

DANCE THERAPY REDEFINED

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A Body Approach to Therapeutic Dance

By

JOHANNA EXINER

and

DENIS KELYNACK

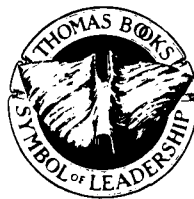
With

Naomi Aitchison

and

Jenny Czulak

Illustrations by Lisa Roberts



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Johanna Exiner is a graduate of the Academy of Music and the Performing Arts in Vienna, with a major in dance. Her work in the field of movement and dance has branched out in many directions, covering such areas as theatrical, educational and recreational dance and the exploration of dance as a therapeutic medium.

As Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Early Childhood Development in Melbourne, she was instrumental in introducing a Graduate Diploma in Movement and Dance in 1977, the first in Australia and shared in coordinating and teaching in the first Graduate Certificate in Dance Therapy.

Johanna Exiner has conducted regular group sessions in dance therapy at state and private psychiatric institutions.

She has published *Teaching Creative Movement and Learning Through Dance* with Phyllis Lloyd, and is the author of several papers and articles.

She is a Foundation and Honorary Life Member of the Australian Association for Dance Education, now the Australian Dance Council, and an Associate of the University of Melbourne.

Denis Kelynack is a counselling psychologist in private practice. Before that he was lecturer in psychology at The University of Melbourne and subsequently became a student counsellor there for 20 years. He first studied dance therapy with Tamara Greenberg at the Center for Energetic Studies in Berkeley California. He then completed the Graduate Diploma in Movement and Dance in Melbourne and subsequently taught in that course for six years. He was also teacher with Johanna Exiner in the Grad. Cert. of Dance Therapy at the same institution. He is interested in the relationship of Feldenkrais and Alexander techniques to dance therapy and has had experience of both of these approaches. Currently he uses dance as a therapeutic tool with individuals, couples and groups.

Naomi Aitchison remembers dancing alone, for the sheer joy of it, when she was four years old. Dancing was always what she wanted to do.

She has danced, studied dance and been a teacher of and lecturer in dance for many years. She was introduced to the work of Rudolf Laban in 1978 whilst undertaking training to be a secondary school drama teacher at Melbourne State College. This greatly influenced her own dance and her approach to teaching.

Since 1980 her endeavours have largely been directed towards recreational and therapeutic dance with elderly people in a wide range of settings. She was one of the first practitioners in Australia of dance with psychogeriatric and other disabled elderly populations. She regularly conducts in-service and other educational programs for students of dance, as well as carers of the elderly.

In 1986 she obtained the Graduate Diploma in Movement and Dance at the Institute of Early Childhood Development, Melbourne.

She is also a member of a group of dance therapy practitioners and students working towards the establishment of a dance therapy association in Australia.

Jenny Czulak has had a long career in educational broadcasting on radio and television with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

While in Britain on an Imperial Relations Trust scholarship in 1966, she took the opportunity of studying Peter Slade's body approach to drama. This fuelled further interest in expressive, creative dance movement on her return to Australia, in particular in the work of Johanna Exiner. Given the responsibility of creating a new weekly radio series of creative movement programs for the active participation of primary school students, Jenny, with guidance from Exiner and others, conceptualised, co-wrote and directed the successful "Free to Move!" programs which were broadcast by the ABC on a national basis for over three years.

She has done considerable movement work with sufferers from Alzheimer's disease; she conducts movement for well-being courses through the Council of Adult Education (Victoria, Australia) as well as "Moves You Can Make!"—a weekly movement and dance program for the isolated elderly, via conference phone.

Grad. Dip. Movement & Dance (University of Melbourne) 1979

Grad. Cert. Dance Therapy (University of Melbourne) 1988

Lisa Roberts—Diploma of Art, Victorian College of Art, Diploma of Education, Melbourne University, Graduate Diploma of Film & TV, Swinburne Institute.

Lisa is an exhibiting artist of drawings and computer animation, with a special interest in movement and dance. She studied creative movement with Johanna Exiner in the early eighties and as a result of this experience, taught drawing through movement. She storyboards and animates for film and television productions in Australia.

