CHAPTER 4

The Group/Individual

While I love to watch an individual fearlessly expressing their inner being with authenticity, I also used group work to encourage individual confidence and technique mediated by peer critique and support. "Man is ordained by reason of his material and spiritual needs to cultivate personal relationships with his fellows" (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 99). I sought a group environment where competitiveness served little purpose and authentic expression was celebrated and respected. I used group work to encourage "a merging of action and awareness" (van Staden, et al., 2004, p. 131) and a 'flow' within and between individuals in the group through observation and critique.

4.1 Group Solidarity

From the first lesson I became aware of multiple levels of ability in the class. I realised in order not to 'expose' individuals too early, I would need to incorporate many sessions of disciplined repetition to support my desire for maximum participation and good self esteem. My choice to dance without music was also fundamental to group solidarity and individual discipline. I reflected on this choice,

> *"I chose to work with no music as I wanted them to hear the sounds they were making with greater clarity and to get a sense of working as a group. There is a powerful energy that comes from working as a group where everyone is doing the same thing at the same time at the same pace. I explained to dancers that I was not happy until they were able to 'sound like one person'. The reason for this is that it requires discipline and sensitivity to modify ones pace to the group. There are always those who like to move fast and those who like to move slowly. Having to conform to a group pace helps to establish a moderate tempo more conducive to learning.*

> *It also gave an opportunity to 'sound' much louder than one does as an individual as well as to rely on others where there were still gaps in learning. The music is paced at the 'final product' and is often too fast (or slow) for many in the early learning stages. Without music there is also the added incentive to accelerate learning in order not to be the one who makes a sound that is incorrect. Most students try and avoid 'group exposure' of their mistakes so when these mistakes are heard by all it encourages the individual to focus with*

greater intensity in order not to expose their gaps in learning and to get it right as soon as possible. I anticipated these 'odd' sounds so when they did occur I tried to make light of them through laughter and encouraged them not to be 'caught out'. I hoped hereby to impose gentle peer pressure to encourage focus and learning.

I consider music as the inspiration that can be added once learning has taken place. The benefits of working without music should not be underestimated. There is tremendous intellectual engagement in flamenco and often the music can be a distraction in the early stages of internalisation. I feel dancers benefit from finding their own rhythm (as a group and then as an individual) and that the added discipline of then following the pace of the music can and should be attempted later."(Appendix 2, class 1)

I believe this focus on the oneness of 'group sound' became a powerful motivation for individual learning. It seemed to act as an incentive to avoid 'exposure'.

(Appendix 5, Video 42 – class 7)

My desire to avoid individual 'exposure' took on another level of importance as I came to realise later in the course that I in fact had two students who were even more challenged than most: one was dyslexic and one had speech difficulties with partial hearing ability. I believe I would have severely compromised their trust if I had unknowingly exposed and humiliated them. Group work gave me time to become more aware of individual levels of ability.

I only introduced 'new' work when 'old' work was sufficiently mastered. This seemed to allow the group to progress as a team. The teacher observed,

> Firstly, I was impressed at how keen and willing they were to volunteer to dance in the small groups and then how the 'spectators' encouraged and helped the dancers by giving hand signals ~ true teamwork.
>
> Lovely to see that all are participating fully in the lessons even if they are battling to master some of the movements! Again - their self confidence has grown! (Appendix 3, week 2)

Her awareness of the levels of confidence and self esteem that were developing resonated with my own. I observed a certain confident team spirit developing, and their

willing participation seemed unaffected by their learning challenges. I feel this group solidarity became the bedrock of many 'organic' relationships which later emerged.

4.2 Organic Relationships and Resonance

In class 1 I reflected:

> *"When I concluded the class … I asked them for any comments. I had hoped that their comments would give me an indication of how they were feeling and how to approach the next class…*
>
> *I was rewarded by their honest comments: "thank you", "wow", "I can't wait for Thursday", "can we perform this dance?" The overall impressions were of enjoyment and a sense of 'wow' as one student described it …*
>
> *The fact that one of them asked if they were going to be able to perform their dance for an audience was for me a clear indication that learning had taken place. Their confidence after one lesson showed me that at least one had learnt enough to want to show others what they had learnt."(Appendix 2, class 1)*

Not only did this indicate to me that learning had taken place, but also indicated confidence in that learning. While at the time I used these reactions and comments to confirm what I felt, (the learning process had been enjoyed), I also realised that these were momentary individual impressions and should not be applied to all who were in the class, but I still used them to reflect upon in order to guide me in the following lesson. The fact that their enjoyment was so evident made me reflect on its influence in learning. I resolved to ensure that the 'work' was 'fun' wherever possible. The children's and teacher's comments helped me to align what I valued with what they valued, and to indicate focus in learning.

