

# Choreography: a focus on facilitation - Dr Joanne Butterworth and Lucy Nicholson

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**UCLanDANCE, Media Factory, Preston Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2019**

## **Introduction**

This was the fifth study day organized by the Northern Network of the Laban Guild for Movement and Dance. The purpose of these study days is to encourage the use of Laban's principles in enhancing practice and performance by dancers, actors and students in a range of contexts.

Professor Jo Butterworth and Lucy Nicholson led investigations into creative and choreographic processes and practice, and reflections on how participants might use these to develop their own dance making, choreography and performance. Ten students and five practitioners attended - the students included four first years from UCLan's BA (Hons) Dance Performance and Teaching, four postgraduate students from China studying on the University of Edinburgh's MSc in Dance Science in Education, and a part-time PhD student at Salford University. The practitioners included community dance facilitators from Cumbria, Lancashire and Cheshire, and a dance lecturer from UCLan.

## **Session 1: Waking the Body**

Lucy taught a warming class to wake and still the body, bring it into relationship with space and others as well as provide points of connection for efficiency and integration. The class was suitable for those with some dance experience and was appropriate for all levels.

Jo Butterworth's two sessions were practice-based investigations into her Didactic-Democratic Spectrum, which was designed as a new paradigm for the teaching and learning of choreography in the tertiary sector. We explored different interrelationships of artistic and social processes that

occur between choreographer and dancer(s) within five differing dance-making approaches: Choreographer as expert - Dancer as instrument; Choreographer as author - Dancer as interpreter; Choreographer as pilot - Dancer as contributor; Choreographer as facilitator - Dancer as creator; Choreographer as collaborator - Dancer as co-owner.

## **Session 2: Devising**

After introducing the model, the participants considered which process had been used by Lucy (Choreographer as pilot - Dancer as contributor and Choreographer as facilitator - Dancer as creator). The participants then created a sentence of their favourite movements using their bodies as instruments. Then, working in pairs, each took the role of choreographer and taught their sentence to their partner. They continued working on their sentences to create loops using different processes from the model and then shared them with the group. They then worked on leading and



following using 'flocking', a process by which leadership of the whole group passed around, depending on who was at the front of the group. Each dancer created movements and new leaders emerged following changes of direction and focus. The dancers had to be very aware of other members of the group and the material emerged as the process continued, the longer the better.



### **Session 3: Facilitation.**

Jo introduced the ideas from Larry Larrinder and the dancers improvised travelling movements on their own. She also called this 'doodling'. They then worked in groups using a range of processes from the model as they worked to create a short dance which were then shared with the group. Following this there was discussion of how the model had been used.

Useful references from the sessions are:

Nicholson, Lucy (2008) 'Return to the body: An approach to working with those in disconnect' in <http://dancercitizen.org/issue-8/lucy-nicholson/>

Butterworth, Jo (2018) 'Too Many Cooks? A Framework for Dance Making and Devising' in *Contemporary Choreography: a critical reader*, edited by Jo Butterworth and Liesbeth Wildschut, London: Taylor and Francis.

### **Evaluation**

14 evaluation forms were completed. The overall day and sessions were rated as good or excellent. All participants felt that they would be able to use what they have learned in future study or practice and they found the event relevant to their experience even though they ranged from first year students to lecturers. UCLanDance in Preston was an appropriate venue which was easy to get to and although transport was challenging for one the Sunday proved to be a convenient date. Two would have liked more pre-course information, although there were details on the Eventbrite site; more information could have been shared on Facebook. Only one tutor and one student were members of the Guild but the majority had not heard of the Laban Guild though all had some experience of Laban's principles. All participants asked to be informed of future study days.

### **Outcomes**

Several outcomes were stated. Firstly all the participants were encouraged to join the Guild. It was decided that we should set up a Facebook network group so that conversations could continue; Lucie Sykes offered to set this up - participants from this event and earlier events in the North (Carlisle, Leeds and Ayr) would be invited to join.

The Edinburgh students asked for contact to be made with Wendy Timmons their Course Director so that a further study could be arranged in Edinburgh in 2020.

Contact will be made with Cheshire Dance with a view to a future study day.

The next Northern event is being planned for Leeds in March 2020; Lucie Sykes and Darren Royston would be helping to organise this.