



# The Playback Conductor Or How Many Arrows will I Need?

By Mary Good

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THE PLAYBACK CONDUCTOR

OR

HOW MANY ARROWS WILL I NEED?

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## PREFACE.

Writing this paper has been rather like being a sleuth. I have been working - directing, acting, conducting\* in Playback Theatre since 1980 - and the constant question I asked as I wrote was - What is the conductor doing here? If the conductor is saying this ....What role is he/she in? Or more importantly what is his/her purpose? Like a sleuth there have been times of delight at discovery, times when the rusty doorway stayed steadfastly closed, and times of meticulously combing through a thousand details.

My own work as a conductor has developed and sharpened as I have been doing the work and thinking in this way. As I am gaining a clearer sense of my purpose with each interaction I have, I also am able to be more flexible and to shift my focus and my intent. My teaching about conducting has similarly been enriched. Jonathan Fox, who first developed Playback Theatre in New York, taught me more than I knew at the time about conducting, and without his generous assistance I may never have begun seven years ago. Jonathan has returned to Australia at different times and worked most productively with our company in Melbourne: and it is with members of the Melbourne Company that I, and they, have struggled to develop what I now know to be very good work. I thank them all for their vision, their support and their sheer hard work. I would also like to acknowledge Francis Batten, Bridget Brandon and Deborah Pearson with whom I have had long discussions which last from year to year about Playback, and its purpose, and the role of the conductor. Telecom would probably gleefully thank them too. It has been Max Clayton, who has among other things, taught me to think more clearly about what I am doing, and who has opened the delights and value of thinking as a Psychodramatist to me.

\*Footnote: The conductor in a Playback Performance is the Master of Ceremonies cum Director cum Group Facilitator. It is his/her task to communicate with the audience and to evoke or draw out the stories of the night.

This paper does focus on what a Conductor is doing in a Playback performance but it will also be of value to Teachers, Psychodrama, Sociodrama Directors, and any Group Leader or facilitator, because it is offering an approach, or way of looking at what any leader is doing with any group. From this follows an ability to diagnose what roles are adequate in yourself, and what roles are underdeveloped, overdeveloped or absent. I think, too, that there are sufficient pictures and examples given to show a way of developing new roles.

### OUTLINE.

As already stated, the focus of this article is the work of the Conductor or M.C. in a Playback Theatre performance. It begins with a brief description and discussion of Playback Theatre. This is followed by a literature review which sets this work in its context. Then the reader is given a picture of the process of a Playback Performance. There are some excerpts from transcripts of Playback Theatre performances in terms of the roles the conductor is enacting. Following this is a description of each of the Roles enacted during a performance, with examples. Four transcripts of different conductors conducting have been used to develop a map of the roles a conductor enacts - of what is adequate and what is not. Most of the examples, but not all, come from these appended transcripts. This work is to be basis of a training curriculum for Playback Theatre Conductors.

### PLAYBACK THEATRE.

Playback Theatre is a form of community theatre where the actors and musicians act as a mirror to enact the stories of people in the audience. The form was developed by Jonathan Fox in New York where the first Playback Theatre Company lives and performs.

In an article written by Jo Salas the New York Playback musician she says:

"There is no audience that does not share the desire to tell stories, as well as the excitement and fear associated, with doing so. In the hundreds of performances given by Playback there have always been Tellers." (i.e. story tellers)

"The stories are fragments of lives, often chaotic half understood by the Teller, without clear beginnings, endings or climaxes. This is the nature of ongoing experience. It is difficult to describe and contain real events without remaining on the anecdotal level. It is the task of the Conductor, (M.C.), the actors, the musician and lighting person to receive raw material, filter it through their understanding and inspiration, condense certain aspects of it, expand others, all without discussion - and present Teller and audience with a theatre piece. The Teller has an opportunity to comment on and correct the scene if necessary. In stories with an unhappy outcome, the Teller may be invited to find a new ending, after seeing it once." (1)

For this kind of story telling and theatre to work in the context of a room full of strangers (which is how many of our performances begin) it is essential to create a safe and respectful environment.

As people see their stories played back and share them with an audience (be it of peers or strangers) we see - how life ~ - and in the sharing we, who become peers, transcend our separate, private, individual experience and know ourselves as part of a whole, and are one with it.

A fundamental factor in this occurrence is the particular marriage the actors and musician create. Bede Griffiths suggests that ... "We must marry the language of reason with the language of imagination and intuition to go beyond the material level. The language of myth and poetry, of the concrete imagination engages the senses, the feelings, the affections and the will as well as reason and so leads to the transformation of the whole man. It is in this sense that the language of the imagination can be said to be a kind of incarnation." (2)

By creating this language of imagination as we enact stories each person in the audience can be touched. The story ceases to be just that of one person.

The following story about Gregory Bateson takes this to the extreme - but I think that what he describes can give us a picture of how story (rather than fact) links us all, and has an organizing function for our experience.

Bateson tells a story of a man who asks his computer (3) "Do you think computer that you will ever think like a human being?" The machine did its work, analyzing Bateson says, "its own computational habits" and then printed neatly the following answer: THAT REMINDS ME OF A STORY. Bateson goes on to say, "If the world be connected, if I am at all fundamentally right in what I am saying, then thinking in terms of stories must be shared by all mind or minds, whether ours or those of redwood forests and sea anemones. The evolutionary process through millions of generations whereby the sea anemone, like you and like me, came to be - that process, too, must be of the stuff of stories."

A function of Playback performances is to mirror the essence that lives within each person, i.e. to experience our soul and to connect individuals to their community. In Playback the hidden stories of the community become public and individuals find how they do, and don't belong. In this way communities can develop - their strengths and frailties become apparent without judgment or criticism, and people and whole groups can be freed to look ahead and develop a vision or purpose of themselves.

## THE CONTEXT OF THIS WORK.

In the literature which has been written on Playback Theatre there hasn't been an attempt to look at what is happening in terms of Role Theory.

In "Drama in Therapy Vol II - Jonathan Fox (4) writes a chapter in which he describes Playback Theatre and touches on some of the roles of a conductor in the interview with a storyteller. He says:

"The conductor's task during the interview is threefold.

1. To elicit facts in an efficient manner.
2. To help the teller structure his material so that it is actable.
3. To size up the teller in order to know what kinds of action will be appropriate."

Here he is focusing very much on the one to one nature of this relationship between teller and conductor. From my observations of Jonathan conducting, and from my work and that of others, it is clear that the conductor is doing far more than this; he/she is working with the whole group (the audience) all the time, and during an individual teller's interview there will have to be interventions which engage and include the audience, and interventions which direct the actors: if the teller and conductor are not going to float off into a world of their own.

By using transcripts from four different conductors I have made descriptions which illuminate the purpose of the conductor in each intervention, be it aimed at the teller, the actors, the audience or the whole group.

The role description attempts to give a snap shot of how the conductor is viewing the world in that moment, ego the role description, "a naive enquirer". A naive enquirer is someone who sees the world as a benign place which is full of diverse treasures to be revealed to him/her. This leads us too, to a sense of the conductor's purpose in this role, i.e. to explore and discover other ways of viewing the world.

