



ICDF Networks

March 2019

Men in Dance



I am a man. I dance.

I am a man who dances, and I stand before God.

From 'MANifesto' - Andy Raine

One of the great things about working with dance is that it reaches across so many barriers, and impacts us in ways we haven't learnt to protect ourselves from. The toughest guy can weep when a sudden gesture opens his heart. A dance can arrest someone so they forget which direction they'd been walking. We can include and connect, give voice to another person's pain, can address difficult issues with compassion and insight, all without saying a word. As artists, as guys who dance, teach or choreograph, or even just as men, we need to be authentic and to have integrity. That's what we encourage each other to be and to do: so we're comfortable in our skin, live well in our body and dare to participate in the worlds we inhabit. That may mean stepping outside the narrow parameters of inherited prejudices, inhibition or hostility. A person is someone to meet, not a problem to label, address and solve! Let's create safe spaces for meeting and learning from each other.

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Network Page on ICDF website ... <http://icdf.com/en/networks/men-dance>

The Voice Behind The Voice - by Andy Raine

I'm putting a few paragraphs down here about a general approach that affects the way we learn, the way we interact with other people and the ways in which we expect God to intervene. It affects our creative output, our writing and our friendships and other relationships. There is a New Testament scripture where Jesus says, 'He who is not for us is against us' and another where He says, 'He who is not against us is for us': both may be true, but the emphasis is different. A similar thing happens in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus talks about being salt and light. The two analogies follow right after each other, but describe opposite strategies. In a flash appearance, sound-bite situation or one where someone is antagonistic and confrontational it may be required of us to become highly visible or make a stance in a memorable way: like a candle or torch held high in the pitch black. If it remains hidden it could make no possible difference. If someone asks for a light it would be rude, unkind and untruthful to pretend you have none to offer. That's in a LIGHT situation. But if it's a situation where SALT is needed, then shining a light in someone's face will only appear rude, and annoy them. Salt isn't to be stockpiled and kept separate, but can bring out the flavour in everything. It needs to be stirred in, and invisibly make all the difference. Any situation we aim to remain in long-term is likely to be a salt situation where our influence is all-pervasive but hidden. Under provocation or when asked to explain ourselves we may need to speak out clearly so our own integrity is not compromised. We should not need to be fearful or defensive under normal circumstances. That would only make us seem uneasy in our own skin, looking for trouble, quick to take offense or pick a fight.



The Lorica [or St Patrick's Breastplate] speaks of the presence of Christ going behind and before us. Too often we've heard the emphasis on being sent out to be good news, thrust out into a dark and hostile world. We see trouble all around us, and assume everyone is against us. Somehow we have to bring God's presence, His light and truth into a culture that has rejected Him and is sure to reject us. Maybe we can even capture somebody and carry them back with us to safety! But the old Celtic monastics and teachers understood that Christ has gone before us already and is interacting with the people we meet. What we need to ensure is that we don't impede the process that He has undertaken. We're called to bless, and let God judge who or what is blessable. If the blessing is able to land it will - just like the birds Noah despatched from the Ark. If the Son of Peace is there your blessing will remain; if not, your blessing will return to you. You can't lose. They get blessed, and if they're not receptive you get blessed some more instead of getting cross. If they are receptive you're delighted - unless you're like Jonah and are full of prejudice and dislike. (He didn't go to the people of Nineveh, in case God blessed them. He hated them and was frightened God would forgive them!)



A lot of Christians, especially, avoid situations which they might find confusing or awkward. Jesus seemed to walk towards these situations, and befriended the despised, the rejected, those with dubious reputations, foreigners, lepers, those with different belief systems. It worried and embarrassed His disciples. Arthur Burt tells the story of a policeman chewing on the end of his pencil and wiping his brow as he stared at a dead horse in McConnaughie Street, before dragging the dead horse round the corner into King Street. Then he wrote his report about the dead horse he'd found in King Street, because he didn't know how to spell McConnaughie Street. He couldn't have the truth because he didn't know how he could explain it. Too many of us try to drag real life occurrences round the corner so they fit into the range of what is already familiar to us.





