

Reflections from the Sara (Zora) Boas visit to Sydney – May 2017



The workshops with Sara took place on the harbour's edge, at the historic Drill Hall, in Rushcutter's Bay, Darling Point. It was a perfect

setting for three very full days of movement exploration.

The illuminating first day, about transcultural competence from a body perspective, preceded two days of expanding on art making as healing. Brief reflections follow in combination with photos of some of the movement based explorations. Sara, now also known by the name of Zora, our international presenter, is a highly skilled facilitator, dancer, DMT, healer, researcher and leadership coach. The workshop attracted participants with these backgrounds, as well as psychotherapists, creative arts therapists, wellness practitioners, and coaches.

Reflections on Transcultural Competence in Body-based Process: exploring 'difference' through movement

This one-day deep dive into working with cultural diversity provided fresh perspectives to all who took part. Although designed for experienced DMT's, it was of more than equal value to those who came from other professions to join with us on that day. Together we explored challenges and opportunities encountered in our work, whether or not our practice is explicitly 'cross-cultural'. We questioned our assumptions about culture, identity, and looked at the 'differences' between us in the safe and supportive environment provided, developing our ideas and finding new ways of working.

We became more aware of our own cultures and the culture of other's by embodying them, with the focus of our attention where it matters, and finding out what the differences between us are



Twilight at Rushcutters Bay

by shifting our perspectives. This involved perspective across radical difference, and finding empathy when it seems impossible to do so. We delved into finding the movement language needed to share and explore the boundaries of our identity through listening to presentations, discussion and exploration of our own material, and that of our clients.

Robyn Price expressed the following:

"This workshop was for me an exploration about how difference can be viewed, received, embodied, embraced and drawn upon to create a rich fabric of experience and potential. It is no accident that the participants in our beautiful dance-making space were from a range of backgrounds, both ethnically and professionally. This was our intention. The raw material held great potential and Zora (Sara) brought her skill at facilitation and dance making to support deep body-level enquiry and learning. It was soon evident that for me, the weekend was not about learning specific skills or activities (although I am certain many are excited to take away new ideas for workshops) but about practising new ways of being.

The very first activity is the one that most deeply impacted me across the entire weekend. The practice of sitting with another person and simply listening to their views on culture. Just listening. How hard it was for me to do that. How profound the connection between my partner and me was as a result. I still hold an embodied sense of that time.

As the day unfolded, Zora offered a range of activities that involved observing, being present with, reflecting, attuning, and communicating nonverbally, using movement and rhythm. We moved in pairs, trios, small groups and in the whole group. In one small group activity, the mover devised, then handed over a rhythm to group members. Using small instruments, the group repeated the rhythm for the mover, providing a soundscape to move to. One way to share something of ourselves and to build a sense of connection and community. Simple, powerful.



Body listening

In another section, we were in groups of six, preparing to move into different perceptual positions: first; second; and third person; within the

relationship; infinity - from a place of spirituality/interconnectedness; and zero or soul/the deep self. From each position came a different experience – how rich the overall experience when taking in different viewpoints.



Playful but challenging

In a final group activity, one mover was accompanied by others in specific roles of attunement, following, or challenging. This could be a playful dance activity, it could offer profound awareness about how we are in relationship. There was space for either or both.

My learning – body level enquiry brings far greater richness than verbal enquiry alone; being in an environment that invites difference can be challenging and at times overwhelming for me; and in my acceptance of the diversity of what others bring, I find myself more accepting of myself.



Taking in different viewpoints

Zora clearly and quietly directs the workshop and holds the space in a way that is grounded, professional and welcoming of the contributions of group members. And that was just the first day in beautiful Rushcutters Bay!”



Cecilia Lau dancing her identity with Zora dynamically holding the space

And a comment from Virginia Chen, pictured with Robyn, in ‘Body listening’, and other photos above:

“What a wonderful and incredible dance healing experience. I totally melted into joy, it brought me back to my childhood and reminded me of my culture as a Chinese.”

With Robyn and Virginia in photos:
Lizanne Knights, Jo Lin, Sharon Todd-Miller and Meredith Lucy

Art Making as Healing: a creative workshop for therapists

This two-day workshop that followed the Transcultural Competence day, was on Art Making and Healing in relationship to the therapeutic value of creation and performance, and the artistic potential of therapeutic process. Although the emphasis was on improvisational movement, it also incorporated poetry and drawing, combining experiential exploration with reflection, discussion, and theoretical analysis. It was designed for those whose work is primarily verbal, or dancers and other artists wishing to expand and deepen their practice.

It covered very many things, included nurturing the personal creative flame within professional practice; artistic risk-taking and the transformation of life experience into art as 'emotional alchemy'. The balance of vulnerability, safety in artistic performing, and witnessing the integration of artistic and therapeutic processes in daily work and immersing it in experiences, was addressed. The participants engaged with their own art making and facilitated others to do the same.



Tarlan Ghiassi and Lizanne Knights engaged in art making and facilitating

Again, Robyn Price was moved to express:

"From the beginning the concept of the co-created space for exploration setting the scene for safety was introduced. As participants, we were from diverse backgrounds and had different levels of experience in improvisation and movement-based reflection. Zora very quickly set the frame and we got to work. Sensing, moving, clarifying, witnessing, holding and performing. During and after, making sense, connecting to personal themes and patterns.

