



# Cultural Dance

*August 2017*

*Photo: Provided by the Christian Dance Fellowship of Sweden*



## Cultural Dance: A Conversation In Progress

One of the outstanding aspects of the International Christian Dance Fellowship that has impressed and captivated me for the 23 years I've been a member is the great diversity of dance expressions we experience through the Fellowship. Many of the dance forms are universal though falling sometimes into a more East West divide. However, cultural dance is clearly a national treasure and our International Conferences have been enriched by its prominence.

What defines our culture? Language, music and dance are some of the main contributors. Even in these days of globalisation we are still keen to find, preserve and express our ethnic origins and cultural identity. I believe that it's God's idea, that in the great big melting pot of the human race He created national identity, scattering people across the earth with different languages and song. Owning it, being proud of it, sharing it through music and dance is enriching and speaks of the greatness of God.

After a little hesitation I'm looking forward to being Cultural Dance Coordinator and welcome lively discussion and sharing of our dances. The recent Network for Creative Arts and Social Concern Newsletter with Dr. Kuwar's paper on "African Dance and Social Integration in Britain" ties in so beautifully with our Cultural Dance conversation and one of the developments I'd love to explore from that paper is: a) keeping the rules, b) breaking the rules. In keeping the rules, while it's important to learn the "grammar" of the dance form, there's a fear that it can become staid and lacking fresh creativity. Though in many cultural dance styles you can see innovation.

Join in our conversation and tell us what you think about cultural dances. Are they still relevant? Should they be preserved exactly as they are? Is it something that should evolve? Will the dance styles of today such as hip-hop be seen as a cultural dance style in 100 years time? We would love to hear your views on our Discussion Forum at <https://www.quicktopic.com/52/H/LswQfjdNQnJ>

*Alison Bourke*

## The Christian and Dance:

# The Redemption of Dance for Use in Christian Worship

**Can Christianity only live if indigenous culture dies? Must an indigenous person be stripped of identity and be westernized to become a true Christian? Is western culture propagated through colonialism, geopolitics, globalization or 'evangelization' the only acceptable culture for the Christian church? The answer can only be NO!**

Dance in the Philippines is largely associated with worship. Indigenous and even colonized Filipinos danced to pray and to express thanksgiving and deep spirituality. Even today most traditional dances that survived the ravages of time are religious in purpose.

But though very spiritual in nature, Philippine dance must be redeemed and purified if it is to be used in Christian worship as it has largely been associated with paganism. To redeem such art forms from pagan use, practitioners must advocate and exclude or cancel texts and essences unacceptable to Christianity and use the greater part that will remain after expurgation in the context of Christian worship.

## The Philosophy of Redeeming Dance



Redeeming dance for Christian worship is premised on the following principles:

1. Created arts, especially music and dance, came from God and must be used for God's glory.<sup>30</sup> Satan does not own anything. He is not a creator but only a thief and a destroyer. Creative arts, like most of creation, were only grabbed, distorted, and misappropriated for himself by the evil one.<sup>31</sup>
2. God's people, who were themselves redeemed by the blood of Christ and who are inheritors of the earth, must repossess such arts for Christian use and God's glory.<sup>32</sup>
  - \* The whole creation has been groaning for redemption
  - \* Dance can be very powerful tools of evangelism and worship
3. Philippine dance forms, like most indigenous dances all over the world, are neither pagan nor evil. As non-living things, they do not have inherent, nor are capable of, morality or immorality. It is the heart of the dancer and the object of worship that define the morality of the art form.<sup>33</sup>

As the power of dance as a tool of worship and communication is beyond doubt, the same power becomes gravely destructive, if not lethal, in the hands of the devil. That is why redemption of dance is imperative. Christians must repossess the arts and thus dispossess evil forces of such powerful tools. As Christians redeem, reclaim and use dance and other art forms in the worship of the One True God, we not only strengthen our armory but we also weaken and deprive that of the devil. Not to redeem and use dance in Christian worship and teaching is to concede and consign it to the exclusive misuse of the world.

