

## Then and Now .....

### Mary Builth



From being very young, I was a mover, a spontaneous fast mover, I ran when I could have walked, I skipped and turned and danced whenever there was enough space to kick my heels. Where I lived in the village in Northern England, I won all the competitions for running and jumping, and I was the despair of my mother at one stage, because I couldn't keep still - so I went to dance classes rather than piano lessons and loved the music and the movement.

Because of the wild environment where I lived as a child I loved nature, somehow it was as if nature and I were closely related. Everything moved just like me ..... the wind roared, the streams bubbled with mirth, the creatures ran and hid, the birds sang and flew ever higher, or dipped and dived over the heather confirming my knowing that I was and am, a part of a moving life. I know that this connection is so much bigger than myself and I am only a small part of it, but I am heavily influenced and inspired to draw from nature as a stimulus for dance, connection to feelings and creativity and, through the improvisation occurring, to get to know more about ourselves.

I suppose it was inevitable that I chose a career in movement and in Physical Education and in the college where I was based Laban's Modern Educational Dance and Laban's theories were just being introduced. These shaped my movement perspectives and through them dance became my main teaching joy as I saw children expressing themselves freely, being in touch with their

feelings, with a mind/body link that was so much more in evidence than in any other aspects of Physical Education. I was taught by the great man himself and one of his trained teachers. Intrigued with his philosophies, I went on to attend several Laban Summer Schools in England.

I married a schoolmate, who started off by being an apprenticed officer in the Merchant Navy, when I went to college. Our married life has taken us from England, to NZ, to several States in Australia and to spend a couple of years living on a yacht on the ocean. Throughout these years I never gave up the dance for myself or the teaching of dance to both children and adults when and where it was possible. It was at this stage usually creative educational dance. And I taught kindergarten, primary and secondary children. I taught adults and special needs people. I taught mothers and their babies and I loved it all and saw and felt the benefits of the dance.



**Primary School Adelaide 1975. strength of elephants, passing logs overhead**

My transition from creative dance or dance education teaching to DMT was gradual. I was already aware that many of the outcomes of creative dance were beneficial to both mind and body, but needed to find out more of the link with the psyche. In the different States in Australia where I was living I became involved with both

teachers of the expressive arts and the organizations promoting their benefits, and this led me to meet and work with like minded people. There were conferences with Jean Houston who uses dance and movement in Human Development; the week-long event 'Circle The Earth' in Melbourne with Anna Halprin, who combines many aspects of movement and dance in nature as a healing force, and teachings and supervision from Wynelle Delaney (DMT from the US), living in Perth, WA, who convinced me that I could easily take my teaching into the field of therapy - which I began to do.

Homes and other Centres; with 'normal neurotics', cancer patients and with a variety of private clients. As always the dance was the key to deep communication inside and outside, both to and from me, and to and from those who were participating.

When living in Far North Queensland, Beatrice Lucas (another DMT) and I worked together to promote DMT. Beatrice with the Queensland Education Dept. and I in a private capacity. I had a permanent group of women in the community, and initially helped them to build themselves a vocabulary of movement using dance education prior to drawing on environmental themes. For me Laban's motion factors have a link with nature and the universe and I use a great deal of these natural links as a stimulus or as a theme both in my teaching of creative dance or in DMT. This helped this group to achieve a greater range of expressive movement and feeling states, which opened possibilities for them to relate it to comparable situations in their own lives. It instilled an awareness of personal patterns of movement and dance in their mind's eye. And if these were recognised as negative patterns, they could be transformed to more positive ones, to provide new understanding, insight for possible life changes and a potential for wholeness. Even now, although I am pioneering DMT in South Australia, I return annually to continue DMT with this group.



**Primary School Adelaide 1975 - Trains**

And although the basis of my own teaching style was based on Laban's philosophy, and I had experienced many different styles and approaches to dance and dance as a healing force, I still wanted and needed to do more study. This led me, in 1987, to attend Dr Marcia Leventhal's (footnote 2. p.7) workshops in Melbourne. From this initial visit Dr Leventhal was persuaded to create the International Dance Therapy Institute of Australia (IDTIA) and a training course for DMT. I became a trainee in this in 1990 - probably the oldest one on record at 62yrs of age, but definitely still moving, and still dancing!!

It was wonderful to learn of the psychodynamic, phenomenological, humanistic approach to DMT and amalgamate this with my Laban training to form my own particular style of teaching. With this and armed with the qualification of a DMT Diploma, qualifying in 1995, I extended my experience with many Special Needs groups and private clients in Australia; with the frail and elderly, in Nursing



**Mary surrounded by women's group in FNQ - 2004**

Working with groups of women for their own empowerment and to celebrate womanhood through an understanding of their own essence and potential for wholeness, has been one of my greatest interests.

And through this interest Clarissa P. Estes book, based on C.G. Jung psychology and fairy stories, "Women who Run with the Wolves" has been another influence on my work. I found this perfect for translating into DMT – for use with group explorations and discoveries of stories, using movement rituals, dance, creative arts and the healing art of the wild woman.



**Mary intergenerational group project**

Also while living in Queensland and working in my community with early childhood teachers, parents and children, I introduced DMT to the local Nursing Home. An Arts Grant from the local authority allowed me to bring together a group of primary school children and the group from the Nursing Home. Both groups were transported to the local hall for weekly DMT sessions, and all who were involved, responded to dance and movement with enthusiasm and joy. It was a heartwarming experience with the evaluation of the program demonstrating the project to be a great success.

I feel enjoyment, the beginning of play and a fostering of the inner child are essential elements in my DMT sessions. They provide release from everyday activities, and the beginning of a journey into the self. The way I have chosen to end my DMT sessions also provides participants with a movement reminder that can be enacted elsewhere when needed. That is it provides a reminder of positive DMT session outcomes where authentic movement from the inner self was reached with its potential to provide insight and

opportunity to effect healthy change and a more creative life through changing patterns of movement.

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell  
Don't go back to sleep.  
You must ask for what you want  
Don't go back to sleep  
People pass back and forth  
Between the two worlds  
The door is wide and open  
Don't go back to sleep".

**Rumi Sufi (poet 13<sup>th</sup> Century)**

Then we come to the 'Now' - and the message hasn't changed, we are still able to allow the slip through the door to that inner world, that revives, renews and refreshes: that world that asks to be shared in movement, dance, words and the beautiful moment - in Life itself.



**Mary- Women's group FNQ 2004**

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