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# Interview with Sue Jennings

Joanna Jaaniste

## Abstract

In this interview Joanna Jaaniste speaks with pioneer dramatherapist Dr Sue Jennings, who founded 'remedial drama' in the '70s, a modality which eventually became known as dramatherapy. Since then, Sue has completed her doctorate on fieldwork with the Senoi Temiar tribe of Malaysia, worked dramatherapeutically with men and women in the fertility clinic of the London Hospital, co-founded the British Association of Dramatherapists, and much more. In this interview she speaks about her work with adults and orphaned young people in Romania using masks; clinical choice points with a range of clients; and the development of her Neuro-Dramatic-Play and Embodiment-Projection-Role models. Sue is a prolific author and continues to edit and publish books on dramatherapy.

## Keywords

Dramatherapy, play therapy, anthropology, mask work, Embodiment-Projection-Role, Neuro-Dramatic-Play.

## Introduction

Joanna Jaaniste and Sue Jennings first met in 2004 when Joanna visited Sue's Rowan Studio in Glastonbury, UK to participate in a workshop there. Since then, they have corresponded by email and have met at conferences. Both share an interest in dementia work and in the ways creativity can be taught to care workers. Last year, when Sue came to Australia to give a keynote speech at the Adelaide ANZATA/ACATA Conference, she was also the guest of The Dramatherapy Centre, Sydney, where Joanna is Director.

Sue Jennings is an anthropologist, dramatherapist, play therapist and author. She became one of the pioneers of dramatherapy when she realised that she could integrate her experiences in theatre, drama and special education. Over the years she has worked with every age group, from babies to elderly people, and in most settings, including psychiatry and forensic work. She has developed two important developmental paradigms: Embodiment-Projection-Role (EPR),<sup>1</sup> and Neuro-Dramatic-Play (NDP), which are taught

on many therapeutic training courses world-wide. In 2016 the European Dramatherapy Federation acknowledged Sue's 50 years of Dramatherapy with the honorary title 'Professor of Play'.

Sue is a prolific author. Her publications include a book based on her PhD thesis, *Theatre, ritual and transformation: The Senoi Temiars* (Routledge 1995), and the more recent, *Healthy attachments and Neuro-Dramatic-Play* (2011). Currently she is focusing on practical books for practitioners, including the best-seller, *The anger management toolkit* (2015). She says that her ideal retirement would be to continue her work in Malaysia and Romania, and to write children's stories.

The interview was conducted partly by email and partly through a recorded online discussion, between Sue in Romania and Joanna in Australia. Sue speaks about childhood memories that have influenced her work in dramatherapy and play therapy, and about her time in Malaysia with the Senoi Temiars tribe where she gained insight into the connection between dramatherapy