

In Memoriam: A Tribute to Israel Zwerling Memories . . . And Deeds

Elissa Queyquep White and Dianne Dulicai

Israel Zwerling, M.D., Ph.D., passed away last year. He was a man who made things possible—a man who helped people make their dreams come true. In order to convey how he was the guiding force and support in the development of dance therapy the feeling of the times will be portrayed in a personal manner.

Memories . . .

My association with Zwerling began in September 1966. I was apprenticing with Irmgard Bartenieff and Martha Davis using Effort-Shape Analysis (now known as Laban Movement Analysis—LMA) to research nonverbal communication interactional patterns in family therapy. This research was being conducted at the behest of Zwerling, who was the family therapist. Zwerling became the Director of Bronx State Hospital (later to become Bronx Psychiatric Center) when I became his research assistant on a part-time basis. In September 1967, I was hired full time, spending half of this time for the purpose of beginning a dance therapy program throughout the hospital. By this time, our research team of Bartenieff, Davis, and Queyquep was joined by Claire Schmais. This team went to a weekly seminar on nonverbal communication which was

attended by well-known psychiatrists, psychologists and anthropologists. Zwerling was fascinated with Bartenieff and her work in both dance therapy and Effort-Shape and felt that a contribution could be made to this new area of study.

Though Zwerling hired me to begin a dance therapy program, he advised us every step of the way. First, he told us which chief of service would be amenable to having dance therapy for his patients. When Schmais and I arrived on his ward, the chief said: "You want to do therapy? That's great!"

Next, Zwerling wisely advised us that we needed to educate staff about what dance therapy could do for the patients. We contacted the heads of nursing who helped set up an orientation for the charge nurses of each ward (some 40 people). When a charge nurse decided that dance therapy would be good for their patients, we had an orientation for the ward staff. We were even able to have a staff member assigned to be in the patients' sessions on a regular basis. Fairly soon, more wards were requesting dance therapy sessions and Zwerling agreed to hire more dance therapists. Miriam Roskin Berger, who later became the Director of the Creative Arts Therapies Department when it was first formed, joined us at this time. Other alumni of this period include Johanna Climenko, Lucille Ormay, Roberta Shlasko, Sasha Silberstein, Florette Orleans and Dianne Dulicai. Schmais continued to work part-time here and at Hunter College and Bartenieff began doing dance therapy with the cognitively impaired.

We were extremely fortunate. Even though most of the hospital personnel referred to us as the touchy, feely people and it was heard on more than one occasion: "Here comes the butterflies," Zwerling never wavered in his support of us. As a matter of fact he encouraged us to keep up our proselytizing and training of staff. He was very insistent that in our communications with staff about what occurred with patients in our sessions, that we stick to our language—the language of movement. The philosophy that we were to teach staff about what we do and not try to explain this in a language other than our own fortified us on our journey.

Many events were concurrently happening throughout this period. The weekly seminars on nonverbal communication continued. Zwerling allowed us to train nonhospital personnel who took dance therapy workshops privately. Further, he suggested that we in dance therapy and Effort-Shape do two things: Train interested staff to do dance therapy and teach Effort-Shape to those staff interested in learning movement behavior.

Thus, we began a dance therapy training seminar. Approximately eight people enrolled. We met twice a week for two hours each time, for eight weeks or so. After the training, our students, mostly mental health therapy aides, went back to their wards and began dance therapy sessions. My job was to supervise them. In our ignorance we assumed that

people who liked to move and who were talented could sustain doing dance therapy sessions. We soon found out otherwise, explained this to Zwerling and thus, we began to teach modern dance classes to our trainees. Today, this seems unbelievable that this could have occurred but it was indicative of the exciting and creative atmosphere that Zwerling created. Perhaps, too, this was a reflection of the times.

The Effort-Shape seminars were attended mainly by psychiatrists, social workers, psychologists and dance therapists. These sessions were held weekly and consisted of experiential work and lectures.

These seminars were just one of the many innovative events that Zwerling initiated. One of his main goals was to educate and train staff—all staff. Many of us received further education through Zwerling's urging both on the job and under the auspices of New York State, who had a very liberal education policy for its civil servants. At his retirement presentation from Bronx Psychiatric Center two speeches remain with me. One was a speech by a woman who had worked as a mental health therapy aide and who became a psychologist during Zwerling's tenure. The other speech was by the State Mental Health Commissioner who stated that one of Zwerling's regrets was that he was not successful at turning Bronx State Hospital into Bronx State College.

In addition to spreading the word about dance therapy Zwerling advised us to contact the chief of the psychiatric residency training unit. Bronx State had an affiliation with Alfred Einstein College of Medicine and he felt that the psychiatric residents should be exposed to dance therapy. Along with dance therapy sessions for the patients we conducted dance therapy orientations for the residents every six-month rotation. For those who wished, we held weekly dance therapy sessions and included the Effort-Shape concepts. Eventually dance therapy was written into the residency training curriculum as an elective. There's no data to prove it, but through anecdotal follow-up, psychiatric residents, once they became "chiefs" in their own right, hired dance therapists.

