

### **What is my aim as a teacher?**

As a teacher my aim is to inform, stimulate, promote and pass on the knowledge of the practice of the traditional aesthetics of Egyptian/Arabic Dance (based on my experience with early Suraya Hilal method and integrated with developments of my own).

*Within the dance, I teach the three styles: Sha' bi ( Saidi, Ghawazee), Baladi (the urban style from Cairo) and Sharqi ( Classical). All these styles share the same concept of movement but emphasis, feel and interpretation vary.*

### **What is my method?**

As a method, I privilege a mode of awakening the kinesthetic intelligence of the body, which I name broadly: the wisdom of the body.

The work in class is to gradually lead students to a point where they are able to relax and develop a power of imitating movements. This process awakens our kinesthetic sympathy. In other words, when we see a body moving we see a movement, which is potentially reproducible in our muscular experience. Put otherwise, when we direct our attention to the movements we see, we learn by imitation. Traditionally Egyptian dance has been transmitted orally from generation to generation and women have always danced while being inspired by music. I believe that through the process of imitation, one can best learn how to feel music.

Gradually, dance practice transforms our bodies smoothly. Through its gentle action, students reach a degree of confidence where we all begin to blend energetically as a group and feel one another through bodies in motion.

Solid groundwork in dance training is central for me, in order to give students a foundation from which to grow. Therefore, I focus on the concepts of grounding and alignment, balance and centeredness. As one progresses, the work becomes more fundamental.

## **What is my vision of Egyptian/Arabic dance?**

*Egyptian dance transforms natural movements into dance: we dance from what we are.*

The foundation in Egyptian/Arabic dance is the grounding. When we are grounded, our movements are free to move from the base of our spine to the extremities of the body. We stand firm in our true organic posture and we transfigure movements into dance. In this manner, our dance becomes unique because we dance from what we are.

When we learn the proper technique, which allows us to show the simplicity of our natural movements, we are able to show the sacredness which is connected with the erotic movement of the pelvic area. In this way we dance from our centre, from our soul. **We give a unique form to our dancing.**

On the contrary, when we learn to move the extremities first, we work against gravity. The physiological energy, which we liberate by allowing the body to find the grounding, is repressed. In this way, the flow at the base of the spine is inhibited. At this point, the body is in an unnatural position and requires unnecessary movements.

*Dance arises through the inner dialogue between movement and music on the spur of the moment.*

Through practice one becomes attuned to this inner flow, where our inner Spirit shines through our body. Words can only vaguely define the Spirit of a dance. I will attempt to describe it as the underlying Joy at the heart of existence, which manifests itself through movement. Dance communicates that Joy is deeper than pain. This can be made available at any level of expertise: it is important for me that students find their dimension of dance, as inner play, where we find our spontaneous relation of Joy towards existence.

*Dance also reconnects with our capacity for self-healing.*

In other words, through the grounding, we revitalize our body by recreating the conditions for a natural organic posture from which tensions can be healed. We enable the body to awaken its inner wisdom for self-healing. In other words, we learn to feel blocks of tensions in the body and release them through a relaxed, joyful movement.

*Dance expressed a spiritual need in the human being.*

While dancing, we enact hope and faith in life. We transfigure our experience into movement. We use our past experience to dance our present and to transform our future. As a result, we recreate ourselves incessantly. One single moment of dance is a sacred moment in which we transform pain into a meaningful movement, which carries hope. We express kinetic images from our own experience.

### **Dance with Spirit**

In *Holy and Profane Beauty*, Gerardus Van der Leeuw says that to dance is an imperative. We must all learn once more to dance, so that once again a new consciousness of life can be created and perhaps finally a style of life.

Van der Leeuw refers to the dances performed at the beginning of the century but his words are contemporary. In his opinion, dance is not only a question of technical excellence. **We must dance with Spirit.** He says that only the Spirit can bring the human being to dance. Inspired by these words, I would like to add that the Spirit of a dance is not something we learn but an element we can only awaken from inside ourselves. Van der Leeuw affirms that *Love is the driving force of all movement. How we conceive of this Love belongs to our personal vision and can only be communicated through our gestures.*