NATIONAL CHOREOGRAPHIC SUMMER SCHOOL
UNIVERSITY OF SURREY, GUILDFORD
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HUGH DAVIES

The Gulbenkian Foundation held its second National Choreographic Summer School for a fortnight from the end of July at the University of Surrey. The object was to enable composers and choreographers to work together much more closely than is normally possible. The original aim was to select six choreographers and six composers, but this was increased to eight of each after the applicants had been interviewed. On the music side two additional applicants were invited to attend the course as 'musicians' (I shall here refer to them as performers, using the term musicians to denote composers and performers together); they were comparable to the 24 dancers who were selected, and had no guarantee of being able to work as composers — though in fact both musicians had a couple of such opportunities, just as two of the dancers who had also applied as choreographers had an opportunity to work as choreographers. All costs, including food and accommodation on the course, were covered by the Gulbenkian Foundation, with some assistance from the Arts Council of Great Britain.

The School was directed by Norman Morrice, choreographer and former artistic director of Ballet Rambert, with a faculty consisting of John Herbert McDowell (composer), Adam Gatehouse (musical director of Ballet Rambert), Mary Hinkson (modern dance) and Piers Beaumont (classical ballet). John Herbert McDowell was particularly appreciated by both musicians and dancers; he has worked with several modern dance companies in New York, has composed over 150 scores for dance and has himself choreographed 16 dance works, in addition to composing for concerts, TV, films and theatre (also directing and on occasion *appearing as an actor!) Greatly appreciated, by the musicians as* much as by the dancers, was the contribution of the other American, Mary Hinkson, and in particular the four one-hour sessions (increased by popular demand) that this former principal dancer with the Martha Graham Company gave for the musicians and those dancers who had done little or no modern dance (including three from the Royal Ballet School). The only real way to understand and learn about even the most basic movements was to be down on the floor trying them oneself. Unfortunately this is not possible with classical ballet, as we learned from a fascinating lecture that Piers Beaumont of the Royal Ballet School gave just for the musicians. He showed how the different parts of the body are moved in ballet, and how this differs from everyday usage; it is remarkable how little of the whole body is actually positively used and how few elements in innumerable combinations comprise the whole of classical ballet. (But then we have the same in classical music: 'you mean to say only seven different notes?')

The composers covered a wide variety of styles and approaches, ranging from one well-known figure (Jonathan Harvey), through some who are beginning to achieve a reputation in their own fields (Gregory Rose, Ilona Sekacz, Judith Weir), to those who are or had just finished studying (Avril Anderson, David Sutton and the Australian Carl Vine), plus myself (no comment). The two performers were Christopher Burn and Martin Jacklin, both of whom had also just finished their studies. (The provision for including composers and choreographers from Australia and Canada was introduced this year and both countries sent a choreographer.) About half of the musicians had worked on one fairly substantial dance score before applying for the course and three had played piano for dance classes. A further requirement was that each composer should be a competent instrumentalist, since the ten musicians had to provide all the music; this was in contrast to the two dozen dancers who were available to the choreographers (most of whom did in fact also dance at some point). In fact we discovered — too late to try it out — that we could muster the exact ensemble for Ives' *The Unanswered Question!* Apparently the involvement of the musicians in every aspect of the course was greater than in the first year, when the publicity did not reach as wide a cross-section of musicians as it did dancers. To remedy this the Gulbenkian's administrator, Gale Law, visited various music colleges and university departments earlier in the year to ensure that the students would all know about it. (Indeed it seems that students from the Royal College of Music in particular are doing very well for themselves in competitions just now, and two of them were on this course).

