

# Deep Stories and Group Trust

by Mimi Katzenbach

In the slow and often fitful evolution of trust in our group, Playback Theatre West, I have noticed that the disclosure of one's "deep story" plays a critical part. I am speaking of a process more delicate and more complex than the trust building which inevitably springs from the telling and playing back of stories from members of the group. I am speaking about the way in which the disclosure and the awareness of one's own "deep story" allows members of the group to know and "feel" you, laying the foundation for trust.

My first sense of what "deep story" is, and how it affects the group, occurred early in PTW's history. During the course of a fairly routine rehearsal involving playing back each other's stories, one member told a powerful story about childhood trauma.

## Locked in a Closet

Simply, it was about being locked in the closet by his stepmother for two days, and not being allowed to play Prince Charming in the school play. The playing back of the story (and, in this case, the offer of a transformation in order to break some of the ossification succeeding trauma), did not finish the story for the other members of the group. We carried the story inside us, and, perhaps even more strongly, we were moved by the teller's willingness to reveal his core of truth. There was something about the story beyond the traumatic aspects which allowed us to view the teller in a new light. We understood his passions for the stage in a new way. We were better able to accept his need to rescue others. We also had insight into his struggle with perceiving himself always as a victim. He quickly became the group star.

I began to feel the teller through the metaphors present in the story. His pattern of choice as an actor and his habits of being as a member of the group were all grounded in this story. In the same way that Jungians encourage one to analyze dreams by placing the dreamer in every one of the dream roles, I began to experience the teller as Prince Charming, as the Imprisoned Child, and as the Cruel Stepmother.

Each of these roles possessed a great deal of psychological and story weight, being classic fairy tale mythic parts. I began to wonder about his process of knowing, in which a story presents the metaphors of self.

Over the past two years, there has been much sharing and playing back of stories. But when a deep story has been shared and played back, with no overt commentary by the group, there has been this special sense of having been witness to the core of another's being. Trust has been the reward for an individual's willingness to reveal and--maybe more importantly--capacity to revere the story as a core story. That is, a teller's ability to recognize his or her deep story has been an important factor in trust-building.

## Central Life Metaphors

These deep stories are wide ranging in tone, setting, complexity. They include a Halloween incident, a vision in a grocery store, an audition, and a school essay contest. And by no means are all of them childhood stories, either. What makes each of these a "deep story" is its value for the teller. A deep story contains the central metaphors which shape the way a person works the world, and, somehow we sense that value--tele--and begin to ground our sense of the teller in these metaphorical patterns. I want to encourage the members of our group to be on the lookout for a deep story from those whom they cannot "feel," with whom they do not have strong tele. For I believe that if we have the patience to wait for tellers to find their deep stories, we will be rewarded with

their full presence. They will, as one member put it, finally "show up."

I have seen the telic bonds of trust building--slowly, fitfully--but nonetheless building by means of an individual's deep story entering into group consciousness. I am coming to believe that we each have a deep story--not deep in style, but deep in where it lies within us. And that tele is connected to the resonances we feel between our own deep story and another's.

In this reductive age of therapeutic scripts and programmatic recovery, the building of community through sharing and witnessing deep stories comes like fresh water after a long hike, reconnecting us with the extraordinary array of human experience and the irreducible poetry of the self.

Inside this edition of **INTERPLAY**, you will find articles about: the first ever International Playback Conference, one person's struggle to start a company, PA--the hottest new 12-step program, and our regular features--Playback Around the World, Ideas and Inventions, My PT Connection, and the President's Letter. Full IPTN membership info is also included as an insert. Starting next issue, only IPTN members will receive **INTERPLAY**.

# President's Letter

Dear Playbackers,

I am writing this the day after the International Playback Conference and workshops in Melbourne this January. My body is battered and tired, but my spirit is very alive.

This time together was a great reminder of the power of story as the river of inner spirit. In these times it is vital that we tell our stories and remember and tell the stories of others

as we grapple with our distress and horror at what we are doing in the Middle East -



through greed which has lost connection with this eternal source.

For this alone, it was a timely conference--a wonderful privilege to be together.

In the conductor's workshop one of the emphases that came up in different ways was that the teller's story must resound with the collective story in the audience and, in fact, with humankind's larger stories. Even if not explicit, there will be echoes in mythology, history, and literature if we as conductors can find our way to the question of why this story now?

