

Revisions to the Leaders Guild Guidelines, March 2016

(substantive changes highlighted below in red)

DANCE LEADER'S JOURNEY

An Approach to Study and Training for Dance and Walk Leaders

What does the dance do for us? First and foremost, it inculcates the sense of rhythm and enhances our response to rhythm. This is really a response to life. It makes us more living, which is to say, more spiritual. It brings out beauty of form and movement, and envelops our personalities in the enjoyment of them. It takes us beyond ourselves, bringing an initial state of non-being, which is really a balm for the soul. (Samuel L. Lewis, ¹)

If you find that the Dances and Walks engage your whole heart and being, immerse yourself in them. Before you can pass them on to others you need to cultivate them within yourself. Dance often and with as many experienced leaders as possible. Become an experienced dancer. Allow the dance transmission to find a home in your heart. Then, if you continue to be drawn to this path, find a mentor with whom you can travel. Throughout human history, any transmission of the sacred has taken place through person-to-person relationships, regardless of institutions or organizations.

To pursue this path requires great and sustained commitment. It is, in actuality, a form of self-transformation in public. Beyond self-development, the path of dance leading is essentially one of service for the benefit of others. The foundation elements requisite to one's development on this path are listed here and described in [Elements of Mastery](#).

- The Dance Lineage
- Experience, Assimilation, Transmission
- The Walks
- Breath
- Heart
- Embodiment
- Rhythm
- Voice
- Magnetism and Atmosphere
- Concentration
- Meditation
- Silence
- Attunement - Tasawwuri, Fana, Effacement
- Elements
- Personal Evolution
- Working with Energy
- Musicianship
- Working with Musicians
- Group Facilitation Skills and Leadership Qualities
- Knowledge, Experience and Understanding of a Variety of Spiritual Traditions

Finding a Mentor - The Mentored Leader

Although the transmission of the legacy of Murshid Samuel Lewis is the responsibility of the [Sufi Ruhaniat International](#), training in leading the Dances of Universal Peace and Walking Concentrations is open to persons of all spiritual streams.

Like native mysticism, this tradition is communicated directly from teacher to student, thus ensuring that subtleties – such as the transmission of sacred atmosphere and attunement, which are impossible to systematize – can be effectively embodied. By linking to a mentor one connects with the power of the lineage of this body of work. Attuning to a teacher creates a direct experience of lineage transmission, which gives authenticity to presentations and representations of any particular stream of blessing. All aspiring dance leaders need to find a mentor; this will be someone who is not a spouse, partner or any other relative of the dance leader.

New leaders naturally look for a mentor to whom they feel attuned: one who has developed qualities they themselves would like to cultivate. Mentors work in different ways with their students (mentees); e.g., some mentors offer training programs or mentoring groups, and others work individually. New leaders are encouraged to inquire of mentors regarding their methods. For a current list of mentors, visit [Mentors Worldwide](#).

Once the mentoring relationship has been formed and the mentor has communicated the details to the [Community Coordinator](#), the mentee becomes a Mentored Leader and is admitted to the Leaders Guild (subject to remaining current with the annual fees). Mentored Leaders are expected to stay in a working relationship with their mentor and abide by the Leaders Guild Guidelines and [Agreements](#). Especially in the beginning stages of learning to lead the Dances and Walks, the importance of Mentored Leaders actively communicating with their mentor, and inviting and considering their mentor's advice and guidance, cannot be overstated.

Mentors may charge for time, expenses and travel in relation to training. Payment or exchange arrangements are made between mentor and mentee.

First Steps in Leading the Dances

Before you try to lead a Dance, make sure you have experienced it. It is impossible to offer someone an experience you yourself have not had, and the Dances are, first and foremost, a matter of experience.

Learning to lead the Dances takes time. Don't try to learn too many Dances too quickly. To begin, learn one Dance thoroughly. Choose from one of the various Mantric Dances. Ideally, there will be no English words in your first Dance. It can be a partner Dance or not. Once you have learned the Dance music and movements then develop a strong relationship to the mantra, the sacred phrase. Get to know it well. Take it into meditation practice. Breathe with it in the heart. Walk with it, getting a sense of the rhythm of the mantra and your walk. Intone it on one note. Sing the melody. Dance the Dance so that it becomes effortless to do. Internalize completely the mantra, music and movements. Once you have a Dance "in your body" in this way it's unlikely you will forget it. Then create the opportunity to lead it with a group of people.

Many people begin leading the Dances by sharing a Dance or Walk in a local community gathering or meditation group. Commitment increases as one simultaneously chooses and feels chosen by the Dances and Walking Concentrations as spiritual practice. The Dances are freely

given and freely received, so there is no restriction on sharing a couple of Dances with friends. However, as with any other discipline, if you want to manifest the fruit of the practice you need to cultivate deep roots. These roots are nourished through patience, practice and sincere motivation.

