

# **The Development of Sapporo Psychodrama Study Group: Sharing a Part of the Psychodrama History in Japan**

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## **Abstract**

Sapporo Psychodrama Study Group (SPSG) is a small group in Hokkaido, Japan. SPSG was founded in 1986, but there has been no leaders for this group. However, SPSG has a 30-years long history and it continues to function and develop over this period of time. In this article, this author will provide a review of the circumstances and the issues of Psychodrama in Japan through a description of the history of SPSG and the developmental story of Psychodrama in Japan.

The current author is a representative of SPSG, but he is not a leader in this group. Members of SPSG continue to study Psychodrama in the groups' monthly meeting. There is a mutual relationship established among SPSG group members. SPSG's structure remain consistent over time, even until now. Over the years, SPSG has been inviting many Psychodramatists from Tokyo and overseas once or twice a year. Thus, SPSG serves as a host, for both SPSG's members and non-members, to experience Psychodrama. This article will focus on the history of SPSG and the story of Psychodrama in Japan. The author will also share his view on the future projection of Psychodrama in Japan.

**Keywords:** Asia, China, Japan, psychodrama history, Sapporo, Taiwan.

## **1. The Foundation of SPSG**

In 1986, SPSG was founded for the purpose of sharing experiences of Psychodrama with individuals who were interested in learning about Psychodrama. The founder was Prof. Hirotada Takizawa, who worked in Sapporo Gakuin University. After participating in several types of Psychodrama in the main island of Japan, Prof. Takizawa simultaneously wanted to apply Psychodrama in Psychiatric Hospitals and also to establish a study group of Psychodrama in Sapporo (Takizawa, 2011). He felt more connected with Japan Clinical Psychodrama Association (JCPA) rather than other Psychodrama group in Japan. In 1981 'Moreno Shock' occurred during the JCPA workshop on Psychodrama – such a workshop was held for the first time in Japan. Prior to that, most people who directed psychodrama in Japan only knew how to conduct one type of drama, in which all participants create the scene and take on different roles on stage. However, when Zerka directed the protagonist during the workshop, she touched him emotionally deeply. At that time, Zerka pointed out that Japanese Psychodrama was just like Sociodrama.

Zerka was again invited to Japan in 1983 and held a 4-day workshop. After this 4-day workshop, some of the participants expressed interest and willingness to study more classical Psychodrama. Consequently, a new study group was founded in Tokyo, which was the Tokyo Psychodrama Study Group (TPSG). Then TPSG became the core of JCPA. Many individuals with diverse orientations began to gather in JCPA to study classical Psychodrama and share experiences with each other. Some of TPSG's members even went abroad to study Psychodrama. For example, Munetsugu Todoh and Kiyoshi Takara went to USA; Yujiro Isoda, Kei Maeda and Yutaka Sato went to Australia. In particular, Yujiro Isoda started to receive training from Max Clayton and to join a trainer training course offered by Australia and New Zealand Psychodrama Association (ANZPA). They learned more about Psychodrama and developed further

skills and knowledge on Psychodrama. Later Yojiro Isoda became the first Japanese to receive practicum training to become a psychodramatist in ANZPA and he subsequently obtained a Psychodrama License in 1996 (Tokyo Psychodrama Association, 2017).

## **2. Before Zerka in Japan**

While Daisaku Sotobayashi and Kouhei Matsumura were the first two Japanese who introduced Psychodrama to Japan, Toshio Utena and Takahisa Mukai were also considered to among the pioneers of Psychodrama in Japan. Sotobayashi introduced Moreno and translated Psychodrama to “*Shinrigeki* : 心理劇(Japanese)” and published it in a short pamphlet in 1951. Matsumura, on the other hand, built Japan’s Shinrigeki Study Group in 1956; he has also been developing Psychodrama and integrating it into his new and original field of study known as Relationship Science. Matsumura obtained his original inspiration/idea about Relationship Science from Psychodrama,. However, Relationship Science is different from Psychodrama and it developed independently from Psychodrama. Matsumura and Sotobayashi applied Psychodrama in the field of education with mothers who have an infant and also families with a disable member. Since then application of psychodrama has been growing from the field of education to clinical medicine, nursing, and industry. In 1961 Matsumura established the Japan Shinrigeki Association; Leon Fine was invited in the same year to teach in Japan. Matsumura further met Jacob Moreno twice in the 1960s. Matsumura noted that he was so impressed by the fact that he was given the title of Honorary Psychodrama Director by Jacob Moreno directly, when he was leaving Beacon House in New York. Meanwhile Sotobayashi incorporated his original method into role playing and he subsequently founded the Chiba Role Playing Study Group.

