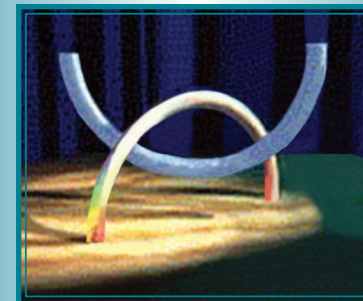




Published in Cooperation with the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama

The Journal of Psychodrama, Sociometry, and Group Psychotherapy

Volume 65, Number 1(A), Zerka T. Moreno Edition 2017



THE JOURNAL OF Psychodrama, Sociometry, and Group Psychotherapy

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**The Journal of Psychodrama,
Sociometry, and Group Psychotherapy**
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About This Journal

The Journal of Psychodrama, Sociometry, and Group Psychotherapy publishes articles and brief reports, including research, case studies, practitioner's techniques, and contributions of spontaneity and creativity, as well as book reviews. Our journal provides a window into our profession, through which the greater mental health and professional community can gain knowledge and understanding of our method.

The journal welcomes manuscripts that explore research, behavioral skill training, case studies, clinical and educational simulations, and role-playing. Peer-reviewed articles must be relevant to psychodrama, sociometry, and group psychotherapy with a focus on the theory and application of action methods in fields of psychotherapy, counseling, education, law, management, and organizational development. The application of intervention of action methods may be discussed either in a group or individual setting.

Submission Guidelines

We ask that manuscripts be electronically submitted in duplicate to asgpp@asgpp.org. Please attach them to an e-mail in .doc or .docx format. As we wish to give credit and visibility to our authors and practitioners, we ask that you submit both a picture of yourself and a brief biography. Please submit your picture in JPEG format, and a bio on a separate page, limited to no more than five lines, including professional identity and any educational background, institutions, work focus, or awards you may wish to include.

JPSGP utilizes a blind review system. All manuscripts, including references, should be in accordance with the guidelines of the American Psychological Association Publication Manual 6th Ed. For additional information on submission guidelines, please visit the ASGPP website.

We wish to thank all of our Editorial Board members, present and past, for their support and time in establishing the *JPSGP* and their dedication to continuously improve the quality and rigor of our publication.

Subscriptions

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Guest Editor's Note

In this special issue of the journal, we celebrate Zerka T. Moreno and her contributions as co-developer to the method of psychodrama.

When Zerka Toeman met J. L. Moreno in the summer of 1941, the meeting was momentous—it has been called the beginning of the most successful partnership in the history of psychiatry. She would help shape and modernize J. L. Moreno's psychodrama into the method that we practice today. In addition, her long life deeply impacted the people who crossed her path, including family, trainees, friends, and colleagues.

We hope this issue will serve as an important document that allows those of us who have known Zerka to remember her many contributions and inspiring moments while educating newer psychodramatists and psychodrama trainees who did not have the opportunity to learn directly from her. For the most part, the information and anecdotes that are contained in this journal have not been shared publicly in the psychodrama community, yet they are important pieces of the oral history of psychodrama, its development, and potential. They expand the history of psychodrama and give us important learning about our work and study. And because many younger psychodramatists and psychodrama trainees have not had the opportunity to meet Zerka directly or take training sessions with her, we hope future generations will have a sense of this amazing woman and her contributions to the field that we love.

In this print celebration, we remember Zerka with our special stories, much like a series of vignettes enacted on the psychodrama stage. We recall that Zerka was not only the wife of Dr. J. L. Moreno and the co-developer of psychodrama, but that she also held roles of sister, stepmother, mother, and grandmother—as well as immigrant, trauma survivor, editor, writer, cancer survivor, friend, traveler, mentor, trainer, and role model.

Zerka Toeman was born of Jewish parentage on June 13, 1917, in the Netherlands. When she was a young girl, she and her family moved to London, England. Even during her earliest years, she felt guided by a constant inner voice of reassurance and insight that nourished her in a family where her father was depressed and her mother seemed to favor her oldest sister.

Eventually this inner intuition would guide her to immigrate to the United States, arriving October 31, 1939. In a few years, she would learn about Dr. J. L. Moreno in Beacon, NY, even though she had not previously known about him or psychodrama. She would bring her suicidal sister Naomi, who suffered from periodic psychotic episodes, to Dr. J. L. Moreno's Beacon Hill Sanitarium, his innovative alternative hospital, with urgent wishes for recovery.

Moreno's psychodrama sessions brought relief to Naomi—these were the days before the availability of psychiatric medications—and Zerka would soon find her calling.

Zerka was just 24 when she met J. L. Moreno, who was in his early fifties. Working together starting in 1941, she first became his student, then his assistant, trained auxiliary, paramour, editor, collaborator, and finally, his wife. She gave birth to their child Jonathan in 1952.

J. L. Moreno called Zerka his muse and once was heard to declare, "I had the ideas but Zerka was the tool." Zerka took many of the ideas of "the Doctor" and refined them. She co-authored *Psychodrama Volume II* and *Psychodrama Volume III* with him. She edited *Who Shall Survive?* and many more of Moreno's written works. Her intuitive and intellectual grasp of the method, combined with her skills in organizing and synthesizing Moreno's constant flood of creative ideas gave her a pioneering role in the development of psychodrama and its documentation. She also gracefully mediated his confrontations and conflicts with peers in psychology and psychiatry.

She and J. L. constantly traveled throughout the United States and Europe to demonstrate and teach psychodrama. As J. L.'s health declined, she stepped out of the roles of assistant and collaborator; she became the leader. Zerka took the responsibilities of training at what was sometimes called the Psychodrama Institute, sometimes the Moreno Academy, and at other times the Moreno Institute. When Dr. Moreno died in 1974, she became director of training.

Many believe that her editing and writing made J. L. Moreno's ideas more accessible and more easily understood and accepted by professionals in other fields, and many others believe that J. L. Moreno and his method would have been a mere footnote in the annals of psychiatry and psychology had it not been for Zerka's constant dedication in supporting the development and expansion of psychodrama.

In addition to *Love Songs to Life*, which expresses Zerka's optimistic view of life in poetry form, she was the co-author with Leif Dag Blomkvist and Thomas Reutzel of the 2000 book titled *Psychodrama, Surplus Reality and the Art of Healing*, which uses a conversational format to explore Zerka's thoughts on the often-neglected technique of surplus reality. The book *The Quintessential Zerka: Writings by Zerka Toeman Moreno on Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy* was published in 2006. Edited by Toni Horvatin and Edward Schreiber, it contains a selection of articles that span a career of some 60 years, from Zerka's very first publication through 2004.

In her elder years, Zerka moved to a retirement community in Charlottesville, VA, and continued to teach and direct groups in the living room of her home. She also worked on *To Dream Again: A Memoir*, published in 2012, which tells the remarkable story of her life before, during, and after her years with Dr. Moreno. When she was unable to live independently and needed special care, she moved to a nursing home in Rockville, MD. She died on September 19, 2016.

This edition is different from our typical journal. It is a hybrid of personal recollections that record oral history from her students and others, documenting Zerka's contributions to the evolving method of psychodrama and the growth and

stability of its membership association and her teaching style. We are extremely fortunate to have articles from writers from England, Germany, and Taiwan because although Zerka immigrated to the United States in 1939, she traveled widely and truly was a world citizen.

Mohandas K. Gandhi once said, "My life is my message," and we could say the same of Zerka, who embodied and lived the ideals of psychodrama, as these articles beautifully illustrate.

In this issue, Regina Moreno offers a revealing and touching article of memories in "Growing Up with Zerka." The center of her story is her childhood social atom, comprised of her father J. L. Moreno, her mother Florence Bridge Moreno, and stepmother Zerka. She recalls her relationship with Zerka, starting long ago with their first meeting at Beacon, NY, and then moving through her teen years and into her adult life. Reading her article, we see Zerka at home, tending to the sociometric challenges of navigating the complexities of a blended family, making soup together, and sewing a prom dress for Gina. She tells how her mother eventually came to accept Zerka's presence in J. L. Moreno's life and how the two women finally became friends.

Jonathan D. Moreno's article "The Mother of Psychodrama (And Mine Too!)" is a loving tribute to his mother when he recognizes the publication of her long-awaited memoir *To Dream Again* in 2012. In honoring her, he acknowledges that she represents "the last of a generation of deeply cultivated Jewish women who read widely, spoke several languages, and respected the power of the word."

Marcia Karp, writing from England, reminisces about Zerka when she was starting to take over training duties at Beacon in "If Moreno Was God, Zerka Was His Prophet." She also offers a review of Zerka's memoir *To Dream Again*, plus the responses of Marcia's children who viewed Zerka like an extended member of their family, and observations of Zerka's ingenuity, skill, and warmth through their 40-year-plus connection. This article is adapted from the Foreword she wrote for Zerka's memoir.

Dale Richard Buchanan shares the experience of his relationship with Zerka in "An Extraordinary Life: Remembrances of Zerka T. Moreno." He begins with a story many years ago, when she took the role as his double in his first psychodrama session at Beacon Institute and in later years when they worked together as president and vice president of the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama (ASGPP). They cooperated as a team to raise funds to store J. L. Moreno's papers at the Countway Medical Library, one of the most prestigious medical libraries in the United States, and oversaw a flourishing organizational membership of 1,000. In addition, he remembers her unfailing support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and intersex people.

Tian Dayton offers an interview with Zerka that focuses on her many contributions to the method of psychodrama. As we read "An Interview with Zerka T. Moreno: Her Contributions to Psychodrama," it is clear that Zerka is speaking modestly, giving great credit to her husband. In Tian's words, she is "collapsing decades of significant—and even critical—modifications of J. L. Moreno's methods into a few sentences." Actually, her contributions are numerous, but this fascinating interview gives a general overview, including using

doubles in several innovative ways, having the protagonist take the role of director, keeping the protagonist in another central role throughout a drama, giving more space and visibility to the protagonist, and altering the teacher–trainer style, teaching with greater clarity and simplicity.

Exchanging the hat of guest editor for the second hat of contributing writer, I tell of my first meeting with Zerka in “Zerka T. Moreno, On and Off Stage” and how she inspired each of her students with her remarkable here-and-now presence. We also learn that the psychodramatic stage is the place to present any incident, event, or struggle in our lives, without censorship or shyness, and that role reversal is not simply a psychodramatic technique but a deep and important means to learn about others and ourselves.

Edward Schreiber discusses “Zerka, as an Existential Teacher,” appreciating Zerka’s ongoing encouragement, inspiration, and mentoring with his particular interest in the mystical codes and formulas in the writings of J. L. Moreno and remembering the careful labor as the editor who assisted Zerka in putting together her memoir.

Jeanne Burger—who Zerka publicly proclaimed as “the woman who saved my life”—tells about her friendship with Zerka with vignettes that show Zerka’s great sense of fun and reserves of resilience in “Travels with Zerka and the Rigors of Riga.” She remembers the ordeal they shared in 2000 when Zerka fell on the sidewalk during a visit to Riga, Latvia, breaking her hip. As we read, we are thankful for Jeanne’s skills as a former nurse, learn of the struggles of health care in post-Communist countries, and see how Zerka has been held in such high esteem by so many psychodrama friends throughout the world.

Irene Daenzer-Vanotti, a radio and print journalist in Germany, gives us the interview that she conducted with Zerka in 2010 in Charlottesville, VA, when she took part in one of Zerka’s weekend psychodrama trainings. The interview, which we have titled “An Interview with Zerka Moreno: ‘Every Morning It Amazes Me What Happened to Me in This Life!’,” appeared in a German magazine and aired on German radio but has not been seen in the United States or in any English-language publication. In this wide-ranging interview, Zerka talks not only about her views on psychodrama, relationships, and group experiences but also about her thoughts about the cosmos, God, being Jewish, and how she felt closest to Buddhism.

In “Why Become a Psychodramatist? Wisdom from the Life of Zerka T. Moreno,” Kate Hudgins documents the living wisdom that Zerka shared during their 25-plus years of professional and personal connection. Writing as friend to Zerka and as an internationally known trainer, she recounts what she considers the five main reasons that Zerka always gave to answer the question “Why become a psychodramatist?” and interweaves elements of training for a younger generation of psychodramatists and trainees. It is good teaching for new students who often are initially overwhelmed with the complexity of the method of psychodrama.

Nien-Hwa Lai, a leader in the psychodrama community in Taiwan, writes about Zerka’s support and encouragement that enabled her to start the Taiwan Association of Psychodrama in “Encounters with Zerka in Taiwan and in the United States.” We now see the fruits of those labors: Today the association has an

important role in the movement to promote psychodrama in Asia; Taiwan has become the second country after Canada to have an agreement with the American Board of Examiners in Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy to certify people in their home country. In addition to telling about Zerka's valuable professional mentorship, Nien-Hwa shares about Zerka's impact as a psychotherapist in her personal growth.

Anath Garber, after visiting Zerka at her nursing home in Rockville, MD, contributes "Zerka Directed Anath's First Psychodrama, Anath Directed Her Last." Anath, a one-time lieutenant in the Israeli army, had scrupulously saved her money to come to the United States to study psychodrama with J. L. and Zerka T. Moreno at the Beacon Institute. In this "full circle" story, she details moments of spontaneity and creativity between the two and how a psychodrama naturally evolved out of a pile of yellow Post-it notes with a nurse's aide standing in as an auxiliary. Anath tells us that act hunger does not diminish with aging and when satisfied, it has a vitalizing effect. The effect surprised everyone, including Zerka's son Jonathan, who gave Anath permission to share her story with the journal. (Might psychodrama serve as a possible intervention for people in nursing homes?)

Linda Ciotola, an experienced TEP who nevertheless considers herself new to Zerka's in-person teachings, muses about her roles and visits in Zerka's later years in "Psychodrama Baby." She shares how Zerka took great pleasure in many visitors that Linda brought—all of them women who found a wonderful role model in Zerka. Linda also tells of Zerka's openness to her gifts of Reiki treatments, how Zerka conferred the special nickname on her, and watching her age into bravery and grace.

Finally, in "Zerka's Address to ASGPP," we have Zerka's final address to the attendees of the 73rd Annual Conference of the ASGPP in 2015 in Philadelphia. This address was compiled and read by Jeanne Burger who prefaced this address with, "My message from Zerka is indirect. She did not write it, and therefore it may not have her usual eloquence. This is what she talked to me about, telling what she wanted to say to the ASGPP. I know that she wants to be speaking to you and that you want to hear from her."

It has been a labor of love to compile this edition and to have psychodramatists and others answer the call to share their memories of Zerka and their stories of how she has impacted their minds, hearts, and souls. Thanks to the contributors who entrusted me, as guest editor, with their precious stories, as well as Sylvia Israel, who connected me with Irene Daenzer-Vanotti and her interview, and to Sérgio Guimaraes of Buenos Aires, Argentina, for contributing his photograph of Zerka on the front cover of this journal. Also, special thanks to the supportive journal board of editors including outgoing editor Tian Dayton, ASGPP's executive council, ASGPP Executive Director Deborah Ayers, the Zerka T. Memorial Task Force, and especially the generous donors who have stepped forward to provide financial resources for this edition to be printed and distributed.

Of course, there are many more stories and certainly hundreds of thousands of people who have been touched by the life of Zerka T. Moreno. I hope that we

will continue to share our stories with each other, again and again. When we share these stories with each other, she stays alive and vibrant within our hearts.

Warm Regards,

Karen Carnabucci, MSS, LCSW, TEP

Report from the Zerka T. Moreno Memorial Task Force

March 1, 2017

Dale Richard Buchanan, PhD, TEP, Chairperson of the Zerka T. Moreno Fund

Congratulations and appreciations to the psychodrama community! We have raised sufficient funds to: (1) publish a Zerka T. Moreno memorial issue of *The Journal of Psychodrama, Sociometry, and Group Psychotherapy*; (2) catalogue the Zerka T. Moreno Collection at the Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine in Boston, an alliance of the Boston Medical Library and Harvard Medical School, and the home of the J. L. Moreno Collection; and (3) create a permanent Zerka T. Moreno International Scholarship for the annual meeting of the ASGPP.

On behalf of the Zerka T. Moreno Memorial Task Force, I would like to thank all the individuals, institutes, and organizations that have generously contributed to the Zerka T. Moreno Memorial Fund. One hundred and three donors have contributed a total of \$33,006. These donors are listed by name and amount contributed at the end of this report. Many others in the psychodrama community have also informed us of their intentions to honor Zerka T. Moreno via volunteering or offering scholarships for their trainees and clients.

Total Donations

One Hundred and Three Donors	\$33,006
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Disbursement of Funds

Banking and PayPal fees	\$454
Countway Library of Medicine	\$12,000
Copy Editing, printing and postage for ZTM Journal	\$7,437
Digital and online hosting for ZTM Journal	\$429
ASGPP for ZTM International Scholarship	\$12,686
Total Disbursements	\$33,006

Zerka T Moreno Memorial Issue of the Journal

All members of the ASGPP and all donors who contributed \$100 or more and were not members of the ASGPP will receive one copy of the memorial Journal; those

donors who contributed \$500 or more will receive an additional copy of the memorial Journal. The Zerka T. Moreno memorial issue of the Journal will also be available in digital format and will be hosted online and available to ASGPP members as a member benefit.

Zerka T. Moreno International Annual Meeting Scholarship

One permanent Zerka T. Moreno International Scholarship for the annual meeting will be awarded annually. The scholarship will be a full waiver of the annual meeting registration fee, including, if any, both pre- and post-conference workshops. This scholarship is open to any first-time annual meeting attendee who resides outside of the United States and is a citizen of any country other than the United States. The scholarship may be given only once to each individual. All eligible individuals will be entered in a lottery and one recipient will be chosen at random.

In addition to the money donated directly to the ASGPP to establish the Zerka T. Moreno International Scholarship, the Fund also authorized the printing of an additional 100 copies of the memorial Journal to be used as a fund raiser for the Zerka T. Moreno International Annual Meeting Scholarship. Since the journal is published in units of 100 at this point there appears to be a total of 150 copies of the memorial journal that will be for sale. Thus, an additional significant amount of money will also be contributed for the Zerka T. Moreno International Scholarship Award.

Zerka T. Moreno Collection at Countway Library of Medicine

The Zerka T. Moreno Collection consists of correspondence, workshop files, Moreno Institute records, biographical materials, and collected publications. The papers, which were donated to the Countway in 2000, span the years 1947 to 2000 and comprise about 36 cubic feet of material. Edward Schreiber and Jonathan D. Moreno also donated additional materials covering the period between 2000 and 2016.

To prepare the Zerka T. Moreno papers for research access, trained archivists at the Center for the History of Medicine will physically arrange the papers and house them in preservation-quality folders and boxes. Books and other published items will be transferred to the rare book collection as appropriate to provide optimal access by cataloging individually. Archivists will then create a finding aid for the collection, which is a descriptive guide that provides a summary of the papers, a biographical overview, and a detailed collection inventory. The finding aid will be available online for discovery and access by researchers worldwide. For an example, go to the Countway website (www.countway.harvard.edu) and search for “J. L. Moreno.”

All necessary funds for the accession and cataloging of the Zerka T. Moreno Collection at the Countway Library of Medicine have been sent to the library. Once completed, the Zerka T. Moreno Collection will join with the J. L. Moreno Collection already accessioned and cataloged at the library.

A formal opening and reception for the Zerka T. Moreno Collection at the Countway Library of Medicine will be scheduled after the collection has been

accessioned and catalogued. All donors, members of the ASGPP and American Board of Examiners certified psychodramatists will be notified via email about this event. In addition, announcements of the opening reception will be posted on social media. It is anticipated that the opening reception will occur in the Fall of 2017.

Brief History of the ZTM Task Force

In the fall of 2015 the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama established a Zerka T. Moreno Memorial Task Force. Dale Richard Buchanan, Jeanne Burger, Karen Carnabucci, Linda Ciotola, Linda Condon, Kate Hudgins, Louise Lipman, Edward Schreiber, and Sandy Seeger served on the Task Force.

Upon establishment, the first order of business for the Task Force was to arrange for and approve death notifications for Zerka T. Moreno. Those notifications were sent out immediately upon her death.

We are also pleased that The New York Times Magazine of December 25, 2016 featured a biography of Zerka T. Moreno in the “The Lives They Lived” issue that included such luminaries as Muhammad Ali, David Bowie, Edgar Mitchell, Prince, Janet Reno, and Antonin Scalia (page 32).

The Task Force agreed upon three actions to honor Zerka T. Moreno: 1) printing a memorial issue of the Journal; 2) establishing a Zerka T. Moreno International Scholarship for the annual meeting; and 3) raising funds so that the Zerka T. Moreno Collection at the Countway Library of Medicine can be accessioned and catalogued.

Fund Raising Committee

In September 2016, Linda Condon, the president of the ASGPP, appointed Dale Richard Buchanan as chairperson of the Zerka T. Moreno Fund Raising Committee.

An intensive and extensive outreach and notification campaign was launched on October 1, 2016 to communicate the goals for the Zerka T. Moreno Memorial Fund and how individuals and organizations might donate to the fund. Contributions were accepted by check and via the ASGPP’s website PayPal account through January 15, 2017.

Announcements were published in both the ASGPP’s “Psychodrama Network News” and the American Board of Examiners’ “Board News.” Email blasts were sent to ASGPP members and their contact lists, and to all certified psychodramatists by the ABE’s website. Social media (Facebook, GroupTalk, ASGPP discussion list, etc.) were also engaged. Announcements were also sent to the psychodrama professional organizations in Asia, Europe, Israel, and South America.

In the coming months and years there will most likely be individuals who will be disappointed that they were not adequately informed so that they might have contributed to the Zerka T. Moreno Memorial Fund. It is our viewpoint that it is never too late for an individual or organization to celebrate Zerka T. Moreno.

Her life and legacy can still be honored via scholarships, publications, research, education, training, and other creative memorials from individuals, institutes, and organizations.

Acknowledgements and Appreciations

The Zerka T. Moreno Task Force extends our sincere and heartfelt appreciations to Linda Condon, president of the ASGPP, and the Executive Council of the ASGPP for the management of the fund raising. Moreover, the ASGPP waived all administrative fees for the fund raising and thus 100 percent of the monies (minus the direct costs for PayPal and banking fees) went directly to the identified programs.

Special recognition is due Debbie Ayers, executive director, whose constant vigilance and kindness in the administrative processing of these donations has been outstanding. We also wish to thank Patty Phelps for her creativity and dedication in creating graphic designs for our informational announcements and notices, preparing email blasts, and postings on social media (Facebook, etc.) that informed the psychodrama community about the Task Force and Fund.

Most assuredly the Zerka T. Moreno memorial issue of the Journal could not have been published without the generous donation of time and expertise from Karen Carnabucci, who served as the managing and guest editor for this issue of the Journal.

Summary and Conclusion

When Moreno wrote *Who Shall Survive?* in 1934, he theorized that only the spontaneous and creative would survive. He was speaking not only of individuals but also of organizations and systems. In order for the professional practice of psychodrama, sociometry and group psychotherapy to survive and thrive, our associations and organizations must also flourish.

The best way for each of us to honor Zerka T. Moreno is to see that her legacy continues so that both the body of knowledge and the spirit of psychodrama are passed along to future generations.

Through your generous contributions, our three tasks are complete. However, the mission is never over. The Zerka T. Moreno Task Force and Memorial Fund extends our sincere gratitude to all those who contribute to the present and future legacy of Zerka T. Moreno.

Zerka T. Moreno Memorial Fund Donors

Donations as of February 15, 2017

Dale Richard Buchanan	\$2,500.00	Frank Del Nuovo	\$200.00	Donna Little	\$100.00
Antonina Garcia	\$2,500.00	Steven Durost	\$200.00	Rosalie Minkin	\$100.00
Jonathan D. Moreno & Leslye S. Fenton	\$2,500.00	Brittany Lakin-Starr	\$200.00	Mimi Moyer	\$100.00
Nien-Hwa Lai	\$1,500.00	Kathryn Levan	\$200.00	Ray Naar	\$100.00
Anath Garber	\$1,200.00	Nancy Paschuk	\$200.00	Catherine Nugent	\$100.00
Sung Hee Cho	\$1,000.00	Herb Propper	\$200.00	John Olesen	\$100.00
Mario Cossa	\$1,000.00	James Sacks	\$200.00	Ira & Joyce Orchin	\$100.00
Tian Dayton	\$1,000.00	Judy Swallow	\$200.00	Louis Perrott	\$100.00
Louise Lipman	\$1,000.00	Anonymous	\$150.00	Patty Phelps	\$100.00
John Nolte	\$1,000.00	Rhona Case	\$150.00	Martin Prescott	\$100.00
Janet Sahafi	\$1,000.00	Meg Givnish	\$150.00	Rebecca Ridge	\$100.00
Gong Shu	\$1,000.00	Frederic Harris	\$150.00	Georgia Rigg	\$100.00
Jeanne Burger	\$500.00	Steve Kopp	\$150.00	Taylor Rockwell	\$100.00
Elaine Camerota	\$500.00	Moreno Museum Association	\$105.00	Eberhard Scheiffele	\$100.00
Adam Chi-Chu Chou	\$500.00	Anonymous	\$100.00	Ed Schreiber	\$100.00
Linda Ciotola	\$500.00	Arts for Change	\$100.00	Sandra Seeger	\$100.00
Sandra Garfield	\$500.00	Martica Bacallao	\$100.00	Ed Semansky	\$100.00
Kate Hudgins	\$500.00	Sue Barnum	\$100.00	Deborah Shaddy	\$100.00
Nancy Kirsner	\$500.00	Adam Blatner	\$100.00	Dario Silva	\$100.00
Mary Anna Palmer	\$500.00	Soozi Bolte	\$100.00	David Silverman	\$100.00
John Raspberry	\$500.00	Karen Carnabucci	\$100.00	Daniela Simmons	\$100.00
Lo Sprague	\$500.00	Letitia Coburn	\$100.00	Fredilyn Sisson	\$100.00
Tom Treadwell	\$500.00	Maureen Colombino	\$100.00	John Skandalis	\$100.00
Siyat Ulon	\$500.00	Linda Condon	\$100.00	L. Scott Urmev	\$100.00
Marlo Archer, Deb Gion & Grayce Gusmano	\$300.00	Jon DeAngelis	\$100.00	L. Scott Urmev & Ronald C. Collier	\$100.00
Sue McMunn	\$300.00	John Devling	\$100.00	Rebecca Walters	\$100.00
Robert & Jacqueline Siroka	\$300.00	Karen Drucker	\$100.00	Michael Wieser	\$100.00
Claire Marx	\$250.00	Estelle Fineberg	\$100.00	Jill Winer Prouty	\$100.00
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Lindsay Chang	\$200.00	Ann Hale	\$100.00	Other Contributions (4)	\$141.00
		Bonnie Hirschhorn	\$100.00		
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Growing Up with Zerka

Regina Moreno, MA¹

Regina Moreno shares her childhood social atom, comprised of her father J. L. Moreno, her mother Florence Bridge Moreno, and stepmother Zerka T. Moreno. She recalls her relationship with Zerka, starting long ago with their first meeting at Beacon, NY, and then moving through her teen years and into her adult life. In her article, we see Zerka tending to the sociometric challenges of navigating the complexities of a blended family, making soup together, and sewing a prom dress for Gina, eventually inviting her to bring the social atom to the stage for her own work as an adult. Gina tells how her mother eventually came to accept Zerka's presence in J. L. Moreno's life and how the two women finally became friends.

