



NYSADTA NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2010

Contents:

- [Reflections on Our Women's Ritual Dance](#)
 - [Notes from the Field](#)
 - [A Peek at Student's Theses](#)
 - [Announcements](#)
-



Letter from the President

Dear Dance/Movement Therapists, Friends, & Colleagues ,

Fertility has been in abundance in the Board of Directors of the NYS Chapter of the ADTA. Our Treasurer, Elisabeth Grasburger, gave birth in 2008, our IT Chair, Debbie Stone, in 2009, I in January and our Recording Secretary, Jennifer Daniel, this March. In our last Board of Directors (2005-2008) the Newsletter Coeditor, Alyson Nehren, joked about the fertility goddesses blessing the board. Our ex-president, Christine Sledzlick, gave birth the day before me, to her third daughter. Clearly the blessings continue as a couple of other dance therapists/students have recently given birth as well.

The current board has finally adapted to having 3 new mothers in key positions. Thank you for bearing with us during these adjustments. We know at times we

have been slow to get things going, like the getting the DVDs out in the mail. Even with these adjustments your board has continued to work hard for you in planning events, doing PR, and providing continuing education.

We updated the chapter's mission statement, with determination from the PR chair, Maria Rivera and the PR committee. Please go to our [website](#), to view it. IT chair, Debbie Stone, is in the midst of searching for a designer to update the website and managing our email list. If you are not on our yahoo group list, have gotten a copy of this email from another source, please contact her at debbiestone@earthlink.net to be added The Treasurer has been getting the banking transferred from the last board and looking into accepting credit cards for DVD orders of *Moving Stories: Portraits of Dance/Movement therapists* .

This past winter and spring PR chair, Maria Rivera, has been doing a fabulous job of spreading the word about DMT, providing information sessions, reaching out to the Pratt students, and looking for new ways to build affiliations with organizations that support our work. She helped organize the student membership, who took on most of the responsibilities, to coordinate the preparations for [The Fourth Annual Dance Parade](#), which was held on May 22, 2010. After a couple of rehearsals to set choreography 15 dance/movement therapists / DMT students donned NYSADTA t-shirts, and danced down Broadway holding the ADTA banner (with some help from some beaus). The students were energizing and everyone had a great time. The PR committee is also working to plan an event at the Open Center to promote DMT.



Dance Parade photo by Melanie McLean • All rights reserved by [danceparadenyc](#)

We have been planning a dance concert by dance/movement therapists to be held on November 6, 2010, at [TADA](#) in [midtown Manhattan](#), not as a fundraiser but as a celebration of the roots of dance/movement therapy. Its title is *Presence: Celebrating the Creativity of Dance/Movement Therapists* . We will

dedicate the concert to the memory to the chapter's beloved Susan Harding, who died a couple of weeks ago. Susan choreographed and performed for both of our previous concerts, we will miss her delightful engagement of the audience, beauty, and spirit.

Concert planning has been spearheaded by the hard work of our Fundraising Chair, Meghan Dempsey. A selection committee was formed, a call put out to our community and choreographers finally have been selected. There will be a wide variety of dance forms represented. Tickets are on sale now and can be purchased at the chapter table at the national conference in Brooklyn. Instead of sending tickets via mail we decided to allow people to show their email, on their smart phones or on a print out, as receipt and ticket for entry. Won't you help us go green and reduce the cost of paper and mailing? We need volunteers to help with the show. Please email Meghan at move2improve@gmail.com for more info or come to our next open meeting (see details below), or visit our table at the [national conference](#).



Cara Gallo (second left), Laura Raffa (middle), and Corinna Brown(right) dancing in the last Chapter dance concert.

Programming Chair, Jennifer Tantia, solicited presenters for continuing education opportunities for all of us. We had one workshop thus far this year given by the wonderful Juliet Bruce on July 10. Louise Montella will give the next workshop on either Saturday October 2, or Sunday October 3, 2010. If you are interested in presenting for the chapter please send in your proposal to Jennifer at FRANKdance2003@yahoo.com