Choosing Certification - The Certified Leader

Choosing certification and working toward this with a mentor furthers the process of learning to lead the dances. As one moves through the various stages of learning, which includes learning about oneself, there is feedback and validation from a more experienced teacher. One also learns how to set goals and accomplish them with concentration, in a process that Hazrat Inayat Khan calls "Sadhana: the Path of Attainment". Murshid Wali Ali has commented, "This path is not about becoming a teacher; it is about becoming awake."

It is necessary to be in an active mentoring relationship to pursue certification. The responsibility for seeking this certification lies with you, the mentee. When you are inspired to become a certified dance leader bring this up with your mentor. Together, you and your mentor find the best way to work toward this goal.

While certification recognizes a certain level of skill and commitment to the Dance and Walks transmission, it is not an end in itself. Certification represents a commitment to continue growing as a dance leader and deepening in one's responsibility to the lineage of the Dances and Walks.

The time required to complete certification as a dance leader varies with each person. Most mentors expect that at least three years of dedicated study and dance leading experience are required; it more often takes longer. Experience is gained not so much through time but through practice and developing the inner self. The number of times one leads in a year will vary and have an effect on this estimate.

Leaders each unfold in their own unique way. Mentees are considered and reviewed individually. The student leader may be certified when the mentor is satisfied that the mentee has achieved what is appropriate specifically for them in relation to the required criteria. When that moment arrives, the mentor informs the [Community Coordinator](#) and requests that the mentee now be registered as a Certified Leader. The mentoring relationship continues beyond certification, and indeed is ongoing at every stage on this path of mastery. This is the hand-to-hand, heart-to-heart connection through which the Dances and Walks live on. As dance leaders mature, their ongoing course of study becomes more independent, and the relationship may shift to that of a check-in support.

Criteria for Certified Leader

Traveling with one's mentor, maintaining an active spiritual practice, studying the [Elements of Mastery](#), developing the capacity for unflinching self-witnessing, and maintaining membership currency are the prerequisites for certification.

The mentor will evaluate the student's commitment to spiritual practice, attunement, knowledge of Dance history, and technical proficiency in leading the Dances and Walking Concentrations.

To be certified as a leader one will be committed to the following criteria:

1. At Least One Sacred Path or Spiritual Tradition

In-depth experience with at least one of the many sacred traditions of the earth is required. Included here is the principle of *dharma* (spiritual path), that is, having a regular practice and/or prayer life. A one-to-one relationship with a guide is encouraged. This guide or teacher may be the same as the person's dance mentor or not. The intention is that personal deepening in inner life and experience of *fana* (effacement of the ego) will be promoted under guidance from an embodied being.

This relationship may include ongoing apprenticeship with spiritual teachers of any tradition, but must be a genuine relationship, not merely occasional attendance at workshops, retreats, or rituals. The relationship may include the formal giving of practices and initiation, an active committed engagement with a congregation or spiritual community, or an informal "working-with" relationship. Ongoing psychotherapy and counseling, while they may be helpful to the growth process, are not substitutes for this sacred relationship.

2. Self-Knowledge

The Dances are powerful vehicles of energy. When they pour through us they touch not only our highest realities, but also stir places still unlit and unresolved. Developing leaders understand this and acknowledge shadow potentials in order to work with unconscious projections that naturally arise. They need to be aware that their role as leaders may influence dancers' perceptions, and they need to be able to self-witness their own afflictive emotions as they arise in order to work with them consciously. In a good working mentoring relationship, the student will be receptive to the reflections and feedback of the mentor in dealing with these issues.

3. Attunement, Transmission, Sacred Atmosphere

It is essential to walk in the footsteps of experienced Dance and Walks teachers in order to develop an attunement to the blessing stream of Samuel Lewis (Murshid SAM). The ability to attune and the willingness to surrender to this stream of blessing are the most important aspects of leading the Dances and Walks. The certified leader is able to demonstrate the capacity to convey a sacred atmosphere consistent with the tradition and feeling of the Dance being presented, effacing their ego-personality in order to let grace flow through. Presence, magnetism and balance are spontaneous and apparent.

4. Technical Proficiency, Knowledge of Traditions, Dance Repertoire

Sufficient technical proficiency to "get the job done" is required. Mentor and mentee acknowledge any additional work needed with rhythm, voice or sound and have an agreement for how this work is occurring.

