

János Fügedi. 2023. *Signs of Dance. Laban Kinetography for Traditional Dancers. Solo and Circle Dances.* Budapest: Institute for Musicology, Research Centre for the Humanities, L'Harmattan. 540 pages.

Reviewed by Judy Van Zile

Emerita Professor at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, United States of America

Correspondence: zile@hawaii.edu

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János Fügedi's voluminous 2023 publication exemplifies his deep understanding of the theoretical basis of the movement documentation system most often known in English as Kinetography Laban or Labanotation, extensive practical experience in notating dances, meticulous research, and clarity in organizing and teaching complex material. These attributes make the book an invaluable contribution to seeing, analyzing, and communicating about movement in ways that can be used in many approaches to dance studies as well as to research that engages with dance through the lenses of other disciplines and dances from locales other than Hungary.

In the preface Fügedi articulates his intent to introduce "the reader to Laban kinteography" (a particular terminology he explains), including "its conceptual foundation in movement analysis." He laments movement analysis being "regrettably... missing from dance education," and the need for dancers and others involved with dance "to learn movement analysis and increase their inventory of kinetic concepts." While occasionally drawing on examples from other geographic areas and kinds of dance, Fügedi delimits his focus to "solo and circle dances" "of the Alpine-Carpathian region, especially those of the Hungarians." He further describes his intent as not to "acquaint the reader with the entire [kinetography] system... but to set forth a method for analyzing the specific movement features of a living dance culture while presenting, step by step, the possibilities of the notation system."

Fügedi's meticulous attention to detail is exemplified throughout the book in his care to credit sources as well as his mentors, colleagues, and various assistants. Introductory material recognizes Mária Szentpál, Ágoston Lányi, and Ann Hutchinson Guest, individuals among the foremost authorities and practitioners in the system originated by Rudolf von Laban and who were Fügedi's mentors. He notes the contributions of Hungarian colleague Gábor Misi for facilitating the development of some areas of the system and proofreading the Hungarian version of the volume reviewed here (*Tánc – Jel – Írás* [approximate translation "Dance—Sign—Notation"], L'Harmattan Kiadó / MTA Zenetu-dományi Intézet, 2011). And he acknowledges English-language translators, creators and proof-readers of verbal text and notated samples, photographers, and models for photographs in this "enlarged English language version" of the original. Although brief, a section on Kinetography's development shows the extensive contributions of individuals, textbooks, and institutions in Hungary. Frequent references to documents of the International Council of Kinetography Laban (ICKL), the major organization that, since the mid-20th century, has regularly met to explore new uses of the system and further its development, point to the importance of the individual contributors to the organization's work. Correspondence between all of the individuals, reports on countless meetings, and major texts published in English and several European languages informed Fügedi's research and knowledge base as well as his understanding of the system's historical evolution and its users.

Fügedi's explanation of the basics of kinetography are presented in 71 pages; 293 pages describe

elements of the symbols and concepts critical to notating dance from the delimited geographic area; and 151 pages contain a glossary of symbols, lists and illustrations of movement motifs, extensive notes to the text, a list of references cited, and an index.

Readers of this review should not be deterred by the voluminous nature of the book, nor this summary of it. As an experienced dancer, scholar, and teacher Fűgedi clearly illuminates kinetography's principles, gradually guides the learner through notation practices for simple to quite complex movements, and draws extensively on photographs, line drawings, schematics, and symbols to illustrate the points he makes—all concisely summarized in charts with notated and photographic examples at the end of each section. The result yields models for those who teach any facet of the analytical systems originated by Laban and for those who want to learn about the system in a highly accessible fashion. Additionally, the volume can be scanned easily and sections isolated to learn about or teach the growth of the system in a manner relevant to individual needs and interests. Hence, the volume is a tremendous contribution to English-language material that clearly describes movement features important to, and distinctive of, Hungarian dance. These descriptions should be useful to not only those who study dance, but to anthropologists, sociologists, inter-disciplinary researchers, and any who study the multiplicity of things that constitute "culture," and to those who wish to know something about movement in Hungarian dances without directly engaging with the notation symbols or without learning to do the movements themselves.

