

REMEMBERING ANDRÉ BERNARD

1924–2003



André Bernard in Bern, Switzerland.

photo © Ursula Stricker

In the 1920s an outstanding and unorthodox approach to freeing the human body's muscular stresses to achieve a balanced alignment and ease of motion was developed by Mabel Elsworth Todd. Today this approach remains unique in its reliance on the creative mind to reeducate neuromuscular patterns of body balance and motion. The process, both scientific and aesthetic, engages the student's mind through tactile, visual, and auditory senses, turning concept into image and image into new muscle patterns.

—André Bernard, from "Ideokinesis & Creative Body Alignment," *CQ* 22:2, Summer/Fall 1997



All photos are from the book *Ideokinese: Ein kreativer Weg zu Bewegung und Körperhaltung* (Ideokinesis: A creative way to movement and body alignment) by André Bernard, Ursula Stricker, and Wolfgang Steinmüller. They were taken between 1992 and 2000.

ANDRÉ BERNARD, a much beloved and respected teacher of Ideokinesis and creative body alignment, was one of the foremost teachers of the work of Mabel Elsworth Todd. Following an educational background in chemistry and mathematics and a professional career in acting, dancing, and radio broadcasting, André studied for ten years with Barbara Clark, one of Todd's most gifted students. He taught as a member of the New York University faculty since 1966 and gave annual summer intensives on the West Coast and in Europe.

André died on May 21, 2003, in his home in NYC. His friend and colleague Kayte Ringer organized a memorial at St. Mark's Church in downtown NYC on June 26, and another tribute was held on June 28, in Bern, Switzerland, at the Etage studio, home of André's summer workshops in Europe between 1992 and 2000. A memorial was also held in Berkeley, California, on July 9.

André's summer workshops at Etage are documented in the new book, *Ideokinese: Ein kreativer Weg zu Bewegung und Körperhaltung* (Ideokinesis: A creative way to movement and body alignment), written by André Bernard, Ursula Stricker, and Wolfgang Steinmüller, released early in 2003, in German. The English version is in process. André also left extensive notes, which will likely be housed at the Performing Arts Library at Lincoln Center in NYC.

Our thanks to Jaime Ortega, Loraine Corfield, and Ursula Stricker for gathering many of the tributes printed below. *CQ* joins them in celebrating André's enormous contribution to the field—and the world—as an outstanding teacher and an inspiring human being. [Eds]

IT'S TRULY A HUGE LOSS TO THE

Universe when a teacher dies—especially one as inspiring and sensitive as André was. I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to experience him as a teacher. I can still feel his hand on my ribs, saying, “Soften here.” I sensed him sensing me, I sensed him listening...and he heard me. There was that moment of communication that I feel is possible only through touch.

“A gifted teacher can teach a child in two weeks what the parents can teach in a lifetime.” [Chinese proverb]

Alice Brydges

San Francisco, CA

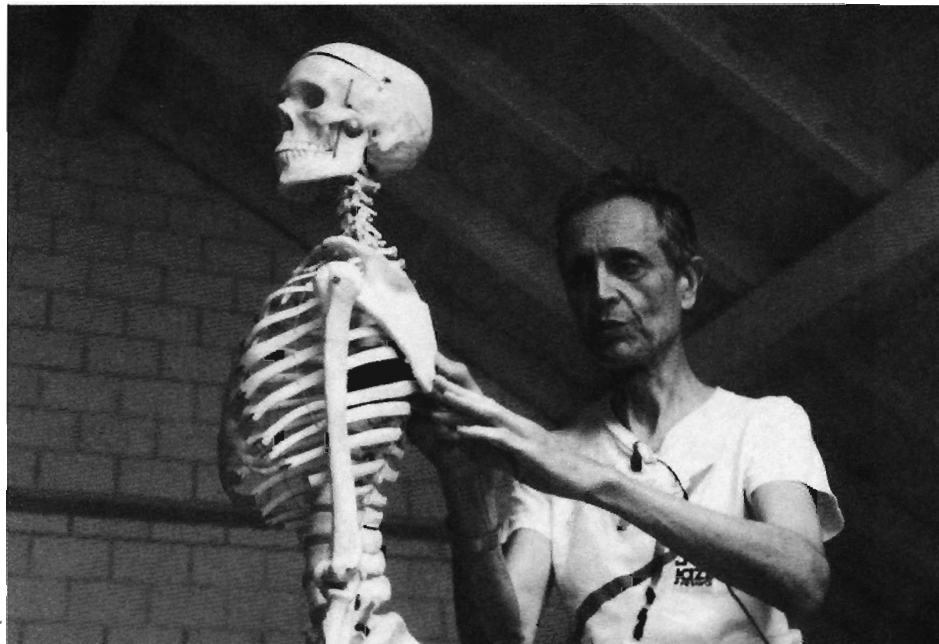
ANDRÉ QUIETLY AND DEEPLY KNEW

a lot—about engineering and design, eloquence, compassion, artfulness, and how best to relate this in context of the human body.

He knew about the natural flow of language pouring through the airwaves and into the synapses. He knew how to project his voice out huge or in intimately and so refined. He knew about support in the bones, yet deepening into velvety joint folds. He knew about the expansive nature of the heart and of awareness; about how to best use an image in the moment and demonstrate it; about the nurturing quality and pure energy inherent in sound and food; about detachment (*aaahhhh*, the letting go) and egolessness; about real spiritual discipline and embodiment.

