CREATIVE ARTS THERAPIES MANUAL

A Guide to the History, Theoretical Approaches, Assessment, and Work with Special Populations of Art, Play, Dance, Music, Drama, and Poetry Therapies

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Chapter 11

MOVING WITH MEANING: THE HISTORICAL PROGRESSION OF DANCE/MOVEMENT THERAPY

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INTRODUCTION

The body is the first and primary means of movement and creative human expression, from the moment a baby first enters and interacts in the world. Unlike other forms of art, dance is unique in that the instrument and tool of expression is the human body itself, making it both a profound form of expression, as well as often elusive and transient. As the dance historian, Wosien (1974) noted, "... before man expresses his experience of life through materials he does so with his own body" (p. 8). The emergence of dance/movement therapy has developed formally as a field during the past century, but the use of dance as a therapy has been in existence as long as humans have felt a need to express, even prior to organized language, or other extensions of expression through musical instruments and art. There is a clear historical precedent in ancient forms of dance and movement healing; from the Greeks with their healing rhythmic patterns to Eastern cultures which combined dance into the major attributes of their deities. Almost all common dance forms developed from early ritual dance (Lawson, 1955; Wosien, 1974). Humanity has always used dance to express and reflect the world, creating and using cultural and individual dance to release psychological needs.

A variety of converging factors led to the direct rise of the modern field of dance/movement therapy including historical use of dance as healing, the growth of modern dance, the study of nonverbal behavior, and the field of modern psychology. As with the other creative art therapy fields, dance/movement therapy uses a number of specific tools and techniques for assessment and work, and indeed often utilizes other forms of art for expression, as appropriate. However, at its core is the inherent need for people to express themselves on a most basic movement level, creating dance that emotes individual needs, as well as one’s connection to the rest of the world. In exploring the history of the field, one reaffirms the reason for it: Humanity moves and creates art as part of the very essential aspect of living. Today, the American Dance/Movement Therapy Association (ADTA) has defined dance/movement therapy as the “psychotherapeutic use of movement as a process which furthers the emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration of the individual” (ADTA, 2004). Please see Appendix for the timeline for the history of the dance/movement therapy field.

HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS

Dance is connected to emotional expression, and in dance/movement therapy today, the goal is to reconnect with this creative process, rather than produce a performance piece. As observed by one dance/movement therapist, “the aim is not to move more freely or more perfectly, which may be the aim of therapeutic dance activities, but to use movement experimentation to explore new ways of being and feeling, and to gain access to feelings that cannot be verbalized” (Stanton-Jones, 1992, p. 3). Traditionally, the original cultural creation of dance is to express these feelings both individually, and as a community. It is only through the recent few centuries that traditional forms of dance, such as ballet, have separated the audience from the dancer so clearly. While the art form of ballet has achieved a level of technical and artistic beauty, it
has left many Westerners unfamiliar with the process of dance making. Further, separation of the body and spirit in the Judeo-Christian traditions had left a historically long period of believing the mind and psyche to be separated from the body. The modern dance movement, and the dance/movement therapists that followed, looked toward ancient dance forms as they began their exploration of the mind/body/spirit connection that has been recently reaccepted culturally. These dances are truly the beginnings of the field and it is often noted that “dance therapy has roots that extend back to ancient times in dances of celebrations and crises, in dances that define individual and group identity, and in dances of death and exorcism” (Schmais, 1974, p. 7). Likewise, as dance anthropologist Judith Hanna notes, “the shaman or medicine person in non-Western dances is an avatar of the dance therapist” (Hanna, 1988, p. 31).

The great difficulty in looking at historical dance is the lack of ability to witness the movement as directly as one can view an ancient painting, or decipher lines of poetry. The transient form of dance makes it difficult to study. Even with the modern interventions of film, video, and other recordings, the live qualities of dance are difficult to record and subject to great interpretation by the viewer. Cultural dance, with its constant evolution of form, becomes a great reflector of the psychological mood of that entity, and therefore, is constantly changing to reflect the current group of those performing the dance.

It is believed that dance is found in all human societies. Dancing serves a variety of purposes, but it is essentially a means of communication, whether to other members of society or to one’s own god or gods. Basically, it serves to make the extraordinary in life understandable and to empower the common actions of daily activity with special meaning. Furthermore, whenever more than one dancer is present, the resulting dance is a reflection of the cultural ideas and ideas of interaction. In essence, dance helps to ritualize the ordinary movements of daily life, and endow them with meaning and purpose. The daily task of gathering fruit or chasing an animal for food is given purpose and meaning. In cultures such as the ancient Egyptians, there appear to have been dance/dramas performed to reflect significant agricultural occurrences such as the rise and fall of the Nile River (Kraus, Hilsendager, & Dixon, 1991, p. 38). The dances were often depicted as either slow, pedestrian movement, or quite acrobatic in nature, including backbends and other physical feats (Kraus et al., 1991; Sachs, 1937).

