



Reflections from a Forensic D/MT Experience

a first-year dance/movement therapist shares her learning

by Deniz Oktay

I am writing this article to share my experiences as a recently ‘birthed’ Dance/Movement Therapist employed on a forensic unit.

When I first applied, I was concerned with both my safety from violent behavior and being a woman on an all male unit. I had envisioned each patient to be kept in a cell with locks. However, the unit strongly resembles any other inpatient unit except for the presence of Department of Corrections Officers (DOC) and the all male population. Patients are free to wander the hallways, sit in the dining area and watch television, or watch movies in the

recreation room. During my inquiries, I was repeatedly told that the Forensic unit was the safest because of the strong DOC presence, as well as the Nurse’s Aides who are used to dealing with the violent behavior of the patients.

When entering the unit, there are two prison gates that are operated by the control room. Often, corrections officers are loading and unloading their guns, but no guns or sticks are allowed on the unit. When I first arrived I felt the natural rhythms in my body become interrupted: stop and wait for the first gate to open; locked between the two gates, no way out; then entering the third gate to enter the unit. I entered carefully, conservatively dressed,

stiff, and fearful. My first memory of my first day was being told that my co-worker had been attacked by a patient when she said, “Good morning” to him. Due to the swift actions of an experienced nurse’s aide, she had not been touched as the patient lunged at her. He was on a one-to-one assault watch because of his history of violent behavior. He was young, schizophrenic, had stabbed his grandmother to death, and then tried to rape a woman on the subway platform. Fear pulsed through my body as I entered the unit my first day. “I can do this,” I thought. Don’t be alarmed or get sucked into the ‘drama.’

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Conference Scholarship Winner

by Elisabeth Grasberger

It was mid-August, 2005 when I saw a posting on the NYSADTA listserv announcing a scholarship to go to the ADTA National Conference. I was aware of the conference and interested in attending, but had hesitated to register due to

the financial burden. Here, on this posting, was a possible solution for my dilemma. Initially I panicked because I was studying for my final exam in Personality Psychology and had just one more day to submit

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Welcome from the Board President

Greetings. It is with great pride and pleasure that I begin a second term on the Board of the New York Chapter of the ADTA. We have a new board, comprised of several members of the previous board, as well as some new faces. With this newly reshaped group there is a renewed sense of energy and continued enthusiasm for our work serving the members of the NY chapter. I thank all those chapter members who took part in the election process.

While I personally did not attend this

year's National conference, (as I was home with my five month old daughter, watching her develop her head-tail connection as she tried to creep across the kitchen floor) I can feel the sense of energy generated as a result of Dance/Movement Therapists from across the country gathering to reaffirm that which we know, and to learn, refresh, and reconnect. I was proud to learn that others from across the county had positive things to say about the New York Chapter. I would like again to welcome chapter members to take

advantage of the multitude of activities, workshops, and events being planned by the board. I am particularly excited about some of our newer ideas: the book club, the Dance to Connect Project, and the case presentations. Please stay tuned for more about these ongoing events and consider participating in them. In addition to our workshops and educational events, I am also pleased to report that we have several dynamic Public Relations projects underway

and a great PR chair and committee. Speaking of committees, they are a great way to get more involved in the chapter and I invite all members to consider joining a committee of interest. As usual I also invite all chapter members to contact me or any of the other board members if you have suggestions or ideas about how we can better serve you.

I hope to see many of you at an upcoming chapter event or workshop.

Warmly,
*Christine
Zimbelmann*

Letter from the Editor

Hello! I am very excited to be the new newsletter editor. It with anticipation, hard work, and a few unexpected snags that I am "giving birth" to this first issue.

I recently graduated from Antioch New England Graduate School's Dance/

Movement Therapy program. Before graduate school I had a short career in Public Relations while finishing my psychology degree.

I am especially excited to be able to combine my love of graphic design and journalism with my

new career as a Dance/Movement Therapist.

In the next three years, I hope to continue the level of change Corinna Hiller brought to the newsletter throughout her past terms, while also adding a few of my own personal touches, including new design

elements.

I would also like to invite ideas, comments, artwork, poetry, articles, opinion letters, photographs, advertisements, and announcements from the membership.

