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# The 2021 International Panel: Dance of the Ancient Healers: How Modern-day Dance/Movement Therapy Practices Have Evolved from the Wisdom of the Past

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**Abstract**
The 26th ADTA International Panel featured dance/movement therapists from the global community who described and demonstrated the healing dances that are part of their countries spiritual, cultural, and historical expression. Panelists contributed a verbal description along with videos incorporating music, rhythm, dance, and movement that represented the ways in which the ancient dance of their cultural ancestors have influenced their modern-day practice as dance/movement therapists. The following are abridged versions of the panel presentations which have been adapted to provide an overview of the panel. The complete transcripts with references and links to accompanying videos can be found by accessing the 2021 ADTA Conference Proceedings via the American Dance Therapy Association.

## Introduction

As Chair of the *International Panel* of the American Dance Therapy Association, Dr. Miriam Roskin Berger introduced the participants on the 26th panel noting that there have been many diverse themes since the panel's inception in 1995. This year, the panel focused on the ways in which modern-day dance/movement therapy practices have evolved and been shaped by a country's folkloric or traditional dance.

In her introductory statement, Dr. Berger described how the panelists were charged to discuss, in relation to their individual backgrounds, the impact of how dances that

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represent ancient healing practices have influenced the practice of DMT's today. One of Dr. Berger's immutable beliefs is that every dance form, from any culture, or from any historical era, will contain at least one, if not more, element that we recognize as a principle of dance/movement therapy process. The most obvious, she affirmed, were movement as a means to express emotion, movement as a transformative means to experience new states of feeling, and movement to communicate and symbolize meaning. Every dance form embodies the unity of physical experience with symbolic meaning with greater or lesser intensity. This unity is perhaps one of the most powerful in human experience and is the core of all ritual; it is the deepest core process of dance/movement therapy.

Citing the impact of the panel of the previous year, Dr. Berger stated that the most meaningful past panels were those that focused on the personal experiences of the participants in relation to dance and to their culture. The 2020 panel clearly demonstrated how the journey of individuals in becoming dance /movement therapists was based on their roots in dance. The 2021 panel will explicitly focus on some of those roots that may nurture the current practice of dance/movement therapy… roots in which similar values can be discerned.

This panel welcomed back seven distinguished dance/movement therapists. Dr. Radwa Said Abdelazim Elfegi from Egypt explored the cultural components of *Egyptian Folklore Dances*; Terje Kaldur from Estonia presented with a team of colleagues focusing on the Estonian Traditional Dance titled *Kalamies* or "fisherman;" the traditional *Yemenite Jewish Dances* of Israel were presented by Dr. Hilda Wengrower; Native American dance/movement therapist Selena Coburn, joined by her father Dugan Coburn, explained the elements of *Jingle Dress Dance*; *Haka: Dance of the Fluttering Heart* was shared by New Zealand dance/movement therapist Jan McConnell along with her colleague, Deon Nathan; Taiwan's *Harvest Festival of the Amis People* was the focal point for Dr. Grace Ho; and the final returning panelist was Dr. Zeynep Catay from Turkey who presented *Semah: The Ritual Dance of the Alevi Population*. The eighth panelist was first-time participant Kayla Oosaseun Jewette who represented the United States and the African Diaspora providing an exploration of the Afro-Cuban Folkloric Dance, *"Dancing for the Orisa."*

## Egypt: Radwa Said Abdelazim Elfeqi

Dance/movement therapist Radwa Said Abdelazim Elfeqi described how thousands of years ago, Pharaonic civilization depicted rituals of healing in dance moves to music played on the harps of the temples and in rituals of speaking to nature and God. Pharaonic ritual movements shifted from linear and perfect to acrobatic and circular. The ancient murals illustrated the personification of animals and images of their Gods.

