



## Manual ACTin'YouTH

Theatre methodologies for social inclusion





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## What is inside this toolbox and who is it for?

The manual is one of the outputs of the European project ACTin'YouTH, which uses theatre methodologies for the involvement of young people at risk of social exclusion in an intercultural context.

The manual is aimed at Youth Workers and all those interested in learning about and experimenting new approaches based on non-formal education and theatre as a form of social inclusion.

On the website of the Italian National Agency for Youth we read:

*"The youth worker or socio-educational animator is a professional who facilitates the learning and personal and social development of young people so that they become autonomous and responsible citizens through active participation in decision-making processes and inclusion in their communities.*

*Youth workers conduct activities with young people primarily in inclusive, open and safe environments, using engaging and creative techniques and methods, facilitating dialogue and bonding, preventing discrimination, intolerance and social exclusion. "*<sup>1</sup>

Within the manual, besides a brief description of the project and the organisations that worked on it (1; 1.1), you will also read the testimonies of some Youth workers who tell about their experience and challenges in working with young people (1.2).

You will then learn about the Methodology (2-3) theatre partners offer, with concrete examples and practical worksheets you can use in your daily work.

A chapter is also dedicated to how to work in a blended theatre workshop: which tools and skills are useful to create your own workshop. A large part also deals with data protection and online security, which are essential to create a safe and peaceful space for everyone.

Enjoy your reading!

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<sup>1</sup> <https://agenziagiovani.it/erasmus/youth-worker/>



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## 1. About ACTin'YouTH: activities, target group, objectives.

ACTin'YouTH is a Eu project K2 carried by a consortium of 6 countries: Italy, The Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Bulgaria.

ACTin'YouTH is based on the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, thus giving young participants a central role and aiming at engaging, connecting and empowering both young people and youth organisations and youth workers.

The project fosters the capacity of Youth organisations and Youth workers to find and develop innovative and integrated approaches to reducing disparities and to actively engage young participants in informal training activities to improve their inclusion in the communities and in wider societies.

Focusing on theater workshops as a training framework for social inclusion is a strategic way to answer to these needs and to develop an informal methodology that will lead to better intercultural communication skills for both youth workers and young participants, as well as fostering their digital competences through the use of the project digital learning tools and materials. Moreover, the project aims to develop an innovative methodology of "blended theatre workshop", with the double goal of making young people of different countries interACT and thus create a network of young people with different cultural background interested in arts – and, in particular, theatre – as a way of communication and social inclusion. Both the blended- and the local theatre workshops will produce materials that will be used to create a final "digital performance" which will be shown as project result during Multiplier Events as well as in virtual connection spaces.

In fact, the project keeps together the fundamental and transversal objective of social inclusion, creating more opportunities for innovative approaches toward the integration of people with migrant backgrounds, and the objective of developing youth workers competences, in particular for the development of effective methods in reaching out to marginalised young people, in preventing racism and intolerance among youth, and in addressing the risks, opportunities, and implications of digitalisation. This will be obtained through the enhancement of creativity and quality, innovation and recognition of youth work that support the creative potential of youth, thus contributing to the resilience of the cultural and creative sectors.

### Target group: with whom do we implemented local theatre workshops?

We work with youth at risk of social exclusion, what does that mean?

Immigrants, asylum seekers, second-generation youth, people with a traumatic and difficult background and young people.

These are mainly young people between the ages of 18 and 30.



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## Objective of the project

The main objective of ACTin'YouTH is to foster youth workers' intercultural competences with theatrical methodologies aimed at creating local theatre workshops for the social inclusion of young people with different cultural background at risk of social exclusion. In fact, youth workers will gain competences also in the field of **non-violent communication, conflict resolution, facilitation** and will develop their **communicative skills** through theatrical methodologies as well as storytelling circles, thus improving intercultural communication competences and innovative approaches for the engagement of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups, in order to tackle discrimination and social exclusion. All the acquired skills will be used during the implementation of both local and blended theatre workshops.

Young people benefit from creativity and performing methodologies, since they learn how to put into practice intercultural dialogue and gain an alternative way of expressing themselves and the cultural features of the groups they belong to.

In particular, theatre and performing arts can lead to an active experimentation of the intercultural dialogue power, experiencing the opportunity to work on self-knowledge, body - language and creativity, by acting and interacting together in the same framework, even though they don't know each other, or they don't speak the same language or share the same social and cultural framework.

Specific objectives are:

- develop a theatre-based training course for improving youth workers' intercultural competences and social skills, aimed at engaging and involving young people
- carry on local intercultural theatre workshops and related on-line activities;
- create a cooperative final "digital performance";
- develop a collaborative interactive platform and tools;
- produce a methodological manual with a collection of case studies based on local experiences.

## Activities and results

1) 24 TRAINED YOUTH WORKERS from 6 different countries on intercultural and theatre-based communication methodologies

2) YOUNG PEOPLE with a different cultural background, taking part in local activities, will experiment an engaging opportunity to interact with other young people, finding common ways of communication, interaction, mutual understanding and collaboration.

So, they will gain:



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- experience in a TARGETED METHODOLOGY to improve their intercultural communication competences that can be useful also for their future professional path and employability potential,
- specific TRAINING in the methodology, that they will replicate in local activities led by themselves together with the Youth Workers,
- TRANSNATIONAL LEARNING AND TRAINING EXPERIENCE which itself is a great way to make young people aware of the richness of the intercultural encounter.

3) INTERACTIVE PLATFORM, to make participants from all partners countries exchange their ideas, their outcomes and their materials on the ongoing activities (at local and transnational level), that will remain after the project's lifespan as a repository of good practices developed during the project and as e-training tool for further Youth Workers and Young People who'd like to approach the methodology. The platform will also be the digital environment where young people, led by youth workers, will develop, starting from inputs given by the non-formal education sessions, the open, transnational and collaborative theatrical performance online.

4) MANUAL that will collect the results of the projects, the specific challenges and solutions implemented, in order to further spread it at national and international level, particularly addressed to Youth Organisations and Public Authorities that should be interested in creating local intercultural workshops aimed at social inclusion of young people.

5) VIRTUAL NETWORK of all organisations, associations, informal youth groups working with theatre and performative arts as tools for social inclusion and intercultural dialogue.

6) INTERNATIONALIZATION OF A NEW METHODOLOGY: through the project, the methodology developed by the partner organisations, gathering together their different experiences in the field of social inclusion, will be tested, qualified and recognised in a transnational context with specific target groups and thus become transferable and replicable in other contexts.

## 1.2 Partners: who are we?

**The Coordinator, Stichting CWM Education, The Netherlands**

<https://www.cultureworldme.com/>

Stichting CWM Education is a dynamic organisation dedicated to cultivating inclusive learning environments and fostering dialogue that inspires impactful collaboration, critical thinking, and the celebration of our shared humanity.

Over time, our mission and vision have evolved from a singular focus on human rights to a profound exploration of our interconnectedness as human beings. We have observed that our educational



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approaches extend beyond the realm of human rights education, actively facilitating transformation, healing, inspiration, and personal growth among workshop participants.

At the core of our work lies the utilisation of performing arts as a powerful tool to nurture social inclusion and embrace the rich tapestry of our diverse society. Our esteemed team comprises passionate youth workers, drama teachers, and artists who employ methodologies such as theatre, non-formal education, live-action role play (LARP), storytelling, and more. We frequently collaborate with specialists and practitioners whose expertise further enhances the quality and effectiveness of our programs and workshops.

Our target groups encompass individuals of various ages and backgrounds, as we strive to engage both youth and adults, encompassing both learners and educators. Our organization's primary objectives include:

- Raising awareness among young people about their vital role in society and the importance of positive action.
- Providing comprehensive training in theater methodologies for youth workers and educators.
- Empowering young individuals with diverse skills, equipping them to contribute to positive change in the world.
- Nurturing the development of young people's potential and fostering their innate creativity.

### Associazione Culturale Smascherati! APS, Italy

<https://www.smascherati.it/>

<https://www.humanbeings.it/>

The cultural association "Smascherati!" APS aims at making theater a place of intercultural exchange mutual understanding. Founded in 1989 in the city of Perugia by artists from a variety of theatre backgrounds, "Smascherati!" always worked on making widely divergent human experiences and cultures meet together through theatre and through different forms of artistic expression. This approach led to the creation in 1994 of "Human Beings - international cross cultural theatre workshop" and in 2011 to the creation of "Teatro Rifugio - a protected place in which to recount exile" a workshop which aim is to include and work with refugees and asylum-seekers. Every year, our workshops result in final original theatre performances, characterized by the richness that the different cultures of belonging of the participants bring with them. Our performances are shown to local, national and international public and festivals. Experts in theater and dance-theater, from Italy and other countries, regularly collaborate in our research and training activities. The most important collaborations were with some theater masters and artists (Eugenio Barba, Pierre Byland, Marisa Fabbri, Jacques Lecoq) and dance-theater artists (Malou Airaud, Bénédicte Billiet and Julie Ann Stanzak, from the Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch).

The core activities of the organisation are focused on intercultural communication and social inclusion of disadvantaged groups, migrants, refugees, with a particular attention to respect all human diversity.



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## COLECTIC SCCL Spain

<https://colectic.coop/>

Colectic (formerly Joves Teb or El Teb) is a nonprofit cooperative located in Barcelona, with more than 25 years of experience.

Colectic was founded by a group of educators in 1992 in order to work with young people in the Raval district of Barcelona. The main mission of Colectic is to work for social transformation through participation, learning and socialization of ICT. Colectic has a multidisciplinary team of 21 professionals (staff) working on projects related to communication, education, training, social innovation, website development and IT support for NGOs, primary and secondary schools, empowerment, community and networks.

They work using technology to improve the situation of communities and citizens' groups, with special attention to the weakest groups: young people, children, women, immigrant people, neighborhoods with economic deficits, etc.

Project focus is based on digital-skills, e-literacy and participation. We promote independence through meaningful and participatory methodologies and the development of various youth groups through ICT-related interests, the Internet and digital culture, new technologies.

## IASIS, Greece

<https://www.iasismed.eu/?lang=en>

IASIS is active in the field of Social Inclusion, Mental Health, and Education.

IASIS was founded in 2005. In its 15 years of experience and contribution, people have always been in the center of projects designed and implemented, with the main objectives of providing psychosocial support, combating the social exclusion of vulnerable groups, the provision of psychological and counseling services, the creation of equal opportunities and new perspectives.

IASIS NGO has been providing support to anyone in need for 15 years: people with mental health problems; homeless; women-victims of violence; asylum seekers; children and youngsters with a range of projects and programs dedicated to them.

## ASSOCIACAO CHECK-IN - COOPERACAO E DESENVOLVIMENTO, Portugal

<https://checkin.org.pt/>

Associação Check-IN – Cooperação e Desenvolvimento (Check-IN Association – Cooperation and Development) is a non-profit organization, founded in 2010, based in Beja and also operating from Lisbon, in Portugal. It works in close cooperation with public and private entities, actively participating in quality of life improvement activities.



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The team is made of a heterogeneous group of dynamic, energetic and motivated people with various backgrounds.

The organization mainly focuses on youth and adult mobility, non-formal education, cooperation and development of organizations and individuals and the overall sharing of knowledge, through the support of European cooperation initiatives.

The aim is to promote lifelong learning opportunities, to encourage and promote social integration, education for sustainable development and social entrepreneurship.

### **SDRUZHENIE WALK TOGETHER, Bulgaria**

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

Association WalkTogether is created to serve as a learning organization that gathers trainers, youth and social workers, youth policy makers, experts, and volunteers with different levels of competences to engage in activities with European dimension and including youth society in responsible choice making, voting, encouraging personal opinion expression, debating and becoming an active citizen who adds value to their social environment.

The association works mostly with people 17 + years old and adults up to 55 years old.

The focus of the organisation is:

- To promote equal educational and labour opportunities for all;
- Balanced integration of different ethnic groups and refugee groups in Bulgaria
- Promotes the intercultural dialogue, exchange of knowledge and European awareness through the active participation of youngsters;
- Empower youth and youth structures through the development of initiatives to support personal, social and cultural development, with a focus on civic education, promotion of youth participation, intercultural learning and a community-centred approach through non-formal education methodologies.



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## 1.3 Being a Youth Worker: Opportunities and Challenges in a Multicultural Environment

In today's interconnected world, working in a multicultural environment has become the norm. It is crucial for individuals to engage in comprehensive study and preparation to thrive in such contexts.

Youth workers, like any other professionals, need to acquire and develop a diverse skill set that enables them to navigate the unique challenges and daily obstacles they encounter while striving for both personal and professional growth.

Undoubtedly, training young people from diverse cultural backgrounds can be an intricate and demanding process. Operating in an international context poses numerous variables that require careful consideration. What are the key skills that youth workers should cultivate to enhance their prospects of success in this field?

1. **Flexibility:** Adapting to new situations, embracing change, and adjusting approaches to accommodate different cultural perspectives and practices.
2. **Openness:** Maintaining an open mind and a willingness to learn from diverse viewpoints, ideas, and experiences.
3. **Empathy:** Demonstrating a deep understanding of and sensitivity to the emotions, needs, and challenges faced by young people from various cultural backgrounds.
4. **Respect:** Valuing and appreciating the cultural diversity and uniqueness of individuals, fostering an inclusive and harmonious environment.
5. **Motivation:** Sustaining a genuine passion for youth work and a drive to make a positive impact in the lives of young people, irrespective of cultural differences.

What are the primary challenges that youth workers may encounter?

1. **Creating a Safe Space:** Establishing a secure work environment where every individual feels comfortable expressing their opinions, sharing their perspectives, ideas, and suggestions. This is particularly crucial in multicultural settings with children and students from diverse contexts, experiences, countries, and cultures.
2. **Lack of Experience:** One of the challenges youth workers may face is the absence of prior experience in operating within such contexts. Participating in seminars, training programs, and engaging in volunteering experiences can significantly enhance their understanding of the environments they will be working in, while also fostering meaningful interactions with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.
3. **Communication (Language):** Effective communication can be a hurdle due to language differences. Misunderstandings often arise when parties are unable to understand each other due to the use of unfamiliar languages. Emphasizing the importance of both verbal and non-verbal communication is essential. Gaining proficiency in a foreign language provides a broader understanding of different



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conceptualizations of the world. In cases where language barriers persist, practical activities that minimize reliance on theoretical explanations can be organized. Youth workers may consider learning a few words in the immigrants' language to expand their knowledge while bridging cultural and background gaps.

4. **Psychological Issues:** Immigrants and individuals with limited opportunities often face psychological challenges as they find themselves in unfamiliar surroundings without concrete support, family, or friends to rely on. In these situations, empathy plays a fundamental role. While empathy can be cultivated through training, it is also an inherent quality of a skilled youth worker. Active listening, in addition to empathy, is a critical skill that must be developed.
5. **Lack of Time:** Time constraints pose another challenge. In today's fast-paced society, where rushing through daily activities has become the norm, it becomes challenging to pause, slow down, and gain a deeper understanding of specific situations. Allocating sufficient time to comprehend alternative perspectives and situations, even beyond working hours, can yield significant benefits for all involved.

By acknowledging these opportunities and challenges, seasoned youth workers with extensive experience in theatre education and working with young people from diverse cultural backgrounds can effectively navigate the complexities of multicultural environments, fostering growth, understanding, and mutual respect among all participants.

## 1.4 Real-life examples of being a youth worker

- **Challenges in training children and teenagers with fewer opportunities and different cultural background.**
- *Written by Elli Fertidi, Youth Worker of IASIS*

The large migratory flows, combined with the social, economic, and political problems of the country, have made it imperative to intervene and provide support to improve the living conditions of migrants and refugees. Therefore, the education of children and adolescents can aim to empower them and cultivate their mental resilience as well as to help them acquire useful skills. However, training young people from different cultural backgrounds can be a very challenging procedure.

To begin with, communication is a key problem that can arise. It is likely that many refugee children will have little or no knowledge of the language of their host country. In addition, the way people communicate varies widely within cultures. Nonverbal communication is also very important, and a Youth Worker must be very cautious.

People from different cultural backgrounds may have a very different understanding of facial expressions, gestures, or body language. Lastly, the tone and the volume of the voice as well as the distance kept between participants are parts of nonverbal communication that can create misunderstandings in a training session. To overcome those difficulties, Youth Workers should be very careful with the use of language, especially in the first meetings. The vocabulary of the training must be adapted to the language skills of the



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children and the terminology should be simple and understandable. Another key thing to remember is that the aim of psycho-education of children under these circumstances is to introduce basic concepts and not the in- depth understanding of complex theories. To this end, training must be oriented to this direction. Furthermore, it is important to create a safe and non-judgmental environment in which each person can openly discuss his concerns and pose his questions. Activities that include painting , games and music can provide communication with young refugees and make the training more fun.

Another challenge that can arise when training young refugees, is the realization that in every culture there are different boundaries that are often imposed by religion or ethics. For instance, physical contact between men and women may not be always allowed, so education must respect these boundaries. The aim of a successful training is for all participants to learn in an environment of mutual respect. To this end, a Youth Worker must have a good knowledge of intercultural education and give participants the possibility not to follow an activity if it makes them feel uncomfortable. Additionally, from culture to culture there are different approaches to completing tasks. In some cultures they learn to function more as a team and others more individually. The same goes for open dialogue and conflict. Some cultures view conflict as a positive thing, while others view it as something to be avoided. Open dialogue and face-to-face conflict resolution are encouraged in some countries. However, in many Eastern countries, open conflict is experienced as embarrassing or demeaning , so differences are worked out quietly. Knowing the above, a Youth Worker will be able to manage the different reactions of children to an activity that requires open dialogue or brain storming.

Furthermore, being a woman Youth Worker may be a challenge when working with people from different cultural backgrounds. Some participants may also be skeptical about the extent to which a woman can be an effective Youth Worker, resulting to not wanting to follow instructions. Even in this case, a woman Youth Worker must not be offended but be able to understand the cultural differences and give time to gain their trust. In all cases an educator must address to the participants of a training with empathy, sincere interest and respect. Educating young refugees also aims to promote the integration of children in the host country and to encourage cooperation and teamwork.

Lastly, an important thing to consider is that refugee children may have difficulty assimilating and processing knowledge due to early trauma and intense anxiety. Experiences that cause trauma or stress in refugee children include living in violent conditions, loss of their homeland and their loved ones while undertaking dangerous and stressful journeys in search of safety. In addition, uncertainty about the permanence of their residence status in a new country, living in poor conditions housing and with limited resources, even living with parents or other caregivers who may themselves be suffering from mental health problems trauma or stress, may contribute to daily stress for refugee children. Given the circumstances, children are likely to struggle to participate in training sessions, be easily distracted and hyperactive and have difficulty in concentrating. To overcome those obstacles, the Youth Worker should be tolerant, patient, and supportive. Besides, the cultivation of mental resilience will only be successful when children feel safe and understood. It is also important not to cause additional stress through the activities, but to improve self-image, while helping them cope with the difficulties they may face.



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- **Being a Youth worker in The Netherlands**

Being a youth worker in the Netherlands can be both rewarding and challenging, especially when working with young people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The Netherlands is known for its multicultural society, with a significant number of immigrants and expatriates residing in the country. This cultural diversity adds complexity to the role of a youth worker, as it requires a nuanced understanding of various cultures, languages, and experiences.

One of the primary challenges faced by youth workers in the Netherlands is the communication barrier. Working with young people from different cultural backgrounds means encountering diverse languages, dialects, and communication styles. Effective communication is crucial for building trust, understanding needs, and providing appropriate support. Youth workers need to develop strategies for overcoming language barriers, such as utilizing interpreters, using visual aids, or learning basic phrases in different languages.

Another challenge is understanding and respecting cultural differences. Each culture has its own unique values, norms, and traditions, which can significantly impact the lives and perspectives of young people. Youth workers need to be sensitive to these differences and avoid imposing their own cultural biases. It requires cultural competence, which involves developing an awareness of one's own cultural background, learning about other cultures, and adapting approaches to meet the specific needs of young people from diverse backgrounds.

Addressing systemic inequalities and discrimination is another significant challenge faced by youth workers. Young people from different cultural backgrounds may face discrimination, racism, and social exclusion, which can negatively impact their well-being and prospects. Youth workers need to be advocates for social justice and work towards creating an inclusive and equitable environment for all young people. This may involve collaborating with other organizations, lobbying for policy changes, and providing support to young people in navigating and challenging discriminatory systems.

Engaging with families and communities is also a crucial aspect of youth work in the Netherlands, particularly when working with young people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Cultures often play a significant role in shaping the values, expectations, and support systems within families. Understanding and involving families and communities in the youth work process can lead to more effective interventions and support. However, building trust and overcoming cultural barriers within families and communities can be challenging and require patience, cultural sensitivity, and open-mindedness.

Furthermore, youth workers may face challenges in understanding and navigating the complex legal and administrative systems in the Netherlands, especially when working with young people from immigrant backgrounds. Accessing appropriate services, healthcare, education, or legal support can be daunting for young people and their families. Youth workers may need to act as advocates, helping young people understand their rights and providing guidance in accessing necessary resources.



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Despite these challenges, being a youth worker in the Netherlands can also be incredibly rewarding. Supporting young people from diverse cultural backgrounds in overcoming obstacles, empowering them to succeed, and witnessing their personal growth can be fulfilling and inspiring. By embracing cultural diversity and adopting an inclusive approach, youth workers can make a positive difference in the lives of young people, fostering a sense of belonging, resilience, and empowerment.

### ● **Being a Youth Worker in Bulgaria**

The position of a youth worker is yet not recognized in Bulgaria as a work position.

Therefore, the challenges are multiple when we look at the profession itself.

Firstly, it has not been seen from formal institutions as serious and important as a job. The work of the youth worker, conducted with young people according to the formal education institution is not bringing a high demand in educational aspect and thus, the tools and methods used by the people who are implementing different activities, following non – formal methods are not proven to work.

Secondly, the education system is not having a curricular for people who wants to become a youth worker. Thus, they do not have where to get professional experience and training, but mostly seeking self-development in the field. Competencies are needed to transform the individual and community approach toward this topic. Competencies are needed to develop community resilience for strength the youth and empower their critical thinking and have their independent thoughts.

The youth work need to find a proper recognition to be part of a multilevel intervention that is required when we come to prevention.

Thirdly, the involvement of young people in activities is becoming more challenging due to the low interest and incentives, perhaps. Sometimes there is a language barrier among the youngsters who are coming from mixed – families or migration background.

The challenges are way more, but in the context and reality of Bulgaria, what we face is recognition by the state, development of professional attitude and social engagement as main difficulties.

- **My experience as a Youth Worker in the theatre project “Teatro Rifugio - a protected place for the story of exile”, Italy – Associazione culturale Smascherati! APS**
- Written by Alessia Bombaci, Association Smascherati! trainee

My arrival in Perugia (ITA) was a succession of excitement and loneliness, a new land to discover and a new identity under construction. The sudden arrival of Covid -19, however, extinguished something in me.



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To rekindle the creative and relational flame came the 'Human Beings - International cross cultural theatre workshop'.

In addition to being an active participant in the Human Beings workshop, I decided to do my internship with the Associazione Smascherati! by taking part in the project 'Teatro Rifugio - luogo protetto per il racconto dell'esilio' (Shelter Theatre - a protected place for the story of exile), financed by the Otto per mille of the Waldensian Church.

The project was aimed at asylum seekers, refugees and second-generation young people and took place in several stages:

- Workshop at the reception centres, a protected moment where they could take back their space of expression, with the time they needed and taking into account their specific needs;
- Workshop at the headquarters of the association Smascherati!
- workshop together with the Human Beings theatre workshop group, where we all worked together - the group was in fact mixed, made up of asylum seekers, but also young people, students, workers, the unemployed. This phase culminated in the performance 'Stormy Weather'.

At the information meetings at the reception centres, names and surnames of those interested in the project were taken, and at each meeting a roll-call was taken to check who was coming and was already enrolled and who was a newcomer. Furthermore, having a telephone reference of the participants was very important. At the beginning, in fact, I thought I had a team behind me (the one from the reception centres), in addition to our own, that was strong and could help us both to circulate information and to stimulate the young people to attend the meetings. On the contrary, over time I observed that there was a lack of dialogue between the two parties and that it was up to the boys' sole responsibility and curiosity to attend and remember the meetings. Having their number then enabled an online network to send information and remember appointments. In the first phase, given the lack of on-site support, in addition to using the WhatsApp channel to invite them back to the workshop, I used the oldest and most annoying of techniques, knocking on the door.

