

BURST YOUR BUBBLE

CHANGE THROUGH
PARTICIPATORY THEATRE



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<https://www.rooftoptheatregroup.com>

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1. Introduction

"Burst Your Bubble. Change through Participatory Theatre" was a training course granted by the European Commission through the Erasmus + program and took place in Mazotos, Cyprus in November 2019. This activity gathered 23 youth workers from 9 NGOs 9 countries (Warm Hands,Albania), ENO (Greece), Ways (Denmark), Sfera 66 (Italy), SferaSerbia (Serbia), Vzayemopomich (Ukraine), Peti Maj (Slovenia)and IKOS (Turkey). This training course was created and implemented by Rooftop Theatre (Cyprus) and it was granted by The European Commission through the program Erasmus +.

The main aim of this training course was:

Raise awareness among 20 youth workers from 9 European countries about the need to participate as active citizens and activism in human rights using theatre for social change techniques as means to build a more just society.

Through a program of workshops and activities we showed them the methods and the strategies to use theatre in their daily work with youngsters. We wanted to make them able to use theatre in their organizations as a powerful tool for human expression and conflict resolution. We wanted to empower and encourage them in the use of theatre for social change in their projects using a suitable approach and methods.

Our last aim is to promote in Europe a generation of youngsters more aware with social issues, proactive against the intolerance and injustice situations and who promote human values and coexistence through performing arts using the philosophy of theatre for social change.

This training course has developed a variety of non-formal skills, knowledge and attitudes regarding theoretical and practical frames for inclusion, involvement in the society and activism in human rights in practical youth work and we want to share the results with you.

This ebook is a manual created to facilitate the transfer of the activities and workshops to real youth work. You will find on it a collection of information about the workshops and activities developed in the training course "Burst Your Bubble. Change through Participative Theatre".

¿What are you going to find here?

1. Methodology
2. Objectives
3. Description of the activities
4. Results

The contents are organized by day and at the end of this document you will find the practical application of the workshops in video. These videos were the result of the great work of the participants and the professionalism of the trainers who have supported them in every moment.

I want to thanks our partner organization in this project for their support, the trainers for their amazing and caring job and the Youth Board of Cyprus ONEK for their trust granting this project.

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2. Workshops Development

2.1 Arts and Activism : An Introduction

OBJ: An Interactive presentation, with theoretical and practical examples, aimed to introduce the participants to the principles and objectives of Arts for Social Change, and explain the connection with Arts and Activism, as a social intervention.

2.1.1. Arts for Social Change: A Context

-In theatre for Social Change and Theatre in Communities, Theatre is perceived as an intervention in society, as a tool for social change.

-It aims to mobilize the singular power of theatre to mobilize a given community to make a difference in how they carry out day-to-day activities, and how empathy and compassion play a bigger role in decision-making.

-The idea of individuals taking the responsibility for their role as part of a whole, and using theatre as a facilitator of interventions.

2.1.2 Theatre for Social Change & Theatre of the Oppressed

Theatre of the Oppressed belongs to the general context of Theatre for Social Change and Theatre in Communities (and more recently, Participatory Theatre), where Theatre is perceived as an intervention in society, as a tool for social change, with the active participation of professionals and non professionals in the creative process.

The aim of Theatre for Social Change is to create inclusive creative environments, where individuals will understand the importance of empowering community members to engage with theatrical activity in order to bring social change.

Theatre of the Oppressed (ToP) / Augusto Boal: This revolutionary theatre methodology, suggests taking theatre from the theatre building to the people, and introducing the new type of spectator that comes out of the ToP process, a "Spect-Actor", who is not passive but participates actively in the process by going on the stage.

2.2 From the Global to the Local: Case studies of Arts Activism from around the world

OBJ: An interactive workshop, aiming to familiarize the groups with important case studies of Arts and Activism from all around the world, as well as familiarize them with the situation around Arts and Activism in their own countries, thus creating a mapping of the indirect experience of the group and socio-cultural issues in various communities.