To me, André, my cherished and beloved friend, was a mentor verging on sainthood. And he was a cohort looking for meaning in the form of the flesh and the word. He exposed me to the best of New York City's music and dance world. He took me out where he wanted to go for fun, and he skillfully led me into the depths of my own being, where I could

photo © Ursula Stricker



... We image an object or substance separating the shoulder blades and the ribs.
André Bernard teaching at Etage studio, Bern, Switzerland.

perceive my own unique rhythm and dance. He did all this with his resonance, grace, glee, and kind touch.

I loved him. We loved each other. We held each other as family. He was my son's godfather and my closest ally in the work. André penetrated our cores carefully. May he live on in our neuromuscular pathways. May we all probe always further into the truth—sensing, feeling, and seeing André. Imagine him well.

In closing, an image from André:

Allow yourself to be a well-watered garden...absorbing the golden warmth of the sun above with the mineral richness of the soil, the earthiness from below...merging in the blossoming garden of your cells, so alive and abuzz with life activity. Be that garden.

Imagine that your most favorite person is watering you...pouring the perfect temperature of water over you. You soak it up, nourished, replenished.

Right now, let that person be... André.

Kayte Ringer

NYC, June 26, 2003

ANDRÉ GAVE US A LUXURIOUS AMOUNT

of time to explore his visualization practices, nurturing an atmosphere of quiet, rapt attention in his classes. Yes, he was a gentle and kind man whose passion for his work was evident in

every word of his teaching, as well as in the delight with which his eyes would dance as he unveiled yet another image toward finding greater ease and balance in life. He surely exemplified his own memory of Isadora Duncan's brother, Raymond, who told him: “It is necessary to plunge into life, unafraid.”

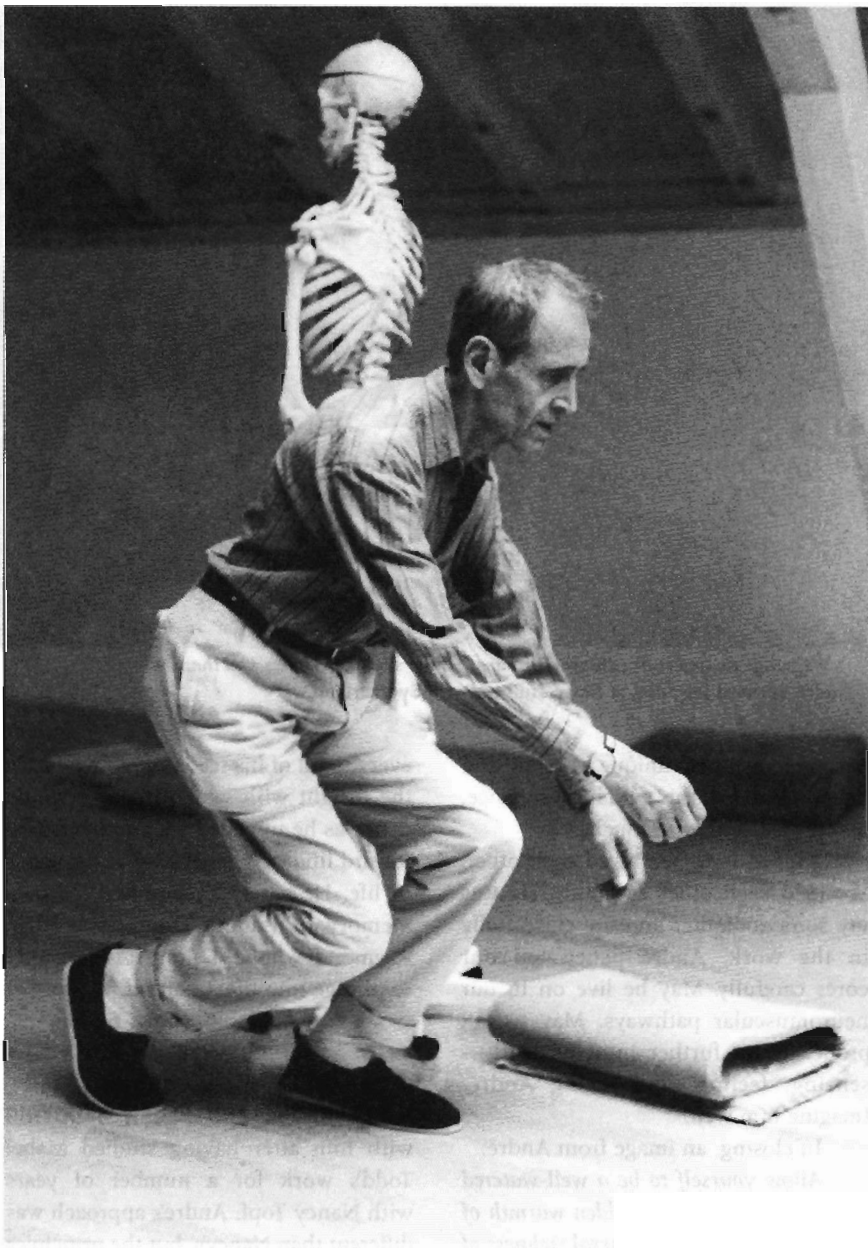
Barbara Forbes

NYC

I MET ANDRÉ AND BEGAN STUDYING

with him after having studied Mabel Todd's work for a number of years with Nancy Topf. André's approach was different than Nancy's, but the principles were the same, and I had no difficulty moving between the two different approaches. Nancy included a creative, improvisational dance structure as well as a very precise anatomical study, whereas André's classes were simpler in structure: anatomy and images, constructive rest, and a little “tactile aid” to reinforce the images...very little movement. And yet, the effect was incredible.