In her book Letters to Alice (subtitled "On First Reading Austin"), Fay Weldon says to her "niece":

"You must read, Alice, before it's too late. You must fill your mind with the invented images of the past: the more the better. Literary images of Beowulf and the Wife of Bath, and Falstaff, and Sweet Amaryllys in the Shade, and Elizabeth Bennett, and the Girl in the Green Hat--and Rabbit Hazel of Watership Down, if you must. These images apart from anything else will help you put the two & two of life together and the more images your mind retains, the more wonderful will be your star-studded canopy of experience beneath which you, poor primitive creature that you are, will shelter:

the nearer you will creep to the great blazing beacon of the idea which animates us all."

However you name it--the Idea, Spirit, or Story, let us work to be its guest and host.

On another note, can I urge you both as individuals and companies to join the Network soon so that we can continue to meet through this Newsletter? Lots of people have told me they are enjoying INTERPLAY.

With warm regards,

*Mary Good*

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**MESSAGE FROM IAN SHRIVES, director, Melbourne Playback Theatre to American Playback companies who sent messages of goodwill and support to the Playback conference:**

**Greetings!**

**Thank you so much for the messages you sent us. We received them at the eleventh hour but they were rushed to us and read aloud as part of the Conference's opening ceremony. It was wonderful to read your wishes of solidarity and support. We salute you, and the work you do, and look forward to meeting you all further down the line.**

**Warmly, Ian Shrives**

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## Inspirational Gathering

(cont. from page 4)

other New Zealanders, a song of grief and respect for the past.

"How does this story end?" The conductor asks quietly.

This conference does not end for me. This conference holds only beginnings. At a time when people are dropping bombs on each other, it is more than heartening, it is absolutely and wonderfully necessary to recognize and appreciate the breadth and depth of what Playback is achieving, through all the world. I know now that there is a passion in and for our work which weaves us together, far-flung though we are. I've already begun writing letters to new people and letters are arriving for me.

## IPTN MEMBERS

### Company

Auckland Playback Theatre  
 Canberra Playback Theatre  
 Community Playback Theatre (Poughkeepsie, NY)  
 DC Playback Theatre (Washington)  
 Interact (Houston)  
 Pittsburgh Playback Theatre  
 Playback Theater West (Denver)  
 Playback Theatre Northwest (Seattle)  
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 Julienne Scott, New South Wales  
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 Judy Swallow, New York  
 Tim Van Ness, Massachusetts  
 Marc Weiss, Colorado

### Friend

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 Tara Rough, New York  
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 Julia Whitney, California

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# PA! ANOTHER TYPE OF 12 STEP PROGRAM

by Debórah Zavos

As Tim approached the group he looked at each one of us with a questioning eye. Jeff was the first to greet him in his familiar gregarious manner. "Hey, you here for the meeting?"

Tim answered, looking briefly at us then at his shoes, "Yeh, my name is Tim."

Everyone answered by saying, "Hi, Tim."

"This is my first meeting and I must admit I'm pretty nervous."

"Everyone is when they first start. Hi, my name is Jeff."

Everyone: "Hi, Jeff."

"Well, my week has been really difficult. I got rid of my boxes. I've had them in the garage, covered, for the last two years. It is a really big step for me. The next step is the cloth."

## Don't Say It

"Oh, don't mention that word," Toni replied tensely. "Hi, my name is Toni. I've been coming to meetings for years now. This week has been pretty good except for Wednesday. I found myself in the same shopping center as the fabric store. Luckily, I had a very supportive friend with me and she just guided me firmly away. I had tears in my eyes and I strained my neck looking back at the store."

"My week was okay. Oh, my name is Debórah," I said anxiously, knowing I was in a bad way. "My difficulty is when I hear the phrase, 'Let's watch.' It drives me crazy. Even when I'm reading something and I see a 'W.' It's not a very common letter, so it reminds me. It's so hard to stay straight."

"Hi, my name is James. I began coming to PA about two years ago. I had hit rock bottom. I lost my job, my wife and my kids. I think I was about to lose my soul when it hit me that I was an addict. I came here the first Thursday of the month and I have been coming ever since. I don't even want to mention how I lost everything, it is too painful. Let's just say I now acknowledge a higher power than... than... Playback."

