

## WHAT IS THE WORLD DANCE ALLIANCE?

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The basic mission of the World Dance Alliance is to act as a service organization to facilitate communication and exchange among dancers and to act as an advocate for dance world-wide. The World Dance Alliance was not created to replace existing organizations. It aims to help existing groups fulfill their goals and provide the links for international exchanges through the Internet and Assemblies. The World Dance Alliance also aims to create a world vision that addresses and promotes a higher level of global awareness that will challenge and «involve» dancers to «evolve» a New Age, a new way of thinking, characterized by creativity, friendship, and co-operation that will contribute to a sager and saner world.

The World Dance Alliance is still a young organization but is developing quickly around the globe. The general plan is for an administrative structure with a broad base of National Chapters which are comprised of dancers and organizations in each sovereign country. These National Chapters not only serve as the points in a global communication network for dancers but also help to organize local dance cooperative efforts. There are now 14 WDA Chapter in Asia and the Pacific with six more to be formed in the coming year.

At the next level are the three Regional Centers: the Americas Center, the Asia Pacific Center, and the Europe Center. And, a Center for Africa and the Near and Middle East is now being formed. The global «umbrella» organization is the World Dance Alliance International, which has an Executive Council composed of delegates from the Three Regional Centers.

In the World Dance Alliance there is also a structure based upon subject areas within the dance field. At present, these are handed by Committees in the Regional Center, and by the end of this year, it is planned that there will be a linking of the centers and the establishment of Global Committees. In preparation for the World Dance 2000 Event, to be discussed in a moment, there is a focus on three subject committees, one each for Dance Research, for Choreography, and for Dance Education.

1. The Education Committee is concerned with the training and preparation of professional dance artists as well as dance in general education.
2. The Choreography Committee is concerned with the creation and production of a dance work performance.
3. The Research Committee is concerned with the scholarly study of dance, documentation, archiving, analysis, assessment, and interpretation.

These committees foster an exchange of information that can contribute to the raising of standards and the introduction of new methods of learning, creating, and analysis that combine the best of traditional knowledge with new technology.

At its First Assembly of WDA International in Seoul, Korea in 1995, the then newly formed Executive Council discussed and moved to organize activities for a Project called «World Dance 2000: Celebrating the Millennium». The primary theme of World Dance 2000 is the «Past, Present and Future of Dance», comprehensive enough to include anyone and everyone in the world of dance. In the World Dance 2000 project, three global events are proposed that will focus on the three subject areas and be hosted by the three subject areas and be hosted by the three WDA Regional Centers.

In 1999, the Americas Center will host an Assembly in Philadelphia on the 'past' on the theme «Heritage» with a focus on research, documentation, and analysis.

In 2000, the Asia pacific Center will host an Assembly in Tokyo on

the 'present' on the theme «Celebration» with a focus on Choreography, the heart of the art.

In 2001, the Europe-Africa Center will host an Assembly somewhere in Europe on the 'future' on the theme «Vision» with a focus on Dance Education at all levels.

These events will involve dancers on a world-wide scale and will provide further opportunities for us to work together to fulfill our dreams for dance in the next century.

For this writer, one of the primary purposes of the World Dance Alliance goes beyond the field of dance.

There is a growing dichotomy in the world today: Nations are moving simultaneously toward two opposite poles:

- a) on one side, toward a global society with international styles evolving in many areas of contemporary life such as travel, and the arts;
- b) on the other side, toward a greater awareness of ethnic heritages and differences.

On a global scale, Internationalism has been a major characteristic of life in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and it has become a dominant world theme in the past couple of decades. Fusion and Interculturalism have been popular topics in a number of fields, including dance. Cross cultural contacts are as old as history itself, but are on the increase in this International Age with technological advances in travel and communication systems. We are truly becoming a «global village».

In contrast to an international culture developing, the opposite is also happening. In many areas of the world, there is a return to an strengthening of ethnic differences. An increased sense of nationalism or ethnocentricity produces two basic reactions.

On the negative side, it can lead to hostilities among groups that are different—sometimes with tragic results. One need only read the newspaper daily to see that there are still many places in the world where people do not have respect, not only for each other's culture, but for

their lives as well. A major factor at work here is a lack of understanding and acceptance of other life styles. We must find a way to combat this intolerance and hate, especially in the youth of the world, for they will inherit the earth. We can only change prejudice, which is a kind of thought pollution, through education starting at an early age. Part of that education can be in dance: the art that gives form and deep meaning to the basic ability and need of humans to move. The human body in movement is not only an important part of communication but is also a vital factor in discovering our own cultural roots and a basic key to understanding and appreciating human differences.

The other reaction to the strengthening of ethnic identities is a positive one leading to understanding of cultures that are different from our own. This reaction is marked by a curiosity, an appreciation, and a respect for those who are different. When groups strive to maintain or revive traditional culture, their efforts contribute to the richness of global culture. More and more people are studying the dance of another culture. Whenever people learn a style of dance other than their own, they have touched the universal in man's experience: for example, students from the West interested in dance traditions from Africa; or Asians studying ballet and contemporary dance.

These all form international connections that create an invisible network for reinforcing the idea of «One World, One People»: a human family with infinite and important variations. In every instance of learning the dance of another culture, there is an inherent respect for the people of that culture. Each person who participates is contributing to the preservation of the multi-cultural life of this planet. We are all enriched by this diversity of dance experience. Perhaps this is the most important value of international dance exchanges; that is, the affirmation of the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect. These exchanges emphasize very clearly the idea and recognition of one world: what Buckminster Fuller called «this spaceship earth», where we are all on board together hurling toward a common destiny.

