

ASIA PACIFIC  
**CHANNELS**



**THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WORLD DANCE ALLIANCE:  
ASIA PACIFIC CENTER**

**2003**

**1/June**

# WORLD DANCE ALLIANCE: ASIA PACIFIC

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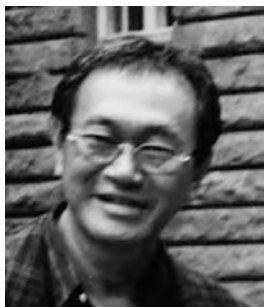
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## EDITORIAL

### World Dance Alliance-Asia Pacific President's Report

By Basilio Esteban S. Villaruz

Since our fruitful time together at Global Dance 2002 in Düsseldorf, we now come home to Asia for our own conference, **26-28 September, Kuala Lumpur** (moved from its original date of 1-4 August in Taiwan).

However, WDA-Asia Pacific is now set to have its annual general meeting Kuala Lumpur on 26 September at the Coronade Hotel (check time and room when you get there.) Most important on the agenda is the election of our new set of officers for our board (after which the new board should meet.) So arrive on 25 September or the morning of the 26<sup>th</sup>. The meetings will extend until 28 September, with departure planned for 29 September. (A hotel package has been organised by MyDance Alliance, see pages 3 and 4.)

Guidelines for the election had been devised by Tom Brown and via a Nomination Committee I had set. This is made up of Julie Dyson ([juliedyson@ausdance.org.au](mailto:juliedyson@ausdance.org.au)), Rogayah Shahrariman ([contact@mydancealliance.org](mailto:contact@mydancealliance.org)) and myself ([basilio\\_esteban.villaruz@up.edu.ph](mailto:basilio_esteban.villaruz@up.edu.ph)) to whom nominations have been forwarded with resume and platform for WDA-AP. Country chapters must also back you, so that your involvement is more than just personal. As set, each country chapter/organisational member is entitled to one vote only.

The positions vacant are: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and four vice-presents for East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Pacific (Australia, New Zealand and beyond). From my understanding and inasmuch as we just elected our secretary in Düsseldorf, we keep our secretary, Julie Dyson, who has served for one year (term-of-office now is two years). Moreover, she and Rogayah have been doing a wonderful job on our *AP Channels*. In my last meeting in New York with Ilona Copen and Judie Janney (our global coordinator), the latter complimented us on our last issue of *Channels*.

I must also thank Tom Brown for working on our By-Laws that were discussed anew in Düsseldorf. You were supposed to make comments on the draft he finalised; if you have any further comment, bring this along to Kuala Lumpur. I also invite you to take seriously and comprehensively your running for office, so that WDA-AP grows as an organisation in its efforts to inculcate, protect and promote dance on this side of the world, to share our traditions and to engage in what is current and advantageous for our profession.

Hopefully, after my term as president, our devotion to WDA will be even be more visible and dynamic. I know how difficult it is for us in Asia and the Pacific to be together in these hard times; it takes not just funds but also courage.

Three final things. First, I must thank the Japan Centre of the Dance Committee of the International Theatre Institute-UNESCO for bringing together dancers and lecturers from Bangladesh, Malaysia, Korea, the Philippines and Japan in a series of lectures and performances last February-March in Tokyo, Kyoto and Nagoya. Rogayah Shahrariman and I, along with leaders and dancers from Bangladesh, Korea and Japan, were so generously received and accommodated.

I also hope you disseminated the ITI-Dance Committee message for the International Dance Day (29 April), written for 2003 by Mats Ek, and forwarded by Ilona Copen, ITI-

Dance Committee president. The Dance Committee of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts in the Philippines printed this out for the IDD, last celebrated in Dumaguete City, care of Shirley Halili Cruz, our WDA-AP treasurer (and WDA-Philippines secretary).

Second, I am happy to announce that all those we invited to be our honorary patrons for WDA-AP have accepted. They are Dame Margaret Scott (Australia), Kapila Vatsyayan (India), P.G. Lim (Malaysia), Lin Hwai Min (Taiwan) and Leticia Ramos Shahani (Philippines). They are joined by those for the Americas: Oscar Araiz and Julio Bocca (both of Argentina), Guillermo Bravo (Mexico), Selma Jean Cohen and Katherine Dunham (both of USA), and Karen Kain (Canada).

Finally and proudly, may I congratulate our members who have just won most prestigious awards: Sonal Mansingh (India), Nanette Hassall (Australian Dance Award for Education), Jose Buenconsejo (Philippines, for his publication on Manobo ritual by Routledge) and, allow me in order to acknowledge the institutions which granted these, myself (Philippines' National Commission for Culture and the Arts, and from CORD in August).

Indeed, if only for our durable loyalty to WDA, many of us deserve some kind of acknowledgments too, as are our young talents who were always provided opportunities by Carl Wolz with his Festival of Dance Academies (which seems to be a forgotten feature in WDA-AP events). Lest we forget, our art's future lies in their feet and hands.

#### **Addendum**

As we seek for alternative days and places to meet – which in these times many of us do more often – we ponder more seriously than we have ever done before, more urgently than we have thought so in earlier or easier times: that the world has indeed changed beyond (even against) our small wills and great aspirations.

Whether by pockets of violence here and there that ripple out to us in inconvenient security checks at airports, or that flare out into full-blown wars that cost lives young and old, and destroy cherished artifacts or long tied infrastructures; or by unforeseen, unknown diseases (old ones rising up again with their fearful heads – thought to have long been cured or avoided), we can no longer just conveniently, efficiently decide to be somewhere, to be with friends and beloved, to be together just because we think it good or productive. Our 'either/ors' are no longer just choices which our democratic (and much-commodified) lives have accustomed us to; they are necessitated by movements and fears beyond our control. As W.B. Yeats said, when the centre no longer holds, and we feel helpless or our fears make us uselessly so, or we in fact go wild and reckless, to dream less and step out timidly, we ask: how has so-called progress and access, study and striving brought us to this?

Yes, we shall meet and overcome this time-and-place upset and much more. We shall sit together and somehow dance, even prance about, laugh and be elated over our little joys and thoughtful surprises, and gaze together at sunrise or sunset with awe in contemplation. But we are no longer as confident. We have to reassure ourselves and each other. We are called to be again inventive – in urgent, even grievous times – to keep our faith in ourselves and in each other. To trust more and perhaps give more. To understand much more – even the world or worlds we have never stepped on – and stretch our tolerance. To ever love what we do – speak of and dance about it – so that we can say that this love is FOR each other and to bless each other with.



