

Every
Knee
Shall
Bow

A Literary Treasury for the
Advancement of the Arts
in Worship

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BASAR PUBLISHING

EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW: A LITERARY TREASURY OF
THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE ARTS IN WORSHIP

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"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

~ Phillipians 2:9-11 (KJV)

INTRODUCTION

Every Knee Shall Bow

Welcome to this one-of-a-kind, ground-breaking educational resource!

You will discover revelation that will inspire you to new heights in the area of dance ministry. Filled with wisdom from some of the most influential dance ministry pioneers, "Every Knee Shall Bow: A Literary Treasury for the Advancement of the Arts in Worship" has assembled prophetic voices who will continue to shape and mold the movement arts ministry for years to come. This treasury covers three distinct and relevant areas:

Our Past: History and Pioneers

Our Present: Education, Exposure, and Activism

Our Future: Advancement

This rich deposit of invaluable information is sure to have an impact of global proportions for years to come.

Dr. Pamela Hardy

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CHAPTER 1

Global Impact: Dancing in the Glory of God

by Dr. Pamela Hardy

I was made for glory. You were made for glory. It is a gift from God. Glory is the inheritance of every believer.

The word glory is defined as weight, splendor, copiousness, honor or honorable. Only God has true glory. His glory shines brighter than the sun.

Psalm 8 tells us that we are crowned with glory, therefore, we are created to live in the glory of our God - to walk in the glory, talk in the glory, dance in the glory of our God.

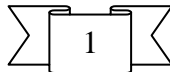
PSALM 8:1-6, 9

1- A Psalm of David. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

2- Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

3- When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

4- What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?



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5- For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

6- Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:

9- O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

Looking at the story of Psalm 8, David kept his father's sheep. As a young man, he was with his sheep day and night. I believe that as David saw the moon and the stars, he came to know God. Therefore, he knew that the Strong and Powerful made them all.

David also knew that the enemies of God were against Him and His people. Through his intimate relationship with God and revelation of God's power, he knew that God would fight for His people and make His people strong. God is more powerful than all of His enemies. God will always win.

Sometimes the power and grace of God appears wonderfully in those who are most unlikely to rule. Sometimes the power of God brings to pass great things by very weak and unlikely instruments, that the excellency of the power might more evidently appear to be of God, and not of man. When these unlikely instruments conquer the most powerful and malicious enemies, it confounds them, and advances the glory of God.

Strength, force, security, majesty, praise, boldness, might and power have been ordained. This He does, because of His enemies, that He may put them to silence.

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The majesty and glory of our King makes us want to glorify Him. There are no words that can truly express His excellent greatness. O LORD our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!

His name is powerful, mighty, noble, worthy, great and magnificent! His name is glorious and honorable. Yet, He, the Almighty Sovereign King, sees us, cares for us and yes, He remembers us and visits us.

God created man for His glory. Isaiah 43:7 says, *"Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him."* We live, move and have our being in His glory.

God makes the minister and the ministry one. Therefore, every part of our lives is meant to be surrounded, enveloped and crowned with His glory. We are encircled and compassed about, both when we attack the enemies of our souls or when we need protection. This is the revelation we must learn and live to manifest the glory of God that will change hearts, and ultimately, change nations.

God has crowned us with glory and honor. The word honor means magnificence, splendor, beauty, comeliness, excellency, majesty and favor. This same God has made us to have dominion over the works of His hands. Dominion means to rule, to govern, to reign and to cause to have power. He has caused us to have power.

He has put all things under our feet. Because the Lord is our habitation, He gives His angels charge over us and causes us to tread upon the lion and adder - upon the young lion and the dragon. Those things that try to oppress us will be overtaken by the glory and our feet then become the oppressor of our enemies.

Through our dance, we trample them under our feet. We dance through troops - those things that try to press against us, and we leap over walls. He makes our feet like

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hinds feet, enlarges our steps under us and makes sure that our feet do not slip, shake or slide - so we can be carriers of His glory. Our enemies fall under our feet. He gives us strength for the battle and subdues under us those that rise up against us. He has also given us the necks of our enemies to dance upon injustice and upon those that desire our destruction. As we dance in the glory, we take salvation to the nations.

Romans 10:13-15

13- For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

14- How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15- And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

As we dance, our feet preach the gospel of peace. Our feet dance tidings of good things. Wherever our feet trod, we carry the presence and the glory of God. This is how the glory of our God will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Our dance can create an atmosphere for the glory of His presence to manifest. Through our worship, we build a throne for the King. The highest form of worship is when we become worship, not just enact worship through the dance.

Our lives must reflect the King. As we die to ourselves, we can begin to hear from heaven and dance the

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dances that He releases from His heart and from His throne. Until then, we have not begun to dance in the glory.

Because we were created to worship, we do not lean to our own understanding. We yield our bodies to God as living sacrifices and allow Him to dance His dances through us. Just as the keys on a keyboard do not move unless someone plays the keys, we can submit to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to play us like an instrument.

Once we are yielded instruments, He can release His glory. In the glory, there is no lack. Healing, deliverance, joy, salvation, and provision will all be released as we dance in the glory. Our regions will be transformed as we dance in the glory.

We must remember that the ultimate goal in worship is the presence of the Lord, not our physical activities. Worship must focus on Him, not on self. Let us cry out for that which is authentic so we do not fill our worship with mere physical activities.

Psalm 96:6-10

6- Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

7- Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength.

8- Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.

9- O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear (fear: twist or whirl in a circular or spiral manner- dance!) ***before him, all the earth.***

10- Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it

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shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously.

Rejoice! Jump for joy! God has turned our mourning into dancing! He has put off our sackcloth, and girded us with gladness! Our glory will sing praise to Him, and not be silent. We will not hold our peace.

As we surrender to the glory of the King, the impact will be felt globally. I traveled to Korea and 30 days later, I traveled to Haiti. The two nations could not have been more different, yet both nations are in need of an impact of God's glory. I found the church in Korea to be alive, filled with joy and expectation, ready to impact their nation with God's glory. In vivid contrast, I experienced many people in Haiti who seemed to be in the eye of a spiritual hurricane as much as still recovering from the dramatic trauma of a natural hurricane. This is a nation in need of God's glory. The nations are in a tumultuous place. Let us dance in Haiti until voodoo is broken and the body of Christ rises up in the splendor of the Lord.

Dance in Israel... until the veils are removed from their eyes. Dance before the Lord and give Him no rest, until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

Dance in Holland... until righteousness overtakes the land and the ladies of the red light district realize that they were created by a loving God who sees their value and their worth.

Dance in South Africa... until every remnant of apartheid is completely destroyed.

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Dance in Mexico... until every gang member and drug lord is converted and delivered from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light.

Dance in the glory... until wicked governments are brought down and people rejoice because the righteous become rulers.

Dance in every nation... until the glory of God fills every kindred, tongue and people.

Dance in the glory... until the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever.

Dance before Him in glory. Ascribe glory to Him. Bring to Him the glory that is due His name and dance, all the earth. His kingdom will be established and His righteousness shall be released. He is the King of Glory. Glory in His holy name. Dance in His holy name so the heart of the nations shall rejoice as they seek the Lord.

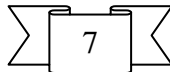
1 Chronicles 16:27-31

27- Glory and honour are in his presence; strength and gladness are in his place.

28- Give unto the LORD, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength.

29- Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

30- Fear before him, all the earth: the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved.



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31- Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The LORD reigneth.

First, we are told that glory is in His presence. Then, the Scripture admonishes us to give, ascribe or bring Him glory. We are to bring an offering as we fall down and worship Him.

The first word in verse 30 is very interesting. The word fear is the word *chuwł*. It translates as "to twist or whirl in a circular manner, specifically to dance." Can it be that all the physical earth was created to whirl before the Lord, thereby bringing glory to His name, establishing and stabilizing the inhabitants of the nations?

The same word can also be found in Psalm 90:2 ***"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed (chuwł) the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."*** Can it be that God Himself whirled in a circular manner (as in dancing) as He created the earth and the inhabitants thereof?

You will find this same word, *chuwł*, in yet another Psalm:

Psalm 29:2-8

2- Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

3- The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters.

4- The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

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5- The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.

6- He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.

7- The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire.

8- The voice of the LORD shaketh (chuw1) the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.

As we worship in the beauty of holiness, the majestic voice of the Lord is released and brings glory through our dance. Flames of fire attend the voice of God, illuminating our hearts, releasing His glory as a holy flame. His voice is filled with glory and has the ability to dance over our wilderness, breaking down barriers and causing us to jump and leap wildly for joy.

John 17:22

And the glory which thou gave me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

He has given us His glory to make us one. We need the Glory to be one! His spiritual weight... His essence, His character, that which makes Him infinite and boundless, with no restrictions, has been given to us to be physical demonstrations of God's glory.

Isaiah 60:1-5

1- Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.

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2- For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

3- And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

4- Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.

5- Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

Arise is a call to stand up! Stir yourself! Shine! Be set on fire! No more movement for the sake of movement.

I call on those who are willing to dance only for the purpose of releasing His glory! As you dance the dances of heaven, may His glory be seen upon you as a visible manifestation. Heal the brokenhearted, dance deliverance to the captives, open the prison doors with the key of God's glory. May nations be transformed by the brightness of your rising.

The world will know those who carry His glory. They are waiting for the appearing, the coming, the illumination, the manifestation and revealed revelation of the sons of God. Dancing in the glory of God can have a global impact resulting in revival! Together, we can change the world.

Dr. Pamela Hardy



Dr. Pamela Hardy is an ordained minister, a preacher / teacher of the Word of God. She received a Master of Fine Arts degree in dance from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX and a Doctor of Religious Dance degree from FICU in Merced, California. Pamela has danced on Broadway in New York City and performed in national and regional touring productions. Because she has given her life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, she now ministers in dance under the leading and anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Hardy travels as with an apostolic anointing, ministering throughout the United States and abroad. God has sent her as an Ambassador to over 20 countries, including Scotland, Germany, Nicaragua, Panama, Ecuador, South Africa, Israel, Malaysia, England, Canada, Costa Rica, Mexico, Suriname, Fiji, Holland, Puerto Rico and throughout the Caribbean. She is a frequent guest minister at churches, seminars and conferences. Pamela is called to minister a Rhema word to worship teams as well as in the area of women's concerns.

The Lord has enabled her to help start, strengthen and edify dance companies in local churches. She and her husband, Apostle Chris Hardy, (www.iclnetwork.org) oversee KCIM (Kingdom Couples In Ministry) and Kingdom Ambassadors Ministerial Training.

Dr. Hardy is the founder of Eagles International Training Institute, (www.eaglesiti.org) a mentoring program for those in dance ministry.

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She also gives apostolic oversight to several Eagles Schools including: International Business Institute, School of the Prophetic, Flag Institute, Prayer Institute, Authors Institute, Mime Institute, Leadership Institute, School of Worship, Pageantry Institute, EITI Torah School, TEN (The Eagles Network – Worldwide) and EITI Children.

She is the founder of Global Horizons, an internet broadcast, and author of LET THE NATIONS REJOICE! The Prophetic anointing that is on her life will bring an increase in vision and will challenge and motivate others to be released into destiny and purpose. She is the Founder and Director of Set Free Evangelistic Ministries.

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CHAPTER 2

Going Forth: Defined

by **Elizabeth Hairston-McBurrows, PhD**

“For ye shall go out with joy...” - Isaiah 55:12

The presence of the African American in the United States since the early 17th Century has expressed a connotation of bondage, rhythms, and rituals. The European and American understanding of what it means to be black in America, and maintain a religious identity as well as an African American identity, is extremely vague.

Thousands of Africans were imported to America from their native land during the 17th Century. They were kidnapped by Europeans who had settled in America desiring to achieve economically, therefore, needing a type of labor equivalent to that of machinery, though not really being defined as such.

Slave labor was to prove quite beneficial to the anticipatory slave owner, notwithstanding the conflicts that would inevitably be inherent with the benefits. Potential slave-masters were not aware of the unique, as well as, rich culture that rested in each one of the “less than human beings,” as they were often called, for the victims of slavery were coming out of a land which has given birth to outstanding civilizations. The victims of slavery were being forced away from a civilization that “has known rivers, ancient dusky rivers,”

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rivers that run deep along the Nile. The families from West Africa were experiencing a separation from a homeland that resounded with flowing – yet sometimes restless, though always communicative – rhythms from one village or hut to another. Flowing rivers, flourishing civilizations, and restless rhythms describe a culture that had a deep religious commitment, which was now about to become threatened but not totally destroyed.

When a people are stripped of their families and familiar surroundings, they find a greater strength in relying upon their religious beliefs. One can worship his/her God with an inward response to a certain degree, yet there comes a time when the desire to break forth into praise becomes overwhelmingly strong and one finds a boldness and strength to “go forth” into praise with singing, clapping the hands, playing on drums or tambourines, and dancing with the feet, no matter what the cost.

Such actions and needs describe the slaves who were brought to the United States during the early 17th Century and, as such, describes the ancestors of those slaves who find a need to worship God with their Body, Soul, and Spirit.

Upon entering a new and strange land—America—the slaves were introduced to a new religion; a religion which was to have a powerful impact upon the Western World’s approach to worship, as the slaves found a need to combine the traditions of the Methodist and Baptist churches with the traditions of their mother country—Africa. The tradition of the former was that of singing with the hands cupped, followed by swaying as they sang hymns learned in the Methodist and Baptist traditions to which they were exposed. To this they added a rhythmic flow, which resulted in dancing, sometimes in a circular-type style. They (the slaves) were often referred to as ‘The Shouters,’ because this dance style much resembled a type of dance movement seen

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by many Protestant leaders in which the slaves would run around the altar praising God. I will discuss more about the ‘shouters’ in a later section. However, I would like to mention at this point that the dance activity in the circle, most of the time, built up to great excitement to the extent that this time was often referred to as “gettin’ happy” or “gettin’ the Holy Ghost.” In later years, many Pentecostals referred to this experience as “tarrying (waiting for the Holy Ghost).”

I will not discuss the theology of either in this work, for I only want to focus on dance forms as they relate to African American History. At the same time, songs such as ‘Come On Down, Come On Down, Lord Let The Holy Ghost Come On Down,’ have replaced the ‘hymns’ with an added rhythmic pattern as an appropriate song to sing at the altar when members of the congregation are desiring to be filled with the Holy Ghost. The tradition of the latter being that of communicating with drums, strumming on the Bangelo, singing folk songs and going forth in dances.

A nation’s traditions establish an identity for the nation, distinguishing it by language and religion in most cases. If the language and/or the religion are stripped from a people, they suffer a tremendous loss of community, which discourages ethnic growth.

The African slaves who were brought over to the United States on the slave ships were forced to be separated from their families and their identification. However, due to a strong will to survive, many of them kept the songs in their hearts, the drumbeat in their ears, and their dance of many rituals in their feet.

The slave-masters knew of their servants’ ability to dance; therefore, they took advantage of their abilities and forced them to dance on the ships en route to the United States. Amid pain from disease and pain from the master’s

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whip, the slave danced to a beat that did not speak of his love for God. Slaves were forced to dance in order to keep them healthy; or so the slave-masters believed. Imagine dancing to a cat-o-nine tails whip. Imagine dancing for survival and not as a result of your love for God. This procedure was known as “dancing the slaves,” according to Lynne Farley Emery in her outstanding book referred to in Note 2. (Black Dance in the United States from 1619 to 1970).

The slaves danced to a beat that forewarned him of the treacherous journey that awaited him in a strange land. How could they dance in a strange land? Though the slaves were not Israelites taken into captivity, they were experiencing similar struggles as is seen in the following Scripture, Psalm 137:1-6, *“By the Rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, ‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion.’ How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.”*

The hope of being able to dance a dance of liberty settled deep in the heart of the slaves who knew the necessity of being free enough to go forth in praise and battle in response to Psalm 149:3, *“Let them praise his name in the dance,”* with the hope of experiencing the reality of Psalm 30:11, *“Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing.”*

Dr. Elizabeth Hairston



Apostle Dr. Elizabeth Amelia Hairston gave up a career in show business to become an Ambassador for Jesus Christ. God has anointed her rich talents and now uses them for His honor and glory. In Columbus, Ohio she directed and founded The Liturgical Expressions, Inc. This body of Holy Spirit-filled believers brought forth God's Word through movement.

Dr. Hairston ministers apostolically and prophetically in music, dance and drama; and teaches a relevant, revelatory, simplicity, yet uncompromising Word of God. She is in constant demand to minister throughout the United States, Central & South America, the Caribbean Islands, Africa, India and Europe. She ministers especially—but not exclusively—in the areas of intercession, women's issues, praise and worship, ministerial ethics and leadership training.

Presently she serves as Founding President of The Apostolic-Prophetic Connection, Inc (an organization that bridges the gap between the five-fold ministries and the arts), and is the International President and Founder of Women With a Call International, Inc. with branches in the United States, South America, the Caribbean, and the continents of Europe, Africa and Asia.

In 2004, Apostle Hairston received a Letter of Recognition as a Global Leader by the President of the United States, Mr. George W. Bush.

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CHAPTER 3

Teach Me and Give Me Understanding: Experiential Learning and the Church Community¹

by Dr. Kathleen S. Turner, Ph.D.

Introduction

Over the years liturgical dance has been recognized to possess unique potential and power in translating and transmitting ideas of faith within the Christian tradition. Yet, liturgical dance is not a regular component of worship services in most Christian congregations. This absence is a loss. This chapter will address the power and potential

¹This chapter is extracted from a larger chapter, Teach Me and Give Me Understanding: Experiential Learning and the Church Community. This larger chapter is found in the following dissertation: Turner, Kathleen S. “And We Shall Learn Through the Dance:” Liturgical Dance as Religious Education. Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 2012. ProQuest (UMI 3554041).

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liturgical dance has in nourishing the faith life of congregants.

This will be done by examining the theories of education and aesthetic education through experience by educator John Dewey. Dewey's ideas can assist faith communities in the teaching, learning and living experiences that are religious. All education for Dewey transpires through the explorations of touching, feeling, and thinking, therefore reinforcing that all education begins with experience. Thus, personal experience is important for all concerned within the context of the learning community.

There are several implications of this principle for religious educators so that it is essential to view religious experience as the centerpiece of their work with learners, (Durka, 2010). If this premise is to be taken seriously, then the religious educator must find ways by which religious experience can be identified, fostered, encouraged, and made applicable for all members of the congregation within a variety of religious learning experiences. Then the church could be defined as a community of learning where a variety of religious experiences can emerge in a variety of venues for all members of the congregation in a way that fosters critical reflection and application both individually as well as corporately.

John Dewey's theory of education is explored through the themes of experiential and the aesthetic aspects of education and then are examined through the views of religious educator Norma Cook Everist (2002) who presents the curriculum as a module that encompasses the entire life of the church. From this perspective the elements of remembering and a communal encountering curriculum are explored. Liturgical dance as a teaching tool has characteristics embedded within it that classifies it as experiential learning while giving clarity and understanding

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to religious experience. The work of Dewey and Everist along with liturgical dance as an experiential learning tool gives richness to religious education as a way to teach, foster and give understanding to religious experience for the church as a community place of learning. This chapter will explore the combined richness found between these three voices.

Dewey's Theory on Education and Experience

Dewey's formal definition of education is:

“__that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience__” (Dewey 1944, 76).

Education is aimed at human flourishing when each subsequent experience becomes a more enriching experience than the previous one. A genuinely educative experience is one in which instruction is conveyed and ability increased and is contradistinguished from a routine activity on the one hand and an impulsive activity on the other (77). A routine action is one which is automatic; it may increase skill to do a particular thing, and although it may be classified as educative, it does not lead to new perceptions of bearings and connections. An impulsive action is one where learning is achieved by doing something which was not understood. However, learning is only achieved because after the act is performed, there are results which were not noted before (Dewey, 78).

For Dewey, a key aspect of education as continuous reconstruction is that it identifies the end result and the process. This means that experience as an active process occupies time and that its later period of reconstruction completes its earlier portion. It brings to light the

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connections that are involved yet were not understood in the prior experience. The later outcome for Dewey thus reveals the meaning of the earlier, while the experience as a whole establishes a bent or disposition toward the things possessing this meaning (Dewey 1944, 78).

To “learn from experience” is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence. Under such conditions, doing becomes a trying; an experiment with the world to find out what it is like; the undergoing becomes instruction – discovery of the connection of things. (Dewey 1944, 140)

Experience is primarily an active-passive affair; it is not primarily cognitive. However, the measure of the value of an experience lies in the perception of relationships or continuities to which it leads. It includes cognition to a degree by which it is cumulative or amounts to something or it has meaning (1944, 140). As it relates to the senses and lessons learned, with the application of the mind, some bodily activities have to be used. In this regard, the senses are regarded as a kind of mysterious conduit through which information is conducted from the external world into the mind (142). They are considered as gateways of knowledge.

The Aesthetic Experience

The educational experience of the artistic and the aesthetic is essential in the learning process. Dewey (1980) ventures into this field of inquiry through the lens of an educator, the artist, and the perceiver. He maintains that when one has *an* experience, particularly when it relates to an aesthetic experience, it is then that the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment (1980, 35). In this case, experience is defined by those situations and episodes that are spontaneously referred to as being “real experiences,” (36).

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In an experience, flow is from something to something; as one part leads into another and as one part carries on with what went on before, each gains distinctiveness itself (36). For Dewey this type of experience has a unity that gives it its name. An example of this could relate to a particular meal, a particular song or a ruptured friendship. Dewey states: The existence of this unity is constituted by a single *quality* that pervades the entire experience in spite of the variation of its constituent parts... In going over an experience in mind *after* its occurrence, we may find that one property rather than another was sufficiently dominant so that it characterizes the experience as a whole. (37)

Dewey asserts that there are conditions to be met without which an experience cannot come to be. "The outline of the common pattern is set by the fact that every experience is the result of interaction between a live creature and some aspect of the world in which he [one] lives," (1980, 43-44). An experience also has pattern and structure; it is not just doing and undergoing in alternation, but consists of them in relationship, (44). The action and its consequence must be joined in perception. This relationship for Dewey is what gives meaning to the experience; to grasp it is the objective of all intelligence. The scope and content of the relations measure the significant content of an experience (44).

According to Dewey: It is not possible to divide in a vital experience the practical, emotional and intellectual from one another and to set the properties of one over against the characteristics of the others. The emotional phase binds parts together into a single whole; 'intellectual' simply names the fact that the experience has meaning; 'practical' indicates that the organism is interacting with events and objects which surround it. (1980, 55)

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Dewey attempts to show that “the [a]esthetic is no intruder in experience from without, whether by way of idle luxury or transcendent ideality, but that it is the clarified and intensified development of traits that belong to every normally complete experience,” (Dewey 1934, 46). The artistic expression is one that unites the same relation of doing and undergoing, outgoing and incoming energy that makes an experience to be an experience. Artistic expression of any kind does the actual creation of the art, but also embodies within itself the attitude of the perceiver while the work is being created. This incorporation allows the art to be a work of the aesthetic.