Likewise, dance can be a means to also make the extraordinary and unexplainable into manageable concepts. Thus, the earthquake, or even an act of thunder and lightning, can be experienced on a creative level. Making those that are overwhelming less threatening through movement and organizational thought has historically helped individuals overcome great emotional strife. Perhaps one of the best-known examples is the tarantella dance from Italy, where folklore has spread the story that the dancer dances to give a potentially fatal spider bite a ritualized movement outlet, as well as to physically move the venom out of the body’s systems through the frenetic dance. While the exact origin continues to be questioned, another such dance, the French Provencial Danse des Trippettes, was said to be created as a cure for epilepsy: “St. Marcel was held to have been able to cure epilepsy, and in the same way that in southern Italy they will dance to sweat out certain disorders, so the leaps of the Danse des Trippettes are employed in church, sometimes for hours on end, to cure the malady. The evil spirit of the illness is literally sweated out” (Jaffe, 1990, p. 273).

In addition to serving as a means for curing the sick, folk dance, particularly throughout Europe, developed to honor and ritualize daily movement. On the island of Madeira (near Portugal), for example, there is a folk dance based on the sweeping
movement of a needle and thread, highlighting the very important trade of lace making that has been a staple of the culture for hundreds of years. In other cultures, such as in sub-Saharan Africa, dance has historically been part of life so fully that even when two Bantu greet each other, they ask the question, “What do you dance?” (Jonas, 1992, p. 33).

In India, both the yogic traditions of movement as well as their dance tradition were created as a means of gaining spiritual connection with the gods. The Far East, as well as ancient cultures such as Egypt, served as great inspiration to the work of dancers, Ruth Denis and Ted Shawn, known collectively as Denishawn in the early 1900s, as they created exotic and spiritual choreographic pieces. Denishawn studied Indian dance, and was one of the first to take an interest in yoga, soon to be followed by movement explorers such as Joseph H. Pilates in the heyday of modern dance. Yoga has gained great popularity in recent years, but it is founded upon a 3,000 year-old tradition of using movement patterns for the well-being of body, mind, and spirit. Further, it was originally studied in a guru-student relationship, not unlike the modern therapist and client. The asanas, or postures, in yoga were originally practiced as a means to prepare the body for remaining still for long periods of meditative practice. Long, rigorous, physical work is meant to be a means to transcend the body, and reach a higher state of mental well-being. Yoga is one of the clearest body systems that stress a non-competitive system of movement. Along with yoga, Indian dance was so critical to its culture that even the deities of India are commonly depicted as dancers. The critical book on drama and dance, the Natya Sastra, was one of the first books in Far East culture to classify human emotion into nine main rasas, or essences of emotion from wondrous to fierce (Gupta, 2000, p. 150). Each of these has a clear movement component expressed through dance. Indian yoga also states the body/mind connection that would become clarified in dance/movement therapy:

What happens in the body likewise occurs in the mind, and what happens in the mind likewise occurs in the body...when tension of the organs is relieved, the mind becomes still. This process can be reversed. Relaxes the mind by controlling your thinking causes relaxation of the body. However, this method is more difficult. Thus, yoga places the emphasis on moving from the physical to the mental. (Kriyananda, 2002, p. 104)

Of course, the emphasis on yoga is to transcend the body, whereas dance therapists would later work this connection to provide a means for people to feel connected to themselves and each other in the present time.

Another means of connection that comes historically is the use of space in relationship to other people. Throughout all ancient dances, there are several basic patterns that are used, notably the circle, the serpentine line, and couple formations as well as two opposing lines. All of these patterns served different purposes in how the dancers related to each other. For obvious reasons, the circle is a rather universal form that allows those participating to see and be with each other. This appears historically from images in Japanese dance, European and African group dances, as well as in most Native American Indian dances. After the courts of Louis the XIV made the performance of ballet popular, these primitive shapes were utilized less as dance became an event to be watched. The emergence of Denishawn and other early pre-modern dance companies would refocus attention on the more natural patterns of movement interaction that would be further utilized by dance/movement therapists as a natural way of group interaction.

Figure 11.2. The circle is one of the universal forms utilized in dance and dance/movement therapy. © 2004 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Modern Groundwork for Dance/Movement Therapy

Early studies in nonverbal communication led to a whole new interest in behavior and movement patterns, establishing an important piece of the foundation for the field of dance/movement therapy. In the late 1800s, scholars began to realize the limitations of studying human behavior in terms of linguistics alone. However, this formal study of nonverbal communication would begin to gain acceptance in the 1960s and 1970s (Levy, 1988, p. 19). Theorists in modern times began to recognize the subtle nuances of nonverbal interaction that are constantly sending messages are often more important emotionally than purely relying on language.

The first major theorist in nonverbal communication was Charles Darwin, better known for his theories of evolution, who wrote about these ideas in his book *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872). Darwin contributed many ideas to the area of nonverbal communication, among the ideas later articulated by modern dancer Martha Graham, that movement never lies. In 1872, Darwin wrote that, "the movement of expression in the face and body . . . reveals the thought and intentions of others more truly than do words, which may be falsified" (p. 364). Around this time, Sir William Osler (1849–1919), who is considered the father of modern medicine, also noted the significance of emotional factors in the healing process, and that nonverbal aspects of treatment were critical to healing (Osler, 1932).

