

Deirdre Barrett

DREAM REVIEW



Jon Lipsky, *Dreaming Together*

(Larson Publications, 2008)

Watching dream theater over the years at IASD, I've appreciated all of the various approaches. These have ranged from psychodrama workshops focusing on aiding clinical understanding to theater folk using dreams mainly as a launch point for entertaining performance. Jon Lipsky's delightful new book addresses both those seeking to work with their own dreams and the drama world searching for interesting stage material.

Lipsky's approach is strongly influenced by his collaboration with Jungian analyst Robert Bosnak, so bodily experience of the dream and dream re-entry are both major foci—concepts IASD readers will recognize from Bosnak's books and workshops.

"In my experience, the immediate value of dreams doesn't come from explaining them, analyzing them, or following their overt or covert suggestions," writes Lipsky. "It lies in re-entering them, living inside them ... until they become incorporated into the fabric of our waking lives." Bosnak-trained dreamworkers will resonate most wholeheartedly with this, but even those who are focused on

either interpretation or finding practical suggestions that dream may generate should find this a powerful approach with which to experiment.

Two thirds of the book is focused in working with dreams for psychological purposes. The first third describes "solo dream enactment," somewhat like gestalt dream work, in which the dreamer takes the part of each character—or sometimes each object or event—in turn.

The second third is about "ensemble dream enactment," in which a group helps the dreamer re-enter the dream world. Lipsky observes that "most dreams are remembered both as a narrative and as a collage of images." He structures the ensemble enactments with the dreamer providing the narrative and other people selected by the dreamer representing each of the key images in the collage. This format is used both to simply re-experience the dream as it occurred, and to explore it further: "If a dark figure is chasing you, it's possible in theater space to turn around and face him."

Lipsky discusses how to symbolize dreamy actions so

as to retain their authentic feel and not make them gratuitously comical. He offers guidelines for when inanimate objects or settings are best embodied by a person vs. a prop vs. merely mentioned in the narration. He describes how simple objects can be selected to serve as dramatic props.

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The final third is devoted to "dramatic dream enactment." This section discusses how to take dreams and turn them into an experience directed at an audience, not just the dreamer. It's the only section addressed predominantly to those in the world of theater, but even here, it's applicable to informal amateur efforts. Lipsky discusses issues such as how much poetic license to take with the original dream and how combining multiple dreams may make for a more stageable one. He recommends collecting a group of

dreams to create a standard length play, such as dreams about one period of time, a common experience, a common theme, or a series from one dreamer.

Lipsky writes beautifully—not surprisingly, as he's an experienced playwright. *Dreaming Together* is rich with examples—of interesting dreams, of every stage of developing and scripting solo, ensemble and theatrical productions. The sample scripts make for interesting reading themselves. There are inspiring stories of breakthrough insights made in the course of acting out dreams.

Anyone who has enjoyed Lipsky's IASD workshops or the performance of his play based on Bosnak's book, *Dreaming with an AIDS Patient*, will find all they need to replicate these in their local dream circle. For those who haven't yet experienced Lipsky's work, the book will also serve as a great introduction to this innovative approach to working with dreams.

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