## The Process of Redemption

The redemption of indigenous culture, specifically dance, and the contextualization of Christianity include the following steps:

### Research

This entails the observation, recording, encoding of the text and context of specific dances and bringing them from the sticks to the school.

### Filtration

Researched materials are studied, analyzed and filtered through Scripture. While the researchers' love for indigenous culture could be great, it certainly should not be greater than their love for Biblical truth. While the aim is to preserve and use elements of indigenous culture in Christian evangelization and worship, there must be the firm resolve to leave out those that contradict the Spirit of God's teachings.

### Interpretation

Meanings of gestures and symbols are given contextual interpretation based on thorough research.

### Redefinition

Elements, symbols or gestures whose meanings have been lost through time are given new Christian meanings and are used in worship and celebration of Jesus. For instance, a traditional dance featuring oil lamps balanced on the heads of dancers (Pandango Sa flaw or Wasiwas) is now performed by KALOOb to celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit like tongues of fire on the heads of believers. An ancient martial dance (Kuntaw) is now rendered to remind Christians of their spiritual warfare with and victory over the enemy. An age-old peace pact (Vochong) featuring the drinking of wine between enemy tribes is staged to interpret the Lord's Supper and the believer's peace with God through the blood of Jesus. A folk dance done between clashing bamboo poles (Tinikling) is performed to demonstrate the snares of sin and the way to avoid its entrapments. Philippine dances can now be seen through Christian eyes, preserved and used as demonstrations of Biblical truth and celebration of Christian ideals. They will no longer be considered pagan and demonic, as they have been in the Church for so long.

The mission of cultural redemption is not to pull the Church back to the Stone Age, but to spur her into the future, only with feet firmly grounded on solid cultural heritage and sense of selfhood. The goal is to see the Church use and reinterpret for contemporary worship the rich musical, dance, and costume heritage of our people. This is mainly because the dance and music vocabulary of the Filipino Christian church today, at least those that use dance in worship, is needy of enriching and Filipinization. At present, most worship teams are confined to and limited by borrowings from foreign forms (i.e. tambourine, "ballet", etc.), missing a treasure trove of sounds and movements more expressive of the Filipino soul.

*Pastor Ed Lapiz*

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For the full article please go to <http://icdf.com/en/inspire-journal-archive>

To see more of **Kaloob** performing their redeemed Phillipine dances go to their website at [http://www.kaloobdance.com/Kaloob\\_Dance.html](http://www.kaloobdance.com/Kaloob_Dance.html)



# Network for Cultural Dance

We are delighted to introduce Alison Bourke as the newly appointed Network Coordinator for the Cultural Dance Network. We know her as a person who enjoys travelling and immersing herself in other cultures. She once told us that she tries to learn as many languages as possible because it is part of a country's culture. The same can be said for dancing for each nation has something unique in the way the people move and dance. Our dream for the Network for Cultural Dance is to see the many different cultural dances from around the world to be represented here to form a vibrant and interactive platform for information exchange and discussion. We know that she is the perfect person to head it up. "Thank you Alison. We are looking forward to taking this journey with you."

## Message from the Cultural Dance Network Coordinator

Through this Network I anticipate us sharing our cultural dances and exploring some of the following areas:

- . 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

I look forward to hearing about your connection with your cultural dance and the sharing of experiences. *If you would like to represent your cultural heritage in this Network please contact me at [shalomalibe@gmail.com](mailto:shalomalibe@gmail.com)*

Be blessed

*Alison Bourke*



Photo: Alison (centre) with the Irish dance group at the Ghana conference

**The ICDF conference in Ghana once again showed a rich variety of Cultural Dances. Some can be seen in the videos on the ICDF Conference website. Look for dances from Uganda, Sweden, Ireland, Ghana, Fiji and South Africa along with African Contemporary, Ballet, Street and more.**  
 Go to <http://conference.icdf.com/conference-history-gallery/2016-ghana-videos> and select Evening Celebrations, Movie Snippets #1 and #2

## In conversation with Shrimathi Susanna Harrington - Network Leader for South Asian Dance

**B**haratanatyam is my passion and my life calling ...I always say that I have brown skin on the inside when asked why I am a South Indian dancer. As a Westerner the vibrant spectacle of movement, rhythm and colours of Bharathanatyam attracted me to the prayerful temple dance from Tamil Nadu.

