

Dancing with Susanne Anders Bartholomai

I've been lucky enough to dance with Susanne a few times as part of the Findhorn Festival of Sacred Dance, Music and Song, where I especially appreciated the way she invited our bodies to wake up to the dance in her morning attunement sessions. At other times she introduced us to and accompanied her treasured mentors, like Dimitris Barbaroussis and Nanni Kloke.

I was so taken with her style of teaching that twice I've joined the group that Frances Fawkes gathers together in Somerset to dance with Susanne. A whole weekend of her teaching is a revelation. It seems to me her teaching is organic. It grows from body awareness movements, for instance exploring the vertical and horizontal dimensions, that may gradually morph into dances; from attention to how the foot touches the floor to how the shoulders can relax; from the space and time that opens up when you're with the music, not trying to get ahead. And if this all sounds deadly serious, there's big laughter as well as big breaths from all the concentration.

Susanne particularly teaches Friedel and Nanni dances, revelling in the creative tension between dynamism and containment in their choreographies. She also teaches traditional dances and treasures the way they hold the space, supporting everyone in the circle, so everyone is actively giving and receiving as they dance.

Her theme at this year's weekend was 'Longing to Belong, inspired by a John O'Donohue poem. She explored this through a number of Nanni's dances, words, music, body movement and dances all coming together, making a whole rich experience. These are the words that came to me afterwards to describe that experience.

We flock together to dance
to dance 'Longing to Belong'
to belong for the time to each other
to each other and to the dance
the dance of our separate lives
lives touched by loss
loss cradled in the circle
the circle where we belong

It would be lovely if more people were able to experience Susanne's teaching. We are hoping she will come to Central Scotland before too long, so if you're interested, keep an eye on the Grapevine Diary Dates.