In class 1 the first 'time of reflection' revealed difficulties in individual learning which I then used to guide group learning:

> *"At this point I decided to narrow the focus to what they had found easy and then what they had found difficult. While some found the stamps and claps easy, there were more who identified their difficulties. As I suspected the step that travelled sideways was a challenge for a lot of them. One mentioned that the 'counting' helped him learn the sequence while another identified the problem*

of "remembering" the sequence. It was at this point that I decided to use a comparison to the skill of "reading ahead" required for speed reading to introduce their focus to a skill of "thinking ahead" while dancing.

... It requires tremendous mental focus to think of the next step while doing the current one. The mind is often focused on the technical as well as intellectual demands of the current step and the ability to think of the next step as well takes time to develop....Without music to rely on to be reminded of the next step tremendous emphasis can be placed on the intellectual engagement of the individual ... In order not to have to rely on the music or others to help recall, I tried to encourage and develop the skills that would lead to the individual responsibility necessary for their success." (Appendix 2, class 1)

I assumed that the student who commented on his difficulty 'remembering' the sequence was not alone and that perhaps there were others, hence my decision to compare 'speed thinking' to 'speed reading'. I assisted one child's challenge by sharing his concerns with others and offering my advice to the whole class. In this way the group could benefit from the advice to the individual.

Through out the course I used the comments from the children to help balance my own perceptions.

"As I waited for the class to enter I found myself wondering if what I had put together for this course had in fact achieved what I had hoped. Those nagging doubts that often plague me: should I be doing something else with my life? Did I hurt someone through a thoughtless word or action? Were the lessons of any value to anyone other than myself? Were they "educational"? ... I also kept asking my companions how they were doing at the start of each lesson .... I felt an obligation to know how the lessons were being experienced and if anyone was not up to what I may have been about to demand of them."(Appendix 2, class 7)

Here I observed how I needed to know how I was doing from knowing how they were doing. When I am not feeling well I often do not want to dance and I needed to know that I was not forcing their participation.

"When replies indicated that a learner was not feeling well I tried to be aware of this and not expect them to participate to the same extent as the rest. If they began to feel inspired as the lesson progressed that was up to them but I tried not to make the same demands on them, especially physical ones, as I did on the rest of the class.

I also needed the feedback that learners were prepared to give me on how they felt after the previous lesson. Their comments were used to guide me in how I approached the lesson. If they were not enjoying it I would try to bring more enjoyment. If they were finding it difficult I will try to find out in what way and would try to help make it easier. If there was a feeling of discouragement I would try to encourage. If there was a feeling of apathy I will try to inspire. If there was a feeling of "heaviness" due to exhaustion I will try to energise or allow time for rest."(Appendix 2, class 7)

I continued to rely on their comments:

"When I asked for comments after this session I was not surprised to hear the following:

    "It was great it felt nice"

    "I liked the new steps"

    "It was very difficult and confusing"

    "Your arms get sore from clapping"

"You learn from watching others mistakes" (I responded that they learn from others mistakes and that's why I encouraged them to watch one another.)

"Enlivening"

These seemed to cover a wide range of experiences. I asked if they had experienced any difficulties and they responded:

"Nothing"

"The clapping"

"Remembering the steps"

"It was hard to turn after the other steps as you are still recovering"

"The 'up down' is confusing"

"Remembering is hard but some people are really doing it well"

It was interesting to note how comments now included experience of technical difficulties. Had the technical aspect now become more demanding or were they now becoming more fully aware of them?" (Appendix 2, class 7)

This clip shows our reflections.