Sincerely,
Cindy Davies

Dancing Delight on Pier 45

by Joan S. Ingalls

It's 4 pm on September 17, 2005 and I start pacing in my tiny apartment. My calendar entry for today reads, "Dancing in the Park." Maria Clausen, chair of the Public Relations Committee, said we would meet at 5 to organize. I am in no mood. In my nervous pacing, I decide, "No, I am not going. I will be a negative influence. I

don't have the energy for two hours of dancing." I sit down and get back to work on a writing project. I look out the window. It's windy and overcast. I tune in the weather report, no rain in the forecast. I am tormented with guilt, but finally let it go, "I am doing the right thing."

At 6 pm, my land line rings. It's Maria. Unceremoniously, she

exclaims, "You're at home! Get your butt down here!" Not an unreasonable request given that I am three blocks away.

"I'm in no mood. I'll be a negative influence," I counter.

"We'll put you in a good mood."

"That's

what I am afraid of," I reply.

"Oh, come on!"

"I'll be there."

On Pier 46 at Charles Street, just north of Pier 45, I see a huge crowd getting denser and denser as I detour toward a loud speaker. A disembodied woman's voice was talking about an artist, Smithson, and his "Floating Island" event. I tore myself away. I had other fish to fry.

At Pier 46 I see members of the PR committee: Cara Gallo, Renee Heagney, Linden Moogan and Maria spinning together in a buddy band with Linden's two daughters. That was comforting, two children to play with. It normalized what I feared would feel exhibitionistic.

I jumped in the buddy band circle and began spinning with them. It was tricky. I really had to pay attention to what everybody was doing to make it work.

What is the PR committee up to, I thought. What are they doing dragging me out to dance in the park? It didn't take nerve. No one stood gawking, making me feel like an idiot. None of my paranoid fears were realized!

The committee was very organized. We had music from a portable CD player, various props, and Marie McKenna and Brian Heagney handed out flyers to interested passersby providing information about Dance/Movement Therapy. Renee videotaped the entire event.

All kinds of people came to our circle and asked to join the dance. A young couple leaving the park stepped into the buddy band and dance with us for a while. A five year old boy, Carlito, came in the middle and organized

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Dance/Movement Therapists lift Deniz Oktay while dancing in Central Park

An Exploration of Dancefilm: A New Art form

by Debbie Stone

Dancefilm is probably not what you think. It is not fuzzy, squint-inducing videos of great live performances. It's not even professional quality productions of recorded performances.

Dancefilm is dance that is created to be seen on film and performed for film rather than stage. It is a hybrid art form, a synergy of both dance and film, but distinct from both.

In some ways dancefilm may scream sterility and emotional distancing, while inviting innovation, collaboration and a democratization of the performance art.

In dance film, as opposed to recorded dance performance, the piece is seen exactly as the choreographer intended, so the vitality and the qualities of the dance come through clearly. One Canadian writer, Cameron Bailey, put it this way, "It's the difference

between a filmed play and a movie." In this case the combination of dance and film create an art form in and of itself.

At the ADTA conference in Nashville, we saw two films for Dance Film Night. *Carmen and Geoffrey*, a documentary about dance and the lives of Carmen de Lavallade and Geoffrey Holder and *The Cost of Living*, a celebrated dancefilm by Lloyd Newson, were shown. Both are films in which dance is predominant, but only *The Cost of Living* is a true dancefilm.

In Newson's powerful work, the characters communicate viscerally and directly to the audience through dance in the same way as a live performance. The role

of photography allows for site specific work that brings the piece to

Dancefilm is dance that is created to be seen on film and performed for film rather than stage. It is a hybrid art form, a synergy of dance and film.

new levels. The choreographer is given the freedom to film in a field one minute and by the sea the next, both wonderfully plain and evocative settings.

My first taste of dancefilm was about ten years ago with Carbone 14's, *Le Dortoir*. I was blown away by the beauty of the photography and the physicality of the piece that came into my living room.

Dancefilm exists as a distinct art form.

This has been a surprisingly slow realization in the dance community, partially because dancefilm is not well recognized in this country.

Ninety-five percent of the hundreds of dancefilms are from Canada and the U.K., with some from Europe. Most of the work is done outside of the US, where the funding is. The Dance Film Association in New York City, however, supports dancefilm, as well as recordings and films about dance.

