

Perm, Ural, Russia

November 4 -6, 2005

Andrey and Sveta started leading Dances in Perm some five years ago, after our training in the Crimea. Since then Eric Narayan came twice to Perm to further introduce the Dances and give training. After several years of inviting us, we felt it now was time to take the trip to 'the place where Europe ends'. Perm is some 2,200 km from St Petersburg, close to the Ural Mountains which form the frontier between Europe and Asia. For Russian standards it is a relatively rich city, due to the oil and minerals of the Ural. Our objective was to 'have the local teachers Sveta and André organize a Dance training in Perm on November 4 – 6 November, 2005 with evening sessions open to all'. We ended up doing an opening session for all on Thursday 3 (from 6 – 10 pm) and three days on the following Friday to Sunday (November 4 – 6).

Full days, as we started with training from 11 am till 4 pm, followed by an open dance event from 6 to 9, and actually somewhat over the top for our physique, as the sleeping conditions were very poor (a double bed of 1 meter with a hole in the middle for the two of us).

On request we started the morning session with the Fatiha. Andrey and Sveta introduced Saadi's melodies in Perm by singing them weekly with their group for a full year after experiencing them with us in the Crimea.

For the supervision session, we followed our usual format of making the program as a group process, a session of four Dances, followed by a feedback session. We used whatever time was left to lead Dances, showing what we talked about in the feedback.

Again we experienced that this format works well, as the whole group experiences a full session without a break and can deepen their understanding afterwards. Some 30 people stayed every day for the whole session. Most came from Perm, but also from Ekatariniburg, Samara and Ufa, cities more south in the broader Wolga area. All in all everyone who wanted, did so (11 in total).

We were somewhat disappointed with the choice of Dances of the feedback sessions, even though we only allowed Dances that we knew. There seemed to be a tendency towards non-mantric Dances (English and sometimes translated into Russian) that depend more on the superficial feelings than on waking up a body awareness. Also not all teachers knew the correct (or only half of the) movements to the Dances they led.

As we know that teachers often come to broaden their repertoire, but cannot distinguish a strong Dance from a lesser one led with enough magnetism to make the experience wonderful, we choose for our evening program mainly Dances that are in the standard repertoire or that we feel are strong enough to become standard.

Andrey himself is a fine musician on drums, guitar and violin, but overall there was a great need also for deepening musicianship, both on drum and guitar, linking style to the elements and atmosphere of the Dance. As we didn't have time to fit musical training in, that'll have to wait for another occasion.

We invited Andrey and Sveta to lead some Dances. Saturday we led the group into an evening of zikr. For this evening we choose mainly published zikrs that are accessible to Dance teachers and not only to Sufi guides. On request, we led the group Sunday night into the Aramaic Lord's Prayer. This proved to be a pioneering job, as only 6 out of the odd 50 participants had experience with this wonderful cycle!

Sveta and Andrey had a small study group on the different lines and we enthused them to start introducing the different lines into their regular program.

Feedback

Sveta, Perm:

I'd like to thank Wali and Ariënne for accepting the invitation and coming to Perm, Oneness found for financial support of this project.

I received great experience as the organizer of the seminar and as a dance leader. I'm satisfied with the way we organized the seminar. Everything we planned to do went on harmonically. There was a good dance circle, opened for interaction, deep work, receiving new experience and knowledge.

I received a new experience in leading the dance, completing the program of a dance session, discussing the dances afterwards. From Wali and Ariënne I learned how to give feedback correctly so that emerging leaders could see both their strong points and mistakes, and also so that they wouldn't lose interest for what they do. I worked with such qualities as planning and spontaneity, observed how they interact in the course of a dance and in life.

I was happy that the group was ready for deep practices offered by Wali and Ariënne, such as Fatiha, Lord's Prayer, zikrs...

I received new knowledge to continue work in our dance circle, and since we have some new dance leaders and musicians (guitar, drums, flute, violin) there are many technical questions on further process. Thanks a lot, hope to see you again!

Natalya Permyakova, Perm:

I took part in training for dance leaders in Perm in 2004 and in Inlakesh 2005 with Narayan. For me the seminar with Wali and Ariënne was very interesting and enriching. In the course of it I learned many new things about Sufism and spiritual dances. Wali and Ariënne combined the logical, step-by-step giving of the material with funny stories, talks about the life of Nasrudin. The answers to our questions were very deep and complete. The singing of Fatiha in the beginning of each day helped us to attune, created a deep spiritual atmosphere.

After leading the dance I received useful pieces of advice on technical part; listening to the feedback given to other dance leaders was also very useful, I learned the original variants of some dances and how they were created. During the seminar I learned many new, very beautiful dances which I wish to dance again and again (like the dance Om Mani Padme Hum). Also I learned about the way the Universal Worship session of dances is constructed.

I favored in Wali and Ariënne their openness, depth, musical talents, high technical level. I had a feeling of being with real masters. Besides, I can't but admire the led cycle of the Aramaic Prayer. That's a very strong transforming ritual.

Nina Hrebtova, Perm:

I took part in the training of Narayan in Perm 2004. This seminar became a new stage in realizing the essence of the dances and my place in this process. Getting to know the dance leading technique of Wali and Ariënne in the course of the seminar was very important. I found useful not only my feedback, but also feedbacks given to others. Everything was accepted, thought over and preserved in memory. I appreciated the experience of playing drums with Wali, there was an interesting attunement to his leading of musical themes. I received new stimuli for further creative work.

Vlad and Nadezhda, Perm:

We took part in the training and led the dance for the first time, the dance was led in English and in Russian. Thanks to Wali and Ariënne – their comments on the character of plying in accord with different elements, on the style of the dance leader, on the main idea of the dance and the ways of expressing it helped us greatly in understanding and deeper feeling the dances. Also very important for us was realizing the role of tradition in Dances of Universal Peace and the possibility of bringing changes into the dance. We would like to mention, plus to this, the great energy given to us by the leaders. All four days went like one breath. We dream to meet Wali and Ariënne again, to come to their master-class.

Evgenia Dudina, Samara:

I want to thank Wali and Ariënne for coming and sharing their experience and knowledge, and Svetlana for organizing a seminar like this, for welcoming me with such warmth. The seminar in Perm, along with the June retreat in Tihvin, opened a new stage for me. For the first time I paid attention to the way the dance is led and that gave rise to many new questions. I'm glad that Wali and Ariënne dedicated a lot of time to explain how to convey the atmosphere of the dance, how important the attunement is, how the mantra is related to the particular movements in the dance. Also I'm very grateful for the feedback, which was very encouraging, and for the comments, especially for mentioning the body-teaching and words-teaching techniques. Listening to the feedbacks given to other leaders was extremely important for me: I learned what brings you closer to the essence of the dance and what can mislead you.

Many dances in the seminar very new and I was deeply touched by their beauty. I was also happy to re-experience some dances and that was wonderful. All in all that created the feeling of great joy and being where you should be.

Svetlana, Nizhniy Novgorod:

What I liked at the seminar was Fatiha and Lord's Prayer. Very beautiful! Thank you for showing "Ma Sha' Allah" of James. This time I absolutely adored Wali, things he talked about were very interesting. The comments given by Wali and Ariënne on every dance in the training were very useful. Thanks also for showing the movements and telling the story of "Altissimo corazon". And of course I should mention the dance of Shabda, translated into Russian, too!