



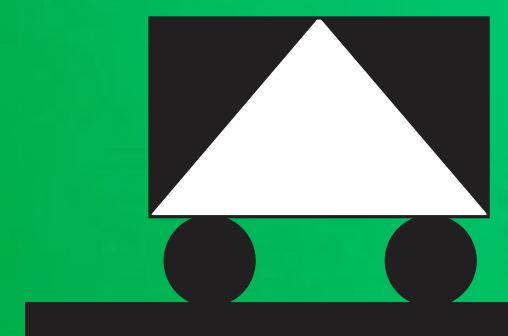
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THEATER IN ONE CAR Methodologies



CONTENT

1	Conscious and Responsible Theatrical Representation of Marginalized Social Groups Márton Illés, Independent Theater Hungary	04
2	How to create a theater show of more characters involving only few actors? Gábor Jászberényi, Másik Produkció	14
3	Audience Engagement Ana Maria Ursu, Basca Theater	22
4	Eco-Friendly, Easily Transportable Sets, Costumes And Props Andjelka Nikolic, director	32



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Independent Theater Hungary, Basca Theater from Romania and Mikser from Serbia joined in a year-long project called “Theater in 1 car” co-financed by the European Union. In the frame of the project we focus on developing and sharing methods on how to create sustainable performances. We use the term sustainable performances meaning environment friendly and cost efficient performances, in which two actors play multiple roles and it can fit in a car (for slow touring purposes) . The shows will focus on empowering and authentic representation of rural stories linked to European values and diverse communities. It is important for us that these stories inspire the local communities to discuss topics related to the performances.