Places like DFA, BBC, and the CBC support this art form, bringing dance and its enormous power to move, touch, and heal a viewer, closer to people's lives.

Surely, the pairing of photography and dance is not new, but this incarnation is very exciting for dance in an age where people prefer much of their entertainment at home.

Dancin' with the Oldies

by Valerie Savidis

Working in a nursing home, I try and use music that my residents will remember; songs that will remind them of a better time. As much as I use music from decades ago I also feel that introducing them to modern music, with different rhythms and sounds will enliven them and facilitate new movement.

Here is a condensed version of the most popular CDs I use in my groups:

Classic Music

Dancing and Reminiscing with the Great Bands

20 Years of Solid Gold Groups

Greatest Hits, Four Tops

Greatest Hits, Louis Armstrong

Stick Another Dime In, Juke Box Favorites

The Ultimate Collection, The Temptations

Divas of Dance-Disco

The Fabulous Fifties, Discs I, II, and III

Modern

Verve Remixed

Tanto Tempo Remixes, Bebel Gilberto

Punumayo World Lounge

Rumba Party Remix

La Suite, Costes

Relaxation & Meditation with Music and Nature, Caribbean Shores

Relaxation, Amazon Odyssey

Review of *Diagnosis: Schizophrenia*

by Cindy Davies

Working on an inpatient psychiatric unit, I am always looking for books that can help me better understand what my patients are going through and also be psychoeducational.

I am creating a library for my patients that are interested in learning more about their diagnoses or reading about people with similar diagnoses. During my book search, I came across *Diagnosis:*

Schizophrenia, a powerful and informative book by Rachel Miller and Susan Mason.

Diagnosis: Schizophrenia is the collaboration of two social workers and 35 patients from a New York City treatment program for the disorder.

It offers stories from patients that chronicle their journeys from being diagnosed to the time the book was written. It provides

answers to many common questions from patient's perspectives, such as, "Do I need to be on medication for the rest of my life?" and "Who should I tell about my diagnosis? How do I deal with the stigma?"

Patients also write about their experiences of hospitalization in an effort to remind staff of the potentially scary experience of having a psychotic break, going through the psychiatric

emergency room, being medicated for reasons they are often unable to understand.

The most valuable aspect for me was understanding fears and feelings my patients have that they may not be able to communicate. Many of them have read this book, discussing their reactions with me and their peers, saying that all people who work with the population should read it!

Conference Updates

by Valerie Savidis

I am pleased to report that this year's conference in Nashville was a success for the New York Chapter. We had our annual conference meeting on Friday evening October 28, where approximately twenty men and woman attended. It was a pleasure to meet with current members as well as inter-

ested physical therapists and psychology students wanting to join the New York Chapter.

The New York Chapter also set up a table to sell our wonderful apparel. I am overjoyed to announce that we made more than \$400 in T-shirt sales! New Yorkers loved the new line that is not only available at



Conference attendees from the New York Chapter dance until the wee hours of the night in Nashville.

events, but on-line and members from Florida, California, and the Carolinas were also interested and willing to buy shirts from the NY Chapter. Thanks again ladies!

PR Brochure Makes Its Debut

The Public Relations Committee has been hard at work, busily completing new educational and promotional tools for the New York State Chapter.

These projects include a possible educational and informational video about dance/movement therapy, a performance this fall to help raise money for the chapter, and a new brochure that will be included as part of the PR Press Kit.

The brochure was

completed by Maria Clausen and Cindy Davies, with help and editorial advice from the Chapter Board and the PR Committee. Committee members are currently working on a plan for distribution and use by the general membership.

The brochure made an appearance at the Bellevue Hospital Creative Arts Therapy Week celebration, receiving praise from other CATs and people eager for information about Dance/Movement Therapy.

Christine Zimbelmann also used the brochure during a talk she gave to high school students about possible dance-related

careers.


Please look for future information about distribution in newsletters and on the website.



