

The reticence to see themselves as part of any movement except perhaps dance, has made it difficult for some people who want to help them. Tai says one man wanted to take them over and head them in his direction. "I guess he was well-meaning, but he knew little about dance." Other Maori activists have spoken to the trio about sharpening up their political act but this finds little favour with the three.

Warren: "Tungia Baker (who is organising the trip to the South Pacific Arts Festival) wants us to look at forming a Maori dance company after Noumea, but...."

As Warren puts it, the reality of facing the final year of training in the NZ School of Dance without a job next year is enough to live with now.

Warren says he's elated at the reaction to the few dance shows the trio has shared in, but as yet there's not a clear direction ahead. What's facing them now is a bleak period after Noumea, with only a stint with the Summer City promotion during Janaury. After this Wellington City Council funded festival ends, the future is uncertain for Tai, Willy and Warren.

What is certain however is their commitment to dance as a way of life. Willy says dancing is his passion although he knows his technique is not suited for classical ballet. Enroling at the NZ School of Dance a couple of years ago was a natural lead-on from involvement with a jazz dance group at Western Heights High School, Rotorua. He was one guy out of five girls who loved to dance.

He was born in Rarotonga and came to New Zealand aged eight years old. The family first lived in Tokoroa and then moved to Rotorua. He was encouraged to apply for dance training in the NZ School of Dance and in fact met Tai



Royal on the bus coming to the big smoke.

Willy says his career ideas previously had been in the diplomatic service, building on his fluency with French and German. However he felt he had to try dance out. He says his ideas about his fitness and sporting background were soon shattered at the school where he found it was a different sort of fitness that was needed. He says he's only coming right now in terms of flexibility of bone joints and use of muscles.

Both Tai and Warren share disco dancing prowess. Tai having won the Bay of Plenty disco title in 1978, and 1979 being the year for Warren's reign in Christchurch. Tai was destined to be a farmer like his dad and accordingly took horticulture and science at Massey University. However this wasn't to be, and young Tai decided to use his gymnastic experience and try

for the School of Dance. He found it technically very hard at first but has no regrets.

Warren grew up in Christchurch gaining experience with the Maggie Bourke Dancers and then the Moving Company. At this time he started an apprenticeship in hairdressing which was left unfinished by his successful application to the School of Dance. His three years hairdressing has come in handy, not just for his fellow dancers, but also as a part-time job during this time of training at the school.

His father, who has the family name of Pakipaki and is from Parihaka, wasn't pleased at first with Warren's choice of a dancing career. Warren says he's getting used to it now.

Both Tai and Willy also agree that a dance career hadn't figured high in their families' expectations. "I guess a lot of Maori think ballet and dance are something airy fairy. They don't appreciate what goes into dance."

They point to a meeting of Limbs Dance Company choreographer Mary Jane O'Reilly with the Maori people of the Awahou Marae, Rotorua. The occasion came about because Mary Jane wanted to see haka movement.

Tai says the Maori people had a close-up look at modern dance and came away liking and understanding what they saw.

The trio see that their form of dance, incorporating Maori movement with modern interpretation, is equally invigorating for pakeha. They see it opening a window through which part of a culture can be seen in a new light.

There's no doubting that their new dance form is a two way window, both breathing new life into a traditional form while opening up previously murky areas for New Zealanders.

What is ironic is that the trio at the centre of it seem unaffected by their newly found fame and would much prefer to just keep on dancing.

(From left) Willy Thompson, Tai Royal, Warren Douglas.