## Diversity in Motion - MyDance Festival 2003

Malaysia's rich heritage of diversity in dance will be celebrated in an exciting independent festival in September called 'Diversity in Motion'. This year's event follows from the success of the first festival in 2001, and will see the addition of workshops and seminars as well as performances by the who's who of dance in Malaysia.

Organised by MyDance Alliance, a non-profit society of dance practitioners and enthusiasts, 'Diversity in Motion' will run 22 – 28 September 2003 in three venues. Performances will be showcased at The Actors Studio Bangsar in Kuala Lumpur, the seminar will be held in University Malaya, and the workshops at the Akademi Seni Kebangsaan.

### **Festival Programme**

22 September – Launch of the Festival and the 'Diversity in Motion' Photography Exhibition  
23-25 & 28 September – Workshops  
27 September – One-day seminar on Contemporary Malaysian Dance  
26-28 September – Evening Performances

### **WDA-ASIA PACIFIC MEETING**

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Due to the unforeseen postponement of the 2003 CORD / WDA-Asia Pacific / ICKL International Conference in Taiwan, the annual meeting of WDA-AP will be held at the Coronade Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in conjunction with the MyDance Festival 2003.

### **WDA-AP Meeting Schedule (details to be confirmed)**

25 September – arrival  
26 September – WDA-AP Meetings at Coronade Hotel  
27 September – MDF Seminar at University Malaya  
28 September – WDA-AP Meetings at Coronade Hotel  
26-28 September – MDF Evening Performances at The Actors Studio Bangsar  
29 September – departure

**For overseas members wishing to attend the WDA-AP Meetings, two packages have been organised:**

Package 1 (Single room) – US\$265  
Package 2 (Double room) – US\$370 (or US\$185 per person)

Each package includes accommodation and breakfast for 4 nights, lunch for 3 days, attendance at the two days of WDA-AP meetings and one-day MDF seminar, and tickets to the 3 evening performances. The packages do not include evening meals or local transportation.

### **For further information, please contact:**

Rogayah Shahariman (MyDance Alliance/Tasema Productions)

Email: [contact@mydancealliance.org](mailto:contact@mydancealliance.org)

Tel/Fax: (603) 4251 8751

# WDA-Asia Pacific Meeting

25 - 28 September 2003

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

## Registration



To register, please provide the following information:

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	
<b>Ph:</b>	<b>Fax:</b>
<b>Email:</b>	
<b>Date of arrival:</b>	<b>Date of departure:</b>

Type of package required:

<b>Single</b>	
<b>*Double</b>	

\*If Double, the name of the other occupant (eg. if two delegates elect to share)

### Payment

To secure accommodation, please forward payment via either Telegraphic Transfer or Bank Cheque:

Account name: Tasema Productions  
Account no: 017 090 2017  
Name of bank: Citibank Berhad  
Address of bank: 165 Jalan Ampang, 50450 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

**If paying by bank cheque, please send to:**

Tasema Productions  
72 Jalan Ampang Hilir  
55000 Kuala Lumpur  
Malaysia

### Confirmation Deadline

Please confirm attendance by 15 August 2003

For more information on the festival, please visit [www.mydancealliance.org](http://www.mydancealliance.org)

## TAIWAN 2004

by Basilio Esteban S. Villaruz  
WDA-Asia Pacific/Philippines

The conference had been set at the Taipei National University of the Arts this year, with overall planning chair Yun-yu Wang Chen of Colorado College (ywang@ColoradoCollege.edu), working on what will still be a very productive gathering, albeit one year later! To begin with, the theme meaningfully reverberates in our lives: 'Dance, Identity and Integration', all relevant to our past, present and future, in and outside dance. There will be the Congress on Research in Dance, one of the most respected scholarly dance organisations worldwide, and the International Council of Kinetography Laban, another company of experts. For the conference proper, we have Mary Edsall of Temple University as chair, backed by her committee: Karen Bond, Barbara Browning, Uttara Coorlawala, Martha Eddy, Ilene Fox, Cara Gargano, Luke Kahlich, Janice LaPointe-Crump (proceedings editor) and myself (with Sonia Domingo Orevillo sitting in after my last October presence in New York).

I was in New York for the conference of the Association of Asian Studies (I was an Asian Studies major, too), courtesy of the Council of Teachers of Southeast Asian Languages (COTSEAL) whose president is Dr Prawet Jantharat. I was recommended by Prof. Adelwisa Weller of University of Michigan, where I also read my paper in full. That was also a preview of my keynote which will be given in Taiwan: *'East-West in My Blood: Endo-Exogamy in Choreographic Creation, or Dance as Discourse Towards Identity and Emancipation.'*

That was delivered for the Philippine Studies Group of the Southeast Asian Studies, International Institute, University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Last year, I also delivered two lectures there, and staged a ballet for the Filipino staff and students, *'From Antonio P (Pigafetta) to Abu'* to music by Josefino Toledo of the College of Music, University of the Philippines, and Charisse Baldoria of Michigan. I also attempted a solo to music by Erik Santos of the UM School of Music.

Our other WDA keynote speakers for Taiwan in 2004 are I Wayan Dibia (VP for Southeast Asia), Mohd Anis Md Nor (chair for Dance Research and Documentation), Judy van Zile (Hawaii) and a number of those from Taiwan.

Other speakers in line are Susan Leigh Foster, Rhonda Ryman, Deborah Jowitt, Tina Curren, Janice Fugedi, Jill Green, Martha Eddy and Barbara Browning. CORD itself will honor Sally Banes, Sondra Horton Fraleigh, Jane Bonbright and myself. Cited for publications are Judy van Zile, Anthony Shay and Ya-ping Chen and Paul Scolieri for their papers as graduate students.

Our meeting in Taipei next year will also bring together the Presidents' Committee that now oversees the running of WDA in Asia-Pacific, the Americas and Europe (with African and Russian involvement), after the demise of Carl Wolz as secretary-general. So we expect to see Grant Strate, Ilona Copen, Marc Jonkers and perhaps other European officers, and Judie Janney.