A typical day was as follows, beginning at 9 a. m. The dancers had a 90 minute class in classical ballet followed by one in modern dance, while the musicians met together. The remaining hour before lunch was used differently on different days. Sometimes there were special classes simultaneously in classical ballet, modern dance and music between which everyone was free to choose, with a strong urging to go to one that one did not normally do (as with Mary Hinkson's classes mentioned above). Sometimes there was a special session, usually musical, involving everyone on the course, which included a vast percussion ensemble in which the musicians directed small groups made up of all the dancers and choreographers (which for some of them was a highlight of the course), a concert of short pieces by all the musicians — (planned earlier that morning, each illustrating an aspect of time), a performance by Jonathan Harvey of a new work, *Meditation* for cello and tape (premiered the day before for the musicians alone) and demonstrations by Carl Vine of the EMS Synthi and by myself of some of my invented instruments. Some of these events had been specifically asked for by participants. As regards Jonathan Harvey's performance: what an ideal situation for performing and listening to music! A hot day, in a large cool room, playing to an audience of some 40 friends who are all totally relaxed, comfortable and receptive, a music that is expressive, resonant, deeply felt and not unnecessarily virtuosic, played by the composer (what instrument could be more suitable in this situation than the

cello?) with a tape made from pre-recorded material played on the very same instrument. Added to which there was the feeling of the privilege of hearing the first two performances of a new work, given the emphasis placed on premieres by most concert promoters (in the strange outside world we had almost forgotten during he course).

After lunch Norman Morrice's masterclass for all the participants summed up the previous evening's results and achievements and gave us various individual and group exercises to work out. For me the most interesting was trying the opening section of Anthony Tudor's ballet *Dark Elegies* to Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder,* where the musicians joined the dancers in several identical groups of seven, though unfortunately it contained a very tricky sequence of steps at one point with which even the dancers had problems. Maybe it would have been more effective if it had been one of Norman Morrice's own works or even something created on the spot. The actual process of making the movements oneself in a group had the same illuminating immediacy for me that the percussion ensemble had for the dancers, though each event seemed fairly commonplace to the normal practitioners of that medium. At the end of the masterclasses we were set a theme for the project which was then worked on for the next three hours by different pairings of the choreographers and composers; all eight projects were presented the same evening. During the second week we had instead three two-day projects, for which some eight or nine hours were available, including the evenings when no projects were presented.

The musicians' sessions in the mornings were partly taken up by two of us presenting their work each day for about 45 minutes. They also included visits to each of the dance classes both at the very beginning and at the end of the course and allowed time for us to prepare our contributions to the percussion ensemble and the concert of short 'time' pieces. (These plus the nine workshop projects made a total of eleven pieces per composer, with two more each by the two performers, making — with allowance for collaborations — some 86 pieces, durations from two to about 15 minutes, produced during the fortnight). After each evening of presentations the musicians would discuss each one in turn the next morning with an unusual frankness. These sessions were very valuable and choreographers often came to them (torn between them and the dance classes going on at the same time immediately above the room we were in). A very striking aspect of the course was the genuine interest and involvement of such diverse composers and choreographers in each other's work, with no feeling of rivalry and competition that is so often felt on such occasions. On the last evening a collaboration of three composers and three choreographers produced a very impressive joint work, unusual enough in music but unheard of in dance! We had excellent facilities in Guildford: the music department's recording studio (used in their Tonmeister couse) run for us by a student Philip Chambon, the department's percussion instruments (supplemented by some brought by the musicians), a total of three Synthis, plus a playback and amplification system installed in the main hall by the very hard-working technical director of the course, Cees de Vries.

The themes for the workshop projects, such as 'Rondo', 'The Unexpected' and 'Use an Inanimate Object' were not always helpful except as something to cling to when faced with a total blank on being told to 'go off and create'. It was, for example, usually possible to work in an idea that one had had even before that particular project was set and one had paired up with a choreographer; maybe the themes were not limiting enough? It's very hard to know. Sometimes one tried to keep to the theme and eventually gave up, or just worked it in somewhere as a concession. Even when a piece was abandoned after a couple of hours, a replacement was put together at the last minute; nobody ever came empty-handed to the evening presentation. These had of necessity a conflicting role: even though nobody expected a finished, polished work after only a few hours' preparation, the results were nonetheless being presented before an audience made up of the rest of us, and it was hard not to judge them as if they were finished works. By the end of these evenings, with eight works presented and discussed (following a long and strenuous day), one tended to find concentration hard, both as audience and as performer. To end the evening, after the performances were over by around 10.15 p.m., free wine was laid on, and a bar was specially kept open until midnight for us thanks to the foresight of Gale Law, who quickly became known as 'The Computer' for his efforts in distributing practice studios for working on the projects (rooms of different sizes, some with and some without pianos) to suit everyone's conflicting requirements.

