

Kathryn Santospirito
Unit 2, 367 Anzac Highway
Plympton SA 5038

Australia Council for the Arts
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*"For us the only hope is for the arts to become part of the
everyday lives of a majority and not a minority of the people"*
Ros Bower (1923-1980)

The life work of Aviva Sheb'a has been exactly about this. She has brought the Arts into the lives of many people and particularly Aviva has brought the gifts of music, dance and art work into the lives of those least able or least likely to access these forms for themselves.

She has brought the Arts into the lives of intellectually and physically disabled children and adults; she took the Arts into the Vietnam war zone; she has shared the Arts with underprivileged and delinquent youth and enabled deaf and blind children to know and enjoy the Arts. These are just a few examples of her work.

Aviva Sheb'a and her Art forms have made a huge difference to the everyday lives of a multitude of people from all over the world.

As an eight year old, Aviva took up dance as a last resort therapy for asthma and by the age of 12 she knew dance would be her career. On her fourteenth birthday, in 1966, Aviva gave her first dance lesson to a nine year old girl who suffered with multiple sclerosis. She had asked specifically for Aviva to teach her and that was when Aviva made the decision to devote her energy to working with dance in a healing way.

She became one of the pioneers of dance and voice therapy in Australia and was a founding member of the *Dance Therapy Association of Australia*. The results of her arts as therapy work are astounding. While working at the Royal Victorian Institute for the blind, in 1975, she assisted a 16 year old girl who was totally blind from birth and had only walked with the aid of a stick, guide dog or another person. With Aviva's guidance and encouragement this girl was leaping, dancing and zig zagging around the room unaided.

In Amsterdam, one of Aviva's students, a 19 year old woman, was restricted by severe urinary incontinence. This student also suffered scoliosis. Aviva worked with the woman using stretching, voice and dance techniques. The student became a professional singer, had total control of her bladder and her spine corrected itself.

While working in Ballarat with intellectually disabled adults, Aviva achieved amazing results when a middle aged man who had never spoken in his life began speaking and singing after only six group sessions.

Aviva has opened up people's worlds by assisting them to walk, jump, dance, sing, speak when previously these activities were not possible. She has worked with the elderly, the disabled, (intellectually and physically, children and adults), with asthmatics through the Asthma Foundation, with underprivileged youth in Israel.

Aviva received a grant from the Amsterdam Council (1977) to develop her voice and dance work (Vocal Dance) and lived and worked there for 9 years as a Community Artist. She was an actor, director and choreographer for the *In-Players* which was an English speaking community theatre group in Amsterdam. Aviva has also done Community Arts work in Germany. (1982) She has learned eight languages other than English to be able to do her work effectively with the particular communities with which she has been involved.

Aviva has directed and codirected community theatre groups in Melbourne and Dunolly and worked with the *Melbourne Mime and Mumbles Group* (theatre group for hearing-impaired youth). (1975) She has presented workshops for numerous community groups including Senior Citizens, Women's Health, Mental Health, Schools, underprivileged and delinquent youth, survivors of sexual assault, and child sexual abuse. She works with sufferers of post-traumatic stress disorder and people with multiple personalities.

Aviva and has conducted workshops for *Ausdance* (Australian Dance Council) (1996) and various community dance groups in Adelaide. She was the Dance Director for the 1997 inaugural *Carnival of Adelaide*, a major Community Arts event.

Aviva volunteers her talents at *Norwood Primary School* where she shares storytelling, voice and movement with the students.

Aviva is a Vietnam Veteran Entertainer and is currently working toward getting other Vietnam Veteran Entertainers getting together, supporting each other and entertaining again. She is in the final throes of writing a book on her experiences in Vietnam and the effects on her then and since.

Aviva is on the Committee of the *Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, South Australian Branch Inc.* to assist in raising morale of Veterans through organising entertainment. She is also the Branch Librarian and is a Counsellor on the *Vetnet Crisis Phone Line* which assists Veterans and their families when they are in crisis. Aviva is an active member of *The Veterans' Forum*.

Aviva writes regular articles for *Pandora Journal* which is a non profit community journal produced in Melbourne. It began as the newsletter for the *Feminist Therapy Network*.

All this work and more is done by Aviva despite the fact that she suffers from asthma and post-traumatic stress disorder and much of her work is unpaid. Aviva is also responsibly raising two children, as a single parent.

Aviva conducts one to one sessions on an ongoing basis. She has students from all walks of life from professional dancers to athletes, housewives, healers as well as those suffering some kind of illness or ailment.

I have studied with Aviva in both the small group and one to one situation. I have achieved much in a relatively small amount of time. I have gained much greater awareness of my body, how it works most effectively and how to safely extend its capabilities. I have found my voice and the courage to use it - to sing, to speak up, to make sounds to express me. For me this is like finding or remembering more pieces of the whole me. These are all very personal achievements and perhaps to another may seem small but the reflection these newly discovered abilities has on all other areas of my life is stunning and exciting to me. It liberates and empowers me.

It is my belief that Arts are a necessary part of our lives as whole healthy human beings. Aviva Sheb'a is giving so many people the opportunity to know and benefit from the Arts as part of their everyday lives. She gives her students inspiration, respect and encouragement and most of all she believes in them.

In nominating Aviva for the Ros Bower Memorial Award I am acknowledging and honouring the very significant and unique contribution she makes to Community Arts. Often people with strong commitment, involvement and dedication to a particular cause or passion are not able or willing to recognise their tremendous worth and achievements. It is important to me and I believe important to Community Arts that Aviva be recognised, the value of her talents be acknowledged and she be encouraged to continue forward to discover her full potential.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathryn Santospirito". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some overlapping letters.

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