



EDUCATION THROUGH ART

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“Rainbow” [Raduga] Dance Ensemble was established in 1975 as a dance class in the House of Pioneers in Nizhny Novgorod. Today it is a stable creative team - a community of teachers, children and their parents.

“Rainbow” Dance Ensemble has repeatedly become laureates and diploma-recipients of federal and international competitions for the interesting body language of dance and corresponding execution form. We are recognized to be good at getting over our ideas to the audience.

The Romans had a proverb: “A healthy mind in a healthy body”. They gave priority to “a healthy mind” considering it as an essential characteristic of health. Lately, though, the focus has shifted to “a healthy body”. In my opinion, both aspects are important in choreography classes.

My own philosophy of education is built on pedagogical ideas of the Russian Orthodox teacher Konstantin Dmitrievich Ushinsky. Education (as defined by KD Ushinsky) is a conscious process that contributes to the creation of a *harmonious personality*. In pedagogy an important role belongs to moral education. Education and upbringing should take into account the historical features and traditions of people, Church and family.

Over 40 years the important part of our dance community is the Parents Club. The Parents Club holds meetings focused on different themes, inviting such guest speakers as poets, doctors, priests and artists. This is a great opportunity for parents to spend time with their children and get closer to each other. This is also a great opportunity for me as a teacher to get to know children and their parents better and create a learning environment as effective as possible.

In one of the first meetings with parents we started a discussion about the main ideas of KD Ushinsky and my own pedagogical methods. For me it was the first attempt to develop Orthodox-oriented pedagogical technologies and forms of work with children.

With the assistance of parents in 2001 a conference called “Mother and Child, together in the 21st Century” [Mat i Ditya, vmeste v 21-i vek] was held. The most important result of the conference was an invitation to “Glinskie Readings” [Glinskie Chteniya] in The Holy Trinity St. Sergius Lavra. I have attended this international forum twice since then. The forum has provided me with immense material in the field of pedagogy.

One of the most significant events in the life of our dance community is themed family night called “In honor of the Royal family” [V Chest Tsarskoi Semi]. Here is the description of the event from “Lorgnette” [Teatralnyi Binokl] magazine: “While professional adult artists are looking for a reason for insane giggling, children have found a topic to think about and sob. It was not a concert or performance but a

purification ritual. Women felt free to cry and men hard frowning from internal pain gazed intently into the faces of their daughters and sons talking about Love - shot but not killed...”

For several years in cooperation with young people of the Nizhny Novgorod Diocese, family and youth dancing balls were held. The family ball on Maslenitsa¹ week was not without participation of the brass band.

The Parents Club has organized the celebration that refers to the Christianization of Kievan Rus. The teacher of the basics of Orthodox culture from Sormovskaya Orthodox gymnasium told about the history of the baptism of Rus'. The church choir performed different Russian poems and spiritual chants. The head of Nizhny Novgorod Regional Public Organization “Our Fatherland” [Nashe Otechestvo] provided children and their parents with the history and work of the organization. She pointed out that keeping Orthodox traditions, family values and Russia's cultural heritage alive is one of the main goals of the organization.

Our ensemble’s repertoire is quite extensive and has included performances accompanied by classical music composers such as Vivaldi, Tchaikovsky, Sviridov, Bach, Shostakovich. The special place in repertoire is allocated for folk dance of Russia and other countries. We regularly organize Christmas nights and concerts on different themes such as “Easter joy” [Paskhálnaya Radost], “In Russia one can only believe” [V Rossiyu Mozhno Tolko Verit], “Seasons” [Vremena Goda] etc.

We are happy to take part in the social project “Children for Children” [Deti - Detyam] and give charity concerts. Our Dance Ensemble made a performance for children from St. Nicholas-Chernoostrovsky Monastery Orphanage “Otrada” in Maloyaroslavets. These performances is an important variety of stage practice; they teach children to show mercy and share joy with the audience.

According to the article “Eternal truths in dance” [Vechnye Istyny V Tantsy] recently published in the local Orthodox newspaper, children in our dance community feel secure and loved. A lot of them manage to achieve professional heights not only due to their dance education but thanks to their personal qualities. They have a strong faith and belief in God so they can deal better with challenges: “Not only the Ideal itself is interesting but also the “obstacles” that are standing in the way to it”.

Over the past two years, Anastasia Maysun, a graduate of “Rainbow” Dance Ensemble and a head of Dance School “Resurrection” [Voskresenie], has staged some contemporary dances for us as a choreographer. They are: “I’m drawing sunlight. Van Gogh” [Ya Risuyu Solnechnyi Svet. Van Gogh], “Pilgrims” [StrAnnitsy], “Insight” [Pro.Zrenie], “The secrets of Degas” [Tainy Degas].

All these performances are about spirituality. The basis for the production "Insight" was the song "Only-That-All" performed by the celebratory choir of St. Elisabeth Monastery in Minsk. This song is a program of Christian life: "just - only -

¹ Maslenitsa is the Russian title of a celebration that takes place every year before Orthodox Lent.

love", "just - only - do not judge", "just - only - do not be sad", "just – only - forgive everybody". The finale of the dance is positive and life-affirming, symbolized by the hands raised toward each other.

Spiritual and moral education in our ensemble is a reference point for high moral values, the formation of humane relations between children, responsibility for their behavior, the necessity for labor, caring attitude toward friends, family values, communication culture, the need and ability to self-consciousness and self-education.

To the question «What is it impossible for a person to live without? - most students answered: "Without family. Without friends. Without love." And "To be human is..." - "To be kind, grateful, and responsible. To achieve one's goal."

They become not only professional dancers but good and kind people. They are able to raise a strong family and strong connections to their children. And their children become a part of “Rainbow” Dance Ensemble so we can keep exploring the world as a big family.