The next major contribution to nonverbal study came with the arrival of Raymond Birdwhistell’s *Introduction to Kinesics*, published in 1952. Birdwhistell is credited with giving the name, kinesics, to describe "the study of all bodily motions that are communicative" (Morain, 1978, p. 3). Stark (1982) notes that Birdwhistell's research is particularly relevant to the field of dance/movement therapy as it deals with movement interaction. Birdwhistell also took his study of kinemorphology and compared it to the study of linguistics. In the same manner that linguists divide language into parts, movement can be subdivided into small subtle actions. The advent of film assisted in the deconstruction of movement into small elements. Genelle Grant Morain (1978) added greatly to this field by taking the ideas that while basic emotions are universal, there are many subtler movement interactions that are unique to the culture from which they originate.

During the whole early half of the twentieth century, the field of psychotherapy was likewise developing rapidly, and with it came many important ideas that would be critical to the future work of dance/movement therapy. Psychology provided a system to understand normal human behavior and its deviations. Ancient roots of psychotherapy begin with *De Anima* (*On the Soul*) by Aristotle that links the heart to mental activity (1987). However, the field took a big step with the new recognition of different types of mental illness during World War II. This war was startling to the American culture both because of the large number of men who were unable to serve due to mental problems, as well as the new difficulties that arose in mental health for those who served in the war (Schmains, 1974). Psychotherapy was beginning to both recognize a diverse level of mental health needs, as well as acknowledge the importance of different modes of expression to release that trauma.

This foundation of the body/mind connection was quite an important shift from the previous century. As Dr. Fran Levy notes,

Much of Western thought at the turn of the century subscribed to the credo of dualism, or the distinct separation of body and mind. Formal dance developed as a performing art, emphasizing technique, with little attention to how it affects the dancer. Medicine and psychotherapy developed as forms of treatment, with the former focusing on the body and the latter focusing on the mind. Psychotherapeutic treatment approaches were almost entirely verbal and nonactive. During the first half of the 20th century, a trend began within many fields to break away from the limitations of these traditions. (Levy, 1988, p. 1)

The development of new aspects in psychotherapy during this time would be paramount to all of the arts therapies, as well as impacting the general creative community. The work of Carl Jung (1875–1961), so critical to new explorations in many modern dances, would be important in providing themes of universal unconscious. A younger colleague of Freud, Jung began his explorations after having several haunting dreams, around the time of World War I. These images, which he worked through utilizing all the art forms, began to
appear to him as part of the larger community’s thoughts and visions and were highly symbolic. Influenced by Buddhism, Kabala, and other religious teachings, Jung defined the idea of active imagination, which places value on the artist invoking the primitive unconscious.

William Reich also followed Freud’s early work on the body, and became more concerned with the general relationship of the body and mind. Many of his concepts centered on the idea that people show physical tension patterns in “character arm,” or fixed body positions that held repressed feeling (Reich, 1943). This work was later more widely accepted, particularly with the reworking of his theories by Alexander Lowen during the 1960s, a more receptive time for thinking about the body in psychodynamic terms.

Shortly after Reich’s initial work, the human movement, led by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, appeared during the 1950s. This introduced the idea that is an unspoken tenet of many dance/movement therapists: that clients wish and, indeed, strive to reach their fullest potential. Called the “actualizing tendency,” this is the will of every person to reach the best possible level of wellness (Rogers, 1961; 1995, p. 331). Therefore, the role of the therapist is to guide and help the client toward this path, while allowing the client to do the work. Important in this process is the role of the therapist to hold the client in positive regard. This is very clear in the work later developed in dance/movement therapy in working the unspoken dance between therapist and client by modeling appropriate and caring behavior. Mental illness is seen as a break in the sense of self, while health involves, among other issues, creativity.

Of course, there have been numerous references to madness in creative arts from Vincent Van Gogh’s psychosis to ballet dancer Vaslav Nijinsky’s bouts of depression. However, these are examples of a select few, highly driven performers devoted to their creative quest. Indeed, the use of creativity may have brought a small sense of order or purpose to what otherwise was surely an unbearable means of existence for some of these artists. Again, the ancients’ use of the arts was to order and express the universe around them. Creativity can be seen as a means of coping, a unique form of human expression and growth. Returning to Rogerian theory, a healthy individual participates in life through creative expression, whether in the arts, sciences, or fulfillment in one’s job or chosen role (Rogers, 1995, p. 193). Similar to Eric Erikson’s idea of generativity in his outline of the eight stages of human development, this expression is due to a desire to connect with others in a healthy manner.

During this post-Freudian period, many other psychotherapists were developing their ideas. In addition, there was growing research in the study of communication. Most importantly, during this time period, as psychology was opening up new ideas, the world of dance reflected upon this, and presented a new way of integrating these modern ideals into expressive art. Dance in the late 1800s had primarily consisted of chorus girls who strove to perform acrobatics (Au, 1988). In contrast, the founders of Denishawn, Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, as well as Isadora Duncan, employed multicultural dance forms in their choreography with an emphasis on artistry. Born in 1877, Isadora Duncan began her work inspired by her own natural body and the images from ancient Greece. Before reaching twenty, she had already proclaimed, “I have discovered the dance. I have discovered the art which has been lost for two thousand years” (Jonas, 1992, p. 193). Though boastful, Isadora soon had her following of dancers and admirers who moved full of emotion and danced barefoot. She also reflected and advanced the psychological atmosphere of the time. Highwater (1978; 1985) notes:

...it is clear that the Freudian emphasis upon the interior world influenced the emergence of modern dance and the cult of personality which Isadora Duncan symbolized. This relationship between the driving forces of culture and the forms of dance demonstrates the way in which experience is ritualized. (p. 21)

Contemporaries to Duncan, Ted Shawn, and Ruth St. Denis also began their exploration of foreign and ancient movement, pulling from Egyptian mythology and Indian dance. While seldom ethnologically accurate, they began to realize the power of ritual in dance and in the expression of emotions. As Shaw (1974) stated, “body movement is life itself... and to move is hence to satisfy a basic and eternal need” (p. 3). The importance of ritual in the working of dance/movement therapy groups became important as early pioneers recognized that humans are comforted in movement rituals whether as formalized dance step, or brushing one’s teeth in the same manner.
each morning. Denishawn embedded ritualized movement with great pageantry, but they were quite correct in recognizing the emotional significance of this movement.