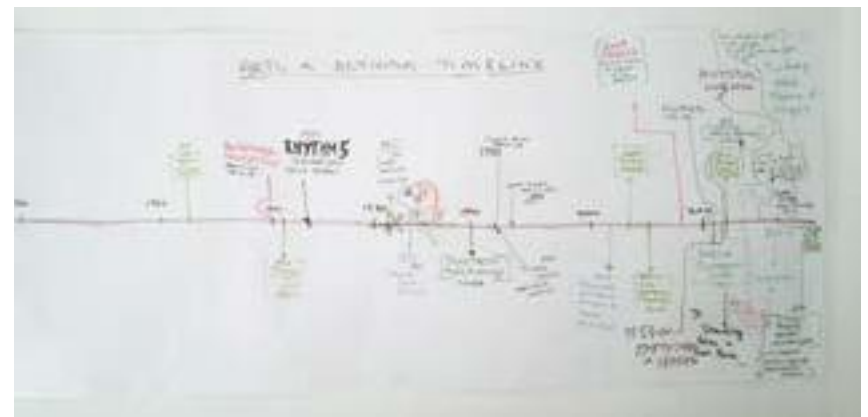
2.2.1. Case studies from the globe

A presentation with examples from all around the world, of important and impactful work in Arts and Activism. Through introductions and unpacking of the various examples, participants discussed such terms as invisible theatre, street theatre, political interventions, demonstration - intervention, and others. Through the presentation of creative action methods / interventions, and then in-depth and focused practice, the participants got the basic principles of the methodology, the possibilities and the broad scope of invisible theatre.

2.2.2. Mapping of local practice:

Through an interactive workshop, participants (in country groups) carried out a mapping of the most impactful work in Arts and Activism in their communities. The participants put this in a physical timeline, registering the socio-political crisis, and also the artistic intervention to it.

Participants also presented the work, it's social impact, its personal impact on them, how it was represented in the press and various social groups.



2.3. On site team work – Learning by doing & Mapping of the City

A Walk through the memories of activism in Nicosia

OBJ: the activity aimed at familiarizing the participants with certain part of the city of Nicosia, which were important in the history of activism of the city, to unpack the possibilities of an intervention in that space, and raise the main questions in relation to the kind of impact they want their intervention to have.

2.3.1. Preparation for the activity

On a map of Nicosia, we placed 5 different spots where demonstrations or other types of public activism took place, on specific thematics which are important for human rights in Cyprus: women's rights, LGBTI+ rights, self-government, the environment and disability rights.

Groups were established, with a gender balance and country balance, and maps were given to each group to navigate themselves around the city.

2.3.2. Task-setting and communication:

Each team was given a list of tasks in relation to their location, those were to do research on the space and its history in activism, to register the place through taking pictures, noting the of the space restrictions (including safety considerations) and the possibilities of the space, and finally raise questions that would allow each team to start to formulate their idea around an intervention.

2.3.3. Execution:

Teams were allowed 2 hours in the space, with the help of local performers and activists in order to complete their work. Participants were encouraged to identify and understand public space, through exposure to these selected public spaces in the host community, understand how public space works and how you can be safe in a public intervention.



2.4. Introduction to Performing Arts Techniques

2.4.1. Warm up

OBJ: In theatre we need to develop a strong awareness of our physical selves. Groups working together need to develop a heightened sense of physical awareness of each other. The following series of exercises were used in order to help to nurture these developments.

1. Walk in space

- The group walks in the space, they fill the space while walking individually, changing directions and observing the space around them.
- They are always aware of their breathing.
- Start walking with clear intentions (they choose a point and they walk towards it).
- Start acknowledging others around them (eye contact).

2. Move as one

The group is walking in the space, suddenly one participant decide to stop moving, the others need to copy him/her and stop as well. Another person decides to start moving again, then the whole group moves again.

3. Act and React as One

One person suggests a new way of moving everyone copies

2.4.2. Team work exercises

OBJ: Send the Face and Passing the click are games that encourage the participants to awake the face muscles and release and share energy but also concentrate in team work.

