from the chair

The most exciting innovation in the BPA’s recent history has been the establishment of the new website which, when fully operational, will give us a massively enhanced profile in the eyes of the public. Fully operational means encouraging all of us to make sure our profile and services are available for all to see. The regionalised searches for ‘Find a Therapist/Sociodramatist’ and the advertising of members’ workshops will give our work and methods the visibility they deserve.

Enormous thanks go to the motivational team who have inspired this - from Anna Chesner to Clark Baim, Gordon Parrott and Sheila Foxgold. The dedicated, inspiring and ongoing work by Sheila Foxgold is worthy of massive praise and thanks. I do not use these words lightly. Sheila has been an inspiration throughout the whole process and continues to be so in her assumption of voluntary responsibility for membership services.

Access the website, make use of the facilities and watch us grow.

The Conference in Glasgow was a great success - the varied workshops, the positive atmosphere throughout, the quality of the catering, the formal welcome and ceremonial acknowledgement of our presence in Glasgow by the civic reception accorded to us, and the warmth of the Gala Dinner - meant that I left with a sense of an organisation in good health.

Incidentally, the profit to the BPA was almost £10K.

A sincere Thank You to Celia Scanlan and her team for their hard work and stewardship of this highly successful event in our calendar.

As I write Kate Kirk and her team are preparing the way for Conference 2010 at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester. The dates are 25th-27th June 2010. There will also be a pre-Conference day at the venue on Saturday 6th March 2010 - all details to follow shortly.

Conferences are an invaluable way of connecting with the Psychodrama / Sociodrama / Action Methods family. I can highly recommend participating.

The AGM at the Conference was a positive and uplifting experience (despite the heat) and I was encouraged by contributions and interest from the floor. Here are the new Executive elected in Glasgow:

Chair: Jonathan Salisbury
Vice-Chair: Kate Kirk
Secretary: Eve White
Minutes Secretary: Nancy Piercy

(cont. on page 2)
BPA Conference 2009 – Amanda Hardeman

The editor asked Amanda Hardeman to describe her experience of her first BPA Conference.

I live and work in Huntingdonshire, that’s about 20 miles from Cambridge. I have a private practice in counselling and I am a teacher and group facilitator on counselling courses. So how did I find myself on a plane to Glasgow in June 2009 on my way to a BPA conference?

My connection with psychodrama started in 1999, when Maxine Daniels presented psychodrama at the prison service where I worked. We were to use action methods as part of the service delivery for a drug rehabilitation programme and I was hooked from the moment that Maxine walked in the door. Everyone in the room was involved and we got to the heart of things very quickly.

I liked the ‘show me’ aspect instantly, the encouragement from the director and the involvement of the group. Whilst this method seemed powerful, it also felt contained. I sensed Maxine was holding the group in more ways than one. It brought alive my counselling background and reminded me of the experiential work I had engaged in as a trainee counsellor.

In the prison, we called it Role Play not Psychodrama when we delivered it to the men. I was wary of the power of the method to start with, but then learnt to trust myself directing a role play besides trusting the protagonist and trusting the group. We spent about 8 weeks using the usual offending behaviour delivery methods (presentations, interactive activities, process groups etc) but when we engaged in the role plays, this was where things started to happen – the whole group came alive and engaged. They genuinely wanted to help, support and challenge each other. It was a job in itself controlling the volunteers for doubling. I found the group-sharing stage the most humbling and healing in many ways.

After leaving my role at the prison, I decided to pursue my interest and I started going to the workshops that Barbara Tregear runs 2-3 times each year in Cambridge. I enjoyed the spontaneity and freedom of the group work and was able to engage in personal work as the protagonist, as well as play auxiliary roles. It amazed me how much I was affected even when I wasn’t the protagonist. This maintained my interest in Psychodrama and action methods and I promised myself that I would one day take it further.

Then I began studying my MSc in Psychotherapy. One on my fellow students is Maria Lumsden Rieder in Basel. We both use the electronic forum for the course and we communicate in this way. In one of her messages, Maria said ‘Watch out for the BPA conference coming up’. Then I looked at the BPA website and what excited me was how organised it was. There was a small profile about each facilitator and I wanted to go to all of the workshops.

This was the year I could attend, my youngest child being three years old.
then I realised that I was with a lot of people who were used to this. I remember one of the exercises where you walk around the room and connect with someone. I joined up with Liz, who is from Canada, and I was able to let go and get into it.

What were the people like? Well, to me, it was bit like a very large family and I was like the younger sister, a new addition. All these people obviously knew each other and it was very safe and connected. The sense of belonging was reassuring.