As with any style of dance it has taken many years of practise, determination and discipline to achieve a professional standard and perform to critical audiences around the UK and in South India.

I have just celebrated my Silver Anniversary as a performer and teacher, and my prayer is that my unique ministry will sow the seeds of Christian stories to my predominately Hindu students. Putting together my Silver Anniversary charity programme encouraged me to look back and acknowledge the amazing adventure I have been on. Having received intensive 1-1 tuition over three years from gifted Hindu teachers in London, I then received a scholarship from The Church Mission Society to train in Christian items in Chennai in 1997. The Christu Dance Centre allowed me to learn the stunning and prayerful dance items which I continue to perform today. I love to express my devotion as a Christian through this traditionally Hindu art form, wearing stunning dance saris and an assortment of colourful and ornate jewellery.

As the Network Leader for South Asian Dance I would love to hear from any dancers who have an interest in India. I am based in the U.K and have the privilege of working with the South Indian community in Colchester teaching their children and hopefully inspiring the next generation of performers.

*Shrimathi Susanna Harrington*



Photo: Provided by Shrimathi Susanna

[www.indian-dance.co.uk](http://www.indian-dance.co.uk)  
[naatyeast@live.com](mailto:naatyeast@live.com)

To visit the Network webpage go to <http://icdf.com/en/networks/south-asian-dance>  
To see Susanna dancing go to <http://icdf.com/en/galleries/networks-gallery/south-asian-dance>

# The Cultural Dances of India

India is a variety of cultures, divided in 29 states, 3 central provinces, having many languages, religions, castes and different tribal groups. All the dance forms of India originate from the Temple worship to god and celebration, including classical, folk, and tribal dances.

Folk and tribal dances are simple dances performed to express Joy and Happiness among the community. They are performed for every possible occasion from worship to celebrating the arrival of new seasons whether its the birth of a child or a marriage. They have the minimum of steps or movements. Some are specially for women and some are for both men and women. On most occasions the dancers themselves sing. Each form of dance has a specific costume and most costumes are flamboyant with extensive jewels. While there are numerous ancient folk and tribal dances, many are constantly being improved. The skills and the imagination of the dancers influence the performance.

In the modern India, western dances are mingled with the tribal, folk and classical dances. They are used in the Bollywood film industry which has much influence on the Indian society.

Two of the dances from India shown here are:

The "Koli" dances of Maharashtra are danced on the coastal sites. They are used for festivals and joy with celebration.



"Dandia Raas" is an energetic vibrant dance originating from the State of Gujrath, North India. Often it is called the Stick Dance because it uses polished sticks or "Dandia". The dance represents the fight between good and evil. The combination of "Garaba" and "Raas" is a very popular dance all over India. This dance is used for worship and celebration.



*Reverend Samson Mankwatar*

To find out more about the cultural dances from India please go to <http://icdf.com/en/icdf-newsletters-articles>  
Photos provided by the author

# Dancing the Irish way: Two Reviews

In CDF Ireland we recently had an all age dance workshop where we invited a trained, qualified and well experienced Irish dance teacher and her pupils to teach us something new. I have a great love for Irish dancing and, even though I have seen many beautiful dancers and dances, our wish to learn something new had really come true!

We experienced something that, although in the wider dance world is not unknown, in Irish dancing it is definitely not something you come across a lot! As most of you know, what makes Irish dancing so unique is its rigid design but on this occasion we used not only our feet but our hands and even our fingers! Yes indeed, as I later learnt, what the Zephaniah dancers do in Northern Ireland nobody else does in the same way anywhere else in the world!

I remember my first time watching a dance show many years ago that integrated Irish dancing with flamenco and step dancing into one performance and I was thinking, sitting on my beautiful red velvet chair in the theatre, "What on earth is happening here?"

