

ANITA STEFAŃSKA<sup>1</sup>

## Positive Impact of Drama Therapy Workshops on Development of Social Skills

### Abstract

Nowadays, there is a growing need for reflection on the role of drama therapy workshops because of an immense interest in art therapy in general in social or psycho-pedagogical work aimed to support the development of social abilities, in particular communications skills. Therapeutic aspects of art are connected with its impact on psyche, and thus the intensification of specific cognitive, emotional and motivational processes. This paper emphasises personal growth of the participant in relation with a group. In workshop activities, especially during improvisation, the ability to undertake and strengthen positive relations is developing. Reorganization and integration of participants' attitudes, resulting in better interpersonal relationships, are shown to occur during drama therapy workshops. New attitudes or acquired skills may become for many of them an encouragement to further explorations, an indication of a framework for increased engagement in social interactions.

### Key words:

drama therapy, workshop, social skills, improvisation, dialogue, communication, change and development

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of Art Therapy, Faculty of Pedagogy and Fine Arts in Kalisz, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland, as123@amu.edu.pl.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The role of drama methods and techniques in practicing professional assistance is increasing, especially in an educational environment<sup>2</sup>. Latvian research conducted by Inese Paica, Kristīne Mārtinsonē, Vicky Karkou<sup>3</sup> shows that art therapy practitioners, including drama therapists, most often work with individuals experiencing learning difficulties. Moreover, when asked to indicate the most common difficulty affecting their clients, the majority of art therapists of all specializations mentioned problems related to intellectual disability<sup>4</sup>.

In this article, an attempt is made to present drama therapy workshops as an art therapy process based on the utilization of spontaneous purposeful activity directed by a sequence of narrative events. Drama therapy in workshop activities involves working on both development of a person (therapeutic activity) and development of a product (artistic activity) in the form of a drama performance that needs to be perceived, first of all, as a positive outcome of therapeutic work and only after this condition is met, as a play performed by actors in front of the audience.

The importance of the process of play in drama therapy is shown in a developmental approach, in the context of drama drama-related work. Drama may constitute an ideal environment to teach the skills that individuals are often lacking in because of loss of stabilization, self-esteem, social position, ability to cope with problems as well as social withdrawal, shame or fear of rejection. In this approach, change is perceived not in the corrective sense, but it is more future-oriented and viewed as the strengthening, motivating and revealing of the individual's resources. Thus, drama therapy is shown to be focused on the reinforcement of the participant's artistic, mental and psychological resources, not on the improvement of distorted functions. The creative process is treated as a learning process,

---

<sup>2</sup> M. Valenta, *Strukturierte dramatherapeutische Projekte in der Sonderpädagogik* [Structured Dramatherapeutic Projects in Special Education] [in:] *Integrations – Sonderpädagogik und Europa* Integration – Special Education and Europe], W. Sassi, M. Vitkova, N. Stormer (eds.), Bad Heilbrunn 2004, pp. 313–315; V. Karkou, *Arts Therapies in Schools: Research and Practice*, London 2009; A. Kopytin, I. Svistovskaja, *Art Therapy of Children and Adolescents / Art-terapiya detey i podrostkov*, Moscow 2010.

<sup>3</sup> I. Paica, K. Mārtinsonē, V. Karkou, *The Practice of Arts Therapies in Latvia: Findings From a Nation-wide Survey* [in:] *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference. ARTS THERAPY: REALITIES AND PROSPECTS*, N. Bražienē (ed.), Riga 2013.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 71.

understood as acquiring new competences for action<sup>5</sup> in order to achieve better quality of life and develop individual potential<sup>6</sup>.

This article aims to present a positive impact of drama therapy workshops on social skills of individuals experiencing problems with communication. Such persons usually do not use accepted and recognized modes of communication or cognition. In result, it is extremely difficult for them to establish a positive relationship based on standard principles of communication. However, it becomes feasible in a drama environment. The performing of different roles creates an opportunity to be involved in various cognitive endeavors in which interpersonal relations established while working on stage gain a special value. “They decide about a social importance of play/encounter, and thus about a therapeutic function of drama”<sup>7</sup>.