What were the workshops like? The organisation of the workshops was second to none. After the agonising decision of which one to choose, you booked in advance and each group was listed with the room and directions. I was amazed at how quickly each facilitator was able to warm up the group quickly and to close the group down safely. The facilitators were all so different from each other and each one had a unique style. I could see that the process was the same, but they all did it in their own way. I learnt so much more by being there rather than reading a book or being lectured at. I liked taking part. It was safe to laugh, cry and share. I appreciated the option of a process group at the end of each day, and attended it on the second day.

Has the conference been of any help in your work? I already use elementary action methods in the classroom as a trainer of counsellors and the conference complemented this. For example:

I use doubling in the classroom. I stand behind the trainee counsellor when they are practising listening skills. I say the things that the counsellor is censoring to encourage them to have an open dialogue with their client. I may say ‘I wonder if you are fed up with your father’. Then the counsellor may take this up with Fred (the client) in their own words.

Moreover I use role reversal in the classroom when the students are practising empathy skills. I invite the counsellor to sit in Fred’s seat and I ask ‘What’s that like?’ I encourage the counsellor to be Fred, feel like Fred does and think like Fred does. It puts into action the “as if” aspect of experiencing another persons viewpoint. Then I reverse them back to the counsellor seat and encourage them to convey their understanding to Fred.

How did I feel about the BPA conference as a whole? What stood out for me was how warm and welcoming people were. In some places, you go to a workshop or conference and you are the newcomer or the novice. At this conference, I found that all the way round, there was no hierarchy. I was able to do my thing and it was encouraged. I have the dates on the calendar ready for next year.

Amanda Hardeman
with support from Richard Oliver
amandalhardeman@aol.com
An Attempt to Formulate a Theory on Therapeutic Work with Traumatised Refugees

This is the second part of a two-part article by Christina Hagelthorn from Sweden. Christina works with refugees and in this second part describes being the person he/she was meant to be.

We have published this article in two parts – the first part was in April 2009 Tele and the second part is on these pages.

Where we finished in the previous issue of Tele:
When we have tele in the public space, we are open to all these different opinions and these various sociometric choices. We receive our identity, we become recognized through daring to stick our neck out, through standing out against the others, and it absolutely leads to reactions from others. With that we are back to the function of tele to create or give identity.

… and the article continues as follows:

Hanna Arendt was a philosopher with existential orientation. She proposes that in the western society, the action which is public and political, to a great extent has been replaced by behaviour which originally belonged in the private sphere, characterized by force, hierarchy and necessity. At the same time, private life which among other things had to do with the economic housekeeping in ancient Greece, in modern society has spread uncontrollably at the expense of the public life. Today the word political has lost its original content and means nothing else than economic house keeping.

From a Morenian perspective we can say that when our action in the world changes into behaviour controlled by authorities, then both spontaneity and the tele factor sink drastically, as well as the freedom to choose one’s acts and to be responsible for them.

The prerequisite for being able to have an identity is to be able to be seen from a number of different perspectives. This is true not only for the human being but also for the public world. “The common world disappears”, Arendt writes, “when it is seen from only one aspect. It only exists from a multiple perspective.” And the multiplicity of perspectives requires that the human being acts, and steps out into the public arena.

Arendt describes the distance as a necessary condition for identity and individuation. Only when we have a certain distance to each other, can we mutually experience the situation of each other.

A certain distance is also a necessary condition for us to be able to talk about tele. This inter-mediate space, however, not be so large when that it is impossible to reach each other. Then the relationship is at risk of ceasing.
There is a dialectic relationship concerning distance and closeness between people. Without a certain distance, the closeness is transformed into symbiosis and pathology, and the individual identity is threatened. The distance is also necessary for an encounter to take place.

If the distance is large and the will to meet is strong, a great life-giving tension can arise. The spark must travel between distant planets to connect them. Interestingly enough, in ancient China it was said that poets flew between the worlds of the heaven on trails of dragon smoke when they were creating their great masterpieces.

In the Christian tradition it is told how Jesus was challenged to answer to the question when the kingdom of God would come. In one translation the answer is: “The kingdom of God is between (in the middle of) you”. When a genuine encounter occurs, we can catch a glimpse of the kingdom of God. It is now always there, but in the encounter something may happen, something that means a glimpse of the manifestation of the kingdom of God.

In our modern world there are usually very clear obstacles to communication. In Moreno’s terms, we could say that tele is missing and also that the spontaneity is very low, in some cases non-existent.

When tele arises, these obstacles to communication can be reduced to a certain extent. It gives us an image of the origin and goal of mankind; an existence without barriers for communication, a heavenly state.