This interest in ethnic dance reached its height in the Denishawn era, which lasted from 1914–1931 (Jonas, 1992). It was truly through the creativity and leadership of Ruth St. Denis that many of these changes in dance occurred. Important to her development as a choreographer was her exposure to performer Genevieve Stebbens. Stebbens was a follower of the philosophy of François Delsarte (1811–1871), who “observed people in public places . . . in order to understand the correspondence between mood and movement” (Mazo, 1977, p. 64). Thus, the foundation of body/mind connection, a primary dance movement therapy principle, was being established and developed by St. Denis.

Modern dance began to develop rapidly during the 1930s and onward, both in the United States as well as abroad (particularly in Germany), feeling the impact in particular of Isadora Duncan and this new round of dance exploration. In Europe, the influence of teachers such as Rudolph Laban and Mary Wigman is noted as quite influential while in America, Denishawn, Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Merce Cunningham, and José Limón were most important references for dance therapists (Levy, 1988). Hanya Holm, who came to America, and Alwin Nicolas, who was born in the United States, greatly impacted both modern dance movements. Unlike ballet, which requires a technical vocabulary practiced from a young age, modern dance was much more accepting of different body types and levels of training. Many students became interested in the use of modern dance in nonperformance domains, as well as creating artistic expression on stage.

The use of dance also became important in creating a psychological release of expression. Choreographer Martha Graham commented that dance would, “make visible the interior landscape” (as cited in Polcari, 1990, p. 3). A graduate of the Denishawn school, Graham took the interest in the ancient themes and combined them a step further with the growing interest in psychology. While Denishawn had thrived on the exotic and elaborate costumes of pageantry, Graham began to strip her works down to the bare essentials. In her dance,
Lamentation (1930), for example, she uses a piece of flexible cloth as both shroud and extension of her raw emotional language. The audience is witness to her process of grief, taking in the movement in a similar manner to witnessing authentic movement. This is a technique often used in which the witness, by their presence, helps the process of emotional release.

Graham was influenced by Sigmund Freud in her early work. Dance writer Joseph Mazo notes, “Freudian theory helped condition the ideas of the generation between the two World Wars, and was used by artists to interpret their reality. During the 1920s when Graham was maturing as an artist, Freud’s teachings were being seriously discussed among the intelligensia and absorbed by less scholarly sophisticates by a form of intellectual osmosis. Graham gained a solid understanding of the psychoanalytic conception of human motivation and, as her work developed, began to use the articulations of the body to explore the motions of the mind” (Mazo, 1977, p. 167). Graham would continue through her career to explore psychological themes, mythology, religion, and general societal issues.

Later influenced by Jung, Graham utilized the themes of universal unconscious in her works to further these explorations. Dance critic Anna Kisselgoff wrote about her moody work, Dark Meadow (named for Plato’s Dark Meadow of Ate) and connected Graham with global themes in Jungian thought. The encounter between the woman and the embodiment of a male principle, spurred along by an earth mother priestess, is meaningful to us precisely because Graham is dealing in archetypes. (Kisselgoff, 1999). Mythology, with its large themes of sexuality, life, and death, is often used for symbolic exploration as well as to tell a story.

Other early choreographers from the modern dance period, including Doris Humphrey, began to explore deeper psychological themes as a way to express that dance should be experienced on a more profound level than mere entertainment. Though Denishawn saw itself as rooted in the ideal of ancient culture, these forms were portrayed on a somewhat superficial level, and evoked more of the mood and general feel of what Denishawn thought ancient and exotic cultures were. On the other hand, the modern choreographers wanted to confront the problems that real people faced – including, in a post-Freudian era, sex... Graham’s works usually explored the individual psyche, while Humphrey was fascinated by the interactions of the individual and the group” (Au, 1988, p. 119).

During this period, the dance movement had also been influenced by such thinkers as James G. Frazer, who published The Golden Bough in 1890, as an examination of folk culture and religious ritual. As noted, the release of this book “created an anthropological revolution which added more fuel to the dance revolution and hence to the emergence of dance therapy. Primitive ritual became a source of inspiration for modern dance, as the older concept of dance as expression of magic, religion and spirituality was revived” (Levy, 1988, p. 3). Suddenly dance was not pure entertainment, but once again was infused with the power of mythology, symbolism, and meaning.

