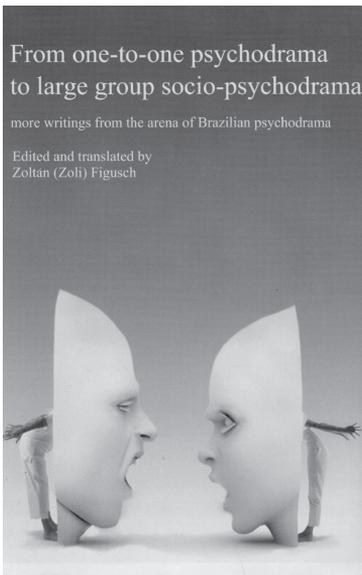


Readers

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.

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From One-To-One Psychodrama to Large Group Socio-Psychodrama: More Writings from the Arena of Brazilian Psychodrama

Edited, translated and published by Zoltán (Zoli) Figsch
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Reviewed by Judith McDonald

This, the second book of Brazilian psychodrama writings edited and translated by Zoltán (Zoli) Figsch, 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. Figsch 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

the use of toys and figures in concretisation.

A number of the contributors offer thoughtful contemplation about their work. For example, Rosilda Antonio presents us with her reflections on the significant shift she has made from a predominantly medical model to one incorporating the one to one psychodramatic method. In Chapter 5, Leila Maria Vieira Kim argues provocatively that the best therapeutic use of tele and transference may be made when the therapist is prepared to analyse the impact of these on his or her private self.

In other chapters, Zoltàn Figusch relates bereavement to psychodrama theory. Using a clinical example, he presents 'the melting clock' as a psychodramatic technique to be used in a one to one setting. Moysés Aguiar discusses how, from a theoretical and practical point of view, spontaneous theatre and the five instruments of group psychodrama relate to psychodramatic psychotherapy. And José Fonseca builds on his extensive contributions to psychodrama theory with techniques for use in relationship psychotherapy, his term for one to one psychodrama.

In the second part of this volume, the focus is on the application of psychodrama in large groups. If this book does one thing well, it is to demonstrate how Brazilian psychodrama is developing its own unique approach. Figusch draws a useful comparison. Here in the West we tend to engage with psychodrama in an ongoing individual or group process, with sociodrama seen as a more separate practice. In Brazil, the term psychodrama is more broadly encompassing, and includes not only ongoing psychotherapeutic psychodrama, but also such applications as spontaneous theatre, living newspaper, sociodrama, playback theatre and street dramas, many involving large numbers.

Anna Maria Knobel places sociodrama into an historical context and includes Moreno's original experiences with this modality. Including theoretical and technical aspects, she presents us with the contemporary Brazilian model, as well as the Brazilian forms of playback and spontaneous theatre, video-psychodrama and tele-psychodrama. The Brazilian movement has taken Moreno's original vision to heart. Rather than waiting passively for the audience to come, argues Regina Monteiro, it is the social responsibility of psychodramatists to go out into the community and actively seek people's participation in spontaneous theatre in public places and thus facilitate social benefits for all.

To illustrate how this is done in Brazil, the second part provides descriptions of large public psychodramas. For example, Cida Davoli narrates a public psychodrama that she produced in the municipal park in one of Brazil's state capital cities, Belo Horizonte. I was moved by her accounts of the experiences of some of the people who found themselves unexpectedly a part of the drama. She emphasises five stages of the warm up process that prepare and maintain spontaneity and creativity in the audience - adaptation to the environment, grouping, preparation for the actor role, preparation for the author role and preparation for the audience role.

Also fascinating were Marisa Greeb's accounts of large public events. In 'The Psychodrama of São Paulo City' in 2001, seven hundred psychodramatists conducted simultaneous street psychodramas in 158 locations involving about 10,000 participants,

and in an even larger event, 'Escenas de los Pueblos' (Scenes of the People), socio-psychodramas were conducted simultaneously in ten Latin-American countries! Psychodramatist Luiz Contro gives an interesting soliloquy of his experiences before, during and after directing one such large group. Arnaldo Liberman raises the question of confidentiality. He outlines the sociodramatic technique of re-plotting, a technique designed to protect the privacy of participants in public dramas whilst still facilitating the interconnection and catharsis of the participants. Elisabeth Maria Sene Costa and Terezinha Tomé Baptista advocate for the return of the living newspaper as a legitimate psychodramatic modality. The authors emphasise its cathartic effect on individuals, and its current and future potential for social and group analysis.

So why, I asked myself, the emphasis on reaching such large numbers? In a chapter titled 'Spontaneous Theatre: A Political Act', Regina Monteiro shed some light. Mass psychodrama began as a passionate response to the political situation in Brazil. In 1984, after twenty years of military dictatorship under which people had been persecuted, tortured and had died of famine, free elections were finally underway again. There was a strong call for participation. Using what she knew best, psychodrama, Regina initiated the 'Psychodrama of Free Elections' in São Paulo with 600 people present. It was the beginning of the return of the people's voice, and a medium by which they were able to begin to heal their repressed past.

Commenting on the São Paulo City event, Marisa Greeb describes it as "a disruptive and liberating act, as it broke away from conservative ways of dealing with the city. It was a revolutionary act, because of a desire of the citizens for more direct and effective actions had been sown simultaneously . . . It was a happy act, because it generated joy and desire to live and it increased the creative potential . . . It was a therapeutic act, because it aimed to overcome the resented forces of being a victim and to revive active and creative potential. And it was also an act releasing new currents of energy into the social environment, and thus starting a new movement of group politics" (p239). She explains further ". . . we finally live in a democratic regime; however, we still haven't conquered a democracy in which every citizen can have the means to become responsible for the collective production and creation of their nation's aims and objectives" (p244).

Thus, for Brazilian psychodramatists, large group dramas are politically driven acts where they strive to involve large numbers of citizens. They aim to be collectively responsible for, and reflective about their country and how it is run. This is a goal worthy of the inspiration of Jacob Levi Moreno, and perhaps one that we here in Australia and Aotearoa-New Zealand can ponder upon.

I found this a fascinating, though dense book, which could be (and probably needs to be!) read many times, to take in all that it offers. Each article is a full piece of work in itself. I did find the change in focus from the realm of one to one psychodrama to that of socio-psychodrama a little abrupt, and thought that this book could easily be made into two volumes. It is a book to dip into over and over, and I suggest it would be a most useful resource to have in any psychodrama library.