In an unpublished document written by Jonathan Fox (5) he has also taken transcripts of conductors conducting and made comments about what he sees happening. His comments tend not to look for the role of the conductor - sometimes they do. For instance, he refers to the conductor as a "stage setter" when the conductor says:

"Okay. We're just going to have the woman and the man and you. And we'll take it from where they're across the street arguing, and you're at the bus stop."

More often he makes a description of what is happening in terms of language ego. At one point he says:

"Teller picks up on the poetic language of the conductor".

Whereas in this paper I will be focusing on the purpose of the in using the poetic language he uses - i.e. in saying and doing what he/she does.

In the "Structure of Magic, Volume I", Bandler and Grinder (6) take transcripts of interviews with clients and therapists and they do a running commentary looking at the language that is used - particularly the therapist's responses.

I analyzed the transcripts I had in a similar way, that is, I went through interaction by interaction but instead my focus was the roles enacted.

Apart from Moreno's writing, I have not found in the literature a description of a group leader or a director done in this way. There are plenty of transcripts of directors directing Psychodramas ("Moore (7), Deane and Hanks (8), Carl Hollander (9), Parrish (10)") and plenty of discussion about the function of the director ("Fink (11), Greenberg (12)") but I have not discovered an analysis which describes each interaction.

Moreno (13) p252-258 Vol I, writes at length about the roles of the Director and gives very concrete descriptions of what the director, the auxiliary egos and the audience are doing because of their particular function. He also talks clearly of how the director can correct his or her limitations. I have attempted to add to this by giving many adequate examples of each role function and in some cases to give examples of inadequate functioning.

The other very relevant and valuable document in this area is the Training and Standards Manual for Psychodrama, Sociodrama, Sociometry and Role Training prepared by the Board of examiners of the Australia and New Zealand Association of Psychodramatists, Sociodramatists, Sociometrists and Role Trainers (14). In this document there are descriptions of each role that must be adequately developed for a director in each of these areas.

There has been no such document prepared for Conducting Training in Playback and in the preparation of this work I have referred constantly to the above manual. The development I have made, as well as bringing this way of thinking into Conductor Training, is the pictures or examples which illustrate the role description.

## THE ROLE OF THE CONDUCTOR.

The conductor is a key person in a Playback performance, it is he or she who engages the audience, develops the theme and sees that appropriate cues and directions are passed to the actors. The conductor must be able to maintain and support him/herself throughout a whole performance.

He or she must also be a multifaceted person or a person of many roles. The ability to change roles in response to the audience or teller is fundamental to the task.

At times in this paper, there will be a differentiation between Public and Community performances. Public performances are open to the general public for admission fee at the door. Community performances are commissioned by a particular organization that pays a fee direct to the Company. For example, the Family Therapy Conference paid a fee for Melbourne Playback Theatre to perform at their 1985 Conference.

In this paper the roles of the actors, musician, lighting person or front of house personnel are not being considered. All of these personnel contribute in a large degree to a Playback performance.

The conductor's roles have been organized into 4 main clusters which fall under the following headings: (They are not in any particular order)

1. Producer.
2. Social Investigator.
3. Listener/Communicator.
4. Guide.

#### The Roles of the Conductor pre performance.

#### Role of Listener Communicator:-

One of the first roles which must be developed for community performances is the ability to talk with and relate to a wide range of people - i.e. the people who-will be contact people and organizers of performances.

#### Social Investigator:-

The second is the ability to relate to and discuss their area of concern - ego in 1986 some groups Melbourne Playback Theatre has performed for are The College of General Practitioner's, The Mercy Hospital Chaplains Training Group, Diamond Valley Learning Centre, The Public Tenants Union and The Personal Constructs Conference - and to seek information which will be of use in preparing for the performance.

#### Producer: - Wise Person.

The conductor must be able to retain his/her sense of integrity and purpose in the work. Organizers frequently want the performance to push their particular line rather than to act as an investigator and mirror of WHAT IS.

#### Systems Thinker and Sociometrist:-

Once the conductor has received the information he/she required from the organizer, he/she needs to become a Systems Thinker to begin to warm up to the performance. What groups and sub-groups will be present and what hypotheses does he/she make about the effect of their dynamics? What questions will open up the issues that are of importance? How does it relate to the theme or purpose of the groups?

#### Guide and Producer:-

The conductor also acts as the person who warms the actors and musician up to the group for whom they are performing. The purpose of this warm up is to pass on information that may be relevant and also to warm the actors up to their role, in such a way that they are not judgmental or prejudiced - nor are they sentimental. There is also the more general task of warming the actors, musician and lighting person up to acting physically, vocally, personally and as a team, and to air and deal with any issues which will be blocks to acting together.

## Producer:-

The conductor maintains the role of key contact person with the organizer prior to the performance so that the actors are not bombarded with information and ideas which will not be useful to them as they warm up to acting. The conductor takes overall responsibility for the way the space is set up - the seating, the visibility, the aesthetics, and the accessibility for audience members participating and the relationship between the actors' position and the audience.

## The Conductor in Performance.

The conductor is working with the audience to create a community which I is able to share their stories.

Following are some extracts from performances, there is a natural sequence in the extracts - they begin at the beginning of a performance and end at the end.

This is a brief attempt to create a picture for readers of the events a conductor may work with in a performance. At the right hand side of the page there is a margin in which there are a number of brief role descriptions, that is, what the conductor is doing with this or that statement or intervention.

Where the conductor's role is underdeveloped or conflicted a note has been made about the need for further development.

### A. Beginning the Performance.

Hello, and welcome to Playback Theatre and a special welcome tonight to people who haven't been before. Who hasn't been here before?

Well, at some time during the night I think we're going to have to have a time when you all can stand up and shake your legs and move around. So you remind me if I don't remember.

GUIDE Role of Hostess.

SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR Sociometrist. Perceptive Observer of crowded conditions.

GUIDE Metacommunicator. Framer.

We're going to tell your stories for you and we're going to start simply with the things that you've brought along tonight.

[Note: This role as enacted here needs to be further developed. The framing needs to be fuller. E.g. tonight we will enact your stories. The stories that you have brought with you. There may be some stories you can remember right now and other stories that will occur to you during the evening and maybe in the weeks that follow. We will begin simply: with glimpses or moments.]

SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR Naive enquirer and PRODUCER of interaction.

So, how about someone tells me, how about ~ tell me, what sort of a day you've had today? (audience member - looks shocked - tries to hide)

LISTENER

Oh, it had to be you didn't it? (Humorously)

COMMUNICATOR Mirror.

'I wish she'd go away' (referring to self)

SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR Naive enquirer, PRODUCER of action cues for actors.

What's one word that would describe it? (i.e. the day)

Teller: says - Satisfying. GUIDE Limit Setter. - (one thing) SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR Naive enquirer.

And what's one satisfying thing that you did today?

PRODUCER of action cues for actors.

Teller:

I wrote a letter to a friend that I've been meaning to do for some time.

GUIDE Hostess.

Right. What's your name?

Teller: Heather.

SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR Perceptive Observer. Relay of information.

Did you hear? Heather wrote a letter to a friend that she'd been meaning to write for months.