Consequently, this paper is intended to demonstrate that it is easier to create opportunities for safe comments on one’s own experiences and uninhibited demonstrations of attitudes in a space whose essence consists in play perfecting and the performance than in situations in which play serves as a means of reconstructing true, personal problems, as it is done psychodrama<sup>8</sup> of Playback Theatre<sup>9</sup>. Although all therapeutic approaches that make use of drama methods recognize the importance of experiences associated with a theatrical performance and successfully use them in therapy<sup>10</sup>, most approaches do not assume that the activities will lead to a drama performance. The outcome in the form of a drama performance is assumed in drama therapy and the following discussion is intended to constitute a point of reference and a general framework that may facilitate the

---

<sup>5</sup> See: M. Stasiakiewicz, *Proces twórczy jako zdobywanie kompetencji działania* [The Creative Process as the Acquisition of Action Competences] [in:] *Twórczość w teorii i praktyce* [Creation in Theory and Practice], S. Popek (ed.), Lublin 2004; A. Gmitrowicz, *Rola arteterapii w psychiatrii* [The Role of Art Therapy in Psychiatry] [in:] *Znaczenie arteterapii w psychiatrii polskiej* [The Importance of Art Therapy in Polish Psychiatry], A. Gmitrowicz, W. Karolak (eds.), Łódź 2000, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> A. Kopytin, *The Development of Art Therapy in Russian Federation* [in:] *SPOLEČNÝ PROSTOR ~ COMMON SPACE ~ Общее пространство. Sbornik příspěvků z conference* [COMMON SPACE. A Collection of Speeches from the Conference], M. Friedlova (ed.), Olomouc 2013, p. 38.

<sup>7</sup> E. Barba, *Teatr-kultura* [Theatre-Culture, in: *The Floating Islands*, Holstebro 1979], “Dialog” 1980, No. 5, p. 120.

<sup>8</sup> S. Kratochvil, *Podstawy psychoterapii* [Basics of Psychotherapy], Poznań 2003.

<sup>9</sup> J. Salas, *Playback theatre A frame for healing* [in] *Current approaches in drama therapy*, P. Lweis, D.R. Johnson (eds.), Illinois 2000.

<sup>10</sup> R. Emunah, D. Johnson, *The Impact of Theatrical Performance on the Self-images of Psychiatric Patients*, “The International Journal of Arts in Psychotherapy” 1983, No. 10, pp. 233–239.

process of planning instructive and educational activities in which artistic methods are employed to enhance communication skills.

## 2. HUMANISTIC APPROACH TO DRAMA THERAPY

It can be said that in drama therapy, one of the basic disciplines of art therapy, at least three areas of science converge. It draws on close links between arts, medical science and humanities<sup>11</sup>. It may also be related to social sciences. In developmental drama therapy, the selection of techniques employed to accomplish artistic objectives and to elicit therapeutic change results from the adoption of a humanistic approach<sup>12</sup>. Rogerian approach, a person-centered therapy, emphasizes the idea that the individual has within himself vast abilities of self-understanding as well as the ability of positive and constructive development. This approach provides directions that may facilitate mutual understanding between persons undergoing therapy. “If I can ensure specific relationships, the other person will discover in him/herself the ability to use this relationship for growth and change and in this way achieve personal development”, says Carl Rogers<sup>13</sup>.

Drama therapy utilizes various ways of designing the process of interactions, these ways resulting from different approaches to using the process of roleplaying. In a clinical approach, roleplaying enriches therapy with an opportunity of crystallization, simplification and symbolization<sup>14</sup>, at the same time enabling work with those aspects that might otherwise remain inaccessible, either because of lack of emotional readiness for them to be fully revealed or because of cognitive reasons<sup>15</sup>. In psychodrama, in turn, the play process encourages the establishing of vivid interpersonal interactions by stimulating easier and direct expression of personal problems and accumulated emotions<sup>16</sup>.

---

<sup>11</sup> See: V. Karkou, P. Sanderson, *Arts Therapies a Research Based Map of the Field*, Edinburgh 2006.

<sup>12</sup> A. Robbins, *Multi-model Approach to Creative Art Therapy*, London and Bristol, Pennsylvania 1994.

<sup>13</sup> C. Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*, London 1961.

<sup>14</sup> D. Johnson, *Expressive Group Therapy with the Elderly: A Drama Therapy Approach*, “International Journal of Group Psychotherapy” 1985, No.1, pp. 109–127.

<sup>15</sup> M. Nowakowska, *Dramaterapia i gra* [The Dramatherapy and the Play], “Czasopismo Psychologiczne” [The Psychological Journal] 2006, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> P. Kellermann, *Focus on Psychodrama: The Therapeutic Aspects of Psychodrama*, London 1992.

