



# ICDF Networks

## September 2019

### Network for Dance Teachers



*Artist: House of Maria - used with permission*

“In step?” she asked,  
    “ In step.” He firmly replied.  
                    “ but, how?”  
    “ just keep your eyes firmly on me and I will lead  
                    The Way.”

To become part of the Network contact Sue at ... [hodsonsue@gmail.com](mailto:hodsonsue@gmail.com)

To find out more about the Network .... <http://www.icdf.com/en/networks/dance-teachers>

The first article I would like to share with you is the extract from the book, “Beyond the Dance” by my dear friend, Yvonne Peters. Yvonne is a lover of Jesus, a worshipper, in addition to being a dancer, choreographer and a pioneer in Christian Dance Ministry. She is a Biblical teacher of note and her ministry spans multiple countries. I’m always inspired by her and deeply honoured to be able to share some of her wisdom and insights with you. As teachers, we know that rehearsals get really tense sometimes and are exhausting and exhilarating and well.... you know.... However, our perspective needs to remain in place. Yvonne’s insights are a timely reminder, especially as we move into our “Concert Season”!

*Sue Hodson*

## Unforgettable Rehearsal

***“The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it” - Genesis 2:15***

Rehearsals are a prerequisite for most any event, be it dance concerts, weddings or graduations. Any public invitation to view a performance calls for a rehearsal. One rehearsal in Israel is unforgettable.

It was Jerusalem in the late 1980’s and, as dancers, we were rehearsing a processional scheduled for one of the evenings of the Feast of Tabernacles celebration. And rehearse this processional we did, every day for almost two weeks.

On the evening we were to perform, there was a sudden programming change. For unknown reasons this well-rehearsed processional was being eliminated from the program. Why this was changed, I never found out. What I learned from it, I never forgot.

Backstage, I engaged in a conversation with the Lord about this situation. I said something like this: “God, you know all things. You even make donkey’s talk. If you know this piece was going to get cut, couldn’t you have told us about it? If we’d had knowledge, we could have put our time into rehearsing the other dance choreographies.” In my immaturity, I thought this was a reasonable conversational exchange with God. What I heard in my innermost being as God’s response, felt as if the air was being sucked out of my lungs. And like Job, felt ***“My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you.”*** Though there was no physical “seeing”, an aspect of the glory and holiness of god was revealed. This is what I heard from the quiet inner voice of the Holy Spirit. “Who are you to decide when I take my offerings. If I choose to take my offering in rehearsals, that must be enough for you.” I was stunned!



Photo provided by Sue Hodson

## UNFORGETTABLE REHEARSAL ... continued

Our New Testament offerings of worship are spiritual sacrifices. There are seven spiritual sacrifices mentioned in the Bible, but two of them pertain to giving praise and thanksgiving to God simply for who He is. Romans 12:1 says we are to offer our entire lives: body, soul and spirit.

*“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all He has done for you. Let be a living and holy sacrifice, the kind He will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship Him.”*

Worship dancers take this seriously. Our prayer is to offer, in excellence, a demonstration through our movements. And while this is the intention of our hearts, one of the weaknesses in the soul of a performer is to evaluate worship on how, when and who sees the demonstration. These, I might add, are weak and improper metrics to measure an offering to God. God’s words to me in that moment cut deeply into the motivation of my heart. He was saying, if I believed my dance was a spiritual offering, then whether He received it in rehearsals or the actual worship event, it should not affect me, at all! In fact, it was His offering, His gift to receive, and that gave Him the right to accept it whenever He desired. My concept of being in rehearsals and running rehearsals was forever altered. Practicing with the awareness of His presence was the main event. Recognising the omnipresence of God in all my endeavours recalibrated my attitude.

Genesis 2:15 reads, *“The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it”*

In Hebrew, the word for ‘work’ and ‘worship’ are interchangeable. The Hebrew word “abad” means both “to work” and “to do”, as well as, “to serve” and “to worship”. I learned these lessons being a worshipper expressing my love for God through dance. But, beyond the dance was the truth that even the most menial tasks can become worship when given back to God in praise and thanksgiving as a spiritual sacrifice. God receives these expressions of love whether others are watching, or He is the only one in the room.