For Dewey, one who perceives is one who must create one’s own experience: [The perceiver’s] creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent. They are not the same in any literal sense. But with the perceiver, as with the artist, there must be an ordering of the elements of the whole that is in form, although not in detail, the same as the process of organization the creator of the work consciously experienced... The artist selected, simplified, clarified, abridged and condensed according to his interest. The beholder must go through these operations according to his point of view and interest. In both, an act of abstraction that is of extraction of what is significant, takes place. In both, there is comprehension in its literal signification – that is, a gathering together of details and particulars physically scattered into an experienced whole. There is work done on the part of the percipient as there is on the part of the artist. (1934, 54)

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A Practical Example

An example of putting Dewey's theories into practical perspective is a summer enrichment project when a group of teens came to visit Camp Kingdom. Camp Kingdom is not classified as a Christian camp and its enrollment is not limited to those who are Christian. However, Christian moral principles are taught, particularly how to love God and to love one's neighbor using song, dance, sports, education, community service, and drama. On one particular day, a group of about seventy-five teens from across the country and world were in New York attending a liturgical dance conference entitled, *Purify...* sponsored by The Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York. They were scheduled to visit Camp Kingdom to dance and participate with the campers during a morning gathering.

About twenty volunteers from both the camp and the conference teens were asked to share their faith through dance to a song entitled, "Never would have made it."² This invitation came immediately after one of the dance facilitators and a group of teens from the conference had just finished performing a gospel hip hop dance to that song. The invitation asked more teens to tell their faith story through movement voice, an artistic endeavor most young people would consider challenging yet not so impossible to achieve. There were about thirty volunteers who took their places on either the school stage or in one of the three aisles of the auditorium and proceeded to dance their life of faith to the song. Boys, girls, teens from both the camp and conference were among those who danced their testimony which encapsulated every adult, teenager, and youth in attendance. Even the few public school security guards who were on

² Marvin Sapp, "Never would have made it," from *Thirsty*, 88697-09433-2 & copyright 2007 Zomba Recording LLC.

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duty found themselves coming inside the auditorium and all were brought to a level of faith that indeed made everyone confront who and what they believed. A pregnant hush fell over the entire auditorium as tears flowed down the cheeks of onlookers; arms linked and hugged bringing the hearts and minds of those sitting next to each other closer together. Some sat silently with hands placed over their mouths; however, eyes were clearly fixed upon the dancers, both those in nearby aisles and those situated on the stage. (C. Turner, pers. comm.)

This challenge had pattern and structure that gave life to this experiential moment. This was a *living* experience for all, the dancer and the observer. For the more than 300 people who were watching this “on the spot” dance improvisation, the actions and consequences were joined to formulate meaningful perceptions that gave direct and personal meaning to everyone’s experiences. People were joined by this experience, uniting personal experiences of faith regardless of age, gender, culture and belief. It seemed the scope and content of the relations measured how significant an experience this truly was. Learning took place on the practical, emotional, and intellectual levels for all of those who were in attendance.

This experience was consistent with Dewey’s notion of education as the reorganization of experience that gives every subsequent experience a clearer perspective by which the individual can arise and grow in learning capacity and comprehension. Experience allows instruction to take center stage on its own terms in order for the individual to fully engage as a learning participant. Allowing the subject material within the experience to run its full course affords the practical, the emotional, and the intellectual aspects of the educative act to gain momentum within the individuals participating in the experience. Perception occurs once

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action and its consequence are joined in union together. Continuity, interaction, and sound objectives undergird the relationship found between education and experience.

Dewey's (1939) theory of education through experience lays a foundation for religious education and its role in presenting monumental opportunities for learning and developing faith within the church as a community of learning. Thus every individual, regardless of age, who regularly attends church service should be given multiple opportunities to discover and learn the meaning of Christianity as well as what it means to be Christian. The church represents a type of microcosm of the world in which one lives where generations of people, both young and old, male and female with diverse learning styles and from diverse cultures and economic standings all come together to learn how to worship and love God while experientially learning what it means to love one's neighbor. This type of religious setting can utilize Dewey's educational theory in ways that could be insurmountable for the congregation as a collective community where learning transpires and growth for the heart, mind, and spirit never ends.

The work of religious educator Norma Cook Everist (2002) who promotes religious education in the context of the church as a community of learning is relevant here. The understanding of experiential learning and aesthetic education in Everist's work reveals a strong Deweyan influence, and so the examination of her work will be done through the lens of John Dewey's educational theories.

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Norma Cook Everist: Remembering, Differently-Abled and Utilization of Resources

Everist (2002) suggests that the religious educator can compile an enriching curriculum if it flows from several vantage points. Three that are highlighted here are the ministry of re-membering, the understanding of the term differently abled, and the successful utilization of resources, including the artistic. Everist states, "The community engages in its ministry of re-membering the body of Christ, literally incorporating all the differently abled people in the parish. Thus the curriculum is formed, God and God's people in this time and place. All else is resource, but substantial resource it is. The community needs to learn how to utilize who they are and who they are becoming, adding appropriate curriculum resources, developing a mutual accountability to sustain and cultivate the entire community." (23)

The ministry of re-membering emphasizes the belonging element people wish to feel within any organization, but particularly within the faith community of the church. Everist claims that the need to be remembered can strengthen a person's sense of identity and purpose as members of the church who work and care for each other. She relies on the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians³ where the church is illustrated as one body with many parts that are different in size, function, and ability, yet function together in a unique and cohesive way. This type of body cannot be dismembered because it is the church community who is called to care, suffer, and rejoice with one another (2002, 32). For Everist this is the call to re-member what Christ has

³ The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts, and though all its parts are many, they form one body, (NIV).

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joined in this rich unity of the church that is situated within a great sea of diversity.

Within this body all members have unique gifts that are united in the one call to discipleship (Everist 2002, 35). Discipleship is not an individual endeavor but one that calls forth the gifts that have been given to every Christian believer to be made manifest during their joining together as a church community of learning. There are a variety of gifts found within the New Testament that are given to the church to utilize and build up the body of Christ. Everist emphasizes the gifts found in the Christian Scriptures, 1 Corinthians 12:7-11⁴; however, those recorded in Romans 12: 6-7 can also be cited. These gifts of the Spirit highlight prophecy, serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing, leadership, and showing mercy, which are gifts for use in the edification and instructional well-being of every member within the church community. Religious educators need the leadership and the encouraging skills offered by the Romans text to fulfill the call in developing a re-membering congregation of disciples who follow the teachings of Christ and the power of the cross in order to love God and one another more sincerely and effectively. According to Everist, this means that all gifts are necessary for this to be a learning community in mission, (35).

Everist's use of re-membering clarifies Dewey's (1939) understanding of education. Dewey contends that

⁴ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gift of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines, (1 Corinthians 12: 7 – 11).

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educative experiences that are mis-educative promote stunted, stifled, and distorted growth, whereas educative experiences that are worthwhile develop a positive *hunger* for the furthering of more growing experiences as mentioned earlier. Dewey's concept of continuity, interaction and objective conditions allows Everist's use of re-remembering to restate the learning stream of the church as a community where the gifts of each member are allowed to grow, influence, comfort and care for all persons. The social set up by which interactions and learning situations transpire are made available through the process of re-remembering. It allows the community of believers to understand the true definition of being Christian, not only in word but in deed, while producing a furthering of educative experiences.

A useful term that Everist develops is "differently-abled," (2002, 35). Everist implies that "by virtue of being a diverse creation and reassembled into one body of Christ, suffering and rejoicing together, the gifts of the Spirit can all be used" (35). Differently-abled is a term that allows people to see how they view one another regardless of their physical, mental, and/or emotional well-being. Everist explains that each person in some way is able and each is disabled, regardless if the disability is hidden as in heart disease or lupus, or the disability is revealed as in cerebral palsy or deafness. The goal is not to change, or even to "cure" certain "disabilities," but to care in a way which gives attention to each person individually (36).

While the term disability does not discriminate, people do discriminate against those who are disabled. As Everist puts it, "The problem is not the ability of people with disabilities to learn and to teach, but attitudes on the part of the temporarily-abled which 'handicap' their learning" (2002, 36). However, Everist asserts that each member of the congregation is differently-abled to some degree, so humans

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are placed on a playing field that is not only even, but is also one that should openly respect God's human creation and the gifts that have been bestowed upon each. Individuals are to rejoice in remembering each person as one who is capable of both learning and teaching. People are all differently-abled creatures who are seen as equal in the sight of God (Everist 2002).

Norma Cook Everist (2002) believes that curriculum is broadly an inclusion of all learning experiences beginning with God and God's people in time and place. She states: In the complexity, even in the midst of the confusion and controversy of diverse people who do not understand one another, God has created and will sustain community, thereby creating living curriculum – one which we will never complete but one which is real. God is in the center of this concept of church as a learning community with all of God's creating, redeeming, and liberating activity. (46)

This living curriculum is one that encounters both the word of God and the people of God with the presence of God in a complexity of learning experiences and applications that sustain, heal, and transform the lives of God's people in ways that are concrete yet creatively imaginative. God is a God of great imagination and wonder, endowed with great resources. In response, religious educators have to learn how to be exposed to such creativity as it relates to the artistic and the teaching resources found within this area of expression.

The aesthetic is not an intruder that comes from the outside of experience and in particular from the outside of the educative act of experience (Dewey, 1980). Rather, the aesthetic is the clarified and intensified development of traits that belong to every normal experience. Artistic expression unites the same relation of doing and undergoing, outgoing and incoming energy that makes an experience to be an experience. Dewey contends ...the conception of conscious

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experience as a perceived relation between doing and undergoing enables us to understand the connection that art as production and perception and appreciation as enjoyment sustain to each other. (48)

When incorporating the artistic in instructional teaching, the educative relationship between the lesson and the learner is incorporated, comprehended and implemented. The artistic is solely a tool to experience for learning and instruction to transpire between teacher and learner. It also means that the choice of the artistic, whether it is music, drama, dance, or art, is the most concrete of choices for the lesson to be taught, understood and grasped by the learner. It is the learner first and then the lesson that occupies the teacher's mind when the lesson is being conceived and when it is being created. Therefore, when the arts are used, they are to be effective in the teaching of biblical and faith concepts and not used as extra added attractions. The arts are inspirational as educational resources for the religious educator to explore, to awaken the voice of the artistic within every individual in learning about a God who is also artistic.

For Everist (2002) there are four essential elements that shed a concern on the caring of the learner within the aesthetic learning experience. She proposes that these four elements of care will assist the religious educator in curriculum building, resource development, and teaching opportunities that are imaginative and effective in developing the church community in ways that will lead to learning experiences that are aesthetic in nature. The four elements are described below.

The *first* is the caring about the learner, which is the caring for the learners' imaginations (Everist 2002, 112). This pertains to the many ways in which lessons are presented utilizing the arts. The *second* is the caring about the content, where the religious educator's belief in the

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Christian faith is strong (112). Lively lessons and artistic presentations can reveal the obvious affirmations as well as the critical questions the teacher themselves may have. Such honesty can bring about a positive and reflective enthusiasm about the content within the student. The *third* deals with the selection of the appropriate teaching style within the artistic, where the goal and function is to stimulate and ignite the imagination of the learner (112). The *fourth* focuses on how well the artistic presentation is done so as to allow the content, interaction and experience to stretch both the instructor and the community of learners (112).

To fully comprehend Everist's four essential elements in aesthetic learning, liturgical dance will be used as an example. Within the worship setting there is already found gestural movements in motion. These include the gestures of sitting, standing, walking, praying hands, kneeling and the lifting up of hands. For some churches, these gestures extend to include the clapping of hands and the waving of hands, which are all gestures that appear in the Book of Psalms as physical directives for the reader to do in the presence of God. Liturgical dance is the physical movement responding to the spiritual and gestural directives found in the Psalms. These gestures can simply remain as they are given or they can develop artistically to become more complex movements depending upon the teaching and occasion (Turner 2009, 49-58, 80-91).

The example would be a Sunday morning service where the congregation sings a song of praise that is accompanied by simple movement gestures. The song, "Welcome into this Place," is classified as a song of adoration and praise. It is inspired by Psalm 122:1, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD,' (Carpenter and Williams 2001, 114). Utilizing the theme of grace, the undemanding gestures to this song can be

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done by the entire congregation to help internalize the meaning of both the scriptural text and the song text, while gaining a further understanding of the meaning of grace. In this case the meaning of grace is twofold. First, grace is extended by God to God's people who are invited to worship God with their entire being. The second meaning of grace is the acknowledgement and acceptance of God's grace by the congregants themselves, who sing with the awareness that God's unmerited favor, is being extended to them.

The purpose of doing movement gestures by the congregation is to internalize the meaning of the words of the song. For learning to be internalized, repetition of meaning must take place for most people, so that they can fully understand what is being conveyed. Within the worship setting, a selection of prayers and/or songs can incorporate movement gestures in order to critically reflect upon the theme of either prayer or song (Turner 2009, 49-52). This particular example utilizes the entire congregation as a community of learning where the participation is done by all (De Sola 1986, 13 – 14). In like manner, all parishioners in attendance can participate in this movement of praise regardless of disabledness. It may be necessary for some of the movements to be slightly altered depending upon the individual or disability, but the invitation for all parishioners to participate is both essential and central to support the understanding that the church is truly a community place of learning.

The first line of the song is, "Welcome into this place," (Carpenter & Williams 2001, 114) which can simply have the congregation open up their arms as if to welcome the presence of the Holy Spirit into their hearts both individually and collectively. The second line is, "Welcome into this broken vessel," (114) which can have the congregation open their arms once again but then cross their

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hands and bring them inward to acknowledge their brokenness. The next line is, “You desire to abide in the praises of your people,” (114) where the congregation can bring their arms upward toward the ceiling and then wave them once from side to side, signifying the presence of God and the waving of the arms as the praises of the people. The last line of the song is, “So we lift our hands and we lift our hearts as we offer up this praise unto your name,” (114). After the waving of the arms, the congregation would bring down their arms to raise them up again to demonstrate the lifting up of their hands. Then they would bring their hands to their hearts and extend them upward, demonstrating the lifting up of their hearts. The offering of their praise unto the Lord would be signified by the waving of their hands once again from side to side and then bring them down. This song of adoration can be repeated a number of times in order to learn the words and movement.

Again, this artistic exercise can be carried out by every differently-abled person in the congregation. The movements can simply be aptly adopted for all to execute in their own way while still feeling directly connected to both song and movement. Once this is done, the internalization of the song’s meaning and the congregation’s critical reflection upon that meaning transpires accordingly. A further learning on the subject of grace takes place both corporately and individually through an aesthetic experience.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to bridge a connection between John Dewey’s concept of education as attained through experiential learning and the work of one religious educator who views religious experience as the centerpiece of their work with learners. The church can be classified as a community of learning where a plethora of religious

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teachings can promote diversified learning experiences for the congregation, regardless of age, gender, learning abilities, culture, and economic status. Learning what Christianity is and what it means to be Christian is a lifelong task for both clergy and laity, but such a teaching must be taken seriously if the teaching is to extend beyond the walls of the church.

Dewey's (1944, 1939, 1980) philosophical principles about learning through education and experience provide lifelong learning opportunities that have social and imaginative implications for the religious educator and the religious community. Education and experience must be purposeful for continuity, interaction, and the objective conditions to transform both the teaching and learning moment. The use of the aesthetic within teaching can help bring this about. Dewey's understanding of the social function of education is foundational to the educational experience of the church as a community place of learning. What is truly essential for Dewey is that learning has to be transformative, and it has to lead to the furthering of more educational experiences. This is dynamic education.

The work of Norma Cook Everist (2002) acknowledges the gifts of the entire congregation as those who can both teach and learn. Everist insists that religious education is not a set of lessons written down to simply be recited, but it is the understanding that the inspired revelation of God and the love of God can touch all humanity through the power of the cross. For Everist the congregation is made up of differently-abled people who are called to share their many varied gifts with one another for the church to become a community place of sincere and divine learning.

Religious education as experientially imaginative it is argued, can push every Christian to live their lives not for selfish motives, but purely for others who live both inside the

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walls of the church and on the outside periphery of the church. These are the people who may never have the opportunity to know the still small voice of God that reaches out to their hearts.

Liturgical dance can be viewed as an educative tool that can touch such hearts both within and without the walls of the church. Liturgical dance has creative, imaginative and educational attributes as witnessed through the examples utilized within this chapter. Its use of descriptive, interpretative, and evaluating movement gesture and language within church teaching and learning events make it a valuable tool for the religious educator.

Liturgical dance is acknowledged as movement that not only teaches within the four walls of the church, but its educative landscape reaches outside to the surrounding community and beyond. Liturgical dance can be summarized to be a physical response to a spiritual directive,⁵ which translates to mean that its movement inventions highlight the various requests to praise God with movement gestures and dance found in the Book of Psalms.⁶ If the bible classifies it as a useful and viable tool, then this opens the door for religious education to do the same.

It is from this vantage point that the author makes two recommendations. The first recommendation is that liturgical dance can be considered not only as a tool for religious education, but as religious education. To explain this further, liturgical dance and religious education can serve as partners highlighting the essence of each subject on

⁵ The phrase “liturgical dance, a physical response to a spiritual directive” was first coined by the author in the Fall 2005, during her studies at Yale Divinity School.

⁶ Scriptural references using physical movements to praise and adore God are found in the Book of Psalms. Examples include: Psalm 63:4; Psalm 134:2; Psalm 95:6; Psalm 149:3; and Psalm 150:4.

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a level that is both equal and supportive. In the Camp Kingdom example, the use of liturgical dance was equal to that of religious education, where liturgical dance as the teaching tool was experienced by both the dancers and the audience. It was through the movements displayed in the improvisational exercise that the themes of faith, honesty and character development were richly displayed and experienced by the dancer and the observer. However, its message of making it with God's help was just as important for both the dancer and the participant, for it confirmed the divine relationship the Triune God has with humanity.

The second recommendation suggests that the liturgical dancer is a very likely candidate to enter into the field of religious education to become a religious educator. As a religious educator, the liturgical dancer can teach experientially and imaginatively a plethora of lessons to the entire church community. From the congregational example, "Welcome into this place," (Carpenter and Williams 2001, 114) the use of movement to accompany the singing added comprehension and understanding to the true meaning of the song. Experiential learning opportunities can assist the congregation as a collective body in formulizing a more complete contextualization of the song, but the movement can also assist every distinct member to comprehend it from an individual perspective. This can lead them to go beyond the walls of the church to share the love of Christ through movement gesture. To the question who will go and share this message of love, this chapter suggests that it is the congregation, the church, the community of learners, and the liturgical dancer who can reply, "Send us, we will go and experience God with them, together!"

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Dr. Kathleen S. Turner, Ph.D.

Dr. Kathleen S. Turner, Ph.D., a native New Yorker, began dancing at the age of five at the Gloria Jackson Dance Studio. After graduating from the New York High School of Performing Arts, she received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from SUNY Purchase and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Sarah Lawrence College.



Kathleen graduated from Yale Divinity School with a Master of Sacred Theology (STM) degree in 2009, a Master of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School in 2008 and received a Certificate of Merit from the Institute of Sacred Music, an affiliate of Yale Divinity School. Kathleen graduated with her Doctor of Philosophy degree from Fordham University in May 2012. Kathleen has danced with many New York based choreographers and has worked extensively with Director/Choreographer, Dianne McIntyre as a member of the *Sounds In Motion Dance Company* touring the United States and Europe. Kathleen was a tenured Associate Professor in the Dance Program at CUNY Hunter College from 1994-2005. She has taught and choreographed for a variety of private dance studios, college programs, and theatre productions on the eastern coast in addition to teaching throughout Germany and Austria.

Kathleen is a recipient of numerous awards from both Yale University and the Society of Arts in Religious and Theological Studies (SARTS). Kathleen has delivered papers at the SARTS 2008 meeting at the American Association of Religion (AAR) in Chicago and at the 2011 and 2012 Religious Education Association Conferences. Her Ph.D. dissertation, “*And We Shall Learn through the Dance: Liturgical Dance as Religious Education*,” investigates liturgical dance as religious education in the church as a community place of learning. Kathleen is an adjunct professor in the Masters of Arts in Ministry program at Drew

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Seminary. Kathleen is a current member of the national Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, the Religious Education Association and the North American Professors of Christian Education.

Kathleen is the founding director of the Allen Liturgical Dance Ministry (ALDM) of the Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York, choreographing over seventy-five dances for ALDM. She coordinated and co-coordinated eight international liturgical dance conferences from 1998 to the present. Kathleen is married to Mr. Curtis Turner and they travel both separately and jointly throughout the United States ministering and co-choreographing for dance ministries, marriage enrichment ministries, church congregations and liturgical dance conferences.

CHAPTER 4

Activism and the Arts

by Paulette Rolle-Alesnik

They always knew it. I have always believed it! As a child, I'm told, there were a few things that I did constantly: talk, dance, eat, and love! Today they are still passions of mine.

I don't remember being a toddler but I was told later in life that I loved to dance. I danced in the house, outside, on the beach, in school, on the streets. I even danced in church. I was discouraged from moving "in the house of G-d" which is quite ironic. Dance! Dance! Dance is what I did!

It was in high school that I took my first "official" dance class with Paula Knowles. It was my favorite class, of course. For three years I trained under her and the R.M. Bailey Dance Troupe. I never missed a class. There were times when I hurt from head to toe, yet I danced! When I graduated top student in dance and drama; that award was like a launching pad to pursue bigger and better things. I just knew that one day I would dance center stage under the bright lights of Broadway. I would be a dancing star.

The First Calling: Doing Me

In my early 20's as I was living life, doing me – which was mainly dancing and modeling in shows around the community – I stopped by church one day to retrieve something from my boyfriend's mother. I remember being afraid to enter church because I was wearing revealing

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clothing; her denomination was pretty strict. Out of desperation, I went inside anyway. Turning to leave, an elderly lady called me up front and began prophesying what G-d showed her about me: "...That one day I would be dancing around the world for Jesus... That my gift would make a difference everywhere I went... That I would be using flags in the dance..." I politely thanked her, left and completely forgot about her crazy ranting. Yet, G-d promised that His Word would come to pass. Unbeknownst to me, it was there that G-d established my call to the ministry of dance. Within months I had surrendered my life to Christ. I left my boyfriend and was on my way to college in America.