PRODUCER Magician.

Let's watch.

ENACTMENT FOLLOWS...

B. The Transition point where individual storytellers will eventually be invited to come out and tell their stories.

HERE ARE FOUR EXAMPLES OF THE PRELUDE TO THIS.

GUIDE Group Worker.

PRODUCER Audience Interaction. Warm up to stories.

1. "Now because this isn't a theatre of strangers, it's a theatre of friends and stories, I'd like each, everyone here, to find someone you don't know and to introduce yourself and to tell them the story of something that's happen to you. So find someone you don't know..."

[Note: From this excerpt. One thing that needs to be developed in this conductor is her belief in her authority to issue instructions. To ask people to do something for her, "I'd like each..." creates a dependency system.]

1)PRODUCER/GUIDE Metacommunicator.

(2) PRODUCER Creator of Intrigue.

3) CONFLICTED ROLE

(4) PRODUCER Metacommunicator.

(5) PRODUCER Group worker.

GUIDE. Producer of action.

2. Well, one of the things that you do when you come here is you get an opportunity to speak to a stranger. (1) Do you know how you do that? (2) I give an order and everybody just does it. (3) What I say is, (4), well, now, we've come to that part of the evening where you can turn to someone near you who you don't know (5) and just share with them something that happened to you today (6) or something that's happened through the week (7) or introduce yourself (8) or do whatever. (9) Just make contact with someone nearby that you don't know. (10) So how about you do that now. (11)

(6) DIRECTOR

(7) DIRECTOR

(8) DIRECTOR

(9) Conflicted Role Discounts previous intention.

(10) PRODUCER/ GUIDE PRODUCER

(11) PRODUCER

[Note: From this excerpt.

(5, 6, 7, 8, 9) This conductor needs to develop a clearer sense of purpose of why this activity is being done. This would enable her to simply instruct the audience in what they are to do. Here there are a number of conflicting instructions. (3) Again here this appears to be a conflicted role state. My guess is the audience doesn't yet have a well enough developed relationship with the conductor to find this funny. The conductor does not appear to touch with herself or with the audience.]

PRODUCER Coach of audience interaction.

GUIDE Group Worker.

3. "And I encourage you to say, Hello' to whoever's around, especially those you might not know. This is a Theatre of Neighbors. So say, "Hello". Make contact with people around you

PRODUCER Of audience - Warm up to stories on the theme.

4. Find the person next to you and tell one of your stories of being at home and at sea. (i.e. At Home and at Sea being the Theme of this interaction. particular show.)

[Note: From this excerpt.

Finding the person next to you is most likely not to expand the social networks within the room. People will tend to speak to the person they know already - so in the role of producer of audience interaction this conductor could develop her thinking about what she is doing and find ways of producing more interaction between strangers.]

### C. Conducting a Story.

(1) GUIDE Welcoming Host.

Your name is? (1)

Marilyn.

2)SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR

Marilyn. And where does your story take place,

Marilyn? (2)

It takes place in the Taronga Park Zoo.

3)LISTENER Active Listener. (4) SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR

Naive enquirer.

In the Taronga Park Zoo (3) which is in what town

or city? (4)

Sydney.

(5) LISTENER Active listener. (6) PRODUCER Humorist/Showman responding to audience laughter.

Sydney, good. (5) Well, you know, I know the Central Park Zoo and I know the Bronx Zoo and that's about all. But the Taronga Park Zoo. (6)

(7) GUIDE Self discloser. Meeter. ( 7) SOCIA-1 INVESTIGATOR Naive enquirer

When did this happen?

Tuesday.

(8) SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR Naive enquirer. (9) PRODUCER Cues for action.

Tuesday. Okay. And what happens there? (8, 9)

Well, lots of things. but the thing that had happened then was the chimpanzees in a very large, expansive, frolicking place and I sat and watched them for about an hour. And it seemed... I'd also seen some other chimps in very small cages...

(10) SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR Naive enquirer.

At the zoo or another zoo? (10)

In the same zoo.

(11) PRODUCER (Makes more of the paradox). Of action cues.

In the same zoo? (11)

Yes. and I was really struck by the difference between the ones that were in the little cages and the ones that had like several acres.

(12) PRODUCER Creator of story. Of action cues.

So, what's a word for a caged chimp? (12)

Neurotic.

(13) PRODUCER Of action cues (14) META- COMMUNICATOR Producer of audience participation.

And what's a word for a chimp that was in this (13) ... describe it a tiny bit this... because I think I would like the audience to be this romping space.

Yes. Right. Well, it's a raft and it's a river and it's trees and there's an adolescent chimpanzee that keeps throwing rocks at an older one and there's tolerance between this older one and the young one which just keeps going and going and going ,just like a kid. I means that's...

(15) PRODUCER Of audience action.

Okay. (To the audience) I think the idea is to maybe have all of you in your own way, (15) you know...

And then there was ones that were lying there sensuously with their legs sort of splayed open.

I mean there was everything.

(16) GUIDE Boundary setter. (17) PRODUCER Of action.

Okay. (To the audience) Just practice this for a minute. (16) Be, just for a minute, this is going to be very brief; this is a rehearsal so you can settle down for yourself, be chimps in the Taronga Park Zoo in this free open place. Go. (17)

...

18) PRODUCER Humorist. GUIDE Boundary setter. (19) PRODUCER Story teller

So, some of us have difficulty in getting into (role and some of us have trouble with control.

(18) So that your challenge is to do it and then undo it, as it were. (19) Okay. So you go to all these little cages and then you come to this wonderful open place where there are all these chimps having a wonderful time. (19)

Actually, it's the other way around. I see all this and then I see this caged chimpanzee and it's screaming and screaming and it screams for at least half an hour.

20)PRODUCER Magician.

Okay. Watch. (20)

.. .

ENACTMENT OF STORY TAKES PLACE.

(21) SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR Naive enquirer. GUIDE Respectful friend.

Did that capture the spirit of it? (21)

Yeh, that was, I mean, words .you know, like I just want to be in there with you.

(22) PRODUCER Ritualist. GUIDE

Respectful acknowledger.

Thank you very much. (22)

D. Working with Conflict.

1) Hopeful PRODUCER

Well let's have another story (tentatively). (1)

[Note: Conductor is conflicted here. She is not offering the tellers chair in a clear inviting manner and she sounds doubtful.]

2)SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR

Who has a story that they would like to see again? (2)

[Note: There are no offers from the audience to tell stories instead there is a distinct settling down into seats.]

2)PRODUCER Metacommunicator. DIRECTOR letting that actors know. (4) DIRECTOR

Directions to actors

Well, I think that we will now work with dilemmas about telling stories. (3) Let's team up in pairs. (4)

[Note: (1) This conductor is not clear in item (3) about whom she is addressing. She is aiming (I think) to give the actors an instruction - which she later does quite simply in item (4) - but it is partly directed at the audience and in that case needs to be clearer and more dramatic or intriguing.]

(5) PRODUCER Metacommunicator.

