

NORVIS

Nobuko Yuasa has written from Japan of her warm memories of NORVIS — the Northumbrian Recorder and Viol School, which has been held every summer in Durham since 1971 and whose founders, both died recently.

Layton Ring July 1922 - Feb 2019
and
Christine Ring Jul 1932 - Mar 2019

Layton and Christine Ring were the founders of NORVIS, the Northumbrian Recorder and Viol School, which has been held every summer in Durham since 1971.

Layton was a harpsichord player, conductor and music arranger and Christine was a recorder and flute player. Their tremendous contribution was to establish and develop early music, especially in the north of England. Layton was also an intellectual poet and charming dancer.

I first met them in 1995 at NORVIS as a student of singing. The course was run with many activities and was filled with smiles and excitement. I also took sessions of dance and viol in the many options named, "Choice of Delight". Elizabeth Dodd, viol player, taught early renaissance dances and Layton taught Elizabethan dances with a percussionist. It was my first dance experience abroad. There was also an energetic Ceilidh one evening and this totally excited me. Layton danced with us.

The many excellent tutors and 70 participants, including many returners, created a warm and enthusiastic atmosphere. They made me smile with asking "Do you really eat raw fish?" as I was the first Japanese person they had met. The course closed with the concert played by the students and tutors ending with Purcell's (1695) "Welcome Ode".



This delightful picture of Christine and Layton was taken in 1995 on the river side of North Tyne

A week later I went back to Durham to attend the Nonsuch Summer School.

It was almost impossible to find any specific courses at the time. After many years of looking, I had reached Peggy Dixon's books and then got to hear of the Nonsuch Summer School. Soon after from the UK consular office, I found that NORVIS was held in the same place just before Nonsuch.

At the end of the second part of the Nonsuch Summer School, while we were learning the country dance "Nonsuch" with Peggy, Layton came up to the door. When I realized it was him, he leaned on the frame putting one arm on the top and watching us with a big smile. I've never lost this mental picture. Soon we finished learning and I introduced him to Peggy. He said that they had known each other long time by name, but had never thought that they would be introduced by a Japanese. We laughed.

He drove me over beautiful hills to his home close to the river North Tyne. Christine, whose idea it was to invite me, made a lovely lunch with salad and quiche. Layton and I danced galliards in the garden with their black cat Noirette watching us. When we walked to the river, he surprised me by quoting a Japanese phrase, *Muzukashi koto wa jikan ga kakaru*. He asked me if it implied "impossible". In fact, it means "It takes more time to develop more difficult skills" and implies, "Don't give up, and you'll get it." During his Nottingham university days, a student from Japan, Yusuke Arimura, who is now a conductor, used to say it to him.

A long time before his university days Layton had moved from New Zealand to learn harpsichord with the Dolmetsch family, and was quickly seized by Mabel as a male dancer for her dance reconstructions.

That summer, by being at the two courses, I got to know how vast the field of music and dance extended. I had no idea how far I would be able to progress in it. On the other hand, I just knew I would keep returning to the UK to advance my learning. Besides the music and dance culture, the way of learning and living struck me as what I was looking for.

Peggy introduced me to all the books in her library and I was able to take as many photocopies of them as I wanted. Layton also gave me files of dance music sheets, and let me take his dance book back to Japan to take a copy before returning it. Peggy told me "This is your great first step", and Layton told me "Keep on doing it!" Their kindness, generosity and encouragement still inspire me to go forward.

Apart from some years when we had phone and post problems, I kept contact with Layton and Christine, although I missed the chance to meet them again.

Christine, who had been frail for some years, passed soon after Layton's passing. The funeral was held with a variety of beautiful music performed by excellent

players and singers, including the pavan "Belle qui tiens ma vie" from Arbeau's *Orchesography*. William and Rupert, their sons, provided a warm farewell to the happy couple, which reached those who lived far away and abroad as well as those who were able to be there.

From Layton's huge, and much published output of 600 poems, sonnets, haiku, fables and so on, dating from 1947 to his last year, I have chosen one from 1995.

Contretemps for a Dancer in 2/2

Révérence first, pet/ Bend your bot-/
Mind your step, hinny/ Hop a lot-/
Stamp at the half-bar/ Mark the spot-/
Cross your leg, man/ Keep it hot-/
Give it your all, petal/ All you've Gavotte!

With the greatest respect and gratitude,

Nobuko Yuasa



Nobuko's dancing stole the show
at the Tadcaster Festival in 2016 Ed.

European Association for Dance History (EADH)

'COLONIAL DANCING IN EUROPE, EUROPEAN DANCE IN THE COLONIES'

Friday 8th to Sunday 10th November 2019
in Portugal

The EADH is a Europe-wide organisation dedicated to the study of European dance history. Its range covers all periods from the fifteenth to the twentieth century – and has even ventured into the classical Greek and Roman past. They organize at least one conference each year – usually in some attractive European location – and publish a journal *Choreologica* of refereed research papers and other articles. Past conferences have been held in Dresden, Prague, Seville, Rome and Leiden as well as London. Their next conference will be held in Porto, Portugal, and promises to be both very entertaining as well as educational, with its theme of *Colonial dancing in Europe, European dancing in the colonies*. A dozen or more proposed papers have been accepted, covering topics such as the lost culture of Australian convict dance, 1788-1840, or the quadrille tradition of the French Caribbean.

The conference will be located in the very promising environment of a former wine-cellar, now converted into dance studios and a café, near the centre of Porto, Portugal's second largest city and the centre of the country's wine trade. In addition to the formal proceedings, there will be a fascinating range of entertainments, including a celebration of the centenary of the birth of the American choreographer Merce Cunningham, along with a public concert presenting 500 years of Portuguese dance. The event is highly recommended and is open to all interested in early dance.

Further details are to be found on the EADH website [<http://www.eadh.com>].

Bill Tuck