In the Christian doctrine it is often said that the calling of man is to become the person he is intended to be. It means that he can meet his God, his fellow human beings and himself, just as the unique being he is without having to play the part of somebody else, or in Hanna Arendt’s terminology, without having to behave himself.

Virginia Satir was a world famous family therapist, whose working methods have a lot in common with psychodrama. Here is one of her poems:

*I believe*
the greatest gift
I can conceive of
having from anyone
is to be seen by them,
to be understood
and touched by them.
The greatest gift
I can give
is to see, hear, understand,
and touch another person.

Virginia Satir (1916 - 1988)

A loving fellow human being sees the positive and the potentials for development in another person. That is exactly what Anton Antonovsky’s theories are about. Instead of focusing on and study the problematic, he wants to move the attention to the strength that can preserve health.

Antonovsky has also created a concept that he calls ‘SOC’ - a Sense of Coherence. People can endure the greatest sufferings if they have a sense of belonging and meaningfulness. That is exactly what torture and ethnic cleaning operation aims at; the destruction of a person’s feeling of worth, relationships and belonging to mankind, and using violence which is unpredictable and seemingly coincidental.

Through truly encountering the persons who carry with them such suffering, and building a relationship with them within which tele can arise, belonging and meaning can be recreated. The human being who has been made to feel worthless, needs to rediscover his strength and his good sides which actually have made him survive up until now.

A man is more than himself; he also belongs to mankind as a whole. The first step to reach his belonging to mankind is to experience belonging to another human being.
Here we can mention a British driving spirit, Camila Bathmanghelidjh, who founded the organisation ‘Kids Company’ in London. She works with London’s most exposed children who otherwise could have developed into being criminal and violent. A great deal of the children have had traumatic experiences. The treatment that Camila offers them, she describes herself with the words “love, care, peace and quiet”. She has a piece of advice for the Swedish authorities: “Invest properly in the immigrants, or else you may have problems.”

Earlier we said that tele thrives in the space in between people where there also should be balance. Man has another dimension of tele to establish; the spiritual that is the relationship to the divine. In that space there is often imbalance within people who have been exposed to persecution and atrocities in the name of religion.

**My brief summary:**
The encounter between people can neutralise the forces that wish to break down mankind and to destroy communication. In encounter, the human being can become free to be the person he was meant to be.

Why have I chosen the drawings of Ken Sprague to accompany my article?

Many years ago I was invited to teach at Holwell and got to know Ken. His approach to his artistic work inspired me, with his emphasis on the social encounter. Later on, he became a member of my theatre company, ‘The Theatre of Spontaneity International’, and we were playmates for a few years.

After his death in 2004, I keep feeling that he is still around and the connection to him continues. As I understand it, a telic relationship exists even if one of the persons on his end of it happens to die.

Christina Hagelthorn
christinahagelthorn@tele2.se

**References:**
Jens Littorin: *She Helps Young People off the Street*. Article in Dagens Nyheter, March 18th 2008.

**Credits:**
The drawings by Ken Sprague are from: www.kenspraguefund.org
As part of maintaining ethical standards within our practice, the Professional Conduct Committee watches how the code of ethics is applied in practice. In the event that you need to contact the committee, the appropriate contact is the Chair as follows:

Alyson Coupe, Chair of PCC
119 Murdock Road, Birmingham B21 9JR

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BPA Professional Conduct Committee

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119 Murdock Road, Birmingham B21 9JR

Tel: 0121 507 0595 or 0771 373 7083

The code of ethics for practitioners is the ‘Ethics for Practice Document 2008’. This is available on the BPA website in the section ‘About BPA’. Though labelled as a ‘Draft, it is a comprehensive code of practice and is the correct code for members to adhere to.

This committee continues to handle complaints against practitioners (if they arise) and they advise any practitioner who has received a complaint, is in any doubt on ethical practice, or wishes to discuss professional practice.

Alyson Coupe
I have just been awarded an interdisciplinary (psychology and drama in education) research PhD focussing on ‘The Violent Illusion Trilogy’; this is a five-day prison residency for violent offenders developed by Geese Theatre Company (UK). There are many psychodramatic elements to this residency and so the following attempts to capture something of the residency, Geese, and the PhD research project.

Geese Theatre Company (UK) was founded in 1987 by psychodrama’s own Clark Baim, following an appearance by the original US company at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The ‘Geese style’ utilises:

- Skilled but highly focussed improvisation within a clear structure
- A deliberate attempt to represent the actual audience present in the room
- The presentation on stage of inmates’ experiences back to the inmate audience
- Halting the action at moments of dilemma to canvass the inmate audience to advise the characters on stage
- The subsequent enactment of majority choices
- The use of half masks to illustrate the notion of ‘fronts’ and ‘lifting the mask’ to communicate honestly
- Direct interaction between stage and ‘audience’

These elements are seen at their best in the structured improvisational performances of ‘Lifting The Weight’ and ‘The Plague Game’, which I hope to write about at a later date.