We have a couple of changes in our board. Newsletter editor, Tomoyo Kawano, moved to Vermont. She undertook the difficult task of getting our newsletter into electronic format via email. For this we are eternally grateful as it helps us save money. We will miss her hard work and dedication. In her absence the board

will do its best to continue sending out our *Vertical Response* emails with newsletter articles and announcements from the membership. Our Corresponding Secretary, Valerie Savidis, has been relocated from NYC to Albany for her job as a nursing care facility administrator (who advocates for DMT). While we miss her down here those of you in the North country may get an opportunity to spend some time with her and hopefully open communication between upstate and downstate. We need a person or a couple of people to fill the newsletter position over the next year, if you are interested please contact me directly at Corinna.Brown@gmail.com

We will be holding an open board meeting on Monday 9/13/10 at 6pm at the Pratt Brooklyn campus. This will be a good opportunity to find out more in depth what the board is doing and what responsibilities each position entails, especially if you are interested in volunteering or running for a position next year. Watch our yahoo group emails for further details.

More personally,

After delivering my 10 pound 7 ounce daughter, Autumn Zoe Brown, via natural childbirth, with two dance/movement therapists by my side, my midwife said, "Now you know you can do anything!" When my midwife and the nurse asked about whether my assistants were doulas we proudly replied, "No, we all are dance/movement therapists!" Now my midwife now wants to refer patients for individual DMT.

With this reaffirmation of my strength along with the support I received from this incredible community, from the warmth expressed by colleagues I've just met to the Pratt faculty who watched my precious bundle as I taught class this past semester, I feel all the more committed to our chapter. I am excited to continue spreading the word about dance/movement therapy, and to energizing this amazing field predominated by strong women.

Giving birth has deepened my appreciation of the grandeur and power of the female body. As I rock her in my arms and move my body to synch into her needs and sooth her, my conviction about the power of movement and the healing qualities of dance are strengthened. I feel so blessed to be a dance/movement therapist and part of this community. At the conference in Portland (and here at home in NYC), so many dance/movement therapists told

me stories about their pregnancies and wished me well. I want to publicly thank all of you for giving us such a loving holding experience. I am forever grateful.

Warmly,

Corinna Brown



Corinna & Autumn Zoe Brown

Reflections on Our Women's Ritual Dance Workshop

Dances of Darkness Transitioning into Light

(Led by Nada Khodlova on January 24, 2010)

Written by Anna Jacus

I'm so grateful to have had the experience of performing these ritual dances transitioning from darkness into light ... The dances provided a richly meaningful way for me to mourn the series of losses I've experienced in the past three years. They enabled me not only to express feelings and tap into the resource of women's traditions, but to experience a cathartic re-envisioning of my life. The dances of mourning, loss, and darkness were mostly simple, slow, and intimately communal. They had the meticulous quality of fine, hand-woven cloth, while some of the music was fiercely

primal – pierced with wailing and even a siren-like war cry. For me, *Vrlicko Kolo*, the dance turning leftwards into darkness and the underworld of war and loss, and *Panagiota*, the dance for turning trauma into victory, felt like shamanic journeys for addressing grief; essential and powerful.

In *Panagiota* (a girl's name), the lyrics and movements shape the story of a young girl, who begins her path in life carefree, flicking her handkerchief to light

graceful steps. The lyrics tell that suddenly, she is assaulted. Her story is literally and figuratively turned in a different direction. At first, each of us sharing her experience in this ritual felt awkward in managing the sudden dance turns. The handkerchief had to be switched from right to left in one swift move, without missing a step. The dance is true to the experience of survivors of assault, who must find a way to go on with their lives holding their grace while managing jobs, children, relationships – and all the other steps required of them.

As a volunteer advocate for survivors of sexual assault, I could easily recognize the immense power in the assertions of this ritual. The final flicking gesture of the handkerchief from the wrist feels like a fiercely defiant signal to anyone with harmful intentions. Yet there was another element of this dance that felt very empowering... the fellowship of the other women in the circle supporting the young girl in the story, and the final stance: a swift switch of the handkerchief from left wrist to right hip...the strong stance of a confident, undefeatable woman. Without a doubt, the gesture is saying: "Even with your knife, you can't touch the core of my life."

Oddly, *Goc*, the dance of "leaving behind" felt the most comforting. The tenuous brushing movement, performed while balanced on the "home" foot, reminded me of kicking sand to put out a campfire... Refugees and immigrants must have felt the same sense of loss, uncertainty, and nostalgia in repeating this gesture for as long as humans have moved from one place to another in search of safety and sustenance. The gesture also recalled my childhood, when we'd leave a signature in the sand at the beach and watch the waves wash it away. It was an early insight into the impermanent nature of things.

