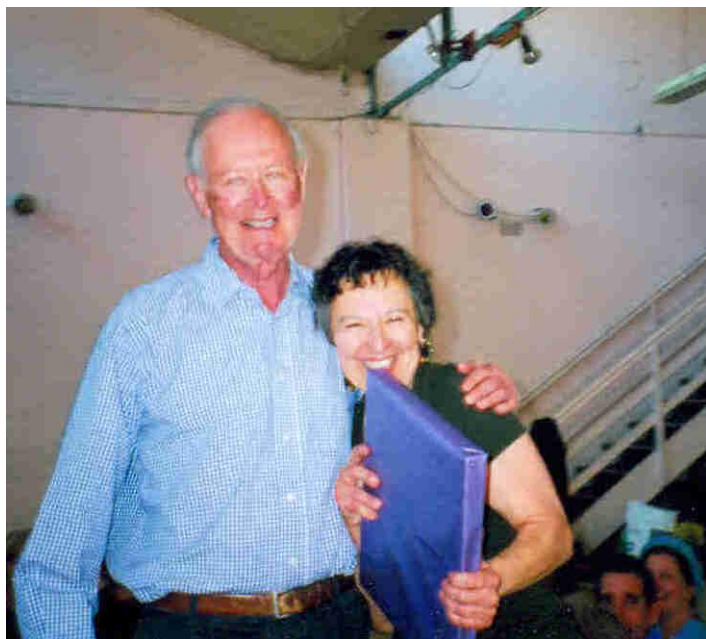


Writing

Heather Hill



Heather with Denis Kelynack - following receiving the HEMF Achievement award – Nov. 2005.*

Heather, PhD, Prof. Member DTAA, B.A., M.Ed., Grad. Dip. Movement and Dance, Grad. Cert. Dance Therapy, author "Invitation to the dance: Dance for people with dementia and their carers" (2001), has worked as a dance therapist for 20 years, specializing in the area of dementia, and has been the coordinator of the dance-movement therapy courses that ran at RMIT University.

The following piece by Heather has been developed from a response she made to a discussion on writing on the ADTA Listserve (last year). In particular, it was her response to an email from Sharon Chaiklin. We put this aside, waiting for the right time to print. As you will note from the message in the Editorial on p.1., it is the right time to print and it fits well into this edition as an encouragement to the DMT community to put pen to paper and write something!

This discussion on writing is on a subject close to my heart and I've enjoyed hearing what others have had to say. I just wanted to pick up on what Sharon said about not waiting for the brilliant idea or perfection in writing.

Sharon said:

"Being involved in the Marian Chace Foundation, we have been trying to encourage our practitioners to write for so long!It just takes one idea to develop...something you are wondering about or find fascinating and moving. Don't think that everything has to be the first time discussed or the brilliant

original idea. We learn from others and something that someone else has written may spark a thought that can grow from that writing".

I think writing can be part of dance therapy practice from the very beginning in terms of finding some time to reflect and write on one's practice. Writing and practice have always seemed a natural pairing for me - but then I do love writing anyway - but it's perhaps something even those who don't naturally write, can consider doing. It is the perfect way to start writing because the paper can provide a receptacle for a whole mix of thoughts and feelings in no particular order and without concern for grammar and style.

Even in the early stages of your dance therapy career, you can start writing. This is where Sharon's point about "brilliance" is particularly relevant. You need to choose a not too threatening context - such as a newsletter (and yes use colleagues, etc. to read drafts) - and just write from your experience. In the first instance, your experience - where you are at at the present moment - is totally o.k. You don't need to wait till you've had 20 years' experience; the experience of beginners is also of interest for everyone experienced and new to the field alike.

Another encouragement to write is that by writing you will actually find out what you know, what you're doing and why you're doing it. In writing my doctoral thesis, I can very much affirm the truth of writing to find out what you know.

Another thing I've learnt is that through the act of writing, one's writing gets better and better - it's a bit like dancing, really! Do not wait for the perfect wording or the perfect beginning, just WRITE! (just as we encourage our clients to just MOVE). I believe there is a wonderful satisfaction in forming and refining thought and feelings into words

Below is a poem which my supervisor sent me as I started writing my thesis and which I feel says much about the act of writing. I hope it inspires some of you out there, just as it did me!

This poem dates from the late 8th or early 9th century and was found as a marginal note in a copy of the Codex St. Pauli in the Monastery of Carinthia. The author is presumably an anonymous Irish monk and scribe. This translation is by Robin Flower. Pangur Ban is old Irish for Soft White Cat.

PANGUR BAN

I and Pangur Ban, my cat
'Tis a like task we are at;
Hunting mice is his delight,
Hunting words I sit all night.
Better far than praise of men
'Tis to sit with book and pen;
Pangur bears me no ill will,
He too plies his simple skill.
'Tis a merry thing to see
At our tasks how glad are we,
When at home we sit and find
Entertainment to our mind.
Oftentimes a mouse will stray
In the hero Pangur's way;
Oftentimes my keen thought set
Takes a meaning in its net.
'Gainst the wall he sets his eye
Full and fierce and sharp and sly;
'Gainst the wall of knowledge I
All my little wisdom try.
When a mouse darts from its den,
O how glad is Pangur then!
O what gladness do I prove
When I solve the doubts I love!
So in peace our tasks we ply,
Pangur Ban, my cat, and I;
In our arts we find our bliss,
I have mine and he has his.
Practice every day has made

Pangur perfect in his trade;
I get wisdom day and night
Turning darkness into light.

Note: Start to write from the very beginning of one's dance therapy work. The Dance-Movement Therapy Quarterly publication team are pleased to receive contributions from students, those just starting in the workforce or experienced practitioners. All contributions are valued. Student assignments, that rarely see the light of day once completed, with a little more effort can be brought up to the standard required for an article. As Heather said in a follow up email "Students who are still at the early stages of training often have such unique and different perspectives which can really inject new blood into the material and give experienced dance therapists food for thought". She went on to say that she sees "it as beneficial both ways - in starting the writing habit early for students, and in giving the rest of us the opportunity to access some of the truly creative and insightful work which comes from students". So send in your contributions and start to write!

Artwork for Pangur Ban: Sheila Lovell – with her kind permission. Sheila is a well-known Western Chinese Artist from the UK.

**HEMF = Hanny Exiner Memorial Foundation*