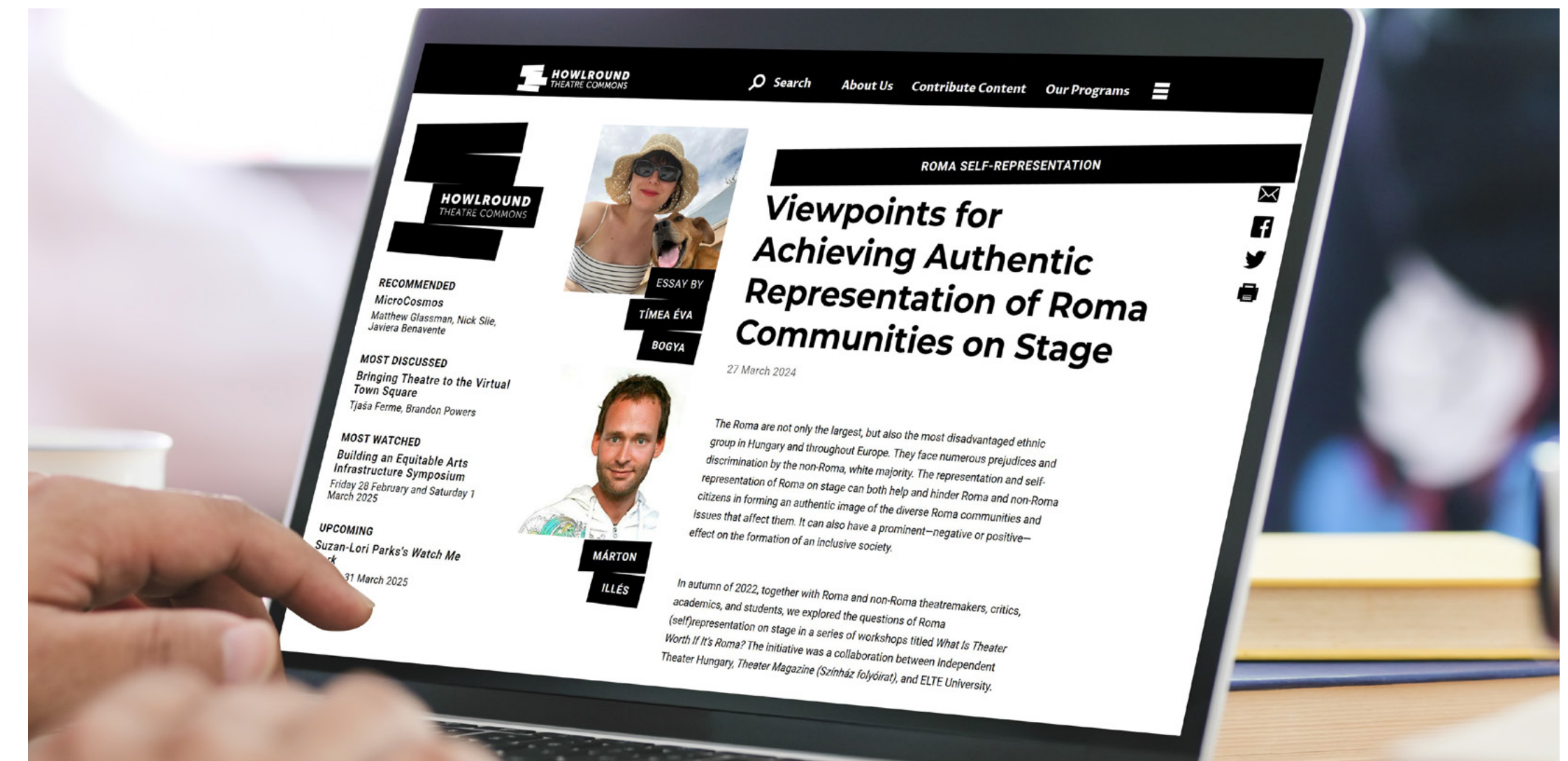


CONSCIOUS AND RESPONSIBLE THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION OF MARGINALIZED SOCIAL GROUPS

Marton Illes
a sociologist, dramaturge,
operative leader of Independent Theater Hungary

As the Theater in 1 Car Project aims to create new plays and theatrical performances presenting rural communities and other marginalized social groups and also target the members of rural communities as audiences the participating artists should be conscious and responsible both related to the representation of marginalized groups and also to find such contents and forms, which are attractive and supportive for the rural audiences.

The Independent Theater Hungary has many years of experience working with the topic of conscious and responsible theatrical representation of Roma communities, and also had related series of interdisciplinary workshops with artists, academics and critics of different origin, the output of which was also published on the U.S. based independent theatrical platform, the Howlround.



HowlRound – open platform for independent theatermakers

Although some aspects can be different related to different marginalized groups, the majority of the arised questions are good to answer consciously when creating a theater performance on topics related to marginalized groups.

At the beginning of the workshop we collected the inspirations and fears why the participants would like to work on rural topics and/or present such topics in rural communities. Some of them had connections to such communities, meanwhile others were outsiders, and in both cases they wanted to bring new horizons, inspirations, challenging topics, artistic experience and other positive inputs to the rural audiences, but also highlighted that they don't want to communicate to them from a hierarchical position as educated city persons, but also build on their strengths and involve them in a partnership approach.

After the opening circle we used the exercise of opinion line, when a statement is said by the facilitator, and the ones who agree with the given statement stand on the right part of the room, meanwhile the others on the left. Afterwards we listened to the arguments of both sides. The statements and the related main arguments were the following:

“You can create a genuine production about marginalized groups only in case of the involvement of their members” - Some of us highlighted that the external point of view might be also relevant and can be also objective in some occasions. However it is important to clarify our own connection to the topic and group, and it is many times important to get new information (e.g. by research or interviews) related to the given social group and sometimes also can be useful to involve the members of the given groups in the creation of the performance either as an external consultant or even as a member of the artistic team - in order to take into consideration such points we might not think about, and not to create something based only on our incomplete knowledge or stereotypes.

“We need to avoid stereotypes regarding marginalized groups when creating a theater show about them.” - Regarding this statement the participants agreed that stereotypes can be dangerous and they can be developed by a theatrical show, which is not the aim of any of us.

However every human being has stereotypes, and theater usually works with them. We can also show some stereotypes and refute them later on, or we can portrait half stereotypical and half non-stereotypical situations and characters, or we can use stereotypes in order to make fun of different characters (but in this way they should be balanced).