*From my Logbook: Yesterday there were fewer of us, and for the first time I knocked on almost every door in the centre for more people to come in. Many doors remained closed, others were opened and sighed a few lies from their crack. However, there were more than 15 people in the room when I returned, but only two of those I had called. Where were they? In his house every man has his corners of transparency that no one needs to know about.*

I was always repeating phrases in my head about 'tiptoeing into the relationship with the other' and feeling the limit of proxemics in personal space. Mine was a constant work to put myself at the service of myself, the stage and others. I was listening to my body and through observations I was guiding, carefully and without imposition, the other. Sometimes I would put myself at the service of an idea to be developed and help with the aesthetics, other times (more common) I would put my idea at the service of the theme and as a group we would construct it. A difficult job if you don't just want to show your mark. I remember that in creating improvisations together I would start from the same questions that stimulated me and propose them.



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"Sometimes I really feel that I don't have the tools to do this," was how I answered Danilo (the workshop leader and director of the association) when he once asked me after a meeting for my opinion on the day. And it is true. I learnt not only to observe and understand the other person's limits, but also to understand and observe my own.

I felt a lot of frustration when some participants did not turn up for the workshop and I blamed myself and the project in my heart. I knew that we could not leave the explanation for an absence (which could have turned into dropping out of the workshop) to free will alone. I believed and still believe in the improvement of our work, but at the same time, I found myself having to accept the content of a simple sentence from the project assistant: 'At a certain point it is their choice whether to continue, they take what they can and then continue on their way'. I argued that I was still searching for the reasons for these losses, but this also increased my frustration at not being able to hold back. Over time I realised that I did not just want to restrain but also to contain the participants - so I began to appreciate the difference between these two different concepts. In fact, even if the participants leave, we cannot contain their souls as they travel and look for other aspirations to fulfil, I am certain that something of our journey together is still present in them.

During this journey I had to come to terms with my emotions, because I always had a strong argumentative and judgmental side, which initially caused me frustration, and I started to love the small daily achievements.

Among my achievements is that this experience was the first in which I did not shout my ideas to overpower others, whereas in the past I would have thrown shoes in the air to avoid hearing certain thoughts. I have not changed my ideas but now I know that we can live in peace and look at a landscape in silence even with those we would have called our enemy. Just sit and listen, it is not a question of justifying but of understanding that our space only speaks to us.

The 'Human Beings' theatre workshop provides an opportunity to grow because it makes everyone feel like cotton threads that together make up a carpet. A community where you feel the freedom to be anything, especially yourself. And that is why over the months we have also taken in critical situations and turbulence. I will always remember the time when Danilo said a sentence in response to an event for which we all felt pain: 'If M. had not felt at home this would never have happened'. This sentence brought me back to earth, that land of wonders and contrasts. The training that Human Beings and Teatro Rifugio can give you I would not describe as technical and I often felt at odds with myself wondering how 'useful' it really was for my life as an educator since there is no talk of observation, evaluation, educational or therapeutic projects. Perhaps there are shortcomings at the educational level in the project, but then I think of my own conflicts, the limits I have found in myself, the various human relationships I have gone through, the openness that goes through even the clashes, and I think of a project that welcomes migrants and people from all over the world, that puts a theatrical method based on improvisation and the essential at the service of the person.

A method that involves listening and uses the forms of art to talk to and about oneself, a place where one can investigate the limits of everyday life, through a sense of the ridiculous and playfulness that helps to release tensions. A place where the limit takes on its original meaning, i.e. not the point at which a thing ends, but that from which a thing begins its essence.



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## 2. Setting the Space for the Blended Theatre workshops:

### A practice is a practice and you can practise it in practice

Written by Danilo Cremonte

A mixed theatre workshop is a place where people with different cultural and social backgrounds have the opportunity to meet and get to know others and learn to know themselves better through the comparison. It is a place of creativity where everyone brings his own contribution. The body is what groups us together; cultural differences (with their richness) come later.

At the centre of the workshop are the bodies with their perceptive senses and their emotional, communicative power.

Therefore, the bodies will not only be object of observation, but also become expressive and creative subjects.

The pandemic forced us to wear masks and gloves. Our possibilities (and needs) for expression and interpersonal communication, as well as our sensibility, have been strongly inhibited. It is imperative to recreate places in which these functions regenerate, especially among young people.

The physical "warm-up" (see card and [https://youtu.be/AG\\_-N3Yc4mo](https://youtu.be/AG_-N3Yc4mo) + <https://youtu.be/uDzrmfKIPM>) that introduces each workshop meeting has mainly the purpose of dissolving the physical tensions that enclose us, dropping the masks that hide us to awaken the sensory and creative sensibility.

An observation of interpersonal behaviour, involving all participants, can be a useful introduction to demonstrate how our bodies constantly communicate in daily life.

Any behaviour that occurs in the presence of another person "communicates".

In a relational context, any passage of information is communication, regardless of medium and consciousness.

Any perceptible behaviour is able to influence the behaviour of others.

Every behaviour is a vehicle of information and there is no possibility to not communicate, whether the communication is intentional or not, whether the subjects are aware of it or not.



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The theatre workshop seems to us a particularly suitable place for learning to observe especially the “body language” and to gain awareness of its importance in interpersonal relationships in daily life.

The observation of individual behaviour in the interpersonal relationship allows us to highlight aspects of communication that are often ignored or neglected: in particular, those non-verbal aspects that have an autonomous, meaningful value and that strongly convey the verbal aspect itself.

In fact, if the communication of a content (information) takes place through words, the relationship (information about information) is achieved through the body language. If a positive relationship is established, the communication of the content will be good; if, on the other hand, the relationship is bad, a “psychological fog” will be created and this will make the passage of even the clearest information difficult.

Education in observing behaviour and self-awareness solicit an ironic and self-ironic sensibility, which are indispensable elements for a balanced psychological maturity and the formation of a critical and creative personality. This can happen more easily in a theatre workshop that also adopts a comic approach, which, in addition to creating a jovial and playful environment, highlights the reality even more, allowing it to be observed as if under a magnifying glass.

The practice of the theatre workshop is therefore also a valid tool to assess and better understand oneself and the interpersonal dynamics in daily life, as well as a space for a creative and communicative expression.

In a multicultural context, such as that of “mixed theatre workshops” that bring together young people with different cultural and social backgrounds, the attention dedicated to body language becomes even more interesting, as it allows the “live” comparison between different cultural behaviour. Suddenly it will be extremely easy (and fun) to dispel the rather widespread cliché where body language is considered “universal”.

If it is true that the body of human beings reacts in a similar way to some external or “internal” stimulus (for example, it opens / closes itself) and that some expressions are recognizable even in different cultural contexts, it is important to understand that the body language is, in fact, a “language” and as such it is “cultural” and not “natural”: we learn the non-verbal aspects of interpersonal behaviour and the “rules of use” together with the spoken language in the context in which we grow up.

Non-verbal behavior is a complex issue, addressed by many different disciplines (anthropology, ethology, linguistics, semiotics, sociology, psychology...) and the theatrical approach that is proposed, focused on the analysis of movement and physical-emotional dynamics, offers a stimulus to observation and self-observation based on the comparison in an informal and creative situation.

Our whole life takes place in a social environment. The reactions of others towards us influence our self-esteem. For young people who find themselves living in new cultural contexts, becoming aware of the diversity of interpersonal behaviour and the “rules” that govern them is certainly important for their positive social inclusion.



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The participants in the "mixed workshop" will be observers and "guinea pigs" at the same time, fortunate enough to be part of a variegated multicultural microcosm, in a situation "protected" by the fiction of the theatrical game that allows (and sometimes invites) them to "make mistakes". Moreover, they will then be able to play and creatively develop what they have observed, "playing theatre" initiating from within themselves.

So far, the attention to non-verbal communication does not mean forgetting the spoken word and imagining a workshop of mute people! Indeed, participants will also be invited to use their own language (and dialect), so that they can express themselves more easily: the variety of languages will be a further enrichment for everyone.

## 2.1 Let's start by observing

The conductor invites a "volunteer" among the participants to come closer to them. After greeting and introducing each other with their own name, the conductor will ask the others "what they saw". The conductor will stimulate young people with questions in order to obtain more and more detailed descriptions about the actions performed by their partner, so as to discover together the many communicative elements that have come into play, verifying possible variables, including absurd and paradoxical ones.

First of all, the two bodies with their "fixed" (non-dynamic) physical conformation, can provide some information, such as sex and age; regarding the information deriving from the physical configuration, it will be requested not to slip into interpretations dictated by stereotypes.

Clothing and make-up are also interesting as they represent a kind of self-presentation, the image one wants to present to others. Based on this aspect, with the different fashions and "sub-fashions", young people will surely be able to grasp a lot of information!

We will focus on the volunteer's gait was it slow or fast? Is the body tense or relaxed? Are these elements that communicate something to us?

We will observe at what physical distance the volunteer decides to stop from the conductor (too close / too far?) and with what orientation of the body (are they facing the side, the front, or have they turned their back?). Would anyone have made different choices? In Japan, for example, would people behave the same way?

We will also consider the distance and orientation of the two subjects with respect to their fellow "spectators": could they be further away or closer? Is there a "right" distance? Could they turn their back to the "public"? What would that mean?

If we analyse the posture of the two subjects (position of the legs, trunk, arms, head), can we glean any information about them and their relationship? And when did they change posture?

Are the arms and hands still or moving? What gestures do they make? Are they aware of everything they are doing? Does the tension / relaxation of the bodies communicate something to us?

They shook hands to greet each other: can other gestures be used in other cultural or social contexts? How do youngsters greet each other? What physical tension was there in that grip? Could it have been more



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tense or relaxed? Would the meaning change? Did they look into each other's eyes as they said goodbye, or did one of them look away? If so, what can we deduce from this?

How was the tone of the voice? And the facial expressions? Were they congruent or in-congruent with the word? What is perceived if I say "Good morning!" with an angry tone of voice, dark face and without looking at the interlocutor? Am I really wishing you a good day or is the message I send something else? We can propose a quiz on the relationship between gesture and word: does it change something if two people that meet first say "good morning!" and then they shake hands, or if the gesture comes first and then the word? (If physical contact comes before speech it is likely that the two already know each other).

Through the observation and analysis of this small event - the meeting between the conductor and the "volunteer" - we will have examined various aspects of non-verbal communication in the interpersonal relationship that tell us something about the emotional state of the protagonists and the quality of their relationship. We will have detected whether there are cultural differences, which is fundamental for seeking a better understanding between people with different cultural backgrounds. We will also have noted that many types of these behaviours are unintentional, yet they cause reactions in the other person.

## 2.2 Basic elements to be taken into account in intercultural theatre practice

With the active contribution of the young participants we can sketch a list of some elements of interpersonal communication (without claiming it as exhaustive) and begin to "stage" the bodies, stimulated by some questions.

Starting from these elements, we can try to recreate situations of everyday life, also playing at inventing "exaggerated" and absurd situations. The elements can initially be taken separately and then together. To play, all you need are chairs and tables. Jackets, skirts and some accessories (bags, hats) can help.

Some of these aspects of interpersonal communication will be developed during the workshop and will become a pretext for new games.

- **Space**
- **Proximity / distance** between people: "intimate area" (how big is it for me and how do I react if someone violates it? Who do I welcome in? When do we define a person as "intrusive?"); "personal zone" (relationship with non-strangers); "social area", "public area".

If I am too close to my interlocutor, "invading" his intimate area, he will tend to close himself in and the passage of information will become difficult.

In front of a semicircle of spectators, where will I have to place myself so that everyone can see and hear me, and that no one feels excluded or uncomfortable?

It will be useful for the conductor to underline to the participants the great cultural differences that exist in the management of space in interpersonal relationships: so do not misunderstand, for example, the "respectful" distance held by a new person coming, for example, from Japan, as a not friendly attitude; and, on the other hand, do not embarrass him by showing him "close" proximity.



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- **Physical contact:** it can be affectionate, sexual, aggressive, "social", casual (caresses, kisses, hugs, pushes, bumps, pats on the back, handshakes).
- 1. **Orientation of the bodies:** it can be face to face, sideways, back to back, in a row.

Stand at the top and at the bottom (who is in a position of domination? And, speaking of hierarchies, it will be interesting to observe the different roles that can be created between a standing person and a seated person, or between two seated people, one close to a table and the other at a distance from it). Relationship between use of voice and gestures with respect to the distance of the interlocutor or audience, the number of spectators and the size of the space (try to create incongruous solutions as well).

- **Gaze** as a projection of oneself into the space (where I cannot reach with the body) and as an "indication" (if I turn my attention to one point, I can attract and "guide" the attention of others); gaze as feedback in the relationship; eye contact (A and B have physical contact without looking at each other, A and C are far away, but they look at each other: who is in relationship?).

(Exercises and games on the space, see sheets: **"Eye contact"**, **"Space balance"**, **"Take the space/ visual field"**).

- **Postures**

**Standing:** position of the head (facing the horizon in the centre or pushed forward and backward, downward, upward, diagonally); shoulders (forwards, backwards, upwards); chest (outward or inward); pelvis (forward, backward or to the side); the positions of the arms, legs, hands and feet.

Do these positions communicate something to us?

Firstly, we can observe the positions of the individual parts of the body separately and then combine them. For example, you can point out the difference between walking with the head extended forward (curious) and then with the head retracted back (cautious), even by "exaggerating" this in a funny way.

When do we define a person "open" or "closed"?

It may be interesting to show the postures of three masks from the Italian "Commedia dell'Arte". The actors had their faces covered by a mask and therefore their posture was extremely important to demonstrate the character. Arlecchino, the young, curious and helpful servant; Pantalone, the rich, old, mean master; Balanzone, the know-it-all doctor who loves good food. What will Arlecchino's posture be like? Will it be open or closed? And Pantalone? Even without recognising the masks, boys and girls can try to sketch their own propersition. Arlecchino's posture is open: legs open, trunk forward with open arms; Pantalone is closed in the fetal position and Balanzone is guided by his belly!

Masks are "stereotypes", meaning that they are fixed types, without the complexity of a character. Charlie Chaplin instead gave his character Charlot a "contradictory" posture: the lower part of the body is open and the upper part is closed, as if to say "I would like to be generous and open, but I'm shy". A contradiction that makes us feeling very close and sympathetic towards him.



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In **walking** we can find the postural attitudes of when we are standing up. Evidently, the observation will have to take into account other elements, for example the rhythm, speed, rigidity or fluency of the movement, and where the gaze is directed. Walking in couples it is interesting to note if you move in synch or not.

Added to this, in how many different ways are we sitting! It will be enough to look at each other to realise that each subject has his own way (and others), defined by his emotional, physical and mental state of the moment, as well as by the context in which they find themselves.

Even **sitting and lying down**, we assume positions that say a lot about us. We often take these positions unconsciously: this means that we communicate without realizing it. We are sitting on a chair, elbows resting on our knees, our heads in our hands: do we assume this position with the intention of communicating our emotional state to others? (Of course we can also pretend, "play" a role, perhaps to avoid a task: precisely because it is a recognized language, we can also "bluff"!).

Together with the participants we can look at some positions that we usually use and then try a silent "dialogue" using only postures: interesting situations can pop up.

We find ourselves reflecting on our habits: are postural attitudes influenced by the context and situation in which we are? Are they different between males and females? How much do clothes affect us?

(Game on the relationship between postures and emotions, see the "**Album**" sheet).

- **Body movements (hands, limbs, head)**

There are many different classifications of gestures. What we will notice in the workshop from a simple observation that each person makes about himself and about the others, is that when we speak and when we listen (and even when we are alone), we perform many gestures with our hands, arms, legs and head, some of which are voluntary and others not.

- **Intentional gestures:** some of these are "codified", that is, they have a precise meaning, understandable only to those whom know their meaning, just as if they were words.

In the workshop it will be interesting to see how a gesture can mean nothing to someone, or can even be "read" with a different meaning. You will be able to play with these misunderstandings which will be a source of fun, differently from a real environment, where such misunderstandings can sometimes generate unpleasant situations.

In our multicultural microcosm it will also be easy to discover that there are so many different ways of counting with your fingers, to the amazement of many participants. To put your own point of view into perspective is always a good exercise in intercultural education.

On the other hand, other gestures are comprehensible to people from different cultural backgrounds, for example those who mimic an action: if you want to indicate or call someone, how do you do it?

In a theatre workshop it is impossible not to highlight how hand and arm movements are extremely expressive, in particular with regard to our emotions. (On this see sheet "**Open / Close**").



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- **Involuntary gestures.** When we speak, we “gesticulate”, some more some less, depending on our background and education. We think about gestures used with the intention of reinforcing what is said, but when they are "inconsistent" with the words, they can do the opposite.

But there are still other gestures, more interesting to us, those that have absolutely no communicative intention and nevertheless can provide some information about us and our emotional state.

Also in this case it will be sufficient to look around us to discover that each one of us is gesticulating: who caresses their hair, who their chin or neck, who plays with an earring, who pulls down the sleeves of the shirt, who bites the cord of the sweatshirt and who their lips ...

And if we stand up, the movements with the feet and legs will be added, real little dances!

What changes if I introduce myself by saying my name and then stroke my hair, or if I eat my nails after the name?

It will be fun to create sequences with four of these gestures, and then with a musical accompaniment chosen by the same participants, thus turning them into small "choreographies".

Even with "poor material" (the daily gestures we do without thinking and which are often repressed by adults) we can do theatre: poor material thus becomes "precious" because we use it consciously to present ourselves ironically.

- **Facial expressions**

Through facial expressions we express the primary emotions: joy, surprise, fear, sadness, anger, disgust.

We can ask the participants to draw some "smiley faces" that express different emotions. With a few essential features (eyes/eyebrows, mouth) they will reproduce some facial expressions in a stylized but clear way, communicating the corresponding emotion, like the first emoticons.

Even in everyday life, make-up enhances their facial expressions precisely in those parts of the face that are so important in interpersonal relationships.

Facial expressions are probably universally recognized, that is, shared by people belonging to different cultures. In different cultures, however, the “rules of ostentation” change, that is the way in which these expressions are used socially (especially in certain contexts and situations), rules that we begin to learn from the first years of life. It is always important to underline these cultural differences to oppose the stereotyped interpretations that are unfortunately widespread, for example that Chinese, Koreans and Japanese are “inexpressive”, or even worse that “they don't feel emotions like us”! In its evolution, the language of emoticons has also changed, creating specific "styles" (Western, Korean, Japanese).

- **Non-linguistic aspects of the speech**

The intonation of the voice, the volume, the melody, the pauses, the rhythm, the non-verbal expressions, the interlayers, but also coughing, clearing the voice and others, are all elements that enter into interpersonal communication, acting both on the level of transmission of information (the content), and also on that relating to information about the emotional state and the quality of the relationship.



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You can ask the participants to read the same sentence, and, using these elements, try to have each of them communicating different information about the content and their emotional state.

In interpersonal communication there is no "passive" subject: it is a relationship that is constantly changing and rearranging itself. This is also why it is important to develop listening and observation skills, which are stimulated during the workshop with games and exercises.

## 2.3 Example of setting up a theatre of the oppressed workshop by Stichting CWM Education.

Setting up and hosting spaces for discussions on various human rights-related topics using the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology is a powerful way to engage participants and promote social change. The three-step structure, which includes setting up the space, working with specific scenes and stories, and closing the space, is vital in creating a meaningful and transformative experience. Here are ten top methods that are commonly used within this framework:

1. **Icebreaker Activities:** Begin by incorporating icebreaker activities to create a welcoming and inclusive environment. These activities help participants feel comfortable, build connections, and establish a sense of trust within the group.
2. **Circle of Introductions:** Start with a circle of introductions, where each participant shares their name and a personal reflection related to the human rights topic being addressed. This allows everyone to share their perspectives and sets the stage for open dialogue.
3. **Image Theater:** Utilize Image Theater to explore specific scenes or issues related to human rights. Participants form frozen physical images representing different aspects of the topic, allowing for non-verbal expression and analysis.
4. **Forum Theater:** Engage participants in Forum Theater, where they enact scenes portraying real-life situations involving human rights violations or challenges. The scenes are intentionally left incomplete, allowing for audience members to step into the scene, intervene, and explore alternative solutions.
5. **Rainbow of Desires:** Use the Rainbow of Desires technique to delve deeper into the underlying desires and motivations that influence human rights issues. Participants explore the personal and social factors that drive certain behaviors or oppressions, opening avenues for self-reflection and understanding.
6. **Legislative Theater:** Introduce Legislative Theater as a method to address systemic issues and policies related to human rights. Participants collectively develop proposals or alternatives to existing laws or policies, aiming to bring about positive change through the enactment of new legislation.
7. **Cop-in-the-Head:** Incorporate Cop-in-the-Head as a technique to explore the internalized oppressions that individuals may experience. Participants personify the oppressive voices in their



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heads and engage in a dialogue with them, examining how these internalized beliefs affect their actions and perceptions.

8. **Newspaper Theater:** Use Newspaper Theater to analyze media representation and its impact on human rights issues. Participants create short scenes based on news articles or headlines, challenging biased narratives and exploring alternative perspectives.
9. **Rainbow of Solutions:** Implement the Rainbow of Solutions method to generate creative ideas for addressing human rights challenges. Participants collectively brainstorm a range of potential solutions, emphasizing innovative and inclusive approaches.
10. **Closure Rituals:** Close the space with meaningful closure rituals that provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and emotions. This may involve sharing reflections, expressing gratitude, or engaging in a symbolic action that represents the transformative journey they have undertaken.

The three-step structure—setting up the space, working with specific scenes and stories, and closing the space—is essential in creating a cohesive and impactful session. Setting up the space establishes trust and establishes a value-based connection between participants, ensuring a safe and inclusive environment for open dialogue. The second part, working with specific scenes and stories, allows for a deep exploration of human rights issues through interactive techniques. Finally, closing the space provides participants with closure and an opportunity to reflect on their learnings and experiences.

By combining these methods with the three-step structure, Theatre of the Oppressed provides a powerful framework for engaging participants, fostering empathy, and empowering individuals to challenge oppressive systems and promote human rights.

### 3. Exercise sheets

The following are proposed exercise sheets and games that the workshop leader can use at their discretion, depending on the duration of the workshop, the people taking part and the objective of the course.

The order of the cards is not fixed, this is only a proposal, but can (and indeed should) be supplemented with other methodologies known to the workshop leader.

Within the cards there are suggestions on how to use them and cross-references to other cards, but you are invited to play with them and understand what you need.

The warm-up that precedes the cards is a fundamental phase of the work, as it allows physical and emotional tensions to be released, and creates a serene and joyful atmosphere where one can feel at ease.

The warm-up therefore takes the form of a preparatory moment for work, where everyone does the same thing (each in their own way), fundamental for the creation of the group.



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## 3.1 Setting up the space:

### Room Walks

#### Room Walk Exercise Instructions: Exploring Different Perspectives

The Room Walk exercise is a dynamic activity that encourages participants to explore different perspectives within a given space. This exercise fosters empathy, understanding, and critical thinking, allowing participants to examine situations from various angles. Here are instructions for conducting a Room Walk exercise with different types of room walks:

1. Setting up the Space:
  - Arrange the room with enough open space for participants to move around comfortably.
  - Create designated areas or corners of the room to represent different perspectives or viewpoints.
  - Clearly label each area with a sign or marker to indicate the perspective it represents.
2. Types of Room Walks: a) Identity Room Walk:
  - Assign each corner of the room to represent a specific identity or characteristic (e.g., race, gender, socioeconomic status).
  - Instruct participants to walk to the corner that represents their personal identification with that particular aspect.
  - Facilitate a discussion afterward, allowing participants to share their experiences, challenges, and privileges related to their chosen identities.
3. b) Opinion Room Walk:
  - Select two opposing viewpoints or opinions related to a particular topic or issue.
  - Designate one area of the room for each opinion.
  - Provide participants with statements or prompts related to the topic and instruct them to move to the area that aligns with their opinion.
  - Facilitate a discussion in each group, encouraging participants to share their reasons, beliefs, and perspectives.