KEYWORDS: Zerka T. Moreno; Regina Moreno; Florence Bridge Moreno; J. L. Moreno; psychodrama; history.

I was told the story of my first meeting with Zerka so many times that I can visualize it like a scene in an old black and white movie, circa 1942.

I can imagine standing on a sunny day on the lush lawn in front of my father's hospital in Beacon, NY. In this scene, my mother has her hands on my shoulders to keep my little body from twitching. The striking lady across from me appears very tall and thin. I see her dropping to her knees, her big skirt spreading around her like an exotic bird. Her arms are stretched out wide.

The story goes that I ran into those arms, and she hugged me close. In those years, I must have been very hungry for connection. I longed to play with the children in the yard of the apartment house across the street. Standing in the cool summer evening, shivering in one of the prissy dresses that my mother had chosen for me, I wanted to cross the forbidden street to their junk-strewn yard. I wanted to be their friend and play their games, and I imagined kicking off my dusty patent leather shoes, pulling off my little ankle socks and racing with them, joining in their wildness and shrieking abandon.

Each day as I grew older, I became more acutely aware of the tension between my beautiful dark-haired mother, Florence Bridge Moreno, and my father J.L.

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Moreno. She was his second wife—he had married an agreeable Beatrice Beecher in 1928 to get help in obtaining his immigrant status and then divorced—and he and my mother married in 1938. She was an accomplished musician and very well-educated; she had earned a master's degree in psychology, and her published research focused on sociometry with children in a summer day camp at our home in Beacon.

My father was often not at home, either with his patients at the hospital, which everyone called the “Big House,” or working with the woman who would become my stepmother and his new muse. My mother became aware of their affair. She gradually fell apart; she became convinced that I had a dark spot on the side of my neck that couldn't be washed away. No one else saw this mark. She spent hours crying in bed or pounding away on her piano.

I was upset by my father's frequent absences, and I longed for his presence. I waited with anticipation for those magical moments when he walked through the door of our little house on Wolcott Avenue in Beacon, when I would rush into his ample body and his warm embrace. He pulled the long-awaited-for treasures out of his pockets: marzipan shaped like fruits and tiny animals. For me, he was a combination of Santa Claus and God. Sitting on his ample lap was my most secure place in the world.

That seemingly safe haven came crashing down when my parents finally separated when I was 10. My mother had suffered what was called at the time a “nervous breakdown,” was hospitalized for a short time, and then moved to live temporarily with my father's younger brother William and his family in Queens, New York.

Mother and I were finally deposited in what seemed like a drab apartment. My father spent the first night there; I thought he was going to stay with us and that we would live together. The next morning I watched as he packed up his shaving gear. My heart starting pounding with panic; even writing about it now I feel the familiar cramps. As he started to walk out the door with his bag, I grabbed hold of his pant leg screaming, “Daddy, where are you going? Don't leave me!” over and over as he closed the door and was gone.

After two miserable years in Queens listening to my mother's crying in that dark bedroom with her frequent migraines, my father and his new wife Zerka decided it would be best for me to return to live with them in Beacon. It later became clear that Zerka had pushed for this different living arrangement. In a way, it was a courageous move—it was not easy to interact with an angry preteen girl. On the other hand, my mother told me that my father made this offer to avoid paying child support. Well, I guess I never wanted to believe that.

It was a struggle to adjust to the new living situation in my family home in Beacon. My father's new muse—my stepmother Zerka—was now permanently settled in our house. I watched Zerka as she typed my father's new book, aptly titled *Who Shall Survive?* Her competent fingers appeared to fly over the keys as my father paced the living room carpet, wearing a path as he dictated, his hands gesticulating in the air. I am the confused preteen in the scene, feeling like a nonperson after choosing to leave my mother with her endless tears.

Zerka tried to engage me when she was not absorbed with my father and their work. At first I wanted to make her disappear like the Wicked Witch of the West in a puff of black smoke. I fantasized my ideal scenario, just Daddy and I living happily ever after, like a perfect fairy tale where I was his only princess.

One evening Zerka stopped rattling away on the typewriter keys. I heard her clipped English accent calling me: “How about we make soup tonight?” It was the housekeeper’s night off, and dinner would be either pizza or leftovers.

Zerka began pulling salami, smelly cheese, a bowl of gravy, tomatoes, and vegetables that had seen better days from the fridge. I offered some noodles and my father’s favorite knockwurst. Together we started chopping, then laughing, as we threw the mishmash of ingredients into a large pot.

“When I was your age, during the war in London...” *Oh no*, I thought, *not another lecture about the starving children in Europe!* “...we didn’t have many choices. Fresh vegetables were scarce and meat was expensive, mostly canned Spam. So we learned to ‘make do’.” We added some spices to the soup, and the soup turned out to be delicious.

Many Friday nights, we worked together on our now-ritual soup creation. The project of “making do” brought us closer together, and I decided Zerka was really OK!

When Zerka and my father were home, we sat at the formally set dining table every night for dinner. Zerka was interested in our manners, and one of her favorite rhymes was, “Keep your elbows off the table. This is not a horse’s stable!”

Despite her busy schedule, Zerka found time to take me shopping for the latest teenage fashions, despite my father’s objections. She listened as I shared, in tears, that some my classmates called me a “weirdo from the nut house.” She was not a warm and fuzzy person, but she always gave me clear messages of how to cope with my feelings, along with directing a few empty chair confrontations.

One special gift from Zerka was her way of helping me discover my singing voice. She often told me the story of that afternoon when we were driving to the Psychodrama Theater on 101 Park Avenue in Manhattan. I was singing show tunes from “South Pacific” in the back seat.

Zerka called out: “That girl has a voice! An amazing voice!”

That led to the hiring of a vocal teacher and two summers studying voice and theater at the National Music Camp, the Interlochen Arts Camp in Michigan. The hope was that I would study at The Julliard School and eventually have a career in voice, perhaps opera and theater. I never followed that dream, but I have continued to perform throughout my life as a church soloist and in opera and musical theater productions.

There were many other highlights in those difficult years of dealing with my father’s new marriage as well as my mother’s constant anger. My little brother Jonathan was born—I was thankful that I was still the only girl!—and he turned into the loving little boy who ran to greet me at the door calling out “Ga Ga” when I returned from another difficult day in school. I remember Zerka sitting at the sewing machine late in the evening, finishing a blue silk dress for me to wear to the junior prom, and later helping me fill out college applications in between working with my father in the office and on the psychodrama stage.



The trip to Europe in 1953, a year after Jonathan's birth, was actually a tour to showcase my father's work. It was very special for me to be invited along. Again, Zerka was able to spend time with me, taking me to the Louvre in Paris and walking up the Spanish Steps at the Piazza di Spagna in Rome where we both managed to get pinched!

During my first year in college, Zerka's growth in her clavicle was finally diagnosed as bone cancer. After attempts at radiation therapy and visits to a number of doctors, the decision was made to amputate her right arm and the shoulder area. My father didn't tell me the full extent of the surgery. I came home when she was recuperating in bed. I was terrified of confronting her. Zerka, in her usual no-nonsense approach, took off her pajama top and showed me the neat stub.

"I wanted you to see it right away so you would know how it looked and wouldn't imagine some horror scene," she said. A few weeks later, she embarked on a lecture tour with my father, sporting a new mink stole. When I look back on this traumatic event, I continue to be impressed by her amazing courage and fortitude.

In the meantime, my mother was wrapped up in an unhappy second marriage. She had a young son. She continued her obsession with my father and her rage toward Zerka. I still wasn't sure where I fit in. However, one message was loud and clear from both my father and Zerka—that I needed to finish college and find a career.

My first teaching position was in Poughkeepsie, NY. Forty-three third graders faced me that first exciting day. I was eager to try my new ideas for hands-on projects and sociometric choice activities. Zerka and my father offered to house me in the small basement room in their small gate house. My little brother, then 9, ran to welcome me every day like an eager beaver, wanting to hear the latest antics of

my students and to help me grade papers. I was already spending time with my Indian boyfriend, a Fulbright scholar who would become my husband in a year and a half. My family was relieved that I had finished college and was starting a new career.

I clearly remember the day my father called me upstairs and announced to me that it was time to find my own apartment and move out of the house. He told me in so many words that they had offered the basement room to a 19-year-old female student from Vassar who wanted to train in psychodrama. I barely could hold back my tears. I made a small starting salary and was not able to afford my own living space. I noticed that Zerka was standing by my father with tears in her eyes. Was it her expression of empathy for me or was it her suspicion that the young lady was to become my father's new muse? Even at 73, my father was lusting after young women. This was like a slap in the face for me, but moving and making do with a small room near my new school helped me learn to manage on my own.

How lucky for me that I discovered my life's vocation in teaching and eventually continued on to receive a master's degree in sociology. I remember how proud Zerka was when the principal at one of my first schools told her: "This young woman is a gifted teacher, a natural in the classroom."

My father died in 1974. It was a devastating loss for me and the subject of my article "Who Will Be There to Catch Me?" in the European journal *Zeitschrift für Psychodrama und Soziometrie*.

A few years later I divorced my Indian husband, leaving behind years of domestic violence. I had two children and my wonderful career, but then I spent my single years like a needy rabbit racing around single bars in Manhattan looking for love in all the wrong places.

However, there was a rainbow at the end of the tunnel. I met my present husband Janos, and my family breathed a sigh of relief. And Zerka always said, "You struck gold!"

Zerka also had a new partner, Merlyn Pitzele. They met at one of the public Saturday evening psychodrama sessions in Beacon during the summer of 1973. As described in Zerka's memoir, Merlyn told my ailing father 3 months before his demise, that he had a crush on Zerka and declared his love for her. According to Zerka's book *To Dream Again: A Memoir*, she made light of it saying, "That is just transference, we don't take it seriously," partly to protect herself if there were repercussions. Later in that same training program, Merlyn spoke up as group members introduced themselves: "My name is Merlyn Pitzele, and I feel a lot better than I did an hour ago, because I went and told Moreno that I was in love with his wife."

Did this contribute to my father's depression after what appeared to be a stroke? We never knew the details; we only had the diagnosis of our family doctor. My father stopped eating, only spoke German, and died a few months later. Merlyn moved into our house in Beacon.

Eventually the hospital was sold and became a treatment center for alcoholics. That center finally closed. The hospital building was torn down. Eventually the entire property was sold to a developer and became a housing development. Before the sale of the property in the 1990s, the psychodrama theater, stage, and training

institute were relocated to Boughton Place near Highland, NY. Zerka was then the full director and promoter of my father's life work as she continued to lecture and travel throughout the world, refining J. L.'s ideas.

Zerka invited me to join her weekend trainings at Boughton Place. I believe that her motivation was to help in healing my wounds and to create a strong bond between us. On the same stage that had been forbidden to me as a child, I began the process of confronting the sources of the pain: losing my father to Zerka, his obsession with his work, and finally his death. I spent many sessions sitting on her lap as she spoke the words I needed to hear from my father: "I want you to know I always loved you. But I was often absorbed in my work and didn't give you the attention you needed and I am sorry for that. I am proud of the strong woman you have become."

After one of the sessions, Zerka sent me a two-page typed letter that began: "That was a brave and beautiful thing you did. I know you felt you had to do it and that was the right forum in which to do it, but it was brave nonetheless. You will not easily be forgotten."

As a gesture of reconciliation she invited my mother to visit in Beacon—a courageous move. My mother agreed with some major reservations. How strange it must have been for my mother to see the changed look of her former home and relive the memories of the past!

Zerka described to my mother in her matter-of-fact style how reluctant she had been to pursue the relationship with my father, especially because a young child (me) was involved. She told him she would move to California. My father said that he would follow her. Zerka revealed to Florence that my father had been interested in other women, suggesting to my mother that she was not the only one who had suffered from his wandering eye.

Eventually my mother began to see Zerka in a different light, more like a victim in a difficult situation. The photo taken on that momentous day shows the three of us in the forgiveness mode, my mother warmly clutching Zerka's arm, all



of us smiling. After that, my mother and Zerka called each other to chat, discussing the use of the supplement glucosamine chondroitin in relieving their joint pain. One day, my mother surprised me by saying, “Zerka suffered too from your father’s exploits, and she is a good person.” That moment of the forgiveness blew me away after all of the years of resentment.

My mother died in 2006 when she was 94 years old. She had been suffering from severe arthritis, and her mind was clouded with dementia. Zerka, five years younger, had been blessed with an amazing memory, having completed and published her memoir *To Dream Again*. She was able to remember in detail events I had forgotten. During our visit in December 2014, she asked about my daughter Miriam Zachariah, who has become a certified trainer in psychodrama, group psychotherapy, and sociometry and conducts on-site trainings and workshops in Toronto. I told Zerka with a mother’s pride that despite the trauma of her early years, my daughter has been strong and focused. Zerka looked at me and smiled, her eyes full of love: “Yes, that’s wonderful, but you know where she got it from.”

I treasure one of our last photographs together, taken with Zerka in her room at the nursing home: not just stepdaughter and stepmother, but two senior women, survivors of a long journey, women who have lived an amazing life. Together, tender, feeling bonded.

Thank you, Zerka! You have been a strong mother figure for me!



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The Mother of Psychodrama (and Mine, Too!)

Jonathan D. Moreno, PhD¹

Jonathan D. Moreno, son of Dr. J. L. Moreno and Zerka T. Moreno, remembers his mother on Mother's Day and celebrates the publication of *To Dream Again: A Memoir*, which came out in 2012. This article was published on the Psychology Today website on May 12, 2012, and is reprinted by permission of the author and Psychology Today. We have corrected a typographical error in the original article, noting that Zerka lost her right arm to amputation at the age of 40.

KEYWORDS: Zerka T. Moreno; *To Dream Again*; Psychology Today; psychodrama; history.

I'm not sure how many 94-year-olds have published new books this year, but I know that Zerka T. Moreno has published one that is both inspirational and an important document in the history of psychology.

It happens also to be a pleasure to read; my mother is among the last of a generation of deeply cultivated Jewish women who read widely, spoke several languages, and respected the power of the word. (Even though she's my mother, as a history of science professor I'm going to claim total objectivity!)

Her memoir, *To Dream Again*, recounts both her remarkable life and her work with her partner, my father J.L. Moreno, a psychiatrist and the pioneer of psychodrama, group psychotherapy, sociometry (social network theory), role playing, encounter groups, and sensitivity training. J.L. died in 1974 just short of his 85th birthday, but as she was 27 years younger Zerka was able to carry on for him.

Though my father was a creative genius, in many ways it was my mother who matured and systematized the way that psychodrama therapy is conducted around the world.

To Dream Again begins with the event that shaped most of her life and nearly all of mine: the amputation of her right arm and shoulder at age 40 due to a chondrosarcoma. I was five years old, just old enough for the emotions and memories to be seared into my consciousness.

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Her side of the story can and should speak for itself. For my part, I remember best my apprehension at her return from the hospital: Would I see blood, I asked my father? I can still see her walking into the front door, a wan smile on her face. I stood as far away as I could, behind our dining room table, as though to protect myself and await reassurance.

That reassurance came quickly, as my next vivid memory is leaning out of our car's driver's side window shouting excitedly to the students and staff on the grounds of my father's sanitarium: "Hey look, my mother's driving!" She says she was so anxious she was trembling, but I remember only the thrill of this, the first of her many self-rehabilitated accomplishments.

The book is about much else, of course: Her family's origins and struggles to survive the catastrophes of 20th century Europe; her adventures as a 22-year-old immigrant in 1939; her complicated relationship with her bipolar elder sister that resulted in her meeting my father; their lives together vaulting through the world of psychotherapy from the 1940s through the early 1970s; and her energetic and charismatic career since then.

Along the way there are nuggets of observation about the political and social upheavals of the era, including their sometimes harrowing Cold War travels to the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries, all in the name of advancing my father's passion for a form of psychotherapy that would truly embrace all of society.

Practitioners and students will especially enjoy her accounts of encounters with the famous and near famous in psychology and the theater. Psychodrama was at that time a unique venue that attracted both scientists and actors. Among the attendees at their nightly public psychodrama sessions on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, she remembers a young man who reminded her of a sardine, whom she later came to recognize as Woody Allen. As the 1960s encounter movement cannibalized my father's ideas, Abe Maslow wrote a letter of protest to Life magazine, which had covered Fritz Perls' Gestalt therapy without mentioning J.L.'s lifetime of prior work on group methods. (And, I might add, without the excesses of that time that did much damage.)

Characters like Eric Bentley, Paul Tillich, Carl Rogers, Norman Mailer, Karl Menninger, Jacques Lacan, Virginia Satir, Margaret Mead (with whom I had a long dinner conversation at age 10), and even the Huxleys pepper these pages, among many others.

But enough from me. *To Dream Again* is not only a present to the world and a beautiful work of literature, it is also a Mother's Day gift to a grateful son.

Happy Mother's Day, mom!

If Moreno Was God, Zerka Was His Prophet

Marcia Karp, MA, TEP¹

Marcia Karp reviews *To Dream Again*, the memoir of Zerka T. Moreno, and reminisces about Zerka when Dr. J. L. Moreno's health began to decline and she was starting to take over training duties at Beacon Institute. In this thoughtful historical document, she shares how her association with Zerka started in the 1960s and her observations of Zerka's ingenuity, skill, and warmth through their 40-year-plus connection. She offers many anecdotes of Zerka's skills, her view of "ethical anger," and how Zerka helped people feel related to her. This article is adapted from the Foreword she wrote for Zerka's memoir, published in 2012.

KEYWORDS: Zerka T. Moreno; *To Dream Again*; psychodrama; history.

INTRODUCTION

I envy anyone about to read *To Dream Again*, the memoir of Zerka T. Moreno, for the first time. It is a remarkable and extraordinary read.

In *To Dream Again*, Zerka tells us wise stories of survivor courage, steely determination, graceful dignity, witty humor, and just plain guts. It is not just the perseverance Zerka shows against all odds, not just her taking her place on the world stage of healing, psychotherapy, and humanitarianism, not so much that she is a craftswoman and the grande dame of psychodrama, but what an honor it has been to have her in our troubled and joyful world.

The book is a lesson in how to live. It teaches us that courage is the most important of all virtues. You can practice any other virtue erratically, but nothing consistently without courage.

My association with Zerka began with a short letter more than 40 years ago. I was 22. The letter not only acknowledged a psychodrama workshop I had conducted but also suggested I come for training at the Moreno Institute in Beacon, NY. The letter was both a pat on the back and a tap on the shoulder. The letter was signed by Zerka T. Moreno.

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True to her direct style, she was right. I needed training. I knew very little about psychodrama although I had a master's degree in speech pathology from Columbia University in New York. I had read *Psychodrama, Volume 1*, written by her husband and partner, J. L. Moreno, the founder of group psychotherapy, sociometry and psychodrama, the author of 300 titles, and the father of more than 40 concepts. For two years, I had watched him and others direct psychodrama sessions in New York City, where I gained insight by playing roles in the raw dramas of life.

I started using action methods with young people who stammered, and its effectiveness in establishing rapid speech fluency was dramatic. Armed with these experiences, I became a head speech therapist for people with minimal brain damage. The work was dedicated to helping people struggle to speak again. Life was interesting until I got "the letter," and then everything changed.

Receiving psychotherapeutic training in 1965 was new and exciting. At the Moreno Institute in New York City, located at 78th and Broadway, we students were part of an audience of 150 people. Moreno warmed up the group by talking about personal concerns and current events. He engaged the audience: He shook hands, looking for clues of resistance or willingness to participate in psychodrama, a therapy of relationships. He was charming, charismatic, easily made friends, and established an atmosphere of safe disclosure. It felt like the room had its arms around you.

Moreno said, "We start with nothing and structure the performance very gradually." He introduced Zerka, who directed with a calm, nonjudgmental manner. She seemed ready for anything. On the semicircular wooden stage, she interwove Moreno's work with the next moment of action. The theme that interested most people became the focus of the session, with one person's issue as the subject.

The protagonist presented scenes from her real-life situation; with Zerka's sensitive direction and introduction of the technique known as "surplus reality," she was able to take part in a scene that had never occurred. The protagonist thanked and said goodbye to her deceased mother. Through role reversal, she was able to express her mother's feelings in saying goodbye. She mourned the loss in both roles and completed her farewell. There was relief in producing tears of joy and sadness, which had been unexpressed for years. The role of the significant other, her mother, was played by a group member. The group member was shown the role through the perception of the protagonist.

Action was directed towards connectedness to others. It was a theater to heal the mind, where people are not victims of their situation but rather are able to change their interpersonal relationships. "Free yourself from old conventions and manifest your own creative talent by creating a new world," was the slogan of the Expressionist movement in Vienna, which influenced the young J. L. Moreno. When people realize that they can put their thoughts and feelings into action, they become involved in the great task of changing the world.

To have the courage to dream again and to believe anything is possible is the cornerstone of the Morenos' work. Questions such as: What is it in your life that

prevents you from doing what you want? What is your unfinished business? With whom do you need to speak? What are you feeling and thinking as you speak?

Help the protagonist remember the past, deal with the present, and move forward into the future. Since the body remembers what the mind forgets, both verbal and nonverbal expression is utilized in psychodrama. Closure follows the warm up and enactment. People in the group share similar experiences, normalizing the protagonist's brave journey, and shifting the perceptions in their own relationships.

That night, Zerka helped the protagonist see whom she could become and to realize a dream.

After the session, the Morenos invited their students to dine with them at the Russian Tea Room. Rudolph Nureyev and his dance partner, Dame Margot Fonteyn, were seated nearby. The waiters joked with Zerka and J. L., complimenting him on his lively nationwide television interview the night before when Moreno spoke with warmth and humor about the purpose of group psychotherapy and the importance of creative-spontaneous expression in everyday life. Our "famous" teachers drove us home to the Beacon Institute along the Hudson River.

My consumption of sour cream, pancakes, red caviar, and Russian tea—combined with my excitement—made sleeping difficult that night. The comparison of small-town life with metropolitan New York City was unsettling. It triggered thoughts such as: "Am I an insignificant nothing or am I something important in the universe?" This existential consideration gave an opportunity to choose between meaninglessness or universality and responsibility. My mind and stomach churned with thoughts, and I missed the first day of training!

Zerka was the main trainer in the theater. Dr. Moreno, then 73, conducted evening seminars in their living room, discussing and processing the day's work. As a teacher, Zerka was clear. You knew where you stood. Trainee directors could hear her shout, "Your back is to the audience." "I can't hear you." "Don't forget to reverse roles."

Her doubling, where both participants interweave "two-way empathy," helped us express the unexpressed, expanding and deepening our thoughts and feelings. She became the "inner voice" and uncannily was spot on. We felt validated because our inner worlds were understood. Her trainer role was undisturbed by her doubling. She was involved and present with the subject of the session, and, at the same time, training the director.

One day, Zerka was working with a suicidal young woman. The group was asked to witness and remain quiet. The protagonist desperately wanted to disappear from this world. Zerka suggested that she lie down on the stage and take the role of a dead person for as long as she wanted. The lights were turned blue. It was dark and silent. My dog, Samantha, known to Zerka, but not to Doctor, sat under my chair. After an interminable silence, Samantha slowly walked up on the stage to the "dead" person and licked her on the cheek, then turned and returned to her place with me. The young woman began to sob. A soft canine brought her back to life, on behalf of all of us. The protagonist looked surprised and said,

“That is the tenderness I am missing. I want to live again, to find something gentle.”

Zerka had the weekly responsibility of buying food in large quantities for us. On rare occasions, the training session was spontaneously canceled. Perhaps there was a good film we could see together. Doctor and Zerka held hands at the movies, touching in its ordinariness. Each July 4, Independence Day in the United States, we went to a park for fireworks and then for pizza, Moreno’s favorite.

At night, when Doctor lectured, Zerka listened, using the time for sewing. At the age of 40, she had surgery for sarcoma, which took her right arm and shoulder. When sewing, she held the material in her teeth and sewed with her left hand. It modeled a miraculous determination and ingenuity. Her brand of womanhood was tailored to fit the situation. Once in a heated debate about marriage, she told us, “Some women get satisfaction out of seeing a clean floor. Me? I don’t give a damn.”

Zerka is “both tough and tender. She is always herself,” Doctor said of her. One student reflected, “Her handicap quickly drifted to the periphery of awareness, and we related to her as an expert on psychodrama. Nevertheless, the actual experience was surely no less than it would be for anyone, but she never imposed her handicap on us.”

Shortly after the amputation of her arm, she found herself in front of 200 prison inmates. She looked at the sea of “prove-it-to-me-faces,” flung back her cape, and declared, “This is my handicap. What’s yours?” A fierce invitation to an encounter, which confronted the men with their fallacies and as equals, as victims, as handicapped, as prisoners, as human beings. It showed that people are more alike than they are different. She used her strength as a survivor and related eye-to-eye, face-to-face. It worked! Under the best of circumstances, life isn’t always fair.

Years later, after her work with the inmates, Zerka talked about the concept of “ethical anger” to university graduates. She discussed this special form of anger which is vital to our welfare.

In 2006 in *The Quintessential Zerka*, she writes:

“I am not referring to righteous indignation; that is a pallid concept compared to ethical anger. We are all aware that there are circumstances in which the expression of anger, no matter how justified it may seem to us, when expressed, will seriously damage a relationship or wound a person in such a way as to do other kinds of damage. Under those conditions, anger is best circumvented. There are other times when the release of anger will be of benefit to all persons concerned but it is not always easy to determine in advance what the outcome will be.

“There is usually a fairly broad-based consensus that some social conduct is right and some is wrong. Now what did Moreno mean by ethical anger? It was not a cold, dispassionate kind of anger. No, indeed, a striking example of what he meant was Christ’s action in

chasing the moneylenders out of the temple. It is a far cry from turning the other cheek.

“There are actions, which are suitable in one context and totally unacceptable in another. With this concept of ethical anger, Moreno gave us a new category of understanding as well as behavior, namely that there are certain moments in our life when we are justified to be angry by not permitting things to happen which our conscience could not allow and by acting upon its prompting, we are, in fact, being a model for others to think about and emulate. Ethical anger is of a passionate nature, a new experience, and meant to challenge and arouse. It upsets values and actions of persons who offend a value we hold dear and which is evident to us. Under such circumstances, we should not allow our standards to be violated.”

How many of those inmates with whom Zerka had worked had been violated in their childhood? Indeed, how many patients or clients who come to see psychotherapists are emotionally, sexually, psychologically, or physically abused? Some wind up repeating their history. Some live in a permanent state of confusion without ever being able to address the moral or ethical wrong of the original perpetrator. He or she acts on impulse, rather than on spontaneity, the latter being an adequate or novel expression from within oneself, appropriate to a given situation. One of the tasks, particularly in impulse control, is to externalize the preoccupying internal drama.

Exploring in action, the unspoken, the unexpressed, and the unborn helps connect people in relationships that are stuck in the past. During this process, the therapist can touch the “autonomous healing center.” For some, the healing center is difficult to reach, particularly with individuals who feel unloved and unwanted. Once in 2008, Zerka wrote to me, “How could I not want more people to have the experience of being given what they need: the knowledge that they are lovable and worthy of being loved?”