This time with the Zephaniah dancers, using my whole body to glorify God through this beautiful dance style felt somehow completely natural.

These dancers use Irish dancing as the primary style of their training and, in some pieces, they add hand, finger and whole body movements to support the words of the song to enhance the message to their audience. The result is something so inspiring and transforming that you will surely never forget!

What is an even greater blessing to know is that these girls also glorify God through their dances, not only because it is God who gave them the talent but also because they combine their dances with beautiful and anointed local Irish Christian music to bring the Good News and Hope to all. They perform not only for entertainment but also for Kingdom purposes!

Looking at their leader, I can know that there is much more in store for further creativity because it was the Lord who created the feet to dance and also the hands and the fingers to join them!

But should we now call this a new thing or just a new way of doing things?!"

*Melinda Ivanka*

**What really is "cultural dance"? Is it an ancient traditional dance style which if not pursued and used in the original way is no longer authentic OR is it something that can renew and change with time yet doesn't have to lose its beauty and the purpose for which it was created?**



Photo: The Zephaniah dancers

At the 2016 ICDF conference in Ghana, Seth Newman showed us how he is using traditional dances to communicate the gospel in Ghana and is a forerunner in this ministry.

Then three weeks ago I went to an Irish dance performance that was an amazing fusion of Contemporary and Irish dance by one of Ireland's leading choreographers. Through a very modern and abstract show he set about creating something extraordinary which was "breaking the rules" and a bit shocking to some! Yet, there was clear discipline of training and keeping of the essential Irish dance steps woven into the performance. While the themes were from a secular perspective that could be a variance with Christianity one could not fail to be challenged and inspired.

That same choreographer has said "I'm not so interested in how people move but what moves them. Movement must have a true intention. If it's authentic, created with honesty and integrity, then it will communicate clearly to the audience."

A lady from northern Ireland who has an Irish dance school, Deborah Anderson, was led by the Lord some years ago to share the gospel through Irish dance and so was born the Zephaniah dancers. Recently CDFI ran a workshop with the Zephaniah dancers which gave us an experience of how this unique school of Irish dance is using the art form to share the gospel. You can google this school to see some of their performances or watch the BBC programme "Jigs and Reels" on youtube.

*Alison Bourke*

To see a short video of the dancing discussed here go to <http://icdf.com/en/galleries/networks-gallery/cultural-dance>

# For His Glory: Caribbean Dance

Amidst the vibrant colours of swirling fabric and infectious rhythms, Caribbean Dance Genres have been birthed before many of the islands were independent countries. Though the origins of most genres have been heavily influenced by slavery, colonialism and culture, the heart of the movement exudes excitement and passion.

From the hills of Trinidad and Tobago to the shores of The Bahamas, the Caribbean chain has over fifty genres of cultural dance all encompassing the stamp of their people. Many styles were derived from African and European foundation whether being religious or cultural. As Christian dancers, our main purpose is to glorify God in our bodies and hence the background and certain movements should carefully be examined before we attempt to recreate or submerge ourselves into certain elements.

Be'le' (belair) Dance came to the Caribbean during the time of slavery with both African and French influences. In Dominica, Haiti, St. Lucia, Martinique, Trinidad and Tobago, and other islands the performers, dressed in layers of clothing, danced to the beat of African drums mainly for entertainment and showcase. Be'le' was used during funerals, weddings, holidays and for many other occasions.

The infectious patterns of the African drums have been known to sometimes invoke spiritual reaction, causing uncontrollable movement by the vessel or dancer responding or answering the call of the drums. Today, Caribbean Christian dancers have adopted the influence of be'le' movements, dress and music to bring Honor and Glory to Jesus Christ. A team of dancers, usually brightly adorned, choreograph movement to local gospel tracks, which usually brings joy to the hearts of many, reassuring any audience of their faith in God, as the message is in the movement and song.