So, I am going to ask you a different question. (5)

(6) SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR Naive enquirer. (7) PRODUCER Of action.(8) PRODUCER

Metacommunicator. (9) SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR (10) PRODUCER GUIDE

How many people have actually thought of a story so far today, one of their own stories, (6) and I want you all to put your hands up, (7) and I won't choose anyone. (8) I just want you to see the stories. (8) Who has actually thought of a story today from their life at one point. (9) Have a look around, hold your hands up really high. Okay. (10)

(11) SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR CONFLICT MANAGER (12) ACTIVE LISTENER (13) ACTIVE LISTENER (14) PRODUCER Magician. GUIDE CONFLICT MANAGER

How many of you have had a dilemma about really wanting to tell this story, but not wanting to? (11) ...Oh right, so you've got the same kind of story that's been told, so maybe it would be boring to everyone else. (12) Is that right? So one part of you would like to see it again, but the other part is saying, 'No.' (13) Let's watch. (14)

[Note: Response (13) adds nothing, in fact detracts from the crisp summary see (12).]

ENACTMENT FOLLOWS.

E. Moving towards Closure. Conductor

PRODUCER

Questions may have arisen for you when you watched the stories.

GUIDE

Through all the things you experience questions can come up. (1)

2)PRODUCER Magician.

We've got here a very wise being who can answer any question you have. (2)

3)PRODUCER Magician. (4) GUIDE Challenger.

If you've got questions of huge significance or questions about anything you can ask this Wise Being and it will answer you. (3) You just have to have the courage to ask the question really.

(4)

Life.

(5) SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR Naive enquirer.

What's the Question? (5)

After you get the answer you know the question.

(6) SOCIAL (7)GUIDE Limit setter.

Do you want to ask about (6) that? What is your Question about life? (7)\_

You know the big one.

(8) ACTIVE LISTENER Naive enquirer.

The Big one. What's the big one? (8).

Oh you know - oh shit - it's sort of like the meaning of existing. What is the meaning of existence?

(9) PRODUCER DIRECTOR Of audience action.

How about you ask the wise being. (9)

What is the meaning of it all?

(10) RESPECTFUL ACKNOWLEDGER

Thank you. (10)

ENACTMENT FOLLOWS.

F. The Ending of a Show.

(1) PRODUCER Metacommunicator. GUIDE Integrator, Limit setter. (2) DIRECTOR

PRODUCER, STORY TELLER (3) SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR, PRODUCER, RITUALIST

So we've had our last story - and we've had our last question (1) - How about some of you recall what you remember from the story of the night (2) What's one of the things that you remember from tonight. (3)

The Rain

(Musician Reflects)

(4) SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR, PRODUCER

Someone else what do you remember? (4)

Liz's really accurate perception of what was happening in the square.

(Musician Reflects)

(5) SOCIAL INVESTIGATOR, PRODUCER

And another thing that you remember. (5)

(11) PRODUCER Story Shaper

And is there someone who has a last something you're sitting on - that you're wanting to callout. (11)

Fear of Dentists.

(Musician Reflects)

(12) PRODUCER, RITUALIST, RESPECTFUL HOST

Thank you. (12)

THE DESCRIPTIONS OF ROLE FUNCTIONS.

The Role of Producer.

The Role of Producer can be likened to the work of the wagtail in the Ainu creation myth.

"In the beginning the world was slush, for the waters and the mud were all stirred in together. All was silence; there was no sound. It was cold. There were no birds in the air. There was no living thing.

At last the Creator made a little wagtail and sent him down from his far place in the sky.

"Produce the Earth."

The bird flew down over the black waters and the dismal swamp. He did not know how to begin. He fluttered the water with his wings and splashed it here and there. He ran up and down in the slush with his feet and tried to trample it into firmness. He beat on it with his tail, beating it down. After a long time of this treading and tail-wagging a few dry places began to appear in the big ocean which now surrounds them - the islands of the Ainu."

There are a number of approaches the wagtail makes - and so does the Producer. These approaches I have designated as sub-roles.

The first sub-role of PRODUCER:

1. Director

In this role the Conductor gives directions to the actors about the staging of the story, the essence of the story and/or a particular way to approach the story. This role is particularly obvious when there are audience actors and the director may be very concrete - ego "So the kitchen is here and we'll have the driveway over there. In the first scene we'll do X and then in scene 2 Y."

Some examples from the transcripts of directions to actors: - (bearing in mind that actors and conductors frequently work together)

\*\*\*"You 3 (3 actors chosen as threatening men) work together." (so the actors will think of working as a chorus rather than as individuals)

\*\*\*"You 3 are the spirit of the house. "

\*\*\*"Actor A and Actor B and people in the audience (indicating with hand gesture) you can be the neighbors. You know what it's like when you don't know what's gone on over the fence."

\*\*\*"Well, lets begin the story with this wonderful dream of sailing off around the world, and then we'll get to the reality of sailing on the ocean and being at sea."

\*\*\*"Do this as a sculpture that transforms; so it's Craig trying to write an essay and then being here. "

An Inadequate enactment of this Role.

Okay. (A) How about Gaffy and Jude and people in the audience, you can be neighbors. Right? You know, what it's like when you don't know what's gone on over the fence. (B) We'll begin with the series of ambulance trips and your arrival and we'll also have the sister doing a bit of organization. Okay? Let's watch.

In Part A the Conductor is being an adequate director. In Part B she is giving directions with no sense of the meaning of the story. The literal events may be covered (just) but there is no purpose for the actors to follow.

## 2. Metacommunicator

In this role the Conductor is telling the audience about the process that is currently happening or about to occur.

Some Examples:-

\*"In the enactment of your stories, to do our best to enrich all of us through your stories, whatever they are, and to honor you."

\*"Okay... We'll do one more." (i.e. there are not 50 more to go, this is it.)

\*"... We're going to start simply with the things you've brought along tonight. "

\*" because this isn't a theatre of strangers, it's a theatre of friends and stories -...

\*"(to teller)... and I actually want to be able to cut across you so that the actors can pick up things easily. So I will interrupt you."

\*Conductor - and what did you call your father.

Teller - Dad.

Audience laughs.

Conductor as metacommunicator: Dad. People call their fathers all sorts of names.

\*An example of an underdeveloped metacommunicator. But those of you who haven't been here before, Playback is about doing your stories, doing peoples stories. And here ...(changes subject) In an attempt to communicate with new audience members she has not enlarged their understanding at all - what is 'doing'. She needs to develop the ability to reverse roles with the audience and be clear about what will be of use to them.

## 3. Producer of Audience Interaction

In this role the Conductor values life and is aware that links between people will develop trust, and that participation and action bring life. The producer of Audience Interaction will coach,

instruct, and insist on interaction. He/She will also focus on asking questions and giving instructions in such a way that the audience are warmed up positively to respond.

\*This may simply be "Everyone find someone you don't know and tell them a story about something that's happened to you this week."

\*Who would like to be the first story teller tonight?

\*Asking questions in such a way that an audience member can answer, e.g. what happened at 12 noon today?

\*Teller says, "...And what every woman here would know when 2 women go to the Pub together to talk..." Conductor as Producer of Audience Interaction, "Hang on - lets find out if they know - to audience - what do you know about what happens when 2 women go to the pub for a talk?"

