People and shadows dance together at the California Quarterly Retreat, January, 2009.

Photo by Penelope Sallinger
The staff of the North American Journal has labored long and lovingly to bring you this new volume for the Dances of Universal Peace. For this issue, we have taken as our theme the inspiring words of Hazrat Inayat Khan:

Towards the One, United with All

On our cover:

-Jane Bari

For this issue, we invite you to open this journal, to partake, and to join us in the joy and learning of another year’s harvest. May the bounty of the human spirit continue to grow and to light.

Towards the One, United with All!

-Bari

On our cover:

The Peaceful Hearts Mandala created by Anuma Kavanai (HI) inspires us to meaningful peace & understanding around the world. (prayer flags, art, and Godless clothing at www.karanara.com)
In 2010, we celebrate the Centennial Jubilee of Hazrat Inayat Khan’s journey from India to the west. In transmitting Sufism to the western world in 1910, Hazrat Inayat Khan also became the grandfather of the Dances of Universal Peace, and he was the Sufi guide of Murshid Samuel L. Lewis beginning in 1919. The Federation Council of the Sufi Message has set a theme for the Centennial Jubilee Year, which is: The Unity of Religious Ideals.

Hazrat Inayat Khan’s 3 most significant celebration dates are:

- Hazrat Inayat Khan’s Birthday, July 5, 1982, this year’s theme: The Divinity of the Human Soul
- Hejirat Day, September 13, 1910, this year’s theme: Spiritual Liberty
- Urs (passing of) Hazrat Inayat Khan, February 5, 1927, this year’s theme: Love, Lover and Beloved
- May the message of God reach far and wide!
Toward the One: How human it is to feel yearning and longing! “Toward” puts us near the object of our desire, or in the direction of it: moving or not moving, or about to move toward our perfect moment. It is the heart’s strain to connect with Oneness: it may or may not include action: a step in that direction, or not. I am reminded of the Sanskrit word “Upasikalad”, to “sit near”. That supreme greatness is so close, that leaning into it, or just being near, may grant us the experience we so desire.

Why do we give our time to the Dances: the practice, the meetings, the preparation and planning? It is for that moment when it all comes together, and looking down at our many feet, we find all the feet are moving together: and the circle itself is taking a great breath in and out and we are the particles of that breathing whole. We are united with all. The miraculous is taking place.

And we have made it happen. By doing the work of preparing the dance circle and by showing up, we have done our part, great or small, to create a space for harmony and beauty to become tangible in the world. Thanks to all of you!

Dances of Universal Peace North America has a role in providing the tangible in the world. Thanks to all of you!

In 2009 we added several new services. Among them were: collecting unpublished dances to post on the website, putting together a Dance organizer toolkit, and hosting quarterly teleconferences on various topics of interest to Dance leaders and musicians.

In 2010 we are continuing these successful projects and expanding on them: for example, putting downloadable flyers and posters on our website, adding audio and video files to the online dance write-ups, reaching out to support circles that are just starting up, and beginning to plan a regional event.

We hope to connect with you, our Dance community, in many ways this year: letting our yearnings be a means for creating a strong force for peace.

—Lucinda Abbe
JOIN THE NORTH AMERICAN REGION OF THE DANCE NETWORK!

Your membership entitles you to receive annual publications, our member newsletters, registration priority, and discounts at Dance events. There are many additional reasons why people join. Often mentioned is the sense of helping to support the Dances so that more people can share in the experience. For Canadian currency rates, please contact the office.

THERE ARE THREE WAYS YOU CAN JOIN:

Online: http://www.dancesofuniversalpeace.org/
Mail: DUPNA, P O Box 1401, Blythe, CA 92226-1401 USA
Call: (760) 922-2551

YEARY MEMBERSHIP RATES: Benefactor - $500+ | Friend - $125 – $499 | Couple - $100 | Regular - $65 | Low Income - $45 | First time – SEE INSET.

HEART PINS
Receive a FREE heart pin with membership purchase. Encourage your family and friends to become Network Members today! If you are already a member and would like to purchase a Heart Pin, they are available for $5 each.

To order, contact Regional Administrator at the DUPNA office: (760) 922-2551. If you are interested in participating in our logo pin fundraising project, please contact Jen at 303-746-5191.

*Offer good only for new membership, not renewals, while supplies last.

By Munir Peter Reynolds

We Begin Again - Dances of Universal Peace International
Building Our International Dance Family

Leaders of the Dances of Universal Peace the world over feel a natural kinship with one another. No matter the country or culture we may visit, Dance leaders often share the same respect and even affection for one another because of the common dedication they share to the art and spiritual practice of leading the Dances. Now a new beginning for the Dances of Universal Peace International brings another opportunity for Dance leaders to unite around the integrity, spiritual focus and tools needed for the work.

Since 1987 when the Sufi Ruhaniat International empowered Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz to create PeaceWorks International for the Dances (the original name of the Dance organization), the Dances have spread around the world and are now led regularly in more than thirty countries. Through publications, projects and collaboration, Dances of Universal Peace International has helped to spread the Dances and has fostered the various DUP regions worldwide. Meanwhile, as the Dance network spread and began to thrive, Sufi Ruhaniat International has continued the Dances at the heart of its spiritual practice. Some of the Ruhaniat’s teachers travel widely and have led the Dances for more than 35 years. This combined network of Dance leaders, Sufi teachers, musicians and dancers is our living, breathing web of connection in and through the Dance work.

This living body of creativity and leadership is distinct from (and not the same as) Dances of Universal Peace International, the organization that was created to serve it. Dances of Universal Peace International exists to link the Dances around the world (primarily through a revised, multi-lingual website) and to support the Mentor Teachers Guild to ensure that the spiritual depth of the Dances remains paramount, as the Dances continue to expand worldwide. This observation was among 18 recommendations of the Unity Council, a joint Dance network body that worked over two years to develop a renewing vision and plan for our international Dance organization. You can read the Unity Council’s full recommendations at dancesofuniversalpeace.org/peaceworksboard.htm. The newly elected Dances of Universal Peace International board of directors (read more about them at dancesofuniversalpeace.org) is already at work implementing the Unity Council recommendations. We have held telecons for Europe and North America to gather feedback, and more telecons will be scheduled for South America, New Zealand/Australia and Russia. At the time of writing, we are transitioning PeaceWorks Publications to on-line, design and building a new web site, closing the Seattle office, revising bylaws, and preparing budgets for 2010. The Mentor Teachers Guild Guidance Council has just released a revised and much improved set of certification guidelines. We ask for your patience as we work to implement changes in many different areas all at once.

We invite your ideas and suggestions as we go forward into this new era. Send comments and questions to Sky Majida skyness548@gmail.com who will convey these to the board and staff. Dance leaders can help us in this effort by making an annual contribution either to your region or directly to Dances of Universal Peace International. Working together we can continue to further Munshid S.A.M.’s Peace Plan — “To eat, dance and pray together” and further the vision of universal brother-sisterhood and spiritual liberation that lie at the heart of the Dances.

-Dunir Peter Reynolds began as director of the Dances of Universal Peace International in August 2009. He was previously Executive Director of the Oneness Project, since 2003.
In 2008, I was invited to join the DUPNA board. The questions “Why me?” and “Why now?” were initial reactions that provided the backdrop for my decision-making process. After some time meditating on the question, however, two important shifts occurred in my awareness. “Why not me?” and “Why not now?” After all, if I knew anything, I knew that I wanted to be part of sustaining and spreading this important practice that contributes to the building of a more peaceful world.