Front Cover



Back Cover

<p>Experience Individual Reichian Psychotherapy Free your blocks, release long held rigidities, feel your energy free up, giving you greater access to your life force and greater capacity to experience pleasure and joy. Contact Corinna Hiller, MA, MS, ADTR, NCC, LCAT (917) 664-8230</p>	<p>New York Coalition of Creative Arts Therapies (NYCCAT) 8th Annual Conference Title: Who Are We Now? Creative Arts Therapies Licensure & Beyond Date: Saturday, April 22 & Sunday, April 23, 2006 Where: New York University</p>
<p>Learn The Art of Belly Dancing with Marie Mckenna-Aguirre, MS, ADTR, NCC Mondays 6:30 - 8 pm, Location: Times Circle Rehearsal Studios, 743 8 Ave (Btw. 46 & 47 Sts)</p>	<p>Writing Group for Dance Therapists Hosted by Corinna Hiller at Union Street Dance, Brooklyn. One Thursday night monthly, 6-8 pm. For more information: CorinnaH@mindspring.com</p>
<p>Fundraiser Dance Concert and Reception The Board of the NYS ADTA has set the date, September 9, 2006 at Teatro La Tea in NYC. If you or someone you know is actively choreographing and performing dance and would like to donate performance of a piece, we invite you to submit a proposal. Please contact Joan Ingalls, Fundraising Chair, immediately to receive proposal guidelines at joan.ingalls@verizon.net Proceeds from the Concert will help fund ongoing continuing education and public relations projects, including a proposed educational Dance/Movement Therapy film.</p>	<p>National Children Mental Health Awareness Day May 28, during Children's Mental Health Week. For more information see www.ftnys.org.</p> <p>DTRs Seeking Supervision Corinna Hiller, MA, MS, ADTR, NCC, LCAT is available for individual supervision utilizing Creative Arts Therapy in NYC. Call (917) 664-8230 or e-mail CorinnaH@mindspring.com for more information.</p>
<p>The PR Committee Wants YOU! The Public Relations Committee will be starting up their Dancing In the Parks series again this spring, and would love to see you there helping spread the word about our profession!! Keep your eye on the NYS listserve for dates and locations!</p>	<p>Come Visit Cafe Press Help support your local chapter in style by visiting our own on-line store at http://www.cafepress.com/nysadta. Many products are available, including mousepads, mugs, buttons, sticker, and clothing.</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">ADTA hoodie</p>
<p>If you like the graphic design or photo retouching in this newsletter, please contact Rick Zwicker (swordcaptain@hotmail.com) or Cindy Davies for information about your freelance projects!</p>	<p>"Every day I count wasted in which there has been no dancing." - Friedrich Nietzsche</p>

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I heard many such stories when I started, like everyone was trying to test me, make sure I was disgusted with the population. “Don’t shake their hands,” I was told. “They masturbate and then come out and want to touch you.”

I am discovering that safety on the unit is complex. My primary concern is creating group safety, while unit safety encompasses many people working together with diverse backgrounds.

Nursing and DOC are on the ‘frontline’ for long periods at a time. I’ve been humbled when they put themselves at risk to protect others. However, I feel excessive force has been used at times. I absorb provocation by nurses and corrections officers ‘let off steam’ by making fun of patients.

I attempt to be a ‘team player’ while struggling to maintain a sense of dignity and build bridges of understanding between my

goals and what I perceive the rest of the team members want.

I find myself overreacting to violence on the unit, becoming emotional, running to see what is going on.

For example, a patient who appeared stabilized randomly hit the man sitting next to him while eating dinner.

Staff took him to his room, shutting the door. While an IM injection was being prepared, the patient defecated on the floor and came rushing out with his pants down. An unwiped behind confronted me as the patient sprawled on the floor. Nurse’s aides dealt with his swings and dirty body, finding a way to put him back in his room.

I called for extra ‘male help’ in a loud and frantic voice. The

head nurse said sternly to me, “Now, calm down, we don’t need

“I attempt to be a ‘team player’ while struggling to maintain a sense of dignity and build bridges of understanding between my goals and what I perceive the rest of the team members want.”

no extra help for him. He’ll take the needle just fine.” I retreated into the nurse’s station feeling embarrassed for my outburst and for showing fear.

Group safety is probably the biggest and most important area of my development as a Dance/Movement Therapist. My first year has been an experiment in creating a therapeutic environment.

The prison culture is quite different than the civilian world. Creating a safe place for the patients didn’t happen overnight, and

I still struggle with maintaining my rules, but since developing a sense of safety, there’s been less violent acting out and more tender, vulnerable expressions in groups.