The projects featured an extraordinary range of results; people could usually be seen from one day to the next to learn more from failures than from successes. Naturally, working at great speed, one felt that one wasn't doing what one would normally do. But then there is almost always a modifying factor, as, for example, when one is composing a work for a particular performer or group. I feel that the most effective way that this works is not when the composer imposes his usual style and content on to the performers, nor when the composer works in all the specialities and 'tricks' of the musicians, but when he discovers a tangential area which is recognisable to both sides and is as yet unexplored by either. I will

mention some of the most memorable and unusual presentations, with some of my own ideas and intentions, given in no particular sequence of occurrence or preference.

The most untypical uses of space were made by the Canadian choreographer Anna Wyman. With composer David Sutton she put on an outdoor performance that started in a small amphitheatre and spread out backwards and upwards over a long slope between buildings towards the tower of Guildford Cathedral, with various people (not all chosen from the ten musicians) adding sounds from various hidden positions as the dancers moved further outwards. She also staged a candlelit ritual with Ilona Sekacz in which the two of theo were the musicians, with some added sounds from the dancers, including a tall man wearing the notes removed from a xylophone as an insect-like costume that clattered and clanked as he slowly advanced across the stage. Choreographer Royston Maldoom and I had also been the performers in our collaboration, and we were each responsible for part of the other's proper preserve: he suggested the sounds for some parts and I choreographed about 90 seconds of the piece. Because our way of working was refined down to basic elements, the sounds mainly produced by amplified natural found objects and the movements based on those of animals, plants, birds and insects, it was much easier for us to exchange roles than in a similar and briefer episode in the collaboration of Richard Slaughter (who wrote a short song with the words 'We have swappèd over') and Judith Weir, both of whom expressed surprise at the difficulties thay had had. Judith Weir also explored other related areas, collaborating with Anna Wyman on a piece in which three musicians (instruments chosen individually by the dancers) 'played' the movements of three dancers and — once again with Richard Slaughter — involving the dancers playing percussion instruments in an instrumental ensemble in between appearing on the stage, with her cues as conductor controlling the course of the dance as well as that of the music.

Carl Vine, who was building a new, very portable synthesizer that he unfortunately did not finish during the course, provided a wide range of approaches, including a very amusing collaboration with his fellow Australian, Graeme Murphy, on the subject of kangaroos, which included a recorded description of them read by the composer in a mock German accent, with occasional fictional attributes slipped in. Since this was taken from a card that he had received that morning, the arrival of the morning's mail — which invariably contained something for him — was a cue for 'here's your score for today's project!' In my own collaboration with Graeme Murphy, the dancers started by singing equivalents to their movements; later on props were added in the shape of long cardboard tubes which were whispered into, drummed on, slapped against each other and on the floor. It was not possible to find a way for the dancers to produce the music throughout, so I added drums and a short vocal passage, and asked other dancers rather than musicians to do this, choosing as drummers three dancers who I knew particularly wanted to perform musically.

Similarly, musicians were used on stage a number of times. Gregory Rose crouched motionlessly against an upturned table during his collaboration with Kristin Donovan, halfway through which he and the table were turned so that he ended up, still motionless, in a very awkward-looking position. In the same composer's collaboration with Richard Slaughter he played violin and Ilona Sekacz played vibraphone on stage, the action going on around and between them. In the middle the two muscians exchanged both positions and instruments, which (even knowing that they both played the violin) was an astonishing effect. One of Jonathan Harvey's collaborations involved at one point a single held note played by musicians in a slow procession around the perimeter of the stage, and he himself appeared as the centrepiece in the six-way collaboration, miming, without his instrument, the cello part that he had previously recorded, while the rest of the action around him was related to his presence in a variety of ways. In Carl Vine's collaboration with Kristin Donovan the composer wandered about the stage with two small transistor radios that he had bought for the purpose and wired up in such a way that electronic noises were produced from interference between them. The use of vocal rather than instrumental music is also somehow more dramatic (and needs to be used with considerable discretion), as in a jazzy 'scat' vocal trio by Avril Anderson and in a song cycle to Chinese texts composed and sung by Ilona Sekacz with guitar accompaniment.