Quadrille, heel and toe, salsa, meringue, rumba and many others are performed with male and female dancers to the tempo of the native Caribbean land. St Vincent, Cuba, Suriname, The Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Grenada are some countries where these influences are found. The point of conduct is critical for Christian dance ministers when portraying any style of dance. The fusion of the music and the natural steps of the dance can sway one to push barriers, however, to the pure all things are pure and as light we shall continue to enjoy Caribbean dance genres as we Glorify God.

Limbo, Calypso, congo, tambu, juba - the list of dances of the Caribbean continues.

One thing the many genres have in common is that they were created to bring joy to the faces of the receiver. Though the underpinning of most of the techniques came about through bondage, we can now take these art forms and consecrate them unto God so He can be pleased. Culture is beautiful and we get our creativity from our Heavenly Father. What a joy it is to see praises from every nation demonstrated through dance.

Go forth in the dance and bring Glory to our Lord!

*Celeste Olivierre James*



## Hudson Taylor: A missionary to China

It has been mentioned in some of the contributions in this newsletter that the missionaries often imposed their culture on a nation when they took the gospel to a country. Hudson Taylor however was different in his approach when he was called to China. In the book "God's Generals" by Roberts Liardon we learn that "While other British missionaries were careful to maintain their English culture and often pressured the Chinese to accept it, Hudson was not interested in promoting any culture other than the kingdom of God and the good news of Jesus Christ." Taking the scripture from 1 Corinthians 9:22 to be made all things to all men, Hudson said "Let us in everything not sinful become like the Chinese, that by all means we may save some." Liardon writes that "This meant adopting Chinese food, using chopsticks, and wearing the Chinese dress, including the black queue." (p 254)

What does this story from the life of Hudson Taylor tell us? I believe that as dancers ministering the love of God to a broken world we can use any means appropriate to reach out and touch lives as long as it is not sinful and is done prayerfully with a servant's heart seeking God in all things. May we all be effective as we work alongside each other, planting, watering and gathering according to what we are called to do.

*Saartjie de Wet*

# Conferences Countries



## Fiji: Oceania Christian Dance Fellowship Conference

First the Spirit's prompting to National Coordinator, Mr Mikaele Mudreilagi, as he attended the International Christian Dance Fellowship conference in Ghana. Then the affirmation as ICDF Teachers from Australia and New Zealand responded enthusiastically to the invitation to come to Fiji.

So the dream became a series of Dance workshops held in Suva at the new Wesley City Mission Church Hall. It ran from Wednesday 19 July through to Friday 21st July, with three double workshops each day. We were so blessed by the servant hearted spirit, the joyous enthusiasm and the patience of our visiting teachers. These were Lucy Jarasius, Debbie Bright, Sharon Ereaux and Belinda Andrews.

On Thursday and Friday night at World Harvest Centre we invited the public to join us to witness demonstrations as well as local dance groups. The atmosphere was electric as wave after wave of graceful and stunning movement told the story of God's love, forgiveness, mercy and grace.

To read more about the Oceania Conference in Fiji, please request the CDF Fiji Newsletter from [icdfworld@gmail.com](mailto:icdfworld@gmail.com)

## South Africa: From The Inside Out

Dancers from across South Africa converged in Cape Town to attend the 7th CDFSA Conference 2017 "From the Inside Out" based on Romans 12:1&2. The focus was to deal with matters of the heart and then to take what we have learnt in dance to the community.

We made new friends, reunited dear friends from years ago and made new connections for the future. That's why we're called a Fellowship.

The Lord confirmed that He brought Dancers together from across the country to do a special work on the "Inside" of each one who was attentive to Him and He has sent them "Out" and back to their cities, churches and communities to make a difference in the lives of individuals and groups they are able to impact. The Lord has also said that He will use the young and the older dancers to do the work of transforming and restoring in our country. We praise God for all that He did at this 7th CDFSA National Conference 2017.



## Suriname: Releasing The Prophetic On The Earth Through The Arts

The Christian Dance Fellowship Suriname held its first International Arts and Worship Conference from June 29th- July 1st 2017 in Paramaribo, Suriname. Our main speakers were pastors Dean Slater and Jaymee Pleasant-Slater from the USA. Dance Minister Romelton Siland from Guyana; and visitors from the Netherlands also joined us.