Elfeqi further elaborated on the development of different dances across time. Sufi dances appeared a thousand years later; Whirling Dervishes moved along the mandalas and traveled across the realms of different levels of consciousness in time and space. At different place and time, Indian/Hindi worship of dance and movement took

stage. Here they depicted Shiva with multiple dancing arms and entwined their philosophy while paving the road to mind, body, and soul all in one holy yoga discipline.

Middle Eastern dances emerged from 11th Century BC to 5th Century BC between Lebanon and Spain before the dancers travelled to Egypt and Damascus. The use of props such as scarves as a dancing tool, as well as part of the dance costume itself, was depicted in art expressions of that time. Belly dance or Ghawazi dance came as a French term "danse de ventre." These dances demonstrated the importance of core muscles; its' harmonical movements playing the tunes and beats of "*Al Tabla*" or "*Al Daraboka*," also known as traditional Egyptian drum. The use of *el melaya el laf* (or the "wrapping sheet") was placed around the body to express presence, femininity, and to sometimes to act as a shield to hide behind. Additionally, said Elfeqi, Isadora Duncan (1877–1927) was freeing the linear and bound lines of ballet from specific measures of perfection, altering the meaning of beauty into authentic, free spirited, and natural emotional moves. Elfeqi posed the question: Who influenced whom? Was it Isadora Duncan or was it Samia Gamal? Dancing through time with life and death, it's more probable that they had never met or even heard of each other, since Isadora died in Paris when Samia was only 3 years old in Cairo, Egypt. Elfeqi states the answer is "No! Our story today started thousands of years ago, and the murals of the pharaonic temples gives us details". Elfeqi explained further:

> I dance to connect with the above; to empower me with water for the plants; plants for the food and food for life. I talk to the wind and console to the stars to harmonize my Gods and nature so I can move freely, free floating with imagination and transcendence along the levels of consciousness twirling with the dervishes in my head.

The following are some of the DMT elements that Elfeqi has identified as directly influenced by the ancient dances of Egypt. She described the impact of healing dances with female clients suffering from breast cancer in both pre-and post-operative stages of the disease:

- Implementing themes of pharaonic rituals seeking life and strength from "the above".
- Free-spirited improvisational aspects of belly dance.
- Use of the scarf and the baton from Egyptian Folkloric Dance, entwined with elements of Yoga Therapy and Tai-Chi healing.
- Allowing the body to unfold: the pain, the sense of self-betrayal, the vulnerability, the anger.
- Being part of a whole, sense of group, partner's work.
- Letting go and reconciliation with the above in the here and now context.

In conclusion, Elfeqi shared a passionate and poetic statement offered by a survivor of "Breast Cancer Body Talk" that occurred during a therapeutic intervention:

> It hurts…
> My body betrayed me…

I am
Sad
In pain
It hurts everywhere
Why me?
Am angry
ANGRY
I am powerful
I am beautiful
I am feminine
I am a sexy being
Hopeful and worthy to be loved
It hurts less…

## Estonia: Terje Kaldur (with Mari Mägi, Kaire Bachmann, Ulrike Morel, and Nele Maipuu)

Dance/movement therapist Terje Kaldur opened her presentation with the following poem describing the magic of the Estonian sea:

The sea merges and the sea separates. The sea calls and sends it on its way.
The sea unites and the sea divides.
The sea calls and the sea sends off.

Kaldur offered a historical context of *Kalamies*, the Estonian traditional dance, which originates from the island of Kihnu. Estonian folk dances are often connected with the sea. *Kalamies* or "fisherman*"* is one the most original Kihnu dances having no equal from other nations. From the 19th century, traditional folk songs and couple dances have coexisted with contemporary folk songs, social dances, and mass culture in Kihnu. Kaldur explained that this is a result of the sustainable way of life and different cultural strata from pre-Christian traditions to Christian practices.

