



WHAT'S ON

Creativity channels cleared

EIGHTEEN New Zealand School of Dance pupils and six other dancers are undergoing training in self-expression this week, courtesy of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council.

Their teachers are the New York-based teaching and dancing couple Sara Pearson and Patrik Widrig.

Pearson said the purpose of the course was to improve the dancers' access to their creative voices "by connecting mind, body and spirit, so the whole can assist rather than interfere with the creative drive".

They did this by teaching release techniques, some derived from yoga and tai chi, but also by combining modern Western understanding of anatomy and kinetics.

"In the past, dancers were taught to 'grip your butt, suck in stomach, pull ribs in, shoulders down and dance'," Widrig said.

"Through our work, we give them a gentler structure, without tension, through which to work."

Pearson rejects the label of "new age" for her work. "When I think of 'new age', I think of crystal sellers and candles and jargon," she said.

After Shaking her head and doing a demonstration of 'new age' dance — all fluid and touchy-feely — she said it was says it's a kind of romance that she was 's not at all attracted to. She then strikes struck a firm, straight up-and-down motion with her arm. "For dance, its very necessary to be focused," she said. says.

"The hippy hippie movement of the sixties affected me a lot.

"I was very drawn to the East at the time and subscribed to much of the lifestyle, even to the point of finding a spiritual master, Meher Baba.



NEW YORK dance tutors Sara Pearson and Patrik Widrig at the New Zealand School of Dance yesterday

"But he taught a very different kind of spirituality than that which you would expect."

"He said that to be spiritual was to be most human, natural and spontaneous, honest and direct, but trying not to hurt anybody or thing.

To him, humour was divine and outward rituals were not useful in themselves.

"I remember he was asked once about diet and he replied, 'it's far more important what comes out of your mouth than what goes in.'"

"The problem with a lot of the new 'new age' is that, though their intentions are certainly good, in a lot of people, it

hasn't got in deep enough to be honest and real."

The duo have run a course in Oamaru and, later this week, will hold another in Auckland.

Pearson said one of the main themes she had come across while in New Zealand was one of isolation among performers.

"In the south, they all spoke of being so isolated in terms of performance.

"It is obviously very difficult, financially especially, to put together a performance here."

Pearson and Widrig have no performances planned while they are in New Zealand, but they said they would be willing to perform if asked.