In the suggested approach of development-oriented drama therapy, the central point is personal growth of the participant in relation with a group<sup>17</sup> Work on the role constitutes the process based on understanding and empathy, by which it serves to practice social skills. The choice of workshop as a form of work brings positive results especially in drama therapy of the intellectually disabled. Creative situation constitutes then an area of education in the process in which complicated group and creative tasks overlap, so it is not possible to plan exactly the course of the encounter or create the so called fixed scenario. Artistic preferences of each participant become the basis for their therapeutic work. This is achieved by the integration of numerous activities in workshop practice: on the one hand it requires discipline, concentration or deep reflection; on the other hand it requires exuberant explosion of spontaneous energy, the power of incident, sublimation for instinctive reactions. This fusion creates therapeutic opportunities of drama therapy.

Workshop practice in development-oriented drama therapy resembles the work of actors, who become co-authors of the performance by introducing their own interpretations of the roles<sup>18</sup>. It assumes integration of many approaches<sup>19</sup>, depending on the context, timeframe, a group of clients and, thus, also means of expression. For example, role-playing and performance preparation are combined with therapeutic methods utilized in drama therapy<sup>20</sup>. It can also combine drama techniques with selected behavioral strategies<sup>21</sup>. This was done for example in the case of Social Emotional NeuroScience Endocrinology Theatre, a novelty intervention program aimed to improve social interaction in children with ASD. During a two-week workshop camp normally developing children were paired with those suffering from ASD (8–17 years old). The results of the project prove that a drama program contributed to improvement in basic social deficits in children with autism<sup>22</sup>.

---

<sup>17</sup> See: N. Rogers, *Sacred Space: Using Expressive Arts to Build Community*, “Earth Circles” 1993, Vol. 4, No. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Compare: A. Boala, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, London 1992, p. 62, 65, 108.

<sup>19</sup> S. Hogan, *The Art Therapy Continuum: A Useful Tool for Envisaging the Diversity of Practice in British Art Therapy*, “International Journal of Art Therapy” 2009, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 29–37.

<sup>20</sup> P. Jones, *Drama as Therapy: Theory, Practice and Research*, London 2007, pp. 81–134.

<sup>21</sup> Utilization of drama techniques to enhance social skills in children with communication and emotional problems can be found, among others in such works as: J. McCarthy, J. Light, *Instructional Effectiveness of an Integrated Theatre Arts Program for Children Using Augmented and Alternative Communication and Their Nondisabled Peers: Preliminary Study*, “Augmentative and Alternative Communication” 2001, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 88–98; M. Peter, *Drama, narrative and early learning*, “British Journal of Special Education” 2003, Vol. 30(1), pp. 21–27, doi: 10.1111/1467-8527.00277.

<sup>22</sup> B. Corbett, *Brief Report: Theatre as Therapy for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder*, “Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders” 2011, Vol. 41, Issue 4, pp. 505–511.

The expected effect of drama therapy is to bring about the attainable changes in personality-related determinants of learning by creating suitable methods. In this space, work on stimulation and development of participants' ability to utilize their own creative means is of uttermost importance. It cannot be forgotten that „creativity is an act that goes from within the person outwards to others”<sup>23</sup>.

A workshop group participates in the process of mutual learning, in contrast to analytically oriented drama therapy, where artistic activities are intended to support the unblocking of unconscious psychic content, which, in loose associations, takes on features of personal statements.

In drama therapy, like in many integrated approaches, (e.g. in a playback method), the group goes through subsequent development stages. Each workshop meeting has its characteristic structure and all stages of work have their specific goals and create a whole<sup>24</sup>. According to Sue Emma Jennings, eminent drama therapist, workshops include three stages: embodiment, projection and role playing<sup>25</sup>, in which the main inspiration for free movement from everyday reality and an imaginary one originates in Shakespeare's works. In the workshop approach suggested here<sup>26</sup>, the activity cycle comprises four stages: 1. Practice, 2. Exploration, 3. Integration, 4. Action. It is intended, like in Jennings approach, to transfer practice from drama reality to everyday one. Undoubtedly, a decisive role, in this transfer is played by the participants' attitude to play characters and recognition of their emotions. Such recognition results in identifiable benefits for psychophysical experiences of the person acting.

Workshop in drama therapy is understood as a set of created therapeutic conditions and artistic activities beneficial for optimal and suitable improvement and development of people struggling with emotional problems. The changes are taking place mainly thanks to the possibilities of expression and the potential of a creative process. Drama sessions involve creative activity, which is, at the same time, a form of specific competencies acquisition. The process of creative mobilization

---

<sup>23</sup> A. Knapp, *Twórczość zbiorowa – utopia czy nowy język teatralny* [Collective Creation – Utopia or a New Theatrical Language] [in:] *Sztuka otwarta, wspólnota, kreacja, teatr* [Open Art, Community, Creation, Theatre], A. Kamiński (ed.), Wrocław 1977, p. 36.