I reached out my hand to touch James's arm. I know how hard his struggle had been. Mine was still going on and I wasn't off the stage. No one is, once you admit you're an addict.

## Parents Still In Dark

Elena was the last to speak. "Hi, I'm Elena. I have it bad. I left my home, my family and my country to come to the Mecca of Playback. I came here to study with \_\_\_\_\_ (It was an unspoken rule not to say his name). There was not enough Playback in my country, so I came to the heart. I've been coming to meetings for a year and it has helped. I haven't told my parents that it's a problem. Maybe one day..."

Eyes turned to Tim. "Now that you've heard about us, what about you?"

"I was the Director of Membership for the International Organization," Tim spoke. "I guess you could say I was a pusher. I quit cold turkey three weeks ago and just yesterday I got a flyer about the summer workshop."

"That's right. It's coming up," I said. As the words stumbled out of my mouth, my heart started to beat faster. "It's the week with Jonathan... Jonathan Fox. That's it! I've said his name. I feel the excitement, the blood, the adrenalin, I feel alive for the first time in months. That's it I've had it!" I screamed. "I'M LEAVING, I'M GOING BACK TO PLAYBACK!" I stormed out of the room as the others just stared with their mouths open.

"I knew she was losing it," Jeff whispered quietly to Toni next to him.

## Capture the Essence?

The teller's actor slowly met my gaze, gently handing me back my story.

"Does that capture the essence?" Jonathan asked me softly.

"Yes, yes it does," I replied, knowing that even though I was still an addict, I had come home.

## PT Around the World

(cont. from p. 8)

Roanoke is to begin doing programs with ethnic groups *before* establishing a PT group, so that a Playback group will emerge from these sources rather than from the therapy network.

## INTERNATIONAL COMPANY

Theatre of Spontaneity International, under the direction of Christina Hagelthorn, performed in Oslo on January 5 & 6 with a company comprised of two Americans, two Swedes, two Norwegians, and two Britons, as well as a Scot, an Israeli, and an Italian. Their next venue will be Milan in October '91.

## STAFF PLAYBACK GROUP

Reports Jo Salas: I've been organizing a Playback group at the place where I work, a residence for emotionally disturbed children. Our group comprises staff members from several different departments, including a high-level administrator. It's been hard for everyone to squeeze in time for regular rehearsals, but being together in this way is so much fun and so healing for us that we have somehow managed it. So far we've done two shows for the children and two for staff. The response has been extremely enthusiastic, more so than I had dared hope. Children and staff alike seem to recognize the opportunity to find affirmation and new ways to connect with each other. The children's stories have tended to be on the theme of nurturing parents. They tell about one cherished moment--when a father showed up on a birthday, or about finally finding loving adoptive parents after a wretched early childhood with a harsh mother and a series of inadequate foster placements. The adults have told about the special challenges--and sometimes the satisfactions--of working with these children, with their difficult behavior and often tragic backgrounds.

# International Playback Inspirational Gathering

by Jude Murphy

## Conference Facts

**Date:** January 23-25, 1991

**Site:** The Conference took place in Melbourne at an inner-city primary school. There were seven breakout rooms.

**Size:** 76 participants came, from 12 different companies: Australia--Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane; New Zealand--Auckland, Gisborne, Wellington, Christchurch; Sweden: Göteborg Studensteater. Also attending were several not in companies, but who use Playback in their work and/or have strong past or present connection with a Playback company.

**Program:** Workshops included The Next Step for New PT actors, Stories: reining them in, letting them run, PT as a creative organization, The Opera in PT, Pushing the Edges, Stand Up and Take the Bullets--the Heroic Nature of PT performance. There was also a session for everybody Wednesday evening run by Mary Good called "The Call to Story," and a session of learning and singing each others songs conducted by Alan Davies. Interest groups (such as, PT musicians, cultural issues in PT, gay women's caucus, using fabric in stories, PT: theatre or therapy?) met and talked informally throughout the conference. There were two post-conference workshops: "The conductor as Artist" run by Mary Good and Deborah Pearson and "Artistry in Playback," run by Francis Batten.