Here are additional room walks that focus on theatrical elements and bodily engagement:

#### d) Theatrical Room Walk with Different Speeds:

- Instruct participants to walk around the room at varying speeds, ranging from slow-motion to fast-paced.
- Encourage them to embody different characters or emotions as they move at each speed.
- After the exercise, facilitate a reflection on how the different speeds affected their physicality, emotions, and perspectives.

#### e) Eye Contact Room Walk:

- Ask participants to pair up and stand facing each other in the room.
- Instruct them to maintain continuous eye contact as they walk slowly around the room.
- Encourage participants to observe their own emotions and the connection established through sustained eye contact.



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- After the exercise, facilitate a discussion on the importance of eye contact in building empathy and understanding.

f) Dancing Room Walk:

- Play music with a lively rhythm or choose a specific dance style to set the mood.
- Instruct participants to freely express themselves through movement and dance as they walk around the room.
- Encourage them to explore different dance styles, gestures, and rhythms during the exercise.
- After the exercise, create a space for participants to share their experiences and reflections on using dance as a form of communication and expression.

g) Follow-the-Leader Room Walk:

- Select one participant to be the leader and the rest to be followers.
- Instruct the leader to move around the room, incorporating various movements, gestures, or postures.
- Participants are to closely observe and mimic the leader's movements as they walk behind.
- After some time, choose a new leader, allowing different individuals to guide the group.
- Facilitate a discussion on the experience of following and leading, emphasizing the importance of non-verbal communication and body language.

Remember to create a safe and supportive environment throughout the exercise. Encourage participants to reflect on their experiences, share insights, and actively listen to others' perspectives during the post-exercise discussions. These different types of room walks provide opportunities for participants to engage their bodies, emotions, and creativity, leading to deeper understanding and empathy within the group.

## Innovative Image Theatre Exercise for Youth with Different Cultural Backgrounds: "Cultural Kaleidoscope"

The "Cultural Kaleidoscope" exercise is designed to explore and celebrate the diverse cultural backgrounds of the participants. It encourages youth with different cultural backgrounds to create and share images that represent their unique heritage, experiences, and identities. This exercise promotes intercultural understanding, empathy, and appreciation among the participants. Here are the instructions:

1. Introduction and Set-Up:

- Begin by creating a safe and inclusive space, emphasizing the importance of respecting and valuing each other's cultural backgrounds.
- Explain the purpose of the exercise: to celebrate and explore the rich tapestry of diverse cultures within the group.
- Provide art materials such as paper, markers, colored pencils, and any other creative materials that the participants can use.



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## 2. Cultural Image Creation:

- Instruct each participant to think about their cultural background and heritage, considering significant aspects like traditions, symbols, clothing, art, or anything that represents their culture.
- Ask participants to create an image or symbol on a piece of paper that reflects their culture. Encourage them to be creative and use various art forms such as drawing, painting, or collages.
- Allow participants sufficient time to complete their images.

## 3. Image Sharing and Storytelling:

- Once everyone has created their cultural images, form small groups of 3-4 participants each.
- In each group, ask participants to take turns sharing their cultural images, explaining the significance behind the symbols, colors, or elements they have chosen.
- Encourage participants to share personal stories, traditions, or experiences related to their cultural backgrounds as they present their images.
- Facilitate a supportive and respectful environment for active listening and engagement among group members.

## 4. Creating a Cultural Kaleidoscope:

- After the image sharing and storytelling, gather the entire group in a circle or an open space.
- Instruct each participant to hold their image in front of them, showcasing their cultural identity to the group.
- Encourage participants to move around the space, gradually forming a dynamic and interwoven "Cultural Kaleidoscope" by connecting their images with one another.
- Prompt participants to find connections, similarities, or shared themes among the different cultural images, emphasizing the idea of a unified and diverse community.

## 5. Reflection and Discussion:

- Gather the participants back into a circle or a designated area.
- Facilitate a reflective discussion on the experience, encouraging participants to share their thoughts, feelings, and insights about the Cultural Kaleidoscope created.
- Prompt discussions on the similarities, differences, and interconnectedness of various cultures within the group.
- Encourage participants to reflect on the importance of cultural diversity, intercultural understanding, and the value of their unique contributions to the broader community.

This "Cultural Kaleidoscope" exercise provides a creative and interactive platform for youth with different cultural backgrounds to share, appreciate, and learn from one another. By exploring and celebrating cultural diversity through images and storytelling, participants gain a deeper understanding of the richness and interconnectedness of their collective cultural tapestry.



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### 3.2 Newspaper Theatre Activity for Youth with Different Cultural Backgrounds: "Voices of Diversity"

The "Voices of Diversity" activity combines newspaper theatre with the diverse cultural backgrounds of the participants, allowing them to critically examine media representation and explore alternative narratives. This activity encourages youth to analyze how different cultures are portrayed in the media and empowers them to challenge stereotypes, biases, and misrepresentations. Here are the instructions:

1. Introduction and Set-Up:
  - Begin by creating a safe and inclusive space, emphasizing the importance of respectful dialogue and critical thinking.
  - Explain the purpose of the activity: to explore how media represents different cultures and to challenge stereotypical narratives.
  - Provide newspapers, scissors, glue sticks, markers, and large sheets of paper for participants to create their newspaper articles.
2. Selecting News Articles:
  - Instruct participants to search through the provided newspapers or online news sources to find articles or headlines that pertain to cultural topics, events, or issues.
  - Encourage them to choose articles that they believe may contain stereotypes or biased representations.
  - Once participants have selected their articles, ask them to cut out the relevant sections or headlines for later use.
3. Alternative Narratives:
  - Divide participants into small groups of 3-4 individuals each.
  - Instruct each group to analyze the chosen articles and brainstorm alternative narratives that challenge stereotypes or biases.
  - Encourage participants to think creatively and consider the perspectives, experiences, and contributions of different cultures.
  - Ask each group to collectively write a new headline or article that portrays a more accurate and inclusive representation of the cultural topic.
4. Creating Newspaper Theatre Scenes:
  - Provide large sheets of paper or flip charts for each group.
  - Instruct participants to glue the original article sections or headlines onto the paper, along with their revised headlines or articles.
  - Encourage them to use markers and other art materials to illustrate or emphasize their alternative narratives.
  - Ask each group to present their newspaper theatre scenes to the rest of the participants, explaining the original representation, the challenges it posed, and their alternative narrative.
5. Facilitated Discussion:



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- After each group has presented their scenes, facilitate a group discussion on media representation, stereotypes, and the power of alternative narratives.
- Encourage participants to share their insights, observations, and personal experiences related to cultural representation in the media.
- Prompt discussions on the impact of media on societal perceptions and the importance of accurate, inclusive, and diverse narratives.
- Emphasize the participants' ability to challenge and reshape media representations through critical thinking and creative storytelling.

This "Voices of Diversity" activity engages youth with different cultural backgrounds in critically analyzing media representation and promoting alternative narratives. By examining and challenging stereotypes and biases, participants develop a deeper understanding of the power of media and their own agency in shaping cultural narratives. Through collaborative newspaper theatre scenes, they amplify their voices and advocate for accurate and inclusive portrayals of diverse cultures in the media.

### 3.3 Rainbow of Desire Workshop for Youth with Different Cultural Backgrounds: "Embracing Our Multifaceted Identities"

The "Embracing Our Multifaceted Identities" workshop utilizes the Rainbow of Desire method to explore the complex desires, motivations, and internalized oppressions that individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds may experience. This workshop aims to empower youth to embrace and celebrate their multifaceted identities while addressing the challenges they face. Here are the instructions:

1. Introduction and Set-Up:
  - Create a safe and inclusive space where participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences and emotions.
  - Explain the purpose of the workshop: to explore the desires, internalized oppressions, and motivations related to participants' cultural identities.
  - Emphasize the importance of active listening, empathy, and respect for each other's diverse experiences.
2. Sharing Cultural Stories:
  - Begin by inviting participants to share personal stories, experiences, or reflections related to their cultural backgrounds.
  - Encourage open dialogue and active listening among participants.
  - Discuss how cultural identities shape desires, aspirations, and challenges, while recognizing the intersectionality of their identities.
3. Identifying Desires:
  - Introduce the concept of desires and aspirations within the context of cultural identity.
  - Instruct participants to reflect individually and identify their desires related to their cultural identities.
  - Provide prompts such as "What are your hopes and dreams related to your cultural heritage?" or "What cultural values and traditions do you cherish and desire to preserve?"



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#### 4. Exploring Internalized Oppressions:

- Discuss the concept of internalized oppressions and how they can manifest within cultural contexts.
- In small groups, ask participants to share and reflect on any internalized oppressive beliefs, stereotypes, or negative self-perceptions they may have experienced.
- Facilitate a discussion on how these internalized oppressions affect individuals' desires and self-image.

#### 5. Rainbow of Desire:

- Introduce the Rainbow of Desire method as a tool for self-reflection and transformation.
- Instruct participants to individually create a rainbow-shaped diagram on a piece of paper or in their journals.
- Ask them to write down their desires related to their cultural identities at the top of the rainbow and their internalized oppressions at the bottom.
- Participants can fill in the middle section of the rainbow with the actions or steps they can take to address their internalized oppressions and work towards fulfilling their desires.

#### 6. Sharing and Reflection:

- Provide participants with an opportunity to share their rainbows of desire, if they feel comfortable doing so.
- Encourage open and non-judgmental discussions around the challenges, motivations, and strategies shared by the participants.
- Facilitate reflection on the collective experiences and support participants in exploring ways to empower themselves and each other.

#### 7. Action Planning:

- Conclude the workshop by encouraging participants to develop action plans based on their reflections and insights.
- Ask them to identify tangible steps they can take individually or collectively to challenge internalized oppressions and pursue their desires.
- Provide resources, support, or opportunities for continued growth, activism, and community engagement.

This "Embracing Our Multifaceted Identities" workshop creates a supportive space for youth with different cultural backgrounds to explore their desires, challenges, and internalized oppressions. Through the Rainbow of Desire method, participants gain a deeper understanding of their cultural identities and develop strategies to overcome internal barriers. By embracing their multifaceted identities, they can empower themselves and create a more inclusive and affirming environment for others with diverse cultural backgrounds.

### 3.4 Physical TRAINING by Smascherati!



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The following text is the transcript of the video recording of the training (**part one:** [https://youtu.be/AG\\_-N3Yc4mo](https://youtu.be/AG_-N3Yc4mo) and **part two:** <https://youtu.be/uDzrmfKIPM> ) we held in Rotterdam (Netherlands) on March 4, 2022, for the LTTA of the ACTinYOUth project.

In particular, this is the first training session of the theater laboratory carried out during the LTTA – which was divided into eight meetings with youth workers and young people assembled by the project partners. We chose to use the video footage of this specific meeting because it involved a full explanation of the exercises (in both Italian and English) which we believe is useful, as a reminder, for participants, as well as function as a "guide" for anyone interested in this laboratory practice proposal.

The explanations obviously generate pauses that interrupt what should instead be a continuous flow of exercises with its own organic internal rhythm, functional to the objectives of the training: dissolving physical and emotional tensions, creating group harmony, stimulating concentration and individual/collective responsiveness needed to be able to listen to oneself and others.

The proposed exercises have been chosen taking into account the specific aims of the ACTinYOUth project. Other elements that led to the choice or exclusion of specific exercises were the pandemic situation and the work space (which, for example, precluded working on personal contact and lying on the ground).

The exercises that can be seen in the videos – transcribed below – are just a section of those making up the basic training of the Human Beings intercultural theater laboratory and which refers to the teachings of Pierre Byland and Jacques Lecoq, as well as other teachings and developments gained in laboratory practice.

In the transcription, we deliberately use very simple, non-specialist terminology, trying at the same time to be precise in the detailed description of the individual exercises.

### **Concentration (in the video – part one: 0 to min 1.18)**

We choose a position in space so that everyone has freedom of movement.

We look for an upright, "neutral" posture, not rigid, arms relaxed along the body, feet adherent to the floor (we are land animals after all!), but with an upward tension (just the one that brought us children to finally stand up, after so many failures). An open, "available", stance: I bring my body weight slightly forward, just like the instant before taking a step forward. I look to the horizon, far away.

I'm doing nothing, paying particular attention not to make those small gestures that we do without realizing it (touching your hair, adjusting your shirt...).

I breathe deeply, but without forcing, paying attention to the action of breathing.

Then, I inhale through my nostrils and, exhaling, I slowly bring my head down.

Inhaling, I return to the initial position.

Exhaling, with my mouth open (the relaxed jaw drops naturally), I bend my neck backwards.

Inhaling, I return to the initial position.

When you exhale, let a sound come out with the air, without forcing it.

### **I declare the action I perform (in the video – part one: 1.19 to min 8.45)**

"Shoulders up!" and I shrug – like a puppet pulled by two strings.

"Shoulders down!" and the shoulders "fall down" – as if the threads have been cut.



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"Elbows up!" and I raise my elbows as high as I can without lifting my shoulders, leaving my forearms relaxed down – again like a puppet.

"Elbows down!" and the arms are stretched back along the body.

"Elbows, wrists!" I raise my elbows again and then I also raise my forearms up to shoulder height – as if the wires were pulling them up from my wrists – with my hands relaxed downwards.

"One hand!" I raise my right hand in line with my shoulders.

"The other hand!" I raise my left hand in line with my shoulders – in a "T" position.

"I look at one hand!" head rotation to the right.

"Back!" I bring my head back to center.

"I look at the other!" head rotation to the left.

"Back!" I bring my head back to center – in the "T" position.

"Support!" I slowly lower my arms, feeling the consistency and resistance of the air. Just like birds, who, while flying, "lean" with their wings on the air.

"Elbows/wrists/hands!": while inhaling, in one fluid movement, I repeat the sequence "elbows/wrists/hands" bringing my arms to shoulder height.

"Far away, far away, far away!": exhaling, I bring my arms forward while also bending my torso forward, as if to reach a very distant point. The gaze continues where the body does not reach.

"Catch!": the hands join as if to grab something.

"Pull!": inhaling, I flex my legs and bring "what I have grabbed" to my chest with my hands, trying to feel a contrast to the action of pulling towards the chest.

"Push!": I look upwards and turn the palms of my hands together upwards, then, exhaling, I "push" upwards from my chest, extending my arms, legs and whole body.

"Open!": inhaling deeply, I "open the space" with my hands and arms outstretched (with tension, but not stiff), until I slowly bring them along the body, completing a circle. The slowness of the movement is motivated by the resistance I feel in the action of opening.

"Relax!": exhaling, I flex my legs slightly and relax the whole body, I bend my back forward, leaving my head and arms hanging down, and bringing all the weight of my body forward (almost before falling). In this position I shake my pelvis (or wiggle by butt like a dog) humming and letting my arms and neck move accordingly.

Inhaling, slowly return to an upright position, starting from the bottom up.

"Yawn!": I give a big (true!) yawn, inhaling with my mouth wide open, stretching my arms, legs and the whole body in general.

I resume the "neutral" position.

"Shoo! Shoo! Shoo!": repeatedly, I "chase away the negative energies" that surround me on the ground, throwing relaxed arms and hands downwards, with soft legs.

"Aiuo! Aiuo! Aiuo!": I move my arms and hands upwards as if to "invoke positive energies", and then again "Shoo, shoo, shoo!" downward.

To decontract the limbs well, I throw my arms and hands (soft wrists), and then my legs to the side as well. I clap my hands and hop and throw my arms and legs again.



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(While doing the training it is important to always use the voice, which is part of the body and occupies the space. Furthermore, using the voice, we do not risk carrying out the movements by holding the breath and generating a contraction: therefore, letting the air in and out, "give and take").

In relaxation, I flex my legs, bring my left foot forward, lean slightly on the right side, stretch my right arm until my hand almost touches the ground; while I stretch my legs and spine, I make a wide movement with my right arm, bringing it backwards and upwards, and then forwards, until I feel all the extension of the right side of the body. Then, relaxing, I lower my arm and return to the starting position. I bring the right leg forward and repeat the movement on the left side. The "opposition" between arms and leg is important: with the left leg forward I bring the right arm forward, just like when we walk; it's a matter of balance.

Relaxation by hopping and throwing arms and hands.

Like a boxer in the ring, I hop around with legs apart, shifting the weight from one foot to the other, legs soft. Clenching my fists at chest height I'm going to loosen my shoulders by rotating my arms backwards and bringing them forward with a rapid rotation, I repeat it several times; at first the rotations are small, then with the arms extended they become wider.

I clap my hands up and raise my left knee, rotating my right foot towards the right side together with my trunk and pelvis: I am balanced on my right foot in a posture of "great preparation" for the next movement. In one movement, I extend my left leg out to the side bringing my foot back to the ground, and bring my arms to the right, right arm extended and left bent.

In a single movement (a bit as if I were inviting someone to come with me "come!") I rotate my pelvis and torso towards my left foot and with a sweeping gesture I bring my right arm up and then I extend it forward together with my bust; in carrying out the movement, I bend the left leg on which the weight of the body passed and stretch out the right leg.

In this position, I flex my outstretched arm and, as if punching, fix a point in the air exclaiming "Yes!". To conclude the sequence, in one movement I cross my hands in front of my chest and raise my right knee, and then bring my right foot to the ground, assuming an open and frontal posture with my legs slightly apart, and spreading my arms horizontally and extending my hands, I flex my legs further, letting the air out of my mouth: "Flex!".

Relaxation.

I repeat on the other side.

De-contraction.

I open my mouth wide "Ah!" and then I act as if I were throwing kisses high up, far away; I alternate the two facial expressions.

(We do these exercises to loosen up and warm up the body, but there is always a motivation, for example that of "opening up", to "push", to "call someone to yourself". We can find the motivations by ourselves. It's not gymnastics, it is also a training for the imagination and for the emotions).

### **The ball (giving body to imagination) (in the video – part one: 8.46 to min 18.58)**

Suddenly, I point to something on the ground. "What is that? A ball!"

I take the imaginary ball off the ground. If I want to throw the ball upwards, I must start from the bottom; if I want to throw the ball forward I have to start from behind. It always starts from the opposite, just as if I want to jump high, I must first bend my legs down to charge myself.



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I will throw the ball upwards with great preparation!

Relaxed legs, left foot forward, right arm extended backwards downwards. "And one!": shifting the weight of the body forward, I bring the arm forward with a small flexion. Return to starting position. "And two!": I repeat the previous movement. "And..." I interrupt myself and ask "What should I do before throwing?" The answer is: "Take aim, watch where you throw". So, I pick up where I left off, I look up "Aaaand ....three!": I rotate my arm several times and finally throw the ball up in the direction of the gaze. The final posture will be: on tiptoe, the whole body stretched upwards, with the arm stretched out, the hand open, the weight forward.

The body will be all stretched upwards and my gaze will project the movement into space, like a "continuation" of the body.

"Bye bye little ball!": we say goodbye to the little ball that has managed to pierce the ceiling and is flying higher and higher in the sky. "Will it come back? Maybe".

The crucial question is: "Is the ball there or not? Yes or no?".

The ball isn't there. But we can imagine it. Humans (maybe even animals?) can imagine. We are able to imagine – and therefore see what is not there. This allows us to invent stories, to invent machines that don't exist... Fantasy isn't just that of children playing. It is the ability to see what is not yet there.

The ball isn't there, but we like to believe it is. It's in my imagination, but if I don't see it, I can't expect others to see it. We like to play. In some languages the same word is used (for example play, jouer, spielen) to mean both "to play", to play an instrument, or to act. For children, when they play, the distinction between fiction and reality is blurred.

But when we play (also) "for" others, as in the theater game, we must give substance to this fantasy. Fantasy is not seen! If I close my eyes I can imagine being at the sea, I see the beach, the waves... But you only see a sleeping person. Hence, we have to give substance to imagination. How? With the dynamics of the body, the dynamics of movement, of action.

For example, if I throw, the gaze is important: with my eyes I reach where my body doesn't reach and I give direction to my throw. And then the physical tension: from the feet, the whole body goes up, stretches upwards. In Italy, many elderly people play bowls and it is interesting to observe them: they look at where they throw the bowl and then follow it with their eyes all the way, and sometimes you see them move their bodies as if they were "inside" the bowl and could change its trajectory. "I am the bowl!".

This is why it is important to combine gestures, gaze and physical tension.

I repeat the exercise of throwing the ball with the left hand, always accompanied by the voice.

Relaxation by shaking arms and legs.

(Two games, in particular, develop this exercise: "Tennis" and "The trained flea", see sheets).

### Excavation (in the video – part one: 18.59 to min 19.35)

"Dig!" (I say it) diagonally, I do as if to dig the earth inside a cave – arms bent forward, fingers open and outstretched – then, "Grab!" (I say it) the earth, I carry it to the opposite side and "I throw it away!" (I say it), shaking hands, relaxing them. Then I rub them against each other as if to clean them.

### Wash (in the video – part one: 19.35 to min 21.17)



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A game to massage oneself and to promote blood circulation – but also to get rid of the "dirt" of the negative tensions of everyday life and find a new "freshness". Similar exercises are found in folk practices of many cultures.

My hands are dirty: singing, I try to wash my hands well. Then, with the right hand "get the dirt" (I say it) from the left and "throw it away!" (I say it) at the bottom right, with a decisive and precise gesture. There is a small pause of immobility at the end of the gesture. The right leg, on which I shift the weight of the body, is slightly bent. I repeat to the left.

Still singing, I "wash" my forehead and cheeks with my hands (massage). With the muscles of my face relaxed (the mouth opens naturally), I give myself small slaps on my cheeks, and then I shake my head quickly, leaving my jaw soft, so that it lets itself be carried away by the rocking.

Then I remove the dirt from my face repeating the sentences from before: starting from the forehead and following the rest of the face, "I get the dirt!" with my hands and then "throw it away!" down to the left, with a decisive and precise gesture. There is a small pause of immobility at the end of the gesture. The left leg, on which I shift the weight of the body, is slightly bent. I repeat to the right.

With firm taps I remove the dirt from my shoulders, just like I would with dandruff: "Clean, clean, clean!" (I say this) first from the left shoulder with the right hand and then vice versa.

With firm pats, I brush the dirt off my arms: "Clean, clean, clean!" (I say it) first from the left arm with the right hand and then vice versa.

"Grab!" (I say it): right hand on left shoulder. And then "Slide, slide, slide!" (I say it) along the left arm as if to take the dirt, and "Away!" (I say it) by throwing the "dirt" to the right with a decisive and precise gesture. There is a small pause of immobility at the end of the gesture. The right leg, on which I shift the weight of the body, is slightly bent. I repeat the same on the left.

"Clean, clean, clean!" (I say it): with both hands I pat the chest and belly. Then with my right hand I pat the right loin and buttock. Moving down the right leg, I pat the thigh and calf with both hands.

"Clean, clean, clean!" (I say it): with both hands I pat the chest and belly. Then with my left hand I pat the left loin and buttock. Moving down the left leg, I pat the thigh and calf with both hands.

"Wash, wash, wash!" (I say it): with both hands I wash (massage) my chest and belly well.

"Take chest, belly, butt, thigh, calf, ankle!": as I say it, I slide with both hands along the named parts, going down the right leg that I bend.

"Go!": as I say it, I throw away the "dirt" with a decisive and precise gesture.

I repeat the same movement going down to the left.

### **Wet dog (in the video – part one: 21.17 to min 21.29)**

Legs slightly bent and apart, torso leaning forward.

I clap my hands hard and "Brrr!", shake my whole body hard like a wet dog shaking off water.

A moment of great relaxation follows, very tired.

### **Angry dog (in the video - part one: 21.29 to min 21.37)**

Suddenly, as if in response to something, with great tension throughout my body, I whirl around to the left with knees slightly bent, fingers curled like claws, mouth wide open, making noises like an angry dog.



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This is followed by a moment of great relaxation, very tired and then again "angry dog" to the right.

### Relaxation by shaking the hips, shoulders, arms, hands and legs (in the video - part one: 21.37 to min 25.16)

In relaxation, I clap my hands and take a step forward with my right foot (the weight of the body remains behind), throwing my right arm and hand forward with the palm of the hand open upwards, relax; I accompany with my voice. The whole body is open.

I return to the previous position and repeat the exercise on the left.

I repeat several times accelerating the pace and with jumps in the change of foot.

The posture I assume is different from that of the previous exercises (throwing the ball, calling someone) where, to maintain balance, the leg and arms were in opposition, just like when we walk.