Like the 1990 global conference in Hong Kong organised by Carl Wolz, we will also be among notation people who help us see dance with analytic eyes. Indeed, we will not just meet our Asia-Pacific members (so many last seen in 2001 in Singapore), but be out for rewarding viewings (in performances) and knowledge of dance from many global points and perspectives.

**All of these conferences have now been postponed until the same dates in Taiwan in 2004.**

## CHAPTER REPORTS

INDIA

by Kapila Vatsyayan  
kv@delnet.ren.nic.in

The dance scene in India is rich, varied, unequal in quality, but vibrant and strong nonetheless. Dance is not restricted to the metropolis of Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata. Performances are held in capital cities of other States and in the culturally rich cities like Varanasi and other places. Besides, there are regular performances on specified occasions in the annual calendar when dance performances are an indispensable part of the community festivities, e.g. Janmashtami, which celebrates the birth of Krishna. So a report on the dance scene in India during the last year cannot restrict itself to the performance of some soloists or groups in proscenium theatres of the four/six metropolis. Though they are important and do receive wide media coverage, cognisance has to be taken of the dance scene both at the level of training and critical discourse as also performance at non-urban levels.

Obviously no report can cover the breadth of the country from the North to South, West to East, at all these levels of performance. As such, I thought it may be worthwhile to focus on two events during the year where I participated and had a chance to witness a broad spectrum of both performance and also critical discourse. I believe that although there is a proliferation, almost surfeit, of performances of the neo-classical styles of Indian dance, there is perhaps not an equal interest in a serious critical discourse on 'dance' at the level of theory, content, analysis and, of course, social context.

An important all-India conference was held in Chennai (Tamilnadu) last December under the auspices of the Krishna Gana Sabha. A very renowned exponent of Bharatanatyam and a disciple of the legendary Rukmini Devi, Leela Samson visualised and directed a six-day conference, performance and discourse on different aspects of contemporary Indian dance. The performances included young artists who were highly accomplished artists in the conventional idiom, but also those others who were using 'dance' and specially Bharatanatyam for purposes of therapy, healing, and those others who were using it as pedagogical tool for imparting training in the basics of mathematics, algebra. To me these were positive and innovative directions of pursuit. Obviously through these initiatives horizons would be expanded. Equally impressive was the search for establishing meaningful communication between the techniques of classical dance and systems of yoga.

There were then performances by contemporary dancers who interpreted the content and themes of old well-chiselled repertoire in a very modern way with a here and now message. The possibility of multi levels of interpretation was made explicit, both in performance as also analysis.

From the concern with the body to the movement patterns, the discussions moved to social context and history. Naturally this generated heat and some extreme positions. It was evident that 'dancers' were divided on the issue of social context which motivated positively and negatively the nature of developments in several styles of Indian dance, particularly Bharatanatyam.

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The second was a very stimulating and unusual conference entitled 'The Sacred and the Profane', Male-Female roles in Asian Performance Arts. This was held in a beautiful secluded place along the banks of the river Ganga in the foothills of the Himalayas. Mrs Shanta Serbjeet Singh, senior arts columnist and critic, Chairperson of the Asia Pacific Performing Arts Network, conceived and visualised this unusual conference with great sensitivity and deftness.



The Asian performing arts, particularly dance, have a rich and varied tradition of a special class of women performers, e.g. the Geisha of Japan, dancers of Solpuri of Korea, the Apsara dancers from Kampuchea, Chui Chai Phram dancers of Thailand, the Devadasi and Mahari of India, and others from Bali, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Complementary and distinctive is the tradition of exclusive male dancers who practice the ritual martial arts. The spectrum is wide-ranging, from the Shaolin in China, Sonmudo of Korea, Sattriya, Kalari, Thang Ta of India and many others. Finally, there is a long history of males impersonating females, and vice-versa. This is a distinctive feature of the Asian Arts, e.g. of Kabuki of Japan, Kathakali, Kuchipudi of India, Nora of Thailand, Joged Pingetan of Indonesia, and others including some special styles of Chinese opera.

The organiser-director brought together eminent artists, female, male, from many parts of Asia. The thematic unity of the conference provided the basis of an in-depth exposure to the performance and a critical analysis of each form and style at the level of social history, cultural context, aesthetic theory and movement technique.

It would be difficult to single out any particular performance. Each of the performers – women, men, women as men and men as women – were of high quality. Their performance was convincing proof of the long and arduous years of training and discipline and a concentrated dedication to a single style and genre.

The conference provided an opportunity to compare the movement patterns of a Japanese Geisha dancer and Solpuri. Both were delicate, feminine and lyrical. However, on closer examination it was evident that there was a great difference between the two in the matter of gravity (i.e. relationship with the 'earth', ground), distribution of weight, feet contacts and, above all, dealing with the inner spaces of the body and the outer space. The Geisha dancer was earth bound although lightly: she moved without losing touch with the earth. The whole body was used as one unit. The Solpuri dancers in contrast explored the possibilities of holding breath, concentrating on the spinal cord, and then carrying out patterns in space by asymmetrical disposition of the lower limbs. This is only one example: there were others worthy of an in-depth analysis, e.g. the dancers from Bali with their attenuated torsos and closed lower limbs and the dancers from Thailand in demipile positions, etc. Lyricism and also different levels of energy were thus achieved through a variety of techniques.

The male performers, specially of Sonmudo of Korea, and Shaolin of China, demonstrated an extraordinary quality of self control. The Sonmudo artist was an epitome of stillness and stance, which was dynamic and eloquent. If dance was the highest discipline of the sense - body, mind and soul - then this is it. The Shaolin in contrast was a dance of open positions, leg extensions, cartwheels, all executed with extraordinary dexterity. The Thang Ta of Manipur and Sattriya of Assam shared the concentration, and the dynamism of the far-eastern forms but were totally different in treatment of space and the emerging choreographic patterns. Naturally the performances which engaged the participants most were of the female-male reversal of roles. The Chinese artist and the Indonesian were outstanding.

The versatility of the famous Indonesian artist Ida Ayu Made Diastini performer of Joged Pingetan kept the audience spell bound. No less impressive was the performance of Kalakrishna in Andhra Natyam of Andhra in India.

All in all, this was a rare enriching experience. The performances and the discussions were conclusive proof of an overarching Asian identity in the matter of dance styles, genres and methods and techniques of kinetics.