While the modern dance pioneers were changing the landscape of dance and making space for dance therapy to emerge, a man named Rudolph Laban (1879–1958) was not only creating dance, but also creating the very means to record the language of dance, a system that is often referenced by movement therapists to describe what they see, and to record pattern changes. In addition to Laban Movement Analysis, other nonverbal assessment tools for dance/movement therapy currently include the Kestenberg Movement Profile and elements from Body-Mind Centering work. Although Laban’s work predated dance movement therapy, his interest in observing the basic interactions between individuals led to his desire to record the nonverbal language between people. Later, this would become a language that dance/movement therapists could use to communicate with each other, and to record changes in a patient’s movement qualities.

The entire system of movement analysis is complex but some of the most basic ideas involve the concept of the effort dimension which looks at movement dynamically through height, space, time, and flow. Each of these dynamics consists of two opposite elements, for example, a person’s use of time can either be thought of as quick or sustained. These descriptions helped dance therapists describe pathological movement. For example, the repetitive motions associated with autism can be further clarified by the use of descriptive terms such as quick time and bound flow. In general, a neurotic person can access all the efforts, but will clearly have personality preferences. On the other
hand, someone struggling with mental illness is often locked into certain movement patterns, and has great difficulty accessing other qualities.

Warren Lamb (1965) later expanded upon Laban’s original concepts, adding the idea of shape in describing how the body interacts with the space around it, referring to these actions as shaping, directional, or directional arc-like in nature. For example, the action of a mother cradling a child is called shaping whereas a businessperson walking to work with intention may be described as directional in nature. The four aspects of Laban Movement Analysis (with Lamb’s contributions) are known as BESS and include: Body, effort, shape, and space (Lamb, 1965). These aspects deal fully with the many ways different parts of the body interrelate to each other, and how movement is sequenced. BESS addresses aspects of any movement event with the complementary areas of perception including: sensing (body), feeling (effort), intuiting (shape), and thinking (space).

Irmgard Bartenieff, a German dancer, was instrumental in taking Laban’s ideas to America, and established the Laban School in New York City. She expanded upon the ideas of Laban, observing cultural dance forms and more pedestrian interactions of movement, and developed innovative ways to treat polio patients. She developed the Bartenieff Fundamentals, a series of six movement exercises designed to help connect body sensation with emotion (Bartenieff, 1980). In addition, she consulted with the musicologist and ethnographer Alan Lomax in his important work studying folk dance forms, and relating these movements to common work actions.

Lomax’s system of studying cultural movement rhythms, called choreometrics, was based upon the assumption that dance embodies the movement of everyday life (Lomax, 1968). Often the movements of dance are culturally derived from a group’s work actions. The ground-hugging shuffling of many Asian and African dances relates to the work done in cultivation. In contrast, people such as the Turkish and Bretons were horse riders, and the pointing and leaping steps of their dances are meant to highlight their equestrian skills (later adapted into the ethereal qualities deemed in the French courts in the performance of ballet).

Another branch in the Laban lineage is Judith Kestenberg, whose work began and overlapped with Laban and Bartenieff. Concerned primarily with developmental theory (based on Anna Freud’s work), she trained at the invitation of Dr. Paul Schilder, beginning in 1937, at Bellevue Hospital (Sossin, Loman, & Mermar 1999). Her Kestenberg Movement Profile draws on some of the concepts from Laban, and merges them with developmental theories and rhythm patterns, creating a system of tension flow rhythms that would later provide a recordable language and theoretical basis for a branch of dance/movement therapy that works with these developmental patterns.

**Emergence of Dance/Movement Therapy**

The great evolution of modern dance, particularly in the early 1900s, had many exploring momentous works, and noting its emotional impact. Up to this point, though, no clear delineation of the field of dance/movement therapy existed. While all the elements, as well as the clear historical precedents for the use of movement in relieving psychological distress, were in place, it took the work of several pioneers to begin the formation of a clear field of professional work. The
atmosphere in the early-mid 1900s had become a ripe time for the emergence of this new field of dance/movement therapy. As seen, the growing interest in psychology and new explorations in dance led many to explore these concepts together. Many of the early pioneers of dance/movement therapy emerged from this creative exploration occurring in modern dance. They also furthered their education in psychology and other relevant mental health work through varied studies.

In the United States, the growth of dance/movement therapy grew rapidly on both the East and West coasts. On the East coast there were pioneers including Marian Chace, Blanche Evan, and Liljan Espenak, and on the West coast, Mary Whitehouse, Trudi Schoop, and Alma Hawkins (Levy, 1988). Of the early dance/movement therapists, Marian Chace is considered to be the primary founder of dance/movement therapy (Bernstein, 1979; Santon-Jones, 1992). Chace had her roots in the beginnings of modern dance and was originally a dancer with the Denishawn dance company. In her early career, she opened a dance studio and observed that many students came simply to better their own mood, without an agenda for professional careers in dance. In 1942, she brought dance to the psychiatric ward at St. Elizabeths in Washington, D.C. and was the first to make a clear connection between dance psychotherapy: “The dance therapist is not teaching dance in order to develop performing artists, but is using her technical skills and her personal creativity and spontaneity to enable people to become more aware of themselves on a human, realistic level” (Chace, 1964, p. 46).