Due to very limited choice, little use was made of lighting. However, in a solo dance choreographed by Gideon Avrahami the space in which the dance took place was lit by an epidiascope, with the dancer at times like a moth attracted to the artificial light. The music composed by Gregory Rose reflected these enormously magnified flutterings.

I was always surprised at the large ensembles for which Judith Weir in particular managed to find time to write, given that one was usually required to rehearse or record for at least one other composer while trying to finish one's own composition. There were different ways of setting about the collaboration. One could sit in the practice studio for the whole time, writing the music as the choreography developed, so that the composer could have a say in the way the whole work progressed. Alternatively one could go away to write it as soon as the choreographer could give one an

idea of how his or her contribution would be (some could not do so until it was actually finished). Then again one could agree to be totally independent and only put the two elements together for the first time at the performance in the evening(Royston Maldoom and Jonathan Harvey tried combining a developing music to a short dance that was repeated several times). Indeed many of the musical performances were completely unrehearsed, with dinner-time taken up with snatching something to eat in between copying out the last of the parts and talking them through with the individual performers.

On one occasion I made a very rough tape of how the music would be, since a piano version would have been totally useless. In my collaboration with Tamara McLorg I used an ostinato tape that I made very quickly for the dancers to have something to work with, the live instruments being added only in the performance. When I tried the tape out I felt that it speeded up the total result too much, so the instrumental music I wrote consisted of slow, overlapping mellow sounds on cello, cor anglais and low marimba in contrast to the light, bubbling high electronic sounds on the tape. The movement of the fairly active ensemble dance lay in between these two extremes, and I treated it compositionally as one layer of the music, not only in tempo but somehow almost as it were in pitch as well. A recording of the music by itself would need a layer added to replace the dance. One choreographer, David Bintley, preferred working with tape, which he wanted as quickly as possible, and seemed uneasy when any of the music was played live. This was because of his intense respect for the music and his desire to really know it before adding his own choreography. Although this is the traditional approach to which we were trying to find alternatives, and some of us found it a bit frustrating, the creative development of this very young classical choreographer from the Royal Ballet School over the fortnight was very exciting to observe.

What visible, tangible results are there now that we are no longer all together in the same place with no other commitments but to work together? Few of us would deny that they have changed substantially. Those who are based in or near London have tried meeting one evening a week in a workshop situation, without any intentions of producing an end product, and with the dancers given the same creative status as the choreographers and musicians. Something similar was attempted after the first course but did not last. We too have had difficulties, starting in mid-August when many people were away and on holiday; at the time of writing the studio that we use is having heating installed, but we hope to try again soon. Undoubtedly we cannot succeed unless we find other people to join us; given everyone's conflicting and busy timetables there are not enough of us to do more than form a small nucleus each week.

Another more immediate result is a BBC TV film of about one hour, directed by Bob Lockyer, which was scheduled to be shown on December 12. The Gulbenkian Foundation only agreed that the BBC could film the course under what are unusual conditions for such a documentary (but are exactly the same for some kinds of documentary, such as wildlife films): the film crew could film anything provided that they did not disturb the activity that was taking place, did not to ask for retakes or for anyone to do something in a different way for the sake of a better 'shot'. This worked very well for us, and Bob Lockyer became just another participant, staying at Guildford even during the several days in the middle of the course when his crew was working elsewhere. Finally Royston Maldoom and I have just started on a work, based on our course collaboration, for a new dance group, Gideon Avrahami's EMMA Dance Company in Loughborough, to be premiered in January. The Gulbenkian Foundation has made money available to commission works such as this which come into being as extensions of the course. I believe that this is the first such collaboration and look forward to experiencing others that will certainly happen before long.

The Gulbenkian Foundation intends to hold a third course next summer, again at Guildford University. If this continues, in five or ten years the whole of dance and music for dance in Britain and elsewhere (since it is the first and so far the only such course in the world) cannot but be greatly changed. It will be very stimulating to be involved in this in some way.