Furthermore, in the Kyushu Island Katsu Saeki started to offer therapy session at juvenile training school, while Takahisa Mukai, who knew Saeki's work, began to apply psychodrama for treating psychiatric patient in the hospital. And, Mukai spared no effort to spread psychodrama throughout Kyushu Island. In 1975 the Kyushu "Shinrigeki" Study Group was established and this group later developed into the West Japan Association of Shinrigeki".

In Tokyo Hajime Mashino knew about Psychodrama and originally he started out with applying psychodrama in psychiatric hospital setting. Then Toshio Utena attempted to apply Psychodrama further in the juvenile training school. He later went to Canada and USA to study Psychodrama. In 1978 Mashino and Utena established the Japan Clinical Psychodrama Association (JCPA), which is the association that Prof. Takizawa that is the founder of SPSG, later attended. In 1981 the time had arrived and Zerka Moreno was finally invited to Japan (Maeda, 1996).

### **3. From Mashino & Isoda Shock in SPSG to oversea's Psychodramatists**

In 1989 SPSG decided to host 3-days psychodrama workshop which was directed by Mashino and Mr. and Mrs. Isoda. This workshop rendered a strong impact on the participants who attended. After the workshop, some individuals left SPSG while other new people joined SPSG and later became core members of SPSG.

This author was very impressed by this particular Psychodrama Workshop. After this workshop, this author followed and attended Isoda's psychodrama workshop as often as he could at parts of Japan. One day he became a protagonist in one of Isoda's psychodrama supervision sessions. This session taught him that it was acceptable that a director does not need to an experienced person who knows everything. Instead, the director is someone who can accompany the protagonist. Additionally, as a leader, the director must never give up in following the protagonist's exploration (Maeda, 2017).

After the workshop by Mashino and Mr. & Mrs. Isoda, SPSG requested Psychodramatist in TPSG to organize regular training workshop twice a year. Meanwhile one of SPSG member had met and became acquainted with Max Clayton; the decision that followed was to invite Max Clayton and Chris Hosking to Sapporo. In Sapporo this was the first time and the first opportunity to have a foreigner to conduct Psychodrama training workshop in the area. Considering the opportunity, there were many discussions among the SPSG members about the total expense for the participants, the participants' expectations of the workshop, and the aim, the purpose, the value of the workshop. At times, the discussions became quite heated with contentious arguments. However, when the day of the workshop by Drs. Max and Chris finally arrive, the participants responses exceeded beyond our expectations. It seemed that, as the organizers, our pervious anxiety and concern about our inadequacy in hosting and implementing the workshop really came out of unnecessary and unrealistic fear. As members of SPSG members, we experienced an enormous emotional uplift and came away with a great sense of satisfaction for hosting the workshop. In 1996, however, some of the SPSG members left the organization after the WS again. Some of the workshop participants, who were also members of SPSG, went abroad to study Psychodrama directly under Dr. Max Clayton in Melbourne and in New Zealand. In the next year 1997, SPSG was able to realize to invite Sue Daniel and her trainee Gillian Blackwell in Sapporo and in Date where it is 100 km away from Sapporo. We had a chance to experience classical Psychodrama as represented by Max and Sue regularly after their workshop hosted by SPSG in 1997 in addition to TPSG's Psychodramatists. Consequently, SPSG became one of the focal points of Psychodrama in Japan.

#### **4. Developing Japan Psychodrama and SPSG**

In 1995, Japan Psychodrama Association (JPA) was established by Mashino, Matsumura, Utena, Mukai and other. This Association integrates different types of Psychodrama developed in different areas across Japan. SPSG has also been making contributes through serving as the host of the annual conference of JPA in 2000 and 2009, respectively. In 2000, SPSG decided to invite three master Psychodramatists, Max Clayton, Sue Daniel and Jonathan Fox; Jonathan Fox was the founder of the Play Back Theater for the annual conference of JPA. The conference was an exciting adventure for not only JPA but also SPSG. There were many participants in this conference and all of participants were quite satisfied.

In 2008, the Sichuan Great Earthquake occurred in China. At that point, many clinical psychologists who were experienced in providing psychosocial support after disaster visited the affected area in Sichuan from Japan and exchanged information about psychosocial support with psychologists in China. The year after in 2009, the Asia Disaster and Trauma Study Group (ADTSG) was established. Once in a year, psychologists in China and Japan have the opportunity to exchange knowledge about psychosocial support in emergency settings, and the meeting and the exchange continue until now. The annual conference of ADTSG will be held on Kyoto in Japan in 2018; this is the first time this conference is being hosted in Japan. In previous conference of ADTSG, this author had presented psychodrama sessions for trauma and family a number of times (Maeda, 2017).