As I take on the board role of Regional Networker in 2010, I look forward to not only building connections within our existing Dance community, but also reaching out into the wider world. I want to help make the Dances come alive for people who didn’t even know we were holding space for them. It is this work of spreading the word about the Dances that, in my mind, will help usher in the ‘Coming Universality,’ which is so crucial to achieving peace.

I am also excited about the opportunity to represent the Dances at events throughout our region of the U.S. and Canada. Doing this will help us spread the word in a very tangible way, by networking with other likeminded communities and letting them know that we are here and we are welcoming! If you know of a conference, festival, or other event in your area that would benefit from our presence, please let me know how we can work together to get us there.

Blessings and peace to all,
Jen Friedman
jennifer@jenniferfriedman.com

Looking for Resources to Help Grow Your Circle?

Check out our Dance Organizer Toolkit!

At our website, you’ll find:
* Downloadable & Customizable Poster Templates
* Ideas for Web-Based Social Networking
* Tips & Tricks for Advertising & Publicity
* Recordings of our Teleconference Series

www.DancesofUniversalPeaceNA.org
The second part of the excavation leads to the Abode of the Message in New Lebanon NY, where no doubt the song from the friends gathering found its way, and was woven into the Dances of Universal Peace tradition by an as-yet unknown Dancer leader. This connection likely gave rise to the designation “Sufi & Shaker” in the kirtan community. And Gennyfer H.’s “over twenty years ago” is probably closer to thirty years. Even now, this Dance continues to shine blessings far and wide. Tonight at the holiday party of the vipsasana group I sit with, I led this dance for the sangha and their friends and family. A number of people thanked me afterwards with glowing smiles and moist eyes, obviously quite moved. One couple shared that this dance was done at their wedding by their request. Even though there are still gaps in the story (I’m currently on a search for Gennyfer H. to do some deeper digging), I’ve provided a write-up of the music and movements that I’ve found to have a kind of critical mass consensus among several long-time Dancer leaders. I offer it here in the spirit of honoring the enduring light that is this dance song. If you have any more information concerning this dance’s history, please contact me at NurLuna@icool.com.

Farrunnissa Lila Rosa is a Senior Dance Mentor from Durham NC, and leads dance meetings, workshops and leader trainings across the eastern U.S. She focuses the Rose Heart Sufi Community (www.roseheartrosi.org) and is a spiritual teacher in the Sufi lineage of Hazrat Inayat Khan and Murshid Samuel L. Lewis.

Here we are.

for the love of our departed crone...

The Regional Retreat Model

An Answer to the Economic Downturn?

by Jane Sky and Mary Jean Matejcek

The Midwest Regional Retreat staged a successful comeback May 15-17, 2009, at the beautiful W.K. Kellogg Biological Station, in Michigan near Battle Creek, for a number of reasons the annual retreats in the Midwest area (an area that extends from Minnesota to western Pennsylvania) had lapsed. Then, in 2008 at Saadi Neil Douglas-Klotz’s Amracic Retreat in Columbus, Ohio, Paul Matejeczk (WII), approached Jane Sky (MI), and Donna Schiller (IL) about reinstating the Midwest Retreats.

Form a committee. The organizers were joined by a group of dance mentors and leaders, plus musicians who pooled their talents to produce a “laid-back, joyful retreat, with time for walking, meditation, leisurely meals, and sleeping.” A film, a hootenanny and especially lots of dancing. Paul contributed an efficient means of web registration. Jane was site liaison. Donna oversaw the information table; and from the extended committee, Judith Kubish organized the musicians. Pat Fitzgerald, Judith Heeter, and Elizabeth Shofner contributed the beautiful poster. Betty Demers organized the market and her son Marley decorated with incredible willingness and enthusiasm. Several others pitched in to help as needed.

Choose a wonderful location. The Kellogg Center was an example of a wonderful location. There was no “big name” attraction. The talented contributions of such a variety of leaders. The more experienced have many nuances and subtleties in their efforts while the newer leaders remind me of the beauty of the tender plants in the garden only now, the dance resonances with the infra-red, the root systems, the balance of men and women, even the different levels of ability of the dance leaders all adds to the charm of the Midwest Retreat. It truly is unique to have the talented contributions of such a variety of leaders. The more experienced have many nuances and subtleties in their efforts while the newer leaders remind me of the beauty of the tender plants in the garden growing stronger each day.”

Create a program. The decision was made to have all dances led by certified leaders who submitted dances they were willing to lead in advance. Jane Sky selected and organized the dances. At some of the Midwest retreats in the past there has been a training component but this time it was decided just to dance. Donna made up the schedule and dance we did for over 14 hours total.

Invite Everyone. This Midwest retreat was unique in several ways. There was no “big name” attraction. A dozen locals from the region made up a healthy mix of Sufi and non-Sufi dance leaders. Everyone was welcome to participate and generously shared to the accomplishment of musicians from all over the region.

Jane Sky and Mary Jean Matejcek

Let the retreat unfold. Jane Sky expressed the overall vibration of the retreat by saying ‘For me, the range of ages of our leaders (11 years to 70+ years), the balance of men and women, even the different levels of ability of the dance leaders all adds to the charm of the Midwest Retreat. It truly is unique to have the talented contributions of such a variety of leaders. The more experienced have many nuances and subtleties in their efforts while the newer leaders remind me of the beauty of the tender plants in the garden growing stronger each day.’

Sunday morning we danced the Lord’s Prayer cycle led by several leaders all adds to the charm of the Midwest Retreat. It truly is unique to have the talented contributions of such a variety of leaders. The more experienced have many nuances and subtleties in their efforts while the newer leaders remind me of the beauty of the tender plants in the garden growing stronger each day.”

The Kellogg Center was an example of an perfect retreat as it is surrounded by beauty...
This song is from a hymn of the same name composed by Gregory Norbet while a Benedictine monk at Weston Priory in Vermont (www.gregorynorbet.org). The English part of this song is the chorus of Norbet’s hymn.

According to the composer, the hymn was “the result of meditating on the life and mission of Jesus. The refrain relates to the spirit of his preparing his followers for his leave-taking (his death) Hence his words to reassure his followers that his love would be with them always.”

The sacred Sufi phrase in Arabic apparently was added during a Young Friends annual gathering in Philadelphia, in a moment of synergy when an impromptu sing-along was overheard, and the similarities noticed between Norbet’s hymn and a Sufi chant being led. As part of the event’s closing, two Friends sang the hymn’s chorus along with the Sufi chant, creating this song celebrating love that quickly found its way into the Dances of Universal Peace.

Note: This Dance has been shared far and wide since the mid-1970’s. However, we are not able to confirm definitively either the melody of the “Ishq Allah” part, or the Dance movements, as we are still trying to connect with the originators. Any corrections will be made available as they are discovered. If you have any more information about this Dance’s origins, please contact Farrunnissa at NurLuna@aol.com.

1. All I ask of you is forever to remember me as loving you
2. Ishq Allah Ma’bud Lillah, Ishq Allah Ma’bud Lillah God is Love, Lover, and Beloved

Establish partnerships.

1. Hold hands with partner in an open, heart-high position, arms stretched to the sides. Circle clockwise together for eight steps, stepping with the left foot on “all”, and the right foot on “ask.” On the repeat, circle counterclockwise with the same partner, in the same manner.
2. Spin individually with arms raised upward, progressing to next partner.