Her most recent project for exhibition is an interactive installation piece consisting of a 50's television with "wings" attached that randomly plays human gestures.

FOREWORD

Many influences are contributing to the evolution of dance therapy in Australia. Dance as a therapeutic mode has deep foundations in ancient health and healing ceremonies of the Aboriginal peoples who have inhabited the continent for at least 40,000 years. Ceremonial dance continues to play a part in Aboriginal health care. Australian dance therapists may wish to emulate new models of community health that incorporate traditional ritual practices with Western therapeutic technologies (Reid, 1984).

Dance therapy as an emergent professional field is being generated in an increasingly multi cultural Australia. As for the United States and other western countries, Australian dance therapy bears the lineage of 20th century Expressionism as reflected in European, American and Australian modern dance. *Dance Therapy Redefined* has origins in Johanna Exiner's early *Modernner Ausdruckstanz* training with Gertrud Bodenwieser in Vienna and is the first book on principles and practice of dance therapy in Australia.

I would like to establish a local context for *Dance Therapy Redefined*. By the early 1980s, the number of dance graduates working in therapeutic settings in the state of Victoria had grown into what was beginning to look like a professional community. Most practitioners had psychology, paramedical, special education, social work or nursing background in addition to a dance qualification; and such dual training continues to characterize career preparation for dance therapists. Australians have also benefited from intensive exposures to overseas specialists; notably Wynelle Delaney, Liljan Espenak and Dr. Marcia Leventhal.

The process of defining dance therapy in Australian terms entered a public stage in 1987 with the establishment of a Dance Therapy Working Party within the Victorian State Branch of the Australian Association for Dance Education. A comprehensive discourse was sought in order to establish a professional framework that would accommodate the range of populations, ethnic groups, practitioner backgrounds and demographic

settings that may be involved in Australian dance therapy. After a year of deliberation, the following working definition was adopted:

Dance therapy is based on the art and science of human movement. It offers movement experiences which, extending beyond the purely functional, engage both body and mind. Drawing on the therapeutic elements inherent in dance, therapists aim at restoring balance and integration in the areas of physical function, feelings and cognition.

Dance Therapy Redefined strengthens this Australian-grown conceptual framework. It provides a succinctly described model of dance therapeutic practice anchored in theories of body mind unity, in the aesthetic nature of dance, and in collaborative research. Autobiographical material from Johanna Exiner and Denis Kelynack enriches the presentation further. The book offers a departure from theoretical constructions that place dance therapy exclusively in the realm of psychotherapy; for example, the American Dance Therapy Association (1979) defines dance therapy as the “psychotherapeutic use of movement as a process which furthers the emotional and physical integration of the individual.”

In *Dance Therapy Redefined*, the multi-sensory physicality of dance is the primary vehicle of therapy. Through what the authors term “reflection in motion,” human beings may “dance further” into health. The aesthetic component, which may be realized through movement expression, that is “sensitive, mindful and imaginative,” is seen as indispensable to the therapeutic process. Although words may be exchanged to question, reinforce, and conceptualize experience, it is *in the act of dancing* that therapy is realized. The role of therapist as teacher is affirmed. Clients are thus treated to the full promise of dance as a complete mode of learning.

I have enjoyed long and varied professional associations with all the authors of *Dance Therapy Redefined*, and I feel privileged to be writing this brief Foreword. The book constitutes a pioneering Australian contribution to the field of dance therapy, and will be welcomed by an increasing number of voices outside Australia that are calling for a return to dance as the central component of therapeutic practice.

Dr. Karen Bond
Senior Lecturer in Dance Education
The University of Melbourne

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PREFACE

Historically dance therapy has almost exclusively been defined as a form of psychotherapy. In our view, however, dance therapy is a discipline in its own right. Our method is anchored in our understanding of the structure and function of the human organism and the nature of dance.

We work with dance as the therapeutic material. Dance is the main vehicle of the therapy and it is in the act of dancing that the therapy is realised. Words are exchanged to question, to reinforce the process, to clarify and, where appropriate, to conceptualise what has been experienced.

This, we propose, is dance therapy in the truest sense.

As dance is the therapy and the instrument of dance is the body, it is the physicality of dance on which we focus. We do this by working towards physical changes as an integral part of change in the whole person.