Kaldur offered some context on Kihnu, the seventh-largest island in Estonia. Currently, it is an ancient island of seafarers and fishermen and home to a close-knit community of about 700 inhabitants who value old traditions along with their local language and songs. Lively women in striped skirts and red patterned headscarves, old grannies clicking their knitting needles, fishermen bustling around in the harbor, melodious chatter in Kihnu dialect, village parties and dances, and modern day interlaced with traditions -- are all that make it unique. To this day, said Kaldur, you can see the women of Kihnu riding motorbikes wearing Kihnu homespun woolen striped skirts. Throughout centuries, the men of Kihnu have spent most of their time at sea (seal hunting, fishing, or seafaring), while the women have become the keepers and carriers of cultural heritage. This includes handicrafts, dances, games, and music of the island. Men were often the creators and importers of the dances, hence the name of the dance, *Kalamies*, translates as "fisherman."

The Estonian Song and Dance Festival, held once every five years, brings the whole nation together. It had an important role in the restoration of independence in 1991, known as the "Singing Revolution." Since 1947, song and dance festivals have mostly been held as one event. The last, in 2019, brought together nearly 100,000 people. *Kalamies*, choreographed by Maie Orav, was performed in the Estonian Dance celebration in 2009 and 2019. The dance/movement therapy elements of the powers of communal dance and creating meaningful stories through movement and song are all incorporated into *Kalamies*. Kaldur concluded her presentation with a second poem:

The sea gives and the sea takes. The sea is hope and hope.
The sea gives and the sea takes.
The sea is a promise and the sea is hope.

## Israel: Hilda Wengrower

As a true migration country, Israel has received ethnic groups from North Africa, the Middle East, Europe, America (from South to North), Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. For this panel, dance/movement therapist Hilda Wengrower interviewed Rut Pardess, a veteran DMT colleague. Although she was born in Poland, Pardess studied dances of Jewish communities in the Middle East and North Africa. These dances were developed long before the establishment of the State of Israel (1948) and were then brought to the country.

The interview elaborated on how traditionally, female and male dances were different, and they were danced separately. Women danced on the vertical (door) plane, while men were permitted to be more expansive in the use of their body, utilizing more personal and expansive space. Wengrower described dances, that, while not specifically representative as healing dances, allowed individuals to experience community, solidarity, and the expression of their emotions. The dances exhibit traditional dress for both genders; the music and instruments, along with use of the voice, are original. The focus of the women's dance is social. The emphasis for men is spiritual and religious: they lament their exile from the Promised Land and praise God for the creation of the world. Wengrower discussed how today, elements of these dances are included in celebrations of rites of passage.

Wengrower went on to discuss sections of an introductory workshop that demonstrated how Pardess incorporated ethnic dances in therapy, as well as in a workshop for personal development. Wengrower identified some of the various effects of the use of traditional dance in DMT:

- *Connecting with patients*: Since there is often a close emotional association in conjunction with positive nostalgic memories that are associated with traditional dances, it may be easier for the patient to begin to move, especially when they have migrated from their home country to an unfamiliar environment.

- *Being in the world*: The use of traditional dance may widen the possibilities of self and others' experiences through the different use of efforts, the use of the whole body, body parts, and through non-verbal communication.
- *Use of traditional and folk dance structures*: These structures can channel energies and help to organize patients. Wengrower gave an example when conducting a training course with students on DMT with children in which she proposed an exercise for pairs: in each pair, one student would be in the role of a therapist and the second student is enacting an excited, hyperactive child. The task of the therapist was to find ways to communicate with the child. The only "therapist" who succeeded in making a connection, Wengrower asserted, was a student who was a professional Latin dancer who gradually engaged the "child" she was working with by using a traditional Merengue dance. Other students who used mostly verbal language and mirroring were not as successful. Another example Wengrower cited was the use of *Yemenite Jewish* dances to foster contact with "unreachable" patients to begin the therapeutic process.