“When bringing theatrical shows to rural communities It’s more important to empower them than facing them with their problems.” -

On one hand it is important to bring new topics, critical perspectives and questioning the status quo when having theater shows, but at the same time, we shouldn’t use such narratives and either forms, which might be too weird for the rural communities, and they hardly can connect to them. As many of them hardly had theatrical experience, it is also important that they can gain a positive experience, which makes them love theater. As many of the rural communities have a negative image and low level of self-esteem, we also need to show them values around and inside them, and also to empower them.

After the opinion line debate we collected some basic questions and aspects, which is good to answer when creating a theater play with marginalized topics.

What is my viewpoint and connection to the given topic and story? Why do I want to work on it, and what are my aims?

What are the shortcomings of my knowledge and who should I invite as an expert or artist, who have more knowledge/personal connection to the given groups and topics?

**Can we portrait the rural communities as a whole?
- No - So which actual topics, groups, persons, stories, situations am I presenting?
How much these stories, problems characters are general human ones, and how much special to a given community, place etc. (but not to rural communities as a whole)?**

Who are my main characters and the line of the story? How complex or stereotypical they are, why?

How do I related to stereotypes not only on the level of story and characters, but also on the level of forms (e.g.: music, costume, language, behaviour)

Do different elements balance each other, ask questions or they are all parallel with stereotypes? Why?

How much do I consider the my audience - their knowledge, stereotypes experiences related to the given topics and social groups; and also their competences and openness related to receive different theatrical forms?

We also analyzed in small groups 3 parts of different theatrical shows based on the points collected together.

Panodráma (Hungary)

► WORD BY WORD



It is a verbatim theater performance, and it was highlighted that it is also an important question, if we change the dialect, words used by an interviewed person or not, and is it okay, if a minority group character is played by an actor, who doesn't belong to that group. As the theater play is about sensitive topics - series murders of Roma people - it was also mentioned that related to sensitive topics it can be useful to have a follow-up workshop/discussion with the audience members, in order to make sure, they get on well with the information and emotional experiences received during the performance.

Giuvlipen (Romania)

WHO KILLED SZOMNA GRANCSA?

The performance is about the suicide of a young village girl, who wanted to go school instead of getting married. Although it is also a performance, based on a real story, here the presentation is more fictional. In the focus scene we saw a television reporter, who wants to get a story from a local old lady. They both are portrayed in a humorous and stereotypical way - though it wasn't problematic, as the stereotypes are used in a balanced way, and also the lower status village women had her right - so the audience could also connect to her.

Independent Theater (Hungary)

► VILLAGE DAY



In the focus scene the son of a village woman who gets income as an informal money lender attacks her mother with moral questions. The money lender figure is usually men and very negative one. Here we see a woman, who does everything for her son. As the critic comes from her own son, and not an external intellectual or the local authority it is much more powerful, and in case of a realistic situation, where both characters has strong intention the use of swear words don't make them stereotypical, superficial ones. If you want that your character is criticised, sometimes it is better to get criticized by someone from their own community.

After the presentation of the small groups' conclusions every participants mentioned an aspect, which was relevant and new for themselves during the workshop.

HOW TO CREATE A THEATER SHOW OF MORE CHARACTERS INVOLVING ONLY FEW ACTORS?

Gábor Jászberényi

an actor and theater artist,
founder of the Másik Produkció

Description

The aim of this three-day workshop is to provide participants with practical support for their projects, using different theatrical techniques. The projects brought were specifically contemporary plays with a small cast, and participants were expected to bring at least one scene from their play in progress.

Method description

The small scale of a play with a small cast allows the creators to treat the actors and audience as a community, thus inviting the audience's imagination into the play. By creating precise and meaningful cues, creators are able to guide the audience's abstractions, making the theatrical experience more personal and relatable.

However, to be able to guide the spectator's attention and imagination well, we need a complex sign system and precise rules of the game. These are what these 3 workshop sessions helped us to create. It was important for us that all participants were treated as co-creators, so that shared experiences and perspectives of suggestions could be incorporated into their future work.