The Second Calling: Coming to America

The day I arrived was a steaming hot day in mid- July. From the airport we decided to have lunch at La Teresita, a popular Spanish restaurant two miles from the airport. We sat at the bar. Within minutes, I was engaged in deep conversation with a stranger, Phil Pulido, a Puerto Rican Associate Pastor of a non-denominational church. I had no idea what either was at the time. He seemed sincerely interested in me and my country. I briefly shared about myself... why I came to America... my passions... Two words captured his attention more than any other: children and dance. I distinctly remember him asking more about my love for children. He said, "We have tons of wonderful inner-city children that could use a hug from someone with a smiling face like yours."

He shared a bit about himself and Sidewalk Sunday School, their church's Saturday school scattered throughout Tampa inter-cities. He invited us to come out on Saturday. The next day, I did.

To this day, I cannot tell you why. Maybe I longed to jump right into my new American life. Maybe I longed to

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see how Americans lived in government housing projects since I had never been in one. Maybe, being an adventurous person, I was looking for the next new thing to do. Maybe, I wanted to be proactive and immediately pour back into my new community. After all, that was the way I was raised. Maybe it was something Phil said? Maybe it was how he said it? Was G-d orchestrating my destiny within the first hour of my arrival?

The next day found me sitting on a hot, blue tarp in 90-degree weather. No shade! No water! I was left with Florida's heat and approximately 50 African American and Latin kids sitting around me, three of whom ended up on my lap. On the scene was a fuchsia pink truck, loud music, crazy games, Scripture verses and church stuff! I did not understand it but I liked it!

The dance off competition came next. Before I knew it, Phil Pulido designated me as the volunteer that would show them some "moves" and lead the dance competition. I laughed quietly inside. "If he only knew the kinds of dance moves I am accustomed to," I thought. Mere seconds later, I was facilitating my first American dance workshop and competition on the stage of their fuchsia pink truck, in the middle of the inner-city! It was there that G-d re-established my call to dance in yet another nation! Minutes after my dance workshop, I met who would serve as my pastors for the next twenty years.

A few short months later, I was traveling all across the United States and eventually around the world with our pastors as part of the children's staff for Evangelist Rodney Howard Brown's week-long mega crusades. At each crusade, the children's pastor insisted that the children minister on closing night. At each crusade, I was "dubbed" dance director for these performances, which consisted of 1500 – 2500 children in one production.

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In less than 12 months, the L-rd sent me from my nation, to another nation, and then to “the nations.” I was center stage and did not know it! I was walking in my destiny and did not know it! Dancing Paulette had been commissioned and established as an international dance minister (as prophesied) before I truly understood my Christian walk. I cannot explain why, but every step of the way I simply said, “Yes, L-rd!” and “Yes, Pastor!” Somehow, this was NOT my idea of coming to America. Why was I not yet on the stage in New York? Where were my bright lights?

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Much has changed since I started dancing in the church. In the early 90’s, there were no known dance ministries in my city. Seeing my passion, my mentor, Michelle Edwards told me about Yvonne Peters from Sarasota, FL and Lynn Hayden from Bradenton, FL. Both cities were just an hour drive from Tampa. As a college student, driving anywhere for an hour would severely hurt my budget but I was determining to go!

One day, exciting news came. Yvonne Peters and her friend Joanne Cecere were scheduled to host a Hebrew dance workshop right in Tampa. It would be my first official Christian dance workshop. This experience opened up a whole new world for me. I learned that there were many others just like me in Bradenton, FL. From that Saturday on, I began my weekly commute to Bradenton to work with Caryn and Candi Fenimore. I learned Hebrew and Modern dances. I learned all that I could about dances of the Bible and the priestly garments we were to wear. It was entirely different from what I was doing at the crusade. Street hip-hop, African and theatrical dances were all I knew. I had

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been exposed to dancers arrayed in the most beautiful garments, moving ever-so-gracefully. New passions were awakened in me. I soaked up everything I could and took it back to Tampa where I taught whomever would let me. To the glory of G-d, there were many eager women, young people and children wanting to learn. These teachings led us to officially form the first two dance groups in the church.

Our church's theme was "Evangelism and Restoration," so we were often in the community and its surrounding areas ministering to the rejected, wounded and dying. Wherever our church went to witness, I was asked to dance. I danced in prisons, for the homeless, in malls, at hospitals, on the streets, for Christmas toy drives, for Resurrection celebrations and many other gatherings. If the church was hosting something, I was on dance duty.

Interestingly, I was not allowed to dance on the church stage, as the main pastors did not fully believe in adults dancing in church. *Children dancing? Fine. That's cute, but keep it in Kid's Church. Reserve it for the outreaches.* It may have been considered entertaining, but my passion had been set on fire!

My exposure to dance in Bradenton churches fueled and further increased my passion for dancing for the L-rd. I had an inescapable desire to start a ministry at "our" church. After many meetings, much pleading, convincing, and showing it in the Scriptures, we were allowed to start an official "adult" dance team. Praise In Motion (P.I.M) was born! The children's group, J.U.D.A.H. Dance Ministry and Eternal Rhythm grew stronger and expanded once the adult team was validated. From three groups sprang every form of performing arts in our church – mime, dance, flags, step, break dance and more!

Because of the evangelistic focus of our church, our work in the community and the surrounding areas, we

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became one of the first churches in Tampa with a complete and organized fine arts department. We became the hub for training others in our city. Our adult and children's dance teams help birthed 200-plus dance and mime ministries in the Tampa Bay area.

Through neighboring dancers from Bradenton and Sarasota, we learned the true history of dance and the biblical meaning of it. As a result, it impacted us in the following ways:

- I obtained new perspective and vision for my life as a Dance Minister.
- I began raising up other dance leaders.
- These new dance leaders started multiplying teams.
- We danced at outreaches and local theme parks weekly and monthly (Busch Gardens, Disney World).
- We joined networks, met many more dancers and expanded our education in the arts.
- We saw the need for education in our city, which led to hosting workshops and conferences.
- Many came from around Florida to learn. Many of these dancers have now gone on to host conferences.

Though we danced internationally with Rodney Howard Brown Crusades, it was somehow contained. Our national impact was launched when Paula White began traveling with Bishop T.D. Jakes and his "God's Leading Ladies" conferences and subsequently hosted her own mega conferences.

Information is now readily available. The world of knowledge is currently at our fingertips. Google has become one of the most commonly used words and information portals in the history of mankind. According to their records,

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Google logs two billion searches per day - approximately 300 million people use Google daily! Like the rest of the world, Christian artists can take advantage of the increased accessibility of information for ideas, education and training. I personally perform research on Google, Bing or Wikipedia at least twice per day.

I was at the height of my career in January 1996. Having been recently promoted to management within the company with triple the responsibility – our church relocation on the calendar – moving from a warehouse to a four-story, gigantic building! I was serving as Fine Arts Director and Assistant Children’s Pastor at a church that held five services per week – three on Sunday ministering to 1500 children, and working 25 plus hours at church... the last thing that I needed was a new project!

It was during that time when G-d mandated the opening of our dance studio to meet the needs of a rapidly growing church. We called it Jazze’ Room; it became my second office. I would go from high heels and pantyhose to jazz shoes and tights every Monday through Friday – from boardroom executive to dancing queen. In 1999, we expanded our operations. Later G-d sent us professional dancers, so we expanded yet further in our training and development of the arts.

Next came a new wave of online resources and multi-media: websites. In the early 2000’s, I started to travel outside of Florida to teach or speak at conferences. This birthed yet another new transition in ministry and increased exposure.

In 2007, with the growing need and demand for training from leaders outside of Tampa, I founded Mordecai Mentoring Program an online training and mentoring school. We have modified the curriculum since then to accommodate a team-based approach. Today, for a minimal

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investment, our professional team of educators, pastors and arts directors offer quarterly online classes in Personal, Leadership, Professional and Business Developments. Visit [www.daretodance.org](http://www.daretodance.org) and click on Mordecai Mentoring Program for more information.

I see our online students developing in both leadership and business education. Each student must first take the Personal Development Module in order to complete other courses. Students are prepared to lead in the modern performing arts world and in ministry, using their strengths and styles but incorporating our techniques.

We currently train leaders, Christian groups and church staff. Because our teaching staff consists of paid professionals, we offer an extensive staff training package to pastors and small businesses. Our teachers educate and empower leaders, pastors and management on how to get more involved in their communities and where to find government funding for the arts and their churches.

How am I an activist for the arts in my community and the nations? G-d has trusted us to establish the Gathering of the Levites UNITY Movement as community advocates for partnerships and cooperation among leaders in the Christian Worship Arts. This movement has spread worldwide.

In November 2010, while teaching in Birmingham, Alabama, I received a vision: a new mandate to step up as the activist for UNITY and peace. Thus far, the mandate for UNITY among leaders has been the most difficult and profound assignment in my Christian walk. I have repeatedly asked, "Why me?" Jesus brings me back to I Corinthians 3:3-11:

*"For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not*



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*carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."*

G-d had spoken! Though it was difficult, I obeyed! I was constantly reminded that I am anointed for the hard tasks. Therefore, I pressed through.

With the official birthing of Gathering of the Levites UNITY Movement in July of 2012, the infant organization is steadily growing into a healthy child with a highly-qualified, anointed, seasoned Board of Directors to lead GTL forward into its future. The Movement is being used as one of the strongest forms of activism in communities, the nations and hopefully the world.

As we write on the pages of Christian history, I believe it will be a slow, uphill battle, but we have documented dozens of testimonials of forgiveness, love, reconciliation and UNITY from leaders around the world. I believe Abba is pleased. Leaders from all genres are invited

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to connect with this movement. Join our monthly family UNITY meetings. For more information visit [www.gtlunitymovement.org](http://www.gtlunitymovement.org).

I leave you with the words of Paul in Ephesians 4:1-6:

*“Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all.”*

Walking In Purpose, Living in Destiny.

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# Paulette Rolle-Alesnik

**Paulette Rolle-Alesnik** is a leader to leaders... a trailblazer! She is a licensed minister, author, anointed choreographer, speaker, and entrepreneur. Her unique way of bringing scriptures to life in presentations, have a profound ability to impact audiences and transcend languages or cultural barriers.



As someone called to portray the gospel through the performing arts, Paulette and her team minister with persuasion and passion from the core. Paulette has graced the stage or worked with Bishop T.D. Jakes, Billy Graham, Celine Dion, Israel Houghton, and Kirk Franklin, among many others. She choreographed over 50 musical productions for organizations such as Straz Center of Performance Arts, where she worked 7years; University of South Florida; Potter's House Dance Conference; Without Walls International Church, directed dance 15years; Billy Graham's KidzGig.

She founded Lord's & JP Investors, LLC in 2002. This corporation umbrellas several other subsidiaries: (i) Dare2Dance, Inc; (ii) PRA EmPOWERment Leadership Seminars; (iii) Off Stage Dance Performing Arts Academy; (iv) Off Stage Dance Company; (v) Lord & JP Real Estate Co; (vi) Project KidzGo (a missionary program).

She travels the globe, empowers and motivates thousands with positive messages of love, acceptance, encouragement, and hope in Jesus. She passionately demonstrates His gospel throughout North and South America, Asia, Canada, and the Caribbean. She has witnessed thousands of souls experience the power of His salvation.

## CHAPTER 5

# Equipping Worshipers, Impacting the World

by **Sumaya A. White, PT MSPT**

Twenty years ago, I would say that God tricked me into dance ministry. I grew up with two loves; one was dance and one was God. It wasn't until 1993 that God brought a clueless lover of Him and a clueless lover of dance into a place of harmony. All these years later, I am never at peace without the two of them. I may wrestle and struggle with them but it is the only place where I can find "home." Like so many other leaders in the area of Movement Arts, we started at a time when there was very little information or support concerning Christian dance. All we had to guide us were our willing hearts and love for God and desire to simply express that to Him and to the world around us.

As a result of leading in dance over the past couple of decades, I have seen the numbers of dance ministries and dance ministers grow and develop, even in my home state of Massachusetts. In other states like Georgia, there is a National Liturgical Dance Day and they have received the key to the city granted by the Mayor. Changes have ranged from growth of small workshops to successful movement arts conferences that host hundreds of dancers.

I have observed growth from dance ministers doing things on their own (just them and the Lord), to dance

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ministers establishing and joining networks, increases in structured education, and the eventual development of Degrees in Christian/Liturgical Dance. There are still churches and denominations that do not welcome liturgical arts due to a lack of understanding or have stopped liturgical arts in the church because of a lack of excellence on behalf of the dance and movement arts ministers.

There are strengths and weaknesses that are simply based on size, for example; with small churches you may have Sunday dinners, but can have a lot of cliques. With large churches you may have food pantries, but relationships can be impersonal. With small church families, you may be able to travel easier, but everyone knows your business. With large congregations, you may always have someone to talk to, but you can easily lose track of each other – the same rings true for dance ministry and the movement arts.

I believe one of the key elements to maintaining the spirit of excellence in any area including the movement arts is found in the education, therefore the intrinsic development of its members and its teachers and leaders. This is where my third passion and call comes into play.

The Word of God declares in Proverbs 29:18 “*Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.*” While most just focus on the first part of this Scripture, it is the second part that brings to mind the question, “Why is he happy?” Is he happy because he simply kept the past? How has that enabled him to have vision for the future; for the unknown? This Scripture speaks to the importance of foundational and unrelenting education to continue with our future and for it to be amazing.

For people to have vision, to see the unknown, to dream, to have hope beyond hope, to expect more, to create like never before – they have to have a foundation. The word **vision** has 4 parts:

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- a) Vision in ecstatic state
- b) Vision in the night
- c) Vision as divine communication
- d) Vision as in prophecy

Vision in the ecstatic state – overwhelming happiness or joyful excitement is what we need to continue to grow as powerful creative artists. This is the kind of excitement and joy that comes from deep within – birthing new music, new songs, and new movements. This kind of joy and happiness keeps our passion alive, sets us on fire and enables us to attract people like moths to a flame.

Vision in the night – as movement artists we are all called to reflect the glory of God in the midst of the darkness, in a world that does not know or care to know Christ. Divine communication – as Christian movement artists we have the honor to be able to have a God who desires to communicate with us and through us. The ability to hear from God, and discerning His heart gives us the responsibility to then share His love, grace and mercy with the world around us. Vision as in prophecy – when our gifts remain submitted to God He uses us through movement to release His miraculous words of life, change, revelation, healing, forgiveness, salvation and vision – new exciting, night, divine, prophetic vision!

It is only possible to achieve all of these wonderful things when we find pleasure, joy, and understanding by becoming educated, by keeping the law the past, by taking classes to increase our technical foundation and by stretching our technique. Discover an even greater pleasure, joy, understanding and wisdom with the true foundation of the Word of God. We must aim to understand the history of liturgical arts beginning with the Word of God and throughout the generations. Just as the church has come

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through the times of the reformation – restoring the offices of the teacher and pastor, then the evangelist movement, the restoration of the Prophets, and later the Apostolic move of God in the church – of fathering and molding.

My mandate is to pour into movement artists around the world. I help equip ministers and especially leaders to become more of what God has called them to be. The call is to impart the truth, heart and skill of our call, seeing dance ministers and movement artists take their stand and their place as Armor Bearers, Watchmen and Gatekeepers. By being grounded, movement artists will not become a part of the world's vision, instead they can have and follow after the vision that God has imparted to them.

It is crucial that we as worshipping movement artists do not fall into the trap of Matthew 15:9 *“Their worship of me is empty, because they teach human rules as doctrines”* (ISV). Now that dance and movement arts ministries are becoming more mainstream, it is very easy to have no foundation and not understand the true power of the call. The performance side of what we do can take over, neglecting God as the center of our hearts. Instead, fame, glory, man’s recognition and man’s doctrine can become our marching orders.

I serve as the Director of TEN Worldwide (The Eagles Network Worldwide – [www.tenworldwide.org](http://www.tenworldwide.org)). God has opened the door for me to pour into leaders, teachers, assistants, dance ministers and worshippers globally, that they may be able to reach their neighborhoods, ministries, churches, cities, states and countries. The TEN Worldwide curriculum is a 2-year curriculum. The first year is based on building the crucial foundations for dance and movement artists in both the Word of God and in dance technique.

Graduates of TEN Year 1 are invited to take TEN Year 2. Year 2 entails leadership training, whether the people

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are leaders by title or not. TEN Worldwide uses current technology to connect with ease in several ways including email correspondence (info@tenworldwide.org), via website (www.tenworldwide.org), and through Facebook (TEN Worldwide). We also utilize international conference calls, downloading via the Cloud, YouTube, DVDs, and in-person instruction.

God continues to use these various mediums as tools to further establish His Kingdom with an extended reach. One of the key features of TEN Worldwide is that we impact worshipping movement artists where they reside. In this age of electronics, texting and virtual communication, TEN Worldwide has the human touch component that makes a world of difference. To graduate, TEN Worldwide individuals have to attend all 5 in-person training modules.

Since TEN Worldwide began in 2008 (graduating its first class in 2009) over 1,000 dance ministers have successfully completed the program from over 15 countries and 28 states in the US. Over 3,000 worshipping artists have attended at least one of our modules.

Our graduates range from those who have never danced a day in their lives, to choir members, ministry leaders, pastors, prophets, trained dance ministers, and even individuals from other faiths. Some may question this, but remember Revelation 11:15: *“Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’”* Our mandate to train, equip and educate movement artists and worshippers from around the globe is based on the foundation of Christ and the Word of God. TEN Worldwide continues to be a flame that attracts people from the four corners.



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The calling on my life is the tagline of TEN Worldwide: “Equipping Dancers, Impacting the World ~ All for Christ!” It is now expanding to: “Equipping Worshippers, Impacting the World ~ All for Christ!”

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## Sumaya White



**Pastor Sumaya A. White** PT, MSPT is a licensed and ordained minister and preacher/teacher of the Word of God and Physical Therapist. She received her Bachelor's and Advanced Masters in Physical Therapy from Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts. Pastor Sumaya received her license in Liturgical Dance from Eagles International Training Institute and was ordained Pastor under International Covenant Connect both in Dallas, Texas.

Pastor Sumaya received her dance training under various dance schools including nationally renowned The Gold's School and Roxbury Center of the Performing Arts, both in Massachusetts. Growing up loving the Lord and loving dance, God in His amazing wisdom brought these two loves crashing together in her life in 1993. Since then, Pastor Sumaya began directing liturgical dance at Jubilee Christian Church in Boston, MA for 15yrs. During that time, she also began mentoring dance ministries and ministers around New England.

In 2008, Pastor Sumaya became the Director of TEN Worldwide (The Eagles Network - [www.tenworldwide.org](http://www.tenworldwide.org)), an international educational network that provides training and equipping for dance ministers globally. With a Global vision and call, Pastor Sumaya believes there is no limit to what God will do as she continues to pour into leaders and dance ministers worldwide.

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## CHAPTER 6

# Dancing in the Land of the Midnight Sun

by **Karen L. Gardner**

Alaska is the largest state in the United States. It is known as the “Land of the Midnight Sun” because during the summer, it is one of the few places where it is still light at midnight. The name Alaska means the “Great Land.” Its name comes from the Aleut word 'alaxsxaq,' which means 'an object towards which the action of the sea is directed.'

Dance is at the core of Alaska. It reverberates in the hearts of Alaska Natives, who lived here first. At Alaska Native cultural and ministry events, dance permeates the atmosphere. Everyone dances. Hear the drums beat. See the Alaska Native women gracefully wearing native garb wave their fans as they move from the waist up. The men bend their knees and stamp their feet as they march and shout. Mighty Warriors come forth. Dance is the air we breathe here.

Alaska is a melting pot of diverse cultures. Each brings their own style of dance, from Alaska Natives to Polynesians, Africans, Latinos, Filipinos, Samoans, Russians and other European ethnic groups. Dance is how we live.

Who would have imagined that a young man and a young woman, both born and raised in sunny Ft. Lauderdale, FL, would one day marry and wind up raising a family in Anchorage, Alaska? I am that woman and wife that moved in August of 1987 with my husband, Anthony Gardner, who

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was stationed at Elmendorf Air Force Base. We came with our first child Ashlee Nicole, who was 18 months old at the time. We would have three more children in the “Land of the Midnight Sun.”

It is here in Anchorage, Alaska, more than any other time in my life, that I have encountered and experienced the Holy Spirit in my secret place as I minister unto Him. It is here in Anchorage, Alaska that God has sent and continues to send spiritual teachers and leaders into my life, who have instructed, trained, corrected, disciplined and activated me in praise and worship dance ministry.

Dance unto the Lord has released healing into my soul, delivering me from the cobwebs of my past. When I dance, it is for Him alone. Dancing unto the Lord deepens my hunger and intimacy for more of Him. When I minister in dance, I release the joy, healing and breakthrough that the Holy Spirit has poured into me. ***"In His presence is fullness of joy and at His right hand are pleasures evermore."*** (Psalm 16:11)

I have danced since I was a little girl. I have always delighted in bringing joy to others and putting a smile on sad faces while on stage or at a podium. After I learned it was okay to dance in church in my 20's, I would dance unabashedly unto the Lord in the back of church or wherever I could find a space. When I dance, it is just the Lord and me, intertwined Spirit to spirit, while everyone else gets to peek.

One Sunday after the morning service ended at Christian House of Prayer (CHOP) in Anchorage, my pastor, Tobitha Lawrence, asked me to start a dance ministry. I said yes, not knowing the first thing about forming a dance ministry or what worship dance was from a biblical perspective. Pastor Lawrence was an early proponent for worship dance and the arts in Anchorage, Alaska.

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I would later learn that it was really Pastor Lawrence's youngest daughter who prompted her to ask me. She had observed me dancing with the children, including my youngest daughter Amber, in the back of the church. Out of the mouth of babes...

Pastor Lawrence did everything she could to ensure I was equipped. She told me to dedicate all the gifts God had given me back to Him. I did. She endorsed the gift of dance in me before I recognized it. She used her position to open a door for me, which I stepped through into dance. She encouraged me to get dance training, even taking me on a trip with her to meet the dance ministry leader at CHOP Texas.

The evolution of worship dance in Anchorage, Alaska was in its infancy during the late 90's and early 2000's. There were not many dance ministries in existence in the conservative evangelical church environment in Anchorage. You could count the number of worship dance teams on one hand.

The worship dance team at CHOP initially consisted of my friend and sister, Debra Lavender-Bratcher, and myself. We ministered for the first time at Pastor Lawrence's anniversary in August 1998 to Crystal Lewis's song, "In Return." We would continue to dance at special occasions and minister every Sunday along with the praise and worship team. Back then, worship dancers ministering while the praise and worship team sung and the musicians played was unheard of in Anchorage.

