



ICDF Networks

January 2019

Network for Dance Artists



Photo: Ad deum Dance Company. See page 4

Members of our Dance Artists network will have studied dance to professional or semi-professional level. They are trained to a high standard and will be involved in ministry, professional companies, as independent dance artists, mission work, or educational roles. Members usually have at least 3 years full-time training as dancers and/or are very experienced performers. They have a an eye also to see, and will act on, the creative possibilities of engaging their faith within their culture.

This network then connects those Christian dance artists who are seeking to make a difference to our culture through their professional training / positions in the dance arena. Most of us do not work at that level and are not in these positions but we can learn from them and in so doing bring more to our own repertoire and choreography and thus into the areas where we do work.

To connect: ICDF Dance Artists Coordinator... sandraheaven7@gmail.com

My New Love For Tango

As a long time dancer, trained in classical ballet, contemporary, and a variety of other genres, dancing is in my blood. I feel most complete when I am dancing, and surrendering every morsel of my being in ecstatic worship to the God who created me. In the past, I have been involved in professional dance companies, a plethora of shows, missions, church worship, evangelism, have directed dance schools and a company, and have been featured in a dance film. I have danced in, and choreographed a myriad of different performance pieces over many years. I've loved it all.

In my maturing years I took up tango because I still love to dance. You see when you are born to dance, it doesn't matter how old you are or how your body starts to diminish in its capabilities, if dance is part of who you are in the essence of your being, you still dance. I love tango because it is a sophisticated art form that requires mastery of a particular skill of "togetherness". It is partner dancing at its finest. It is the art of intimate conversation through the body. Every nuance of leader/response, invitation and acceptance is worked out in a playful and artful way on the dance floor. I especially love it because it makes me acutely aware of others and the way we interact in our relationships.

You can tell a lot about a person from the way they dance, the way they move their body. You can see what sort of life they've had and the way they have learnt to respond to others, just by one dance on the dance floor. It is a very revealing exercise. As Martha Graham once said "movement never lies". Tango is all about connection and moving as one harmonious unit, a bit like our relationship with God. Tango is about connection and the relationship you have with your partner. It is of an inner nature that is then embodied and fleshed out through our mortal bodies. It is about breathing together, feeling another's heart beat, the subtleties of leader and response, the elasticity of movement, and following the energy patterns of your partner. It is a rich learning exploration of our interaction with others.

My goal in dancing tango is to experience that perfect partnership of male and female, dancing as one, embodying the union that is the shadow of the relationship that God designed us to have with Himself. It is a dance of love and passion. My whole life has been in pursuit of one thing: the knowledge of God, and by that I mean the experiential knowledge of becoming one with my Lord. It is a very long journey to holiness and wholeness, but it is one well worth the effort, sacrifice of lesser things, and the unspeakable joy of being in perfect union with a glorious Saviour.

As Acts 17:28 tells us, "For in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'" So, let the dance begin: Christ invites us to be swept up into His triune nature of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God made you and He is not embarrassed by His creation. He calls you to shine forth, to glow, and to flourish in this world. The fruit of His suffering is your glory, your love, and your worship. Christ longs for the most intimate connection possible with you. Knowing God is all about communion and oneness and He offers us the most exquisite relationship possible. So dance, my friends, whatever genre you love! Like Eric Liddell's famous words in the movie, Chariots of Fire, "When I run, I feel His pleasure," dear friend it is ok for you to say, along with me, "when I dance, I feel His pleasure"



Photo: Sandra Godde. Photograph taken by Matthew Taylor, 2018

Sandra Godde

Choreography and Ministry - suggestions for solo dance ministers

To dance or not to dance? Solo, that is... Therein lies the question. The first place we must begin in a discussion about solo dance ministry, is whether God has called you to minister ALONE in dance. We are ALL called to dance alone in our prayer closets, in loving adoration at His feet. But has He called you to minister in dance publicly as a solo ambassador and servant for Him? Only the Lord can truly reveal your calling as a solo dance minister, so my first suggestion is to seek Him in prayer and ask Him to confirm your calling in the mouths of 2-3 witnesses. Solo dance ministers come in all shapes, sizes, ages, and with various technical (or non-technical) backgrounds. One thing I can say for certain however, they all have that “certain something”, that sets them apart as anointed dance ministers, that not all worship dancers possess.