I repeat faster, always accompanying with the voice.

If I turn to gaze (convinced!) in one direction, those close to me will also look in that same direction.

With my gaze I can anticipate the movement and indicate the direction I will give it.

I clap my hands and look up: I throw my right arm up. I clap my hands and look down: throw left arm down; and vice versa.

I clap my hands and look to the left: left arm thrown to the left. I clap my hands and look to the right: I throw my right arm to the right.

I repeat the sequence always interspersing with the clapping of the hands and saying the directions: "right up, left down, right down, left up, side to right, side to left". I pick up the pace, until I throw both arms up, simultaneously raising my left knee and balancing on my right foot.

### Turnaround (in the video - part one: 25.16 to min 25.40)

After a few seconds in this position, hopping, I turn around myself clockwise and then counterclockwise. Then I repeat the same movement balancing on my left foot.

### Introducing (in the video - part one: 24.40 to min 29.07)

I clap my hands, I extend my right arm to the side with the palm of the hand open upwards and, looking in the direction of the arm, I say "Et voilà!", as if introducing someone.

If I want the movement to be a presentation, tension is key: the energy I put into the gesture to "support" who I am presenting. A "relaxed" handshake is not an indication of great interest!

Emotional tension is transmitted through body tension. If there's interest, there will be an investment of energy in what I do. (On this see "**Emotional tension/physical tension**" sheet)

I resume the exercise of presenting in different directions always with the voice and clap of the hand: sideways, diagonally up and down.

With my right arm I present to the right and, keeping my arm extended to the right, with my left arm I present to the left: I have both arms open, I look ahead "Et voilà!", now it's me who introduces myself!

I have my arms crossed on my chest. Taking a step forward, I "push" (feel the resistance!) with my forearms and backs of my hands, as if to "open": here I am, "present", I'm here. (See the "**Open/close**" sheet on this)



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### Small rhythmic introduction sequence (in the video – part one: 29.07 to 37.03)

- 1) I clap my hands.
- 2) I stamp my right foot on the ground taking a small step forward (the weight of the body remains behind, on the left foot).
- 3) opening my arms, I say my name.

First, we do it all together, then individually, each facing the others.

As people do the exercise in front of others, it will be possible to pay more and more attention to the gesture. Opening your arms to introduce yourself is opening up to others. It is like a hug, a welcoming, "round" gesture: the arms will not be rigid and the opening will not be exaggerated (with the eyes I can see the hands).

### "...what happened?" (in the video – part one: 37.03 to min 44.57)

After the individual introductions, we repeat the exercise once again all together.

I keep my arms open and move my hips while humming. I clap my right leg three times with my right hand, point to the left with the same hand, shake my pelvis, clap my hands and move my right leg as if I were kicking something to the left.

Before finishing the "kick" gesture, I suddenly "feel" something to my right that makes me go back with my leg and put my foot back on the ground.

"...what happened?" This is the question that puts me on alert, as "suspended". The body is in the same tension as a runner before the "start".

In everyday life, when we sense something unexpected, we stop and listen.

In the theater game, I also imagine what doesn't happen and I react.

Feet are firmly on the ground, legs relaxed, ready to spring. I suddenly pass from a moment of joy and light-heartedness to one of surprise, alert, question. I feel tension throughout my body and I look around, always remaining on the spot, as if wanting to scrutinize something. All my senses are alerted, trying to find all the information I need. Sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste "what is happening around me?" I ask them. I am sensitive to everything. Let's think about how developed a dog's sense of smell is, how much information it captures that we don't perceive! Or in the senses of other animals...

When we are in a foreign country for the first time, we are both curious and fearful: we are on the alert. Everything is new and surprises us: the noises and rhythms, the colors, the smells... A new food: we observe it, we smell it, we touch it and then we taste it. We perceive our surroundings through our senses.

I repeat the movement of the "kick" forward to the right and left, back to the right and left.

Each time, I interrupt myself with the question "...what happened?", and each time I focus on a particular meaning.

Once the "interrupted kick" sequence is complete, I continue letting my leg guide me and make me do a complete 360° turn: forward kick with right leg makes me turn to the left (ie, counterclockwise); left leg makes me turn to the right (clockwise).

Then back kick with right leg makes me circle back to the right; left leg makes me circle backwards to the left.



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### "...that's enough!" (in the video – part one: 44.57 to min 45.06)

At the end of the sequence, from the state of alert there is suddenly a "breakdown" of tension in the body: as if I'm tired, I spring on my relaxed legs and let my arms and torso drop down. I spread my arms and let them fall, I raise them to the sky and let them fall without resistance.

### "Oh well!" (in the video – part one: 45.06 to min 46.32)

The previous movement turns into a small rhythmic sequence. Accompanying with the voice "...ah well, yes well", I take two steps diagonally left raising my arms up and then on the third step I raise my left knee; I lower my arms and knees and go back; I repeat the sequence on the right.

I repeat the sequence several times, maintaining the rhythm, but gradually reducing the space and amplitude of the movements of the arms and legs, until only a small hint, a memory, an intention remains of the sequence of movements I was doing.

### "...scared? It's a joke!" (In the video – part one: 46.32 to min 47.41)

I return to a neutral position, but this moment of balance is broken by a fright: "I see" and point to something on the ground that scares me a lot. I stiffen and scream in fright. I react with great physical tension to great fright. I protect myself first with one arm then the other, crossing my wrists in front of my chest.

"What's that? What's that? What's that?" I wonder, while keeping the tension high throughout my body. Then I ask myself "Is it nothing?", "Is it a joke?". "Oh, it's a joke!" and with a big sigh of relief and laughing, I "melt" by relaxing and slowly untying the arms that served as a shield. I arch back slightly with my arms bent close to my torso, and throwing my forearms forward with my wrists soft, I jump backwards, as if to throw away, "oh, come on!". "It's nothing!", "What a fool!". I repeat twice.

"Ah!", I bend my torso slightly to the left, raise my right forearm while the arm remains close to my side and I stretch to the left, with my right hand and forearm I make as if to chase away. I repeat on the other side. Spreading my arms, I take a little hop.

But as soon as I relax, I "see" the danger again and point to it, it is above and below, I am surrounded. I react as before by crossing my wrists in front of my chest, screaming and stiffening my body. "What is it?", "It's nothing!". I repeat the movements from before, but in an amplified way and when I lean to the side, I stretch the whole right and left side well.

I jump 3 times with arms outstretched, "Oh well!", and the next exercise is born from these hops.

### "Decreasing" (in the video – part one: 47.41 to min 51.18)

On the rhythm of a hummed jingle, I take fast steps forward and when the tune ends, I stop remaining "suspended". As if I was wrong, I go back counting "1, 2, 3, 4" and then, humming again, I set off again in another direction. This time, however, I suddenly interrupt the tune before the end and stop "suspended". I go back counting "1, 2, 3, 4" and then, humming, I set off in a new direction. The tune will end even earlier and therefore the path will be even shorter. I repeat several times always decreasing the jingle and space (only the counting keeps the same rhythm), until I stand still without singing. Now it's just inside me. The suspended tension remains.



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### **“Wait for me!” (In the video – part one: 51.18 to min 51.43)**

From a neutral position with my legs relaxed and firmly planted on the ground, suddenly – as if I had heard something – I move my right arm aside and put my head under it to check if there is someone or something behind me, first to the right, then to the left: nothing is there. I scan far in front of me on the horizon: I see someone. I raise one arm to greet him then immediately the other and yell: "Hello!".

I extend my arms outstretched forward and shout "Wait for me!", and start running in place. Arms, torso and legs are in line, I'm kicking my legs backwards to run as fast as I can "Here come, here I come!", "Wait for me!".

### **"Shit!" (In the video – part one: 51.43 to min 51.12)**

I tried to run after him, but he's gone, I'm a little embittered so I drop my arms and with a gesture of annoyance, I slam my right foot on the ground and utter: "Shit!". I repeat with the left foot. I repeat again, but in the repetition the movement is transformed.

Standing on my left foot, I swing my right leg forward along with my left arm, snapping my fingers to mark the rhythm, as my right arm goes behind. (Like when we walk: arm/leg opposition). Then support on the right, throwing left leg and right arm behind and left arm forward.

After a while, without losing the rhythm, I put my foot down on my right foot and throw my left leg and right arm forward and left arm behind. Then support on the left, throwing right leg and left arm behind and right arm forward.

I repeat several times alternating the two sequences transforming it into a little dance.

### **Tying my shoelaces (in the video – part one: 51.43 to 52.53)**

Seamlessly, maintaining the rhythm of the previous dance, I start clapping and modify the movement of the legs. Leaning on the right, I "pick up" the bent left leg, rotate it outwards and throw it to the side. I "pick up" and place my foot on the ground. Same movement with the left leg. The foot that is on the ground is well rooted and does not hop. The rhythm becomes more sustained, marked by the hands.

Suddenly, while I'm "dancing", I stop, with one foot suspended. There is something wrong: I check and see that the shoe is untied. I tie my shoe and resume the "dance". Suddenly I stop with my other foot suspended. Even here you have to tie your shoe!

(A rhythmic tempo is created. An accident, a problem breaks it. Suspension. The problem is resolved and the previous rhythm is resumed).

### **“Break” (in the video – part one: 52.53 to the end; part two: 0 to 2.23)**

The third time, I stop with my foot hanging: the shoe can't be untied again! I have to look for a new "justification" for the posture I'm in. I'm tired, I want to take a break. I place the left foot suspended on the inside of the thigh of the right leg. Then I place my right hand on my left knee and rest my left elbow on it with my forearm pointing up. Finally, I rest my left cheek on the palm of my left hand. A “resting posture”.



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As if I had fallen asleep, I lose my balance and almost fall, but land on my left foot on the ground. With my right hand I “grab” my right knee and place my right foot inside my left thigh. I then repeat the whole previous sequence on this side until I get to the "rest posture".

Several times I lose my balance and reassemble my posture, but now I do it in one movement, without disjoining the action. So, I'm making the action smaller (as for "**Decreasing**") until all that remains of the posture is a memory.

The posture can therefore be broken down and recomposed in different ways. For example, I can do it in 4 times, articulating the action in 4 micro-actions, or in a single time, with the body parts starting together and ending the action together (like a flower that opens and closes).

We can transform the action into the "tired man's walk", each step a rest pause, or with music, following the rhythm, it can transform into the "tired man's dance"!

It seems interesting to me to be able to use a simple posture to be able to create a theatrical game. Even more interesting and meaningful if we play with our personal postures of daily life. We can play it individually or create small “choreographies” as a couple or as a group.

### "...wonderful!" (In the video – part two: 3.12 to min 4.31)

Inhaling, I open my arms upwards and say "wonderful!". Then turn my palms down and let the open arms slowly descend until they are stretched along the body.

I take a step back. Forearms in front of the torso parallel to the floor. As I take a step forward, I open my arms with the feeling of "opening a window" and looking out onto a wonderful panorama. It is important that the forearms and backs of the hands "push" forward, as if sensing a contrast, an opposition.

In the landing posture, I will have my arms open slightly bent, my fingertips still in my field of vision. A posture of openness, of availability, like a welcoming embrace: "I open up".

I open/close, I open/close. (See "**Open/close**" sheet).

I'm standing, "neutral" position, arms extended along the body.

In the following exercises I will try to move only one part of the body, checking the different possibilities. Behind even stupid "justifications", there are important exercises for the articulation of the body.

### "Yes yes, no no" (head movements) (in the video – part two: 4.31 to min 5.28)

Repeatedly raising and lowering my head in a sweeping motion, I say "Yes, yes!".

Repeatedly turning my head in a sweeping gesture to the right and left, I say "No, no!".

I alternate the two movements, accelerating the pace. Then, I reverse the text with respect to the gesture: when I nod, I say "No, no!" and when I deny with the gesture, I say "Yes, yes!". I repeat faster and faster. Still in suspension, looking ahead, I ask "Yes or no?". I open my arms sideways and say "Mah...", a gesture and a verbal expression which in Italian means "I don't know".

Then, with my arms stretched out along my body, I shrug my shoulders and say "Whatever!", another gesture and another expression used in Italy to say "I don't know". I repeat this several times and then tilt my head from side to side, saying "Maybe yes, maybe not". This movement is also repeated several times.

Then, looking forward, I push my head forward on the board saying "What?". Then I bring my head back to the starting position. I bring my head forward again, repeating "What?". So, keeping my head forward, I



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point to myself and ask "Who, me?!" and then, pointing forward, "Over there?!". Now I put my head back as far as possible and say "No no no no no!" accompanying with the gesture of denial of the forefinger.

Arms extended along the body, I move my head 3 times quickly forwards and backwards on the axis. Every time the head is forward, I say "Cuckoo!" (like the bird on a traditional Swiss watch).

So, remaining frontal with my face, I bring my head to the right and left side, always on the axis. I accompany this movement by saying "Tic tac, tic tac". Then I finish a complete rotation on the axis of the head (face always frontal), twice clockwise and twice counterclockwise.

I lower my head to look at the ground: "Oh! The ball we launched is back!".

The little ball comes to life and I follow it with my eyes: this will be my motivation to make the next head movements. I will keep my eyes fixed, as if looking through the holes in a mask, and this limit will force me to make wide movements with my head.

The ball slides along the floor to the left, then climbs the wall and then slides along the ceiling until it reaches the right wall, then descends and returns to my feet. To follow it, I will have made a complete rotation of the head, softly and as wide as possible.

Now the ball will go the reverse turn faster and I will follow it by making the rotation faster.

### **Goodbye (in the video – part two: 5.29 to min 10.29)**

The ball is at my feet again and now it slides on the floor going forward, and then it climbs on the back wall: I follow it with my eyes, pointing at it. The wall is gone and the ball moves away on the horizon. I raise my right arm to say farewell her "Bye bye". In order to look further, I go on tiptoes. The whole body is in tension upwards. Now slowly bring your heels back to the ground. In order to control this descent, I have to put all my weight forward on my toes. One part of the body "pulls" upwards, while another "pulls" downwards: this contrast generates tension. A stretching that is certainly good for the body. But we should try to feel how this physical tension reveals an emotional tension: in detachment there is a break-up, a piece of the one who departs stays with me, and a piece of me leaves with the one who leaves. This awareness gives a great "stage presence".

### **"Oh well!" (shoulder movements) (in the video – part two: 10.29 to min 11.10)**

As if wanting to shake off the tension accumulated in the previous exercise and bring the training back to a more playful level, I shrug my shoulders saying "Oh well!" (in Italy gesture and word are used to belittle a circumstance: "it's not important").

Part of a good training is to train yourself to pass from one psycho-physical-emotional state to another completely different one – as children know how to do – and also to train yourself in self-irony so as not to risk taking yourself too seriously: we're playing!

I repeat the gesture of the shoulders several times and then I raise them one at a time: up/up, down/down accompanying with "Ah well, yes well!". Then, I push one shoulder forward and then bring it back. I repeat the same with the other shoulder. I close them both: I close myself! I open them both: I open myself! I stand on the side and rotate a shoulder: very sensual! The same with the other. Moving forward, I quickly shrug my shoulders alternately without moving my hips "Chica chica chica!". I then hop in place, leaving my shoulders absolutely relaxed and free to jerk.



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### **Gorilla (chest) (in the video – part two: 11.10 to min 12.53)**

I push my chest out and pound my fists making animal noises. Then, I spread my arms with elbows bent, forearms pointing up with fists clenched, “muscle flexing” as a sign of strength. Then I strike the chest lightly with my right fist and, as if feeling a strong blow, I draw my chest in.

I imagine rejecting a ball with my chest (chest out), or receiving a “ball-hit” (chest in). Always trying to move only the chest (and not the shoulders, for example).

Now, I push my chest out to the left diagonally up. I repeat twice as if they were the pulsations of the heart pounding for love! I repeat the same to the right (a second spare heart!).

Then, I do a full chest rotation, still breathing and humming: forward, right, backward, left, forward, and so on in one fluid motion. I also repeat in the reverse direction.

Quickly massage your chest with your hands from top to bottom.

### **"Waterfall" (in the video – part two: 12.52 to min 13.18)**

As if water were coming down from above, I raise my arms up, tilt my head back and let the water and hands slide first over my face, then over my neck, chest, belly, legs down to my feet and I accompany the movement descending progressively with the body on the ground on all fours (hands and knees on the ground). I let the water flow on the ground ahead. I put my forehead on the ground and lift my hands and feet: pause. Reinvigorated, I stand up in one go, helped by the wide movement of the arms outstretched to the side, which continue upwards above the head. Hands clench into fists. With the arms “pull” all the energy down. “I am strong!”. I exhale.

### **"Wagging the tail" (hips) (in the video – part two: 13.18 to min 14.08)**

I stamp my feet on the ground to give me good stability. Feet are parallel, legs relaxed, back straight. Push the pelvis forward, bring back to center, push back, bring back to center. Right, center, left, center. I repeat these movements several times, always trying not to move other parts of the body. Then all the rotation: forward, right, back, left. And then in the reverse direction. I repeat several times in both directions softly and without forgetting to hum.

I lean forward with my torso, push my pelvis back, clap my butt with my hands, and like a happy dog wagging its tail, I move my pelvis widely to the right and to the left.

I return to an upright position and, alternating the support now on one foot now on the other, I shake my arms and legs.

“How wonderful!” Inhaling, I open my arms upwards and say “How nice!”. Then turn your palms down and let your open arms slowly descend until they are stretched along your body.

### **“Offering and receiving” (in the video – part two: 14.08 to the end)**

In this “exercise”, I believe that motivation arises “naturally” while performing the gestural sequence: I take something from myself and offer it, then I take something from outside and bring it inside me. The timing of breathing helps to enter this physical and sensory dynamic. (On breathing, see the “Breath” sheet.)



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(The music that accompanies the sequence in the video we refer to is: J.S. Bach "Goldberg Variations" BWV 988: Aria, Glenn Gould (1981 Gould Remaster). But it can also be performed silently).

"Neutral" position, weight slightly forward, gaze at the horizon, arms extended along the body.

## FRONT

- 1) Inhaling, bend the right elbow, the forearm and the relaxed hand rise in front of the torso, until the palm of the hand is next to the left cheek. (As if I took something from below - inside me? - and brought it up).
  - 2) In apnea, the hand passes behind the neck.
  - 3) Exhaling, the arm extends frontally up to the fingertips of the hand, without bringing the shoulder forward. (As if I "offered" what I took).
  - 4) In shallow apnea, short break.
  - 5) Inhaling, I bring my hand in front of my face. (As if I "received" something from outside).
  - 6) In apnea, short break.
  - 7) Breathing out, I bring my hand down in front of my chest and bring my arm back to its initial position. (As if I carried inside me what I received from outside).
  - 8) In shallow apnea, short break.
- Same gesture with the left arm. Same gesture with the two arms together.

## LATERAL

I repeat the entire "offering/receiving" sequence on the sides, first to the right, then to the left, and then to both sides simultaneously.

- 1) Inhaling, bend the right elbow, the forearm and the relaxed hand rise in front of the torso, until the palm of the hand is next to the left cheek.
- 2) In apnea, the hand passes behind the neck.
- 3) Exhaling, the arm extends laterally to the right up to the fingertips of the hand.
- 4) In low apnea, I turn my head to the right.
- 5) Inhaling, bring the palm of the hand back to the face
- 6) In apnea, I bring my face back to the frontal position.
- 7) Breathing out, I bring my hand down in front of my chest and bring my arm back to its initial position.
- 8) In shallow apnea, short break.

## UPWARD

I repeat the entire "offering/receiving" sequence upwards, first with the right arm, then with the left arm and then with both simultaneously.

- 1) Inhaling, bend the right elbow, the forearm and the relaxed hand rise in front of the torso, until the palm of the hand is next to the left cheek.
- 2) In apnea, the hand passes behind the neck.
- 3) Exhaling, the arm extends upwards to the fingertips of the hand.
- 4) In low apnea, I raise my head.
- 5) Inhaling, bring the palm of the hand back to the face.



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6) In apnea, I bring my face back to the frontal position.

7) Breathing out, I bring my hand down in front of my chest and bring my arm back to its initial position.

1. In shallow apnea, short break.

"Thank you!". With a deep bow, I thank all participants.

## 1. Eye contact: lead and be led

### Learning Objectives:

- create a relationship of trust between strangers;
- learn to drive and to let the others drive you;
- listening to the partner;
- concentration and openness;
- attention to the others and to the space;
- become aware of the importance of the rules of the game.

### Rules of the game:

- always maintain eye contact with your partner;
- accept peer guidance

### Materials: Music

**Preface:** before starting the exercise, it is advisable to ask the partner for his/her availability. (Let's take the example once again from children when they ask an unknown equal in age "shall we play together?").

**Description:** to allow for a more immediate understanding (also thinking of the participants who do not know the language well), the workshop leader invites a volunteer to do the exercise together; first the workshop leader with outstretched arms and hands on the partner's shoulders will make him move in space, in different directions, pushing and pulling him; then, reversing the roles, he will let himself be guided by his partner.

The workshop driver and the volunteer then try to do the regular exercise, which consists in performing the previous action, but without physical contact, maintaining eye contact and the same distance (as with outstretched arms). As before, role reversal applies.

Once a good feeling has been created between the two "players", the workshop driver will propose to play without establishing a priori the roles, roles which will alternate repeatedly without the need to



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communicate with words or gestures, but only perceiving the partner's decision to take the guide and to support it. This allows the couple to "risk" more, going faster throughout the space and also "pulling" (therefore walking backwards) without fear of obstacles, as the partner will immediately take the lead in view of a "danger".

The workshop driver now invites the participants to create couples that will occupy all the space.

The couples decide who leads the game until the workshop driver invites them to switch roles.

During the exercise it is good not to talk and focus on the partner's gaze.

When the workshop driver feels that there is a good harmony in the couples, he/she invites the participants to move on to the second phase, that is, to play without deciding the roles beforehand. Players will have to be very concentrated and "listening" to their partner; they will also have to pay particular attention not to bump into others.

During the second phase the workshop driver will propose different music, so as to stimulate the players to vary the rhythm and directions, and to look for a "character" of the movements, creating an original "couple dance".

**Development:** the workshop driver, when he feels that the game is proceeding well, proposes a further step. The couples, while they are playing, meet and exchange partners: two new couples will form from the two previous couples. The exchange must take place without resorting to gestures or words, but only through the search for the gaze.

The workshop driver will invite the participants to form couples with everyone.

**Observations:** Looking into each other's eyes can create embarrassment and in this regard there are cultural differences, which the workshop driver must take into account in order to respect everyone's sensitivity. The couples at the beginning of the game are formed on the mutual choice of the two partners.

## 2. Space balance

### Learning Objectives:

1. become aware of the space;
2. building trust between persons;
3. leading and being led;
4. concentration and openness;
5. becoming aware of the importance of the rules of the game.

### Rules of the games:

- maintain space balance with the partner;



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- seek and maintain eye contact;
- guidance exchange.

**Material:** Music

**Description:**

The space is defined as a rectangle. The participants are seated all around.

Imagine the space as a table in precarious equilibrium supported by a central pivot.

A participant is invited to look for the balance point. A second participant enters and breaks the balance and the first player has to restore it.

The game consists of the provocation by the second participant (B) and the reaction of the first (A).

When B crosses half the space, A leads the game. Once the game is clear, the leader is replaced by a second participant.

Different music is played to stimulate different rhythms and relationships between the partners.

While the first couple is playing, another one enters and then another up to a maximum of five couples at the same time. Then the first couple leaves and a sixth enters and so on until all participants are involved.

As the new pairs enter, the people leading the game are asked to take into account the presence of others in their "half of the field" and to fill the space, so that the whole space is in balance, not just the individual pairs. This implies a greater awareness of spatiality, thus concentration and greater openness together.

**Development:**

Once all participants are familiar with the rules, ten people are asked to walk in the space while keeping their balance. When the music starts, the participants immediately look for their partner, who will be the person who is currently balancing with them. Contact is only made through a glance. This is how the game starts again, until the music stops and the participants return to being single. They return to walking individually and with the start of the music the game is resumed, with a different partner.

**Variation:**

The people who lead can decide not to play alone, but to join in pairs or in more, until they form a group. On the opposite side it will be the same.

In this way you begin to feel the choral group. This can also be followed by moments when one person decides to break away from the group to play alone again.