Fűgedi's differentiation between the subtleties of what dancers feel as they are moving and what observers sense but may or may not be able to articulate, are embedded frequently in his descriptions of the intricacies in Hungarian dance movements. This differentiation is the basis for some of the choices he and his colleagues make in adapting the system for notating the dances of their own and those of neighboring cultures, and goes beyond kinetography basics to engaging with selected advanced methods to describe intricate movements of the legs and feet that characterize Hungarian dance. Attending to the sequence in which Fűgedi presents material, the ways in which he breaks down concepts and gradually leads his reader from the simple to the complex, and his explanations of why Hungarians have made specific notation decisions provide models for those teaching in diverse settings or notating other kinds of dance that focus on other parts of the body. For notators, careful reading of the text leads to understanding the need to determine what to notate and what not to notate, and how to highlight things that should be documented. It is also a recurring reminder of how beneficial the flexibility of the system is when one understands its most basic principles.

Fűgedi concludes with brief comments (rooted in a lengthier presentation published in a 2018 journal article) on "practical advice" regarding notating "from film and video." Some may benefit from reading this section before tackling the sections on the notation system itself. By explaining the detailed way in which Hungarian dance notators and analysts utilize their extensive archive of filmed field recordings to fully analyze movement subtleties, Fűgedi counters frequent declamations that film supplants a need for notation. And identification, early in the book, of locations of major holdings of primary source materials is valuable to informing future debates as the system continues to evolve, as well as a reflection of the extent to which Fűgedi himself sought to uncover details about the system.

Because a kinetography score is set up to align with a visual representation of timing of movements, and because of the intricacies of timing in many Hungarian dance movements, Fűgedi often includes music notation to facilitate understanding the rhythmic structure and its representation in a kinetography score. In his section on notating dance from film he delineates important considerations for attempting to discern timing from many of the older archived silent films, and the importance of documenting how timing in each instance was determined. He also discusses how to obviate challenges the flat, two-dimensional nature of film imposes on clearly seeing some movements, and emphasizes a point he makes throughout the text—when notation theory and practice are solidly understood, and movement details are clearly seen, the simplest notation methods should be chosen for use.



Some might wonder about the inclusion of 340 notes that span slightly more than 20% of the entire volume. These notes provide a rich resource for those already advanced in using kinetography and for those interested in more extensive details of the system and its history. Like the rest of the book, the notes contain a wealth of visual examples and reference a vast array of sources and resources.

Because of the values of this text in introducing dance notation and Hungarian dance to a broad array of disciplines, an explanation of what Fügedi and his colleagues mean by “traditional dance” would have been helpful. Although used in many publications, there are frequent debates about what this phrase means, with implications often only suggesting such things as dances emanating from older time periods and dances considered indigenous to particular people and places prior to significant outside influences.

Those already involved with kinetography at advanced levels may differ in their own usages and perhaps even disagree with some of the choices made by Fügedi and his Hungarian colleagues. Native English-language speakers and writers may occasionally stumble over what they consider unusual word choices, misspellings, or grammatical errors. These are quite minor matters, however, in relation to the clarity of Fügedi’s explanations, and in no way detract from the book’s overriding excellence and contribution to dance studies. The depth and breadth of Fügedi’s knowledge, vivid descriptions, thorough analyses, and the manner in which he teaches concepts and tools for recording movement provide the basis for an understanding of the constantly moving nature of what makes something dance.

The first draft of this review was completed the evening before I heard of János Fügedi’s death. Words cannot express what I felt when I learned of his demise. I decided to not make any substantive changes to the review, but felt compelled to note my extreme sorrow. János was younger than I in years, but substantially older in wisdom, knowledge of kinetography and movement analysis, and depth of conceptual understandings of movement. I consider him both a colleague and mentor whose death leaves an unfillable void; a meticulous scholar who produced a significant body of important research results in numerous languages; a caring and sharing teacher and friend who leaves behind a legacy of kindness and insightful and well-reasoned debates that furthered personal and professional growth among his many colleagues and students from across the globe.



Kendra Stepputat. 2024. *Tango Dance and Music: A Choreomusical Exploration of Tango Argentino* (1st ed.). London: Routledge. 280 pages; 45 B/W Illustrations.

Reviewed by Jonathan Skinner

Surrey Hospitality and Tourism Management; University of Surrey; Great Britain
ORCID: 0000-0001-5319-2606

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This book makes a substantial contribution to tango studies and slips into a rich vein of detailed, passionate, carefully written academic accounts from Marta Savigliano’s (1995) iconic *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* and Julie Taylor’s (1998) poignant ethnography *Paper*

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