1. Send the face:

The group forms a circle, one participant does a facial expression then the next person has to copy that and so on until it goes around the whole circle. In the next round the participant who started needs to do a new facial expression and add a sound to it. The sound has to grow the energy.

Then another person makes a new action + sound and so on.

2. Passing the click :

Group in circle. This is a game for giving and receiving. One person has the "click" and s/he send(gives) it to a person across.

The person has to receive the "click" by clicking s/he fingers and give it to someone else.

* you move the click in the space, the click travels/throw it around/most precious gift of the world/it's a bomb.

3. Melting Catch

The whole group walks in the space they are given secret numbers, when their number is called that person needs to start melting. The rest of the group need to work together to catch the person melting, before s/he falls on the ground.

2.4.3. Trust building exercises

OBJ: The following exercises were focused on team building which involved leadership and building trust. When using this game, safety is very important!

1. Lead the blind:

In pairs. A is the leader and B has their eyes closed. The leader is leading the blind to move around in the space. Then they exchange roles.

2. Trust walks

In groups of 5, 1 participant stands in the middle and has their eyes closed and tries to walk in the space, and the rest of his/her group form a circle around them and try to protect them.

3. Trust falls

In pairs participants who are approximately the same size. Stand toe to toe, hold hands, and lean back, balancing one another.



2.5. Introduction to Theatre of the Oppressed method and focusing on Invisible Theatre

The session continued with a brief introduction to the theatre of the oppressed methodology. Presenting the tools of the methodology, image theatre, forum theatre, invisible theatre, newspaper theatre, rainbow of desire and legislative theatre.

In order to focus on invisible theatre, I had to explore with them the image theatre first, so they can open their creativity and become aware of the possibilities to raise awareness on an issue.

2.5.1. Image theatre activities.

1. Status in circle

In a circle I will say some words and you need to embody the word you hear.

Count to 10

Sun/Tree/Chair/Female/Love

2. Artist and Sculpture

In pairs A was an Artist and B was the Sculpture, A had to apply these words on his/her sculpture. Mountain/Sad/Anger change Joy/War/Inclusion.

3. Team creations

(In groups of 4 x five) With your group I will say words: Car/Hate/Acceptance/Freedom/Male.

2.5.2. Groups and brainstorming.

The session then continued with the structures brainstorming, with questions such as: what is social intervention and how is it meaningful in my own community? Then the group got divided into 5 different smaller groups, and each group had some time to go online and read some case studies, discuss between them how one can make change through invisible theatre. What is invisible theatre and how we can create an invisible theatre performance. Then I gave them all the theories and information they needed.

Each group, got assigned a subject that they had to focus on. The 5 subjects were, "Youth and Environment", "Women's abuse", "Civic Rights- The right to self-government", "Lgbtiq+ Rights", and "Disability Rights". Each group had an article given to them in order to kick off their research and start motivate them to look deeper in each subject. Each subject came with a specific location, that location was the location that they would have perform on the 7th day of the training. The whole group has been around the city on day 3, so more or less they already knew how the spaces looked like.

They had the whole afternoon to investigate the articles and the subject, to explore the possibilities of creating an awareness for the topic. They had to come up with 5 emotions that they feel regarding each subject, and with the 5 emotions to create as a group 5 different frozen images. The frozen images were what inspired them to start working the next day.

1. Debriefing:

Teams and the facilitators carried out a debrief of the experience of the city, of the specific site and the prospect of a performance. First thoughts and questions about the potential impact of the work were raised.

2.6. Full Day Mask Improvisation workshop

2.6.1. Methodology

A movement workshop based on improvisation/exploration exercises with the use of paper masks and templates, some props and mirrors.
Guided individual and team work, with side-coaching from instructor.