One of the roles of education is to prepare students for life by teaching

them respect for other peoples and their cultural traditions. Cross-cultural learning broadens a person's world view. It takes a long time to change attitudes of hate and prejudice, and that is why it is important to educate the young with a multicultural perspective and an attitude of caring for others. It is not an easy task to balance one's self-esteem and ethnic identity with assimilation of something different, new, perhaps even strange. A sound education in a multi-cultural context should prepare students to understand and function within the dichotomy of an emerging world culture. The World Dance Alliance advocates this view of education that dance is extremely valuable and has an important and vital role to play in contributing to this understanding of global society.

In James Redfield's transformational novel, *The Tenth Insight*, a group of people come together for the sake of the future of the world. In a sense, the World Dance Alliance is a group of dancers that have come together for the sake of dance and to address some of the major problems that are facing the world of dance on a global scale. Some of the major problems identified by the WDA are: The acceptance of dance as a respectable career choice for young people; and the provision of a living wage for those who do make the choice. Also, there is the disappearance of precious dance heritages in many countries around the world in the face of contemporary economic and technological advances. On this matter, the WDA is planning an «Inventory of Endangered Dance Traditions» to promote awareness of the loss of part of the world's rich cultural resources. And dare we mention the lack of male dancers in most parts of the world. One hopes that we can together, as a dance organization, create better conditions for dance and dancers, and by extension, for all of society.

To describe what happens when a group of people come together for a specific purpose, we can use another New Age term, «synergy»; that is, the energy that comes from a combination of forces that becomes greater than the total of the individual efforts. As a group we can accomplish far more than we could individually. Normally, dancers work together in groups – in schools and in companies – but we must also

learn to extend this beyond our immediate circles and encompass a larger picture. That is the heart of Global Awareness.

The United States, as a pluralistic society, perhaps can be seen as a case study, with both positive and negative aspects, for the world and the new rush toward globalization. Several images have been used in the U.S. for this phenomenon. In the last century, during the large waves of immigration, the U.S. was seen as a «Melting Pot», an alchemist's cauldron in which various elements came together to create a new «golden society». After World War II, this concept began to change so that images of groups retaining their ethnic identity while being a part of the whole began to emerge. These images include the «Patchwork Quilt» idea from Hawaii, a small but important area for the phenomena of cultural mix. During the Kennedy administration, the president began to talk about a «Salad Bowl», and Mayor Dinkins of New York has referred to a «Mosaic» of cultures in that city. All of these images suggest that two processes are happening simultaneously. On the one hand, we have fusion, interculturalism, and other labels being used to describe the emerging global style; and on the other hand, there is a pendulum swing back to the recognition of ethnic and national identities. Clearly dance has great value in the understanding of these two trends and many excellent scholarly studies and dance projects have been done to illustrate this.

The many «New Age» terms coming more and more into common usage in the world today such as «Win-win», «Syncretism», «Interdependence», «Futurism», «Fusion», «Interculturalism», and «One World, One People in a Global Village», all suggest working together for mutual good and for the sake of the future of the planet. The World Dance Alliance, as a service organization, needs the help and good will of many volunteers from around the world to help realize this goal. Albert Schweitzer once said: «At that place in life where your talents meet the needs of the world, that is where God wants you to be». We, in the world of dance, with variety of related talents, have much to offer not only to the world of dance but to future peace and harmony on the planet as

well. Are we in the field of dance prepared to be proactive about these principles? I think so—and I pray so!

The specific tasks that confront the World of Dance in raising standards in the various aspects of the field, are already being handled very well in certain parts of the world. The role that the WDA can play is one of service in helping dancers to share and exchange their expertise with others. The World Dance Alliance will be the connective tissue that links dancers together through its site on the Internet. But more importantly, for me, the main role of the World Dance Alliance is about developing awareness of a global society and an attitude of mutual help toward an improvement of the human condition on this finite world.

In conclusion, I would like to say simply that «I love the dance as a dynamic expression of man's universality», and «I love dancers as a special group of highly committed individuals who connect with the divine in their art». today, I would like to challenge the world of dance to become a model for others in the New Age of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in working in a synergetic «win-win» way and through the Kindly Contagion begin to erase age old prejudices and intolerances and thereby contribute to a greater understanding and appreciation of the richness and diversity in the human family. And what better way to do that and to celebrate those differences than through the art of the Dance.

To paraphrase John F. Kennedy: «Ask not what the World Dance Alliance can do for you, but rather what you can do for the World Dance Alliance and its goal of world peace and harmony through the art of the dance».

In ancient China, there was a curse that went: «May you Live in Exciting times», suggesting that too much activity destroys one's peace of mind. And this pivotal point in history, let us take this as a blessing and say «How Great to be Living in Exciting Times». Let us go forward into the next century with an optimistic view about dance and about ourselves, make an effort to find ways to continue our precious dance heritages and at the same time, rejoice in the myriad new dance forms that are evolving. Let us be advocates for improvement of the status of

professional dancers, and for a more important role for dance in the education of every child on this planet. Dance is a positive force in this world and I hope that through this art that we all love so much, we can make our «Kindly Contagion» spread around the globe and that we can contribute to, and be witness to, a «Golden Age for Dance in the New Century».

### **Abstract**

El artículo nos presenta una visión de la creación y funciones de la asociación World Dance Alliance; como afirma el presidente de esta asociación, autor del artículo que nos ocupa, la misión básica de la WDA es la de actuar como organización activa para facilitar la comunicación y el intercambio entre los profesionales de la danza y así mismo actuar como defensores de la danza a nivel mundial. Una vez establecida la misión de la asociación, Carl Wolz se introduce en la organización interna de la asociación y el trabajo hasta ahora realizado.