

## The Movement Choir

### “Simplicity is power....”

Peggy facilitated the first Movement Choir in Australia as a closure for the first day of the conference. During this she told us that Laban said “Dance is the birthright of all human beings.” and he believed in scores for groups so they could intermingle. Unfortunately his ideas were taken on by the Third Reich and distorted for Hitler’s use and Laban fled to the UK. She stated that simplicity is power and that simple movement for the expression of group purpose is what works well in Movement Choirs.



We explored both words and movements, first individually and then in a small group. Within the group we created a group repeatable movement phrase based on the individual word and movement. Each group then shared these and we voted on about 5 different ones to be the framework of the dance. Fortunately for us the wedding taking place in the Abbotsford Convent’s gardens was ending and we could claim the use of the lawn and dance these words and phrases in unison outside in the sunshine.



The power of the communal body moving amongst Nature’s elements was pure joy and I imagine most of us were as refreshed and energized by the experience as I was. I adored the toddler coming close to the group knowing that this indeed, the joy



of dancing together, is what life is all about.

*E. Connor Kelly*

### “...everyday work actions”

My memories of Peggy Hackney stretch back to 1987 when I spent one semester studying Movement Analysis and the Bartenieff Fundamentals with her in Seattle.

In that time, her profound mastery of body movement and dance was something I relished. Twenty years later in 2007 when I joined her movement choir at the Dance Therapy Conference, I





fully expected a Laban style movement choir. Rudolph Laban created the concept of the Movement Choir in Germany in the 1930's using simple movement sequences on large groups of people based on everyday work actions. From photos of these choirs, it appears as if the form of these choirs was 'directed from the outside' by Laban using a variety of group formations to help to design the material.

Peggy took a different approach to the Dance Therapy Conference Movement Choir.

She seemed more interested in opening up the dynamic range of movement based on the feeling responses of the participants. Each person was asked to contribute a movement quality and participate in a small group (5-6 people), which then added vocal, spatial and timing considerations to the material.

The larger group (around 70 people) then viewed all the pieces and through democratic vote, an order was selected creating a beginning, middle and ending. This piece was then taken outdoors and performed twice so that people could feel a sense of completion.



The piece seemed satisfying both to do and watch - creating an authentic, living, flowing, evolving movement choir ... fun to create, available to all participants working at their own level, and satisfying to perform.

It led me to reflect on the flexibility of Movement Choirs and to appreciate once again the heritage Laban has left us and the ingenuity of Peggy Hackney's appropriate adaptation for such a worthy occasion.

**Linda Leah**

**“...”repetition builds meaning .....**”

Imagine planning your perfect wedding dress, perfect wedding day, perfect wedding party and then

having a bunch of dance therapists on mass running around and expressing themselves in the background of your wedding photos. Personally, I would have thought that was perfect too.

So this is the picture I have of us all: a beautiful sunny afternoon, a grassy hill surrounded by a grand but crumbling building and rejuvenated gardens... and a wedding party and photographer somewhere nearby, just perfect for our movement choir. And in my own memory of photographs I see many familiar faces and familiar bodies. We are running and reaching, forward and back. We are swaying and stretching inwards and outwards. We are folding down, flying high and flinging around on mass. Once, twice three times we worked through our movement piece *because repetition builds meaning* says Peggy. *And it takes time to build to a climax.*



I am aware that somehow something of my movement, something of what I feel I do as a dance therapist, something that I expressed in movement, was been drawn out of me, out of my group that I formed and collaborated with and was been offered to the group. Something of the essence of what I think, what I believe, what I embody was claimed by the bigger group and used to express what we all feel *we do as dance therapists.*

And the group movement felt personal, very personal that some of the gestures touched my heart and I blinked away a tear as dug down into the past and yet I felt connected to all the bodies and safe and held and happy as I surged and reached forward to the future.

Through a beautiful and democratic process, Peggy elicited my inner attitudes, she facilitated connections through dynamic interplay with others and directed an outward expression. It was a beautiful way to fully embody just what the conference was about.

**Natalie Poole**

**Ed. Note: Authors' bios *Movement Choir*, see p. 53.**

## Performance on the Lawn

### Three Songs, Three Dances' BAH Improvised movement collective



Sitting on the lawns and getting out into the beautiful grounds of the Abbotsford Convent was really another unsung highlight of the conference, particularly as the weather was mild, sunny and conducive to sitting outside on the grass or somewhere in the lovely convent grounds. Add a dance performance on the grass to this ..... and what a luxurious, pleasant and lovely way to spend a lunchtime .....just watching and enjoying the dance .....what more could you ask?