(Audience Responds.)

\*Conductor (as Producer of Audience Interaction). "... describe it a tiny bit ... because I think I would like the audience to be this romping space" "Ok, just practice this for a minute ... this is a rehearsal so you can ... be chimps in the Taronga Park Zoo in this free open place. Go."

(Audience respond - become chimps in Taronga Park Zoo.)

\*(to audience) "What do you imagine happens next?" and responds "... and what did happen. (to teller)

\*Conductor to Audience - What do you think of when you think of a cathedral?

Audience Member - Statues.

Conductor - Statues - What is a statue you have in mind right now?

Audience Member - Virgin Mary.

Conductor - You be the Virgin Mary statue - What other statues do we need?

\*Audience - The Sacred Heart, the Annunciation, Joseph.

Conductor - So all of you - indicates - become statues - and yes (to an audience member) you be an angel flying around the top.

- To audience - What else do we need to create this cathedral?

Member - Heavenly singing.

Conductor - Think of 3 words you might sing.

Audience Member - Holy, Holy, Holy.

Conductor - Lets practice - everyone here join in Heavenly singing of Holy, Holy, Holy.

PRACTICE

Conductor - Let's have some worshippers. - Indicates - yes.

And so the scene is built and the storyteller's story is enacted.

\*One example of an underdeveloped producer of Audience Interaction might be to audience, "You all be the waves"... and offering no rehearsal, I no way for them to approach being waves and relating to the story.

#### 4. Producer of Useful Cues for Actors

Here the Conductor is focusing the teller and the questions he/she asks so the actors can develop the response. He/She is thinking concretely.

Examples:-

\*"What's one word that would describe your day today?" (Teller- "satisfying") "And what's one satisfying thing you did today?"

\*"Where does your story take place?" "What happens there?" "So, what's a word for a caged chimp?"

\*Conductor - "What's Lee like this particular night? ... her essence."

Teller - "Nothing different... It'll come into it later."

Conductor - (Knowing the importance of these early cues to actors enrolling

"Nonetheless (firm and with humor) give us a word that will give us a feeling for her now."

Teller - "Serious."

An example of this role in an undeveloped form is:-

\*Well, we had a friend who was a family friend. Actually she was my father's lover, and she came along.

Let's have her. Now give her a name. It doesn't have to be her real name.

Jean.

And what's a word that would describe her to you?

Peculiar.

\*So the conductor so far has drawn out useful cues ~ she doesn't continue and discover whether her mother knows Jean is her father's lover or what their relationship is.

## 5. Producer as Story Teller or Story Shaper

In this role the Conductor acts feeling for what will add to the story and what will detract - sensing where to end, where to begin and where to move ahead. This will affect his work with the teller or with the actors and with the audience. The Story Teller/Shaper *is* picturing the story and its rhythm. The telling of the story should be impelling and dramatic.

For example:

\*Teller - My story takes place last Sunday when I went with my father to visit my grandmother."

Conductor - And when is the last time you saw her?

\*Conductor - (after the "cast " has been established - the Teller is a fairly confused person.) "Did anything special happen on this visit?"

\*Conductor - "That seems like an appropriate place to pause. So you vowed and declared that you would never go on."

\*The Conductor may also tell a story him or herself. E.g. "That's probably reminded you all of stories. It reminded me of when I was 17 and a boy called Graham... "

\*Conductor - So what is the thing you want to see?

\*In one form of stories which we do in Melbourne where stories are done in tableaux, the conductor actually shapes the story completely. In this story the teller assists a disabled friend to come to the show this night.

Example:-

Scene 1. Nick is arriving and looking around for Craig.

2. He decides to buy his ticket anyway.

3. He sees Craig's car arriving.

4. He races downstairs to meet Craig.

5. He helps park Craig's car.

6. He carries Craig upstairs.

7. He discovers they have nearly missed out on getting a ticket.

8. Finally they get in.

These scene changes are narrated by the Conductor as the actors change their shapes.

## 6. Magician or Showman

The Conductor utterly believes that what will be created by the actors will be magic and in this belief he/she acts and speaks in such a way that the audience is intrigued and captivated.

\*It can be in the words - "Lets watch" or "You watch" or "Watch".

\*Or as in the Story Teller example of the tableaux story - again it is the conductor's belief that the magic will appear before everyone's eyes.

"He races downstairs to meet Craig" - (Turns her head to the empty stage.)

\*Or in transforming a story. "This is how it happened, eh? Here we can create magic!... How would you like to change the ending? Instruct the actor playing you what you would like them to do that is different.

## 7. Creative Artist

In this role the Conductor is concerned with developing the warm up of the group in an economic and aesthetically rewarding way. He/She has a sense of timing: an awareness of need for changes in rhythm. This is both within particular stories... This is enacted in the way the story is elicited so that it is alive for the audience and in the directions and cues that are passed to the actors... And in the story of the whole night. The questions the Creative Artist will be concerned with in the overall production are:-

1. How to begin the show.
2. How long to continue doing X with this audience.
3. What will develop and add to what is happening.
4. Knowing when to stop.
5. Knowing how to close the show.

The Creative Artist can plan some of these things but other decisions need to be made on the spot.

## 8. Humorist

In this role the Conductor expresses with humor the paradox he/she is involved in at the moment. This role is often expressed in movement, gesture, sound.

Example: - In a situation where a female conductor wanted a male teller for the next story prowling and saying, "I'm looking for a man."

It may be part of giving an instruction or setting limits.

Example:-

After the audience have rehearsed being chimps in the zoo and some audience members have found it hard to stop and come back to neutral.

Conductor - So. (laughing with the audience) Some of us have difficulty in getting into a role and some of us have trouble with control

## 9. Wise Person

In this role the conductor is able to take an overview and to understand the meaning and values of what is happening for an individual or for the whole group. (i.e. is not caught in the unconsciousness of the group. He/she can experience it and step out.) He/she would have some understanding of the disturbing motive and of the reactive force.

Example:-

Conductor - "Let's have another story - Who has a story you would like to see again."

No volunteers from audience - in fact there is a subtle retreat deeper into their seats, with eyes down turned. "How many people have actually already thought of a story during this performance but also right now don't want to?"

The wise person might state what they see as the disturbing motive and also appreciate the forces which prevent its enactment.

Sometimes after a story which has had an impact on the audience the conductor's presence and solidity - the willingness to "hang in" in the intensity or difficulty – inspires audience members - and then to ask questions which are both appropriate to the audience and answerable.

## 10. Ritualist

The Conductor in this role recognizes the values of producing and creating rituals both old and new in which an audience can be involved.

\*The simple act of acknowledgment and respect after a teller had told a story - What is your name? Thank you?

\*Marking the beginning of the show, the beginning of a story in a way that is clear. Finding a ritual to end the show - in a way to complete the circle. The audience has come in and given to the actors the actors need to acknowledge their thanks.

\*Creating - a song or a chorus for the audience to join in.

\*Awareness of an ongoing joke or theme.