## Native American Indigenous People / United States: Selena Coburn and Dugan Coburn

Dance/movement therapist Selena Coburn, joined by her father Dugan Coburn, stated that the *Jingle Dress Dance*, a traditional dance of the Blackfeet Nation, best exemplifies the creative and healing elements of DMT. They described how dancing has always been very essential to Native American Indigenous people, with the importance of the dances changing over time from everyday occurrences to special events and ceremonies. The jingle dress was adorned with tobacco twists rolled into cones and attached to the dress in patterns. This attachment made the dress 'jingle' when the dancer moved, thus the name *Jingle Dress Dance*. The Coburns revealed the intriguing story behind the *Jingle Dress Dance*:

> It is said, that a young Ojibwa girl became very ill, and her father feared he was going to lose her. He tried everything to make her feel better. One night he had a vision to save his daughter in which he saw the dress and the instructions for the dance movements. After his vision he began making the Jingle Dress for his daughter. Once made, he had his daughter wear the dress and started showing her the 'springlike' movements, jumping to cross one foot in front of the other while keeping one foot on the ground. She started to feel better and kept dancing. Finally, she recovered completely and kept on dancing and eventually formed the first *Jingle Dress Dance Society* of the tribe.

The panelists stated that the *Jingle Dress Dance* is also a strong reference to the power of women held both within the tribe and with Native Women in the world. The dance focuses on preserving the tribe's health and spirits of their communities during hard times, bad seasons, and during any suppression of their culture. After Pow-wow

circuits grew, the *Jingle Dress Dance* moved beyond its original borders and was adopted by many other tribes because of its connection to prayer and healing.

The Coburns reiterated that in the Blackfeet Nation there is an emphasis on inclusion and community. There are three roles to play during a Blackfeet dance ceremony: dancer, drummer, or witness. When the dancers dance, they are dancing for those who can no longer dance. Their dance is a prayer for all those who are witnessing the dance. The Blackfeet Nation used dance for many purposes: community, language, history, healing and medicinal purposes, spiritual ceremonies, and to speak with nature. The tribe used dance to imitate animals before a hunt, prepare for battle and increase tribal strength, for victory dances or celebration, and to distinguish and promote different societies within the tribe. The nation's spiritual practice included dancing and speaking to the spirit of the animals they were going to hunt or eat. They gave thanks to the creator and the animals spirit before using the animal.

Dance was used almost every day in the tribal life before the Blackfeet Nation was moved onto a reservation. Once restricted to a reservation, the way of life for the tribe changed dramatically. There were no more buffalo hunts, war raids, and no daily camp life. People started to stay in one place. The result was much more leisure time and the loss of a lot of their spiritual practices. As the Blackfeet Nation's world was modernizing, the Coburns asserted, their dancing became even more important. It became one of the only times to wear traditional dress and practice old customs. Pow-wows became the cultural meeting point for many tribes. Government agencies and missionaries threatened the Indian way of life; they tried to forbid pow-wows and any traditional dancing and dress. The Blackfeet dances that have survived today are taught to the tribe's youth. The acceptance of the dances into North American modern culture means less shame for younger Indians. The tribe is once again proud to dance in traditional dress.

The Coburns claimed the Blackfeet tribal culture uses dance as a tool to include, protect, enliven, and nurture its members. This is a dance form that truly believes in the power of dance and dance/movement therapy. Through the elders and knowledgeable tribal members, the nation will continue to pass along its oral tradition of stories and dances to the next generation, ensuring its future.

## New Zealand: Jan McConnell with Deon Nathan

"Tēnā koutou katoa from Aotearoa, New Zealand," welcomed dance/movement therapist Jan McConnell, "and together with my good friend and kaiārahi (guide) Deon Nathan, we present this personal expression and collaboration around the dance of the *Haka*." McConnell went on to describe that Haka means to ignite the spirit of Māori demi-gods in each one of us. Hā means the breath of life, Ka means to ignite. *Haka* is implemented in different contexts: through kura, or schools; through waiata, or song; in high schools through *Kapa Haka*; and in governmental events greeting dignities. *Kapa Haka* resembles the fluttering heart, with the rhythm the same as the heartbeat. It incorporates Māori values into physical activity. *Haka* connects Māori to the natural world or Te Taiao, and the spiritual world, Te Ao Wairua.