Sexuality can also be a complicated safety issue. I was struck by the male/female dynamic when I walked down the hall during my initial tour.

One of the challenges I face is expressing my femininity naturally without drawing uncomfortable attention to myself. A friend, who is not a dance therapist, saw me as I went to work. She jokingly said, “I see you’ve got your armor on,” pointing to my baggy pants and jacket hanging to the middle of my legs.

I find myself avoiding use of my hips and middle section, especially

during movement sessions. I am afraid to engage these men because of their violent histories and inability to form healthy relationships. Yet, I really want to find that part of us that is the same.

A lot of my job consists of finding ways to bridge communication between disciplines, especially DOC. The Activity Therapy room has two large windows that DOC must have visual access to at all times. In one of the first dance therapy groups I conducted, I was positioned in the farthest corner from the windows, conducting part of the group on the floor.

After the group, the officer guarding the room told me he was momentarily frightened because I, “dropped out of sight.” He sternly warned me to never sit on the floor because he couldn’t monitor the group. I was relieved that he was concerned for my safety, and yet simultaneously annoyed that he was limiting the

potential for utilizing the floor. Because of this experience I am more aware of my body positioning, standing next to the door when I use the floor. It’s been a good formula.

Working with DOC has been a challenge and very rewarding. The officers see what I do the most. They observe transformations and see me working in a deep and

support. Occasionally, I do experience disdain and a sense of mockery from an officer. But, they seem to recognize the work that I do and are positively curious. They also must be my allies, because when I need protection, they are the first to give it to me.

My main goals for groups are creating a safe environment, developing healthy ego functioning, increasing healthy socialization skills, and most importantly, developing coping mechanisms.

Sadly, most of my patients have been incarcerated many times, either serving long prison terms or being repeatedly arrested for misdemeanors, let go and then arrested again.

The most striking factor of working with

these patients is the environment of depravity they live in.

Almost everything is considered contraband, including plastic forks and knives. They eat spaghetti with plastic spoons.

Ruling out malin-gering is also important. Many patients are from Rikers Island. They serve time in the ‘bing’ (solitary confinement), sometimes making alleged attempts at suicide to avoid ‘bing’ time.

I journey through intense emotional countertransference experiences each day.

Lately, I have been experiencing digestive problems at work, as if I am having a difficult time ‘stomaching’ all that I am taking in. Creating that boundary is difficult for me. In the course of my training, I have worked hard to understand my empathic nature and how it helps me, as well as where I need to be less empathic and more strict.

During two recent authentic movement

Many patients are from Rikers Island. They serve time in the ‘bing’ (solitary confinement), sometimes making alleged attempts at suicide to avoid ‘bing’ time.

profound way. To my surprise, they have been a tremendous

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during both group and individual supervision, I became aware of this feeling of “What the hell am I doing here?” Meaning, what’s the point of this group? How does what I am doing relate to what they are feeling and experiencing? How much am I not willing to mirror them and engage with them for fear of actually making a connection? It feels forbidden! I don’t want to connect with these men, these gross, disgusting infested men! I must be getting diarrhea from them.

This is my internal dialogue at times, and yet I know that the more I work with them and become comfortable with myself, the more I am connecting and engaging with them.

As I calm down and become more grounded and comfortable with the life and personalities of my patients, I have come closer to their human potential and desire for healing and transformation.

I am amazed at the transformation I have undergone.

Working with incarcerated mentally ill men feels so rich with potential. Balancing my goals and way of engaging the patients within the setting is challenging. I have to choose my battles regarding treatment of patients, injustices and confronting others while also opening to the dialogue between approaches. In many ways, I feel I have been seduced by the patients, plights, struggles, lack of voices that are respected by others. They are society’s shadow. Even if they are never released to society, they are a crucial part of it.

On the opposite spectrum a major part of my process, has been dealing with disgust I feel for many of the patients who have committed heinous crimes, often refusing responsibility for them. Many demonstrate a flagrant sense of entitlement. I have heard the statement, “I didn’t do anything wrong. It’s an injustice that I was

arrested,” many times. Although it’s a possibility, the likelihood that most of my patients are innocent is impossible.