For certification, the dance leader will have mastered at least 4 of the Original Dances of Murshid Samuel L. Lewis. In addition, the dance leader will be able to present with appropriate attunement a minimum of 20 Dances from a variety of traditions. No more than 3 Dances may contain sacred phrases in the vernacular language of one's country (i.e., "the plain variety of language in everyday use by ordinary people"). (Please refer to Foundation Dances and Walks Manual.)

No dance is a Spiritual Dance because it is called that; it does not mean a certain form or technique, nor a ritual. ... What must remain is the sacred phrase; this, the sacred phrase, and not the form, is the foundation of development along this line. (Samuel L. Lewis, ²)

A phrase arising from a Divine Messenger has several values. Its very nature points toward God realization. The multitude of its repetitions are marked in the cosmos itself. The devotee becomes attuned to this tremendous cosmic magnetism. Therefore it is often more beneficial to repeat phrases that have been uttered many times than to use familiar terms which are translations of these phrases but do not have the same echoes in the universe. (Samuel L. Lewis, ³)

One will also have the ability to lead a partner Dance with progression, a Dance in combination with a Walk practice, and several Dances consecutively, building on a central tone or sacred atmosphere.

The leader will be familiar with the writings of Murshid Samuel Lewis and Hazrat Inayat Khan through reading and study. Also highly recommended is *Wisdom Comes Dancing*, the selected writing on spiritual dance of Ruth St Denis. Murshid Samuel Lewis wrote that the Dances were "initiated in to the akasha by Hazrat Inayat Khan and Ruth St Denis, who first brought these teachings jointly in 1910." (Please refer to the [Bibliography and Study Materials and Resources](#).)

5. Walks Embodiment

The Walking Concentrations are embodiment practices that have the potential to integrate into everyday life the states experienced in the Dances. Whether a dance leader leads Walks in every session is not as important as mastering the effects of the Walking practices in their own being.

A certified dance leader will be able to lead the "Toward the One" Walk, the Center Walks, the Element Walks, and the Sun and Moon walking practices from the Planetary Walks or Astrological Yoga. (See Foundation Dances and Walks Manual.)

6. Social Responsibility

A dance leader does not lead in a vacuum but in a mandala of dancers, musicians and other leaders. It is expected that a dance leader who works in ongoing circles will become aware of a wide range of social responsibilities to the circle, and to one's greater surroundings, and will attempt to become skillful at communication, conflict resolution, mediation, and team building.

Dance leaders and mentors are encouraged to avail themselves of training in these interpersonal skills, through workshops offered by the Mentors Guild or through other opportunities.

We wish to follow the example of Murshid SAM whose life emphasized open-hearted service and generosity rather than a desire for recognition, wealth or power. Throughout the existence of the Mentors Guild, dance leaders and mentors have worked in positions of service in their own Dance communities and in the International Dance Network at large. They have donated generously of their time, money and resources in order to further the work in benefit to all beings. We encourage dance leaders and mentors to continue this tradition of service and generosity in whatever way they feel moved to do so.

“We think we are about singing and dancing, but we are really about creating peace.” (Murshid SAM, paraphrased by one of his early students).

Deepening in Dance Leadership

Certification marks a basic level of competence in dance leadership skills. All certified dance leaders are asked to commit to study and practice as long as they are actively leading the Dances of Universal Peace and the Walking Concentrations. They continue to stay connected with their mentor, follow the ethical guidelines and Guild Agreements, and deepen in their own spiritual practice and in the Elements of Mastery. One can only transmit and share what one has experienced and integrated.

Other than certification, there is no further outer recognition to mark advanced levels of development as a dance leader. Instead, feedback and recognition is reflected through the results of one's own actions, and is also reflected through one's mentor, with whom the certified leader continues to walk.

An advanced dance leader is known by increased presence, magnetism, and balance in his/her leadership and has an expanded dance repertoire including many foundation Dances drawn from a broad range of spiritual traditions. Such a leader leads many of the original Dances of Murshid Samuel L. Lewis, has the ability to represent the *baraka* of Murshid Samuel L. Lewis through his Dances and Walks, and has the ability to lead several of his advanced Dances.

The Walks repertoire of such a leader will eventually expand to include all the Planetary and Elemental Walks, as well as a variety of Wazifa Walks. An advancing dance leader is encouraged to learn the advanced Walking Concentrations, including Tasawwuri Walks, advanced Planetary Walks, advanced Centering walks, and advanced Elemental Walks.

Numbers of Dances and Walks are not an end in themselves, but merely an indication that the leader has continued to deepen in mastery of this path. Most importantly, over time, the advancing dance leader increasingly comes to embody the truth and transmission of the sacred phrases with grace and humility. Through the Dances and Walks, s/he is able to convey an unbounded vision of human freedom and become a vehicle for the awakening of humanity. This capacity usually comes from engaging in a deep and dedicated manner with one's inner impressions, conditioning, and obscurations through a dynamic spiritual path.