Words: Gregory Norbet, and traditional
Music: Gregory Norbet
Movements: Unknown New England Dance leader in the mid-1970’s

The music and the English words copyright 1972 by The Brothers of Weston Priory as recorded on the Listen CD; all rights reserved.

Dance Instruments await dance musicians,
Photo by John Bari Ramsey

We dance today... everywhere
we dance today
we dance together
we barely touch the floor yet we are grounded to Gaia’s core
we merge with spirit singing,
we blend all our words & skip all our beats
we dance together
growing near to such complete innocence
that it is really as if, for that moment there has always been this Oneness everywhere

- John Bari Ramsey
DUPNA Financial Report for 2009
A year ago, we were in the midst of the 2008 financial credit meltdown and wondering how all of this economic chaos would affect us. Our board passed a budget that included a deficit (more expenditures than revenue) balance of $ (7,500). As I write this report in early December 2009, it appears that our 2009 financial results will approximate our budget.

Our balance sheet was healthy at the end of 2008 and will continue to be healthy at the end of 2009. Our bank accounts had balances of approximately $55,000 on December 31, 2008 and should have approximately $47,000 in our bank accounts at the end of 2009.

We have begun our budgeting process for 2010. Again in 2010 we are looking at a deficit budget with expenditures about $ (7,500) greater than revenue, similar to 2009. We are continuing to explore additional fund raising possibilities.

Look throughout these pages to see your membership in action.

Membership dues and donations allow us to further our mission of fostering participation in the Dances of Universal Peace and Spiritual Walks in North America. We are grateful to our members for supplying us with the “green energy” of their dues and contributions. We will use your financial support to fulfill our mission. Since Oneness Project grants are no longer being received, almost all of our financial support comes directly from you, our members.

Thank you.

May the spirit of the Dances continue to always flow through us.

-Jim Herren, Treasurer

We sang as we danced in the room filled with mountain light, circling partners with hands joined. “All I ask of you is forever to remember me as loving you.” We lifted our arms and hearts upward as we turned toward the next partner, singing the Sufi sacred phrase which is often translated, “God is Love. Lower, and Beloved.” “Ishaq Allah Ma’bud Lilah!” “Look beyond the personality of your partner,” the leader had told us. “See the Divine.” Within minutes, that is exactly what I saw.

As I met each new person, I held God’s Hands. Looking into Goddess’s Eyes, heard the Voice of the One singing to me gently, joyfully, lovingly.

As I thought about it later, I was surprised at what had happened to me. I was co-facilitating the first North Carolina weekend retreat for students of A Course in Miracles, leading guided meditations based on the Course. This dance was part of our group activity for Saturday evening. I had been a serious student of the Course for quite a while, sometimes attending three weekly study groups at a time. What I had spent years studying and trying to achieve had been accomplished in a matter of moments through a sacred song and a simple dance.

It was my first experience with the Dances of Universal Peace, in the fall of 1986. This is the still-unfolding story 23 years later, of how this particular dance came to be. When I began studying to be a dance leader in 1993, this dance, “All I Ask You”, was one of the first in my repertoire. I stopped leading it after several years because there was no published version and no one seemed to know whose dance it was. As a developing Dance leader, I felt strongly - and still do - that it was good adab, good karma, and good bawka to be sure I was sharing the dance as it was inspired to the dance originator.

Because there was no definitive documentation on this dance, I respectfully let it go. But this dance wasn’t ready to let me go. We have several active chanting circles locally, and over the years I found that the song was universally present in the greater kirtan community as a chant, almost always described as “Sufi & Shaker” in origin. The melody wasn’t exactly what I had learned, and the “Ishaq Allah” part was generally repeated 2 extra times, but it was always shared with great tenderness and devotion.

In November 2009, I attended a vipsasana retreat where “All I Ask of You” was led during chanting. At our closing sharing, quite a number of people mentioned how much this song meant to them, how important it had been in their lives, how much they loved it, how moved they always were by it. The leader turned to me and said “Farrunnissa, I know you’re a Sufi teacher; tell us more about it.” I told what I had been told, that the English part was the last words of Muktananda to his disciples, and that the Arabic part was Inayat Khan’s version of a traditional Sufi sacred phrase.

Later, a little irked that I still didn’t have more information about this dance, I did a Web search and to my delight, turned up a remarkable story of the origin of the song. From the June 12 2008 entry on the View Pacific blog (viewpacific.wordpress.com):

Over 20 years ago, Gennyfer H. was attending a Young Friends program of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Quakers). One of the Young Friends was leading an impromptu sing along, teaching the group the Sufi song “Ishaq Allah Ma’bud Lilah.” It reminded her of a hymn, “All I Ask of You,” written by Gregory Norbet, then a monk at Weston Priory. She told the friends about the similarity and sang it for him. At the end of the gathering, they sang the hymn’s chorus along with the Sufi part. About ten years ago, while she was trying to find a local Conversations with God gathering, she came across a mention of the song in an online discussion group. It was only then that she realized that the song had continued and spread, like the ripples from a stone dropped into calm water.

Gennyfer went on to share that she will soon be joining in a reunion with classmates who had sung the first song together:

“In thinking about my upcoming reunion I was feeling nostalgic and thinking that my classmates might enjoy knowing how the songs had merged and traveled. I did a search to see if it was still around and found your blog. With the gracefulness of serendipity, my search was two days after you posted. Whenever I think about this song that I have sung as a lullaby to my children quite often and at the side of my mother’s bed as she left us, I feel honored to have been given the chance to truly understand how we are all connected. In this time where human separation in religious beliefs seems so heightened I hope that the moment when I was present enough to get past my adolescent shyness and sing this song in front of a group of my peers whom I had just met, that I have somehow been part of an opportunity for healing.”

Continued on page 30
A Dance Gathering is Born

by Shireen Julie Pogell

One of the ways I express my creative connection with my Beloved centers around the Dances of Universal Peace gathering that I lead each month in Durham, NC. The preparation happens on several levels and the Dance meeting is in my heart and mind all month long.

I always choose a theme that comes out of life experiences within the community, or the needs of the world. Sometimes it comes out of my own life process. I trust that what is important to me will touch the lives of others. Some of the themes we’ve had in the past few months are Peace, Surrender, Transformation, Love, Letting Go, New Life, “That Love May Reign” and “Come, Come Whoever You Are”. I will illustrate the process in depth with the example of our Sufi community.

This led to the empowerment of another woman who spoke up with the truth of abuse by yet another spiritual leader in our area. There was much need for healing. Other losses and illnesses were also affecting our community at that time. A very special drumming teacher had breast cancer. One drum pattern and chant that she taught us was an invocation of Omolu, the orisha (or spirit) of healing. My mentor, Farrunnissa, created a dance to the Omolu chant and rhythm, and agreed to lead it at our Dance gathering. Omolu’s festival is held in Brazil in the month of August, so the energy of this invocation was in the ethereal realm.

I was feeling the presence of the wazifa (Name of God) “Ya Ghaffar” (the ever forgiving). According to Saadi Nell Douglas-Klotz (The Sufi Book of Life, Penguin Compass, 2005), “This is the burning energy of love which can heal and erase the impressions that have lodged in our hearts.” I previously led a series of practices on “Ya Ghafur” (the forgiver), which led me to the dance “Estafirollah” in the Foundation Dance Manual. I loved the experience of deepening that the sitting practice and Spiritual Walk brought to that dance. At this Dance gathering, I wanted to lead a Walk and then do the Estafirollah dance.