Echoing her view, an Inca tribesman, from northern Argentina, quietly stood in front of 1,000 psychotherapists during the International Association of Group Psychotherapy’s 1985 congress in Buenos Aires. He said, “For 800 years, we have cured people by asking them ‘Who doesn’t love you?’ Then we ask, ‘Who is affected by your not being loved?’” With an elegant simplicity, he sat.

Highlighting the importance of love and connectedness for psychotherapists is more than apt. For example, when my daughter Poppy was 8, she was trying to understand how Zerka was connected to our family; she figured we must be related by the way she felt. She looked quizzical and then said, “Zerka is an unconscious relative!” As children do, she made up an answer that fit how she felt. Indeed, Zerka made people feel *related*; with her, with others and with themselves.

Peter Felix Kellermann, the Israeli author and psychodramatist, remembers her similarly in a personal message in 2009:

“She was able to bring people into an intimate personal encounter based on mutual recognition and appreciation. Her journeys throughout the world and her close relations across different borders built a universal sense of family, independent of our backgrounds. Her personal experience with her sister’s mental illness gave her a unique inner understanding of how the mental processes work.

“Always empathic, an extraordinary ability to put herself into another person shoes, during the person’s burden of deep depression, strange hallucinations, or being scared of his or her own shadow. Zerka was there, role-reversing, doubling, mirroring, and providing her wise words of sharing. How many therapists in the world could ever provide such immediate healing?

“I have firsthand experience of her warm touch on my shoulder, which in a magical way, provided support and consolation, as well as a push to get on with it. Always graceful, brilliant in her perception, listening to the needs and feelings of the other, and then responding in a way which invites communication and sharing that pulls the process of relationships forward. As mentor, she sometimes took the role of mother but also let herself be nurtured by others.

“Zerka was always willing to write a foreword to books and to send a word of congratulations for achievements.”

There is a story of the greatest archer in the world. He was traveling in the countryside where he saw a bull’s-eye with a perfectly placed arrow in the center. He measured it to be sure. He had never seen that kind of marksmanship. Finally, he met the archer who shot the arrow and asked, “Tell me, how did you achieve such accuracy?” The archer said, “It’s easy. I shoot the arrow first. Then I paint the bull’s-eye around it.”

Similarly, my daughter said of Zerka’s ingenuity:

“She is very accurate. No nonsense, she just gets on with it. I have found her much more awake, aware, and willing than most. I am impressed that she is such a whiz with e-mails. Also that she laughs a lot, especially with you.”

My son Jackson shared his 20 years of memories of Zerka:

“There wasn’t a distinction made between teachers and students. As a child, I thought that the basis of people being there was to address what was missing; it seemed everyone had ‘something’ missing. When they related to me personally, it was fun. They were caring, and we played ball. When they went to the theater, they went as a group, to deal with something that was larger than they were individually. Mostly, they came out smiling.”

After years of assisting, listening and learning, Zerka became the preacher of Moreno's gospel. If he was God, she was his prophet. Quoting and explaining his Germanic density, Zerka spoke a language that people understood, using concrete examples of everyday life. She developed Moreno's teachings into a systemic treatment approach with established strategies, as exemplified in her important 1965 paper on "Psychodramatic Rules, Techniques and Adjunctive Methods," republished in *The Quintessential Zerka*.

In Zerka's words from an unpublished interview with me in 1983, she said:

"People ask for so little, and they don't always even get that, so they are immensely grateful when they get something for themselves. Who are we but channels? People telephone me years later, one 38 years later, to tell me how much the session gave them and turned their life around. Others are so full of act hunger that they have no memory of the work, and that's fine too. Just so it works. It's not an ego trip; it's a cosmic journey."

In her memoir, Zerka writes:

"I often think looking back, that my life is a fairy tale. I came to Beacon, looking for a new life for my sister who was psychotic, and what I found was a new life for me. That was a profound lesson for me. Whatever else you do, don't search for yourself. Look to help others and then you will find what you need."

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An Extraordinary Life: Remembrances of Zerk T. Moreno

Dale Richard Buchanan, PhD, TEP¹

This article contains recollections and remembrances of Zerk T. Moreno during her 40-plus year relationship with Dale Richard Buchanan. The article describes three events and the roles that Zerk played during those events. The three are: Zerk as a director and mentor to students in training; Zerk's leadership and collaboration during her second presidency of the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama; and Zerk's indefatigable and relentless support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and intersex people. The article concludes with Zerk's philosophy of living in the moment and making each and every moment count.

KEYWORDS: history; Zerk T. Moreno; psychodrama; AIDS/HIV; transgender; ASGPP; LGBTQI.

Victors write history, and survivors write memorials. Although there are many who knew Zerk far longer, and far better than I, most of them are no longer alive. So it remains to us, the living, to write her memorial.

Zerk and I first met in October 1971, and since that day she has made a profound difference in my personal and professional life. It was an honor and privilege to write the prologue for *The Quintessential Zerk* and the afterword for her memoir *To Dream Again*.

In the afterword of her memoir (Moreno, 2012) I wrote, "With the publication of her last two books (this is her fourth book) she has given us a front seat to the history of her life. From each of these books it is now evident that since 1944 Zerk has been an equal partner in the development and promotion of Moreno's work in psychodrama, sociometry and group psychotherapy. Moreover, it is clear that without her steady and constant stewardship of his work after Moreno's death, both J. L. Moreno and his contributions would be mere footnotes in the history of psychiatry. Zerk's passion, scholarship, and leadership have

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deepened, broadened, and fastened both of their places in the pantheon of the founders of modern psychiatry” (p. 257).

While much has been written about her extraordinary life and remarkable journey, I would like to share with you my recollections of Zerka.

ZERKA'S EXQUISITE CONNECTION AND SUPPORT WITH A PROTAGONIST

While my intellect was challenged and stimulated by my experiences at Saint Elizabeths Hospital in Washington, DC, it was at the Moreno Institute, under the guidance and support of Zerka T. Moreno, that my childhood wounds began to become healed, my heart was re-opened, and I developed the courage to lead a more authentic life. My most treasured and cherished personal experiences with Zerka took place when I was a trainee at the Moreno Institute in Beacon, NY. During that time Zerka was my director, my double, and my witness.

My first drama at the Moreno Institute focused on my beloved mother's sudden and tragic death when I was 8 years old. I recall choosing Sharon Hollander to direct, Sandra Garfield to play the role of my mother, and Zerka to be my double.

Motion pictures and audiovisual recordings do not and cannot capture the exquisite connection that Zerka, as a double, forged with a protagonist. Although her voice (accent, cadence, tone, and pitch) was quite different from my voice, throughout the drama I felt she had merged with my heart and soul, and spoke aloud my innermost thoughts, feelings, and secrets.

During the processing after the drama, one student asked why the director did not explore the sexual tension that was palpable between Dale and his mother. I must have looked shocked or perplexed, because Zerka looked to me and asked how I was. I told her that I had no memory of any sexual tension or feelings towards my mother in the drama. Zerka quickly responded to the student and stated that there was no sexual tension between Dale and his mother. The group continued with the processing and I can't recall any of it.

Months later, I had a dream where Sandra Garfield, who had played my mother in the drama, was wearing a sexy negligee, and I was a young boy wearing my Davy Crocket pajamas. We were going round and round in a revolving door, and there was a plate of glass separating Sandra from me. When Zerka and I next met I asked her about the dream and whether it was part of my psychodrama. Zerka simply stated that she had remembered that scene and added that, “Of course, you were both in your clothes.”

Then I asked Zerka why she had hushed the student from processing the sexual implications of that scene. Her response was that after a drama the protagonist is in the psychodrama recovery room. In order for the drama to set and to deepen, the protagonist must stay calm and not become distracted or upset or chase after branch warm-ups. She said that after the drama what the protagonist needs most is to rest, incorporate the drama, and reflect on the drama so the protagonist may transform his life. Furthermore, she added that I was not ready to acknowledge that part of the drama. She said that I needed time to integrate and

process my experience of the drama. She noted that any premature interpretation or processing could be damaging to the healing process. Then she turned towards me and said, “Now you are ready to process that part of the drama. Shall we begin?”

ZERKA'S LEGENDARY LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION SKILLS

My most treasured and cherished professional experience with Zerka was when she was president of the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama (ASGPP). Almost 10 years after J. L. Moreno's death, there was a great deal of turmoil and uncertainty within the psychodrama community. Many younger members were eager to take charge and change the course of the organization and the norms of the community. Zerka believed that if she was president she could calm the waters and guide the Society to honor the cultural conserves that were working and embrace new cultural conserves without destroying the organization.

Consequently Zerka informed me that she wanted to be president one last time and asked if I would be her vice president. Although I gave her an immediate and emphatic yes, shortly after I began to wonder about how this new relationship would work. Previously she had been my mentor and psychodramatic mother, and I was her trainee and subordinate. Having served on the Executive Council, and as an officer on the council, I had my own thoughts and opinions of what might be best for the Society.

My thought was: What we would do if we had any differences of opinion? My concerns evaporated after our first “official” meeting as president and vice president—while Zerka did have strong opinions and gave voice to them, she also requested and valued my opinions. Together we created a lovely collaborative leadership process that supported our strengths and complemented our weaknesses.

During our time in office from 1983 to 1985, we were wise stewards and shepherds for the ongoing business of the ASGPP, which included annual meetings, membership, journal and newsletters, and international relationships and collaborated on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to permanently anchor J. L. Moreno's legacy within one of most prestigious medical libraries in the United States.

In 1978, Zerka and her son Jonathan Moreno transferred J. L. Moreno's books, articles, correspondence, papers, audiotapes, films, impromptu phonograph records, professional awards, and honors to the Francis A. Countway Medical Library in Boston, MA, which was supported by Boston University and Harvard University. However, due to the economic crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the universities' budgets had been cut and they could not afford to move forward in organizing, cataloguing, and making available the collection to scholars and the public. They would need \$20,000 to complete the work.

From the moment we brought this proposal to raise \$20,000 for the collection to the ASGPP council members, they acted as one: They averted their eyes, shuffled their papers, and remained silent. After several tense minutes—we had, after all, been trained as therapists so we knew how to stay silent and let the anxiety build—council members finally began to offer their thoughts.

They unanimously agreed that it was both a worthwhile project and doomed to failure as there was not enough money in the ASGPP accounts and there was no chance that \$20,000 could be raised from the membership. The \$20,000 amount adjusted for inflation would now amount to \$50,000. Consequently, I eagerly and enthusiastically volunteered to chair a fundraising project, and Zerka served as the co-chair. Exceeding everyone's expectations, save my own and Zerka's, we successfully raised the \$20,000. Zerka and I attended the formal dedication of the Moreno Collection at the Countway Medical Library on May 6, 1989. Since then, countless scholars and visitors have viewed the collection.

When our terms of office ended, we had left the Society in excellent financial condition, with 6 months of operating expenses reserves in the bank, a membership of more than 1,000 and an annual meeting attendance of about 1,600. Although we had been able to quell the rebellion of some of the younger members of the community, in time that rebellion took place, and the Society lost members and attendees at the annual meeting.

ZERKA'S RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION ON BEHALF OF THE LGBTQI COMMUNITY

Lest the reader get the impression that Zerka was only a kind, gentle, and generous person, it is essential to note that she also had a backbone of steel, a piercing intellect, and no patience for the prejudiced and intolerant.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, questioning, and intersex (LGBTQI) people were always welcome at the Moreno Institute, and indeed a number of early prominent psychodrama directors were gay, lesbian, and bisexual.

In the prologue to *The Quintessential Zerka* (2006), I wrote, "Both (J. L. & Zerka) championed the isolated and the rejected. His causes were prostitutes in Europe and prisoners and delinquents in the United States. Hers were gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons, and later those living with HIV and AIDS" (p. xv).

Although I did not witness Zerka's strength of character and spirit during the dark days of the Nazis' rise to power and their relentless persecution and Holocaust of the Jewish people, I was there to witness her character and spirit during the AIDS plague of the late 1970s and early 1980s. During that time, thousands of gay and bisexual men became seriously ill or died of HIV and AIDS. New York City was the epicenter of this epidemic. Neither politicians nor the general public seemed to care that AIDS was a public health crisis. At best, there was benign neglect as some thought this was merely a problem for homosexuals, and, at worst, others considered the AIDS crisis as retribution towards gay men for engaging in abominable sexual practices that violated biblical teachings.

During those dark days, Zerka was a fierce and steadfast supporter and champion of gay rights. Moreover, she was a caregiver to many persons who had AIDS and those who loved and cared for them. When others became frightened or unsure of the how AIDS was contracted, she gave education and reassurance that treating all human beings with dignity, respect, and kindness would not transmit the disease. At times she displayed her righteous indignation about how AIDS patients were treated and how little our government and society was doing to care for these unfortunate souls.

Even early on when scientists were unsure how HIV was transmitted and many people were frightened and terrified of the disease she touched the hands, hearts, and souls of those in our community who were affected by HIV and AIDS. Edward Schreiber recounts how his partner Kim, who was dying of AIDS, was brought into the Psychodrama Theatre at Boughton Place and placed on a makeshift bed at the foot of the stage. Zerka brought him on stage, held his hand, doubled him, and invited a student, who was deeply impacted by his courage, to direct Kim's final psychodrama (E. Schreiber, personal communication, April 22, 2015).

During this time Zerka was highly supportive of persons who questioned their gender identity and held her belief that people should lead a full and authentic life. At a public psychodrama demonstration session, the protagonist was a transgendered person who was scheduled to undergo gender reassignment surgery. The protagonist had not told a parent about the surgery and wanted both a rehearsal for a conversation with the parent and support for having the surgery. At the end of the drama, Zerka took the hand of the protagonist and proclaimed that the protagonist was one of the bravest persons that Zerka had ever directed and personally offered the protagonist her support during the transition.

Having Zerka at our side, and fighting for each and every LGBTQI person's right for respect and dignity was a moment, that for those of us who were present, none of us shall ever forget.

TIME TO SAY GOOD-BYE

In August 2011, I went on a pilgrimage to Charlottesville, VA. Others in the psychodrama community had informed me that Zerka was dying and it was time to say good-bye. Since I don't drive and the train schedule was most inconvenient, I took a bus to and from Charlottesville. It was an all-day adventure, and during the long bus ride I had the opportunity to reflect on our times together, the profound impact she had made upon my life, and the many gifts she had given me. My warm-up to our "final" meeting was anxiety, sadness, and gratitude.

However, when I arrived at her home she was beautifully dressed, with her hair done and seated in the living room. She greeted me warmly and offered me a beverage and cookies. We had a long, lovely, and lively conversation about Jonathan, her grandchildren, her family of origin, and her anticipated relocation to the Washington, DC, area.

Timidly and gently I approached the topic of how long she felt she had left to live. True to her core and our Morenian philosophy, she stated that no one knows how long he or she has to live. She continued that sometimes we think we know but that is just an illusion. Finally she stated that we must live each and every precious moment that is given to us and to live that moment in the here and now. When I left, I knew it was not Zerka's time to die.

TIME TO CELEBRATE ZERKA'S LIFE AND LIVE OUR OWN LIVES

So it is true that Zerka moved to the DC metro area, and continued to live for several more years. Hers was a long good-bye. However, most times she lived in

the moment, was connected and present with those who visited her, and until the end encouraged all to have courage and to believe in themselves.

I would like to end with a quote from her memoir *To Dream Again*: “Talking about my demise, I told my son, ‘Don’t cry for me when I am gone. Go out and have a good dinner. Enjoy yourself and your own life and above all, remember I’ve had a ball’” (p. 501).

To you, dear reader, I would like to paraphrase Zerka and say, “I urge you, no, implore you, to gather some friends and family and have a good dinner. Enjoy yourself and your own life, and above all remember that both Zerka and J. L. had a ball.”

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Interview with Zerka T. Moreno: Her Contributions to Psychodrama

Tian Dayton, PhD, TEP¹

Tian Dayton tells of magical and transcendent moments that took place during her training years with Zerka T. Moreno at Boughton Place near Highland, NY, and shares her interview with Zerka, allowing Zerka to tell in her own words the modifications that she offered to the method of psychodrama, as originated by Dr. J. L. Moreno. This interview from 2001 gives an overview of Zerka's numerous and varied contributions to psychodrama, including the use of doubles in new ways, having the protagonist become his or her own director or co-director, keeping the protagonist in another central role throughout the psychodrama session, giving greater visibility to the protagonist, and Zerka's views on how to be a better teacher-trainer, with greater clarity and simplicity. Tian's comments are italicized in the article.

KEYWORDS: Zerka T. Moreno; J. L. Moreno; innovations; history; contributions; doubling; Fritz Perls; empty chair.

INTRODUCTION

Thanks to J. L. and Zerka T. Moreno, we have a method of healing that cannot only restore us to sanity but also revive and strengthen our spontaneity and creativity, which are so core to sustaining resilience. We are human beings of action, not only words. We absorb what is around us with all of our senses, and we communicate our emotions and intentions through posture, gestures, and facial expressions long before and long after words enter the picture. Part of reclaiming our sense of aliveness lies in reaching back into the sentient meaning and purpose of this vast web of body language, whether conscious or otherwise, and reincorporating it into our present-day self and self in relation to others so that we can feel, sense, and communicate with greater awareness.

One of my many fond memories of Zerka was arriving at 8:50 on a rather chilly morning, into the drafty cavern of Boughton Place for a day of training.

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There on the original Moreno stage (most of it anyway, since the third layer didn't fit and had to be put in storage) was the rather surprising, adorable, and winsome sight of Zerka zigzagging to and fro around the stage, rhythmically shaking her head singing, "I love Paris." Extending her one arm in chanteuse fashion, that arm reaching out and gesturing for two, her eyes sparkled like a young girl. She was wholly unselfconscious, "just warming up" as she said, and sharing not only her wisdom of the method but also her utter comfort with the stage, allowing its boundaries to be extended as she felt moved to use it. What was the stage now: a hillside in southern France, a cabaret, a physical rehab, her living room?

Another memory is when after a long few days Zerka invited us to dramatize "moments of joy," taking the stage to underline or memorialize something dear to our hearts. I chose to enact my father giving me sips of café au lait on the balcony of our childhood home in the early morning. I asked Zerka to play my father, and although she did not generally take on roles, she willingly began to play it, knowing without words that I could not let anyone else into this secret corner of my heart.

It was a decade or two later (these moments have a long afterlife once brought to the stage since they "grow in the mind like yeast," as Zerka used to say) that I realized we had not spoken a word. Intuitively she realized that this was before I could talk, a golden moment drenched in sunlight and the flavor of coffee, sugar, and milk. It was a deep and pleasure-filled connection with my father and with the morning itself.

I recall how Zerka wrapped the imaginary napkin around the glass of hot liquid as she leaned towards me with the spoon, asking me if I wanted a little, blowing on it because it was hot and giving me, at the close of this sweet and cherished ritual, a tiny sip that tasted just as delicious as it had then. All in the mind? All on the stage? How is it that the stage can allow a recreation of a moment more completely than any picture or memory could? How did she know not to talk, to blow on the spoon, to remember the napkin? This is part of Zerka's magic—she did know; she just knew.

As Zerka often said, "If Socrates said that 'The unexamined life is not worth living,' then I say that, 'The un-lived life is not worth examining!'" Zerka used the stage to stretch the boundaries of life, to live not twice but again and again, to practice life, relive and rehearse it. To celebrate golden moments and suffer through caverns and cleavages in the psyche that sap aliveness and motivation. To say hello, good bye, and everything in between. To find the self, lose the self, and find it again. To live, laugh, and love.

I first encountered psychodrama in the addictions field through Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse, who had trained with Virginia Satir, who had in turn trained with psychodramatists. The creativity, role interactions, intensity, and sheer zaniness of the method seemed a match for my own inner world and that of the family I grew up in. It was not only about exploring pathology but also about reconnecting with and celebrating life.

Although I was aware that I was sticking my neck out by adapting a method that was so innovative and apart from the general lexicon of treatment at that time, its gravitational pull was just too strong to resist. There really was no moment of decision; I was just home. I found what I needed. Being able to sing songs on stage,

shout, rage, hug, cry, and generally leap around when needed appeared to me to be an ideal sort of therapy. It was fun, and it examined rules rather than blindly following them; it was a therapy that was intent on fitting into me rather than make me shrink-wrap myself into it. Talking to those who I had lost, not to death necessarily, but to the slow death of addiction, gave me back something precious and cherished. It took parts of my childhood experiences that had been relegated to a sort of no-fly zone in our family discourse into the light of my own recollections. I could finally exhale.

Zerka was a woman and therefore especially important as a mentor. She had the kinds of experiences that women share in the home and in the workplace and in this special world of psychodrama—so filled with passion, meaning, creativity, and spontaneity that many of us call it “home”—this very unique professional calling we share.

Throughout my training and friendship with Zerka, I deeply enjoyed her stories of how this magical and mysterious method of psychodrama developed into something teachable and learnable. I wanted to share with others in my field her deep and wonderful wisdom. So many years ago, we met for the interview that follows, and I asked about her special contributions to the method of psychodrama. I have also included some of the many questions I asked her during the years that she always graciously answered and some that I included in one of my books, *The Living Stage* (Dayton, 2004).

In my asking her what was important about her role in the development of psychodrama and sociometry, Zerka first listed the fact of being the interpreter of the ideas of her husband Dr. J. L. Moreno. Here, Zerka was being her usual modest self, collapsing decades of significant—and even critical—modifications of J. L.’s methods in which she was instrumental, into a few sentences. Actually, her contributions are too many to name here, but this interview gives an overview of her many influences. Zerka often said that J. L. called her his “muse” and that pleased her. Such was her love for him and her love of the method and her understanding of the important impact that his methods of healing could have on the world. She appeared always supportive of its birth and adaptations many of us made to be relevant within our particular fields of practice. She had the heart of the creator in her home and in her spirit. She was the co-creator.

INTERVIEW

Tian: What would you say J. L. Moreno’s vision was?

Zerka: Moreno’s work, whether we think of sociometry, psychodrama, or sociodrama, is to help us reformulate the world and ourselves within it, into a more creative, fulfilling one. The core of his spirit resides in spontaneity and creativity.

Moreno wanted to bring a new order into society at large through the application of action sociometry. He wanted to heal the entire world order. He began his book *Who Shall Survive?* with the first sentence: “A truly therapeutic procedure cannot have less of an objective than the whole of mankind.”

He did not think that psychodrama, whatever its healing, could do it all by itself. He thought we needed to overhaul the entire way humans relate to one another. Unfortunately, it meant a revolution that our world is not yet ready for. He considered undergoing changes in small groups is fine, but he also hoped for a larger stage on which to accomplish his ideas.

Psychodrama found more general acceptance from the public and the mental health community, and received more attention therein, but Moreno felt that sociometry could be a more powerful healing tool for society at large. In fact, he said sociometry is the umbrella under which all his other ideas fell, but it is more threatening to the existing social order if it is honestly applied because leadership would be of an entirely different order from what we have.

We only need to look around us to see how much his dream is needed. His ideas were utopic but not acceptable.

Tian: You've said that Moreno did not want to see psychodrama limited to the mental health field alone. Can you explain that?

Zerka: Moreno never felt psychodrama should be limited to the mental health field. He wanted it to be a way of living, to enrich our life. That's just why he created sociodrama and axiodrama, neither of which is sufficiently used as such a way of living.

Tian: Is healing through catharsis central to psychodrama?

Zerka: Moreno did not believe in "an unconscious," nor in verbal catharsis. He talked of "unconscious or conscious states," and he believed in action catharsis. Even more original, he believed patients could get well without any visible catharsis, as the process worked silently, internally, below the verbal level. Insight was just an artifact, not something to pursue by itself. Moreno over time, became much more supportive of the idea of a catharsis of integration.

(Note to reader: Zerka Moreno writes in The Many Faces of Drama (1997), "It is somewhat unfortunate that the idea of catharsis as related to psychodrama has become a leftover from the past, because, in fact, we have moved beyond that and have become much more supportive of the process of integration, interpersonally as well as intrapersonally or psychometrically. Thinking in terms of the protagonist's social atom, which is frequently revealed only piecemeal in the course of the drama, helps to bring about . . . an integration that is more fundamental than an abreactive catharsis." Said Zerka about J.L Moreno: "He was a genius ahead of his time, and a genius sees the world differently from others. Just look at our scientific history. He was greatly misunderstood even by those who wrote about him.")

Moreno believed that if a client could "see himself in action" in a safe environment he would be able to have his own "action insights" into his own behavior rather than relying entirely on the therapist to be the only purveyor of wisdom and insight. Moreno's "action insight" is very consistent with trauma treatment, in that the body holds the memory of

trauma and that as we physically move our body begins to remember what our mind has forgotten. As the body or limbic mind “remembers,” the conscious mind, which is able to function more effectively in a clinical setting and with the support and help of the therapist and group, can begin to translate these limbic memories into words and make sense of them. Moreno believed that if a client could “see himself in action” in a safe environment he would be able to have his own “action insights” from reflecting on his own behavior rather than relying entirely on the therapist to be the only purveyor of wisdom and insight. He believed that in this way, people could self-correct.

Tian: Tell us about the empty chair. Did Fritz Perls get the empty chair from Moreno?

Zerka: Moreno and I devised “the auxiliary chair” (*read: “empty chair”*) as an interpersonal tool. Fritz Perls used to attend Moreno’s Wednesday night workshops in New York City. He learned about and adapted the empty chair into Gestalt therapy. Perls used the empty chair as one would in individually centered therapy. I think he did not really understand Moreno’s original view and focus on interaction; he was still an individually focused therapist. Perls never used auxiliary egos. He was the only source of therapy. He used the empty chair as an intrapersonal rather than an interpersonal tool, thus removing the core of interaction between people (the social atom of the protagonist, in other words).

Tian: Can you give us some examples of ways to use the empty chair?

Zerka: I brought an empty chair into a scene spontaneously during a psychodrama simply by asking a protagonist what she would say to the person she was talking to if they were sitting in a chair that was on the stage. I have used it as a warm up to workshops, the protagonist speaking to himself or herself; for instance, what they expect to gain from the workshop or what concern they brought with them or what they have learned from previous sessions, either with me or someone else as director, if they were known to have been in psychodrama before. Also, I have added not only the above, but keeping the protagonist in role-reversal position throughout the session, until the final closing scene, sometimes as a significant other, sometimes as a beloved object belonging to the protagonist.

(Note to reader: Here Zerka is referring to allowing the client to, for example, reverse roles with his or her mother and answer questions as the mother. This allows the client to actually experience sitting in the role of someone who had a profound impact on his or her development. It can be a wonderful experience for the psychotherapist to gather information and for the protagonist to “stand in the shoes” of someone who shaped him or her. This monodrama would include doubling and role reversal as needed or desired.)

Tian: How would you define the scope of psychodrama?