Within his simplicity, André reinforced the power of the images to effect the neuromuscular system. I could almost say, André's classes were disturbing—because he showed that ATTENTION was the key to coming into a more centered alignment. And that these practices he so generously shared week after week with us could



From creeping to standing to walking.
André Bernard teaching at Etage studio,
Bern, Switzerland.

affect the entire Being of a person. This was disturbing because it was so simple. And he was constantly the example of this—his gentle hands, his way of sitting and standing, his honesty, his smile, his bouncy walk, his kindness, and his continual attention, moment to moment.

Loraine Corfield
Piermont, NY

I FIRST MET ANDRÉ WHEN I WAS A dance student at N.Y.U. School of the Arts. I came from a very academic background and had studied anatomy previously. André would discuss some part of the body and then we would do *constructive rest*. At first my academic background made it difficult for me to

grasp that André was teaching us to reorganize the inner configuration of our bodies through imagery.

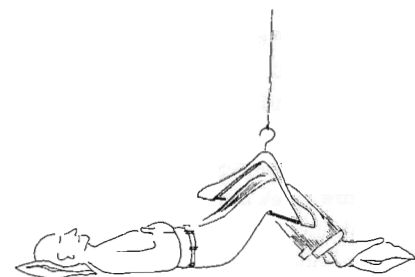
One day I had a breakthrough experience: I felt my back release like it never had before, using the image of the legs as pants draping over an imaginary clothes hanger. After this, I started becoming more involved with his classes and repeated his workshop series again and again. André let me take his classes at N.Y.U. even after I had finished school. I repeated his complete class series many times in a row and discovered that even though I knew the topic of the class, sometimes word by word, my experience became deeper and deeper and was ever fresh. This was

possible because André was teaching his thoughtfully structured classes from a deep level of embodiment.

In the mid-1980s, I organized some courses for André in Europe, mostly in Zürich, Switzerland, and the Swiss Alps. During this period, I wrote a book based on his work and some of my own ideas that were starting to develop; I created a lot of drawings for this book to explain the anatomy and Ideokinesis through imagery.

I was always impressed with the way André could convey imagery through touch and the clarity of his voice. It was as if the imagery flowed out of his fingers and vibrated in his vocal cords. To this day I can feel his touch as if it were happening in the very moment. I attended one of the last classes he taught in New York City. We worked on the line of movement between the pubic symphysis and the 12th thoracic vertebra. He was showing us how to know when you really embody this line. He was developing his work until the very last moment.

Eric Franklin
Zürich, Switzerland



Constructive rest position.

ANDRÉ BERNARD AND THE BODY OF LANGUAGE

I danced at the memorial service for André Bernard last week at St. Mark's Church in the Bowery in New York City. I was at the end of a program of stories and reminiscences by family and colleagues of André from his life in the radio and dance worlds. How words capture spirit always amazes me.

The body of language was something I was looking for when I first went to study with André in 1979. I studied ballet as a young girl and stopped after a couple of years and focused more on singing, my real passion. I entered dance again as a teenager, having disavowed singing for rebellious and restless reasons. The silence I found inside dance intrigued me. I was interested in hearing what was underneath the movement. Yet, the many techniques I explored always left me with a feeling I was wearing a dance that didn't quite fit. I was just about to return to the world of words and study philosophy when a modern dance teacher I had at the New School for Social Research, Julie Sandler, introduced me to Ideokinesis. I resonated with the work and the fact that we talked about the body, learning about anatomical design, at the same time as we engaged the imagination through the simplicity of *constructive rest position*. Julie recognized my hunger and suggested I go directly to a power source to learn more. That source was André.

I studied with André for a number of years. In the beginning, I wasn't dancing, or dancing in the ways I had defined dance before. So much was moving in me with the resonance of André's mellifluous voice touching my body in stillness. The basic image we

worked with—*imagine you are a suit of clothing filled with sand and watch that sand pour out of the opening seams*—was an antidote to the dances I felt I had been instructed to wear for years. The color and tone of the simple and subtle images and the interweaving of mechanics and emotionality both rested me and stimulated me. André created a place to become imbued with vitality, ease, curiosity, heart, mind, and spirit. Perhaps that all adds up to soul.

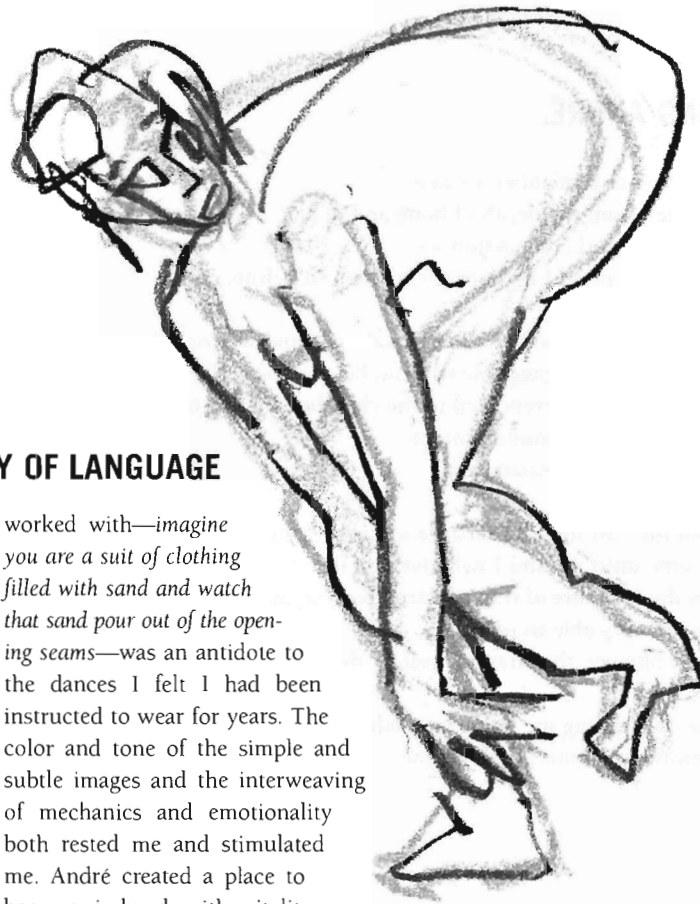
I was content with this content for a while, but I became interested in how one might dance and move in space from this richness. How does one experiment with invention, and how does one make an art of science in the way that André had? I wanted to dance again. And luckily, at this time (in the early 1980s) there were kindred folks asking similar questions. André opened a window for me to see into the body and then a door that I could step out through to find the dancing to accompany my view. This dancing was improvisation, which I continue to do and love in many of the same ways and in so many new ways.

