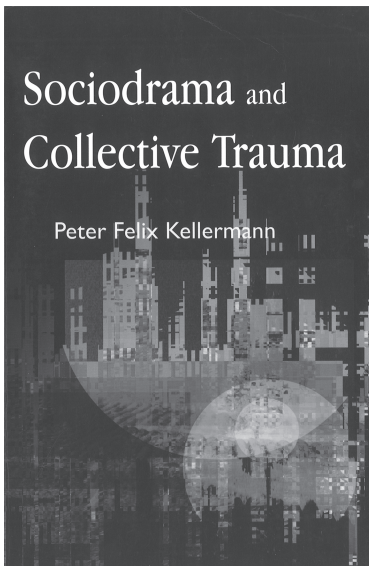


# Book Reviews



## *Sociodrama and Collective Trauma*

By Peter Felix Kellermann  
Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London  
2007

*Reviewed by Jenny Hutt*

In this wide-ranging exploration Peter Felix Kellermann draws a comprehensive map of current sociodrama practice and its use in collective healing.

Originally raised in Sweden by European Jewish parents, Kellermann has lived in Israel for 30 years, where he works as a clinical psychologist in a treatment centre for Holocaust survivors and their children. The book draws on his work with a large number and variety of trauma survivors and

introduces the work of selected sociodramatists and other professionals around the globe. *Sociodrama and Collective Trauma* builds on his previous publications *Focus on Psychodrama* (1992) and *Psychodrama with Trauma Survivors* (2000), and incorporates revised and extended versions of previous articles on interpersonal conflict management (1996) and sociodrama (1998).

## Passionate but Measured

Kellermann's writing is imbued with a concern to alleviate human suffering on a collective scale and a strong motivation to prevent more of man's inhumanity to man. While this deep commitment informs his work, his presentation is dispassionate, orderly, descriptive and measured. His first chapters introduce sociodrama, collective trauma and society. These are followed with thorough explorations of crisis sociodrama, political sociodrama, diversity sociodrama, conflict transformation in sociodrama, post war healing and reconciliation. These chapters introduce the roots of sociodrama, and provide examples of sociodramatic practice, guidelines for conducting sociodramatic interventions and links to the work of practitioners involved in a range of related work such as conflict transformation.

## Balanced

Although he is a committed practitioner, Kellermann's makes a balanced assessment of sociodrama. He acknowledges Moreno's development of sociodrama as a deep action method for dealing with intergroup relations and collective ideologies, and reminds us

of his grand vision to improve intercultural relations around the world. He observes that sociodrama can be surprisingly emotional, touching upon themes about which people feel very strongly. However, he also critically re-evaluates some of Moreno's original claims for sociodrama in an unsentimental manner. For example, he describes as "naive and utopian" Moreno's vision that lasting peace between people and nations will be achieved if the capacity to reverse roles is only cultivated (p136).

He reformulates Moreno's "exaggerated" goals for sociodrama such as human survival and world peace into a more humble form, such as "one of many activities that may help for conflict resolution". Sociodrama, Kellermann contends, "has a unique potential to help large groups of people work through their collective trauma so when the time is ripe they may approach the struggles of human coexistence with more awareness. At such times sociodrama may have a unique potential for bringing large groups of hostile people together and opening up new channels of communications between them. Sociodrama may be seen as filling different functions in the various stages of the development and resolution of conflict. Crisis, politics and diversity sociodrama deals with pre-conflict issues and are preventative in nature. Conflict sociodrama deals with the actual conflict after it has begun and during its course. The fifth kind deals with the various concerns during the termination of conflict" (p65). Thus he acknowledges sociodrama's limits. It is primarily a psychosocial intervention which can only briefly explore political and historical realities.

## Large Scale and Difficult

Kellermann's definition of sociodrama is large scale. He works with a minimum of 20-40 participants and sometimes with very large groups of 1000 at some international congresses. This calls for a team approach to leadership. In addition to the necessary knowledge and skills, he advises that sociodramatists need to have a lot of courage, stature and experience to do the job effectively.

He observes that after half a century, sociodrama is still relatively unknown as a method. It is only now that sociodramatists are coming into their stride. One explanation he gives for this slow development is that sociodrama is difficult to undertake. He mentions a number of particular challenges, such as the leader being personally tested in diversity sociodrama and the risk to participants of retraumatisation or revictimisation in crisis sociodrama. In response to both the scale and complexity of sociodramatic work, Kellermann highlights the need for sociodramatists to work in interdisciplinary teams with other professionals.

The book is written in an objective style. In the chapter on collective trauma I found this style rather exhaustive and relentless. Despite such an objective approach, little attention is given to evidence about the impacts of sociodrama. This probably highlights the fact that the field has not yet been the subject of thorough research.

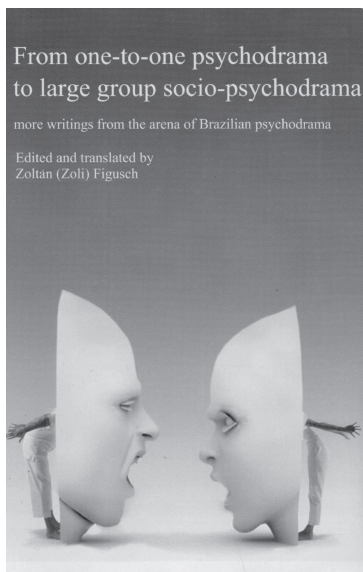
While the book takes an overview position it does offer vivid examples from time to time, which really bring it to life. An example is the story of a Bulgarian man who had spent six years in prison for destroying a statue of Stalin. He re-enacts his 'crime' in a political sociodrama and receives a standing ovation from the audience.

## Readers

*Sociodrama and Collective Trauma* does not claim to train the reader in sociodrama. It is broadly descriptive and probably most relevant to a wide range of practitioners trained in the psychodrama method. As a sociodramatist, I found that the book increased my awareness of practice worldwide, helped me put my own work into context and built an integrated and unified picture of sociodrama in disparate fields.

I felt appreciative of the big view taken by Kellermann and I found the work he described inspirational.

*Jenny Hutt is a Learning and Organisational Development Consultant living in Melbourne. She is a Sociodramatist, TEP in training and staff member at the Australian College of Psychodrama.*



***From One-To-One Psychodrama to Large Group Socio-Psychodrama: More Writings from the Arena of Brazilian Psychodrama***  
Edited, translated and published by Zoltàn (Zoli) Figusch  
2008

***Reviewed by Judith McDonald***

This, the second book of Brazilian psychodrama writings edited and translated by Zoltàn (Zoli) Figusch, is made up of a collection of 16 articles by leading Brazilian psychodramatists, some of whose work has thus far only been available in Portuguese. The book has two distinct parts, the first focusing on the theory and practice of what the Brazilians call one-to-one psychodrama psychotherapy, and the second on large group socio-psychodrama. Figusch provides an introduction to both.

Valéria Brito leads off part one with a chapter on the theory and practice of one to one psychodrama psychotherapy, posing some thoughtful questions along the way. She wonders whether one to one psychodrama is a deviation from, or an adaptation of the socionomic project and questions how, considering the limitations imposed by a group configuration reduced to the minimum, the psychodramatic dramatisation can be made viable in the individual situation. The following chapters present a range of useful practices, from starters that can be used to assist a client's warm up to dramatisation, to