‘The Violent Illusion Trilogy’ residency both incorporates and extends these elements. Monday opens with a performance of the ‘Violent Illusion Part I’, which depicts a situation of inter-generational abuse and acts as an ‘affect bomb’, challenging the inmate audience and speeding formation of rapport and trust in Geese as ‘credible communicators’.

From this point a strong cognitive-behavioural framework begins to roll out through small and whole-group work. Improvisational drama is used to stimulate explore and develop ‘thinking reports’ focussing first on a violent character from the play, then, through active offence reconstructions, on the men themselves, with participants taking roles. These sessions form the core of the work as the men then develop and practise cognitive behavioural ‘interventions’ around their violent reactions.

Wednesday sees another performance, the ‘Violent Illusion Part II’. This is a much more hopeful scenario focusing on a man returning from prison to his family and attempting to change. He is used as a model to further develop the cognitive-behavioural mechanisms by which men will attempt to ‘do different’ with their violence.

Both performances are played in full mask, which encourages men to project on to and identify with the characters, and Part II also features a series of taped thinking reports illustrating the internal dialogue of the central characters.

The culmination of the week is the Corridas on the Friday. There are highly ritualised challenges or ‘role tests’ using improvised drama, conducted before the inmate audience and within a specially constructed, circular enclosing set—the Corrida, Spanish for bullring. The language is deliberate as the theme is of testing, but the Corridas are far subtler than simply attempting to ‘wind up’ a man with a tendency to violence.

For example, some of the most difficult have been where a man convicted of killing his baby was asked to think of five good things to say about himself. Similarly, the men found it hard to be a special guest of a TV show and be asked to talk about their ‘new self’. The intensity of these Corridas must be experienced to be believed and provides a powerful catalyst for change. This is evidenced by the quantitative results of my research, which show a considerable reduction in levels of experienced and expressed anger before and after the residency. My research concludes that it is to be regretted that action modalities such as drama, theatre, and psychodrama and drama therapy are currently treated with such suspicion by the criminal justice establishment.

For me personally, the learning gained from the research has been immensely useful in elaborating my model of practice within psychodrama. This informs all my work as a trainer and consultant forensic psychologist, particularly in terms of programme design and the use of experiential methods integrated with cognitive-behavioural work.

More information about Geese Theatre is available on: www.geese.co.uk
Dr Mark Farrall info@ignition-learn.com
A Psychodrama Day in London

London Psychodrama Network presented their first Conference on Saturday October 3rd 2009 with Malcolm Pines as the guest speaker - and Maxine Daniels writes about it

The London Psychodrama Network invited Malcolm Pines to be guest speaker at the Dean Cross Health Unit in East London. Marcia Karp had encouraged him to come along and we had 19 guests for this one-day event.

The conference began at 10 am with Malcolm Pines opening the conference with a lecture. Marcia introduced Malcolm and informed us that she had asked him: “How come you’re so full of common sense?” to which he replied: “When you get to my age, you can’t be anything else”. This was an informal start to his lecture on Social Mind, Social Brain and Psychotherapy. He shared with us that he had been born a few streets away from the health unit, his parents were Russian Jewish immigrants, and he reminded us of the history of the area, including the events of the First World War through to the Second World War. This personal sharing with the audience ‘connected’ us to the local area. This was relevant to the theme of his lecture about human beings connecting as social animals.

He explained about Mirror Neurons. These are the brain cells that are stimulated when we are engaged in an activity and when we observe someone else’s activity. He posed a question to help us to think about our work as psychotherapists: How do we know about anybody else’s mind? He discussed feelings, relationships, experiments with animals and a ‘social synopse’, who is connected and who isn’t connected. He told the audience that he had trained in psychodrama and would be using terms such as ‘mirroring’, ‘doubling’ and ‘role reversal’. This was a lovely surprise as I’m not sure that everyone realised about him.

Other headings in his lecture were: Vagal Contribution, Mirror Self Recognition, and Neurobiology of Group Analysis and he recommended books, including: ‘The Brain that Changes Itself’ by Norman Doidge and published by Penguin.

Malcolm finished his session by disclosing to the audience that when he first read Moreno’s ‘Who Shall Survive’, he didn’t take it seriously at the time. However, he believes the title is an important question for human beings now. The more we understand humans as social animals, the closer we come to the destiny of who shall survive.

