

choreographer being appointed to such a position - when presented by a proposal to organize a dancers congress, was delighted by the idea. This congress took place in 1926 at Magdeburg, where a large theatre exhibition was organized. It was the first of such international "Olympiads of Dance", that were held in 1928 in Essen and in 1930 in Munich.

"One of the successful repercussions of this... was that I was able ... to get... permission for the publication of both scores in Laban's notation and the journal 'Schrifttanz' by the 'Universal Edition'". The first issue (July 1928) carried an article by von Laban about "The Basic Principles of Movement Notation". The eminent critic Fritz Bohme contributed "A Chapter from the History of Choreography" and another noted critic, Hans Brandenburg wrote about "Dancewriting and the Stage". Lizzie Maudrik contributed an article about "Dancewriting and Ballet", and it concluded with "New Basic Features of Music Theory as a Result of Dancewriting Research".

Further issues dealt with the problems of dance-notation and with wider issues of the aesthetics of dance. The journal became a forum for many modern dance artists and theoreticians, thus offering an insider's portrait of the modern dance movement.

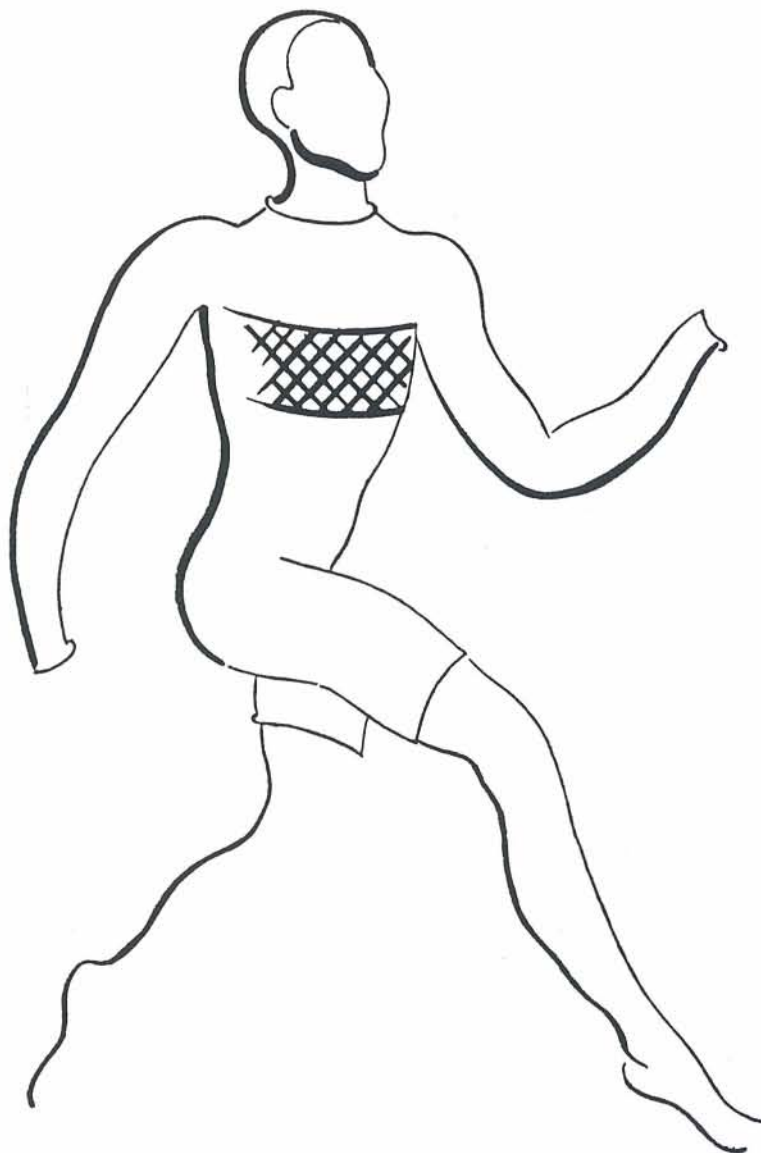
Nowadays, when European dance-theatre has renewed interest in dance expression, when again, as in the 1920s, not just technique but personal expression and creation is demanded of dancers and the total division between creator and performer is waning, the sources and theories of expressionist dance have become topical again.

Likewise, the proliferation of movement-notation methods and the development of Labanotation make these reprints of "Schrifttanz" an important source of information.

All this is especially pertinent with regard to the history of modern dance in Israel. Modern dance in this country was dominated by "Ausdruckstanz" artists from the 1920s to the 1950s, when the American, Graham-dominated style took over. Artists like Gertrud Kraus (whose company took part in the 1930 Dance Congress in Munich), Tille Rossler (a student and later teacher at the Wigman School at Dresden), as well as dancers of Gret Palucca's and other important companies were the dominant

personalities in Israel's modern dance. The materials found in the now available again "Schrifttanz" throw new light on the circumstances and theoretical basis of their work.