SESSION 0

Prior to the 3-day workshop, participants got to know each other during a two-hour discussion. They talked about their ideas, presented their projects, and got to know the future course of the workshop and its themes.

Themes

Each session followed its own theme and the tasks were always based on the theme of the day.

World building

The first session focused on the tools by which we can create a world on stage, including its own set of rules.

Character building

The second session focuses on bringing the stage characters to life and integrating them into the previously created stage world.

Storytelling

The last session focuses on storytelling through the introduction of theatrical/dramatic techniques. Using the techniques learned earlier, we create a stage world, place our characters in it and tell their stories.

Types of tasks

We basically worked with three types of tasks: group, individual and pair tasks.

The group tasks are by their nature common tasks, they involve everyone, they show a technique in an effective way. Individual tasks are essential because they focus the participant on the part of the project that they are working on. They can deal with segments that concerns them personally.
In pairs tasks, on the other hand, participants focused on the project through their partner, reacting and helping. The two of them solve the tasks together, which can later be integrated into their joint work.

SESSION 1

WORLD BUILDING

Warm up	- Joint warm-up, - Focusing on joint work, - Concentration games.
Getting to know the space, each other.	It is important to get to know the space in which we are going to work - the first few exercises are about observing the space around us, its shapes, its rules.
Group exercises in space	- Playing with attention - Filling the space with a medium-paced walk - Keeping the pace, continuing to fill the space, interacting with each other (smile, wink)
Pace and rhythm	Observing own and group's tempo, interpreting it, putting it into a system, dividing it into 5 steps. This exercise shows very well that if we can find a coordinate system according to which our world or, more precisely, our characters work, we can adapt to it, which will be of great help. For example: if we know the pace at which our characters move, breathe, etc. in the world of the scene/situation we want to create, we can tell our audience a lot about that environment without words.

SESSION 1

My place in the group / Creating a group game rule	If someone of the participants stops, everyone must stop, if someone starts everyone starts. This game can be the first rule for creating a shared world. Complementary tasks - Stop one by one, creating a “human panopticon”. - Stop and start at different paces, paying attention to the filling of the space
My place in space	Using eye contact, we form pairs, with the task of swapping places, so that their attention is focused on their own place in the group and that of their partner. Complementary tasks - The formed pairs have to keep the distance between them while exchanging places - The formed pairs must maintain the rhythm and tempo of their choice
Atmosphere creation	The group uses sound and movement to create different atmospheres. For example: - A busy street that is very noisy - A place that is dangerous and can only be spoken in whispers

SESSION 1

Pair exercises	After each exercise, the pairs are swapped so that each participant works with the other. After each round, pairs take 1 minute to discuss their feelings and events related to the task, giving each other feedback.
Perfect copy	Making a perfect copy of my partner’s movement. The exercise is always led by someone, this leadership is constantly changing, not discussed in advance. It prepares the response to the partner. The leader can do any movement, it is his/her job to create the perfect copy.
Change	The partner creates a sequence of movements of his choice. The observer, when he feels that he has reached the end, asks him to change. The partner then has to change something (tempo, rhythm, movement, style, etc.) This exercise is important to observe our need to change because of external influences from the stage world. This exercise is important to observe our need to change due to the external influences of the stage world.

SESSION 1

Bring back	Bringing back an earlier movement or representation at the invitation of a partner. This is a small part of the created world.
Individual exercises / Setting the scene	Using movements and sounds, we create different locations, which are already linked to the participants' projects (e.g.: Exhibition space, Box ring, Underpass, etc.) Complementary exercise Defining and respecting the rules of the created venue. E.g.: cold, hot, suffocating, etc.
Virtual prop creation	Using movements and sounds, we create different props, which are already linked to the participants' projects (for example: digging, wrench, glasses, etc...) Repeating and analysing the techniques at the end of the day. Feedback.