The rest of the day consisted of workshops introducing psychodrama and applying it in different settings. Marcia’s workshop Psychodrama & Mentalization was very popular and is also very topical at the moment in psychotherapy. Feedback from participants attending her session included:

“It’s good to do a workshop like this on psychodrama & mentalization. I use it in my work. It was a great workshop and I really enjoyed it. I’m thinking of training in psychodrama” (Astrid F).

“Brilliant. I’m completely new to the psychodrama world. It seems that using doubling and role reversal is quite tricky to get your head round but it worked out great” (Paula G).

Janine Turkie ran a workshop on the dilemmas of touch in psychodrama which produced some interesting discussions:

“Very interesting, really thought provoking, lots of food for thought, it was good” (David H).

We all ate lunch together and there was a lot of networking.

Chip Chimera, Olivia Lousada, Dusan Potkonjak, Maxine Daniels and Richard Oliver all ran workshops along different themes: Family Drama, Sociometry, Group Process and Introduction to Psychodrama.

The workshops finished at 3.30pm and then Marcia led the closing session. There was a friendly relaxed atmosphere and it seemed from the feedback that everyone had enjoyed themselves. Our team of presenters felt it was successful and we are now thinking of when the next one will be.

Marion N summed up the conference: “It feels as if psychodrama links aspects of psychodynamic, with dramatic and systemic thinking. It’s integrated and works with different therapies. I’ve gained a new insight and really enjoyed today.”

London Psychodrama Network have produced a calendar of events for the open sessions until July 2010. If you are interested in receiving the calendar or being on our mailing list, please contact chipchimera@btinternet.com.

Maxine Daniels
Earlier this year I had the good fortune to be invited to run a three-day workshop in Vaasa, Finland. It was the culmination of a fruitful and spontaneous encounter with Heidi Torkko who attended the BPA Conference in Liverpool in 2008. We both had a shared interest in using psychodrama and other creative methods with children and young people, especially in a school setting.

Eventually it happened and a program was put together and we waited for people to respond to the invitation to look at using creative methods with school-aged children. We were successful in getting 17 people together who wanted to participate in the workshop which included teachers, occupational therapists, social workers, and some psychodrama practitioners.

Vaasa is a really beautiful place and I would recommend it for a visit. It is small enough to walk around and there are plenty of places to visit. I travelled via Helsinki and then got an internal flight up to Vaasa.

The event was hosted by the University of Applied Sciences in Vassa who provided the wonderful venue and support in terms of administration. The welcome I received from Heidi and her husband Manu was warm and helped me feel relaxed as I prepared for the opening session the following day. The event started off in a most wonderful way by local school children who came along and sang and played instruments which showed how with encouragement these young people could expand themselves in a beautiful way. What stuck me most of all were the references within the songs to the landscape and animals that were a part of it.

It was May and the theme of the landscape, the animals, and the seasons resonated throughout the workshop. I think that the energy of the group was like the time we were in - namely early spring - with plants and people emerging from the darkness of a long winter.

Furthermore, we had the pleasure of visiting the great Finish artist Pekka Halonen, whose art is deeply connected with Finnish working life in the fields and farms, the seasons that influence everyone, and the myths and legends of Finland. I felt extremely privileged to see these paintings for the first time and especially his paintings of tomatoes - something I was surprised could grow in Finland.

The three-day workshop contained many deep connections to the land and stories passed on from grandparent and parent. These contained such wisdom and lessons about our hopes and fears.

Outside of the venue, Vaasa really did provide us with some wonderful spring sunshine which was gently encouraging the buds on the trees and woodland flowers to open up.

On the final day I showed a film about the work done in Liverpool using art, music, story-telling, psychodrama, and gardening in one inner city school. The group were most enthusiastic about the idea of developing gardening and therapy in schools.

The final part of the session involved a group exploration of connections and waking up in the forest which culminated in a collective childhood song. We ended with a story from Africa which was told twice in English and Finnish and brought us to a close.

The connections continue and we are hopeful to arrange another workshop in 2011.

I am most thankful to Heidi Torkko for her warmth and generosity, Ulla Ollinkoski for her organisation and reassuring emails, and to all those who attended in Vaasa who created such a warm environment adding to the Spring time sun.

Carl Dutton
Lead Therapist, Liverpool Haven Project for Asylum and Refugee Children.

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Tel:0151 709 6126
Announcement from Susie Taylor

I would just like to thank you for your thoughts of care and support I have experienced from you over the death of my mother. I was very moved and felt very much a sense of connection with you. It confirms my belief that we hold each other in mind as an organisation and I am very glad to be a part of that.