## NEW ZEALAND

DANZ - Dance Aotearoa New Zealand

By Philip Tremewan  
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New Zealand has been a hive of dancing activity this year. We began with Choreolab – a two week workshop for more than 40 dance artists working with New Zealand, German, Australian and American choreographers. This overlapped with the Wellington Fringe Festival – an umbrella for performances by many new and emerging dance practitioners.

Meanwhile Auckland hosted performances by such key contemporary companies as Atamira (working within a Maori tradition), Black Grace (who have incorporated women into their company for a major new work), Touch Compass, and Auckland Dance. Mau Dance performed at the World Music and Dance Festival (WOMAD) in New Plymouth. Both Black Grace and Mau will be touring internationally this year.

The Royal New Zealand Ballet is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and began the year with the company splitting into half to tour the smaller towns of the North and South Island – and to go to the arts festival in Tasmania.

Recreational dance had two major weekends of workshops and performances – Jambalaya and Tango.

The Dance Platform in Auckland saw opportunities for choreographers to work with dancers and mentors in the creative development process.

The TDENNZ (tertiary dance organisation) met on 11 June and noted that there were significant new tertiary courses underway in New Zealand, and reinforced the value of having dance in the school curriculum. Planning also took place for the Tertiary Dance Festival, which was held in Auckland from 4-7 July 2003. The TDENNZ reaffirmed the importance of its role in political advocacy for dance, leading the research agenda, and its links with the Tertiary Dance Council of Australia (where Garry Trinder of the NZ School of Dance represented NZ in July).

Still to come are a number of other festivals – the Auckland Dance Festival, the Auckland Festival (featuring Mau and Raewyn Hill's company Soapbox), Dance Your Socks Off (Wellington) and The Body (Christchurch).

Meanwhile contemporary dance artists have been debating the frequent tension between taking every opportunity to work and create in dance, and the earning of a livable income.

Dance Aotearoa New Zealand (DANZ), supported by New Zealand's Arts Council, has commissioned a Dancers' Survival Guide and provided mentoring support for dance company management and marketing. DANZ is also working to support the new dance curriculum in schools and to link schools with professional performance.

For more information about dance in New Zealand see [www.danz.org.nz](http://www.danz.org.nz)

**AUSTRALIA**  
Australian Dance Council - Ausdance  
By Julie Dyson



Australian dance has been under the microscope in recent months, with a review of the subsidised sector commissioned by the Dance Board of the Australia Council. The research was undertaken by David Fishel and his team at Positive Solutions.

The report was completed at the end of May, and the Dance Board is now considering its findings and interpreting the data to determine future directions and priorities. The research was undertaken in response to the Board's concern about its capacity to support a growing field, as well as addressing issues highlighted in key consultations with artists and arts organisations over the previous two years (including the Ausdance Dance Summits in 2001).

In the meantime, the Australia Council has made a special allocation to the Dance Board of \$AUD150,000 to begin to address some of the major issues identified in the report. As a first objective the Board is likely to develop some initiatives to develop the national dance market and audiences.

The Melbourne International Festival, the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) and Ausdance Victoria have combined to present a three-day conference from 18-20 October, called BodyTalk. As the title implies, BodyTalk will focus on the body, ideas, current theories and practices. Many of the international dance artists performing at the Melbourne Festival will participate in the forums, discussions and workshops. On Monday 20 October, there will be an 'Industry day', focusing on issues of concern and interest to the dance profession. Further information from Kath Papas at Ausdance Victoria, [kath.victoria@ausdance.org.au](mailto:kath.victoria@ausdance.org.au)

Another very important one-day research forum will be held the previous week (11 October), also under the umbrella of the Melbourne International Festival and the VCA. This will focus on a long-term research project called *Unspoken Knowledges*, led by Prof. Shirley McKechnie of the School of Dance, VCA, Robin Grove of the University of Melbourne, and Dr Kate Stevens of the MARCS Auditory Laboratories at the University of Western Sydney.

The forum will ask questions such as 'What kind of theoretical frameworks can illuminate the dynamic relationships between choreographers and dancers in the making of contemporary dance works?' and 'How can we investigate collaborative modes of dance research between industry partners and universities to promote long-term partnerships for the future?'. Sessions will include '*Spatialization in contemporary dance*' by choreographer Neil Adams, '*Shaped Time: Dynamical Systems Theory and Contemporary Dance*' by Dr Kate Stevens, and film and live excerpts from choreographer Sue Healey's 'Fine Line Terrain'. Further email information can be obtained from Dr Kate Stevens, email [kj.stevens@uws.edu.au](mailto:kj.stevens@uws.edu.au)

Australian Dance Week took place in May, and was celebrated in most States and Territories with performances, workshops and forums. Dance Week always receives excellent media coverage, and it promotes a focus on dance which is often difficult to obtain at other times of the year.

Finally, a wonderful new publication has just been released by Currency House, the *Currency Companion to Music and Dance in Australia*. It covers issues such as Aboriginal traditions, Asian and Pacific links with Australia, research and writing, electronic music, choreography and all genres of dance. See Currency House website at [www.currencyhouse.org.au](http://www.currencyhouse.org.au)

Visit the new Ausdance website at [www.ausdance.org.au](http://www.ausdance.org.au)



2003 will be a busy year for us at MyDance Alliance.

### **New Logos**

We have two new logos designed by committee member Michael Xavier Voon.

### **Dance Box Series 2003**

Jointly organised with The Actors Studio, the Dance Box Series continues but with some changes to the general structure. Instead of presenting a performance every month, the series includes and alternates workshops and seminars as well, thus involving both the Creation/Presentation and Education/Training Networks of MyDance Alliance. Each cluster of performance, workshop and seminar is curated according to a particular theme:

- *Improvisation (January – March)*
- *Traditional (April – June)*
- *Contemporary (July – August)*

It is hoped that other themes will be covered in the years to come.

### **MyDance Alliance Website - [www.mydancealliance.org](http://www.mydancealliance.org)**

MyDance Alliance's website is up and running. It provides information on the society, WDA, the Networks as well as the main projects of MyDance Alliance. It maintains a calendar of dance related events, which forms the basis of a weekly newsletter emailed to members and other subscribers. The next stage will be to incorporate directories of professional members and services with the aim of providing additional benefits to members.