The final in the darkness series was the dance of longing for homeland and a state of grace – the beautiful crane dance – *Grounkner*. It was balletic, poetic, lovely. Cranes actually perform exquisite mating dances with joy and abandon. But this dance described the experience of migration – a haunting evoked by the seasonal nest building, departure, and return of ethereal beings. The music too, was haunting. I hummed it as I drove my car yesterday.

Once we'd internalized the movements, the communal intimacy, and the darkness of the theme, the improvisational dance section served as a profound physical transition from darkness into light. My initial improvisational movements, like the ritualized movements, were small and simple. I found

myself recalling my grief as I had placed flowers on my father's grave this past November. I brought this movement into my improvisation...first laying down flowers on the grave, then placing stars into the night sky, whirling, and embracing Earth and Sky and all beings.

As I danced, I felt changed, spiraling outward and opening my gestures, my thoughts, my heart. My improvisation included gratefully returning my memories and insights into the Earth, as seeds, and as rain, pointing my hands down; rippling my gifts through my fingers; patting them into the ground. Using movements from my tai chi practice, I shifted my weight and shaped spheres of light and energy until they snowballed into a great radiance. The altar at the center of the room drew me close.



It was a great joy at this point when all of us joined hands again to share our individual experiences in recreating our group's dance circle, relevant both to our immediate and enduring concerns. Our personal gestures and the ancient re-enacted gestures felt equally authentic. Nada put on some Haitian music and our circle yielded with great fluidity to the Afro-Caribbean rhythms. We harnessed the energy we'd gathered and dug deep into the rubble of need and despair with our gestures to send healing out to those suffering from the devastation of the recent earthquake in Haiti.

In coming to this workshop, I expected to learn something new, to share feelings, to challenge my inhibitions, and achieve insight. Yet, I didn't realize I had so much to mourn and that the women dancing with me would be reaching out to heal me with their energy with such generosity and non-judgment. I didn't expect to feel so emotional or to experience a catharsis of this sort. I now realize how much more work I need to do on myself and feel confident in undertaking it.

I look forward to more ritual dance experiences, following the Earth's rhythms...solstice, equinox, all the indigenous Earth holidays... In my experience, the old wisdom in these dances has never failed to predict and prescribe the correct medicine for the human condition.

I didn't realize I needed to attend so carefully to grieving my recent losses. Yet doing these dances during the dark of winter addressed my need with chthonic power. I have faith that an equinox ritual would similarly address my need to achieve balance, shed the unnecessary, and invite the flow of spring energy...

So, ritual dance can heal grief and trauma. Why not "village" peace rituals on Earth Day and World Peace Day? I'd like to see wedding rituals for brides and grooms honoring the Demeter/Persephone archetypes, welcome dances for new babies, and memorial rituals for mourners... The old languages of movement are needed now more than ever.

Notes from the Field

Dear Members,

My name is Maria Rivera and I am the Public Relations Chairperson for the New York State Chapter of the American Dance Therapy Association. My main responsibility on the board is to support the Chapter in finding ways to increase the public awareness of dance/movement therapy (DMT). I am learning how to promote and enhance the avenues of communication among dance/movement therapists and persons working in related fields.

Aside from being a dance/movement therapist, I am also a professional dancer, a choreographer, and a songwriter who collaborates with other young adults of color in themes pertaining to the African Diaspora. I was born and raised in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, yet it was here in New York that I had the honor of becoming a dancer. As a woman of African descent, I made it a point to reconnect with the healing elements of traditional dance, song, and music of the African Diaspora. I have travelled to Cuba, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic and other destinations to study their rhythms and dances that retain significant aspects of African culture. It was through these experiences that my understanding of "therapy through dance" became evident and palpable. I came to terms with the idea that there is not "one way" to do therapy and not

“one way” of understanding the body and mind connection. In other words, it was through these experiences that I became aware of the vast extent of the human “moving” experience. This very fact opened my mind and my body to an everlasting hunger to explore the “dancing body” and its manifestations both in health and illness.

