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Volume 2 | Number 1

Article 1

2014

Obituary: Warren Lamb - 1923-2014

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Editor-in-Chief: Teresa Heiland

Recommended Citation

Davies, Eden (2014) "Obituary: Warren Lamb - 1923-2014," *Journal of Movement Arts Literacy Archive (2013-2019)*: Vol. 2 : No. 1 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/jmal/vol2/iss1/1>

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Obituary: Warren Lamb - 1923-2014

Abstract

Obituary of Warren Lamb, colleague of Rudlof Laban, developer of Movement Pattern Analysis.

Keywords

obituary, Laban Movement Analysis, Movement Pattern Analysis, Warren Lamb

WARREN LAMB 1923 -2014

Warren Lamb was an inspirational pioneer of movement study. When he died in January, shortly before his 91st birthday, he was still very actively involved in many aspects of his work. Colleagues in England are now dealing with the formidable task of sorting through his huge archive.

Shortly after serving in the Royal Navy during World War II, Warren by chance heard of Rudolf Laban, and in 1946 joined the Art of Movement Studio in Manchester. There he studied movement and dance with Laban and Lisa Ullmann, studies that included Laban's system of notation. During the war, Laban worked with an industrial consultant F. C. Lawrence, helping to improve the efficiency of companies essential to the British War Effort. This included, for example, devising ways to help women perform heavy tasks previously done by men, or to relieve the strain of highly repetitive jobs. The work of Laban and Lawrence was successful and continued to be used after the war when some of the students from the Art of Movement Studio, including Warren Lamb, were introduced to it. Retaining his interest in dance and all aspects of movement, Warren Lamb's greatest legacy lies in taking this analytical work forward, ultimately developing what is now known as Movement Pattern Analysis.

Notation and observation techniques were steadily honed during the following years, and, by the time of Laban's death in 1958, were being used not only to improve efficiency, but also to determine the type of person most suitable to a particular area of work. With Movement Pattern Analysis, Lamb identified the link between movement patterning and the cognitive processes used in decision-making. Individual movement patterning, he discovered, revealed what he named the critical Posture-Gesture Merger and it was a short step to extend use of the analysis to white-collar as well as blue-collar workers. In a simple interview, his observation and notation of an individual's movement pattern would reveal, when de-coded, an individual's preferred way of arriving at a decision. Using this method, Lamb was retained by many leading companies for over four decades to advise on their senior appointments.

Throughout his career, Lamb promoted movement study as a subject in its own right. His groundbreaking ideas, including theories on gender differences in movement, have found application in diverse areas, such as in counselling and human development and leadership studies, and have been used by the United States government. He fought constantly to keep his work safe from plagiarism or simplistic faddism, to keep what he had created true to its origins in Laban. The Warren Lamb Trust and the Institute of Movement Pattern Analysis will continue to promote his work and oversee professional standards.

His first publication was *Posture and Gesture* (1965), followed by *Management Behaviour* (1966, with David Turner), and *Body Code* (1979, with Elizabeth Watson). Most recently he published *A Framework for Understanding Movement* (2012 with Eden Davies).

The Warren Lamb archive is in the care of the National Resource Centre for Dance, University of Surrey, which is actively seeking funding to catalogue this valuable collection and make it available to the public. It includes, among other things, manuscripts of works published and unpublished, conference papers, educational syllabi, correspondence dating back to his early years working with Rudolf Laban, and countless notated profiles of individuals and team assessments.

Warren Lamb died at his home in Claremont, California in January 2014. He is survived by his wife Bobbie, and by his four children from his first marriage to Joan Carrington.

By Eden Davies