Also critical to Chace’s development was the work of the theoretician Harry Stack Sullivan, who created the idea of a participant observer, who witnesses, but also chooses to interact in the therapist process, rather than being a complete observer (Sullivan, 1953). In general, although his name is largely forgotten, Sullivan’s ideas on interpersonal relationships added greatly to the field of dance/movement therapy. He furthered ideas that personality is about perception of self in relationship to others, and that this perception of self also changes throughout the developmental stages. Marian Chace applied these ideas in the way that she worked with individuals by either subtly mirroring physical gestures, or responding emotionally with another movement expression (Schmais, 1974). Chace always saw her work as helping to further the individual toward an appropriate means of human expression.

Along with honoring the individual dance, Chace stressed the importance of focusing on what is healthy, instead of labeling pathological problems. As noted by Fischer and Chaitkin (1993), the dance between patient and therapist “... is the meeting of two people, each with their own dance, and the purposeful use of movement by the therapist which is healthy in each of them” (p. 152).

Later, second generation therapists such as Sharon Chaitkin, Claire Schmais (1986), and Judith Fischer (1993) would create theoretical frameworks for understanding Chace’s work in addition to connecting it with the evolution of developmental theory.

Blanche Evan helped to further the field through her work with both adults and children, as well as through her writing. She came from a diverse dance background that included dance improvisation with Bird Larson as well as Spanish dance with Viola and La Meri. Evan’s interest in the modern urban adult came from a concern that modern society forces the individual to lose connection with the body and its emotions (Evan, in Benov, 1991). She created a system of movement work, called Fundamental Technique, which aims to rehabilitate the body with an emphasis on spinal alignment. Part of her ideas came from the observation that humans are unique in their upright posture, and that the spine reflects the body’s movement and expressive capabilities.

Liljan Espenak had her own journey through a variety of movement studies and styles, including folk dance, work with the movement of Daleroze, as well as brief study with Marian Chace. Important among her contributions was the formation of the first postgraduate school program in dance/movement therapy at New York Medical College. The core curriculum included the importance of studying folk and ancient forms of dance as vital to the training for a dance/movement therapist. She wrote that, “In a certain sense, dance therapy seeks to reproduce, working with patients in the psychological environment, the evolution of the history of dance, providing within a clinical setting the opportunity for the acting out of fears and anxieties through the archaic, primitive movements... then seeks to develop the fragmentary experiences into more integrated expression” (Espenak, 1981, p. 19). Again, the process of dance/move-
ment therapy seeks, as ancient dance did, to both normalize the human experience as well as elevate expression.

Meanwhile, in the West, particularly in California, another group of dance/movement therapists (DMTs) were pioneering their work. Mary Whitehouse developed the area within dance/movement therapy known as authentic movement, originally known as “movement-induction.” Having trained as a Jungian therapist, and often identifying herself with his work, she was also greatly influenced by the psychoanalytic ideas developed during WWII. This is particularly utilized with private practice work, as it involves the therapist witnessing whatever movement occurs, and describing this with statements such as “I move” or “I am moved” depending on the emotionality (Whitehouse, 1979, p. 57) of what is seen. Like Jung, she worked with the idea that the creative process, in her case using improvisational dance, tapped into a deep level of the unconscious.

Originally from Switzerland, Trudi Schoop began her work in psychiatric settings in southern California and came to formulate many of her ideas independently during the 1950s. She had strong influences from Duncan, Jacques-Dalcroze, as well as a foundation in European mime (Schoop, 1974). She described her first workings in the field through her book, *Won’t You Join the Dance?* (1974). Much in the same manner as Martha Graham’s statement that movement never lies, Schoop put this into terminology in her book, “with chapters such as the body is a babblemouth” (Schoop, 1974, p. 59). As she describes,

It seems to me that each body I see radiates its own nonverbal message, and that this message represents the sum total of an individual’s various characteristics. By means of its unspoken projection, I can sense a personality as being fundamentally open or closed, active or passive, aggressive or defensive . . . the most significant of all body statements is the one that indicates a person’s feeling about his own body. He may love it, hate it, or take it for granted. But whatever his prevailing attitude, it will surely influence his relationship to the world around him. (Schoop, 1974, p. 61)

Much of her technique centers on observing the individual, then delving into their world to find how they can open to larger community around them. Communication is critical to her work. Whether through a folk dance rhythm or other expression, communicating frees an individual from isolation (Schoop, 2000).

The last of the West Coast therapists, Alma Hawkins (1964), based her work on the instinctive power of dance to heal. In her book, *Creating Through Dance*, she states the concept of dance being both the most ancient, as well as the most basic, form of expression. She also was greatly influenced by the humanist movement. In Rogerian thought, the role of the therapist is to help the client reach an area of health through the concepts of congruence, empathy, and unconditional acceptance. In dance/movement therapy terms, congruence would be expressed through the technique of mirroring (using the same movement as a client) or shaping and nonverbally reflecting a complementary quality nonverbally. Empathy is reflected through “kinesthetic empathy,” a term coined by Miriam Roskin Berger to describe the empathic body connection (Berger, 1956, p. 170). Finally, the field of dance/movement therapy developed around the acceptance that everyone’s dance is important, valid expression, whether performed publicly or expressed privately.

