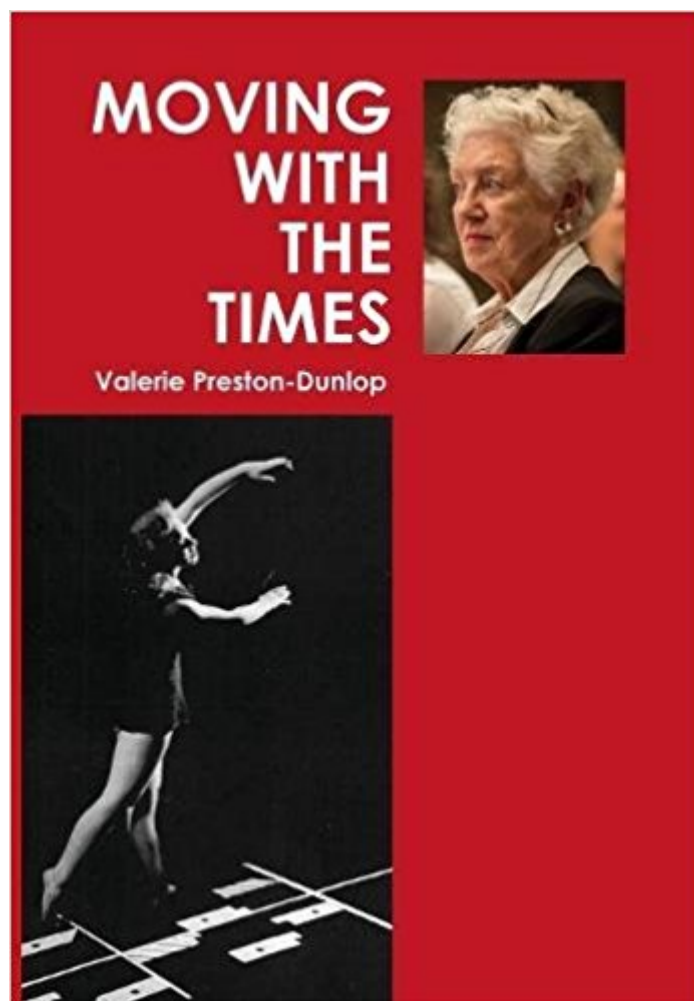


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Synopsis

Uncompromising innovator, researcher, dancer and scholar, mentor and matriarch She is a bishop's daughter with a silver-spoon childhood and youthful traumas through the death of her father, wartime separation and teenage poverty. Valerie's meeting, aged sixteen, with the extraordinary Hungarian Rudolf Laban, guru of expressionist dance, set her on a life-long career devoted to questioning, championing and developing his initial insights into dance as a deeply significant art form for human wellbeing. Her writing exposes her battles to integrate dance practice with dance scholarship in a world set up to keep them apart. She shares the difficulties of balancing the demands of family with professional life exacerbated by the catastrophic illness of her husband John and her own experience of mental breakdown. She describes her travels taking dance all over the globe and collecting evidence across Europe of Laban's leadership of German dance in the 1920s and 1930s, work that the Nazi regime almost succeeded in annihilating. The book traces her support of what is now Trinity Laban Conservatoire for Music and Dance, from being in its first cohort of students in a grubby studio in Manchester to being honoured as a Fellow in its Herzog and de Meuron award-winning building in South London. Valerie shares her wholehearted commitment to whatever was on offer at different stages of her life from performing and choreographing, renovating a Victorian garden and running clubs for disadvantaged people, writing books and directing documentaries, educating dancers and dance makers, engaging with all manner of people along the way from the left-wing theatre director Joan Littlewood to the establishment Archbishop of Canterbury or the astounding choreographer William Forsythe, while nurturing her family and embracing Quakerism.

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