St. Mark's Church is an amazingly resonant space. Things that get expressed there remain and resound. When I got up to dance on the afternoon of André's memorial after such beautifully moving words, a tai chi demonstration, and a lovely song, I only had to move in what was lingering in the memory that space holds. In the absence of such a presence. I didn't have to make my studies with André visible; they showed themselves

in an effortless fluidity that filled me and moved me large, winging me into smaller and smaller phrases until I eventually was on the floor in constructive rest position feeling the tremendous beating of my own heart. It was surprising to me how hard my heart was beating. I lay there on the floor and listened to it as it gradually slowed down.

My dance was a culmination of time, an offering, an appreciation for André. André led me to dance that afternoon much like he led me to the way of dancing I had been sensing in a deep place but hadn't been able to find before studying with him. He steered me in the right direction then, and I imagine he will continue to do that for the rest of my life. All I have to do is listen to the resonance his voice has indelibly left on my soul.

K. J. Holmes
Brooklyn, NY
July 5, 2003



Bewegter Moment (Moving Moment), 1996, Ursula Stricker.

REMEMBERING ANDRÉ

Remembering André is to remember a voice.
A voice that emanates from the depth of bone and blood.
His was a lingua of love and compassion ~~~
reflecting a pace of perception I had never experienced before.

To be in the blanket of his speech was to be made safe and welcomed.
Life became utterly simple and graspable while in his presence. The complexities and turbulent storms within me, surrendered to the clear bell tone of his singular word;
Cells began to organize on a common intent,
muscles relaxed, mindfulness expanded.

André taught from the vast interior expanse of his presence.
He embodied, "Come unto me and I will give you rest."
Indeed he gave us the structure of rest, constructive rest, and led us into the interior world that others are only able to point to.
André was the Way Shower, the Grand Guide to the life within the body.

Thank you André, for leading me home, and educating me to the structure that houses the mysterium organum of the Divine.

Kate Jones
San Francisco
July 12, 2003

THE TEACHER AS TRANSMITTER

Writing about André Bernard, I am confronted with a deep question: What kind of work was he doing? What role does his work play in the dance world, in physical education, and therapy, and how is it related to other kinds of movement activities?

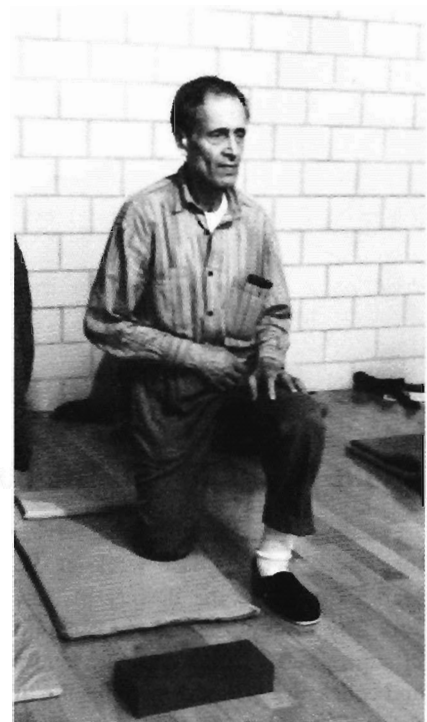
Putting the question this way brings me closer to its essence: a humanistic movement education. Which immediately leads to the most important issue: the teacher as transmitter.

So I decided to write not so much about the system as about the human being who creates a situation in which the student can experience a new sensation, bringing him closer to reality and enlarging his world—both the actuality around him and his inner world, the world of fantasy—which makes him change his movement patterns in coordination with the changes occurring through his life. Not the system but the process-provider.

I want to stress the difference between the system and the teacher. We appreciate systems according to objective criteria. A teacher, however, is a particular, unique human being with certain physical, psychological, temperamental, and biographical features. Not only his conscious world but his unconscious world too is part of this personality and teaching. This means that even the best teacher cannot provide the learning situation for everyone. He can talk to, teach, and influence only those individuals who are tuned more or less to the same wavelength as he is.

For me, André was first and last a teacher in the deep sense of providing a learning situation, and he did so with every facet of his personality—a wonderful example to follow.

What kind of situations did he create?



He offered images that can help us form pictures of our own moving body, assuming that by applying the images to our physical vehicle we will be more in tune with ourselves and with the environment.