Then in 2011 the Great East Japan Earthquake struck Japan. This author was sent to the affected area as a coordinator of psychosocial support under Japan Red Cross Society (JRCS), because he is a trainer of psychosocial support for a long time in JRCS and had acquired considerable experience in the field of disaster relief work. This author stayed at the affected area for several weeks. Then he received an email

from Sue Daniel for nominating him to be on the Board of International Association of Group Psychotherapy and Group Process (IAGP). At that time this author was deeply grief-stricken given the devastation of the earthquake stricken area; he experienced an unspeakable sense of helplessness. Therefore, his focus was on wanting to do something to help the situation at hand rather than about his eligibility to be a board member of IAGP. Later, he prepared for the election for being a board member of IAGP and was elected. It seemed to him that the main reason why he was elected for such a position was not because he was well-known internationally, but instead it was because Japan just went through such a huge disaster that was known internationally.

Consequently, this author traveled around the world to participate in board meetings in many countries, including Columbia, USA, Italy, Portugal, China, Croatia and Germany all within a few years. He gradually discovered that all of the members in the board were individuals representing their country. However, he was the only not officially representing Japan. For that reason, he decided to obtain an international license in 2012. He chose to be certified as a Psychodramatist by the Psychodrama Institute of Melbourne (PIM), which was founded by Sue Daniel. As a result, in February 2015 this author became the first in Japan and across Asia to be certified as a psychodramatist by PIM. Currently, he is a candidate of Trainer, Educator and Practitioner (TEP) in PIM.

## **5. Today and Future Directions**

Currently SPSG has one certified psychodramatist, two trainees, and one candidate of TEP by PIM. While SPSG is still a small group of people without a leader at the present, it is becoming one of the enthusiastic groups in the world. In 2016, this author was invited by the Taiwan Association of Psychodrama (TAP). It

was his great honor to be invited. The visit was not only an adventure for him, but also for TAP. It was his first long workshop that he directed by himself and lasted for two full days workshop, and he also facilitated one more session in the TAP conference. Kiyoshi Takara who was the president of JPA passed away in 2017 at the age of 64. Before Takara passed away he recommended the author to be the director of JPA during the TAP conference. It was a very fascinating experience for this author to direct almost 40 participants that had included not only Taiwanese but also Chinese, Singaporeans and Japanese. This author also met Nien-Hwa Lai and participated in a wonderful workshop by Marcia Karp with almost 300 participants. This author gave his gratitude to Takara for this splendid opportunity.

Continuing the conference of TPA, the author had an opportunity to direct a one-day Psychodrama workshop in Melbourne with in PIM on February 2016 (Daniel & Maeda, 2016). Furthermore, in March 2017, in inner Mongolia of China this author hosted a psychodrama workshop with many of participants that included medical doctors, psychologists, lawyers, policemen, teachers in elementary school, junior high school, high school, university professors, clerks, and housewives. In Mongolia, Psychodrama was introduced to students and teachers in high schools and universities there. This experience was received positively in Mongolia and the another Psychodrama lecture is planned in another other high school in inner Mongolia in the near future.

In 2016, other certified psychodramatist of PIM emerged in Philippine and India. Hence, the field of psychodrama has been growing and expanding in Asia, across not only Japan, Taiwan, and China but also in other countries.

Even though SPSG is simply one of the many groups that study psychodrama in Japan, its connections with other national and international groups are growing wider wider and deeper day by day, with JAP, PIM and other Asian countries. This author



hopes to build stronger relationships with other organizations by exchanging psychodrama experiences with these organizations. In the future, shared and standardized certification system for becoming psychodramatists might be established in the Asia region under an international approval.

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# 分享日本心理劇史之一： 札幌心理劇學習團體的發展

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日本北海道札幌心理劇學習團體(Sapporo Psychodrama Study Group, 簡稱 SPSG)成立於 1986 年，是一個沒有帶領者的學習團體。時至今日 SPSG 已經有三十年的歷史，並持續在運行和成長中。此文筆者將藉由回顧 SPSG 的背景脈絡及心理劇在日本發展的故事，來協助讀者了解日本心理劇的整體現狀與未來發展。

筆者為 SPSG 目前的代表，並非此團體的帶領者。SPSG 的成員持續在每個月參加團體集會，藉此相互學習心理劇，在團體中可以觀察到成員間的互動都是奠基於對等的關係上。直至目前 SPSG 都非常穩定的在運作中，且多年來每年都邀請一到兩次來自東京或者海外的學者，一同進行研討訓練。作為主辦方，SPSG 不僅服務團體成員，也歡迎非團體成員一同加入來體驗心理劇。此篇文章將著重在 SPSG 的歷史與心理劇在日本的發展過程，筆者也從自身觀點提出日本心理劇的日後規劃理念供讀者理解。

**關鍵詞：**日本、日本心理劇、學習團體。