



Paul Liburd and Robert Cohan - photo by © Pari Naderi

Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund.

Sir Robert Cohan CBE Tribute:

I count myself very fortunate; I first had the honour of meeting Bob in my early teens at the Harehills Middle School in Leeds, where I started my first dance steps.

Bob came to the school as a guest of Darshan Singh Bhuller, also a former pupil of Harehills who went on to dance with London Contemporary Dance Theatre, a company I would too be invited to join in later years.

I entered London Contemporary Dance School at the age of 16 and immersed myself into my training, having a blinding faculty to teach and nurture me - Jane Dudley, Juliet Fisher, Nina Fonaroff, Ronnie Emblen, Brenda Last, Peter Connell to name a few; all these wonderful people in Bob's vision.

Daily, as I peeped through the window of studio 8 at the Place watching the company rehearsing and creating work with Bob (when they were not on tour) inspired me to be in there one day.

Towards the end of my first year at LCDS, Bob choreographed a new solo on me called *Under Summer* with music by Debussy which was the 1987 Great Britain entry to the Eurovision Young Dancer of the Year. At 17-18yrs old to have a solo made on me by Robert Cohan was a complete dream, a daunting but also thrilling moment, having the

chance to work with the legendary creator so closely at such a young age. This has stayed with me my whole dancing life. As a teacher, leader, choreographer and creator his ways with words were pure magic, very little said sometimes but always clear, creating imagery and an environment to inspire feelings and a connection to the movement and space.

I went onto dance with LCDDT for 5yrs dancing some of the company works *Class, Songs Lamentations and Praises* and *Forest*. Bob created roles on me in *Crescendo, Stone Garden* and *The Phantasmagoria* whilst a member of the company and under his direction. Over the next 18yrs I danced with Rambert Dance Company and Scottish Ballet.

On returning to London, I rekindled my work with Bob, demonstrating his teaching methods for research at Middlesex University with former dancers and colleagues from LCDDT, Professor Christopher Bannerman and Associate Professor Anne Donnelly (nee Went) in order to document his work on numerous occasions both in London and Beijing. I also had the pleasure of teaching Graham based technique on the inaugural Cohan Collective in conjunction with Yorke Dance.

In 2018 Bob wrote my recommendation letter to Janet Eilber, Artistic Director of the Martha Graham Company, allowing my time to observe the company and school in New York, part of my CPD also made possible by Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund and Rambert School.

I am currently teaching Graham based technique at Rambert school and every year I show my new first year students a film of Bob teaching a master class (circa 1975) with him speaking so eloquently about dance, performance and training. His clear words put his teaching methods in context, and I believe are perfect for my new students to hear, with a richness that I cannot put into words.

In 2018 I had the pleasure of working with Bob again in a performing capacity dancing in the Elixir Festival at Sadlers Wells in the re-imagining of Bob's iconic work *Forest* back on stage with LCDDT alumni Kenneth Tharp, Christopher Bannerman, Anne Went and Linda Gibbs alongside former dancers of NYDC.

The whole concept of the project was to pass-on and bequeath knowledge of movement and dance performance. Being back in the studio and on stage Bob never ceased to amaze with, what I call magic, the way he creates an atmosphere.

I am truly thankful for the impact he made on my life as a young dancer, nurturing my path with care, honesty and love, also being a mentor and dear friend at the opposite end of my career/journey.

Bob, you created a dance family here in the UK and globally that I hope will continue to do you proud.

Respect and gratitude always Sir Bob.
Love Paul xx



Photo by Robert McFadzean © RCS



Photo by Chris Nash

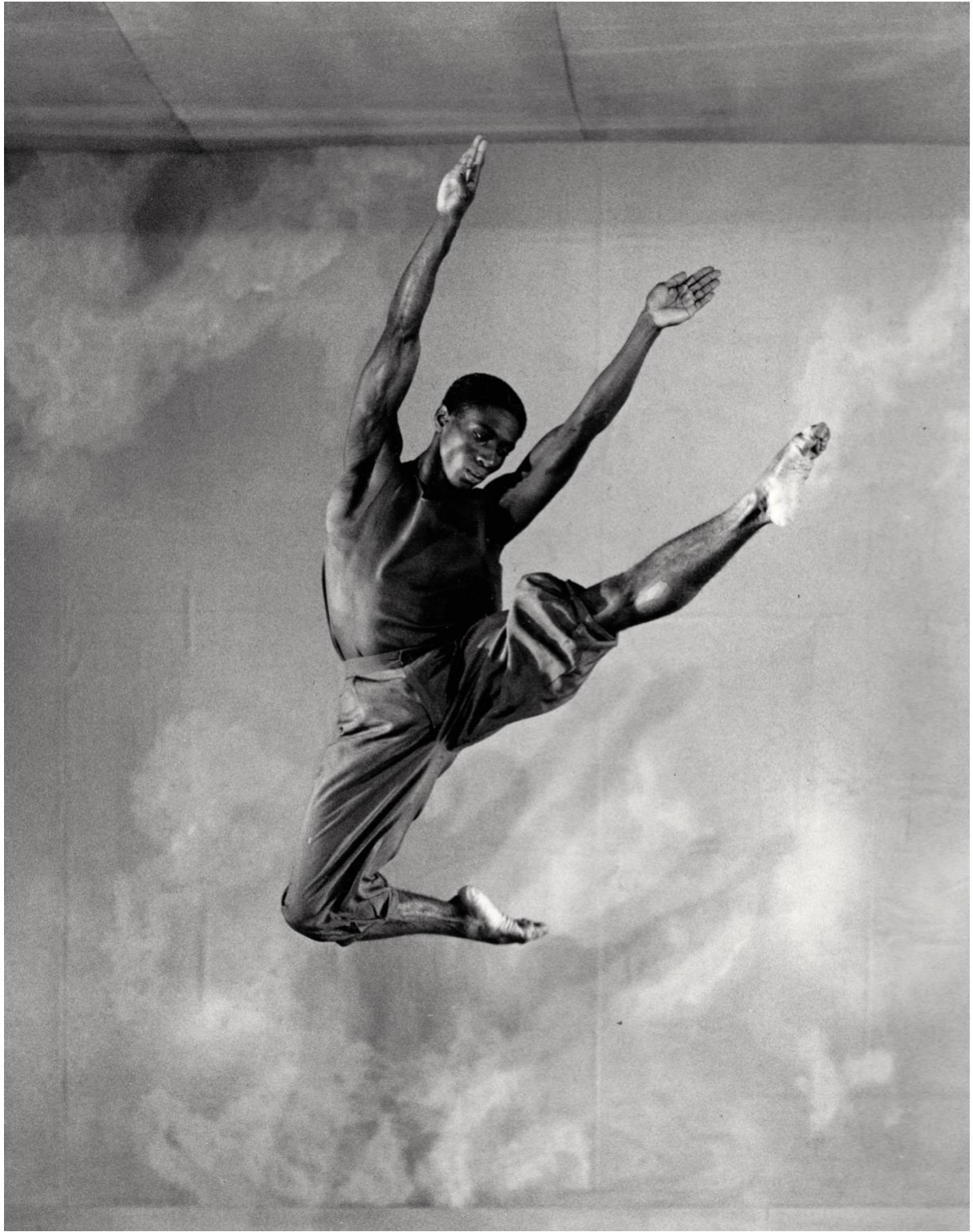


Photo by Bill Cooper 1988 LCDT