## The Social Investigator

In our everyday world the gossip is in some ways a wonderful example of the Social Investigator - it is also an aborted attempt at Social investigation. The gossip is partly motivated by fascination for detail, curiosity, and yearning to belong, enormous perceptiveness, an interest in people, and a sense of story. The gossip can create the most wonderful stories and scenarios on the basis of observations and other gossip. However, the gossip forgets or is not conscious that he/she is seeking a mirror of him or herself so that he/she can be open to viewing the world through many other mirrors or points of view. The gossip does not have the courage it actually takes to be a true social investigator.

The detective is also a partial example of a social investigator -partial because he/she has an exact product in mind.

Marco Polo, Jung, Jane Austen, Georgia O'Keefe, Jules Henry and Thor Heydahl were all social investigators: people who have been open to see and learn from what is around them. To leave behind their own assumptions and dare to tread into new areas.

This story in Seven Arrows (16) also gives us a glimpse of a social investigator with a passion for truth -

Once there was a Mouse. He was a busy mouse, searching everywhere, touching his whiskers to the grass, and looking. He was busy as all mice are, busy with mice things. But once in a while he would hear an odd sound. He would lift his head, squinting hard to see, his whiskers wiggling in the air, and he would wonder. One day he scurried up to a fellow mouse and asked him, "Do you hear a roaring in your ears, my brother?"

"No, No", answered the other mouse, not lifting his busy nose from the ground. "I hear nothing. I am busy now. Talk to me later."

He asked another mouse the same question and the mouse looked at him strangely. "Are you foolish in your head? What sound?" he asked, and slipped into a hole in a fallen cottonwood tree.

The little mouse shrugged his whiskers and busied himself again, determined to forget the whole matter. But there was that roaring again. It was faint, very faint, but it was there! One day he decided to investigate the sound just a little. Leaving the other busy mice, he scurried a little way away and listened again. There it was! He was listening hard when suddenly, someone said "Hello."

"Hello, little Brother" the voice said, and mouse almost jumped right out of his skin. He arched his back and tail and was about to run.

"Hello" again said the voice. "It is I, Brother Raccoon." And sure enough it was! "What are you doing here all by yourself, little brother?" asked the raccoon. The Mouse blushed, and put his nose almost to the ground. "I hear a roaring in my ears, and I am investigating it", he answered timidly.

"A roaring in your ears?" replied the Raccoon as he sat down with him. "What you hear little brother, is the river."

"The river", mouse asked enviously, "What is a river?"

"Walk with me and I will show you the river", Raccoon said.

Little mouse was terribly afraid, but he was determined to find out once and for all about the roaring. "I can return to my work", he thought, "after this thing is settled, and possibly this thing may aid me in all my busy examining and collecting. And my brothers all said it was nothing."

Many times he became so frightened he almost turned back. Finally, they came to the river! It was huge and breathtaking.

Little mouse approached the water and looked into it. He saw a frightened mouse reflected there.

"Who are you?" little mouse asked the reflection. ... and so the story continues.

As a Social Investigator we must be mouse and have the courage to ask the question we hear roaring in our ears.

## The Conductor in the Roles of the Social Investigator

### 1. Naive Enquirer

In this role the Conductor acts as an explorer venturing into unknown territory. He/she has dropped ideas about "having to know" things and is willing to allow the picture or story to fall into its place - and to enjoy this process.

Example:-

"So this is what kind of school?"

"And who else is in the story?"

"Was it a very big storm?"

"What did you call your father?"

"Where does this story take place?"

In this role also the Conductor asks the questions that are on everyone's mind.

Example:-

"How does this end?"

"And does she die?"

"And does anyone get injured?"

"And do you end up being lovers?"

"And do you ever find it?"

An example of an underdeveloped naive enquirer would be where a conductor assumes knowledge without checking it out. Often the audience and actors in such a situation can be quite mystified.

Example:-

If a teller talks about "a relationship" and the conductor assumes it means that the teller and X are lovers - but this is not clear.

## 2. Efficient Elicitor of Information

In this role the Conductor is aware of the drama and of economy. He/she does not (except in exceptional cases) allow a teller to talk on and on. The aim is to find the skeleton of the story as quickly as possible so that there is something for the actors to add. The Conductor must also be aware of how much, and what, is necessary for the actors and audience to continue being involved and interested.

## 3. Sociometrist

In this role the Conductor is particularly aware of the whole group or audience and the relationships between people.

Examples of the Sociometrist at work in a Public Performance.

"How many people are here for the first time?"

"Let's have the next story from someone who is here for the first time?"

Person telling a story about her boyfriend - Conductor, "Is he here?"

"Let's hear from someone in the back."

"Who lives in York?" (Where the Performance is)

"Who else went to Boarding School?"

"Who has been to Bombay Airport? Your word for Bombay Airport?"

Examples of a Sociometrist at work at Conference Performance.

"Who is here from interstate?"

"What was your response when you first saw the conference brochure?"

"What was your vision, your hope, as you began to organize this ..."

"What has stood out for you in this the first day of the conference?"

"What have you achieved here in these 3 days?"

"Who is a presenter at the conference?"

"Who is here from the country, etc.?"

"Who here, is a welfare worker with youth organizations? Who is an administration of youth organizer? Who are the youth who are here? What's your word for welfare organizations? etc."

Much of the thinking of the Sociometrist will begin in talking with the conference organizers and in reading the brochures and discovering who will be attending. Sometimes it happens through the news. Melbourne Playback Theatre was about to perform at the Youth Affairs Conference of Australia in February and on the news there was an item about the Prime Minister's address and the angry response from some conference participants.

The person chosen to be teller is often based on the Sociometry.

Example:-

Let us have one teller from the administrators, one from a welfare organizer and one representative of youth.

Or more dramatically if a number of people put their hands up at the same time; the Conductor may be aware which of these people is likely to be the teller of the moment.

Example:-

In a hostile fearful group the teller of the moment would not be rejected isolate.

Whereas at another moment it could be appropriate.

#### 4. Systems Analyst

In this role the Conductor is seeing everything as part of a dynamic or changing whole. The Conductor may indicate to an actor cast in the role of "baddy" to discover the fullness of the role rather than stay in the stereotype. (This work would more often be done in rehearsals so that it is part of the actors' repertoire.)

The conductor may ask the teller to choose an actor for a door or a chair so that the full system is shown through the inanimate objects.

The Conductor may encourage both a child and a mother or a student and a teacher to tell their own versions of the story.

At a performance in a community for emotionally disturbed children each member of a family and their therapist were asked to tell a story or have a moment reflected of their time together while living in the community. (The whole community was present.)

If other people are in a story a teller tells and they are present in the audience they will often be given an opportunity to respond to the teller's picture of them or to present their picture of the world.

The Conductor will also be aware of changes that are occurring within the audience during a performance.

Example:-

In a school that the staff are starting to see the students differently or vice versa.

The Conductor in this role will also sometimes work to make differences public.

Example:-

What is your response to Student A now?

\*In a story by a teller about her father and scientology.

An appropriate question may have been, "Who-here-has a negative response to the area of Scientology? Who here-has a positive response to the idea of Scientology?

Who-here-has a neutral response to the idea of Scientology?

In this way people in the audience do not have to sit on their responses - they have been acknowledged - they may be freer to watch and participate. The teller also knows what is.