(Appendix 5, Video 43 – class 7)

I noticed how each individual was experiencing unique focus and that by sharing that focus in the group context it afforded opportunity for others to broaden their focus as well. I noted how they were learning from others mistakes as well as from what others did well. "Pure dancing has no describable story. It is frequently impossible to outline the content of a dance in words, although one can always describe the movement" (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 4). For this reason, I believe verbal expressions were limited when trying to understand and 'share' the multi-dimensional, organic experience in dance, however they did provide opportunity for resonance.

4.3 Integrated Individual Experience and Self Esteem

If dance does not integrate the intellectual emotional and physical, I believe it becomes *"mindless physical exertion"* and an *"extravagant use of energy"* (class 3 p44). I believe confidence in dance requires self knowledge.

> In order to gain self-confidence children and dancers have to gain knowledge of the self i.e. physically, psychologically and socially through self-evaluation … Pupils should be encouraged by the teacher to a 'self-corrective' strategic and thereby producing a creative learning environment. The teacher becomes more a guide and by asking the right questions, giving reinforcement the teacher becomes a facilitator. The atmosphere then changes from one of constant correction to a process of self-knowledge (van Staden, et al., 2004, p. 123).

I observed how some children found it difficult to integrate the mind body and soul creatively. The teacher confirmed this,

> It has been so apparent that some learners have seldom been involved in an exercise/routine where free movement of their body is encouraged, and therefore are very stiff in their execution of the dance steps. Creative thought in some learners has just not been developed. They are in a rut!! No deviation from a set path.
>
> Whereas some of the children thoroughly enjoyed the chance to break free and experiment with their own ideas. Lovely to see how they encouraged one another. (Appendix 3, week 3)

The integration of mind body and soul in dance is challenging and I observed how it took time and encouragement to develop. In these clips I observed how skill and confidence seemed to support authentic expression.

(Appendix 5, Video 44 – class 1)
(Appendix 5, Video 45 – class 8)

Because dance is a 'whole being' experience, I was aware of how difficult it was to protect self esteem during critique. However,

> If the child lacks realistic self knowledge of own strengths and weaknesses, it will influence his or her ability to discriminate and regulate the self …." (van Staden, et al., 2004, p. 123).

This requires one "… to develop the ability to be open to feedback and to take negative feedback as constructive" (van Staden, et al., 2004, p. 123). I used times of reflection to engage in all forms of feedback.

(Appendix 5, Video 46 – class 3)

I believe it is imperative

> …. to avoid attaching self-esteem to performance outcomes … Individuals who believe in their abilities do better because that belief motivates them to work harder and longer and persist in spite of difficulties (van Staden, et al., 2004, p. 124).

I did however endeavour to protect self esteem by encouraging 'caring' critique of the 'work' not criticism of the individual. In this clip Mr. Silence surprises us all by his choice to dance 'silently' and I became aware of the need for me to encourage critique of his work, rather than him personally.

(Appendix 5, Video 47 – class 6)

4.4 The Group as Sensitive Participant Observer
I introduced the group as 'participant observer' from the first lesson and I gradually developed this concept to encourage focus, observational learning, sensitivity, accuracy and humility.

"I then introduced a new skill of learning to provide the beat or rhythm for the dancers. Those who were watching were now given the added responsibility of providing the clapping for the dancers. I described it like being a drum. They were to provide a clear strong beat for the dancers to work to. This is not easy, as it requires great empathy and sensitivity from those clapping. I told them that they needed to clap in unison and that they needed to sound like 'one person'. A 'splintered' sound was not acceptable. I then made the comparison with how they clapped in assembly where no clear rhythm was evident. I thus tried to show them what I wanted by showing them what I did not want."(Appendix 2, class 3)

In this video clip I taught unison clapping by asking them to clap as they would in assembly, in order to show them how I did not want them to clap.

(Appendix 5, Video 48 – class 3)

Here I used the 'incorrect' to guide practice. I later observed how I responded to their fears and insecurity with sensitivity.

