

## **ALICE OWEN: DMT SNAPSHOT INTERVIEW**



*This is a short interview conducted in April 2016 with Alice, through a project called DMT Snapshots in which short interviews were conducted by Ezme Webb and Tess Hens to be posted on the DTAA Facebook Group to support networking and sharing of experiences between Australasian DMTs.*

For our April Snapshot, Brisbane-based Alice Owen shares the eclectic range of influences on her many years of experience as both a DMT and Speech Pathologist, and insight into how she links the two sets of professional tools to promote healing and development.

### **CLIENT GROUPS**

Alice works with both children and adults with ranging capabilities that include: effects of autism, movement difficulties, communication difficulties, voice difficulties including dysphonia, neurological disorders such as Parkinson's, Motor Neuron disease and stroke sequelae, and....

“Older people who wish to keep active and those who need encouragement to become more active including people with dementia.”

### **PRIVATE PRACTICE**

Through Alice's primary work as a private practice Speech Pathologist she is able to demonstrate the efficacy of including Dance Therapy tools to presenting issues.

Alice says she hasn't felt the need to promote her DMT skills beyond her practice. Rather she describes allowing the benefits of her dual approach to therapeutic intervention to speak for themselves.

“I haven't ever advertised – people hear about my work and approach me. I presume some people find me via the DTAA website.”

### **LINKING SPEECH PATHOLOGY AND DANCE MOVEMENT THERAPY**

Alice gave an example (see photo) of an on-going initiative, the Brotherhood of Wordless. It is a writers group for people with disabilities who use assisted communication tools to type. They have written pieces to be performed at the Queensland Poetry Festival in August and are creating a Cabaret show in collaboration with dancers next year. Both Alice and her colleague Vanessa Van Der Werff have used DMT workshops and one to one work as creative aids and to assist participants with movement difficulties. Bringing together body-based work with creative writing projects and specialised communication support fosters productive channels for communication and personal expression with this group.

For more detail, Alice points to her research paper 'Using Laban Movement Analysis to Assess Progress in Dance Therapy' published in *DTAA Collections 2*. It documents a year-long dance therapy journey with a client who was also a speech pathology client who used Facilitated Communication.

## **INFLUENCES**

Alice cites her training in the Graduate Diploma of Movement and Dance as the most useful tool and resource in her career. She cites improvisation teacher, Al Wunder as informing her practice in a deep way too. Alice's Speech Pathologist training also exposed her to a wide range of theoretical and practice based influences:

"I don't subscribe to any particular psychological methodology but was trained in Play Therapy and Client-Centred Therapy, and Gestalt Therapy as a Speech Pathologist in the 1960s, and I continue to work within a Transpersonal Framework."

Alice also mentions Marcia Leventhal, Mary Builith, Jane Guthrie, Karen Bond, Linda Leah, Merle Tankard and Expressions Dance Company as further influences. Finally Alice describes her love of modern dance:

'I am devoted to modern dance but only when it is genuine and meaningful rather than a soul less trick pony fest.'

## **PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES**

As her career progresses, Alice shared she can be selective about venue, time and money, and therefore chooses work that will be appreciated and have an ongoing effect.

"I'm 69, still and well and dancing, but I do get tired. And I don't want to keep trying to convince people that Dance Therapy is worthwhile. Generally I'm happy to get something going, then hand it over to a dance therapy student and supervise them. I teach on the movement-based Somatic Therapy course that Tracey Nicholson is running, so there are local students needing work practice."

## **MOTIVATIONS**

“After 25 years I can feel the deep effects of Dance Therapy on my body and psyche, and this knowing makes me wish to share those benefits.”

**FUTURE GOALS – DESCRIBING WORK LIFE BALANCE AND A CREATIVE APPROACH TO LIVING LIFE.....**

“I don’t have goals. I’m living life in a relaxed way making plenty of time for my own creative fun. This includes a movement improvisation group, a choir, playing ukulele and guitar, songwriting, probably writing a book, and a creative dance project. I also have a delightful 3-year-old grandson to sing and dance with, and 95 year old mother to assist.”

We encourage you to respond to Alice’s snapshot with comments and questions. Thank you for reading April’s Australasian DMT Snapshot!