Another pivotal local worship dance ministry leader in Anchorage at the time was Davina Stallworth of Lighthouse Christian Fellowship. Today Davina and I are licensed dance ministers under the Eagles International Training Institute (EITI), founded and directed by Apostle Pamela Hardy. Davina and I work together as a team,

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educating, equipping and activating worship dancers and leaders through The Eagles Network of Alaska (TEN), directed by Pastor Sumaya White. TEN is a local worship dance program under EITI.

Through TEN, we touch the lives of worshippers and leaders who desire to dance for the Lord. The students who finish the course receive a certificate of completion presented to them at a local graduation ceremony, or they can graduate at the Gathering of the Eagles International Worship Summit held in Dallas, Texas in October of each year.

Some continue with their training by applying for admission into the EITI year-long worship dance program founded and directed by Apostle Pamela Hardy. This course is like taking a college course in Fine Arts with an emphasis on dance. It includes Bible study, monthly teleconferences, written assignments, technique and choreography training.

After completing TEN and/or EITI, the students are encouraged to take what they have learned back to their homes and churches to teach and impart to others the power of praise and worship in the dance. EITI and TEN have revolutionized liturgical dance in Alaska. Today, we have more than 12 dance ministries in Anchorage. This is a more than an 80% increase since 1998.

To equip myself as a dance leader, I set out to get some practical training in addition to prayer and Bible study at home. My first pursuit began in 1999, when Debra and I joined “Circle of Friends,” a local dance ministry led by Cindy Stewart. She was my first worship dance instructor.

Along with teaching choreography, Cindy led us in a book study entitled, “The Heart of a Worshipper.” The revelation from this book damaged my ignorance about what a worshipper was. The most important precept I learned was that as a worship dancer, I perform or minister to an “audience of one” – Almighty God. I learned that liturgical

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dance is an outward expression of my inner personal relationship with God. The effects of worship flow from the inside out, changing the atmosphere.

This revelation altered my worldview! Until that moment, I thought worship dance was about how well I moved, how high I jumped or how flexible I was. While these skills are important, it means nothing without having an intimate personal relationship with God.

The secret place is where Abba Father releases the anointing that removes every burden and destroys every yoke. When I minister as God's yielded vessel, He releases a fresh anointing to encourage and deliver His people. I have learned that both anointing and skill are required to be an effective minister of the Lord.

My tutelage in worship dance continued when I met Renee Gray, who was visiting Anchorage in October 2000 along with her husband at the "Soul Winners" Conference. When I saw her dance, my heart was touched. She danced like God's ballerina, releasing encouragement and hope. I rushed over to meet her after the service was over. The following February, Renee and her family relocated to Anchorage on a mission for God.

Today, she is Apostle Renee Gray, who lives in Plano, TX, where she operates Praise Party School of Dance. The saying, "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear" became a reality when Praise Party School of Dance opened its doors in August 2001 in Anchorage. I worked closely by her side to help her find a building and to set up the school. It was an exciting adventure that continued until she left Anchorage in 2004. Before she left, Renee passed the baton of worship dance to all of students. She always called us leaders.

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Renee instructed students in Bible study, technique, choreography and leadership. Praise Party School of Dance ministered in churches and the community. I became aware of the importance of outreach ministry through dance to evangelize within and outside of the four walls of the church. I attended my first worship arts conference in the Lower 48 with Renee.

My next development in worship dance occurred in 2006 when Renee invited me to apply for acceptance into the Eagles International Training Institute (EITI), a one-year worship dance program founded by Apostle Pamela Hardy. I would was accepted into the program the following year, graduating with the class of 2007. Apostle Pamela Hardy and EITI changed my life forever!

Connecting with Apostle Pamela Hardy transformed me from being a chicken into an eagle and from being a thinker into a doer. She taught me to not only set goals, but to execute them. The anointing on her life compelled me to face my fears and dance into my destiny.

I began to understand what it meant to wait upon the Lord, allowing Him to renew my strength, so that I could soar like an eagle above the winds of adversity. Up until this point, I was a master procrastinator dogged by fear, imprisoned by the bars of condemnation, shame and guilt. I was talented and gifted, yet filled with insecurities, doubt and self-rejection... but God!

I continued to press towards the EITI finish line. I prayed, read my Bible, worshiped the Lord, researched and wrote papers, meditated on the Scriptures, choreographed pieces and recorded them on DVD to complete my monthly assignments. As I pressed, the image of who I am in Christ Jesus became indelibly impressed into my mind, infusing me with confidence and pushing out inferiority.



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Finishing the EITI worship dance program was a game-changer for me because it took me to the next level in ministry. It culminated with a graduation ceremony in Columbus, Ohio, where I received my certificate of completion and an unexpected licensed dance minister credential from Set Free Evangelistic Ministries.

During the EITI course, one of the goals I set was to open a dance studio. This dream became a reality in January 2008 when I opened Pure Freedom Ministries of Alaska Dance School in Anchorage, Alaska. I provide instruction in the biblical foundation of dance, technique, choreography and leadership. I also host the end-of-year annual “Breakthrough Prayse” Gathering, where the students minister the dances they have learned throughout the year to glorify God.

Thanks to the leaders God has placed in my life, I continue to teach students these key areas for foundation. I have had the opportunity to minister at and to choreograph productions at statewide and local conferences and to host workshops. I have been given the opportunity to touch the lives of many with the love of Jesus through dance and intercession. When I did not believe in myself as a worship dancer or leader, God sent people into my life who believed in me.

Over the past 15 years since I started dancing for the Lord, I have witnessed pastors and other five-fold ministry leaders accept and invite worship dancers to minister to God’s people. This is the divine order of God, according to Psalm 149:3: *“Let them praise Him in the dance....”* When led by Holy Spirit, this order is the perfect recipe for anointed praise and worship. I will continue to raise up worship dancers and to establish worship dance outposts across Alaska that release dances from heaven setting the captives free in the “Land of the Midnight Sun.”

EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW

## **Karen L. Gardner**



**Karen L. Gardner** is a high-impact teacher, transformational leader, author and former Fortune 100 sales executive. She is the founder of Pure Freedom Ministries International based in Anchorage, Alaska, focusing on prayer, liturgical dance and leadership. She is also the director and instructor of the Eagles International Intercessory Prayer Institute. Beyond her bio, Karen enjoys coaching people to discover, own and leverage their innate gifts and talents to live an abundant life.

## CHAPTER 7

# The Time is at Hand

by Lucie Poirier

God established me in the ministry of dance in 1999. I was asked by a friend to visit her church because there was a woman's conference going on. The keynote speaker was the late Dr. Fuchsia Pickett. She was teaching on Deborah the judge and women in ministry. That night I was led to write a short note of about two sentences to her as she ended her teaching. Though it was a challenge, I was instructed by the Holy Spirit to be sure that the note was handed to her. I instructed her assistant to please place it in her hand.

The next evening, I went back to the conference and purchased some of her books and stood in line for her to sign them. I rehearsed what I wanted to say to her as I waited in line. When it was my turn, I immediately asked her, "Did you get my note from last night?" She replied, "Yes, I will contact you when the Holy Spirit speaks."

Months later, she called and sent a letter to inform me that God had called me into the ministry of dance. A few days passed and she sent me a book about dance that included the author's personal contact information. She referred me to the author for mentorship. I became a student of not only my mentors but of the Holy Spirit also.

I studied and danced at home for about 2 years before I received my first invitation to dance at a church or was given the opportunity to lead a dance ministry. Eventually,

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God established me in ministry as a dancer, a dance leader, author and global ambassador to the nations to change covenants of lands and redeem souls for Christ.

All of this happened through trials, errors, and disappointments from man, yet standing on God's Word as David did. My journey of being in a place of authority in the ministry of dance can be described in several verses of Scripture, but two in particular: Colossians 1:12-13 and 1 Peter 5:10.

### **The History of Dance has Impacted My City**

I have seen dance impact my city tremendously. I live in Jacksonville, FL; a very significant city for our nation's history both in establishment and Christianity. In my latest book *Dance for a Harvest* (pages 196 - 198) I explain:

"I grew up in the city of Jacksonville, specifically about a 10-15-minute drive from the Fort Caroline National Memorial Park. That park holds a very important piece of history for both Americans and Christians. The fort that's encased in the park marks the place where the French Huguenots fled to the Americas in 1565 for their religious freedom. 2 months after they arrived, the battle continued as they encountered a massacre from the Spaniards within their fort. I remember going there on field trips when I was in elementary school. Of course I wasn't interested in the historical significance at the time, but now see the purpose of God in all of it. History has always been important to God. I never liked history as a little girl, but recently I realized that history is tied to God's purpose. Genealogy is important to God. I used to find reading all of the weird names in the Bible a waste of time and found

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no need to list the names of the families. But today I say to you that history is all part of the plan!"

There is something redemptive in the soil of Fort Caroline. During the ecclesiastical reformation in the 16th century, Jean Ribault led the revolution to bring the French Huguenots to the shores of Fort Caroline to fight for their religious freedom. That bloodshed is still there, crying out. Places like that are all over the world. Take your history seriously wherever you live as you move forward.

In May 2011, I was in Ireland. My purpose was to take territory. Before I left for the trip, God had not revealed my assignment completely until I arrived. Most days involved visits to national heritage parks. History played a major role in that trip because it gave me direction about when, where and how to dance and prophesy. Remember when Moses sent the spies to Canaan? You have to be sober! Dance is serious business, so take it seriously. God wanted my feet on that soil for redemptive purposes.

In June 2011, the Global Day of Prayer (GDOP) was hosted in Jacksonville, Florida. GDOP is a big deal. In July 2000, South African Christian businessman Graham Power was called to establish a global day of prayer. He had been given a vision based on 2 Chronicles 7:14. Jacksonville was the first city in the United States to host it. Eyes from all over the world were on this city for God's purpose. I believe Jacksonville is marked for revival. Dancers must be awakened in cities all over the world.

Some months before the GDOP, I was attending a dance class and introduced myself to one of the dancers. I asked her name and since I had heard an accent, I asked where she was from. She told me that she was from Budapest, Hungary. About a week later, I received a message from someone informing me that there is a global

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dance that was scheduled just before the GDOP. After getting the details, I was surprised to know that it was a resurrection dance which started in Budapest, Hungary. Dancers had an opportunity to join in and dance for Jesus throughout all the cities of the world. This was the thumbprint of revolutionary revival!

On April 24, 2011, I met the dancers in our city at the Fort Caroline National Memorial Park. God chose who would dance there. They were all of French and Spanish heritage, which was so strategic. I led them in the resurrection dance that was being danced by the rest of the cities of the world. Such occurrences should happen more and in bigger scope.

God cares about places. Places are significant and meaningful to Him. He is detailed. Landmarks are not trivial. Every detail of the earth has a purpose. Every continent has a different aroma. Every nation has something redemptive for Him. God is jealous about what belongs to Him. It is a dancer's job to go and uproot what belongs to God.

Yes, a dancer has the anointing to do exploits. An anointed dancer has authority. Psalm 144:1 says, "*Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.*" Revival is the resuscitation of something. The church needs to be resuscitated. The dancers need to be revived. We need to understand and walk in the authority of our assignment. David killed a giant; therefore, we can walk in revival as those women did in all the cities of Israel.

The Lord has mandated me to bring an understanding of dance as an ambassador of the dance during this end time harvest. I dance on several levels, teach on different areas, and unite and impart into the lives other dancers. I believe that God has given me a mandate to tell others to dance in knowledge and understanding. In 2004, I was sitting at my

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desk working and God said, "Go tell my people to dance." I later found out that His plan and His strategy was not only to tell them but to instruct them to understand and apply the knowledge received.

I have the opportunity to dance before God alone as well as dance before thousands at a time. During the season that God began to mold and make me, I danced before Him in my living room night after night and studied His Word. It was there that the Holy Spirit taught me about His majestic presence, beauty and power.

I soon began to dance in my chair at church during praise and worship. It did not matter which church. If there was music unto Him, I was engaged in dance with Him and for Him. "His Dancer," was my mantle and it still is.

With the wealth of information that I was gleaning, I began to write. In 2006, He told me to get on a local radio station for 15 minutes. Through this assignment, He fed me that I may feed His people the Scriptures about dance. It was clear that He wanted dancers to move in knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. That same year, I held my very first dance conference to unite, educate and empower dancers in my city. All the while, I continued my international travels for the harvest.

Though my message is generally for dancers, the arts are being called forth and used for the gathering of souls. For the last few trips that I have been sent on (Ireland, Haiti and Kenya) I have seen God pull the sound out of the arts to penetrate the darkness in these nations. Darkness is fearful of the Light which is in us.

I am now mandated to expose the mysteries of God concerning the sound that creates miracles. Whether the sound is released through a painting, an instrument, a prophet's mouth or a dancer's body, its frequency is dangerous for the kingdom of darkness if the releaser is

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chosen. The bottom line is this: God is the Creator and we are in His image as ambassadors to release or create His will.

God asked Ezekiel if those dry bones could live. We have the authority to create in the face of whatever darkness may have to say; to rewrite the history for nations through the arts and through sound. This may sound bizarre, but it was wind manipulation that put flesh on those bones. We carry the DNA of Father God through the Blood of Jesus. Therefore we have the authority, as Ezekiel did, to change situations through the wind of our dance.

### **The Arts are Advancing in the Future**

A few years ago, I was at a closed meeting with some prophets and artists and the Lord said to me, "Keep your eyes on the arts, the musicians, and the dancers for I will speak through them." Since then, I have seen and experienced great things through the arts and we are about to see it in greater measure. The revelation of the dance that is being stirred in me now is the power of sound and Holy wind. The key is that the dancer release the sound of God. There is much that can be said about how to release the right sound!

I walk in a spirit of expectation concerning the arts. I want to stand on a housetop to scream and shout about what God is doing with dance and dancers. The spirit of wisdom and revelation is upon us now. In the book of Daniel, the angel told Daniel, "*... But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.*" (Daniel 12:4). In the book of revelation the angel told John, "*... Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.*" (Revelation 22:10).



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Wow! Wow! Wow! "The time is at hand" simply means that the time is now. Those that have an ear to hear are aware that we live in the greatest hour of history. Those that have an ear to hear the mysteries of the God and to discern the hidden things – This is the time! Now is the time that the understanding is being released because John the revelator was instructed to unseal the sayings.

I see dancers rising up and doing great miracles as they get an understanding of their identity to release the sound of healing, deliverance, and miracles. Dancers produce wavelengths with the ability to cause colors of Light to invade the chaos in a person's life or in a nation. Dancers must release their creativity anointing into what is not, so that it becomes.

This is the will of God concerning the dance. Ask David the musician! His music was anointed to confront that spirit that was annoying Saul. Every knee shall bow to the frequency of the sound that releases Light. God is Light! May your life be filled with laughter and dance!

EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW

## Lucie Poirier



**Rev. Lucie Poirier** mentors dance ministries, dance leaders, and dancers on how to carry the anointing of the dance in the Kingdom of God. Lucie speaks, dance, blogs, holds annual conferences, travels to international lands, produces teaching materials and writes.

She resides in Jacksonville, Fl with her husband, Mark, and two loving boys and one girl. Prior to her move to Jacksonville, Lucie lived in Miami for a number of years where she studied and achieved a degree in Chemistry and minored in dance. She is also on the board of directors of El Shaddai Children's Home of Haiti Ministries. One of her passions includes international travel. A sought-after dance evangelist, Lucie teaches and dances throughout the United States and around the globe.

Her travel experience includes Japan, Sweden, Denmark, Ireland, Honduras, Bahamas, Scotland, Israel, Haiti, Brazil, Africa and so on. Prior to her conversion to Christianity, Lucie won second place on a televised dance contest in Tokyo, Japan in September of 1990. Lucie Poirier is the author of *Dance for a Harvest*. In 2004, she founded "Dancing for the End time Harvest" a 501c3 nonprofit organization. She has a special anointing as a solo dancer.

## CHAPTER 8

# According to Your Heart I Will Dance

by **Lillian Rodriguez**

I received God's calling to dance before Him in a prophetic way. I had my first experience with Him a little over 20 years ago. In that moment (without really understanding what I was experiencing), the Holy Spirit made me dance in a supernatural way all around that wonderful place without reservations. Dancing with Him in that divine moment transformed my life completely.

I never imagined that dance would mark what would be the before and after of my story. In the same way, He took control of my body and made me dance without me putting up any resistance. I immediately decided to give complete control of my life to Him. This began what I would call the best season of my life, a great adventure with the Father. He led me to a place where I began to learn His Word and to sit at the feet of the Master to be nurtured in my spirit.

God began to speak into my life, saying that He would take me to the nations and I would have many disciples and children in ministry. He told me I would teach many and would preach His Word. Those words were constantly declared over me, but I never imagined it would come to pass through dance.

Since the moment I received salvation through Christ, I worked as a teacher of the Word. Dance was not my primary role in the church in those early days. For this

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reason, I did not think that the prophetic Word of God to my life would be fulfilled through Dance. Back then, dancing inside of the church was not widely practiced in my nation.

I remember a girl from another denomination teaching me simple choreography. I would occasionally watch a church service on television and the church had a dance ministry. I then met someone from Christian Dance Fellowship of Puerto Rico, who taught me my first steps regarding this ministry.

I started experiencing a growing thirst for learning more about how to dance in the church. I attended various workshops and conferences in Puerto Rico and outside of my nation. Without realizing it at the time, those were years of preparation in Holy Spirit's school for what He wanted to do through me.

The Lord led me to start a dance ministry in my local church and we danced while we were learning. We began receiving invitations to minister in other churches and events. I did not fully understand it, but the Lord was leading me to minister others. Without realizing it, I was operating in the prophetic word that had been decreed over me.

After receiving an adequate amount of instruction in relation to the dance ministry, I unexpectedly received a visit from a group of young people at my door asking me to teach them and give them dance classes. This began the ministry outside of the local church. I started to prepare and gathered everything I had learned to teach those young people who came with such great spiritual hunger and thirst.

A few weeks passed and I received a call from a pastor of one of the biggest churches in my city. He asked me to help him start a dance ministry in his church. Other young people from other nearby cities also contacted me to instruct them.

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The prophetic word that was released over me began to manifest very rapidly. I helped to start dance ministries in different churches in my city and nearby towns, providing instruction and the necessary tools to begin dancing according to His heart. My passion to worship God through dance and to teach others grew increasingly.

My secular job as a health professional was not satisfying me. I wished and prayed with all my heart to be able to work full time for the Kingdom of God. The commitments and responsibilities with ministry increased even more and my secular job became a great limitation. Suddenly God came to change the course of my life in the least expected way.

After years in a career as a Medical Technologist, God introduced me to the business world. Back then, a wonderful servant of God had begun a business, a Christian dance store called *Adórale* (Worship Him) in a city very close to mine. After a few years of operation, for personal reasons, she decided to sell the business. I never thought to buy or have this type of business. It was not in my plans and had nothing to do with my academic preparation. However, God's plan was different. Without going into too many details, I can testify that it pleased God to give me this beautiful store which is more than a business, it is a sanctuary and habitation for God. Suddenly, I became a business woman, which in turn opened doors for me to quit my secular job. One step closer to God's plan, I became immersed in everything related to both dance and the business world!

God was intertwining everything in my life according to His perfect plan. Many things were happening at once. People approached about organizing a dance retreat. I decided to put together a small retreat for dancers, but "small" was not the idea of God. Doors started opening, and

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many people answered the call. The room capacity was not sufficient for the number of people registered for the retreat. We searched for an alternative. What began as a simple retreat ended up being the first “According to Your Heart I Will Dance” conference.

The Lord continued to confirm His Word over my life and His mantle of authority was placed over me. Due to the desire of the people for more, I decided to hold a dance conference annually, and have been able to see God’s support. Many people in Puerto Rico already know about the annual conference and start saving for it with anticipation to be able to attend our conferences. These conferences are characterized by leading people into deep worship, where God’s presence is manifested to the point that His power is unleashed and His Kingdom established in our midst; evidenced by miracles and wonders.

In these conferences we have witnessed the most beautiful and never-seen-before choreographies led by the Holy Spirit, without any rehearsal or previous practice. This is unique movement created only by Him and for Him. We have seen people being healed physically and emotionally, others being freed from bondage and people receiving salvation.

There are many testimonies of what God has done in our midst. A young woman recalled how she came to the conference with a severe knee problem and each time she heard the sound of the drums, she felt electricity producing vibration in her knee and received her healing immediately. A woman who was barren came to the conference. We prayed for her, and the next year she came presenting her daughter. There are not enough words to describe all of the miracles and wonders that God has done. All of the glory belongs to Him!

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Eventually, I received an invitation from the International Christian Dance Fellowship to start and lead the organization's chapter in Puerto Rico. After a period of prayer and seeking God's will, I agreed to the calling and began to activate, raise and lead the Christian Dance Fellowship here. Through the Fellowship, we have been able to unite many dance ministries in the nation. We have done a number of workshops, providing resources and inviting anointed speakers from other countries and from Puerto Rico.

We have organized glorious activities, such as: "Sunrise in His Presence" where over a hundred worshippers received the early morning sunrise on the beach with worship and dance for the King of Kings. We have witnessed how worship coming from a passionate heart can please God. We have also participated in national activities, such as the "Day of Clamor to God for Puerto Rico" and have ministered together in concerts of renowned singers and worshippers. The Fellowship has been a vehicle to empower, unite, and educate many and it has led us to have unique experiences in the presence of God.

As part of my preparation to respond to God with excellence, I studied at the Eagles International Training Institute for two years. This is a powerful Holy Spirit-led Institute in which I was able to get deeper into the Word of God. It also helped me to grow more on the technical level. After receiving a license as a dance minister and choreographer, I was named Director of the Institute in Puerto Rico and Latin America. Currently, I mentor students in my nation and other nations. I have seen the fulfillment of the Word of God when He said I would have many disciples and children in ministry. Today, I am a spiritual mother of wonderful children in many nations.

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Later, the Lord placed in my heart the desire to raise a one-year training institute for dance leaders, called According to Your Heart I Will Dance. It is a compilation of everything I have learned over the past twenty years, condensed in a year of intensive studies. The student will go over most of the areas of dance and instruments of worship (tambourines, flags, streamers, etc.), studying theory and putting it into practice. Students end up being highly trained and ready to go out and teach others. It has been very challenging, but we have graduated many students who have been very satisfied with the training and have the desire to continue studying even more. As a result, many have had doors opened to them and have gone out to minister in other places, by the grace of God that they received.

Four years after starting my first business, God spoke to me about acquiring another shop. He opened the way and supplied everything in the given time, so that another Adórale Store (Worship Him Store) could be opened in another city. Through the business, I have been able to reach many people, both Christian and non-Christian, not only to supply a physical need but also to give them a Word from God.