2.6.2. Objectives

- To build trust and confidence within the team in a creative environment
- To create a safe space in which participants could try something, even stupid, and fail safely
- To wake up the body and mind for an unusual creative process
- To create a common language code between all participants and director
- To sensitize and free the imagination towards the intended public performances
- To stimulate the appetite for size, extravagant physical presence, energy level, communication and emotional engagement
- To differentiate the size between the 'everyday body' and the body appropriate for performing on stage and public spaces
- To expand the comfort zone of participants
- To encourage teamwork, concentration, clarity, ease and joy
- To help develop awareness and skills necessary for stage performance
- To encourage the use of strong choices and intention/motivation as well as breath, time, space, weight, movement, gesture

- To offer valuable techniques for character development and dramatic construction
- To practice being in the present and hushing the over-analytical, critical mind
- To acknowledge the ready presence of hundreds of characters in our imagination

2.6.3. Workshop Description

- Ground Rules

- The more you respect the mask, the more it will affect you
- Work for yourself – no relations with others until asked to
- Work in silence
- Separate yourself from the mask (no speaking/moving as yourself) when in the mask. Remove mask if you, the actor, needs to say something
- When you are told to stop and come out of the mask, you will do so
- Always go with the first image that you see in the mirror
- Don't stay in front of the mirror for more than a few seconds
- If you hear a critical voice in your head, acknowledge it and let it go
- Work with no shoes and socks
- If possible, wear black, form-fitting clothes
- Be aware of hard floors, objects and others in space
- The goal is to always bring the body in harmony with the mask
- Take care of each other
- When giving feedback, use positive and affirming language; criticism of someone's body can make them self-conscious, which is the opposite of what we want
- Have fun

- **Warm Up and Games.** (with no shoes/socks!) to bring everyone together throughout the day (e.g., zip/zap/zop, green light/red light, etc.)

1. Neutral Mask

-Neutral Mask Concept

We often rely solely on our face to communicate. Taking away the face while wearing a paper mask 'forces' us to use your whole body and make movement bigger. It is a great way to find out how we habitually move in our everyday life, which we can then adjust to build a character. It is also a way to build stage presence – becoming 'watchable' on stage. There is nothing neutral in nature, it is only a relative concept we use as a tool. No mirrors for these exercises.

-Exploring Different Movement Centers

Where movement begins, as if someone is pulling us with a string, where on our body would the string be attached?

-Movement Center Stereotypes

Discovering characters in our imagination, e.g., priest, soldier, rock star

-Personal Movement Centers

Where does movement begin in your body – observation with partners

-Standing, Walking, Sitting, Gesture

Beginning to build a simple physical vocabulary

-Discovering an Object as if for the first time

With innocence, vulnerability (Neutral Mind)

-Identifications with Natural Elements: Fire, Water, Air, Earth.

Looking for movement center, breath, direction of movement, energy level, what area the element needs to take up

2. Beginning Character Masks

-FREE-FOR-ALL Exercise

First exposure to the beginning character masks. All masks laid out, whole group. Choose any mask. Contemplate if for a few seconds – no more, to avoid analysis. Follow the procedure to assume a mask. Let the image in the mirror inspire you, trust your impulses. Transform the body, bringing it into harmony with the mask. Do not let the critical voice intervene, trust your impulses and follow the mask without reservations (except if impulses are violent!) If you are told to freeze, close your eyes and come out of the mask, you will do so. Work on yourself, for yourself. In silence. Explore the physicalization of the mask through standing, sitting, walking, gesturing, exploring the space, observing the breath and others in space.

-Carrying the Mask Exercise

Participants choose and assume a mask and work through the simple movement exercises: to sit, to stand, to walk, making a gesture. They are paired so that while one partner is working with a mask, the other is observing. Participants give/receive sidecoaching from their partners on what to adjust to bring their body in harmony with the mask.

Participants improvise with low/high energy levels, young/old ages, etc.

-Finding the Need That Fits the Feeling

Finding the intention/motivation of each mask/character. Why is it moving? What does it want to accomplish?

-Developing Relationships

Observing others in space, figuring out who your mask likes or not, who it feels closest to, etc.

