

Dances of Universal Peace – Sydney
March 24 -March 25
by
Arjuna



This is a photo by Aija of our first dance meeting of the year

I wanted to begin with this image because it shows the number of people that we sometimes get at our meetings. It also had a photo of our dear Dahlia, who went back to the light not long after this photo was taken. She's the woman in the big hat, the colourful clothes and a big smile. We had no idea at the time

that she'd been battling an aggressive lymphoma since April last year. We only found out a couple of weeks later when her daughter Lily turned up and shared the news. Karen and I visited her in hospital a couple of times in the oncology ward and sang some of our dance songs which she loved. She was a world travelled performer, specialising in Edith Piaf, Yiddish music and Sephardic Jewish music. She was such a presence in our meetings and we will miss her dearly.

The Sydney group has been meeting twice monthly on the 1st Saturday at 3.30pm with a training hour before hand, and the 3rd Friday at 7pm at our Peace and Meditation Centre in Bondi. We've been promoting World Peace by Murshid Sam's formula to Eat, Dance and Pray together. We share a potluck meal after some 2 hours of dancing. We get anything from 6 to 16 people person session depending on what else is on the night, like the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras recently on the same night.

Usually, the Friday night is led by Karen and myself and the Saturday can have several leaders – Sabira Jane, Raimunda, Gini Lelani and Aija with occasional visiting leaders. In our sessions we generally do 3 dances on a theme appropriate to the time and then we have a meditation in the middle, in a Sufi Sesshin style, and do another 3 dances and then share food. We cover some of our costs by donations.

Once again on the October long weekend we had our Aboriginal Spring Renewal retreat at Jamanee Gunya with Uncle Noel and Aunty Trish. Last year we were gifted a Creation Story about their sacred mountain Balgan, for which he wanted us to create a dance/drama, as we had done at the training of ambassador to country retreats. All these are documented on our blog on the dances' website, with photos and text by myself and a photo story by Jennyma – here's the link for last years retreat: <https://www.dancesofuniversalpeaceaustralia.org/post/2024-spring-renewal-reflections>

Aija has also been promoting our meetings on Instagram, which is why she took the photo above and the one below. Also I post the session on the Sydney Dances Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/DancesofUniversalPeaceSydney>

As well as sending out reminder emails to the regular dancers.

Some of the outreach for this last year was a talk I was invited to give on Sufism for the Theosophical Society in the Blue Mountains, which included a chant and the dance *The Ocean Refuses No River*. I'd also led this dance for a Conscious Sydney Event in Redfern. I'd also played guitar for a young singer, Jason that evening when he sang Leonard Cohen's *Halleluiah*. Jason has since attended some of our dance meetings and brought along a young friend and has another dancer. We also have other events in our centre like a Nurashki Jerrahi Zikr every 6 weeks or so for which I lead the Afghani Zikr in free form dance, and every couple of months we have a Tara dance meeting usually led by Felicity. Occasionally we have also Kirtan sessions with Freya and other presenters.

For some of last year we had Central Coast Dances once a month at Raimunda's but since her daughter has come to live with her that space is no longer available. Sabira Jane also leads dances at the Steiner Retirement Village, Christoforos House where she and Robyn live, but she'll give a separate report for her meetings.

Overall we have a vibrant dance community in Sydney and surrounds, so we can send out our peaceful vibrations on a regular basis.

