

# HURJA PIRUETTI - A DANCING COMPANY

*by Katja Kõngäs, founder of Hurja Piruetti. Photos by Chris Senn*

Once upon a time there was a girl – barely 18 years old – who had a dream.

”I want to create an art community for children, boys and girls, where they can freely express themselves through dance, where they can come as they want and build their social awareness and tolerance towards other people. Where they can, irrespectively of language, feel that they are understood and they understand others”

This was the founding thought of Hurja Piruetti, a dance school created by Katja, a young dance teacher who wanted to make a move and a difference.

The early days of Hurja Piruetti were not easy for Katja. She did not have the money, the support nor the facilities to make her dream come

true. Sometimes she stayed up at night thinking where she could find the money to pay the next month’s rent for the school. Still her determination and artistic pride kept her going. There were also other people, who saw her passion, who had the skills and the will to help her and give her strength in areas she did not master herself. Sometimes she doubted herself – it would have been easier to get another job. For more than thirteen years she worked both with dance and in a private company. Working only in an office from eight to four, she would have had more time to be with her family instead of spending her spare time knocking on dozens of doors asking for money to run the school.

The dance school grew and moved from the gym hall of an elementary school to its own pla-





ce, own studio and studios. It got very little financial support from the city and the state. The key to success is the network, the right people, who believe in you. Even if you think you are the most creative person on the planet, you still have to have the courage to rely on other people to complement your vision.

After ten years of existence, more and more dance teachers joined in. After fifteen years Hurja Piruetti had evolved from teaching mostly contemporary dance to offering several different dance styles including street dance. Dance teachers were coming from all over southern Finland.

While the institution has grown, so have the challenges of administrating it. Students and locations have increased and this has led to higher demand in communication and maintenance of contact details.

Even though having solid locations for the dance school has been a big improvement it has also brought along standing charges which has been solved by bigger financial support from the city, higher participation fee and individual

financiers.

Another problem in the growing institution has been the vulnerability and the workload when just one person has been responsible for managing everything. This problem has been solved by utilizing various government supported programs when recruiting trainees.

A cooperation with a local internet company provide a great solution to better communication. With help from the company, Hurja Piruetti was able to purchase computers and broad-



band. Other networks are utilized, for example the translation work and costume design.

Now, nearly 20 years later, this young girl is a woman, a mother of two and an inspiration of over 700. The financial situation and the facilities have improved. Hurja Piruetti has gained global respect and awareness, but the values of tolerance, understanding and unity are still the founding principles of the dance institute. No-one is turned away from Hurja Piruetti's door

– you do not need to be a certain type of character. You can come as you are – and you can bring your friend. What started as a group of 15 young dancers, is now an institute of over 700 students, an institute which is winning international competitions, participating in global projects and furthermore building up a community for children to express themselves. This is a story of determination, inspiration and pride.