God is at work far more often than we give Him credit for. No-one can see the wind, but if we're looking or feeling we can notice the wind by how it changes things. People who are not card-carrying believers are often very responsive to God's promptings, may even live more generously than us or say things we badly need to hear. If we belong to the Good Shepherd we have learnt to recognise

His voice even when we can't see Him. That voice can come to us through the voice of someone we meet, through nature, through circumstances, through words we read or an idea or a knowing that drops into our consciousness. Jesus was able to recognise a voice behind the voice of whoever was speaking to Him. He could say 'I have not found faith like this in anyone from Israel' when He was listening to an outsider. He could tell when Peter was speaking what the Father in Heaven had revealed to him. He could refuse to listen when a few moments later Peter started saying what the Devil wanted to persuade Jesus to listen to!

Even inspired believers only 'prophesy in part' - in other words we don't get everything right all the time! So we have lots to learn. In every encounter there is something for us to learn. We can listen to the other person's story, and learn to understand. We can benefit from local knowledge, or the fruit of another person's experiences. We can be respectful and teachable.



When we meet someone we should get past whatever we immediately dislike about them, and look to see what we can learn by getting to know them, and especially by listening deeply to what they say. The same is true of teachers or authors. Even someone we dislike or disapprove of may have something important to tell us: they also prophesy in part! We shouldn't refuse to open a letter with our name on it just because we don't like the look of the postman. If someone's going to clean my windows I don't care what their religion is, only whether they can thoroughly clean off the accumulated dirt that stops

me from looking out and seeing clearly. It doesn't matter whether we disapprove of a lone Samaritan woman at a well, she introduces a whole village to Jesus. It doesn't matter if we say Matthew was a cheat, he knew how to throw a party. It doesn't matter if we say, You're not allowed to get healed on a certain day or in a certain way, the guy who got healed will say, Once I was blind and now I see, and... you can't take that away from me! A religious mind-set is fortified by prejudices [our own, or those inherited from family or past teachers] and is quick to discount or exclude people. We hate it when we are ignored or excluded by others, but we all too easily play the same games. Again, Arthur Burt says, 'They drew a circle and counted me out, but God and I had the will to win: we drew a bigger circle, and counted them in!' Often we feel fearful, and are suspicious of what is unfamiliar territory. But there is treasure to be found all over if we continue to be seekers.

Remember those wise men who came from the east? The ones who showed up in Jerusalem looking for the new king? They were so earnest in their seeking that they travelled a long way to find him, and then asked for more information. They'd looked to the stars for guidance, and wound up going the right way. Wise men continue



to be seekers. On the Hill of Tara King Laighoire was waiting with his druids to bring a light to the ritual fire from which runners would go to rekindle the fires of all Ireland. Suddenly Patrick lit an Easter fire on the hill at Slane directly opposite. 'Who has dared to do this?' said the King. 'Go bring him here to me, and let him explain himself'. So Patrick was brought before the king, and told his truth. The druids recognised that this moment and this man were spoken of in their long-remembered prophecies, and many of them became his followers, continuing as spiritual leaders amongst the people. Others felt threatened, were defensive, and plotted to have Patrick assassinated. I believe there are prophetic signs and voices planted in every people, cultural tribe and interest group. Real seekers always find, or are found. We are given the desires of our heart so we can

pay attention to them and let them guide us towards our collective purposes and our own destiny! Give what someone shares with you a fair hearing. Try to have beginner's mind, that is excited to learn. Don't just react, but respond with an open heart. If you really listen, then you're more likely to hear what comes from the heart, and recognise what happens when deep calls to deep.

'Digest of Interviews'

Interviews from Andy Raine with some of the Men in Dance Network group on Facebook.

Ben Norton: One night in Watford

Are you busy or can you talk?

I'm just in the middle of spray-painting a 6 foot love heart...

Ben, either you're some kind of superman or you juggle a lot of seemingly contradictory balls! You're very from-the-heart, but you do loads of physical stuff, as well.

There used to be a cartoon series on TV that was called 'Mister Ben' (Honestly, it wasn't written about me!) He'd walk into a costume-hire shop, try on a costume, then stand in front of a magic mirror and have an adventure as a cowboy or a space-man or a deep-sea diver or whatever. My life's a bit like that. I never quite know each day what costume I'll be wearing or what will be demanded of me. You might find me doing a triathlon or a marathon, sitting in the pub with a bunch of guys, or on operations in Afghanistan with British soldiers. I could be writing and presenting media shorts - or swimming in the North Sea with you....