Becoming part of the chapter board has sparked and renewed my motivation to continue to do research, network, ask questions, and get inspired by others in my field, whether we agree or differ in our views and interests. An essential aspect of my overall vision is to increase DMT outreach to the diverse New York community and encourage people to continue to be curious about what dance/movement therapy means to all of us. It is my belief that the more people get involved, the more we learn from each other and the more we grow in knowledge. Ultimately, we will be more competent in serving our diverse clientele. Having said that, as the Public Relations chairperson, I would like to support and help create a dance/movement therapy community in which every perspective and every voice is heard. A community in which information exchange and dialogue are promoted, encouraged, and respected.

It is an honor to serve you as the Public Relations Chairperson so please do not hesitate to contact me, propose an idea, offer help or just say hello. You can contact me at maracadance@yahoo.com

Sincerely,

Maria Rivera, Public Relations Chairperson, NYSADTA



Maria Rivera dancing

A Peek at Students Theses

Erin Bryce Holmes

I am Erin Bryce Holmes, a graduate candidate in the Creative Arts Therapy Program at Pratt Institute. I am currently working on my thesis project,

tentatively entitled, *Welcome to the cipher: An embodied exploration of the underground hip-hop culture*. My thesis is a heuristic study of how the hip-hop subculture influences me as a dance/movement therapist-in-training. I chose this topic because I am passionate about dance and the ways in which hip-hop as an art and culture has helped me to navigate my way through life. I want to explore my feelings and the therapeutic properties that may be present in the performance of hip-hop for myself as well as others. I will conduct interviews with professionals from different fields of social work, dance, and clinical work to gain an understanding of the influence of underground hip-hop in their lives and careers. I will conclude my study with a choreographic response and suggestions of how to include hip-hop music in a dance/movement therapy session. Through immersion in the subculture, I hope to learn about my strengths and weaknesses and discover ways that I can utilize my experience in helping my future clients.

Contact information: bryceentertainment@yahoo.com

Yomaira Nazario

My name is Yomaira Nazario, a graduate candidate at Pratt Institute. Based on my interest in how dance/movement therapy can impact other cultures from around the World, my thesis is about how short-term dance/movement therapy impacts Ghanaian women who have HIV/AIDS. Creating an ethnographic research, I used qualitative research methods to study twelve fifty-minute dance/movement therapy sessions, which I held three times a week in the summer of 2009 in an HIV/AIDS supportive clinic in Accra, Ghana.

My objectives for this cultural research were:

- To motivate self-expression, self-assurance, and sense of self in the participants.
- To create a safe and trustful environment to stimulate self-awareness and socialization between group members during the dance/movement therapy sessions.
- To support group members' cultural values and identity; to encourage creative expression and embodiment of movements.
- To investigate how short-term group dance/movement therapy as a

modern mental health treatment can be integrated into traditional healing processes for Ghanaian women infected with HIV/AIDS.

Last summer I volunteered in Accra with a non-profit organization called The Sankofa Center for African Dance and Culture, which helped me to understand how HIV/AIDS has affected this population emotionally and physically, mostly Ghanaian women and children. Their traditional values and morals have stigmatized those who have the disease creating an aggressive environment towards this population. Women are neglected and rejected in their homes by their family members and in social environments, including work. The lack of education has created a huge manifestation of HIV/AIDS's presence in West Africa.

With the experience I got from this research, I felt the need to support this population and to keep exploring how dance/movement therapy can be expanded in other countries. I lived, I breathed, and I explored the Ghanaian living experience, which has helped me to grow much more as a dance/movement therapist.

Contact information: yomairanazario@gmail.com

Announcements

Join us at our next Open Board Meeting

at Pratt Brooklyn

MONDAY 9/13/10 @ 6pm

in the CAT department,

East Building 3rd Floor

200 Willoughby Ave, Brooklyn

take the G train to Clinton Washington

Exit on Lafayette and walk down Washington to Dekalb, make a right and walk one block to campus

Coming Soon

Women's Ritual Dance Workshop

with Nada Khodlova

for details email mokosh@nyc.rr.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR AND REPORTERS WANTED

contact Corinna Brown at

Corinna.Brown@gmail.com

if you are interested

If you have any advertisements, news or articles you would like to share with us for the upcoming fall newsletter please send it to Corinna Brown at Corinna.Brown@gmail.com in a mircorsoft word document. Thank you for supporting our chapter. We look forward to seeing you at one of our many gatherings this fall.

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