At a recent series of performances at a conference, issues of dissatisfaction with the organization of the conference, including the fact that the "top dogs" had their own discussion group and were not mixing with the general population, were raised and viewed from many angles.

From the point of view of the complainant, from the point of view of a "top dog", from the point of view of a facilitator of an ordinary discussion group, etc, etc. Many of the authority issues and issues of working in hierarchical organizations were made public through the airing of what was happening in the moment. The conductor's job was to keep inquiring about whom else was affected - who had a response to what was being shown.

#### 5. Perceptive Observer

The Conductor will sit and move so that they can see and be aware of all members in the audience. The Conductor will be thinking that what they observe in the audience during the telling and the enactment of a story will be relevant to the unfolding of the whole performance. The Conductor in this role may notice: who is really warmed up to tell the next story: that there is a lot of fearfulness in the audience, etc.

Noticing that audience can't hear is physically uncomfortable need to move, etc.

#### 6. Objective Analyst

In this role the Conductor observes behavior and analyses it using role theory. This is particularly relevant to Tellers and the assessment of what kinds of action are appropriate.

Example:-

Teller with a very weak ego structure - the conductor may decide on the basis of such a role analysis to structure the story so that the boundaries are very clear. In some cases it may need to be very literal.

#### The Listener/Communicator.

The task of the listener is to enable the teller to listen more fully to his/her own experience.

My daughter used to sing a song which goes something like this -

"I talk to my dog and he listens, I tell him what is wrong,

I see the answer in his eyes,  
In a little while I begin to smile,  
Talking to your dog isn't silly."

Krishnamurti (17) also talks of such listening when he writes about the function of education. The listener through his/her lack of fear becomes an educator.

"I wonder if we have ever asked ourselves what education means... This is really a very important question, not only for the students, but also for the parents, for the teachers, and for everyone who loves this earth. Why do we go through the struggle to be educated? Is it merely in order to pass some examinations and get a job? Or is it the function of education to prepare us while we are young to understand the whole process of life?.. Surely, education has no meaning unless it helps you to understand the vast expanse of life with all its subtleties, with its extraordinary beauty, its sorrows and joys... To live is to find out for yourself what is true, and you can do this only when there is freedom. when there is continuous revolution inwardly, within yourself... It is only when you are constantly inquiring. constantly observing. constantly learning that you find truth God or love you cannot inquire, observe, learn, you cannot be deeply aware, if you are afraid. So the function of education, surely, is to eradicate, inwardly as well as outwardly, this fear that destroys human thought, human relationship and love.

- J. Krishnamurti.

### 1. Active Listener

In this role the Conductor listens to the teller and communicates his/her listening. The Conductor in this role must be able to cast aside fear and prejudice, and listen with acceptance and openness to the teller. Because it is the actors' job to reflect back the story and its meaning to the teller, the conductor would usually not make an active verbal response to the teller, although he/she may express such a response in the directions to the actors. e.g. This is a story about LOSS.

Examples of active listening from the transcripts:-

\*Teller - "It made me a rebel."

Conductor - "It made you a rebel."

\*Teller - "It must have been made by a number of people, like it's in use. I don't know who devised it."

Conductor - "So it's been around."

\*Teller - "Oh, quite pleasant really, after a bad day."

Conductor - "After a bad day? What's been bad about the day?"

\*Teller - "Oh, it feels good."

Conductor - "Feels good."

Teller - "Feels like I can be optimistic again, cautiously."

Conductor - "You can be optimistic again."

Teller - "Not too brazenly."

Conductor - "Cautiously!"

In this role the conductor may also act as a mirror making more of a particular aspect.

Example:-

\*An audience member has been asked a question by the Conductor. She is silent and looking confused and embarrassed. Conductor - (with humor), Oh it had to be you didn't it! Why doesn't she (referring to self) go away?

\*Oh. My goodness. - (audience member who has been trying to be invisible.)

Conductor - Shock. Horror. You knew I was going to do it, didn't you? ... Right. Walking into a crowd of people and being the centre. How many other people have this kind of experience when this happens? Quite a number. Let's watch.

So Conductor here moves from mirror to active listener, to sociometrist to producer.

\*An example of inadequate listener role: of inadequate mirroring.

Teller - "He was the handsomest boy." (very strong emphasis)

Conductor - "Oh! was he. He was really handsome. (soft trailing voice) What sort of boy was he?"

Here the conductor has not matched the strength of the tellers response and has actually missed what she said. i.e. The sort of boy he was was THE MOST HANDSOME.

## 2. Double to Teller - Deep Listener

In this role the Conductor gives voice to some of the unspoken deeper experience of the teller. This role needs to be used with caution and discretion - it is most often appropriately the role of the actors.

An example early within telling of a story -

\*Teller - "This is a ... story about when I was 14, 15 and ..."

Conductor - "So this is a hard story to tell, is it?"

\*Conductor - "A word for this man."

Teller - "Confused."

Conductor - "Do you mean disturbed?"

It is sometimes necessary and appropriate at the end of a Tellers story to listen and respond from this role.

\*Teller - "It was a real relief to see it again."

Conductor - "It's very moving, wonderful to see yourself here."

### The Guide

In the Divine Comedy (18), Dante is presented with Virgil as his guide before he even crosses the threshold into hell. Virgil appears and stands beside Dante and says:-

"But, as for thee, I think and deem it well

Thou take me for thy guide, and pass with me

Through an eternal place and terrible "

(1, 112-114)

Helen Luke (19) describes the relationship thus:-

"He is revered master and teacher certainly, often a father to Dante in his fear and ignorance, but he is also a fellow poet, friend and peer. There is a beautiful and subtle change in their relationship when they reach Purgatory, paralleling Dante's inner growth. Virgil remains the guide, but we feel the gradual transition from dependence to equal friendship."

The Conductor must take on his Virgil responsibilities with each teller feeling for the transitions in the dance of their relationship as they occur.

There are 6 sub roles under this heading.

The first one being:-

### 1. The Host - Creator of a safe enough place.

In this role the Conductor welcomes people in the audience, and their own unique responses to his/her questions, interventions, the enactments, etc. He/she is not so concerned about what people think that he/she loses her own generosity of spirit.

\*He/she has arranged the seating so that he/she can see all the people in the audience. When talking, Conductor looks at and casts eyes over everyone.

\*Individual tellers are welcomed usually by name. Individual tellers are thanked for their contributions.

\*Responses are noticed and responded to.

Example:-

I see people wondering who X is. She ... (gives information)

### 2. The Meeter

"Meeting" means more than a vague inter-personal relation... It means that two or more persons meet, but not only to face one another, but to live and experience each other, as actors each in his own right... It is people who meet one another who are the responsible and genuine founders of social living." (20)

The Conductor in this role is a solid entity willing to stand firm and meet the audience as a spontaneous actor, as him or herself.

\*He/she is willing to see and acknowledge discomfort, awkwardness, embarrassment, sorrow, pain, humor, anger, and joy in him/herself and in the audience.

\*He/she can be firm and clear about their intention and purpose.

