

Intergenerational Community Theatre –Process Diary (03 april-30 june)

Intergenerational Community Theatre -*Age Against The Machine*

European Network of Cities CERV, Funding ID: 101138625 (2024-26)

1. SESSION 3, Individual Body in the Collective- Árvores Andantes [Walking Trees]

Place: Sede do Sport Lisboa e Évora, Évora, PT **Date:** 24/04/2024 **Hour:** (14:00-16:00)

Group:

Members of the team present: 1 coordinator (Ana Moya), 1 expert from CM Évora (Pedro Silva) and 3 assistants (Diana Oliveira, Isabel Guedes, Daniela Salazar)

Participants: 4 students from U Évora (Performative Studies), 9 Senior persons

Structure of participants: all women

(It is a homogeneous group all coming from Alentejo region)

Total number of participants: 13 persons

Total number of team members: 5 persons



Topics session and goals:

The session aimed to feel the body as a tool of performative expression, uniting and integrating body, movement, and emotion. We understand that there is an individual body and that this body dialogues with a collective body. We have been trying to get the body to talk, letting the body travel with evocative images without restraints.

Keywords: Body expression, body dialogue, desires, dreams, dance, soundscape



Methods, techniques and exercises:

We work with the transdisciplinary fields of performance improvisation, individual and collective body movement, plastic arts representation, and soundscape awareness. We also explore body expression through the integration of dance and drawing.

In both exercises, we engage in a unique play of “projection of bodies”. This involves projecting our body memory onto the other body -and the opposite- in a dynamic and interactive process that enhances our understanding of body movement, expression and evocative memory.

Exercises: 1. Stretching (in a circle); 2. The river stones (2 concentric circles); 3. “Montado Trees” or “Walking Trees” (2 groups, spread around the room); 4. Dance of wishes (2 groups, spread around the room); 5. Sharing wishes.

Summary of the artistic activities developed:

We start with a stretching exercise and then the “River Stones” relaxation exercise, where they caress each other’s bodies in movement in two concentric circles. Next, we experienced the “Montado Trees” or “Waling Trees” exercise, where some participants were trees and other human beings. Both react to soundscape events in the landscape (rain, wind, birds, night, bees, sheep and pigs, bonfire, etc). This is a performative improvisation exercise where bodies react to sounds and associations of movement and interaction with other bodies.

We continue with the “Dance of desires” exercise, where some dress up with paper, and others dance and draw on their colleagues’ bodies, following the feeling and emotions of their desires.

Then, we placed the drawings on the floor and discuss about their wishes.

Next, we had a conversation about the performative agenda of the next session. This gave us a chance for all the group to discuss the preparation of some logistics, and reflect on the expectations of the session.

Report of the participants responses and evolution:

The shows looser and freer body expression and performance creativity both in individual movement and in the dialogue between bodies.

One participant, Margarida, shared a profound insight about her experience with the last exercise (the dance): “I let myself go – live in the present. In the Now. Without thinking about what’s next or what I’ve been through”. Her words reflect a moment of introspection and living in the present, a significant shift in her mindset.



Team impressions, comments and observations:

In this session, the presented exercises show a performative complexity that they accepted without limitations through the confidence that the group is creating. This fact gives us the security to challenge their creativity within the group.

Sharing intergenerational and intercultural experiences:

In dance, we observed how participants move differently according to generational differences. All the older ladies were dancing with the same type of rhythmic movement. At the end, when we commented on the wishes they were holding in their hearts while dancing, the older women spoke about April 25th in Portugal, and the importance of freedom and peace in society. They feared that current times could make us return to a past that younger generations are unaware of. A change in politics could bring back a time of social injustice, poverty and fear that they lived during the dictatorship. They spoke about the limitations and lack of opportunities when they were young to study or work because there was no public transportation. Working classes felt the fear of expressing themselves freely. Amidst their concerns, they also expressed a profound hope for their grandchildren's future. They fervently prayed that Portugal and Europe would never witness another international war or the rise of a fascist government. Their collective aspiration, born out of a shared past, was to prevent the return to a history they had strived to overcome, a future they were determined to shield their grandchildren from.

Unexpected results and challenges during the implementation:

At this moment, we see a cohesive group, that is without fear of experimenting, very creative in its response to improvisation exercises, and very determined to defend social issues to help the new generations (children and grandchildren).

Results at the level of the self, the community and the regional-cultural social context:

There is a great consensus among the senior group on socio-political concerns and historic memory.

Problems with the topics by participants:

Nothing to report in this first session.

Dialogue among different topics (intersectoriality) and transversality in the themes:

When talking about memories of the past, and fears of the present, we observe a relationship between socio-political issues, family life, education, and work opportunities.



Evaluation of the workshop by participants (statements):

In the exercise of transforming ourselves into trees, one of the participants later poetically named us “walking trees”. They felt very nice in this session, and one participant said it was beautiful.

When asked how they felt about the exercise “Montado Trees”, they said that feeling like a tree in the landscape was a very revealing experience for them, because there was a quality of the unexpected that they had to deal with. They interacted with the behaviour of the others, feeling that they were protecting the others despite their being unable to move because their feet were rooted in the ground.

When they were asked about what they felt with the exercise “Wishes Dance”, the wishes they held in their hearts were “peace in the world”, “freedom” and “life” (evoking all those things they have now in their lives and they can lose because of political changes and regimes, or wars in the world). One participant said that she wished to dance with her deceased husband, and she imagined she was doing so at that moment.

In the exercise of dancing among trees, holding a desire in their hearts, these were the words that appeared written and projected on the bodies of the trees: “vida” [life] (next to a heart), “paz” [peace], “encontro” [meeting], “aqui” [here] (next to a road), “renascer” [reborn] (next to a flower), “brilha” [shines] (next to a star), “sonho” [dream] (next to a cloud), “chegada” [arrival], “ser” [being], “eu” [me].

Many of the drawings projected on the trees were abstract colour lines, others drawings were: a heart over the water, a sun over the water, or water alone, flowers, the sun shining, a house, one single heart, two hearts together and three hearts together, a girl, clouds, the globe, a road, a chicken (or a cock), a butterfly, two girls playing, a hand, a star, a basket, a

drop of water, a tree, a face, two hands approaching to touch each other with the sound of music, a circle of people with a heart in the centre.

Ideas for upgrading exercises or continuing next session:

All the participants live in the neighbourhoods “Poço entre Vinhas” and “Nossa Sra da Saúde”. They expressed their desire to show them to us, bringing us to their houses to show us, some of them, precious memories they have at home (Tomasia has wood sculptures from her husband, Margarida has paintings designed by her, other participants have other precious memories they want to present to us).

In session four we will do a performative itinerancy. We ask that participants prepare the performative neighbourhood tour. We will visit some of their homes until we finally reach Tomásia's house so that she can show us her husband's sculptures. On this tour, we will better understand their lives and the place they lived for years.

Ideas for a dramaturgy:

Until now, we have recollected the following impressions: the sense of absence of the masculine figure in their lives (at the individual level), the responsibility of taking care of the families and grandchildren, the sense of worry and concern for younger generations and grandchildren, the strong connection with nature and the countryside, a great concern about socio-political changes in Portugal and Europe that will cause the loss of freedoms and social justice for their families.