**Administration and Hospitality:** The conference was organized by Ian Shrives, Megan Williams, and me, all of Melbourne PT, assisted by Andrew Gunner, Pauline Northeast, Michelle Kleinert, Grant Corvie, Helen Campbell, Nick Pappas and Alan Davies. About 30 PT locals and their family and friends put up conference attendees from out of town. There was a strong desire to be hospitable to the many New Zealanders (25 of them altogether) who made the effort to raise the money to come such a long

way (the *entire* Christchurch company was present). This was also true of Per Wikström and Hanna Ardesjö who travelled from Sweden as well as a number of intrepid travelers from Interstate Australia (like Jamie, who busked at the Conference to raise money for his fare home!). Many visitors also helped before, during, and after the conference.

**Finances:** The conference cost AUS\$100 for the main part, which included one dinner and two lunches, \$35 for the feasting and dancing night, \$200 for the 2-day and \$250 for the 3-day post-conference workshop, and it made a profit.

"Haere Mai Wölkommen Welcome" in bright yellow and red letters that glow; Deborah Pearson arranging mauve dahlias in a glass dish to welcome people as they arrived to register; the solemn and festive singing ritual in the opening ceremony; the line of Conference participants, curved like the Rainbow Serpent, stretching from 1977-1991, charting the beginning of their connection with Playback; stories rising like bubbles in a champagne flute; the



"A story is like the wind..." Faces in the crowd at PT Conference.

## The Conference Feeling

"What is the first scene of your story?"  
The conductor in Melbourne Playback  
Theatre often asks.

I am remembering Ian, arms outstretched in recognition, in welcome, opening the first Playback Conference on record, the crashing sound of many hands clapping together, the tears in Ian's eyes, and my own startled joy: "we've done it, we're here, we've arrived."

"What's the next important thing that happened?" The conductor asks again.

The short answer is celebration. My head spins with images, remembering: Martin and Marilyn Sutcliffe painting

tale of Brigid's Aunt enacted by all eighty participants in one mighty ship, steered by the extraordinary helmsmanship of Mary Good; Peter Hall, arms outstretched, eyes blazing, whispering "Once Upon a Time"; "Saf-fika," the seven piece African band playing at the Feasting and Dancing night under a soft Australian sky, and fifty people leaping to their feet to dance as the first drumbeats began; Rebecca Mitchell's story of a Family, who comes painfully and proudly forward after many years of silence; Ronn Kjestrup and me shaking hands on the promise of a new Trans-Tasman Playback alliance; Christian Penny singing in Maori, joined by the  
(cont. on p. 2)

# Conference in Melbourne

## Peaches and Sour Grapes

by Kim Stephens

A whirlwind from New Zealand, Sweden, and other parts of Australia cut its path through Clifton Hill, Melbourne and disappeared quickly, leaving behind chaos, dispirited souls and disorder. Too harsh, you think? What about the new friends? The sharing of workshops and stories? The face that now goes with a name? The emotion that goes with belonging? They are there...they are there. I know that.

But a company that hosts a confer-



Peter Hall, Jude Murphy and Andrew Gunner at reception desk.

ence has a different experience to others. While only the committed travel, we of Melbourne Playback are all here together, with our excitement, organizational anxieties, resistance, desires, tiredness.

### Wednesday, January 23

I want to learn at this conference. I am desperate to learn. I want others to teach me. I want to see how others do it. I want theory, and practice, I want different teachers, different coaches. I don't want crying. I don't want to see people moved about being together, not on the first night. I want to do the work.

This sociometric activity has gone on too long, Mary [Good]. Let's act. We do. Mary asks everyone to act in this

story. Don't do it, Mary. Eighty actors on stage trying to pull focus--it won't work. It does.

### Thursday, January 24

I am going to conduct a performance for the first time in a few weeks. I want to be coached. I want 'hands on' experience. Tell me where I am going wrong. Stop me whenever you want. Tell me what to say so I don't get stuck. How can I stop myself from getting caught up in the teller's emotion? What can I say to move the story on? Pin me to the wall and give me a working over. I am ready to be flogged with knowledge.

"Who is going to conduct?" says Deborah.

I sit. I do not move. Sue stands up. Shit.

### Friday, January 25

It is lunch time. Everyone sits and eats at the Clifton Hill Deli. I take my lunch to the park and I sit alone for an hour. I cry. I think about my daughter and cry. I did not know she had been at the conference with me.

