

# Creative Dance as Bridge Between IACD and ADTA

representing the International Association for Creative Dance at the ADTA conference\*

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The theme of the 2013 ADTA conference was creating community connections. I was honored to present the workshop: “Creative Dance as Bridge from Self to Community” and I saw this as an opportunity to create a bridge between IACD - International Association for Creative Dance and ADTA - American Dance Therapy Association and the dance/movement therapy community. Developed by Barbara Mettler, Creative Dance is an approach to dance improvisation. IACD was founded in 1998 by her students who wanted to keep alive her vision and unique approach to exploration of body movement and improvisation.

Mettler said that “Free dance is not an interpretation of life - it is life”, and as every living thing, Creative Dance and IACD grow and develop and seek to expand and open to new possibilities. As a dance therapist and a long time practitioner and teacher of Creative Dance I see how these modalities can connect, relate and enrich each other.

Barbara Mettler considered her approach to dance as art that serves no other purpose than to provide joy in the act of creating satisfying movement forms. She really insisted on “no other purpose” and emphasized that her work was not therapy. She did, however, see great therapeutic benefits as a by-product of Creative Dance as art and also encouraged her students to apply the creative dance principles to their own work and lives. The principles of Mettler’s approach of Creative Dance can easily be implemented in Therapy. When having the intention to use them in therapy, Creative Dance has much to offer to dance therapists.

At the workshop I introduced elements of Creative Dance that can be adapted and integrated into dance therapy. Some of these principles are known to dance therapists, some serve as refreshers and some bring new perspectives. I’ve listed the main principles of Creative Dance with my comments as to their therapeutic value as I see it in parenthesis:

1. Movement and dance are basic human needs. Everyone can dance, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, dance experience, physical ability and body shape. *(This principle opens the door for everyone to participate in Dance/Movement Therapy.)*
2. Movement/dance has value as it happens in the present, as it develops, and it is not aimed at an audience. *(This allows freedom to move from within and relate to meaning and psychological implications when done in the therapy room.)*

3. The movement is improvisational, expressed as an organic dance form, creating a dance that is free to develop according to the living qualities of the movement. It unfolds naturally as an expression of one's inner life. *(This type of work invites mindfulness to the movement - deep listening to the body, feelings and impulses that bring authentic quality to the movement and rich material for therapeutic work.)*
4. To keep it as pure movement, there is no outside music or accompanying percussion, only natural sounds of body parts, breath & movers' sounds. *(This also invites enhanced awareness/mindfulness of movement impulses, expressions and connections).*
5. The body is the instrument and the movement is the material of the dance *(This concept helps to deepen the connection with the body and listening-in, from the tune up to working on content that arises with movement.)*
6. Creative Dance sessions are based on exploration of themes and "creative problems" or studies (e.g.: time, space, shapes, polarities) that call for problem solving and creative solutions. *(Exploring creative solution can support and enrich therapeutic investigation. The movement themes provide meaningful explorations with psychological implications e.g. open-close, holding on-letting go.)*
7. One of Barbara Mettler's unique contributions to movement improvisation is in expanding the improvisatory dance to include others. The movement themes develop within a structure of individual exploration, dancing in dyads or small groups and ending with a whole group dance *(This progression reflects the innate human progression of growth and development. It brings interpersonal mindfulness to therapeutic work especially in groups. It guides participants to include others in their field of awareness and invites participants to explore the relationship between individual forms of expression and the group's themes, finding creative solutions to navigate between the two.)*

The response to the workshop was wonderful. People expressed their appreciation to the deep listening to the body, working in silence, connecting through movement, taking a pause and experiencing a rare and powerful connection with their own body expression and with others.

The flyers, newspapers and brochures that I brought to represent IACD were in high demand and some of the participants asked to be part of IACD list to get information about IACD's ongoing activities. There is a variety of activities IACD offers. There are Creative Dance groups in several states that are open to new participants. (I have been leading one of them, an ongoing Creative Dance group in Portland Oregon for over 8 years). Regional workshops are offered under a special grant from Mettler Studios (next one coming up will be in Tucson AZ on January 17-19, 2014). These workshops are designed to introduce new people to Creative Dance and can be arranged upon request. The annual week long Creative Dance Congress provides the opportunity to dance in a large group, learn from different teachers and deepen one's experience of this approach. There are also workshops and trainings along with two newsletters per year that keep members of IACD connected and informed.

The positive and enthusiastic feedback I received from the workshop emphasizes the potential of collaboration and mutual learning between IACD and ADTA.

IACD is open to new members and engaged participants. If you want to learn more, get involved or become a member you are welcome to visit IACD's website at: [www.dancecreative.org](http://www.dancecreative.org). You can also find out more about Barbara Mettler at [www.barbaramettler.org](http://www.barbaramettler.org).

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