An “Attunement” gathering is held at my house on the Wednesday night before the monthly Dance. For this Dance gathering, there were two other Dance leaders: Farrunnissa, and Grace. Grace was preparing to lead the Zoroastrian Elements Dance, found in DUP Dance Book 2. I wanted to do “Mantra of the Green Tara”, the Allah Zikr by Mansur Johnson and the dance “I am Open to All That You Are”, found on Bernie Heideman’s CD, “At Home with Chant.” The group decided to do the Healing Dance (“Ya Shafee Ya Khafee”), found in the DUP Dance Book 2. We practiced the dances and made sure we had the best combination of musical accompaniment. We are so blessed in our community to always have guitar and drum, and oftentimes, ny, tambourine, clarinet, flute, violin, or psaltery.

The final preparations are on the day of the dance. I always take the afternoon to quiet, practice, pray, and attune to the Dance. At 5:30, I leave for the Dance gathering with a carload of instruments, various things for the altar, flags, flowers, and our Dance sign. Usually my husband Ted, who calls himself my “roadie”, has loaded up the car.

The space we use for the gathering is very important. We set up an altar at one end and put up prayer flags. We bring in lamps and turn off the overhead fluorescents to prepare the space. At 6 pm, we have a potluck. Knowing that it is usually a smaller group, we set up the tables so that we can all be included in the conversation. We had a particularly rich sharing that contributed to the deepening of the Dance gathering. During the meal, one dancer who grew up Zoroastrian in India shared more about the element of fire in that religion.

Dance space at the Sky Meadow Dance Camp (T). Photo by Radha Teresa Buko.

December 3- 5, 2010
Lava Hot Springs, ID (near Pocatello)

LIVE! AT LAVA DECEMBER RETREAT

Leaders: Narayan Eric Waldman, Connie Zareen Delaney, Bernie Heideman, Munir Peter Reynolds & Patsy Saphira Boyer

Oneness Project presents a weekend of Dances of Universal Peace, walks, zikr and natural hot water springs. Join us for another opportunity to eat, dance and pray together.

Email: registrar@onenessproject.com
Contact: Registrar, (406) 363-7211
Oneness Project, P. O. Box 1141, Hamilton, MT 59840

December 29 - 31, 2010
Trinity Episcopal Conference Center, Emerald Isle, NC

DANCES OF UNIVERSAL PEACE

Leader: Akal Dev Sharonee; musician: Mark Smith

Celebrate the holiday season with the Dances, along with meditation, chanting and yoga. There will be free time to enjoy the pristine beauty of the North Carolina Coast.

Email: mgeesmith@juno.com
Contact: Mark Smith, registrar, (919) 357-1967

Life is so rich, how can you help but rejoice?
Dancing to the joy, Dancing to the grief,
Following your footsteps to the edge of the possible and leaping into the void.
Every atom of the universe is in motion - Be the Dance, that’s all there is.

-Sky Majida Rashay

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Darvesha & Friends

A whirlwind of mantra, instrument and dance bringing Heaven to Earth. Recorded live at Wilderness Dance Camp with Darvesha & friends: Ahti Molana on sax; Munir Peter Reynolds and Eric Narayan Waldman, guitars; Allaudin Ottinger, drum; and Toliq Nitkin on keyboard. Also Wayne Talmadge, Zareen Connie Delaney, HayraFattah, and Russ Bertolette.

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DANCE EVENTS

October 28-31, 2010
Dancing Peacock Paradise, near Ocala & Gainesville, FL

FLORIDA FALL SUFI AND DANCE RETREAT
Leaders: Murshida Leila Be and Sheikh Bodhi Be
Dances of Universal Peace, zikr, Sufi practices and teachings.
Contact: DiAnahita Kanoy, registrar, (352) 546-1345
P. O. Box 376, Ft. McCoy, FL 32134
Email: FLRetreats@gmail.com

For Complete Details on Events:
www.Dancesofuniversalpeacecenter.org /allonetimeevents.asp

November 12-14, 2010
Jemez Springs, NM
DANCES OF UNIVERSAL PEACE WEEKEND
Leaders: Tara Andrea and Maboud Charles Swierkosz,
Shekia Darvesha Victoria MacDonald & friends; drums: Shems Nickle
Join us at Hummingbird Music Camp in a beautiful
mountain setting with tall trees, river running through
camp, and a natural hot springs nearby.
Email: taraandrea@cybermesa.com
Contact: Tara Andrea, registrar, (505) 438-0820
www.DancesofUniversalPeaceSantaFe.org

We learned about the practice of
keeping an eternal flame in private
homes. A woman who grew up
in Chechou shared about the fire
element in her tradition. We ex-
perienced the underlying unity of
religions. We popped popcorn that
had been ritually blessed to honor
Omolu and had a bowl of it on the
altar for a ritual at the close of the
Omolu dance. When people asked
about the popcorn, this became
another chance to tell more of the
orisha tradition.

After our potluck, we began our
opening Walk. We use this to gather
us as a community, to connect to
our bodies and begin walking and
moving together. I introduced the
theme with a “Ya Ghaffar” Walk. I
used the image in “The Sufi Book of
Life” of hands cupped at the heart,
walking to a 4-beat rhythm, imagin-
ing a person or event that needed
healing, and as the fire of Ghaflar
burned away the impression, letting
the hands surrender and go down to
one’s side, until another image came.
A circle formed and we danced
E斯塔ferallah. Next, we did Dance
introductions, a welcome, and an
Invocation. Grace led the Zoroas-
trian Elements Dance. After several
dances, we had a popcorn blessing
and a break. We sat down in a circle
did dancer introductions and
announcements. Sometimes we sing
the next dance together, especially if
it is new or if there are more than a
few words to learn.

I look to the second half of the
dance to build on the deepening at-
tunement of the first half. The Allah
Zikr started and went very deep. We
were ready for the Healing Dance in
three circles. Dancers chose which
circle they needed to be in. The
closing dance sealed the healing, and
the love was palpable as we opened
our hearts to each other and to the
beloved in the beautiful dance
“I am Open to All That You Are”.

We always invite our musicians into
the circle at the end and sing the
Buddhist blessing together - “May
all beings be well, May all beings be
happy, Peace, Peace, Peace.” I close
the circle by speaking the words
Sa’di has given us as a translation of
Ameyn: “May the song renew
itself from gathering to gathering
and from age to age, and may this
be the ground from which all our
actions spring.”

Hugs are customary, and we
finished the dance gathering with a
warm feeling of community support,
friendship and Love, Harmony and
Beauty. The fruits of the meeting
are a result of the long and loving
preparation by many, all of which
goes into birthing a Dances of
Universal Peace gathering.

-Shirin Julie Purcell has been leading
the Durham (NC) Dance Meeting for 3
years and before that the Chapel Hill (NC)
Dance Meeting. She is mentored by
Farshid Mousavi.

