

Newsletter June 2026

ZOE SCHOOL FOR DANCE MOVEMENT THERAPY

Move - Create - Embodiment - Impact



Hello

{{ contact.FIRST_NAME }} {{ contact.LAST_NAME }}

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Trudi Schoop: "Come dance with me!"

Humor in psychiatry? In the mid-20th century, that sounded like bad taste.

Trudi Schoop brought it along anyway. She got people moving—people who had withdrawn into themselves for years. Sometimes even to the point of dancing.

A laugh can sometimes move people more than an explanation.

Come dance with me

"Come Dance with Me" is the title of her book—a direct invitation from a woman who began as a comedienne and ended up as a pioneer of dance therapy.

Trudi Schoop (1903–1999) grew up in Zurich, toured Europe and America with her dance company, and even parodied Hitler on stage—in a black tutu and with a painted-on mustache, much to the displeasure of the German consul. Then, in 1947, she disbanded her company and moved to Los Angeles. To work in psychiatric clinics.

With her joy of movement, she invited people to get moving themselves—and in doing so discovered that her patients' isolation gave way almost of its own accord. Her humor, which she deployed at just the right moment—self-deprecating, with the most loving tone—brought people to pay attention, to arrive, to be fully present.

I can still picture my teachers as they spoke of Trudi Schoop. It felt as though I had missed out on something precious: the chance to have met Trudi Schoop herself.

You can listen to the interview for this newsletter
here

Was she ahead of her time? Research provides the answer.

For a long time, humor was considered a sensitive topic in therapeutic circles—too risky, not serious enough. Schoop did it simply because it suited her so well.

This is a matter close to my heart: students who have the courage to develop their own approach—and the skill to justify that approach.

Today we know: Humor is considered a key factor in therapy—fundamentally and across all schools of thought, for the therapeutic relationship as well as for targeted interventions. It can reduce pain, relieve stress, and strengthen the immune system. Above all, however, it creates something that is difficult to bring about directly: deep connection. And it opens up inner processes of exploration where direct communication reaches its limits.



Humor at the Zoe School – a scene from class

Once we were working on the neck, arm, and hand. A student suddenly froze in her tracks, looked around with wide, astonished eyes, and said:

“When I’m stubborn, I have no tact.”

The others could barely hold back their laughter.

And then—the moment when she herself realized what she had just said. She laughed heartily. We all laughed with her.

That’s exactly what Trudi Schoop would have loved. The body as language—and laughter as insight.

What we are developing today—and what remains

Schoop danced where the body as a therapeutic medium was still unthinkable. That she did so—with humor, with ease, with an invitation to everyone before her—bordered on provocation back then.

What has remained: the body as a path. Movement as language. And the attitude that Schoop embodied—warmth, presence, deep connection.

At the ZOE SCHOOL, we train dance therapists for a time that presents us with new challenges in the future of Switzerland’s healthcare system. Dance therapists today need nuanced knowledge and an evidence-informed practice.

This is my heartfelt mission: students who have the courage to develop their own approach—and the skill to ground that approach.

Trudi Schoop used her sense of humor because it suited her so well. Our students today learn why it works—and how to use it consciously, precisely, and with the same loving tone.

When I work with our students today, I always enjoy it anew when humor emerges. What could be better than a shared laugh, a shared smile—or, and this too can be humorous, a shared moment of reflection.

Now I wish you a wonderful start to the summer! Brigitte Züger

Director, ZOE SCHOOL



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ZOE SCHOOL FOR DANCE MOVEMENT
THERAPY
Elsässerstrasse 34
4056 Basel

Website: www.zoeschool.ch
Email: brigitte.zueger@zoeshool.ch

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