



Benesh instructor Natasha Frid with students at Sundance International Summer School, Toronto Photo: Grace Academy of Dance and Performing Arts, Oakville

What's in a name, wonders **Liz Cunliffe**

The Choreologist

I am often asked what is the difference between a notator and a choreologist? In 1956 Rudolf Benesh defined choreology, coined from two Greek words 'choreia', meaning a dance, and 'logos', meaning science, as 'the scientific and aesthetic study of all forms of human movement made possible by Benesh Movement Notation'. Although this is still the definition given in many dictionaries, it is clearly a very specific interpretation of the word. Others have interpreted it more literally to mean 'the science of dance' and used it in contexts that have nothing to do with movement notation.

In 'choreologist' Rudolf tried to find a term that covered all aspects of a notator's work: studying movement, writing and reading scores and realising the choreographic intention into performance. Nowadays, in the interests of clarity, professional notators who use BMN are encouraged to call themselves Benesh Choreologists or Benesh Notators.

There is also a long running debate about what the process of bringing a pre-existing dance work to performance should be called. In the theatre, rarely is one production of a play intended to be exactly the same as a previous one. The opposite is true of dance works where the intention is almost always to recreate every detail of the original production as closely as possible. So is this a revival, a reconstruction, a re-staging or a remounting of the work? The next time you go to a performance, read the programme notes carefully. They might have come up with a wording that clinches the argument forever.