McConnell and Nathan presented together in the spirit of the Treaty of Waitangi, Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This is a treaty that underpins this land, and is between Tangata Whenua, Māori the indigenous people of New Zealand, and Tangata Tiriti, the crown. And so, it's through this lens that they investigated the connecting elements of DMT and *Haka.* Sharing a video of students from the school which McConnell's child attends, she invited the audience to explore their own sense of resonance to what they see and hear and to become aware of their own heartbeat, as there is an essence within this that comes from the heart. By viewing this dance through the lens of dance/movement therapy theories, she believes, one can acknowledge movement as metaphor, observe mirrored and kinesthetic empathy, while witnessing shared rhythm and the power of communal movement.

*Haka* enables personifying God in embryos; we are in infant form to become tamariki (the Māori word for children), children of ariki or Gods first born. McDonnell clarified that what they mean by "God" is not religion; *Haka* helps our tamariki uplift each other with the wisdom of our ancestors. It's more than just a game of rugby, she asserted, although the way by which *Haka* is known internationally is that it is performed before the start of rugby games by the New Zealand teams!

McConnell concluded with the following heartfelt poem:

When I witness Haka I feel it in my heart
I feel it in my feet
I feel it in the earth
I feel it the challenge
I feel it in the fear ……. And I stand anyway
I accept the challenge to drop what I think I know and I accept the challenge to stand in what my body has forever known.
I accept this challenge for my whanau (family), for all of our tamariki (children), for all of our whanau
And to honour what being Treaty partner means
I let go
And I listen
I listen to this old wisdom
with the nerves and the muscles and the heart and the blood and the spirit the Wairua
I listen
And I begin to hear.

## Taiwan: Grace Ho

Returning panelist, dance/movement therapist Grace Ho, gave a remarkable and detailed description of cultural dance from her home country of Taiwan. Ho discusses how Taiwanese indigenous people have abundant cultural identity. Taiwan is relatively a small, well-developed island and has a surprisingly high degree of diversity. Taiwan is thought to be the origin of the Austronesian family. Ho conducted

research into the history, language and culture of Taiwan, discussing that the country possesses a deep understanding towards cultural diversity and richness to other indigenous tribes around the Austronesian region. About 542,000 Taiwanese aborigines live on the island where there are 16 officially recognized indigenous tribes. These tribes have preserved the ancient Austronesian languages and culture while having their own languages, folk cultures, and tribal structures. Each of these tribes celebrates their own significant festivals throughout the year, such as the Harvest Festival, Ancestral Spirits Festival, and various tribal totems that best represent Taiwan's mysterious and diverse aboriginal cultures.

Amis is the largest tribe in Taiwan. They have magnificent rituals with the annual harvest being the most representative. According to the Council of Indigenous Peoples website (www.apc.gov.tw), the population of this tribe is nearly 214,000, and mainly distributed in Hualien, Taitung, and Pingtung counties in eastern Taiwan. The Amis have their own language—Austronesian dialect and have traditionally been a matriarchal society in nature; however, the tribal public affairs and important festive activities are still dominated by the male gender. Overall, the Amis social system equitably balances the power between men and women and that creates a harmonious social relationship within the tribe.

