, and told her of my Paper and my theory. She was swished away into the crowd after a polite reply; but later found me and said how interested she was in my subject, and could I send her my paper, and the book I have written on the subject. Yes, Virginia, I could!

In the Paper I traced our Right Brain's differences to the stimulus of our 3 million-year forest-dwelling environment, where the use of our head-situated distance senses used movement in the planes to locate distant dangers. Change of environment from Forest to Savannah meant behavioural and consequent neural changes. We now had a wider horizon to scan; new food-animals to weigh up as either danger or sustenance; further distances to travel to. All this added up to the further development of Shaping movements now of the whole body; these could be Integrated Movements now we were up on our feet and walking, able to merge Gesture and Posture. This movement stimulus enabled the necessary separate development of Right-Brain functions, and arguably was arrived at within the classic Darwinian evolutionary process.

Once we were on our feet, other actions became possible. We now had both hands free for tool making and carrying. Our "handedness" in turn stimulated the Left-Brain, and led inevitably to its typical separate functions, and the consequent development of speech. Speech conveys ideas; now our species really took off.

All this was put out of my mind when on Friday night we were taken to a reception held in a typical Carioca place. That is to say, in 1904 the rich man who had married an Italian Princess, an Opera singer, had built her an Italian Palace, with many marble-walled and patterned parquet floored rooms, set around a swimming pool. All this in the style of ancient Rome... There was exquisite food and wine, and briefly, the spotlight on the Christos on Botofago peak loomed through the mists above us. And the dancers of Regina Miranda's Centro Laban do Rio all gave their performances in those palace reception rooms. But afterwards, I thought, what clearer illustration could there be of the communication of movement, the exquisite awareness and control of body, the expression of the deepest emotions and most varied relationships of which human beings are capable?

It also brought me back to the problem of the Favelas - shanty-towns - where Renate Neves and Maria Duchesne (The Art of Movement Integrating People) have found a means to promote citizenship practices; strengthening individual identity, promoting social inclusion through dance, education and the arts. The performances these children achieved were remarkable, and give hope that the voice of the Favela communities will be heard.

And what an example Encontro Laban was, of my own conclusions about Integrated Movement Patterns. I suggest that just as hunter-gatherer groups are known always to share their necessities of food, shelter and companionship, so they must have shared their individual skills, maximising the group's combined energies. Tool-making, leather preparation, fire-kindling and so on, were individuals' skills, shared to achieve common survival. Individual characteristics, what we would call personality, and Warren Lamb would call problem-solving styles, would thus become observable to every member of the group. Individuals would be valued for their varied personalities, and the predictability of their behaviour would become part of the social glue of the group, essential to its survival. Working together harmoniously as a team is the highest achievement of human beings. Here in Rio, I saw it at its best.

I return home to follow up the contacts I made, and find my way towards an M.A., towards writing a popular version of my academic book - "Human Being" - and a television series on human movement and anthropology. Articles in Movement and Dance and the Action Profile Practitioners Magazine are already commissioned. I am available for lectures and presentations! I have been immensely encouraged by the academic and scientific, as well as the dancers' reception of my Paper, and have to thank the LUTSF for helping me to go to Rio, which was a privilege and a pleasure.