SESSION 2

CHARACTER BUILDING The second session focused on bringing the characters to life on stage, integrating them into the previously created stage world.	
Warm up	Warming up together, focusing on working together, concentration games
Group exercises / My own character, pace, rhythm	- Observing characteristics, understanding and portraying the characteristics of uniqueness - Observing our own character while walking at a medium pace
The pace, rhythm, gestures of my created character	Creating small changes to my own character traits (e.g.: slight bending of the back, defocusing the gaze, etc.) - Finding the gestures of the new character created
Movements, sounds, features of my created character. Character portrayal.	- Bringing to life the gestures and pacing I've found in the character, already linked to my own project - Finding the sounds associated with the character (e.g. coughing, wheezing, shuffling, etc.) - Finding signs that make sense - Detailing/Enlarging - Finding the character's habits and secrets and putting them into a sign

SESSION 2

Switching between characters	Quick switching between previously created characters. Clarify gestures that indicate characters.
Pair exercises	After each exercise, pairs will be swapped so that each participant will work with each other. After each round, pairs spend 1 minute discussion on their feelings and events related to the task, giving each other feedback.
Meet at	The previously created characters meet each other, maintaining their characteristics through short improvisations. This often causes tension in the scene, and observing this tension is very important for later situation building.
Action-reaction	The characters make each other react through improvised short scenes, so that the characters created come to life and react in their own way. At the end of the day, the techniques are reviewed and analysed. Feedback.

SESSION 3

STORYTELLING The last session focuses on storytelling, bringing the characters to life in the world we have created and telling their stories.	
Warm up	Warming up together, focusing on working together, concentration games
Analysis of the participants' scenes / Arc of the scene	- Observing characteristics, understanding and portraying the characteristics of uniqueness - Observing our own character while walking at a medium pace
Situational awareness	Finding, sharpening and discussing the situations in the scenes.
Turning point recognition	Finding, elaborating and discussing turning points in the scenes.
Creating tension	Finding and pointing out points of tension in the scenes (e.g.: There is a mine buried in the middle of the stage, which the actors do not know about, but the audience do, and every time the actors approach the mine, tension builds).
Characters in the story	Incorporating previously created characters into the scenes you have created, following the rules of the world you have created. Presenting the scenes brought, reflecting on them. Feedback.

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Ana-Maria Ursu
actress, director,
co-founder and manager of the Basca Theater

The aim of the „audience engagement” workshop was to find together ways in which we can involve the audience in the performance and in the project activities.

As a trainer, with a vast experience in working with diverse communities, I proposed during the workshop some forum theater exercises to open a dialog about the importance of involving communities in the creative process.

The presented exercises were selected according to the following criteria:

To be adapted to any community

To have an immediate impact on the participants

To be fun and simple but with precise goals

**To be able to express the needs and wishes
of the participants in the community
so that the artists can collaborate
more easily with that community**

To respect the forum theater method



How projector can be used in a play

On the first day I coordinated 3 games:

The first one is called **Chorus** and aims to get to know each other's names in a fun way. Without being aware of the fear of embarrassment, the participants get to be uninhibited and relaxed around each other.

The second game is called **Zombie** and is about teamwork. The participants had to come up with a strategy and negotiate team roles, to accept the proposals of their colleagues, respect the rules of the game in such a way that they could create a functional mechanism by which they could make the flow of the exercise last for at least one minute. Zombie is a very good game when you start work with a specific group, because the participants are instantly put in a situation in which they have to collaborate efficiently in a very short period of time.

The third game is called **Blind Exercise**. This particular game was invented by Augusto Boal, and it is used in the preparation for a theater forum show. Through the steps of the game, the participants learn to trust in each other and take up the role of a leader. By the end they learn to have confidence in themselves. The positive effect of the exercise is that the participants learn to have empathy towards people with visual disabilities, because they experience what it means to have no sight. Another positive effect is that the participants realize that they can be empowered even when they lose one of their senses, because they get to use their other existent senses and are stimulated to engage in a creative way with themselves and their surroundings.



Participants of the workshop creating a image with a conflict

On the second day, I started the workshop by collaborating with the choreographer Viktoryia Medviedieva who lead the participants through a series of movement exercises which enabled them to interact with the others by working their body. The purpose of these movement exercises was to lead the participants in such a way as to detach from their intellectual selves and just be inside their bodies for a while. They were then in a position where they could remember and further use these exercises in their future stage practice.

