

## 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 9, “Listening to others” (“A escuta do outro”)

**Place:** Sede do Sport Lisboa e Évora, Évora, PT **Date:** 12/06/2024 **Hour:** (14:00-16:00)

#### **Group:**

**Members of the team present:** 1 coordinator (Isabel Bezelga) and 1 assistant (Isabel Guedes)

**Participants:** 2 students from U Évora (Performative Studies), 10 Senior persons

**Structure of participants:** all women

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

**Total number of participants:** 12 persons

**Total number of team members:** 2 persons



### Topics session and goals:

This session focused on developing the participants' active listening, an essential characteristic for working on a theatre stage. Active listening is also about emotional exploration (exercising with sentences) to avoid the strangeness of non-mimesis. Our body and/or voice tone do not need to correspond when imitating the words said—this contradiction brings richness to projected meanings and the theatrical game. We also worked with the introduction to the theatrical work of repeating and rehearsing scenes already established for the dramaturgy.

**Keywords:** active listening, word variation, emotion, sedimentation



### Methods, techniques and exercises:

To develop the active listening of the participants, we started, as a warm-up, with the song "Estas é que são as saias" [These are the skirts]. The objective was to achieve harmony in tone, movement, and coordination among the entire group. To ensure group synchrony, equal movements were established for all participants: transferring weight from the left leg to the right, always starting with the right, body and sound coordination exercises, individual and group motor coordination and finally, internalization of the rhythm, listening and reproduction (first individually, second in pairs and third in a group, going to the centre and returning). After this warm-up exercise, we moved on to an exercise with numbers in which each participant was assigned a number. In progress, the participants had to follow the sequence quickly, saying their number out loud without ever being in long silences. The

objective of this exercise is group listening, which allows us to anticipate the other's impulse to speak, containing our own so that there is no overlapping of voices. Then, we moved to a greater level of complexity in this exercise: the participants no longer had an assigned number; they had to start on their initiative, and the sequence had to be equally fluid, relying only on attention and intuition that no one else was going to talk about that moment, with the same objective of not having voices overlap. Whenever someone spoke at the same time, the count went back to the beginning. This exercise underwent several reformulations in order to better adapt to group participation.

For listening and emotional variation, we used random sentences that would have to be said in a question-answer manner, with only the tone understood and not the sentence's meaning. We resorted to working in pairs and circles, in which the objective was no longer question-answer but reproduction with emotion. Finally, for the "Ceifa" scene [harvest scene], only a more systematized and refined choreography was used, with the addition of other details provided by the participants.

### **Summary of the artistic activities developed:**

This session focused more on active listening to the words and the movements. The first warm-up exercise was singing "Estas é que são as saias" (traditional song from Alentejo), while interspersing movement and coordination of the group, going to the center and returning to the original place. With several repetitions to achieve greater harmony and fluidity in the group. After this warm-up exercise, we moved on to an exercise with numbers in which each participant was assigned a number. In progress, the participants had to follow the sequence quickly, saying their number out loud without ever being in long silences. The objective of this exercise was group listening, which allowed us to anticipate the other's impulse to speak, containing our own so that there was no overlapping of voices. Then, we moved to a greater level of complexity in this exercise: the participants no longer had an assigned number; they had to start on their initiative, and the sequence had to be equally fluid, relying only on attention and intuition, respecting that no one else was going to talk at that moment, with the same objective of not having voices overlap. Whenever someone spoke at the same time, the count went back to the beginning. We created different variations of this exercise to increase the participants' active listening gradually.

Exploration of the different emotions that we can give to the same sentence was the next exercise. Finally, systematization and sedimentation of the choreography of the "Ceifa" movement – a movement already started in the previous session.

### **Report of the participants responses and evolution:**

The participants remained receptive but demonstrated difficulty with group coordination and the simultaneity of voice, body, and movement. However, by simplifying the exercises and then complicating them again, the participants already demonstrated greater fluidity, control, and fun. The same difficulty was also observed when exercising sentences in attributing

emotions that are not linked to the meaning of the sentence. Once again, it was necessary to deconstruct and choose a different path so that the participants could internalize the game. While exercising their emotions, some participants said that they did not understand what was being asked and did not make sense to them. As they began to understand the game's objective, they said they were having fun.



#### **Team impressions, comments and observations:**

The team found that at the beginning of the session, there was a great difficulty for the participants to develop active listening, and they were more afraid of their performance, so they ended up paying less attention to the group. The team realized that they had to simplify and redefine the techniques and exercises to improve the participants' active listening skills. It was thus verified, at the end of the session, that the exercises that the participants initially “rejected” could already be performed.

#### **Sharing intergenerational and intercultural experiences:**

There was no intergenerational sharing because it was decided to do more theatrical games, adapting and using music and songs from the traditions and culture of the participants' region that were in their memories.

#### **Unexpected results and challenges during the implementation:**

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

At the level of self: listening to others, what happens in my body and empowerment.

Community level: greater connection between the collective.

**Problems with the topics by participants:**

Initial difficulty in coordinating with the group, inattentive active listening and difficulty in dissociating meaning versus word.



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

It was a session in which no topics were spoken but rather executed, focusing more on body expression.

**Evaluation of the workshop by participants (statements):**

At the end of the session, the participants felt surprised and proud of their execution of the proposed exercises. They began to observe the structure of the performance, and that fact motivated them.

**Ideas for upgrading exercises or continuing next session:**

Still discussing.

**Ideas for a dramaturgy:**

Group dance to the song “Estas é que são as saias”, with synchronized movement, singing and square dancing

Deepening and improving the imagery scene of the harvest – possibilities for variations and installation of the poetics of movement, positioning of bodies in “hawk wing”.