As evidenced in their music, said Ho, the Amis are known for their polyphonic vocals, in which two simultaneous lines of melody interact with one another during a song. Traditional music carries the history, culture, and memory of the indigenous group. Amis people often communicate by singing at weddings, funerals, and in everyday life; the musical instrument accompaniment helps to convey affections such as solace, encouragement, and blessings. There are more than 40 traditional Amis instruments and musical dances. The Amis have a rich collection of musical instruments among all indigenous tribes and their music is very well-known among all the tribes in Taiwan. Amis' people are closely connected to bamboo, which is also frequently used in making their musical instruments: bamboo percussion, nose flute, pan flute, woodpile, and Jew's harp. In their music, dancing and singing are always combined, and have a ritual implication. Their dance steps are typically related to land, women, farming, fishing, and hunting.

The traditional Amis clothes are light in texture with bright colors that display the Amis people's passionate and buoyant nature. During the Annual Age Festival, the Amis living across the island celebrate the Harvest Festival; it is during this time that both the young and the old Amis dress in bright traditional clothes and are united in powerful and lively dancing.

Ho described the key aspects of The Harvest Festival, which is a celebration of the year's harvest and provides an opportunity to express gratitude to tribal ancestors for their blessings and protection. It is an annual ceremonial and musical event filled with the songs and dances of the Amis. It also marks the start of a new year, with the dates of the festival varying according to the different regions of the Amis villages. Generally, the first of these events is set around the middle of July in the Taitung area, and the last is staged in Hualien at the end of August or early September. The celebration traditionally lasted for more than a week; however, in modern times the length of the festival has been reduced to an average of between three to five days. Its purpose is to thank their ancestors and the spirit gods for their goodwill and a bountiful harvest

during the year, and to ask them for good luck in the upcoming year, to free them from disease, and to send blessings for good weather. Beyond giving thanks for a bountiful harvest, the festival also serves as an important social event for families to reunite, to connect to gods and ancestors, and to unite the entire village socially and spiritually.

During the celebration Amis tribe members wear vibrant, colorful clothing representing their region. These colors are woven throughout their costumes and are chosen to represent their inseparable relationship with the environment and natural resources. Each age group wears different styles of headdresses, while the village chiefs wear ornate, feathered headwear symbolizing leadership and wisdom. Interestingly, said Ho, this festival also offers a chance for younger members to search for their potential marriage partners. During the dancing, males wear a brightly decorated bag over their shoulder called an "alufu" or lover's bag so that single women of the village can place a betel nut into the alufu of a man they admire. If the interest is mutual, the gift is accepted. Traditionally, it was the males' responsibility to welcome the ancestral spirits, and the duty of the females to end the festivities and give the ancestral spirits a grand send-off. Ho explained that in recent years, the gender restrictions have become not so rigid, with the dancing done in a circle with dancers holding hands and following a specific pattern of steps. The Amis believe that how they live in this life will impact their afterlife; that is, if they love singing and dancing during this life, they will experience a similar joy in the next. Singing and dancing well can lead the village to experience a bountiful harvest and favorable weather in the upcoming year. Finally, the shouting that is heard at the end of a song symbolizes the group's unity and the community spirit of the entire tribe. The Harvest Festival is the best way to learn and experience the richness of Amis traditional culture, music, dance, beliefs, and their ethnic identities.

In conclusion, Ho made many connections between the healing components of the dances celebrated at the Amis festival and modern-day dance/movement therapy. Communal dance in circles, the transformative power of music and voice, and the movement dialogues between generations, believes Ho, are properties manifested in both ancient traditions and in today's DMT methodologies.

## Turkey: Zeynep Catay

*Semah* is a dance performed as part of the religious service *Cem* of the Alevi population in Turkey, began dance/movement therapist Zeynep Catay. The Alevi belief is characterized as a heterodox, a philosophical interpretation of Islam that also brings together traditions from Central Asian shamanism and Anatolian Bektasi belief systems.

