

June Marsh

## In the Flow

Having experienced a wide variety of dance situations for most of my life, in recent years I began to feel a need to explore dance in relationship to two twentieth century developments. These were, psychology and technology. I felt this was necessary in order to gain further insights. Dane Rudhyar wrote, "our twentieth century may come to be known as the psychological century, even more than that of the discovery of atomic energy. . . . The basic root of nearly universal crises are the enormous social and economic changes which have been brought about by modern science and modern technology."

In this article I would like to deal with psychology and perhaps with the other, videodance work, in a subsequent issue, although it is the link with all three including dance which formed a synthesis. Technology used humanly acts as a vehicle which can be set aside at a certain point or used for certain effects.

*'I know who I was when I got up this morning, but seem to have changed several times since then.'* Lewis Carroll.

Later this developed into the way we act out many selves or 'sub-personalities', to use transpersonal psychology terminology. My interest in Humanistic Psychology also grew and paralleled readings in Jung, Maslow, Assagioli and other growth writers as well as participating in workshops and courses in conscious experience of Alpha and Theta brain cycles. So I came to a dance psychosynthesis through this holistic approach, which took many lateral steps, not to mention some backward ones also! Thus making for a more dialectic progression.

Depth and height psychology served to further underly the feelings I'd always had about dance as a transcending experience and path to the transpersonal self. Dance has always been second nature to me and, I saw it as applied zen where you meet your 'undanced dance'. Perhaps I wouldn't have used exactly those words to express it since it was then more a feeling that did not have to be articulated.

Today's need is to balance intellectual theory with understanding through knowing in your whole being, expressing through and into form. This is the excellent outcome of so much in the 'new psychologies', balancing intellect and intuition and providing ways more immediate and affordable, with techniques for self-help. As we begin to understand more of our own seasons, rhythms and cycles, so we can come to a new understanding of our own living human nature within that has an adult relationship to nature without, whilst preserving the 'child in man'.

**What can Dance and Movement give to the Growth Movement?**



*from the Mystic Spiral by Jill Purce, Thames and Hudson*

Living and moving symbols as an expression of the language of the unconscious created through movement and dance, can be used for growth and therapy bringing an experience of rhythm, contact, release, flow and sheer joy of moving. Getting outside oneself and really experiencing that you can dance beyond the awkward image and express an inner longing in an encouraging, secure and caring environment and atmosphere is very important. Sometimes our most basic expressive needs expressed through rhythm and movement are the hardest to find space and time for in this plastic, passive, concrete world. The experience of dance should overspill into our daily lives. I have not learned my real dance in the studio but in letting life live through me and in experiencing a wide variety of things which give further life to it. It is crucial that in order to work towards becoming whole beings and to utilize all our potential we need an experience of many modes so we can play all the notes in the scale and adapt at will. This means fostering adaptability without becoming bound by any technique whether of dance or psychology.

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Some dance techniques alter the physiology of the body and I'm sure the same parallel can be drawn with the mind and psyche. We need to be careful in what we choose. Some guidelines are needed since the choice is becoming very broad, and whilst good on the one hand it can lead to an over eclectic approach with lack of discipline. Balance again is required. Our inner feeling should be the basis for our choice - 'to feel it out'. This ability is what we need to develop most along with 'heart thinking' to refine and discriminate for ourselves in order to grow and realise our fullest potential.

So dance and movement can bring balance to the various techniques used in psychology. This combines willing and thinking through feeling.

We can move the mind into the body and vice versa. This should be a two-way experience. Put into our body movement what it is to fly and to flow, can bring a release and new awareness that staves lopsided conceptualising. To give form through movement is an easy thing to say and hard to do for the bridge between mind and body needs rebuilding. Theory and abstract knowledge has taken us a long way but to go further we need a bodily response within some kind of structure. Freedom comes through discipline. The language of gesture is such a wonderful gift and has been sadly neglected. Sound can be conveyed through gesture linking to our vital inner organs and so help to heal. Our feet have gone to sleep, we have folded our arms in complacency and stuffed our hands in our pockets for too long. We do have hands that will heal again when we release the dancer within.