But I remember one night that week in Watford.

It was the final event of the tour. We went for a 'reccy' in the streets earlier in the day (so we could picture where we might be dancing) - and I got a really uneasy feeling that I'd never experienced before. When we came back there on the night I felt it again at a particular place - I just burst into tears, as if I'd been 'told' something was wrong, that someone was going to get hurt or there was danger. I was super-vigilant, almost hyper, even when we were dancing. When we were all done dancing and about to leave I came to a particular spot and began to sob uncontrollably. Then Michael identified that I was standing where a young man had recently been knifed. So we danced on that spot to bring peace to the ground.



Martha Graham used to say, 'Wherever a dancer stands is holy ground.'

But we danced at various places in downtown Watford that night. One was already a stage area, complete with Comedy and Tragedy masks above us, just outside a pub. One guy came outside after watching us through the window - and we ended up talking about how each person's life is significant. I said to him, "If you were the only man in the world... what's your name?" "Adam," he replied. You can't make these things up!

We kept on moving and finding ready-made street-sets, props and backdrops for particular dances - and each time the audience would appear, often as they were crossing from one pub to another or heading into the clubs. There's one dance just the men do, and it's always danced bare-chested. It seems to highlight the strength and vulnerability of the guys - but especially at last orders on a cold March night!

As soon as we stood in place and switched on the music the doors opened a bunch of big blokes and one girl all piled out and watched the dance. They'd had a lot to drink already and were crossing to one of the clubs. They loved the dance, and clapped and cheered, then they decided with the logic that prevails in these moments that we had to repeat the dance, but they would dance it with us! You and Michael were busy putting your shirts back on already. The guys from the audience were taking theirs off - and me and Paul looked dubiously as the girl looked set to follow suit, but then she thought better of it and stood in the audience instead.

So we stripped off again, played the music again, with the new guys stood beside us, bare-chested, full of beer and bravado. We did every move as before. They cheered us on very animatedly, and clearly thought they were doing everything we did - and took a huge bow at the end!

It was a big bonding experience! That one night feels like it has all the kind of ingredients why I always think of dance as being a night-time thing on the streets, connecting with place and people, music and all that matters.

It was pretty life-changing for me. I think that it taught me that dance does not just absorb us in the physical, but crosses all kinds of boundaries.

Edwin Santini: intention .. emotion .. connection

Edwin, I see photographs of you dancing or holding yourself in some dynamic pose, and I can tell that dance and movement have an authenticity and intensity for you. I instinctively feel you are someone who can convey honest emotions on behalf of other people, certainly for me as a man. Tell us what it means to you to be able to dance, and what part it plays in your life.

Creativity plays a very important aspect of my life. I see it as a calling to wake up, and heal other creatives. I express my creativity in many ways, including dance and movement.

Tell us more about Imaginare - the team training, and what styles and techniques are taught and explored.

Our team uses different styles ranging from aerial/acrobatic to contact improvisation.

You are from Puerto Rico and Spanish is your first language? You teach in English in Florida? or Spanish? or both?

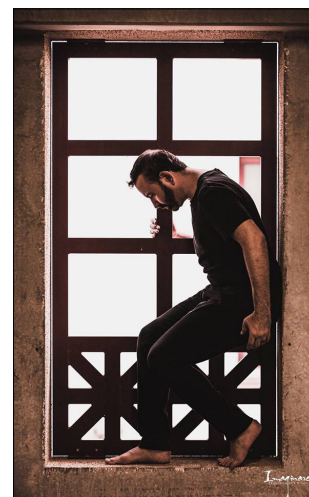
That's correct, we moved to Florida 5 years ago. I usually teach in Spanish; but I also speak English fluently.

And you and your wife are able to perform together?

My wife and I lead the whole ministry from here. We have three teams: Puerto Rico, Costa Rica and Florida.

Looking at your group photos I see so much potential in the very young exploring arts and dance. I also see the interaction between the folk on team, and think these are friendships that may last a lifetime. Are your team studying with you full-time or in their time outside working jobs?