History and hero worship sometimes go hand in hand. I feel uncomfortable with the exaltation of the matriarchs and patriarchs of the organisation. I want to work with the actor who stands in front of an audience, as I do, and has a strong image--or none.

The peaches are the best peaches I have ever tasted.

We are about to perform. Annie, my colleague and friend, disappears out

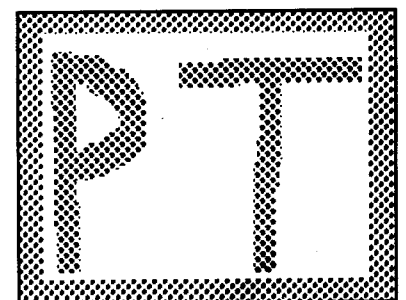
the door--with her, my focus.

### Sunday, January 27

I have to leave a post-conference workshop early to act in a Melbourne Playback performance. It is at Pharmacy College. I think it is at Melbourne University. Ronn Kjestrup, from Christchurch Playback, has agreed to act in the performance with us. Four of us, including Ronn, trudge around Melbourne University looking for Pharmacy College. Melbourne University is situated on twenty-five hectares of land. I think that Ronn is thinking that Melbourne is supposed to have its act together better than this, or maybe he's glad that other companies screw up as well. Maybe he's thinking both. We find the College--not at the University. We have fifteen minutes to warm up. We perform together. Ronn from Christchurch and we from Melbourne. I am the teller's actor. Ronn makes an offer. I am unsure what his offer is. It is fantastic. I am on stage, uncertain, having to find out what this Kiwi actor is offering. The audience and I discover together. Sometimes in our own companies, we know each other's offers too well.

As a result of the conference I know someone in our company now has a greater sense of belonging in the company, I know some have moved into international sociometric stardom, I know someone who has felt isolated and alienated, someone who has been resistant, others who have been very moved by the experience, another who has had to endure a personal tragedy during the conference.

And I know now that I have experienced all these things during this time.



# the struggle to start a company

*What follows is correspondence between Ingeborg Meyer, who returned from studying at Drama Action in Sydney to Hannover in Germany last year, and Mary Good, founder of Melbourne Playback Theatre.*

**Dear Mary,**

Thank you very much for your letter and the information about the IPTN. It came just at the right time, as I was close to starting a company, but then it didn't come off. Maybe it's still too early, but it was a frustrating time, as I'm dying to explore the possibilities of Playback here in Germany. At the moment I'm writing an article about Playback Theatre to get more known myself as well as Playback. Starting right from scratch is quite an experience. When I read your letter I felt great, just that you and some other people over there still think of me and my idea and support it as well.

It took me a long time to establish myself again in Germany. Only three months ago I found a permanent place to live. Settling back into university wasn't easy, either, but I need the degree. I think it will help me with pushing Playback forward, too. By the end of next year I should be through with the exams as well as my thesis (which I'm going to write about Playback, of course!).

If you don't mind, could you please give me more information about the way you run your company: How did you start it off? Do you or did you get paid by the group members, and do you have a kind of artistic leadership? Some people who wanted to be part of "my" company don't want to have a leader at all. I decided not to agree to it, as I feel I need at least the artistic leadership (they've only done two courses with me). What do you think? I'm dying for some exchange about all the problems around Playback Theatre and the organization of it.

Please give my love to everyone ever there in OZ who does Playback.

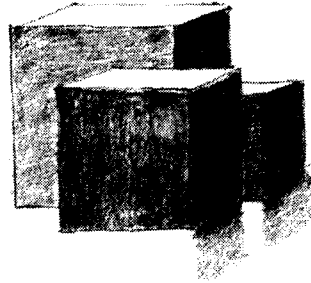
**Dear Ingeborg,**

It was very good to hear from you and to see you in the photo you sent.

We started the Melbourne Company in 1981. Like you, I came back to my original home having studied at Drama Action Centre and with Jonathan in New York. There was already a group of people practicing Playback. They had done one performance.

I made contact with them. They did know I'd been studying in New York and intended to begin a company. I think some of them were very angry with me, but it never was said.

I advertised three workshops (people paid to attend), saying that they were introductory workshops and that I was looking to begin a company. After the three workshops there was a meeting of everyone interested in forming a company (this included 4 people from the practice group). I stated quite clearly that I wanted to begin with myself as the director and trainer.



