

The Table of Silence, a Prayer for Peace

Joelle Grosso (September 16, 2016)



Jacquelyn Buglisi is the American choreographer who created the concept behind the Table of Silence Project 9/11. This project is not simply a choreographed dance but it also serves as a public tribute, a healing labyrinth, and a prayer for peace. Every year since its launch in 2011, her dance company, the Buglisi Dance Theatre, has done this performance on the anniversary of September 11th at Lincoln Center in New York City.

Being a native New Yorker, the tragic events that happened on September 11th were especially hard on Jacquelyn. Living in an apartment on 42nd street, she was actually able to see where the first plane hit from her window. One of her close friends, Bill Biggart, passed on that day despite being in war zones several times throughout his career as a photojournalist.

The inspiration for this particular project however came to her a few years later while she was in Italy. After visiting Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper, she went to see an installation created by the Italian visual artist, Rosella Vasta entitled Table of Silence. Another artist, Constantin Brancusi of Romania, had made a sculpture with the same name years earlier. So with these influences in mind, Buglisi had the urge to collaborate with Rosella Vasta. She wanted to personify Rosella's idea of the table of silence which was a huge allegorical banquet table of humanity coming together to sit and share a meal in silence.

This was how the Table of Silence Project 9/11 was born. In this choreographed number, over 160 dancers dressed in white recreate the shape of a mandala which is a spiritual symbol that represents the universe in many Indian religions. This September, Buglisi was present at the Italian General Consulate of New York's ceremony that paid tribute to those of Italian descent who died during the attack 15 years ago. In her own words, she said she wanted to create a "peace labyrinth" of a



mandala energy that brings harmony, purity, and hope into the world. By doing this she believes that “we can send this message through the human body, the instrument through which we live our lives, and through which we dance. We could make that expression reach beyond words.”

The Table of Silence Project 9/11 has not only been carried out in New York but in California and in the Italian towns of Perugia and Assisi as well. The performance has also been streamed live and was viewed in over 82 countries. Now that this beautiful project has reached a global scale, Buglisi regards it as an international call for peace while at the same time commemorating those who lost their lives on that terrible day so many years ago. She wants to enforce the power of movement and the concept that we can “awaken our humanity through art.”

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