
A VIEW ON BIODANZA BY RUTH ESTEVEZ

Saturday October 10th with Dr. Prof. Marcus Stüeck



This Saturday, Prof. Dr. Marcus Stueck, Director of the Leipzig School of Biodanza in Germany came to Manchester. Our resident teacher, Maria Canizalez-Jerez had invited him and this was his first visit to the city.

From the start, I knew it was going to be special. Without making a fuss, Marcus walked up to each of us to say hello. It's crazy that I can't remember if he took my hands, gave me a hug or even spoke. All I remember is him looking me in the eyes and that I liked him.

Soon, we were all sitting in a circle as we always do at the beginning of a session. He talked, we introduced ourselves and he talked again. Throughout the day, he dropped nuggets of information like spiralling leaves and I caught them and wanted to hold onto them and I honestly thought I'd remember exactly what he'd said but the afternoon moved forwards as Biodanza does and I realised I'd have to let all these gifts of information come back to me later if at all.

Luckily, in some form they have!

'Biodanza. Bio because it's grounded in our biology. Danza because we dance.'

And because it's about our bodies and dance, Biodanza is non-verbal. If we use other senses than speech, then we relate to each other on a different level which I sometimes find challenging but increasingly rewarding and natural.

Sight: we look in each other's eyes and take time to see the other person's interior world.

Touch; one example is that we hug each other as it connects us physically to each other's hearts and being held is something many people never experience. And it's healthy, it reduces the heart rate by ten beats a minute.

Smell; being so close, you can catch each other's scent. This may not be pleasant, but it is what it is, as a friend says, and that is primal.

Hearing – we dance to carefully chosen music that evokes different emotions and so different speeds, movements, exercises.

As for taste....not sure we're ready for that yet!!

Have to say though, at times on Saturday, my mind did kick in and I wondered, 'The washing is out, and the sky is getting darker... please don't rain.' And then I stopped thinking and listened to the music and reacted to it and then I felt free, not judging how I was dancing or how others were moving, in fact, I barely saw what others were doing, just a blur around the room or dodging so we didn't bump into each other.

'We are the Universe.'

We are all made up of stars and when we dance we connect to the universe. I like that thought and I reached up to the ceiling and out to the walls and felt the sunshine on my face.

'To be connected is to be alive.'

By connecting with others and the group we are more than the individual. Marcus made it so simple to react to a partner's movements rather than charge in with trying to stamp our own on the shared dance. In this way, it was so much fun to work together rather than make it a struggle of wills. Imagine if we always did this in real life?

'All we have to do is 'be.' '

That made me feel overwhelming relief and recognition. Of course that is all we have to be, but sometimes we need a reminder and reassurance.

And this is the great strength of Biodanza. It's a Dance of Life and all we do in a session, we can take into our everyday life. How wonderful is that? If it was in our national curriculum from a young age, say fifteen minutes in the day, what differences could be made. And throughout our lives, all the way through, exploring, playing and connecting with others. Old age would be less lonely because we'd all know we're part of the whole.

It's so liberating being able to play as adults and re-ignite the child within us. Less depression and mental health issues too. The benefits are colossal and I could talk about it well into the night!

“ To be connected is to be alive.”

All this I've written and I've hardly touched on what we did, but I feel greater understanding from Marcus' soundbites. However, I am going to talk about one exercise. It came out of a sequence of dancing with our eyes closed. Marcus began to give small suggestions. The music at this point contained the sound of the

sea. Marcus said to take our time and I didn't hear properly, but I think it was to move up or forwards. I sat in the surf, running my hands through the water. Opening my eyes, I saw others standing, but I wanted to stay in the water, so I did.

He then said to meet someone else. I felt like a feral child, hair hanging over my face, not wanting to meet anyone. And then I saw someone's fingers and hands come into my eye line. And then, oh no, they were bending to meet me. I put my head down, peeping out of my fringe. Splash, splash, turning my hands in the water. They sat down with legs outstretched like me, with their bare feet inches from mine. And then tears ran down my cheeks. They were so sensitive and intuitive and it was exactly what I needed; a playmate.

I shuffled forward and touched their feet with mine and wriggled my toes against theirs. They waited. I moved to sit next to them and we wriggled out toes together. Her hands rested in her lap waiting for mine and I explored her hands and fingers, leaning our heads together. Lying down in unison, we continued to play with each other's hands and arms. It was fun and exciting and calming all wrapped up together.

Marcus suggested new encounters and I thought, should we move? Should we stand up and share moments with others? But I didn't want to and I sensed she didn't want to either, so we stayed, exploring each other's hands.

I was happy. Today, I'd stayed in three situations that I could have left. In life, I often leave a conversation or a situation when it could go on further. If I can do this in Biodanza, I can transfer this to real life. Many of you won't understand the importance of this to me because you probably always talk a conversation through to the end or see a situation out. For me, this was progress and I am really pleased with myself and for the safe environment that Marcus and the group created.

So, what did we all feel at the end? Many said grounded and yet also flying. Connected was a word repeated over and over.

I looked around the circle and felt I knew these people even though I hadn't met some of them before. I felt I cared deeply about them. I felt at peace and that I could take this feeling with me when I left. It has been a wonderful day.

Huge, massive thanks to Maria for running Manchester's weekly and monthly classes and for inviting Marcus to join us today. Many thanks to both and to the group for their generosity and love. Felt I've grown today.



About Ruth Estevez

Ruth is a writer who spends a lot of time sitting down, so to counteract this, takes as many dance classes as she can. For many years she was a dancer with the Manchester based Juba do Leao who play North Brazilian style rhythms and now takes a mixture of tap, samba, various dances from the movies and Cuban salsa classes. She also loves Biodanza because it takes her emotionally to another level and connects her to others without saying a word... She is an active contributor on the effects that Biodanza has after she has been to the sessions.