

Brillo del Sol spreads Thai massage in Argentina

In July, 2006, THAI Director Bob Haddad was invited to teach existing Thai massage students of Centro Brillo del Sol in Buenos Aires. Brillo del Sol (The Sunshine Center) has recently become the first THAI Approved Institution on the South American continent, and Egle Puca is the first THAI Instructor in Argentina. Here are some excerpts from a THAI interview with the school's Coordinator, Miguel Angel Nogueira.

When was Brillo del Sol established as a center of Thai massage teaching in Argentina, and what are its goals?

Centro Brillo del Sol began teaching in Argentina in March of 2001, without knowing what would eventually become of our efforts. Up until then, Egle had been working as an assistant teacher of Zen Shiatsu in another school, but because of certain circumstances, it became impossible to continue teaching there. One night we were talking about the future, and I asked her "if teaching is so important to you, why don't you open your own school?"

At first this seemed an almost impossible challenge, but since we had some organizational experience, we were able to resolve all of the problems that we encountered along the way, and in only fifteen days, the school opened its doors to our first students. In the beginning we had only one small group of Zen Shiatsu students, but little by little, the number of participants began to grow, and we began to think about offering basic courses in Nuad Boran. Egle had learned basic Thai massage and was very interested to continue her studies. In Argentina however, advanced studies of the modality were not readily available. In 2002, we tried our best to create a comprehensive program of study of Nuad Boran that would include everything that we could learn about theory, diagnosis and energy flow, as well as traditional therapeutic practice. As a guideline, we only had the previous experience of Egle as a therapist, student and teacher of other Eastern therapies, but we tried our best to teach what we knew to those who wished to learn. Later, in 2003, we began to teach basic Thai massage weekend courses to other cities in Argentina. We are hoping in the future to spread Thai massage to our neighbors in Chile and Uruguay.



Egle Puca (l) and Miguel Angel Nogueira in front of the Jivaka altar at Centro Brillo del Sol, Buenos Aires. Photo courtesy Brillo del Sol.



Students pray the Om Namoh before class. Photo M.A. Nogueira

When the school began, were there already people who were practicing Nuad Boran in Buenos Aires? How and when did Egle learn the basic techniques of Thai massage?

As far as we know, there were only two people who knew anything about basic Thai massage before we opened our school. In 1998 Egle studied with one of them, Valerie Gaillard, who had trained at the Old Medicine Hospital in Chiang Mai. Afterwards, Egle was so interested to learn more, she began to track down anyone who had ever taken a course in Thailand, and would ask them to come to the school so they could work on each other and share ideas. These people, among them Susana Neer and Nicolette Vajt, enriched Egle's understanding of

traditional Thai massage, since they had studied at Wat Po, and had learned in a different style. Naturally, during this whole period, we spent as much time as possible researching through books, videos and materials on Thai massage that we were collecting from various sources. And in this past year, we were lucky to come into personal contact with Bob Haddad from THAI, and his help and guidance has been invaluable for our growth and deeper understanding of Nuad Boran.

At this time, how many students have studied Thai massage at Centro Brillo del Sol?

Since we began the school, 40 students have completed the entire curriculum. At the present time, an additional 60 students are studying basic Thai massage courses in Buenos Aires and other major cities in Argentina. In total since we first began our work, about 150 people have had some sort of learning experience in Nuad Boran through Brillo del Sol.

Tell us something about the school's philosophies of teaching and learning.

Regarding the teaching of Thai massage, we try to work from a traditional perspective. We recognize that this is energy work and that the postures and techniques are simply tools that help to balance the receiver on physical, emotional, mental and spiritual planes. Egle places emphasis on sensitivity and energetic perception with her students, so they might learn to identify and adequately address energy blockages. She integrates daily exercises in Tai Chi Chuan or Chi Kung so that students understand how to use their bodies and body weight, and she makes students aware of the importance of good ergonomics. Finally, the school tries to create an atmosphere of respect, right action, discipline, compassion, and connection with the client in accordance with the Thai tradition.

What are your hopes for the future?

To keep learning, practicing and improving. And to continue to learn more about traditional Thai massage, so that we can contribute to teaching and spreading of this healing art in Argentina and in the rest of Latin America.

Why did you decide to get involved with THAI? How do you think THAI can be of help to you?

We believe that THAI's goal of establishing standards of practice among all schools, teachers and practitioners is important and necessary. It helps us all to maintain, transmit and respect the traditional format of Thai massage, especially in these days when there seem to be many teachers who aren't dealing with its traditional nature. Here in Argentina, we wish to be members in good standing of THAI, and we promise all of our support and enthusiasm so that THAI may continue to grow into the future.



Thai massage practitioners gather after class for a group photo at Brillo del Sol, Palermo, Buenos Aires. Photo: Bob Haddad

