

## Riverside Project – FUSION OF CULTURES

Certainly everyone has had the opportunity to admire some Flamenco dancing, Contemporary, Indian, or some Cuban styles of dancing. Most of us also, have the experience of witnessing the famous Middle Eastern dance form of Belly Dancing. But what would come as a result of mixing all of them into one?

The result of this mixture pot of cross cultural dance forms was something that I was invited to see. The weather and a rainy day, didn't stop my curiosity and interest for what was promised to be a unique, artistic dance concept.

"We are interested to find new movement pathways - which means a fusion of dances. The styles I chose to work with are Flamenco, Cuban, Tango, Indian, Contemporary and Belly Dancing" commented Annalouise Paul, Director/choreographer of the show as we enjoyed a cup of coffee before the show.

Annalouise has been directing a dance residency, which is the initial stage of a work exploring the fusion of dance forms from different cultures. The second part will take place in October 2005.

She discovered dancing at 19 years old in Sydney and later studied at the Laban Centre in London. There she



worked as a professional dancer and choreographer for 5 years. She also discovered that acting was part of her soul, so off she went and did the Hollywood thing! She trained in LA for 5 years and stayed over there for another 2. She has performed and choreographed for theatre, opera film and TV production.

In this residency, she worked with, Indian dancer David D'Silva, Australian Contemporary dancers Rebecca Devine and Miranda Wheen, Chilean born Belly Dancer Jrisi Jusakos, Argentinian Flamenco dancer Christine Yoia and Cuban dancer Idalberto Alcalá.

I was impressed with the outcome, not only because of such talented artists but because the product was exciting and different. I discovered new rhythms, music, voices and costumes. The unique

and combined movements of their dances, told the story that makes this big multi-cultural country that is Australia.

It was a pity that the show was only witnessed by a handful of people (family and friends). I only hope that the final stage will go further not only into exploring the links between dance styles and cultures but also into taking this act to a wider Australian audience.

"More than anything this project for me is about Identity" Annalouise told me.. "When you take on a new culture, you leave a part of yourself in order to do so, but what comes out is something new and perhaps stronger. Definitely there is a transformation of some sort," She added.

"My own journey as an artist has been a transformation and the dance artists I have worked with on this project, some are Australian and some immigrants are also going through their own transformation both culturally and artistically - whether they realise it or not!"

The rain still pouring but it is time to go. Congratulations to everyone for a wonderful and creative show.

*The Residency was facilitated by the Western Sydney Dance Action. Produced by Kathy Baykitch of Western Sydney Dance Action and funded by NSW Ministry for the Arts.*