

FOURTY YEARS OF RIO ABIERTO

The Río Abierto Foundation was born in Buenos Aires in 1966. Since then, instructors formed in this institution have been teaching the system in many cities in Argentina and around the world.

Julia Pomies writes

Mar del Plata, Necochea, Villa Mercedes, 9 de Julio, Bariloche, Rosario, Córdoba, San Juan, San Luis, Santa Fe... And in the Americas: Brasilia, Campinas, Piaui, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador de Bahía, San Pablo, Montevideo, Mexico DF, Tepolztlan, Boston and Los Angeles... And in Europe: Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, Tenerife and Las Palmas (en the Canary Islands), Rome, Ancona, Bologna, Milan, Napoles, Papua, Verona, Munich, Lugano (Switzerland). And also Tel Aviv, Jerusalem. And recently in Moscow.

In the first days of September this year Río Abierto held once again an International Encounter of Teacher Trainers in the Río Abierto System (mind-body techniques for human development): vital expressive movement, massage, voice liberation, posture awareness, meditation, work on oneself.

The encounter took place in the home quarters in Buenos Aires. Intense all-day workshops that included debates, workshops, model classes... reaffirming knowledge and seeking, the surprise of new ventures and discoveries. At the close of the international encounters, these instructors from all over the world coordinated a cycle of open classes which were attended by over 150 students, colleagues and friends... Kiné Magazine was there, and besides sharing the movement, the creativity, the energy of the visitors – and of the local inhabitants too, we took advantage of the opportunity to make a few interviews and take some photos.



A Capillary Growth

We spoke with Enzo, Vincenzo Rossi, who tells us: "I found the Río Abierto system in Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro... María Adela came often to give classes. And then, in the year 1978, I decided to take the instructors' course and I came to Buenos Aires and stayed for 2 years... and then I went on traveling back and forth all the time. At that time, Río Abierto had very few foreigners coming to take the instructors' preparation, unlike today, so for everyone it was strange to see a Neapolitan in Buenos Aires. And to study this!... that was also strange for my family and friends back in Italy.

Then I met my present wife, Claudia here in Argentina... And in 1983 we settled down in Napoles. Since we began to teach an instructors' course we have had a number graduate classes. At present, there are round 100 graduates teaching throughout the Italian peninsula: in Rome and outlying areas, in Milan, in Bologna, in Venice, Papua... Rather than multitudinous classes, as is the case here, there we have a capillary growth in the medium-size cities and smaller in the outlying areas. Many people take classes in their small towns. Moreover, we have an instructors' course and special activities in our center in Umbria. So that, in Italy, if you mention the name Río Abierto, the people know what you are talking about... In fact, my book on the system that was published this year, is already in its 3rd edition... Surprisingly. Editions of 2.000 or 3.000 copies that are sold out at once..."

Enzo presents us with a copy. It's in Italian of course, but we'll translate some extracts to share with our readers.

"This is a living work. There is a common spirit, common elements, but each region, each instructor, finds and creates his own peculiar characteristics. In my case, I have gone deeper into the relationship of our work with music, overall with that which is commonly called classical music.

About Río in Río Abierto and other bodies

We spoke with Michel Robin, director of Río Abierto in Rio de Janeiro.

“Each Río Abierto is different from the others. People in Brazil are very concerned about their body. It’s an instrument for teaching, it’s for people to see me. It has a very great importance. And this is a notable difference. There are many academies of gym. A lot of muscle-building. Everywhere. Because people want to have beautiful, strong bodies. For show. The body is more for show than to feel or to be used dynamically. It is a calling card. This is a strong characteristic of Brazilian culture. There, people think at gym as a way to obtain and keep muscular, “hard” body. But, in Río Abierto we work precisely on the opposite: the flexible-permeable-expressive-sensitive. In Brazil, there is a very “instant” culture. Much more than here, people want everything now. Results on the outside, not the inside so, it’s difficult to attract people because there are much better “modeling” alternatives. And now, it’s the pilates cruze! The body divorced of mental, emotional psychological aspects... and on the other hand, there is strong spiritual current, but distorted... The Evangelical Christians occupy an impressive space. “Let the inner demon out...” They shout. And they too are after instant spiritual results. Everywhere we find a crisis of meaning; people are lost; they don’t know where to go. There is a crisis of belonging. Two fundamental crisis. Religions give exactly that: direction and belonging. They give deep consolation.

Our work is also one of brotherhood when one looks at the inner part. But, one great difficulty is that in Río Abierto we attempt a return to the essence, to contact with our essence and express ourselves from there. But people are hypnotized by the instruments; they want techniques: Is it Bio-Energetic? is it Reich? Is it Gestalt? Is it a mixture? Is it for solving psychological problems? Then, they go to a psychologist. Buy this goes beyond psychology... We made a little flyer to promote our work. It says: “If you feel unhappy with your body, you go to the gym academies for work on your body. Then, a drama class to improve your expressive ability. Then, if you feel a lack in your psyche, in your heart, in your mind, you go to a therapist. And if you have a spiritual crisis, you go in search of something religious... What if I told you there is a way to approach all of this at one time, a way that deals with all these together, in an integrated manner? That is the Río Abierto system, come and experience it”.

Just look, nothing solid is left; the parameters we had 20 or 50 years ago are collapsing. The economic situation isn’t stable, nor the emotional one, nor is one’s job, one’s profession... What do you have that’s solid, concrete outside yourself... what do we have?... Nothing. We are in new times. The external parameters are disappearing. And where are we going to stand? On what solid ground? Inside.

And this work is directed to that. Since there is nothing on the outside that is saved solid. Our education inculcates the idea of stability. Settle down in life. But there is nothing stable any more. There is something that’s moving. This work is movement and we must learn to be in movement.