<sup>24</sup> R. Emunah, *Acting for Real*, New York 1994; R.J. Landy, *Drama Therapy. Concepts, Theories and Practices*, Springfield-Illinois 1994.

<sup>25</sup> S.E. Jennings, *Models of Practice in Dramatherapy*, “Dramatherapy” 1983, Vol. 7, Issue 1, pp. 3–6; S.E. Jennings, *Dramatherapy with Children and Adolescents*, London 1994; S.E. Jennings, *Playing for Real*, “International Play Journal” 1995, No. 3, pp. 132–141.

<sup>26</sup> A. Stefańska, *Teatroterapia jako metoda kształtowania poczucia godności u osób niepełnosprawnych intelektualnie* [Dramatherapy as a Method of Shaping a Sense of Dignity in People with Intellectual Disabilities], Poznań-Kalisz 2012, p. 144.

of persons united by the power of collaboration enables men's encounter with a world of unique experiences.

Differentiation of creative attitudes of participants, diversity of their aesthetic sensitivity or previous interactions with art can improve the workshops' quality, but they do not determine it. The main qualifier is the power of art, which can integrate the area of creativity, health and processes of change (e.g. transformation of attitudes or habits). The value and likelihood of artistic actions of participants are determined by the coherence of the following components: artistic and therapeutic goals, methods and techniques and documentation. The workshop uses specific media, maintaining the element of unpredictability as a fixed and essential aspect of a creative process. Hence, the lack of preconceived solutions. The role of a scenario is to provide a framework for a group work.

Many of the activities offer the participants various metaphors and analogy based exercises, for instance tasks focused on overcoming patterns in the evaluation of other people's behaviour and the participants' own actions. Participants gain the experience through direct action, which involves experimenting with solutions at a safe distance, which could not be possible in reality. It is noteworthy that the *here-and-now* experiences, both consciously and intentionally communicated in an aesthetic form, serve experimental purposes, even if they evoke unpleasant recollections. Artistic practices used in workshop activities should not be considered in terms of artistic abilities and skills development or training. They serve as an inspiration for conversation, reflection and explication of one's own experiences gained through dramatic play.

### 3. PLAY AS METHOD OF DEVELOPMENTAL WORK AND ITS CONDITIONS

In the therapeutic process, man finds himself in a playspace<sup>27</sup>, where the situations are created that initiate specific experiences and participants are encouraged to explore them by engaging in dramatic action. In this way, the ability to undertake and strengthen positive relations is developing. Therapists arrange a situation for learning about each other, discussing different social, family, peer and workplace relationships. Participants are also learning possible recording and blocking of toxic relationships. During this work, a phenomenon of transferring experiences

---

<sup>27</sup> P. Jones, *Drama as Therapy: Theory, Practice and Research*, London 2007, pp. 81–134; D. Johnson, *On the Therapeutic Action of the Creative Arts Therapies: The Psychodynamic Model*, "International Journal of Arts in Psychotherapy" 1998, No. 25, pp. 85–99.

from drama reality to everyday one takes place and the utilization of drama metaphor by the facilitator/ therapist assists the participant in returning from the realm of drama (play) to the real world. It is then that psycho-motoric, cognitive and emotional spheres of human activity are most activated. For this reason, during specific tasks, participants' behaviors need to be monitored and documented. This provides feedback for the evaluation of progress and directions for further work aimed at refining the role and ultimately oneself<sup>28</sup>. Observation needs to focus on acting and analysing it through the prism of performer's personal and current needs.

A variety of problems can be solved thanks to the aesthetic illusion that takes place in the process of acting. It happens because the participants, even though being aware of conventionality of drama, almost always adopt personal attitudes to the characters they play out. While improvising within the confines of a role, participants often recognize similarities to the real world. Patrice Pavis states that "every game is based on a codified system of behaviours and actions which – depending on established assumptions – could be regarded as real and feasible, artificial or theatrical"<sup>29</sup>.

#### 4. AREA OF DIALOGIC COMMUNICATION – IMPORTANCE OF OBSERVATION

The dialogic communication<sup>30</sup> should start with *communicating with oneself*<sup>31</sup>. This personal communication is often based only on a body gesture, seldom on the basic structure of sounds opening space for ambiguity of feelings or views. It can be said that in the process of drama therapy (as in theatre in general) "a new quality is created because of implementing/integrating the basic components of human existence, such as words or sounds, into a completely unexpected situational framework or an inadequate space"<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> M. Valenta, *Dramaterapie* [Dramatherapy], Praha 2011, p. 199.

