

'Humour Strategies and Other Competencies' training in Leipzig (3rd – 11th October 2015)

On behalf of Comparative Research Network e.V. Kamila Kowenzowska and me offered our support to Theater Vision e.V. by bringing and leading a couple of exercises in Leipzig (under „other competencies”). I thought it can be a nice challenge: to link our exercises together and learn from each other. The competencies we offered were: intercultural aspects in work, everyday life, humour from intercultural point of view, team building using digital tools and working with authentic movements and drawing attention to the *blocking* and *supporting* aspects in our lives. Apart from some exercises, we've been participants like others.

I was really excited about working with humour because it's something that has already been helpful in my life: to have a sense of humour. Even if mine can be quite dry. Saying something funny can be a challenge if I don't know the other person and/or coming from a different culture. Unless I use mimics, gestures and movements that are non-verbal and mostly universal.

We've been doing plenty of exercises working with our movements, our individual characteristic features (physical and behavioural aspects) and improvisations. I found it fascinating to scrutinize myself from a different point of view.

It was amazing to find things that are very *typically me* and to play with it: exaggerating the way I walk and talk or my general attitude towards things. I loved to laugh at myself! Sometimes it happened in a form of an inner smile, another time laughing my head off imagining myself from outside e.g. while acting out a scene with others. I find clowning a fascinating possibility to integrate parts of us that are hard to accept – let it be a physical deformity, an illness or something that we think is awkward or „not okay” in us.

We've been also working with personality traits from our inner child, awoking its playfulness. Most of it through movement, intuition and playing with different emotions, e.g. acting out as an angry clown, stupid clown, a know-it-all clown, scared clown, arrogant or naive clown etc. - or improvising a scene together with other clowns.

I learned, however, that finding the inner (core) clown figure is not that easy. It takes a lot of work to catch that particular essence. (And it can also alter depending upon our current moods.) What I missed from the clown trainers is the feedback related to our clown figures. It would have been helpful to get more tips from them into which direction we should dig more.

I found helpful however that we were shown the „humour suitcase” a bag of objects that we can put together for ourselves which can be a big help for „survival”, for example: an emergency red nose that we can put on while sitting in a car in a traffic jam. This way we can switch real stress into humour, improvising as an angry clown. It's a great chance to change our perspective and sublimate unwanted feelings by working them through a role. Some other wonderful ideas we've learned:

- dubbing someone else's talk that we cannot hear or understand
- giving objects another role (eg. using a shoe as a telephone)
- the beauty of failing

- hiding behind another person and using my hands to do gestures as they would belong to the other, etc.

All in all, we could successfully link our intercultural aspect to clowning as the participants came from 6 different countries and many of them are working with migrants. Kamila made the people aware of the sensitive topics in an intercultural environment on the first day and I made a transition from clowning to the last (implementation) day where a different mind set was needed.

I'm amazed by clinic clowning as a profession and the endless possibilities of improvisation and humour. I enjoyed learning (by doing) something new and I already started to implemented some skills in my private life. I'm looking forward to trying out ideas on the pilot workshop and in my work.

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Bernadett Hamar-Sári

Thank you Erasmus+ and Theater Vision e.V. for making this possible!