We have a culture of clinging, clinging to ideas, to something solid. We must use ideas in movement. Discard them when they are no longer valid. Or when we are in a different situation. Look at the parameters of light. The wave concept of light. Or the corpuscle concept. Which one is true? For some things, one works, for other things, the other. You have to pick up and let go. We need to have an education for things in movement, the antithesis of the static, the stable.

In Mexico, the Indians danced in the square and they gave us a flyer. And it impressed me deeply: the Aztecs in their culture regarded dance as something to be lived by priests, warriors, administrators. Because by living dance one can apprehend the movement of things.

Understanding movement is different from simply understanding: stand under not stand over. Understanding includes the body. The mind alone is no enough. One must live it. When I live movement, I understand that things flow. They are made and unmade continually. This causes anguish. One must take it on the positive side, the fact that things aren’t crystallized. A concept is formulated; I use it until it doesn’t work any more; then I let it go because now there is another way of looking at it...

I’m studying contemporary scientists like Bohm, Sheldrake because their arguments are very appropriate and... “scientific”. Prigogine... A more dynamic, artistic vision of science. They say that all the laws of physics are being constantly up-dated. This causes anguish because there is nothing set-pat; it is a chance to create. I love Paulo Freire: “the world isn’t, the world is becoming...” And I am creation. I, too, am creating the world...

There is another world in San Pablo (Denise and Eduardo describe it)

Denise: San Pablo has a style quite different from that of other Río Abiertos, even in Brazil. In San Pablo, all our instructor-trainers, except Eduardo, are psychologists... and I believe this give us a more psychological orientation. Whereas Rio de Janeiro has a more artistic orientation... Campinas is more on the intimate, oriented more towards massage, a deep inner work... I feel that Río Abierto has changed my life. If I contemplate Denise before and after, I feel I am another person, with other values, other beliefs... I am very grateful for this change in path that has come about in my life.

Eduardo: We belong to the first group of graduates of the Río Abierto system in San Pablo. And we have been working for 16 years now. We began with Ana Micaela, who came from Rio de Janeiro and had a group for pregnant women, which Denise started going to. They invited me to come and do some work together... but it turned out to be the day our little daughter was to be born. So, Denise asked me to go and speak with Ana and advice her that we wouldn't go, that Roberta had just been born. I went. I arrived just when a class was about to start. And Ana said, come in, join our class. And I went in... and never left after that. So that, in some way, we were born to Río Abierto along with our daughter.

From Mexico, Chinese coincidences

Alicia Zappi, director of Río Abierto Mexico attempted to bring to this encounter the idea of coincidence: "My theme has been the relationship between our work in movement and massage and Chinese medicine. Because there is a very fine correspondence between the way we move and the meridians... the 5 elements... Both in movement and massage our energy lines, our lines between muscles, all correspond "coincidentally". I'm interested in emphasizing the fact that our work is preventive as well as healing. It's not dangerous when an illness is present (sometimes people say no to a massage when there is an infection or cancer or spinal problems...) But our massage is like a medicine that cures before you realize you were ill. The signs are always previous to those considered by allopathic medicine. Clear signs of need of help appear in the organ or the meridian. In Chinese medicine, certain organs are related to specific emotions. We work with the idea of certain repetitions and characteristics being associated to specific organs, either occupying too much space or repressing certain emotions. Contemplating both systems helps me to be more precise in my work.

In fact, there are repetitive or chronic emotions that cause illness in specific organs or glands. And other emotions that heal. The more one studies from different points of view that all converge, the greater precision one attains. This is the theme I have tried to bring to this encounter because it is what I have been studying in the last few years.

Heading for Montevideo

Our last conversation was with Graciela Figueroa, dancer, choreographer, directress of Río Abierto in Montevideo and in Spain.

"I was born in Montevideo. I began to dance at the age of two when my mother brought me to a Russian dance teacher. When I was 9, I had already begun to work in the independent theater. I have always danced. I have done theater and dance. Choreography. I have had a lot of recognition, success ever since I was very young. In the 60's they weren't giving scholarships to young people... but all of a sudden, I don't know what happened, and I was given a Fulbright Scholarship as a professional dancer by the US State Department and the OAS. So, I went. I auditioned for the Graham dance company and Cunningham... and I was given scholarships and contracts. I stayed several years and developed my professional career in N.Y. Until I felt that I had to return. And I came back to Latin America. To Uruguay. I got involved with a group, with a community, where I went on with my artistic work but also with an inner work. Then I went to Chile. Then, many years in Brazil. I was always traveling. But then I established my home quarters in Montevideo. I was living in Brazil when I met María Adela and it was a very, very deep event for me. Very beautiful. Something that came to give a continuity to what we had already begun. Before that, it was something like listening to myself to what came from above and from within. And, as a very young girl, I had also read Ouspensky and Gurdjieff... These readings supported me clarified my ideas. Oriental books too. The I Ching. Key books that helped and accompanied me.



When I was in the US, it was between 1960 and 1968, I experienced a great opening of mind and heart... In Chile, I joined Caludio Naranjo (we are one in our inner work). They saw me dance and called me. It seemed that recognized in my work something that has to do with an inner search. And there, I came into contact with something more structured than what I had been doing alone (from so alone to so accompanied). I remained with his group until the military coup. And I had to flee.

And then, it was Coringa (a dance company, professional dance classes and other things) in Brazil, very intense work. And then, with María Adela we put together something that we called "A Fonte" (The Source) and we worked together with Coringa. We put on big shows. A hundred dancers... But they didn't come for the shows. They came to improve their lives.

Then we began to work (A Fonte/Coringa) including all the Río Abierto system. Now, in Uruguay, we call it "A Space for Harmonious Development; Río Abierto Uruguay". And so, I have always gone on working.