

# Rise! Arise! Arise!... Life is calling you...

## Dancing Live in New Zealand

By Dakini Warrior

It is Aotearoa, the Land of the Long White Cloud. And we are about to celebrate the Summer Solstice and Christmas all at once, dancing together, hand to hand, heart to heart. The privilege of gathering together, the touch, the direct glance into another's eyes and heart, sharing food and simple intimate connection – these are, on one hand, acknowledged and appreciated strongly at our regular dance meetings; and on the other hand, they feel so normal and ordinary, that the Covid-related challenges the rest of the world faces, seem like long forgotten fairy tales from far-away lands.

I arrived in New Zealand together with my husband and daughter, to spend here six months, dancing and traveling around in a house truck. When the Covid lockdown hit in March, we got stuck on a desolate, deserted pebble beach in the South Island, away from even a mobile signal. For the next two months the nature invited me in, love flowed freely, and I simply accepted the blessing. I discovered that it was a beach of precious stones, and every step I took was on agate, red jasper and green quartz; an audience of birds, seals and dolphins joined my morning practices... My heart felt nourished and graced and I knew very little about the world outside.

It is now more than a year later, and the three of us are still in a house truck on the land of long beaches and live dances. The restrictions on gatherings lasted for a few months, and by the winter the dance circles had returned. By that time the zoom boom had bloomed worldwide, and alongside with it, had come the exhaustion from zoom for many.

**So how is it for us to eat, dance and pray together in person, knowing that we are in a totally unprecedented unique position in the world to be able to do it?**

Below are some thoughts from a few dance lovers in New Zealand. By any means these only represent a small fraction of the whole picture, yet they may give you a snippet of a current feel in New Zealand.

From Premanand:

“God’s Love is always raining down on us but we keep putting up our umbrellas. Our winter gathering at the end of July at the Tauhara Centre in Taupo was just the most sublime dance weekend, it was certainly a time of taking down the umbrellas, being the first time we had all gathered together for 4 months as a result of lockdown. 70-80 of us felt tremendously blessed and full of gratitude for hands holding hands, hearts touching hearts, breathing together, to be dancing again our voices soaring, moving together in unison, sharing deep gentle eye contact and ahhhh, the hugs.... heaven on earth in these uncertain times. And sending these blessings and prayers of healing out to all beings knowing that very few places in the world could partake in the experience of being together in this way presently. This, what we had previously so taken for granted.

Link to Joyful Zikr, filmed at this weekend: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Y9Yqkd\\_4aU&ab\\_channel=JenaRobinson](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Y9Yqkd_4aU&ab_channel=JenaRobinson)

What a precious gift to gather again at Te Moata for our spring gathering, to be held, nurtured and supported by 860 acres of regenerating native bush. Living with Jelaluddin Rumi’s words ‘it is best to travel with companions, with other Lover’s of God’ echoing in our hearts as we explored ‘Why are we Here!’

And now we look forward to our summer of dancing with Dance Camp Aotearoa, sharing leadership, our largest dance event on the calendar, and Mana Retreat our annual DUPANZ network event, this year with beloved Dakini. What a gift.

We feel so blessed living in Aotearoa at this time, living without the fear or restrictions of covid on a daily basis, and knowing this could change in an instant!"

From Azima Sally Mabelle:

"This one is grateful for the surprisingly huge burst of inspiration which was personally received during this time of covid19, resulting in many more local as well as international dance and sufi zoom connections, with the barrier of travel costs slashed. This also led to an opportunity to deepen in our own spiritual practices, calling us to go within to develop more connection and resilience.

In 2020, I have held six face to face dance gatherings so far, and one more to come for Summer Solstice (four in central Auckland and three in west Auckland) and we seemed to enjoy them all the more knowing how blessed we were to be free to connect in person while the rest of the world were still under greater restrictions.

We here in Aotearoa NZ did not realise when we gathered for our Maori dances weekend 6th-8th March with Shafia and Maiyima that this would be our last face-to-face gathering for over four months. It was not until the end of July when we reconvened for the first time in person at Tauhara Retreat Centre, for a dance gathering with about 80 dancers held by Premanand and Amrita Bhakti. What a joy and relief it was to dance in person again! Although initially cautious, we quickly fell into the joy of our moving meditations, complete with handholding. Ahhh - together again! We then held another face-to-face dance gathering on the 1st August at the Auckland Unitarian Church, again a joy and blessing not to be taken for granted!

During our lockdown periods, the Spirit of Guidance also inspired this one to hold four other zoom dance evenings on the seasonal transition evenings of Autumn Equinox (21 March) and Samhain (1 May) and Winter Solstice (20 June) as well as a Trans-Tasman zikr in collaboration with Hadia (NZ) and Arjuna (Australia).

It was delightful to have dancing friends from Hawaii as well as Arizona and Canada join in on some of those gatherings, as well as others from our local and NZ national dance community. A sense of shared community and connection was still felt, despite the physical distance.

Our last 4 seasonal dance gatherings were held face-to-face, and again, although cautious, there was a palpable sense of joy in community connection and gratitude for the dances, knowing that not all of our dancing friends were able to gather at this time. We send our love and blessings out with the heartfelt prayer 'May all beings be well and happy and free!'"

From an appreciative dancer Matěj Koukl from Czech Republic:

"I am present in New Zealand for last year. I attended a majority of dancing gatherings.

Regarding my actual path, I was naturally attracted into the middle of the circle to the position of a musician. Thus I was supporting by my guitar and drum especially the bigger meetings like a Dance Camp and retreats. I experienced very pleasant cooperation with local dance leaders and warmth welcoming into the community. For 2 month of lockdown we were holding our regular meetings via Zoom. At that time I felt quite dispossessed. And for this reason I am very humble at the start of every our

gathering. What a gift, only this simple possibility to meet in person and that it is “today” happening again. We often mention the thoughts towards other dancers and mainly all people who haven’t chance to meet physically during this special time. Sometimes the whole one dance is dedicated to support anybody in a challenging situation, because especially during the awesome evening, it is easy to forget actual time of world changes.”

From Dakini:

“Fresh and strong was the desire and longing for the dances in me when we started again. Yet, it wasn’t the human connection, I particularly longed for, but the soothing, powerful, gentle, clear, peaceful, heart-opening healing livingness of the dances. With gratitude I rediscovered the joyous blessing of dancing, whereas in recent years my experience had mostly been leading and playing music in the middle. I appreciate the depth of awareness around the challenges humankind faces in different countries worldwide, especially sending out our heartfelt compassion and light to all the suffering beings.

As a dance leader, I also notice the various ways the pandemic of fear has impacted our dance circles. Recently, in a dance circle with a number of new dancers, the leader was asked, if there was a need to hold hands during the session. “I’m not going to hold **her** hand, as I saw her sneezing into her hand”, exclaimed a worried dancer...

Holding situations like this one - holding fear, deep grief, loneliness and hopelessness asks for a refined sensitivity towards every soul present. The job description of a dance leader evolves into becoming a light bearer, a messenger, and a bodhisattva in the service of the One and All. And the dance circle becomes a prayer wheel radiating out kindness, hope and compassion to the world. As Hameed put it in a recent dance evening in Auckland (paraphrasing Murshid SAM): “you may think, that we are just singing and dancing here, but really we are working for peace in our own hearts and in the world.”