

Honorary Member Forrest "Cliff" Coggan

Forrest Coggan was a Founding Member of SDG, taught many years worth of SDG Festivals, was a writer for our Journal and worked with another Founding Member Mary Jane Wolbers, and her daughter Vivian, with our SDG Archives. He was a professional dancer touring across the globe, choreographer, teacher, and director. He worked personally with Ruth St. Denis, being called "Cliff" by her, and specialized in Sacred Dance. We have a sampling of Forrest's knowledge of dance and The Sacred through his own words...



This is a statement Forrest read as a member of the Training/Education Panel to the Americas Conference in Mexico City 1995 with 130 attendees from eleven countries and published in SDG's Journal Spring 1998.

In Sacred Dance forms, globally, I identify three areas of expression: The dance for meditation and self growth; The communal/community dance, where the search for spiritual understanding or group enlightenment is aided by the joining of metaphysical powers; and the dance done in the role of priest, shaman, healer, or intercessor, who acts on behalf of the individual or community. This last is often performed by one elected or selected due to his or her ability, through gift or age, to more easily access his or her own inner spiritual power.

The dance instrument is more than the body. Those dance works that I most admire, and those which I suspect will enjoy a long and respected life, possess some potent essence beyond the body and the conscious mind: an essence we may term "spirit" or spiritual-mystical.

Also in teaching of dance, we become aware that those who are growing in techniques of all kinds, physical and psychological, may or may not have access to - within their life experience - deeper levels of spiritual insight and human compassion. Perhaps this is due to earlier belief structures. As teachers we commonly employ various techniques to release new dimensions within our students.

There are some intellectual methods which might assist those in spiritual need, both as choreographer and performing artist- such as certain designs in space, time and energy, which ring true at unconscious levels. There are also methods of silent, sometimes still, inward search and study which may aid in discovery of hidden sources within our individual selves. The resulting art is one of joining body, mind, and spirit to make our dance more powerful for the moment, and longer lasting in terms of cultural memory or usefulness...



For The Journal July1, 1964

... Since many present-day religions are concerned with forces governing life and death, love, fear, and hatred, and since most religions seek to find for man a harmonious relationship with those forces which promise vigorous growth and continued well-being, it would seem beneficial to the student of religious dance to have training in physical objectification of his religious experiences in terms of interaction forces and changing force structures. By imposing force relationships as they are experienced in states of peace, harmony, joy, rapture, ecstasy, awe, etc. upon his/her own body and mind, the religious dancer can bring him/herself as a total human being into harmony with those conditions which he/she considers uplifting, inspiring, and everlasting.

This training of the student in the expression of cosmic realities through dance composition and performance may develop an increased awareness of force principles which underlie his/her own physical-psychical mechanism and may provide him/her with a common ground from which to communicate his/her deepest needs and discoveries...

On The Creative Artist by Forrest Coggan 1963

**I am of the holy Spirit
I am of the pure heart.
I stand here on the edge of the universe
The power of infinite creativity in my hand.
The power of destruction I also hold
To dispose immediately of my beloved mistakes.**

**I am change
I am guided progress.
The great plan is my life's blood.
I have no will save by its service.**

**My judgement is directed with great care and facility
Accuracy and insight rule my mind, gesture, force.
Time for me does not exist
This is for all eternity
The Universe is temporal and must halt in its turnings
While God Speaks Through Me.**

**I take delight in my goodness.
I find instant anger in my faults.
I make myself the master of all fates.
I form the receptacle to hold all curses checked
I am the channel through which
The purifying force moves to change the world.**

I am the child of God's mind.

I am Shiva.