Portraits of Youth

MARISA SPROWLS could be considered a child of the Dances. Her mother
and father have been very active in the Dances ever since Marisa can remember. A teenager now,
Marisa has attended 3 dance camps. She was 17 when she attended the Creative Arts for Peace
Camp in the summer of 2007, held at Claymont West Virginia. The weeklong camp, formerly an
annual event but now no longer held, was organized by Marisa’s mother, Kathryn Ashera Rose,
who is a dance leader and mentor. It was at that camp that Marisa met Maitreya Jon Stevens,
who was then a 26-year-old youth camp counselor. Maitreya created a lively Zikr tune on his
guitar called “Rock and Roll Zikr” and mentioned he wanted to find some dance moves for his
tune. Marisa recalls just having some fun with it and she made up the movements. From her
experience with hip hop and eastern style dancing, she brought in “probably more hip movements than is normal”. and of course there
were some regular turning movements and so forth, all conveying the feeling of a rock ‘n roll Zikr. When the youth at the camp
introduced the new dance that she had created “everyone seemed to like it”, says Marisa. That is an understatement. The “Rock and
Roll Zikr” dance was a real hit of the 2007 Peace Camp. It was danced with great gusto several times there. Marisa greatly enjoys
dancing in general, and she enjoys the Dances of Universal Peace when she can “open up enough”. She feels she has to be “in the
right place” for all the intense eye contact and intimacy of the Dances. She finds the higher energy dances “with lots of instrumental-
ists” particularly appealing. Marisa also plays piano and “a little guitar” but has never used those skills to accompany the Dances
herself. It has now been over 2 years since the camp where Marisa created the dance. She is in college now
and has not been to a Dance in a while. We hope that Marisa creates more dances someday.
On October 4th, 2009, in Ocala, Florida, a large number of people emerged into the world bearing one of the best gifts we can share with others—Gratitude.

**How does Gratitude, as a state of grace, manifest and come to be?**

“Our time together began in the heart of DiAnahita Kanoy, who with grace and tireless effort brought together Lila Flood and Allaudin Ottinger. They invited us to create a fully rewarding experience; found a setting; and coordinated all the people who provided the wide variety of experiences through which we all learned.

Those who return to these events experience the joy of finding new friends and connecting to long time friends. Those who are new find that they come into one of the most fully rewarding experiences they could expect. Dervish Dancing, Qui Gong, drumming, poetry, meditation, and Dances all flow along in a synchronicity seldom found in our everyday lives.

Allaudin Ottinger brings his own well perfected talents to the Workshop and is a part of the unity that is all of us. His teaching is like a mirror of our inner spirit, the character is like fragrance in the flower. We are “forgetting of our false ego”.

**We are “forgetting of our false ego”.**

Lila Flood

Tucking in times for rest, meditation and eating in community, with so many well loved friends, made all of the rest so much more meaningful. Even nature mirrored the events on Saturday night, as crystalline halos whirled around the moon above as the dancers whirled below. Even as we go about our lives now, a piece of each of us will always be turning in our hearts with the memories as we go forward. No better finale to the Workshop could be created than the Universal Worship Service on Sunday morning.

All of those who participated felt the culmination of joy and connection that had been building in us the whole time. The music chosen for the Sunday service was particularly poignant. Many who attended, especially the singers in the chorus, felt the choices and preparation of the music were divine.

Kate Johnson has been dancing in the Universal Peace Dances for more than 10 years and feels as if she was reborn when she walked into her first Dance. Email: kate.n.j@gmail.com
Developing the relationship with our inner and outer participants for your awareness and mine. It is not just as a Dance leader, I cannot monitor everyone’s through the physical touch that happens at a public of body language, feel the energy, and make good personality and history. I feel, we must be conscious Each person comes into the dance with their own life. They may find comfort in the sacred space of the Dances and in relationships new and old. Something they look forward to because of a stressful may be a stronger person, community, and Dance circle, but rarely discussed. Here in Fort Collins, we are talking about it! Fantastic! When we are aware of an issue, it gives an opportunity for growth in becoming more sensitive and conscious. The result may be a stronger person, community, and Dance circle, demonstrating that we can all take responsibility for our own actions, and help those we believe may need it. What could be so simple and natural for many is not always so simple for others. We need to be aware of how our physical touch during a dance can affect some people. There is a lot that goes along with a simple hug for adults, and why not? For the average adult person who has never experienced the Dances, to be faced with holding the hands of strangers, and then to be asked to hug these same new people, can be very intimidat- ing. And yet for some of the more experienced, it is something; they look forward to because of a stressful life. They may find comfort in the sacred space of the Dances and in relationships new and old. Each person comes into the dance with their own personality and history. I feel, we must be conscious of body language, feel the energy, and make good decisions to create a safe atmosphere for relationships, through the physical touch that happens at a public Dance meeting. As a Dance leader, I cannot monitor everyone’s behaviors, but I can share what comes to me from participants for your awareness and mine. It is not just about leading the movements, words and attunement. It is not just about dancing. It is about the practice of developing the relationship with our inner and outer lives. Through feedback from dancers about issues – such as “hugging” – one can have awareness and develop our sense of intimate comfort level no matter where we are, when faced with it. It may take time for this to really sink in deeply. A change or shift in the way we think or do things may seem uncomfortable at first, but the long term benefits will prevail.

-Honor the teens as emerging members of the community by helping them to create and participate in ‘rites of passage’. Create unique opportunities such as ‘Inner Beauty Parlour’ for the girls: special roles at a community celebration, a sleepover in dance tent, nighttime trust walk, midnight zikr in the dance tent, a field trip – something no one else can do!

We offer these tools as the wisdom view – one that reflects the divine wisdom in each child and the whole community. We believe that ensuring the continuation of the Dances for future generations is a worthy goal. Beyond this is the gift our children offer in creating love, harmony and beauty in the world.

-Kathryn Ashera Rose is a mentor teacher of the Dances and has directed intergenerational Dance camps. She published I Open My Eyes To You, a resource for those working with youth. To share ideas for working with youth for possible inclusion in the upcoming All My Relations publication, contact Kathryn Ashera Rose at SpiralRose@aol.com.

-Tajali Theresa Tolan is Co-Director of the Children’s Global Peace Project and is a mentor teacher for the Dances, leading regularly in Madison, WI. Tajali has developed and directed 14 children/youth programs at DUP and Sufi events since 1995. Tajali is a Marriage and Family Therapist by vocation and is the mother of two children, ages 29 and 12. To learn more about the Children’s Global Peace Project, or to sign up for one of the upcoming trainings, visit http://www.cgpp.org/ or email Tajali Theresa Tolan at tajali@cgpp.org.

Changes in Continental Dance Leadership

Patsy Boyer (ID) served for five years, from March 2005 till March 2010. She was amazing at helping hold the energy of the Board and keep things moving forward, very graceful in her dealings with people. A major force in creating the beautiful new website and its concepts that allow for easy expansion. She left the Board to take a position on the Oneness Project Board of Trustees.

Jim Herren (CA) served as Treasurer and member of BOD for two years, June 2008 to June 2010. His financial expertise and communication skills helped Yamuna Devi and the Board develop a deeper understanding of our financial status and tax obligations, and clarified the status and nature of our finances. This year, as his work as a healer expanded, he had to step down in order to accomplish that growth, but he leaves us in a much more enlightened position than when he arrived.

Shivadam Adam Burke (AZ) joined the Board a year ago. He has taken over Patsy’s website work and has helped expand and revise the website as well as working on the Dance collecting project and helping spearhead a new audio project and create a stronger web presence for DUP NA.

Rahmana Elizabeth Sayre (OH) just joined the Board as a trainee. She is also working on the audio project and shows a great interest in helping the Board serve the NA Dance community in better and better ways.

