



# ICDF Networks

May 2018

## Network for Cultural Dance

Besides dance, one of my long term passions is scuba diving which I do regularly in the cool waters of the Atlantic Ocean around the west coast of Ireland. The waters here are rich in sea creatures and plant life. Since I spend much time undersea the behaviour of marine creatures is of great interest. There is one mollusc I've come across that's a most unlikely dancer – the common scallop, a bivalve 10-15 cm in diameter. First time I swam over this shellfish on the muddy seabed, its "mouth" open a few centimetres, I touched it by accident and was surprise and amused to see it "dance" several metres. It has no legs or arms but quickly claps shut its mouth sending out a jet of water by which it propels itself in swoops for a short distance. Choreography is limited. Flight and self-preservation are the motives for the dance but I like to think of it as the cultural dance of the scallop. Around us in the natural world, fascinating cultural dances are taking place for courtship, for protection and maybe just for joy and pleasure! You can watch the dancing scallop on YouTube!

All around Ireland, mostly in the rural areas, Ceilidh dance classes are popular among the middle and older generations. Primarily these are for socialising and for exercise. No one is left on the side with dances made up of groups of 3, 4, 6 and 8. The love of traditional music and pattern is evident and much enjoyment experienced by all. In the last Cultural Dance Newsletter we saw how one dance school in Ireland is using traditional Irish dance to praise the Lord and spread the Gospel.



Photo of the scallop provided by Alison Bourke

Our dream for the 'Network for Cultural Dance' is to see the many different cultural dances from around the world represented in the Network and for the Network to form a vibrant and interactive platform for information exchange and discussion. If you would like to represent your cultural heritage in this Network, please contact Alison at [shalomalibe@gmail.com](mailto:shalomalibe@gmail.com)

- The Network for Cultural Dance is interested in exploring:*
- . the origins of our cultural dances*
  - . meaning, development and change*
  - . redeeming our culture*
  - . integration and renewal*
  - . ministry through cultural dance, sharing the gospel*
  - . "breaking the rules", innovation and creativity*
  - . clothing/costume*

## **Lina Lasup: an interview**

*Lina is one of the workshop leaders at the ICDF Dance and Culture Study Tour next year in Kanyakumari, India. Alison Bourke interviewed her to find out more about the cultural dances from Indonesia and what to expect in the workshops.*

**Indonesia is made up of many islands. Are there different cultural dances found on particular islands? How popular is cultural dance today on these islands?**

Yes, as an archipelago with the thousands of islands, Indonesia has more than a thousand tribes too, each with their own set of cultures and traditions, including dances. These cultural dances are quite different from tribe to tribe, although some nearby located tribes may have similar characteristics/elements in their cultural dances. Some cultural dances are still popular as they are practiced internally within the tribe and used by our country to promote our cultures internationally (this is what happens with the most famous cultural dances of our largest tribes like Balinese Legong and Kecak, and Jakarta Mask dance); but many cultural dances are less and less practiced today as there are fewer in today's generation who are willing to preserve the traditions or keep their ancestors' belief systems.

**Do many Christians participate in cultural dancing? In what ways are they using these traditional dances? How have Christians been redeeming their culture and reclaiming cultural dance?**

In general, Indonesian Christians do participate in cultural dances. We often try to incorporate cultural dances in our praise and worship time at church, by blending the traditional/cultural elements and combining them with other elements like ballet, tambourine dance, etc. However, we always make sure first that those cultural dances are coming from good values in line with the Bible instead of from some unbiblical rituals or foundations. Indonesian Christian dancers are now becoming more and more open to this, and I see this as positive, because this is how we work together spiritually to redeem our cultures for Christ.

**Are there close associations between cultural dance and religion?**

Yes, many of Indonesian cultural dances are a form of ancient religious rituals to tribal gods (some of which even include episodes of trance when the dancer get possessed by some spirits), e.g. Balinese Kecak, Yogyakarta Serimpi, and West Java Kuda Lumping dances. That is why Indonesian Christian dancers need to carefully research each cultural dance before using it and only take elements that are in line with the Bible.

**We look forward to your workshop "Indonesian Cultural Dances and Biblical Truths" in India May 2019. Can you tell us more about what we can expect in the workshop?**

My workshops in the ICDF Dance and Culture Study Tour in India in 2019 will focus on incorporating the good values in the Indonesian cultural song "Tak Tong Tong" from West Sumatra and cultural dance "Saman" from Aceh; and blend them into a meaningful and powerful dance in line with Biblical truths. The cultural song is originally a song of encouragement for joy and uplifting spirit; while the cultural dance has very dynamic movements and is meant to welcome an honourable king. In the blended special performance dance at the end of my workshops, we will showcase and spread love, joy, unity, and harmony: basic Biblical values often forgotten in today's world.



