



*Schlage nichts hoch vor, mit ihrem
Hilfenissen macht man keinen Schaden*

Spirit in a Materialist World: Bergson, Laban & the immanent spiritual

Friday January 19th 2018, 10-6pm

£12 Full / £6 Concession; Buffet lunch and refreshments included

Ivy Arts Main Theatre, University of Surrey, GU2 7XH

This one-day event at the University of Surrey is hosted by the Centre for Performance Philosophy (CPP) in collaboration with the Labanarium. The event is the second in the ‘Performance Philosophy & Spirituality’ series hosted by the CPP in 2017-18.

“What we cannot perceive with our senses, especially with our fundamental sense of touch remains unreal and its very existence is denied, until intuition or research discovers the unique and universal role of movement as a visible aspect of space” (Laban, 1966).

Whilst “new materialisms” of various strains have come to the fore in much contemporary European philosophy, this event explores a possible complementarity within a non-dualistic thinking of ‘matter’ and ‘spirit’, ‘mind’ and ‘body’. With presentations from Professor Henrik Bogdan (Gothenburg), Professor John Ó Maoilearca (Kingston), Juliet Chambers-Coe (Surrey) and a presentation and Movement Choir led by Alison Curtis-Jones (Trinity Laban/Roehampton), it investigates the seeming dualities presented by discourses on ‘spirit’ and ‘matter’ and to offer insights from philosophical and movement-based practices which seek to “stop the process of disintegrating into disunity” (Laban,

1966). As such, we aim at an understanding of spirit and matter as not separate entities but as elements which are constituent parts of the whole and all experience of them is immanent and part of the “harmonious order in the great and universal flux” (Laban, 1966).

This event will explore the intersections of performance, philosophy and ‘spirit’ in the lives and works of three key figures: the dance theorist Rudolf Laban, the French philosopher Henri Bergson and his sister, the artist and occultist Mina Bergson. This will include talks and workshops exploring Laban’s involvement in the fringe masonic organization, Ordo Templi Orientis, and the Bergsons’ relationship - both positive and negative - to the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Combining talks and performance from international contributors, this event will consider the light and dark sides of these mystical thinking practices.

Booking: <https://tinyurl.com/y848p6vl>

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LABANarium
Resource & Network Centre
for the Movement Community

Spirit in a Materialist World: Bergson, Laban & the Immanent Spiritual
Centre for Performance Philosophy in collaboration with the Labanarium
University of Surrey, Ivy Arts Centre – Main Theatre
19th January 2018

Programme:

10-10.30 Registration and coffee (Ivy Arts Foyer)

Opening Remarks: Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca (Director, CPP)

10.30-12.00 **Session 1**

Talk: Professor John Ó Maoilearca (Kingston University)
'The Two Bergsons: On the Double Life of Matter and Spirit'

Respondent: Dr Charlotte de Mille (Courtauld)

12-1 Lunch (Ivy Arts foyer)

1.00 – 2.30 **Session 2**

Talk: Professor Henrik Bogdan (University of Gothenburg)
Worshipping the Sun on the Mountain of Truth: Rudolf Laban's involvement with Theodor Reuss and the O.T.O.

Talk & practical workshop: Juliet Chambers-Coe (Director, Labanarium)
The indivisible experience of the intuitive act of moving – choreutic and eukinetic pathways to the immanent spiritual

2.30-3.00 Afternoon Tea (Ivy Arts Foyer)

3.00 -4.30 **Session 3**

Performance and workshop: Alison Curtis-Jones (Trinity Laban/Roehampton)
Movement Choir "Reigen" Exploring the spirit in the Materialist World: Movement Choir
followed by discussion

Closing remarks: roundtable with all presenters

4.30-6.00 pm Drinks (Ivy Arts foyer)

6pm END

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Session 1

Talk: Professor John Ó Maoilearca (Kingston University)

'The Two Bergsons: On the Double Life of Matter and Spirit'

Respondent: Dr Charlotte de Mille (Courtauld)

Abstract

Enlightenment - Dark Enlightenment. Spirit - Matter. Light - Dark. What do these words mean beyond according authority to one's own party, or the others? Should we expand matter into something spiritual (the ether) or shrink spirit into the 'new' matter (as 'vibrant', 'plastic', 'contingent')?

In this talk I will look into the black light of spirit and the white light of matter. I will also present the ideas and double life of Bergson – not only the famous philosopher of spirit, but also the unknown practitioner of dark clarity – the other Bergson, Mina. Not only the man but the woman too – and the two sides of one, secret, and virtually traceless endeavour by this brother and sister of a blackness that is both light and dark.

Biography

John Ó Maoilearca is Professor of Film at Kingston School of Art, Kingston University, London. He has also taught philosophy and film theory at the University of Sunderland, England and the University of Dundee, Scotland. He has published ten books, including (as author) *Bergson and Philosophy* (2000), *Post-Continental Philosophy: An Outline* (2006), *Philosophy and the Moving Image: Refractions of Reality* (2010), and (as editor) *Bergson and the Art of Immanence* (2013) and *The Bloomsbury Companion to Continental Philosophy* (2013). His last book was *All Thoughts Are Equal: Laruelle and Nonhuman Philosophy* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015). In 2014 his name reverted from the English 'Mullarkey' to the original Irish, 'Ó Maoilearca', which ultimately translates as 'follower of the animal'.

Session 2

Talk: Professor Henrik Bogdan (University of Gothenburg)

Worshipping the Sun on the Mountain of Truth: Rudolf Laban's involvement with Theodor Reuss and the O.T.O.