**Observations:**

At the beginning the game is based primarily on respect of space and balance. As the game develops, participants are asked to create a relationship with the partners: the one who leads will have the task of surprising the partner, the one who lets himself be guided will have the task of reacting. Why do we approach? Why do we move away?

Feel the difference between approaching by running or walking.

Feel the uniqueness of the relationship with the partner. Feel the importance of pauses.

Already energy, rhythm and space enter into one of the first exercises proposed during the workshop.

From the exercise we pass to the game and from the game to a creative moment.

The participants at the end of the game, which can take a long time, will have developed a form of contact between them, breaking many barriers, including the language barrier.



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### 3. Open-close (open yourself/close yourself)

#### Learning Objectives:

- Look for the necessary tension and energy in the gesture
- Looking for motivation and cleanliness of the gesture in improvisation
- Stimulate the creative imagination

**Materials:** music

**Rules of the game:** perform every action and gesture as if going against an opposing force

#### Description:

The workshop leader asks the players to perform "essential" actions with their upper limbs, playing with the following pairs of opposites: open/close-push/pull-offer/receive.

It is not a question of "miming" the actions pretending to be dealing with objects, but of practicing the tension of the body, the cleanliness of the gesture and the dynamics of the movement.

The workshop leader initially invites the players to concentrate on the movements that "start from us" and go outwards (in opening, pushing, giving) and then "return" towards us from the outside (in closing, pulling, receiving).

To perform an action, energy is needed and this is generated by "sensing" the opposing force that goes against the movement: I "open" something that is "closed"!

To help generate this energy, the workshop leader can counteract the player's movement, for example by adhering his arm to the arm of the player, opposing resistance: the player's body will immediately react, "supporting" the arms in their action.

It is important to use all the joints of the hands and arms without stiffness, paying attention to which single part "guides" the movement (shoulder, elbow, wrist, fingers...).

The workshop leader can also suggest to the players to move as if they were underwater and feel the contrast of the element around them: the movement will be fluid and not rapid.

It's good to take breaks that mark the end of a gesture, before starting the next one. Pauses set the pace, they're like punctuation.

It's good not to decide first what you want to do, but to let the images and sensations come while you improvise. If suggestions come up, it's good to cultivate them with the imagination, but also without having problems moving on to something else, with a lot of freedom.

The exercise is accompanied by music that can stimulate the imagination of the players.

As always, it is also very useful to watch the work of one's companions: for this reason the workshop leader can ask the players to divide themselves between "actors" and "spectators", then reversing the roles.

The moment in which one improvises in front of one's companions is important both for those who act and for those who watch: the actors become aware of being observed and train themselves to "have an audience"; the viewer is invited to do so without making judgments, but with complicit curiosity.

The game can be developed and go beyond the gestures of arms and hands, also involving other parts of the body.

**Observations:** the exercise is preliminary to the exercise "Improvise with a partner on the side".



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### Development:

When I open my arms I "open myself" and when I close them "I close myself".

The workshop leader can suggest that the players try to apply the exercise done previously by playing this time with the opposites "opening/closing", "offering/receiving".

To react to events that cause an emotion, or simply to express them, the body "opens itself" and "closes itself". The word "emotion" contains in itself the action of motion (literally "moving out"). Even in expressing emotions we make an investment of energy: the emotional tension manifests itself in the physical tension which in this game does not have to "explode", but it is "held" and expanded throughout the body by the actor, generating a "slow" movement.

And even in this case the tension arises from feeling a contrary "force": for example, "I would like to open up, but I'm shy". The resulting gesture will acquire a much greater value precisely because it is not "easy" for the subject to open up and requires a considerable emotional investment on his part.

### Observations:

Again, it is easy to pass from a simple initial exercise to an expressive game that can turn into a real improvisation.

This activity can become an individual moment of training to be done all together, each following and developing their own imagination.

Through this activity, to young people it is also offered the opportunity (quite rare today) to discover the strength and beauty that resides in slowness.

In our hand which, without premeditation, slowly opens, we can recognize the opening of a flower, or the simple yet significant act of showing oneself with "bare hands".

## 4. Put down roots

### Learning objectives:

- Train imagination and creativity
- Train awareness of the various parts of the body
- Acquire fluidity of movement
- Acquire stability and balance

### Description:

Balancing on one leg, imagine touching the ground with the toe of the other foot as if it were boiling water and react by immediately withdrawing the foot. It is important that it is a "reaction": before touching it, we do not know that the water is boiling! Try again, until the temperature is judged pleasant; at this point, gradually place the tip of the foot on the ground, then, increasing the pressure as if we wanted to dig and enter the earth, place the half of the foot and then descend to the heel, bringing on it the whole weight of the body and then raising the other foot.

Repeat the exercise on the other foot.



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Then alternate the lean on the ground between one foot and the other, first by jumping, then remaining with the toe on the ground and then the whole plant. Your feet are now well "attached" to the ground, as if you were a tree with deep roots. Feel the lower body "pulled" down and the upper body light. Lightly raise your arms.

At this point I can imagine a strong wind shaking the tree and messing it up in all its parts and in all directions. The whole body moves as flexible as a young plant, playing with the ankles, knees, pelvis, chest, shoulders, neck, elbows, wrists, hands. Only the soles of the feet remain firmly attached to the ground.

As always, it is important to let yourself feel inside the image and not to think too much.

Slowly the wind decreases and the calm returns.

**Observations:** The exercise is preliminary to the "Take the space" sheet.

## 5. Take the space/field of view

### Learning Objectives:

- The exercise helps to become aware of the space that surrounds us, paying particular attention to peripheral view. Even in immobility I can "take" a space that goes beyond what I occupy with the body.
- Become aware of your own "stage presence".
- The exercise is preliminary to the game "Improvisation with a partner on the side" and to the creation and execution of rhythmic sequences (gestures or articulated actions) in couples or groups.

### Materials: /

### Description:

The workshop leader invites the participants to position themselves in the room, distancing themselves from each other.

The workshop leader asks the participants to stretch out in all directions with their arms extended, as if to "touch" with their fingers the ends of an imaginary bubble, as large as possible, which surrounds them. The whole body must be flexible, the legs bend, the neck is soft.

After some of this "exploration", the workshop leader starts placing limitations on the use of body parts in performing the same exercise.

First limitation: the arms must remain still along the body; the extreme point will then become the head.

In the next step, the legs will no longer be able to bend and therefore the "occupied" space will further decrease.

Subsequently, it is requested to immobilize also the pelvis and to move only the upper part of the body. Can be offered as an image that of being immersed in the sand up to the basin.



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The sand then rises up to the shoulders: only the neck will have freedom of movement.

Then the workshop leader invites to immobilize also the head in a frontal erect position and asks how the space can be "taken" and "occupied" while remaining motionless. The answer is the view.

At this point, without moving your head, people are invited to look at everything visible: near, far, up and down, to the sides, even rolling your eyes.

Then everybody is asked to immobilize their eyes, continuing to look ahead.

The following exercise is therefore proposed to become aware of one's visual field, paying particular attention to peripheral vision: looking ahead at the horizon with eyes still, stretch the arms forward with the index fingers pointing upwards; slowly spread the arms, continuing to look at the two fingers with steady eyes, until they are visible (the opening is not the same for everyone).

Participants are therefore asked to leave their arms alongside their bodies and to keep their gaze open with their eyes still, without losing the sharpness of their vision, and therefore to try to memorize everything they can see (people, objects, colours, shapes) in the foreground, far, above, below, to the sides.

After leaving the participants the necessary time, they are asked to close their eyes and to "see with their eyes closed" the memorized image. It is suggested to experience the sensation of being able to carry all the space within themselves and at the same time of being able to occupy it all, in complete stillness.

The workshop leader asks everyone to keep their eyes closed and then he will ask a participant to say what he "sees" with his eyes closed; (the workshop leader can also take the participant's hand to indicate a point in space and ask him: "Who is there? What object? What color? And further back? And higher? ..."). He then asks the participant to open his eyes to check how much he remembered and how much he forgot. Then he invites him to do to one of his companions what he did with him. And so it will be in succession with the other participants: being asked what he/she remembers and asking another. It is important for the participants to keep their eyes closed until the "check" with a companion.

**Observations:** it is an exercise that requires silence and a lot of concentration.

After the exercise it is good to massage the eyelids lightly.

## 6. Improvise with a side partner.

### Learning Objectives:

- Learn to lead and be led
- Seeking the motivation and cleanliness of the gesture and action
- Stimulate the creative imagination
- Train peripheral vision and concentration
- Train your memory through the construction of sequences



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- Train your sense of rhythm

**Materials:** music

**Rules of the game:** perform the same gestures and actions in sync, improvising

**Description:** The game is a direct application of the exercise on the field of view (see **Take the Space** sheet). It is good to have previously worked on **"Open/Close"**.

The workshop leader asks to form pairs.

A player (A) looking forward with his eyes still, opens his arms to show his partner (B) his own field of view and asks him to position himself to his side, so as to be within his sight.

Both players are always looking ahead, at the horizon, without moving their eyes.

B is invited to slowly make gestures with his hands and arms, making sure that they do not leave A's field of view (for example behind or on the opposite side to that of his partner).

B will also have to move very slowly to allow A to perform the same gestures as him at the same time, in synchrony. Who observes, should not understand which of the two partners is leading the game!

At one point the workshop leader will ask the players to switch roles without interrupting the game (A leads B). After some time the workshop leader will ask to stop choosing a final posture.

The workshop leader will then ask half of the group to play the game in front of the other companions, keeping the same pairs. As before, the workshop leader will at one point ask the players to switch roles without interrupting and then to stop in a final position.

At this point the half of the group that was watching will be asked to act and the rest to watch.

By improvising in front of their companions, players can pick up and develop elements they have felt most during the previous stage of the game, but without feeling committed to repeat what they have previously created.

**Observations:**

It is important that gestures are motivated, i.e. that actions are performed or emotions are expressed. The workshop leader may suggest working on the pairs of opposites: "open/close - push/pull - offer/receive"; but also "I open, I close, I offer myself, I receive" (see **"Open/close"** sheet). Even the slowness of the movement (essential to allow the partner not to act late) must be motivated and not a formal slow motion exercise.

Improvising as a couple in sync obviously greatly limits the freedom of movement, as the driver must always keep in mind that his partner is unaware of what will be done. However, this limit imposes great concentration and attention which translate into tension and cleanliness of the movements, very important qualities which often fail when improvising individually.

**Possible developments:** Creation of **rhythmic gestural sequences in pairs** with the creative contribution of both partners: two players stand next to each other, looking ahead to the horizon; player A makes a gesture and player B repeats it; then A performs another gesture and B repeats it, and so on for 4 gestures. At this point the two players repeat the sequence of 4 gestures in synchrony. Afterwards, player B proposes his 4 gestures to partner A in the same way. Then the two players repeat the 4 gestures together and then the whole sequence of 8 gestures. The music that will accompany and mark the rhythm of the sequence can be proposed by the workshop leader or chosen by the players themselves.



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After this exercise, the handler can propose to A to compose a new sequence of 4 consecutive gestures; B will repeat the sequence and finally "add" his sequence of 4 gestures. A and B will repeat the sequence of 8 gestures together. Even long sequences can be created gradually.

Subsequently, **sequences** can also be created **in small groups**: A proposes 4 gestures, B repeats, C repeats, D repeats. Everyone performs the sequence together. B "adds", A and C repeat, D repeats. Everyone performs the sequence of 8 gestures together. C "adds", B and D repeat, A repeats. Everyone performs the sequence of 12 gestures together. D "adds", C repeats, B repeats, A repeats. All together they perform the sequence of 16 gestures. A complex rhythmic gestural sequence was built with the creative contribution of all the participants!

The same construction methodology can be adopted to build **group sequences with actions with objects**, articulating the actions into many "micro-actions" (see "Take the space" sheet).

Each player proposes his sequence to the partner of the couple (or to the partners of the group), who will then add their own sequences with the same object or with others, following the game scheme used to build the rhythmic gestural sequences. Doing so, players can create entire scenes of "dance action" using music that they can choose based on the character they want to impress on the scene (almost like a musical!).

Players can also name the action they perform: this way they help each other to remember the action and perform it together at the same time. This gives the sequence a precise rhythmic scansion, until it takes the form of a melody. Work songs were born this way, with the intention of helping each other (and perhaps easing the pain a little); the rhythmic scanning of the speech can also recall the origin of rap or certain songs from old cartoons. The group "song" that arises from naming the actions can therefore even replace the musical base.

"**Writing with your hands**" (see sheet) also offer the pretext for improvising with a partner on the side.

#### **Observations:**

This kind of exercises facilitate the ability of individuals to work creatively in groups, with the active participation of all, avoiding the creation of leaders and subordinates.

## 7. Simple individual and group sequences

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- Learn to work in a team
- Train coordination individually and with partners
- Acquire greater awareness of the gesture
- Learn new ways to express emotions

**Material:** Music

#### **Description:**

- **Sequence of 6 gestures + word**  
1) I clap my hands and I say "Hands!",



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- 2) with my right hand I clap my forehead and I say "Forehead!",
- 3) I clap my chest and I say "Chest!",
- 4) I clap my belly and I say "Belly! ",
- 5) I tap my butt and I say "Butt!",
- 6) I throw my hand forward and say "Go away!".

I repeat with the other hand and then with both together. It can be done faster and faster...

The exercise can also be an excuse for the participants to teach others the names of the various parts of the body in their own language.

It can be pointed out that in our daily behavior it is not indifferent where we bring our hands when we speak: if we bring them to the head, we will have to deal with the mind (thoughts, doubts, memories), to the chest there will be emotions, to the belly for the hunger: on this the participants can show proposals.

- **Walk with 6 gestures + word**

The group is divided into two opposing teams; the same sequence of the previous exercise, but done in line with one's teammates; each step corresponds to gesture + word, first one advances and then one goes back. First one team at a time and then all together.

The participants will then be able to invent different walks with the same sequence of gestures, for example as a "défilé", or to organize group walks in line to a music of their choice.

## 8. Playing with your "tics"

### Learning Objectives:

- To play with one's own fragility and valuing it
- To stimulate a self-ironical vision and awareness
- To transform everyday life into an opportunity for creation

### Materials:

1. Jackets, skirts and some accessories (bags, hats) can help.
2. Music

### Presentation of own "tics"

Here by "tic" we mean those gestures, movements, small actions that we perform unconsciously and which have no communicative intention. (See "**A practice**", Involuntary gestures)

The workshop leader will be able to give some real examples, but above all he will invite the participants to observe each other to see how many gestures they are making unconsciously while they are sitting and listening: "some caress their hair, some their chin, some their neck, some play with an earring, who pulls down the sleeves of the shirt, who bites the drawstring of the sweatshirt and who the lips... And if we stand up, the movements with the feet and legs will be added, real little dances!" ("**A practice**").



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The workshop leader will ask the participants to spread around the room and to concentrate each one on himself: precisely because these are gestures that we perform "unconsciously", it will take time and concentration to search for them!

When the workshop leader has made sure that all the participants have found their own "tics", he will ask them to choose the four they consider most personal and characteristic, and then to put them "in sequence", accompanying each one with a different, appropriate personal posture. Then memorize the sequence.

Choosing and memorizing one's own "unaware" daily tics first of all causes a process of awareness (self-ironic). And then, creating a sequence with these gestures, effectively transforming them into theatrical "signs", involves a sort of "distancing" from one's personal/private daily life. This allows us to play freely, showing in "public" (one's companions) aspects of ourselves that we tend to hide and of which we are often even ashamed.

The fiction of the theater (of the workshop) protects and allows the research on oneself.

In front of their seated companions, each will present their own sequence of tics.

The workshop leader can therefore intervene from time to time, making various development proposals, depending on the person in front of him and on the proposed tic sequence.

For instance:

- **"Where are you?"** Imagine a place, a situation. (More than one person can participate at the same time).
- **"Are you waiting for an answer: will it be positive or negative?"** Try to "play" by varying the pace and tension of tics. Play with the emotions you feel coming. (More than one person can participate at the same time).
- **"Show everyone how good you are at doing your tics!"** The gestures will be shown in an "exaggerated" way: just the opposite of what we do in everyday life!
- **"Dance to this music"** The sequence turns into a "new dance", a hesitant waltz or wild hip hop. The dance can also involve more people who will have learned the sequence of their partner.
- For a couple: try to **"talk"** to each other using your tics.

#### Group sequence with own "tics"

Small groups of 4 or 6 boys are formed. Everyone chooses his own "tic" + posture that he likes best and teaches it to his group mates. We get in a circle.

"A" teaches his classmates his tic+posture. When everyone has learned it, repeat it together.

Then everyone learns the tic+posture of "B" and repeats it together. Everyone does the tic of "A" and "B".

Then everyone learns the tic+posture of "C" and so on, until everyone has learned everyone's tics and postures. The entire sequence of tics and postures is repeated together.

We line up and we repeat the sequence. Then we try to add the walk that could arise from a development of the postures.

The same indications as for the "walk with 6 gestures" (in line or in a row) are therefore valid. (See "Simple sequences" sheet)

#### Development:

- **Greeting rituals for couples**



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The workshop leader asks the participants to form pairs.

Each learns their partner's 4 tics, so each pair has 8 tics! With these 8 tics the two people of the couple will have to create a rhythmic sequence that is like a greeting.

The workshop leader asks the participants if they know any particular ways of greeting each other, for example those in which members of the same sports team exchange, and asks them to show them to everyone. An example that could be shown is the greeting between Homer Simpson and the plumber, both belonging to the Stonecutters sect (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCXtGhtKk28>).

These are greetings made up of a series of small gestures placed in rapid, very rhythmic sequences that are exchanged by members of the same group and which are made, precisely, to recognize each other.

What couples are asked for is to create a greeting of this type, but using their tics.

1) "A" and "B" look at each other from afar. "A" makes a gesture (1st tic) and "B" responds with the same gesture. They recognized each other, they belong to the same "sect"!

2) "A" and "B" approach with the same gait developed by a tic/posture (2nd tic).

3) "A" and "B" simultaneously make the same rhythmic sequence of 6 gestures, like a ritual greeting.

As far as possible, it is good that the tics are made "on" the partner: if, for example the tic is "I touch my ear lobe", I will do it to my partner and he will do it to me at the same time (as if there shake hands).

If the tic is "nail biting", it will not be appropriate to bite the partner's nails! But we can, for example, take each other by the arm and, as in a toast, each eats his own. And if we want to add some movement, we can do it while doing a round together and maybe, after switching arms, another round in the opposite direction. Just like a dance!...

Each couple will find the character of their greeting and can use the music they prefer.

## 9. Writing with your hands

**Preface:** the game assumes a minimum level of knowledge of the writing of a language in common by all the players and can contribute to the improvement of this knowledge.

The game should not be played if there are illiterate people in the group (even in their own language); in this case, the writing of the word can be replaced with the drawing of an image.

If, on the other hand, everyone knows how to write in their own language (even if they don't have a language in common), the game will be played directly as described in the "master's variant".

### Learning Objectives:

- Look for the necessary tension and energy in the gesture
- Seek the motivation and the cleanliness of the gesture in improvisation
- Listening to your partner
- Work on strengthening one's self-esteem and identity
- Learn to take into account differences and specific needs

**Materials:** music



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**Description:** I imagine a large transparent wall between me and the "spectators"; I imagine my hand is a large brush; I imagine dipping my hand/brush in a bucket of paint and writing a word on the wall in letters as big as me.

To facilitate the reading of the word by the participants, I will write "in reverse"; if I'm not capable, viewers will make a little more effort to decipher what I have written.

As an example, the workshop leader writes a short word (for example "SKY") and then asks what he wrote. Once the correct answer has been found, the workshop leader asks a volunteer to go and write on the imaginary wall a word that is somehow linked to the previous one (e.g. "clouds", "sun", "earth", ...). Once this second word has been deciphered by the students, another volunteer will go, and so on, creating a "chain" of words.

The workshop leader will ask the students to be precise in writing, paying particular attention to the beginning and end of each stroke: for this he will suggest that they always look at their hand, i.e. at what they are writing. He will invite the players to move fluidly and to articulate the limb in all its parts (elbow, wrist, fingers). If you play music, you can ask the students to try to write following its rhythm.

"Master's variant": the workshop leader invites a volunteer to write a word in their own language and script and then to "read" it to their classmates. Other students will then be able to translate it into their own language and write it themselves. It is important for the people who are writing to show their ability, especially when they still have difficulties in the second language. Observing and listening to the variety of languages and scripts is an experience that always enriches the group.

#### **Development 1:**

In pairs: the players, not too close to each other, try to write "short messages", imagining that each one has a small transparent wall in front of him; to make the understanding easier, new lines are started after each word. When "A" has finished, "B" replies, and so on, creating a silent dialogue at a distance. If a player doesn't understand a sentence, he will write a question mark, and his partner will try to rewrite it more precisely. The workshop leader will invite the players to write short messages and will remind the writer to look at what he is writing and to look at the partner only when he has finished the message, to receive a feedback.

#### **Development 2:**

In pairs: "A" teaches "B" how to write a word and vice versa. They stand side by side and write the two words in unison as they were taught. The game is even more interesting when the two words are in two different languages. Before playing this game, it is good to have practiced **"Taking the space"** and **"Improvising with a side partner"** (see sheets), of which it can be an application.

## 10. Tennis

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Train the imagination and creativity
- Practice the listening to your partner
- Have greater awareness of different parts of the body



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- React and play "without thinking"

#### Materials: Music

**Description:** In pairs, an imaginary ball is tossed and relaunched to each other, using only certain parts of the body: the forehead, shoulders, chest, pelvis (front, side and back).

We tune each hit on the ball with a sound.

Initially we can play "mirror", i.e. player "B" responds to "A" with the same part of the body. Afterwards, the players are left free to choose.

The hits are given with different strengths and in different directions, so you have to "see" where the ball goes and move accordingly, like in a real tennis match (you can watch the last scene from Antonioni's film "Blow up"!).

Players can be asked to gradually get closer and closer: the smaller the space, the faster the pace will be, up to the an unsustainable point.

#### Development:

- The game, after being played in pairs, can also be played in small groups.
- Using different kind of music, players can be asked to abandon the idea of tennis and let the music guide them.

#### Variants:

- The ball is no longer used to play tennis, but to "hit" the partner. The partner will suffer the blow by receiving it with the struck part of the body, without repelling. Then, with another part of the body, he will throw the ball to hit his partner.

The game doesn't necessarily have to be always "hard": the blows can become less strong, until they resemble caresses and the partner will react accordingly. Different kind of music can tune these different phases of the game.

- We put away the imaginary ball and continue playing in pairs, still focusing on the individual parts of the body. It will no longer be a ping-pong, back and forth. The new idea is that we can invent a dialogue made of small sequences of movements.

"A" and "B" look at each other from a distance. "A" approaches "B" by moving a single part of the body at will (e.g. pats with a shoulder followed by a rotation of the same) and then add the movement of another part (pelvis?) and then again of another (head?). Each movement will be tuned with a sound with the mouth. "A" will so have improvised a small sequence of movements, with the intention of "communicating" something to "B" who will have remained still, attentive and watching. Now "A" stands still in the position in which he is and observes the "response" of "B". When "B" has finished, "A" will answer, and so on.

What relationship will be created between "A" and "B"? Will it be a fight, a courtship, a gossip?



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**Observations:** The host will invite the players to avoid making facial expressions to be concentrate on the rest of the body (as if the faces were covered by a mask). It is important that the players "do not think", but that they react with the body.

## 11. Breathing

### Learning Objectives:

- Concentration
- Relaxation
- Communication of emotions through phisycal actions
- Training the sense of rhythm

**Materials:** chairs

**Description:** Let's focus on the most "natural" action that exists, the first (and last) we perform in life, and which we share with other animals and plants: breathing.

We breathe an average of 25 thousand times a day!

We get in a circle, sitting comfortably, with our back straight so as not to compress the abdomen.

We breathe naturally, without forcing, each one at his own pace. Let's just try to consider what we're doing, the path that the air takes entering through the nostrils (or through the mouth, but the nose filters, moistens and warms the air!), to get to the lungs and back.

We will notice that the action of breathing takes place in 4 times: inhale, high apnea, exhale, low apnea.

**1st Exercise** (From Lecoq-Byland) : we blow slowly maintaining the same intensity, as if we were pushing a pingpong ball with our breath.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Exercise:** we move the head from left to right during inspiration, pause in high apnea, return in inspiration time, pause in low apnea.