They grasp and hold a congregation’s attention whether technically trained or not and they have an amazing ability to grip the hearts of people and keep their attention through the entirety of a song. They communicate God’s heart and usher in His presence and there is always a compelling release of God’s anointing and a fullness of His presence as these anointed dance ministers express the heart of God through movement. Congregants feel the nearness of His touch upon their hearts and experience breakthrough in areas of personal need. These dancers minister in dance prophetically, proclaiming a “timely word in due season” through movement that brings exhortation, edification, and comfort. Also, anointed solo dance ministers humbly bring attention to Him whose almighty power dispels works of darkness.

Do these points describe YOU??? If you’re not sure, ask someone you respect and whose opinion you value as wise and discerning. Assuming the Lord has already confirmed your calling as a solo dance minister, the remaining points I will address here are matters of discipline and ministry focus for you to consider...

Training ~ I suggest at least 3 full years of disciplined study & training in your chosen area of movement

Continued Skill Training ~ I have learned the hard way, at times, that I must continually hone my skills

Theatrics ~ Since you alone carry the weight of expressing the message of your song

Using pageantry aides ~ Especially if you have a limited movement vocabulary to enhance the message

Use ALL of your dance space ~ ... and face various directions throughout the choreography

Should I use my own choreography? ~ Unless you feel the Lord leading you to use someone else’s choreography, I suggest using your own, so that the expression comes from YOUR heart/soul

How long do I prepare for each song? ~ I suggest at least 3 months of prayer, worship, scripture meditation, choreography composition, and rehearsal to adequately prepare to minister a song alone

Ministering a “vertical” song ~ When the Lord leads you to minister a song that expresses worship or prayer that is “vertical” to Him alone, you MUST bring your congregation “into” your personal worship experience

How do I avoid redundant or repetitive movement? ~ Increasing your movement vocabulary is essential!

How long is too long of a song? ~ I suggest 4-5 minutes when ministering ANY song, solo or group

Do I dance the song in my prayer closet only? ~ Discerning God’s will in the place of prayer is sooooo necessary when choosing a song to minister alone



Photo: Dawn Churchill (front)

Dawn Churchill

This article gives the perspective of Dawn Churchill, the ICDF Contact in the USA, regarding the ministry of solo dancers. For the full article please go to ...

<https://dawnchurchill.wordpress.com/2007/11/30/choreography-and-ministry-suggestions-for-solo-dance-ministers/>

Ad Deum - a professional and Christian dance company

Ad Deum is a professional modern and contemporary dance company based in Houston, Texas. The organization was founded in 1991 by Artistic Director Randall Flinn, a Houston born professional dancer and choreographer.



The name Ad Deum is Latin and it means Unto God. So why would a professional dance company call itself by such a name? Randall Flinn, who chose the name says, "As an artist who embraces faith in the saving grace of Jesus Christ, I find it personally significant not to fragment my artistic life from the whole of my individual life. This would include my hopes, beliefs, worldview and what is held deep at the core of my very existence." Ad Deum then became a very fitting name for Mr. Flinn's vision to both dedicate and direct his artistic pursuits, passion and presentations.

However, within the scope of artistic definition and summarization, Ad Deum would probably not best be described as a religious, liturgical, worship or sacred dance company. So, sound confusing? Let's look further!

Flinn believes that if life is divided in a dualistic manner between "secular and sacred", then humanity lives in a state of chaos and confusion concerning the truth of their creation. "There are not two different worlds that exist on this planet. The Genesis account is that God created only one earth and He actually called it good, though He knew that fallenness and brokenness would enter in. Jesus came into the world to redeem and restore the separation caused through the destructiveness of sin that caused a schism between humanity and their communion with a Holy Creator."

Even Christ himself did not come into this world to "divide up the pie" but to "make the pie whole" once again. Christ being fully man and God come in the flesh brought forth salvation and redemption as an offering to this one Earth in which we all exist. Yes, He called people to a restoration of faith and trust in the one true God and Creator but He did not form a specialized sacred dimension outside of His offering and wholeness of salvation for all the world. Therefore, the one who embraces the Lordship of Christ is the one who truly understands the completeness of His mission for every human being and every God given cultural task and creative endeavor. This truth dismisses the dualistic philosophy of a separated sacred and secular world, calling or cultural sphere. In other words, the God who has brought both redemption and restoration to this world through the gift of His Son has also come to give created order and purpose to all of life. For He desires that all of life would be lived within the realm of divine and holy communion between humanity and God.