\*In this role, too, the Conductor asks questions which are answerable" (there is no attempt to trick the audience) and focuses them as simply as possible.

\*In this role, too, the conductor thinks about the audience he/she will encounter and structures performance and his/her communication in such a way that this particular group will be met. There will be differences in the language used and the general approach to (1) a group of unemployed youth and (2) Doctors at the College of General Practitioner's.

### 3. Limit Setter

In this role the Conductor actively works with the audience and with the tellers to set the boundaries or framework within which the drama, the exploration, the improvisation can take place. Much of this will be done through the structuring of the performance - but also through interaction with audience members. In this role the clarity of purpose needs to be communicated in tone, stance, whole being, not simply the words.

Example:-

\*What's one word you would use to describe today?

\*Conductor - How does this story end?

Teller - With me being thrown out of the pub.

Conductor - How does it escalate to this point?

Teller - Do you want it short or long?

Conductor - Short - very short.

\*"Let's hear some other stories, very briefly. You have a story? Stay there and tell me your story."

\*With a teller who is going on and on - to physically restrain them and be clear.

Example:-

"Now stop here: and give one word for your experience in that moment."

\*The conductor in this role sometimes needs to insist on developing a relationship with a teller that will enable them to work together to produce a drama.

\*It is possible that a conductor in this role may decide to say to a teller - Unless you are willing to work with me - and I require you to stop now and give just one word to describe X, so that the actors have a cue - I will not continue with you.

#### 4. Therapeutic Guide

Because of the observations a role analysis the conductor has made he/she will guide the teller and the actors in a variety of ways.

Example:-

\*Teller with weak ego structure - the conductor will need to structure the story so that the boundaries are very clear. In some cases it may need to be very literal. The conductor needs to communicate this simply as a direction to the actors.

\*Confused tellers/Tellers who go on and on. The conductor must structure and conduct the interview in such a way that there is a clear presentation of events.

\*The Conductor may in this role decide to offer the teller a chance to transform the ending - i.e. offers them to be creative in a way in which they were not in real life.

\*With children the Conductor him/herself may suggest a more satisfactory ending which will offer the alternatives of a healthier role system to the child.

\*At the end of a story there are times when the Conductor needs to connect with the teller to integrate them back into the present time and or to integrate the story. Often this needs to go further so that there is some form of sharing of similar experiences from audience members so that the teller can become one of the community again.

## 5. Visionary

In this role the Conductor invites and encourages the audience to imagine - to picture. The Conductor believes in the innate creative genius in each person and in the healthiness of attuning and activating the imagination.

James Hillman, a Jungian Analyst, (21) says -

"My practice shows me rather that the more attuned and experienced is the imaginative side of the personality the less threatening the irrational, the less necessity for repression, and therefore the less actual pathology acted out in literal, daily events."

\*Conductor to Audience Member - You've been thinking about travelling - Are you planning to travel?

Teller - Yes, I'm going on a business trip.

Conductor - What's one thing you're imagining when you think of this trip?

\*Conductor - How many other people have ever done this kind of venturing?

Teller - Hang on, we didn't ...

Conductor - How many people have imagined how wonderful it might be...

\*Conductor - Since this is theatre and we can do things however we want, when you think of that time can you imagine a way...

\*Conductor - (to teller) - Hold it there.

(to audience) - What do you imagine is going to happen?

\*Conductor - (to audience) - Two feelings you have about the unseen in your life - that which is invisible... ?

\*Conductor - Let us do the story as you imagine it might be. So you arrive in Paris. Does anyone meet you?

\*Teller - .....

## 6. Group Worker

\*In this role the Conductor works to establish a climate in the room which is conducive to new responses (thoughts, actions, feelings, pictures) emerging.

\*He/she is able to identify the central concern and the theme of the audience - this is usually done through observation and analysis of the stories and moments which are presented.

\*He/she acts as a conflict manager. Often in a Playback Performance this can be done through the way the conductor plans and frames the use of "Pairs" (a form used in Playback - where actors work to portray the essence of particular conflicts)

Example:-

Teller - I had a conflict last night when we had to play a simulation me and the leader did a terrible job in introducing it. I know it can be a good game but I felt unable to get up and give the introduction self or change it. - Conductor - You watch.

ENACTMENT FOLLOWS.

Conductor - Who was the leader last night?

Conductor - What's your name?

Teller - Jim.

Conductor - Jim. When X was speaking were you aware of any conflict within yourself?

Teller - I began to feel uncertain and to wonder if it had been terrible and at the same time I wanted to say - why don't you appreciate what I will do.

Conductor - You watch.

ENACTMENT.

Audience Member - I had a conflict throughout that.

Conductor - Yes?

Teller - I wanted to jump up and tell Jim what he did was good and ask to be quiet but I sat here too scared to move.

Conductor – Let's watch.

ENACTMENT.

If the theme of the night is wanting to discover and explore, versus fear of ridicule - the conductor may invite the audience to share times of conflict and the actors would present 3 different snapshot versions.

\*The conductor also needs to find a closure for the audience. This sometimes involves knowing when the story of the night is complete or finding a way to close when the drama is still open, so that there is possibility for integration.

### Implications

What are the implications of this work and these descriptions?

a) That thinking about one's purpose is a useful way to develop thinking about roles. It also can enable a conductor, teacher, director, or group leader to be much clearer and more focused in what they are actually communicating.

b) The training of Playback Conductors needs to include a good grounding in Role Theory, so that Conductors can think analytically about the situation and act in accordance with what needs to be achieved.

c) It would be valuable to do a similar analysis approaching the work of new actors and even more in the ongoing training of actors. Individuals could know which roles needed to be developed and likewise a whole company could begin to see a profile of what is strong and what needs to be developed in their work as a group.

d) That for any group leader such as analysis could be useful in the same way. That is, if, for instance, a teacher were to tape a session with students and have it typed out into a

transcript, they could then begin to do a role analysis-looking at each intervention, discovering their intention-and at how they actually conveyed that.

They could also begin to look at what roles were absent, e.g. was there a social investigator? If not, why not? Do they have the social investigator function as part of their repertoire? Can they develop this role through role training?

(e) From the actual examples given here: there are many, many opportunities for role training. For example, if person X has an underdeveloped producer or an underdeveloped metacommunicator there are examples in this paper that they can practice and develop.

(f) For Teaching purposes it could also be worthwhile to develop a series of videotapes with a commentary. Often a lot of the nuances of a role are not expressed verbally and, in a written report such as this, a lot is missed. This could be used to assist teachers and group leaders to begin to think in terms of roles.

## SUMMARY.

An analysis of some transcripts of Playback Performances revealed to is investigator that there are 4 main Roles to be developed in a Playback Theatre Conductor. These are the -

Social Investigator,

Listener,

Producer,

Guide.

Under each of these main headings there are many sub roles. .

By doing such an analysis a conductor can develop a much clearer understanding of what he/she is doing in his/her work and can therefore develop it further. The roles described are learnable and trainable.

The implications of this work are wider than just for the Playback Conductor - the same approach can be used to evaluate the functioning of Teachers, Psychodrama, Sociodrama, Directors and Group Workers; and to develop their ability to work effectively and with purpose in the community.

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