Other early leaders in dance therapy included Franziska Boas, who worked with children at Bellevue Hospital in the 1940s, Elizabeth Rosen, who wrote the first book of dance/movement therapy entitled *Dance in Psychotherapy* (1957), and Norma Canner, who began her work in the 1950s with children. Franziska Boas, the daughter of the famous anthropologist Franz Boas, was deeply influenced by the history and original meaning of dance, as much as in the new psychological language of her time (Levy, 1988). Rosen influenced many with her writings. Her own technique relied both on a free association reaction to words and movement, as well as utilizing simple, taught movement. As noted in one description of her work, “…the patients gradually developed a repertoire of movement techniques and simple folk dances which provided them with a feeling of accomplishment” (Levy, 1988, p. 118). Norma Canner began as an actress, later moving into creative movement, and then exploration dance therapy through a number of styles including Jungian, Gestalt, Neo-Reichian as well as utilizing authentic movement techniques. Like many dance/movement therapists that followed, her work has been strongly influenced by both traditional movement work as well as psychology.
American Dance Therapy Association

By the end of the 1950s, dance/movement therapists were organizing themselves and beginning to connect with each other. In 1964, there were three documented groups of dance/movement therapists based in Washington, D.C., New York, and California (Stark, 2002). The ADTA officially became organized in 1966 with Marian Chace presiding as its first president. It came into being to create standards for education and a level of professionalism and conduct. The creation of the ADTA and the ongoing work to create a professional standard of study is largely considered the major accomplishment of the second generation of dance/movement therapists (Beaudry, 1997). One of the important steps taken was the establishment of a two-tiered process for the system of accreditation. The first level, DTR, or Dance Therapist Registered, is obtained after study and receiving a Master’s degree from an approved program, or equivalent work through independent programs. The DTR is considered an entry-level clinician and has performed a minimum of 700 hours of supervised clinical internship. The second tier, the ADTR, or Academy-level Dance Therapist Registered, is achieved after several more years of supervised clinical work (at least 3,640 additional hours), as well as defining one’s theoretical leanings in the field. At this level, the dance/movement therapist is qualified for private practice work, as well as being able to teach dance/movement therapy and provide supervision, an important part of maintaining the integrity of the field.

Currently there are more than 1,000 registered dance/movement therapists in 46 states and working in approximately 30 different countries. Still quite a small field, the 2nd and 3rd generation dance/movement therapists have worked hard in establishing graduate school programs as well as to publish and lecture in more venues. In joining with other creative arts therapies, dance/movement therapy has been included in a number of different resolutions and grants throughout the past few decades. An important step in the historical progression of recognition was in 1993 when the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine of the National Institutes of Health (formerly know at the Office of Alternative Medicine) awarded the ADTA an early grant to look at the effects of dance/movement upon medical illnesses (ADTA website).

The reality for the current generation of dance/movement therapists is finding avenues to be paid, while expanding the field. Like other creative arts therapists, dance/movement therapists search for work under several titled areas, such as therapeutic recreational specialist, mental health worker, as well as more oblique job classifications. Few have full-time jobs, and even fewer still have a job with the sole title of dance/movement therapist. As Beaudry (1997) ruminates, “before committing the field to any alliance, however, it seems critical for DMT leaders and educators to reach a consensus about what is the core identity of DMT in the U.S. at the present time” (p. 21). A recent decision to align with the National Board of Certified Counselors was intended to help create job opportunities, but states vary widely in both licensure and reimbursement possibilities for the DMT field. Many dance/movement therapists have gone through additional training to broaden themselves in the market, but there is a strong desire to also remember the roots of dance, and to respect the traditions that have created the field. There remains a societal distance from the world of dance, but as alternative health therapies have emerged, there is a new acceptance of exploring the body/mind connection, and returning once again to move and be moved by the power of dance.

Dance/movement therapy is useful for a wide range of patients and issues due to its movement component. It is particularly useful for those areas where traditional talk therapy may be inadequate due to unique nonverbal issues, for example, work with Alzheimer patients, who remember body sensations, but may lose track of a verbal conversation. Likewise, DMT is particularly useful for populations with eating disorders, victims of sexual abuse, emotionally disturbed children, and those with sensory issues or trauma. Even in the most physically restricted body, there is interaction in the eyes, or a subtle movement in the hands. This is a place to begin the dance. Interestingly, yoga and Pilates have gained great acceptance in modern culture because of their accessibility to most of the normal neurotic population. It is often easier to be given an exercise than to tap into the creative process which can be a far scarier proposition. However, this is the very strength of dance/movement therapy, and the trained dance therapist works to meet a client at their level, and work through the dance itself.
CONCLUSION

Humans have long used the inherent power of dance to promote healing on a body, mind, and spiritual level. The modern field of dance/movement therapy developed into a professional domain that maintains a high level of educational competence and skills in therapists who are committed to guiding others towards well-being. Primary to this work is the belief that through the expressive power of movement, we further the emotional, cognitive, social, and physical integration of both individuals and groups in this healing art.

It is important to state that psychology has had a tremendous effect on the development of dance/movement as therapy, and has provided a language in which therapists can discuss pathology and development. However, it is the dance itself that remains a vital part of dance/movement therapy. The human urge and desire to express itself is a powerful and basic need, no matter what form of expression it takes.

The field of dance/movement therapy continues to grow and provide a means for people to connect to themselves, to each other, and to the world around them. In honoring the dance, the dancer moves, quite literally, to heal, to express, and to create. Dance is, at its most basic level, a way of being human in the present. It reveals the innermost self, as well as reflecting the universe as the individual perceives it. That is why it is quite critical never to judge personal or cultural dance, but to always understand that expression as an honest piece of selfillumination. The therapist is a skilled guide to join in this dance and to help move it quite literally onward.