*“Oh, how great are God’s riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and His ways! For who can know the LORD’S thoughts? Who knows enough to give him advice? And who has given him so much that he needs to pay it back? For everything comes from him and exists by His power and is intended for His glory. All glory to Him forever! Amen.” (Romans 11:33-36)*

*(The article above is an extract from the book “Beyond the Dance” by Yvonne Peters. This book is available on Amazon.)*

### Why Dance Education Matters ... a book introduction

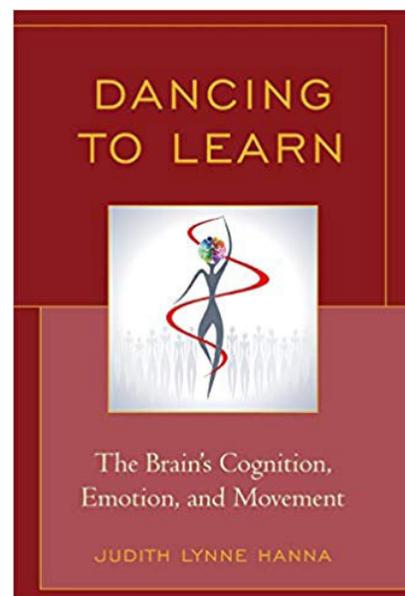
“Why Dance Education Matters” is a book written by Judith Lynne Hanna, Ph.D.

We read ...

“Many arguments for dance education have been made. For example, certainly students in dance may acquire skill sets that serve them in myriad of ways, develop embodied knowledge and kinesthetic connections, and become gainfully employed. But the most important reason to offer dance education in schools and universities as well as the broader community is what neuroscientists have revealed in the past 15 years.”

This article was first published in the DA:NCE newsletter (Dance Awareness: No Child Exploited) and the full article can be found on their website at ...

<https://www.soultolecholeography.org/why-dance-education-matters/>



## Introducing Miriam Whitehouse

Miriam began dancing at the age of three, starting with ballet. She trained at the Jason Theatre School in North London for seven years before continuing her training at Katherine Kapel School of Dance . She holds several qualifications and is affiliated to professional dance teaching bodies in the United Kingdom.



She has been teaching professionally since 2007, supporting her pupils in shows and examinations that have developed their skills and confidence in dance. She holds a U.K.A. Associate Teaching Qualification in Tap and Jazz, an Exercise to Music Fitness Certificate, an international Instructing Certificate in BodyJam ( Les Mills), and teaching qualifications in Living Dance International in Ballet, Contemporary and Jazz, as well as Level 5 in Safe and Effective Dance Practice. She loves to teach dance and her dream is to see it making a positive impact on the lives of her pupils within the school system and in the community.

The dance school that Miriam runs has a Christian Ethos and a real heart towards developing dance excellence in both students and teachers.

Miriam has written a tap curriculum that was launched in Toowoomba, Australia in January 2015. She has a passion for teacher development and here she describes it in her own words:

*'Since 2012 Generation Edinburgh has offered a variety of dance styles to pupils of all ages and abilities, we've liaised with Primary and Secondary schools to link dance in with the Curriculum for Excellence, we've raised funds for various charities through our shows and community projects and have produced our own Tap curriculum that is being used by schools in New Zealand, Australia and soon to be Africa.*

*In January 2020 I will be going out to Sydney to hold a seminar for teachers to train, receive credentials and use our new material: a further 3 Tap grades and a new Jazz curriculum. Some of these teachers come from places where this training isn't possible, and to give them this opportunity is like gold dust as they take it back to their communities and teach their kids. I will also be launching an online teachers HUB which will have videos to help train theachers and their pupils. I believe this resource will be incredibly helpful around the world and will provide a lot of support and training for teachers to build up in confidence, technique and skill.*

*Love and deepest thanks to all who support us through prayer, deeds and financially.  
Miriam'*

(For more information about the project above please contact Miriam at ...  
[miriamwhitehouse11@gmail.com](mailto:miriamwhitehouse11@gmail.com))

# The Teaching of Boys in Dance

*Meet Michael Barnard who is a dancer and dance teacher. Sue Hodson conducted an interview with him to find out about his perspective on teaching boys.*

**Question: Please give us some background about yourself ... How did you first get involved in dance? What drew you? What style of dance do you do?**

I'm Michael and I'm currently 23. I'm married and I own Limitless Arts Global (pty) Ltd which we use to teach, perform and create many different forms of dance, drama, and music. We have a performing arts school, a production team and performers. LA Global has been hired by other shows, churches, and schools. My Mission is to use stage to glorify God! We will do it eventually in every school in the country and in many cities around the world.