### **2nd MyDance Festival (MDF 2003)**

#### **'Diversity in Motion'**

The second MyDance Festival (MDF 2003) *Diversity in Motion* will take place 22-28 September 2003. The aim is to feature the diversity of dance in Malaysia, from Contemporary to Ballet, from Traditional to Jazz. We believe that dance, which has no language barrier, is the best means to represent the harmonious diversity that exists in Malaysia. Many well-known local figures from the different genres of dance have agreed to be part of the selection panel that will view all submissions and determine the final lineup.

The festival will comprise performances at The Actors Studio Bangsar, workshops at the National Arts Academy and seminars at University Malaya.

While this year we are inviting applications for MDF from around the country, in 2005 we hope to include participants from outside Malaysia.

### **Membership**

This year has seen membership grow from 36 to 65 members. We hope the upcoming events will continue raise the profile of MyDance Alliance and recruit more members to work together for a better prospect for Malaysian dance.



A society to support and promote dance in Malaysia  
• The Malaysian chapter of World Dance Alliance •



Malaysia

## HONG KONG DANCE ALLIANCE

By Tom Brown  
tombro@hkapa.edu

The Hong Kong Dance Alliance has undertaken three major projects since its last report.

### **The School Dance Education Research and Development Project**

This first project is a commission from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) in partnership with the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) to survey dance provisions in Hong Kong secondary schools, conduct in-depth research at selected schools, and provide workshops for schools from which dance teaching materials will be developed. The project will conclude with a seminar on 5 July 2003 and further demonstrations of teaching models at the HKAPA.

The project focuses on three concepts of dance learning: appreciation, performing, and dance making, and the place of dance education within the secondary school curriculum – whether in the physical education curriculum as it is currently taught, or within an expanded arts curriculum.

A 150 page mid-term report on the first two parts of the project was submitted to the HKADC in April 2003 from which the Alliance hopes to draw material for publication. The report, written by Alliance Administrator, Sze Tak-on, from data collected from questionnaires as well as interviews by the Alliance researcher, Anna Chan, provides an excellent snapshot of dance education in Hong Kong Secondary Schools.

### **Dance Platform**

This second project is also funded by the HKADC with support from the HKAPA, the Hong Kong Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and the Hong Kong Fringe Club. The project will present four showings, one each in June, July, September and October, of works-in-progress by young choreographers at the Fringe Club Studio and the HKAPA's Studio One. It will culminate in two fully produced performances of completed work in December 2003 at the LCSD's Ngau Chi Wan Civic Centre Theatre.

The showings are designed to allow choreographers to develop their work while engaging in critical dialogue with their peers, the audience, and seasoned professionals. Ideally, each choreographer will have the opportunity to show their work twice before they present it during the final production. Among others, Hong Kong choreographer Helen Lai serves as an advisor for the project.

### **Dance Journal/HK**

The Alliance's third project is the ongoing production of *Dance Journal/HK*. Funding from the HKADC and support from Rainbow Printings Ltd., the HKAPA and the LCSD have been secured to enable six editions of Volume Five of the *Journal*. With the continuation of the *Journal*, the editorial staff has been expanded to include two writers, Anna Chan and Jasper Lau. Ms Chan has contributed an article on Dance Education for each of the first two editions, a feature which the *Journal* intends to make a regular part of its reporting. In addition to occasionally contributing reviews, Mr Lau has contributed a 'News' section that has also become a regular feature of the *Journal*.

Due to the SARS crisis in Hong Kong, the Alliance's 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Hong Kong Dance Award Production, originally scheduled for June 2003 at the City Hall Theatre, was replaced this year by a more low-key presentation of awards during a press conference-cum-exhibition at City Hall. This year's awards honor distinguished performances by four dancers as well as the work of a choreographer, a dance photographer, a lighting designer for dance, a composer for dance, and two dance organisations – one that focuses its activities on dance for young people and another which has consistently addressed social issues through its dance performances.



## JAPAN

by Miki Wakamatsu, WDA Japan  
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At the turn of the 21st century, Tokyo began to see more and more international dance exchanges. For example, many ballet dancers from Russia began to come to this country to work with local ballet companies. There are international dance contests, too. Those held in cities like Kobe, Saitama and Shizuoka bring judges and quality dancers from all over the world. These events owe much to the Japanese government's policy to support performing arts.

JADE 2002, held in August 2002, was the first international dance festival that received financial support of approximately one million dollars (120 million yen) from The Agency for Cultural Affairs. It was a complete change from the period when there was no support available to international dance festivals.

On my personal level, such financial aid also made our project possible to invite Margaret Jenkins in San Francisco to choreograph a work to perform in Roppongi.

The funding enabled JADE 2002 to invite Japanese dance companies that are active in New York and Paris as well as experimental dance companies in Asia and North Europe and also to hold a dance symposium. At the same time The Tokyo Performing Arts Market was held, which was attended by Sal Murgiyanto of Indonesia and Mohd Anis Md Nor of Malaysia, and also many young dance artists from Taiwan, Korea, and Hong Kong.

Japan realised many dance projects in association with the FIFA World Cup, which was co-hosted by Korea. There were four related projects in different scales that I was personally involved in. The major three were as follows:

On May 31, the first day of the World Cup, there was a dance performance co-produced by Korea and Japan in Nakano. Kim Chaehyeon was the artistic director. Dance Maker's Society co-hosted the event in which forty dancers from Korea participated. What I enjoyed about the event was we spent all day the day before the

performance creating a part of the work together.

On July 6 and 7, we had a Korea-Japan joint dance society conference at Sky Hall on the 12th floor of Hosei University, hosted by Korea Dance of Future Society and Society for Dance Research. Out of the total of 200 participants, 68 came from Korea. English was used at the presentation and the proceedings were published in English.

At Japan Women's College of Physical Education, an international education symposium was held in August where Professor Lee Ae Hyun danced Sungmu (Buddhist monk's dance). Other universities such as Nihon University, Ochanomizu Women's University and Waseda University also realised various projects to promote international exchanges.

Major dance organisations that are incorporated such as Japan Ballet Association, Tokyo Ballet Association, and Contemporary Dance Association of Japan have their own international divisions that offer performances, symposiums and workshops. Exchanges with various countries have been promoted. For example, it is estimated that approximately once every two months a performance is given somewhere in Tokyo by Asian artists.