"I then let them try to clap for the dancers and as I expected it wasn't very good. They looked disheartened. One of the boys expressed his fear of doing the steps in two groups. I responded to his expressed anxiety by sharing my story. I did this in the hope of conveying to others who may have been feeling the same anxiety that I knew how they possibly felt. I hoped thereby to reduce their self imposed pressure to do well immediately. I tried to encourage them to be patient. I told them how it often took me six months to be able to perform a new dance. I then reminded them that this was only their third lesson and to 'chill.'" (Appendix 2, class 3)

When I used my own personal story of anxiety in the learning process to convey my empathy I was aligning with Palmer. "As we listen to each another's stories, we are often reflecting silently on our own identity and integrity …" (Palmer, 1998, p. 147).
I reflected on my own experience and used my story to try to ease insecurities, but because I saw little sign of relaxing of insecurities from the group yet, I decided to introduce the 'leading' and 'following' in flamenco to encourage this.

"When they swopped groups the second group was worse: the clapping had no 'sensitivity' or conscious awareness of the dancer ... I had to interrupt this group in order to explain how the clapping worked in flamenco. I gave them what I hoped would be good news: "in flamenco the dancer rules!" I then explained how the pace of the dance is determined by the dancer. Those clapping for the dancer (or in the instance of a musician, playing for the dancer) had to follow the pace of the dancer. The dancer was the leader and the clappers were the followers. I then told them that they would all get a chance to 'lead' and to 'follow'.

Both first attempts to clap successfully for the dancer were weak but I did not interrupt their 'poor' performance as I wanted them to observe and analyse for themselves what was going wrong. I merely allowed them to struggle to the end and then sat them down for a moment of reflection. I hoped that they would then be able to identify and solve the problems themselves."(Appendix 2, class 3)

In this clip I reminded them to 'chill' when they felt the pressure to get the dance correct immediately. I introduced the idea that as dancers, they were 'leaders', in charge of the pace of performance and the 'clappers' had to be sensitive to their needs.

(Appendix 5, Video 49 – class 3)

Throughout my classes I used the group experience to encourage focus and individual self correction while often restraining from giving my opinion. I often allowed 'poor' or 'incorrect' performance in the group to awaken the inner teacher. By allowing them to experience what it felt like to dance to 'bad backing' I hoped they themselves would improve their own 'backing' skill. Reflection assisted this.

> *"When I asked for comments on what it was like to clap for a dancer they responded:*
>
>> *"... you get tired ...*
>>
>> *... it's confusing when you first start dancing and you hear the claps ... and then you get used to it and it works its way out ...*
>>
>> *... it needs you to look and see ...*
>>
>> *... your hands get tired ...*
>>
>> *... .it's difficult because you have to listen to yourself and the dancer...*

... you can't just relax and enjoy it."

... I then asked if knowing the dance helped them at all in their attempts to clap. When I asked for a show of hands to indicate who felt that it had helped them, the majority agreed that it had.

I then asked what it felt like to dance to the claps. One replied that he found it 'hard'. When I asked 'why' they responded:

> *"you get distracted ...*
> *It's confusing ....*
> *It's nice ...*
> *you're tempted to clap with them while you dance."*

I found all responses identified many of the difficulties and I hoped that their experiential learning had helped them to begin to try and address their difficulties. Sharing experiences also can help others to identify problems that they might not yet have been aware of." (Appendix 2, class 3)

This clip shows this time of reflection.

(Appendix 5, Video 50 – class 3)

I believe having to continually 'swop over' groups, provided opportunity to experience 'both sides'. Being a good flamenco dancer requires courage to lead and it requires confidence in own and the 'backer's' ability. Being a good flamenco 'follower' or 'backer' requires considerable sensitive observation to enhance another's performance, with little expectation of personal acknowledgement.

This was intensified when I divided the class into smaller groups, where the majority watched, while smaller groups clapped for one another's performance.

> *"I now had three groupings: one small group dancing, one small group clapping and the rest of the class observing. This introduced the idea that those who were clapping were in fact also 'working'. They needed to concentrate as much as the dancer and were not allowed to 'sleep' or lose focus. I then told those observing to watch both clappers and dancers in order to pass comments.*

The first group of clappers did not concentrate and they made it very difficult for the others to dance to their 'splintered' rhythm. When they swopped over I made the same group that had just clapped experience what it was like to have those same people clap for them. In this way I hoped to draw their attention to their lack of focus. I remarked that they had been too busy having a "good time" and had not watched the dancers. I then pointed out that we would now see if they would be given the same treatment. I wanted to draw their attention to the fact that clapping is an unselfish activity. Clappers may not be noticed or appreciated as much as the dancer but they had a responsibility to the performance as a whole and to ensure that the dancers were successful.