Zerka: It’s that method that encompasses whatever is dramatically focused, whether applied to groups or to an individual, and that can also embrace

all forms of art, including music. It can include everything that is possible within the guided action model. Our method is so relevant and such a powerful tool for education that it should be employed equally outside of the therapeutic format as within it. J. L. Moreno never intended it merely as a tool of therapy. He felt, as I do, that it should be made available to a larger population. Based on the twin principle of spontaneity and creativity, it is possible to use this method to mediate in interpersonal and intercultural conflicts. We need to train more people to use this tool, to go out into the world, in every situation to help make people's lives fuller and more complete; to help people to fulfill themselves in positive rather than destructive ways. Indeed, it is used this way effectively far more in other countries than in the United States, where role playing is still limited to closed institutions, although it is growing in measure, as in police academies, administration, business, and schools, still it needs to come out into the larger world.

Tian: So is action the "royal route" to the psyche?

Zerka: Psychodrama is largely a "do-it-yourself-project-in-action." (*Note to reader: The idea here is that moving the body warms up emotions, as emotion is, after all, stored in the body and reveals itself as it seeks expressions through particular gesture, facial expressions, body postures, and movements.*)

I say: "Director, get out of the way whenever you can and yield the stage to the protagonist. Give the protagonist his or her space. After all, this is not your drama, it's theirs."

I learned not to do anything for a protagonist on stage that they can do for themselves, such as helping to arrange objects for the protagonist who is scene setting. I put it this way in my sessions, when group members or auxiliaries want to help, and the objects are not heavy or dangerous to anyone: "Don't become gentlemen of the American moving industry. Let him or her do it him or herself."

The same is true for making lists of feelings on a board or paper or making drawings for the protagonist, or picking up chairs representing absentees. (*Note to reader: Zerka believed that part of the warming up process for the protagonist lies in doing his or her own scene setting; it helps the protagonist to warm up to or get into his or her drama.*)

Tian: You use a lot of creative approaches in your work. Can you describe a few for us or give us a few tips about to your style?

Zerka: (*Introducing an auxiliary.*) One of my improvements is that I do not ask for a verbal description of the protagonist's absent other, but have them introduce that person or persons via role reversal. After all, this is an action method, so I maximize action.

(*Reworking a power imbalance.*) Another is that I have people who feel disempowered after a severe emotional or other kind of trauma take back their power from the source of that pain, human or otherwise. A cushion or some nonthreatening item, a cloth, or whatever, can represent power and be attached character who "holds the power" and then removed by

the protagonist and reclaimed as their power.

(Representing time—past, present, or future.) I use the image of a clock face for time representation. For walking into the future, I ask the protagonist to walk clockwise on the stage setting, asking the protagonist to call off the number of the years or, if they hesitate, I call them, to find out, for instance, how long they plan to carry their current burden and what is needed to get rid of that. If the protagonist needs to go backwards in time, I do the same thing with the protagonist walking counter-clockwise. That's how one can concretize time, which may otherwise be too abstract.

(Protagonist as director or co-director.) I also developed ways of using the protagonist as director. I let adolescents, who resist any authority, direct their own psychodramas. I ask if I may make a suggestion here or there and am accepted that way, as a benevolent group member. I help in making the closure. *(Note to reader: Here Zerka is describing either acting as a co-director with the protagonist or doing an autodrama in which the protagonist essentially functions as the director of his or her own drama.)* *(Role reversal experience and expansion.)* At some times, I keep the protagonist in a central role, other than their own, throughout a drama giving them a role reversal experience and allowing them to see the situation through another's eyes.

(Building autonomy.) I also give more space and visibility to the protagonist by reducing my own as director.

(Teaching approach.) I have learned and taught how to be a better teacher-trainer, with greater clarity and simplicity. One of psychodrama's benefits is its teachability; this is a method that feels natural and sensible in the learning of it.

(The internal healer.) One of psychodrama's fundamental tasks is to put the client in touch with their own internal healer; we all must touch the autonomous healing center of our clients no matter which particular approach we use.

CONCLUSION BY TIAN

I would like to add to this section a lesson that has been particularly useful for me that I took from my years at Boughton Place. One of the complaints about psychodrama is that it's too evocative, that it brings up too much, too fast. I noticed that I never seemed to go away from groups with Zerka low or overwhelmed, rather I tended to feel lighter and easier as a result of working with her. Years into training, I realized that Zerka devoted an unusual amount of time to sharing. At the end of a long day at Boughton Place, we might be sharing with the last protagonist or about any final feelings and thoughts that may need letting go. Zerka encouraged us to share. And even after that sharing had gone on for what seemed an inordinate amount of time and the white plastic chairs we were sitting on were becoming most uncomfortable, Zerka would wave her arm and say "Anything else?" I winced, I tried not to glare at those in the group, willing them not to share any more so we could just go home. Eventually I came to value the

lengthy sharing, realizing that this feeling of freedom to bring closure to what we needed to share allowed us to leave the conflict on the stage and depart feeling freer and easier, carrying less that might come back to trouble us later. It was not that we didn't carry plenty—"psychodrama is like yeast, it grows in the mind," remember— but we felt somehow held at that moment we needed holding.

I developed a hearty respect for the healing function of sharing for the protagonist to feel seen and witnessed, for the auxiliaries to let go of their roles by sharing about the experience of playing the roles and what might have triggered from their own lives, and for the group members to explore where and how they identified with the enactment. I came to understand that sharing was rich, purposeful, and sociometrically re-knitting both interpersonally and intrapersonally. I gave in to the time it took, and in my own work I reckoned that if Zerka Moreno could bore people stiff at the end of a long day for the greater good it did, then so could I.

In conclusion, I want to share a comment that Zerka made to me that warmed my heart and helped me in taking the risks I was taking in treatment. In my work in the addictions field it was becoming increasingly clear that I had to deal with trauma for the addict to explore possible drivers of addictions and for those around the addict to explore the effects of living in that distorted and disorganized world. Parental addiction had emerged as a primary cause of long-term physical and mental health conditions. The adult children of the alcoholics movement allowed those who grew up with addiction to understand their own posttraumatic stress and the unresolved childhood pain that was reemerging and recreating itself in adult relationships. In addition, a burst of research in the areas of neuropsychology and the brain gave psychodrama and forms of therapy that included the body increased validity. Addicts and those who lived with addicts showed emotional, psychological, and behavioral extremes (Anda et al., 2005). They required a method that allowed them to revisit moments in which they had become frozen—the spaces and places within their surplus reality where they had lost touch with parts of themselves through the dissociation that so often accompanies trauma. Integrating this new research into psychodrama and sociometry was exiting and inspiring (Dayton, 2015).

Zerka's words helped me feel comfortable with these clients where they were, gently walking together toward not only a sane and balanced middle ground but also a middle ground that could access true rather than pathological spontaneity, allowing them to be more fully alive.

During one particularly challenging week, I was having a conversation with Zerka and said, "I sometimes feel like I am dancing on the edge, Zerka. It feels right to me, but what do you think?" Her reply was vintage Zerka. She didn't skip a beat: "If you're not on the edge you aren't doing psychodrama!"

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Zerka T. Moreno, On and Off Stage

Karen Carnabucci, MSS, LCSW, TEP¹

Karen Carnabucci studied throughout the 1990s with Zerka T. Moreno as her primary trainer at Boughton Place in rural Highland, NY. She remembers how Zerka taught her to become a trainer, not only by teaching the psychodramatic method but also by example. Of the many lessons, one important lesson has been learning about the psychodrama stage as the sacred place to present any incident, event, or struggle in our lives, without censorship or shyness, for resolution. Another is that role reversal is not simply a psychodramatic technique but a deep and important means to learn about others and ourselves on multiple levels.

KEYWORDS: Zerka T. Moreno; Boughton Place; training; role reversal.

INTRODUCTION

It was a cold and snowy day in 1991 in Lakeville, CT, when I first met Zerka T. Moreno.

I was an aspiring psychodramatist, conducting experiential psychotherapy in groups for family members of alcoholics at a chemical dependency treatment center in south-central Pennsylvania. I had been reading about psychodrama and became excited when I learned that Zerka, the collaborator and widow of J. L. Moreno, was alive and demonstrating and teaching psychodrama.

Even better, Zerka would be presenting a program on the psychodrama of dreams, one of my all-time favorite interests, during a weekend program sponsored by the Omega Institute of Holistic Studies.

I enlisted a fellow counselor to join me for this winter trip to Connecticut. Happily waiting on the lower level for the dinner buffet in this quaint inn where the workshop was scheduled to start the next day, I was surprised by the entrance of an elder woman who radiated vitality and energy.

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“Hello!” I blurted out to the woman I immediately knew was Zerka. This spontaneous encounter, however, was quickly interrupted by Merlyn Pitzele, an older man garbed in black who I learned later was Zerka’s companion. He loudly directed me to stand back, and it seemed that he was vigorously protecting his beloved from intrusions, conversations, and contact with participants.

I retreated to the buffet line in embarrassment and quietly ate my dinner with my colleague at the far end of the dining room. Fortunately, the feeling of embarrassment changed to anticipation when I learned that only a handful of trainees had arrived on this snowy weekend for the workshop and that each of us would have the opportunity to step on stage for a personal psychodrama session directed by Zerka. The anticipation transformed to awe as I watched Zerka direct drama after drama, all of which were deeply moving, beautifully flowing, and obviously very healing.

“If you were doing this for 50 years, you too would be seamless,” Zerka told us, her admiring students. Later, when we clamored for more information about psychodrama and psychodrama training, Zerka said crisply, “If you’d like to know more, you’ll just have to follow me around.”

And so I did. I decided Zerka would be my primary trainer in psychodrama and began to make the monthly drive from my home in Lancaster, PA, to the original Moreno Stage at Boughton Place in rural Highland, NY, for Zerka’s weekend and extended summer trainings. We were a diverse group of people, coming close by from New York’s Ulster County as well as throughout New York, plus Louisiana, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Texas, Vermont, and Virginia—and from around the world, including Belize, Brazil, Denmark, England, Germany, India, Japan, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden.

I was continuously impressed by Zerka’s remarkably sharp memory, recalling details about each person’s previous dramas that she had directed years before. And there were other remarkable qualities: her graciousness; her sometimes flamboyant wardrobe, which included interesting necklaces, colorful shoes, and dramatic capes; and her generosity when inviting me and a friend to stay at her home in Beacon, NY, one weekend. Her generosity and interest extended to any pregnant woman who showed up at Boughton Place; Zerka always took the opportunity to make a director’s choice so the woman would have a full psychodramatic session, which would be gentle, loving, and life-affirming. Zerka told us that she believed the drama would not only transform the pregnancy but also the woman’s ability to properly nurture and parent her child after birth.

I finally confessed to her that I had been put off by her companion’s brusque words during our first meeting in Connecticut and that I continued to feel timid when I was with her, trying to be respectful and nonintrusive. She listened carefully and suggested that we have a psychodrama to repair my embarrassment and played herself in the role. On stage, I remembered that Merlyn had approached me the next day—asking me to keep a watchful eye on Zerka so that she didn’t fall on the icy sidewalk—and realized his tender care for her. Later, I learned that Merlyn was a well-known labor expert and educator who had advised presidential candidates in the 1950s before he became interested in psychodrama

and started training at the Moreno Institute. In one of her many typed notes to me, she wrote, "His bark is worse than his bite."

Just as Zerka had generously welcomed me into her home, she welcomed all of us to the stage and welcomed our inner dramas of joy, pain, confusion, fear, and trauma. There was no need to censor the inner story that we carried, nor the feelings, thoughts, fantasies, or wishes that were connected to that story, even if it was related to her personal life or the life of someone close to her.

Zerka, when watching and supervising when her students directed on stage, was exacting. There was the right way to set scenes, to role reverse, to double, to make an aside. Sometimes her tone was sharp, especially when a trainee was sloppy with details. If an auxiliary was placed in the driver's seat of a car to play the role of the driver, one did not wildly twist the invisible steering wheel this way and that like a toddler in a carnival bumper car. One placed one's right foot gently on the invisible accelerator and used both hands to steady the invisible wheel as he or she "drove" the car and looked ahead to the road. Directors were not to hurry through the initial scenes to get to the action but told to precisely and slowly build each scene step-by-step to warm up the protagonist to the fullness of the action.

But as exacting as Zerka was, she was also encouraging as I slowly collected my hours for practitioner certification. Once in a while, I wondered if I should think about becoming a TEP, since the basic goal of practitioner certification seemed so far away. During one summer intensive, many of the trainees became involved in photocopying parts of Zerka's collection of information from her library, much of it out of print. We took turns driving back and forth from Boughton Place to the copy store in nearby New Paltz, hardly believing our good luck to have access to Zerka's tremendous collection of materials. I especially wanted to copy one of J. L. Moreno's larger works, which I had not read and which was out of print.

Zerka, observing my excitement about the manuscript, chimed in with this bit of advice: "Now, Karen, be sure to make two copies. You'll need to have a couple of copies when you become a TEP."

What I came to realize is that Zerka offered that same encouragement and steady love to every trainee who crossed her path. Of her many gifts, one most certainly was the ability to stay with each person, providing such a here-and-now presence that convinced you that you were her most intelligent student and that she fully believed in you. I realized that she was teaching more than psychodrama—she was teaching life, relationships, kindness, and love, based on the principles of psychodrama and sociometry and her deep understanding and acceptance of her incredible life experiences.

Certainly, the learning was in the action. During our years at Boughton Place, many of us had the opportunity to role reverse with Zerka at one time or another. This typically took place out of her sight, when we were directing a practice session or acting as an auxiliary in a drama during one of the breakout sessions in the smaller rooms away from the main Moreno Stage. Because she had one arm, her left, we learned to tuck our right arms behind our backs when we played the role. Here, we learned yet again that the physical method of psychodrama offered the deep experiential learning that could not be discovered

by talking alone. It quickly became apparent that the fate of having one arm was disorienting and challenging and that Zerka's apparent ease in reaching, eating, typing, writing, and driving with her left arm and hand must have been a hard-earned victory.

As I learned how to become a psychodramatist, I repeatedly role reversed with Zerka. If I found myself in a tough place while directing a drama, I learned to pause and "become" Zerka and then I found my way. In the interview part of the session—whether with the protagonist or the protagonist reversed into another role—I copied her style of questioning, a style that was direct, open, and curious. "And have you thought about hurting yourself?" I would find myself asking a client taking the place of her mother; it was a very good way to learn about the inner world of the protagonist and his or her social atom, yielding rich information, more so than a direct question to the protagonist. She liked to ask the protagonist in role reversal, as the dog, the mother-in-law, the picture on the wall, or the former boyfriend: "What do you look like?" and "How old are you?" and "What is your relationship to our protagonist?" in that curious voice. The answers that came were always powerful and illuminating, for me, the group, and for the protagonist.

Now Zerka is gone, but she lives on within my heart. I still call on her when I need her, and I hope that I carry her love to the next generation.

Zerka, as an Existential Teacher

Edward Schreiber, MEd, DD, TEP¹

In this article, Edward Schreiber remembers Zerka T. Moreno's encouragement and mentorship during his research and investigation about the mysticism and existential philosophy contained in the writings of Dr. J. L. Moreno. He expands on what he learned from Zerka about the mystical elements that are encoded within the psychodramatic method, which are not often discussed in the literature.

KEYWORDS: Zerka T. Moreno; mysticism; *To Dream Again*; psychodrama.

INTRODUCTION

I want to share the essential existential lessons I have learned from Zerka T. Moreno as her student, as a colleague, her editor, and friend. These are some of the life-transforming lessons, the magic she taught, and the wisdom she lived. These gems she passed to many others, which I treasure every day of my life.

Within the psychodramatic method, there exists a wisdom tradition for the expansion of the self in experience and perception. It begins with the isolated sense of separation to the unfolding realization of our connectedness to all life.

This is the core of the wisdom that Zerka taught—a sacred path for awakening in a specific way. What is specific is what is awakened. What is nonspecific is the variety for how this awakening happens, how this expresses itself within us, and how this can be given expression by each of us.

Many of us sense the existential teachings in the method; Zerka made them surface. She points us to J. L. Moreno's ideas for planting seeds of this awakening within groups, within ourselves, and within the fabric of society.

This is the essence of what I have learned from her. And the impact of her teaching has been forever life changing, for my life, and for those to whom I pass this on. I honor this wonderful, loving, fierce, elegant, graceful, funny, and demanding soul who has blazed this path for those who seek it, for those who wish

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to know the mystic teachings embedded into the method. This is the power which the method gives access.

I asked Zerka many years ago what the mystic tradition was about, asking her for references to other existential and spiritual knowledge and wisdom. Her answer was this is singular: that is J. L. Moreno's unique teaching. To find the mystic teachings in the published and unpublished works of J. L. Moreno, Zerka gave a single instruction: "Follow your nose."

The first request Zerka gave was to study and to consider the area of *Who Shall Survive?* called "hypothesis." Pieces of a puzzle began to appear: J. L. Moreno's ideas and information about mysticism and healing floated up in what we were reading. I, along with my colleague Adam Barcroft, dedicated three full years of study to this, as we realized we were tapping some realm; we could sense and feel it. Once our resistance to the complexity was worked through, the essential wisdom appeared. Zerka loved the process to which we dedicated ourselves and encouraged us every step of the way.

We discovered that an entire body of knowledge had been encoded into symbols; typical of many existential mystic wisdom schools. We returned this information to Zerka, and her posture with this discovery, and throughout each stage of the way, was to keep going. Zerka became J. L.'s primary agent for which these teachings were presented to the world during J. L.'s life and after his death.

My interest, from the moment I met her to now, what I have agreed to for the remainder of my life, is to share these existential codes and practices, created to awaken something within ourselves, in groups, and in the fabric of humankind.

Zerka, teacher of this wisdom tradition, writes this in *To Dream Again: A Memoir*:

"Our instruments are basically spiritual and existential, pointing to and supporting the value of the human spirit. Instead of looking at mankind as a fallen being, everyone is a potential genius and, like the Supreme Being, co-responsible for all of mankind. It is the genius we should emphasize, not the failings.

"Moreno attributed healing to what is going on silently, mostly invisibly, in the body and deep inside the self, not touched by words but through action, often continuing well after treatment. He termed it due to the 'autonomous healing center' within.

"Awakening the autonomous healing center, the power to heal oneself, is how I see the value of psychodrama and all forms of therapy. My task is to find and touch that autonomous healing center within, to assist and direct the protagonist to do the same. I am merely a guide in the wilderness, clearing away obstacles so protagonists can find their very own path.

"Moreno's notion is that we are more than biological, economical, sociological or psychological creatures, that we are first of all cosmic beings."

The awakening of the autonomous healing center is the central seed to which Moreno was pointing. J. L. writes of “a sort of primordial nature, which is immortal, a first universe which contains all beings and in which all events are sacred.” Zerka completed J. L.’s idea by offering the translation of it to describe the autonomous healing center within us and within groups.

I will not forget the 10-day intensives at Boughton Place on the original Moreno Stage where she worked with people from around the world. Two things took place in every psychodrama she directed:

First, she found her way to the autonomous healing center within herself, and *that directed her* in her directing. She speaks about this in her DVD training series through www.psychotherapy.net.

Second, she pointed the protagonist to that within themselves, and at times while in the role of the other. Her relationship with the autonomous healing center was how she knew when and how to move, and in what way. The magic appeared. She followed the prompts and prompting of the autonomous healing center. This was the gestalt of her entire life.

Her memoir *To Dream Again* contains her many tales of how she was awakened by, and learned to live creatively with, the autonomous healing center. Presented as a memoir, her final book is teaching guidance about living fully awake in the world. She rarely explained it, as is the case in many sacred traditions, although she would often say we needed to empty ourselves, to become a hollow instrument.

I remember one night 20 years ago, when a group of us sat at her home in rapt attention, as she shared this, in stories, with us. Soon everyone went to sleep, and I remained there transfixed. Zerka spoke of role reversal from the wisdom mystic tradition, as a tool to expand perception to our original nature, and in that expanded sense of self, to embrace that in the other. This is the cosmic formula. It sparks within us a remembering of the expansive nature of our being, not constrained by the identity of form, it touches what is limitless. This is how the awakening of the autonomous healing center happens; it dissolves our sense of isolation from the whole of life. We become life itself.

The primordial nature awakens to itself—as us.

J. L. Moreno wrote of this. The awakening of the autonomous healing center is what Zerka lived, and the whole of her life experience from childhood to her return. She wrote about this, from her unusual birth, to childhood, to how and why she left England, to what she found as she arrived in New York, to how she found J. L. Moreno, and all that came after. Her life is an extraordinary example of the presence of the living, breathing, giving awakened autonomous healing center within her. It was magnetic and extremely demanding.

She was a beautiful, amazing, powerhouse of steeled intention to bring Moreno’s work to the people, to the world. I miss her, but I feel her spirit. For the rest of my life, I wish to walk this Moreno Road. Because of Zerka Toeman Moreno, I have found a reason to live and a way to help others.

I give myself to this in my own way as she has shown me, following my nose and the mystic codes. This is what awakens.

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Travels with Zerka and the Rigors of Riga

Jeanne Burger, EdD, LPC, LMFT, TEP¹

Jeanne Burger – who Zerka publicly proclaimed as “the woman who saved my life” – tells about her friendship with Zerka with vignettes that show Zerka’s great sense of fun and reserves of resilience. She remembers the ordeal they shared in 2000 when Zerka fell on the sidewalk during a visit to Riga, Latvia, breaking her hip. As we read, we are thankful for Jeanne’s skills as a former nurse, learn of the struggles of health care in post-Communist countries, observe Zerka’s brave spirit and see how Zerka has been held in such high esteem by so many psychodrama friends not only in the United States but also throughout the world.

KEYWORDS: Zerka T. Moreno; Jonathan D. Moreno; Inara Erdmanis; psychodrama; history; Latvia; *To Dream Again*; family therapy; Salvador Minuchin.

More than 20 years ago, my teacher Zerka Moreno was scheduled to present at the Second Evolution of Psychotherapy Conference in Anaheim, CA. We had talked about her role as a faculty member for this well-established conference, which was organized by the Milton H. Erickson Foundation, and we shared thoughts about psychodrama and family therapy.

I had worked with her at Boughton Place in Highland, NY, for her 2-week intensive in July 1995, and stayed in her home in nearby Beacon. During the evenings, we worked on the family therapy presentation that she was to share with Salvador Minuchin, renowned for his structural family therapy approach.

She was excited to be invited because of the prestige of the conference, yet apprehensive that many of the attendees, and even other faculty members, might view her as J. L. Moreno’s assistant rather than an innovative psychotherapist in her own right.

She asked me to join her for the conference, which was once named by *Time* magazine as “the largest gathering ever devoted to the practice of psychotherapy” and typically draws thousands of people. My plane was late, and when I arrived at the hotel I learned my room had been given away. There were no rooms available

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for 30 miles. I saw Zerka in the lobby and told her of my predicament. In her typically generous way, she offered to share her room with me.

What fun we had! We attended all of the events and shared all the gossip. We observed rivalries, collaborations, and insecurities among the star psychotherapists, all well-known luminaries in their fields. My knowledge of family therapy was helpful to Zerka. When Minuchin attempted to minimize Zerka's contributions to family therapy, I urged her to tell the family-in-the bus story. This story related to the blended family that came to Beacon to work on tense relationships between the two sets of children. Through a series of individual psychodramas, the children came to view each other differently and began taking new seating arrangements on the family van as they began choosing each other as companions.

Minuchin had to acknowledge that this example was a beautiful application of his structural theory. Later, Zerka impressed her audience by directing a 1-hr psychodrama with at least 300 people and an interrupting fire alarm. She used her before-and-after family-photo technique; the drama was lovely and satisfying, with intimate sharing, and ended exactly on time. Zerka was a master of time management. She taught me that you can close a drama at any time if you allow the protagonist the last word and have time for sharing.

After this conference, Zerka invited me to travel with her to other conferences and events, an itinerary that would include the United States, Europe, China, and Tibet. The most remarkable thing that I learned about Zerka was that she used psychodrama daily in her life. She would set up empty chairs in our hotel rooms to work out conflict with someone and would role-reverse with her image in the mirror. Sometimes I took an auxiliary role without knowing exactly who I represented or what the issue was, but she could direct herself out of her dilemmas without much help. Sometimes she would put me in the director role, but it was almost always an autodrama when she was the protagonist. (After all, why not have the best?)

We became very good friends. By 1997, the year of her 80th birthday, we were rooming together at the annual conference of the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama in New York City. Much fuss was being made about Zerka turning 80, and so many flowers had been presented to her that our room was filled to overcrowding with masses of bouquets. One night I got out of bed and put the flowers in the hall. When Zerka asked what I was doing, I told her that the room smelled like a funeral, and I kept dreaming that one of us had died. We laughed and told surplus reality stories about how we might have died.

Besides the flowers and her multiple obligations at the conference, Zerka was being interviewed by Bill Moyers—this interview never aired, because Moyers experienced a stroke prior to the editing—and there were large television lights, a microphone, and a chair in one corner of the room where she was being interviewed between events.

I had fewer obligations at the conference, but I was obsessing about my next-day workshop, wondering if time permitted the addition of a certain activity. Zerka listened and said, "Well, let's get to the important question. What will you wear?" I showed her my outfit in diversionary girly-sharing mode. She commented

on a loose button. I dismissed her comment with a remark about not having time to sew it and planning to cover it up with a jacket.

The next day, I returned to our room between events. Zerka was sitting under the camera light with my blouse edge in her mouth—remember, she had only one arm and hand—sewing my loose button. I took in this loving act and burst into tears. She had twice as much to do at the conference, and sewing a button was much harder and more time consuming for her because of her one hand. She said clothes were important for confidence and she wanted me to feel self-assured for my presentation.

Zerka remarked that our travels somewhat mirrored how J. L. and she had traveled the world. In Zerka's day, she accompanied J. L., the sociometric star, as he lectured and demonstrated his method throughout the United States and Europe. Now it was Zerka who was the sought-after star, and I was the travel companion, friend, and assistant. Whatever the dynamic, it was so thoroughly enjoyable!

Our final trip, however, was just as unexpected as the first. What started as a dream journey for me turned into a nightmare for both of us. Zerka had been working in Europe for several weeks, and I agreed to meet her in Odense, Denmark, where she had been invited to open a new psychodrama center for Lone Paavig. Our plan was to continue with workshops through Norway, Latvia, Estonia, Moscow, and finally Italy.

After a powerful 4-day workshop for 30-some participants in Odense, we toured Copenhagen and relaxed on the beach at the Vejlelfjord Center, overlooking the fjord. We flew to Oslo for two days of workshops at the school of Eva Roine, where Dag Blomkvist was working. I was always amazed with Zerka's skills in handling difficult situations and politics—she managed to sail above any controversy. I marveled at her energy and physical strength as she managed long days and dinners as well as walking in heels for several hours in Vigeland Sculpture Park, a popular attraction with more than 200 sculptures in bronze, granite, and cast iron.

When we flew to Latvia on September 11, 2000, I was enjoying our wonderful travel, accompanying this beautiful person who was always so welcomed and respected. We landed in Riga, the capital of Latvia, and were met by Inara Erdmanis—trained and certified by Zerka in 1982 and a leading psychodrama figure in the Baltic states—and her student Moritz Maris, a physician interested in addictionology. They brought flowers, then lifted our suitcases to Moritz's van, and we drove across the bridge into beautiful Old World Riga.