When I was fourteen, I asked God to show me what he wanted me to work towards and He told me I was going to use the stage to glorify him around the world. I struggled to grasp this, and I in fact didn't work towards it purposefully. But when I was seventeen and needed to choose a direction to go in I was scared. After months of dealing with this question of "where to next" I only had peace with studying performing arts. Not because I desired to learn it, I was desiring to become a biokineticist, but because I knew where I felt God's peace and leading. When I listened and said yes to God I saw how I had been Breakdancing from age thirteen, how I had written short skits, created

numerous short comedic videos, played in the youth band since fourteen, and more... God knew me better than I knew myself. I was drawn to these things because I enjoyed creating in this way.

For those curious my main dance focuses are Breakdancing/Hip Hop and Contemporary dance. Regarding Drama, I love bringing the story to life in an incredibly entertaining way.

**Question: What would you say to boys out there about pursuing a career or ministry in dance?**

Yes, you can make it! Yes, your family will not lack anything. Yes, your limits/vision/trust in God needs to be limitless!

Practically you need more than one skill. Don't box yourself and say you only work well doing such and such. Rather approach growth with a fierce and consistent desire to learn, and a strong belief that you can do anything. You must dream, but dream with God! because God knows the practical, the realistic, the method, the timing, the details. He knows you and He loves you. Don't miss Him or let Him miss you. God Loves You!

**Question: How can dance teachers improve the way boys are trained?**

Affirm them as boys. Affirm the many different things they can show as human beings: pain, weakness, strength, courage, love, compassion, hate, confusion, etc.

Don't worry about a male dancing in a feminine way or other strange ways. Be concerned about discerning the spirit and where the person is at with understanding themselves and dancing; do not presuppose who they are or their reasons. You see, dancing is movement and it's creative and therefore can be done in so many different ways. We need to make sure that our male dancers can be creative and versatile, and that the man within them is growing and not being shut down.

**Question: What do you think the way forward is for boys in ministry?**

The way forward is wide open! There is so much opportunity and if you can't see it, create it!

For groups of people I say this. The way forward for boys in dance ministry is to have something that is challenging and fun for them. Ask the boys what they like, get Bboys, krumpers, trickers, contemporary dancers together and someone with a heart for the boys to bind what you do. Then get together and have serving opportunities for them so that there is always something to work for. I also do believe that a bit of healthy competitive battling has place for building skills, character, and friendship.

On competitive dancing- no dance style is superior, and to give your best should be the focus, not to tear someone else down.

# What To Do With Those Difficult Parents

It is the scene we all dread: an angry mom marches up to us and demands to know why her exceptionally talented daughter is not the star in the upcoming show, or why she did not receive Honours for her exam, or why THAT boy is the lead dancer. Worse still, when are you going to make up the lessons my child lost (due their fault, not yours)?

Whether you are an experienced or new teacher, you will come across this at some stage. What is our response? “Respond in the Spirit, in the opposite spirit” is a word of advice that my husband regularly gives me and when I follow those wise words, it works!

Most of the time, parents are encouraging and supportive, but the following tools will help in dealing with the occasional strong personality:

1. Set clear studio policy - Make sure that all parents have in writing the list of rules for your studio. Hold everyone to the same guidelines regarding studio behaviour and expectations. Set the standards as to dress, behaviour, parent interviews, exams, shows, etc. You want every student in your studio to be happy, relaxed and growing to the best of their ability.

2. Don't allow a parent to ambush you before or during a class. Set a time to meet with them or organise a phone call at a time that suits you. (Don't fall victim to those parents who phone at all hours.)

3. Expect Respect - There is no reason to allow a parent to walk all over you or your assistant. If they disagree with you over an issue and refuse to see reason, consider getting in another teacher or mediator. Jesus said: "As far as possible, pursue peace with one another."

