

Creative Therapies Association of Aotearoa (CTAA) - New Zealand



We are pleased to present the following reports from Connor Kelly and Lesley Hawkins on this Creative Therapies Conference held in New Zealand in August of this year. Connor and Lesley now both live and work in New Zealand. Connor moved with her family a few years ago and Lesley returned to her home country very recently after living and working in Melbourne for several years.

Conference report AUT Akoranga Campus, Auckland.

Theme : Travelling Light :Enabling ourselves and our clients to let go of unnecessary baggage.

Connor Kelly

E. Connor Kelly, MA, ADTR, LPC, trained at NYU, interned with Judith Kestenberg, worked as a DMT in the Boston area in the 80s and held several positions for both the local and national ADTA. She studied authentic movement indepth with many pioneers in the field and after 8 years in Germany and Italy, now resides in New Plymouth, NZ. where she maintains a small DMT practice, teaches authentic movement and studies yoga.

I made sure to arrive on time to the CTAA 10th Anniversary conference as latecomers were not allowed into the opening ritual. Juliet Batten author of *Celebrating the Southern Seasons, Rituals for Aotearoa* was facilitating the opening. I had read about her in a library book upon arrival in New Zealand nearly 2 years ago. We entered in silence where a beautiful altar had been created in the centre of the room. She opened with the invocation of the energies from each direction and its corresponding element. She than offered us a basket of stones and had us take one or two and imagine some baggage we wished to released. Next she asked us to put these stones in the water jugs which had been placed in each of the 4 directions on the altar. We then sang a welcoming song and she lead us in a spiral dance, which allowed us to greet each conference attendee through song and dance.

“ Welcome, welcome,
To see you makes my heart sing
Welcome, welcome,
In you I see myself
In you I see the one.”

We were called to the first keynote address by a bell. The ringer then announced the time and next event. Tarquam McKenna, President of the Australian National Art Therapy Association filled in for the original keynote speaker who had to cancel. He did a superb job using grace and humour as he discussed with powerful readings by John O’Donohue (*Eternal Longing*), a power point presentation on compassion fatigue and how we look at health and well being. He shared several interesting points of view. One was a recent comment by an American professor who suggests 20 years ago 75% of students came to university with passion and 25% for vocation, he saw now those figures are reversed! He also shared a pyramid model illustrating adverse conditions that later effect mental health and suggested that we, creative arts therapists work within these scientific gaps. He encouraged us to ‘enlarge our frame of belonging’, release our experience of ‘reduced identity’ and allow the eternal beauty of the soul to emanate.

Morning tea followed and again a bell ringing transitioned us on to the morning workshop. The offerings included:

Barbara Eberhard *Dance/Movement Therapy – a language of learning*

Sara Smallwood *Art therapeutic work with eating disorders*

Tarquam McKenna *Expressive Therapy - Bridges into Praxis*

Marnie De Wolf *Art Therapy with Grief and loss*

I attended Tarquam's workshop. He offered us some words again from John O'Donohue, *haunted lonesomeness, vacant heart of contemporary life*. Next we shared with a partner what image or sensation we experienced as we listened to those phrases. Next one person shaped the other's body into a sculpture and gave a name for that sculpture as he walked through the gallery pointing to the sculpture. Each person did each role. Next we joined another dyad to create an artwork. We began with our image/experience of being the sculpture. From there we worked silently to fill in the art work. Next we each wrote words to express our experience as patient and on a separate sheet our experience as therapist so that each group had 2 sheets. Tarquam read these as if he were reading poetry. We next chose some of the words we liked as a group to read and create a performance piece (words from a different group). As we discussed the number of modalities we engaged in he asked us to look at how the aesthetic of the experience is waking us up as well as the power of participation. He also spoke to our ease in mutual participation but acknowledged the 'shadow' waiting outside the door!

Lunch followed the morning workshop and was a lovely catered affair. Many of us had a chance to mingle with other creative arts therapists from different regions of New Zealand. Pathfinders Bookstore had a stall with a wonderful collection of books to sell. Again Lisa the bell ringer reminded us of the second keynote address.