The written description in the program of *Three Songs, Three Dances' BAH Improvised movement collective* told us that "This creative and dynamic team of contemporary dance students have a passion for spontaneous movement and quirky characters', and we weren't disappointed with this description. They delighted us with their improvisations and creativity that fitted in so perfectly to that wonderful performing space.



### To anyone involved in research attached, or could be attached, to Sydney University

*The following message forwarded by Bonnie Meekums (Counselling Subject Co-ordinator Lecturer in Counselling, University of Leeds), to Penny Best in the UK, was passed on to our Australian DMT community by Penny. Originally posted by Anoushka Kulikowski, International Office Assistant, from Leeds University, U,K, the information could be of great value to anyone considering research who could attach themselves to Sydney University. Although the deadline for applications is in March 2008, we understand that applicants seeking funding can apply annually.*

This email is to remind you of the Worldwide Universities Network (WUN) Research Mobility Programme (RMP), a funding scheme to support international research and career development.

WUN is an alliance of 16 research-intensive universities which aims to create international networks of researchers in all academic disciplines. Further information can be found at [www.wun.ac.uk](http://www.wun.ac.uk)

The WUN Research Mobility Programme is open to postgraduate research students, post docs and academic staff members. It provides funding for research visits to the WUN partner institutions listed below; you can apply to stay from 1 week to 3 months with the current average being a two month stay.

The international institutions participating in the programme are:

The University's of Pennsylvania State; Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Wisconsin-Madison; Washington-Seattle; California-San Diego; Bergen; Utrecht; Zhejiang; Nanjing and Sydney

Full details of the scheme, including FAQs, application deadlines and application forms can be found at [www.wun.ac.uk/rmp.php](http://www.wun.ac.uk/rmp.php)



## Performance from Integrate Stretch

*Prior to printing the reflections of 'At the Bridge' performed by Integrate Stretch at the DTAA conference in Melbourne, November 2007, we are really pleased to be able to publish this short piece about this group from Rob Baum. Rob is the dance therapist and artistic director of the group.*

Stretch Theatre developed out of the Footscray Community Arts Centre about 15 years ago. To my knowledge the community theatre group has always been led by trained Dance Therapists; I was fortunate to have inherited this “population,” but always refer to those involved as “members.” Upon taking over the group in mid-2005 I was asked to integrate it, in accord with current disability discourse. I confess that at the time, although I agreed in principle with the notion of integrating, I had grave concerns about how it would work with this group, both because of its longevity as a group, and because of the cognitive disabilities and mild-severe physical disabilities which I initially perceived as the common ground of Stretch. I was afraid that non-disabled people would “take over”, marginalizing the original members.



The programme facilitator, Bernadette Fitzgerald, was particularly keen that the group produce something cohesive and rehearsed, rather than improvisational as they were accustomed. Last year we had three community events, two involving collaboration with international musicians *The Swiss Collectables*. The opportunity to work with contemporary and live music, alongside the novelty of our integration, spurred me to introduce a theme of visibility: the name of our final show was *Why Can't You See Me?* In 2007 I experimented weekly with cognitive exercises, for instance, teaching sequences rather than simply motor patterns. Research on the corpus callosum, ‘the bridge’ which connects left to right brain, suggests that this area can be developed; following Chace’s lead, I used choreography.

It took me a little while to recognise that a love of theatre, a delight in socialising with other performers, and a sizeable “hambone”— theatre idiom for the desire to be in front of an audience— were actually the core characteristics of Stretch members. If other, non-disabled people were to possess some of these traits, then they would fit right into the group—at least, as far as Stretch was concerned. And if they couldn’t work with us, learning theatre, narrative, dance and music techniques, then they weren’t going to return. By the end of 2005 the group had been renamed “Integrate Stretch,” and around that time the day and time of our meeting also changed, to great effect. Members waiting for taxis or public transport home have a little more daylight; they can also look forward to eating a dinner of four lamb chops *after* a session, rather than contending with their internal presence during class, and we can sustain a healthier, more vigorous training period.



We were thrilled to present *At the Bridge (of Mind)* both to our Maribyrnong community and to the Dance Therapy of Australia Association Conference. The warm, loving reception of the DTAA conferees brought forth the very best in our members. We thank the DTAA for the opportunity to share our work as performers, and Annette Dunphy in particular, for making our stay both special and normal.

**Rob Baum**



“....move it and prove it”

This is a performance group of committed people, adult artists, with a variety of disabilities based in the Footscray Community Arts Centre. They are a group of people who believe that if you want to dance there is absolutely no reason why you shouldn't; and with an artistic director who also believes they can and they will.

