

Reflections on Workshop with Dr Steve Harvey - Dynamic Family Play and Physical Storytelling Sunday October 15th 2007 at Cecil Street Studio

Sally Denning

Sally, B.Ed, Grad. Dip Movement & Dance, Grad. Cert Dance Therapy, M.Ed, and currently undertaking a PhD., is a dance movement therapist, professional dancer and teacher of Middle Eastern dance. She has a small private practice in dance movement therapy in Northcote and specialises in working with people with depression.

The DTAA Annual General Meeting, usually held in November, was brought forward so the membership could have the pleasure of learning in action with Dr Steve Harvey PhD, ADTR, RDT, RPT/S.



Dr Steve Harvey

Steve is well known internationally for his work in dance-movement therapy. He has taught the Naropa DMT program and at Langen Institute. He is involved in Playback Theatre and is highly experienced working with families of young children in private practice. Steve's core focus is Dynamic Family Play and also in a practice called Physical Storytelling. He developed the latter together with his wife E. Connor Kelly who is a dance movement therapist. He now lives in New Plymouth NZ where he is currently a Consultant Psychologist with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Steve helped pioneer the field of Family Play Therapy and has written book chapters and articles, with several published by the American Psychological and American Psychiatric Associations.

We spent the morning looking at how he uses Dynamic Family Play to address family conflict's and relationships and then, in the afternoon session Steve conducted for us, he focussed on Physical Storytelling. We started by playing a game – purposefully designed to cause confusion. We walked, we followed, we selected a special person to follow and kept it a secret, and we identified an anti-special to keep away from – this was a secret too! Soon we were a mass of bodies that might have appeared from a great height to be like magnetic filings being attracted and repelled on occasions.

Following this warm-up activity Steve discussed with us how this activity of special, anti-special could be drawn, analysed and discussed. We discussed the combinations of 'included versus not included' and we thought about this in relation to family situations. For example a family with lots of violence – special and anti-special can be the same person. Steve emphasised that there are always answers in the play state. He indicated that "*in the play state there is an instinctive creativity that can take us to health.*"

In the afternoon session we also discussed some of Steve's experiences in working with a range of groups and the impact of Physical Storytelling. Steve described activities he had used for family work including scarf fights for bed-wetters and monster games for trauma. He continued by taking us experientially through some of the various basic dance/movement scores in the physical storytelling practice. These included the journey score, 3 stops, 3



solos, a poetic double and the Fairy Tale (see Connor E. (2006) Physical Storytelling in 'Moving On' Vol. 5, no. 1 p. 2-8).



We finished by participating in a Physical Storytelling movement exercise. One participant volunteered to tell her story. She selected dancers for her story who left the room while she gave a quick précis of the situation. The dancers returned to the room unaware of the detail.



Steve as the dance movement therapist acted as narrator of the story. He chose a fairytale format to portray the essence of the scene. The narrator told the story in segments and the dancers unaware of the detail, danced and moved to what they heard. The participant (client) who originally imparted the story watched, and led by the movement therapist, commented and de-briefed on the experience post the Physical Storytelling process.

Personally I found the process to be extremely moving and powerful, and I doubt that there was a dry eye in the room at the conclusion! Clear themes spontaneously emerged from the story telling process and a conclusion unexpectedly emerged that had personal relationship first and the product outcome of the story in second place. As Steve commented the performance itself is geared to transfer or recover in some way and it is anticipated that the Physical

Storytelling process helps us understand ourselves in a different way.

This was a powerful professional development day. The Physical Storytelling technique is another tool that, with appropriate and adequate training, can be added to the Dance Movement Therapist's kit bag!



Note: Photographs from this workshop are of dances that emerged from various scores