Sylvia Rands who has recently returned from Australia described her approach to voice work. She has integrated her studies with Kirstin Linklater and the Lichtenberg Institute of Sound training. She offered us her perspective on using breath and sound in healing. We stood up in the lecture hall to practice 2 different breaths, one for release, the other more for centering. She spoke of the jaw as the bridge, jaw bridge, drawbridge, gateway to our sound channel which is sourced in our belly, our pool. Her humorous style, as well as her weaving in phrases from Tarquam's first keynote, offered a very energetic, uplifting and entertaining lecture. I also learned from Sylvia that 2 parts of our body are continuing to evolve and that is our larynx and our hands. As an authentic movement practitioner I was

reminded of the sound and song that often arises as we move deeply into our body wisdom.

Afternoon workshops followed this keynote:

Sylvia Rands *Voice Work and the Vocal Process*

Steve Harvey *Movement/Drama and Dynamic Family Work*

Lisabeth Toomey *Music Therapy – Explore music to understand ourselves*

Clare Caldwell *Transpersonal Artstherapy with Death and Dying*

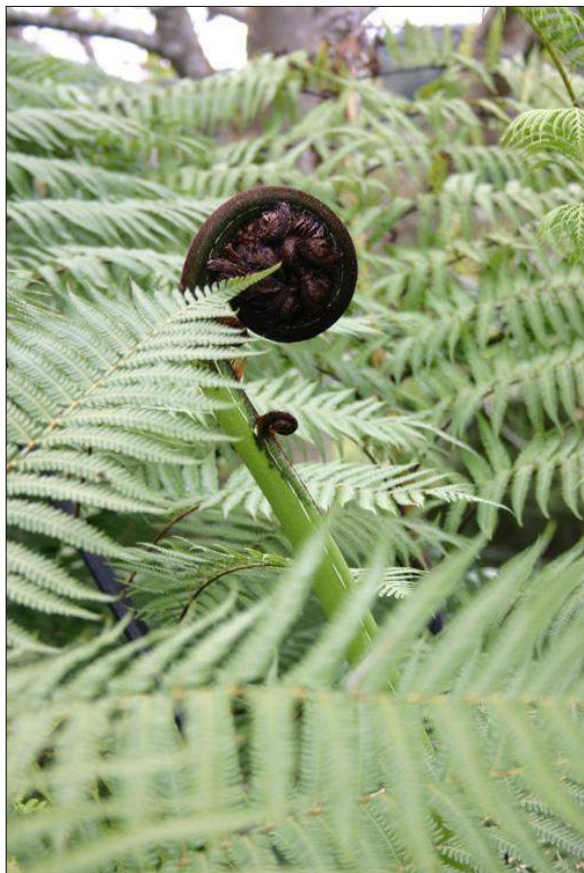
I attended Sylvia's workshop as I find voice is integral with the body. We explored the breaths she taught earlier and I was able to ask about her encouragement of mouth breathing. As a yoga practitioner I am practicing more and more pranayama which is mostly nose breathing yet as a swimmer I must mouth breathe. She shared that the average person does not breathe into their belly so the mouth breathing charges that pathway. We also visualized our pool in our belly and moving into that pool. Afterwards she had us close our eyes and she handed us a picture. The picture had the apparatus for sounds, ears, voice box etc. and on the back there was the image of the female reproductive system and the similarity is no surprise to me as I remember connecting the 2 regions in movement explorations long ago. She then showed us an example of her 1:1 work with a member of a group which in this case involved quite a bit of movement and some hands on facilitation. She also shared that we are 3 to 4 octave beings and we need those higher tones, called brilliance as they organize our whole vocal system. That sound feeds and nourishes us. She demonstrated this with tones from her voice and her singing bowl. She encouraged us that we are meant to be divine and expressing our joy and using our full range of brilliance is part of this process!

The closing ritual followed facilitated by Brigitte Puls, Chairperson of CTAA. We first sang a gorgeous song in Maori. Then we went to the altar to choose 3 feathers. As we moved around the room we were to imagine 2 gifts we received from this conference and choose a feather to represent each gift. Next we gave away these 2 gifts to two different people we met. I had the privilege to share my gifts with a young woman new to the work and a seasoned professional, Tarquam. Both were deeply moving moments full of light, love and gratitude. The theme travelling light and releasing excess baggage wove magic throughout this conference.

Many of us were able to meet in Ponsonby for dinner together afterwards which allowed us more sharing and storytelling time together. We also had a belly dancer for entertainment!(as well as a Hen Party nearby!!!) Indeed a rich and heart felt day!