Finally, it’s taken quite some time to see that I’ve had a curiosity about the beast that lies behind the man. Almost akin to reading the headlines of people who fill our daily papers with dramatic stories of crime, I initially felt elated to ‘get the inside scoop.’ Now, however, I’ve let go of that need and can allow something else to occur. My groups have felt a definitive shift towards the gentler, more vulnerable aspects of these

men.

I am giving myself a goal of a minimum of 10 years as a Dance Therapist with the Forensic Population. Whether those 10 years are spent at Bellevue in inpatient, I cannot predict. However, intuitively I feel I have found an area in which I want to delve deeply. Realistically, it will take me at least that long to develop the unflinching confidence to work with this population and know that I know what I’m doing...at least most of the time.



Scholarship winner Elisabeth with Chapter Board Members Renee Heagney and Valerie Savidis.

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the application for the scholarship. With a lot of luck and a compelling letter, I became the second recipient of this scholarship and was on my way to attending my first ADTA conference in Nashville, TN.

Being a second year student at Pratt Institute, it was a great support to have the chapter pay my conference fees and make it possible for me to attend. I knew it would be a unique opportunity to enrich my understanding of the field. I felt honored to be the one given this award to help further my learning experiences and feel part of a bigger

community.

The offerings for workshops were overwhelming, and they all sounded really interesting. I knew that my second year internship would be at the Tomorrow's Children's Institute, at the Hackensack University Medical Center. I decided to choose workshops that would focus on working with this population, but also others, such as how to market oneself.

From the beginning, through the very end, every minute of the conference was packed with wonderful things to do. I decided to sign up for the Introductory Support Group with Linni Deihl. It was a

great opportunity to meet people new to the conference through moving together. It was also exciting to meet people from other countries, giving international Dance/Movement Therapists the support to work in their countries. As the conference continued, I felt that I represented both New York and my native country Austria.

On Saturday evening, I went to the banquet and dance. My classmates and I decided to dress up because it was the weekend before Halloween. We had a blast. It was great to look around in the ballroom and see many familiar

faces that I got to know. I felt grateful to have learned about this profession.

Before I knew it, the conference was over. As I shared the struggles, frustrations, joys, and excitement that this field brings with it, I was proud of everyone who was there. The room was filled with community and understanding. I saw tears in many eyes, my own included. I know I will reflect back on this unique experience and I am truly grateful to the New York Chapter for supporting me in this part of my journey toward becoming a Dance/Movement therapist.

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us. He was insistent and we joyfully played the "bouncing game" with him. He ran back and forth across the circle, bouncing off the buddy band.

A couple of young girls wanted to play Limbo and a very tall youth, George, angled under the buddy band, calling for people to go

lower, crawl, and go on one hand and foot. Our group clapped a rhythm and soon George and his friend were leading us in African dance. We put on music with a drum beat and joined them, each in our own way.

Carlito's parents were thrilled to see their son playing with us. They said it was

rare to see him cooperating and having fun with others. They wanted to know where they could get more of this "whatever it was" for him. It was just what he needed more of.

It's what, in my opinion, we all need more of, the activity of building our connection to others in the

moment. When looking for an excuse to dance with friends in the fading light of the setting sun, tune in during April's National Dance Week. We'll be there looking for you. We know how to make magic in the park, the magic of Dance/Movement Therapy.



*NYS American Dance
Therapy Association*

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Support Your Newsletter

The NYS/ADTA is the official publication of the New York State Chapter of the American Dance Therapy Association. The Newsletter Committee reserves the right to edit all materials. This newsletter is mailed to all members of the chapter. Subscriptions to nonmembers is \$8 for three issues annually. For \$16 per year, nonmembers can also receive workshop flyers, conference brochures, and newsletters. Just send a check to the

P.O. Box listed above with a note requesting "Subscribe Membership." All checks must be payable to the New York State Chapter/ADTA.

advertising

There is no fee for advertising for Dance/Movement Therapists/Chapter Members. Please send your ads, scan-ready art and graphics, or text to the editor: cindylou823@yahoo.com.

newsletter deadline

The deadline for the next issue of the newsletter is **May 30, 2006**. Please send your contributions to **cindylou823@yahoo.com**.

Contributions can include theoretical or response articles, photographs, letters to the editor, announcements, creative writing, or other writing related to Dance/Movement Therapy in New York State.