I then let each group 'struggle' to clap and dance for one another in order to experience what it felt like when things were not working. Those watching were given opportunities to observe both activities and all had a chance to observe as well. I emphasised that I wanted them to 'think' while they were observing what was working and what was not working … .why some things were good and some not. In other words I wanted them to be engaged in critical analysis of what they were watching." (Appendix 2, class 3)

The teacher also observed their challenges and felt the urge to participate and experience what the children were going through,

> When the group were split into two groups - they did not realize at first that the clappers had to work just as hard at focusing as the dancers. Some battled with this. This was quite an intense workout!

> Only when I tried one of the stepping movements did I realise how difficult it was to remember and to master - this made me even more impressed with how the children have coped and done so well! (Appendix 3, week 2)

I used the group as participant observer to give personal experience of the roles of 'follower' and 'leader' in flamenco and to encourage focus, sensitivity and understanding of the requirements of both. Even the teacher felt the urge to experience being a 'participant observer'.

I further developed awareness of sensitive participant observation when I introduced 'jaleo' (vocal support from participant observers).

"I reminded the clappers that they had an added responsibility to shout and clap now. I reminded them of the need to eliminate 'background noise' (chatting). I only wanted to hear their claps and their 'jaleo'. As I expected the shouting was excessive and sounded like the school gala. I swopped groups and the second group was no better. Both were examples of unskilled uncontrolled noise.

I then explained that I had been waiting for this to happen and that I would now explain to them how to 'jaleo' correctly. They had just witnessed how not to do it, I then showed them how to do it correctly. After I had given an example of how and when to 'jaleo' for a dancer I asked them to tell me if they had noticed when I chose to shout. Responses included:

> *"every time they did another section ...*
> *... in the gaps".*

I then asked what happens when shouting happens continually. Responses included:

> *".... you get irritated ...*
> *.... you get distracted and you forget your steps ....*
> *... its confusing ...*
> *... .you can't hear the claps".*

All these responses were correct and I hoped that having experienced the problems for themselves they would try to be more sensitive in how they shouted for others. I then summed up that 'jaleo' was there to help and not to distract.

After both groups had done it I then got the whole class to dance the sequence while I shouted for them so that they could all experience the correct way. I then sat them down to reflect on how my shouting had felt while they were dancing. Responses included:

> *"it helps you ...*
> *it didn't distract you ...*
> *it made you feel better".*

I responded by saying that the main purpose of 'jaleo' was to make the dancer feel better and to encourage them. I then asked what was difficult about it. Responses included:

> *"trying to find the gaps…*
> *you have to look and listen". I then tried to ask how they would shout if I was not too sure of my steps. The response came:*
> *"… when you need help".*

I asked these questions in order to draw their attention to the need to be sensitive to the dancer's needs, to be able to observe body language accurately and to support one another's performance." (Appendix 2, class 4)

The following clip shows the above.

(Appendix 5, Video 51 – class 4)

'Jaleo' is another skill of the sensitive participant observer in flamenco, requiring awareness of the emotional experience of others. As a 'backer/follower' the accuracy of clapping together with the empathetic expression of emotion in the shouting (jaleo), demands integration of body, mind and emotion as well as sensitive awareness of the integrated experience of others. It requires a "relationally dynamic and receptive response to the flow of energy" (Whitehead, 2009a lines 592-593) of the dancer. I felt I needed to demonstrate this when I saw no signs of this from the class. Their observation and comments led to their 'jaleo' then improving.

I observed how I tried to limit my critique in order to encourage theirs and to respond with loving encouragement wherever possible and by empathising with their fears.

> *"I then asked the same people to swop over so that those who had just clapped now danced and those who had just danced now clapped. The group who had just described their performance while clapping as "excellent", soon discovered that the same description of confidence could not be applied to their performance as dancers. They began to possibly experience a bit of pressure and could not remember their steps. I immediately responded to their fears by sharing my own personal experience of 'mental blocks' in performance. I tried to reassure them that forgetting ones steps was 'normal'. I then encouraged*

them that when they had a mental block again to just carry on and that it was highly unlikely that all three of them would forget the same step at the same time and to rely on one another.