*Photo: Lina Lasup*

## Morris Dances

*“Some of the oldest records of the Morris dance come from the Welsh Border Counties of Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire. In 1609 a side of 12 dancers performed at Hereford Horse Races. In 1614 the inhabitants of Longdon, Ledbury, entertained themselves with May games, Morrises and dancing upon the Sabbath day in the summer set aside for such purposes.”*

*“The Roots of Welsh Border Morris” by Dave Jones, 1988*



*Photos: Taken at a Morris Dance workshop taught by Maxine Knowles. Facebook video link below.*

Without a doubt the Morris dance always pulls a large crowd of people in Shrewsbury town centre. I have to admit, a few years ago I gave them a wide berth thinking it being a pagan art form that I wanted nothing to do with - although I loved to hear the bells in rhythmic movement. To me personally it was not sitting comfortably with my faith nor did I find it relevant.

However in the spring of 2017 our “Root’s Christian Dance Company” of Shrewsbury was preparing dances for the summer outreach “Senior Moments”, a holiday at home for over 50’s. It always has a theme and this time it was “Near and Far”. So Jan, the creative director for this event, thought we should take folk on a journey of dance from different countries starting in Ireland with a soft shoe Irish dance and ending back in Shrewsbury. I suggested the Morris dance would be the obvious dance to do although I was not entirely comfortable with it, nor were the others. I said I would pray and think about it.

Sometime later I was listening to my Wild Olive CD (A Messianic Jewish Music Group) and “Praise the God of Ages” came on and straight away my mind turned to the Morris Dance. I started dancing holding a wooden spoon as my stick and the steps just came without thinking! I was somewhat amazed and believed the Lord had given me the steps in answer to prayer. I quickly wrote them down and felt somewhat excited to share them with the team.

We decided to wear white trousers (with bells) and our Jewish White blouses and being the Lavender season, which I love to grow in our garden, I made lavender crowns for us to wear as the women Morris dancers tend to wear flower crowns.

When we danced “The Morris Salvation Dance” (as the song we dance to is all about coming to God through Jesus Christ) at the summer outreach we had amazing comments, for example: “I couldn’t take my eyes off the dancers” and a church going gentleman said it had meant more to him than a sermon.

Needless to say we added this dance into our program of dance that we presented in Shrewsbury town square the following Christmas. We started with this dance as it is clearly the gospel and I believe it is a message to the spiritual realm as much as to the folk watching.

LET THE LORD’S ARMY OF DANCERS GET VISIBLE AVAILABLE AND RELEVANT!

*Maxine Knowles*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l\\_xRjqM6J7E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_xRjqM6J7E)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1K\\_gd9CD-o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1K_gd9CD-o)

<https://www.facebook.com/ChristianDanceFellowshipGBWestMidlands/videos/425314547904148/>

To read the full article written by Maxine .... <http://www.icdf.com/en/networks/network-newsletters>

## Ministry Through Classical Indian Dance

**M**y training in Bharatanatyam, a classical style from Southern India is complex, traditional, structured and worshipful. Although the dance has strong connections to Hinduism I have found within the style a freedom to worship Jesus as a solo performer.

My mission is unique and I believe God given, and my praise goes to him. Psalm 63 v 3-4 'Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.' I share that my heart is brown, just wrapped in a caucasian body. When I dance His Gospel through this cultural language which Hindus hold in high esteem, I receive gratitude from secular and Christian audiences for sharing the stories of Jesus.



Susanna with student Dhanya Mahadevan.

Over the last 15 years I have been privileged to teach weekly classes to the Asian community in the UK. I work predominantly with children and I love their energy and creativity. Jesus encourages us to become more childlike, releasing us from inhibition and in freedom expressing our praise and worship.

It is such an honour working with Asian children and their families, teaching students their traditional cultural dance. I have asked some of my students to share about why they enjoy learning Bharatanatyam and their answers are very thoughtful and enlightening.