Susie
dikkta@aol.com

The British Journal of Psychodrama and Sociodrama

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The Administrator
8 Douglas Drive East, Helensburgh, G84 9BG
administrator@psychodrama.org.uk

Finding Psychodrama Books and DVDs

Where are Psychodrama Books and DVDs are readily available?
Read on …
www.ospip.co.uk (Oxford School of Psychodrama & Integrative Psychotherapy)
including
Psychodrama Since Moreno - innovations in theory and practice
The Handbook of Psychodrama
Prices include delivery

www.karnacbooks.com
including
Acting-in: Practical applications of psychodrama methods
Psychodrama Since Moreno - innovations in theory and practice
The handbook of Psychodrama

www.hawthornpress.com
including
Ken Sprague – People’s Artist
There is a discount for BPA members which is buy 2 get 3rd free and post and package is free within the UK.

www.jkp.com
including
Authors such as Anna Chesner, Nick Luxmoore, Mario Cossa, Zoltan Figusch, Madeline Andersen-Warren, Ron Wiener

www.psychotherapy.net
including
The Zerka T. Moreno Series (3 DVDs)

www.eurospanbookstore.com
including
Acting-in Practical Applications of Psychodramatic Methods – Adam Blatner
Foundations of Psychodrama History, Theory, and Practice – Adam Blatner

Photo Directory of Psychodramatists

For some years now, Adam Blatner has maintained a directory of photos of psychodramatists on his website. Browsing through the photos, it is clear how far psychodrama has spread across the world.

Here is an example of what is available:

Ron Wiener is a senior sociodrama trainer and is co-director of the MPV/SAM school of sociodrama and action methods(www.mpv-sam.com). He works across Europe and as far afield as Russia and China as a trainer and organisation consultant. He is also a community theatre director, producer and actor. He is the author of ‘Creative Training’ and ‘Community Action: The Belfast Experience’. He can be contacted at ronald.wiener@ntlworld.com.

Who may add their Photo to this website?

This is for those who are active enough in psychodrama that others might well want to connect with you. Adam would prefer those entering their name have at least 200 hours of training or experience and a fair amount of commitment to participating in psychodrama as a sub-field.

Making additions to the Directory:

Fresh photos and captions are welcome and may be sent to Adam Blatner at adam@blatner.com. Names and descriptions may be brief, eg “I am X, a psychodramatist in Y country”.

Why not go and have a look …
www.blatner.com/adam

Richard Oliver

Richard Oliver
1. Psychodrama in Action

As the title also indicates, this DVD presents psychodrama in action. It is a recorded session, with Zerka Moreno as director, leading a protagonist-centred psychodrama. The film starts with a brief introduction by Zerka of the five instruments of psychodrama: the protagonist, the director, the auxiliary egos, the group and the stage. Later on she then demonstrates the use of these instruments in action.

The session is somewhat unusual in the sense that there is no classical protagonist selection. It was the group who decided before the session, and outside of the director’s knowledge, to pick a group member to be protagonist. With processing type commentaries regarding the director’s thoughts, the film then shows a psychodrama session with its typical stages: warm-up, action and sharing.

The warm-up is focused on grounding the protagonist to the specifics of the problematic situation, aiming to anchor him in the physical reality of the experience, using physical starters, giving the director clues as to where the drama might go. Moving into action, Zerka then demonstrates the use of the most common psychodrama techniques: the double, supporting the protagonist and helping him pick up on the embodiment of his feelings; role-reversal, moving the protagonist closer to the unexplored territory of his problem, and helping him work through the conflict that lies at the core of his difficulties; soliloquies that help the protagonist become more aware of his thoughts and feelings; and the challenging stance of the director, demonstrating the psychodramatist’s role as ‘bearer of truth’. Following the drama there is sharing, and finally, closure, going back to the protagonist to see what feelings have emerged.

I was trying to watch this DVD from the perspective of a psychodrama trainee, and found it to be a useful learning tool. It gives a clear and easy to follow demonstration of psychodrama in action, and introduces the different stages of the session and the techniques applied in a simple and straightforward manner, offering very helpful pointers into the role of the director through Zerka’s commentaries. I would recommend this film to all novice directors as well as more experienced ones.

2. Zerka on Psychodrama

This second DVD is an interview with Zerka Moreno in which she talks about different aspects of psychodrama theory and practice. She begins with the origins of psychodrama, spontaneous theatre and ‘throwing away the script’, as well as the principles of encounter and spontaneity. Following this, she introduces the five instruments of psychodrama, talking in more detail about the role and functions of the director, followed later on by the protagonist and auxiliary ego, illustrating the use of these instruments with examples of her clinical practice. In the section entitled ‘Theory behind the practice’, Zerka presents a brief overview of the spontaneity theory of child development, linking this to the techniques of role reversal and doubling.