**3rd Exercise:** let's imagine that with the air that comes out of the mouth we "draw" and that by inhaling we carry the drawing inside us. Let's draw a childish image: a small sailboat on the waves of the sea.

Let's do the exercise with our eyes closed:

1. with the front head I inhale through the nose;
2. in high apnea I bring my head to the left;
3. exhaling from the mouth I draw the waves of the sea, going from left to right (it is the duration of the exhalation that determines the duration of the drawing);
4. in low apnea I bring my head to the centre;
5. inhaling I carry the drawing inside me;
6. in high apnea I bring my head to the left;
7. exhaling I draw the sailboat: from left to right the lower part of the hull, from right to left the upper line of the hull, from left to right I draw the triangle of the sail (all in the duration of the exhalation);
8. in low apnea I bring my head to the centre;



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9. inhaling I carry the whole image inside me;
10. in high apnea I activate all the senses to fully experience the image: I can see the boat, the sea, the sky... I can hear the sound of the waves... feel the heat of the sun on my skin... taste the salt on my lips... smell the scent of the sea...
11. when I feel it's time to exhale (without forcing the apnea!), I gently blow on the sail, pushing the boat towards the horizon.

You can repeat the exercise with your eyes open. It is a great exercise of concentration, imagination and relaxation.

### Respiration/action/emotion

**First "experiment"**: let's try to get up and sit down in two different ways in regard to the breathing.

- 1) From sitting, we stand up inhaling (it is the duration of the inhalation that determines the time of the action); we remain standing in high apnea; we go back to sitting while exhaling (in the time of exhalation); sitting in low apnea (end).
- 2) From sitting, we stand up exhaling (for the entire duration of the exhalation); we remain standing in low apnea; we sit inhaling; sitting in high apnea (end).

We ask the participants to say in their opinion which of the two methods they find more "natural". The first will be indicated. We perceive the action of exhaling as contrasting ("unnatural") with the action of going up. The exhalation matches better with the descent. However, it will be interesting to experiment with these contradictory situations since the very contrast can mean a particular situation. For example, if I sit down inhaling, I will feel that the action is held: there is a tension that goes upwards (the inhalation), while the body descends. What's holding me back? The question creates a "dramatic" situation.

**Second "experiment"**: we ask a volunteer to pick up a chair from the ground and throw it far in front of him (we'll stop him before throwing it!). To make a nice forward throw, he will carry the chair behind his back, arching slightly backwards. Together with the volunteer we observe that, "to make himself strong", he has performed this action by inhaling, and, in high apnea, he is ready to throw the chair away. When he is in this "throwing" position, we ask him to exhale and we ask him if, in low apnea, he still feels strong enough to throw the chair. Most likely the answer will be negative and he will tell us that now the chair seems "heavier" to him, almost dragging him backwards.

To give us strength, we inhale. In high apnea we perform a rapid action, for example to give a slap (see sheet "**Clown's slap**").

But even before an important event, to give us courage, we inhale. For example before saying something particularly important and that involves us very emotionally.

Suddenly, among the participants, we emit a cry, "BUH!": as a reaction to the small fright, the closest ones will jump contracting. We'll ask them what they did with their breathing. They inhaled rapidly and held their breath in apnea, then relaxed as they exhaled.

There is a relationship between phases of breathing and emotional tension.

Simplifying, as in the previous example of the physical action rising/falling, there is also a "rising/falling" of emotional tension accompanied by the different phases of breathing.



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With inspiration there is a "crescendo", a "tend towards" (desire, fear, hope); in high apnea there is a moment of suspension, of questioning; in the exhalation there is a "descent" (relief, disappointment); in low apnea a kind of vacuum.

For example, let's try the action of walking.

We articulate the walk in 4 steps: A) I walk looking at the horizon; B) I stop; C) I turn my head 45°; D) I turn the body realigning it to the head.

We combine the **4 phases of walking with the 4 phases of breathing**, each time in a different way:

- **1st match**: A) I walk in inspiration time; B) I stop in high apnea; C) I turn my head exhaling; D) I turn the body in low apnea.

- **2nd match**: B) I walk in the time of high apnea; C) I stop and exhale; D) I turn my head in low apnea; A) I turn the body while inhaling.

- **3rd match**: C) I walk in expiration time; D) I stop in low apnea; A) I turn my head while inhaling; B) I turn the body in high apnea.

- **4th match**: D) I walk in low apnea time; A) I stop and inhale; B) I turn my head in high apnea; C) I turn the body exhaling.

It is important that the participants themselves try and notice the difference in meaning between the different walks.

As we do the exercise, let the breathing stimulate the imagination, and thus motivate the walk.

**Observations**: For example regarding the 1st match.

I walk inhaling: I go hoping to find something beautiful (what?), or I'm afraid that something bad awaits me (what?); I stop in apnea: moment of suspense, what will happen? I turn my head exhaling, I see something (what?) that brings disappointment, it's not what I hoped, or what I see (what?) brings me relief, it's not what I feared; I turn the body in low apnea.

What do I hope or fear to find? Let the images materialize by doing the exercise, without forcing.

We can also do the exercise going towards a partner and experiencing the difference if I approach him inhaling, or in high apnea or exhaling. I hope something coming from him? Do I approach doubtful? Do I go there after a disappointment? I can then add actions and/or words, for example a hug: it will be different if in apnea or exhaling...

Through the practice of the exercise and possible creative developments, the participants become aware that they can also communicate their emotions through physical actions

For example, if I open a suitcase slowly while inhaling, I will create a feeling of anticipation, which can be prolonged in the suspense of immobility. If I open it with a quick gesture, after inhaling, I will communicate decision and courage. If I open it exhaling, it will be an expression of boredom, listlessness. In apnea, something tiring.

The exercise on the phases of breathing can be combined with the "**Broken action**" exercise (see sheet).

## 12. Emotional tension/physical tension

### Learning Objectives:



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- Awareness and management of one's own states of physical tension
- Awareness and management of one's own sensitivity
- Expression, communication and representation of one's emotions

**Materials:** Jackets, skirts and some accessories (bags, hats) can help.

Objects of daily use, 2 chairs

**Description:**

When we are hit by an emotion, the body reacts by contracting or relaxing (see **“Breathing”** sheet).

We can imagine a scale of 7 levels of tension corresponding to 7 levels of emotional tension on which to practice and play (inspired by Byland/Lecoq).

0) Totally relaxed, on the ground as if **“dead”**.

1) Very relaxed, like **“sick”**; I'm about to fall; every action is tiring, heavy; I can't walk, I move in space teetering, carried by the weight of the different parts of the body; I have difficulty articulating words because the muscles of my face are also relaxed.

Especially with regard to this level of tension, it is important to focus on the physical aspect (losing energy, relaxing), avoiding imitation-driven shortcuts (e.g. "playing drunk") that lead to false results. We can try to do the exercise with our eyes closed, with a partner who protects us from possible dangers. I keep the soles of my feet on the ground and my legs soft and open to widen the support base and not to fall. I rotate my pelvis slightly, shifting my weight from one leg to the other; the upper body counterbalances the weight to balance in place. The sensation I get is that the floor moves under my feet, as if I were on a ship. If I make a bigger movement with my pelvis, I leave the support base and, letting myself be carried away by the weight, I move in space. Counterbalancing with the other parts of the body, I will try to find new balanced positions. By practicing the exercise, I try to "let me go", so that a motivation of this condition arises and the physical exercise turns into a creative game.

2) Relaxed, very jointed; **“without problems”**; gestures are imprecise, exaggerated, have no beginning or end.

3) Intermediate state, of our daily **“normality”**: reference point from which to "go up" and "down" in this scale of levels.

4) **State of alert**; gestures are measured, precise; all sense organs are particularly sensitive; a "suspended" condition in which I ask myself questions without making judgments. A very interesting condition that leads us to be open and reactive. In daily life we can experience it when we find ourselves in an unknown context, for example when we arrive in a foreign country and everything is new to us: smells, tastes, colours, sounds and rhythms... Young children experience this condition with a world yet to be discovered. This is also the reference level for when I put the clown's red nose (see **“Put the red nose”** sheet). To search for this level of psychophysical and emotional tension together, we ask the students to walk in space at "level 3"; at a certain point the workshop leader will call them: everyone stops and everyone looks at the workshop leader asking the question "Me? Are you calling me?", in a suspended state, ready to go. It is an immediate reaction that leads us to stay in high apnea (see **“Breathing”** sheet), without preparation and without comment.

5) State of major **contraction**; more dry and decisive gestures and movements; more broken rhythm, even in speaking.



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- 6) **Strong contraction**; maximum agitation; labored breathing; eve of the crisis.
- 7) **Maximun tension**; crisis with explosion and scream. (Level to hold only for a few seconds).
- 8) As level zero, "death".

#### **"Applications" for games and improvisations**

- 1) We can try to apply the scale of 7 levels of tension to **actions and emotions (fear, anger, joy...)**.

The workshop leader invites the participants to perform an action of their choice with an object, and then to repeat it by gradually climbing the scale of levels, in a crescendo of tension and rhythm, to then suddenly jump from one level to another. By improvising the participants will find the motivation for what they are doing; thus the different emotions will also arrive and will give warmth to the actions. Having left the necessary time for the students to practice on their own, the workshop leader will invite them to create a small scene (with a beginning, a development and an end) starting from what was born improvising. Those who wish can then show it to their companions.

- 2) We can try to apply the scale of 7 levels of tension to an **improvised dialogue**.

The workshop leader invites two volunteers to improvise a dialogue in front of their classmates. They will start talking at "level 3", without having decided in advance what to talk about. The theme will emerge independently from the dialogue and the improvisation will focus on it, without digressing anymore. At the beginning the workshop leader leads the game by saying the number of the level on which both play. Then he will make one player "go up" while the other will "go down" and then make him make sudden sharp jumps. When the game is well underway, the workshop leader will stand aside and the two players will be able to continue the improvisation until they find (as always) a conclusion. In subsequent improvisations, the workshop leader will intervene only when he considers necessary to stimulate the players.

- 3) We use the scale of 7 levels of tension for an **improvisation for two: "The appointment"**.

Here's the game: "A" and "B" have a date to go out together. "A" goes to "B"'s house and calls him from outside. "B" does not answer. "A" enters and finds "B" sitting on a chair. "A" has to convince "B" to get up and go out with him (without touching him!), "B" doesn't answer and doesn't get up.

What will be the reactions of "A"? He will ask himself questions, he will try to understand the reason for "B's" attitude. He will react in different ways, going from one emotion to another (astonishment, fear, anger, despair...) and from one level of tension to another. He will use different strategies to convince "B": he will beg him, he will tempt him with attractive promises, he will threaten him, he will blackmail him... Until "B", suddenly and unexpectedly, gets up to go out with "A". At this point "B" will sit down and the roles will be reversed.

- 4) We use the scale of 7 levels of tension for **a group improvisation: "The foreigner"**.

Here's the game: "A" is in a foreign country and can only speak his own language. "A" addresses a group of people asking them for something he urgently needs. Nobody knows the language of "A".

"A" will try to make himself understood (but not too much, otherwise the game ends too soon!).

How will people react to the request for "A"? Each person will react in his own way, going through different emotional states and different levels of tension, from maximum availability to intolerance, to repulsion ...

Tension dynamics (cohesion/rupture) will also be created within the group and this will make the game more interesting; even more so if different languages are spoken in the group too.



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## 13. Broken action

### Learning Objectives:

- Train the precision of the gesture
- Find new ways of expression to communicate your emotions
- Learn to use objects as partners
- Train the sense of rhythm
- Learn a new creative process

### Materials: music

**Description:** I carry out a "complex" action on or with everyday objects, such that I can break it down into a sequence of "micro-actions".

A few examples among countless: I fold/stretch a garment; I put on/take off a garment; I open/close an umbrella; I sit down/get up, pour, drink, eat... with the related necessary objects.

The first task will be to "drain" the action to get to the essential, eliminating unnecessary gestures.

Then I create the sequence by performing one micro-action at a time; to highlight the beginning and the end of each single micro-action I insert a pause between one and the other. Each micro-action must have the same duration.

Example: I pour a liquid from a bottle into a glass. 1) I grab the bottle with one hand 2) I lift the bottle 3) I bend the bottle to pour the liquid into the glass 4) I straighten the bottle 5) I put the bottle down 6) I let go the bottle.

The precision of the movement shouldn't be confused with rigidity and mechanicalness (unless you want to play on this aspect, like puppet-robots).

This exercise is very useful to gain awareness of what we are doing and making it more meaningful in a theatrical context.

After that I can create more and more complex actions.

Some examples of "application" of the sequence:

- "Skill": even the simplest action can turn into a show of mastery, like a spectacular "number": "Look how good I am!". The more "trivial" the action, the better! But with even greater commitment and precision. The performance may also have a clownish development with connected "failure".
- "Advertising": the action can be transformed to advertise an object of daily use (a chair, a handkerchief, an umbrella, a bottle) as an amazing originality, with related "instructions for use".
- "Lesson": teaching a "naive" student how to perform a daily action.
- "Training": how a boss gives orders to a group of subordinates.
- "Musical": the same sequence of actions performed by a group on the rhythm of a music.

**Variants:** Once the sequence has been well learned, the object is removed and a gestural sequence is obtained which can be used as an excuse to "dance" freely, with or without music.

**Development:** How to give body and life back to this "stripped" action?



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We will give life (and meaning) to the action thanks to rhythm and tension (see "Breathing" sheet), just like we give life to a written text through our voice, our breath.

The same action and each micro-action can be performed with greater or lesser tension and with a different duration (slow/rapid). Each pause will have a meaning (a doubt? a problem?). At any moment of the sequence I can stop, go back and then resume. I can play with the (obsessive?) repetition of a single fragment.

For example, if we want to put into practice the action "pouring a liquid", we will start asking ourselves questions that can stimulate our imagination: "What's in the bottle? Water or something else? Do I drink to quench my thirst or for another reason? Do I like it or not? Maybe I have a drinking problem and want to stop drinking?" And still more questions...

The same action can tell a different story and convey different emotions depending on **how** I perform it.

**Observations:** It is important to understand that I can make any daily action interesting and above all that, through this, I can express and communicate my emotions.

## 14. "Album"

### Learning Objectives:

- Playing with emotions
- Train the body to react to external inputs
- Becoming aware of the body
- Becoming aware of possible tensions and emotions
- Train the imagination and the creativity

**Materials:** music

**Description:** the first phase of the game consists in looking for six postures corresponding to six emotions: fear, anger, joy, disgust, amazement, despair.

The workshop leader invites the participants to walk into the space, keeping their distance. The workshop leader enunciates an emotion aloud and the people must immediately react by assuming a posture. The postures do not have to illustrate the emotion, but are taken as a reaction to the emotion felt.

The reaction is to a strong emotion (a big fear, non a small fear), it entails great tension and the involvement of the whole body. If the participants tend to express themselves mainly through the face, the leader will invite them to pay attention to the body. The reaction of the face is often a mask that replaces the expression of the whole body.

The workshop leader invites the participants, when they react, to use their voice and/or a word to express the emotion.

The final posture, in stop, is the final moment of the reaction that occurs through movement, like a photo (or a sculpture).



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The workshop leader invites the participants to remain still in the position found and to become fully aware of it: where the head faces, what the arms do, what position the various parts of the body are in. And then he invites them to take a neutral position.

He asks the participants to reconstruct in a "cold" way the posture they had found.

Once the posture has been found, the workshop leader asks to "fix" it and memorize it.

The participants are invited to walk again and the leader will enunciate another emotion.

The procedure of the first emotion is repeated and the workshop leader will ask to take the first and the second posture. This continues until all six postures corresponding to the six emotions have been found.

**Developments:** The second phase of the game consists in creating a "story" through a sequence of the six postures. You can imagine having six photos in an album and arranging these photos randomly, without thinking of a possible story first. Once the sequence has been created, the players will have to find a motivation for each emotion and the randomly born succession. The resulting "story" may be bizarre and will be an extra stimulus for the player to motivate the succession of twists with his own imagination. The result can sometimes be more like a dream than a realistic story. Being forced to find a motivation for a randomly created sequence stimulates the player's imagination, a fantasy free from rational logic.

Subsequently, players can be asked to create a sequence already thinking of a story to tell, even better if it is a memory of a lived experience.

The workshop leader can suggest two different ways of representing the story in front of the classmates:

1. to represent the story by living it in the present and reacting with postures to the emotions, as if the facts were happening at the moment. In this case it is not a matter of explaining and telling the story and the reason why one is reacting in words, but of reacting to what one "sees" (I am not saying "I saw a mouse!", but "Ah! A mouse!").
2. to tell the story as an event that happened in the past, using postures to bring to life the emotions that are reliving in the moment. The reaction to the emotion comes before the description of the event that caused it: first I assume the posture of fear and then I say "I saw a mouse!".

To draw attention to the precision of the postures, the workshop leader can ask the players to show the sequence in a "cold" way, without motivation.

#### Variants:

- a gestural sequence can be created with the six postures, without a verbal narration. The sequence can be both carried in space or done while still. The participant can choose a music to work on.
- the workshop leader can ask the participants to arrive at the postures in one time (therefore in a single movement), or in four times (therefore in four movements), articulating the various parts of the body.
- a "comic" sequence can be created: each step corresponds to a posture.



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**Observations:** it is useful to precede the game with a search for opening and closing postures (see also the "Open/Close" sheet).

## 15. Trust

### Learning Objectives:

- Have confidence in yourself and in your companions
- Learn to suspend judgement about what others are or do

**Material:** for the "I trust blindly" exercise: blindfolds or scarves to cover the eyes

**Premise:** Creating an atmosphere in which everyone feels at ease: this is an indispensable premise for workshop participants to drop their own defensive "shells", motivated by fear, mistrust and shyness, and to open up to each other.

The mixed theater workshop represents a precious opportunity to learn how to listen, a gym in which to train non-stop - everyone, workshop leaders included - to "suspend judgement", an exercise that is not easy and that cannot be learned once for ever.

Only in this climate of trust people will begin to freely express their emotions and show their creativity.

There are many specific exercises to help building trust between players. Some of them are here offered.

### "Run, run, run!"

**Description:** The workshop leader invites a volunteer to go to the opposite side of the room. He then invites him to run quickly towards him and stop just before touching him. It's nice to end the exercise with a hug.

**Variante:** The workshop leader invites the volunteer to run towards him and to stop only at his "Stop!".

The conductor could also meet halfway the volunteer to make the game even more exciting.

**Development:** The workshop leader asks the volunteer to walk towards him with closed eyes and to stop only at his "Stop!".

Then the workshop leader asks the volunteer to do the same, but running.

With closed eyes, the perception of space changes significantly and it is interesting for the participants to try this experience.

N.B. Some guys will stand along the way to intervene in the (frequent) event of a not straight walk or run. During walks and runs with your eyes closed, it is important that the other people assisting do not make any noise.



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## “I trust blindly”

**Description:** The workshop leader invites a volunteer to cover his eyes with a blindfold. He takes him by the hand and takes him with him walking slowly in the space. The aim of the game is for the volunteer to gain confidence and enjoy being guided; therefore the workshop leader will have to measure himself with the personality and character of the volunteer, paying attention not to force him. Once the volunteer has gained confidence, the workshop leader can start to accelerate the pace, up to making short jogs. The workshop leader will invite the volunteer to travel with the fantasy, imagining places and situations in which he is walking. Quiet music in the background can help.

Once the game is over, the workshop leader and the volunteer will switch roles: the workshop leader will blindfold himself and let himself be guided by the volunteer. Before starting the workshop leader will remind the volunteer of the objective of the game and to pay particular attention when changing direction.

Role reversal is important because it puts the workshop leader on the same level as the participants and shows that he trusts them.

Once the game has been shown, several pairs can play at the same time, depending on the space available.

When the first fears have been overcome, the conductor can invite the participants driving to exchange the blindfolded partners, who will therefore have to trust a "stranger".

Finally, the workshop leader will ask to reverse the roles between blindfolded and guides.

### Development:

#### “Guardian Angel”

The guide releases the hand of his blindfolded partner, remaining close to him and protecting him from possible dangers, like a "guardian angel".

In a further development of the game, the blindfolded player is alone in the middle of the space and moves freely, also being able to "risk" more in his movements, knowing that he has several "guardian angels" distributed throughout the space, ready to intervene.

N.B. During these games "in the dark" (for the blindfolded) it is important that the assisting participants do not make any noise.

#### “In the circle”

Some participants form a tight circle while standing, facing the center. One of them (“A”) goes to the center of the circle, closes his eyes and tries to relax by breathing calmly.

The participants around put themselves in a position to be able to welcome and support the body of "A": one leg in front of the other, the arms bent with the hands in front of the chest.

"A" begins to swing forward, backward, to the sides, with ever wider movements, until he meets the hands of the companions who form the circle, who will welcome him softly and then gently push him in another direction. It is important that the people who form the circle are always on the alert so as not to intervene



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with abrupt reactions that could disturb "A". The goal is for "A" to gain more and more trust in them and therefore discover the pleasure of "letting himself go", leaning on them.

At the beginning of the game, the hands will soon come to welcome and support the body of "A". Then, they will arrive later, leaving more freedom for "A" to move.

During the development of the game, the people who form the circle will be able to welcome the body of "A" also on other parts of the body, extending the support base for example on the arms, on the legs, on one side, creating pauses before pushing it further, again in the direction of other companions. In these pauses (which are like "pictures"), "A" will try to distribute his weight over the entire support base offered to him.

Another possible development consists in welcoming "A" no longer with the hands, but with other parts of the body, for example offering a side or the back as support.

A quiet music can accompany the exercise. Another possibility is for the group to sing a song together.

### **"Pin"**

Three participants standing: "A" stands between "B" in front and "C" behind.

"B" and "C" stand with one leg in front of the other, arms bent with hands in front of the chest.

"C" pushes "A" who, keeping himself straight and with his feet on the ground, leans forward. "B" supports "A" with his hands and then pushes him back where "A" (without bending!) will meet the "rescue" of "C". And so on... "B" and "C" softly welcome the body of "A" cushioning its weight and then delicately push it towards the opposite partner. In doing so they earn the trust of "A", who must feel more and more at ease and enjoy this game. This is why at the beginning the holds will take place almost immediately, and gradually they can take place later and later, increasing the space of the movement of "A".

Once familiar with his teammates, "A" will be able to play with his eyes closed.

It is important that "A" always maintains a straight posture, without bending over.

N.B. At the beginning it is preferable to do the exercise on a hard gymnastics mat.

### **Clown development**

In the crescendo of the game, "A", going backwards, opens his arms; "C" takes "A" under the armpits who bends over and arrives seated on the ground.

### **"Crossing the Chair"**

It is a game to develop self-confidence.

A sturdy chair: it is a matter of crossing the chair by "walking" on it.

The workshop leader shows how to do it: I place my left foot on the seat and then my right foot on the top of the backrest. I carry the weight on the right foot counterbalancing with the left. In a game of balance, I



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land on the right foot without having abandoned the support on the backrest. I take a step with my left foot and continue walking.

The workshop leader invites a volunteer to perform the exercise, holding him by the hand.

Once learned well, he repeats it by himself, starting away from the chair and crossing it without losing the rhythm of the walk.

It's a little "stunt" that gives to the participants a lot of satisfaction, and it's much easier to do than it looks.

Obviously it is also an excellent exercise on the sense of balance and on the control of body weight.

## 16. Language lesson

### Learning Objectives:

- Sensitization of tactility
- Concentration on the sound of words
- Relationship/contact

**Materials:** Musics

### Premise:

When my skin touches another's skin, his skin touches mine. Touching also means letting yourself be touched. It is an action that can only be reciprocal and therefore requires players to be open, trusting and willing to meet.

Physical contact cross over the intimacy of people and is experienced differently by everyone, also affected by the different cultural education received, and the workshop leader must take this into account. On the other hand, it is precisely thanks to these games - perhaps also by accepting to experience an initial situation of discomfort - that barriers are broken and strong relationships are created, discovering that one's own fear and fragility probably resemble those of the partner with which is being played.

Young children seek physical contact with each other, but then, as they grow up, with the education, the contacts decrease, remaining limited to socially determined situations. In the theater workshop we are offered the opportunity to "become children again" and play also through contact with others, rediscovering the pleasure of it, especially after the long and painful period of "interpersonal distancing" due to the pandemic.

