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Eric Miller, PhD, Director

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To: Anita Ratnam, PhD

Dear Anita,

Hello! Thanks very much for leading a session on "Storytelling and Gesture/Movement/Dance" in the "Storytelling and Childhood Development Workshop" on Saturday, February 2nd, in the 2013 Chennai Storytelling Festival, held at the Goethe Institute here in Chennai!

This event was a training session for adults (especially teachers). I suggested you might have these teachers role-play as children listening to you tell stories, and you did this part of the time. In the process, you demonstrated how a storyteller could activate and mobilise listeners to act-out and become elements of stories.

As a performer and choreographer, you are brilliant at having yourself and others breathe, move, and use the voice (for speaking or singing), in a synesthetic manner (all senses working in coordination). The entire body is mobilised as a single organic verbo-motor mechanism to express emotions and thoughts. The stretching, bending, and twisting movements you had the "listeners" do were very robust and healthy for them. And I know you like to add the use of musical instruments to accentuate all of this with rhythm and melody.

You demonstrated ways of involving story-listeners as characters in the story, often having the listeners role-play characters and, as characters, join in impromptu parades throughout the space. In this way, you literally had listeners enter the story and become story characters, and you led these listeners on the journey of the story.

You have developed a unique and splendid technique for telling stories -- especially using gesture, facial expressions, posture, movement, and dance (all in conjunction with breath); and especially facilitating audience participation by having the story-listeners also do all of this physical activity. You beautifully train other performers in this technique.

Some storytelling is for children and adults together; but some is especially for children, and some is especially for adults. In all three of these categories, I am looking forward to you continuing to compose (find, create, etc) and tell stories that really have suspense and utilise dramatic tension. I am speaking of storytelling that wraps the listeners up in the drama of the story, so each listener poignantly wonders what is going to happen next, and really cares about what is going to happen, because something important is at stake. Of course, such stories can be small or big, quiet or loud. They can be "slice-of-life" personal-experience stories, stories from folklore, or any other type of story. As you know, it is when technique is fully utilised (and "forgotten") that art achieves its fullest bloom.

You are truly very good at storytelling, and at training others in storytelling: I am hoping you might do a lot in this area in the years to come.

Many thanks again,

Eric