Depending on our level of awareness—conscious or unconscious—we have different images of ourselves. Sometimes we are changing in our life and not changing our body images, and sometimes we are changing our images but not connecting this to our life and body.

The reason why most of our body images are unconscious is that we acquired them at an early age and through a variety of sources. It's similar to learning our mother tongue: we simply acquire it, and only much later are we able to learn it consciously.

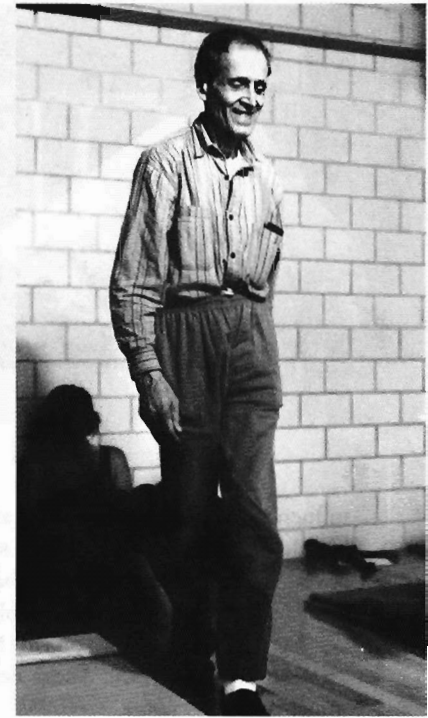
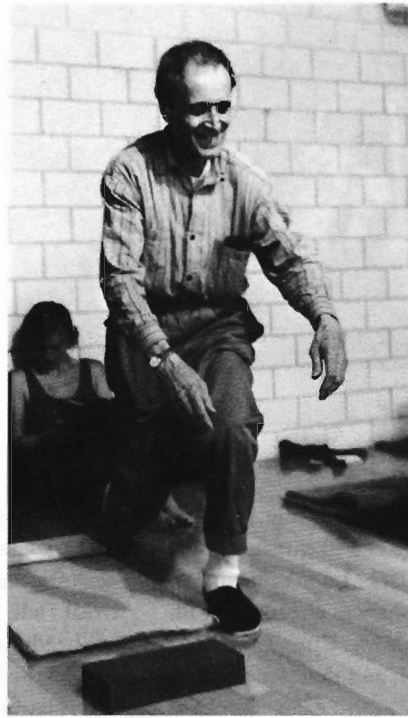
This means that we gain a lot of our movement repertoire not always in the most optimal way for the full development of our faculties and functions. This is where the process of learning comes in, for only through learning can we correct our movement. And learning can only be done by adults who are willing to take responsibility for their lives.

There are many "systems" that incorporate images as part of the learning process, and movement culture has been doing so for more than 100 years. Isadora Duncan, F. M. Alexander, Elsa Gindler, Rudolf Laban, Moshe Feldenkrais, Gerda Alexander, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, and many others all included work with images in their methods. Typical of André's teaching was that it was mainly done through images. These originated with Mabel Todd and were transmitted to him by Barbara Clark.

My first conscious encounter with body images as a tool in

As you come up in one movement, you are going to lean your weight on top of the extended leg...then bring one leg under and forward.

André Bernard teaching at Etage studio, Bern, Switzerland.



photos © Ursula Stricker

teaching movement was during my studies with Lotte Kristeler at the Kibbutzim Teacher Training College in Israel. Lotte was a disciple of Elsa Gindler, one of the pioneers of movement education, and I was totally caught by the simplicity of the tasks she asked us to do. Skeletal images were used in a very immediate way, always connecting the body sensation to the shape of the bones involved. One of the first was imagining the sitting bones while sitting, and the magic is still working to this day.

Later, I went to Moshe Feldenkrais. His way was very different, teaching movement processes step by step, giving clear instructions about weight, effort, and body part. One of the first images I remember was the “pelvic clock”: lying on your back on the floor, imagining the pelvis resting on the face of a clock, and moving the edge of it carefully from one hour to the next.

Noa Eshkol’s input was very much more than putting in this or that image. Her great contribution was the invention of a remarkable system of movement notation (Eshkol-Wachmann Movement Notation—EWMN). Its main idea is that every limb moves in a circular path. Applying this idea means having an image of each gesture as a complex of circular movements in which each limb moves in its own orbit, and together they create the gesture. It was, and still is, a wonderful challenge for the moving self.

At this time, I began to suffer from lower-back pain and went from one therapist to another, a process that eventually gave me the key to my development as a mature mover.

One of my strongest experiences was with the Alexander Technique: a set of vectors in space, suggested by very short sentences and accompanied by the gentle touch of the teacher.

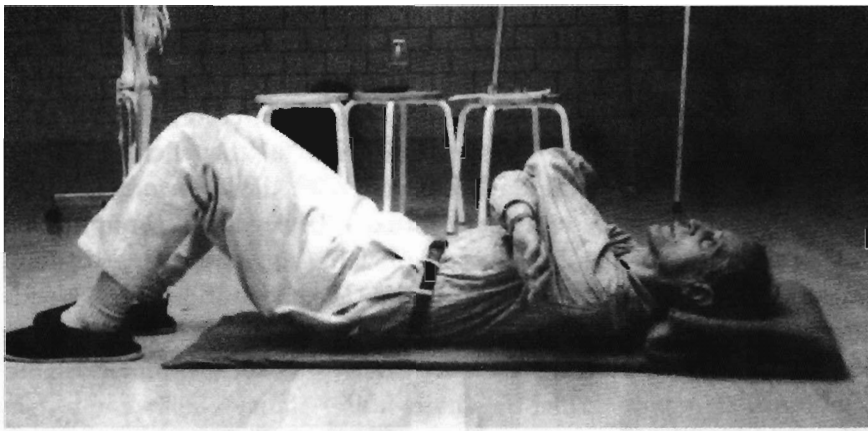
It is a wonderful example of acquiring movement change through images. I pay my deep respects to the lesson I received from Patrick McDonald who, when asked by my teacher Shmuel Nelken what he thought about my back, answered, “Oh, I know quite well. Give him twenty years.” It was one of the happiest days of my life: I was given a perspective, which I still have.

