

## A Psychodrama Day in London

London Psychodrama Network presented their first Conference on Saturday October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2009 with Malcolm Pines as the guest speaker  
- and Maxine Daniels writes about it

The London Psychodrama Network invited Malcolm Pines to be guest speaker at the Dean Cross Health Unit in East London. Marcia Karp had encouraged him to come along and we had 19 guests for this one-day event.

The conference began at 10 am with Malcolm Pines opening the conference with a lecture. Marcia introduced Malcolm and informed us that she had asked him: "How come you're so full of common sense?" to which he replied: "When you get to my age, you can't be anything else". This was an informal start to his lecture on Social Mind, Social Brain and Psychotherapy. He shared with us that he had been born a few streets away from the health unit, his parents were Russian Jewish immigrants, and he reminded us of the history of the area, including the events of the First World War through to the Second World War. This personal sharing with the audience 'connected' us to the local area. This was relevant to the theme of his lecture about human beings connecting as social animals.

He explained about Mirror Neurons. These are the brain cells that are stimulated when we are engaged in an activity and when we observe someone else's activity. He posed a question to help us to think about our work as psychotherapists: How do we know about anybody else's mind? He discussed feelings, relationships, experiments with animals and a 'social synapse', who is connected and who isn't connected. He told the audience that he had trained in psychodrama and would be using terms such as 'mirroring', 'doubling' and 'role reversal'. This was a lovely surprise as I'm not sure that everyone realised this about him.

Other headings in his lecture were: Vagal Contribution, Mirror Self Recognition, and Neurobiology of Group Analysis and he recommended books, including: 'The Brain that Changes Itself' by Norman Doidge and published by Penguin.

Malcolm finished his session by disclosing to the audience that when he first read Moreno's 'Who Shall Survive', he didn't take it seriously at the time. However, he believes the title is an important question for human beings now. The more we understand humans as social animals, the closer we come to the destiny of who shall survive.

The rest of the day consisted of workshops introducing psychodrama and applying it in different settings. Marcia's workshop Psychodrama & Mentalization was very popular and is also very topical at the moment in psychotherapy. Feedback from participants attending her session included:

"It's good to do a workshop like this on psychodrama & mentalization. I use it in my work. It was a great workshop and I really enjoyed it. I'm thinking of training in psychodrama" (Astrid F).

“Brilliant. I’m completely new to the whole psychodrama world. It seems that using doubling and role reversal is quite tricky to get your head round but it worked out great” (Paula G).

Janine Turkie ran a workshop on the dilemmas of touch in psychodrama which produced some interesting discussions:

“Very interesting, really thought provoking, lots of food for thought, it was good” (David H).

We all ate lunch together and there was a lot of networking.

Chip Chimera, Olivia Lousada, Dusan Potkonjak, Maxine Daniels and Richard Oliver all ran workshops along different themes: Family Drama, Sociometry, Group Process and Introduction to Psychodrama.

The workshops finished at 3.30pm and then Marcia led the closing session. There was a friendly relaxed atmosphere and it seemed from the feedback that everyone had enjoyed themselves. Our team of presenters felt it was successful and we are now thinking of when the next one will be.

Marion N summed up the conference; “It feels as if psychodrama links aspects of psychodynamic, with dramatic and systemic thinking. It’s integrated and works with different therapies. I’ve gained a new insight and really enjoyed today.”

Maxine Daniels