

# Taking Heart – an opportunity for Dance/Movement Therapy?

*Robyn Price*



**Robyn (facing camera) with partner in Penny Best workshop – March 2006, Melbourne**

*Robyn, BA, Grad Dip Movt & Dance (Melb Uni), Grad Cert Dance Ed (UTS), Postgraduate Diploma in DMT, Wesley Institute, has a long standing involvement in dance, as student, teacher and performer. She also works part-time as a marketing writer.*

In November 2004, the Association for Medical Humanities (Australia/New Zealand) was created to promote the medical humanities in education, healthcare and research. Its aim is to facilitate communication between the many disciplines that are concerned with the human experience of health and illness.

The Association's first biennial conference, held in Byron Bay in July this year, would bring together around 200 people from across Australia and around the world: GPs, writers, university lecturers, musicians, actors, artists, psychotherapists, psychiatrists, naturopaths, and one dance/movement therapist.

There was an interesting theme that emerged over the three days. When making comments or asking questions, non-medical people would preface their comment with "I'm not a medical person, but...". I was obviously not the only person harbouring a level of insecurity when confronted with a group of medical types. (I worked out I was holding on to a childhood view that doctors are superior beings and this view didn't help my already high levels of anxiety in being alone in a sea of unknown people.)

For me, this conference was stimulating, both creatively and professionally. I enjoyed participating in the creative writing and drama workshops, adding ideas to the 'toolbox'. It forced me to find ways to articulate to medical professionals what dance/movement therapy is. It also opened my eyes to new opportunities for our profession. The wellbeing and self-care of health professionals was mentioned many times, as was the use of the arts and humanities in the training of health professionals, and this group of people was certainly interested in investigating the place of the arts and humanities within a broader view of healthcare.

In 2008, the second conference will be held in Melbourne with (it is my intention to make this happen) at least one dance/movement therapy workshop and a couple of paper presentations on the links between medicine and DMT in Australia. For more details about the Association of Medical Humanities (Australia/New Zealand) see [www.usyd.edu.au/medicalhumanities/contact/amh.shtml](http://www.usyd.edu.au/medicalhumanities/contact/amh.shtml).

## **For reading on the topic:**

See the online Medical Humanities journal at <http://www.mh.bmjournals.com>, and two recently-published books: C. LeNavenec & L. Bridges (Eds) 2005, *Creating Connections Between Nursing Care and the Creative Arts Therapies: Expanding the concept of holistic care*, Springfield, Illinois USA, and S.W. Goodill (2005), *An Introduction to Medical Dance/Movement Therapy: Health Care in Motion*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London, UK.