At the Saitama International Creative Dance Contest in January 2003, China received the grand prize for the first time in 10 years. In the past, artists from countries such as the Philippines, Korea and Japan have won the grand prize.

From the late 90s several organisations like Theatre X were founded to receive foreign dance companies for their programs and aimed to construct a dance network with Asian countries.

WDA used to be the information center for this effort, but now in the Internet age, it seems polycentrism is universalised. World efforts are called for to promote and boost international exchanges by wide cooperation on a case-by-case basis.

## NETWORK REPORTS

### RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION

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The R & D Network has remained low-key for the year 2002-2003. Part of this lies with the absence of a real contact period amongst members that would usually take place during annual meetings or festivals. Only a few network members attended the WDA Annual General Meeting in Düsseldorf in 2003, and the absence of the network co-chairs contributed to the general lethargy. In former years, the R & D Network was able to organize paper panels; contribute and promote active participation of members in writing and reading research papers; or even suggest specific themes for annual WDA events. It provided the impetus for the meeting of minds and cross-fertilization of discourses amongst its members.

Equally felt was the absence of active correspondence amongst members, or the facilitation of such interaction by the network co-chairs. What correspondence took place through email was between a very small number of people who wanted to exchange information and ideas that were important and immediate. As co-chair, I was able to facilitate these interactions and place contacts when needed. Perhaps the most decisive factor for the communication void was the inability of members to respond to messages and/or announcements fast enough to enable an efficacious flow of information.

The Asia Pacific Dance Research Society, a branch organization of the R & D Network, has suffered a similar fate. The society's success with its first monograph publication of *Asian Dance: Voice of the Millennium* in 2000 has never been matched. The network should be able to publish succeeding monographs if its members communicated and responded to calls for papers. As a matter of fact, the recent call for papers for the 2003 WDA-AP Conference (which was to run concurrently with CORD) in Taipei resulted in at least one panel from our network. But many more panels or paper presenters should have come out if initiatives are to materialize.

Thus, it is timely for us to think about redirecting or reinventing the R & D network in 2003. We should try to find new workable projects that will bind our research, writing, and scholarship together into the cohesive body it once was. It now rests in our hands to make our pledge come true.

## DANCE EDUCATION

*In the last edition of Channels, we published a Dance Education report from Australia. In this issue we cover Malaysia and New Zealand.*

### MALAYSIA

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Below is a very brief outline of the main institutions for dance education in Malaysia and the courses that they offer.

#### Private Dance Schools

Some of these include the Federal Academy of Ballet, Jean Gan Academy of Ballet & Music, Sri Wilayah Ballet Center, Aurora Dance School, Plaza Dance Academy, Green Apple, Harmony Academy of Ballet and others too numerous to compile. They offer part-time training with the number of classes per week dependent on the type of dancing.

RAD, ISTD syllabus

Children's / creative dance classes

Adult dance classes

Ellie Zhou Ballet Studio

In addition to the courses above, there is a full-time Dancers' Course (no information available)

#### Universities

University Science Malaysia  
Dance is an elective subject in the  
three courses below – Non Major:

BFA

BA

Certificate in Creative Arts

Also:

MA (Theatre / Dance)

*University Sarawak Malaysia  
(UNIMAS)*

BA in Applied and Creative  
Sciences (dance is part of the  
movement / theatre courses – Non  
Major)

*University Technology MARA  
(UiTM)*

BA (film / television school); (dance  
is an elective subject – Non Major)

*University Malaysia Sabah (UMS)*

BA (dance is an elective subject –  
Non Major)

*University Malaya (UM)*

BA (Theatre / Music Majors; dance  
subjects taught)

MA Performing Arts (Dance /  
Theatre / Music)

*University Putra Malaysia (UPM)*

BA (Music Only)

*National Arts Academy (Akademi  
Seni Kebangsaan / ASK)*

Diploma in Performing Arts (Music /  
Dance / Theatre / Creative Writing)



## NEW ZEALAND

2002 Education Report from (DANZ) Dance Aotearoa New Zealand

Philip Tremewan, DANZ Director

philipt@danz.org.nz

Supporting tertiary dance programs in New Zealand universities, DANZ, in partnership with the *Goethe Institut Inter Nationes*, brought Professor Michael Diekamp to speak at the Tertiary Dance Festival and work with students in some of the Universities. Fulbright Scholar Jannas Zalesky presented at the DANZ Research Forum, run concurrently with the Tertiary Dance Festival, and met with key players in the field of dance education in schools.

DANZ's contract with the Ministry of Education to provide a Dance Education Officer in schools has been renewed for three years, and we have gained a contract for a Secondary School Dance Coordinator to assist in linking the professional dance sector with schools. This shows the importance being placed on the dance element of the new school Arts Curriculum, which is compulsory in all schools from January 2003. Resources that meet the requirements of the curriculum are urgently needed and DANZ is assisting in sourcing these resources.

Over the past year (2002) most of the Professional Development opportunities offered have been aimed at tertiary / senior dance student level, as DANZ works in partnership with dance companies and other organisations to leverage these opportunities. However, a Management and Marketing Mentoring Program has been initiated to support small project dance companies and freelance dancers to increase their knowledge and skills in producing and marketing their works. This is done on a one-to-one basis, dependent on the needs of individual artists.

The New Zealand Association of Dance Teachers has been looking into professionalism in that sector, with the development of a recommended pay scale and sample contracts for employing and contracting dance teachers in the private sector.

Assoc. Professor Cheryl Stock  
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## THE *EULOGY* PROJECT, 2004

A collaborative creative exchange between Taiwan and Australia –  
Creative Industries Dance, Queensland University of Technology (QUT) & Taipei National University of the Arts (TNUA)

Creative Industries Dance at QUT has developed strong links throughout Taiwan through annual visits by the Head of Dance, Associate Professor Cheryl Stock, to choreograph, teach master classes and audition students. As a result of this ongoing relationship, Creative Industries Dance was invited by TNUA to collaborate in a unique two-way exchange between the two institutions, during July/August in Taipei and in Brisbane during November 2003. Because of SARS, this project has been postponed to 2004.

