

Book Review

***Sociodrama: The Art and Science of Social Change.* By D. Adderley, M. Belchior, A. Blasko, J. Damjanov, K. Galgoczi, M. Maciel, J. Teszáry, M. Werner, and M. Westerberg. Erasmus+, 2021 (e-book).**

Karen Levin Moser, LCSW, PAT

Sociodrama: The Art and Science of Social Change is a fascinating compilation of essays written by European sociodramatists. It is a free online e-book that can be downloaded at <http://sociodramanetwork.com/international-book/>.

The book was written because of “The Performers,” a project that took place in Europe from 2016 to 2021. The intention of the project was to bring European sociometrists together to expand the use of sociodrama in institutions and communities. The Performers project was initiated by the sociometry between two women: Judith Teszáry and Kata Horváth. The project later included involvement from the Federation of European Psychodrama Training Organizations with an interest in developing a European standard of training for sociometrists. There were participants from eight countries who were involved in the project with more than 30 sociodramatists. Reading this book, you will hear their voices and get a sense of the incredible work that took place at a variety of institutions and other settings.

Sociodrama: The Art and Science of Social Change begins with an interview with the founders of the Performers project, Teszáry and Horváth. In reading the interview, one can see how the mission of the Performers project started. The authors call the interview a “prelude” to the collection of papers that follow in the book. The interview is an account of how the two women met, their histories, and their mutual interest in utilizing sociodrama among diverse cultures and groups. One gets a sense of the passion that Teszáry and Horváth bring to their work; it is evident to the reader how their creativity and commitment to sociodrama bring the project and participants together. The rest of the book is a collection of the various participants’ writings about their work.

Part one of *Sociodrama: The Art and Science of Social Change* is dedicated to each author’s description of a moment in time when they were moved to practice sociodrama. Diane Adderley writes of the intention of the first part of the book:

...a short story, telling something of a memorable moment that had stayed with us in some way, that might illustrate for the reader how we

came to be, and to remain, so passionately involved in the dissemination of this method, which we see as “a method for all mankind,” as JL Moreno put it.

These short memories of how the authors came to practice sociodrama draw the reader into the human experience of seeing the power and impact of the method as well as the seed of inspiration to be moved to learn more and practice it.

Part two of *Sociodrama: The Art and Science of Social Change* is titled “Foundations of Sociodrama” and takes the reader into a more academic view of sociodrama. With titles such as “Guidelines for Best Practice in Sociodrama” by Manuela Maciel or “From Sociodrama to Cinedrama in Psychosis” by Sara de Sousa, part two of the book is a series of essays about sociodrama as a method and science written by some of the premier members of the international sociodrama community. The writings are rich with Morenian philosophy, sociology, and sociometry. Each paper has a bibliography with reference material for the reader.

Part three of *Sociodrama: The Art and Science of Social Change* is titled “Sociodrama in Social Settings: Organizational, Educational, and Community Work.” This chapter allows the reader to explore practical applications of sociodrama in clinical and nonclinical community settings as the authors provide both a summary and analysis of their work in each setting. Titles such as “Sociodrama in a Swedish Secondary School: Focus on Warm-ups” by Mariolina Werner Guarino or “Can Sociodramatic Methods Enhance Empowerment and Collective Resilience During a Time of ‘War?’” by Melinda Ashley Meyer truly illustrate the breadth and depth of the reach of sociodrama. The analyses of the applications clearly indicate the efficacy of sociodrama as the authors in some cases have included their sociometric research.

Sociodrama: The Art and Science of Social Change is a book that is rich with cultural context and the years of experience and passion of the writers. The reader of this work will be drawn into both the psyche and creativity of the authors and be transformed by the descriptions of their work. As one reads this book, it is easy to imagine being in the scene and setting where the sociodramas took place. In reading *Sociodrama: The Art and Science of Social Change*, one can sense the impact on the collective of the communities and organizations that were served as well. The sociodramas conducted during the Performers project are dealing with the wounds of collective trauma in social settings, war, with refugees, foster care, prisons, and empowerment in educational and organizational settings.

This book may disappoint a reader who, from the title, expects to learn both the “art” of how to conduct a sociodrama and research-supported “science” behind how it effects social change. A few authors briefly present the results of their sociometric research, but the reader who has not had training in psychodrama or sociometric theory may not understand how to interpret the findings. The references from each author do, however, provide the novice reader with resource material on the theoretical underpinnings of psychodrama and sociodrama from its creator Jacob L. Moreno and other practitioners. Whereas the book is not a manual on “how to do a sociodrama,” it is truly inspirational and a

recommended read for anyone who is interested in sociodrama and its application in practice in a variety institutional and community settings. Zerka and Jacob L. Moreno would be inspired to see how the Performers project served to promote sociometry among its European community and members as they came together with passion for their work.