<sup>29</sup> P. Pavis, *Słownik terminów teatralnych* [Glossary of Theatrical Terms], Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1998, pp. 172–173.

<sup>30</sup> J. Rutkowiak, *O dialogu edukacyjnym. Rusztowanie kategoriałne* [About the Educational Dialogue. Categorical Staging] [in:] *Pytanie – dialog – wychowanie* [Question - Dialogue - Upbringing], J. Rutkowiak (ed.), Warszawa 1992.

<sup>31</sup> M. Buber, *O Ja i Ty* [About Me and You] [in:] *Filozofia dialogu* [Philosophy of Dialogue], B. Baran (ed.), Kraków 1991, p. 41.

<sup>32</sup> M. Kowalczyk, *Teatr w świadomości uczniów (1985–1990)* [Theatre in the Awareness of



A participant, or a performer, finds a place in theatre activities where he “acquires a potential of releasing himself from false self-concepts, by dressing up and undergoing a quasi-metamorphosis. He will therefore seek his own authenticity”<sup>33</sup>. Acting and creating requires participants to apply their own meanings in all areas of stage-related, which means that a transactional model should prevail. This model is a communication sub-type, understood as “meaning negotiation”, which refers to the areas of meaning - values, attitudes, beliefs and thoughts - that a person develops in the course of life.

According to this approach, all participants contribute their personal areas of meanings to all communication situations. Then, „openness yields openness”. Thanks to such attitude the quality of communication significantly improves: we are not only rewarded with “openness” of our interlocutor, but we also enrich our knowledge of ourselves and gain self-confidence. It is important that all workshop participants consider themselves – to a lesser or greater extent, more or less consciously – an honest source of information.

Each story or event marked with conflict that is acted out and presented in a dramatic form to a group of people having a sense of mutual trust can be performed in a braver manner. Likewise, a series of different events, one-sided or reciprocated relations can be made more intricate and multi-layered in its structure. During workshop activities a participant is affected by a wide range of interpersonal relationships.

A participant performs and engages in artistic activities arranged in different forms e.g. a theatre game or a specific acting task used in therapy. That is why these tasks, characterized by nonlinearity, fluency, multi-layers and multi-directionality, affect various types of cognition and reception of a played character. *Completion*, which is understood here as engaging in an acting task, is commonly seen in terms of individualised forms of a “stage happening”.

During the process of creation, the acts of expressing the imaginary world and the real world are becoming alike. Those are the situations in which one can observe difficult emotions and thoughts from the safe distance of play, which is beneficial for the participant’s *self*. The concept of *self* in an drama therapy is modified by reflexive information, which enables a better understanding of the motives of a fictional character as well as the values that are important in real

---

Students (1985–1990)], Warszawa 1995, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> K. Krasoń, *Cielesność aktora – transgresyjna idea rozpadu czy rekonstruowania sensu* [Corporeality of the Actor - Transgressive Idea of Decomposition or Reconstruction of Meaning] [in:] *Spektakl jako wydarzenie i doświadczenie* [Performance as an Event and Experience], I. Jejtę-Lewkowicz, J. Michałowska (eds.), Łódź 2010, p. 55.

life. It is worth noting that although each participant is affected in a different way, common experiences and reactions can be observed. In many people, empathy is aroused as well as acceptance of their own lives. The development of common experience, however, requires time and a deepened communication.

On the other hand, dialogue may arouse a sense of internal anxiety in some people. The anxiety can serve either as a disrupting factor or a spark that triggers creativity, leading to a change in the anxious person's attitudes. The most important is observation and assessment of the participants' specific abilities that allow them to immerse in the imagined world, which is created by them at the same time. That is why in stage space one should focus, above all, on creating specific conditions for (after D. Goleman) "the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive and in the right way"<sup>34</sup>.

## 5. ROLE AND POWER OF IMPROVISATION

Work with a group during workshops should focus on specific onstage activities resulting in the creation of a stage performance. It is more important, however, to design active situations involving conversations about man and his condition in terms of the humanistic approach paradigm. The participant is actively involved in achieving a common goal, that is a performance. At the same time, each participant becomes both the subject and object of their own observations. The process of gaining knowledge during dramatic play is at the same time the process of discovering one's own limitations. The participant may either accept them or attempt to overcome them. This involves change connected with revealing one's own potentials.