They are also working various jobs, and study and dance when they can. Most of us have been dancing for many years. We have basic, intermediate and more advanced trained dancers. And yes, most of them work. They train over the weekends, and my wife also teaches at our school in Puerto Rico and Florida. It is sometimes hard, but that's part of it. We have team rehearsal during the week and then usually train or take additional classes over the weekend. We use dance and creative movement in the context of the Christian faith. I believe through dance we connect with ourselves, with others and with God. Obviously we see it from the faith aspect but it can be applied in many other ways as well. We build a Community of Creatives, an army of artisans. We are an army in many ways but in the most general terms this is because the arts have the power to influence and shape the culture. We incorporate other areas such as painting, folklore and theatre. Folklore is very important - it connects people to history and culture, but also to the world of story which can mediate the numinous, the spiritual and the hard-to-explain. It is a world of magic and of empathy. We are connecting intention, emotion, message which can bring inner healing and even physical.



What about 'Supernatural' - I've seen that word on your posters?

We say Supernatural because it connects beyond the natural realm. Yes, so we use a variety of styles..But beyond technique or styles, we are more concerned about delivering the Message intended. Every style, or technique should support and make the Message more clear for the non-artistic audience.

That's massively important. If stylistic stuff distances you from your audience it can be counter-productive. All the technique needs to be subservient to the content and authenticity.

We want to bring love and healing through the universal language of the Arts. Sometimes we have found the simplest dances on the streets can connect powerfully with an individual or audience, they come up and say, 'you see, you understand my pain!'

Exactly. Authentic and vulnerable. That's showing our way of life. I can feel all this off many of your pictures - that, and the sense of family. I feel I already love you and have begun to know you through the pictures! It almost feels like David playing his harp and soothing Saul's troubled spirits.

Yes! and that's what really matters to us: to make an impact in lives, establish a legacy.

So thrilled that you honour us by joining this group.

It's a blessing to me too, but I look forward to continuing this conversation. It is a great blessing to connect with other creatives, especially male dancers!

This link should take you to our facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Imaginare/>

Here is our webpage too: <http://imaginarearts.com/>

Kevin Atkinson: dancing and big decisions

Kevin, you chose to apply for a dance and choreography degree course; tell us why, and how it was for you.

I basically wanted to know more about dance itself, how I could develop my own body-understanding and dance.

And did it deliver?

It did. The course was focused on the self, how the self moves - focused on me and my body - and how that fits amongst the movement of others. I was beginning to develop my dance at an age (which was late 30s - I was 40 when I graduated) when some dancers are deciding to retire from a performing career! It was a huge, massive step into the unknown. We'd sold the house, given up our jobs, to develop our creativity. I never had the Billy Elliott break-through of experiencing dance as a child. The creative arts were not on the radar of my family or my life growing up. In my late teens dance arose over the horizon, but still only on the periphery of my personal life. I began to watch dance performances because they fed me, but mostly I wasn't doing any dance myself. To step into a world that was all about dance and creativity was a huge step, but I felt very much at home, like part of me was being reconnected.

The other joy of the degree-course was being surrounded by other men dancing. We had 7 or 8 men to about 20 girls, so that was enough to feel we were already a distinctive unit. Lots of the focus went onto men-in-dance, male dance companies, male figures in movement. The lecturers made that a major feature of our choreography. We were lucky enough to have workshops with DV8, Wayne McGregor and folk of that calibre. We did contact improvisation, and it all had a real physicality and energy that fed our innate creativity. Because one of my main focuses was working in the community with folk who have not experienced dance, after I graduated I was employed to recruit and work with a wider group of people whose creativity just had never been tapped into. So I became a teacher within the University on the same course I'd graduated from AND also offering classes and workshops to groups of lads, or women, or groups of individuals trying to find their voice instead of being overlooked or ignored. I did that for a couple of years.

Then you took another brave decision?

I left that job with the benefit of all the experience it had given me. It meant I could abandon the strictures that course-work demanded to develop my own work with people in community, those without dance-experience. Three opportunities were before me and my wife Oonagh: 1] offering dance-workshops to a wide range of people; 2] taking over the leadership of an existing performing group called 'Beyond the Barricades' who we already danced with; and 3] beginning a non-profit dance company, 'More than Dance', professionally engaging with schools, local organisations and national events. It became our life - that, and the relationship with everyone involved. The quality and caring of those relationships is what characterises us.