Under the umbrella of art making as healing emerged the themes of voice and leadership. How do we use our voice? As arts therapists,



Robyn and Sharon Todd-Miller, sending and moving

how can we support our voice to be heard more clearly? Playing with internal supports for vocal projection bring surprising results. And with leadership, we discussed the issue of creating power and authority through embodiment,

self-awareness and open-ness. The latter offers the possibility of drawing on the resources of the group to enhance what you bring as leader.

At the heart of this two-day workshop was a solo performance from Zora – a personal and powerful statement of the human experience – with an opportunity to reflect, question and see the end product of a profound, embodied, art making experience. This was the support for the second day, in which we all worked towards a personal performance.



Robyn and Sharon – clarifying and performing

Zora skilfully built the program, including personal movement exploration, sounding, written reflection and use of the spoken word. In small groups, the roles of mover, speaker and sounder were appointed. Words selected from a

written reflection (based on earlier improvisation) are read out and sound offered in response to the movement that emerges. This is art making, carefully constructed, simple, yet deeply impactful.



Cath Rummery and Teresa Matieu -building words towards personal performance

Words as art, language as support for our work, hearing the differences between us.

The day was an extraordinary, fast moving process in which we created, explored and formed material using body movement, sound and words, with the support of the

facilitator and one another, then performed a short piece in front of the group.

As I write about the experience, I sense it in my body in a way that is more powerful than the memory of specific moments.

In the ensuing months, I have begun to find my voice and step into leadership in my work and I am certain that the workshop supported that process. I look forward to more in 2018.”

And from Samantha Herbert on ‘Art Making for Healing’:

“The weekend with Zora was an experience of discovering, tapping into, playing with, investigating and embodying our Healing Artist. Infusing aesthetic appeal with the depth of the individual’s expression. The question continued to surface; how can we use art for healing? How can healing be artistic? This was the foundation of our own personal exploration over the two days with Zora.

We focused on our true expression, what is here in the moment and what needs to be expressed. Write it, speak it, hum it, sing it, move it, share it, witness it. Witnessing yourself and being fully present to the unfolding. Thinking with the body and dancing with the mind. A moving meditation.



Samantha Herbert and Soraya Kassim
Unfolding



Finding true expression



Moving it, sharing it

I was able to express the centre of myself, my gifts and talents as a healing artist. I rediscovered that I am not simply a therapist I am an artist and my art is healing to others.

We created a sub-culture of support, openness and curiosity in which things unfolded organically and we were able to learn from witnessing Zora's facilitation skills in creating clarity and responding to the moment. It kept us on our toes. We were forbidden to ask the question 'What are we doing next?'. Left to the unfolding of the present moment!

Playful responsiveness was a key factor in the processes we explored.



Lizanne Knights and Teresa Matieu - with Samantha - being heard and seen

We explored big questions that provoked thought about how we as group leaders and therapists facilitate space. How comfortable do we want our group to be? How comfortable do we need to be? What arises from discomfort? We explored

these rich questions in which transformation can truly take place.



Playful responsiveness

We were challenged to look at what was getting in the way of us communicating our craft and profession to others outside the therapeutic community. How can we move with our words like we can move with our expression? This was relevant, relatable and important. We warmed up our voices and dropped into a stronger way of communicating to reconnect with the power of using our voice. Holding space, communicating and being heard. A reconnection of the intellect with the art. Right and the left, bridging the worlds.



Reconnecting intellect and art

As an artist-healer the questions arose in me - how can I incorporate my artistry, expression and healing in my group work.

I was inspired by Zora. Her clarity, articulation and effective communication. Her willingness to speak her truth in the moment. She was adaptable and listened to the group and facilitated the growth and transformation of the group in an



Zora and group silently acknowledging the performance of each group member

organic present and focused manner. She was authentic, transparent and humanised herself as a leader."

From Tarlan Ghiassi



Tarlan Ghiassi with Cath Rummery and Carolina Barreto

“Coming from an eastern background and having a totally different culture I found this workshop honestly one of the best and most helpful workshops I ever attended. It was a life changing event and it impacted on not only my professional world but also and more importantly my day to day life.

Since then I feel more connected to the land and people I am living with. I often go back and review the workshop experience and it is amazingly helpful.”

And more responses

“This workshop really highlighted the importance of voice and the power of holding space through vocal resonance.”

“It renewed my faith and belief in my craft as a form of healing. I was inspired, moved and

compelled by the exercises – would love to do them weekly.”

“There was important learning for me in witnessing Zora and her style of listening, communicating, sharing and responding to the present moment.”



Meredith Lucy

“That was an amazing experience. A lot of discovery, learning and identifying opportunities and areas for growth, and meeting lovely group members and fellow dancers. It was a pleasure to be learning from Sara Boas’ rich experiences.”

“The workshops transformed my relationship with performance. I’m no longer afraid of the word or looking at it as part of my role when facilitating DMT groups. The skill with which you put safety and building blocks in place allowed me to perform in front of our group without a whole lot of judgement, anxiety etc. I trusted my body.”

“Thank you for the gift of your workshops.”

Sara(Zora) will be back in beautiful Rushcutters Bay, Sydney on February 10-11, 2018, to explore the topic: ‘Body as Storyteller’. Please put this in your diary. More details to come.



Back row:
Samantha Herbert; Brittany Abela; Lizanne Knight; Teresa Matieu; Cath Rummery; Mary Claude Vienet; Jane Guthrie; Diana Arar.
Front row:
Tarian Ghiassi; Sharon Todd-Miller; Robyn Price; Sara Boas; Soraya Kassim.