

# For love of the world

Dr Joanna Jaaniste

An audio file of the play, *For love of the world*, can be downloaded from:  
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## Keywords

Dramatherapy, ethnodrama, person-centred approach, dementia, quality of life (QoL).

The play *For love of the world* (also called an ethnodrama), was written as the centrepiece of a thesis (Jaaniste, 2014) which linked my interest in dramatherapy with research in the fields of dramatherapy and dementia. My thesis research was carried out as a result of invitations by individuals and organisations interested in a person-centred approach to people with dementia (Kitwood, 1997), to work

with this population and write about them and the effects of dramatherapy upon their lives. In the light of our ageing population, and the small quantum of published research in the area, I wanted to find out whether dramatherapy would improve well-being for people with dementia, and have a positive effect on their quality of life (QoL)<sup>1</sup>.



Raphaëlle Legillon,<sup>2</sup> *For love of the world: the characters*, pastel, pencil and ink, 210 x 297mm.

I took a mixed-method approach to this research, in which I was both dramatherapy practitioner and researcher, offering dramatherapy sessions for people living with dementia and stepping back to research the effects of the sessions on QoL. Two groups took part: a dramatherapy group in a Sydney day centre, and a control group undertaking a diversional programmed activity of movie-watching in a Newcastle facility. These two groups were compared through a 'dual arm study' using an approved QoL measure. QoL levels were observed to improve substantially in the dramatherapy group, with higher levels of body awareness and interaction indicated compared to the group who watched movies (Jaaniste, Linnell, Ollerton, & Slewa-Younan, 2015). Moreover, the research revealed a robust and largely unexpected ability on the part of dramatherapy group participants to engage with dramatherapy intervention and reflective practices.

The play was written mainly to express and document my struggle with the two types of research used – the qualitative approach being much more familiar to me than the quantitative with its accompanying statistical complexities. The play, which characterises both these methods, can be seen as a metaphor for the difficulty of combining the two approaches. Since I felt like a seeker for the Grail of Valid Research, I chose an Arthurian legend as a foundation for the story (von Eschenbach, 1980). The exacting and authoritative 'Black Knight' character representing the quantitative approach (Klingsor) is represented as a threat to the seeker/researcher's own values, and to her sense of value or worth (Joanna in role). The character representing the qualitative research (Amfortas) is more friendly, and, as a wounded healer, definitely resonates with my own theoretical preferences. Since the research (particularly the qualitative research) had shown me throughout that people with dementia have a wonderful 'feeling intelligence' (Jaaniste, 2013) as well as an empathic consciousness that I had not anticipated, the Woman from Dementia is at the very centre of

this drama. In order to consider her views and resolve the differences of the two approaches, an empathic mediator is required. This character takes the form of Sophia, the Soul of the World. The play is finally resolved through Sophia's skilful mediation, and Klingsor gradually comes to understand Joanna's choice of a pragmatic approach to mixed-method research and ceases his judgemental attack on her investigation.

The actual writing of this play came easily to me, showing me with every line of dialogue the value of arts-based research. For once I was not writing several considered drafts of chapter after chapter... Instead, the poetry flowed and eased my frustrations as it trickled deliciously via the keyboard onto the page. I became excited about the prospect of publishing it in the centre of the thesis, only then realising that, of course, it needed to be performed!

How to arrange a performance? There were encouraging conversations with Dr Sheridan Linnell, my supervisor; however, asking people to learn lines and rehearse was not an option without funding to pay them for their time and effort. Fortunately I am close to a couple of trained actors who were willing to help, and two lovely participants from our Dramatherapy Introductory Courses also agreed, with me playing myself. A kind sound engineer agreed to record *For love of the world* as a radio play for a tenth of the usual cost, and we were off and running.

It was exciting to meet at the studio in Harris Street, Sydney, and listen to the script as it turned into sound, brilliantly punctuated with birdsong and inspiring sound-based leitmotifs for all the roles. Our computer whizz helped direct the characters to be more or less passionate, inspirational, evil, hopeful or satisfied. The cast, in order of appearance, is as follows:

<i>Joanna:</i>	Joanna Jaaniste
<i>Klingsor:</i>	Bruce Disney
<i>Amfortas:</i>	Steve Vella
<i>Woman from Dementia:</i>	Joanne Strauss
<i>Sophia, Soul of the World:</i>	Amanda Crompton
<i>Sound Engineer:</i>	Buzz Pringle

I am grateful to them all, and to the fieldwork participants who gave their time and trust to inspire me to write this ethnodrama. Please use the link provided to listen.

Enjoy the play!

## Endnote

1. Improvement was measured on a scale with internal reliability: Quality of Life Alzheimer's Disease ([QoL-AD] Logsdon, Gibbons, McCurry & Teri, 1999, 2002). QoL-AD is a 13-item self- and caregiver-measure of QoL which is rated on a 4-point scale, with 1 assessed as poor and 4 as excellent, bringing the total possible score to within a range of 13 to 52. The authors of the measure (Logsdon et al., 1999) describe their scale as giving the person with dementia the opportunity to be self-determined in completing the questions, and Moyle et al. (2007) recommend it for its lack of emphasis on pathology.
2. Raphaëlle Legillon is a trainee art therapist at The University of Western Sydney. Image courtesy of the artist.

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