

Penny Mann InterPlay Frontrunner

REFLECTIONS FROM CYNTHIA WINTON- HENRY, INTERPLAY COFOUNDER



When Phil and I met Penny, her way of doing things was already close to our way of working. We teased and honored her as a "born InterPlayer, an ecstatic follower, a savorer!" Plus, she took notes on everything we said and did.

Because of people like Penny, Phil and I realized the power of "ecstatic leaders and followers." We joked that a person with a good idea might dance a solo. But any real movement takes at least one good follower, a number 2. The power of the second person, or follower, is to amplify. They make the next thing happen. This power is always underestimated by followers. Even I, an irrepressible visionary, learned to ecstatically follow, because following is how we bring a communal dance or a story into being. Following is the great, Yes-Anding,

Who we choose to follow means EVERYTHING!

Penny and Fawn Christiansen taught the first InterPlay class in San Jose, where Phil and I weren't involved in any way. We attended the class performance and observed Penny and Fawn and their students faithfully convey the InterPlay forms, the spirit of InterPlay, and even the exact words that we often shared. What an odd and profound feeling to witness InterPlay spring to life outside of our bodies in a way that was successful and meaningful. That would not have happened without Penny, her documentation and love for structure. Penny gave us a living sign that InterPlay was worthy of repeating and indeed replicable. Wow!

Then, I became a follower of Penny Mann. In addition to experiencing her brilliance as a storyteller, song-maker, and dancer in Wing It!, she organized the community to fill the seats of our first large performance of the Unbelievable Beauty of Being Human at the Cowell Theater in San Francisco. She served on the Body Wisdom Board and organized the first Raising More Money (Benevon) Fundraising events. Penny counseled me that I was prone to overwork and gave key feedback when I needed it.

Penny! Her buoyancy after Breast Cancer and end of life illness, her faithfulness to those she loved and played with, and with her Hagitude as a wise elder, Penny is now an InterPlay Ancestor, a Playmate and Holy Woman forever on our Spirit Team!

Reflections on Wing It! Performance Ensemble

BY PENELOPE MANN, MARCH 6, 2022



I organized my 80th birthday so that I could experience Zoom time with InterPlay friends and, particularly, Wing It! Performance Ensemble Members. I played with Wing It! folks from 1990-2009. One day I started sobbing. I'd touched a 12-year loneliness I had for the ease of bodies moving together, which Wing It! had given me.

As an ensemble, we'd learned to lead, to follow, trust, and risk, to support and surprise one another. We sang, we danced, and told stories. We could roll over one another on the floor like puppies in a pile or roll into a row of spoons to hold each other in our grief. We could tell stories all together or alone, dance in pairs or fives---burst into song to support a story or help find an ending to something which was going on too long. We did it for ourselves in rehearsals, honing our craft yet tending to our needs. We did it for others on stage, all "in the moment."

Thirteen players showed up. I quoted from *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*, where Francis Weller says that "deep in our bones lies the intuition that we arrive here with a bundle of gifts to offer the community-- But we may or may not find our tribe. If we do not find our tribe--those who call out and receive our gifts, an unrecognized, un-named grief can set in and sap our vitality."

I told them that they were a key part of my tribe. I wanted to hear from my tribe. They puffed me up with memories of my role in the company. But most profoundly, they helped me know in my bones that when I offered my gifts, they were seen, celebrated, and built upon. When others offered their gifts, we played with them and created something together. They call me the "Queen of Savoring," and I claim it as recognition that I look for what is wise, fun, and connecting.

My life has a deep sense of satisfaction & purpose partly because I met, played, and created with them. I continued to lead the simple forms we learned. I believe that authentic play in community is a sacred call and that I/we answered it. We continue to answer it. As we do, we bring body, mind, heart, and soul together again at last. For a final act, I led us in an InterPlay closing. We released all we do not need, we gathered up what we want to savor, we recognize that as we take care of ourselves, we have more to give, and then, "POOF"--- we send all this good energy out into the world.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY indeed!!