

LABart Danceformance Ritual: Dancers in the Cube

An approach to develop movement rituals through LMA-material linking occidental and oriental gesture transcending the polarities to create a meaningful „third“.

In 2006, Elisita Smailus (CMA, Berlin 1997) and Nunzia Tirelli (CMA, Milano 2004) met in Southern Switzerland (Ticino) and decided to promote their Laban/Bartenieff knowledge in this Italian speaking part of the world.

September 2008 they managed to organize a first Laban Event on the Monte Verità and in this way actively took part in the Global Laban Celebration Year which was commemorating Laban's work all over the world 50 years after his death in 1958.

In the same year, they started conducting a Basic Training Program in Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analysis taught in Italian language (LaBart) which consists of five weekend modules over a year. The second LaBart program took place in 2009. At the moment a third one is successfully running. Slowly but surely the LMA family is growing.

2008 was also crucial for both because shortly after the Laban Event on the Monte Verità they both participated in the October Conference at LABAN Centre, London. 2009 saw them again in London, this time for a "Summer Intensive" (Living Architecture). 2010 they will attend a next "Summer Intensive" (Dynamic Body) which also is part of the new Specialisation Program in Choreological Studies, starting with this course and proceeding for the following three years. Both are interested in participating in this study to enrich their LMA-based working material.

The second Laban Event in Ticino was in September 2009 and contained the essentials of their "Living Architecture"-experience. The third Laban Event will be in September 2010 and will again contain the essentials of their "Dynamic Body"-experience, enriching the content of the Basic LaBart training course.

In this way, a strong link across Europe from LaBart Switzerland to LABAN London has already been established and is well on its way. This is also the source for the planned experimental workshop LABart Danceformance Ritual: Dancers in the Cube.

Laban was inspired by Plato's cosmology (Timaeus, 350 B.C.) and developed his vision of a bodily and philosophical relationship of sacred geometry in resonance and correspondence to cosmic movement. As Laban points out the second fact of space-movement in "Choreutic" (1966, p. 26): *"Our body is the mirror through which we become aware of ever-circling motions in the universe with their polygonal rhythms. Polygons are circles in which there is spatial rhythm, as distinct from time rhythm."* This also metaphysical approach in Laban's Space Harmony interests the two Certified Movement Analysts from Switzerland in their research.

It is also to preserve the "spiritual dimension" in Laban's work that Valerie Preston-Dunlop created the "Choreutic Meditation" to embody sacred dimensions in movement. The movement sequence to which Elisita and Nunzia have been introduced in 2008 and 2009 at LABAN London will be taught as a base during the workshop.

The introductive meditative walk marks the square base of a cube creating a “shared sacred space” between two movers. It integrates the four cardinal directions in space (N-E-S-W) and develops into a meaningful dimensional cross-sequence linking polarities.

The vertical dimension links the material with the spiritual, the more solid matter with the more ephemeral. The horizontal dimension symbolizes an opening and enclosing attitude towards the world, the listening to the Self and the Other. The sagittal dimension is in relation to temporality in reverence to the past and looking forward into the future. So it is Laban’s metaphysics which brings us to sacred and spiritual dimensions in the octahedral dimensional cross: lifting up beyond oneself, going down through one’s centre connecting to the earth, closing away from what does not fit and opening out to the world, retreating back honouring the past, advancing toward whatever is lying in front of us, searching the unified whole.

Furthermore, the idea is to continue this meditative beginning by going deeper into the logics of 3D-progression of Space Harmony principles using the cubic structure to integrate dimensional (octahedral), diametral (icosahedral) as well as diagonal movement in a quite “labanese” way but using a ritualistic structure and attitude to create a danceformance ritual in the form of a structured improvisation.

A common interest of both Nunzia and Elisita has been the work with ritual gesture in the form of Mudras in Yoga Meditation and South Indian Temple Dance respectively. In this work the hands are seen as energetic and in connection to the Chakras (energy centres in the body) but also activating a large neurological part in the brain. The dimensional scale will be using a Mudra-type gesture and mainly two Mudras from the Indian dance will be used to support the work on the diagonal scale to enhance the opening and closing feeling of this most complex three-dimensional moving executed in a creative, individual way, using the figure eight and changing fronts.

The planar, i.e. diametral movement will be in a more kinespheric way with curvilinear tracing through the primary gestures of gathering and scattering using the arms as “messengers of the heart”. The ritual idea of offering and receiving is alivened.

Throughout the ritual, especially in the dimensional and diagonal part, moving will be supported ideally by an organic breathing in correspondence to the developmental patterns of breath and navel radiation, i.e. inhaling on extension and exhaling on condensing. Ritual quality of the danceformance is supported by moving mainly in a meditational flow going toward “spell drive” (favouring the indulging attitude) and hereby creating a magic presence oscillating to short full drive moments when the Time-factor starts to come in.

In this danceformance ritual we thus try to establish the concept of Laban which is stated in the fifth fact of space-movement (Choreutic, 1966, p. 54):

“Each bodily movement is embedded in a chain of infinite happenings from which we distinguish only the immediate preceding steps and, occasionally, those which immediately follow. In every trace-form, created by the body, both infinity and eternity are hidden. Sometimes the veil seems to be lifted for an instant.

Inspiration, clairvoyance, and a heightened awareness can thrive from this fissure in the part of the world which we see as eternity. Thus bodily actions and trace forms become a means of producing moments of ecstasy or clairvoyant concentration. We should never forget that every gesture and action of our body is a deeply rooted mystery and not a mere outward function or trick, as many people regard it in modern times. It was thus that tumbling or standing on the head could once have been a sacred play.”

Last but not least, the idea of dance ritual is to get calmly grounded and organized through a harmonic structure of bodily movement to enable a sense of community in uneasy, chaotic times throughout the world:

So let us come together, get rooted and take off on a holistic flight.... to create a meaningful “third”.

Contact:

Elisita Smailus
CH-6927 Agra
+4179/413 82 56
labart58@gmail.com
www.danceformance-labart.ch

Nunzia Tirelli
CH-6850 Mendrisio
+4176/367 54 08
labart58@yahoo.it
www.nunziatirelli.ch