Dramatic projection comes into being here and now through improvisations. Performing theatrical tasks as free improvisations, especially by people who are not able to speak up for themselves on a *day-to-day basis* (the sick, the elderly, the disabled, the addicted, people from dysfunctional families, immigrants etc.) should encourage them to use their full communicative potential. Lack of will, need or ability to talk about oneself, one's own virtues and often results in low self-esteem. This is manifested in decreased ability to express and defend one's opinions and judgments. During workshop activities one can observe the way in which gaps in specific social skills, such as communicative abilities, determine

---

<sup>34</sup> D. Goleman, *Inteligencja emocjonalna* [Emotional Intelligence], Poznań 1997, p. 17.

behaviours. Some people cannot oppose others and in result they passively follow orders, which in turn negatively affects their social life.

There are many reasons for creating different drama opportunities in which people *speak up and talk on someone's behalf*. In other words, it is necessary to challenge participants to engage in an onstage dialogue. Such engagement requires them to decipher /decode partner's intentions, to understand his or her facial expressions, gestures, behaviours, and, eventually, to start a logical and intelligible interaction. A need emerges for discussing acting in terms of comparing different characters' points of view as well as pointing out similarities and differences in interpreting non-verbal language. Such discussions are intended to make participants aware of the complexity and variety of different forms of communication and transmitting information.

Improvisation helps to gain flexibility and to adjust the performer's response to a new situation. It may also be helpful in "triggering new possibilities in the already known situations"<sup>35</sup>. In improvisation, the participants are required to formulate their own opinions about a dramatic conflict and to attempt to objectify conventional reality. This reality can be filled with contradictory perceptions of different participants of how to live, speak, dress and establish social norms. Improvisation as a drama therapy technique facilitates the identification of the characters' identities and the search for justification of specific human behaviour.

The ability to analyse the causes and effects of fictional character's actions requires being ready to engage in difficult conversations, which forces participants to use specific argumentation, perceive a problem both analytically and synthetically. In improvisation, it is essential to be aware of where the conversation is supposed to lead, what is the aim of it. Improvisations are preceded by the analyses of the text: plot, conflict, settings and some implicit notions. Thanks to asking simple questions, such as "what is the plot about?", "what does it result from?" or "what drives human behaviour?", a participant sees a creative process as a physical action corresponding to the activity of the mind. It also helps to read different signals and meanings in other people's behaviours. As Ryszard Kapuściński stated: "I receive information not only from what somebody says, but from landscape,

---

<sup>35</sup> E. Orlik-Marciniak, *Świat gier i jego znaczenie dla rozwoju dzieci i dorosłych* [World of Games and Its Importance for the Development of Children and Adults] [in:] *Wspomaganie rozwoju: psychostymulacja i psychokorekcja* [Supporting Development: Psycho-stimulation and Psycho-creation], B. Kaja (ed.), Bydgoszcz 2000, p. 186.

climate, people's behaviour, thousands of details. The reality speaks to us in many languages"<sup>36</sup>

Thanks to improvisation, performers perceive the action taking place on stage as the result of their own collective work. Engagement in interpreting the situation constitutes the participant's individual contribution to designing the play process that will ultimately lead to the performance, sometimes in front of an audience. Although many participants barely notice their own contribution to performance preparation and progress in developing their abilities to establish interpersonal relationships, a facilitator/therapist can assess them by comparing the starting point and the final outcome. In improvisation, the participants practice and develop communication skills that are needed in everyday situations.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Drama therapy is used to stimulate the willingness for expression. This is achieved thanks to variety and multiplicity of tasks connected with performance preparation, dynamic drama composition or rewarding experiences resulting from acting on stage. These features of drama therapy workshops support inner growth and enrichment of the abilities to communicate, resulting from mutual respect of the group and facilitator. Before the ultimate outcome in form of a performance is achieved, the most vital and fruitful encounter involving creative and conscious collaboration needs to take place. In such collaboration, art as an identifiable language enables experiences that would otherwise be inaccessible or largely limited for most participants. Workshops assist individuals who are shy, excluded, disabled or have problems with establishing relationships with a group. Drama therapy workshops support participants in revealing and presenting specific perceptions of reality, at the same time enabling each of them to retain artistic freedom and aesthetic sensitivity. It is a process that requires concentration and reflection on the part of each participant in order to discover of one's own abilities, to become aware of the possibility of choice or to get acquainted with previously unknown life situations.

