

Interview

Theatrum mundi: Conversations with Adrian Lania



Toril Pursell met Adrian Lania, dramatherapist and psychologist, several years ago through their mutual work with ANZATA. Combined are excerpts from two interviews with Adrian, in person and via video call, in Sydney and Melbourne, Australia. These are acts of listening, recording and interpreting a colleague's story, with a personal and professional appreciation for dramatherapy as it has evolved, and Adrian along with it. The dialogue is to a large degree influenced by narrative therapy practices.

Adrian speaks about the dynamism of dramatherapy, relevant early childhood memories, his training in Poland during a time of political and social transformation, and his subsequent move to Sydney. He discusses his current practice with young people in schools and sets the scene for what is currently underway for dramatherapy training in parts of Australia. In conversation, the exchanges between the northern and southern hemisphere are traced as the profession moves in from the wings.

Keywords

Dramatherapy, Poland, Australia, Grotowski, theatre, playspace

Toril Pursell: *Here we are, Adrian, to reflect on dramatherapy, from Poland to Australia. Is there an image or an object that might serve as an introduction to you and your relationship to dramatherapy?*

Adrian Lania: Two images strongly came to mind when I was reflecting on this. The first was a bicycle, and this is about my relationship to the profession of dramatherapy. As on a bike, you learn to ride and you have to balance a lot of things. Quite a bit of this balancing is intuitive. Then comes that moment when you 'click' and you know how to do it, and that's an uplifting moment. Most of the methods I use in dramatherapy are hands-on; that's the kind of person I am. Dramatherapy is experienced.

Like a bike attaining more speed, the field of dramatherapy in Australia is in a transformative space. I've encountered a lot of art therapists

who were pioneers in Australia, for example Annette Coulter, and they empathise because remember what a struggle it was to bring art therapy to Australia. Dramatherapy is in that phase here right now.

Thinking further, the image about dramatherapy changed into the sandpit. I have these vivid memories as a child about this huge sandpit. Believe it or not, I was a bit shy as a child, but I loved playing there. I would collect and hide objects that became treasures, getting lost in playfulness until someone called, usually an adult, for a reality check. A sandpit is quite simple – it's sand with some boundaries. I believe dramatherapy has these core qualities too. It's using basic tools and at the same time it is like a child in the sandpit – you can make anything you want. The possibilities are endless.