When we arrived at the very modern Hotel de Roma, I settled into the hotel room and with Inara and Zerka planned for the workshop the next day for 220 participants who were excited by psychodrama. In great spirits, we went out on foot to explore the city and culture of Riga. We marveled at the architecture, noticing the wonderful faces sculpted on the facades of the brick buildings, stopping at outdoor booths and little shops to browse for gifts and purchase Baltic amber. The weather was lovely, and we were having a great time. We decided to

walk to a well-known Latvian restaurant for dinner before the evening presentation.

Walking ahead, I heard a startled cry from Zerka, then Inara. I turned to see Zerka drop to the pavement as she tried to catch herself with her arm. She had caught her toe on the partially raised sidewalk grate and was in pain, unable to put weight on her right leg. I persuaded her not to move and supported her in a reclining position with my body.

A woman on the street who spoke English offered to call an ambulance on her mobile phone. We waited for almost a half hour, and when I wondered aloud why it was delayed, Inara walked to the corner, where she saw a parked ambulance. Inara and the kind woman beckoned for the ambulance to come to where we were sitting on the sidewalk. Zerka had reconciled herself to the necessity of medical care and calmly accepted our help. We were silent—I think each of us was anticipating what would happen next.

Zerka was crudely lifted to a stretcher by the ambulance attendants (they did not understand my request for a body board to be slid underneath, and Inara was discussing which hospital to go to with the driver, so she was unavailable to translate). The female ambulance attendant was Russian and told Inara that Zerka likely had a broken hip, and she would offer pain medication. I was beginning to feel that I was losing control of the situation because of the language barrier and realized that communication would be through Inara.

I gave up trying to talk and pocketed the empty medicine vial, thinking I would need this information. I realize now that my anxiety resulted in the coping behavior of collecting lots of useless information. Later I had copious detailed notes with flight numbers, phone numbers, addresses, and medical treatments, gathered in an attempt to gain control of a situation that was beginning to feel traumatic.

I persuaded the ambulance driver to stop at our hotel so I could gather passports, personal items, and Zerka's insurance cards. Zerka, with calm acceptance, was able to tell me where to find the items and said she took extra travel insurance that July when she had a premonition about her trip to the Baltic countries.

At the hotel, where guests were enjoying the pampering by the staff, I wanted to share our predicament but realized there was nothing anyone could do. During my surreal elevator ride punctuated by stops at various floors to let off laughing tourists, I thought about what to bring to the waiting ambulance. I gathered papers, purses, an overnight bag with medications, personal effects, bottled water, and underwear for Zerka. I hurried to the ambulance with my load, worrying that my errand had taken so long. The Russian doctor seemed annoyed when I returned, but her demeanor softened when she recognized our situation and realized I had the papers she needed.

We arrived at the back door of the Traumatoloģijas un Ortopēdijas Slimnīca, where Zerka was wheeled down a cement-floored corridor with benches along the side and bare lightbulbs above. We followed her into a small, poorly lit room, where she was transferred to another narrow stretcher. We were left alone.

The only medical equipment in the room was an enameled table with instruments soaking in a basin of alcohol. When Zerka needed a bedpan, there was no one to be found; Inara and I hunted up a basin in a storage closet and struggled to help her out of her clothes. We worried about moving her if she had broken bones. She reported that she was fairly comfortable after the pain medication.

After 25 min, two male attendants pushed Zerka into an X-ray room where she was shoved onto a big old-fashioned X-ray table. After pictures were taken, an English-speaking doctor arrived, looked at the viewer, and pointed out a break in the neck of the femur. He recommended that she have surgery immediately.

I felt uneasy about this recommendation because Zerka had not been examined, no blood pressure had been taken, and the facility was primitive. Even Inara, who was familiar with the country and could talk with the doctor, was not feeling confident about this plan. The doctor said Zerka could travel home if we could get an airplane seat with space for her leg to be stretched out, but we would need to leave in the next 2 days.

Zerka was taken upstairs to a “luxury private room” and admitted. I helped her to get settled, cringing as she was transferred to a very thin mattress with no drawsheets to move her. The nurse was kind but spoke no English. She brought more pain medication and helped me undress Zerka. The room was clean but bare. There was an extra bed which was kindly offered to me. The telephone took incoming calls only.

Inara called by mobile phone for Moritz to pick her up, and we made quick decisions. Inara would move into our hotel room for the night so she could direct the session the next day; it was too late to cancel. Moritz took me to the hotel, where I could arrange for transportation to the United States. He would bring me back to stay with Zerka, since it is customary in Latvia for the family to stay in the room with the patient and provide meals.

At the hotel, I again had the feeling that this was a nightmare from which I would wake. I gathered more personal items and water bottles. After making phone calls for 90 min, I secured a Lufthansa/United flight for the next day at noon with the necessary bulkhead seat and stretcher service to transfer in Frankfurt to Dulles International Airport in Virginia. I called Zerka’s insurance company and my own to inform them of our circumstances. I finally reached Zerka’s son, Jonathan, and he agreed to meet the plane at Dulles.

When Inara returned, she helped make ambulance reservations to the airport. Moritz and his wife Inez returned me and our luggage to the hospital at midnight. After some difficulty getting into the hospital, which was locked for the night, I found Zerka’s room.

She was resting but was in pain and had been unable to summon the nurse. She did not want the sandwich I had bought in the hotel but did drink water and let me help with a bedpan. I went to find the nurse for pain medication. The hospital was eerily empty in our section, which was locked and separate from the main ward and nursing station. I finally located the nurse when she returned from another floor. I realized that we had not eaten for a full day but neither of us was hungry. I lay awake listening for Zerka, who needed regular assistance, thinking that I would rest when we reached home the next day with our crisis behind us.

The next morning, Inara brought a delightful physician friend, Kaspars Losans, who helped communicate with the hospital doctors and the ambulance driver to help with discharge and get us to the airport. We decided to ask that Zerka be catheterized and medicated.

I dressed her in my clothes, which were looser than her own. She was such a sport, uncomplaining and accepting, but it was frightening that she left so many decisions to me—not like her at all—and was staying in control by asking for eyedrops and lip balm, vitamins, and face cream. When the stretcher arrived, we had still not eaten; when the morphine tablet hit her empty stomach she quickly became nauseous and vomiting.

The ambulance crew, impatient with my efforts to clean her up, rushed her to a handheld stretcher. At first, they held the canvas litter stretcher and told her to move over to it! When they realized this was impossible, they permitted me to bring chairs to support the stretcher so we could move her. Then they were down the stairs to the ambulance with Inara, with Kaspars and myself struggling to bring the luggage, which consisted of two purses, two heavy carry-on bags, two coats, water bottles, hospital papers, and two very large suitcases. There was no room for luggage in the ambulance, so I brought the purses, Zerka's personal bag, her coat, and a bag of water bottles, and Kaspars followed in his car with the rest of the luggage. We said goodbye to Inara as she left for the workshop that was planned for Zerka in Riga. She would go on to Parnu, Estonia, for the next workshop. It felt rushed and unorganized, but we were relieved to be on our way.

The ambulance, siren on, rushed through crowded streets. It was a fast and bumpy ride until we nearly collided with a truck coming out of a side street. I was face to face with the truck's driver through our respective windows—it was hard to say who was more frightened. The ambulance driver, after driving more sedately, parked in front of the airport well before flight time. It seemed there was no plan to get on the tarmac to board. I pretended to have a problem finding my passport to delay moving the ambulance until Kaspars and the luggage could arrive.

Luckily, Kaspars arrived while the airport police were questioning our papers. I went inside to purchase tickets and check luggage; I was told I had to board as a regular passenger and Zerka would be put on the plane by stretcher. I said goodbye to Kaspars, who was leaving to meet Inara at the workshop, and went to check on Zerka before heading for the boarding gate. She was resting and groggy from the medication, so I decided to wait for the plane to board.

An attendant arrived to review the hospital papers and became upset when I explained that Zerka would be boarding by stretcher. I began to think that things might not go smoothly, but I gathered our purses, carry-on baggage, and coats to board the bus that took us to the plane. From the bus I could see the stretcher being carried on the plane. I wanted to get off to help Zerka to her seat, but it was impossible.

Then I saw the stretcher descend the stairs with Zerka on it. I banged on the bus door until it was opened; as I jumped off with our gear trailing behind, I heard lots of yelling with one voice telling me in English that I was in a restricted area. I grabbed the man who spoke English and pulled him to the stairs to find out what was happening. At the top of the stairs, the American pilot emerged, saying he

couldn't take Zerka on the plane unless she could stand to get to her seat or sit upright in a wheelchair—impossible with a broken hip. He explained his fears for her safety, something about injury to her hip on takeoff, and spoke of his concern about litigation and his worry that she could have an emergency reaction in flight which would require landing.

I tried to plead our plight, but he wouldn't change his mind. Our luggage was unloaded, and as I stood beside the two confused Latvian ambulance attendants holding Zerka on a primitive stretcher with our suitcases at my feet, I felt frightened that we would never leave Riga. Without a translator, I was alone, with no way to contact Inara. I didn't know if I should take Zerka to the hospital where there was pain medication and doctors or to the hotel where there was food, bottled water, and telephones. I decided to try to find a flight which would board a stretcher while we were at the airport.

I sent Zerka back to the ambulance and out of the wind. She was again calm and resting and uncharacteristically giving decisions to me. I made four trips to carry our luggage to the terminal lobby, where I secured it to a post with my bicycle lock. I was being shooed away from the departing plane and could not find anyone to help. My back was screaming with pain and our luggage was beginning to look like my worst enemy.

I went to the Lufthansa office, where there was an English-speaking clerk and a telephone. I left a message for Jonathan to tell him about the change of plans, and I began to investigate flights that could take a stretcher. Lufthansa would not have a flight until 6 days later, and there was no stretcher space.

After going from desk to desk, I found a British Airways flight leaving at 7 p.m. I went to the ambulance, gave Zerka water and lip balm, and covered her with our coats, ignoring the ambulance driver's questions. I was almost glad to have the excuse that I couldn't speak their language, since I wanted to stay at the airport. I went back to arrange a flight and stretcher transfer. The British Airways flight fell through because we did not have a doctor in attendance, and the plane was too full to accept a stretcher. Again I called the U.S. embassy, but there was no one to help.

The next available British Airways flight to New York was scheduled for the next day, with a transfer in London. I arranged for a six-seat aisle that would accommodate a stretcher and picked up a hospital form that had to be completed by a physician. In my next call, Jonathan suggested that I call Marcia Karp in London. Marcia was sick with the flu and told me of a petrol strike in London that was making ground transportation difficult.

I went from desk to desk to check for flights with stretcher availability. Lufthansa told me the airline would not permit flight with a broken bone because of the danger of embolus in the air. When I received refund papers for our refused flight, I saw an emergency number listed on the form. I asked what this could be and was told it was for the doctor who had cleared Zerka for flying and had accompanied us in the morning—Kaspars! I was so relieved I almost cried, and when I called the number, Kaspars answered. He offered to call Inara and told me he would return to the airport to help. I didn't know he had left his phone number with the Lufthansa clerk as an emergency contact. We definitely did have an emergency.

When I went to the ambulance to tell Zerka that we had a Latvian-speaking hero coming, I was relieved to find her asleep and breathing easily. The ambulance attendants were understandably anxious about driving to the hospital, so I tried to communicate that we would leave any minute.

One more phone call, to WorldAccess Insurance to get help in the repatriation process. I was given a bureaucratic runaround about having surgery in Riga before engaging a medevac plane to fly home. Of course the company preferred the hip-replacement surgery to be completed in Latvia, since it would be less expensive to return on a commercial plane.

However, I could not trust the hospital where Zerka had never been properly examined and the equipment was 60 years old. None of the routine medical procedures, such as listening to her heart, was applied during the 5 days Zerka was hospitalized. I gave up trying to explain, and left my number to the hospital with a request that it contact me with flight information.

Kaspars looked as gorgeous as any sight I'd seen. He took charge of getting Zerka readmitted into the hospital and put me and the luggage in a taxi so he could follow the ambulance in his car. The plan was to stay at the hospital until we could leave for London the next day.

The hospital was again locked for the night. I stood by the entrance to the wing we had left that morning with the mound of luggage at my feet. I was wondering how I would find an open entrance when a nurse came bustling out; she didn't seem to object to my propping the door open with a suitcase. I found Zerka in the same second-floor room. She reported with weariness that she was feeling fairly comfortable, being a great sport, although she looked pale and lethargic, and I was worried about her.

After bringing the suitcases upstairs piece by piece, I was just sinking into the second bed in the room when Kaspars and Inara arrived. It was such a relief to have their help. We expected we would leave the next day. Inara left to travel to Parnu to complete the workshop planned for Estonia.

An hour after they left, British Airways called to say our reservations had been canceled because the airline would not fly the stretcher. This was another low point. Zerka remained cheerful, but she later told me that she had decided she would die in Riga. Unexpectedly, I found my comfort in prayer.

Meanwhile, Jonathan had been working behind the scenes. He called to report that Zerka did not have to return to New York because a place had opened up in a retirement community in Charlottesville, VA. We discussed where we should go, since we could not find transportation to the United States without surgery. He contacted a representative of the U.S. State Department who stressed that we should not permit surgery in Riga. The medevac company wanted \$85,000 in cash and could not promise departure in the next 2 days. Even if we could raise this money, I didn't think we could wait that long.

We decided to go to Helsinki or Stockholm for proper treatment. We chose Sweden because Zerka could speak the language and we had many English-speaking friends there. Jonathan arranged travel by ambulance plane from Finland to the Karolinska Institute, a medical school internationally known for excellent health care. The cost for that 50-min trip across the Baltic Sea was \$35,000.

While waiting to travel, we spent another day in Riga. I went out by taxi to buy food—quite an experiment in pantomime! At one point I was feeding Zerka what I thought was cottage cheese but turned out to be a salty dip. We ate smoked salmon and canned spinach and managed to laugh.

Zerka asked why I was so fascinated with her suitcase when I was trying to repack. We laughed again, and we had fun and diversion planning how she would decorate her new cottage in Virginia. She wanted to sing, but I could not.

The same noninvolvement with Zerka's medical needs continued at the hospital. I was giving her a daily aspirin to ward off emboli and worried over her being immobile for so long. Once, a woman with a transparent green plastic cap came defiantly into the room and threw some food on the bedside table from a wooden tray; it seemed to be mostly dry, dark bread. Zerka was insulted and said the woman would have been a perfect candidate for a grim propaganda Hollywood movie about a prison guard in the backwoods of Siberia. I was happy for the bread.

We went through similar preparation for the new ambulance trip to the airport. Zerka was placed on a narrow stretcher that was strapped to the side of the small plane, and I was directed to a tiny jump seat. While the luggage was being loaded, the top of my suitcase ripped, and I kept busy collecting the clothing that spilled on the tarmac and adding to the plastic bags with our water supply. Although the trip was bumpy and uncomfortable and the plane landed at the wrong Stockholm airport, it was a happy relief to arrive to bright blue skies and clean air. The ambulance was beautifully equipped, and the driver and attendant were wonderfully kind and professional. At last I felt Zerka was being properly cared for and I could breathe.

At the Karolinska Institute, a welcoming nurse took charge of the luggage and an extraordinarily beautiful doctor greeted us and explained the procedure, showing a sample of the insert he would use to replace Zerka's hip joint. Looking at this doctor, Zerka asked him where he was from, and interestingly he said, "My parents are from Persia." He did not call it Iran. We agreed that "Persia" conjured up all the scents, sounds, colors, and mysteries of *One Thousand and One Nights*, and we were under his spell.

When Zerka was stabilized, he turned to me and said, "You look worse than she does. Why don't you let me take you to the cafeteria for some food?" As he sat with me while I ate, I said, "If you keep being so nice to me, I might cry." This chief of orthopedic surgery said, "Have you done that yet?" So I cried, and he didn't even leave.

He called each morning, telling me when to arrive so I could be present when he made rounds, and he permitted me in the recovery room with Zerka so she would see a familiar face when she woke after surgery. He would even arrange our plane trip home.

The staff was attentive and caring. The hospital was well equipped and felt luxurious, with equipment that was not yet available in the United States. Zerka finally had her surgery 5 days after her fall.

Psychodramatist Monica Westberg came immediately to the hospital and invited me to her lovely home, a 20-min train ride from Stockholm, for several

days. Later I moved in with Kate and Lars Tauvon because their town apartment was on the direct bus line to the hospital. All of our Stockholm psychodrama friends were contacted, unhappy to know why Zerka was there but happy to help. They visited Zerka with goodies and took me for wonderful excursions. By the time Zerka was ready to move from her private room to the ward, most of the European psychodrama community had been alerted, and her bedside was loaded with flowers, fruit, and visitors.

Zerka made great progress, walking with the help of a hydraulic tripod walker that raised her from her bed. She could balance with her one arm on the curve of the handle. This device was not available in the United States, and I wondered how she would manage with a traditional walker after surgery. She made friends with the staff and accepted the decision to move her to a ward when she was healing.

At discharge, Zerka's surgeon made arrangements for catheterization, medications, and wheelchair transport. He suggested Icelandic Airlines and helped request the bulkhead seat in first class. Our Swedish friends provided cars and assistance in getting us and our belongings to the airport.

By this time, Zerka could sit in a wheelchair and was brought onto the plane by an electric lift. We were placed in the front seats, which didn't please a tall gentleman who had reserved that seat and only reluctantly, under protest and after explanation by the flight attendant, retreated to the back of the plane.

We anticipated a change of planes in Reykjavik to connect with a flight to the Baltimore/Washington International Airport. Imagine our delight to discover that this plane would take us there! Jonathan's wife Leslye met us at the airport, to drive Zerka to Charlottesville. It was hard to say goodbye to Zerka when it was time to find my connection home to east to Norfolk. I knew she had a long drive to Charlottesville and a long recovery in front of her.

Jonathan had registered Zerka at the University of Virginia's hospital rehabilitation center. After a week there, she was moved to the nursing facility at the Colonnades, the retirement community where her new cottage awaited her. Due to complications and further surgeries, she was there for several months, confined to a small space where she read the entire memoir of Marcel Proust in French. When she was ready to move to her cottage, Toni Horvatin, Zerka's friend and student in New York, undertook the mammoth task of moving her belongings from Beacon to Charlottesville with love and efficiency.

Throughout this ordeal, which included five surgeries, much pain, and many difficulties, Zerka was incredible. She remained determined for herself and interested in other people. She maintained many friendships by diligent communication by e-mail, which she learned to use while recovering. Many people who loved her arrived for visits, and Zerka remained involved and helpful in the lives of all who came her way.

When she decided to work again, we organized monthly workshops in her home in Charlottesville for 10 years. People came from throughout the world to experience Zerka's direction in this most intimate setting. Participants would often remark how she would be energized by directing psychodrama sessions and would look and feel younger as the weekend progressed from Friday night to Sunday

afternoon. She remembered and cared about every piece of work. Each weekend, I left feeling I had learned something about myself and about psychodrama.

When she could no longer rise from her bed, Zerka put her energies toward writing her wonderful memoir, *To Dream Again*. She would often remark, “Sometimes I wondered why I survived Riga, but the workshops and the book made living on very worthwhile.”

Zerka and I agreed that the rigors of Riga were traumatic. Several people offered to direct psychodrama sessions for us, and those sessions were often helpful. However, the small psychodramas that we did together were most healing. We used the method to reexperience the details and recognize that we did our best to get through the trauma. Surely support, spirituality, self-care, and strengths in action were the keys to our survival, and psychodrama was the way to understand it.

“Every Morning It Amazes Me What Happened To Me in This Life!”: An Interview with Zerka T. Moreno

An Interview by Irene Daenzer-Vanotti¹

Irene Daenzer-Vanotti, a German journalist, shares the interview that she conducted with Zerka in 2010 in Charlottesville, VA, when she took part in one of Zerka's weekend psychodrama trainings with Friedel Geisler, the late psychodrama trainer from Germany. The interview appeared in a German magazine and aired on German radio but has not been seen in the United States or in any English-language publication. In this wide-ranging interview, Zerka talks not only about her views on psychodrama, relationships, and group experiences but also her close ties with Dr. J. L. Moreno and her thoughts about the cosmos, God, being Jewish, and how she has felt closest to Buddhism.

KEYWORDS: Zerka T. Moreno; Irene Daenzer-Vanotti; Friedel Geisler; cosmos; interview; Germany.

Daenzer-Vanotti: We have just finished a psychodrama workshop with people coming from all over the world—practically—what do you enjoy most about psychodrama groups?

Zerka: The first thing I enjoy is the fact, that this is a group of individuals, who don't know each other—except a few people—and they melt into a loving group in a few hours actually. And you can feel the crosscurrents of their contacts. And the interesting thing is, I think it is because we have had a common experience. Also the sharing and the discussions are focused. They are not generalized; they are focused on what we have co-experienced. And that is the part I like so much: Doesn't matter which group it is—as long as that happens, good things happen for everybody.

Daenzer-Vanotti: And you mean the common experience is the entrance scene?
Zerka: It started on Friday night by people showing themselves in brief moments. And of course that awakens both the feeling

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for everyone and the feeling “I want to know more! What is this person really about?” So it begins already there. You feel the warm up, you feel the integration of the group. It was nice. One lady came late, but she was immediately embraced by the group.

Daenzer-Vanotti: Do you experience this in every group?

Zerka: No, there are different structures in groups. But there is something about this instrument where they finish up: everybody wants to stay in touch with everybody else. Because leaving is like losing something, something very intimate and immediate and something they want to continue to experience. It is even hard to leave, takes time to separate themselves from this space here.

Daenzer-Vanotti: Is it psychodrama that does this?

Zerka: I think the instrument helps it. And it creates what Moreno called “tele,” which is a feeling into reality of the other and appreciating this reality. Not wanting to change it in any way. But appreciating and accepting that reality. Most people who come here are already familiar with that instrument. Very few people come here who haven’t experienced it. But even people for whom it is an entirely new event, they fit in pretty fast. If you come alone, you need only one person to feel anchored in a group—in a large group, like in a lecture—you talk to the people next to you and you already begin to feel: Oh, I am part of this group. We don’t realize how much human beings are social beings and how much they need human contact. And they don’t get enough of it – out there. It is too mechanical, too superficial or too fleeting. Gone too fast.

Daenzer-Vanotti: It is remarkable how in this group and in many groups people are ready to give something very intimate of their lives—maybe something they have never told anybody else before. Is that an experience you have quite often?

Zerka: Well, I think it is a question of trust. If you trust not only the group but the leader, it is easier. If I organize trust for these people, then it is easier to open up. A little step at a time.

Daenzer-Vanotti: Are you building up trust in your own special way?

Zerka: Well, I might be building it up in my own special way. But every good psychodramatist has to know that this experience is based upon trust. And if trust isn’t there, it is not going to work—or it doesn’t work. It might even injure. In group psychotherapy too—you have to have trust in the leader and in the group itself.

Daenzer-Vanotti: What does it take for you to build up this trust?

Zerka: I am just myself. I give myself away. I don’t pull any punches, I tell the truth. I reveal things about myself or I help them reveal things about themselves. They do trust that. As my

- husband said, I am always myself. Like we are here together talking very comfortably.
- Daenzer-Vanotti: Even on the phone it was very easy to talk to you and get to a meaningful point in no time.
- Zerka: I think, I learned that from Moreno and from the method. And the more I grew into the method, the more I trust myself. That is an important thing. I remember when I had my first session, I remember thinking—it is really me who is doing that and I am doing it in cooperation with someone else? We are either doing harmony or disharmony—and you can feel it when it is disharmonic.
- I occasionally say this to a patient: I don't think we are harmonious at this time—can we start all over again! With a fresh warm up. I did that with my companion. I had a companion for 21 years after Moreno died. And one morning we were both grouchy—it was just one of those days, where things were going to be unpleasantly grouchy. So we both said: "This is no way to start a day! Let's start again." So we went back to our bedrooms and came out again and said "Good morning!" and started with a new warm up! Fortunately for my own life, I found companions who understand that and if something goes a little bit awkward, we correct it. I am sorry, I interrupted, I am sorry I wasn't with you—and that immediately changes the atmosphere.
- Daenzer-Vanotti: I perceived you as being spontaneous as well as quite strict, like when you asked one participant on the stage who wouldn't easily come on the stage – you were very strict. How do you manage to keep up this spontaneity and this strictness, behind which there is an eagerness to want to go – after all these years, how do you keep this up?
- Zerka: I don't really know. My husband said I was tough and tender, both. So maybe when these two mingle properly, it works out somehow! [laughs] One really doesn't see oneself anyway or know oneself very well—I learn about myself too as I go along.
- Daenzer-Vanotti: Is it that, that you want to learn about yourself?
- Zerka: Of course! And about everybody else. I don't ever want to stop learning. That's what life is about: Continue to learn from life and from other people.
- Daenzer-Vanotti: What did you learn in those three days of our seminar?
- Zerka: Well, apart from trust, I would say, the level of spontaneity varied to begin with, but it seemed to equal out towards the end. That always amazes me: Some people are more withholding, other people are more forward, but once the ones who are withholding see the other ones, they lift themselves up out of whatever dumpy space they are in. It is

really infectious. The work is infectious. I mean, you either turn it off, or you go into it wholeheartedly and you are there with it.

Daenzer-Vanotti: Has the extent to which a group works, becomes lively and loving something to do with the state you are in?

Zerka: Oh, I think so. Moreno said the director has to be the most spontaneous member of the group. You have to be free of any preconceived notions. So I don't know anything. Even what I know of people, I don't know, I don't use. Except—you have two sons or this or that, that's just a little comma—but actually I try not to remember anything because I haven't seen them for a little while, they must have changed, I changed since I last saw them. So obviously they changed too. One has to be available. I don't care much for the kind of German way of going for the red thread, *der rote Faden*, I don't even know what that is! It reveals itself as you go along, but it is not just going to be there for you—it is nonsense. If you do that you are not open to where the red thread might be going. Remember when I told you I don't want to hear your story. You can't know what you want to work on in the beginning. Watching other people something more meaningful might come up. I am watching this person and they teach me something else—so I might have to make a move.

Daenzer-Vanotti: When you say they are teaching me something, do you receive something like a word or a notion in your head?

Zerka: A protagonist who might be holding back or have not a clear idea where they are going, they get “happy confusion”—it is a beautiful expression!—they say what I was going to work on was not significant enough, what I heard from so-and-so is much more significant. And we saw that happening here too. And some people don't have any idea where they are going to go—and I don't have any idea and I am waiting for the inspiration to guide me.

Daenzer-Vanotti: Where does the inspiration lie?

Zerka: Outside of me! In the cosmos somewhere, and I am lucky to pick it up! [laughs]

Daenzer-Vanotti: Moreno said God is within you. . .

Zerka: Ya.

Daenzer-Vanotti: And yet the inspiration is outside—do the two communicate?

Zerka: Oh absolutely. God is also there—if you think of God in certain terms. There is a moment, when I absolutely don't know what I am doing. And it comes. The important thing is to be open—almost like a blank board until inspiration comes and writes itself on the board.

Daenzer-Vanotti: Is that true for any situation in life?