In order to go deeper into theater forum practice, I continued with a series of Status Exercises, in which the participants were asked “Who has the higher or lower status in a conflict dynamic?”. Starting from two images created by the participants, they had to, in turn, re-asses and change their status from highest to lowest. This exercise can be used as a tool of developing conflict and a scene starting from a simple image where each character’s status is easily discernible.

The third exercise was going deeper into the theater forum method starting from the proposal of each participant for creating an image. They had to create an image with a conflict, with three different set characters: Aggressor, Victim and Witness. After each group showed their image, we discussed conflict, we identified the characters and exemplified ways in which a scene can be developed from a certain image, through improvisation.



Participants of the workshop creating a image with a conflict

The theater forum method is a very good instrument to be used in communities with non-actors, because it gives voice to each participant, thereby helping them have enough courage to express themselves in regard to the problems and needs of their specific community.

At the end of the two days of games, there was a question and answer session in which the way the theater forum method can be used and developed while working inside certain communities.

The last session of the workshop was a brainstorming held with the partners in the project, about follow-up community creative/interactive activities. We found creative and interactive activities, taking into account the following:

- 1.Topics**
Which have to be relevant to the group that is being addressed.
- 2. Aims**
To develop cultural life inside rural communities.
- 3. Forms**
Activities designed to be funny and easy to understand, engaging and participative.
- 4. Own Competence**
Using the professional know-how we possess, we can give something back to the community.
- 5. Target Group**
Identifying the groups we want to address, research on which activities would be best suited
- 6. Operative Frames**
Identifying the logistics we have at our disposal and can used inside rural communities.

The creative/interactive activities we discovered were:

- Theater forum exercises**
- Sculpture**
- Photo exhibition with photos done by people in the community about their village to encourage local worth**
- Creative writing (poems, plays, letters)**
- Interviews used to find out stories from the community which can then be used inside a theater play**
- Audience discussions after the show to receive feedback and share experiences**
- Drawing activities – very engaging and liked by children**
- Interactive map – participants in the community can explore their surroundings and see them from a new perspective**
- Architectural planning of a venue/village – engaging the community to work alongside professionals in the field, to experiment with ways in which their surroundings can be used as a cultural venue**

Postcards

Music – activities through which the participants

Puppet creation

Painting

Sound recordings

Kamishibai – shadow theater

Creating masks

Starting from these examples of activities, the partners had to come up with follow up exercises which can be used in accordance with their performances and the communities inside which they will perform.

The third exercise was going deeper into the theater forum method starting from the proposal of each participant for creating an image. They had to create an image with a conflict, with three different set characters: Aggressor, Victim and Witness. After each group showed their image, we discussed conflict, we identified the characters and exemplified ways in which a scene can be developed from a certain image, through improvisation.



Usage of light in the scene

ECO FRIENDLY, EASILY TRANSPORTABLE SETS, COSTUMES AND PROPS

Andjelka Nikolic

director, PhD student of Scene Design, Belgrade

INTRODUCTORY PART (discussion)

In the introductory part, we discussed the title of the workshop, asking the questions:

Is mobility eco friendly?

The participants gave arguments for and against this thesis, and the goal was to raise awareness that ecologically sustainable theater is a complex concept, which, in the long term, would require a redefinition of cultural habits and needs, and new production models.

What do we actually transport when we are transporting the theater?

Discussing this question, apart from the obvious answers (that we are transporting people and objects) we also reached the important point: that, first of all, it's about "transporting" concepts, ideas. This led us to the conclusion that, in making the production plan, it is important to take into account all venues where the play will be performed during the tour, and that for each one some kind of adjustment might be made. That could imply significant spatial changes, of course in accordance with the concept of the play.

Do we define the performance space only with sets and props? What is *scene design*?

In order to gain insight into a more modern view of the theory and practice of defining stage space, we introduced and explained the concept of stage design.

Scene design is a field of professional, artistic, curatorial and theoretical-critical practice that was created by expanding the term and field of scenography.