### Description:

It is played in pairs. The game consists in teaching your partner the names of body parts in your own language: for this reason the game will be particularly interesting if it takes place between two people who can each speak a language (or a dialect) that your partner does not know.

The workshop leader ("A") invites a volunteer ("B") to play the game together and thus explain it to everyone.



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"A" invites "B" to close his eyes so that he can concentrate more on the sense of touch and develop greater tactile sensitivity.

"A" takes "B's" left hand with his right hand.

"A" brings "B's" left hand to touch a part of his body, for example his cheek, and caressing it with "B's" hand, names it in his own language (for example, in French he will say: "joue").

In pronouncing the word, "A" will concentrate and it will be an opportunity for him to rediscover its beauty and "uniqueness".

"A" repeats the action and "B" will try to repeat the word ("joue") in that language unknown to him until he too is able to "enjoy" it, with the help of "A". In the end, what interests us is not the correct pronunciation of a word, but perceiving the sensuality expressed by that word together with the action of touching.

Then "A" will bring the hand of "B" to another part of his body, for example the hair, and, caressing it with the hand of "B", names it in his own language (for example, in French "cheveux") and "B" will try to repeat the word ("cheveux").

Then the roles will be reversed and "B" will teach "A" (who similarly will keep his eyes closed).

After the short example, the workshop leader will invite the participants to form pairs, hopefully among people who do not know each other's language.

The game can continue in the same way with various parts of the body.

#### Remarks:

Evidently the game does not consist of a real "language lesson", but offers a pretext for putting the players "in communication" through unknown words, which acquire meaning only through touch, whose sensitivity is increased by touching with the eyes closed.

Naming the parts of the body in one's "mother" language and trying to convey to one's partner through "that" sound the profound meaning of that word (to which perhaps he too is only now paying so much attention) is also an important and significant act. And this is particularly true for those who find themselves having to communicate daily in a foreign language and even more so for those who come from communities whose language has been "stolen" (reducing it to "dialect") and a foreign language has been imposed (colonial).

A "claim" which however takes place in an act of exchange, as a reciprocal gift with the other.

## 17. First presentation

#### Learning Objectives:

- Experience the pleasure of "being on stage"
- Train scenic awareness
- Learning to listen and look at the other without judgment (**"suspension of judgement"**)

#### Material:



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- scenes (or objects that can perform this function)
- music (optional)

### Description:

Each participant introduces themselves to their fellow "spectators" by saying their name, geographical origin and making a personal gesture (like a gift to his companions).

In introducing themselves, the participants will use their own language.

It is important that there is something that acts as a backstage and delimits the space between an "outside" (private space) and an "inside" (public space): "entering the scene" I must be aware of what I am doing.

Some "rules of the game" that the conductor can gradually suggest, taking care not to inhibit the protagonist, but rather proposing them as a "support":

- I enter from behind a backstage, I stop and look at my fellow spectators;
- I move forward without losing eye contact and step after step I feel the pleasure of being on stage growing;
- I stop where I feel balanced with the spectators (neither too close nor too far), so that everyone is within my field of vision;
- I say name and origin and then I make the personal gesture; or vice versa, first I make the gesture and then introduce myself: the important thing is "to do one thing at a time";
- When I'm done, I leave from where I came in.

## 18. "Waiter"

### Learning Objectives:

- Train the coordination and articulation of the body
- Train the imagination
- Train the precision and fluidity of movements

**Material:** music

**Description:** A simple exercise with many possible developments. It is about imagining that you are carrying a plate of hot soup in the palm of your hand, from which not a single drop should fall. The dish is shown with the arm extended forward; bending the elbow and rotating the wrist, the hand is passed under the armpit, to then rise and pass over the head and then descend to the starting position. At the beginning it is important to always look at "the pot" and check that it does not tip over. It is repeated in the reverse direction, then with the other hand, and finally with both hands. Initially it will be done standing still, but



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then it can be done while walking and, with music, create your own "waiter's dance". You can vary, keeping the hand still ("fixed point") and making the body act, playing with suspensions, stops and returns...

**Observations:** Starting from a purely physical exercise for articulation and coordination, we move on to play and then to the possibility of improvising.

## 19. The slap of the clown

### Learning Objectives:

- Trust your partner
- Train the precision of the gesture
- Train the rhythm
- Train movement coordination individually and with a partner

### Materials: /

**Description:** The workshop leader invites a volunteer. They stand facing each other at arm's length, both with the left leg forward. The workshop leader asks the volunteer to remain still while he does the action of slapping him (trust!).

The workshop leader

1. to give himself strength and courage, inhales (see "Breathing" sheet) raising the right arm;
2. in high apnea slaps the volunteer's cheek, without touching him;
3. exhaling (satisfied!), brings his arm back down.

The workshop leader now invites the volunteer to "give him a slap". When the hand of the volunteer reaches the workshop leader's cheek, the latter 1) will clap his hands to simulate the sound of the slap and then 2) will jerk his head to the right. To make the slap more likely, the noise of the hands and the movement of the head will not be simultaneous, but in rapid succession (first the noise and then the movement).

To learn the game well, it will be necessary to proceed gradually. The workshop leader invites the participants to arrange themselves in pairs facing each other:

- 1) "A" slaps, paying attention to stop the hand before touching the partner's cheek, and "B" will remain stationary. After having both learned the exercise, the roles are reversed.
- 2) Each player practices on his own to clap his hands and, in succession, to move his head.
- 3) In pairs, the whole game is played. Once learned, the parts are reversed.
- 4) In pairs, they practice "slapping" each other, in an increasingly rapid "back and forth", always maintaining the "rules of the game".

The game of slapping is an excellent training regarding trust, rhythm, and coordination of movements (both individual and in pairs).



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**Development:** The conductor asks the couples to create a "before and after" to the exercise, so as to transform it into a short scene to show to their classmates.

It is a question of finding a pretext that justifies the slap and, after the development of the back and forth, of finding a conclusion, which perhaps surprises the spectators because it is unexpected.

To make the game more lively and engaging, the workshop leader will suggest that the players take pauses between one slap and another, during which they can watch the spectators; the pauses will gradually become shorter and shorter, creating a crescendo in the rhythm of the scene.

**Observation Quiz:** I get slapped and show two different reactions, keeping my face expressionless.

**"A"** 1) I clap my hands to simulate the sound of a slap;

1. I jerk my head to one side;
2. I bring a hand to touch the affected cheek;
3. I bring the head back to the center;
4. I bring my hand down.

**"B"** 1) I clap my hands to simulate the sound of a slap;

1. I jerk my head to one side;
2. I bring the head back to the center;
3. I bring a hand to touch the affected cheek;
4. I bring my hand down.

The participants are asked to find the difference between the two movement sequences and then to say if the two reactions have a different motivation. Often participants feel the difference in meaning without noticing the difference in sequence!

In case "A" the first reaction is to bring the hand to the cheek because it hurts: physical pain.

In case "B" the first reaction is to bring my head back to the center to look at whoever slapped me, and then I bring my hand to my cheek (almost automatically): inner pain.

## 20. Ping-pong

### Learning Objectives:

- Improve a dialogue based on words with a partner
- Overcome fear of judgment and self-judgment through creative play with your partner

**Materials:** Jackets, skirts and some accessories (bags, hats) can help.

### Rules of the game:

The "rules of the game" are very simple.



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- 1) Dialogue is like a game of ping-pong, where the ball is the line and must not fall into silence
- 2) Lines must be short (maximum 4 words!)
- 3) Speak loudly and with tension
- 4) Let the subject (simple!) arise from the dialogue and once found, keep it
- 5) Don't ask "why?": it puts your partner in difficulty (you play together so as not to "drop the ball")
- 6) Don't answer "No": it's like closing a door. The dialogue continues more easily if you answer "Yes!"
- 7) Dialogue "without thinking", but "reacting" immediately.
- 8) Find a conclusion.

### Description:

The workshop leader invites two volunteers: imagine you are on the ring of an old small circus without amplification. You are very far apart, at the edge of the track. There is confusion and noise on the stairs. Improvise a dialogue respecting the "rules of the game".

If the two players do not maintain a high level of tension and voice, the workshop leader can ask the spectators to make some noise until the two have reached the "right" level.

During the dialogue, without interrupting the rhythm, the workshop leader can ask the players to organize a way to meet each other and thus, again thanks to the improvised dialogue, the two players will find themselves close. Even when close together they will have to maintain the same high level of voltage and volume. Without interrupting the dialogue, the workshop leader will then ask the players to stand side by side, facing the spectators and thus continue the improvised dialogue. The game of "Ping-pong" allows you to improvise on stage, saying in advance and "organizing" on stage what you are going to do. As always, players will have to find a conclusion to exit the scene.

The workshop leader can ask two other players to start standing, as well as distant, even back to back, so the two will not initially see each other and will only hear the voices, there will be the theme of the discovery and the meeting.

The dialogue in each couple will be born and will develop without any previous agreement. It can take place using the "present" or the "past" or the "future", giving rise to unimaginable roles, stories and visions (reversible at every line!).

After a few examples, the workshop leader can ask everyone to form pairs, with partners far enough apart, and play all at the same time. The general confusion will be great, but the players will have an extra stimulus to seek communication with their partner! Keeping the pace, tension and volume high helps players (especially the more "shy") not to think too much, stimulating a more free and less conditioned imagination by everyday reality.

Subsequently, the workshop leader will invite the individual couples to improvise in front of their companions: they will start from what they did when they all played together without spectators, but without feeling constrained, and always improvising.

(The game takes up an exercise proposed by Pierre Byland for the study on the clown).

## 21. The trained flea

### Learning Objectives:



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- Look for tension in improvisation
- Seek precision and attention
- Train imagination and creativity
- Experience the pleasure of being with the public, working on your insecurities

**Materials:** music

**Description:**

The game recalls a circus "number" and shows to be useful and fun in many ways. We have trained a flea to do what we order it to do.

The flea is so small that the spectator cannot see if the flea is really there or not: the trainer will make him see it through his own eyes!

**Basic exercise.**

The trainer puts himself in a support posture: legs open slightly bent, back straight, arms soft forward (as if they were resting on a bench), fists closed, back of the hands upwards.

With the fingers of his right hand he/she takes the flea (from where he/she wants) and places it on the back of his left hand. Looking at the spectators, he announces that the flea will jump to the back of his right hand. He/She looks at the flea on the left hand and makes a small movement with his wrist to make the flea jump. He follows the flight of the flea with his eyes until it lands on the back of his right hand. "Et voilà!" He/She looks at the spectators satisfied and announces the next performance: "the somersault!". He/She gives a small blow with his right wrist and follows with his eyes the evolution of the flea in the air until it lands on the back of the left hand. He/She looks at the spectators satisfied and with his right hand indicates the flea. He/She picks up the flea with his right hand and puts it back where he had taken it at the beginning.

In order for the game to work, it is necessary to "give substance to the imagination". How? Scrupulously following with the eyes (and seeing!) the flea. If the trainer does not see his flea, he cannot expect the spectators to see it. Another important element to engage the viewers is watching them, particularly at the beginning when he announces the performance, and immediately after the performance is over. The subjects of the event are three: trainer, flea and public.

**Development:**

Once this basic exercise has been done and repeated all together, the participants can be asked to develop it into a real "comic circus act".

The workshop leader will explain that it is not so important what you do, but rather the "how".

Jackets, skirts and some accessories (bags, hats) can help.

The workshop leader can propose the following "game scheme" to facilitate the creation of the number:

- 1) "Entrance" with presentation with invented name and personal greeting
- 2) Presentation of the flea (or fleas) with the name
- 3) Brief announcement of the performance (let's remember that we are at the circus!)
- 4) Exhibition of the flea (e.g. "the jump")
- 5) Announcement of the development of the number
- 6) Exhibition (e.g. "somersault")
- 7) Announcement of further development "more and more difficult!" (e.g. "double somersault")



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- 8) Surprise/problem/accident (e.g. falling flea or jumping among spectators, ...)
  - 9) Acceptance of the problem and its resolution (or worsening...)
1. Conclusion, farewell and exit.

## On the comedian

In a "mixed" theater workshop, where people with different cultural backgrounds, with different life experiences and also with different expectations arrive, it is very important to create a welcoming atmosphere right from the start. An approach that is not formal, but rather joyful and playful, favors the dissolution of tensions generated by understandable fears towards such "different" strangers: and here the faces relax in a smile, a contagious expression, recognized and shared by every human being .

Already in the warm-up (see "**Training**") sheet), which introduces each laboratory meeting, the exercises are performed "joking" and laughing, and many of the "games" proposed have a comical imprint.

There are many different cultural differences and personal sensitivities to comicality and it is important to ensure that they are not only respected, but that they can manifest and be valued.

A path that can be taken in common is the one based on self-irony which allows us to move away from the clichés of a stereotyped comicality, often passively received and imitated, to develop our own personal *sense of humor*.

It will be easier to accept our way of being and behave if we train ourselves to observe ourselves through the lens of irony. Discovering that with our "weaknesses" we can cause laughs and smiles in others (our companions), will represent a great and happy conquest. It is certainly a delicate path, but of great dis-inhibiting and liberating value, which facilitates the processes of socialization (see "**A practice**").

Many of the games proposed (see sheets "**Improvise with a side partner**", "**Playing with your tics**", "**The trained flea**", "**Broken action**", "**The slap of the clown**", "**Simple sequences**", "**Ping-pong**") can constitute stages of this journey, an integral part of that research on ourselves and on our being human in relationship and with the others.

The study on the comedian that is brought in the "Human Beings intercultural theater workshop" and in "Teatro Rifugio" refers to the "Searching for one's clown" by Pierre Byland, the great theater master that Danilo Cremona met for the first time in 1978, the beginning of an intense frequentation.

**"The search for one's clown"**, according to Byland's teaching, means starting a search on oneself, on one's most hidden part, the one that one would never want to show off, on the contrary one is ashamed of, the most fragile and ridiculous part of ourselves. Accepting being ridiculous for who you are, and not pretending to be funny. "Don't act!" is Pierre's continued recommendation.

This "exposure" is made possible only thanks to the "protection" of the theatrical fiction highlighted by the "mask" of the red nose: in short, we are in the theater, we are, in some way, "playing".

The clown's nose - the little red ball which is the essential synthesis of the art of clowning - is the smallest mask in the world and does not hide the actor's face like other masks do, but illuminates it. The red nose



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makes the fiction of the theatrical play clear and at the same time demands absolute sincerity. The red nose is a mask and involves a "mask" acting which, however, will not be artificial, but "simple", it will not be stereotyped, but "personal".

The search for one's own clown (who is not a character to be played) begins by passing through the critical and not easy experience of the "fiasco", that is, the failure of the "number", of the performance. Accepting it means starting from scratch, remaining open and available to the public. In fact, as in the circus, there is no "fourth wall", there are spectators and the clown can and must rely on them in order not to be alone and to attempt to recover from the "fiasco". To do this, you have to put yourself in the position of someone who knows less.

Wearing a red nose means trying to see the world through the eyes of a child for whom everything is new and to be discovered; it means trying to stay in a world of games where reality and fantasy get confused; it means trying to be amazed and wondered, without taking anything for granted.

Byland is credited with having brought the clown from the circus to the theater, but it is he himself who always recalls the humble origins of Augusto, the clown with a red nose due to the cold suffered or from too much alcohol, poor, always out of place, called on the stage to "plug the holes" between the performance of the acrobats and that of the tamers, in the midst of the excrement of trained animals.

And speaking of "humble origin", it should be remembered that the word "clown" probably derives from the Latin "colonus", which means farmer: the citizens laughed at him for his clumsy and heavy walk, typical of someone walking in the middle of the land and mud.

The search for simplicity and immediacy, a humble attitude with respect to one's role, the openness to spectators (interlocutors whose existence is not denied), are principles that have great pedagogical value, with implications that go beyond theatrical perimeter.

Transforming one's fragility into theatrical strength is an objective-path that assumes even greater value when it takes place in a context such as that of the theater laboratory open to all, offering an opportunity for individual growth tout court.

The clown is the anti-hero, and as Jacques Lecoq writes about the work of Pierre Byland, "The clown highlights the individual in his uniqueness and demystifies the claim of each to be superior to the other." For those who have suffered, or suffer continuous discrimination and abuse in daily life, this experience, lived in a playful and joyful atmosphere, can produce very positive effects.



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## 4. Top 10 Methods to Close a Theatre Workshop Space with Youth of Different Cultural Backgrounds: Fostering Reflection, Connection, and Empowerment

1. Circle of Appreciation:
  - Participants gather in a circle and take turns expressing gratitude and appreciation for their experiences, contributions, and growth during the workshop.
  - Importance: Closing with appreciation strengthens the sense of community, validates individual efforts, and fosters a positive atmosphere.
2. Reflection and Journaling:
  - Provide participants with time to reflect on their personal journey, insights gained, and any challenges faced during the workshop.
  - Importance: Reflection encourages self-awareness, deeper understanding, and integration of new knowledge and experiences.
3. Small Group Discussions:
  - Divide participants into small groups and facilitate discussions where they can share their reflections, key takeaways, and questions.
  - Importance: Small group discussions offer a safe space for dialogue, active listening, and collective sense-making, promoting mutual understanding and connection.
4. Collaborative Art Project:
  - Engage participants in a collaborative art project, such as creating a mural, sculpture, or collage that represents their shared experiences or themes explored during the workshop.
  - Importance: Collaborative art projects foster teamwork, creativity, and a sense of ownership, providing a tangible representation of the collective journey.
5. Closing Ritual or Ceremony:
  - Design a closing ritual or ceremony that aligns with the cultural diversity of the participants, incorporating meaningful symbols, music, or rituals from different backgrounds.
  - Importance: A closing ritual or ceremony honors participants' cultural identities, strengthens a sense of closure, and creates a sacred space for reflection and appreciation.
6. Sharing Personal Manifestos:
  - Invite participants to write personal manifestos that express their commitments, aspirations, or goals as a result of the workshop.
  - Importance: Sharing personal manifestos empowers participants to articulate their intentions, deepen their personal connection to the workshop's themes, and encourage accountability.
7. Open Mic or Performance Night:
  - Provide a platform for participants to showcase their talents, whether through poetry readings, monologues, music performances, or other forms of artistic expression.
  - Importance: Open mic or performance nights allow participants to share their voices, celebrate their cultural heritage, and build confidence in their abilities.



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#### 8. Action Planning:

- Guide participants in developing action plans or commitments for how they will apply what they have learned from the workshop in their daily lives or communities.
- Importance: Action planning ensures that the workshop's impact extends beyond the workshop space, empowering participants to create positive change and contribute to their communities.

#### 9. Exchange of Contact Information:

- Encourage participants to exchange contact information, such as emails or social media handles, to facilitate ongoing communication, networking, and support among the group.
- Importance: Maintaining connections beyond the workshop fosters a sense of community, enables further learning, and provides a support network for participants.

#### 10. Closing Appreciation Circle:

- Gather participants in a final circle, where each individual has an opportunity to express appreciation or offer a closing message to the group as a whole.
- Importance: The closing appreciation circle provides a final moment of connection, affirmation, and gratitude, leaving participants with a positive and uplifting memory of the workshop.

When the theatre workshop space is properly closed with youth of different cultural backgrounds, it offers numerous opportunities:

- Opportunity for Reflection: Participants can reflect on their experiences, gain insights, and integrate new learnings into their lives.
- Opportunity for Connection: Closing activities foster a sense of community, strengthen relationships among participants, and provide a supportive network.
- Opportunity for Empowerment: Participants can develop action plans, commit to personal growth, and feel empowered to create positive change in their communities.
- Opportunity for Cultural Celebration: Closing



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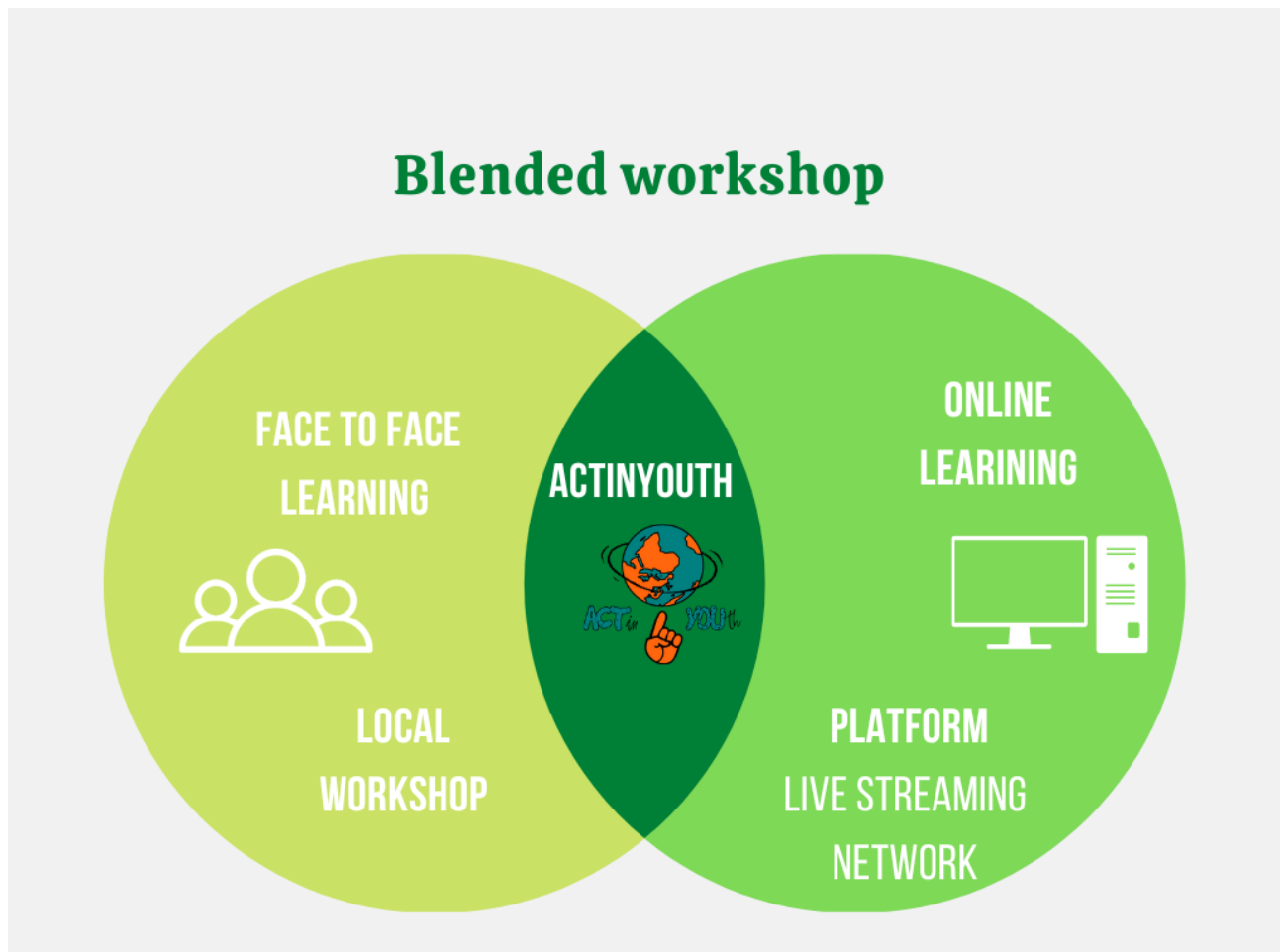
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## 5. How to work in blended workshops? A concrete experience: obstacles and success factors.

What does blended mean?

The term is used to refer to blended learning, where the learner learns both in a face-to-face experience and online (through digital platforms, online assessment modules, questionnaires). It is not just about mixing approaches, but making the learning experience more engaging with approaches that combine and complement each other. It involves face-to-face, online and autonomous learning.



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During 2020, the Covid19 pandemic forced the Human Beings workshop (held by Smascherati!) to move online.

For a couple of months, participants met twice a week for a couple of hours on the ZOOM platform.

Not only people who were participating live and had to stop due to the lockdown, but also former workshop participants who took advantage of the opportunity, joined in. From all over the world, therefore, people connected to ZOOM for the work sessions, which took place in the following way:

- physical training - space was needed for movement
- pause, where the live performance was paused
- moment of improvisation.

The duration of the sessions was variable, depending on the participants' wishes.