I first heard about Mabel Todd and Barbara Clark in 1974 from Laura Huelster, a wonderful lady who was dean of the physical education faculty at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She told me that the tradition of Mabel Todd was still being carried on there and that Barbara Clark lived nearby.

Margaret Erlanger, the head of the dance department at the same university, introduced me to one of her students, Pam Matt, who was very involved with Ideokinesis. Margaret also invited me to visit the dance summer school, and one morning I went with her to a big hall where we watched Chester Wolinsky’s dance class from a small balcony.

The first part of the class was on the floor. It was quite a crowd, with about thirty people attending. After an hour, Chester started a long phrase on the diagonal, building it up gradually. The brave ones picked it up and ran with it enthusiastically, followed by a long line of the less brave dancers. At the very end of the line, a small girl in wide white pants was doing the phrase with lightness, quietness, and inner grace. I was astonished and followed her movements for the rest of the class.

When I asked Margaret who she was, Margaret said, “Of course, it’s Marjorie. She’s also one of Barbara Clark’s students.” That was the first time I saw clear evidence and the direct



In the constructive rest position, the legs are folded so that the angle in the knee joints is about 90 degrees. Imagine that the legs are pants draped over a hanger in their creases. The hanger is hanging from above. If you think this image clearly and intensively, the back can easily release and settle to the ground.

André Bernard teaching at Etage studio, Bern, Switzerland.

influence of Clark's teaching. Later, Pam gave me my first booklet by Barbara Clark with its strange egg-like image on the cover. Why didn't I ask to see Barbara Clark? I don't remember. Perhaps I did, but it wasn't possible as she was already very ill.

Since I was going on to New York City, Pam Matt arranged for me to meet André Bernard, and that was the first time I heard his name.

I arrived on time at the entrance of N.Y.U., and on the left a thin man was sitting very upright yet lightly, without effort. His legs were parallel, his toes pointing in a little and his forearms resting on his thighs—truly resting. As I write I can feel again how an image works, because as I hold this picture of him in my mind, my whole body is elongating, tilting slightly forward, and the base of my head is becoming free. André addressed me with a deep, soft voice. Should I say it was the most beautiful voice I ever heard? It was without any trace of artificiality or self-consciousness. I can't recall what we talked about now. I guess I asked him a few questions about himself. I can vaguely remember showing him some books on EWMN. Yes, I gave them to him as a present.

From then on, I met André every time I came to New York. In 1983, when I was performing there and giving a workshop at N.Y.U., André attended my classes. It is hard to describe how such an act affected me. I had been doing my own thing for many years in a very isolated environment, and just his coming along gave me a touch of self-respect. It was like some of the things in life that improve you by magic. Like standing in front of someone you adore—there's no fear, and there's a huge light supporting you. (It happened to me again when Kazuo Ono came to my studio and watched me dancing.) Encounters with such enlightened people change one's body image.

Each of these meetings was a support. Like sitting opposite Moshe Feldenkrais while eating together, which always influenced the way I sat—made it lighter and easier. Or when talking to someone who speaks your mother tongue, you find yourself talking much better.

I found other such links a few years later when I came to Dartington College in England to take part in the dance festival there and was exposed to some more people who carried these hovering images. First, Mary Fulkerson: seeing Mary dancing with Richard Allston to a short Scottish tune. I could see that she knew something very deep about

movement and heard later that she had studied for years with Barbara Clark.

Another day, I met Steve Paxton in the entrance to the Great Hall, and he showed me some waves he was doing with his head and neck. Again I felt the connections with what I had learned years before from Lotte Kristeler and later with such clarity from Moshe Feldenkrais. But what was so striking was the way Steve's way of moving in so many ways resembled Noa Eshkol's—this quality the bones and joints have of moving as if they were birds. The invisible muscles and ligaments are doing the work in such a subtle way that you imagine they are being moved by someone else: a perfect marionette, an embodiment of Kleist's "On the Marionette Theatre"—and again it is the image that carries them; they are serving it.

I have gone so far into my past because of the nature of these encounters: they create images. Images are a deep activity of the human soul. Images turn daily life into poetry, give us meaning, and carry us on and on.

While writing, an old idea about what binds all these people together suddenly came to my mind. My strong impression of Lotte Kristeler was that everything she was saying came from her own immediate experience. She embodied a quality of being by following the image, which we were also able to follow because of her authenticity.

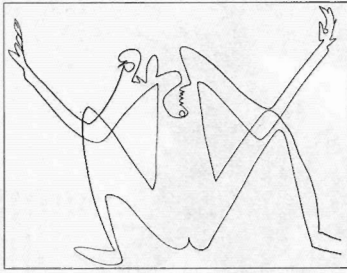
The teacher as transmitter listens to himself first and last, because there is an extensive secret to unravel. His body, like everyone else's, goes through a lot of changes, and he has to review these time and time again. He also has to get hold of the image, which can confound description. He verbalizes the process of creating the image, checking it against his own body at this particular moment in his personal history, and when this is done, the listener tries to follow the same process.