I had a situation where I handed over my teaching studio to another teacher and one of the more difficult parents did not agree with the way that teacher was running it. I received a very nasty WhatsApp berating me for appointing her and calling my Christian walk into question.

My first response was to respond angrily and defensively. However, the Lord helped me to reflect on where this person was in their life, how troubled they were and the likely cause of the reaction (which wasn't really about the teacher actually). I was able to ignore the message and not respond to it.

Although they left the studio, when I next saw them they were friendly and chatted away as though nothing had ever been said. While I wouldn't always advocate ignoring messages, this one was too toxic to respond to and was the correct thing to do: 'in the Spirit, in the opposite spirit!'

There are some battles not worth fighting and relationships are more important than being right.

4. When setting up rehearsal schedules, try to find out beforehand if there are school exams coming up, festivals that children will need to be a part of, etc. In working with the parents as much as possible, you will lessen absenteeism and irritation. Stick to the schedule as rigidly as possible. Expect your dancers, parents and yourself to adhere to the schedule. If you chop and change, parents will become 'difficult'!

5. One of the more difficult confrontations is the one where a parent questions your decision to not place their child in a higher-level class and threatens to leave the studio. Although meeting with the parent may be uncomfortable, it is important to meet with them in person and try to help them to understand that your decision was the best one for their child. This can be difficult for the parent - especially if the child has made a transition from another syllabus and was dancing at a higher level and is now dancing a new syllabus, but at a lower level.



Artist: House of Maria

## Difficult Parents ... continued



Explain in detail why the decision was made with regard to strength, areas of weakness in posture, flexibility, performance or technique. Show the parent that the child's advancement is not just a subjective one, based on how you feel about her, but on actual measurable facts. As a teacher, you are concerned about your dancer's whole body – physical, emotionally and spiritually. If a parent is truly advocating for his /her child, they will understand. If they are unrealistic and will not accept your decisions, perhaps they should move on. The Lord gave me a word of wisdom for the teacher of a young dancer, who had recently joined her studio, thereby changing both teacher and syllabi. The dancer was talented, but badly trained and was resisting being placed in a lower grade than she had been in in her past studio. “Tell her that this is not a reflection of the amount of talent that she has, but a reflection of the bad training that she received. Tell her that you want to work on building up her strength and technique to a point where she can showcase her talent properly.”

By communicating clearly with both dancer and parent, you nurture cooperation and respect. Most people will respond reasonably and those who don't, will leave. Remember, you still have all those other amazing, cooperative, supportive and amazing parents and students! Not even Jesus could keep everyone happy all the time!

These are some of the strategies that I've employed in running my studios over the years. I would love to hear from you about what has worked for you! Please send any comments, questions or suggestions to: [hodsonsue@gmail.com](mailto:hodsonsue@gmail.com) and I will post them next time.

*Sue Hodson*

## A Teacher's Stress Before Examination?

Does a teacher go through stress before examiner students are examined?

Most do!

I certainly did!

Early in the year I would be encouraged to see weekly or monthly improvement in the students. I was looking at where they improved from the month before. Closer to the exam I would begin to look at their progress with 'new eyes' in that I was looking at them from a different point of view. I thought how would an examiner see them? I started to look at them from the areas of lack – where they were not yet achieving. I started to get nervous about how well they would perform. I knew students were doing their best and would hope to get a good grading in an exam. But would they? I could see where they needed to improve.

The temptation at that point was to coerce or put undue pressure on students in classes. I had to check myself to see that I wasn't doing that. I knew it was unfair on the child. Instead I needed to be more effective, or as effective as I could be, in my teaching explanations rather than pressuring the child.

Even as an examiner and founder of Living Dance and a teacher for 40+ years, one would think I would have confidence in my own teaching but I still succumbed to feeling nervous!

Mostly when I go to examine, a teacher will say things like – “I hope my students are okay - I'm not sure if they are as good as they could be, or up to standard - I'm feeling so nervous!”

When I look at the students I am always pleasantly surprised – they are up to standard!

If you feel like this it is perfectly normal!

So rest assured, as a teacher you are doing your best and students are doing their best!



*Sue Hodson and Beth Bluett-Spicer are Joint- Coordinators for the ICDF Network for Dance Teachers*

*Beth Bluett-Spicer*