Zerka: I hope so! But that can't be true because you have a history

with people. While I try to be as spontaneous as possible, the history sometimes takes a part in the communication. For instance, if I were able, had legs, I would be up and dancing around too, taking my heels up. But I have to reserve myself. That's a limitation I have, and I live with that and make the best of it. I use what I have and I am able to do and forget what I am not able to do anymore. So I am really hoping that every moment I am working is real, it works for me and with me and for others. But you see how beautifully people mingle with each other and that's the beauty of a group, they understand each other they are real with each other.

Daenzer-Vanotti: And with themselves?

Zerka: And with themselves, more honest. So where does inspiration lie? I honestly don't know. I only know it is out there somewhere.

Daenzer-Vanotti: And you trust it?

Zerka: Ya.

Daenzer-Vanotti: Have you ever lost the trust?

Zerka: Well, I told you about this time in Chicago, when I thought, I don't know what they want from me, I felt the lady who had invited me and I felt her as very hungry. And if people are so hungry you know you are not going to be able to satisfy them—and I transferred this hunger from her onto the group, which was wrong. The group might have been hungry but not to the intensity that this lady was. Well, the warm up is important. I really like to be a blank slate, no preconceived notions. I know people are needy. To what extent what I can give fulfills them, that we'll see whether it works in the process or not, is not entirely in my hand—it is between me and the group and the cosmos. [laughs] Moreno said we were cosmic beings before we biological beings, social beings, economic beings. We were cosmic beings first. So maybe this is a return to my original source of being—cosmos! And trusting in that.

Daenzer-Vanotti: Are you still going on the psychodrama stage yourself?

Zerka: Oh, yes, sometimes, when there is an opportunity, I have a need. I used to do that with my students. I have something very pressing that has just happened—I have to be a protagonist. They loved it, when I was a protagonist—they could be my auxiliaries, they could role reverse with me. I mean I was a member of that group. When we stayed together and worked two or three weeks in that theatre you merge with each other, you become each other's partners. It was a beautiful experience. Imagine, if this weekend would have gone on! Moreno had that with his psychotic patients. He knew what they needed. He loved them. In fact, I have always said, the closer a patient became to so-called normal, the less

interested he became in them. If you were a little bit crazy he loved you! [laughs]

Daenzer-Vanotti: Are you the same?

Zerka: Oh yes, I think so. I have to love myself and I am little kooky. I always say to people it is all right I am a little crazy but my craziness works for me. There is a difference whether you let your craziness work for you or against you. I choose to let it work for me—and it works!

Daenzer-Vanotti: Can you give an example?

Zerka: Well, you see some examples in my book. Seeing something totally unexpected that wasn't presented in the drama—and I am bringing that out to you. It has nothing to do with what you produced and I say I see this and this and this in you—and you say, that's right, that's how I am! I have chocolate cookies! Would you like some chocolate cookies? I am childlike! Like a child at a party. Wonderful. What kind of presents am I going to get! [laughs] And the presents are the relationships that build up. Try some of those cookies, they are really good! I usually leave it at one helping of cookies a day. But they are good. They are the best American chocolates. Most American chocolates are much too sugary. These aren't. I come from Europe, and, you know, I think in America everything is a bit too much, including sugar. And the mistakes they make—they are bigger and more stupid than anywhere else.

Daenzer-Vanotti: Do you remember a role you once played that particularly impressed you?

Zerka: I was first auxiliary ego to psychotic patients—that was the greatest lesson ever. I am so grateful for that experience. My craziness was allowed to function. I have been people's body parts that spoke, the voice itself or a hallucination. Or I remember a girl. She was doing a very ordinary scene. Moreno brought her to a dream—and I had worked with her, and we were standing at the top of the stairs and that's what she said. I am standing at the top of the stairs and I am looking down and I only see mist at the bottom. And I say, what is that? That's my mother, crumpled up, lying there. I don't know, whether that was a hallucination or it was a wish—it terrified her. Now, I didn't see exactly what it was. But by the way she looked—horrificed—I knew. That's all you need. It helps to be close to people. You pick up vibes. Also by watching the way they use their bodies. It might be different from yours. So that's a good lesson. Oh, this is how other people use their body!

Daenzer-Vanotti: One thing remains a mystery in psychodrama to me: How come feelings or sensations are creeping up within in me

- which are part of me and yet they are different from myself. Have you come to a conclusion how that works?
- Zerka: If you understand enough to let it flow, not to hold on to this particular image: This is how I am! I tell you: I don't even know who I am. I don't. People tell me how I come across. I don't really see myself that way. I don't really think we see ourselves. We experience ourselves, but we don't see ourselves. And even what we experience may or may not be recognized by other people. And that's all right. They are entitled not to see a segment. But you have to be pretty sure of yourself, that what you are doing has meaning. Who you are has meaning. Otherwise, why would you be here? What are you doing on this earth? You are here to learn! And so you're better available for learning. Otherwise you're halfway dead!
- Daenzer-Vanotti: Having lived for so long—have you always been able to open yourself up to learning?
- Zerka: That again I don't know. Yes, I was curious. I want to know what this world is about! There are so many mysteries here. And I am never exactly going to know what it is about. But every little mystery is an answer and a piece put into the puzzle. So I know that my inner core is stronger now than it was before I did this work. I know that much! And as for death—death itself doesn't frighten me. What I hope I avoid is this slow deterioration people go through. If death comes—welcome it fast. I am here, I am available. I come back in some other form or whatever. I call it the undiscovered country.
- Daenzer-Vanotti: Talking of death, do you think that afterwards you will be hovering about for more psychodrama sessions?
- Zerka: Like Moreno hovers above me! [laughs] I don't know. I guess it depends whether the other people awoke me or not. I don't call for Moreno. I don't consciously call for him. In fact, I am very rarely aware that he is here. Other people are more aware than I am. But if 35 people tell you they saw him, 35 people who seem perfectly normal and are not hallucinating—that is part of a mystery. We know so little. You know there is a picture of him in my office. I've had a lady who took care of me. She stood in front of that picture, she came out and she said: "Your husband talked to me. And he said: 'You be good to my Zerka and I'll be good to you!'" and, by the way, she's had a very rough life—and her life is beautiful now. Yes, extraordinary. Yes. She has completely changed her life. And I wasn't even there in the room with her. So other people have the experience too.
- Daenzer-Vanotti: Do you have the same notion with other people in your life who have passed away and who are still close to you?
- Zerka: No. I remember them, but I can't say they are here. And, as I

say, I can't even say whether Moreno is around or not. I think the reason he is here is that we have such intense tie otherwise it wouldn't happen. On the other hand, people say they shouldn't be around for they shouldn't be in this life anymore. But I think we live multiple lives. How do I know that I am here just now? God knows—all of us might be somewhere else. In other peoples' dreams for instance! Yes. Might be alive in other people. And the more people you connect with, the more this may happen to you. When I first came here, which was when I had fallen and broken my hip, Moreno was not kind to me in my dreams. It was almost punitive, as if I had done something wrong. The falling. I accuse myself that it was foolish that I fell, and I think I carried that on in my dreams and projected it to Moreno. But I must tell you, he suffered greatly when I was ill. He really lost something. I think we were very closely tied. At the same time, he was also very disturbed. I, in a way, I left him when I was ill, and I came back stronger than before. At some point, I became in my own way as strong as he was. In these tangled relationships humanity lives in.

Daenzer-Vanotti: That's one of the big mysteries.

Zerka: And by the way—having children. When my son was born, I looked at him and said: "Yes, you're the one for me." And we have been together before. I knew that instantly the moment I saw him.

Daenzer-Vanotti: So you believe in some sort of reincarnation—or whatever you call it.

Zerka: Yes. And if I don't come back, I don't—of course, the idea is to get all your karma cleaned up so you don't come back. But there are no guarantees about that, of course. And maybe some people want to come back. Because it is been so fascinating! Great big psychodrama in the world—who wouldn't like to come back to it? Even if it is crazy out there. Really crazy. So staying sane in this crazy world is already an achievement. An achievement to be recognized for, right?! By the way, when I worked with psychotic patients, I loved being crazy, I thoroughly enjoyed it. Some psychotics really suffer, but some enjoy being crazy.

Daenzer-Vanotti: Have you experienced psychodrama being able to really help them?

Zerka: We don't like to talk about cures. Nobody likes to talk about those any more. But yes, helping them in terms of finding parts of themselves and helping them integrate those parts. We hope that they are a more integrated person and that does happen. May not always happen right away—takes some people longer. I said to one participant, you know, that might

work for you right away, might take six or eight months. He said, "Aha!" In fact, I get phone calls from people 20 years later, telling me, that their life changed after the psychodrama. More than one said, "You saved my life," and I have no idea how I did that. You don't know how you save another person's life. Just being there with them? Who knows? I think all of us have those results working with people and you can't put your finger on it. There is one woman—she lives out in the West—and she said, "I came with my 16-year-old son and my life was kaput, in shambles, and that weekend with you changed it around." Now, I couldn't put my finger on what it was. Was it her session? Was it watching the others? Was it living in surplus reality—who knows? Maybe all those things. I think Moreno wanted to teach us to be crazy and enjoy it. Cause we are crazy anyway. Might suffer from being crazy.

Daenzer-Vanotti: If you had to put it in a couple of sentences: What in psychodrama are you most grateful for?

Zerka: Having discovered that surplus reality is important, is sometimes more significant than life itself.

Daenzer-Vanotti: And surplus reality means the reality on the stage?

Zerka: Well, it can be in your life. It means being in the reality beyond reality, I lived in that as a child, as we all do. We all live in surplus reality. And to find it back and feel it as harmonious and useful—not just for yourself but for other people. So it is like childhood with the advantage of knowing what it means to be in that place. Learning to dance when other people are not dancing! Psychodrama is a little bit like that. Dancing—you know—*L'chaim, l'chaim!* [To life, to life]

Daenzer-Vanotti: How would you describe the change of your insights in your rather long life? Have they changed?

Zerka: Well, I think it is almost invisible. It is little, little steps, big step, back step. I feel I learned from Moreno through osmosis, just being there with him and in the atmosphere he created. You couldn't help either loving it or hating it. There is nothing neutral about it. Probably even chemical, physical, the whole thing—it is very interesting. It was another world.

Daenzer-Vanotti: Did you fall in love with this world immediately?

Zerka: No, I didn't even know I belonged there. He discovered me. He pulled me into it.

Daenzer-Vanotti: Did he see you as the person who would be able to live with him and keep his legacy?

Zerka: He was looking for a muse. He made me into his muse. Also step by step by step.

Daenzer-Vanotti: Was it difficult with such a grand and flamboyant character to keep your own self?

Zerka: Ya. In his own way, he was quite a perfectionist with the

image he had of what the world could be like. Yes, it is always complicated. I mean, he is a genius. A genius just isn't like anybody else, so you had to be spontaneous to deal with that. You got into trouble, it was your trouble.

Daenzer-Vanotti: Did it help that you were so much younger than him?

Zerka: I never thought of that. His feeling-life was so young. He felt it more than I did, and especially as he aged. Then it began to be more noticeable. When he was at his best—no difference! We had absolute the same idea about how our child should be brought up, how we meet the world. Sometimes he taught me that, sometimes I told him that! But there was never any discussion about that sort of thing. In fact, we corrected each other. We never had arguments about that sort of thing. We were just there, we were each other's companions.

Daenzer-Vanotti: And the psychodrama you are living now is that different from his? Is it Zerka's or is it the one you developed together?

Zerka: I have certainly emerged gradually from under his shadow. I do what I think I need to do. He taught me the rudiments, but I work very differently from the way he did, and that doesn't mean that I haven't learned from him. But I interpret what I have learned from him differently from the way he interpreted it.

Daenzer-Vanotti: Can you give an example?

Zerka: He was at his best with psychotics. There, he was unlimited in what he could do and the effect he had on them, because they behaved quite normally when he was working with them! My experience with psychotics as a psychodrama director was more limited. But with the so-called normals—he said there are no such people as normal, everyone is a little neurotic; he said: "Are you a 'Normautic'?" He loved to make up new words! So as for the Normautics, I did better with them than he did. He didn't have so much patience with them. In fact, his patience began to go down as he got old; he began to separate himself more from that world.

Daenzer-Vanotti: As a young woman living with a genius, how did you manage to compose yourself, keep the entity of yourself?

Zerka: The fact is that he listened to me, when I had a statement to make. I didn't realize it until much later, I had tremendous power over him. And at the end of life, he said that: "I have given you too much power." Now nobody gives a person power, but it is true that he supported it. But I was apparently always a personality, with or without him. He said to a whole group of people: "She is always herself." Which was a great compliment, living side by side with him because I could have stayed a shadow.

- Daenzer-Vanotti: What is your feeling vis à vis his legacy? Is it well kept or are there dangers for it?
- Zerka: Well, I always say, what would Christ say if he came back to this world? He would shake his head and say: "This is what has become of me?" And I think in some way, Moreno would say to some people: They don't get me. And then the other ones that get him, he would say, "Good!" And I must say there are both of these everywhere. We talked about theorizing this weekend; there are people who take the juice and the flesh all away, they make it sterile. He would say this is the wrong kind of research. I think he would be delighted to see how it has grown and spread. One of my students went to Bangladesh to start a psychodrama theatre and from there it flowed to India. About the only continent where psychodrama is not conducted is Africa—and it is one of the places which needs it very badly.
- Daenzer-Vanotti: Talking of peoples brings me to the Jewish question—you are Jewish, Moreno was Jewish. What role does that play?
- Zerka: My family was Ashkenazi and his was Sephardic. I always find the Sephardic the Spanish, Portuguese more interesting than the Ashkenazi. But to tell you the honest truth, I lost the feeling for any formed religion. I believe in our common spirituality. If we can exchange that, I think we are doing better, without any labels and any preformed ideas. Meet each other as human beings—that's the way I want to do it. Moreno spoke about the I-God. That makes more sense to me than all the other ones. But it is too threatening to the established churches and very rarely they would be able to accept it.
- Daenzer-Vanotti: Do you think religion hinders *Begegnung* [encounter] in that sense?
- Zerka: I think most people misunderstand their own religion. Look, there are divisions among the Mohammedans. I don't think it is religion itself. It is how people interpret it and live by it. Moreno wanted to bring a new religion to the world, one that fits the modern needs. He also said to all his students that they were geniuses, and he believed that they were potential geniuses. If you are told you are a potential genius, you start to become a genius—or at least make a little step towards it. If you are told you are your own god, you begin to trust that. I think that's much more important than to say "I am a Christian" or "a Jew." I feel closer to the Buddhists.
- Daenzer-Vanotti: In which sense?
- Zerka: Letting things go, not hanging on to things and making them part of who you are. And maybe the idea of reincarnation—I find that very normal. As I said, when I saw my son, "I knew

you are the one for me.” And I know Moreno and I were connected in other lives, I know my son was there too. Moreno said: “Together we make God. There is no God without us. We make God.” If he is bad, it is because we made him that way; if it’s good, it is because we made that way. The way we live, God makes the difference. And that is cosmic.

Daenzer-Vanotti: How does that relate to the boundaries and limitations every human being has?

Zerka: What limitations—if you are in the cosmos, you have no limitations. If you are in that cosmic feeling, there are no limitations. There is a purpose but no limitations. Of course, we have boundaries to overcome. The idea is to be creative about it. Every minute, every day. I wake up in the morning and I think: Isn’t life amazing! It is! It still amazes me. I mean, when I think of the story of my life. I really have a fantastic story to tell! It is unbelievable, it is just incredible how things happened to me in my life. And I felt guided because of that. A friend took me to one of these people who see things, and she said I have a male and a female to guide me—that makes perfect sense to me. I have never seen them—I am grateful if they are there, doesn’t matter if they are there or not. But it is a nice idea!

Daenzer-Vanotti: When you talk about entities guiding you, let’s come back to psychodrama. Do you remember when psychodrama in crucial decisions or problems was a real help to you?

Zerka: You have to realize I came to psychodrama not for myself but for a sick sister. That took priority over everything. It is her illness that brought us together. That’s the core of the story, that’s how we got to know each other. But I did feel before I met him on the land where his hospital stood that I was being transported into another world. Before I saw him. I had no idea what that meant.

Daenzer-Vanotti: So that the idea of healing someone else who was very close to you, that that was like a guiding star. . .

Zerka: My sister had to get well. Whoever got my sister well was fine with me. But that was not what I was experiencing. It was that I was entering another world. Long before I knew about psychodrama. I felt before I met him that I was entering a new land.

Daenzer-Vanotti: Has it to do with the fact that you were both exiled in this country?

Zerka: The background made it easier, because of that. It doesn’t mean so much to him, but it helped. And I spoke German.

Daenzer-Vanotti: Did you speak German together?

Zerka: Yes, very often. We sometimes spoke German so that the children shouldn’t understand what we said—but of course

- they did. I spoke French, English, German, and I spoke Dutch. And I think all that, living these languages helped too.
- Daenzer-Vanotti: Because you are a slightly different person in each language.
- Zerka: Ya!
- Daenzer-Vanotti: Last question: What are your projects and wishes for the immediate future?
- Zerka: First of all, I do psychodrama weekends every month up until October, but my immediate project is to get my memoirs finished. That is the seventh or eighth version already. I learned when you are writing, it is not so important what you are writing but what you delete! Edit, edit, edit! When that's finished, I shall redo Moreno's autobiography. Because the person who printed it in California made a lot of mistakes. And after that, I have my mother's memoirs, which will be very interesting, from the 19th century. I have lots of projects. I always find new projects.
- Daenzer-Vanotti: How do you manage to keep up this concentration and this interest in people?
- Zerka: Ich bin neugierig! [I am curious!]

Why Become a Psychodramatist? Wisdom from the Life of Zerka T. Moreno

Kate Hudgins, PhD, TEP¹

This article documents the words of wisdom from the life of Zerka T. Moreno during the final two decades of her life. These are stories and statements she often repeated in daily conversations, about what it means to be a psychodramatist. Zerka lived a life of embodied spontaneity and creativity as she moved from the role of an international trainer who traveled the world to the role of a wise elder who taught from the gentleness of her home in Charlottesville, VA. Here is the shared philosophy collected from oral history that is often missing in academic programs on drama therapy, expressive arts therapies, and other methods of experiential psychotherapy. These stories are meant to encourage new students of psychodrama and experiential psychotherapy in its many forms to reach into the depth of the seminal action method of psychodrama through a brief window into the life of one of its co-creators.

KEYWORDS: Zerka T. Moreno; psychodrama; wisdom; spontaneity; creativity; doubling; Therapeutic Spiral Model.

INTRODUCTION

There is an ongoing discussion among psychodrama practitioners and trainers about the destiny of psychodrama as a specific field in and of itself. Drama therapy, sometimes considered a “cousin” of psychodrama, has evolved to the establishment of master’s-degree programs in colleges and universities in the United States, Canada, and England. Many people learn psychodrama techniques by reading case studies and attending skill-building workshops but do not continue the route to become certified psychodramatists. The question is, why?

Psychodrama as a field seems to be in a state of cultural conserve in some areas. Many trainers are of either the first or the second generation trained by J. L. Moreno or Zerka T. Moreno, and the field now competes with training programs

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of many other disciplines. Perhaps the younger person, a prospective trainee, asks, “Why become a psychodramatist when I can get a master’s degree in drama therapy for the same number of training hours?”

This is a good question, one that Zerka continued to answer in some of her most important word-of-mouth teachings and her example of living during the past 20 years. With this question in mind, I offer what I learned from Zerka after a quarter of a century of personal connection to her.

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH ZERKA MORENO THROUGHOUT 25 YEARS

I first met Zerka in 1987 at the annual conference of the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama in New York City. My dissertation research on doubling had just received the American Psychological Association’s Graduate Student Award for Research, and I had been published on the same topic in a clinical psychology journal (Hudgins & Kiesler, 1987).

As I was walking to a workshop, I heard a voice call, “Kate, dear, aren’t you the one who just won the award on doubling?” I stopped and, feeling a bit of intimidation and awe, told her about my study and how easy it was to do psychodrama research with the right assessment tools and analysis. This conversation began a relationship with Zerka that lasted more than a quarter of a century. Initially, our relationship focused on professional collaboration and mutual support; later, a deep and special friendship blossomed when she lived in my hometown of Charlottesville from 2000 to 2013.

She lent me the plans of the original Moreno stage and theater in Beacon, which allowed me to build the Psychodrama Theatre of Protection in rural Black Earth in Wisconsin, where I practiced during most of the 1990s when I lived in nearby Madison. She opened the theater on October 31, 1996, saying it was as good a night as any for her to fly her broom! She soon called the theater “the most beautiful psychodrama theater in the world” and came to visit once a year to train international students, especially from Australia and New Zealand.

The event that cemented our relationship was her 80th-birthday cruise, which involved family members, friends, prominent trainers, and eager students joining her for a leisurely trip to Bermuda. My husband Peter Dummett and I were assigned a suite next door to Zerka and Jeanne Burger, and we could hear them giggling at night when we returned to our rooms to find our towels folded and twisted into various kinds of animals and flowers. We loved the hanging gorillas!

The birthday cruise provided a great opportunity to connect to the broader psychodrama community, with many prominent trainers from the United States attending. The second night, I called the head waiter and said, “Please don’t make us stay in our assigned seats. This is a group that needs to connect with people at other tables and move around. You can be assured that this will get the waitstaff a better tip than trying to memorize our coffee preferences!” Thus began the sociometric dance to celebrate Zerka, and the cruise community listened to her stories of psychodrama, coming from decades of work with J. L., as well as her trips bringing psychodrama to all corners of the world after he died in 1974.

Looking back, this event seems like the height of her career. Zerka was in full bloom, energetically and creatively. She was surrounded by her international community, including second- and third-generation trainers with abundant creativity, experience, and respect. Each day Zerka directed a psychodrama session; other hours were taken by trainers who had been her students. At night, she would sit like a queen at her table, surrounded by psychodramatists telling her what was happening in the field in their parts of the world. The trainers shared their experiences and ideas about psychodrama with enthusiastic young students, many now certified psychodrama trainers in their own right.

When Zerka moved to Charlottesville to live near her son Jonathan and to recover from her fall in Riga, Latvia, and first hip-replacement surgery, she started offering international training weekends in her cottage. I was privileged to assist her from 2002 to 2012 with groups coming from Taiwan, where I was teaching at the time. At other times I hosted international dinner parties in my home during a training or personal growth weekend that Zerka and Jeanne Burger would offer at her cottage.

There are no words to describe the twist of fate that led to Zerka retiring in my home community, touching my life in ways I could never have imagined. Although I am an experienced psychodramatist, it was nevertheless amazing to witness her living, eating, and breathing psychodrama as she faced the tasks of aging gracefully. When Jonathan took a position at the University of Pennsylvania and she decided to stay in Charlottesville, Zerka and I became friends and at times more—a good psychodramatic mother–daughter pairing for both of us. She spent seven Thanksgivings at our home where she was the matriarch for my “orphan’s Thanksgiving,” organized for people whose families were far away or unavailable. In this way, Zerka taught me the pleasure of combining my personal and professional lives in the way she triumphed at all times.

Zerka always seemed to know when I was traveling out of the country to conduct psychodrama trainings. If I did not contact her within 3 days of returning home, she would call to press for details, always asking how psychodrama was being accepted in the country I had visited. She gave the support and encouragement of a good-enough mother for a career my own mother had had difficulty accepting. I became the on-call computer “expert” and cook of weekly lunches along with Francesca Toscani, who matched her interest in history and watched the British television drama series *Downton Abbey* with her each week. During Zerka’s time in Charlottesville, I saw her re-create herself through four hip replacements and several brushes with death, each time returning to teach small groups of people in her living room and to tell me about them over lunch the following Friday!

What I share are the words I heard her repeat and the actions she lived, showing what it means to *live as a psychodramatist*, which I find missing in the academic programs that teach various experiential therapies. I want to make sure that her life teachings that have been part of our oral tradition are translated into writings, especially for new psychodrama trainees. In this way, Zerka will continue to influence the new generation of young psychodramatists.

ZERKA #1: WE ARE ALL SPONTANEOUS CO-CREATORS IN LIFE

J. L. Moreno originally considered psychodrama as a new theology, not as the clinical, educational, legal, and community tool for individual and collective change that it has become. In the early 20th century, J. L. saw the method as a way to access a “well of spontaneity” that he believed was within us and around us. When he wrote of the godhead in his seminal book *The Words of the Father* in 1921, he wanted to speak to a generation of people that saw the Judeo-Christian view of God as an external, paternalistic male being, whom one prayed to for help.

J. L. defined spiritual and psychological health as living a spontaneous and creative life that existed across the limitations of time and space. He asserted that we have a god within us at all times (J. L. Moreno, 1953), a life force he called the godhead, a word later defined in terms of spontaneity and creativity. He taught that humans are active cocreators in their lives. Zerka continued this legacy, making psychodrama both universal and international.

CANON OF CREATIVITY

The godhead became structured into the Canon of Creativity (1955) that is a core teaching in psychodrama training, education and practice. At its essence, psychodrama helps people change by accessing their true spontaneity—an innate sense of being one’s truly authentic self—and using this authentic self through roles to make creative life decisions in every age and aspect of living.

The well-known definition of spontaneity as an adequate response to a new situation or a novel response to an old situation is what defines the enactment of spontaneity on stage. But for Zerka and many other psychodramatists, the goal is to actually live a life of spontaneity and creativity. That is a lesson Zerka taught: Use spontaneity and creativity, and even the worst challenges can be faced with grace.

She was often wracked with pain, both the phantom pain after the amputation of her right arm due to cancer as a younger woman and the pain of the four hip fractures and surgeries between 2000 and 2010. In 2012 she again fell from her bed, breaking a femur that she chose not to repair by surgery. Her pain increased and she sometimes used a wheelchair when directing groups. She then became director of a very different life, surrounded by a team of health-care professionals led by Dale Davidson for 12 years; the team not only provided medical care, lovely meals, and companionship but also trained auxiliary egos in her life. She taught every person about the history and method of psychodrama, offered each the chance to become protagonists in her bedroom, and created a new psychodramatic family for herself as she aged.

She never complained about the pain, and she taught herself to use the computer, one-handed, at the age of 85. At each juncture, she figured out how to re-create herself using her spontaneity and auxiliary ego support of the paid professionals and special friends. When she arrived at her nursing home in Rockville in Maryland near the Baltimore–Washington metropolitan area, she considered the change “the biggest spontaneity test in my life” (Z. T. Moreno,

personal communication, 2013). It was a spontaneity test that she took graciously and gratefully: She had a view of a beautiful tree outside of her window when she was alone; gradually the nursing home drew many international psychodramatists who came to hear and film her teachings one-on-one during the last years of her life. When she was still using her computer and during my visits to see her, she would tell of people visiting from England, Europe, Israel, South America, China, and Taiwan.

ZERKA #2: DOUBLING IS THE CORE TOOL OF PSYCHODRAMA

In *The Quintessential Zerka: Writings by Zerka Toeman Moreno on Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy* (Horvatin & Schreiber, 2006), we see that Zerka was the first to explore the power of doubling. Actually, she was the first spontaneous psychodramatic double she when J. L. was treating her mentally ill sister, whom she spoke of knowing “inside out” when she was helping him understand her sister (Z. T. Moreno, 2012). Acting as her sister’s inner voice, Zerka developed the double to concretize the surplus reality within her sister’s and then others’ consciousness but not spoken aloud. She and J.L turned the doubling technique into one of the most important interventions in experiential psychotherapy, education, and community organizing (J. L. Moreno & Moreno, 1969).