#### **What can the Growth Movement give to Dance?**

There is an increasing interest in bodymind integration and many systems of body awareness used in the growth fields can give valuable insight for dance with an understanding of how tensions and blocks can be released through the right use of movement led by someone who understands what effect various movements have upon one's being. This goes beyond the physical extending and repetition of exercises found in many dance 'techniques', without any probing and questioning as to their emotional and mental effects. The result can lead to over-extension and burning out the body whilst still young, instead of a careful cultivation of the body's recuperative powers.

Yoga or Tai chi brings the idea that we do not need to regress physically with age. I have found that my body is now more flexible than ten years ago and that an integrated lifestyle, mentally and physically can make for strength. Also imagination is strength. The body can be exercised through the mind by inner visualisation techniques. Guided imagery, sensory perception and exploration of body mechanics increases use of inner and outer space. Thus we can use the breathing, grounding self imaging techniques albeit developed from observations of eastern forms by people like Reich and others, and incorporated into methods such as Gurdjieff with his co-ordination of mind and body. Bio-energetics, Alexander Techniques, Rolfing, re-birthing, these could be a part of dance curricula. It was interesting to see this all happening in last summer's 'Many Ways of Moving Conference' held at The

Polytechnic of Central London. "How many ways can any body move?" was the opening question! Melting pot situations need time to reveal the blending, combining, complementing and contrasts, and for developing a greater movement awareness throughout society, and also for asking the 'WHYS of Moving'.

Today we need to develop an attitude of consciousness which is interested in knowing and understanding the laws by which the energies which stand behind manifested life operate. Thus the importance lies in knowing the effect of our outer movement on our inner state of being.

The growth movement revitalizes in a conscious yet natural, spontaneous way what ancient man knew naturally.

### **What does Dance Symbolise?**

Creation is movement, and spirit is creative movement. We are cosmic beings within the cosmic being! We are beginning to glimpse the body as an energy field, extending beyond the perception of the physical. We have to be careful how we take responsibility for ourselves and for activating and interacting with the energy fields of others. This is an important consideration in the use of movement within the growth movement. All energy is sacred. This observation is another indication of what we are stepping into and of what we need to learn and to be aware.

The combining of Eastern and Western forms is also a factor in the growing awareness of how to use the body and how the subtle bodies are affected. This can be extended to the reciprocal effect between ourselves and our world. This inter-relationship is something which has been the concern of dance and movement since people first began to gesture and move and created a way of symbolising their relationship to themselves, to others and to the universe. This is the cosmic dance. We can find it repeated in many movement systems, whether labelled, traditional, sacred, ethnic, Sufi, Tai chi, Gurdjieff. . . So it is a metaphor for life and the universal and cosmic flow which we embody and reflect within and of which we are a part.

There are people working in traditional dance such as Margery Howe, revealing the symbolic insights of the various steps, patterns. . . The partner holds can relate to polarity and the dynamic tension necessary in organic life. 'Dancing to the centre', finding a place in the whole is all part of the value of ritual and also the right distance between, the awareness of space in relationship to others. The six pointed star of traditional dance found in sword dances etc symbolises the two triangles of the meeting and intercrossing between heaven and earth and the right and left as the intuition and intellect and balancing of these. This again is the basic linking that all forms seek. The whirling dervish is seen as the thread between heaven and earth. It is man who by standing on the earth upright serves the function of creating a bridge holding the two forces in his being. We can stand poised yet anchored as intermediaries. In a unique way we bring spirit into matter and then raise matter into spirit, through our own integration and enlightenment. In sacred dance based upon the research work of people like professor Bernhard Wosien the pattern is repeated. This he based upon Greek dance form. Again gestures

are made heavenwards or earthwards as deliberate means to channel energy. Sacred gestures in Egyptian and Hindu Temple Dances embody and invoke the relationships also and the freer mudra forms as used in Indonesia were derived from these. The psyche is outward, in Tai chi it is more an inward linking of breath, eye vision and movement in a meditative poem expressing motion the three stages in the cycle of life! Taking the tiger by the ears symbolises the drawing in and focused use of energies. Most forms too are concerned with orientation. Yoga postures have each a significance relating to a level of consciousness and to an element. This is only a brief survey. Much use is being made of the 'ancient' forms today translated into a free-form as well as to their popularity in their pure form. Although there has always been cross cultural referencing of styles, as with Flamenco, very slowly through time, the migratory, physiological and cultural patterns can be seen. This has been very much speeded up in the twentieth century with the rapidity of communication and use of media. So we can cross reference and have a visual picture and impression of other nations developed forms. This becomes somewhat eclectic before it can evolve into an expression that we can choose from to express our self image and beyond.