We recently started a Christian Dance Academy called “AbunDANCE” where we offer technique classes for adults and children. We teach students to train their bodies so they can exercise their calling with excellence.

After placing all my life in the hands of my Master and Lord, many doors have opened. I have been able to minister to the nations because of the prophecy that was spoken over my life. By God's grace I have gone out to teach, instruct and train others in countries including the United States, Costa Rica, Panama, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Suriname, Honduras, and islands in the Caribbean. I have been ordained as an Apostle under the



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covering of Set Free Ministries by Apostles Pamela and Christopher Hardy.

Nothing can be compared to the satisfaction of being aligned to the perfect will of God. The dance of life only makes sense when God is the Director and Choreographer of it. I have been exercising the apostolic ministry long before the formal ordination, and as the Lord spoke to me on one occasion, this call came to me from my mother's womb. There is no doubt that when we decide to surrender our lives to God in obedience, nothing can stop His purpose from being fulfilled in our lives. We must influence others to glorify the name of Jesus Christ.

Everything has been the result of a call, obedience to the One who called me, and of a lot of work, effort, and passion for His presence. I have been able to continue the job others started and I have purposed to do it worthily. One day on God's calendar, my whole life changed. I went from a laboratory to a Christian business, from a small pulpit to the nations, from dancing in the secret place to dance with multitudes... Because "you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things."

I never would have imagined that unforgettable day when my life of dance for Him began. He took all of my being and caused me to dance in that small and divine place. Many things have been accomplished for His glory. We are birthing a great legacy for the next generation. Lives are continually impacted by His presence. Souls are receiving salvation. Bodies experience healing. Slaves are being freed. Pain is changing into joy, restoration is taking place and many being instructed according to the heart of God.

The sweetest fruit is being able to win the heart of the King with worship and dance that is pleasing to His heart. The King has extended His scepter and shown me His favor. To Him be all the Glory. I will live on my knees before Him.

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## Lillian Rodriguez

**Lillian Rodriguez** is an Apostle, Minister of God, Minister of dance, and Teacher of the Word of God. She holds a Certificate in Ministerial Arts from the Mizpa Bible Institute in Puerto Rico. She is a Licensed Minister of Dance and choreographer by the covering of Set Free Ministries and Eagles International Training Institute directed by Apostles Pamela and Christopher Hardy. She oversees EITI in Puerto Rico and Hispano-American areas.



She is a member of Centro Cristiano Adoram Church in Lares, Puerto Rico, and her pastors are Rev. Juan Alberto and Wendy Martinez. Her functions in church include: Leader of the Dance Ministry, Teacher of the Word, and President of the Church Governing Board. Through dancing, she has taken the message of the gospel to the community, prisons, hospitals, schools and the Church. She has ministered in the United States, Costa Rica, Panama, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Caribbean Islands where she served as a teacher and speaker.

At the present time, she is the National Coordinator for CDF (Christian Dance Fellowship) in Puerto Rico and has organized many congresses of dance in Puerto Rico. She is the owner of “Adorale,” a store that sells merchandise for dancing and arts. She founded the one-year discipleship program, According to His Heart I Will Dance, to train in the Word and in dancing. Lilly offers workshops to churches and groups for children and adults.

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## CHAPTER 9

# Devotion in Motion

by **Layesha N. Walton**

Many dance ministries have formed, gathered at conferences, joined mentorship programs, enrolled into schools, and developed their own sense of theology as it relates to dancing for the Lord. With the increasing accessibility of information provided to the worship arts community, specifically dance, the Lord has instructed me to address this phenomenon by sharing Kingdom Worship as a Mandate, as opposed to mere talent being treated as the anointing from God. The word mandate according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary is an authoritative command. John 4:24 (KJV) says *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and truth."* Therefore, it is necessary for the worship arts community to understand with all the information received to become more technically sound. As a dancer, singer, or musician, we have an authoritative command from the Lord to worship Him in Spirit and in truth. Doing this consistently and with Godly character must be the goal for the worshipper.

My assignment is to teach balance as it pertains to the appetite for holiness, righteousness and developmental training for dancers. Although many teach with compassion and the truth of God's holy Word, there are teachers who teach void of understanding the true meaning of ministry, which is to meet the needs of people. Without Godly wisdom and understanding the Word of God, well-meaning dancers are subject to obeying their flesh more than the Spirit of

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God. This prompts them to become very similar to worldly dance companies, ensembles and/or entertainment groups instead of worshippers for the Master's use.

If our teachings are only surface-related, we should only expect superficial development. When dance ministry leaders begin to reach beyond the minimum – calling dancers to repent, and to be delivered from unhealed hurts, unmet needs and unresolved issues – then we can expect to see them move from performers to God-chasers and true ministers of movement.

It is difficult to watch the growing trend of worldly competitions of the world creeping into the worship arts community. The organizers of such events say they are to instill Godly competition. However, it becomes a breeding ground for idolatry. It's obvious how many notes have been taken from the world more so than the Word of God. Romans 12:1-3 (KJV) says, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."* Sadly, the Scriptures above are completely opposite from what is happening in some of our worship arts ministries today.

Our bodies are being used in every way but as holy, or acceptable to God, including the dance garments we choose to wear. Most of the competitions are exactly like those hosted on prime time television, and our inconsistencies are sending the wrong message to the world. Instead of seeing Christ, they find hypocrisy. We have been

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extended grace through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I will continue teaching the truth of His Word as it pertains to His expectations and the reasonable service we have been assigned to as ministers of reconciliation and dance.

I believe this mandate has been given to me because of imbalances within the dance ministry community. There are many worship arts conferences teaching the unadulterated Word of God, and leading people into true worship experiences. For every amazing conference filled with the glory of God, there are just as many which claim to educate, enlighten and equip the saints. In many cases, participants leave emotional, elevated by man, and in error.

There are also amazing dance instructors, whose technique is intact. They have no lack in their ability to grand jete', chasse', battement, tendue, layout, and tour jete' all in one breath. Sadly, many still lack the hunger and thirst for righteousness. We also have ministers of movement who can quote the Scriptures perfectly, apply some of them to their lives, love dancing for the Lord, but lack technique, and live with deadly spirits called "offense" "envy" and "jealousy." Others who are technically trained do not feel that they have a place in dance ministry, while some who love to dance for God do not desire to receive training.

The Lord wants us to align ourselves with His Word and develop BALANCE. Job 31:6 (KJV) says *"Let me be weighed in an even balance that God may know mine integrity."* If we keep our hearts lifted towards the Lord, He will lead, guide and develop us in the way HE chooses.

I often teach about the call of God vs. the call of fame or in some cases, flesh. Within these lessons it develops students in the worship arts community by helping them understand the distinct difference between the voice of God, the voice of our flesh, and/or the voice of the evil one.

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Often times, especially when people are talented they are told they are anointed, which is not always true. It is so important to understand who God is, what His Word says and how He speaks. John 10:1-5 (The Message) says:

*“Let me set this before you as plainly as I can. If a person climbs over or through the fence of a sheep pen instead of going through the gate, you know he’s up to no good—a sheep rustler! The shepherd walks right up to the gate. The gatekeeper opens the gate to him and the sheep recognize his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he gets them all out, he leads them and they follow because they are familiar with his voice. They won’t follow a stranger’s voice but will scatter because they aren’t used to the sound of it.”*

If you are clueless to the voice of God, you will always answer the wrong call for your life. This is just a snippet of what I teach my students.

My instructions for teachers include identifying behaviors of idolatry, jealousy, envy and strife because of their pressure on dancers to perform at high levels. Teachers are encouraged to push their students to live with Godly standards, while also learning how to minister through dance effectively. I like to inspire those with dance ministry institutions to create safe environments for people to learn and grow. We must refrain from holding people to lopsided standards. For example, we cannot push them to excel technically with little focus on their spirituality. I encourage all worship arts institutions to promote healthy balance between holiness and excellence. Overall, my mandate is to encourage ministers of movement regarding their character;

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to challenge and encourage them to reflect the character of Christ, and to excel in the beautiful gift we call DANCE.

It is great to see how the arts impact social media. We have ways to reach others like never before. The exposure is great and in some ways very beneficial! Social media is a great tool for evangelism, positive branding, marketing, advertising, and promotional use. If used the right way, you can create a wonderful marketing plan to push Christian events, resources, products, new businesses, dance ministry fundraisers, church initiatives and more. Social media is great for connecting with others who love to praise, worship and dance unto the Lord all over the world! To have such access to the Body of Christ is mind-blowing and when utilized God's way, He can truly be glorified.

These different outlets allow us to share upcoming conferences, workshops, forums, boot camps, our experiences, and unity amongst each other in the worship arts community. It is phenomenal if you think about the various ways we can benefit from social media. If we are open to learning new ways to impact the world with the love of Jesus, this is certainly worth learning more about! We must remember to use discretion and be led by the Spirit even when operating in social media. Proverbs 3:5-6 (KJV) says: *"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."*

Although there are wonderful benefits to using social media, it does leave me to question the price some of us are willing to pay when we defame, defy and degrade the godliness that we are supposed to host within. Through social media we confuse others with our inconsistencies. It is very difficult for new believers or unsaved friends to trust our witness, or the ministry of a dancing preacher who posts dance ministry photos, provocative photos, sprinkled with

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Scripture quotes, but decorated with sinful undertones. Romans 14:16 (KJV) states: *"Let not then your good be evil spoken of."*

I heard someone jokingly say, "Facebook has a spirit," and I rebutted, "No, Facebook doesn't have a spirit, but those who use it have spirits, and it shows on their pages, in their photos, and wall posts." If your flesh is ruling your spirit, meaning that you do not exhibit the fruit of self-control, could it be social media is not for you at this time? Matthew 26:41 (KJV) *"Watch and pray, that ye not enter into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

You may not desire to attract the wrong attention, nor bring shame to God, especially if you believe that you are just having fun. This is what happens when we profess Jesus Christ as our Lord, and live contrary lives. When we dance unto the Lord in church and at various Christian events we are held to a higher standard of living, especially for those serving in leadership roles with great influence. We must be careful how we display our character; we are called to be lights in this dark and perverse world, even within social media. Philippians 2:15-16 (King James Version) says: *"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."*

Within my community I use the arts to bring unity among multiple dance ministries and between dancers who are technically trained and those with no experience at all. They come from different denominations, different pastors, various churches, cultures, and ages with one goal: to praise and worship the Lord Jesus Christ in spirit and in truth through dance. We also come together in prayer for all of the



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churches, pastors, congregations, one another and for all communities represented. Our guiding Scriptures are found in Psalm 133:1-3 (KJV) *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."* This ministry is blessed because it incorporates the love of Jesus Christ and activates unity within the community through the art of dance.

While my assignment is clear to teach how Kingdom worship is a mandate locally, nationally and internationally, it will forever be my desire to educate others through the Word of God. Through it we will expose the enemy and his schemes to confuse those in worship arts, and activate an army of worship artists who understand the balance of living and ministering with a spirit of holiness and excellence.

EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW

## Laysha N. Walton



**Laysha N. Walton** is a native of Miami, Florida, graduate of Fort Valley State University (Fort Valley, GA) with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Mass Communications/Public Relations. Laysha began studying at Ballet Etude and continued her studies at the Inner City Touring Dance Center, Miami Northwestern's Performing and Visual Arts Center and The Alvin Ailey American Dance Center (Summer Intensive Professional Women's Division) located in New York City. Laysha has had extensive training and a performance career for over 25 years.

After receiving Jesus as Lord and Saviour, she gave up dancing for entertainment, only to have Him give it back to her as a tool of ministry and evangelism. Currently through Anointed to Dance, Laysha Walton provides Christian dance education through classes, workshops, seminars, choreography, and ministry presentations nationally. Her dance background includes Ballet, Modern, and Jazz.

Laysha and her husband, Randol, are the founders and directors of Music & Dance Unto the Lord, Inc. and Kingdom Worship Training Academy. Laysha is also the founder and director of T.B.M.U. (Tampa Bay Ministries United), L.I.F.T. (Ladies Influencing their Future Today) Mentorship Program, and author of, *Dancing My Testimony: A Daily Devotional Journal for Worshipers*.

## CHAPTER 10

# Soaring in the Nations

by **Gaditcha Landus Olijveld**

I have always loved to dance, even when I was a little girl. I still love to dance! I grew up with dance and it has always been my passion.

During my teenage years, my cousins and I started a dance group. My turning point was when I came to know the Lord. Of course dancing in the world can never be compared with dancing for the Lord. People often think that when you give your life to Christ, you cannot be free and give God that "crazy praise." They think church is boring or that you have to be quiet the whole time. That is one of the reasons why people are afraid to give their lives to Christ. For me to come to the knowledge that church was not boring at all and that I could dance before the Lord was really a revelation and a relief. Nothing could stop me from praising my Lord and expressing the deep and passionate love for Him through dance.

After a year or so, I followed my husband to another church called Friends in Christ Ministries, where we were later ordained as Youth Leaders. A few of us started to practice together and after a while we presented our first ministry piece in the church. I will never forget these ladies! We were young but passionate for the Lord. Most of the time we ministered with two or three people. After ministering with the youth a couple of times I knew that God was calling me to another level.

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In my spirit I knew that there was more to what we were doing, although we did it with all of our hearts. There were other dance ministries in Holland at that time, but we had not heard a lot about dance as a form of worship. I did not have the feeling that it was really explored and the dance ministries were not working together.

I had the desire to grow and to develop myself within the dance ministry. I started to pray and ask God to send me someone who could help me and mentor me. I soon discovered that there was going to be a dance conference in Holland. I went to the conference with five other sisters and this is where my life and ministry purpose changed.

One of the guest speakers at the conference was Apostle Pamela Hardy. I remember her coming up to me. She asked me to stand before the people and told me to minister to them and to prophecy in dance. This was completely new to me, but I obeyed. From that day on, I was a changed dance minister. She explained to me about the Eagles International Training Institute and I applied. I graduated in 2006, and from then on, God began to reveal more to me about the way He wanted me to go.

Although I had great challenges when I started the course, I kept holding on to the promises of God. Even when friends walked away, I remained committed to Him. Attacks and discouragement came from everywhere. It was not an easy time, but I am grateful. Why? Because through these things, I got to know Him on a greater level. I drew closer to God and He promised me that He would speak on my behalf.

The ministry of dance is a very beautiful way to honour God. As with every other ministry, it also has its challenges. These challenges were not only the attacks of the enemy, but manifested in the way dancers viewed each other more as competitors than as fellow worshippers in the

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Kingdom. It is heartbreaking to see, because God wants us to be one - Not to pretend to be one, but to be one!

When I was going through a similar situation, all I could do was trust God and stand on His word. For me, obedience to God speaks louder than anything else. Since I was committed to obeying Him, I could not let the opinions of others hold me back. Christ was and still is my backbone.

In 2006, on my way to the graduation in the US, I remember looking out the window of the airplane as we waited for takeoff and there was a beautiful rainbow. I heard God speaking to me, "It's OK. My promises for you are coming to pass." I felt the peace of God in such a sweet way and my heart was filled with joy.

In 2007 God started speaking to me about hosting a dance conference. In faith I stepped out and began preparing. Sure enough, God sent people to help and to support the vision. It is great and necessary to work with a team and I am grateful for the team God has given me. We are women who love God and also have a love for His people. During the years that we have been working together, I have seen growth as we develop both individually and collectively.

Our team consists of people from different churches. This was an answer to prayer. I asked God to show forth His unity through the dance. I have observed that more people from different churches are working together to build the Kingdom. Glory to the King!

For me, dance is not just a ministry but it is my passion. It is the best way to express myself to my Father. My desire is that everyone discovers a true passion for God. This will allow them to operate in their calling with a compassionate heart and spirit.

God is using us to develop others, but more importantly, they get to know who they are in Him and what He has called them to do. Individually, we need to know our

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true identity in Christ; otherwise, people, situations and circumstances will cause us to waver and we will not be steadfast in Him. Knowing Him and knowing what He requires of us will allow us to stand firm. It give me great pleasure to see people developing and walking in their calling and destiny.

A chapter of The Eagles Network ("TEN") has also been established in Holland. When the students come in, we show them God's love. We want them to know that they are welcome and we look forward to spending time with them.

I remember a time when one of the students entered the room, and from the beginning she appeared uninterested. She seemed afraid and had low self-esteem. As the meetings continued, we would see small changes. By the end of the year, she was totally free. The transformation that we saw in her was so remarkable, it could have only been a work of God. She became passionate about the Lord. This is just one of the many cases God brings on our path. After every meeting, conference or gathering we have, I leave with a grateful heart. Seeing what God does in the lives of others and allowing me to be part of it humbles me and gives me an even greater passion and love for Him. He is truly an amazing God.

God is using me to be a pioneer in Holland. He has surrounded me with worshipping warriors who have the same vision and desire. When He sends us out, we are there to break ground and to release the freedom and presence of God. Our ministry is not only for Holland, but He has also called us to take His Word in dance beyond the borders of this nation. We have had the privilege of going to several nations within Europe and beyond for ministry purposes. Each time we are amazed by the God that we serve. He reveals Himself to us in so many different ways.

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Dance ministry continues to impact my life. I have always wanted to travel, but never had the opportunity to do so. After my graduation from EITI in 2006, the Lord began opening doors, and the invitations started coming in. By God's grace and favour, I now travel to nations to speak about the Lord and to show forth His praises through dance. I have visited several nations and have met some amazing people. The most wonderful thing in all of this is that we see lives being transformed for the Father's glory.

One of the great things I remember while serving in other nations happened in Denmark. We went there with a team of seven. It was a beautiful experience. On that trip I saw breakthrough taking place. Two of our quieter members on the team became totally free and began ministering to the people and sharing the Word of God.

Since then, we attended a worship conference in Suriname, where I was invited as one of the guest speakers. I was there with four of my team members. Most of us are from Suriname and one is from Curaçao. I was 11 years old when I migrated to the Netherlands. Even though I was returning, it felt like the first time. Suriname feels like coming home.

We finished a dance conference that lasted 5 days - 2 days in Paramaribo and 2 days in Nickerie. The last day we finished the conference with a procession through the streets of Suriname. We ended with a worship concert.

My experience during this ministry trip was completely different from all the other assignments we have had. I witnessed the hand of God moving in a mighty way. People treated us with love and care. I met wonderful people with servant's hearts and a love for worshipping God. Suriname has a special place in my heart and some of the people truly captured my heart. I will never forget them.

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My heart is filled with gratitude unto the Lord. Our God is amazing! Words are not enough to tell you how I feel and how much I love God. He keeps surprising me.

Is it because I conquered His heart? I truly love the Lord and my life is in His hands. I want to be the worshipper who touches His heart and makes His heart beat faster; the worshipper that brings Him joy each day. One who loves Him for who He is and not for what He is doing. Father, words cannot express my love for You. My heart belongs to You.

I encourage you to obey Him and walk in His perfect will for your life. He started with me in Holland and now He is taking me to the nations. God will extend your land and enlarge your territory if you trust and obey Him. All He needs is your yes. Give Him all and see His glory revealed in your life.

The beautiful thing about the dance is that you can express yourself. Allow what is on the inside of you to come out. As revealers of God's sight, when we minister in dance people should see the Word and the heart of God demonstrated. Changes have taken place over the years and I believe that many more changes are on the way.

***Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send? And who will go for us? And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"***

- Isaiah 6:8



## Gaditcha Landus-Olijfeld



**Gaditcha Landus Olijfeld** is a licensed and ordained dance minister. In 2006, Gaditcha graduated from the Eagles Training Institute (EITI) under the leadership of Apostle Pamela Hardy; She is now the European Director of Eagles International Training Institute (<http://www.eaglesiti.org/>) and also the country representative for International Christian Dance Fellowship ([www.icdf.com](http://www.icdf.com)), an international network for worshippers.

Gaditcha is the founder of Shekinah Worship Dance Institute [www.shekinahwdi.com](http://www.shekinahwdi.com), which has its home base in the Netherlands. God is using her to establish, empower and edify dance ministries both at home and abroad. In the past years, God has allowed her to minister in Holland, America, Suriname, St. Martin, Poland, Denmark and England.

From an early age Minister Gaditcha had a passion for dancing and singing. After giving her life to Christ, she became aware that she could worship God through dance. She is determined to use this precious gift of God to glorify Him and to reach her purpose in Christ (pursuing destiny). She ministers in dance under the leading and anointing of the Holy Spirit. Her most passionate desire is to see lives changed and challenged to serve the King in spirit and in truth.

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She is a committed and mature Christian whose walk with God is evident in everything she does. Her one desire is to achieve that intimacy with God at all times. As well as being a worshipper, she is an intercessor at heart; she is committed to seeking God's leading for every aspect of her life and ministry. This is evident when she ministers, God gets all the glory and lives are touched.

Gaditcha is married to Marciano Landus and together they serve as International Leaders for International Covenant Connect under the leadership of Apostles Chris and Pamela Hardy. They have one son, Eljhonai, and he is also glorifying God through the ministry of dance.

## CHAPTER 11

# From Natural to Spiritual

by Camlyn Leander

*"For thou hast possessed my reins:  
thou had covered me in my mother's womb.*

*My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in  
secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts  
of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance,  
yet being perfect; and in thy book all my members  
were written, which in continuance were fashioned,  
when as yet there was none of them."*

- Psalm 139:13, 15-16 (KJV)

Born into a family where dancing came naturally, it seemed natural when I was an adolescent to easily learn the latest dance moves. It was natural when, like my three elder sisters, I was selected by my standard four primary school teacher to dance at Carifesta when it was held in Trinidad in 1990. It was also natural when, like my eldest sister, I joined a dance group and entered a performing arts competition called Party Time.

It became a bit strange when my dad randomly told me one Monday morning, "Carry your dance clothes to school with you and join the dance class held at your school this evening." I was 11 years old. It was even stranger when one of my elder sisters told me that when she was my age

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she had asked our dad to take ballet classes and he laughed at her, but I didn't ask him to join a dance class and he enrolled me in one.

Since then, I've danced at different schools. I learned folk at Andre Ettienne Dance Company, Marcia Charles Dance Theatre Company and Julia Edwards Dance Company. I studied hip hop with the Executives dance group and Praise Academy of Dance. I took modern at Marcia Charles Dance Theatre Company and Praise Academy of Dance. I learned to limbo at Julia Edwards Dance Company, and Latin dances with Walter Diaz of Venezuela.

I was afforded opportunities to travel to Caribbean islands and a few states in the USA to dance. At one point in time I stopped dancing and switched to playing music, but the Lord found a way for me to resume dancing. The group that I played music with wanted dancing to be a part of their performances. God's purpose for my life in the area of dance had to be accomplished and His Word could not return to Him void. I loved dancing and loved to travel, not only for my pleasure but for the Master's plan.

