

Zerka, Mario, Linda: A Psychodrama Journey from Classical to Contemporary by Steven Durost, LCMHC, PhD, REAT

"What do you want to do to the perpetrator?"

"I want to get rid of him. Send him out of the room never to be seen again."

"Well, do it."

I took a breath and with this roundish-faced, one-armed, grandmother-matron sitting at my side, I grabbed the air holding the space of the perpetrator and sent him out of the bathroom at the Catholic school, which had been created in surplus reality within the Charlottesville living room of Zerka Moreno.

I had no idea what to expect when I signed up for the week-long workshop that started with three days in Zerka's living room and finished with three days with Mario Cossa and Linda Ciotola. I had just taken a psychodrama course at Lesley University, which only touched the edge of what could be done with action methods. It created in me an act hunger so deep that I sought a way to experience the fullness of this method. When I found that one could still work with Zerka Moreno, I signed up immediately. How often can you work with someone who was so instrumental in creating a whole field of therapy?

There were people from all over the world in Zerka's living room that weekend. We all had a reverence. We had made the pilgrimage and before us was not an empty stone facade to bow before. Zerka was anything but that. She was clear and present and knowing and completely in the moment. A library of her and J.L.'s books held the space behind where she sat. I opened a couple to see them inscribed by J.L. himself. I have to say, it was a thrill. That which had been theoretical was becoming real and knowable.

I know this next part will sound real "geeky" and weird, but there was another-worldliness to my time with Zerka. Time and space warped and I could feel myself standing in living history with someone who was looking towards the future. It was as if Zerka had spent so much time in surplus reality that all around her was saturated with possibilities. Her living room was a rift in the time-space continuum and one could enter all alternate universes.

I had just meet Zerka the day before she directed the vignette above, yet I could tell she was the most capable of space/time pilots. When she had a protagonist role reverse, she would interview the character in the fullness of their role. She was a reporter fully present to the person she was interviewing. She was fearless in the drama, with clear recall and totally humble when receiving feedback...in fact truly enjoying the collaboration...and learning from all input.

This was in 2007. Zerka was 90...and still growing.

Most of the group of us moved on, continuing the work that Zerka started by spending time in psychodrama with Mario Cossa and Linda Ciotola. With Linda directing, I expanded on the vignette. I went back to the sober Catholic school bathroom, found the child left there after the perpetrator was ousted, and rescued him. But, before going

there, Linda had me pick people to play an inner strength, an interpersonal strength and a transpersonal strength. She resourced me.

Little did I realize at that time that Mario and Linda had been trained in the Therapeutic Spiral Model...as had Cathy Nugent, whom I worked with in subsequent years. I intrinsically learned the safety structures key to TSM. But, it was not until many years later that I realized that I had not grown up in classical psychodrama but rather I had been birthed into the world of psychodrama through TSM.

Zerka directed my first true vignette in the classical psychodrama approach and Linda had directed my first full psychodrama using TSM.

It seems strange that I should only now in this summer of 2016 have attended my first full training workshop with Dr. Kate Hudgins, but Kate has been important to me for many years. I had the opportunity to mention that to Kate at the Arizona ASGPP conference during a workshop. She was surprised—which, of course, she would be since I hardly ever been in a room with her. Yet, the method she and Francesca created are instrumental to my personal healing, inform my teaching of psychodrama and fragrance the work I do with clients. I am ever indebted to Kate, Mario, Linda, Cathy and, of course, Zerka and J. L.

At that workshop in July of 2016 with Kate, I had the opportunity to meet Zerka in surplus reality. On earth, she was in a coma. But in that moment during a sub-drama, she spoke to me. She said she had to re-invent herself many times over the years, especially when Beacon closed. She said she could always be found in that metaphysical space—the space that her living room was drenched in and where time and space melded for healing.

My guess is Zerka is re-inventing herself even now—if not in some other time and space—then definitely through each of us who met her, knew her, or are touched by her amazing creation.