



The Sound of Success

A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO DR ALFRED TOMATIS

Read this exclusive interview with **Françoise Nicoloff**, a French/Australian psychologist and one of the pioneering trainers of the Tomatis® Method. Learn from her life-changing experience with French ENT Specialist, Dr. Alfred Tomatis, as she celebrates her 40th year in the health and education industry!

Q: How did you know about Dr. Alfred Tomatis?

Françoise: I first discovered Dr. Tomatis through his voice via a program that was played on one of the French popular radio programs.

Dr. Tomatis was responding to Jacques Chancel's questions. Jacques Chancel was famous for his TV shows and interviews with artists, authors and even researchers like Margret Throsby does on ABC classic in Australia.

And what Dr. Tomatis was saying through his interview was quite amazing and helped me to understand that the brain had the capacity to change.

We could change the brain and therefore, change behaviour, emotions, learning, and communication skills; and these by changing the way the ear and the brain work together.

My mother joined that interview halfway through. She was very interested in what Dr. Tomatis said during that broadcast, she ordered the recording of the program which came as a cassette (tape), at the time back in 1976.

Everyone in my family listened to it and we were all fascinated with what Dr. Tomatis was explaining.

Q: What led you to meet with Dr. Tomatis?

F: A few months later I first heard from him, my grandmother got very sick and she asked my mother to organise an appointment with Dr. Tomatis in Paris because she intuitively felt that Tomatis could help her.

She had been previously diagnosed with bipolar disorder and was going through a crisis. She went to Paris. She did three (3) weeks of the Tomatis® program. When she came back from Paris, she was a totally different person. She was much calmer, less emotional, less depressed etc.

And so that was a good try, a first among the members in my family.

The Tomatis® Method is a sound-based, ear-brain-body training. It uses the “Electronic Ear”, called TalksUp® today by implementing a sound contrast through Gating®. It triggers the attention mechanisms in the brain. Sound is transmitted via specific headphones using bone and air conduction to help the brain and the body to perform at the optimal level. This neuro-sensory approach helps issues with auditory processing, sensory integration, balance, learning difficulties, ADHD, autism attention, concentration, communication, emotional regulation, anxiety, stress, depression, voice and more.

Then my youngest brother had a car accident which left him with undiagnosed PTSD at the time, I am talking about 1977, so 40 years ago. It was quite a severe car accident, with a big emotional trauma on top of the physical injury. He started to withdraw from communication and interaction and we could not recognise him. He was no more himself!

He was a boy who could have been diagnosed with ADHD today--highly intelligent, but easily bored at school; so quite disruptive and unmotivated.

So, after the accident, my parents decided to send him to Dr. Tomatis in Paris. And again, after three weeks, he came back

different. Firstly, he had retrieved his spirit back which was a big relief for us.

To our great surprise, he also started to take notes and get organised to prepare his exams, which he did not use to do in the past. It was good to see him back to who he was but also fantastic to see that he started to be motivated to do his best for his exam. So, that was a big bonus.

And then my oldest brother, who had been diagnosed with dyslexia was going through a crisis. He did not know if he was going to shut down his business and if he was going to separate from his wife.

So, my dad sent him to Paris and said, “Look, go and clear your mind, and when you come back you'll be able to make your decisions.”

I was on a holiday at the time when my oldest brother had to go back to do a second program; so, I took the opportunity to go with him.

At that time, I used to work on cruise ships as an excursion manager.

So, I told my brother, “Look I'll go with you and I'll do the Tomatis® as well because it is so wonderful. I can certainly benefit from it too.”

Being in the tourism industry my interest in the Tomatis® Method was that I could learn languages faster and I wanted to add Spanish to the languages I was already speaking. So, that's how I first met Dr. Tomatis.

Q: How was it meeting with Dr. Tomatis himself?

F: I met him in the early days of September 1977, I was fascinated by his stature. He was very tall, very thin and with his bald head.

After having done the listening test with one of the staff members, I was expecting that he would say lots of things about my listening test but there was not so much to comment on after he said, “You are lucky, you have a Russian ear” which explained the easiness I had with learning languages.

And we spent our time talking about the Spanish coast knowing that I was working on cruise ships. We were sailing along Spain, and he mentioned that he had a property and training centre in Carboneras, Spain.



Q: How was your first Tomatis® program?

F: He thought that I could still benefit from the Tomatis® Method, to help me with languages. At that time, my main goal was to learn languages more easily and efficiently.

So, I did the first program in Paris 4 hours a day (two in the morning and two in the afternoon for 2 weeks). In the late seventies, the program consisted of listening to Mozart music and Gregorian Chant for 3 hours a day for 21 days. As I could not stay for three weeks I did listen for 4 hours a day. When I came back to Marseilles after 2 weeks in Paris, I gave up my relationship of 4 years, so that was a substantial change.