It follows that because of the way we pay attention to the body, our approach is applicable to physical as well as psychical disturbances. We see the book as providing a platform from which others in dance therapy and related professions can take off, selecting, adapting and developing the material it contains for their specific purposes. While our text does not include individual case studies, the strategies we propose reflect the experience accumulated over many years of professional work. We have also taken account of the responses which groups of colleagues provided after participating in some of our introductory workshops. Their views contributed to the development and clarification of our thinking.

We believe the content of this book to be of value not only to those involved in the field of dance and dance therapy itself, but also to others with a more general interest in the function of dance in relation to the health and well-being of the community.

AUTHORS' NOTES

The authors have chosen to use, at times the female and at other times the male pronoun in preference to using either one consistently throughout.

The authors use the term *psychical* when referring to issues of the psyche and *psychological* when referring to psychology.

The authors use the term "client" (singular) interchangeably with "clients" (plural). However, examples given for work with a single client are in most instances applicable to group work.

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Johanna Exiner wishes to thank Dr. Gill Parmenter, Head of the School of Early Childhood Studies, University of Melbourne, for making available a private office to work in and access to office facilities; Pat Alsop, Senior Secretary in the General Office and Brenda Rush, Reader-Services Librarian, for years of advice and practical assistance and all staff members who contributed in one way or another to the completion of the manuscript; Dr. John Lloyd for his generous responses to repeated requests for information regarding the body/mind issue and Phyllis Lloyd for her consistent support and ongoing encouragement.

Johanna Exiner and Denis Kelynack express their gratitude to the Sidney Myer Fund (Melbourne) and its director, Michael Liffman, for a study grant to assist with the development of their work and to Mark Gordon, Executive Officer of the Australian Dance Council – Ausdance (Vic.) for administering the monies. Thanks to Norbert Hrouda whose expert videotaping formed an invaluable basis for examining the dance therapeutic process.

We both wish to put on record our recognition and appreciation of Naomi Aitchison's major contribution to the formulation and organisation of the text in all its aspects. We acknowledge with respect Jenny Czulak's constructive criticism, her focus on essentials and for giving so freely of her time in the preparation of numerous drafts. We are indebted to Lisa Roberts for the keen interest she took in our text which resulted in the book's dynamic illustrations. To Bob Exiner, who was always there when help was needed we say a very sincere personal thank you.

Finally we express our gratitude to Ingrid Barker for the great interest she took in our work, her patience in dealing with our many alterations and the care she took in preparing the final typescript; and to Karen de Ross who rescued us with a further typescript when Ingrid became unavailable.

INTRODUCTION—A PERSONAL ACCOUNT

The reason for offering an account of the direction I took from being a passionate dance student and performer to becoming at first a reluctant but finally a dedicated teacher, is its similarity to those taken by a number of dancers of my generation in the course of their professional life. For me, like for many others, the transition into dance therapy seemed to occur organically; I arrived, and I knew that was where I belonged.

I owe much to the cultural and professional environment in which this progression took place and gratefully acknowledge the many colleagues who encouraged and supported me. I only regret that in this brief history not all to whom thanks are due could be listed by name.

Johanna Exiner

I was introduced to dance in Vienna in Professor Gertrud Bodenwieser's children's classes.¹ At that time Bodenwieser was already Professor of Dance at the Academy for Music and the Performing Arts. Bodenwieser, a pioneer in what in Europe was given the name of *Moderner Ausdruckstanz* (Modern Expressive Dance) was hailed and respected as a liberator of dance, both in the topical and poignant themes she chose for her choreography as well as in her style, which she referred to as "expressionist". The work with us children was equally characteristic of her break away from the balletic tradition.²

I remained in Bodenwieser's children's classes until old and good enough to enter the Academy. I was fortunate in still being allowed to graduate in the third month of the Nazi regime in Austria, which had replaced Bodenwieser with a new director. Bodenwieser, who like myself, was of Jewish origin, had already fled to France. From there, and with the assistance of one of her most prominent group members still in Vienna,³ a tour of Colombia was organised and again I was lucky, being accepted as a member. I did not regret abandoning my second year medical studies which I had undertaken as a second string to my bow