So, at one point you had between 4 and 6 male dancers involved in 'Barricades' - but as circumstances changed they've moved away or moved into other things, and suddenly you are usually the only man. How does that feel for YOU, Kevin?

At times it's a very lonely place - very vulnerable. I can't hold on to people who are re-locating. I can't let myself feel resentful - instead I have to accept the gift of each season and what it might teach me. The whole group, I suppose, is formed in the style of my choreography primarily, so although the women adapt it a bit, and definitely dance as who they are, it doesn't feel like they're women trying to be men, but there is a core strength to their movement vocabulary- nothing overwhelmingly feminine, but room for contrasts at times, and individual personalities shine through.

How about in schools?

The lads especially look to me as a role model, and are confident that they will look good and perform well, because they view what I do positively. We work with kids from as young as 3 through to teenagers; and soon they can be presenting pieces before whole schools, parents or the wider world they represent.

Huge privilege! - no regrets?

Some of the lads come from families where they have no positive role model, and it's a privilege to realise they entrust themselves to you. No regrets, none at all, never. We'd do the same again, except perhaps make the same decisions earlier.

Was there a particular Kevin-and-the-dance defining moment for you?

If I hadn't met you, Andy, when I did, maybe dance would not have broken into my life. You set me loose with one long piece of music - 'Tehillim' by Steve Reich - and left me to it. I found a wellspring of creativity that was unleashed: I go back and back to that moment, and it's still there. There was me and God, and we were dancing together. And as a man I think I needed another man who dances to embody that for me - and give me dance!

Daniel Cossette: exploring the heart of exploitation

Dan, you said you were in rehearsals all day yesterday?

I just finished rehearsals with 'Springs' dance company for their show 'Bread of Life', and we begin touring next Saturday for a little over a month, with a cast of 5. I work with them part-time, as each dancer is taken on by them according to the project, rather than being all full-time members. My wife Mel and I also have our own company 'Infusion Physical Theatre', and in that we too tend to collaborate with other artists from project to project, sometimes local, sometimes international. We developed a show countering human trafficking, addressing the problem of supply and demand, especially with regard to sexual exploitation. That show has two titles, so is sometimes called 'Somebody's Daughter' and at others 'Just Sex'. We developed this with the Cambridge Centre of Applied Research in Human Trafficking - the acronym for that is CCARHT which sounds like "cart". We're trying to EXPOSE and INFORM. Anti-slavery research says that in the UK 6 out of 10 people are aware of human trafficking as a problem, but only 4 out of 10 realise that it's going on right in the UK.

What's your process?

We want people to come face to face with the plight of the victim and to feel the trapped nature of being tricked, captured, forced into slavery, and to feel the desperation, so it provokes a response of, "This must be stopped!" We can hear about facts, but it's when we experience an emotion that it becomes personal. The partnership with the Research Centre gives people in our audiences lots of options for getting involved. We have Question and Answer sessions after the shows.

Dan, one of the questions I'd been waiting to ask you was about the mix in your career between mime, and dance ... physical theatre, where's that at?

I was classically trained in French mime, and after free-lancing as a solo artist for many years, I wanted to work with other people who move! So I became involved with 'Project Dance' who do pop-up festivals, performing in public spaces in cities around the world. Through that I met Randall Flynn, and worked with his dance company 'Ad Deum' for the next 4 years. I got my formal dance-training on the go as we travelled!



So how did that feel? You didn't lose your mime, but gained dance?

There was definitely a deconstruction process which felt heart-breaking. The way I knew how to move was suddenly 'wrong'. But it taught me a stronger, more connected way of using my body, that is more powerful and more efficient, includes more physical artistry to enhance my mime training. Mime provided for me an artistic connection to character and emotion - and dance provided a physicality and artistry of abstract movement that added to my mime.

So now I should ask how things are shaping up for you ahead, Dan. Where are you up to with developments in your career, with your life in general, and decisions about the future?