In addition to the creation of theater decor (set design), scene design includes the design and realization of the entire image - visual, but also auditory and tactile, an image that belongs to the theater understood not as a “play to watch” (Schauspiel) or “play to listen” (Hörspiel), but as “co-play” (Mitspiel). Scene design therefore consists of several elements:

- architectural space (constructed or found/chosen)
- articulation of that space (scenography)
- design and realization of decor, props, costumes, light, sound, projections, special effects...
- bodies of performers (actors, dancers...)
- movement of those bodies (choreography, mise en scene)

The architectural space of stage event includes the entire theater building, foyer, auditorium, and finally the stage, and apart from the bodies of the performers, great attention is paid to the bodies of the observers - their arrangement and movements are considered an important segment of the overall image.

PRESENTATION THE ELEMENTS OF SCENE DESIGN

In this part of the workshop, I presented in more detail different elements of stage design, along with showing and explaining practical examples (photos of performances).

Architectural space

Performance „**Orphan Mileva from Bosnia in our civilization in 1878**“ is an example of using the entire theater building as a stage space - not only the stage, but also the balcony, foyer, auditorium.

„**Epic Games: Building of Skadar**“ is an example of “schoolroom theater” - a play that can easily be performed in any school setting.

Old barn (made in 1942 in the village Markovac is an example of the use of “found” architectural space - a vernacular building that has lost its original function, and can serve as a space for stage events).

Projects „**During Summer During River Sava**“ (New Belgrade) „Abandoned Orchards” (Markovac) are two examples of using public spaces as the spaces for a theatrical performance. These examples were chosen because they are related to the goal of the “Theater in one car” project, which is communication with the rural audience.

Orphan Mileva from Bosnia in our civilization in 1878



Epic Games: Building of Skadar



Set design

“Orphan Mileva from Bosnia in Our Civilization...” is also shown as an example of the use of **modular**, easily transportable elements for the construction of set. Performance “**Rainbow Tree**” shows the importance of using **lightweight materials** that are easy to pack.