Ad Deum ... continued

So for Ad Deum, dance is simply a good and perfect gift of God that is a beautiful and true facet of our physical created beings. If we believe in God and His wholeness over creation and culture, then we are free to celebrate and engage in the fullness of His cultural mandate to create and engage in the making and performance of dance and other human art forms. If the transformational power of redemption has enlightened and enlivened the artist, then that artist lives and works and even brings incredible blessing into the all inclusive world of humanity. These are the artists who have come to recognize that they have been entrusted with a virtuous endowment and stewardship to aesthetically care for the Earth and its people.

And this is what Ad Deum does and why this dance company was founded: "To creatively care for all people through the cultural task of artmaking that is enlivened with redemptive virtue and purpose." Ad Deum dancers are very real contributors and artistic caregivers to this one awesome and yet desperately broken world that needs to drink of redemptive beauty, hope and healing.

Randall Flinn tells us more ...

"We prefer to refer to ourselves as professional dance artists that clearly are inspired and informed in our artistry by our Christian worldview belief. However, we don't necessarily feel that dance or art in itself can be deemed as Christian, though it certainly may be inspired or informed by our personal faith in Christ and may carry or reflect a Christian or Biblical theme. We most certainly know that there are many artists worldwide who have placed their personal faith in Christ and we are among those artists. We know that Jesus redeems and saves people, including artists and creative individuals. These people then live out their faith in many cultural caregiving spheres of life in which they are gifted, employed and are called to. Art indeed can uphold and bear the essence of the redemptive virtues found in Christ. We are indeed artists who bear the image of the faith we embrace and trust. This truth helps us to be clear about our very existence and the powerful potential of our creative offerings to the world. Our faith actually compels us to be more fully human and complete as artists and as people, just the way God planned it.

WE ARE DANCE ARTISTS, WE CARE FOR THIS WORLD, AND WE HAVE FAITH TO BELIEVE THAT IT MATTERS!

Ad Deum can be best described as a "covenant community" of professional dance artists that believe that their lives and talents are gifts from God. We have been called to the sphere of the arts, namely dance, and recognize this as an endowment of God in which we have been entrusted with good, beautiful and true stewardship. We believe that the arts, as good and perfect gifts of God, can and should be pursued with redemptive virtue and value. The artists of Ad Deum engage in the arts in redemptive pursuit and presentation, becoming instruments of inspiration, comfort, hope, healing, joy and even renewed faith and trust. We embrace this artistic mission and calling in the humility of servant artistry and care giving. We believe that if the artist is willing to serve others with beauty, grace and truth then redemption for humanity may flourish through creative and compassionate artistic offerings.

This is the mission and standard which draws dance artists into the community of Ad Deum. This is the very heart and core of what we believe and the passion that fuels our desire to share and serve through the art of dance.



Ad Deum ... continued



Our community maintains a professional company known as Ad Deum Dance Company, a professional training and performance program known as Ad Deum II and a newly formed Dance Artist Development and Discipleship Program. We are based in Houston, Texas and offer touring performances and workshops, daily classes, spring and summer dance intensives, international internships, lectures on faith and artistry and outreach missions and caregiving through dance. Our faculty and choreographers include Randall Flinn, Shizu Yasuda - ADII Director, Dani Hammack - Former dancer with Martha Graham Dance Company, Steve Rooks - Former 10 year principal dancer with Martha Graham, Roxane D'Orleans Juste - Jose Limon Dance Foundation, Alicia Graf Mack - Former principal dancer with Alvin Ailey, Richard Bowman - Former dancer with Australian Ballet, Steve Brule - Former Ballet Master at Houston Ballet, Durell Comedy - Mark Morris Dance Group, Vincent Hardy - Former dancer with Complexions Contemporary Ballet, and many more,

We do accept international dancers into our work. Professional level artists can apply for an artist visa and we will give assistance in that process. We also accept and offer short term 1-3 international visitors to come as our guests and enjoy our classes and community.”

Randall Flinn

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All photos: Ad Deum Dance Company provided by Randall Flinn

There Has To Be More!

