

## LECTURE-DEMONSTRATION OF *DANCECODES* : A REPORT

by

**Vera Maletic and Roberta Shaw**

Content director Vera Maletic and technical director Roberta Shaw from the Ohio State University's department of Dance presented the recently completed multimedia database for dance documentation *danceCODES*.

Maletic gave a brief survey of the two major projects funded by the National Initiative to Preserve American Dance (NIPAD). The first project, *the Ohio State University-Multimedia Dance Prototype (OSU-MDP)*, was a content concept and software shell designed to document dance artists. It was developed by means of creating an interactive CD-ROM documenting choreographer and videographer Victoria Uris. The developing stages of the project were presented at the 1995 ICKL Conference and included the "LabanLink," a simultaneous viewing of the score and the videotape of an excerpt from Victoria Uris' *Three on a Match*; this was programmed by Joukje Kolff under the guidance of technical directors Scott Southerland and A. William Smith.

The intent of the second project, *danceCODES*, was to create a software shell organized in its function and layout like a "database" that could be used by dance companies or individual choreographers to document their work. The projects' first technical director A. William Smith came up with the initial concept and together with content director Maletic selected two works by choreographer Bebe Miller that would serve as the shell's prototype: an existing work *Rain* (1989), and a work that was in the making *Going to the Wall* (1999). Between 1998 and 1999, Smith and Maletic collected numerous materials for the documentation of *Going to the Wall* that could be categorized as still image (photographs, designs, lighting plots), moving image, sound and text. These included extensive interviews with the choreographer, the dramaturg, lighting, set, and costume designers, and seven performers who actively contributed to the composition of the work. To document the work on videotape Smith designed a method for multi-camera shootings from different fronts. A particular feature of the documentation is the choreographer's description of the content and motifs of each of the sections.

When Smith accepted a position at another institution, Roberta Shaw was hired in September 1999 to become the project's technical director and she tackled the formidable task of bringing the project to its completion. In collaboration with Miller and Maletic she had first to articulate the structure of the database. Subsequently she researched the new DVD technology and designed and programmed the project. During that process it became clear that *Going to the Wall* was too complex to serve as the prototype for a shell program to be distributed to the community. Shaw then tackled the design and creation of the pre-programmed shell *danceCODES* using Miller's solo dance *Rain* as the prototype.

Roberta Shaw discussed her design and programming choices by showing sections from the documentation of *Going to the Wall*. These have resulted in a dual set with a DVD-ROM that includes an interactive section on the making of work, and a DVD-Video with the full-screen version of the one hour piece. The project contains over 12 hours of video and a section where viewers can switch between 3 angles of the dance without interruption: it is expected to be distributed in early 2002.

Shaw then demonstrated her creation of a shell program or template—*danceCODES*--explaining the way in which it provides dancers, choreographers, archivists, producers and scholars with a simple way to digitally archive dance works. This pre-programmed shell organizes archival materials into an interactive, non-linear, multi-media presentation, which can include Video, Still Pictures, Text, Audio and *LabanWriter* Notation Scores. *DanceCODES* can contain approximately 1200 pages of dance scores. The product is ideal for those whose knowledge is limited in multi-media development, but have the need to create archives that are digital, easily retrievable, and laid-out in a presentational fashion. To create a *danceCODES* CD-ROM or DVD-ROM users need only to digitize and edit video, scan photos and use Adobe Photoshop to design visual content; the programming, layout and interactivity of *danceCODES* is already complete.

This program can be downloaded at no charge through the *danceCODES* web site:  
<http://www.dance.ohio-state.edu/products/dancecodes/>