Through the experience of the Dances of Universal Peace and the Walking concentrations, through study and applied spiritual practice, through effacement of the ego, and through life's experiences, one continues to grow spiritually and as a dance leader.

Dance Write-ups and Recordings

The DUP International website offers an on-line resource library for Leaders Guild members containing originator-approved Dance write-ups, recorded Dance music tracks and other resources. This password-protected library, funded by Leaders Guild fees, includes the contents of the Foundation Dance Manual and many of the previously published Dance booklets, as well as newer Dances. As such, it is a valuable and authentic reference. Nevertheless, in providing this resource it is distinctly not intended that Dance write-ups and recordings become the means for learning and then leading new Dances that one has not experienced in person. **And please do not lead a Dance after only viewing a YouTube video of it.** It is especially important in this digital age to remain true to a person-to-person, hand-to-hand and heart-to-heart transmission of these Dance practices. The spiritual transmission of the Dances remains experiential, passed from one human being to another.

Leaders Guild

The Leaders Guild is the collective body of all mentored dance leaders. Leaders Guild members are responsible for carrying and nurturing the living stream of the Dances of Universal Peace and Walking Concentrations through leadership that reflects ongoing spiritual and personal development. When someone becomes a mentored dance leader they automatically become a member of the Leaders Guild, if they abide by the [Agreements](#) in the Leaders Guild Guidelines, keep an active relationship with their mentor, and remain current with annual Leaders Guild fees. (Note: For convenience, the payment of one's Dance Region dues in most cases includes the applicable Leaders Guild fee, which is then remitted by the Region to DUP International on the member's behalf. See [Leaders Guild Fees](#) in the Agreements section for further information.)

Dance Mentors and the Mentors Guild

Dance mentors are experienced dance leaders who have been invited to become teachers and guides to newer leaders, encouraging their mentees to develop and lead from their spiritual depth. The Mentors Guild is the collective body of all mentors. The Mentors Guild provides a forum for communication on such matters as transmitting, nurturing and protecting this body of work, the training of Dance and Walks leaders, and upholding the [Agreements](#) in the Leaders Guild Guidelines. In addition, the discussions of the Mentors Guild advise and assist the Guidance Council in all aspects of its work.

Further information on dance mentoring is published in [Mentoring Path](#).

Guidance Council

The Guidance Council holds in trust the transmission of the Dances of Universal Peace and Walking Concentrations in the lineage of Murshid Samuel L. Lewis. Four to six Senior Mentors are appointed on a rotating basis by the Pir of the Sufi Ruhaniat International, who is the Spiritual Guide of the Dances of Universal Peace. The Guidance Council has the responsibility of guiding leaders and mentors by encouraging their spiritual expansion and personal development, supporting learning opportunities, determining requirements for level acknowledgment, and upholding standards of conduct and human relationship that are in keeping with the transmission of the Dances of Universal Peace. The Guidance Council keeps in communication with the Spiritual Guide, who provides assistance as required.

Communicating and Networking – All Dance Leaders

Once a mentoring relationship is agreed to, the mentor provides to the [Community Coordinator](#) the following data about the new mentee: name, mailing address, phone, e-address, beginning date of mentoring. The Community Coordinator will confirm registration of the mentoring relationship to both mentor and mentee. Apart from the above, it is the responsibility of every mentored leader to ensure that any changes to their personal information are communicated both to the [Community Coordinator](#) and to their mentor.

The Guidance Council provides periodic communications by direct email newsletters to all members of the Leaders Guild. InTheGarden is a moderated e-group forum for all members of the Leaders Guild for discussion of matters concerning leading the Dances and Walks, training and development, our way of working, and information regarding administration and structure. All leaders are asked to join by sending an email message to InTheGarden-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

Walking with One's Mentor – An Ongoing Path

All leaders, no matter what level of skill and mastery they have attained, continue walking with their dance mentor and deepening in the [Elements of Mastery](#), thus forming long-term – in some cases life-long – relationships. Nevertheless, it may be appropriate to dissolve a mentoring relationship when, over a period of time, fruitful working conditions have been challenging to establish. Any mentor or mentee may discontinue a particular mentoring relationship if after reasonable effort there is failure to connect. Once a new mentor has been identified, the dance leader will ask their former mentor to contact the new mentor to describe the leader's dance leading experience and progress in dance training, and to make recommendations. The new mentor will not accept a transferring mentored leader without making this contact with the leader's former mentor. The new mentor is responsible for communicating the transfer to the [Community Coordinator](#), who will confirm the change of registration to both mentors and the mentee.