When it was possible to start again in presence, the sessions on ZOOM continued in mixed form - blended, to allow those who were geographically far away to continue.

### How were the sessions conducted?

The same way as described above, but with some adjustments:

- good quality audio and video;
- paying attention to the people streaming, so that they did not feel excluded from what was going on in the workplace;
- moving the camera to allow them to see and hear everything that was going on;
- also look at what people were streaming.

The mixed workshop turned out to be a great opportunity, both for those connected from afar and for the participants in attendance.

### Positive elements:

- possibility of involving people from other parts of the world



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- possibility of involving people who live far away and have no means of getting to the meeting place

### Difficulties:

- in the absence of a PC, it is not always easy and accessible to connect by mobile phone;
- discontinuity of the internet signal;
- tiredness in following online for too many hours;
- inattention.

In the framework of the ACTin'YouTH project, all partners carried out local workshops for six months, which therefore provided for a blended modality: on the one hand the face to face workshop, on the other hand the use of an online platform where both Youth workers and Young people could find: resources, documents, explanatory videos, a chat to interact with other participants from the various European countries, forums, live streaming.

The platform was created with the intention of allowing participants from all partner countries to exchange ideas and materials on ongoing activities (at local and transnational level), which will remain even after the end of the project as an archive of good practices developed during the project.

The platform can also be used as a self-training tool for further youth workers and young people who wish to approach the methodology.

The platform will also be the digital environment where young people, guided by youth workers, will develop the open, transnational and collaborative online theatre performance from the input provided by the non-formal education sessions.

The platform is accessible in all languages of the partnership and is divided into two parts: Youth workers space and Young people space.

## 5.1 Safe and secure online tools for youth workers

### Learning objectives

- Understand basic concepts of security, privacy and protection in a digital context



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- Digital rights
- Get to know some free / libre open source software and tools for better privacy and security

## Learning contents

1. Why safety and security in the digital and online world are important?
2. FLOSS (Free/Libre Open Source Software), Creative Commons and other public licences
3. Recommendations and good practices for selecting online tools for youth work

## Description

Let's think about why safety and security are important in the digital environment, and even more with young people and in a social inclusion project like ACTin'YouTH.

Today more than ever, we need to reflect critically on our relationship with technology. How do digital technologies impact the way we get informed and make decisions? How can we as a society face the 'side-effects' of an increasingly data-driven world?

### 1. Intro - Why safety and security are important?

In [ACTinYouTH](#) we believe that technology has a great potential to help humans to thrive and to empower people to achieve things that seemed impossible. We want to use technology as a great tool and strategy for equality, not a source of divide. Closing the digital divides on a global level requires many many projects and strategies around the world.

ACTin'YouTH starts from local face2face workshops, where young people work together on social, communicative and intercultural skills in a series of theater based workshops, where we establish quality relationships and build self confidence in young people, a part from working on digital competences through practical use of digital tools.

Theater and learning-by-doing are two important methodologies within the project. As digital tools we've chosen audiovisuals and online platforms. Combining these, we work on breaking social exclusions mechanisms and stereotypes around and within participant groups. The audiovisual pieces created and produced by youth, are a representation of their cultural and social reality, which become a powerful tool to



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develop social inclusion and cohesion. Partner organizations provide support, training and digital tools for audiovisual creation.

### The digital infrastructure is of crucial importance

*How can certain multinational companies offer massive free online platforms and services? How come it's free for me? Do they not pay for their servers and the people maintaining them?*

The answer is simple, we are not their users, we are their products. Their business model is based on selling our data and our profiles.

The need for good quality data protection and a responsible and critical use of massive social networks is especially important in times of fake news and online harassment.

The ACTin'YouTH platform itself is hosted on our own infrastructure, and built by integrating well-established free software tools, a modern lean design and a basic set of features for learning, creating, exchanging and sharing.

## 2. What is FLOSS? Free/libre open source software

Free Software refers to freedom, not price. It guarantees its users the essential four freedoms. The absence of at least one of these freedoms means an application is proprietary, so non-Free Software

**Use:** Free Software can be used for any purpose and is free of restrictions such as licence expiry or geographic limitations.

**Share:** Free Software can be shared and copied at virtually no cost.

**Study:** Free Software and its code can be studied by anyone, without non-disclosure agreements or similar restrictions.

**Improve:** Free Software can be modified by anyone, and these improvements can be shared publicly.

What is free software (Open Source)? Software freedom explained in less than 3 minutes <https://media.fsf.org/w/xs29yhLxSP1uKLYkSeoKKp>

Under the label FLOSS (Free/Libre Open Source Software) we find a great diversity of free and open technological solutions that respond to the management and production needs of a project.



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## Commons

The commons is an **economic model that emphasizes the collective, community and/or cooperative management of a material or immaterial good**. In this model, the emphasis is on **access to sources and resources**: they must be open and shared, in order to guarantee general interest.

### 3. Creative commons and other public licences for content

It's important to remember that all creative work by default has an “all rights reserved” copyright, regardless of their format, and even in the absence of any copyright symbol (©).

When we use internet search engines for finding images and pictures for example, we recommend using advanced search mechanisms which allow filtering for open licenses. Let's see some examples

- [Wikimedia](#) is an image database where all available images have an open license
- [Flickr](#), [Iconfinder](#), [Google Image Search](#) and [Duckduckgo](#) allow to filter for Creative Commons or Public Domain licenses.
- [Pixabay](#) is an open licensed image database.
- [Peertube](#) is an open license video sharing platform.
- Youtube allows to filter for Creative Commons work.

What should you always keep in mind when searching for educational resources?

- Don't use whatever images, videos, text fragments etc. you find on Internet. Check carefully if copyright, personality rights or other usage restrictions apply.
- Always fulfill personality rights, make sure people identifiable on your images have previously agreed to publishing ... do this with your own photos as well as with photos you got from the Internet or other resources.

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2. The text says CC-BY or another variation of the licenses in the list and picture.
3. Especially on websites look for an overall license applying to all work, you might find it in the header or footer area, or on the about page.

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#### 4. Tools for online meetings, webinars, and sharing learning content



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Software and online platforms for internal or external communication, within your organizations or publicly with your community, some forums and social networks, all free/libre open source software!

### Video conference and online meeting tools

- [Jitsi](#) is a free software videoconferencing tool, you can [find here](#) a list of public community run Jitsi servers you can use for your meetings
- [BigBlueButton](#) offers a demo server for shorter not critical meetings only

### Working with images, photos, videos

- [Gimp](#) is a free image editing software
- [Inkscape](#) is a free alternative for vectorial graphic design and image editing tools
- Platforms for finding free images and icons: [pixabay](#) offers search for free images, [iconfinder](#) helps you find free graphic art and icons, [pexels](#) with a special focus on gender and diversity

### Chat software and instant messaging

- [Mattermost](#) is a chat software for building your organization's own chat platform
- [Signal](#) is a FLOSS chat software available for smartphone and desktop computer
- We recommend to NOT use WhatsApp or Telegram because they are not designed with a "security by default" mindset, they are known for important security flaws, and although the messages are end-to-end encrypted WhatsApp does not encrypt metadata but shares it Facebook, the cloud-based design of Telegram, etc.

### Online collaboration, documents etc.

- [Nextcloud](#) and [Owncloud](#) are tools for online collaboration and hosting privately your documents.
- [Framasoft](#) is a French NGO creating free software tools for other non profits, they offer tools for creating polls or questionnaires and many more.



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- [Cryptpad](#) is an online tool for securely creating and sharing documents as well as collaborating online.
- [Decidim](#) is a free software platform for decision making processes, used by public administrations and non profit organizations.

### Build your website with free software

- [WordPress](#) is a free software tool for easily setting up your own website
- [Drupal](#) is a more complex online framework for designing and building a website

### Learning environments

- [Moodle](#) is a free software tool for setting up and hosting online and blended courses.

### Operating systems for your computer or phone

- [Linux](#) is the most well-known FLOSS operating system, although Linux alone is only the “kernel” of a richly flavoured ecosystem of different Linux distributions you can install on your desktop computer or laptop. Some examples of famous Linux distributions
- Ubuntu is a very well known distribution specially built for desktop and laptop uses, perfectly works in a school or work environment, ask your hardware store or second hand store for computers with Ubuntu already installed.
- Fedora is another of the older Linux distributions flavours, provided by the company Red Hat.
- Linux Mint is a derivative from Ubuntu and in many ways pretty much the same, it usually provides a feature rich desktop design.
- ElementaryOS was built to provide a similar usability to MacOSX, designed for simplicity and works great with older hardware.
- [F-Droid](#) is an app store for open source apps for your smartphone with Android.

### Group work

The following task should be done in teams of four or five people, you should use a computer, laptop or smartphone with internet connection.



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1. Do any of you already use FLOSS (Free/Libre Open Source Software)? What tools do you use? 5 minutes
2. Choose 2 of the before mentioned tools and find out how they are working, test them on your computer or smartphone. Discuss in your group about the experience? 5 minutes
3. Got to the website [alternative.to](http://alternative.to) and look for a free software alternative to one of your most used apps or online tools. 5 minutes



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## 6. Partners methodological approach: case studies

### Stichting CWM Education and Theatre of the Oppressed

**Introduction:** Stichting CWM Education is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting education, integration, and social empowerment among young people with different cultural backgrounds in the Netherlands. With a particular focus on the Amsterdam and The Hague areas, the organization has successfully implemented the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology to address the unique challenges faced by these youth. This case study explores the best practices employed by Stichting CWM Education in their work with diverse communities and highlights the transformative impact of Theatre of the Oppressed.

**Background:** In Amsterdam and The Hague, there is a significant population of young people from diverse cultural backgrounds. These individuals often face barriers in education, employment, and social integration due to factors such as language barriers, cultural differences, and discrimination. Stichting CWM Education recognized the need to create a safe and inclusive space for these youth to express themselves, address social issues, and develop essential life skills.

**Implementation of Theatre of the Oppressed:** Stichting CWM Education adopted the Theatre of the Oppressed approach, pioneered by Brazilian theater practitioner Augusto Boal, as a powerful tool to engage young people and foster social change. Theatre of the Oppressed combines theater techniques with interactive exercises, encouraging participants to explore and challenge oppressive systems and behaviors. Through interactive performances and workshops, the youth are empowered to critically examine social issues, develop empathy, and explore alternative solutions.

**Creating a Safe and Inclusive Space:** One of the best practices employed by Stichting CWM Education is the creation of a safe and inclusive space for the participants. They prioritize building trust, respecting cultural differences, and valuing each participant's voice and experiences. This enables young people to freely express their thoughts, concerns, and aspirations, regardless of their cultural background. The organization actively ensures that all participants feel welcomed, supported, and heard throughout the entire process.

**Facilitating Dialogue and Empathy:** The Theatre of the Oppressed methodology encourages dialogue and empathy-building among participants. Stichting CWM Education utilizes various interactive exercises, such as forum theater and image theater, to engage young people in discussions on social issues that affect their lives. By embodying different perspectives and roles, participants gain a deeper understanding of complex social dynamics, challenge stereotypes, and develop empathy for others' experiences. This process allows for transformative personal growth and fosters a sense of unity within the group.

**Addressing Relevant Social Issues:** Stichting CWM Education identifies and addresses relevant social issues that affect the youth they work with. Through participatory theater performances, participants have the opportunity to share their stories, experiences, and perspectives on these issues. The performances not only serve as a platform for self-expression but also raise awareness among the wider community about the challenges faced by young people with different cultural backgrounds. This contributes to breaking down stereotypes, promoting dialogue, and ultimately working towards social change.

**Collaboration with Community Partners:** Stichting CWM Education actively collaborates with community partners, including schools, cultural organizations, and local authorities. This collaborative approach ensures



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a holistic support system for the young people involved. By partnering with schools, for example, they can integrate the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology into educational curricula, allowing for wider impact and long-term sustainability. Collaboration with other organizations and stakeholders also helps to address systemic issues and advocate for change at a broader level.

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement: Stichting CWM Education places great importance on evaluation and continuous improvement. They regularly assess the impact of their programs, gather feedback from participants and stakeholders, and make adjustments based on the findings. This commitment to evaluation ensures that their work remains relevant, effective, and responsive to the needs of the youth they serve.

### **AMKE IASIS - Experience in dealing with the youth refugee crisis**

Since 2005 IASIS aims to provide psychosocial support, combat social exclusion of vulnerable groups, offer psychological and counseling services and create equal opportunities for everyone. Given the extended scale of the refugee crisis, the provision of housing, care, protection and psychosocial support to millions of young refugees who have arrived in our country was imperative. Thus, the organization has a significant experience in dealing with the refugee crisis as it will be shown above.

#### **Temporary Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers' Families (2011-2020)**

In 2011, IASIS in cooperation with Nostos, operated one Temporary Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers' Families, that hosted 70 persons. The purpose of this structure was to improve living conditions of the Asylum Seekers' Families during their stay in our country, intervening in two main directions: the coverage of their primary needs and psychosocial support. The individual objectives of the structure included medical care, legal support, maternity empowerment and providing basic cultural and cognitive tools for their professional reorientation and for their possible integration into the Greek and European reality.

#### **Temporary Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers "MELLON" (2013-2020)**

In 2013 IASIS in cooperation with Nostos, E.A.D.A.P. and Ergoerevnitiki started the operation of "MELLON" Temporary Accommodation Centre for Asylum Seekers. It was a housing facility that accommodated 60 unaccompanied children and adolescents and 40 mothers with their children. They were all refugees and asylum seekers coming from war zones. The facility, besides the coverage of their basic living needs, provided medical services, educational activities, counseling services focusing on re-employment, as well as legal support. Additionally, educational-entertainment activities were organized in order to support refugees acquaintance and adaptation to Greek reality, as well as support services for the integration of children in the school environment.

#### **Accommodation Centre for Refugees beneficiaries of relocation (XENIA Athens) (2016-2020) / Accommodation Centre for Unaccompanied Children seeking Asylum (XENIA Teens - TEENS SPIRIT) (2016-2017)**

In the context of the initiative of the UN High Commission "Support to implementation of Hotspot and Relocation Scheme and to the Strengthening of the Asylum Reception Capacity: Establishment of 20,000 Reception places in support of the relocating scheme", IASIS in cooperation with Nostos, operated Accommodation Centre for Refugees beneficiaries of relocation (XENIA Athens), that hosted 350 persons.



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The main purpose of the structure was facilitate refugees during their stay in Greece, until their legal and safe relocation to another European country.

In the framework of the same initiative, Iasis in cooperation with Nostos operated Accommodation Centre for Unaccompanied Children seeking Asylum (XENIA Teens - TEENS SPIRIT) with a capacity of 20 teenagers from countries such as Syria, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Guinea and Bangladesh. In this centre, apart from daily food and accommodation, psychosocial support as well as pedagogical activities were provided. In addition, teenagers participated in experiential non-formal learning activities for the development of soft-social skills and attended to counseling services for career guidance.

### EUROPEAN PROJECTS

Apart from the above and given the need for continuous improvement of services and development of the knowledge and the skills of the staff, Iasis has participated and implemented a lot of European projects. Many of these projects targeted adult population, yet it is understood that the skills and the tools created, can be used for children and teenager refugees.

To begin with, **Soft Skills for Migrants in Europe (SOSMIE)**<sup>1</sup> aimed to compile a guide and develop teaching and pedagogical tools that can help migrants to identify their potential and develop their skills (softskills) aiming at successful professional integration.

The European Erasmus+ project **Lighthouse**<sup>2</sup>, supported lifelong learning and career pathways for migrants to develop their skills and employability, by providing an open, interactive web site offering counseling and career guidance all tailored to migrants. Moreover, **Solidaridad Sin Fronteras (SSF)**<sup>3</sup> was a European Erasmus+ Project that was a mobility for the training of the trainers/counselors of the Amke "IASIS" on innovative methods of education and counseling of refugees - migrants, in order to serve the needs of the beneficiaries and to increase the quality of the services provided by the institution. **Empowering teachers and trainers to cope with religious diversity and boost intercultural education in Europe (B.Living)**<sup>4</sup>, was another European project that aimed at empowering trainers to cope with religious diversity and boost intercultural education.

Furthermore, **I'M HAPPY**<sup>5</sup> was a project designed to develop an application that will provide an aggregated map for young refugees who do not have access to social/service information about their country of asylum and/or have lost their families.

The European project **My Informal Learning Experience (MILE)**<sup>6</sup>, dealt with beneficiaries moving to Europe (refugees, migrants, asylum seekers) who lack formal qualifications but have valuable experience gained during their working life, family activities or in the context of other activities.

Another Project that Amke Iasis participated was **Innovative Techniques for Reaching Out to Migrant Youth**<sup>7</sup>. This aimed to equip Youth Advisors with innovative techniques to effectively reach young people from different cultural backgrounds, such as migrants, refugees or asylum seekers, provide personalized techniques that will help to reach the above-mentioned population, according to the characteristics of young people, and thus promote effective youth work, the concept of working with young migrants, and international cooperation between organizations working with youth.

**VET For Migration**<sup>8</sup>'s goal was find, adapt, implement, and evaluate the new innovative methods and tools for education/training and support of young migrants/refugees used in the two host institutions, CJD (Cologne, Germany) and Framtidståget (Stockholm, Sweden).



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Briefly, other projects in which the organization participated was “Welcome”, “Introducing gamification in vocational education and training for professionals and social workers in the field of migrant children protection and support (GVETS)”, “Education for Deeper Social Integration (EDSI)”, “From Alienation to Inclusion (FATI)”, “Be in Europe”, “Go up”, “Transversal Model for Migrants”, “Assessment of Mental Health of refugees and asylum seekers by Youth Workers (AMORAY)”, “A part of EU”, “Supporting practitioners to train migrants in Europe (SUPPORT ME)”, “Body image, psychological health and TABU concerns in migrant youth and implications for their education (BODY TABU)”, “Develop and Realise Empowering Actions for Mentoring Migrant (DREMM)”, “Providing access to training for migrant women working in care sectors (WE CARE)”, “Exhibition for the incorporation of Migrant children into the EU school frameworks (POEME)”, “Only What You Give Is Yours (O’VISOR)”.

### Other related activities

Refugees and asylum seekers are a social group with high vulnerability, facing an increased risk of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. They have experienced traumatic events and have been subjected to serious threats to their life, freedom and dignity. Persecution, abuse and torture, separation from family and homeland, violence and exploitation and the difficult journey of refugee life are borderline situations with serious physical and psychological consequences. Apart from the above, children and young refugees have other challenges to deal with. Learning a new language, understanding the culture and educational system of the new host country, adapting to the new circumstances are all aggravating factors for the mental health of young refugees. Given these, Amke IASIS through actions such as “Intervention in community” aims to integrate young refugees and provide psychosocial support, while at the same time encourage community members to act in order to improve their living conditions. The objective of this project is to provide medical and psychological support to vulnerable groups, encourage them to participate in activities and educational programs, facilitating their adaptation and smooth integration into society. At the same time, volunteering is an act of selfless contribution and in Amke IASIS, the network of volunteers and the organization of volunteer activities is a priority. The participation of volunteers in the actions of the organization has a double benefit. On the one hand, for the volunteers, on the other hand, for the direct beneficiaries of the organization and indirectly for the community. Through volunteering, the communication and social skills of volunteers and beneficiaries are strengthened and stigma is eliminated. Volunteers strengthen their sense of solidarity with society and acquire skills that benefit them in both their personal and professional lives. It is worth noting that the majority of the organization’s volunteers are in the age range 18-34 years old, and include people of both genders and people of different nationalities.

### Summary

The majority of young refugees in our country face particular psychological difficulties, due to the life events and traumatic incidents they have experienced. Feelings of helplessness, fear, frustration are likely to overwhelm them, while it is possible to deal with mental health problems such as generalized anxiety, PTSD and depression. Given the circumstances, actions to support and improve the living conditions of people in need should be considered self-evident. IASIS has been contributing for 17 years to the provision of psychological and social support services, to the reduction of social exclusion and to the creation of equal opportunities and new perspectives for vulnerable groups of the population. Addressing these phenomena affects us all and if we act collectively we can build a better world for everyone.



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## Associazione culturale Smascherati! APS: Teatro Rifugio - luogo protetto per il racconto dell'esilio / Teatro Rifugio Project - experience in dealing with young refugees and asylum seekers in Italy and Human Beings project

The Cultural Association Smascherati! APS and the company of the same name were founded in 1989 by artists from different theatrical cultures. The meeting of distant human and cultural experiences and the contamination of different forms of artistic expression are at the origin of the work. From these premises, the *Human Beings intercultural theatre workshop* was founded in 1994, in which people from all over the world participate. *Human Beings* - a meeting place for 'migrants' and a creative atelier.

"*Human Beings*" is a workshop where people from all over the world can meet, express themselves and get to know each other through the practice of theatre. Starting from our own history (experiences, language, culture), we aim to search together for all that unites us, that makes us similar to each other, that makes us "human", human beings.

The workshop is open to all (over 18) and free of charge.

Every year more than one hundred people from all over the world and with different life experiences register for Human Beings. The age of the participants ranges from 19 to 70. Foreigners include workers, students, refugees and asylum seekers. Italians come from all over the country (both students and workers). The presence of young 'foreign' children of Italians living abroad and second-generation young people (children of foreigners living in Italy) is interesting.

The Human Beings workshop offers itself as a place of real intercultural (self-)education; theatre practice is used as a means of both knowledge and creative and communicative expression.

Indeed, theatre, in its plurality of languages and expressive possibilities, allows for a rich and meaningful exchange of human and cultural experiences; and this is even more so when it takes place between people from different cultures through the method of improvisation and self-narration.

A prerequisite for such research and openness to take place is that people find themselves at ease, in a 'protected' condition and educated to listen.

This protection made possible the path that led some refugees and asylum seekers to open up, to share their own stories with others, and to find a way to tell their life experiences (wars, persecution, flight, exile), finally relieving them in theatre. Thanks to these meetings, the idea (and the need) to realise a specific theatre workshop project in Umbria as well, with asylum seekers and holders of protection as protagonists, became clearer and clearer: in 2011 "*Teatro Rifugio - luogo protetto per il racconto dell'esilio*" ("*Shelter Theatre - a protected place for the story of exile*") came to life.

The need for a 'specific' workshop for refugees and asylum seekers is due precisely to the absolute peculiarity of their existential condition, which is not autonomous, marginalised and with difficult integration problems. One of the priorities would seem to be the reacquisition of their own identity, and theatre (in particular, the theatre workshop) would seem to offer the conditions and tools for the success of this effort.



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It is hard to imagine succeeding in stimulating in exiles the search for their own material autonomy and the desire and will for their own real integration (let alone their actual realisation), without a preliminary path of identity reconstruction and strengthening.

Participation in the workshops does not require knowledge of the Italian language. Translators (active workshop participants) are always present to translate into the various languages.

The project, in terms of both methods and content, is aimed at enhancing differences, starting from the expressive potential of each individual participant, in a practice open to experimentation and the mixing of different languages; thus, first and foremost, an opportunity to meet the other, moving from one's own 'story' and one's own need for communication.

The practice of improvisation/narration and the use (also) of the mother tongue guarantee and valorise the cultures of each individual participant, who is stimulated to research their own "origins", in a context of confrontation-meeting with others.

Learning the Italian language, the main communication tool in the workshop, is favoured by the free and dynamic context that characterises this activity.

The workshop is attended by both Italians and foreigners (from all over the world and with different life experiences); mutual knowledge, through observation and listening, is the best antidote to all forms of xenophobia and racism (which are based precisely on ignorance); the presentation of the show, then, allows a wide audience to get to know and appreciate the creative work of an intercultural group and to verify the (added) value of 'differences'.

The workshop is set up as a protected place, where participants have the opportunity to express themselves through theatre play, without fearing the judgement of others and without judging each other. The workshop is a serene and joyful place, where themes, even complex and sometimes traumatic ones, can be addressed discreetly and also lightly (but not superficially).

The **specific objectives** are:

- the creation of a safe space where everyone can express themselves;
- to have awareness of the theatrical act;
- to have greater awareness of one's own body and how everyone can have different forms of movement and expression;
- to have greater self-esteem;
- learn to relate to others;
- stimulate creativity and imagination;
- discover diversity and appreciate its value;
- deepen knowledge of oneself by comparing oneself with others;
- improve knowledge of the Italian language.



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