We are planning a UK tour with the counter-trafficking show, then next year to take it through Europe especially to Budapest and to Germany. We are targeting specific places known to be one of the European hubs for trafficking recruitment. In the UK there's Derbyshire - and university towns, even Cambridge, for anyone can be recruited, often in places where the very wealthy live close beside the very poor. Wealthy folk can be the consumers - or can become victims, kidnapped or coerced, often through the lure of emotional manipulation and grooming, or through the need of a better job. Our plan is to stay in the UK. I'm hungry to do projects that change the world. We need to be making city councillors aware that these issues are immanently local. We can bring about a cultural shift. It's important for me as a man. I've seen several shows by female colleagues that are about sexual exploitation; but there are almost no men doing work on the issue. So, validly, the content of their shows is focused on the plight of victims, usually women - but no one was addressing the role of the men. More men artists, writers, choreographers should be addressing this: it's not a women's issue-of-interest, but a human dignity issue.

Here's a question I'm interested to ask for insights on... On the syllabus of the school of creativity I attended in Canada years ago, there was a class with the heading 'Developing a transferrable life-style when on the road', then they fast-forwarded us past it into setting out on tour a few days early to coincide with another opportunity, and the class was replaced with just a short discussion - they didn't seem to see the irony in that! Dan, what would you tell us you've learnt on THAT topic?

I feel like I'm underqualified for speaking about being out on the road. For me it's very seasonal, and not with long periods away. I have a home-base. Sometimes my wife is travelling with me, for she is a performer also (in mime and dance.) But by using the internet and so on, I can stay connected to my friendships and accountability groups. Despite the craziness of touring life, I have to carve out time for reflection, quiet and prayer so that I stay centred.

Ant Grimley: a Brendan journey

So, Ant, you've been dancing for a long time...

Well, I'm 47 now – and I was 14 or 15 when I started. In fact, I went on a dance-team to America when I was 15 – and came back 16!

There were 3 families, including your own, who raised the money for you to go..

Yes, by washing people's cars. And I had to get permission for time off from the school I was just about to transfer to. Then those same families said, 'We've got him there, and he'll have learned so much, but who's he going to share it with?' So they decided to become a dance-team you could teach! After that there was always people keen to get involved with dance. At one point there 35 people in our dance-group – and always loads of men. Because we always had plenty of men, other men felt secure to join. They felt that way because they were watching men dance.

Can you tell us about 'Brendan'?

I think it was the album I heard first: 'Beyond these Shores' by the band Iona. Then because that interested me I read the full account of the voyage of Brendan who is supposed to have crossed the Atlantic Ocean setting out from Ireland in a large coracle called a 'currach'. He and his companions famously made this precarious journey back in the 6th century. It's quite a story.

And you choreographed a whole show about this?

It was a personal journey, reflecting on the voyage; and the dance production grew out of that. Life was a journey – with adversity, prosperity, all rolled into one story. When we taught the dance-production all these things were in the minds of the dancers. It made the dance-production a collection of quite intense mini-stories as each individual was emotionally invested in the greater story.



The starting piece was Brendan's invitation to different brothers, friends in community, to reflect on the implications were they to go on this journey with him. Each had a sort of circular poncho woven from rough cloth, and these were laid out on the floor to represent the circular cells where each man lived alone. Each of them was free in that space to reflect on his own dilemma, and express it. If they chose to say yes to going on the journey, this was represented by lifting the poncho up from the floor, and pulling it on over his own head. The cast was: me as Brendan, and five other men as his brother-monks, then one woman as the Wild Goose or "bird of heaven". Whilst the brothers mimed the constructing and preparing of the currach [boat] behind him, Brendan in the foreground danced out his own struggle between calling and reluctance, fear and excitement. Then the brothers form themselves into the shape of the currach, and Brendan steps back to become its prow. Their movements then recreate the turmoil of the sea: their interlocked arms begin to slide as their weary bodies droop, battered by the elements. But the Wild Goose surrounds their frail craft, and after rebuilding them by strengthening their failing arms, leads them forward. Eventually they reach their destination, and in the land of promise they are free to explore, dance out their joy and relief at arriving.

Does that lead to the dance, 'Today' ?

Yes, it turns out Joanne Hogg wrote that song after surviving a bad car-accident, which gave a contemporary edge and feel to the music and the very vigorous choreography.