This process is fascinating to watch as man's oldest symbol interfaces with some of his more recent innovations, such as modern psychology and technology. What will evolve? We hope an interest taken again in rhythm, movement etc, making it an intergral part of a total way of living, like a meditation in action and not something for an elite few or just some self-indulgent trip and occasional freak out either!

### **Contacting your symbols through dance**

Dance is an image in time and space, like a poem. Yet it is transient and of the moment. This is what matters, to live each moment to the fullest. From the unconscious, symbols are evoked which are messages to the conscious. Time and again, I have experienced this happening through my own dances which are a way of portraying one's own life story. I call them 'spiritual stepping stones', where the image presents itself through the dance movement and later reveals more and more what it symbolises - for beyond the symbol lies a greater reality. A strong expression of this happened for me with a dance I called 'Soledad' (Woman alone). It proved a great learning process. Several years later I am still unravelling its insights, - one being the balancing of male and female within myself. An experiential movement event, 'Ripple of Hope' and a creative dance workshop for the AHP, 'A Step in Time', both based upon experiencing the four elements through movement and linked to Jung's four psychological types - sensing, feeling, thinking, intuiting, allowed me to observe similar realisations happening in others.

### **Dance Life**

Dance is essentially transient. It is of the now, capturing the moment and letting the joy of each moment be perfectly realized. Dance arts are, no longer frills and entertainment. Dancers as 'cultural workers' can restore dance to a real integrative and effective role today, communicating in diverse ways. The body 'speaks' linked to a thinking mind, for the body is an expressive

instrument and must sing. It is necessary to be fully articulate bodily and verbally in the path towards self-actualisation and self-realisation. The activity of the limbs wakes up and vitalises the experience of the head.

We need to get a move on for in healing ourselves we heal more than we realise. It is important to have harmonious adaptability and flexibility and to let go and be in the flow, a metaphor which is more than just dance terminology, for dance is a symbol for life itself. The universal cosmic pattern is reflected in the dance within. We need understanding of vibrations, energy flows, right timing, the spaces in between and right distance in order to actualise all our potential if we are to survive and grow and learn to take full responsibility for our actions and the reality we create. To become master of our own beings, physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. We need to tune in to ourselves, to others, and our world and thus gain attunement by the understanding of rhythm. We need to be aligned ourselves with our own primal axis and to also be in our right place or space at the right time. To perceive the inbreathing and outbreathing, contraction and expansion of life in our own movements.

Also, we need a wide vocabulary of movement in order to allow ourselves room to experiment and develop because it is the process of growing through the art form we chose which is as important, if not more so, than the product itself. One can describe dance in many poetical ways, what really matters is to experience the creative process itself. Just as we've denied the thrusts and messages from the unconscious until Freud and to a greater extent Jung opened it up to us, so we've been denying our urge, need and ability to move. First we must be aware, for we tend to exercise with the same inflexibility that governs our ordinary movements and re-enforces old habits.

Today it is becoming increasingly necessary to take a step in time figuratively and literally if we are going to be left the time to explore inner and outer space.

As we become beautiful instruments, so we can be resonators and channels for life's energy and 'dance life'. At first, we take many false and clumsy steps, but as momentum gathers we can become more fleet-footed, steady and poised and able to join in the wonderful dance of life. So, this is an invocation to dance life and to dance it from the heart.

Enjoy it!

### **NOTHING IN THE LAND OF EVERYTHING**

"Nothing found - what any nothing can soon verify for himself - that the dance of becoming which is also the dance of life is not danced with the feet and legs only, but with every limb, with every faculty, with every fibre and particle and potential - yes, potential! - of one's being. When he was dancing - really dancing - Nothing knew that even that which he was not, as yet, was being pulled out of its hidy-hole and into the dance. As he danced, that which he was not, but could be, was being persuaded to come forth, out of its hiding, into the light of the sun."

**Ted Matchett**