Personal Highlights & Aspects that held Personal Meaning from the 'Travelling Light' Conference of Creative Arts Therapies Association of Aotearoa, Auckland, NZ, 2005

Lesley Hawkins



New Zealand Pung Fern

Lesley, DM and creative arts training, NZ and UK, Cert. DMT, IDTIA, Finalising Dip. Prof. Counselling,, experienced in Body-Mind Centering, Laban, Anna Halprin approaches, worked as DMT in aged care, women's health, HIV positive clients, general mental health and special needs populations

I would like to share with you...

- ♥ Being happy & excited about the developing creative arts therapy field in NZ, that such a conference took place and I was able to be there
- ♥ Our name tags – coloured love hearts and feathers & personal conference bags – nice pen!
- ♥ Sense of ease and flow of the day; well organized, yet informal and friendly
- ♥ Meeting new people – Conner Kelly!
- ♥ Reconnecting with old colleagues
- ♥ The lovely spacious, light, and wooden floored room, where I participated in dance movement and voice workshops
- ♥ The welcome ritual from Juliet Batten – putting a stone in water vessel (releasing your burden for the day at least) and singing and moving together...non threatening, self affirming and socially connecting.

- ♥ Keynote address by Tarquam McKenna on wellbeing of therapeutic workers – simple, refreshing approach, emphasizing diet, exercise, humour, spirituality, and readings from Irish writers such as John Donohue. ('The Case of Frightened Identity' & 'Our Fear of Freedom: The Refuge of False Belonging')

Attending Barbara Eberhard *Dance/Movement Therapy – a language of learning*

- ♥ The joyous and enthusiastic style of Dance Movement Therapy w/shop presenter Barbara Eberhart giving me inspiration to work with children.
- ♥ The content of Barbara's material was primarily based on working with children - perhaps simple, fun, is the most useful & profound, yet with the ability to be sophisticated and adapted to adults.
- ♥ The sheer joy of waking up then bouncing puppet birds up and down on purple stretch cloth to Strauss – how many bounces before they fall? – As a group how do we co-operate? Then using the puppets to talk through and perhaps choreograph a dance with.
- ♥ Form a circle, half group close eyes and meet in the middle with other half observing – provided good opportunity for peer discussion on body language – How do we protect ourselves? How do we walk into the unknown? How do we interact when we get there?

Sylvia Rands *Voice Work and the Vocal Process*

- ♥ The wise words and physical exercises of voice performer and therapist Sylvia Rands:
- ♥ Reminder that the voice is anchored in our physical being and therefore directly linked to our emotional process. We cannot connect to our centre until our mouth is open & jaw relaxed – enabled through adopting the 'gormless look'!
- ♥ Making wonderful faces, sounds, & gestures, to let the dead energy out, access vocal range (emotional range/physical levels – waving hands in air as if in gospel choir for higher level shrill sounds, kicking out with legs engaging whole body energy and making all those lower level grunts, growls, and roars, and then torso shaking and wobbling for the middle level sounds and all other sounds travelling through) and find your present centred 'here I am' expression
- ♥ 1 = belly for the source, 2 = visualise image eg pool 3 = sound channel
- ♥ The effect of left brain domination on voice has been attention to elocution (pitch, vowel sounds,

sounding nice) but who are you? Engaging the right brain means expression of identity and creativity & accessing the healing frequencies as found in nature.

- ♥ What really resonated for me was the simple teaching that breath = space(oxygen and release), so more breath = more space, flow, movement...health...think less, breath move and be more
- ♥ The wonderful exercise of closing my eyes, being given a folded piece of paper, opening my eyes upon hearing certain sound, and responding in sound to what my eyes immediately focus on...a sketch of the vocal tract and then turning it over to find a sketch of the female reproductive organ...and realising the similarity in anatomical structure
- ♥ Lightening the load using the metaphor of 'excess baggage' provides an interesting contradiction – excess joy, sorrow, anger is discouraged yet inhibiting these primary impulses can weigh you down in bodily tension, utilising the secondary (socialised) impulse empowers us to choose our response based on appropriateness for the situation but not to deny it! 'Baggage' is the unwanted, old, not needed any more – carrying our old stories or other people's stories...letting go lightens our load.
- ♥ How singing and moving through action songs feels so ancient, natural, and ageless. We ended Barbara's workshop with 'The river is flowing, flowing and flowing, the river is flowing back to the sea. Mother carry me, carry me, carry me, Mother carry me back to the sea' – you can imagine the movements that go with this.



If I'm lucky at certain times of the day the beach can be deserted up here in the Northland region of NZ – sound, movement and nature – bliss.

Photographs: Lesley Hawkins