I did this because the support of a group no matter how small often helps those who are not so confident or sure of their steps. That feeling of being able to rely on the person next to one is one of the advantages of group dancing. I told them to make full use of it. I was reassured once again that as teacher I needed to 'trust the process' at times. These three boys may have overestimated their ability to do the sequence unaided after their success at clapping. I allowed them to begin again. They then made a third attempt and I let them struggle to the end even though the timing was all out of sync. They finished to the applause of their friends who rewarded their perseverance." (Appendix 2, class 4)

(Appendix 5, Video 16 – class 4)

I began to question my response in this situation. Had I been empathetic or cruel? I reflected on my action,

"The pressure to succeed immediately is often almost subconscious in many of us and can prevent us from allowing our selves and others to struggle for longer in order to build self confidence as well as a truer reflection of our ability in that moment. Those boys felt better and so did I that I had allowed them to complete the task instead of stopping them at the first sign of a mistake. Perhaps the lesson for me was that if I give others the opportunity and permission to "test their wings" before they have learnt to fly, maybe they might give me the opportunity to do the same. This pursuit of perfection can be very debilitating if used as the standard of judgement in all assessment."(Appendix 2, class 4)

I came to realise that the timing and manner of intervention is challenging for me and success and failure have a fragile relationship. I observed how I relied on my intuition to determine my responses. Here I felt tempted to rush in and help at the first signs of a mistake but I resisted the impulse. In retrospect I am so glad I did.

"I then asked them if they were surprised at how much they were able to do when they "just chilled". I asked how they might have felt if I had stopped them and told them that they weren't able to do it and to just sit down. They

responded that they would not have felt good. I asked if they felt better having tried to go further than they thought they could. The response was: "yes". I then responded that that was my intention: that they try and see how far they got. I feel that a great deal is learnt in the 'trying' and I do not like to interfere with the learning that takes place when things do not go as expected.

For this reason I often let poor attempts stumble along without stopping them at the first sign of a mistake."(Appendix 2, class 4)

Some may consider my actions un-empathetic but this was another of those moments when a judgement call was needed and I made it. I wanted to give them the opportunity to learn from trying as I believe 'process' leads to learning and increases opportunities for success. In this case the future success became that of subsequent groups.

(Appendix 5, Video 17- class 4)

"By the time the third group came to do it they were able to do the sequence very well. They finished to a round of applause. The fourth set was also "fantastic" and I praised them all enthusiastically. I then asked them to try and analyse why their performance had been so good. One responded that:

"they had learnt from the other groups mistakes".

That was exactly what I had hoped would happen. I then asked them if they always learnt from people who "get it right". There was no response. I then asked if they also learn from people who "get it wrong". The response was a resounding "yes". I had hoped to draw their attention to the value of mistakes in the learning environment. I feel that valuable learning can take place when one experiences personally the effects of mistakes or incorrect execution. I find it a great motivation to 'get it right' after experiencing 'the wrong'. I therefore value mistakes in my classes and want students to not be afraid of trying and getting it wrong. In fact if they do make mistakes I want them to view them as opportunities to learn rather than view them as embarrassing ... I try to use the constructive feedback sessions to support that aim." (Appendix 2, class 4)

At the same time the inquirer tries to shape the situation to his frame, he must hold himself open to the situations back-talk … he must adopt a kind of double vision." (Schon, 1983, p. 164) "Double vision does not require us to stop and think, but the capacity to keep alive, in the midst of action, a multiplicity of views of the situation (Schon, 1983, p. 281).

I believe my experience as a flamenco performer has helped develop my 'awareness' of a 'multiplicity of views' which was supported by opportunities to 'slow down' the action in practice. Performance simply speeds up the process. I believe my teaching has benefits from this. I felt aware of my own experience and that of others and I observed myself encouraging this in the children with my use of the group as sensitive participant observer.

4.5 Individual Authenticity in the Group

I became aware of individuals through reflection, observation, empathy and creativity.

Ms. Differently-Abled, (the young dyslexic girl) was the first individual I became aware of when she admitted during reflection time that she had let her fear of dancing go after one class. Later,

> *"I noticed that there was one particular boy who was making no or very little effort in the class and I was concerned with why. He seemed well and I could not understand why. I later asked the teacher and she told me that he was a 'problem' and described him as a 'high risk' child with the potential to go 'off the rails'. I decided to keep an eye on him and to try and include and encourage him where I could."(Appendix 2, class 4)*

I later came to name this boy Mr. Rhythm for his rhythmic ability.