One of the most significant events that Zwerling committed to was to agree to have a site visit for reviewers of a grant proposal for a model graduate program in dance therapy, written by Schmais, together with Davis and myself. Zwerling was delighted to host this visit, helped the reviewers roll up their sleeves and participate in a dance therapy session with patients and assured the reviewers that Bronx State Hospital would indeed accommodate all the students in their internships. He even tried to get the interns stipends from the State of New York.

Zwerling's feelings for the patients as human beings was illuminating and refreshing. Bronx Psychiatric Center is on the perimeter of a highway. In order to get back and forth from the subway without walking a long distance, you need to walk across this Parkway. Because he felt the patients were in danger he unsuccessfully petitioned New York State to

build a bridge over the Parkway. These feelings of concern and respect extended to all levels of staff from the janitorial staff on up.

We never spoke about why he was such a proponent of dance therapy, although his article, "Creative Arts Therapies as 'Real Therapies'" addresses this. I suspect also that he felt that any discipline which offered "life" to patients was important to him. Certainly Zwerling himself was full of love, life, enthusiasm, humor and compassion—and he was truly interested in feeling that all people should reach their desired potential.

The dance therapy unit was only one of the many things that Zwerling initiated and supported while at Bronx State Hospital—other disciplines were family studies and group process, and he was a strong advocate for community psychiatry.

My fondest memory of Zwerling is seeing him speedily walk by a dance therapy session in progress and yelling out: "So, you think that stuff really works, huh?" Obviously, he did and as a result he clearly helped to establish dance therapy as a profession.

Elissa Queyquep White

In 1974, Zwerling became the Chairman of Mental Health Sciences at Hahnemann University. The following will give an overview of his accomplishments there and his abiding support for the creative arts therapies.

. . . And Deeds

In 1947 Israel Zwerling was awarded his Ph.D. in psychology, in 1950 his medical degree, and in 1960 he received his certificate in Psychoanalytic Medicine. In the 46 years Dr. Zwerling practiced as a physician, academician, therapist and administrator, he devoted 23 of those years as a staunch supporter to all the creative arts therapies. A brief dateline gives an impressive overview starting from his departure from the Bronx Psychiatric Hospital.

1974—Established the dance/movement therapy section of Creative Arts Therapy in the graduate school of Hahnemann University and Medical School in Philadelphia through a National Institute of Mental Health training grant. As Chairman of Mental Health Sciences he established the Creative Arts section at the level of the executive committee with other mental health section chiefs.

1975—Established the music therapy section of Creative Arts Therapy in the graduate school of Hahnemann University and Medical School in Philadelphia. The CAT section was included in the graduate school course "Medical Information" a mandatory course for all graduate and medical students. It was taught in pairs with faculty from all over the

University which shifted each year allowing us the maximum opportunity to relate to the rest of the University.

1976—He sponsored a research grant for the creative arts section from Department of Education which provided teacher training from our section to special education teachers in Pennsylvania.

1977—He sponsored a renewal of the original training grant. He provided the budget to submit a video of the Creative Arts Therapy for submission to the Presidential Commission on Mental Health.

1978—He set aside the budget resources for a film on the Developmental Milestones of the Young Child through the arts.

1979—He set aside the budget resources for a film on the Nonverbal Interaction of Families (art therapy and dance/movement therapy) and participated in several presentations of the film at national conferences.

1980—Moderator for a continuing education workshop for the American Psychiatric Association Conference including sponsoring videotapes of an adult and child case for presentation. Moderator of a panel for the American Psychoanalytic Association Conference on the Creative Arts in Therapy.

1981—Moderator for a continuing education workshop for the American Dance Therapy Association on the use of Creative Arts Therapy in assessment and evaluation.

1983—Sponsored an international Creative Arts Therapy Symposium at Hahnemann University, sponsored the subsequent publication and served as a moderator.

1985—Assisted in the development of a joint degree program with the Laban Centre, Goldsmiths' College, London. He used his position as chairman of Mental Health Science to guide the proposal through the academic approval.

1987—With his support and guidance, Hahnemann offered a Ph.D. in psychology with a dance/movement therapy specialization.

1992—Submitted testimony for the Senate Hearings on the Aged for the efficacy of dance/movement therapy with this population.

1993—We lost a supporter this year but in the 14 years I worked as director of the dance/movement therapy program for him and the 4 years before at Bronx State Hospital, he taught me the most valuable lessons which I have been delighted to try to pass on to my students.

"Dianne, first there is no division of the emotive and cognitive function in the integrated person. Second, work for integrating all the faculties of your patients. Protect with vigilance the assault on your own by false binary thinking. Be able to offer opportunities for creative solutions to your students' and patients' problems and then be willing to wait to see what is done with those opportunities . . . as I will with you." (Israel Zwerling, M.D., Ph.D.)

Dianne Dulicai