André did not simply repeat recipes; he lived them and introduced new faces of the image to himself and to us, showing us the meaning of being. He consciously and continuously created body images. André was a human being, a human being-image. He was doing chemical magic. He was an alchemist. We will keep up the magical work, with André's images and with new ones, sure we will.

Bless you, André.

Amos Hetz

Jerusalem, Israel



The following writings are from the book, *Ideokinese: Ein kreativer Weg zu Bewegung und Körperhaltung (Ideokinesis: A creative way to movement and body alignment)* by André Bernard, Ursula Stricker, and Wolfgang Steinmüller. The book was published in German by Verlag Hans Huber, Bern, Switzerland, in March 2003, and was in the process of being translated into English at the time of André's death. The translation continues, with the help of André's longtime student and colleague Nancy Lyons, in hopes of being published—even more so now as a tribute to André Bernard and his work.

Ursula Stricker, Wolfgang Steinmüller



photo © Ursula Stricker

So before we start to give tactile aid, you start, with your imagination, the river flowing up the front of the spine and down the back.

André Bernard teaching at Etage studio, Bern, Switzerland.

FOREWORD

In 1987, shortly after the end of my medical studies and during my training as a Feldenkrais practitioner, I discovered an anatomy book of a very special sort. The book was *The Thinking Body*, written by Mabel Todd in 1937, and my understanding of human structure and function has never been the same. Five years later, I had the good fortune of making the acquaintance of André Bernard. I signed up for the introductory workshop on Ideokinesis that he was offering in Freiburg, Germany, and I was so taken with the effects of the work and the way André Bernard presented it that I became his enthusiastic student. I subsequently invited him several times to Freiburg and began a series of summer pilgrimages to Bern, Switzerland, to attend the courses that Ursula Stricker was organizing in her movement studio known as the "Etage."

André began coming to Europe to offer his workshops in Ideokinesis in the mid-1980s. At that time, Eric Franklin, a student of André's from N.Y.U., invited André to Zürich, Switzerland. Another former student, dancer Erika Kletti, invited André to teach in Wiesbaden, Germany, where he taught from 1987 until 1998. André also taught every summer from 1992 through 2000 at the Etage, by the invitation of Ursula Stricker.

Ursula Stricker, a dancer and visual artist, had come to know André Bernard a few years earlier in New York City. It was during one of our meetings in the workshops of André in Bern that Ursula and I developed the idea to create a workbook out of the material she had collected during the summer workshops. André edited a major part of the transcribed tapes but unfortunately not all.

We did our best to make the German edition as close as possible to the original English language transcripts, without taking away any of the precision of the language. We wanted the reader to sense something of the atmosphere of the workshop, and to provide a lively and interesting start into the work with imagery.

We are very aware that no book can replace a teacher, but it is our hope that it will awaken curiosity about this fascinating work. Certainly the applicability of Ideokinesis is limited when one studies it alone. However, Ideokinesis is fundamentally about working on oneself and one's own concepts of thought and behaviour. It only works with a high degree of personal involvement. No therapist can think for their clients and no teacher can think for their students. The manner in which André Bernard so deeply and empathically imparts this work has deeply influenced me and my work with people. I am certain that the publication of these transcripts, the Bernese summer workshop protocols, will also stimulate others who are working in the field of somatic-psyche, body-mind learning and will be inspiring.

Wolfgang Steinmüller

Freiburg/Breisgau, Germany



IDEOKINESIS— a source of inspiration

Following my path as a visual artist and a dancer searching for a truly free dance, in 1981 I departed Bern, Switzerland, bound for New York. In the huge, vibrating city, I moved unceasingly from dance school to dance studio. Hungry and enthusiastic, I grabbed on to various impulses, techniques, and dance cultures while my body became increasingly confused, tense, inflexible, and painful. I was hoping for some solution or orientation whereby I could get in touch with my body, to appreciate and understand it as an instrument of movement. And then I found myself in an open workshop at New York University, where I met André Bernard and Ideokinesis.

“Think it, imagine it, let it happen.” With his deep, warm voice, André Bernard guided us into the heart of Ideokinesis, Constructive Rest, and he supported the flowing images with a gentle touch. Resting aligned on my back on the floor, I relaxed and experienced a feeling of clarity and pure beingness. Later, when I was standing outside on the street, firmly on both feet, I felt infinitely free and light. It was like coming home. In the midst of the bubbling City of New York! Throughout my years of study in New York, this experience always led me back to André Bernard and Ideokinesis.

In André Bernard I found a clear, modest, compassionate teacher who embodies the work. The rich transmission inspired me and, together with other paths, opened me to the wonderful world of body, movement, and alignment; in other words, to the work of balance. Layer by layer, I gained access to the deepest layer, the weight-bearing structure of the bones, and over time, I developed a continuous awareness of the bones. Through the arrangement, alignment, and balancing of my skeletal structure, my behaviour and work habits changed and many burdensome postural patterns loosened and melted away. What I had unknowingly and unhealthily assimilated into my body from various techniques simply fell away by itself. Bound energy that had been locked up became free. This freed energy continues to affect me directly as creativity—in my life, in my art, and in the teaching of my movement, dance, and alignment work. There unfolded over the years, from ever more deeply inside, from trust in my body, a dance born upon the bones.

What became familiar as a meditative, creative path of body, alignment, and movement awareness began to weave itself naturally as a “red thread” into the fabric of daily life, where even routine movements became clearer, lighter, and more flowing—what to me is an essential aspect of “quality of life.”