In class 5, two more individuals emerged: Mr. Silence (the young man with hearing and speech difficulties) and Mr. Einstein (the intellectual). While these names may suggest 'boxing' that is not my intention. I used these names to describe my perceptions of them. When I asked them to form groups to work out their own improvisations some individuals immediately went to work alone. The teacher,

> *".... pointed out two particular boys: one who was often shunned by the other students as his speech capacity was slower than theirs and who was hard of hearing (... Mr Silence) and the other because he was very 'mature' for his age and often found his peers 'immature'. He also excelled academically, (.... Mr.*

Einstein). The one had chosen to work alone and the other had been left to work alone.

I then intentionally went over to both of them to offer them help or merely to keep them company. Whether this was in fact necessary I will never know but I instinctively did not want them to feel isolated or to intensify any feelings of isolation that they may have already been experiencing. My desire for an inclusive classroom where no one felt excluded became almost instinctive. I offered to clap while they experimented with their creation."

<div align="right">*(Appendix 2, class 5)*</div>

(Appendix 5, Video 53 – class 5)

Here I became aware of my being "receptively responsive" which required me to improvise "in making a creative response to the perceived needs of the other" (Whitehead, 2009a lines 604-605). By focusing on creativity, individuals gradually emerged from the group and I realised the importance of this. While I believe children should learn "to work together to attain a goal and that their performance is then motivated as a result of others performing the same action" (van Staden, et al., 2004, p. 130).

I also believe group work does need to be balanced with opportunities for individual expression and the 'physical' change in class formation supported this. The 'order' of circle and semi circle transformed into 'disorganised' and 'organic' as individuals and groups of various sizes began finding a space to be creative.

> By changing his/her position in the room the teacher varies the students' feeling for space; alternating frontal organisation with group and partner work encourages individual and group responsibility. These structures stimulate awareness of self and of the group in the students and avoids flat-front, teacher-centred class (Ickstadt, 2004, p. 87).

Mr. Einstein volunteered to go solo first and used his 'creation' to correct misperceptions of himself.

"I thought his work was of an exceptionally high quality. Not only was he able to combine the voice with rhythmic movement but he also used the opportunity to give a 'message' to his peers. His composition is worth quoting:

"They see me as this boring dude

They see me as this all time prude

Don't they know I'm not that bad?

They can know I'm sometimes glad"

This was followed by a wonderful improvisation session of rhythmic stamping.

I responded by describing his work as "excellent". The whole class gave enthusiastic applause."(Appendix 2, class 5)

Mr. Einstein was a student who in fact was capable of the task I had initially given. He proved to be the exception. The high standard of his work both surprised and delighted me. When Mr. Silence volunteered to go solo his performance came as a surprise.

"When the learner who was frequently shunned by the class (Mr. Silence) chose to do his routine on his own I was aware that he might expose himself unwittingly to ridicule from his peers. I was aware of a couple of 'sniggers' during his piece. He chose to do a very 'moving' performance in virtual silence. He made big bold movements with his legs and explored body movements that a contemporary dancer might use. As he finished his routine I chose to acknowledge his courage rather than critique his work as I felt that even if some had not appreciated the nature of his creation they would possibly be able to appreciate his courage.

…. I am very aware of the possible damage that can be done to an individuals self esteem in circumstances like this so I am very careful to watch for negative comments and to negate them with positive affirmation in acknowledgement of courage and effort. I reminded them of how difficult it was to perform solo especially when one was not sure of how ones creation would work. I then praised his bravery and the class responded with applause."

(Appendix 2, class 5)

In class 6 he volunteered again but this time his performance was almost 'silent'. I was aware of the class 'sniggering' again and I made a conscious move to accept and include his improvisation for what it was: his authenticity. "It is just as difficult to

describe a dance in words as it is to interpret music verbally" (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 101). While I tried to use words to describe what I had seen and felt while watching Mr. Silence, it is in fact almost impossible to do so. I feel that not even a video recording can capture the experience.