The Alevi-Bektasi belief is based on humanitarian values of egalitarianism and unity. The *Semah* dance is performed as one of the 12 rituals forming the religious service. It is performed in the spiritual house named Cemevi, in the presence of the spiritual leaders of the community: *Dede* (grandfather) or *Ana* (grandmother). It is accompanied by the music of *baglama*- a Turkish instrument like a long-necked lute. The *Zakir* plays the baglama and sings *Deyis*- poetry depicting the wisdom and phi-

losophy of Alevi-Bektasi culture. Typically, *Semah* is to be performed only as part of religious service. However, in recent years *Semah* performances are also carried out to educate non-Alevi groups and to stimulate interest in the younger generations.

Catay went on to describe the various qualities of this traditional dance that can often be seen during the process of dance/movement therapy. The *Semah* dance typically has three parts. Starting slowly, the first part is called Agırlama. This section is mostly about greeting. During the second part, *yurutme*, the dance becomes livelier, and the common rhythm is established, and finally *yeldirme* is the fastest part of the dance often resembling flying. The ceremony is concluded by a final prayer led by the religious leader.

The dance of *Semah* is performed by men and women side-by-side but without touching. As such, it embodies the principles of egalitarianism. It is performed in a circular formation. Motions of circling around the center while also twirling around one's own axis represent the cycles of life, the cycles in the universe, progression of day and night and unity of all living things. Specific movements of the *Semah* vary according to the region of Anatolia in which it is performed. Some resources indicate that there are more than 100 variations of *Semah*.

All movements in *Semah* have symbolic meanings embodying the Alevi values and one's connection with God, universe, and humanity. For example, the motion where the palm of one hand faces the sky while the palm of the other hand is turned to the ground symbolizes the connection between God and humans, taking from God and giving to humanity. A similar idea is expressed through the motion of turning both palms toward the sky and then reversing them so that they face the earth.

Placing the palm in front of one's face signifies looking at oneself in the mirror and seeing divine beauty. Turning the palms up to heaven and then bringing them over to the chest is interpreted as God is in me, or God is in man. The crane bird also has strong symbolic meaning for the Alevi. Crane birds are admired for their peaceful and cooperative nature. Many movements of the arms during Semah embody the wings of the crane bird. Moving arms forward and backward imitate birds taking flight, a metaphor for freedom and communication.

Currently forming around 10–15% of the population in Turkey, the Alevis had to endure discrimination and prosecution throughout history. Therefore, they have been discreet about their identity and religious practice. However, since the 1990's they have gone through a process of opening up and more candidly claiming their identity through various organizations. Catay concluded with proudly sharing that *Semah* was registered in 2010 on UNESCO's Representative List of the "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity."

The *Semah* dance, as Catay describes, embodies the many healing elements of DMT: symbolic communal dance utilizing mirroring movement and observing and responding to others; the use of the circle in an egalitarian process with both individual and group expression; and finally, the simple human experience of engaging in the dance with joy and pride.

## United States/African Diaspora: Kayla Oosaseun Jewette

Afro-Cuban Folkloric Dance has origins in Yorubaland Nigeria, began dance/movement therapist Kayla Oosaseun Jewette. This dance style is based on the Orisa practice. Orisa are the forces of nature that are around us in our everyday life and the spiritual manifestation of those forces. For example, Osun is the spiritual energy of water, specifically freshwater. This practice was brought to the Americas and the Caribbean through the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Jewette explained that our ancestors, brought this practice with them and kept the song, dance, and culture alive throughout generations of being enslaved. This practice fueled them spiritually, mentally, and physically allowing them to withstand the harrowing tests of enslavement.

While there are many Orisa within the practice, Jewette focused on Osun. As previously stated, Osun is the spiritual manifestation of water. She represents the divine maternal, womanly, and feminine energy in life. She is strong, caring, loving and shows the unconditional positive regard of a mother for her children. While she has many attributes, one of her greatest is that she is a healer and uses water to heal. Before western medicine, Osun used her sacred water to heal ailments from the common cold to infertility. Her healing abilities are unmatched and widely sought after by her children.