With the ICDF gathering in India around the corner we decided to interview Gio Fisher, one of our main teachers who will be teaching an elective on 'Stage Presence'

1) You have worked as a dance artist on the professional stage for some time. Please tell us something about it.

This was an exciting part of my life that I will never forget. 'District 6 the Musical' was definitely a highlight and the show that catapulted me onto the professional stage. Then sharing a stage with artists like Michael W Smith, Toby Mac, Out of Eden and the Katinas while living in the States was simply awesome.

2) How did you come to realise that you could use your gifting of dance within the body of Christ?

My three sisters and I grew up dancing together and they came to know the Lord a few years before me. I watched them do spiritual dancing thinking ... "there has to be more!". This is where the Lord prompted me strongly to use all the training that He allowed me to go through in the first place, for His glory ... but I had to first hand it all back to Him so that He could purify it! Only then did I experience that fulfillment in my dancing.

3) What is your approach when working on choreography? Is it different for your dance school versus for a Christian setting?

Most of my choreography happens while I'm driving. Most of the time a song just grabs me and I flow with it from there. My approach is the same in both my studio and ministry work as we do our utmost to keep it wholesome and to radiate a strong positive message throughout our work.

4) In your opinion can we as Christians make use of secular music when working on a choreography to be performed in a church? If so, do you think we should take the lifestyle of the composer / the original message of the music into consideration before using it?

Shoo! This is a tough one and definitely different for individuals and even churches. We are quite liberal and have used secular music to convey the message we're trying to bring across, even in our church productions. I do take the composer into account but, for me, it is the lyrics that I listen to very very closely! This is a very fine line and we should walk it with the utmost care and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's prompting and guidance. I just know in my heart when a piece of music is right!!!



Photo: Gio Fisher leading a dance at the CDFSA conference in 2017

5) There has always been some tension between the trained / professional dancer and the person who dances from the heart, with a number of possibilities in between. Do you think both can be embraced at the same time?

Absolutely! Maybe the tension is created by intolerance. We have to flow in our gifting and passion! And this looks different for everybody. Why then would we want everybody to look the same. Trained or not, I say, "DANCE FROM THE HEART!"

Dance and Missions

In the previous newsletter, we asked our readers to let us know how they did dance and missions. We have received the following from Seth Newman in Ghana: "In 2018 we put up 14 open air dance crusades each with a number of people lifting their hands up to surrender to Jesus. A church in the area then follows up on these people."

DANCE ARTISTS IN INDIA 2019

Exploring Postmodern Dance

Postmodern dance is a period of dance that originated in the 1960s. This period was characterised by dance in collaboration with other arts discipline such as music, text and visual art, the use of simple gestures, every day movement and improvisation, as opposed to standardised techniques and the exploration of time, movement and space. In this workshop, principles of postmodern dance will be explored through dance, music, and text (the book of John). In addition, if you have always wondered about how to take a concept and develop it into a production this Morning Elective will be the one for you.

~ Workshop leader: Lisa Wilson

Stage Presence

This elective will teach you how to captivate your audience! With a fusion of modern and hip hop with flavours of Spanish and African dance styles, you will learn how to present yourself on stage... to the max -- by going full-out & fabulous!

~ Workshop leader: Gio Fisher



Dance is a performing art form consisting of purposefully selected sequences of human movement. This movement has aesthetic and symbolic value, and is acknowledged as dance by performers and observers within a particular culture. Dance can be categorized and described by its choreography, by its repertoire of movements, or by its historical period or place of origin. (Wikipedia)

From Improvisation to Choreography

As “fearfully and wonderfully made” beings we all have a unique story to tell through our movement and expression. “What do I want to communicate, how shall I move, where do I start, what space can be used?” - these are just some of the questions we face when contemplating creating choreographed movement. This elective will provide an opportunity for delegates to gain the skills needed to answer some of these questions by using guided creative movement to explore both personal and group narratives and then to progress towards formulating a choreographed piece.

~ Workshop leader: Anna Arnold

Creating Shapes in Groups

This fairly relaxed workshop is based on the ideas used by Ballroom and Latin formation teams to create shape on a dance floor. We will think about how you could create shapes and patterns using groups of people, and how as a group you could move from one shape to another. Starting with simple lines building to more interesting and complex shapes - finishing with a challenge for the workshop leader to create shapes suggested by the workshop participants.

~ Workshop leader: Peter Hothersall