One of the sections I found most interesting is the one in which Zerka talks about her own experiences as director. She describes this as often experiencing herself in a cosmic
dimension, like being an empty vessel, touched by what Moreno called the ‘God principle’. She illustrates this with a moving example of intuitively picking up on the suicidal feelings of a group member she once directed and her psychodramatic work on this protagonist’s loss that followed. She finishes this section on surplus reality and the totally non-linear character of psychodrama work, which can take us ‘anywhere out there’.

In the final sections of this DVD we find out personal details about how Zerka got involved with Moreno and psychodrama. She also talks about the mirror technique and its confrontational aspect, having an arousing effect especially on non-cooperative patients. She also speaks of the challenges and doubts all directors experience about doing it right, regardless whether novice or more experienced. Her advice is ‘Practice, practice, practice!’ and not to take the world for what it really is. Finally, in the ‘sociometry’ section, Zerka revisits the beginnings of sociometry and Moreno’s early experiences at the refugee camps of Mittendorf during the First World War, and reminds us that Moreno’s group psychotherapy was intended not as an analytic, but as a sociometric approach.

3. Psychodrama, Sociometry and Beyond

In this third film Zerka’s students are the interviewers, each raising questions regarding theory and practice. Zerka’s responses are organised under various thematic chapters and coloured by references to her clinical as well as more personal, biographical experiences.

Zerka also emphasises the importance of societry as the underlying principle of group therapy and the potential to use sociodrama as an educational tool, especially in our times when one can only truly become a global citizen if one is able to learn about other people. Zerka also touches on the subject of how psychodrama fits into other cultures and the significance of creating ‘indigenous leaders’ of psychodrama in every such new culture.

Finally, in the closing section of this DVD Zerka talks about potential new areas where psychodrama could be involved and further developed, such as the school system, social services, hospitals, pre-marital testing, and psychodramatic schools for parents.

Out of the three films, this was the one I enjoyed most, as it addresses a great variety of interesting subjects going, as the title indicates, beyond the basics of psychodrama, sociodrama and sociometry. I would recommend these films to everyone involved with psychodrama or sociodrama, regardless whether they are still in training or already practising, as I believe they offer valuable learning points first hand from one of the founders of these methods.

These 3 training DVDs are available from:

www.psychotherapy.net

Zoli Figusch
figusch@hotmail.com
You Are My Flowers
Craig Stevens and Kate Frost have written a Clinical Example from one of their group sessions. This was written at the same time as their article in TELE November 2008 and now we have the space to include it

Warm-Up:
I ask the group to sit facing an empty chair and imagine that the empty chair is occupied by the issue they would look at if they were to use the time in the group this evening. I ask them to think of 2 questions that they would ask of it.

We stand in a circle and I ask them in turn to give the answer to the first question and we vote on that answer to determine the protagonist. I give Paula special consideration here as she had hung back last week and as yet had not mentioned anything of her concerns. Kirstie gets 4 votes for her answer ‘The Manifestation of All Things Bad’ and therefore is our protagonist.

Finding a Scene:
We stand and I ask Kirstie how she feels – she says ‘anxious’. I state with authority that we don’t need her anxiety so we’ll leave it to one side, placing a box of tissues on the table to represent the anxiety. I ask her, ‘What’s the mood now that’s gone?’ After some thought she says, ‘Calm.’

We then spend some time thinking about where the encounter could take place between Kirstie and ‘the other’ (her anxiety). I say it needs to be on her territory in order for her to feel in control and safe. We have suggestions from the group as to safe places, and prompted by these Kirstie chooses a field near her home where she sometimes goes with friends in summer and where she walks her dog every day.

Action:
She describes the field and I ask her to take the role of the dog. She sits on a chair to demonstrate being small and I interview her as Tag the dog. She represents What's going on in her head and the different people. I offer Jack Bauer to keep the layers safe as no-one is capable of doing this. I am left with the task and although she agrees, she can’t say. I suggest we take this layer off and put it somewhere safe, and as time was an issue I ask how we might end this encounter. Kirstie says that she and Tag would walk home. Jack still holds the layers securely in his pocket so I ask what she would like to do with the pens and as it looks messy like her. I ask how she would like the conversation to take place and she chooses to have the ‘Other’ sitting on the floor while she stands next to Tag. Kirstie chooses Steve to be the ‘Other’ in the conversation and says that it was not exactly another person, more a part of her.

With the scene set, she asked the first question:

Kirstie: What are you?
The Other: The Manifestation of All Things Bad
Kirstie: Why are you here?
The Other: I don’t know.