Ten graduating students from each institution will undertake training together and rehearse the haunting work *Eulogy*, created by acclaimed choreographer Xiao-Xiong Zhang. Originally from China, Xiao-Xiong spent many years in Australia where he became one of the leading contemporary dancers of the 1980s. For several years Xiao-Xiong has been a member of the TNUA Faculty in Taipei teaching and choreographing for the contemporary dance program, as well as in China and Hong Kong. He is obviously the ideal person to lead this exchange, being at home in both Australian and Chinese cultures.

### **Stage 1: Creative process / performances, Taipei**

The Taipei residency will culminate in performances at the International Showcase Program of the 2004 *Cord/WDA Asia Pacific/Ickl International Conference*. Based around the themes of *identity* and *integration*, this international conference and festival is organised jointly by World Dance Alliance – Asia Pacific, Congress for Research on Dance (CORD) and the International Council of Kinetography Laban (ICKL), the latter being New York based organisations. The combined QUT/TNUA work *Eulogy* will be the finale of an international dance showcase at the Festival. In addition, QUT has been invited to present a new work by and with QUT students. Master of Fine Arts (Choreography) student, Ricky Sim, well known as a dancer with Singapore Dance Theatre, will create *Transparent Ground*, merging Western and Chinese qualities of movement and philosophies. QUT dancers participating include two Taiwanese students, both recipients of the Vice-Chancellor's QUT Taiwan Dance Scholarship.



Dancers: Paul Zivkovich & Ching-Chi Chang, Photographer: unknown

### **Stage 2: Rehearsal and performances, Brisbane**

In order to facilitate cultural reciprocity with students able to participate in both countries, Xiao-Xiong Zhang and the ten TNUA students will visit Brisbane in November to train with our students in Australia and to perform *Eulogy* as the featured work of the QUT Dance Graduation season, one of the main events of the Queensland dance calendar.

### **Significance of the *Eulogy* Project**

The *Eulogy* project is highly significant for many reasons. It is an ideal vehicle for promoting Taiwanese/Australian relations in an international setting through a high profile performance. The project also enhances Australia-Taiwan relations through educational / artistic cooperation. More specifically for the students, it provides direct experience of aspects of Chinese and Taiwanese culture, lifestyle and philosophies by immersion in a creative learning environment with young peers and fellow students in Taipei.



Dancer: Paul Zivkovich, Photographer: Sonja De Sterke

### **Benefits of the *Eulogy* Project**

The two-way nature of this project reinforces the value of building ongoing rather than one-off exchanges to deepen cultural understanding and relationships between the two countries. In so doing, the project encourages Australian artists to develop a lasting interest in Chinese countries and cultures and their relations with Australia. For these graduating students the exchange creates a dynamic networking opportunity to further develop collaborative projects with artists from the region.



Dancer: Ko-Pei Lin, Photographer: Ian Hutson

## NEWS

SINGAPORE

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### Two dance pioneers

Leng Kee Dance Troupe – Leng Kee

The People's Association has provided strong support for several major dance companies in the last two dance decades and groomed several key players of dance in Singapore. Leng Kee Dance Troupe distinguished itself as a company that has the capability for sustainable artistic growth and the dynamics that combine training and creative activity.

Fifteen years ago, Miss Leong Siew Yeng sowed the seeds of dance in Leng Kee. Five years later, the Leng Kee Dance Troupe was born, with the mission of promoting contemporary Chinese dance. Since then, it has been actively creating new dances for children and young dancers. Trained in Chinese dance by pioneer Madam Lee Shu Fen, Miss Leong played the lead roles in the Phoenix Dance Troupe and danced in major productions of the former National Dance Company, Ministry of Culture, in the late 80s and early 90s for its many overseas missions. Her extensive experiences of interacting with ASEAN contemporary dance artistes during these festivals broadened her horizon considerably.

As the driving force of the Leng Kee Dance Troupe, Siew Yeng trained the very young ones and inspired a group of dedicated dancers who have been working with her closely in the last ten years. Her choreography, often rooted in life, touched the hearts of the audience. *Foundation* (1997), which depicts the perseverance and strong will of the Sam Sui women construction workers, *Sandstorm* (1999) which commends the determination and bravery of purposeful travelers, and *Braving the Inferno* (2001), in praise of firemen, are just a few examples of Leong's unique choreography. They present a sensitive blend of tradition and modernity. Miss Leong has also choreographed dances for the opening ceremonies of Punggol Primary School and Balestier Hill Secondary School, as well as the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Nanyang Junior College. These honours speak well of her remarkable ability to work with young students, guiding them in developing a love for the art of dance!

Apart from presenting performances at the heartland, Leng Kee Dance Troupe also toured Indonesia and Thailand in the recent years, bringing Singapore into the limelight of the regional dance stage.

I would like to congratulate the Leng Kee Dance Troupe for its remarkable achievements in the first decade. I have no doubt that with Miss Leong at the helm, the troupe will continue to tap the resource of our tradition and at the same time create new work that enrich the Singapore dance repertoire with creative dynamics.

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## **An explorer for the frontier - Mei Yoke**

The visit of a ballet dancer to a school started a little girl on a journey in dance. The pointe shoes and pirouettes made the young Mei Yoke fall under the spell of ballet. The upright body, moulded by an aesthetic of balletic perfection, urged her to become a dancer like her heroine on stage. That is the story of Low Mei Yoke. Her achievement was not given to her on a platter but was earned through decades of serious and sustained effort.

School dance soon became too simple for her. She observed how the professional dancers from the People's Association practised in her school's compound. Mei Yoke wanted to become one of them. Her mother kept her word to let her join the profession once she completed her secondary school education.

In the next few years, she performed extensively with The People's Association's Cultural Troupe and learned the art of dance under the guidance of choreographers of diverse backgrounds. During this period Mei Yoke was also teaching at schools and experimented with ideas absorbed from various sources. Several schools where she taught won the distinction awards at the Youth Festivals.

But it was when she joined the National Dance Company of the Ministry of Culture in the early 80s that Mei Yoke had the opportunities to interact with our ASEAN counterparts closely and was fascinated by the diversity of dance which reflected the rich cultures of the region. She then gained first-hand knowledge of how different the bodies are, and how the movement patterns were influenced by tradition and social cultural environments.

Her experience in learning Labanotation from a training course organised by the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts in 1991 with a group of distinguished choreographers and dance educators further extended her knowledge of regional dance cultures.