When you witness someone dancing for Osun, shared Jewette, they will more than likely have on colors like white, yellow, or orange. They will be adorned in brass bracelets, necklaces, beautiful earrings, a head scarf and may even wear feathers in their hair. This is representative of Osun's beauty and her ability to care for herself well and present herself in a beautiful way. Her movement is light, joyous, and she flows like a river. Her movement can be side-to-side, with turns, subtle or even large to take up space. When moving for her and embodying her essence, it's important to smile; she represents the joy that is found through our healing, and she smiles because of this.

Dancing for the Orisa is typically done in ceremony but can also be performative outside of a traditional setting. In ceremony, there are special drums played called Bata. There may also be a bell called an *agogo*, and even a *sekere* (a gourd surrounded by a net of beads). Songs are also sung along with the dance to call the spirit of the Orisa into the space; this is done by call and response. A lead singer will sing then the chorus will follow, and the entire ceremony is done in this way. There is dancing, drumming, and singing all happening at once in ceremony to invoke the spirit.

This practice through movement has given individuals of African descent the ability to connect to the lineage and legacy of their Ancestors. For Jewette, it has allowed her to personally find her connection to nature and connect to a higher power in the way her Ancestors did. It has also allowed her "to heal parts of myself in a way that feels meaningful and grounded as a person of African descent. It has given me community, balance, allowed me to build trust, learn to submit to a higher source, and helped me to uncover and live out my purpose."

Utilizing this body knowledge in her practice as a dance/movement therapist has proven to bring meaning and deeper healing and connection to movement groups. There are many elements that can be brought into dance/movement sessions, how-

ever, the three key elements that are used most often are rhythm, metaphor, and call and response.

The use of rhythm in Afro Cuban dance is important. There are movements that match specific movements. This means that the mover must listen and respond with their bodies to the proper rhythm. In movement groups this is demonstrated by a participant responding to the different rhythms or patterns within a particular song and moving in a way that feels authentic to them in their body. Being able to match or compliment a rhythm through the body brings organization and stronger interpersonal connection as participants move together in a group.

Jewette claims that metaphor or imagery may be one of the elements that is most accessible. Participants often assign meaning to their movement through a thought or feeling. This leads to the use of imagery or metaphor. The most common is that of water. Participants are often cleansing themselves, taking a swim, and washing away negativity. Utilizing the knowledge of the healing power of Osun once a participant assigns that imagery or metaphor to their movement, it becomes easier to ask more questions and inquire about what they are cleansing, what part of them needs to be healed, and how can they be refreshed. Some of Osun's movement is rubbing her arms, face and hands. This movement is often utilized to bring some self-soothing to participants and expressions of self-love.

Lastly, reports Jewette, call and response can be used in two major ways throughout groups: vocally or through movement. In ceremony, call and response is happening with the lead singer and chorus, and with the drummers and dancers. In movement sessions it is similar. If participants are comfortable using their voices and can assign a phrase or word to repeat, the group may begin to chant that back and forth to each other for a period of time. Similarly, throughout the group, participants and leader are constantly responding to each other through mirroring and complimentary movement, as if, Jewette contends, it was a conversation. One participant engages in a movement, and another may mirror or compliment, and it continues back and forth in that way.

Jewette concludes that Afro Cuban dance has much to offer to the world of dance/movement therapy. Ceremony and DMT groups are different contextually, however, the same elements can be used to bring about great connection, trust, organization, and healing through the power and intention of the movement and through the healing power of the Orisa.

## Concluding remarks

This year's panelists explored the intrinsic connection between the dance forms of their countries and ethnicities spiritual, cultural, and historic expression and the various ways in which elements of these dances influence their modern-day practice as dance/movement therapists. Witnessing the beautiful dancing and learning about the distinct wisdom of the ancient healers has clearly demonstrated the enduring impact of just how our mutual love of dance informs, supports, and drives our global profession.

The following is the link to the complete video of the 2021 International Panel presentation:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9zFoCpeookI&feature=youtu.be.