

Reflections On 'Water'

A workshop presented by Rosemary Blundo at the Dance Therapy Forum in Sydney, April 2005

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Meredith's studies include architecture (B.SC.(arch)), garment design (Dip. Fashion and Textiles) and various dance forms. A background as a dancer and designer with a commitment to social healing, Meredith began work building integrated community culture through the arts in country NSW in 1995 and has completed studies towards a Post. grad. Dip. in Dance Therapy, 2005. Meredith reflects on her experience with a process designed around the theme of water with Romemary Blundo.*

There seems always to be a new way of experiencing the natural elements, both in method and personally. This time the process began with ball throwing/word associations which worked to informally connect group members with little intervention from the leader. The depth of my interest in others expanded...

Then followed a partner experience as seaweed in the sea; weed surrounded by and in relationship with water. I began as weed, a kelp listing about, requiring strong, fluid support (my partner) to keep afloat. Too much weight for my partner, who left me to save myself from falling. Weighty stuff. Wordlessly we moved to my turn as water where, initially, I filled the fronds of a dancing weed which happily accepted a light sense of watery presence. This weed became discomforted by my water attempting to influence her floaty movement. Again I experienced my weight as strong, this time interfering with a flow in our pas de deux.

I seemed to be experiencing a physical inappropriateness, brought about by the influence of the heaviness of my emotions.

Next Rosemary brought out a basket of water-filled balloons for us to handle while she introduced the image of 'spirit level'. Words interjected gentle rocking music as we danced the experience of liquid moving through our bodies. Oh what relief to move this weight around my body, play with weighted balance and images of a baby supported by the womb. The living weight of water continually coming back to centre, finding its/my own path ebbing and flowing as the tides, finding blockages and moving them... "supported but free".

The 'Water' experience was completed by a rocking song circle with lyrics expressing the image

of a river returning to the sea...and the brushing off of any last droplets.

Now I was present to the forum; my unrealized personal needs gracefully accommodated.

Yesterday, in studies of the DMT pioneers, the piece of the puzzle explaining why certain ways of moving can be deeply satisfying found a fit. Initially I had considered the experience in terms of reflecting the value in recognizing and finding ways to include a client's presenting state to enable the experience of validation and thus greater ability for openness and further involvement in the creative process. This was reflected in the appropriateness of the imagery for attending to my needs in this process as well as in terms of the Narrative/Constructivist type approaches, whereby the client's language is fed back by the therapist in an attempt to encourage further inquiry. This facilitates the expansion of the personal experience (here the personal experience of 'weight' was my language), with the possibility of dissolving what may be considered the 'problem'.

Permission to indulge (a preference for me according to Laban analysis) in an unspecified mood, in a safe, ambient environment, supported my movement from an unsettled place to one of peaceful enjoyment...but a review of the theories of Paula and Bill Douthett, as applied in Christian Sacred Dance, shone further light on my sense of feeling uplifted.

The Douthetts recognized that they could apply the Natural Laws, as proposed by Isaac Newton, to a system of movement they called Harmonics. "Awareness [in the use] of God's laws written

within the body enables the person to relax into the natural forces, resulting in an emotional, spiritual and physical harmony which can be tangibly experienced” (Douthett, 1993 in Defina, 1999). A basic premise of this movement system is that little effort is required to move with the natural forces that govern the earth (Defina, 1999). For example, considering why certain dance movements have a particularly satisfying resonance, I have found an explanation in terms of the forces of gravity plus inertia. Many of us may have experienced being uplifted by moving like a pendulum with our weight swinging freely, as I found here in a body filled with “living water” or a “spirit level” (Blundo’s images). The resonance left by such swinging, by moving in and out like the flow of a wave, by experiencing centripetal force (mass being pulled towards a centre) at work in a moving spiral or by the simple comfort of a rocking motion, may

be further understood by looking at the application of the Natural Laws as reflected in our bodies.

For me, Rosemary Blundo’s facilitation of an experience of the element water was certainly thought provoking and surprisingly rich as an experience of kinetic learning towards professional development.

References

Defina, Evelyn (1999). Sacred Dance as a Form of Dance Therapy in *Dance Therapy Collections Number 2.*, published DTAA, Melbourne, Australia. .

***From:** a program initially devised by Teresa Connolly, Drama teacher/therapist, for the ‘Arts for Health’ program, held in Gosford, NSW. The program provides ongoing group sessions which aim to assist people reconnect with their creativity and meaning in life.