Sheila Richardson (Nova Scotia, Canada) served as a Board trainee for some months, and has now accepted the role as east Canadian liaison and outreach person instead. The Board appreciates the perspective she brought to the table and hopes that will continue as she takes on her new role.

Carrying Continued from page 21

Honor the teens as emerging members of the community by helping them to create and participate in ‘rites of passage’. Create unique opportunities such as ‘Inner Beauty Parlour’ for the girls: special roles at a community celebration, a sleepover in dance tent, nighttime trust walk, midnight zikr in the dance tent, a field trip – something no one else can do!

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Dance North American Journal 2009/2010

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I am lucky to be able to approach music as spiritual practice now... As I look back over all the music I've played, I can see a huge difference (more importantly, feel a huge difference) from when I was playing for some kind of ego reasons: to accomplish or prove something, to get listen, even just for the thrill of my own ego. Innocent as that was, I mean, most of my recordings I did almost entirely for the sheer joy of listening back, pure creation! That joy, however, was always short-lived and it came at a very high price. One, it never seemed "good enough" (in a worldly sense), and two, I was perpetually unhappy that more people were not listening to what I had spent hours creating. I was doing it all for myself, in other words, and that did not sustain my pleasure.

Well, thank God, gurus, and murshids that I discovered playing music to facilitate group spiritual practice... all, with us all, when we do it together as one unit. At some point very soon into a song, no one is leading it. Of personal glory in favor of glorification of the One that has given me the ability to play even a single note. Beyond ourselves to something much greater than music, hard as that may be to imagine (I LOVE music!!). That over and over makes it become more and more real. Then it begins to apply to everything else in life, too.

It has been a long road getting here, and I still have so much farther to go. It is a never-ending road. We use the music as a teacher. Whenever I kick myself for having made the slightest musical mistake, "God" says, "I taught it, so I step in and lead it. Good thing I learned how to play instruments, so that I can, in this way, the focus is almost 100% not about me, but vrittas, it is about what happens among us all, to us all, with us all, when we do it together as one unit. At some point very soon into a song, no one is leading it."

I make some mistakes almost every time I lead kirtan or Dances. But the great joy is, nobody minds! It means nothing! Because it is not about me, not even about the music itself. It is about how we can all move beyond ourselves to something much greater than music, how that may be to imagine (I LOVE music!!)"

So, yes, I feel immense gratitude that life has afforded me the opportunity to lead others with spiritual music. Of course, I had to step up to the plate, and that means that I have to surrender completely any sense of personal glory in favor of glorification of the One that has given me the ability to play even a single note. I used to play music. Now, God plays music and I happen to show up ... to be there while it happens. Much better point of view, and more accurate to what is really going on, besides.

The old way was some kind of cruel delusion, at least for me.

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The old way was some kind of cruel delusion, at least for me.
I am a dancer leader and mentor with many years of initiatic practice on the Sufi path. However, at this point in my life, I now consider the Dances to be my primary spiritual practice. There is a wellspring of spirituality that comes through the Dances of Universal Peace. Of this I am drawn to ask “What makes this a sufficient spiritual practice for me?” I have examined my prior “in-depth experience” to see what it has provided in my own development, and then, how I have applied this approach to steeping in the Dances. Some key principles for me are: devotion, persistence, group practice, community (or sangha), self-discipline, individual practice, ritual, guidance, sequential progression, teachings (or dharma), regularity, and self-examination (including choices in daily living).

Most of us would agree that devotion, persistence, group practice, sangha, and self-discipline are going to be naturally engaged in the practice of Dance leadership, but what about the rest of these? In fact, I have found that the Dances are a spiritual practice that can even be done alone. Almost every day of my life, I move and sing the sacred in my own living room (unless I’m doing the Dances somewhere else), as a rich individual practice. But in truth, I am not generally alone: Tara, Kwan Zeon, my teachers, tend to “show-up,” along with many of the other masters, saints, and prophets, as do a number of dedicated dancers from our weekly Dance circle. The circle, at times, feels quite full. As in other spiritual practices (and life, in general), it may be most useful to recognize that much is a matter of grace, and to accept, but not expect these gifts. My background, both as a studied musician and a Sufi practitioner, may have had a lot of influence upon my concept of daily practice. One can pick up the guitar and just play it. Or one can say an invocation, pick up the instrument and stroke the wood, in respect and gratitude, before even tuning. Likewise, one can acknowledge the instruments of one’s body and voice, before stepping into a dance. These little bits of ritual are no less important in preparing the atmosphere for individual spiritual work than when we are doing the Dances as group practice. During the training to be a Dance Leader, one is (ideally) guided through a sequential progression of experiences (i.e. graduated challenges) which develop depth and skill, by calling forth what is ready to bloom next. This guidance is in the realm of the Mentor. I would add to this that there are specific teaching techniques that elicit a steady stream of successes, and that these techniques can also be applied to oneself.

The teachings (or dharma) in the Dance path are intrinsically embedded in the sacred phrases that permeate our lineage, as well as in the writings of the Dance ancestors and the diversity of world traditions. There is no shortage for those who are scholarly, nor for those who are more kinesthetically oriented. Daily practice is desirable, but any regular, ongoing commitment to practice at specific times is helpful to establishment divine connection. The more frequent and focused the practice, the more potent is the connection.

For nearly all of my life, I have been a classical musician. There has hardly been a time that I haven’t played in an orchestra, a chamber music group, and/or for the opera or musical theater. Music has provided me with many of the happiest times of my life. Although I was introduced to the Dances of Universal Peace in my early thirties, I was nearly 50 when I began to attend them regularly. I had more than 5 years’ experience as a dancer before I was invited into the circle at a retreat in Charlotteville, VA (by the guest leader, Alaulain Matleau) to become a Dance musician. I was, at this time, playing without printed music. I quickly discovered, however, that the violin could easily play along with the dancers who were singing the melodies. It could also play notes in the chords that the accompanying guitarists were playing or it could add notes to the rhythms being enunciated by drummers. As my comfort in the center of Dance circles increased, I discovered that I could also produce counter-melodies that blended with the dance melodies. Five years after I became a Dancemusician, I began composing music in a different way. A breakthrough occurred when I came across a book entitled “How Musciles Learn: Teaching the Violin with the Body in Mind.” This book by Susan Kempter provided a key to unraveling the mysteries of playing the violin in tune: muscle memory. Moving around the violin thoughtfully could produce consistent muscle movements to produce consistent pitches. I began writing exercises based on the book’s principles in my teaching practice, giving students the experience of paying attention to particular muscles to accomplish particular goals. The more exercises I wrote, the more my own being, having steeped in the classical music tradition fed my imagination. In a way, it’s easier to compose than to play the Dances, because one has to do the latter in real time. There’s not going back to change a note or a melodic line, because the dance is always moving on.

A Dance musician learns, however, that what could be regarded as a ‘wrong note’ can easily be turned into a ‘passing tone’ in the way to a right note (and other words, no big deal). The attitude is critical to remaining calm in the midst of the circle. What is most critical for being a Dance musician on a melodic instrument, though, is learning the tunes of the Dances so that one doesn’t confuse dancers by getting the tunes wrong especially when dances go ‘on the breath.’