A few years later in 2002, I gave my life to the Lord. My dance was not surrendered to Him yet. I continued dancing at a school and danced at secular events, dressed in secular garments. There was a pull of the flesh that wanted me to focus on my natural talent and a tug from the Spirit whose desire was to glorify the Father with the dance. The flesh was winning. I continued to pray that God would deliver me from myself and make a way of escape from the secular dance school I attended.

Six years later in October 2008, I experienced a degree of liberation in the dance but not before some pain. I damaged my knee and was unable to dance for six months. It was a blessing in disguise because I was able to attend Praise Academy of Dance Trinidad's second praise dance

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conference where Apostle Pamela Hardy was the guest speaker. It was there that my mindset was changed and I shifted away from the secular to the ministerial. Within six months I was chosen to be a part of praise ministry team and my passion for ministry was honed.

At the end of 2009, I embarked on a journey to study the ministry of dance at the Eagles International Training Institute (EITI). What a year that was! The first day of 2010, I received my first prophetic word that concluded with instructions to dance when the Lord tells me to and not to neglect the prophetic dance for my professional dance.

My purpose in dance was the object of the enemy's attack through sickness in my body. I stopped dancing for four months only to realize when I studied prophetic dance in June of 2010, that dancing was the means of my victory over that plan of the enemy. I resumed dancing even though my body was weak. It soon became strengthened as I continued pressing in.

In July, I attended a dance workshop in Puerto Rico. On two different occasions, from two different people, (one of them was Prophet James Hernandez), I received the same prophetic word that God was going to use me to bring change to my nation when I dance, twirl and spin. In August, my Pastor Dale Desvignes selected me to be the leader of the dance ministry. I was shocked, scared, honored and very inexperienced! The only person that I have ever led before in my life was me. I accepted the opportunity and challenge to help this group of young men and women to grow and develop in their relationship with the Lord and in the ministry of dance.

In October of 2010, I graduated as a Licensed Dance Minister. It was at EITI's International Worship Summit that I received double confirmation from the Lord that the idea my Pastor shared with me to open a dance school to train and

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raise up other ministers in dance was indeed His plan. On January 22, 2011, Exodus Dance Movement opened its doors and they remain open to date.

My personal history as a dance minister doesn't extend very far into the past. Since my shift to dancing for the Kingdom of God, I have recognized that there is a great passion and love for dance. More pastors and leaders have added the dance ministry to their list of church ministries and are allowing dance to be a part of their services.

Looking back at the 20 plus years that I have attended church, before my encounter with Jesus as the Lord of the dance, the only time I saw persons dancing in the church occurred spontaneously. The thoughts held by church leaders about dance in the church ranged from dance having pagan origins to the only true form of dance being spontaneous. Some dance ministries were not allowed to minister at their home church but were invited to minister at other churches. There was much struggle and persecution from the pastors and leaders in the church, but God's plan was victorious.

While some were being hindered, there were a few persons whom God was raising up to start the foundational work of bringing structured dance into the church. Little by little, more people started dancing and establishing dance ministries at their churches. Many were saved, touched, and changed through the ministry of dance, thus opening more doors for the acceptance of dance in the church.

Unfortunately, dance it is still viewed by many people as "a special" and not true ministry. This is due to the fact that as the ministry of dance grew, there was a lack of biblical understanding as to what it is (by both leaders and dancers), what is required of those who call themselves dance ministers, as well as little desire to study and work to become ministers of the Word and not just dancers. Because

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there was limited emphasis on biblical foundations and Scriptural teachings about dance, it hindered the flow of the Holy Spirit, lessening the impact on the lives of believers and unbelievers.

The ministry of dance in Trinidad and Tobago is still in its infancy. There is a separation of ministry and minister from the dance. Most dance ministries spend practice hours focusing on learning choreography and movements in preparation for an upcoming event. At the end, they receive applause from those who responded emotionally. In all fairness, that's all they could have done since flesh responds to flesh and spirit responds to Spirit.

I see more dancers in the body of Christ seeking to sharpen their skill in the dance. Some take classes at traditional dance schools, just as I did. Because they are a part of the school, they also participate in dance productions not realizing their error due to a lack of knowledge.

Others are content with simply being a part of the dance ministry, not striving for personal growth and development so that their offerings unto God can be at a standard of excellence. There are those who desire to go deeper, but allow obstacles and challenges to keep them back or to steer them in other directions.

Fortunately, there are a few who press in and endure, who strive for excellence in ministry, and thirst for the truth of God's Word. Once received, they do not get entangled again with the bondage of sin, mediocrity, ritual and religion. These fast and pray, and seek God's face to know His heart in order to minister His messages to His people. They also disciple others.

In addition to the ministry of dance, there is the mime ministry which is becoming more popular. Praise Academy of Dance Trinidad hosted dance conferences and workshops which included sessions on mime annually. We train, equip,

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strengthen and connect dancers and mimes to know and fulfill their purpose.

Sarah Byrd, a Trinidad native, hosts biannual worship conferences here which also help in the development of dance ministers. The Woodbrook Pentecostal Church invited Royal Priesthood and Reborn International from Texas to be guest facilitators at their annual dance conference. The Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies (PAWI) hosts Youth Fest every year. Youth Fest consists of a month of activities including a camp, concerts and culminates with a competition. The competition requires young people between the ages of 13 and 30 to study a selected passage of Scripture and develop a presentation in their given area of ministry. I was encouraged at the level of spiritual maturity and creativity of some, but equally disheartened by the level of competitiveness of others.

I thank God for those who love God first and dance second, who avail themselves to be used by the Giver of the gift to minister healing, deliverance, breakthrough, hope, love, peace and so much more to His people. I am grateful for those who seek after righteousness more than skill and who live exemplary Christian lives. I also thank God for those who were before me, who fought and struggled for the dance to be established in the churches of Trinidad and Tobago. Furthermore, I thank God that He has called me in this area of ministry for such a time as this, so that I can impact the present to change the future of the ministry of dance in this nation.



## FROM NATURAL TO SPIRITUAL

# Camlyn Leander



Camlyn Leander has been called by God before she was born. As a result, she has had a growing relationship with her Father from a tender age. At the age of 11, she was introduced to the world of dance and from then her passion for dance began. She danced with many secular groups which afforded her opportunities to travel to different US states and Caribbean islands.

It was not until 2008 when she met Dr. Pamela Hardy and the founder and members of Praise Academy of Dance Trinidad and Tobago that she started dancing for God and began her journey on the path God has called her to. In March 2010, Camlyn was led to Pillars of Truth Ministry where she was accepted immediately. Six months later, she became the leader over the dance ministry and serves under the youth ministry.

Camlyn became a licensed dance minister through EITI in 2010. In 2011, she was taken to another level of stewardship when the Lord led her to establish a dance school, Exodus Dance Movement.

She recently graduated from the West Indies School of Theology where she attained the Certificate in Bible and Theology Program. She is studying the final year of EITI-SOP and the EILI Five-fold Leadership

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Track both at EITI. Camlyn continues to thirst after God and aspires to fulfill every purpose and plan He has for her life.

## CHAPTER 12

# Dancing His Story

by Teresa Gardner

It was Sunday morning, 1978, at Resurrection Lutheran Church. During the last song of the worship service something happened that had never happened before in this church – dance burst forth! The acolyte (liturgical assistant to the pastor) robed in a white alb began whirling and leaping before the Lord in a circular manner around the altar in the center of the room. Several of us found ourselves immediately, unhesitatingly, joining in – spinning, twirling, skipping and leaping with all our might! The worship that had been welling up within our hearts during these early years of the Liturgical and Charismatic Renewals exploded in this utterly spontaneous and abandoned outward expression of praise.

Though it has experienced many different forms and seasons, the birthing of dance initiated by the Lord that morning has continued for over thirty-five years. Unquestionably, it was the Lord who birthed the release of dance in this church for His pleasure, His purposes, and His glory. It has been the faithfulness of the Lord that has carried it on to this time.

History is God's story. It is truly *His Story*, and we are the language God is using to write in these prophetically abundant days. How thankful and privileged I am to have been a part of telling His Story through the language of movement during my own generation.

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When I first experienced dance as an expression of praise of my love for God through the movement of dance, I had no idea that it would be my entrance into a lifelong involvement of participating in the birth of many dance ministries. It would also lead to the development and restoration of others for this historical resurgence of body, soul and spirit movement for the glory of God during this era of the church. As I have reviewed dance throughout church history, I believe we have witnessed and will continue to experience a unique move of the Holy Spirit involving the restoration of dance for the glory of God in our lifetime.

As a teacher and director, I became aware many years ago that each new class of dance ministry students lacked knowledge and understanding of the origins and history of the dance ministry into which they were entering. They did not know there was a time when dancing *before, for* and *with* the Lord was not the norm. They have, in a sense, been born into an environment where dance ministry is a normal part of worship expression. That is wonderful, but it has both its positive aspects as well as its challenges.

Just as it is important for us as Christians to learn from 2000 years of church history, so too, I believe, is it important for those of us involved in Worship Arts Ministries to learn what God has revealed and how the Spirit has moved historically within the worship arts realm of "His Story." In order to understand our present and prepare for our future, we should build upon the solid foundation of the past – including the past history of dance used as an expression of Judeo/Christian praise and worship within our own generation. Let *us* fulfill the exhortation of the psalmist in declaring, "*One generation shall praise thy works to another; they shall tell of your mighty acts.*" - Psalm 145:4 (KJV).

## DANCING HIS STORY

I confess that I have found it impossible to comprehensively condense into these few pages the history of what the Lord has done in and through the Resurrection Dance Ministry over three and a half decades. Nevertheless, here is part of one person's story – my story as a worshiper, dancer, choreographer and director with *The Resurrection Dance Ministry (RDM)*.

### **A Brief Historical Overview of The Resurrection Dance Ministry**

Prior to His ascension, Jesus told His disciples that they would be His witnesses ***“in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”*** (Acts 1:8 NIV). I have found the analogy of this progressive expansion of local to regional to international ministry helpful in describing the growth and development of The Resurrection Dance Ministry. Here is a brief decade-by-decade synopsis:

***And you will be my witnesses...  
In Jerusalem*** (Locally)

#### **1970s - The Birth**

Dance was released as a congregational expression of praise and worship during the Sunday Morning Worship Service. In addition to spontaneous responses to the Presence of the Lord, special offerings of choreographed dance and dramatic interpretation of Scripture were included in the worship services. Larger Drama/Dance Productions such as *The Witness* (Jamie and Carol Owens) and *The Lord's Supper* (John Michael Talbot) were presented locally and regionally. *The Resurrection Dance and Drama Ensemble* began with 20 – 30 young adults.

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*...in all Judea and Samaria* (Regionally and Nationally)

### **1980s - The Growth**

Dancing before the Lord developed into a ministry in and to the local congregation and to the larger geographical region through workshops and conferences with participants of all ages. The biblical study and understanding of worship and dance deepened and matured as *The Dance Ministry of Resurrection Church* worked with and learned from other national and international ministries and teachers. Teresa Gardner, the director, began serving with *The Tabernacle Dance Company* of The International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem, Israel (ICEJ). “Worship with Dance: Volume I” (a two-hour video featuring 24 dance selections of various levels within a local congregation’s worship environment) was produced to encourage others beginning in dance ministry. Worship Dance classes began at the request of several parents desiring that their children learn to worship the Lord with dance.

*...to the ends of the earth* (Internationally)

### **1990s - Missions and Training the Next Generation**

The ongoing training of worship dancers, future ministers, and disciples grew to nearly 100 students weekly from ages four through adult. Several classes became active and committed Ministry Teams of *The Resurrection Dance Ministry (RDM)*. Students of all ages participated in worship service dance offerings and ministry outreach opportunities began in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade. In 1992, RDM began teaching and ministering at worship conferences overseas throughout the former Soviet Union (Poland, Ukraine, Russia [from St.

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Petersburg/Moscow to Siberia/ Vladivostok], Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan), the Philippines and Hong Kong.

Worship missions continued into the next decade with teams ministering in India, Argentina, Belize and Israel. RDM began teaching and leading dance ministries in several other churches locally and regionally. “Worship with Dance: Volume II” (a four-hour/two video compilation of dances, teaching and congregational expression) was produced. The Annual Worship Dance/Creative Arts (now Worship Arts) Conference began in the summer of 1997.

*...from glory to glory*

### **2000’s - Ever Growing, Ever Changing**

Local, regional and international ministry continued to expand and *RDM* students grew up to be become teachers, staff and faculty. *Zion Center for Worship and the Arts (ZCWA)* was officially established as a covering for ministries which had grown beyond the realm of the local church. *ZCWA* began partnering with *The Obed Project* and ministering annually in Israel with worship, intercessory prophetic prayer trips and service projects.

Teresa’s involvement with the ICEJ/Israel continued for a decade as Dance Company Manager for The Tabernacle Dance Company. In 2002, *ZCWA* began *Dancing Together – A Multi Cultural Youth Dance Program* – as an expansion of *RDM*’s already existing neighborhood outreach to the local international, refugee and underserved communities near inner city Charlotte, NC. An annual Winter Worship Dance/Arts Conference began in 2000. In 2005, Linda Sloan joined *ZCWA*’s staff full-time. In 2011, Teresa received her Doctorate in Worship Studies and began implementing *ZCWA*’s Online Course Studies Program.

## EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW

It is good to give thanks for all the Lord has done! There is not room here for the many testimonies of changed lives or to share the individual, ministry and congregational victories and trials, gracious successes and redemptive failures that God has used to continually form and transform us. He is changing us into His image from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

The truths and principles that apply to our lives as Christians also apply to our calling in dance ministry. Love for God and one another, relationships, unity, faithfulness and commitment, a servant's heart, walking humbly before God and esteeming others better than ourselves, recognizing and honoring one another's gifts, roles and callings, and so on. I do believe dance ministry may be one of the more challenging ministries to be involved in, as it requires our whole being – body, soul and spirit. It is a completely vulnerable and obviously visual expression of the Body of Christ and, therefore, the enemy works hard to damage and destroy God's image in any way possible. But, thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

### **Our Stories as Part of the Larger Picture**

Let me share an encounter with the Lord and a vision He gave to me in 1990. I was visiting Times Square in New York City. Standing there, I thought of the many "stars" who had performed over the years and walked through the very spot where I was standing. The Lord pointed to me and said, "You are the generation I want to use to change things." My immediate response was, "But Lord, that is for people who know what they are doing." I knew that I certainly was not qualified. I was just someone who loved God and was trying to be faithful with the little that I had. (Well, I think we all know it is not wise to argue with the Lord!) And, please be



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honest, how many of you reading this have felt unqualified for what the Lord has asked you to do?

Within the hour, while overlooking the city, the Lord showed me a world map – the type usually seen on walls with little colored push pins designating specific points. There were pins all over the earth, more in some places than others. The pins represented those the Lord had placed in specific places with the call of using dance for His glory all over the world. When we began our international missions trips I had the privilege of meeting some of those the Lord had planted! I sensed that many did not understand why they were *where* they were and others struggled with *why* they were called to this type of ministry - but God had planted them there for His purposes. In His time they would come forth as part of God's revelation and covering the earth with His glory. When revealed in its fullness, the earth will have to reckon with this revelation and either accept or reject the glory of God. Please do not underestimate your part in God's plan.

### **A Brief Personal Testimony**

I am a worshiper. It was through worship that I came into a deeper relationship with the Lord. As a young Christian, it was one of my deepest desires and prayers that the Lord would use me to lead others to worship Him so that they, too, would know and love Him more. I have been more surprised than anyone that part of God's call on my life has been dance ministry. I was not a dancer, and I was not very good at it when I tried.

Shortly after I recommitted my life to following Jesus Christ at the age of 21, dance became the most natural and heartfelt expression of love and praise to God I had ever experienced. I could no longer keep inside all that was within me, and it came forth through expressive movement.

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Like many of the pioneers of dance ministry in my generation, we were adults when the Lord called us into this ministry. Although I had been dancing in the church for many years, and was released into public dance ministry through many venues outside of the church, I was 32 years old when the Lord clearly told me to pursue dance. Knowing in the natural that I was well beyond the age when someone would begin this type of pursuit, I knew that it was the Lord.

The Lord made the purpose very clear to me. The classes and training were not so that I could become a great dancer, but so that I could make His message more clear. Increasing my movement vocabulary and the ability to execute the movements placed within my heart, mind and spirit by building a more solid technical foundation would enable me to more freely and clearly express visually through movement what the Lord was speaking and revealing. It would enable me to better show forth His sights and praises and to be a more faithful messenger of His revelation.

I am often asked if I think it is necessary for those in dance ministry to receive technical training, or if it is enough for the Holy Spirit to guide us. My experience would encourage me to say, "Both." There are many venues for training and I certainly encourage Spirit-led decisions when making these choices. I do believe technical instruction is helpful for every type of dance communication - from congregational leading to prepared choreography to spontaneous and prophetic communication. We should pursue excellence in both Spirit and skill at whatever level or age we find ourselves.

### **What Is Your Story Within His Story?**

If I may, I want to encourage you to begin where you are. Please do not deny the calling of the Lord nor ignore that

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quietly persistent voice of the Holy Spirit encouraging you to move forward, even though you may not feel like you know how. A journey takes place step by step.

If the Lord has placed the desire within your heart and spirit to dance before Him, to dance with Him, to make Him known to others, to show forth His glory through movement... I will say to you what my pastor's wife said to me 35 years ago shortly after dance first broke forth in our church: "(Teresa), if you are the only one to dance before the Lord, I think that is just fine." *Your* story is important. I encourage *you* to respond to His initiation of love and to take His hand leading you in the dance.

May God the Father, His Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit lead you into His perfect will and calling for your life and may you say a resounding "yes" to all He has for you.

EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW

## Teresa Gardner



**Teresa Gardner** has developed and led dance ministries for over thirty-five years and is currently the Director of Zion Center for Worship and the Arts (ZCWA) - a citywide/international center for worship training through biblical study and technical development. Her vision for seeing the arts restored for the glory of God has taken many local, national and international venues and currently includes ZCWA's national bi-annual Worship Arts Conferences in Charlotte, NC

Teresa continues to serve as Director of The Resurrection Dance Ministry and teaches Worship Dance Classes to all ages, directs Dancing Together – A Multi-Cultural Youth Dance Program as a community outreach for inner-city children and youth, and assists many churches in beginning and establishing their own dance ministries.

Teaching at Worship Conferences around the globe, Teresa's desire is to see the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. Teresa and ZCWA's newest venue of biblical worship arts education is through online courses ([www.zcwa.com](http://www.zcwa.com)).

Teresa served as Dance Company Manager for the International Christian Embassy's Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem from 1999-2010 and continues to provide worship arts discipleship-training trips to Israel. Teresa received her Doctorate of Worship Studies from The Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies.

## CHAPTER 13

# Grace in the Dance

by Karen Liew

Brown's beagle jumps up and down with his feet in the air, his floppy ears flying out behind him. A benign smile fills his face, and his eyes close in satisfaction. As he leaps, Snoopy says, "If you can't dance, at least do a happy hop!"

In every possible situation, Christians have experienced the joy of Jesus, which no man can take from them. Saint Francis of Assisi was known among his contemporaries as 'The Dancing Fool' because he always danced and smiled while outdoors. Ernest B. Gentile, an ordained minister and an author, says in his book *Worship God* that he has gone into the church sanctuary alone and danced before the Lord just for the sheer exhilaration of His joy in his heart. According to Gentile, "The use of body movement or kinetic expression has been argued by liturgy theologians and common worshippers alike. Such discussions cover more than dance. Since dancing is the most strenuous and energetic, it naturally draws the most attention, especially from people hesitant to participate in bodily worship. Worship always requires some action of the body. Just standing or singing in a church service is kinetic expression. Closing the eyes or bowing the head is also a mild form."

The grace of God raised the ministry of dance in Malaysia. Though most churches had been used to a milder form of worship, we find that worship dance was a way of life with the Israelites. Psalms exhorted the people to praise

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God with music and in dance (Psalms 149:3; 150:4). King David danced before the Lord with all his might. (2 Samuel 6:14)

Dancing and arts, which had been relegated more to secular enjoyment and creative expression, must find a place of creative expression in the worship of God through redeemed arts. Peter E. Gillquist says, "The church that has the courage to gain back the physical acts in worship will soon discover that their people will be alive and active in the Lord in a way they never thought possible!"

### **Christian Dance Fellowship of Malaysia**

For this very reason, the Christian Dance Fellowship of Malaysia (CDFM) was formed under the leadership of Rev. Karen Liew, who is the Founding National Coordinator. It is connected to the International Christian Dance Fellowship (ICDF) based in Australia, which has started CDFs in over 25 countries since its formation in 1988.

CDFM has held training workshops and practices since it was formed in Kuala Lumpur on July 2, 1999 at a Regional Creative Dance Camp. Since then, it has ministered in outstanding performances at the Emmanuel Celebration in 1999 at the Bukit Jalil Stadium. There were also the memorable performances at the Breakthrough 2000 Renewal Rally where local, contemporary and flag dances were presented at Bukit Jalil Putra Indoor Stadium. The Argentinian ministry team was so impressed with the presentation that they plan to send copies of the dance videos to future organizers of their revival-evangelistic events in other countries as a model-guide.

The next mega-event the CDFM participated in was the WEFGA 2001 opening ceremony and closing ceremony in JW Marriot, KL. Madam Surlianty Liu Chun Wai (Founder and President of the Southeast Asia Dance Troupe) was

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appointed the Artistic Director/Choreographer. Vibrant Southeast Asian dances were presented at the opening night where the Malaysia Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir, his wife, VIPs and delegates from 116 countries were in attendance. The cultural dances certainly contributed to a stimulating evening!

### **Beginnings**

What is widely appreciated and accepted now, was once a subdued and uncharted territory. Christian dance in Malaysia had its beginnings with Aunty Margrate Yap of Shachah Creative Music & Dance Centre, a Christian dance school. She spearheaded the dance movement at the time teaching dances using tambourines, worship-strings, chopsticks, banners, flags, cloth and ribbons.

Rev. Karen Liew, along with the members from her church and many others enrolled in her dance training. Different churches later participated in the combined Praise Festivals, culminating in the annual Dataran Merdeka celebrations for four consecutive years at the Selangor Padang, where 800 dancers from all over the country publicly proclaimed Jesus to an estimated crowd of 20,000.