The theme of the conference was: "Releasing The Prophetic On the Earth Through The Arts"  
1 SAMUEL 10:5-7: "After that you will come to the hill of God where the garrison (a fortified place/a safe place) of the Philistines is; and when you come there to the city, you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place [of worship] with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre before them, and they will be prophesying. Then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you mightily, and you will prophesy with them, and you will be changed into another man. When these signs come to you, do for yourself whatever the situation requires, for God is with you."

At the end of the conference we could see that lives were really changed and touched by the Holy Spirit. We saw lives restored, the broken hearted healed and others physically healed. Some of the attendees experienced a new freedom to express themselves through the arts. There were also others who came to a new Biblical understanding of the arts.

To read all about the South Africa and Suriname conferences go to <http://icdf.com/en/icdf-newsletters-articles>

# News from the ICDF Joint-Coordinators

The first six months of this year has been a whirlwind of activity. The highlight was, when after much preparation, we travelled to India to meet with our connections in the country in order to plan the ICDF **Dance and Culture Study Tour** for 2019. It was a blessed and fruitful time, visiting various venues, experiencing the culture and making friends as we went along. We are grateful to our hosts, Albert and Leela Emmanuel for the time and effort that went into the planning of our trip. We came away with a very clear idea of how the Dance and Culture Study Tour is to be structured and what elements must be included. Those of you who will be joining us for this event are in for a special treat. More information will be released as soon as essential details have been finalised.



Photo: Waiting at a bus stop in India



Photo: Carol and friends sharing a dance in Nairobi

On the way back home from India, Saartjie stopped over in Nairobi (Kenya) and Kampala (Uganda) to meet with the Country Representatives and to lead workshops. In Kenya she met with Caroline Mwazi and the workshop was conducted on the *Biblical Foundations of Dance as in the Old and New Testaments*. A great time was had by all exploring the practical applications of these scriptures and this was followed by a question and answer session. Going out for pizza with some of the dancers was the perfect ending to the evening.

In Uganda Saartjie met with Jacqlyne Tumusiime for a full programme of meetings, experiencing Kampala and teaching. The workshops were presented over two evenings with the focus being choreography that finds its source in the dancer's spirit. For her it was a joy to be able to work with the dancers from the Clay Dance Company, a talented and dedicated group of dancers under the leadership of Duncan Roy. The dream is to follow up with more visits to these two countries in 2018.

Arriving home Saartjie had three weeks to catch her breath before attending the National Conference of the Christian Dance Fellowship of South Africa in Cape Town and so completed her travels for the year.

For Jan her travelling days are not over yet. She is still to attend the National Conference of the Christian Dance Fellowship of Britain; meet with Lina Lasup, National Coordinator for Indonesia in Paris; and to visit the Christian Dance Fellowship of Ireland in Dublin.

For both of us it is a privilege to be able to meet and serve the dancing community worldwide.



Photo: Dancers from the Clay Dance Company working on a choreography in groups

## ICDF Website: Mobile Friendly Upgrade

At ICDF, we are continually working on our website to make it a hub for networking, resources, events, and information about Christian dance. At the moment, our website is designed to work primarily with desktop computers and laptops — but not mobile devices.

In March this year we launched a fundraiser to enable us to make the ICDF website 'mobile friendly.' We want to thank those supporters who responded to our call by making a donation. We do however still have a long way to go to reach our goal of £1000 to make this possible. ICDF has over the years been moving into countries that do not have easy and regular internet access and where the largest percentage of the people rely on their cell phones for internet contact.

For us it is important as we can see the number of enquiries coming from these countries with limited internet access is increasing. We also find that researchers and students are visiting our website to gain access to our articles and other documents. Please help us to make it possible to help them by donating through paypal on our website at at .... <http://www.icdf.com/en/support/support-us>



Thank you

*Jan and Saartjie*