

## **Interview with Andy Au - by Andy Raine**

AR: We travelled down to Brighton for Jonathan Campbell's wedding and Andy agreed that we would put aside a while earlier that day to have him answer some questions for the men's focus network ...

AA: We've been working with staves, with permission, and of course a lot with men.

AR: Staves?

AA: As in plural of staff - they're big sticks.

AR: Sorry, I thought they were called staffs! Tell us first about percussion.

AA: We've been experimenting with moving with drums, and keeping rhythm.

AR: That's sounding wild, and good to be developing. What else have you been doing?

AA: We've been doing a lot of something we call 'dynamic mass sculpturing'

AR: \*Mass' as in weight?

AA: No, taass' as in many. This dynamic mass sculpturing is not choreographed, but is designed to release individual creativity collectively!

AR: Sounds wonderful. Now tell us what happens.

AA: Someone creates a shape, then the next person adds a shape of their own onto or around it. Each new person adds their own shape onto the picture that is building up.

AR: Like a developing tableau.

AA: Yes, but from that you create a pulse, a rhythm. One person, still keeping the shape, flexes or pulses, then that pulse ripples through the group till all of the dancers have kept their positions, but all move slightly in response to the recurring pulse as it reaches them, and they are all doing it.

AR: This sounds a bit like the piece you did with two other guys when we saw you at Glastonbury last summer - but you all had staffs.

AA: Staves! Yes, it's the same idea. You create a shape with your body and the staff, then the others add on one at a time.

AR: Yes, it was quite fast - and very impressive with the staffs.

AA: The staffs help to make many forms of dance, and this releases creativity.

AR: It was all changing very quickly, when we saw you, but I don't remember you using the pulse.

AA: When you use the pulse, you create the shape, each add to it, introduce the pulse, then dissolve the combined shape or sculpture and begin to create a new one.

AR: How does that work?

AA: We may have decided that when we check out the stage area, for example, that there will be three pre-determined focal points for the dancers. One of them could be a clock, in the balcony, so that everyone in turn would end up looking at it or otherwise indicating it

AR: Do you need a sequence for that?

AA: No, the first person just moves to create a new focal point. But it will be one of the pre-determined possibilities, so people really are focussed, not just looking vaguely the same way. There need not just be one group, either. There may be multiple sculptures around the available space, happening simultaneously or at random timing.

AR: How about women with staves? Do you reckon they look good?

AA: Men look better.

AR: Ted Shawn used to reckon there are some ways of moving only guys should use, some only women should use, and then a cross-over grey area that both should approach with extreme caution.

AA: We have one girl, Kirsty, who is alright with a staff. But because they haven't the musculature it doesn't usually come naturally to women. Men and women move differently. Everyone knows that - just look at the way they walk. Men have a linear walk, but women have a compound walk. Now, when you see men with staves there's a powerful dynamic there, seeing men move together - it makes an astounding spiritual difference.

**Once we had these 250 worship leaders from Icthus churches and did dynamic mass sculpture with the staves and drums! It all became sort of "tribal" ' with about half of them moving like that and only 40 or 50 had been to the workshop!**

AR: Enough of them to give the others the feel of where it could go.

AA: In one church there was this non-Christian guy joined in and he felt a belonging. Being part of this proves he worked into a spiritual sense of reality.

AR: If people can experience being around vital worship the presence of God does the evangelising.

AA: Yes, when you do a prepared PRESENTATION, that has only one shot for evangelism. If it's not exactly relevant to that person then it misses. But WORSHIP in evangelism is powerful if God orchestrates it.

AR: So where does it go from here?

AA: The dynamic mass sculpturing can lead into spontaneous prophetic action that really cuts it. I've already been developing that congregationally or cross-congregationally in Switzerland. We're about to do more with it right here in Brighton.

*For details of workshops or training courses with Andy Au (or Candy Hadler) contact-*

*Movement in Worship, 84-86 London Road, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 4JF*

*Tel: (0)1273 693807 Fax: (0)1273 682248 email:citygate.trust@ukonttne.co.uk*

## In Your Spare Time

The apostle Paul worked almost all the time, making tents. In fact, he delighted in not being a financial burden even to the churches he had raised up himself. He planted churches, developed relationships, taught and encouraged and interceded *all in his spare time*.

I draw attention to this, not to make us feel defeated and unproductive in comparison, but to encourage us to offer to God again the availability we *do* have.

For most of us, dance is necessarily a spare-time activity. We are too busy working, earning a living, supporting a family or studying for qualifications ...

Even those released for ministry full-time may only have the opportunity to spend a small proportion of their time and energies to developing their gifts in the dance.

It may come in 'seasons', when there is 'a time to dance' or the occasional project or opportunity which challenges and stretches us. There is nothing unusual or untoward about this.

In terms of creativity, the occasional evening given over to free-dance with new music, or revision of old materials, is enough to remind us what it is all about, especially if we are able to give time just to being in God's presence alone, conscious only of Him.

Often you hit up against a profound DISSATISFACTION with your own dancing. This may be because your dancing once seemed vibrant and alive, 'on the cutting edge' of what God was doing, but now it seems stale and predictable. Your body just doesn't seem capable of doing what you want it to anymore. Maybe you are carrying extra weight or haven't exercised for ages ...

Another dissatisfaction can sound like this: 'All our dance is irrelevant and stilted. It lacks power and imagination. There has to be more than this!'

Dissatisfaction can be the 'goad', the provocation to cause us to want better, to create material with more originality. Often, something has to be recognised by the heart. Things that are deep, heart-felt and painful need new language to be conveyed and expressed. We can determine not to be superficial in our treatment of serious subjects, and more courageous in engaging with difficult concerns and issues.

Jim Wallis of the Sojourners Fellowship in Washington DC once challenged his audience to ask, 'Where are the songs I could sing in jail?' Some of the best suggestions were old Negro spirituals such as 'Nobody knows the trouble I've seen, nobody knows like Jesus', or protest songs like 'How can I keep from singing?'

Some of Paul's letters were also written from jail. Years before, this same Paul learned to sing

psalms at midnight, even after a brutal beating.

Within the confines of our own circumstances we can learn to offer a sacrifice of praise. Against the background of our own contemporary culture, we can find authentic ways to express the things that matter to us. People *like* us readily resonate with our struggles even if they are quick to dismiss platitudes or easy answers.

The priority is to get real, and give *much energy* to expressing our struggle and hope.

© 1998 *The Clearing In The Woods* <http://users.ids.net/~wright/dancemen.htm>