

Published October 14th, 2009

InterPlay: Finding Your Inner Voice through Movement and Story Telling

By Sophie Braccini



Marlys (right) demonstrate "hand movement" with artist Karen Wyse (center) and colleague Angela Chang (left) Photo Sohie Braccini

"but InterPlay is more than that."

The next period in the session is dedicated to getting a partner and telling that person about something they saw through their window. After a change of partner, other little items that have been noticed in one's recent past are exchanged.

Then it's time for the hand-dance. As music is playing, a group of participants move one hand together, they touch, push and pull in an incremental way. "The purpose is to get the feeling of being in touch with another person, in a non-threatening way," says Tobias, "I love the playfulness of it, the closeness developed with another person, the music."

During the shape and stillness exercise, the music plays and participants walk to its melody, then they are asked to stop and make a shape. "As practice develops people make more and more shapes and finally just do it on their own," explains Tobias.

"Nobody is ever judged here," says Tobias, "InterPlay has allowed me to be the dancer that was always within, without being choreographed."

The last activity is called toning. Participants produce sounds (tones), that match or not; they can choose to just listen, and there is no limitation to the creativity of each participant.

"The whole experience is so energizing and freeing," said Ann Leitch, who became a friend of Tobias through InterPlay. "InterPlay opens people up to telling their stories as well, whether real or invented," adds Tobias. In the more advanced classes there is an activity called "Big Body Story," where people tell their tales with their voice and all their body.

In Oakland Tobias has participated in groups for all ages, including a children/family group where her own grand-children experienced the method. She says she hopes to attract 50+ active adults to her classes at the Lafayette Community Center.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA

Marlys Tobias says she is a happy woman; she has freed in the second part of her life the inner dancer that was always there but had never been able to flourish. All thanks to InterPlay, a gentle movement, dance, singing and story telling practice that she wants to bring to her neighbors in Lamorinda.

For the Lafayette resident it all started 15 years ago with Cynthia Winton-Henry and Phil Porter, the founders of InterPlay in Oakland, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. "Both Winton-Henry and Porter have been interested in how individuals and communities can regain a sense of integration and connectedness," said Tobias, "for me it has also been an extraordinary source of creativity and development."

According to its founders, InterPlay is an active and creative way to unlock the wisdom of the body by allowing individuals to regain access to their stories, movement and voice. It's a system of forms, a set of tools and ideas to help individuals and communities thrive. And anybody willing to give it a try can do it. All that is needed is a little willingness.

A first session starts with warm ups and stretching. There is no need to perform here, each participant allows his or her body to guide the way. One can stretch standing, sitting or lying down. Then the music starts and participants can walk, run, move their bodies and stop.

"That part can be construed as a walking meditation," says Tobias,