Zerka later developed and tested the double’s use in a community setting with mothers and their infants (Z. T. Moreno, 1951), who showed increased empathy as a result. She often spoke of this study as proof of the value of doubling, recommending that people double themselves to become aware of the surplus reality within their minds and of the interpersonal relationships in their lives. During our Friday lunches she would speak of psychodramatists in Europe that many people don’t know in the United States who had used doubling personally and professionally, such as Grete Leutz, who originally had been hired as a nanny to her son Jonathan and a companion to her stepdaughter Regina, and became a physician and the first psychodramatist in Germany; or Anne Ancelin Schützenberger, PhD, the French psychologist who studied at the Moreno Institute and popularized psychodrama in her country.

If I had to identify her allegiance, it would be to doubling as the key psychodrama intervention that helps people change. This was obvious in her directing style and reliance on doubling as well as her relationship to her personal double. In her directing at Black Earth and in Charlottesville, she often used only a double and one other auxiliary to play the antagonist, creating simple dramas with great impact. A favorite statement to a protagonist who was repeating problematic relationship behaviors was to direct the double, “Tell the protagonist to get on with it! There is no time to waste!”—repeatedly demonstrating the power of this basic technique.

As I developed the Containing Double in the Therapeutic Spiral Model (Hudgins & Toscani, 2013), Linda Ciotola and Kimberly Burden (2000) developed the Body Double, and later Linda combined the classical, Containing, and Body doubles into the Triple Double (Carnabucci & Ciotola, 2013). Dale Richard Buchanan (in press) talks about the cognitive double employed at Saint Elizabeths

Hospital to role train severely disturbed patients to do simple tasks of daily living. Zerka saw all expansions of the double and other psychodramatic concepts and tools as examples of co-creation; she encouraged me and others to “keep on developing psychodrama and being creative for J.L.’s sake” (Z. T. Moreno, personal communication, August 15, 2010).

It is fitting that my first connection to Zerka more than a quarter of a century ago was about doubling, as the conversation came full circle a few years ago. After Zerka moved to her nursing home in 2013, I asked if she was lonely. Her smiling and confident answer: “Never, I always have my double to talk to at any time! I am never bored.” Zerka’s belief in the power of the double to maintain a happy and healthy life could not have been summed up any better than this.

I have found that doubling is not taught as the major intervention in nonpsychodramatic programs in drama therapy, expressive arts therapies, and Gestalt therapy, and frequently is not used in common role play situations when people have not had psychodrama training. It seems relegated in many action modalities to the voice of a friend, sponsor, or spiritual being rather than kept in its pure essence and power as one’s own voice that always speaks the truth. Yet Zerka saw doubling as the most powerful tool to help the protagonist find his or her inner voice—the true inner knowing in a role of self-support both as a psychodrama director and as an aging woman.

While Zerka focused on the power of the double, she connected it to the increasing knowledge of affective neuroscience through her constant reading of important new works. Long before Bessel van der Kolk and his colleagues (Rausch, van der Kolk, Fishler & Alpert, 1996) proved that experiential therapy is the treatment of choice for trauma, Zerka was telling how psychodramatic doubling provided what a child needs as an adequate environment for healthy development. Today, Cozolino (2014), a leading neuroscientist, shows how babies’ brains develop in interaction with those around them, creating a web of neural networks from these earliest connections to others—something Zerka knew intuitively before science could support this information.

ZERKA #3: IF YOU WANT TO SEE THE WORLD, BECOME A PSYCHODRAMATIST!

After breaking her hip at the age of 83, Zerka often stated, “Now they can come to me.” And come they did, most months for the 12 years that she lived in Charlottesville and later in the nursing home in Rockville. People from all walks of life wanted to experience psychodrama with this living legend. Her Charlottesville home became a rich salon where a new generation of U.S. psychodramatists became exposed to psychodrama’s developments around the world and visiting international trainers shared powerful stories of how psychodrama is changing lives across cultures, genders, and classes. One of Zerka’s gifts was to share the history of how psychodrama was developed in its own time and place in the history and culture in Europe and then the United States, long before she herself took it to other countries.

Jeanne Burger served as Zerka’s assistant leader for most groups in Charlottesville, and I served as her assistant director and local organizer for

students from Taiwan, since I was working there during those years. Year after year, Nien-Hwa Lai brought groups of Chinese and Taiwanese students to attend workshops with Zerka, assuaging one of Zerka's few regrets—that she had not been able to return to Asia. It was in Zerka's cottage that the seed of the Taiwan Association of Psychodrama was formed and blessed by Zerka, along with the Asian Zerka T. Moreno Foundation headed by Dr. Lai (N.H. Lai, personal communication, May 9, 2012).

Today, I wonder if I would have traveled so much and started new international groups and projects had I not visited Zerka so frequently. With each visit, she encouraged me to keep developing the Therapeutic Spiral Model to treat trauma (Hudgins, 2002; Hudgins & Toscani, 2013) and expressed keen interest in my travels. I am sure that Zerka's stories about Asian trips influenced my willingness to teach in Asia for more than 12 years. One favorite story was her trip to China with Gong Shu in the early 1980s; she directed a spontaneous psychodrama session during a stop at a tower at the Great Wall of China. The tower was called Beacon Tower, coincidentally sharing a name with the town in New York where she and J. L. lived and established his sanitarium and psychodrama theater. Today I wonder if I was unconsciously fulfilling her unfinished act hunger for psychodrama to be brought there.

I don't know if today's students of psychodrama, drama therapy, and the expressive arts therapies see their choice of professions as a way to see the world. I have to say, psychodrama has taken me to more than 30 countries in as many years. It has been a true blessing to learn from many cultures—and their spontaneous and adequate ways of doing things that are different from what I learned! After each trip, when I returned to discuss new learning and interesting cultural moments, Zerka always turned to the fact that it was spontaneity and creativity that allowed people to connect through psychodrama despite many differences.

As Zerka often paired the cry to “become a psychodramatist and see the world” with reports of a new museum or institute in yet another country to honor J. L. or herself, I would not want it to get lost from the vernacular. I recommend that psychodramatists and students attend international psychodrama conferences in the country of their choice, ideally annually. It is a great way to meet people who come together across cultural differences to celebrate the belief in spontaneity and creativity as the way to bring people together in today's world of trauma.

ZERKA #4: HEALER, HEAL THYSELF!

Asked in her later years about what is most important about being a psychodrama director, Zerka would answer: “To be a psychodrama director you must do your own psychodrama first. You have to experience what you are asking others to do.” As her memoir shows, she survived many traumas and yet remained one of the most generous, openhearted, and creative people I have known—a true healer. She saw opportunities for her own and others' healing in simple social contact or ordinary daily situations.

When Zerka moved to her nursing home, one of my trainees, who had attended one of Zerka's workshops in Charlottesville, decided to visit Zerka to offer

company. Much to the surprise of my trainee, Zerka started a psychodrama session moments after she arrived and announced that she would be moving. Zerka directed, “Role reverse with the door!” and they proceeded to have a spontaneous session in this new setting where Zerka was healing herself and others. If I brought a personal or professional difficulty to our Friday lunch date, Zerka would have me pick up the psychodramatic “phone” and call that person. She took the director’s role, moving me to role reversal and back to my role until what was bothering me was complete and we could return to the business of eating lunch.

The importance of personal healing is reflected in the curricula of most psychodrama training institutes around the world. Almost all place emphasis on learning experientially by being protagonist, auxiliary, and group member in a psychodrama group. We risk losing the directive of personal healing when programs become overly academic and students of psychodrama find themselves in dual roles when they share their personal stories in their classes. How to walk the line between self-disclosure, personal healing, and classroom education needs continued exploration for academic and private training in psychodrama, sociometry, and group psychotherapy.

This call to personal healing is part of Zerka’s legacy. It is also a call for people in all fields, especially practitioners of experiential methods of change, to embrace the depth of psychodrama and its view that all beings are spontaneous and creative and that this life force is strong from birth until death. As Zerka imagined and lived it, psychodrama was a way of life, not just a method of change for others.

ZERKA #5: HEAL THE WORLD AS YOU HEAL YOURSELF

“A true therapeutic procedure cannot have less an objective than the whole of [hu]mankind” (J. L. Moreno, 1953, p. 3) was the beginning quotation to my dissertation on doubling (Hudgins, 1986) that began my connection to Zerka. Thirty years later, I want to pass this message not only to the new students asking “why become a psychodramatist?” but also to psychodramatists around the world as one of Zerka’s living legacies.

There are many talented psychodramatists working to make peace in the Middle East, and others working with survivors of natural disasters such as earthquakes in Turkey, China, and Malaysia. There is no individual, familial, or collective trauma that psychodrama does not seek to heal. What we all have in common is a belief that psychodrama can reach into the hearts and souls of people who are very different from each other at times of trauma through the belief in spontaneity and creativity as the curative agent of change. Truly, psychodramatists answer J. L.’s call of *Who Shall Survive?* (1953) with “only the spontaneous and creative will survive!” It is an equally important answer and task in today’s world of terrorism as it was during the time of psychodrama’s development starting just before World War I.

This is what I fell in love with in psychodrama when I first went to Beacon, New York, in 1980 and read *The Words of the Father* (J. L. Moreno, 1921). Later I became a clinical psychologist, but in my heart and in my presentation to the world I am foremost a psychodramatist who happens to have a doctorate in clinical psychology. Without doubt, my long-term relationship with Zerka

supported me as I developed my work with the Therapeutic Spiral Model (Hudgins, 2002; Hudgins & Toscani, 2013) and will remain with me forever.

Although I have mentioned Zerka's love of doubling as the core psychodrama intervention, it is important to mention that role reversal allows us to experience another's perspective by walking in his or her surplus reality without prejudice, bias, or judgment. Psychodrama has kept its purity by being taught by people who, if not direct students of the Morenos, are certified in psychodrama, sociometry, and group psychotherapy through the American Board of Examiners in Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy.

CONCLUSION

As I sort through the wisdom that Zerka repeated during the years of our friendship and professional connections, it seems there will always be more to say. However, when I look at the five statements that I have chosen, having role reversed with Zerka I feel she is content with my choices. Of course, there *is* more to share, but for this article the documentation of these five major elements of oral history to paper is enough.

Although the academic programs of drama therapy and the workshops teaching currently popular experiential methods give professionals the opportunity to develop practical skills to address trauma, it is psychodrama that offers the perspective that being a psychodramatist is a way of life, combining the personal and the professional through the godhead, spontaneity, and creativity as the life force that guides every aspect of life. It is not simply a theory of psychotherapy or a form of education or community organization for people to help others. Rather, it is a method that emphasizes the valuable tools of doubling and role reversal to alter and deepen relationships with ourselves and others.

I leave you with my most recent surplus reality experience with Zerka. She was embodied on stage in a psychodrama training group in Taiwan when a protagonist wanted a "good enough mother" role in her drama; the trainee picked Zerka as that person. Another trainee took the Zerka role, and Zerka came alive for everyone to see, hear, and touch across the surplus reality of time and space.

During this drama, I doubled the auxiliary to deepen the Zerka role. I also shared "Zerka's Scissors," the invisible scissors that Zerka often used as a psychodramatic tool to cut umbilical cords, trauma bonds, and dysfunctional family ties and make good goodbyes. The protagonist proceeded to "snip, snip, snip" the legacy of her past and embrace her spontaneous and creative self today. It was wonderful to see Zerka there in surplus reality! This vignette brings together her words of wisdom on spontaneity, creativity, doubling, and psychodrama as a way to live life. I hope to meet her again many times on psychodrama stages around the world. I hear her say, "Kate, dear, you have listened well."

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Encounters with Zerka in Taiwan and in the United States

Nien-Hwa Lai, PhD, TEP¹

Nien-Hwa Lai, PhD, TEP, remembers her encounters with Zerka T. Moreno. She developed a strong bond when Zerka visited Taiwan in 1996; as their relationship expanded, she realized that relationships were constructed through the collective doing of two and required two-way understanding for a true encounter. She recalls how Zerka asked her to take the responsibility to manage the Asian Zerka T. Moreno Psychodrama Foundation and how Zerka directly and indirectly impacted the growth of psychodrama in Taiwan. There are now seven Trainer, Educator and Practitioners in Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy, eight Practitioner Applicants for Trainer, and one Certified Practitioner certified by the American Board of Examiners in Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy, and more are expected. In addition, the Taiwan Association of Psychodrama now has about 130 members, including 38 trainers and 26 directors certified by the association. In the past 2 years, about 300 people have attended the country's annual conferences, including psychodramatists from China, Japan, Hong Kong, Macau, and Malaysia.

KEYWORDS: Zerka T. Moreno; Taiwan; Asia; Taiwan Association of Psychodrama; Asian Zerka T. Moreno Psychodrama Foundation; psychodrama.

Zerka T. Moreno has been the beacon on my journey as I have sailed in the vast ocean of psychodrama. She is the guide who supported my adventure and the psychotherapist who pulled me up when I slumped in life. She gave me the strength to lead people forward and the courage to make dreams come true.

In 2014, I was awarded the David A. Kipper Scholar's Award at the annual conference of the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama (ASGPP). Zerka was the reason I accepted the nomination, which she encouraged in several of her letters to me:

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Nien-Hwa, would you please change your mind and go ahead and permit this? It is what you well deserve, and you certainly should be honored. People here do not know enough about the fine work you and your Taiwanese colleagues are doing. I want them to know, and you are certainly the best director and trainer for your country in the field of psychodrama. So please, as a favor to me, go ahead. Love, Zerka.

Another letter:

Nien-Hwa, Stop worrying about being ready. You're more than ready. There are hardly any others in the ASGPP who have your competence and certainly not your experience. Just do it. We're behind you, cheering you on. Love and hug, Zerka.

The moment I stepped on stage and received the award, I only wanted to say: "Thank you, Zerka! I made it."

1996: MY FIRST TELE WITH THE ONE-ARMED HEROINE

I first met Zerka in 1996, when Gong Shu brought her to Taiwan. It was a once-in-a-lifetime event in the psychology circle here, as well as a dream come true for many people who had "unfinished business" as a result of the unexpected cancellation on her trip in 1987 and had been waiting eagerly for her visit. Her open session at the Grand Hotel in Taipei attracted more than 500 people, including psychodrama aficionados of different ages. Her work mesmerized everyone.

During the workshop, Zerka used a red wool ball to test the group sociometry and establish cohesion. The participant who held the ball would share one important thing in life, and then pass the ball to the person with whom he or she would like to connect. After sharing some moments in her life without a right arm, Zerka passed the ball to me, and I just froze, because I was about to share that "I had about eight months feeling absolutely nothing in my right arm, losing all senses and mobility. . . . I understand what the life is like without the right arm."

Zerka heard me and said, "We did not know each other before. Today, we meet here and had such a deep connection in losing the function of the right arm. This is what psychodrama calls tele." That was our first encounter, and before she left Taiwan I gave her a red souvenir necklace made of cloisonné enamel.

2000: ZERKA FORETELLING THE FUTURE

In 1999, a big earthquake hit Taiwan and the casualty rate was high. Having served as a member of the relief work team at the affected area, I was exhausted and overwhelmed with a sense of loss when I again met Zerka on March 15, 2000. Before she left Taiwan, the National Taiwan Normal University, my alma mater, hosted her open session of 150 people, including many professors in psychology and social work. Many were emotionally touched and became tearful simply after a

few short pieces of role reversal. At the end of the event, each of us used our own magical “camera” and shot an unforgettable “family photo.” The event healed my sense of loss and prompted future psychodrama courses in universities in Taiwan, grounding the academic development of psychodrama in Taiwan.

After the session, people waved goodbye to Zerka, then 84, with feelings of reluctance. She sensed that atmosphere and winked at us with a playful smile, saying: “It’s OK. One day, I will look over you somewhere in the cosmos and will still be with you.” Later in 2000, she broke her hip in Europe and could no longer travel. Zerka seemed to have predicted the future.

2005: BONDING THROUGH THE RED NECKLACE

I couldn’t believe I would meet Zerka again. On February 13, 2005, I flew to the United States to take the on-site examination for Certified Practitioner (CP). Before the exam, Ning-Shing Kung and Kate Hudgins took me to visit Zerka in Charlottesville, VA. We gave each other hugs and kisses. I still remember the refreshing scents and touches of her. She was concerned about my exam and said, “I am going to give you a present today. I will direct a drama for you.” She pushed her wheelchair into an individual counseling room and asked me to bring a jewelry box to her. When I opened the box, I saw a familiar red pouch. I was in tears and felt deeply touched, because inside the pouch was the red cloisonné enamel necklace that I had given her in 1996. She told me, “When I wear it, you are right on my mind.” She touched the red necklace with her left hand as she spoke. “Let’s begin the psychodrama now.”

When a person clearly remembers a present you gave 9 years ago, it made me believe the strong bonding in the relationship embedded with deep security and trust. As if to demonstrate it in my drama, she said, “When I chose this profession as my career, I understood that it would be hard as a therapist taking a therapeutic approach different from others. You can only find what you truly want when we follow our heart and pursue it.” I always wanted to be different as a professor in the university and that was a difficult path. However, even now, I still follow my heart and the spirit of psychodrama, teaching and training in action. I will continue with firm steps in my pursuit down the path.

From Zerka I learned the importance of relationships in psychotherapy. The bonding through the red enamel necklace was a key point that started the whole therapeutic process. That is, when you are willing to have your client co-create on the therapeutic journey, a sense of connection, safety, and trust is created, and thus initiates an adventure.

2007: CUTTING THE UMBILICAL CORD WITH THE MAGIC SCISSORS TO BE MYSELF

Feeling entangled in my professional relationships, including relationships with my trainees as a Practitioner Applicant for Trainer (PAT), I wanted to face and deal with my own issues. I couldn’t find a psychotherapist in Taiwan and was very worried. In the end, I decided to call Zerka for help, and she generously offered a 3-day workshop in Charlottesville. In the workshop there were five people,

including three trainers from three countries, and all agreed that I should be the protagonist to work through my issues.

The frequent use of role reversals helped me to see and understand myself and my counterparts. I realized relationships were constructed through the collective doing of two and required two-way understanding for an encounter to truly happen. If I cannot be the one taking the initiative to leave behind presumptions, anger, and feelings of being wronged, it would be difficult to truly role reverse into my counterpart and see the “me and you” in the other’s eyes, let alone any new insights.

At the end of the drama, Zerka asked me to use her “magic scissors” to cut the umbilical cord to let myself to grow up. The moment I cut the cord, we also reached the climax of the action phase. Truth be told, when I actually made the cut, I started feeling right away the freedom and ability to look back on the other in the relationship.

This drama helped me to mature and show my real self. It also helped me to develop my own style in therapy, directing, and training. I learned to break through my cultural conserve, to express my anger genuinely, and to challenge our teachers and seniors, which is not allowed in my culture. I allowed myself to grow up and take responsibilities, thus owning the opportunity to repair the relationship.

2008: LEARNING TO SAY GOODBYE

After I became a PAT, I received news of a trainee dying from a natural gas poisoning accident. It was unbearable, especially since she had told me, “You made me fall in love with psychodrama and wanting to be a CP.” Feeling overwhelmed, I again visited Zerka, the sanctuary for my wounded soul, to face this loss. I learned that bidding farewell was such a difficult lesson but also realized that happiness was in cherishing the moment you had.

In this session, participants came from Taiwan and China, two conflicting countries that share the same language. Our hearts were tightly connected, whether in tears or in laughter. There was no barrier, nor any conflicts. Suddenly feeling the closeness and understanding in soul, I felt that world peace was not that difficult after all.

2011: THE FASCINATING JOURNEY OF FIVE TRAINEES

In 2011, I traveled to Charlottesville with five trainees for a workshop. Zerka began the workshop with the empty chair; she emphasized that the technique was invented by J. L. Moreno, whereas Fritz Perls, once Moreno’s student and later the founder of Gestalt theory, adopted the technique in his approach, leaving the world with a misleading impression that the empty chair was his own work. Zerka explained that Moreno first used the empty chair in group settings to help patients talk with their inner “bully,” because he believed this was a part of our true self. Only when we face and know this part of ourselves will we be able to truly support and understand the appearance of this bully and eventually learn to protect the self from being hurt. When we can admit that we play such a role, we will understand and sympathize better, and in turn become aware of how we might hurt others.

She also directed a drama for each of us and taught us about the sociocultural atom by drawing how you perceive yourself as an individual. This drawing should include three circles of relationships—personal, professional or work, and social; by using the empty chair, we can know how we objectively perceive this world. She encouraged us to draw this once a month, in order to be regularly in touch with the changes in our lives.

Based on her explanation, I understood that Moreno defined person and world with a focus on their relationships. He broke away from the individualist view often found in the West, and instead followed a network of social conditions to interpret the world we objectively perceived. This concept coincides well with the collectivism culture in the East.

On the third day after the workshop, I had an opportunity to meet with Zerka on my own. During this session, she reminded me how to face parental death—how to say goodbye. Just as I was leaving, I gave her a hug and said, “Please take care of yourself for us,” and she replied, “I will do my best!” Right then, I realized how much I should cherish this moment, and still I expected to meet her again next year.

2013: ASSUMING THE RESPONSIBILITY TO MANAGE THE ASIAN ZERKA T. MORENO PSYCHODRAMA FOUNDATION

I always felt that Zerka was a prophet. Before I left to return to Taiwan, she helped me to prepare for the death of my aging parents. In December 2011, my beloved father passed away, and I was able to say goodbye to him as Zerka had rehearsed me during the workshop. In 2013, I again visited Zerka, who was rather frail, unlike what she used to be. I cherished every moment. She gave me a warm-up ball as a present and asked me to use it when I led a group, so that every time I used it, Zerka would be seemingly with me. Moreover, as I was about her height, she asked me to choose something from her wardrobe as souvenir. I silently told myself: “I will come and visit you again.”

Prior to this visit, she e-mailed me several times asking me to take the responsibility to manage the Asian Zerka T. Moreno Psychodrama Foundation. She believed that this is the century for psychodrama to flourish in Asia. When I saw her, she asked Kate Hudgins to draft an agreement for us both to sign and commit to this mission. I asked her, “Why me?” She simply said: “Tele and trust.”

Because of this mission, I started working to connect several Asian countries and regions, such as China, Malaysia, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Macau, hoping that psychodrama would blossom and flourish in Asia.

2014: “I MADE IT!” AND THE JOY IS TO SHARE WITH YOU

In 2014, I was awarded the David A. Kipper Scholar’s Award from the ASGPP. Were it not for the kind words from Zerka, I would have never accepted the nomination, not to mention the award. That year, I was in the United States as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar. After I won the award, I planned a weeklong trip to visit her at the nursing home in Rockville, MD. I interviewed her, and the materials formed the essential basis for my work on psychodrama.

Zerka believed that “everyone has his or her own subjective perception, and what one sees is different from what another sees.” Nevertheless, psychodrama works on our subjective perception by asking our perception to change. The more we observe ourselves, the easier we see how we change. Do not keep looking at others, and never ever focus only on what others expect of you. Instead, use role reversal and insight in action to gain perception of yourself and make changes.

Role reversal helps us experience differences and diversify our views about self and others. Therefore, changes in the perception of our protagonists are actually brought about through new experiences and emotions produced in role reversal. This reminded me not only to help protagonists role reverse in dramas but also to apply it in my life and regularly role reverse with people and things I meet in this world, to make the most out of this life.

Additionally, psychodrama introduces substantial changes in the protagonist during scene setting. People may easily fall into their old situations and images. Through scene setting, we become aware of what was brought along, and by entering a scene along with the help of doubles, the feelings and perceptions are magnified. The process of role reversal introduces more diversifying experiences and feelings, allowing reexamination of a relationship from a different perspective, thus conferring changes.

Zerka believed that:

“The interaction between people often falls on the level of roles, as opposed to the genuine relationship from one human being to another. When you become a psychodrama trainer or director, you must learn to see “human beings” in your relationships and help trainees/protagonists to genuinely experience your reality, so that they know how to face others. We need to see the total of a “human being,” of his or her roles.”

Therefore, I always tell myself not to live in roles but to accept that I am a “genuine yet imperfect” human being, before calling upon the role of a director or a trainer: Never put a particular role on equal footing with the meaning and worth of a “person” and become overwhelmed by the overload of hopes and expectations people have from a trainer.

2015: OUR VERY LAST ENCOUNTER

Meeting face-to-face does not necessarily mean a spiritual encounter. Meeting is a physical experience, whereas encounter is a memory of eternity. In April 2015, I visited Zerka in Rockville again, which I suspected was likely our last physical and worldly meeting.

Zerka said,

“I am turning 98 by June 13, and I have no regrets living to this age. I believe not many people could say this. I had no regret in this life

because I have psychodrama, which allows role reversals. It really brings life to mean something entirely different.”

She reminded me about the importance of expanding psychodrama in Asia with three essential concepts, which I pass on to my trainees:

- Please believe in yourself and explore this world with curiosity and an adventurous spirit, so that your life is enriched and diversified for further changes.
- It is a big mistake to consider psychodrama the same as psychotherapy. Zerka believed that psychodrama applies not only to treatment but also to education and other social occasions. She described it in the term “psychodramatic education,” when psychotherapy was only one aspect of psychodrama. Zerka encouraged people to actively expand psychodrama in different arenas, such as schools, community, enterprises, and prisons, as well as our daily life. Psychodrama helps people learn to survive in this society and to present ourselves in different manners with different styles in the various situations and contexts we encounter. This is actually what Dr. Moreno called “spontaneity.” She deeply believed that “psychodrama helps people to live their lives without any regrets.”
- What matters most for a psychodrama director are not your skills but the love and care you have from within for people. I firmly believe and practice this belief: Methods such as psychodrama, sociodrama, and the expansion of role repertoire could give me new perspectives and find myself a suitable place in life.

Finally, Zerka encouraged me to take note of cultural factors when working in different countries. A trainer needs to be aware of and understand the cultural differences in different places in order to develop culture-sensitive training processes. In the meantime, the attitude and conduct of a trainer would work as the best role model for trainees. A good trainer needs to embrace the new instead of confining him- or herself in past experiences. He or she should be open-minded and keep learning, with a willingness to encourage trainees to explore and stay curious. Thus, trainees learn from the role model as established by their trainer.

What Zerka reminded me of during my visits in 2014 and 2015 was exactly what I value the most since I became a trainer. Through her words, I saw a clearer picture for the development of psychodrama in Asia and grew more confident about it. I always pay close attention to local culture when I visit different countries and regions to provide trainings, and when trainers of different countries come to Taiwan, I also notice the differences in cultural perspectives and the ways we see issues and interventions for protagonists, which inspired me to write the article “Practicing Psychodrama in Chinese Culture (Lai & Tsai, 2014).” I also value the relationship between a trainer and a trainee, like a relationship between a therapist and a client, because every relationship is unique in its own way.