I continued to travel for a few months pretty much until the end of 1978 but at the same time, I joined my first Tomtis® training in Carboneras in Spain in summer 1978 as I was accompanying my mother there. I then saw the place that he was talking about back then in our first encounter! (laughs)

It was the advanced level of training in the Tomatis® Method at the time; so, I started with the highest level of training.

I think it also gave me the clarity and the courage to stop that relationship because I knew that it was not stimulating nor fulfilling for me.

I was working at the head office which was very close to the Tomatis® centre; so, I continued my program and I had the opportunity to see Dr. Tomatis more often. And of course, when my mother was coming for her training, we spent a lot of time discussing about what she was learning, and I got to see more people benefiting from the Tomatis® Method. I witnessed some miraculous changes which led me to question my future.

It was really in Spain that I saw the genius of Dr. Tomatis, spending nearly a week with him and professionals of high caliber. This was quite enlightening for me.

And then, within a week of returning from Paris, my father left this planet, something which was not expected at all as Dad was only 48 years old. Of course, it totally changed our lives and the outlook that we had on it.

His in-depth knowledge and unique sense of synthesizing things together stroke me as the young curious adult I was. He had a humongous memory too.

Q: What made you pursue the Tomatis® journey?

F: My parents had decided to open a Tomatis® Centre du Language in Marseilles. They were going to start their training with Tomatis, planned only a few weeks after my Dad's passing.

Observing the effect of the Gating®, or the impact of listening to the high frequencies in the music of Mozart or the filtered mother's voice and how quickly people could change, was quite amazing.

Cruising was a fantastic adventure, also a dream come true, but I knew it had to come to an end.

We encouraged Mum to continue the project as it was their project.

My mother started her training and she went to Paris one week per month for many months.

So, when I opened up to Dr. Tomatis saying that I wanted to work with his method and support my mother in doing the work, he said that It was a great idea and he was quite happy to see me take that journey. He then asked me to study psychology.

During winter 1978, the cruise company sent me to the Head Office to support the Group department.

Then, of course, I had to learn the basics and therefore, to attend the first level of training. So, I left the cruise ship in the West Indies and flew to Paris to attend the first step of training. Meanwhile, my mother had opened the Centre du Language in Marseilles just a few days before I embarked on my last trip to South America for 6 weeks. So, I was there when we first welcome our first three clients who were happy to not travel to Paris any more. Our first clients were 3 young girls, one was suffering from autism, another one from severe cerebral palsy and the third one was a little girl who suffered from an encephalitis as a side effect of immunization. I still remember with emotion when the later

started to walk at 7 years of age in the hall of our centre a year later.

I came back from the cruise, attended the first course in Paris and then worked full-time with my mother in Marseilles. Simultaneously, I started a 5-year course at the University in Aix en Provence to become a Clinical Psychologist.

And yeah, that's how it started, and the rest is history. Meeting Tomatis brought a total change in direction career-wise but in my life in general too.

Originally, I wanted to be a doctor but turned to another passion of mine which was travelling and speaking foreign languages. When I met Dr. Tomatis, it allowed me to go back to my first intention, making a difference in people's lives.

Since 1977, I fell in love with the Tomatis® Method and it is still part of my life today with promoting, expanding the Tomatis® Method around the world and helping people to change their lives for the better. So that's been very encouraging, stimulating and motivating.

Q: Most people nowadays shift from one career to another after 10-15 years. You are in your 40th year with the Tomatis® program. What can you say about this?

F: Well, I am aiming to work for maybe another 20 years if I have the health and the brain to do it! I am not done with the Tomatis®

Method yet! (laughs) What keeps me in this field are two things, and they are intertwined.

First, it gives me the possibility to meet a lot of people and to transform their lives. That's the primary motivator.

What amazes me still, is to see how quickly people can change and how those changes are lasting; when I see a child, who comes to me and says, "I'm happier" or seeing a child starting to talk or an adult believing in life and love again when they had lost the desire to live: You know it makes my day, or It made my life. So, this keeps feeding my enthusiasm and my passion for this work.



It is not me doing the work; I'm just a facilitator there who allows the transformation by using the Tomatis® Method and all its parameters to improve people's lives. And you know, I have considered a few times over the years to quit because it was not easy and not always financially great and so on. Yet I knew that if I would not continue what I was doing, I would miss something big in my life and would regret it. So, I just persevered and faced the challenges that go with it (laughs).

The second aspect: I am a gypsy. So, being a Tomatis® consultant and trainer require me to travel. I

am lucky that I can travel wherever with my Tomatis® work.



