

Sociodrama in a
Changing World



Sociodrama in a Changing World

Edited by Ron Weiner, Di Adderley and Kate Kirk
Sociodrama and Actions Methods Training, UK
2011

ISBN 978-1-4466-1786-1 available at
<www.lulu.com/product/paperback/sociodrama-in-a-changing-world/15062909>

Reviewed by Cher Williscroft

Senior sociodrama trainers from the United Kingdom, Ron Weiner, Di Adderley and Kate Kirk have collated an impressive collection of 34 articles on the history and development of sociodrama and its theory, practice and application, through the lens of four key themes: So What is Sociodrama? (Theory and Practice), Sociodrama in Cross Cultural Work, Sociodrama in Organisations and Sociodrama in Education and Training. The editors succeed in their goal of providing a “wide ranging collection of views on the current debate what is Sociodrama?” with articles gathered from practitioners and trainers living and working in 13 countries from all four corners of the globe. Each contributing author works at the cutting edge of sociodramatic development in their own country and has an impressive background of teaching and practice. There is a variety of different approaches, with some articles predominantly theoretical, some historical in flavour, some sociological and others case study centred.

As a sociodramatist Trainer Educator Practitioner (TEP) who has studied and practised in the Southern Hemisphere, I was astonished by the diversity of theory and practice in evidence around the world. The differences between countries and between practitioners and trainers are much more evident than the similarities. For instance, as the editors point out, the separation of psychodrama and sociodrama is more apparent in Europe and North America than in other parts of the world, where the two methods are more complimentary specialisations deriving from the same rootstock. Take Rollo Browne (Australia), for example, who describes both protagonist centred and group centred sociodrama where the “social and personal are inextricable” and the warm up is unified by a “sociodramatic question”. By contrast Atonina Garcia (USA) stresses the importance of clear boundaries between psychodramatic enactments, where players “assume hypothetical roles spontaneously, not their personal roles”. To add a little spice to the debate, Maurizio Gasseau (Italy) gives two clinical examples of what are described as “sociopsychodrama enactments” that consist of the development of a sociodramatic conflict which is resolved with protagonist centred psychodramas.

Many readers will be inspired to discover such a large community of sociodramatists living and breathing sociodrama into schools, management, theatre, communities, villages, universities, families and organisations, and applying the method with inspirational variety, depth and dedication. I was humbled and impressed by the work sociodramatists are doing in the 21st century in collectively bringing about “change for the whole of mankind” (Moreno, 1934).

While the book unifies sociodramatists around the world as contributors, each chapter stands alone with little attempt at integration. The editors’ welcome and introduction chapter assists the reader to make sense of the diversity by presenting an overview that pulls the disparate threads together. However, some of the articles lack cohesion in style, format and presentation. It is as if each author has been given an open slate on which to express whatever they want about sociodrama in their country. Some chapters are dry, theoretical and hard going. Some lack order, purpose, are too long or too short, or contain diagrams that are difficult to grasp without more commentary. On the whole, the book would have benefitted by more stringent editing or writing guidelines. The huge variety and often disparity of concepts, theory and practice, together with different writing styles and formats, produce a disjointed experience for the reader, rather than a sense of unification.

Several chapters are juicy with well set out case examples of sociodramatic enactments where the reader can easily imagine being there on the stage. I greatly appreciated the articles that contained actual descriptions of sociodramas, such as Rollo Browne’s (Australia) Sociodrama with a Marketing Team, which is a well ordered piece of writing in a corporate setting. Eva Leveton (USA) writes an inspiring chapter about working with different tribal cultures, including the attitudes and methods that have helped her in her work over 50 years. Her description of a role reversal between two tribes in a “culture drama” is stirring. Marcia Karp (UK) describes a sociodrama of the Greek financial crisis where the group was the protagonist. Some lovely gems for the practitioner are found in Irina Stefanescu’s (Romania) sociodrama produced for a pharmaceutical company and in Marjut Partanen-Hertell’s (Finland) clear outline and discussion of a sociodrama in an environmental context. I enjoyed the short but effective chapter by Smaroula Pandelis (Greece) on how sociodrama was used to teach a leadership course at a university. One of the editors, Kate Kirk introduces a different style by adding an insightful step by step “sociodramatic commentary” to her description of a workshop for those working with young people with Asperger’s Syndrome.

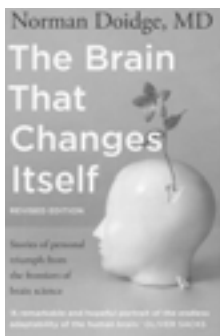
I read all 34 articles before discovering the short abstracts of each at the end of the book. Readers would be advised to turn to this useful index of subjects and keywords by chapter, and pick and choose those articles that interest them. A contributors’ biography with contact details, provided at the beginning of the book, is also a stimulating testament to the work that is being achieved by the sociodrama world community.

I am sure anyone interested in sociodramatic work in conflict management, teaching and education, team development, change management, cross cultural understanding, peace and reconciliation, community and organisational development, and political change on small and large scales will find the work of those who have contributed to *Sociodrama in a Changing World* heartening, educational and inspirational.

REFERENCE

Moreno, J.L. (1934). *Who Shall Survive? Foundations of Sociometry, Group Psychotherapy and Sociodrama*. Beacon House, New York, USA.

Cher Williscroft is a sociodramatist, TEP and managing director of Conflict Management Ltd (NZ). She conducts training in Aotearoa New Zealand and is a staff member of the Wellington Psychodrama Training Institute (WPTI). Cher can be contacted at <cher@conflictmanagement.co.nz>.



***The Brain That Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science* (Revised Edition)**

By Norman Doidge, MD
Scribe Publications, Melbourne, Australia
2010

Reviewed by Dr. Neil Hucker

When I first heard the title of this book last year I immediately thought of J.L. Moreno's (1978) Canon of Creativity, that circular/spiral relationship between the conserve and spontaneous new role development. With my underlying biological orientation as a psychiatrist I am always on the lookout for developing perspectives on the foundational biological processes of spontaneity, creativity and role development. How does the brain work? And how does it accommodate on going progressive change that facilitates continuous development of roles and the self?

For a long time the brain has been viewed as developing a fixed and conserved structure. Its various functions are seen as localised in particular areas to provide and use discreet, un-transferable processes. This view of the neurological brain does not accord with my psychodramatic experience. Although my understanding of conserved role functioning fits, the spontaneity process and the creation, training and integration of new roles does not.

The Brain That Changes Itself, written by psychiatrist and researcher Dr. Norman