Zerka made fundamental impacts here in Taiwan, both direct and indirect. Her influences made Taiwan, an island of 36,000 square kilometers and a population of 23 million people, to have seven TEPs, 18 PATs, and two CPs

certified by the American Board of Examiners in Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy. Recently, John Olesen, TEP, oversaw the on-site exams of three CP candidates and three TEP candidates, which would add another three new CPs and three TEPs if everything goes smoothly. Additionally, the Taiwan Association of Psychodrama (TAP) was established on March 27, 2010. There are about 130 members now, including 38 trainers and 26 directors certified by TAP. In the past 2 years, there were about 300 participants each year at our annual conferences, including psychodramatists from China, Japan, Hong Kong, Macau, and Malaysia. We continually invite trainers from Europe, Canada, the United States, and Japan to share their training experiences in Taiwan. Despite our being a small island, the psychodrama here certainly enjoys diverse elements in abundance.

FUTURE: FROM TAIWAN TO ASIA

Since 1974, psychodrama in Taiwan has been under development for 42 years and continues to steadily expand throughout Asia. In 1994, Zerka's only Chinese disciple, Gong Shu, started providing training in Taiwan; soon after, Dorothy Satten, Kate Hudgins, Pam Remer, and Rory Remer started offering long-term training here. Some also established regular training programs in China and have contributed greatly to the development of psychodrama in Asia.

In the past 10 years, Taiwanese trainers from the younger generation have started workshops in China, where interest in psychodrama is rapidly growing. The Zerka T. Moreno Asian Psychodrama Center was established as a transient organization until we can financially afford to set up the Asian Zerka T. Moreno Psychodrama Foundation as she entrusted us to do. The center has a website and offers regular workshops in Taiwan and China, training about 200 people each year; the number is still growing.

Though Zerka has physically left us, there is no doubt that her spirit and love stay with us and guide us to spread her psychodrama beliefs in action, thus sending out more love. Zerka, I love you forever and ever.

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Zerka Directed Anath's First Psychodrama; Anath Directed Her Last

Anath Garber, MA, TEP¹

Anath Garber details moments of delightful spontaneity and creativity between herself and Zerka T. Moreno during a nursing home visit in Rockville, MD, and how a psychodrama naturally evolved out of a pile of yellow Post-it notes with a nurse's aide standing in as an auxiliary. Anath tells us that act hunger does not diminish with aging, and when satisfied it has a vitalizing effect. This vitalizing effect surprised everyone, including Zerka's son Jonathan D. Moreno, who gave Anath permission to share this story with the journal.

KEYWORDS: Zerka T. Moreno; Jonathan D. Moreno; psychodrama; aging; nursing home.

I knock on the door ("Please keep it shut at the request of Zerka Moreno," says the sign), and there is Zerka, sitting up in her bed.

At the foot of the bed, there are two nurses, or nurses' aides, and they are reading charts. They are looking concerned, troubled. Zerka is folding and unfolding a piece of paper as if trying to read it.

I am standing, quietly waiting—will she turn her head towards me? The nurses motion for me to come closer. I slowly approach her bed. She lifts her head.

"Anath," I say.

"Anath!" Zerka exclaims, her face crinkling in a smile.

She has recognized me! I am elated.

For the past few days, her son Jonathan Moreno has been trying to dissuade me from making the trip from New York City, where I live, to the nursing home in Rockville, MD, where Zerka lives now. "Not much point in visiting," he says. Her niece flew from Israel over the weekend. "Zerka barely recognized her, could not make a connection, groggy from the morphine to kill her pain," he says.

"I will sit quietly then and breathe with her," I say.

"Sitting quietly—okay," he says. "I don't want you to be disappointed."

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Indeed, the aide tells me that it is time for her morphine, but she'll let me stay with Zerka for a little while before administering the drug, so she won't fall asleep. They both leave; I am in charge of feeding her finely crushed ice, which I spoon out, one by one. No liquids allowed.

Alone, we gaze at one another. She smiles. I hug and kiss her like a long-lost puppy, surprised by the spontaneous outburst of physical intimacy. It is unprecedented between us. It will continue throughout the visit.

I am aware as I kiss her that she is also a stand-in for my mother and sister for whom I've been grieving, and I am aware that I allow her be the young mother cuddling her child. We both delight in our proximity.

I massage lotion into her arm and face. She points to my necklace. She likes one piece especially. I am just about to brag about the piece I made.

She stops me. "I can't hear you, dear. They took my hearing aids to fix."

Ahh. We have a communication problem. I grab my bag, and there is a pad of yellow Post-it notes. A miracle!

So now I write my questions to her and my answers to her questions. Then I stick them to my gray sweatshirt for her to read.

"I love you," says my first Post-it.

In front of her, on a table across the bed, sits Jonathan's book, *The Impromptu Man*. Did I read it, she wants to know.

"Of course, brilliant! Scholarly, and a page turner!"

Another Post-it. "He inherited the gift of writing from you."

She beams with maternal pride.

"You directed my first psychodrama," I reminisce.

"A full circle," she replies.

I am not sure I heard it right. She repeats, "Full circle."

I wonder, does she mean my visit is the full circle? I don't know at this point that soon I will direct her psychodrama.

Piling the used Post-its on top of a pillow, we make a collage. Soon we run out of space and pile them on top of her book *The Quintessential Zerka*, which she's just finished autographing for me. "To Anath," I write to save her effort, and she adds below, "with Love," which she writes painstakingly slowly. When she signs her name, she quips: "A mystery signature."

"It looks like a Japanese ideogram," I respond. We burst into laughter. She hands me the card she was examining when I entered and tapes it to the book. It has her full name and address. "Thanks," I post.

Just then Zerka notices that I've been writing with my left hand. She high-fives me: two lefties! This precipitates more hugging. (Zerka was a rightie until her late-thirties, when her right arm was amputated due to cancer.)

Now Zerka wonders when she'll get her hearing aids back. I volunteer to find out. I find my way to Gilbert, the man in charge. She kept tearing the hearing aids out of her ears, he says, so it was decided to take them away from her.

"But today she is fine," I say. "Why should she be deprived of hearing?" He agrees to release the hearing aids. Mission accomplished, I return. "The hearing aids will be fixed soon," a Post-it on my chest announces proudly. Her face crinkles into a smile.

We sit quietly. I feed her the finely crushed ice.

Now, with her hearing restored, Zerka starts dismantling the collage we made out of the sticky notes. She lays them out on the table, arranging them with much concentration.

"Tell me when you are ready!" she says abruptly.

"I am ready if you are ready," I reply, although I have no idea what am I ready for. But then her tone of voice has a hint of professionalism, authority. I recall it well from my days at the Moreno Institute in Beacon, NY. It is a bit intimidating.

Ahhh—and with that I enter her reality. I sense that the sticky notes are now more than Post-its—they have morphed into notes for a lecture, and she wants me there as a co-presenter? Or support? I sense that the bed is no longer a bed. We both ascend to a podium, and the space is filling up with people eagerly anticipating her appearance, and me as part of the deal...

She looks up from her notes, towards the audience. "These are only fragmentary thoughts. This is all impromptu, none of it has been prepared," she says. She pauses, then shuffles the notes some more.

"This is beautiful, please continue," I whisper softly into her ear.

Zerka whispers softly to me, "So here they are—wait a minute." She composes her thoughts, and the voice of authority resumes. "My husband and I introduced a new, you may say occidental, method to America. It was revolutionary..."

The phone rings—my cab is waiting. It's been more than two hours! The aide walks in with the next dose of morphine. "The medicine needs to be administered," she insists.

I plead with her to hold off for few more minutes. "Could you please be the audience?" I explain the set up: that Zerka is right now talking to an audience and could she stand over there by the foot of the bed and pretend to be part of the audience?

"Just stand and listen," I direct. The aide catches on very quickly. As she becomes part of the audience, I turn to Zerka, saying softly, "They are all here, can I go right now?" She is by now totally warmed up to her role of the teacher/trainer/lecturer/First Lady of Psychodrama. She barely notices me—"Yes, dear," she nods—and turns to face the audience.

I fly to the elevator, three flights down. "I am in the middle of something important," I tell the cabbie. "Traffic's bad. Ten minutes max," says the cabbie. And I fly back to the room.

The aide in the audience is listening attentively. I rejoin Zerka at the podium. Sitting tall and regal, she holds the audience in the palm of her hand. As she lectures about her work with J. L. Moreno, the years peel off her age—and I notice that tears roll down my face. The aide is looking at me, and her eyes are tearing too. She hasn't seen this Zerka.

Zerka (to the audience): "Any other questions? I am sorry it's been a tough day."

"It's really good, Zerka," I whisper, and I leave the podium and with my imaginary microphone, I run to the audience. "Anyone? A question?"

Finally, Anath, as a voice in the audience, says, “What would you want people to remember?”

Zerka, her voice rising, says, “Instead of working with people in singles, we brought a new method. Moreno was a group therapist. And of course we brought in drama. It was difficult—before people were used to work with singles, so to teach them in groups was way ahead of its time. It was revolutionary—and difficult.”

“And do you know how many people are grateful to you?” I say, stepping off the dais and pointing to the audience, my arms spread wide.

Audience: “We love you.”

Anath: “I love you.”

Applause.

The aide now insists that she has to give the morphine. I plead for one more question. “We have time for one question,” I announce and run off with my imaginary microphone in pursuit of the questioner.

The aide, as a voice in the audience: “Do you have a message for young people?”

Silence.

Zerka retreats into herself. Silence. But my untrained auxiliary, encouraged by my confidence in her, sprints out of the audience space and lands next to Zerka. “Do you have any advice for young people?” she screams into her ear. “Do you have any advice for young people like me and her?” she repeats even louder as points to middle-aged me. I am afraid she will get Zerka out of her role.

To my surprise Zerka says, “YES!”

I beam, but Zerka continues addressing the previous question.

The aide looks up at me, somewhat disappointed. Zerka accepts the medication, and without missing a beat, resumes her lecture.

“It will take 30 minutes before she’ll fall asleep,” the aide informs me, then inserts herself seamlessly back into the audience.

I return to the podium, next to Zerka, I lean over and whisper, “My dear Zerka, it’s time for me to leave.” I kiss and hug her once more, lingering, inhaling her presence.

“Anath,”—she raises her voice—“Anath, here. . .”

She points at me, and I realize she is introducing me to the audience. She tells them about my work. I blush. She smiles at me approvingly. I choke up.

I exit, but all I want is to stay, to listen to her voice and hold her hand until she falls asleep.

In the cab, snailing through the traffic, I realize that as Zerka was shedding years off her age, so was I. And now sitting in the back seat of the cab there’s a young Anath, newly arrived in the United States, listening to the Zerka of her youth. A full circle.

A “Psychodrama Baby” Reflects on Visits with Zerka

Linda Ciotola, MEd, TEP¹

Linda Ciotola, an experienced TEP who nevertheless considers herself new to Zerka's in-person teachings, muses about her roles and visits in Zerka's later years in “Psychodrama Baby.” She shares how Zerka took great pleasure in many visitors that Linda brought—all of them women who found a wonderful role model in Zerka. Linda also tells of Zerka's openness to Linda's gifts of Reiki treatments, how Zerka conferred her special nickname, and observations of watching Zerka age with bravery and grace.

KEYWORDS: Zerka T. Moreno; psychodrama; Reiki; nursing home; mentor; aging.

Although many of my colleagues have known and loved Zerka for years, I have been a relative newcomer to her wise teachings and amazing spirit. Perhaps that is why she called me her “Psychodrama Baby.”

In just a few years, I have played a number of roles in our relationship, including that of “Psychodrama Baby,” and I have felt the wash of many strong feelings, as if I have known her for a very long time.

Zerka and I became acquainted when I began to attend workshops at her cottage home in Charlottesville, VA, after she moved there in 2000. Later, as we developed a friendship, visits became more frequent, and I often brought guests with me.

In Charlottesville, I loved the brilliant directing in the intimate setting of her living room, the potpourri of international visitors soaking up her wit and wisdom, the books and photos, the archival 8-mm film of J. L. Moreno at the New York State Training School for Girls in Hudson, NY, plus meeting her dedicated professional caregivers and devoted friends, students, and colleagues who were regular visitors.

During the tedious return drive to my home in Maryland on the gridlocked Capital Beltway, I had time to savor highlights of our Charlottesville visits. I had

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explored the workshop participant role; the trained auxiliary role when my secondary trainer Mario Cossa led a workshop with her; the avid listener role, spellbound by story after story which I would later read about in *To Dream Again*; and the delighted connector role when I brought organizational development icon and pioneer Edie Seashore to meet Zerka.

When I delivered Edie to Zerka—at Edie’s request—they pored over journals revealing the Moreanean roots in the work of Kurt Lewin and colleagues. Each later described the other as “brilliant and charming.” Upon leaving, Edie, then age 80, exclaimed, “Now *I* have a role model!”

Zerka was especially pleased when I brought clinical social worker and psychotherapist Nancy Alexander from Columbia, MD, to visit. Nancy and I collaborated for several years, working with clients who had been diagnosed with complex posttraumatic stress disorder and dissociative identity disorder, and conducting private dramas, adapting the therapeutic spiral model for individual sessions with a team of two trained auxiliaries.

Zerka was eager to hear Nancy’s perspective of how the psychodramatic work had changed lives. Stories of how psychodrama continued to transform lives were frequent highlights for Zerka who repeatedly pronounced, “The work continues to spread like Johnny Appleseed.”

She also loved hearing the story of when I was a young mother and my 3-year-old son had night terrors. Long before I knew psychodrama existed, I heard him scream and cry out one night, “Mommy, there is a bad horse in my closet!” I was puzzled as to what provoked this fear since he had not seen any films with horses or had any troubling experiences with horses. I said, “Joey, it’s OK—he isn’t a bad horse—he’s lost and afraid. Help me lead him outside and back to his farm down the road.” Taking the imaginary reins in one hand and my son’s hand in the other, we slowly went down the stairs, out the front door, opened the front gate, and led the imaginary horse into the street where I patted the horse’s bottom and said, “It’s OK—go home to your farm.” Then, I walked Joey upstairs and kissed him good night, and he went back to sleep. Zerka said, “You were a natural psychodramatist long before you knew it!” She often reminded me of this story with a delighted smile.

When I learned that she would move to a nursing home in Rockville, MD, waves of sadness washed over me, knowing she would miss the life that she had created in Charlottesville. On the other hand, she would be just 90 min away—rather than 3-plus hours—from my home in Grasonville, and I could visit regularly. I committed to myself that I would visit her monthly.

My first visit with Zerka at the nursing home found her reflecting upon the transition, telling me of conversations she had with herself in the double role, inquiring about me and my family and work, and expressing keen interest in what my colleague Cathy Nugent and I were doing in our psychodrama training group.

An avid reader, she frequently read books in languages other than English and engaged in animated discussions particularly on topics of philosophy, the meaning of life, and making a difference. She loved poetry and eagerly asked to see all of the poetic lines I had selected for my workshop on hope that I was planning for the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of American Society of Group Psychotherapy and

Psychodrama. She was delighted by the line in the poem by Emily Dickinson, “Hope is a thing with feathers that perches on the soul . . .” She said, “Hope has feathers to help us fly up!” That was when she called me her “Psychodrama Baby.”

Musings about why she was still alive at 96 and bedridden were frequent, and she meandered into memories of times with J. L. or Jonathan. She decided that seeing the accomplishments of her adult grandchildren, Jarrett and Jillian, was the reason she was still was alive.

Visit after visit, I was continuously amazed by her sharp mind, loving heart, unceasing curiosity, and ongoing self-reflection. As we got to know one another better, we began to speak of spirituality, of our nature as “cosmic beings.”

One time, she agreed to let me treat her to a Reiki session and drifted into a vivid dream state. When she awoke, she described being seated, overlooking a very beautiful scene of a vast field of grass and “endless rivers and rivers of people coming to see me.” I said, “An endless stream of those whose lives you’ve touched coming to share their love and appreciation.” She glowed, acknowledging the depth of my statement with her eyes.

Following her transition to hospice, she was gleeful in describing a worker’s visit with a bunny rabbit and still glowed with light and love.

After the 2015 Conference of the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama in Philadelphia, my psychodrama friend and colleague Kathy Amsden, a social worker and singer-songwriter who works in hospice and palliative care in Maine, came with me to visit Zerka. Kathy and I had attended Edward Schreiber’s conference workshop on sociatry, which was profoundly and deeply moving. Meaning had been concretized with balls of yarn, which we brought to Zerka in a container along with messages sent to her, a stone from me inscribed with the word “Dream” and accompanied by a handmade prayer shawl that Kathy had received from her hospice volunteers.

Zerka looked frail and in pain. We gave her the container of yarn and told her the essence of Ed’s workshop. Kathy placed the prayer shawl on the side of her body that hurt and sang to her while I gave her a Reiki treatment. She smiled sweetly and became peaceful. It was clear that she was ready to rejoin the First Universe.

Two weeks later, Jeanne Burger and I visited Zerka following the Mid-Atlantic Chapter meeting where Jeanne had directed a workshop on “Dream Dramas.” Jeanne had been Zerka’s workshop facilitator and organizer for years, and it had been difficult for her to visit Zerka as often as she would have liked due to distance and travel complications. Zerka was resting, her eyes covered by a sleep mask. When Jeanne removed the mask and said, “Zerka, it’s Jeanne and Linda,” Zerka acknowledged us only with her eyes. She reached to touch my face and said, “My psychodrama baby.” She then said, “I have to sleep now.” Jeanne and I left, filled with love and gratitude for the blessings bestowed by Zerka.

My visit in October 2015 presented the opportunity to visit with Zerka in a new way—she was not conscious, her eyes were closed, and she did not respond when I spoke. As usual, I brought flowers (thanks to my husband’s green thumb) arranged in a recycled Perrier bottle so she would not have multiple vases in her small space. This glorious fall day offered lavender, asters, and an orange dahlia.

She looked younger and more at ease. However, her hand and arm were determinedly active, as if pulling weeds. Her lips were moving, as if speaking, but there was neither sound nor words that I could discern. This action continued for some time as I reflected on previous visits and how I felt the entire psychodrama community with us in spirit. When her determination seemed to show an edge of frustration, I patted her hand and said, “Zerka, dear, it’s OK. It’s Linda. I can help—I will be your auxiliary.”

Together we continued the psychodramatic weed pulling until I felt guided to give her Reiki on the top of her head, her forehead, and her heart—the energetic chakra centers of the crown chakra, third eye and heart. She finally rested her hand and arm. I kissed her forehead, and she smiled and said “Ha!” sounding like a grandmother delighted by a surprise kiss from a grandchild.

I patted her hand and said, “Zerka, dear, I bring love from the whole community and all in the world whose hearts you have touched over so many years.” I kissed her forehead again and said, “I love you, thank you. Go in peace.” I left the flowers where she would see them when she opened her eyes. As I looked over my shoulder, she had resumed pulling psychodramatic weeds, now looking peaceful and determined.

“The Events of My Life All Seemed to Happen for a Reason”

Zerka's Message to ASGPP

Zerka T. Moreno, TEP

I am lucky. I was born under the lucky star of June 13. My luck has been to always be satisfied with who I am. Even as a child, I knew my mind, and I taught my mother to love me as myself; so, at age 97, I have no regrets. I urge you to accept and love yourself. It makes for a satisfying life.

The events of my life all seemed to happen for a reason. I could not always control what happened, but I could stay true to myself and could respond carefully. I came to understand this fully when I wrote my book *To Dream Again*. I hope that you will read it because it is my sharing.

I feel very satisfied when I see my life's work being continued by all of you. The good teacher enjoys seeing her students surpass her. I am especially appreciative of how psychodrama and sociometry are spreading almost exponentially to the far corners of the world.

My best work as a director was when I knew nothing about the protagonist. I let the inspiration come to me by staying curious and observant. Preconceived notions just get in the way.

The philosophy of psychodrama is always more important to keep in mind than the methodology. Coming to America in 1939, contemplating the vast ocean from the deck of the ship, I had a sublime moment: I turned to a Marxist Indian man, a person with whom I seemingly had nothing in common, and said, “We are all connected.” This was even before I knew psychodrama which, of course, is all about connection.

My message to you is: Know yourself. Be yourself and trust yourself.

I am appreciative of the genius in each of you, let it shine! Love, Zerka.

About the Authors



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Jeanne Burger, EdD, LPC, LMFT, TEP, is a former member of the American Board of Examiners in Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy. Trained by Zerka T. Moreno, she assisted Zerka in organizing workshops in Zerka's home for many years in Charlottesville, VA, and is an international presenter of psychodrama and sociodrama. She is a former executive council member of the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama and is recognized as a Fellow by the organization. Her dissertation, *Effects of Psychodrama Treatment on Levels of Assertiveness and Locus of Control in Women Who Have Experienced Battering*, was published by The College of William and Mary in 1994.



Karen Carnabucci, MSS, LCSW, TEP, is a consulting editor for the *Journal of Psychodrama, Sociometry, and Group Psychotherapy* and has been awarded the Hannah B. Weiner Award and the David A. Kipper Scholar's Award from the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama. She is the author of *Show and Tell Psychodrama: Skills for Therapists, Coaches, Teachers, Leaders* and co-author with Ronald Anderson of *Integrating Psychodrama and Systemic Constellation Work: New Directions for Action Methods, Mind-Body Therapies, and Energy Healing* and, with Linda Ciotola, *Healing Eating Disorders with Psychodrama and Other Action Methods: Beyond the Silence and the Fury*.



Linda Ciotola, MEd, TEP, is a psychodramatist, a certified Usui Reiki master teacher, and a Certified Health Education Specialist with 40 years of experience in education, group facilitation, and lifestyle counseling. She is an American Council on Exercise Certified Health Coach, a fitness and yoga instructor, and a MindBody Specialist. She is also a certified trainer in the Therapeutic Spiral Model and co-author, with Karen Carnabucci, of *Healing Eating Disorders with Psychodrama and Other Action Methods: Beyond the Silence and the Fury*. She received the Zerka T. Moreno Award in 2008 from the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama.



Irene Daenzer-Vanotti is an award-winning radio and print journalist in Germany. She had studied psychodrama with the late Friedel Geisler, who knew Zerka T. Moreno and was, herself, a leading psychodrama trainer within the Psychodrama-Institut für Europa working in Solingen, Germany. She typically writes on topics related to issues of religion and faith, psychology, social issues, and contemporary history.



Tian Dayton, MA, PhD, TEP, is the author of 15 books, most recently *Neuropsychodrama in the Treatment of Relational Trauma*, as well as the now-classic *The Living Stage*. Other books include *The ACoA Trauma Syndrome*; *Emotional Sobriety*; *Trauma and Addiction*; *Forgiving and Moving On*; and *Relationship Trauma Repair*, the latter a model for using sociometry and psychodrama to resolve issues related to relationship trauma. She has a master's in educational psychology and a doctorate in clinical psychology, is a board-certified trainer in psychodrama, and a licensed creative arts therapist. She is a fellow of the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama, has been awarded its David A. Kipper Scholar's Award and President's Award, and is the retiring editor of the ASGPP journal. She is the winner of The Mona Mansell Award and The Ackermann Black Award. She was a faculty member at New York University for eight years teaching psychodrama. A nationally renowned speaker, expert, and consultant in psychodrama, trauma, and addiction, she has been a guest expert on numerous television talk and news shows.



Anath Garber, MA, TEP, was trained by J. L. Moreno and Zerka T. Moreno in the 1970s and a member of the faculty of the Moreno Institute in New York City. She has conducted workshops nationally and internationally and has been in private practice in New York City since 1975. She introduced many innovations in the application of psychodrama for the treatment of stuttering, alcoholism, weight reduction and maintenance, and spiritual growth. She has combined psychoanalytic treatment, Focusing, and mindfulness with psychodrama. Many of her clients have achieved world recognition. She has been quoted in magazines such as *Essence*, *Body and Mind*, and *Mode*. She has been featured on *Beverly's Full House* on Oprah Winfrey's OWN network.



Kate Hudgins, PhD, TEP, has authored, edited, or co-authored four books, most recently *Healing World Trauma with the Therapeutic Spiral Model: Psychodramatic Stories from the Frontlines*. In addition, she has edited more than 20 peer-reviewed articles and chapters about the Therapeutic Spiral Model, the psychodramatic adaption for trauma treatment developed by Hudgins in collaboration with Francesca Toscani, TEP. She is an internationally recognized trainer, having worked in 20 countries, and has been honored by the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama, winning the Innovator's Award in 2001 and David A. Kipper Scholar's Award in 2009.



Marcia Karp, MA, TEP, is a trainer, educator and practitioner of psychodrama, sociometry, and group psychotherapy. She is registered with the United Kingdom Council of Psychotherapists. She holds a Directorship Certificate from the Beacon Academy, Beacon, NY, with training from J. L. and Zerka T. Moreno. She is the recipient of the J. L. Moreno Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama and recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the British Psychodrama Association. She and Paul Holmes co-edited *Psychodrama: Inspiration and Technique*; *Psychodrama Since Moreno* (with Paul Holmes and Michael Watson); and *The Handbook of Psychodrama* (with Paul Holmes and Kate Tavon). These books have been translated into several languages. Karp has a private practice in Brentford, West London, and travels internationally to lecture and train.



Jonathan D. Moreno, PhD, is the son of J. L. and Zerka T. Moreno. As the David and Lyn Silfen University Professor at the University of Pennsylvania, he teaches bioethics and the history of science. He is also a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress. His most recent book is *Impromptu Man: J. L. Moreno and the Origins of Psychodrama, Encounter Culture, and the Social Network*. Previous books include *Undue Risk*, *The Body Politic*, and *Mind Wars*. He is a member of Institute of Medicine/ National Academy of Sciences and past president of the

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Regina Moreno, MA, is the daughter of J.L. and Florence Bridge Moreno and the stepdaughter of Zerka T. Moreno. She taught for 47 years in Colorado, Canada, New York, and California. She has been using sociodrama, role training, and sociometric choice techniques with elementary, middle school, high school, and college-level students. She is presently working as an independent consultant, training teachers and school administrators in the use of role play and conflict resolution strategies as a way of dealing with student

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Nien-Hwa Lai, PhD, TEP, is a licensed and certified counseling psychologist and professor in the Department of Psychology and Counseling at the National Taipei University of Education in Taipei, Taiwan. In 2014, she received the David A. Kipper Scholar's Award from the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama. She is one of the founding members of the Taiwan Association for Psychodrama, established in 2010, and the Asian Zerka T. Moreno Foundation.



Edward Schreiber, EdM, DD, TEP, is co-editor (with Toni Horvatin) of *The Quintessential Zerkas: Writings by Zerkas Toeman Moreno on Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy* and the editor of *To Dream Again: A Memoir* by Zerkas T. Moreno. He is an adjunct faculty member at Lesley University, an activist, and a master addiction counselor with a specialty in the treatment of trauma. He is editor of the chapter "Psychodrama, Sociometry, Group Psychotherapy and Sociatry" in Kaplan and Sadocks' *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry* (9th ed.). He is the recipient of the David A. Kipper Scholar's Award, the Collaborator's Award, and the Zerkas T. Moreno Award from the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama. He is the director of the Zerkas Foundation, a not-for-profit education, training, and research foundation that is dedicated to the sociatry work of J. L. and Zerkas Moreno.