That one was not only vigorous, but very fast, and difficult to keep on top of! Very exciting to watch. It was as if the drum-beats were coming alive.

It was the antithesis of the fear they had experienced: there was the whole range of emotions expressed. When someone has been through an anxious time, they often feel the need to do something physical to use up the adrenalin. This is that dance!

Then Brendan and the Wild Goose have a more intimate dance where they remember the journey and recognise the help he received in particular episodes of adversity or struggle. It finishes with their return to their homeland, and Brendan's eventual death. The whole show was 35 minutes in duration as a whole dance-piece. But we had narration to give context, sometimes songs and other dances beforehand – and we travelled all over the country with it.

That was how long ago? And what are you up to now?

That was in 1996, and we've revived it, taught it with many groups, children and adults over the years. Then in 2018 I started working on Part 2, with the title 'Community on the Water' - there's 4 dances so far.

Ant Grimley: a Brendan journey ... continued

So, is the plan to perform it with the original 'Brendan' show?

It could be done as Part 1 and Part 2 with an interval – or with either as a stand-alone performance. We are performing the first 4 dances of 'Community on the Water' at a conference in May 2019, called 'The return of Wisdom' in London. That's with me, my daughter Katie and our friend Megan.

You've done lots of dancing, and various shows over the years, but it seems you always return to 'Brendan'.

What started as a metaphor for my life has become a reality. So my returning is a story of the journey itself. In 1996 it was an idea, a notion of life as a journey. But Part 2 puts meat on those bones, my experiences of living the journey. The key moments of that journey were the death of my wife, eventually building a step-family and intentional community, chosen so that 4 generations are living as extended family under one roof. The idea for the dance-drama has become the lived narrative for me and my family. 'Brendan' has been companion on my journey; and through all we suffered and experienced – highs and lows – it seems Brendan has become my friend.

Leon Hoskin-Stone: from Morris to Appalachian

Leon remembers when he was younger it wasn't very cool to be a dancer if you were a man - though ballroom dancing could be a useful skill when it came to dating. He was a Morris dancer for years, doing all that high energy traditional folk-dancing in the streets with other rowdy men.

Leon, what kind of dance are you involved in?

We do Appalachian Clog - the kind of traditional dance carried by immigrants to the area of the Appalachian mountains, using a mixture of English clog-dance, Irish step-dancing and Appalachian old-time music. So in a way it's bringing back traditions that came across the Atlantic from the UK. We are announced when we perform as a team who demonstrate 'High Appalachian' with formations. I joined our group in 1986 - when I was already doing Morris dancing with Winster Morris Dancers from Derbyshire, UK - but that was also all-men, traditionally. I was a team-dancer, dancing with men, and then with men and women.



You've always encouraged other men to dance?

One friend - Sam who is a musician - had seen me dancing, and he says, 'Seeing Leon dance made me think IF HE CAN DO IT, SO CAN I!' So he came to workshops, and now incorporates doing some Appalachian stepping into his music performances. That's so good to know he dances because of me. I'm 74 now and still performing, still enjoying it. With the Morris dancing I always encouraged younger lads to get involved alongside the older men and to feel good about it. These days some of the dance-sides are made of ALL young men, and they leap higher and much more vigorously (whenever the traditional dances allow!) But it's good to see these things being kept alive.

How do people who know you in some other capacity react when they discover you are a dancer?

As a male I've been proud to be able to dance. I regard it as a skill, like any other. Nearly always when people hear about it they want a demonstration, and then they love it and respect me. Sometimes I get recognised from my work - they'll say 'Aren't you that guy who does the Appalachian dances with Feet First?' Once I even got free ice-creams on the strength of it - so that was a good thing!

This 'Men in Dance Network' * continues to serve ICDF by being available to support men who are involved in any Christian dance.

This 'Men in Dance Network' * is mostly a forum open to connecting with ALL men who identify themselves as dancers, regardless of faith or belief, tribe or culture, age, ability, dance-skills and training, nationality or colour.

**** We hope these men will be interested in exploring with us some understanding of what men characteristically bring to the dance, what we enjoy, how we learn, and what can be achieved when men move together... in dance, in integrity of purpose and in friendship.***