

## Vale - Suzie Graham Kuzmanovski 1961 – 2018

On receiving this sad news from Sasha Trompf our thoughts are of course with Suzie's family and friends. Please accept our condolences. We share the grief with you in a different way; we mourn the loss of a committed member of our dance movement therapy community; someone who believed staunchly in the power of dance. This unwelcome and sad news came to us from Sasha Trompf, who wrote that:

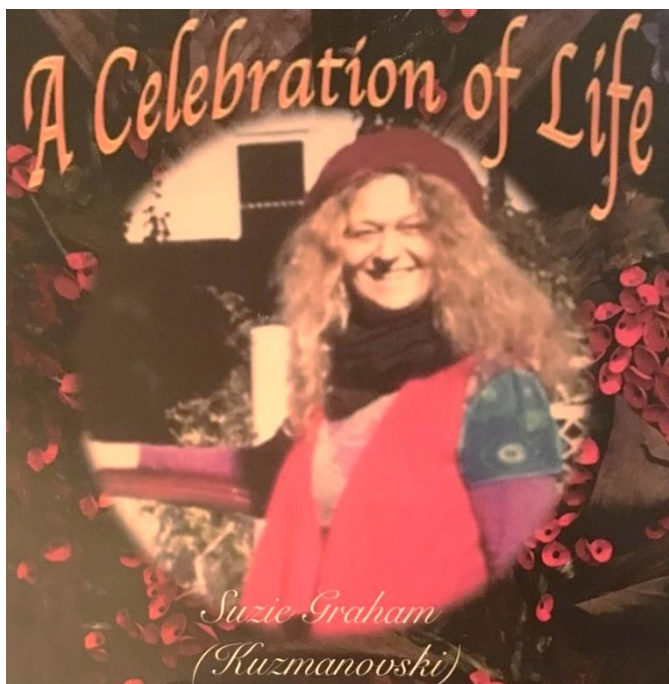
“Our fellow dancer and dance therapist Suzie Graham Kuzmanovski passed away on the 11th of June 2018 right before a beautiful sunrise. Suzi was a free spirit, the life of any party and a healer. She lived and breathed dance therapy and with every relationship or encounter she would describe it as a type of dance. She used dance in her work with disability and wheel chair bound people and in the most limiting situations she could bring laughter and warmth. Suzie asked me to let the dance therapy community know of her passing, particularly her teachers, supervisors and co-students” and “wanted me to contact Maeve”

..... With the greatest respect for my dear friend and in honour of her beautiful life,  
Much love, *Sasha*

*Yesterday is history  
Tomorrow is a mystery  
Today is a gift  
That's why it is called the present  
Plan for the future  
Live in today .....*

These words were written on the cover of the order of service for the celebration of life, just below Suzie's name. This was sent to us by her family, together with the following message:

“Suzie had been dancing her whole life. Movement is life, in all its different shapes and forms, fundamental to us all. We, her children, are very honoured to have been raised by a woman who lived with movement and in dance. Through her own body awareness she gave us strength to believe in ourselves and to listen to our bodies and be what we needed to be, and move how we needed to move. Suzie danced many of her steps in her childhood even through physical obstacles that she had as a mum who was born with dislocated hips. In later years thanks to body movement she was involved in, she was able to relearn how to walk without pain by going back to work with earlier developmental movement. It was Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) that harnessed this for mum. DMT workshops filled her spirit and challenged her in many levels of existence. She



included dance into her art. Once she discovered DMT it lived and moved within her every day onwards. Belly dancing was the first dance style that we recall as being a feature of mum's life. She danced with an innate natural talent and gave her students and peers confidence to move with joy in their own bodies. Her dance classes were a safe space for others to move in and she had such a strong ability to find what people needed. This is the woman we were lucky enough to come from! She left us knowing that we could find whatever knowledge we needed from within. “Down the line”, she would say. She was someone who empowered those around her. To all the wonderful and inspiring people out there who were educators and facilitators to mum's movement, to all those who danced and moved with Suzie, please know that you touched her life in a way that gave her strength to not fear her last goodbye. From the children that danced with her through gestation, birth, childhood and young adult hood what a wonderful time we had.

Movement, body awareness and strong determination allowed mum to continue doing things for herself, to continue moving her own body until the time came for her complete stillness. Just keep on dancing!!!

From *Christine, Jacqueline, Matthew and James Graham*

*Maeve Larkin wrote:*

I met Suzie the first day of the IDTIA Diploma course around 13 years ago when she bounced into my life with a big smile and mischievous look. We immediately had something in common, we both lived in country Victoria and had to travel down to Melbourne for our coursework, tutorials and supervision sessions. I remember Suzie as playful, creative and spontaneous in her dance. She had a wonderful fun loving nature but also a deep appreciation of life.

After we had finished the Diploma Suzie who already worked as a disability support worker incorporated dance therapy sessions into her work in Colac. Suzie was very knowledgeable and generously shared her views and ideas with me for a number of years after I began to offer dance therapy sessions for adults with intellectual disabilities. For a while we had our own private peer supervision group over distance by phone. Suzie was always affirming and encouraging and we could share our similar difficulties and triumphs as beginner dance movement practitioners living away from Melbourne and feeling somewhat isolated.

Over the years we caught up in person at various workshops and events in Melbourne, and one time I made what felt like a long trek down to Colac where I met some of Suzie's children and was inspired by the scope of her creativity which ranged from dance to various art and craft projects which overflowed her dining room table, threatening to envelop the room.

Sadly around 8 years ago Suzie informed me of her illness. As she turned to face the challenges of this unexpected journey, her life moved in other directions which I know included everything she loved, dance, the arts, her family, friends and travelling adventures. I will always remember Suzie with love and as "suziestilldancing"

*And from Elizabeth E Loughlin:*

Suzie lived in the Colac area and worked with local agencies in her dance movement therapy. She was particularly gifted with the population who had an intellectual and often physical disability. She held high expectations of her clients and encouraged their participation in the dance movement program. She expected her clients to take their place in the large circle and respectfully watch and listen to the movements of others as they began their dance. There was much order and intent. At the same time, she offered each dancer the freedom to develop their individual moving self, sometimes with

assistants, in the dance circle space. I was Suzie's supervisor for her DMT work with this population and clearly remember her 'on site work' in one long video that demonstrated her personal and professional qualities.



Suzie was less sure writing the final assignment about her DMT practice with the disability population and was reluctant to hand in her written work. Looking back, her supervised 'on site' video was in fact her 'written' piece for her IDTIA Diploma of Dance Movement Therapy. In recognition of her skills and the video of her Diploma work, the International Dance Therapy Institute of Australia (IDTIA) has awarded Suzie Graham Kuzmanovski the IDTIA Diploma of Dance Movement Therapy posthumous.

And among many other messages received, "How sad. Such a wonderful open, free, caring spirit. I notice Suzie's Email address was stilldancing@ .... most apt, and I guess she is still dancing - with the stars. RIP Suzie, Tony (Norquay); Suzie was such a good dance therapist and lovely person. I'm sorry to hear that. Bouthaina (Mayall); and OH NO...I am devastated. I LOVED her. I was just looking at a beautiful piece of art she made me years ago. She always wanted me to come visit her. She LOVED Continuum. And .... She came to quite a few Continuum classes and the last one she came out of the bush to attend. She was a one of a kind, magical, loving wild woman. Amber (Gray).



IDTIA Training group: Rob Baum and Suzie on the floor. Maeve Larkin, Bouthaina Mayall and Danielle Robinson