

There is Dance in all of Life Shakeh Major Tchilingirian

The dance of primitive humans expressed the simplicity in their lives. As human civilisation advanced, music and dance continued to be refined as expressions of thoughts and feelings. Music and dance are integral parts of deep human spirituality. Indeed, as Komitas, the renowned Armenian musicologist and composer asked a century ago: "Is not the life of the entire universe a dance?" Following his travels to hundreds of villages and towns collecting and transcribing thousands of folksongs, Komitas came to the realization that "there is dance in all of life."

Recently, I experienced this spiritual power of dance during the "Meditation des Tanzes" with Heidi Hafen. Even as I did not fully understand the instructions given in German and knew virtually nothing about what was being explained, I instinctively immersed myself into the movements and the music. Little did I suspect that I was about to experience a tsunami of joy, beauty, harmony and connection with the Cosmos – the "entire universe" that Komitas notes. The experience of the "Meditation des Tanzes" reiterated deep down in me the "sacred journey" I have been on for many years now: my journey of performing on stage and teaching dance, where this artistic pilgrimage shared with others has always taken place in a "sacred" space.

The "Meditation" reinforced this sense of the sacred in me in a way that was instinctive, spontaneous and unconscious. The form, the language of movement, the expressive-

ness and the common themes – "The Sun Dance," "The Eight Pointed Star," and "The Rose" and "Eirene" – left their imprints in my heart, mind, body and soul. When my body remembers these dances, I feel inner peace and a full connection with the Creator and the Universe. A number of Armenian dances – such as "Ejmiatsin" (based on ancient sun worship dance) and "Asdvacana Bar" ("Mother of God" dedicated to Virgin Mary) – share some of the same changing pattern of steps on the ground (like a pulsating star/sun). The intention and message of peace, harmony, and respect for one another and for the Universe were familiar themes.

Such dances have the power to harmonize, transform and balance the self on a deeper conscious and spiritual level. The shared experience of connecting with one another (community) and with the universe in turn affects the environment we live in. The value of this shared ritual and the intention can transform our mindset and our sense of who we are. I consider myself blessed for being brought up with a rich heritage of Armenian folk songs and dances. Years of dancing, performing and researching continue to fuel my passion for discovering and sharing the wisdom that these traditions have to offer.

There is something to be discovered in each and every song and dance. Folk dances (sacred and secular) have remained with us from ancient times. Religious connotations still survive in folk dances, such as the sprinkling of water or leaping over a fire. Rever-

ence for nature and the elements (for example “Nareh”), totemic and mystical animals and birds (“Lorgeh,” “Kochari,” “Msho Khr”) feature both in folk songs and dances, as well as lyrical choreographed dances. Throughout history communal ritual dancing in closed circles (shamanic origins) has brought communities together for the shared experience of joy, empowerment and healing. My choreographies – for example, “Djermag Aghavni” (“White Dove of Peace”), “Tzaghkatz Baleni” (“The Blossoming Cherry tree”), “Bar Dzi-

rani” (“The Apricot Tree”), “Dou Im Yegheg” (“You, my reed”) – have their roots in this old tradition and wisdom.

“Meditation des Tanzes” energized and inspired me so much that upon my return I choreographed my latest dance “Iriknain” (“Evening Light”) to Khachatur Avetissian’s beautiful composition by the same name. This dance is an invitation to enter the sunset, the light of the evening, the mystery of the very Light that gives life.

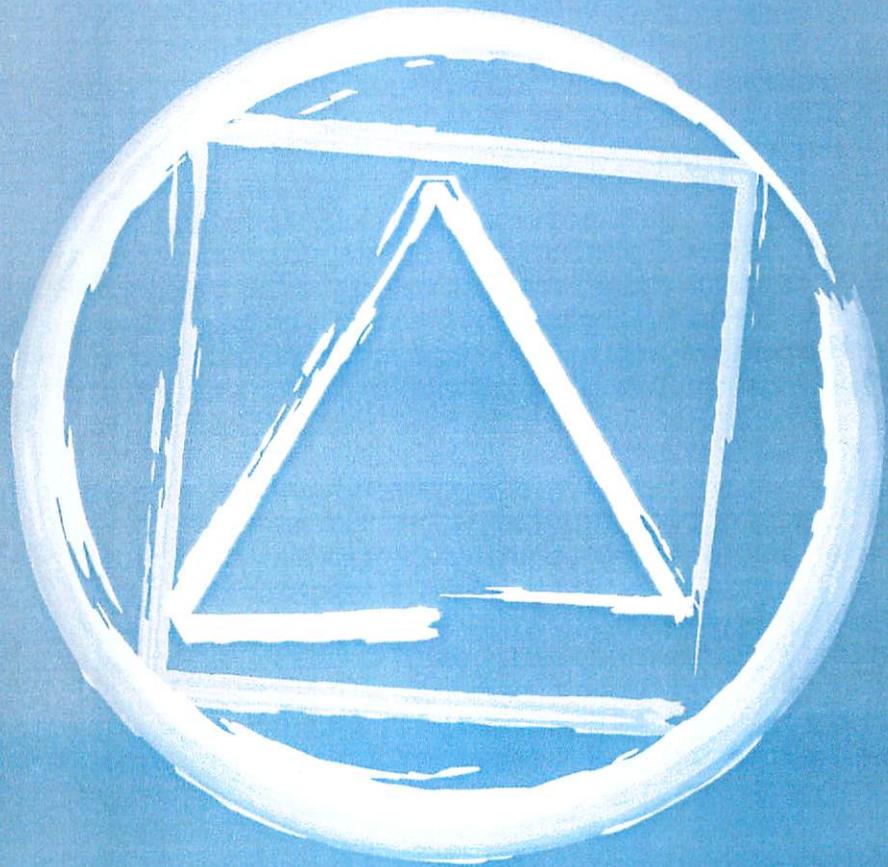
*Im Lichte der Einheit
wird alles Schwierige einfach,
und das Einfache erweist sich
als Eingang zur Wahrheit.
Das Wesentliche tritt hervor,
das Unwesentliche zurück,
das Trennende schwindet und
das Einende wird sichtbar.*

K. O. Schmidt

Balance

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ALLES IST EINS