A happensence produced a big breakthrough in my composition not long after I began writing music. One of my students, who had trouble playing in tune, was the daughter of a piano teacher. I started putting piano chords into the exercises so that the student could play with her mother for pitch support. This had two consequences: 1) In order to suggest chords, I had to learn about harmony and 2) It turned my violin exercises into performable pieces. Playing for the Dances launched my current and ongoing project, but in a different way. In January of 2007, I attended a weeklong Dance retreat in New Zealand. At one session, I noticed that a young dancer was ‘covering’ her voice – singing very softly with a voice that seemed to have much greater capacity. I discovered that this Australian woman, Melinda Parsons, was a budding opera singer. So I decided to compose a piece for the two of us. The first attempt was unsuccessful. I had never composed for voice before, and it didn’t occur to me to put rests into vocal parts to allow singers to breathe (and to quickly become a duet for flute and violin.)

A second attempt at a duet was more successful. Initially I wrote it with out words (a ‘vocalise’, so-called, that can be sung on ‘la’ or ‘ah’), but then a suggestion was made to set it to the words of the second Beatitude. As a dancer, I was aware of Saadi’s (Neil Douglas-Kloza’s) work in retranslating the Beatiudes and the Lord’s Prayer from the original Aramaic into English that was often significantly different from that of the King James Bible. I was able to find the second Beatitude online in Aramica, the King James translation, and a variety of translations provided by Saadi. I selected one of the latter and used all three versions of the text—Aramaic, King James, and Saadi’s—in the song. Melinda and I performed (twice for the retreat), and it was a rousing success. There are eight Beatitudes (or ten, depending on whom you listen to), so this one song cued out to become part of a project. It took me most of the rest of the year to get back to it. By November, I had added piano chords to the music I had written to see that the student could sing with a new Beatitude song each month.

When I completed the last of the eight in April 2008, it was clear that the set of Beatitudes alone didn’t provide enough material for a CD. It occurred to me that the poems of Rumi (in Coleman Barks’ translation) might be a fruitful source for an additional set of songs. It took me more than a year to get around to exploring that possibility, but once I did. I had two ‘ruminations’ burst forth quickly, all within 5 weeks. So I have now released my second CD containing my Ruminations and Beatitudes. It is called ‘One Being to side All’, after the title of one of the Rumi song poems. Look at how playing for the Dances has led me deeper – not only into the tradition of Rumi. Samuel Lewis, and Saadi, but into finding my own musical voice as well!  

-Mansur Richard Conviser is past president of the Dances of Universal Peace North America.
Leading Dances with Survivors of Abuse

by Naomi Wilansky

Recently I was invited to lead the Dances of Universal Peace during “A Day of Healing” for survivors of abuse. “The Day of Healing” is offered through the YWCA in Bloomington, Illinois, a venture into alternative healing beneficial for survivors.

I am grateful for the Dancing Peace limerits, it is a wonderful resource. After I agreed to lead Dances at this event, I wrote to get other advice from other dancers and leaders. I was amazed at the flurry of varied responses and took them all to heart. There were many helpful suggestions about what dances might be used and why the Dances would be good for healing, particularly from people who have experienced them as potent medicine in their journey from trauma to healing. There were also warnings from those who cautioned me about what I was getting into, about aspects of being gentle, awareness of boundaries, and the importance of having experts present to help with difficult situations that might come up.

I am a social worker and was prepared in terms of the emotions that came up, but I have minimal experience working specifically with survivors. I went in with some trepidation and was surprised at the amount of energy it required from me. I was drained, as well as uplifted, by the experience.

I chose to lead only relatively simple, non-partner dances because I was pretty sure that none of the people at the workshop would have had experience with this particular form of dance and I guessed the intensity level of partner dances might be intimidating. The first dance I lead was “Shanoon,” with its powerful symbol of the tree could be validating and healing.

This turned out to be a perfect first dance. It was very positive, grounding, and could be danced without holding hands in the circle. My husband played the shaker for this dance and guitar for the others. Sensitive to the fact that a strong male presence could be uneasy for some of these women, he stood way outside the circle – (he is also a social worker.)

The next dance was a “Bismullah.” It has a beautiful melody and only brief hands-on-shoulders touching. “Heart Sutra” was next, which I thought fit nicely with my goal of simple, non-partner dances, and continued the theme of heart centeredness. The Buddhist intention of presence without judgment in this dance was also very helpful. As I was teaching the dance, one woman became tearfully emotional. After we had begun dancing, she started apologizing to the people on either side of her for her crying, which had increased. I stopped the dance and checked if she was OK, or if she wanted to get a tissue, and I took the opportunity to explain that the Dances are powerful, healing, and that it is fully OK if strong emotions like sadness, fear, happiness or anger might emerge.

I noticed also that one woman avoided holding hands with others. I was glad that when I introduced the Dances, I had emphasized that touching was optional, and also encouraged them to pay attention to what was going on inside and to be clear about what was OK and not OK, and perhaps even to sit out at any time if that is what was needed.

I invited the group to sit down in the circle after the Heart Sutra dance and share what they were experiencing. The kids join the dancing at the morning all camp class, Mendocino (CA) Sufi Camp, July, 2009. Photo by Shaffee Howard Ballinger.
Carrying Our Vision Into the Future:
Planting Seeds of Peace in the Hearts of Our Youth

by Kathryn Ashera Rose and Tajali Theresa Tolan

In the early days of this nation, several native tribes banded together under the name of the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. One of the principle tenets of their ‘Great Law’ was that all chiefs consider the impact of their decisions on all of their descendants for seven generations. If we step into this ‘wisdom view’, we can see that the future impact of the Dances is immense - and especially if it is carried into the future in the hearts, minds and souls of our children. So we ask, what are we doing to ensure the continuity of the Dances for future generations? How are our children being gifted with experiences of the Dances? In what ways do the Dances and the ways they are presented and shared need to evolve and change to reflect the new world that is emerging?

As we are demonstrating in schools through the work of the Children’s Global Peace Project, and at many of the camps and Dance circles that are inclusive of youth and families, children really ‘get’ the Dances. They readily feel the flow of energy and love it. They strongly appreciate the way they are individually honored and recognized at a core level. And they intrinsically resonate with what creating peace is all about.

In the Children’s Global Peace Project, Dance leaders and musicians conduct several sessions of Dances and related peace-making activities with groups of elementary and middle school children and their teachers. By the second visit, the children are eager to dance, often requesting their ‘favorites’. They are soon eager to demonstrate and lead the Dances, and at the end of their time together, the whole community dances together. The children are empowered in this process to experience themselves and incanting at this time to imbue our world with exactly the needed energies for our evolution. They entrain heart-to-heart with all living things to the extent that they will be urging us to take much greater care of all beings, including animals and plants, as well as people. In creating programs that are inclusive of children and teens, we acknowledge that wisdom lives within everyone no matter the age.

We will see that a child will convey so much love to an elder that the elder is healed in some way, and a teen may on occasion save the day for an adult in need. A lone adult may entertain and care for a child in a way that gives a single parent a much needed respite. And so on.

We could all use a reminder of the passionate, break-the-mold energy of our teen years? Or to have our heart opened to the angelic realms by a singing child gently taking our hand? A small child skipping through the dance tent may awaken in us a remembrance of the fairy realms. Even the infants will entrain us to be more Berlin-like, she was feeling but couldn’t express. I suggested looking into each other’s eyes as we processed what was going on, it would help us ground ourselves in the experience. People had very different experiences and I attempted to validate each one.