Especially from the practice group people, there was some opposition, but I didn't offer anything different and I knew that I was the only person at the time with the training and with the commitment to see it through.

We then met for about eight evening sessions (no payment) and a weekend, and then we did some self-assessment. We rated ourselves on the following criteria: ability to reverse roles with a wide variety of roles; ability to express yourself through your body; ability to work in a group (a team); ability to listen. It became clear that one or two people were not able to make a self-assessment and we worked with them. These people were not ready to work

in the company and they left. This was not easy but by then the group was becoming clear about its needs.

During those eight weeks a couple of new people joined. They were people we knew and thought would be good.

I acted very much as the trainer and director for the first few years. I also did nearly all the early conducting. We did have someone else try and it was not good, mainly, I think because she was still working to get her acting skills together and could not pay full attention to either role.

**Be the Director**

After 18 months we did have a second conductor and she and I alternated. We also tape recorded performances and had regular supervision sessions with one another.

Ingeborg, I support your idea of being the director. It seems crazy to talk about equality when no one else is trained. They need to recognize your training. Do write to me if you want to talk when difficulties arise. Annette Henne and Christina Hagelthorn would also be good to talk with.

Going back to the question of payment--I didn't charge for any training I did in the company once people had joined, but I did for the initial workshops.

I know some other people, I think Deborah [Pearson, founder of Perth Playback] is one of them, who did charge for rehearsals and training for longer than this. My thinking was that once they committed themselves to working with the company, that we together were creating the team. I continued always to receive the same payment as the actors. Sometimes I did feel resentful about this because early on I did carry a lot more than anyone else, *but* I was also the one who wanted to have a company most. It could be good to establish that the conductor, director, manager--if they are one role as they were here--gets paid more.

Ingeborg, I hope this is helpful. I look forward to hearing how you're going.

# ideas and inventions

## *Beginning, Middle, and End*

by Ann Hale

James Lucal and I [of PT Northwest in Seattle] were searching for a training device which would heighten actors' awareness of what a story is about and accomplish this within the ensemble framework. We created the following exercise:

- 1) Three actors are seated on the stage facing the audience.
- 2) The actor at stage right enacts the beginning of the story; the actor stage center enacts the middle; the actor at stage left enacts the ending.
- 3) In our practice sessions, a teller, without the assistance of a conductor, tells a story. Group members are attentive to the teller, and the actors on stage listen.
- 4) Someone in the group plays music during the setting up.
- 5) Each actor prepares to work alone, capturing the essence of their portion of the story, either impressionistically or realistically.
- 6) During the enactment the actors take turns in solo performances. It seems to work well to have the actors come to a "freeze" at the end of their scene. (The second and third actors need to be prepared to make a sudden change in order that the parts of the story work well together).
- 7) The actor responsible for the ending may choose to indicate nonverbally to the other actors to join him or her in a moment of closure with a stage picture or finale once he/she has come to an end of the portrayal.
- 8) Following the acknowledgement, the teller is free to comment.

### Surprise Beginnings

A frequent reaction when we do this is astonishment about what is thought to be the "beginning" of the story. Often the actor portrays something which is only hinted at and never spoken of by the actor as the beginning. This brings excitement to the form. It also means that the actor doing the middle may have to carry the lion's share of the story as related by the teller.

"Beginning, Middle and End" has

potential for performance situations. There are some stories that lend themselves quite easily to being enacted in three segments, particularly those stories which are internal reflections of the teller ("I used to have this attitude...this happened...now I realize, etc.") This form may be introduced at a time in a performance when a change in format is needed, or the actors need some relief from prescribed role demands. The conductor may suggest the form prior to the teller's arrival on stage or decide as the story is being related. In such a case, the conductor won't ask the teller to choose actors, but will suggest the form instead.

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## My PT Connection

by Sheila Traister

When I came to Playback it was with the feeling that I had to be a part of the experience. Drawn to the challenge, the magic, and the pure fun of it, I had to know, Could I do it? I've been with Playback almost a year and "Can I do it?" is no longer the draw. So, what's changed? What does this Playback work mean to me?