Rudolf Laban's (1879-1958) interest in alternative forms of spirituality and esotericism led him to Theodor Reuss (1855-1923) and the Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.) – a fringe masonic organization which admitted both men and women and openly proclaimed that it practiced sexual magic. Laban joined the O.T.O. and quickly rose to a prominent position in the order, and in August 1917 he performed a *Sonnenfest* at the Anational Congress organized by the O.T.O. at the Monte Verita. Laban's feast for the sun consisted of a series of dancing hymns and pantomime dances with torches, with such alluring titles as 'Die sinkende Sonne', 'Die Dämonen der Nacht', and 'Die siegende Sonne'. In this paper Laban's involvement with Theodor Reuss will be discussed, and the possible influence of the teachings and practices of the O.T.O. on Laban's dance theory will be explored.

Biography

Henrik Bogdan is Professor in History of Religions at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. He is the author of *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation* (State University of New York Press, 2007), editor of *Brother Curwen: Brother Crowley: A Correspondence* (Teitan Press, 2010), and co-editor of *Aleister Crowley and Western Esotericism* (Oxford University Press, 2012); *Occultism in a Global Perspective* (Acumen/Routledge, 2013); *Sexuality and New Religious Movements* (Palgrave, 2014); *Handbook on Freemasonry* (Brill, 2014), *Western Esotericism in Scandinavia* (Brill, 2016). He is the editor of 'Oxford Studies in Western Esotericism', co-editor of 'Palgrave Studies in New Religions and Alternative Spiritualities', and associate editor of *The Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies*. Bogdan is Secretary of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE).

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Session 2 contd..

Talk & practical workshop: Juliet Chambers-Coe
(Surrey, Director Labanarium)

The indivisible experience of the intuitive act of moving – choreutic and eukinetic pathways to the immanent spiritual

Abstract

Whilst some details of Rudolf Laban's interest and involvement in the occult is known, what is as yet unexplored, are the ways in which an understanding of Laban's 'spiritual philosophy' might have impact or significance for movement and dance *practice* and *for performance*. This paper-presentation seeks to reveal some of the 'hidden' aspects of such philosophy-in-practice and offers insights into how Laban's theories can be positioned within the emerging field of Performance Philosophy.

Biography

Juliet Chambers-Coe is a Post-Graduate Researcher at the GSA/University of Surrey. She is a GL-Certified Movement Analyst and Teaching Fellow at the Drama Studio London. Her PhD research is centred on Rudolf Laban's philosophy of movement and its spiritual foundations, in particular with respect to theatre and training actors. She has worked extensively as a movement educator across the UK in Conservatoire training schools and in the U.S and China. She is founder and creator of the *Labanarium*, a Resource and Network Centre for the Movement Community, a project which she hopes will support the further sharing and development of movement and dance research scholarship across institutional and geographic boundaries.

Closing remarks and roundtable discussion with all presenters

Session 3

Performance and workshop: Alison Curtis-Jones (Trinity Laban/Roehampton)

Movement Choir "Reigen"

Exploring the spirit in the Materialist World: Movement Choir

followed by discussion

This practical session will focus on Laban's theories of space harmony and the harmonic structure of movement in relation to his Rosicrucian 'world-view'. Participants will explore the concept of the 'Reigen' or round dance, which is a collective celebration of life and the actualisation of 'community' through group cohesion, collective sensory engagement and organic solidarity through movement and spatial form.

Biography

Alison Curtis-Jones FHEA, MA, PGCE, BA(Hons)

Ali teaches at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, London, and University of Surrey, UK. Artistic Director of award winning Summit Dance Theatre, she is an internationally recognised dance artist, movement consultant and leading exponent in re-imagining Rudolf Laban's 'lost' choreographic works. Her re-imagined works include performances in the UK, Europe, USA, and Canada, filmed and screened by Swiss TV company RSI, German TV company ARTE and featured in the BBC documentary *Dance Rebels*. Ali teaches annually in Switzerland and presents conference papers, lecture demonstrations, workshops and masterclasses internationally. Her artistic and pedagogical research focusses on the dynamic body as archive through a choreological lens. Her work is published in *Dance Books*, *Journal of Dance and Somatic Practice*, *Movement and Dance Magazine*, and her chapter '*Contemporising the Past, Envisioning the Future. Re-imagining Rudolf Laban's Dancing Drumstick (1913)*', in *Transmissions in Dance: Contemporary Staging Practices*, (Ed) Main, L. published by Palgrave Macmillan.

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19th January 2018

Performance Philosophy and Spirituality series 2017/18
hosted by the Centre for Performance Philosophy

This event is the second in the ‘Performance Philosophy & Spirituality’ series hosted by the CPP in 2017-18. The aim of the series as a whole is to explore the relationships between performance, philosophy and the interconnected yet distinct notions of spirituality, spirit, the spiritual, and spiritualism, from a pluralist perspective – drawing together forms of thought and ways of knowing from a selection of global philosophical and performative practices.

Firmly located in the context of immanence and always with a concern for the implications for embodied practices – whether spiritual, artistic or philosophical – the events nevertheless stress the importance of thinking alongside notions of ‘spirit’ and the ‘spiritual’ through considerations of diverse contexts ranging from Sufi whirling, contemporary African and South Asian dance and somatic practice, to the engagements of Rudolf Laban and Henri Bergson in the occult revival of *fin de siècle* Europe.

Coming up...

The third and final event in the series:

***Diaspora & Embodiments of Hope: Performances of Spirit & Sustainability* led by Dr Sabine Sörgel**

Centre for Performance Philosophy, University of Surrey
April 19-20th 2018

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