### Dhanya - 18 years

*"I started learning Bharathanatyam when I was 7 years old. Back then, I never appreciated the rich history and culture behind this ancient art form but enjoyed my lessons. These allowed me to catch up with friends and doubled up as a fun way to exercise. Over the years my interest grew as I learnt more complex steps or 'Jathis' and drama-orientated pieces which I was able to perform with my group.*

*This year with the support of my wonderful guru, Smt Susanna Harrington, I decided to concentrate more time on this dance form and had the opportunity to travel and learn a great deal more about its importance in India's rich history as a way of storytelling. I hope this experience will enhance my appreciation of Bharathanatyam and help me to grow as a dancer and performer."*

***I dance as an expression of worship and joy for my Father in heaven.***

### Thomas - 15 years

*"I first started learning Bharatanatyam at the age of 10 and have loved it ever since. I love learning Bharatanatyam as it is totally different to any other hobby that I do and it allows me to connect with Indian culture in a unique way. Bharatanatyam is such a beautiful dance form. It allows a performer to exhibit a plethora of different themes in such an ancient and expressive way. I find it to be a demanding yet relaxing practise with a deep spiritual element to it, which is just as important to me as the physical movements."*

### Adithi - 9 years

*"I like Bharatnayam because of the lovely expressions, hand gestures and the power in the leg steps. I like how I learn about my culture through dancing."*

I am still learning and developing as a worshipper and as a teacher. This summer I am excited to be performing at Ggomm conference in Kenya, where I will be performing a newly choreographed dance on Psalm 139. Please pray that I keep in step with the Holy Spirit's leading.

*Smt. Susanna Harrington*

One of the Morning Workshop Streams at the Dance and Culture Study Tour in India 2019 will be on Classical Indian Dance presented by Samson Manwatkar. To read more about the *Cultural Dances in India* go to ...

<http://www.icdf.com/en/icdf-newsletters-articles>

## Warring with exuberant praise (reflecting on Spanish dance lessons)

It is done with passion and gusto. The bright red and orange frills contrast strongly against the black dresses. The shoes had iron bits added to the soles for extra sound effects.

You beat the enemy into a powder as fine as the dust on the ground as you stamp your feet. David said, “I crushed them and stomped on them like the dirt on the streets” (2 Samuel 22:43).

But the stamping of feet was not the only sound: Clap with your hand, snap your fingers or swish your skirt downwards in such a way that the fabric makes a slapping sound. Ps 47:1-4, “Clap your hands, all you people. Shout to God with a loud, joyful song.” We must fear the LORD, the Most High. WHY? He is the great king of the whole earth. He brings people under our authority and puts nations under our feet. He chooses our inheritance for us, the pride of Jacob, whom he loved. Selah

There was nothing timid about the Spanish dance lessons. They were exuberant joy celebrating our Victorious King and joining him in the battle for our inheritance.

In one song our teacher, Melanie Erasmus, taught us to clap a certain rhythm or beat on the counts of 3, 6, 8, 10 & 12. Why don't you try clapping on those beats? It feels a bit weird. It felt just as weird as the process of renewing our minds, the real battlefield against our enemy. How could one interpret these beats? Here is a possible interpretation based on the book by Martin van der Merwe, “*Hearing God : numbers dictionary. A prophetic understanding of numbers*” ...

The Trinity (3) came to mankind (6) to resurrect us to a new life (8) that we might fulfil (10) our original mandate to govern (12) the earth.

When you face a battle in your life ask the Holy Spirit what is the beat you could clap in and then praise as you trust in God for your victory.



Photo: Melanie Erasmus

### PSALM 47

1 Clap your hands, all you people. Shout to God with a loud, joyful song. 2 We must fear the LORD, the Most High. He is the great king of the whole earth. 3 He brings people under our authority and puts nations under our feet. 4 He chooses our inheritance for us, the pride of Jacob, whom he loved. Selah 5 God has gone up with a joyful shout. The LORD has gone up with the sound of a ram's horn. 6 Make music to praise God. Play music for him! Make music to praise our king. Play music for him! 7 God is the king of the whole earth. Make your best music for him! 8 God rules the nations. He sits upon his holy throne. 9 The influential people from the nations gather together as the people of the God of Abraham. The rulers of the earth belong to God. He rules everything.

### REFERENCES

H8628 tâqa taw-kah'

A primitive root; to clatter, that is, slap (the hands together), clang (an instrument); by analogy to drive (a nail or tent pin, a dart, etc.); by implication to become bondsman (by handclapping): - blow ([a trumpet]), cast, clap, fasten, pitch [tent], smite, sound, strike, thrust.

H7554 râqa raw-kah'

A primitive root; to pound the earth (as a sign of passion); by analogy to expand (by hammering); by implication to overlay (with thin sheets of metal): - beat, make broad, spread abroad (forth, over, out, into plates), stamp, stretch.

Thea Veljoen