(Appendix 5, Video 54 – class 6)

I had asked the class to do a task with rhythm which he with his hearing ability was not inclined to do. He chose to dance in silence. His body became his 'voice.' I now realise the extent of his courage as he risked even further isolation by choosing to dance the way he did. Yet he took 'action' and faced his fears by dancing and moving with his unique 'voice.' The fact that he volunteered placed the decision to face those fears into his own hands. I felt tremendous humility to have been witness to such courage. Not only had he done it 'his way', he had encouraged me to embrace 'silence' into our creative space.

Dance educator Diana Jordan suggests that

> "… children, even the ablest of them, are imperfect masters of language, and communication in this medium, is for some of them very difficult. Particularly is this so for the less able and for those who have not the advantage of hearing thoughts well expressed in their daily lives. But in bodily movement … there is a means of communication and expression for all" (Jordan, 1966, p. xvi).

I was astounded by his courage to communicate in 'silence' in a world where 'sound' dominates.

Later in class 5, Mr. Rhythm came to my attention again.

> *"I decided to show them the step that I was going to teach the following lesson … It contained body percussion which I thought they might enjoy experimenting with. As I was demonstrating it to the class the teacher came over to me to draw my attention to one of the boys who had in fact been doing a similar thing in the improvisation session but who had not yet performed. It was the same boy I had noticed in previous lessons who did not seem to want to engage in the classes and the same one I had been drawn to encourage in this lesson's warm up session … I began to clap the beat for him as he continued and this made what he was doing sound even better. The whole class and I were astounded and gave*

him enthusiastic applause. Not only was his timing outstanding but his rhythms were astounding as well. I realised this was another example of 'natural' talent ... I then concluded the class by calling Mr. Rhythm to perform his improvisation again for the class while I clapped the beat for him. It sounded so wonderful that I instinctively joined him by adding my own improvised rhythms to his. We were all inspired by the mini 'jazz session' we had just experienced and it ended in applause by all for what we had shared."(Appendix 2, class 5)

(Appendix 5, Video 55 – class 5)

Here was a boy who already 'knew' and I felt compelled to provide opportunity for his talent to develop.

"... I was left feeling humbled once more by the process of creativity and how some of us already "know" before we are even "taught". The learner who did not engage fully in the warm-ups was the self same learner who left the class in awe at his natural rhythmic ability. Perhaps he already knew his rhythmic capacity but if that was the case I hoped the affirmation he received from me and his peers would confirm and strengthen what he already 'knew'." (Appendix 2, class 5)

I work on the assumption that people already know much of what they need to know, but that they are often unaware that they know what they know, and that they become aware of what they know and how to use what they know by reflecting critically on their practice and from interacting with others (Conolly, 2009)

I would add,

… and by dancing together.

As I reflected on the circumstances that led to the 'discovery' of Mr. Rhythm's talent I began to wonder what would come of it, without the opportunity to develop.

"I feel as teacher it is my obligation to be able to recognise the difference between 'natural talent' and 'developed talent' and to encourage both to develop a work ethic. The natural talent will only achieve a certain amount on its own. If there is no work ethic it will not reach its full potential. Those who do not have natural talent should also be encouraged to work at new learning as

they may be surprised at how much they achieve if they really apply themselves to sustained effort." (Appendix 2, class 5)

Friedlander differentiates between 'talent' and 'skill':

"We talk about people being talented when they can do something very well. There are attributes which some people are born with that make a skill easier to attain, but generally the potential to be 'talented' must be unearthed and skills learned … .learning is critical for both skill acquisition and for discovering or refining ones innate talent" (Friedlander, 2001, p. 64).

This 'learning', I believe is learning to 'work' irrespective of natural ability. As teacher I believe it is my responsibility to inspire this work ethic and maximum effort from all. Whitehead insists that learning to harm or working un-cooperatively is not educational and he stresses the importance of "influences in learning" being "educational" (Whitehead, 2009a line 695). I reflected,

"As teacher I see my responsibility to inspire effort and 'passion' and to encourage and support these when needed. By striving to do this I hope to raise the levels of ability for all" (Appendix 2, class 5)

I believe all can benefit form finding and developing authentic communication through the body. A strong work ethic merely refines it. I had observed individual talents and began thinking of how to develop them.