



De Sola captures some of the anguish of the gospel story of the woman with a flow of blood in a prayer service at Holy Names University, Oakland, California. (GTU Archives)

15. “The Woman with the Flow of Blood” Dance

CDS: I didn’t think of creating a prophetic dance—it just fell out of me. This is the dance called “The Woman with the Flow of Blood.” It was Doug Adams who made the distinction between priestly dances and prophetic dances. As I said, I did not start out to create a prophetic dance. It turned out that way as I was working in the studio because of incidents in my own life, the music I had at hand, and an assignment. This assignment was from a woman minister in a Protestant church. She wanted a dance based on the woman with the flow of blood in scripture, but with the idea that the blood would unite us, not separate us. What came to my mind was a poem of Rabindranath Tagore, an Indian poet. He begins with the line, “The world is wild with the delirium of hatred . . .,” and he continues with the thought that “Blood, which should unite, separates us.”

There were some more lines, but soon it merged into the scripture story of the woman with the flow of blood. I started in one corner, carrying an enormous long, red cloth on my arm, body bent over, racing down a diagonal, calling for help. [I danced] to [recorded] music of Susan Osborn, a singer associated with the Paul Winter Consort at St. John the Divine Cathedral.

In the recording, she chants with full voice the names of tribes who live in the Grand Canyon. (I believe she was part Native American.) So the dance incorporated another kind of boundary crossing. One of the dancers in the company was Cherokee. She became very interested in the

work, and both taught me and gave me permission to use some of her tribes' sacred gestures. The main thrust of the dance is a woman calling out, crying for help for she is dying of thirst in the desert. She races around, and puts the cloth down making a circle, a sacred circle and with her body turning and turning, winds it around her feet. She limps to a mysterious figure [nearby who has] a bowl of water [in front of her]. Branches [encircle the bowl on the floor]. The woman in the gospel thinks, *If I could just touch the hem of Jesus's garment, I will be well*, and in a parallel way, the woman in the desert reaches toward the bowl of life-giving water. She drinks, then picks up the green branches and does a dance of joy. I feared it might not be to everybody's taste: the poem and scripture mix, the long red cloth, using Native American chants for music, but it worked as a dance, and I believed it was prophetic in both [the] dance elements and [an] understanding of scriptural text that crossed boundaries. These elements fell into place as I was working on it. I trust when something comes from deep within—from the body and psyche, drawn together and giving new understanding of scripture. OK. The choreography was the quickest I have ever done, very interesting.



De Sola poured out emotion in the dance Woman with Flow of Blood. (GTU Archives)