



MARCHANT BIRCH, Director of Alchemy Dance Company & Academy

Marchant was born and raised in Cape Town, South Africa. He was trained in Ballroom from the age of 7 up to competitive professional level. He won numerous competitions in Ballroom and Street Dance, and was winner of the National Cape Jazz Championship 1999 in South Africa, competing against over 500 couples (Cape Jazz is a partner dance similar to salsa).

On taking up salsa he understood the need to learn the dance form from its authentic Latino roots and has trained with the worlds best Puerto Ricans, New Yoricans, Dominicans and Cubans. He was invited to start teaching and performing salsa in the UK in 2001 and has since become one of the most sought after teachers & performers in the UK and internationally. Marchant is also the 1st and only representative of South Africa in the international salsa community.

In 2005 Marchant's choreography of Tito Puente's 'Take Five' received high acclaim from the Mambo King himself, Eddie Torres. It was considered a ground-breaking choreography at the time for its flowing use of line and arms, and intricate musical interpretation. The influence of this can be seen today in UK salsa performances

Growing up in Africa undoubtedly contributed to Marchants intricate sense of rhythm, from the raw sound of the carnival drum, to the sophistication of the Cape Town jazz musicians. In his years in salsa he has taken his teachings from the latinos, and blended it with ballroom technique, jazz and afro movement, developing a smooth, elegant style of salsa and mambo known as the Alchemy Way. He is reknowned for bringing 'smooth' and 'flow' to UK salsa.

Marchant and Davina together formed Alchemy Dance Company in 2005. They took both their past dance experience and combined the techniques and methods for the performance company. Originally a team of four, they performed nationwide at many events and salsa congresses.

In 2006 they launched Alchemy Dance Academy, giving the salsa public the opportunity to improve their dancing by way of the Alchemy method of dance training. For 2 years they ran the Academy by way of intensive courses and workshops at different venues around the south. In March 2008 [Alchemy Dance Academy](#) launched its permanent residence in Hampshire, where students travel from far and wide to learn the Alchemy Way. It is pioneering the Alchemy Way that is now Marchant's main focus with Davina. In 2007 they released their first instructional DVD '[Alchemy Way Partnerwork](#)', which, produced in two versions, was the UK's first On2 instructional DVD.

Now representing Alchemy Dance Company as a solo couple, Marchant & Davina are known for their captivating performances, world-class choreographies, and excellent teaching methods, they are in high demand to perform and teach around the UK and internationally. ([click for calendar](#)).
[click for more history](#)



DAVINA BIRCH, founder member of Alchemy Dance Company & Co-Director of Alchemy Dance Academy

Davina is Marchant's performance & teaching partner and project coordinator for Alchemy. She is the female exponent of the Alchemy Way of dancing mambo & salsa, and is the featured lady on Marchant's instructional DVD.

DAVINA holds ISTD teaching qualifications in Modern Theatre Dance and Tap. She trained in Modern, Jazz, Tap and Ballet from the age of 3, taking Modern and Tap to advanced status. Further qualifications include a BA Honours degree in Drama & Theatre Studies, and various fitness teaching certificates including an S/NVQ in Exercise to music.

Since 1996 she has taught in a variety of capacities, mainly freelance teaching at dance schools and colleges around London. Davina was Head of Dance at a community youth theatre in London and taught the dance aspect of GCSE performing arts in secondary education. She taught and entered many students for dance examinations, and choreographed for numerous showcases, productions, and competitions.

In 2003 she took up salsa, attending classes with Marchant who soon spotted her potential and undertook her training. It was from this that Alchemy Dance Company was formed, Davina's jazz dance experience being part of the core technique training for the company. She also co-choreographed, with Marchant, Alchemy's debut show 'Timbalito'.

Davina is described as having a smooth, sophisticated and sexy style. She is known for teaching following techniques for ladies, and how to style within the natural flow of partnerwork without affecting the man's lead... the female Alchemy Way!. The combination of her training and experience has given her a passion for teaching, with an infectious enthusiasm which is passed on to her students.