Aren't we all born with rhythm and a sense of movement from within which can be outwardly expressed through any part of the body that can move?. And didn't Integrative Stretch move it and prove it?.

Their natural exuberance their obvious enjoyment ,their focus no matter whether in a wheel chair or moving upright was both transforming for the performers and their audience. The choreography and the music was well chosen to show a variety of movement and expression .

Their group performance captured their love of movement and dance and they were obviously pleased with their opportunity of performing to such a supportive, appreciative audience

Congratulations to FCAC their artistic director Rob Baum and to all those special dancers.

**Mary Builth**

**A Moving Experience**

The *At the Bridge* performance, evoking the human spirit, was a deeply moving experience for me that came from the dancers and their commitment to their performance piece.

Dr. Rob Baum and her Group had more impact than can be imagined physically, mentally and emotionally on their captivated audience. The performer's 'Encore ' after applause, included their return with gratitude to their audience and as they ever so sweetly lingered in our midst, I stood with humble tears and a wish to see and know them all again.

Above all for her organisation, time and devotion to her work .... Rob Baum deserves a Flower Dance !

**Tiana Li-Donni**



**Photography: Harris Chaiklin**

**Ed. Note: Authors bios *Integrate Stretch* – See p. 53.**

**A Thank You**

The Committees of the DTAA and HEMF want to say a big thank you to all the people who gave so generously of their time and energies to help bring the conference together, to keep it running and support the presenters and other delegates. A special thank to our Conference Billeting Co-ordinator, Jill Groom (who also helped out on Saturday) and those generous people who assisted by offering accommodation in their homes. We would also like to thank Rosemary Bell, who helped on Saturday and Sunday, and all those people who pitched in during the event (both at the conference and during the workshops) to assist where needed. This willingness to assist was greatly appreciated and contributed greatly to the event's success.



## Bidding Farewell Through Movement

### Weaving the Threads – Dancing the Metaphor



The 2007 Weaving The Threads Conference concluded with a Weaving The Threads dance ritual facilitated by Mary Built. The ritual had the whole group moving in straight lines, in curved lines, past and around others. It had us taking notice of each other, of all the individual threads which make up our Australian Dance-Movement Therapy community. For me, this moving among my fellow dance-movement therapists allowed time to really see each thread in this fabric of our community. It also let me appreciate that while over the years connections and interweavings might not always have been smooth, we have not only continued to hang in together, but have managed to create a rich tapestry full of many and varied colours and textures. It felt satisfying, it felt deeply emotional and it felt very connected, strong, powerful.

In seeking to tease out this weaving metaphor some more, I asked a friend who has been involved for years in cloth art to explain a bit more about the weft and the warp, which constitute the “bones” of the weaving process. The warp are the vertical threads, the weft the horizontal which move over and under the warp. In then taking this further into a Laban framework, which sees the vertical as the domain of self, and the horizontal as the communicatory, social dimension, I felt this image of weaving was indeed a powerful metaphor for our community.

Over the years, individuals have worked hard to establish themselves and their ways of working in

dance-movement therapy – styles which are different from each other, but strongly grounded in hard earned experience and study. At the same time, it has been from the interaction of these individuals that our community has been able to grow - through the establishment of a professional body, through the development of training programs and through our less formal interactions in mentoring, supporting and at times inspiring each other. Thus, dance-movement therapy has become what it is today through the integrity and the work of individuals, but also through their willingness to move beyond themselves and contribute to the larger fabric of our community. My friend added a further metaphor of the “crossways” - the tension, the stretch between the vertical and the horizontal - which allows flexibility in fabric. To continue the metaphor, I would suggest that the crossways tensions in the fabric of our community, have not only contributed to its flexibility but to its strength.



On the day of this ritual, though, there were no such thoughts, no need for words – it was all there in the dance. By creating a ritual quality of dance, Mary offered us a space to give full respect and meaning to each other as individual dance-movement therapists and as a community.

Thank you, Mary!

*Heather Hill*  
Author's bio – see p.54.

### Opportunity for Dance Movement Therapy Experience

#### Volunteer Required to assist

Person with dance/ dance therapy background needed to assist with a group of intellectually disabled adolescents in a weekly dance therapy program. Place: Sunshine Special Developmental School, Ivory Court, Sunshine. Commencing: April 8 (Week One, Term 2) every second Tuesday 9.15am -12.15pm **The suitable person will have a current Victorian 'Working with Children - Volunteers' card.** If interested **contact Sue Mullane** on 9311 4804 (school) or 5429 1132 (home).