

Vibrant visions: A multi-modal workshop demonstrating the healing power of art, drumming and dance

Maralyn Nash with Sibou Bangoura and Yacou Mbaye

A video featuring the workshop may be viewed at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=758OWB-UkSQ

Keywords

Therapeutic art-making, cross-cultural art therapy, collaboration, communal healing experience

I've learned that people will forget what you said; people will forget what you did but people will never forget how you made them feel.

(Maya Angelou, 1969)

Conceptualised and led by Maralyn Nash, the 'Vibrant Visions' workshop at the 2013 ANZATA Conference offered arts therapies practitioners the opportunity to enrich their practice and engage in a collaborative process encompassing the disparate modes of art-making, drumming and dance. The workshop featured a West African drumming and dance performance by musicians Sibou Bangoura from Guinea and Yacou Mbaye from Senegal (Figure 1), followed by participation in a group drumming circle and the creation of a personal healing symbol. The workshop was intended to enable participants to experience what Nash calls 'the joy of self-expression' and to release their primal creative energy, inspired by the ceremonial and celebratory *djole* bass rhythm patterns of drumming from Sierra Leone in West Africa.

Some stills from the video of the workshop are included (see Figures 1 to 10). The reader is advised to view the video in its entirety, to gain a fuller picture of the experience and effects of the workshop.

The workshop began with a presentation in which Nash examined cross-cultural applications in arts therapies practice, bringing African perspectives on healing together with Western psychological paradigms such as somatic psychology (Sharaf, 1983), energy diagnostic treatment method (Gallo, 1998), and the expressive therapies continuum (Kagin & Lusebrink, 1978). Nash then introduced

examples of the cultural Adinkra symbols of the Asante people of Ghana as a reference for participants. She also wove her own story into this workshop through stories and photographs celebrating her love of African art and culture spanning three decades of adventurous journeys, inspirational art-making, marriage and motherhood.

Sibou Bangoura and Yacou Mbaye presented a contemporary West African cultural context in which participants could learn the elements of their drumming techniques and dance movements (Figure 2). Bangoura and Mbaye adapted traditional *djole* drumming patterns, so that the participants could play them on the *djembe*, and simplified the dance steps of the traditional *djole* style. Both musicians are from a traditional lineage of West African Griot families who are ancestral custodians and teachers of these cultural music and dance traditions. Their input enabled participants to embrace the powerful, experiential and cross-cultural artistic collaboration of an Indigenous West African communal healing experience.

As the video demonstrates, the methodology of teaching music in both traditional and contemporary African culture is learned experientially by participating in a drumming circle (Figure 3), in an interactive process between master teacher and student that blends oral, aural, visual and kinaesthetic strategies to facilitate the learning of rhythm patterns (Hess, 2009, p.58).

According to Anku (2000), "Circles have an important philosophical significance in the perception of the African reality of time" (p.6). Whether performed individually or shared as a