It has allowed me to come back to Australia, where I grew up as a young child, as well as to go to Japan, Mexico, Columbia, the Philippines, Panama and recently to China. I met different people along the way like many colleagues, professionals and of course, patients and clients. Some of them have become great friends too.

This has brought so many beautiful experiences into my life. The fact that I can travel while doing what I love is amazing! That's fantastic! I am so lucky!

Q: Speaking of experience and travelling, what did you think when Dr. Tomatis invited you to become part of his first team of trainers? Share some highlights.

F: Well, in 1983, because the group was expanding, there was a need for a structured training. Up until then, most of the trainings happened in Paris. However, the Method was starting to expand on other side of the Atlantic and Paul Madaule was delivering the training to North America, Canada, and Mexico when he followed Dr Tomatis to Canada in the early 80s.

We needed to establish a structured and standardised process. So, when Dr. Tomatis asked me to be part of the first team, I was delighted because it meant that I was going to travel and share my knowledge with new professionals too. I discovered along the way that is something I really enjoy too.

So, we designed a professional training course. And for a therapeutic tool to stay alive and continue to grow, it needs to transform and adapt to modern technology and the new demands and life style changes as well as to incorporate accrued knowledge thanks to research in different fields.



That's what we are still doing with the Tomatis® Method--it is a non-stop growing, expanding and constantly changing process which keeps it evolving to people's best benefits.

Dr. Tomatis himself was experimenting and bringing modifications all the time in our ways to work and to design programs. I have seen drastic changes, for example, when he introduced the bone conduction in the headphones. This was a turning point in the Tomatis® Method. Then he introduced new parameters with some delays and their timing. In the early 80s, this

allowed to design the listening programs for 15 days with 2 hours of listening a day instead of 21 days for 3 hours a day.

Another one was in the early 90s, when he understood the importance of the vestibular system it dramatically changed the way we would design programs too.

With the development of technology and research allowing a better understanding of how the human being functions, we can adapt and do more refined intervention using the available tools that we have today.

I have seen the changes from having the recordings on big reels then onto tapes then CDs. Then also with miniaturization and digital technology, I have seen the changes in the equipment too. I still have in my garage an electronic ear dated back to 1969 with lamps (valves) and different generations of electronic ears over the years. In 2000, we saw the mini electronic ear becoming available which helped me to start offering home based programs. This allowed me to have the program available for people in remote areas which is quite necessary in a country as vast as Australia is.

In 2009, another generation of portable equipment came up with Solisten® and since 2014, we are now using TalksUp® which is a real electronic ear allowing to do all the work I used to do with old analog ones and this, with beautiful results. The digital technology allows us to be even more precise in the design of the programs we create for our

patients. We can also use mother's voice work. With wireless technology, we can have a full class of 30 children listening to a Tomatis® Program with one TalksUp®.



We are again at a turning point now, and massive changes are going to happen soon in the ways that we can use the Tomatis® Method to better help more people. So I find it exciting and I embrace the changes when they make it easier to implement and increase the efficacy of the Tomatis® Method.

Q: You were also given the chance to establish Tomatis® Centres such as in Japan. What was it like?

I was living and working in Tahiti when Dr. Tomatis asked me to go to Japan in 1993. It was a big honour for me. It showed the trust that Dr. Tomatis had in me to recommend me to a couple who wanted to initiate the Tomatis® Method in their country.

Mrs Murase and her husband were business people and were fond of the French culture and language. They wanted to give a different direction in their lives with a more human side, a bit like what my parents did originally in 1977.

Of course, I immediately said yes! (laughs) No question about that! As long as I could take my daughter with me, (she was turning three), there was no difficulty because travelling the world is in my genes. (both my grandfathers were migrants). I was also very excited to go to Japan, a new country to discover, especially that Japan is so different from the countries I had already known. When you are there it is like being on another planet.

A few years before, I originally told Tomatis, "Look, send me anywhere in the world, to Timbuktu, to where ever it is necessary..." and it happened! I had the opportunity to go to Tahiti and I seized it because I ultimately wanted to come back to Australia where I spent three years of my childhood. Moving to Tahiti was making Australia more accessible. I finally arrived there in September 1995.

So, in March 1993, I arrived in Tokyo at the time of the cherry blossom season. Then I was travelling back and forth between Tahiti and Tokyo to initiate the Tomatis® training in Japan and to start the first Tomatis® Centre in Roppongi in Tokyo. I also gave the first Tomatis® public lecture there.

That's still what I am doing, the Tomatis® group has recently asked me to go to China and support the Chinese professionals and families there.



Ten years ago, I was also invited by a family to Manila and trained professionals who opened centres over there in the Philippines.