Mei Yoke's concern for society and people as expressed in her dances began to draw favourable notice from the dance circle and the press when her works were featured in the Singapore Dance Festival, a festival initiated by the former National Theatre Trust in the 80s. '*Refugees*' portrayed the anguish of the boat people of Vietnam and their determination to seek a new life. In a piece created in 1991 entitled '*Asking Dance*', she attempted to find the meaning of dance for the stage. These dances were created during the period when Mei Yoke was based at the Marine Parade Community Centre.

In 1992, Mei Yoke set up The Frontier Danceland, with the mission of setting a new direction and creating a more innovative platform for choreographers in the region to work together. In the next few years, Frontier Danceland invited choreographers from Malaysia, Hong Kong and Taiwan to collaborate with its dancers, responding to issues of common concern, ranging from environmental pollution to social problems. It also collaborated with other like-minded artistes to draw resources from other dance traditions.

Central to Mei Yoke's philosophy is to communicate with expressive dance. In the age of globalisation, the tendency to speak in one language and being trapped in standardisation is very real. What she hopes for Frontier Danceland is that it persists in being an innovative group, continues to present dance from an unconventional perspective, speaks with a clear voice and remains at the forefront of creativity.

I would like to warmly congratulate Mei Yoke for what Frontier Danceland has achieved in its first decade and wish the troupe all the best for its future endeavours.

INDIA

By Dr Sunil Kothari  
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Vice President, WDA Asia Pacific  
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### **Centenary Celebrations of Rukmini Devi Arundale**

Within India and also abroad, the centenary celebrations of Rukmini Devi Arundale are on. Rukmini Devi was a multi-faceted woman and a pioneer in so many ways, personally and professionally. Thanks to her, Bharata Natyam has become the most popular and well-known dance form of India today.

Rukmini Devi's earliest dance experience was learning ballet from Cleo Nordi, a member of Anna Pavlova's troupe. Friendship developed between Pavlova and Rukmini Devi, and it was Pavlova who advised her to study her own traditional dances. Though she hailed from South India, Rukmini Devi did not see a traditional Bharata Natyam performance until 1932, when she saw two dancers from the devadasi community and was deeply impressed. She started learning from Mylapore Gauri Ammaa, a devadasi attached to a temple. Secrecy was necessary because at that time, girls from high society did not study dance, associated as it was with women of ill repute.

Rukmini Devi also learnt from the great teacher, Meenakshisundraam Pillai, and in 1935 she performed before the delegates of a Theosophical convention. Although an eye opener, her act was still considered that of a rebel. Nevertheless she had the full support of her husband and Dr Annie Besant, President of the Theosophical Society.

In time she succeeded in removing the stigma attached to the dance; brought in innovations in presentation such as making the musicians sit on one side of the stage rather than follow the dancer as was the practice till then; designed costumes which have now become standard for contemporary dancers; introduced the instrument, *veena*, in place of the clarinet; and made the presentation generally more refined. In total, she choreographed twenty-five dance-dramas.

But this was not all. Rukmini Devi also established an International Academy of Dance and Arts, later called the Kalakshetra, to train young dancers. She invited the great traditional teachers and musicians to teach at the Kalakshetra, thus institutionalising the art of dance and music. She was visionary and wished to share with all the spiritual quality of these ancient arts.

Today, the world of dance pays homage to her on the occasion of her centenary celebrations. A series of seminars, dance presentations and other events have been arranged throughout India. A photo exhibition on the life and times of Rukmini Devi, curated by myself, is to open in New Delhi at the Lalit Kala Gallery from 29 February 2004. A museum for her collection of art objects has been set up at the Kalakshetra and select dance-dramas choreographed by her will be presented in Europe and East Asia. Two volumes of her writings and speeches, a centenary volume and a volume of tributes by her and others to their contemporaries, have been published. But most of all, her students around the world carry on her message as they teach Bharata Natyam to others.

## **Death of Dr N. Pattabhiraman**

Editor of STRUTI

The death has occurred in India of Dr N.Pattabhiraman, the editor-in-chief of SRUTI, India's leading dance and music magazine. We shall at SRUTI who write regularly for will miss him. As an editor he was meticulous and, I often thought, far ahead of his time, in terms of what he started twenty years ago in Chennai.(Madras) He succeeded in setting a tone and SRUTI has today a faithful and wide readership. Even when writers and contributors disagreed with him, he had a great persuasive quality and by setting an example by serving the cause of dance and music through such a journal, he won them over. He gave platform to those who did not agree with him and SRUTI BOX, the column for letters to the editor, carried letters of disagreement with him also. He showed a catholic taste and was a shrewd editor.

Like a successful and shrewd editor, he thrived on controversies and published opposing views, generating healthy debate. Even his popular Whispering Gallery column (he kept his readers guessing as to who wrote that column – he would insist that it was work of several people) with a touch of gossip, without malice towards any one, succeeded in generating interest in issues which interested his readers. He coined the words like 'Vasu the Bossu' and brought a refreshing sense of humour!

He built up a team of dedicated writers, correspondents, critics and several writers to contribute to SRUTI, the news, the views, the reviews , the feature articles etc.

He has trained his Deputy Editor, Distant Editor, Roving Editor and a host of writers who will carry on his work with a spirit of dedication and commitment. As a roving critic I have continued to write for him from the early years and shall continue to do so.

We shall of course miss him, but we know that his spirit will guide us.

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## **WDA:AP MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION**

**Eligibility: Membership shall be open to all institutions and organizations and to all individuals interested in dance in Asia and the Pacific. Annual General Meetings (AGM) for members are normally held in July or August at the Asia Pacific annual international dance event.**

Benefits: Members pay reduced rates for the AP annual international dance event  
Members receive a biannual calendar of major dance activities worldwide  
Members receive and may contribute to the newsletter, *AP Channels*  
Members may participate in committees that contribute to the growth of dance in Asia and the Pacific

**Annual membership dues for the World Dance Alliance: Asia Pacific are:**  
**Students/Senior citizens: US \$5 per year;**  
**Dance professionals: US \$15 per year;**  
**Organizations: US \$30 per year**

The WDA:AP fiscal year is from 1 July to 30 June. National Chapters may also collect additional dues.

## **WDA EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

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