

also acts as a clear and definitive statement about Zerka Moreno's significant contribution to psychodrama over the last five decades.

That said, the book is not without faults. For example, I believe that in the chapter on sociometry, the authors show a limited understanding of the complex process that occurs in analytic group therapy. Furthermore, I consider that same chapter to be a somewhat confused discussion of the subject. On page 94, Zerka Moreno defines sociometry as the "measurement of human relations," a definition that applies to the use of sociometric techniques to explore and measure the relationships in a pre-existing group at the New York State Training School for Girls at Hudson. On page 109, she states that a family is not a sociometric group because the children in a family do not choose (using sociometric choices) to become members of the group.

I am optimistic that psychodramatists at all levels of the craft will find much to debate and argue about in the contents of this rich and challenging book. It put me in touch again with some of the original reasons for my being so moved by psychodrama. I recommend that psychodramatists read the book and form their own opinions.

PAUL HOLMES  
Brighton, East Sussex  
United Kingdom

*Theatre for Community, Conflict and Dialogue—The Hope Is Vital Training Manual*, by Michael Rohd. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998.

At a clinic in Washington, DC, in 1992, theater teacher Michael Rohd led a series of drama workshops with teenagers from a private high school and homeless people with HIV. Together, they explored how to use theater to delve into the impact of HIV and AIDS on all of their lives. Something new and exciting began to take shape: theater based on dialogue and action, theater without answers or resolution, theater committed to the depth and breadth of engagement that becomes possible only when the body and the imagination are involved.

In *Theatre for Community, Conflict and Dialogue*, Rohd reports the subsequent development of that work into a practice that has proved itself with youth groups around the country, in which not only issues related to HIV and AIDS but also concerns about violence, substance abuse, and teen pregnancy are addressed. Rohd's purpose with his compact book is to empower the reader to adopt the precepts and techniques that he developed for the Hope Is Vital project. Subtitled *The Hope Is Vital Training Manual*, the book contains a succinct presentation of Rohd's method, which is broken down into clearly described activities designed to meet specific goals at each stage of the process.

The substance of the work is the improvisational development and enactment of scenes that embody pressing social or personal issues but do not convey a message or a solution. The scenes are designed to raise questions with such tension and urgency that when the facilitator freezes the action, the audience members are ready to take the place of the protagonist on stage and try out different decisions. In that way, a dialogue ensues—emotionally invested dialogue in action. By the end of a session, many points of view have been heard, many behavioral choices explored, many personal experiences represented. The point, as Rohd has emphasized, is the dialogue itself, the experiential learning that everyone does have options, choices, and rights, even in the face of the worst pressures that young people must deal with.

Rohd acknowledges the basis of his work in Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, a political theater that draws the audience—"spect-actors"—into the enactment and transformation of oppression. Rohd's attention to group process, however, distinguishes his work from Boal's and from some other theater-based approaches. Rohd's description of warm-up exercises, for example, is impressively different from the usual compendium of "icebreakers" that are often used by those ignorant of the true complexity of warm-up. Each exercise is firmly placed in the larger context of the development of the group and the leader's goals at any particular moment.

Rohd also makes it clear that this group work is not therapy. The sessions take place not in clinical settings but in community and educational contexts, and the goals are social rather than individual improvement. "You are not trying to use a group to work through one person's problems. You are using a group to explore a social problem compressed into a specific, fictional interaction that is culled from the collective consciousness of the participants you are working with" (p. 71). Rohd does not mention Playback Theatre, a form that shares *Hope Is Vital's* focus on the group and the commitment to improvisation, interaction, and social change; but he does describe Playback's "fluid sculptures," apparently unaware of their origin. He comments on, but tantalizingly briefly, the connection to Brechtian theater that seeks to challenge and disturb its audience rather than lead them to catharsis. Audiences leave the traditional theater, having journeyed through discomfort to resolution. Rohd, like Brecht, wants to provoke audiences into action. For Rohd, it begins on the stage itself.

Written as a practical guide with a brief scan of background and theory, *Theatre for Community, Conflict and Dialogue* contains a proven technique that will be of interest and value for practitioners of action methods.

JO SALAS  
New Paltz, New York