Hence, it certainly fits with my love for travelling, for discovering new cultures, new people, new countries, and new continents; and yes, that's also very much a big inspiration for me.

Training is something that I enjoy doing as well. Every time I can share my knowledge and experience with new professionals, it brings me joy.

It also means more people will benefit from the Tomatis® Method. It also encourages me to continue to learn, to deepen my knowledge in many areas, which I really like too.

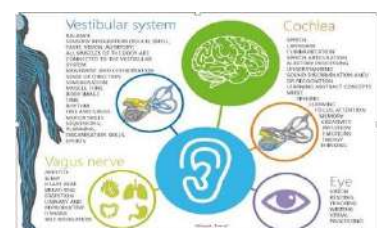
In 2001, we launched the International Association of Registered Certified Tomatis® Consultants regrouping the professionals. My peers gave me the honor to lead the Association for seven years. We produced the Listening Journey for Children that we launched at our Conference in Panama. Since it has been translated in Spanish,

French, Japanese, Chinese and recently in Russian.



Over the years, I have worked with people of all ages from babies, toddlers, boys and girls, adults and elderly with issues such as speech delay, global development delay, sensory integration and auditory processing disorders, learning difficulties, trouble with attention and concentration anxiety, autism, depression, stress, balance and coordination issues, brain injury as well as singers and musicians or people wanting to learn a new language.

And the beauty beneath all those difficulties or issues is that they have one common denominator, that is, they can be alleviated when we retrain the ear and its connection to the brain and the body. Because of the strong connections between the ear, the brain and the body, the ear is the highway to access brain and body and to rewire those connections, so they work more appropriately. That keeps me alert to continuously learn about neurosciences, sound, music psychosomatic and more.



Q: If you were to give a message to Dr. Tomatis today, what would you tell him?

F: I'll say, Merci! "Thank you." Yes, thank you from the bottom of my heart because it has allowed me to give a sense of direction to my life which I have and will never regret.

It has also made my life very meaningful because when you help to transform people's lives, what else can you do better? How can it be better than this?

I have seen children with autism starting to speak and blossom, I have seen babies to start to sit and crawl and develop when nature was not in their favor, I have seen children who hated reading starting to love reading and becoming bookworms, I have seen children starting to like school because suddenly they can understand the world around them, I have seen people suffering from anxiety and depression discovering a new sense to their lives and starting to be happy and resourceful, I have seen Mums giving birth to healthy babies, I have seen people reconnecting with their family once their wounds had healed, I have seen people discovering new talents and becoming painters and artists, I have seen singers rediscovering the pleasure of singing again, I have seen young people being empowered and accessing their dream life and jobs, I have seen elderly to find balance again and enjoying life again whilst being able to participate to conversation and able to have a social life again, I have seen

people with brain injury to discover that they could have a life again. Over forty years, I have seen so many families, children and adults who have gained a better life thanks to the Tomatis® Method. I have seen neuroplasticity in action.

Dr. Tomatis allowed me to have the life I was dreaming of when I was about 10 years old; and such a meaningful life. If I look at 40 years back, I have been very lucky to have met him early on my route and it is still not the end of it (laughs).

Even though it has been a long journey, 40 years with its ups and downs, though it has been worth it. I can only be grateful to Dr. Tomatis and what he has brought into my life and the lives of hundred thousand of people around the world for nearly 70 years. Isn't it fantastic?! It makes my heart sing!



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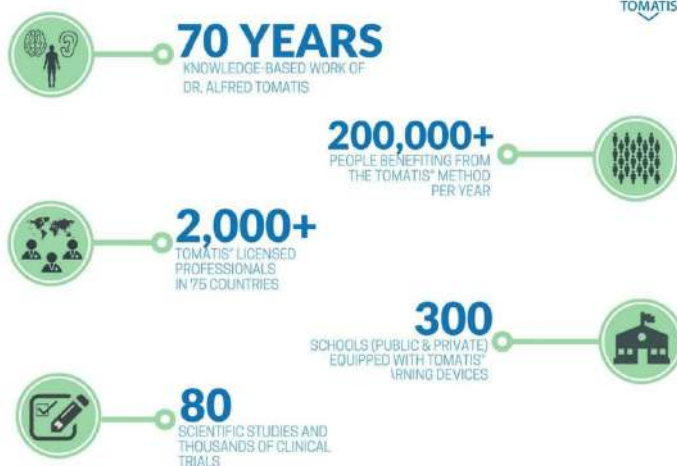
Useful information or to find a professional near you:

www.tomatis.com (worldwide)

www.tomatis.com.au (Australia)

www.tomatisassociation.org (research – articles – The Listening Journey for Children for a free download)

Interview by Shiela Mae Pialago
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