

Remembering Trans Remembrance

By Gina Maya

At a certain point, the playwright and actress had everybody in the palm of her hand. Jo Clifford, the evening's guest speaker, also a sort of benign cobra before us, mesmerizing, with her tales of directing theatre in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, of a life story of love, loss and artistic resurrection. She spoke of religion and the two versions of the myth of Adam and Eve, a familiar one of polarity, then another of androgyny. Somehow it was possible to be anything in that relaxed, reflective audience, atheist or religious, middle-class culture vulture or revolutionary. The event was trans remembrance, but it could have been simply about humanity.

We celebrated, then, and remembered. Avery Laquerriere read their brilliant poem about pride and alienation and shit-strewn hypocrisy. Jo Clifford spoke of her life and her career; she could have continued all night, one suspects, on any topic. We watched a movie, *Tangerine*, that became increasingly about fragile individuals falling between the cracks of social labels, trans women, married husbands, their families, prostitutes left outside bolted brothel doors. It was Christmas in the sun-swept urban sprawl of Los Angeles, with a big final scene of conflict in the plastic hollowness of a Donut Time restaurant.

Outside the room we broke for tea and pastries, while by candlelight stood a board with some eighty names of trans people, murdered in hate crimes this year, from all over the world. We celebrated trans identity, and remembered.

And bless us

For all the times we have been frozen in terror

Let's remember we are not alone

Don't let us,

Don't let us ever forget,

For he is she

And she is he

And we are they

And they are we

And ever shall be

For ever

And for ever

And for ever

Jo Clifford

The Gospel According to Jesus Queen of Heaven

Why I do Queer Tango

by Maria Boutchkova

If you don't need convincing to try Queer tango, please come along on Wednesdays either for a lunch or an evening class (12 noon – 1pm and/or 1-2pm; 7-8pm and/or 8-9pm) at Epworth Halls, Methodist Church, Nicholson Square (5 minutes from the University of Edinburgh George Square campus), otherwise, read

on for why I do it.

Over the last three years, I have been dancing on and off at the Blues and Balboa events organized by <http://www.edinbop.co.uk/>. I like the crowd there, along with the spirit of the dancing because being able to lead or follow regardless of one's presented gender is common and accepted. Before moving to Edinburgh, I had chosen to practice flamenco in Montreal for two important reasons: first, because this dance has very little partner dynamic and second, for its emotional intensity. This intensity, in my mind, can be found in tango as well, and it has been an unfulfilled dream of mine to be able to learn it one day. But the very rigid traditional roles of leading and following, not to mention the strict ritual of eye contact and nods across the dance floor before inviting someone to dance, have placed it in the "I don't do this" category for me.

Until I saw an ad for Queer tango this summer, and attended several classes in July with the amazing, inspiring, igniting Louise.

One of the rules I live by as a parent and as a human being, is to act in a way and use a type of language that challenges oppressive stereotypes. For example, I

avoid saying to little girls how cute or pretty they are, and instead I ask them what their favourite story is, or ask to see something they recently drew or made. Imagine how I felt, when Louise told us in the very first Queer tango class that we would invent our own language and instead of saying lead and follow, that we would use the words suggest and interpret.

To me Louise's will to start this class and use a new language is not only an act of activism that is in line with my beliefs but also has been a precious gift – to be able to enter the world of this magical dance that used to be inaccessible to me. I can't wait to share this gift with as many people as

possible, and I know Louise feels the same.

Here is my favourite description on how Louise teaches tango:

“Louise’s philosophy of tango is that it is about awareness and connection. To tango well, you have to be able to pay attention. Some people have called tango ‘walking with attitude’, but she thinks it’s ‘walking with awareness’ – of yourself, of the other person, of everybody else in the room, of the music. In the world and in life in general, people are often looking for different ways to connect really well with other people. As human beings, we thrive with connection, and tango is a fabulous way of being connected.”

Please join us on Wednesdays at lunchtime or in the evening for one or two hours. The lunchtime classes are 12 noon – 1pm and/or 1-2pm; the evening classes are 7-8pm and/or 8-9pm. They are at Epworth Halls, Methodist Church, Nicholson Square (5 minutes from the University of Edinburgh George Square campus). Find out more at <http://www.qte.dance/> and/or join the Queer tango Edinburgh Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/285415031797624/>.