



An Introduction to the 2013 Winter Workshop A letter and a few personal words from Jenner Roth

[The Winter Workshop is an annual event of the Spectrum continued professional development programme]

In the early autumn of 2012 the playwright and author Alan Bennett said in an interview about his latest play "People", that the function of the play was not that it offered an answer: The purpose of the play was "not knowing the answer, but trying to find it out through the process." And that, I thought, is what we are trying to do at Spectrum in our teaching, our sharing, our sessions, our lives. To find out through the process, to learn from ourselves.

Over these days, I would like to suggest that you engage with the workshop as a process and that you recognise that learning is a process.

I mention this here because sometimes we come to workshops or sessions looking for answers and for somebody to tell us how or what so we can go away knowing. The workshop is a learning process and what can happen is that you can be disturbed, irritated, excited, relieved, stimulated. You can talk and ask and reflect and question and determine. You can engage more fully with yourself and others, you can move closer and further away, you can be smarter or duller, more or less informed.

The process is the learning. It includes moments of epiphany and moments of being lost. But finally having encountered ourselves, our limitations and stretched our imaginative and analytical thinking, clarity appears, doors open and new paths become visible. The answer lies in the journey and cannot be predicted or planned. It has to be worked for.

Also in the autumn of last year, I went through a process of heart surgery and was away from my practice for the autumn term. It was a strange situation for me, a bit like attending my own funeral. What would my life be like without me? I prepared and organised my groups and clients to go on working and meeting without me and I would later have the opportunity to talk with them and hear what that was like. For years, we had worked together, and now, amazingly, I could watch where that work went, how it was received, how what I said had been learnt and used.

In the event, I was moved and excited by the autonomy and verve with which everyone continued on their path of growth and learning, making new discoveries, developing new directions.

During this time, I saw a documentary which seemed relevant to my personal experience and to our work as professionals. In the documentary there are humpback whales coming together off the shores of Hawaii to sing. Like the winter workshop, this is an annual event. The whales learn patterns

of sounds from one another and then extend and change them. The sounds carry for thousands of miles and it is not known who or what listens to these songs or even what their meaning or purpose is.

This coming together, this singing, this learning and augmenting the learning, the fact and power of the presence of the whales, the sending their singing so far into the world with no clear knowledge of where it goes or how it is received, made me think about what and how we communicate with our voices, our presence, our actions, why we do our work, how we learn, and then change and evolve our learning, how we make our voices travel, how we each make our own repertoire from what we have learnt from others and how what we do and sing goes into the world, and we do not know how far or where, or what the reception of it may be.

And finally, to remember that not knowing the answer doesn't invalidate the experience and nor should it stop us from asking the questions.

Welcome to the questions. Welcome to the process. Welcome to the experience of yourself.

Jenner Roth
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