My sense of self has changed since doing Playback. At the time I got involved with the work, much of my energy was focused on self awareness--particularly on how I could love more fully in the moment. I knew this would greatly improve the quality of my life and my relationships. As an actress I felt I could bring more 'realness,' more 'vavoom' to my characters.

As the year has progressed and I more freely yield to Playback's demand to let go and to trust, I've been able to experience very pure and honest moments doing the work. In these moments I'm so vulnerable that I see and hear with more than just my eyes and ears. I'm so open that all my life's experiences seem accessible, mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

And in the same instant I'm confident enough to trust myself to take huge risks and to make appropriate choices. I'm truly empowered. I can imagine that life at its best, like a strand of natural pearls, would be a string of these moments.

### Looking at Myself

In the work I'm experiencing what I want so much more of in my life, this moment-to-moment spontaneity. And boy could I use it! I've recently realized how ineffectual I can be in relationships, particularly Playback group life. The environment here is so intimate and often intensely passionate. We have our lives, our stories, our feelings. I care about these people and I want them to care about me. And in that place of need, I can be so insecure that I place the responsibility of a safe and secure environment in which to work and grow on them, rather than looking to myself. I want to be as spontaneous and trusting in my relationships as I am in the work.

Playback Theatre is my playground for creative expression and a vehicle for my inner growth. It's one of the purest and most complete ways of honoring and serving others that I have ever experienced. I hope to do it for a long time!

I thank Playback Theatre West for their heart, integrity and compassion, and for allowing me to do the work with them.

Thank you for hearing my story.  
*Sheila Traister lives in Denver, Colorado, and is a professional actress.*

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JOIN US! Continue to receive INTERPLAY by becoming a member of the IPTN and staying connected to a worldwide network of people doing Playback. See insert for full info. REMEMBER! Only IPTN members will continue to receive this newsletter.

# Playback Around the World



## **BENEFIT OF TALKING**

Brayere Robb, director of a Playback group in Le Havre, France, writes: I have been able to help the group build confidence and trust amongst each other by encouraging them to talk more instead of the Capricornian "shut up and get on with the work." Consequently there is a far, far better feeling...and therefore the work has improved, too. Another guy left, so we're very 'unbalanced' sexually, but it hasn't mattered nearly as much as I feared, though sometimes very young children are perplexed at having to choose a woman to play a man. We're playing once a month in a fixed venue and getting a full house of nearly 100. We've also started to get other contracts, including a Woman & Aids conference, an annual village dinner in the country, and a teachers' seminar."

## **MULTICULTURAL GROUP**

From Annie Stirling in Toronto: YES OH YES studios in Toronto has been producing DRAO, a Playback on New Perspectives since August 1989. After joining Jonathan Fox and company last summer, I trained 25 more actors in Playback in a two week intensive and picked nine of them to join the company. DRAO is more multicultural now with Chinese, East Indian,

West Indian, North American Indian, British, French, Black, and our original blond Europeans in the cast.

Its work has included shows for street people, schools, and Winter Garden Theatre shows.

The studio is doing drug and alcohol prevention programs in March and May, with follow-up workshops facilitated by me, with Daryl, the musician, and all of the actors as group leaders. Our spring run for students will be at Toronto's historic Winter Garden Theatre and at the Bickford Centre. Barry Stephens, director of Sponte [a theatre company whose format includes Playback and sociodrama] has been a great help and inspiration to DRAO.

## **FOCUSSING ON THE WAR**

Director of the Schaffhausen (Switzerland) Playback company, Annette Henne, phoned in the following report soon after the start of the War in the Persian Gulf: We recently did a performance that focussed on the War. It was very important for people to tell and look and share. It was something special I really can't find words for. In these days of war I had the feeling that

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PT was very important. It is not enough to talk about war and share opinions. People need to have a place where feelings can be aired. It seems to me that in this time PT can have a very important function.

## **AND ON THE PEACE**

Donna Breeden reports from Juneau, Alaska, where she is the high school drama teacher, that she and one group of students set out to envision peace. Then they did Playback scenes. From these they made a piece which they performed for the whole school after three days of rehearsal.

## **NEW START**

Ann Hale recently moved from Seattle, where she was instrumental in the founding of Playback Theatre Northwest, to Roanoke, VA, her town of origin. Ann says: One of my plans for (cont. on p. 3)

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