REFERENCES


## APPENDIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dance/Movement Therapy Timeline</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Religions dances in Croce, ancient Egypt, etc. are documented through writing and art.</td>
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<tr>
<td>441 B.C.</td>
<td>Euripides incorporates dance in his dramas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>350 B.C.</td>
<td>Aristotle writes <em>De Anima</em> (<em>On the Soul</em>) that links “heart” to “mental activity.”</td>
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<td>860 A.D.</td>
<td>Shiva appears as Lord of the Dance (<em>Nataraja</em>) in Indian cultures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1448 B.C.</td>
<td>First ballet (<em>in France</em>) – dance was less participatory for mainstream.</td>
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<td>1811</td>
<td>Francois Delarte was born – led study in understanding mood and movement.</td>
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<td>1850</td>
<td><em>The Golden Bough</em>, published by James G. Frazer, explores folk culture and religious ritual, and led the way for a new interest in dance.</td>
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<td>1872</td>
<td><em>The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals</em> is published by Charles Darwin, on nonverbal behavior.</td>
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<td>1877</td>
<td>Isadora Duncan, born in San Francisco, ushers in a new era of dance and the natural body.</td>
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<td>1879</td>
<td>Rudolph Laban born – theorist, philosopher, movement educator, he is known for pioneering a system of movement notation used by many dance/movement therapists.</td>
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<td>1894</td>
<td>Martha Graham, pioneering modern dance was born – connected dance, ritual, and psychology.</td>
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<td>1900</td>
<td>Freud’s <em>Interpretation of Dreams</em> begins modern psychology movement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Freud outlines the stages of childhood development (<em>oral, anal, genital</em>).</td>
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<td>1911</td>
<td>Emile Jacques-Dalcroze found institute for study of eurhythms in Germany.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914–1931</td>
<td>Denishawn era – founded by Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis, explores ancient dance, ritual, and opens doors for the modern dance movement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Carl Jung publishes <em>Psychological Types</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930s on</td>
<td>Modern dance grows, exploring connections in dance and psychology.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1937–38</td>
<td>Judith Keister begins her intensive movement studies, leading to her developmental movement profile system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1942–43</td>
<td>Marian Chace, primary founder of DMT, brings dance movement therapy to St. Elizabeths.</td>
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1950s  Trudi Schoop is part of the West Coast dance/movement therapy movement, publishing her work in *Won't You Join the Dance?*

1950s  “The humanist movement” led by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow focuses on client desire for wellness.

1952  Raymond Birdwhistell publishes *Introduction to Kinesics* dealing with movement interaction.

1954  Erik Erikson outlines his development theory on the “Eight Ages of Man.”

1957  Elizabeth Rosen writes the first book of dance/movement therapy entitled *Dance in Psychotherapy.***

1962  Piaget defines cognitive stages of development.


1965  Warren Lamb adds to Laban’s theories and movement observation work.

1966  American Dance Therapy Association officially organized.

1977  Dance/movement therapy, art therapy, music therapy, and psychodrama were represented on President Carter’s Commission on Mental Health.

1980  Irmgard Bartenieff publishes *Body Movement* on her expansion of Laban’s work, including relevance to dance/movement therapy.

1993  The Office of Alternative Medicine of the National Institute of Health awarded one of its first exploratory research grants to explore dance/movement therapy for those with medical illnesses.

1996  Dance/movement therapy, art therapy, and music therapy are recognized by the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) of the Department of Health and Human Services that may constitute covered elements of a partial hospitalization program in Medicare facilities.

  Dance/movement therapists celebrate their 40th annual conference.

**Photo Credits**

**Figure 11.1**

Dancing Girl. Limestone ostracon of irregular shape. Egyptian, New Kingdom, 17th dynasty (16th BCE). 16.8 x 10.5 cm.

**Museo Egizio, Turin, Italy**

**Photo Credit:** Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY

**Figure 11.2**

Artist Unknown, Japanese Circle Dance. Japanese, Edo Period, late Kan’ei (1624–1644) to Kanbun (1661–1673) era

Object Place: Japan

Panel; ink and color on gold-leafed paper, 19 3/8 x 22 3/8 in.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Denman Waldo Ross Collection, 17.687

**Figure 11.3**


Oil over relief wood carving. 17 1/4 x 27 5/8 in.

Ricco-Maresca Gallery, New York, NY

**Photo Credit:** Ricco/Maresca Gallery/Art Resource, NY

**Figure 11.4**

Photo of Marian Chace in dance/movement therapy session.

Photo courtesy of Marian Chace Foundation

**Biographical Statement**

Laurice D. Nemetz, MA, ADTR, RYT, is an academy-level dance/movement therapist and registered yoga teacher with a diverse background in the arts and healing. Educated at Goucher College with a Master’s degree in dance/movement therapy and at Wellesley College with degrees in art history and French. Lauri has performed dance extensively in the United States and France in various disciplines, including European folk dance, modern, and improvisation, and has worked and performed at the prestigious American Dance Festival. She has been a therapist in a variety of settings from children to geriatrics, as well as trauma work post-9/11. A well-known lecturer, she has also published in several professional journals.