

Dances Of Universal Peace

Ruth Christine Fischer

In 2019 these grounding, uplifting and powerful dances called me from seemingly nowhere after a 20 year gap since my first encounter. I soon found myself drawn to a two year Dance Leader training course which I have recently completed. It has been a life-affirming, joyful, challenging at times, and healing journey, the fruits of which I am moved to share.

Firstly, a brief introduction to the Dances of Universal Peace.



Their founder, Samuel L Lewis (1896 -1971) emphasised that "Words are not Peace" and that "Peace must be experienced." The dances therefore offer a direct embodied experience of peace,

of unity and of the reality of our connection to all life. At a time when across the world there is much disconnection, fragmentation and feeling of separation, the dances offer a real opportunity to:

- meet and accept the fragmented parts within ourselves,
- come to know more of our True Self,
- experience a real heart-connection with each other and of belonging to the earth.

They can be both fun and profound. Honouring all spiritual traditions, we sing sacred phrases and move in a circle with simple body prayers or movements based on traditional folk dance. We often dance to mark nature's changing seasons and festivals, to celebrate or mourn life transitions, or to embody certain qualities such as compassion, strength or gratitude.



The Dances of Universal Peace also comprise a whole range of breath and walking practices attuned to the various planets and the different elements. These can all help us call on different qualities as needed in our lives and to come more into balance. No previous experience is needed and the dances are taught in simple stages.

Some of the highlights of these last two years for me have been the friendships formed on our training course, buying my baritone ukulele to accompany dances, starting to lead dances in person last year - both with groups and one-to-ones, and inviting my mentor, Jilani and her partner, Salik, to Bangor earlier this year to lead dances with a group of 22 of us!

Probably the most challenging part has been this last period, where it seems the safe container of the dances allowed parts of me that are not at peace to surface. As Samuel Lewis himself stated about the dances, they can "unearth the forgotten and rejected places within our own cells and psyches." Seeing how at first I met these parts of me with harsh judgments was not comfortable. Learning to relate to these parts again and again with love and from the spaciousness of an ever present awareness has been humbling and

Founder Samuel L Lewis called Ruth St. Denis - a feminist pioneer in the modern dance movement - his "fairy godmother". In her unpublished book *The Divine Dance* (1933), Ruth St. Denis wrote of her vision of a future dance for life and peace:

"The dance of the future will no longer be concerned with meaningless dexterities of the body... Remembering that man is indeed the microcosm, the universe in miniature, the Divine Dance of the future should be able to convey with its slightest gestures some significance of the universe.... As we rise higher in the understanding of ourselves, the national and racial dissonances will be forgotten in the universal rhythms of Truth and Love. We shall sense our unity with all peoples who are moving to that exalted rhythm."



relieving. It is also allowing a deepening capacity of my heart to open in the midst of whatever comes and goes. To sum up, the dances give me a real groundedness in my life and they offer a means of expressing joy, love, longing, devotion etc.

They are both a personal and community practice and are a beautiful way of sending blessing energy and intention out into the world, giving hope and a deeper sense of belonging to the whole, of coming home.

I offer group dances and one-to-ones on a donation basis in Bangor. At present, the group dances are usually about once a month, and take place either in an outside space or with a small group in a private cabin space at the top of my garden surrounded by trees. They can last from 1 to 2 hours, sometimes including a heart sharing circle. (Regular free group in park over summer on 1st Sunday of month – see Calendar). The one-to-ones take place in the cabin space or can be online. They usually last around 45 minutes.

In all the above, I aim to tune in with what is needed at the time. The one-to-ones in particular offer a chance for you to feel in to what you are most needing in your life at this point: for example it may be to celebrate or let go of something, to

call forth a particular quality, or to re-discover more of who you are and your place in the world.

I can then share a particular breathing or/and walking practice, and a dance to support you with this. These may subsequently become a personal practice for you to deepen in to over a period of time if you so wish. **Do get in touch to find out more about any of the above.**

Ruth Fischer is a Mentored Leader of the Dances of Universal Peace, living in Bangor. She has previous qualifications in Music, Education and Dance, and has over 25 years experience of working creatively with groups and individuals of different ages and abilities in the community. Her other areas of experience and joyful interest are Mindfulness, Non-Violent Communication (Rosenberg), and gardening.

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To find out more about the dances in their wider context, visit the UK or International websites:

www.dancesofuniversalpeace.org.uk

www.dancesofuniversalpeace.org