Drama „happening” in therapeutic - artistic workshops consists in creating opportunities to get to know and understand the role of various forms of expression and utilization of such means of expression that are important in the context of

---

<sup>36</sup> R. Kapuściński, *Autoportret reportera* [Self-portrait of the Reporter], Kraków 2003, pp. 49–50.

social communication. Drama-based therapeutic approaches provide models of human interactions in which it is essential to engage in the process of gathering and compiling information. The process of teaching pro-active perception and appropriate description of fictitious, imaginary reality takes place for the participant performers to be able to test their abilities to affect a particular situation or event.

The development of such abilities is particularly valuable for participants who do not experience their own self in certain aspects of real life. Lack of confidence in one's own potential often leads people to abandon their own desires, which in turn results in lower vitality, passive and pessimistic attitude to life, and isolation.

Special attention given in this work to drama therapy methods that effectively support and stimulate personal development results from the belief that, as Maria Straś Romanowska puts, it every man “ feels an organic need to manage his/her life”<sup>37</sup> constantly experiencing a variety of relationships with oneself and an uneasy world of social interactions.

## References

- Barba E., *Teatr-kultura* [Theatre-Culture, in: *The Floating Islands*, Holstebro 1979], “*Dialog*” 1980, No. 5.
- Boala A., *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, London 1992.
- Buber M., *O Ja i Ty* [About Me and You] [in:] *Filozofia dialogu* [Philosophy of Dialogue], B. Baran (ed.), Kraków 1991.
- Corbett B., *Brief Report: Theatre as Therapy for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder*, “*Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*” 2011, Vol. 41, Issue 4.
- Emunah R., *Acting for Real*, New York 1994.
- Emunah R., Johnson D., *The Impact of Theatrical Performance on the Self-images of Psychiatric Patients*, “*The International Journal of Arts in Psychotherapy*” 1983, No. 10.
- Gmitrowicz A., *Rola arteterapii w psychiatrii* [The Role of Art Therapy in Psychiatry] [in:] *Znaczenie arteterapii w psychiatrii polskiej* [The Importance of Art Therapy in Polish Psychiatry], A. Gmitrowicz, W. Karolak (eds.), Łódź 2000.
- Goleman D., *Inteligencja emocjonalna* [Emotional Intelligence], Poznań 1997.
- Hogan S., *The Art Therapy Continuum: A Useful Tool for Envisaging the Diversity of Practice in British Art Therapy*, “*International Journal of Art Therapy*” 2009, Vol. 14, No. 1.
- Jennings S.E., *Dramatherapy with Children and Adolescents*, London 1994.

---

<sup>37</sup> M. Straś-Romanowska, *Status poznawczy kategorii „osoba” we współczesnej psychologii rozwoju. Zarys problemu z perspektywy psychologicznej i filozoficznej* [Cognitive Status of a Category of a „Person” in Contemporary Development Psychology. Outline of the Problem from the Psychological and Philosophical Perspective], “*Psychologia Rozwojowa*” [Development Psychology] 2002, No. (7)2, pp. 149–160.

