



ICDF Networks

February 2017

Men in Dance

This Network is intended as a forum for all men involved in Christian dance and other men interested in exploring the issues we face, to hopefully provide 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 friendship and in prayer.

Some men:

- lack the opportunity to give public expression of their faith through dance
- feel isolated because they find themselves as the only man in a group of women
- long for some male company and perspective
- are looking for good dance material, ideas, music and reports of men's teams or dance groups

“As men in dance I believe our remit is to be setting people at ease. For other men this will happen naturally if we are ‘blokey’ enough and comfortable in our own skins.”
- Andy Raine



This is a time when traditional dance is enjoying a revival and renewed respect in many cultures, and in contemporary culture dance is taking a much more central place. Men are finding a stronger dance voice, instead of this sphere being a place we've abandoned and left to the women. It's also a time of great spiritual hunger and openness, far greater in its impact than the confines of church or worship settings. It's not just 'Christian' dance we are to engage with, but our whole capacity to express truth with excellence and integrity. There are other men we must invite to bring wisdom and questioning to this conversation.

Men wishing to participate in future cyber forums once or twice a year are invited to contact Andy Raine at andy@uppersprings.com with their current email address and he will add you to the mailing.

We are starting a closed Facebook group for men only. Request to join the group by searching 'Men in Dance Network' on Facebook.

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

Network Blog Page ... <https://icdfnetworks.wordpress.com/category/men-in-dance/>

MANIFESTO

This network is for men not *about* men.

Not necessarily men of faith. First of all we are men.

Each person's dignity as man - or woman - ultimately centres and defines us. We are creatures of instinct and reason and choice.

We choose our destiny, our responses and reactions, our path and direction.

We choose to break down or build up, to wound to heal.

We accept discipline and training, our bodies the instrument of our intention.

So all men are welcome to explore and join us in the dance and in this conversation.

We need to define and understand what is the dignity and nature of a man, the selection of dreams that focuses our inner transition from an unformed boy into the outward destiny of a man.

This network is for dancers, for men who dance or want to dance, whatever their training or lack of it, their experience of dancing or lack of it.

All of us move, our beings dance – even those of limited mobility or ability.

Our experience of life is our qualification, rather than previous dance experience.

Our willingness to move is the opening of a greater journey.

We want, by and large, to dance as men,

with a movement and vocabulary that satisfies our physical being, that

feels genuine and true for us. There may be exceptions when a role requires us to dance as a machine, a penguin, a demon, a child – or even a woman! - but mostly we want to dance as men, and to explore what characterises that quality of movement.

We also want to encourage each other,

to feel the shoulder-to-shoulder quality of recognition and affirmation to be found in a company of men.

We will be non-judgmental, yet truthful,

spurring each other on to greater authenticity and finer dance, splendid achievement and extraordinary encounters.

This network is for men who in their exchanges with each other will be able to listen deeply and speak from the heart.

It is for those wanting to experience, encounter and explore.

I need to experience reality beyond the narrow confines of my own concepts and controlled environment.

I have to be open to encounter life in a way that is truthful and transformative.

With all my energy and strength, with my whole body and all its senses, my whole being alive and attentive, there is always more to explore, engage with and express – and anything is possible.

The unexpected always awaits to take our breath away, to catch us by surprise

Meanwhile my back hurts, I can't find the moves, and the people around me drive me crazy.

Andy Raine

Photo: ICDF Conference, St Andrews



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

I am a man. I live. I breathe. I hunger.
I thirst.

I am a man. My body tells me I am a child no longer.
But often I behave like a boy even now, walking in the body
of a man.

I am slow to turn my energies to caring for others: I care
about myself.

I want to be loved. I crave affirmation.

I am a man. I want to make my mark upon the world.
I want to live, and I want my life to have meaning.

Now I am strong. Now I am secure.

I put to one side the need to just please myself.

I am a man, a sexual being, with physicality and desire.

I live with that hunger each day. I am a man, a boy no lon-
ger.

I am a man - and certainly not a woman!

I am a man, and more than just an animal. I learn from life.

I can work hard. I understand sacrifice.

I like to be liked. I love to belong,

but also **I can stand alone.**

I am a dancer. My body has weight and meaning. My mat-
ter matters.

I move with intention and integrity.

I rise from the earth. I cut through the air, and connect again
with the ground.

I move in and out of balance, and my centre of gravity shifts.

I recoil and contract into certainty.

My leg stretches out, and my foot writes upon the earth;
my heels hit its canvas like the skin stretched on a drum,
with a rhythm of joy and laughter
or the slow beat of suffering, lament or defeat.

All these things the body senses,
remembers, reveals, communicates.

I am bruised, I ache, I am tired, but I continue,
and using its muscular memory retrieve the dance,
release its power to move, connect, inspire or cause to weep.

We must dance, search out the patterns that truly matter,
that make our matter speak truly.

I am a dancer, taking my place upon the larger stage that is
my life,

part of the pulse of all the growing, breathing, swirling mass
of earth, space, sky and sea. I live. I move.

I dance. I breathe, contract, release.

I fall down. I get up. This is the way of things,

of life, of love: our turn to join the dance,

our moment to turn. The pulse is in me,

so **I dance.**



Photo: ICDF Conference, Ghana

I stand before God. I am a man.

I dance with all my strength, and still I stand before God.
No one can take my place. No one can facilitate the
encounter.

There is nowhere for me to run. I am too large to hide.

I may close my eyes or hide my head, but I am seen.

The audience has gone home. My dance is done. Who is
here?

The ultimate arbiter. The judge who knows the truth.

The One who has so much to answer for.

I am a man - don't give me easy answers.

I have known pain, and I know love; and these
can rack and stretch my body, show me that there's
more to know - and to be known.

If love is this, desire deep-planted in the soul,
deep-rooted in the body, awaiting expression,
release, contract, exhausted, weeping, touching meaning,

I stand before God, whatever He or it or this may mean,
defying their explanations:

naked or not, I stand

as one known through and through in deeper honesty,
and once again I dance.