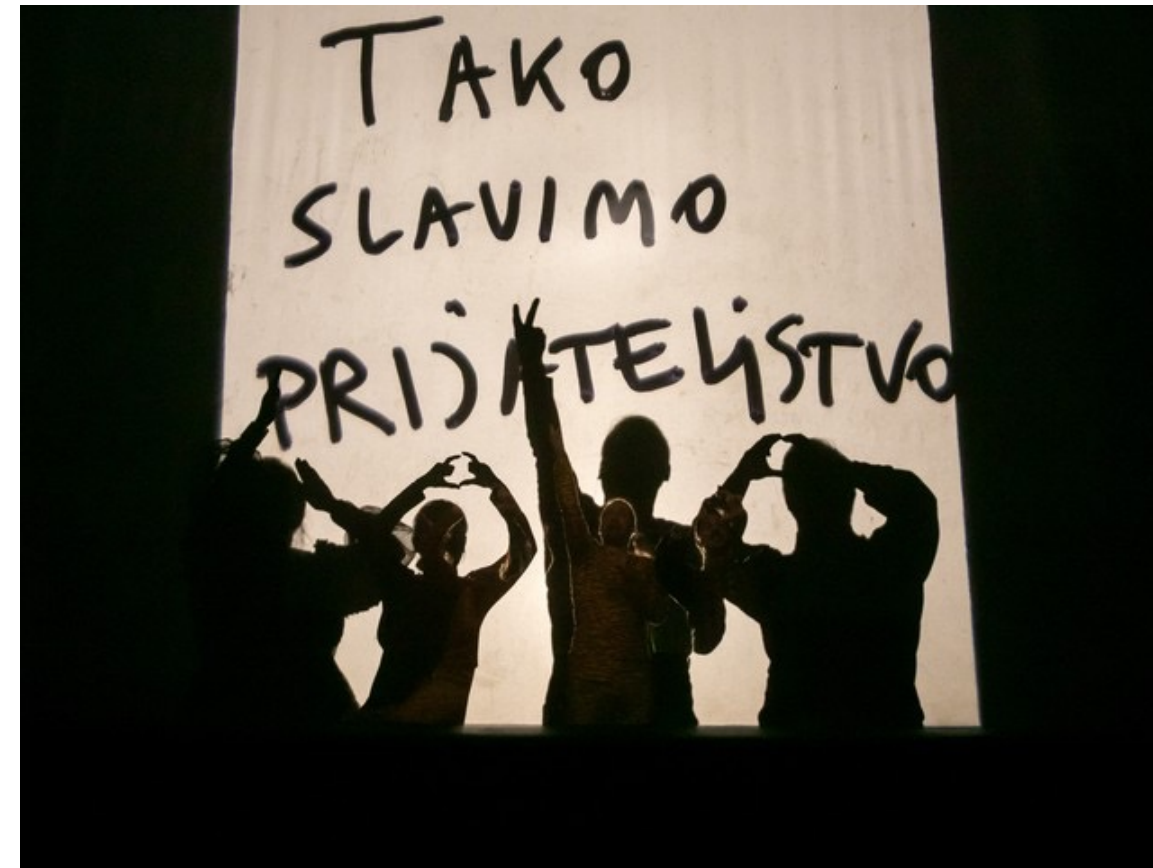


Video projection

Can be used as a means of creating an atmosphere („**Gulliver**“), but also as a way to project a concrete space („**Funeral in Teresienburg**“). This performance „**Letters From The Edge of The Forest**“ is an example of playing with analog projectors, and was chosen because one such example was among the projects presented at the workshop.



Funeral in Teresienburg



Light

“**Orphan Mileva from Bosnia in Our Civilization...**” and „**Shared Landscapes**“* are examples of the use of stage lighting, then easily portable light props (battery lamps), but also the use of daylight, which is important for performances performed outside urban areas.



Shared Landscapes

Sound

Sound is another powerful technological tool that can be used to evoke a space, either through creating the atmosphere of a space, or through a narrative description of a space, which is then further shaped in the imagination of the viewers. (example: “**A Brief History of Forgetting, Part One**”)

Virtual Reality

„**Shared Landscapes**“ is an example of creating a stage space in virtual reality. In the future, high technologies will be used more and more in the creation of scenography, but this approach requires additional caution, i.e. aesthetic sensitivity, in order to preserve the difference between theater as art, and the commercial creation of sensations and attractions.

Performers and Audience

Performances „**Haidouks**“ and „**Orphan Mileva from Bosnia...**“ show how choreography, i.e. the organization of movements of the performers and the audience, can also be used as a means of articulating the stage space.



Orphan Mileva from Bosnia

Props

Performance „**Clarification of the Case of a Series of Murders By Poisoning in the Ćuprija District in the Seventies of the 19th century**” is also an example of the relationship between performers and spectators that can be used to define the stage space, where props have a special function of communication between these two groups.

Clarification of the Case...



Women as Lovers



Eco friendly theater

Once again, we returned to the topic of environmentally friendly theater, with examples of performances in which ready-made sets were used: old objects, which found a new function in the theater (“**Women As Lovers**”) but also new objects, which after being used in the theater production can be further used outside the theater (“**Am I afraid**”)

History Repeating

We mentioned the example of the kamishibai theater, as an ancient example of an ecologically friendly mobile theater, which is gaining new popularity today, precisely because of these properties.

NEW PROJECTS

In the final part of the workshop, we discussed the tools of scene design in thinking about mobile, environmentally friendly, and aesthetically provoking solutions in the context of the project “**Theater in one car**”. This was the most interactive part of the workshop, where the teams presented their projects, from the aspect of scene design, and where together, referring to previous examples, we looked for new, better solutions.

To my great satisfaction, by the end of the program there was an opportunity to make sure that the participants of the workshop could practically apply the new insights gained at the scene design workshop. At the final presentation, in two scenes we saw new solutions, resulting from our discussion: the use of shadow theater and symbolic props made of light material, instead of bulky decor (the example of the team from Poland) and the use of the relationship between the performers and the audience, and new media, instead of a conventional, realistic set design, on the example of the team from Bulgaria.





THEATER IN ONE CAR Methodologies

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