### **Dance Development**

After Margrate Yap migrated to the United States with her family, there was a growing void in the dance movement; however, the flames of passion for Christian dance worship lingered in Rev. Karen Liew. Having experienced the grace and anointing of God in the dance ministry, she was determined to pursue and develop herself in this art of dance. She went on to attend an accredited program offered by the Institute of Ministry and Arts (WIMA) Sydney and took dance courses conducted locally by Mary Jones, the Founder

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of Christian Dance Fellowship International and Australia. Through this education she expanded her dance vocabulary, incorporated tambourine, and most importantly, learned the biblical perspective of dance.

Encouraged by Mary Jones, she sought to work on dance techniques to seek greater avenues of expression. It led her to enroll in modern dance as well cultural dance under a renowned local professional tutor, Mew Chang Tsing and with the National Arts Academy of Malaysia.

### **Aflame for His Glory**

After completing biblical dance and some contemporary dance courses, Karen felt a compelling need to gather the dancers for combined efforts in dance, to unite and ignite the fire in worship-dance once again. A Regional Creative Dance Camp was set up and invitations sent out to churches in Malaysia whose dancers were willing to come for a seminar-workshop. We placed an emphasis on networking and combining resources in the ministry of dance. Outstanding overseas and local tutors were aligned to lecture on dance for the camp and the response was overwhelming! The flame was lit and CDFM was formed with the vision and mission to express Christ through dance par excellence!

### **Redeeming Dance**

Through Mew Chang Tsing, Karen was introduced to Madam Surianty Liu Chun Wai who became her next mentor in dance. Madam Liu has completed research in classical, folk ethnic and traditional dances of Asia. She has choreographed and lectured on dance cultures of Asia in an effort to translate such forms of dances to express worship to the living God.



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In line with the working of God to restore all forms of creativity and artistry through His people, a "Redeeming Dance For Christ" seminar was scheduled in 2000 by CDFM to train dancers and prepare for the WEFGA. The seminar featured highly qualified teachers from South Africa, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. Madam Surianty Liu, who was one of the outstanding teachers, was later invited to be the first official Artistic Advisor for CDFM.

### **Greater Heights**

It is the desire of CDFM that dance will be a unifying factor of the church and a soundboard for communicating Christ to the various communities around. We hope and foresee that Christians will rise to the occasion to enthusiastically fulfill the call to dance for Him, with high standards of holiness, communicating the presence of God in their ministries.

Though there must be a rising standard of excellence in presentation through appropriate technique, choreography and attire, dance for God is not to be just an external art form or motion. The purpose of the dance is to express biblical faith, as well as to inspire or stimulate others to worship Him.

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## **Karen Liew**



**Rev. Karen Liew** is a spirit-filled ordained pastor who received her dance training both through a local dance theater company and through Kingdom Life Training Institute. She serves as coordinator of Christian Dance Fellowship Malaysia (CDFM) and works in conjunction with International Christian Dance Fellowship (ICDF).

## CHAPTER 14

# Dance the Walls Down

by Cynthia Draaibaar

I can still remember very well, when I first gave my life to Jesus. I had a great desire to dance before the Lord. I had danced previously and I was the leader and founder of a very famous worldly dance group in Suriname. At my conversion I did not understand much about liturgical dance (dancing in the Church). What I understood is that liturgical dance was a lot different compared to that of the world. After a long wait, the day finally arrived in which I could use my talent to the honor and glory of God.

It started when I was sitting in a prophetic service. I asked the Lord Jesus to tell the prophet to give a revelation concerning a young lady who sat in the room and who would very much like to dance for the Lord. I hadn't been a born-again Christian for long. I had been waiting several months for a chance to dance before Him. I looked forward to the call of the prophet, but the revelation did not come. I was disappointed because the service was almost over. I thought "Lord, when?" I wanted to receive my confirmation to dance that same day. I sat there, but I didn't give up. I talked to God and questioned Him.

***But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. - Isaiah 40:31 (KJV)***

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At the end of the service, the prophet called everybody to come up front to anoint them, and to leave the place immediately afterward. Everyone lined up in a row to get anointed. I took pleasure in doing so as well and stood in line, still disappointed but at least I was going to be anointed. Right there, when I wasn't expecting it, it happened. The prophet touched my head and I was moved by God's Spirit. I ran and danced with all power and might I had in me.

The anointing was so powerful that I danced around the building five times without getting tired. I can remember very well that the movements I did were movements of warfare. I danced until all one thousand people were anointed and left the place. From that day on, my dance ministry was activated.

I was a member of the church where I was converted for about three years. I traveled with my church to different parts of Suriname to proclaim the Gospel through dance, song and the Word. Even then I could see the mighty manifestation of God's power moving among people. Spiritual dance was still new to me, but I opened myself up to be used by God. In addition to Suriname, I also ministered in dance in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.

I really had a great hunger for more of God and grew so fast! I got to the point where I could no longer experience spiritual growth in the church where I served. I remained humble and asked the Lord for advice and guidance. Through a dream, he led me to a special woman, a well known spiritual leader in Suriname and abroad, called Apostle Irma Gimith-Woerdings. I became a member of her Church "Bribi Ministries" fifteen years ago.

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### **My Moments of Growth in the Bribi Ministries**

I started my personal dance ministry fifteen years ago as a dance teacher under the covering of Apostle Irma. At that time, dance was not very popular in the churches of Suriname. I started with a dance group named "Shabach." Our group consisted of many so-called problem youth. The group did not exist for long due to the lack of knowledge with which I then had to contend. I was never well-prepared. I also had to determine during the exercises what I was going to do with the group that day.

Poor preparation was one of my biggest problems. I cancelled the training many times for no reason or better said, every little reason I could find. I was not very motivated. The consequence of this was that I had to start over and over again and I kept holding myself back from growing in this ministry.

Practicing together was not interesting anymore for the students because I never knew where to start and where to end. I had to deal with this. I discovered that having a talent didn't mean that you could also transfer or teach this talent to others. I had talent and I had the gifts, but I also had a lack of knowledge. Because of this, I also did not have the right inspiration and motivation to continue the work.

I didn't like my behavior at all. Just like my students weren't interested in being a member of the dance team anymore, neither was I interested in being the leader. There was no growth in the church dance team.

My Apostle always supported me in what I was doing, but that wasn't enough for me and she knew it. One day, she told me to find a church where I could locate someone to help me with my ministry. She told me she had no one in our church to help me. Instead of leaving, I choose to be the one who was going to help the other dancers in the future. I

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didn't give up, and through many obstacles, I was able to find my way.

I went looking for help and acquired the knowledge that was needed through the Word of God for the dance ministry. My love for the ministry was increasing because of the information I had gained. I started to enjoy what I was doing, because I became aware of how I needed to do it. Practicing with the team was no longer a failure.

As my career developed, I faced the fact again and again that I was called to be a leader. Every place where I worked I was designated as a leader. I never had leadership training before, but somehow I received a leadership position. I have avoided leading for years, mostly because of the management that comes along with it. I concluded that instruction in organizational structure and management would be very important for success in my call as a leader, and for the plans God had concerning me.

I could not keep running away from leadership. I was born to lead. I wasted many years by not applying well-structured management skills in my personal life and ministry. I was trying to do it my way. If I had been more open to change back then, I am sure by now that I would have probably been at a higher level within my vocation. Just like Joseph was sold with a purpose for the future, I believe I also had to go through these circumstances with a purpose for the future. (Genesis 46)

I have come to learn that our ways are not always the best ways to work things out. Most of the time we need to listen to each other and learn from one another. Because I endured this phase of transformation in my life, you are able to have the opportunity to have this book in your hands today.

I took my first management training years ago. Even though the teacher wasn't a Christian, he spoke about the

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foundation of management and leadership from out of God's Word. I discovered that even in the little things we do for God, we need to have management skills. There are a lot of mistakes that we make as leaders during our work, but as a result we are learning to become better examples.

I have been dancing now for about seventeen years for the Lord, but there is still a lot to learn. It's good to glean from others who have been in the ministry for many years. I'm a teacher and a studio owner, but I remain a student taking lessons from the Word of God - not only with regard to my dance ministry, but also how it applies to daily life.

### **Education**

I had ballet lessons as a child. I took a lot of training and studies, workshops and seminars based on the dance ministry. I finished Bible school and studied the full vocabulary of Pastor Lynn Hayden. I also studied the full syllabus of Shachah Ministries, enrolled in courses for “Bachelor in Christian Arts,” and took an online class in Dance Company and Studio Management with Pastor Rekesha Pittman. I will be graduating from The Eagles International Training Institute, led by the renowned Apostle Dr. Pamela Hardy. I am employed as a Network System Engineer and am a Microsoft Certified Trainer.

### **The Ministry and Dance Studio**

My ministry has developed from a desire to worship the Lord through dance into a school which is committed to proclaiming the Gospel through dance. We have 150 students each year taking lessons at the school. Isn't God amazing?

After my marriage in 2004 to Ricky Boetius, my loving husband and father of our 3 children, I founded the

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first recognized Christian dance school in Suriname, named "Dance The Walls Down Ministries." The school carries this name because of the many obstacles in this ministry around the world and in the lives of many dancers. As dancers, we often forget that we can pull down these walls around us through our praise and worship in the form of movement.

Like Joshua, I felt like I wasn't really qualified yet to start the ministry. God promised to be with me every step of the way like He had done for Moses and all others who obeyed Him. Just as Joshua and his team needed a shout of praise to bring the walls down, we only need to have a dance of praise to bring down every wall that comes up against us, in the name of Jesus! It's not only about us, but also for the people among us. We should be able to dance the walls down in people's lives.

In the beginning, the main purpose for this ministry was to develop the dancers, work with their talents and gifts, and use them for the glory of God. Since, 2008 God added another very important purpose: to go and win souls for God through dance. From that time, our school concerts changed into theatrical pieces where the Word of the Lord is displayed through our dance.

Our audience consists of believers and non-believers. People often come to us with tears in their eyes, saying how the Lord touched their hearts. Many of them didn't even know that some of the acts were from the Bible. We believe we can reach our country with the Word and accomplish all of this through dance.

### **Impacting My Nation**

#### In Church:

In many churches we have laid fundamentals for dance ministries and groups. We have trained many dance leaders, empowering them to go back and teach others as well.



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### In Schools:

I started a school outreach program recently, wherein I am going to schools with a team teaching dance in flags. Through this project, I want to introduce “Dancing for God” to young people and show them how they can use their bodies as a temple of God. I believe that these young people will be the leaders of tomorrow. If our leaders know God, our country will be a place where God will be very well known and worshipped.

Don't let your dance be just an ordinary dance. Use it to break through situations. Use it to transform your nation. Use it to glorify the name of God. Don't just mimic the movement, walk in the call!

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## Cynthia Draaibaar



**Cynthia Draaibaar** was born in Suriname, a beautiful country where 40% of the people are Christians. She is full-time minister in dance, and has studied Network System Engineer as her professional job.

She is an ICT specialist and a Microsoft Certified Trainer. She finished Bible school in Suriname and studied Christian Arts in dance.

Cynthia is married to Ricky Boetius, and they have 3 children together: Cherady Boetius, Chavilio Boetius and Ibchar Boetius.

She is a member of Bribi Ministries Church under the leadership of Apostle Irma Gimith- Woerdings. She became a full-time minister in dance in March 2012. Cynthia also serves as Founder and Director of Dance The Walls Down Ministries, as well as the Founder and Director of Het Christelijk dans netwerk Suriname (The Christian Dance Network Suriname).

## CHAPTER 15

# Beyond Movement: Creation and the Body

by Ronya-Lee Anderson

Creationism is the religious belief that humanity, life, Earth and the universe are the creation of a supernatural being, most often referred to as the Abrahamic God. As science developed circa 1900 many views developed which aimed to reconcile science with the Genesis creation narrative. As the term creationism became more popular, it also became more closely associated with fundamental Christians who did not believe in evolution. For our purposes, I will use the Genesis creation narratives, found in chapters 1 and 2, as the basis for drawing conclusions about the significance of bodies and in turn, movement.

### *Imago Dei*

The concept of human beings having been created in the image and likeness of God is not a theological doctrine unique to Christianity, but is also espoused in Judaism and Sufi Islam, which should come as no surprise, since all three religions share the same God. We have heard it said time and time again that we are created in the image and likeness of God. However, I wonder what layer of meaning we ascribe to this truth.

For some, to be made in the image and likeness of God is to be like God in all of God's power, splendor and

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majesty. We think of ourselves as little gods, hampered only by the cumbersome weakness of our bodies. We do not need God, for we ourselves are gods. Such a manner of thinking suggests that we are somehow rivals with God, that we too are immortal, devoid of weakness, eternally powerful and strong, all by ourselves. Such thinking can lead us to despise the fragility of our bodies.

There are others who in thinking about the truth of what it means to be made in the image and likeness of God, possess a more nuanced perspective. We are called to reflect God. We are not little gods, but rather, the created - creatures of God who do more than bear the stamp of God, but are reflectors of God's light.

### *Human beings are tied to the land.*

2010 seemed to be a year of floods and earthquakes, mudslides and oil spills. 2011 was really no different, with earthquakes and hurricanes in the most unlikely of places. Hurricane Sandy in 2012 ravaged parts of the Caribbean, and the United States in a matter of days. The earth has really taken a beating and whether implicitly or explicitly, we have all been a part of it. We interact with the land in which we live in ways that help and harm, hurt and heal.

From the beginning, we have been tied to the land. After calling into being the light and darkness, the waters and the creatures in it, God creates man from the dirt. Yes, dirt! We are tied to the land! After God created man, God then tasks man with naming the birds of the air, fish of the sea and beasts of the land. Man is involved in giving creation identity and meaning. We are tied to the land! God further entrusts man with responsibility to creation by giving him dominion over the earth. We are tied to the land!

In the same manner that God tasked mankind with caring for the land, God also tasked mankind with caring for

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bodies. Our personal bodies, the church as the Body of Christ and Christ's Body in the world, are in our care collectively.

### ***Creation is tied to speech and action working together.***

I was an English Language and Literature major as well as a Dance Performance and Choreography major in college. I have met countless men and women who too majored in English and Dance. Many of the dancers I encounter in class, rehearsal and performance settings are English teachers, closet poets, accomplished writers or passionate preachers. Based on my experience as well as what I have witnessed in others and the Scriptures, I am convinced that there is indeed an acute connection between speech and action, writing and dancing, words on a page and movements of one's body.

In both of the creation accounts, we encounter God speaking and making. We encounter both the words and actions of God. In fact, the actions of God are most often a fulfillment or manifestation of the words uttered. The pattern: God says, then God makes. "Let there be ..." is promptly followed by God making that which was just called into being. Moreover, Genesis opens with God hovering over the face of the earth. The very beginning of the world is ushered in with the movement of its Creator. Furthermore, in the creation of man we encounter God fashioning with God's hands, performing as would a potter or sculptor. At the same time, we encounter God speaking things into existence; exercising the power of divine speech.

### ***God declares that our bodies are good.***

God made the human body and called it good, "yet according to classical understandings of the fall, our bodies were (and are) the places of brokenness, vulnerable to sin and apt to

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harm the bodies of others.”<sup>7</sup> To be at home in the body has been our struggle since creation. In the words of theologian and former Dean of Duke Divinity School, Willie Jennings, “our bodies are not problems to overcome, shells to be shed or weaknesses to be despised.”

Our bodies may be weak and fragile, easily compromised and unstable, yet they have been declared good, whole, and complete by God. The beauty of it all is that God declares that creation is good. The Greek word for good is *tov*, which literally means, complete or whole. That which God has made is complete and whole, not broken, bruised or easily corruptible.

Our bodies possess the stamp of approval from God. The Creator of the Universe declares that the hair under our arms and on our legs, the size of our breasts, the width of our hips, the lilt of each waist are all good, complete, whole. In short, the creation doctrine or narrative offers us a picture of bodies that are manifestations of the Word of God, fashioned by God with good intentions, charged with significant work, and completely whole.

### ***Other Bodies***

While care for the bodies of others is not noted explicitly in the creation narratives, the Scriptures provide guidance on this topic. Take for instance I Thessalonians 4:3-6:

*For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do*

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<sup>7</sup> Bracken-Long, Kimberly. *The Worshiping Body: The Art of Leading Worship*. Westminster: John Knox Press 2009. p22

## BEYOND MOVEMENT: CREATION AND THE BODY

*not know God; that no one should take advantage of his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.*

This concept of honoring the body is not a private matter or concern. Instead, it is indeed communal. We have been called to care for others as we care for ourselves. This idea is a great one in theory, but proves to be rather dangerous in practice. Think about it. If indeed we care for others as we care for ourselves we might well be accused of abusing others, for we often abuse our own bodies. Human beings eat toxic foods, skip out on an adequate amount of sleep each night, consume alcohol, coffee and soda, experiment with drugs, and engage in unprotected sex.

The bottom line is that we do not have a good track record when it comes to the treatment of our own bodies, let alone the bodies of others. Slavery and genocide, child prostitution and pornography point to our failure to adequately care for the bodies of others. Take the legacy of assault against bodies of color, for example. There is a history in the United States of dishonoring bodies, particularly bodies of color.

Lynching was so common in the South that whole white families, women and children included, would come out with picnic baskets in hand to watch. During slavery, countless women of color were raped and/or beaten by their white masters. Ironically, these same bodies were also then used to nurture the newborn babies of the plantation mistress.

The Christians of that time could have used some serious instruction on the theology of the body. They feigned concern for the souls of their slaves, all the while neglecting and abusing their bodies. Surely they could not fathom any redemption of the body, particularly slave bodies.

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Today, when women and female children in Darfur are raped, when young girls in parts of India are forced to work as prostitutes in brothels, when child labor persists in many parts of the world, including the United States, as Christians we must ask ourselves, how does our understanding of Christ's bodily resurrection inform us about how we view and treat the bodies of others?

In I Thessalonians 4:3-6, Paul instructs the hearer to "possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor." He then goes on to stress that one should not take advantage of his brother or sister. The Apostle Paul links treatment of one's own body to the treatment of the bodies of others.

There is a level of common humanity that is made visible through movement. All bodies are housed in the womb of a female body for nine months, moving to the rhythmic flow of the most basic element of life: water. These same bodies, once revealed to the world, are full of the rhythm of breath and sustained by the rhythm of the heartbeat. Rhythm and movement are a part of every living and breathing being. Movement is a common denominator.

There is not a documented civilization, tribe or culture that is devoid of dance in some form. Dance is commonly associated with the religion and culture of a people, a part of weddings and funerals, the celebration of births, the mourning of deaths. From the Indian classical dance, bharata natyam to the circle dances of Judaism, to the classical ballet of Europe and the Asante dancers who don red to symbolize mourning, dances are performed to commemorate history, to mourn the loss of loved ones, to entertain kings and queens, and to mark important milestones.

Our common humanity is evident through movement. Movement links us all, reminding us of our embodiment. Movement calls us to be fully aware of our humanity, in all



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of its frailty and strength. From our connection to the land, to our connection to each other, it is movement that links us. Perhaps a more movement-literate world could lead us to more awareness and care of our bodies, and in turn, the bodies of others.

### *Moving, Being*

As a fetus I swam in the womb of my mother  
Performing somersaults and round offs with ease.  
As a young child I ran and jumped,  
Skipped through fields and wrestled with my brother.  
As a teenager I was on the professional dance track,  
Leaving school early to take pointe lessons,  
Fitting tutus and stretching my body to unbearable limits.  
I moved for the love of it, the feeling of transcendence, the  
thrill of it all!  
As an adult dancer I have been on the "only by the grace of  
God" track,  
Whirling and leaping, stretching and reaching,  
Only to wake up with aches and pains.  
And in those aches and pains, I am reminded of my mere  
humanity.  
It is then that I recall the futility of it all  
If I am not, surrendered  
So that God can make something of me.  
When I wake up in the morning, I wake up hoping,  
Hoping, I will have just one more opportunity  
To move on the dance floor,  
To move in my relationships,  
To move in my community,  
To move in this nation,  
To move in this world,  
With God as choreographer, nature as my stage,  
And all my brothers and sisters- the company.

EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW

## Ronya-Lee Anderson



**Ronya-Lee Anderson** holds a Master's of Divinity from Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina. She also holds a B.A. in Dance and a B.A. in English Language and Literature from the University of Maryland at College Park.

A former member of the Chuck Davis African American Dance Ensemble and Carla Perlo's Carla and Company, Ronya-Lee has traveled extensively teaching, dancing, and choreographing. Her work has been commissioned by Duke University, PG Community College, Dance For All Youth Company in South Africa and churches throughout the United States. She has taught master classes for Jubilate Worship Conference in Raleigh, North Carolina, Project Dance DC and Youth 2011 at Purdue University.

Ronya-Lee currently serves as Artistic Director for her company and school, Dancing by the Power: Movement Matters, a non-profit sacred dance organization. She also directs the dance program at Center City Public Charter Schools and teaches at Dance Place. She is in the process of ordination in the United Church of Christ. Ronya-Lee counts it all joy that her life is brilliantly colored with her threefold passion for God, youth and dance.

## CHAPTER 16

# Uncorked

by **Belma Vardy**

Before I came to the Lord, I wasn't a dancer. After I came to the Lord, I didn't know I was one! Dance wasn't a part of my world. It came about in my life very unexpectedly.

My first encounter with God in 1983 was an experience I could never imagine. God overwhelmed me with His love. It felt like liquid flowed physically into me from my feet upward, filling my entire being and embracing me in a warm, intimate hug at the same time. I fell asleep that night in deep peace knowing that I would never be alone again.

The next morning I couldn't utter anything but words of praise to God. As I worshipped, a voice that didn't come from me, but vibrated both inside and outside of me, filled the room: "These hands are going to praise me," it said. I looked at my hands. I had no idea what the words meant, but my Father had spoken. A few minutes later, as I continued in song, my arms, and then my whole body started moving spontaneously.

I knew the Holy Spirit was moving through me, but I thought it odd to worship with movement. I would have been embarrassed for anyone to see me. *They'll take me to the funny farm*, I thought. I pulled the drapes and did my "thing" in secret.

As a closet worshipper I developed a broad vocabulary of movement. In February 1987 I attended a worship conference in New Orleans with my friend Colleen, a

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worship leader at the Christian Reformed Church of Meadowvale. Five thousand people were registered. I was surprised to see many people there with musical instruments. One woman had a harp. “Why are you in the audience and not on stage?” I asked her. “The Bible says we’re to praise God with our instruments,” she replied. Immediately, I understood. *My body is my instrument! If these people are using instruments to worship God here, then I should use mine.*

When I went to the back of the hall to worship in private, I encountered a wall-to-wall line of people. When the music started, I was shocked to see what happened. They all began moving and doing my “thing!” I ran to tell Colleen. “Oh Belma,” she laughed. “That’s dance!” “But no,” I insisted, “that’s my communication with God! My love expression to Him! That’s where intimacy happens!”