I ask whether the ‘Other’ is one thing or is made up of many things - many. I use the idea of a Russian doll to ask what the big outer layer would be and Kirstie says she knows what it is but can’t say. I suggest we take this layer off and put it somewhere safe, and as she draws a blank as to where this might be. I suggest that we might need someone to keep this stuff safe and although she agrees, she can’t think of anyone to do this. I ask for suggestions and the group suggests different people. I offer Jack Bauer to keep the layers safe as no-one is going to mess with Jack.

No-one in the group knows who Jack Bauer is, so I suggest he might be the best person to be chosen explaining that he’s the bad-ass-est of bad-asses. Kirstie chooses Joanna to hold the role of Jack and sits him a little distance away. She chooses a felt tip pen from a large mug filled with them to represent the unnameable top layer and gives it to Jack who puts it in his pocket, looking around him as though anyone who came near would get more trouble than they bargained for.

She repeats this process with several more layers and makes statements to each of them as follows:

- Parents splitting up – ‘You split me in two’
- All the mistakes I’ve ever made – ‘I don’t know why you still bother me’
- Anger and resentment – ‘Why am I not allowed to feel you?’
- Pain – ‘I never knew/know how to deal with you’
- Fear – ‘You paralyse me’

In each case she is considered and thoughtful and gives a pen for each layer to Jack who is rock solid. Throughout this Kirstie has not done the nervous laughter that often accompanies her speech and I comment on this, as well as reminding her from time to time of Tag’s presence.

Winding Down:
After the 5th layer was removed, I ask what’s left and she says ‘the things I don’t know’. Kirstie says that she could safely leave those things there and as time was an issue I ask how we might end this encounter. Kirstie says that she and Tag would walk home. Jack still holds the layers securely in his pocket so I ask what she would like to do with the pens and as it looks messy like her. I ask how she would like the conversation to take place and she chooses to have the ‘Other’ sitting on the floor while she stands next to Tag. Kirstie chooses Steve to be the ‘Other’ in the conversation and says that it was not exactly another person, more a part of her.

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Profile – Chris Andrews

The editor asked Chris Andrews in Bristol to describe his work.

I’m a psychiatric nurse and group worker in the NHS in south Bristol and we run group programmes for adults with a range of mental health problems, helping them to move forward with their recovery. I am also a qualified sociodramatist and a psychodrama trainee, and I use these techniques wherever I can. I think it’s really important to use action methods and psychodrama techniques as widely as possible. They’re too important and life-enhancing to be used solely in long-term psychodrama psychotherapy groups.

We run an intensive ten-week programme, consisting of 3 groups per week, called ‘Finding a voice’. As well as using a mixture of group discussion, psycho-education and CBT skills, each group member has an opportunity to experience some role training or a psychodrama vignette. We have also combined psychodrama techniques and Cognitive Analytical Therapy (CAT) with some success in our ‘InterActing group’. I think it’s really important to combine Morenean methods with other therapies and to bring them to as wide an audience as possible.

Psychodrama is often seen as a bit off the wall and elitist, so I’m really proud that it’s become more mainstream and relevant in south Bristol.

I have a background as an active trade unionist and socialist, and I think it is these experiences that first alerted me to the power of the group. The potential for dynamic change, personally and collectively, is the same in a campaign group as it is in the therapy room. If we come together and are creative and committed, great things are possible.

I first came across psychodrama through Ali Simmons in Bristol 12 years ago, and I have been running groups with her ever since. I was also inspired by Francis Batten to begin my sociodrama training 7 years ago. I loved the way Francis combined psychodrama, sociodrama, playback theatre and drama techniques, effortlessly drawing on different disciplines and approaches as the situation demanded.

I have always believed that psychodrama and sociodrama fit well together. During the weekend workshops that I run jointly with Ali Simmons, we look for the common themes that are emerging in the psychodrama work. If it feels helpful, we may then explore these themes sociodramatically. To give an example, on one weekend we explored the issue of boundaries between countries sociodramatically to illuminate the issue of interpersonal boundaries that had been recurring for psychodrama protagonists.

I was extremely lucky to work under Francis Batten, Ron Wiener and Di Adderley in my sociodrama training, and I now feel equally lucky to be working with Clark Baim and Susie Taylor in the Birmingham Institute for Psychodrama. Ideally, in years to come, I would like to work across the spectrum, psychodrama psychotherapy one day, organisational and sociodramatic another day, and maybe community development as well. I love the work and writings of the Australian sociodramatist Rollo Browne, who insists that the psychodramatic and sociodramatic are present in every enactment. The personal and the political are indivisible. We separate them out at our peril.

Chris Andrews

with support from Richard Oliver

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