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YOGA gets its

SHIVA REA | VISIONARY FIREKEEPING YOGINI

How do you see yoga and dance integrating now?

REA: In some ways, what is happening now is what has always been. In the United States, dancers knew about yogasanas and Indian classical dance long before the American public did, going all the way back to Ruth St. Denis and Martha Graham to Indian dance choreographers like Chandralekha putting yoga on the stage.

The most fertile grounds for the union of yoga and dance for me are in the free-form dance community that *Conscious Dancer* supports or even in communities like center camp in Burning Man. The American yoga world needs more connection to the

elemental raw energy of nature in order to manifest the creative force of kundalini shakti. The Hindus call it *sahaja*, a spontaneous realization of the divine flow.

How are you verbalizing the yin of yoga and the yang of dance nowadays?

REA: I can orient anyone to this basic pulsation of life as the place in which the dance of the body emerges just using the language of expand and contract, inward and outward, coil and release. In yoga, yin is referred to as inward movement or *langhana* and outward movement or yang is called *brahmachara*.

When people learn from you, where are they taking it?

REA: The beauty of our school of flow arts is that we have people from diverse backgrounds. We have graduates of our teacher training who

Asanas are flowing off the mat, as the yin of yoga and the yang of dance form a perfect union.

Is it time to give your practice some wiggle room?

facilitators are shaking up their practice, turning up the tunes, and letting their *sahaja* loose. The reciprocal flow between yoga and dance comes of age in a magical merging of bodies in motion. Around the globe, studios are recognizing the trend and supporting the convergence by adding sound systems, using circular mats, and inviting musicians—the goal is to create a welcoming container for expression and connection. “People want joy!” is how Dan Leven puts it, and we couldn’t agree more. We invited eight luminaries from the leading edge of movement to share some history, forecast the future, and tell their stories from the inside out. Welcome to the fertile ground where yoga and dance are blooming. Namast-Yay!

GROOVE ON

are teaching yoga at the university level, as part of their own dance program, or who include yogatrance dance in their yoga studio or school. Both fields now recognize how important it is to dance if you are a human being on the path and how every movement can flow as yoga.

How do you introduce people to the external flow of dance vs. the internal practice of yoga?

REA: I just bypass people’s outer mind and talk directly to their cells. The core energy of the cells is not biased. The cells are born dancing and they need help. They want to be happy and literally have freedom to dance in the body. Coax the cells to dance. It works every time. When you grow up in the West you have to learn how to devour the root of your own

inhibitions and two thousand years’ worth of conditioning. We can all be translators or poets of the nonverbal world of movement, the one language everyone shares.

Describe your personal journey.

REA: My father gave me the godname Shiva—after Nataraja—the Cosmic Dancer of the Universe. I remember being delighted as I love-love-loved to move. Imagine that your name in Greek means “ecstatic dancer” or in Swahili “dancer of the sky.” When you are a little person, this thrill you and gives you permission to dance. For me, it meant dance all the time, in grocery stores, on tables at parties, and for hours and hours in my own lil’ dancing universe.

Then I read that Shiva was also the Lord of Destruction. I got that spontaneous freedom

in my dance from the pulse of the streets of San Francisco as a little girl. It was raging. It was very Shiva—dancing not destruction but instead the dissolution of old structures that had to go. I am still finding out if the eccentric Granddaddy of Shakti James Brown is right when he says “you can solve any problem with dance.”

A form called “yogatrance dance” gradually emerged from my body like a rising force of healing expression that has changed my life by simply opening to the *ahimsa* or spontaneous flow. This is the understanding within yoga: consciousness, life, everything we see and don’t see is arising from the creative pulsation of life.

Om Namah Shivaya!