I kept watching the dancers, feasting on their movements. Suddenly, the music stopped and worship leader Kent Henry said, “The Lord just spoke to me. He told me to stop the service because there’s a woman here in whom He placed a gift three years ago. She calls it her ‘thing,’ and she’s been hiding it in her worship closet. God is saying, ‘Would that woman please come forward because I want to pop her cork tonight!’”

There wasn’t time to think. I wasn’t in time. I was suddenly in eternity. My feet did their own thing. They stepped away from the chair, moved me past people in my row, up the aisle. I felt like I was being carried to the front. By the time I came face to face with Kent, I was sobbing. He anointed me with oil, laid hands on my head and prayed for me.

Gripped with God’s powerful presence, I “glided” back to my seat. When I got there, the drums rolled, the band resumed with a warfare song, and my spirit engaged in the

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music. I jumped up and over the two people beside me in a single leap, landed in the aisle and was released to worship-dance in public for the first time. Colleen was stunned. “*Where did you learn that?*” she asked.

Colleen and her associate Grace had a band of 25 people called the Celebration Singers. After my “uncorking” they invited me to travel with them throughout the Christian Reformed Church circuit. They sang, and I performed as their solo principal dancer, leaping and dancing in the aisles. They were well-respected, and due to their credibility people accepted me and my worship-dance. I loved my new-found freedom, but God showed me there was more to come.

By March 1989 I had joined Meadowvale Church. At that time, my ministry didn’t have a name, yet when I danced or taught workshops, people were powerfully touched by God and wanted to help me financially. I often received donations made payable to Celebration of Dance. I had to send them back because no ministry by that name existed. The phenomenon continued until I finally went to the bank and put the name officially on a bank account. Celebration of Dance was born.

My vision for Celebration of Dance developed as God released new dance ideas. I saw intimacy with God as its core message. My assignment was to impart that message through wholesome worship-dance and movement to children, youth and adults.

In the early 90s I ministered in many settings: March for Jesus, outdoor festivals and services, conferences, productions, senior homes, jails, Christian schools, universities, weddings and even funerals. An event I regard as a milestone in my ministry occurred in 1990. The Lord said to me, “I want you to teach a worship-dance class for children.” Obediently, I announced it in the bulletin, and 38 kids showed up. They soon realized it was “serious stuff” –

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all about God. In a few weeks only 12 out of the 38 remained. These 12 wanted to know God and began having encounters with the Holy Spirit in the classroom.

Around that time I was asked to participate with my kids' dance group in a Toronto-area Arts Conference that drew people from all over Southern Ontario. During the last movement of their dance, the children were so overcome by the Holy Spirit that they fell prostrate on the floor before God, weeping as they encountered Him personally. God's presence deeply touched the conference participants, and from this event many churches regionally invited me to teach their kids, youth and adults. Hearts were touched and lives were changed.

Wherever I taught, healings occurred in individuals and communities. By 1991 I had even taught internationally at a church in Germany. Bookings poured in, but in March 1991 I had a unique encounter with God that added a new dimension to my ministry.

I was attending a congregational meeting at my church when I casually glanced around the sanctuary. The room transformed before my eyes. In a flash I saw the elders and pastors standing around the sanctuary with flags. A drop came out of heaven and fell on each of their heads and clothed them. The experience shook me deeply. I knew the vision was from God, but the thought of having to make it happen scared me.

I was nervous to teach adults I knew in my own church. In addition, I had never taught men. Yet, I felt God telling me to call the pastor and share the vision, but I resisted for three sleepless nights. "Fine!" I finally yelled into the air. "I'll call him. I need some sleep!"

The next day I was very nervous, but kept my word. "Pastor," I said, "I had an open vision." I told him what I had seen. It was very quiet on the other end. I was

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embarrassed. *I want off the phone!* I thought. To make a quick exit, I added, “It’s probably for five years down the road. Not for now. Just thought I’d tell you. Thanks for listening! Bye!”

“Belma, *wait!*” His tone sounded urgent. “We had an elders’ meeting, and while we were praying, we felt the Lord tell us to do something with flags. We said, ‘Lord, if this is from you, then have Belma call us and ask us to do it.’ When can you come teach us?”

My fears melted away at the joy of seeing God work. These men and I connected and flowed together to create a processional for our church. It was spectacular, and as the men marched and whipped their flags, a woman who had been ill with depression for ten years was healed.

When our performance ended, the pastor said to everyone, “This processional is modeling what Belma does in her ministry. By showing it to you we are supporting her, teaching you, and bringing you into God’s presence.” Personally I felt encouraged. In addition to covering my ministry, my church leaders had a personal understanding of it. I had acquired a backbone of support.

Invitations continued to come. Stories of people being healed and touched by the Spirit spread and pastors asked me to do week-long seminars because they witnessed transformation in their people. People came into closer relationship and intimacy with God. They realized that the Holy Spirit operates today just as He did in the book of Acts. Wherever I taught dance, people of various denominations became connected and united as they worked together.

Worship-dance birthed a hunger for God. Churches invited me back many times and asked me to train their dance teams. Some wanted to teach dance, and I had the opportunity to pass God’s training on to them. People of all

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ages experienced genuine emotional, physical and spiritual healing through this new method of worship.

Media exposure took my ministry to the next level. After I appeared on a Mississauga TV show, *100 Huntley Street* invited me. From that appearance I received many invitations nationally. As a member of the International Christian Dance Fellowship, and later as coordinator for the Christian Dance Fellowship of Canada, I received invitations internationally.

The ministry grew until 1993, but exploded after that. In response to a dream from God, I pioneered worship-dance videos for all ages. They expanded the scope of my ministry and touched individuals, churches and communities in unique ways.

Primarily, the videos took worship-dance internationally to places I couldn't go. People attended my workshops, learned dances and carried videos of the dances they learned back home. At home the videos helped them communicate with God in new ways they may not have explored.

The videos transformed the way worship-dance was taught. Churches adopted them as a teaching tool. Groups learned dances from the videos in their own settings, and at church-related events, such as the GEMS Girls' Club concerts. The videos were utilized to teach and demonstrate worship-dance to children.

Churches also discovered that the videos helped usher people into God's presence. John Franklin, Executive Director of the arts association IMAGO wrote, "The Celebration of Dance video series has been a good way to empower God's people in their worship. We feel strongly that the work Belma undertakes will be valuable to the Christian communities she serves. Our hope is that many



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will get behind her creative work to help see it to completion.”

I am also deeply honored that this ministry has been embraced by the First Nations and Inuit people. Becky Thomas, the 2011 Best Female Artist, Native American Music Awards, said of my workshops, “I think your teaching is excellent. It engages all ages, and the movement keeps everyone focused. The practical stuff really helps get the message [of the Gospel] into the hearts of the First Nations people.”

God has given me amazing assignments in wonderful places. Each one overflows with stories of God’s grace and intervention. He has provided finances for the ministry, supported and promoted it, opened doors before me and protected me.

Churches that may not have embraced dance have invited me. Churches whose doctrine does not teach flowing in the Spirit have found their expression in worship-dance. People from two to 82, people with poor self-esteem, have left workshops encouraged and empowered. Men in North America who traditionally resist emotional expression and view dance as a “women’s thing,” have been ignited by God’s Spirit, developed hunger for God and begged for a dance workshop. Families have been united in dance.

My most immediate challenge has always been the need for an ongoing walk of faith and dependency on God. He has never failed to empower me and guide me as I do my worship “thing” daily in the privacy of my home before Him. This “non-dancer” can truly say, there’s nothing I’d rather do than worship-dance!

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## Belma Vardy



**Belma Vardy**, a former actress and model, dedicated her life to Christ in August, 1983. From the day that God released her in the worship dance ministry, this dancer and choreographer has inspired people of all denominations to discover intimacy with God through movement.

An accomplished instructor, Belma travels internationally to present worship dance workshops and choreograph performances. Her gentleness, dedication and leadership abilities allow her to lead people of all ages into personal experiences with God through movement.

The heart of her ministry, Celebration of Dance, is to impart an understanding that movement inspired by the Holy Spirit, can reach into the depths of the human heart to release the spirit to new freedom and elicit profound emotional expression. This response brings deep inner healing, and rich encounters with the Father's love.

Belma has produced 14 worship dance videos/DVD's for all ages. She co-leads as International Focus Network Coordinator for Children's Dance Ministries and was National Coordinator for adult worship dance for the Christian Dance Fellowship of Canada for a number of years. She has shared her testimony on many radio and TV programs including 100 Huntley Street, and The Miracle Channel.

Celebration of Dance ([www.celebrationofdance.com](http://www.celebrationofdance.com)) is based in Burlington, Ontario, Canada.

## CHAPTER 17

# Put Your Best Foot Forward: Advancing the Arts

by **Rekesha Pittman**

God does not always move in the same way and neither should we. If we take our cues from what is currently "trending," we will miss the greater opportunities that the Lord has for us. Many dance and movement ministries start, and then fizzle, because there is no clear direction to keep the momentum going.

Several years ago, I visited a website and was horrified to see the exact vision that God gave me for Reign Dance Company displayed, only replacing the name of our ministry with their own. If we continue to replicate what already is, there will be no advancement of the arts beyond the common and into the extraordinary.

When God creates a thing, it is well done. God's understanding far surpasses the modern technology of today! With His infinite ability to do wonders, why is there so much mediocrity among us?

It is time to advance in the arts. We can no longer approach ministry without a God-ordained mandate. This includes the willingness to invest our resources into education, technology, and the training needed to impact the globe in ways that will transform lives and not just emotions.

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### **Advancing in Education**

We are advancing in education. Over the years, many with a passion for training and instructing worshipers have hosted conferences and workshops at churches and in the community. These have included events with local, national and international impact. Quality conferences will continue to grow as well as offer live video streaming options to those who are unable to attend.

As dance conferences continue to abound, we will see specialty conferences emerge in the areas of garments, leadership, pageantry, flags and banners, and ministry entrepreneurship will increase. This will be due in large to veteran conference-goers who are looking for expanding options in worship dance and arts instruction.

Internationally, we will also see growth in conferences and workshops, not only with people traveling to the United States, but also from the U.S. to international territories and from nation to nation. As key leaders and speakers with international influence are invited as guests, their respective supporters and delegations will be willing to journey with them into new lands and promote annual visits.

Even though virtual conferences and events are currently being offered, it is still a bit early in the worship dance sector as hands-on instruction has been more accepted than virtual attendance. This may gain some ground in the future, but the popularity of virtual conferences for dancers does not have the audience that it needs yet to flourish exclusively.

Many worship artists have launched institutes and training programs in order to provide structured information to those seeking to gain increased knowledge of the arts in worship. This evolving development will continue to gain momentum. No longer are we limited to in-person meetings,

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conferences, and training calls. Online classes, webinars, and virtual schools will continue to surface.

Eventually, this will come full-circle as educational institutions will embrace added worship arts courses and degrees to their programs. Christian colleges and religious institutes of higher learning will begin to support arts studies in a greater capacity as certificate programs, minors, majors, master-level and doctoral studies abound. In order to prepare for this, we must develop excellent curriculum with accurate research, knowledge and measurable results. Programming for profit alone will not last. Legitimacy will be established as we bear fruit in this growing area.

### **Advancing in Technique**

Technical training is increasing by leaps and bounds! Several faith-based professional dance companies and schools are offering biblical training in conjunction with formal dance technique. Businesses will continue to expand into properly equipped studios and training facilities that give movement artists the liberty to develop entirely new dance styles and productions that the standard church sanctuary has been unable to sustain.

Christian dance companies will have the opportunity to move out of church basements and end sub-leasing arrangements to open their own establishments. This is particularly increasing in areas where there are large arts-based communities, primarily in the Eastern and Southern portions of the United States. Other nations will also see an increase in Christian-owned arts facilities as pioneers will continue to launch sites in their respective regions.

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### **Advancing in Productions**

As we develop professionally, we will see the profitability of theatrical productions in the worship arts expand. As this audience grows, investors will begin to create budgets that will allow worship in dance artistry to be staged with designer garments, professional sets, excellent lighting design, and world-class direction. Beyond the church, singers, musicians, and actors will incorporate worship dancers into community productions to enhance the artistic experience. Dance companies will move beyond recitals and onto performance stages as they plan for excellence in theatres and showrooms worldwide.

Christian dance companies will need to develop key relationships with financial supporters in order to advance the arts in professional venues. This will include planning productions in advance, hiring quality staff, and providing students and principals with a superior environment for learning, development and rehearsals.

### **Advancing Through Authorship**

A key component that will work in conjunction with education is the multiplication of authors writing to the worship arts arena. Authors will move beyond biographies and general Scriptural studies, into focused, research-backed publishing. These specialized subjects will continue to branch out as books are released by writers who record the development of Christian dance studies in multiple nations. Books on Christian dance will become more widely available and referenced by those in the worship arts community and will begin to make their way into mainstream media.

With the ease of making books available via digital downloads, books on dance ministry will increase for availability on devices, tablets, smartphones, and computers.

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A new area that will gain submissions from authors will be audiobooks, which will allow the author to record the book for audio release themselves or through the use of a narrator. These recordings will be able to be shared by CD or MP3 download for easy listening.

Publishing books has become a realistic goal for millions today. As technology increases, the cost to produce quality works is on a steady decline. With the internet and standard word processing software, basic publishing is a growing option for many. Though the concept of publishing a dance ministry book as a bestseller may be a lofty aspiration, marketing and promoting these books via social media and e-marketing allows publishing to yield a monetary return on investment.

### **Advancing in Media**

Media is evolving into various formats. Traditional media has included radio, television, news outlets, and both print and online publications. Worship artists have been able to access these traditional platforms through relationship development with producers, reporters and writers, and by excelling enough in the dance to garner a significant audience. A growing number of worship artists are being featured in local newspapers, regional and specialty magazines and local television programs. Once exclusive to a select few, technological advancements are expanding these outlets.

The primary landscape for media today is self-hosted services like YouTube, internet radio, blogs, and personal websites. Creating a channel on a video hosting site is relatively simple for those who have access to mobile devices, tablets and digital cameras with video recorders. Traditional video cameras are also more common as prices continue to drop. With basic software editing and HD video

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options, producing stellar visuals for sharing has become the norm.

Several artists are also becoming radio hosts via internet access. Not only are hosts launching weekly or even daily broadcasts, others are launching entire internet radio stations online. These shows can include guests interviews and offer the ability to promote additional services, events, or products via the virtual radio station.

As a relatively recent term, blogging has become a mainstream media outlet for entertainment and news sites. As several blogging sites offer free hosting services, worship artists are using this technology to share websites or feature regular posts of special interest stories and news. Once a separate website, many blogs will be integrated into the main websites of hosts for greater tracking and retention of visitors. Through blogs, artists will be able to increase newsletter subscriptions, promote podcasts, share videos, and increase promotions to interested audiences.

Though they have been around for quite a while now, newsletters continue to serve as great marketing tools and information portals for worshipers. Developing technologies are granting newsletter distributors the capability of adding video into newsletters. This will continue to expand and decrease in price as multiple competitors offer these options.

A natural progression from the newsletter is the magazine. Many standard publications have ceased printing physical copies due to the high cost of production. Digital "coffee tables" are now more common through tablet devices. The arts will continue to gain readership in these areas, provided that they provide quality content and stunning visual imagery. Print-on-demand magazines will be an option that is left to the discretion of the reader and lessens the amount of magazine copies that have to be paid for by the publisher.



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Although there may not be a great demand for worship arts newspapers, the growth of writers as columnists and special interest pieces will continue to expand. Currently, worship artists have been interviewed or presented as a specialty piece, but this will change as many more advance in education and are able to cover many subjects in worship dance and movement.

On local levels, worship arts-focused talk shows will feature guests who are able to discuss cutting-edge subjects as well as feature special interest stories for broadcasting. With appropriate representation, we will see this genre expand onto national and international Christian television stations. Worship dance leaders must prepare now for speaking on camera with clarity and charisma.

A very popular trend today is reality television. In the United States, programs featuring Christian gospel artists and leaders have gained prime slots on mainstream television networks. Dance ministers and liturgical dancers have made cameo appearances on these shows, and we will see this exposure continue to increase. With the popularity of Gospel singing competitions and secular dance competitions, I think that it is inevitable that someone will produce a "Christian" dance competition for television.

Artists will also develop their own reality productions via upload to the internet. Web series can be viewed online through the channels that artists develop. There is also an emerging market for purchasing custom television channels with some cable television providers. Though this is currently an expensive option, prices will continue to decline as competition increases.

Another option for video production is through documentaries. Filmed over a period of time, documentaries can highlight a particular group or groups of people with a common theme. Producers can opt to develop programming

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or artists can raise capital to produce and distribute them. Equipment availability will allow artists to film themselves and access this market in even greater numbers.

These advancements will occur through the film and television industries as well. Praise dancers have already made appearances on network sitcoms and in feature film releases. We will see an expansion of worship arts films in the straight-to-DVD market and artists will continue to gain cameos in standard faith-based films.

As excellence in the arts continues to come to the forefront, dance ministries will be promoted from back-up and companion pieces to featured guests. We will continue to see movement artists emerge as growing numbers of Gospel and Christian singers invite dancers to share stages with them through national, international, and televised appearances. Groups that include singers, dancers and musicians as one unit will also gain notoriety and expanded media opportunities.

### **Advancing in Missions**

Many dancers and ministry teams are going to the nations for the purposes of missions work. Beyond preaching, dancing, food, and medical supplies, worship artists will begin to develop and expand the numbers of dancers through workshops, teaching, and educational curriculum.

Missions trips of this nature are often self-sponsored through personal means or through fundraising efforts. Beyond the spoken word and shared ministry pieces, worship artists will contribute garments, music and instructional media to leave as deposits in the territories visited. Philanthropic works in the future will be the development of worship arts academies and Christian dance studios in other nations, villages, islands, and townships.

## PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD

The movement minister that desires to advance in missions must secure a passport and invest in education of a biblical, cultural and movement nature. This will aid in being able to adapt to the movement styles of many cultures and instill Scriptures from a global perspective that transcends racial and language barriers.

### **Advancing Through Technology**

As technology transforms with new innovations, so will the options for the arts. Social media platforms have extended the reach and connectivity of many worship artists across nations, denominations, regions, and movement styles. Facebook and Twitter have served as outlets for conference and concert promotion, as well as educational opportunities and networking. Social media will continue to outpace traditional email and paid advertising for information sharing.

Many businesses today utilize apps for products and promotions. As the creation of applications for tablets and phones becomes more widely available, worship arts conferences and organizations will be able to offer an app for download. Technology-savvy users will be able to reach a younger demographic through these means.

In conjunction with educational offerings, technology will play a larger role in how these programs are delivered. For individual instruction, Skype can be used to offer a virtual dance class. Live streaming can be used to show real-time happenings via computer to people who log-in to view programming of conferences, classes, and concerts. Free options such as Google Hangout offer users a limited number of connections online for people who are able to network and collaborate on projects while meeting virtually.

Conference calls for organizations have become standard communication tools. Free calling services have employed the use of multiple phone numbers across inter-

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national lines to allow training and meetings to happen simultaneously. With recording and playback capabilities, this avenue will continue to widen as worship artists use them for widespread enhancement opportunities.

Once exclusively a corporate training tool, the online webinar is expanding rapidly as an option for worship-arts meetings. Depending on the size of the audience, some developers offer webinar services for free. Users with a greater audience can pay for an expanded menu of services to meet their needs. Webinars will continue to grow as prices make them accessible because they offer a visual component that surpasses the restrictive nature of the standard audio conference call.

### **Advancing as Entrepreneurs**

Involvement in the arts costs money! In addition to standard dance classes, garments, travel expenses and the like, movement artists are forging new ventures to meet the needs of worshipers around the globe. There are no limits to what we can offer as entrepreneurs in the arts.

In addition to owning a traditional dance school, garment manufacturers are leaving the confines of garages, basements and sewing rooms and developing offsite manufacturing buildings for mass production. For those who are not traditional garment designers, casual clothing production of shirts, jackets and other everyday clothing is gaining a presence in the marketplace. Bags, caps, beverage containers and shoes are being sold to promote dance expansion beyond the dance floor.

Online training programs both long-term and short-term are serving the needs of artists worldwide. As the need for specialized subject matter grows, more will be willing to take these courses from the comfort of their own homes and

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submit assignments completely online. "Virtual" is the new reality!

Duplicating the work of others should not be an option. As the diversity of worship dancers continues to extend, so will the market for entrepreneurial development. Maximum profitability will be gained as we embrace technology-based education systems and prepare now for a variety of emerging opportunities.

### **Advancing Toward the Future**

This is not the time to hold onto restrictive traditions, erroneous beliefs, or archaic mindsets. Preparing to advance the arts forward begins with the choices that we make today. We renounce fear and welcome faith! The abundance of worship dancers and movement artists should result in quality over quantity. Quality control begins with you. Will you accept the challenge to advance?

EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW

## Rekesha Pittman



**Rekesha Pittman** has been in training for ministry from her youth. Whether singing, dancing, acting, or speaking publicly, the Lord has graced her to be able to stand before His congregation with boldness. Her intense desire for ministerial excellence has opened the doors for her to minister in both dance and teaching of the Word on a national and international level.

She discovered worshipping the Lord in dance in April of 1999. Her first choreographed liturgical dance piece incorporated seven dancers for Resurrection Sunday. It was out of this experience that she was directed to establish Envision Worship Dancers in October of 1999. With the Lord's leading, Rekesha began to host Worship in Dance Conferences in California (2003, 2004, 2005), and has since branched out to Nevada (2007, 2009, 2011, 2013).

In April 2004, the Lord blessed her to establish Rain Rein Reign Ministries, which focuses on instruction, leadership, and development of worship arts ministries. Rekesha launched Reign Dance Company of Las Vegas in the Spring of 2009, and the Company continues to grow and flourish. Rekesha is the author of *Company Keepers: Dance Ministry Daily*, a devotional book for movement ministers. She released *For This Cause I Bow My Knees* in August of 2011. Her latest book, *Dance Leaders Advance* (2013) is a tool uniquely crafted for every dance leader's arsenal. She also published *Training to Reign* co-authored with the members of Reign Dance Company. She will release her fourth book,

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*Of Them That Danced: Moving Through The Scriptures* in November of 2014.

Rekesha frequently travels as workshop facilitator, mentor, consultant, and intercessor for various dance ministries, churches, worship arts departments, and music ministries. She is blessed to be the wife of Matthew Pittman and the loving mother of Lynynn Pittman. Her innermost desire is that pleasing the Lord be the focus of service in ministry, and that worship is an essential component in the daily life of every believer in the Body of Christ.

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