3. Countermask

-Nesting Masks

Choosing a mask 'opposite' from the one you have been using. Nesting the paper templates together so that one mask is hidden (countermask, private face), the other is visible (mask, public face). Start physicalizing the outer mask and when instructed to, the inner mask. Even though the physicalization is 'opposite' to what the audience sees, the mask still works, it is alive. Switch between inner/outer masks first on instruction, then on being triggered by something that happens in space with others. Think about intentions (what this character wants) and choices (the tactics they use to achieve it).

-Blind Mask Scenarios

Mirrors are turned, participants close their eyes, are given a mask they can't see. They will physicalize the mask based on others' reaction to them. Scenarios were given – context – and role assignments were chosen by the participants while doing the exercise. Some scenarios included the workers on strike versus management, the airport terrorist attack, family dinner, space exploration, etc.



4. Wrap Up

-Questions and Answers, Observations, Discussion

-Initial ideas for Coming Performances

2.7. Creation and Rehearsals of the Activism in Human Rights Performances

2.7.1. Warm up:

OBJ: The objective of these exercises is to start to warm up the body and create awareness of the space and their bodies. Count to 20 is great for concentration, and practice patience and listening to each other.

1. Walking in space

- just walk, observe, look at the other
- Secretly choose 2 people in the group, and try to always be in a triangle with them. Always move in the space

2. Moving in space with body parts:

You walk in space and you move around as if a body part is the protagonist of your body. Walk with Right hand joint, left ankle, left shoulder, head, left shoulder, knees, hips, chest.

3. Count to 20

Group in a circle. One person starts by saying "one". Then another person will continue by saying "two" and so on. *IF any two people say a number the same time the group must start again from "one".

2.7.2. Team work

OBJ: Flocking it's a great way to make a group of people communicate and listen to each other without the use of words. The goal of this exercise is to have a big group of people move in the space as if they are one body.

1. Flocking

In groups of 5. Groups are facing the same direction. The person in the front leads everyone. The group needs to copy the leader. Everyone needs to move as if they are ONE body. Every time the angle changes someone else has to lead.

2.7.3. Creating a performance

Each group got an A3 paper and had to create a map with all the ideas and information they gathered concerning the subject they had to study. They also had to propose 2 final freeze images from the ones they presented the day before.

Based on those frozen images they had to develop an idea that would embody a clear statement when they create the theatrical performance for the invisible theatre piece. As I mentioned above the groups already knew where their location of their performance was going to take place. So, they had to start thinking about the right position to do the performance, the duration, their role, where passengers pass from.

After all these brainstorming they had to choose one frozen image and start building a script around it. Then each group presented their image and the rest of the group had to comment and give feedback. The groups came up with 5 amazing ideas, and with my guidance we transformed the ideas into 5 theatrical performances which all of them had the ingredients of invisible theatre.

Our objective here was to create awareness on various subjects that matter. The group performed these performances in 5 different locations in south and north Nicosia. Each performance had its own magic. We had some public participation, comments, and thoughts that were vibrant around each performance.

The performances were played in 5 different places of Nicosia (Cyprus) with a remarkable history in terms of activism and social achievements.

3. Results

In this part we want to offer you as a practical sample of the work that was developed during the training sessions. These performances were created by the participants in "Burst Your Bubble. Change through Participative Theatre" with the help and the guidance of our great trainers.

Enjoy Them!

On the occasion of Human Rights Day on 10th of December, each organization that was involved in this training course had prepared the same performance . All the performances were played on the same week of December 10th to support the celebration of Human Rights Day.

Find the results here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2393503444106487>



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

- To all our partners:

Warm Hands, (Albania), ENO Greece (Greece), Ways (Denmark), Sfera 66 (Italy), Sfera Serbia (Serbia), Vzajemopomich (Ukraine), Peti Maj (Slovenia) and IKOS (Turkey)

for their support in every stage of this challenge.

- ONEK. Youth Board of Cyprus for their trust granting this project

<https://onek.org.cy/>

- Hadjios Valley Mazotos for their kindness and the exceptional environment that they provide.

<https://www.hadjiosvalley.com/en/>

- Mazotos Tavern for their outstanding treatment and amazing food

<https://www.facebook.com/mazotostavern>

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