

# Creative Therapies Association of Aotearoa (CTAA) - New Zealand

*E. Connor Kelly*



Russell Waetford opened the conference with a gorgeous ‘Powhiri’ – a special Maori greeting - and as we greeted each other in this way (nose to nose to inhale each other’s essence) the taste of reverent ritual was palpable. That was, until the door opened and a staff member announced that another group had the room booked in 5 minutes! This gave us all that familiar ‘real world intrusion’ that so many of us endure as we try to create ‘sacred space for our patients/clients’, which caused much laughter.

*Connor, MA, ADTR, now lives and works in New Plymouth, New Zealand. She studied with, Marcia Leventhal, Mimi Berger, Andre Bernard, Penny Lewis, interned with Dr Judith Kestenberg and was in a program developed by Lilian Espenak. She has worked with the developmentally disabled, was involved in the development of a creative arts therapy and internship program, worked with the frail elderly, and in private practice. She is experienced in counseling, family therapy, focusing, contact improvisation and Authentic Movement (worked with Janet Adler), was a member of Theatre of Spontaneity International and is a La Leche League Leader(LL).*

The first keynote speaker, M. A. Greenstein from Boulder, Colorado, presented a talk entitled *Slow Cure for Fast Culture: How to Let the Genie out of the Bottle in the Age of Information*

M.A. spoke about our evolution from a whole brain perspective and that disease today is a result of our speedy culture and in order to address this issue we must shift our paradigm. We must use whole brain thinking in webs and sequences not in duality. The brain makes culture and the culture makes the brain which involves attention/awareness. She describes this as neuroplasticity. She also suggests that if we remember breath precedes initiation of movement we can maintain health. We also need to think about the relationship of patterns and the patterns of relationship.

The CTAA held a conference entitled ‘Healing Ways’ on March 24 at the AUT(Auckland University of Technology), Akoranga Campus, Auckland. The following day the keynote speakers facilitated all day workshops.

Morning workshops followed. These included:

Art	Diana Hickey (Lecture)	The Creative World of Children and Adolescents with Cancer
Drama	Caroline Miller	Spontaneity to Health Through Dramatherapy
Expressive Arts / Multi-medium	Dr Tarquam McKenna (ANZATA)	Marriage of Methods
Movement / Dance	Connor Kelly	Authentic Movement
Music	Claire Molyneux Raukatauri Music Therapy Centre	Hands-On Music Making
Spiritual / Cultural	Brigitte Puls	Healing Spiritual Dance

I facilitated the authentic movement workshop with a small but dedicated group. One member had attended my last workshop at the Body/Mind conference in November. As always it is an honour

and privilege to witness others’ unfolding processes.

A beautiful lunch followed including soup and wrap sandwiches with time to shop at the

conference bookstore, sponsored by Pathfinders Bookstore, which included a special conference discount!

Mark Pearsons from Brisbane, Australia shared his work in the second keynote address entitled *Emotional Healing, Emotional Literacy and Resilience*.

Mark spoke about his particular approach to working with children which includes multiple expressive arts modalities with a particular emphasis on visual arts. His Power Point presentation gave an excellent illustration of both the theoretical and practical tools in this work. This includes working from an invitational stance, using multiple intelligence theory as well as the premise

that emotion precedes cognition so therefore emotion is necessary for rational decisions. I deeply appreciated his definition of a therapist as “A servant of the soul of the client”. It is clear he has a multi layered and in-depth approach using a variety of tools that can enrich any expressive arts therapist’s practice.

A CTAA committee meeting followed allowing us to connect on a business level and understand more fully what the organization has to offer. One wonderful aspect is a lending library that is free to members.

In the afternoon the following workshops were on offer:

Art	Megan Shiell (ANZATA)	Art & Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)
Drama	Paula Crimmens	The Healing Power of Stories
Expressive Arts / Multi-medium	Anita Wacker	Replenishing Your Passion & Compassion
Movement / Dance	Amanda Levey	Finding the Freedom to Move as Your True Self – Dance as a Healing Art
Music	Sally Mabelle	The Authentic Voice
Spiritual / Cultural	Stephanie Turner	A Maori Model for Arts Therapy

I attended Paula Crimmens’ Drama Therapy workshop. Paula trained in the UK and spoke a bit about her background and this method. She offered us a story and after several group warm up activities we enacted 2 scenes from the story. We each chose a role in each scene. Afterwards we shared why we choose the role we did and what the enaction meant to us. She described how she has adapted this method for working with people with disabilities. This workshop was heaps of fun and clearly reminded me how important it is for us to play together!

pebbles and imagined 2 things we would take away from the conference. She encouraged us to walk among the other participants and offer the 3<sup>rd</sup> to other participants and sharing what they had given us that day. This was a lovely way to close our gathering.

Many of us celebrated later with a gorgeous meal in town at a lovely Turkish restaurant in the Newmarket area of Auckland.

Brigitte Puls, outgoing CTAA president, offered a simple closing ritual. We each choose 3 coloured

The following day included all-day workshops with the keynote speakers

Day Two – Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> March – Full-day Workshop by Keynotes	
10am – 5pm	M. A. Greenstein – <u>The Fluid Body</u> At the Blockhouse Bay Boatclub, end of Endeavour St, Blockhouse Bay, Auckland.
or	
10am – 5pm	Mark Pearson - <u>Processing, Reflecting and Integration: Art and multiple intelligences in the healing journey.</u> At MARCO Trust, 47 New North Road, Eden Terrace, Auckland

I attended M.A. Greenstein’s *The Fluid Body*. The setting was a boathouse in a bay. Being surrounded by water, this became a perfect container for our exploration of the fluid body. M.A. spoke about her background including studying at UCLA (with DMT pioneer Alma Hawkins), with Emilie Conad Da’Oud and Bonnie Cohen. She suggested that our thinking of the body has thus far reflected an architectural aesthetic which is a grid and includes

planes, symmetry, lines etc so she asked us to arrange ourselves sitting in that rectangle. She also said that no matter how ancient a practice is, someone at some time made it up and that most of our body practices are based on this aesthetic. She suggests we look at the body on its own terms. For one thing bones are curved and not straight! We did a brief meditation and then imagined taking a form in the centre of the room. She asked us one at

a time to enter the space and take that form and then dissolve the form so we could experience form taking shape and dissolving which is based on a Barbara Dilley practice. Later we explored a hands-on breathing practice with partners to illustrate how and where we breathe. We also danced to music to explore the different fluid systems. She was encouraging us to move at a tissue level. In our explorations she suggests we maintain an attitude of inquiry and pay attention to micro movements as we experience the asymmetry, the non linear aspects of the body. She suggests we look at our language and metaphors. As I engaged in this workshop I could feel internal movement relating to a paradigm shift.

I noticed the asymmetry in my body and greeted it with delight and curiosity. I felt my body taking my own unique space, no longer trying to mould myself into a linear, planal ideal. My mind breathed an “ah ha”, the body has it’s own unique language and shape beyond anatomical correctness based on the ideal of a machine.

The phrases that stay with me are, “breath precedes initiation”; “breath is always there and is our friend”; “the body on its own terms”; “examine your metaphors”; “the neuromuscular system is not the main event, it is only coming along for the ride”. These phrases are quotes from MA from my notes for this workshop.

**Photograph: New Zealand beach by Lesley Hawkins**