“Let it happen,” André Bernard’s first lesson, continues again and again to be a guidepost on the long path to ever-growing awareness and depth. Ideokinesis is also an inexhaustible source of inspiration for my work, “Placement and Creative Dance.”

After years of working with André Bernard in New York and Zürich, he accepted my invitation to come to Bern. From 1992 through 2000, he taught Ideokinesis to a growing number of enthusiastic students at my space known as the “Etagé—Space for Movement, Expression, and Silence.” Most students returned to the workshops year after year to deepen the work.



photo © Ursula Stricker

Leave the fingertips in the creases for a few moments so your partner's femur heads can be like little golf balls; they fall into the cups.
André Bernard teaching at Etagé studio, Bern, Switzerland.

Over the years, I have been documenting André Bernard's workshops by recording them on audio-cassette tapes and photographing some of the essential moments of his teaching. From the very beginning, I had the vision that this creative way of alignment and movement might be made accessible to serve a greater number of people. This is happening with the realization of our book in German and will hopefully be followed by its publication in English and other languages.

In a time of constant acceleration and technology, where we are suffering from imbalances on all levels, and where more people are losing their connection to the earth, to their bodies, to themselves, Ideokinesis is a tool and a way of working with ourselves in an attentive, conscious, self-responsible, loving, and holistic way. It is a way to find more rest, clarity, depth, alignment, and inner balance in the midst of everyday life—a way to harmonize, align, and center body, soul, and spirit.

I want to thank my dear friend and teacher André Bernard for his generous, compassionate, and committed transmission of Ideokinesis, which he has lived and taught without reservation. Through André Bernard and his teaching, over the course of decades, many, many people have been touched, nurtured, inspired, and transformed on all levels.

Ursula Stricker
Bern, Switzerland

AFTERWORD

I was first introduced to the work of André Bernard in a church converted to a dance studio in a quiet neighborhood in Berkeley, California. Inside I discovered a teacher and a teaching with profound integrity, clarity, and the power to transform.

By this time I was in my late-20s and had established fixed patterns of posture, thinking, and moving that I never questioned. André's teaching opened up new pathways of thinking, sensing, and feeling. The imagery of Ideokinesis cut through my habitual and unconscious patterns of clinging and holding, and led me to experiences of being softer, more released, balanced, and responsive. The realization that I had a choice and was not destined to be chained by habit was exhilarating! I tasted the most delicious morsel of freedom...the possibility of not being incarcerated by my own habits and ideas. It was the beginning of a long journey that I am still enjoying.

As a dancer, performer, and teacher I have always been eager to understand more about the intimate weave of the human body, mind, and spirit. I was so excited about the value of his work for my dance students that I invited André to teach at Sonoma State University in Northern California. So an annual summer workshop began that continued for over 20 years. Not just dancers came...health-care professionals, therapists, poets, teachers, artists, and people from all walks of life walked into the studio, eager to study with André.

This diversity of individuals is naturally mirrored by the diversity of ways each person responds to and uses what they have learned. For me André's work has deeply informed my teaching and dancing, as well as my daily dances—when I open a door, cut a vegetable, or think through how to solve a

problem, I am affected by the principles of Ideokinesis. They have become embodied in me and are an integral part of the fabric of who I am.

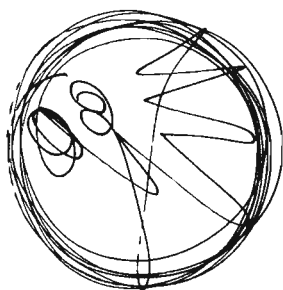
Lynda Knapp, a former dancer who made a career shift to nursing, studied with André Bernard for many years. She still practices what she has learned from him on a daily basis; as she lifts a patient, she is aware of letting the weight of the patient rest on her femur heads and of bringing the person's weight as close to her central axis as possible.

Numerous body-care practitioners, teachers, dancers, and movement specialists in the United States and Europe use the principles of Ideokinesis and creatively apply them to their own work. A few of these professionals include: Irene Dowd in New York; Pamela Matt, who teaches dance at Arizona State University; Kayte Ringer, who combines the work with Rolfing; Erika Kletti Ranacher, dance therapist, from Wiesbaden, Germany; and Eric Franklin and Ursula Stricker from Switzerland.

André was a messenger of this work, but he was also the message. He distilled the essence of his teaching into language and action that was pure, clear, easily absorbed, and deeply nourishing. He taught like a vigilant master gardener, providing patience, trust, and loving acceptance. He didn't force growth or change; he allowed each student to make their own choices and take their own time. He was a brilliant yet humble teacher, giving with generosity of spirit, depth of information, and selfless devotion. No wonder he left us such a bountiful garden!

Nancy Lyons

Rohnert Park, California



*Coming into being (pen and ink),
by Ursula Stricker.*

For more about André and his legacy, contact Kayte Ringer, kringer@nyc.rr.com. For info on André's book Ideokinesis, in German, or the English version yet to be published, contact Ursula Stricker, ursula.stricker@bluewin.ch; Wolfgang Steinmüller, wolfstein@soma-institut.de; or Nancy Lyons, nancy.lyons@sonoma.edu.

For more on André Bernard and his work, see his article, "Ideokinesis & Creative Body Alignment" in CQ 22:2, Summer/Fall 1997. CQ is offering a special discount for this back issue (until May 2004) for \$5 plus shipping (see p. 101). André's article is also available as a 16-pg CQ Reprint for \$2 (includes shipping).