For anyone wishing to understand better the emergence of neo-expressionist dance in Europe - and for that matter in Israel - "Schrifttanz" is required reading. Hence the importance of the publishing of at least a selection of this material in English.



by Giora Manor

The republication - in German and English - of the "Schriftanz" quarterly, offers a new view for observing the expressionistic modern dance of the 1920s and 1930s

From 1928 to 1931 a quarterly called "Schriftanz" - meaning "dance+writing" - was published in Vienna by the eminent music publishing firm "Universal Edition". Two recent republications offer the reader another opportunity to enjoy an insider's view of the expressionistic modern dance of the 1920s. In London, Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Susanne Lahusen have edited a selection of articles from the "Schriftanz" translated into English (published by Dance Books, London, 1990) and in Germany there appeared a complete facsimile reprint of all the 11 issues that appeared during this periodical's short but significant lifespan. ("Schriftanz", Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, 1991).

The German reprint has been overseen by the Viennese dance-historian Gunhild Oberzaucher-Schuller. She was also responsible for a book of the proceedings of an international symposium held in 1986, entitled simply "Ausdruckstanz", which took place at the ancient Thurnau castle near Bayreuth, the Bayreuth University's Institute for the Research of Musical Theatre in 1986. ("Ausdruckstanz", Florian Noetzel Verlag, Wilhelmshaven, 1992). In more than one way, this is a companion to the two dancewriting volumes.

Often when participating in dance history congresses or symposia, I am amazed and thrilled by a phenomenon peculiar to the history of modern dance: though the modern dance movement is almost a hundred years old, among the students and historians, one may meet some of the central personalities of the period under discussion "in the flesh". For example, on the cover of the "Ausdruckstanz" book there are photos of Rosalia Chladek, the doyenne of Viennese modern dancers, a lady of about 80 years of age. One could meet her at Thurnau and have a coffee with her during one of the breaks, listening, so to speak, to history straight from the horse's mouth.

In fact, after an eminent professor and his research students presented Chladek's movement method by very scientific diagrams and tables to the participants of the meeting at Thurnau, a presentation that made the Chladek-Method sound awfully dry, complicated and abstract, the old lady herself got up, sat on the edge of the presenter's table and proceeded to show and explain her method lucidly and simply, illustrating her words by very nimble movement. Instead of a convoluted analysis one was suddenly confronted by the thing itself. History, so to speak, cocking a thumb at historians.

Chladek wasn't the only "specimen" of early Ausdruckstanz present. Alfred Schlee - by now also an octogenarian - founder and editor of the "Schriftanz" periodical, enlivened the proceedings by his pithy remarks and by his terse way of correcting errors. He was in an excellent position to do so, as it turned out he was present at the performances described in the papers, when still a youth.

As was the dance writer Walter Sorell, who also contributed valuable interpolations drawing on his own experience of modern dance in the 1920s and 1930s.

Alfred Schlee writes in the foreword to the English "Schriftanz" book:

"My involvement with dance began in my early youth. Since I had the good fortune to have been born in Dresden at a time when progressive elements in all the arts provoked much attention and excitement, my adolescent curiosity was strongly encouraged." While studying music, he also enrolled in courses at the Dalcroze Institute in nearby Hellerau, where he mingled with most of the great pioneers of modern dance, such as Mary Wigman or Rudolf von Laban.

"The great variety of personalities - and in particular the friendships with Laban, Kurt Jooss, Oskar Schlemmer, Bronislava Nijinska, Rosalia Chladek and Valeska Gert - created for me one fascinating experience after another. Every meeting strengthened my impression that we needed a forum, a framework for the exchange of written analysis and opinion".

These were the days when von Laban, a dancer and choreographer who had a scientific turn of mind and had enjoyed a technical education, began to formulate his method of movement-writing. It was only natural, that this new method required some form of publication in print, and that purpose was another incentive for the foundation of a dance periodical devoted to modern dance as well as the Laban notation theory and practice.

Schlee decided to do something about all this. He turned to the director of the Universal Edition in Vienna, proposing the publication of a dance quarterly. But his plan was rejected. Perhaps Schlee, a youth who arrived at the publisher's office clad in the open-neck shirt of the youth-movement called "Der Wandervogel", didn't make a serious enough impression. Other publishers also turned Schlee down.

Four years later, when Schlee was already one of the junior editors of the "Universal Verlag" (of which he was later to become the general director), he became involved in a unique project. At the German city of Munster the director of the municipal theatre, a modern dance enthusiast, who had invited Kurt Jooss to run a modern dance company as the resident ballet company of municipal opera - the first instance of a non-ballet

SCHRIFTANZ