- Jennings S.E., *Models of Practice in Dramatherapy*, "Dramatherapy" 1983, Vol. 7, Issue 1.
- Jennings S.E., *Playing for Real*, "International Play Journal" 1995, No. 3.
- Johnson D., *Expressive Group Therapy with the Elderly: A Drama Therapy Approach*, "International Journal of Group Psychotherapy" 1985, No. 1.
- Johnson D., *On the Therapeutic Action of the Creative Arts Therapies: The Psychodynamic Model*, "International Journal of Arts in Psychotherapy" 1998, No. 25.
- Johnson D.R., *The Theory and Technique of Transformations in Drama Therapy*, "The Arts in Psychotherapy" 1991, Vol. 18.
- Jones P., *Drama as Therapy: Theory, Practice and Research*, London 2007.
- Kapuściński R., *Autoportret reportera* [Self-portrait of the Reporter], Kraków 2003.
- Karkou V., *Arts Therapies in Schools: Research and Practice*, London 2009.
- Karkou V., Sanderson P., *Arts Therapies a Research Based Map of the Field*, Edinburgh 2006.
- Kellermann P., *Focus on Psychodrama: The Therapeutic Aspects of Psychodrama*, London 1992.
- Knapp A., *Twórczość zbiorowa – utopia czy nowy język teatralny* [Collective Creation – Utopia or a New Theatrical Language] [in:] *Sztuka otwarta, wspólnota, kreacja, teatr* [Open Art, Community, Creation, Theatre], A. Kamiński (ed.), Wrocław 1977.
- Kopytin A., *The Development of Art Therapy in Russian Federation* [in:] *SPOLEČNÝ PROSTOR ~ COMMON SPACE ~ Общее пространство. Sbornik příspěvků z conference* [COMMON SPACE. A Collection of Speeches from the Conference], M. Friedlova (ed.), Olomouc 2013.
- Kopytin A.I., Svistovskaja E.E., *Art Therapy of Children and Adolescents / Art-terapiya detey i podrostkov*, Moskwa 2010.
- Kowalczyk M., *Teatr w świadomości uczniów (1985–1990)* [Theatre in the Awareness of Students (1985–1990)], Warszawa 1995.
- Krasoń K., *Cieleśność aktora – transgresyjna idea rozpadu czy rekonstruowania sensu* [Corporeality of the Actor - Transgressive Idea of Decomposition or Reconstruction of Meaning] [in:] *Spektakl jako wydarzenie i doświadczenie* [Performance as an Event and Experience], I. Jejte-Lewkowicz, J. Michałowska (eds.), Łódź 2010.
- Kratochvil S., *Podstawy psychoterapii* [Basics of Psychotherapy], Poznań 2003.
- Landy R.J., *Drama Therapy. Concepts, Theories and Practices*, Springfield-Illinois 1994.
- McCarthy J., Light J., *Instructional Effectiveness of an Integrated Theatre Arts Program for Children Using Augmented and Alternative Communication and Their Nondisabled Peers: Preliminary Study*, "Augmentive and Alternative Communication" 2001, Vol. 17, No. 2.
- Nowakowska M., *Dramaterapia i gra* [The Dramatherapy and the Play], "Czasopismo Psychologiczne" [The Psychological Journal] 2006, Vol. 12, No. 1.
- Orlik-Marciniak E., *Świat gier i jego znaczenie dla rozwoju dzieci i dorosłych* [World of Games and Its Importance for the Development of Children and Adults] [in:] *Wspomaganie rozwoju: psychostymulacja i psychokreacja* [Supporting Development: Psycho-stimulation and Psycho-creation], B. Kaja (ed.), Bydgoszcz 2000.
- Paica I., Mārtinsone K., Karkou V., *The Practice of Arts Therapies in Latvia: Findings*

- From a Nation-wide Survey*, [in:] *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference. ARTS THERAPY: REALITIES AND PROSPECTS*, N. Bražienė (ed.), Ryga 2013.
- Pavis P., *Słownik terminów teatralnych* [Glossary of Theatrical Terms], Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1998.
- Peter M., *Drama, Narrative and Early Learning*, "British Journal of Special Education" 2003, No. 30(1), doi: 10.1111/1467-8527.00277 [access date: 16.06.14].
- Robbins A., *A Multi-model Approach to Creative Art Therapy*, London-Bristol 1994.
- Rogers C., *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*, London 1961.
- Rogers N., *Sacred Space: Using Expressive Arts to Build Community*, "Earth Circles" 1993, Vol. 4, No. 3.
- Rogers N., *The Creative Connection: Expressive Arts as Healing*, Palo Alto 1993.
- Rutkowiak J., *O dialogu edukacyjnym. Rusztowanie kategorialne* [About the Educational Dialogue. Categorical Staging] [in:] *Pytanie – dialog – wychowanie* [Question - Dialogue - Upbringing], J. Rutkowiak (ed.), Warszawa 1992.
- Stasiakiewicz M., *Proces twórczy jako zdobywanie kompetencji działania* [The Creative Process as the Acquisition of Action Competences] [in:] *Twórczość w teorii i praktyce* [Creation in Theory and Practice], S. Popek (ed.), Lublin 2004.
- Stefańska A., *Teatroterapia jako metoda kształtowania poczucia godności u osób niepełnosprawnych intelektualnie* [Dramatherapy as a Method of Shaping a Sense of Dignity in People with Intellectual Disabilities], Poznań-Kalisz 2012.
- Straś-Romanowska M., *Status poznawczy kategorii „osoba” we współczesnej psychologii rozwoju. Zarys problemu z perspektywy psychologicznej i filozoficznej* [Cognitive Status of a Category of a „Person” in Contemporary Development Psychology. Outline of the Problem from the Psychological and Philosophical Perspective], "Psychologia Rozwojowa" [Development Psychology] 2002, No. 7.
- Valenta M., *Dramaterapie* [Dramatherapy], Praha 2011.
- Valenta M., *Strukturierte dramatherapeutische Projekte in der Sonderpädagogik* [Structured Dramatherapeutic Projects in Special Education] [in:] *Integrations – Sonderpädagogik und Europa* [Integration – Special Education and Europe], W. Sassi, M. Vitkova, N. Stormer (eds.), Bad Heilbrunn 2004.