One woman really liked the individual spin in the “Bis-mil-lah” dance, saying it made her feel free and happy. She expressed being scared to hold hands and that moving into the circle in the “Heart Sutra” dance was also scary. Another woman expressed appreciation for the use of different languages, which she felt were more beautiful than English. Another said she didn’t have a problem holding hands with women but wouldn’t hold hands with men. The woman mentioned above tried to understand why she had cried so strongly but could only say that she had been deeply touched. One woman supportively commented that her crying reflected what she was feeling but couldn’t express.

We continued the dance with “Alwoon D’bushnay.” Many of the participants were impressed with alternate translations for “Our Father…” I suggested that the two people on either side of the woman who wasn’t comfortable holding hands put their free hand on their hearts. This helped with the flow of energy through the circle. We ended in a circle singing “Return To Love.” All the women were looking down. On the last time through, I suggested looking into each other’s eyes as we sang. Most were crying by that time. Overall, it was very emotional, and I feel like it went very well. Although only an hour had passed by, I was exhausted and I recognize the work that it was for me.

We received a thank you note from the YWCA Stepping Stones therapist who organized the Day of Healing. I’m going to let her words bring this article to a close: “I wanted to thank you for your generosity in volunteering your time on a Saturday to help survivors of trauma. I was amazed at how powerful and moving the dances were. I have received great feedback from the participants. Thanks again for helping survivors find alternative techniques to healing from trauma!”

- Naomi Wilansky is a Dance Leader and social worker living in Normal, Illinois.

Now available: a collection of two new song cycles for soprano with violin and piano accompaniment, composed by Mansur Richard Conviser. The eight Beatitudes are sung in Aramaic, the King James translation, and new translations drawn from Saadi’s work. The ten Ruminations has words from Rumi poems, as translated by Coleman Barks. The collection is available as a CD for $15 or a digital download for $10. Ordering information and song samples are available at www.richardconviser.com
How about a Hug? by Grace Marie

Suggestions on How to Hug or Not to Hug at a public Dances of Universal Peace meeting:

These suggestions can be practiced at the dance, and then used outside of the dance space for personal empowerment practice. No judgments are needed or wanted on how people face this issue and work with it on their own. We simply honor and respect others’ choices.

Before we move to the suggestions, consider these observations:

Personal boundaries are unique to every individual. We empower individuals to honor their boundaries.

We acknowledge the intimate nature of the Dances and emphasize/encourage dancers to honor one’s own and other people’s boundaries.

Hugs on Automatic Pilot: Hugging can be a “habitual” group behavior where the group goes on “automatic pilot” rather than hugs being a genuine expression of the living presence of “loving kindness” that has emerged from the group practice of the Dances of Universal Peace.

This suggests one to be sensitive, mindful, and considerate to this dynamic.

Neediness versus Mindfulness: Sometimes we are driven by neediness for human physical contact. It is neither about right nor wrong. It is just part of being human. What is the level of our needs?

What is the intent of our hugs?

Hugging can be a practice where we remain present to our breath and heartbeat, as well as to the connection to the other person and their energies. It can be a practice to help us be present in the moment and share our intention to express “loving kindness” without sexual energies or personal neediness.

Creating a Sacred Connection Through Hugs:

- Make eye contact, and follow the movements and body language of the other person to avoid clumsiness.

- Be welcoming when you hug. If either of you requested the hug, then be warm and loving, creating the feeling of safety and the feeling that the two of you are the only ones that matter at that moment.

- Consider posture, strength, and duration.

- Do not confuse a “friend” hug with a “lover” hug, as things may get awkward and complicated.

- Unless you’ve hugged the person before, don’t hug them without asking first. Use judgment and discernment.

- If you know the person well, and have been hugging for many years, by all means, enjoy the hug deeply and profoundly.

Creating a Sacred Connection Without a Hug:

- Be assertive and courageous with what your needs are with each person, using your own energy through body language, or say what you need.

- If you see someone approach you with open arms, extend a hand out for a handshake.

- For myself, many times I prefer a handshake while looking into the eyes of a person.

- Put your palms together at your heart, and bow.

- Exit the dance circle space.

We want to leave a dance feeling good. Take care of yourself. Be mindful of others.

CREATING A SACRED CONNECTION

A HUG:

- Put your palms together at your heart, and bow.

A hug is a form of physical intimacy not necessarily sexual that usually involves closing the arms around another person or group of persons. The hug is one of the most common human signs of love and affection along with kissing. It is practiced publicly and privately without stigma in many countries, religions and cultures, within families, and across age and gender lines. Hugs may be exchanged as a sign of support and comfort in times of need. Hugs can be used to show many levels of affection, not particular to human beings alone. There are many species of animals that engage in similar exchanges of warmth.

Wikipedia, "Hug"

While researching “Hugging” online at the libraries in Colorado, I found something very interesting, in that only children’s titles appeared. Here is a list of a few hugging book titles for children: The Hugging Hour, Hugging the Rock, Daddy Hugs, Mommy Hugs. Suddenly, they’re here. The Art of Hugging a Cactus, Won’t you be my Hugaroo, Hug Time, The Giant Hug, The Cuddle Book. It’s Hug Day, A Hug for You, Hugs for Cats, Hug your Dog, Hug Me and the list goes on for a hundred or more.

Continuing the library search for adults using the word “embraces”, #1 - 4 came up as: Embraces: Dark Erotica, Accusing Embraces: needful, painful remembering in Beloved, Twisted Triangle, and, believe it or not, Weeds, Season One.

Wow. Hugging for children sounds really great, loving and innocent compared to the adults.

A hug is not a Peace Dance requirement, nor is it something we should take for granted. Based on the few titles about adults embraces, we may seriously consider, as human beings, and as a community, to begin conscious, sensitive “hug” development. This may sound crazy to some. What happens to people from child to adult with sensitivity to “hugs” is related to love, goodness, family, but it also could be lack of trust, betrayal and pain. It may take time to develop the depth, consciousness and innocence of a loving gesture.

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The hug has become the favorite social greeting when teenagers meet or part these days in the United States.

- For Teenagers, Hello Means “How about a Hug?”

New York Times, May 28, 2009

As dancers, we share an intimacy and friendship through the depth of the Dances by the gaze, holding hands, sharing the voice as we sing love to various partners throughout an event. Embracing after a dance has also been part of this tradition, worldwide. Our intention with the Dances and the embrace is to share a greeting and enjoy the continued intimacy of our friendship.

The issue of embracing has been brought to my attention by dancers, both experienced dancers and those fairly new. One shared that there were people who came for the first time who will not attend again because they felt the hugs were “forced” on them. Being a first timer to this kind of intimacy can feel overpowering and “too much.” The last thing any of us want to do at a Peace Dance is to scare new people away because of an embrace whose intention should be, and is for many, innocent, and loving. For others, it is invasive and uncomfortable.

A second dancer shared that even experienced long timers felt the embraces were prolonged and felt inappropriate with certain people.

An embrace or a hug has been a tradition at the closure of Dances of Universal Peace meetings. There are many who heartily engage in this tradition and look forward to it. Some have said they would not attend if hugs were not available, and others do not attend because of it.

Some dances have hugs as part of the movement of the dance. Some partners engage deeply in the embrace, slowing down the dance throwing off the timing. Others give a quick “A-frame”-style hug and move quickly, slowing down the dance throwing off the timing.

-Two different dancers, two different kinds of hugs.

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