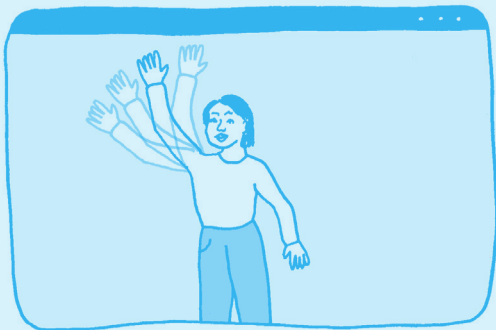
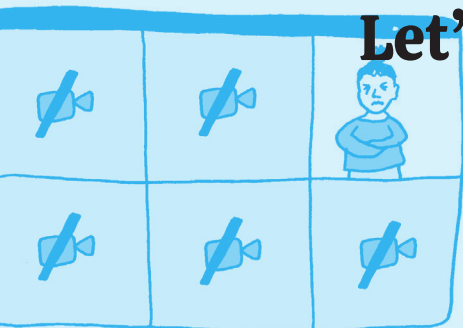


Webbing Theatre Handbook

Let's do theatre online!



Webbing Theatre Handbook

Let's do theatre online!

Webbing Theatre Handbook:

Let's do theatre online

Authors of the handbook: Žiga Auer, Jana Burger, Jaka Andrej Vojevec, Nežka Struc, Barbara Polajnar, Elly Jarvis, Sofia Casarrubia, Josipa Lulić, Bárbara Santos

Editors: Barbara Polajnar, Nežka Struc

Designer: Ena Jurov

Proofreader in English: Jaka Andrej Vojevec

Ljubljana, **Kulturno umetniško društvo KUD Transformator**

Zagreb, **Centar za kazalište potlačenih POKAZ**

Berlin, **KURINGA**

September 2022

Online handbook

Kataložni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili v Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani

COBISS.SI-ID 123855363

ISBN 978-961-95175-3-6 (Kulturno umetniško društvo Transformator, PDF)

Contents

INTRODUCTION 7

KUD TRANSFORMATOR 11

KURINGA 12

Centar za kazalište potlačenih POKAZ 13

TERMINOLOGY 15

Theatre of the Oppressed 17

Oppression – a central concept of the Theatre of the Oppressed 18

Feminist Theatre of the Oppressed 18

Theatre pedagogy 19

CASE STUDIES 21

KUD TRANSFORMATOR 23

Webbing Theatre Lab 23

KATIS (Professional development program for teachers supported by Ministry for Education): Theatre on Web 26

POKAZ 30

Giraffes 30

KURINGA 32

Ma(g)dalena international network 32

KURINGA, POKAZ, KUD TRANSFORMATOR 41

Webbing Theatre Festival 41

LET'S DO (SOME) WEBBING THEATRE! 45

Basic principles 47

Name Games & Warming Up 49

Group Building 53

Sensory Games & De-mechanization 56

Generating Content 63

Image Theatre 68

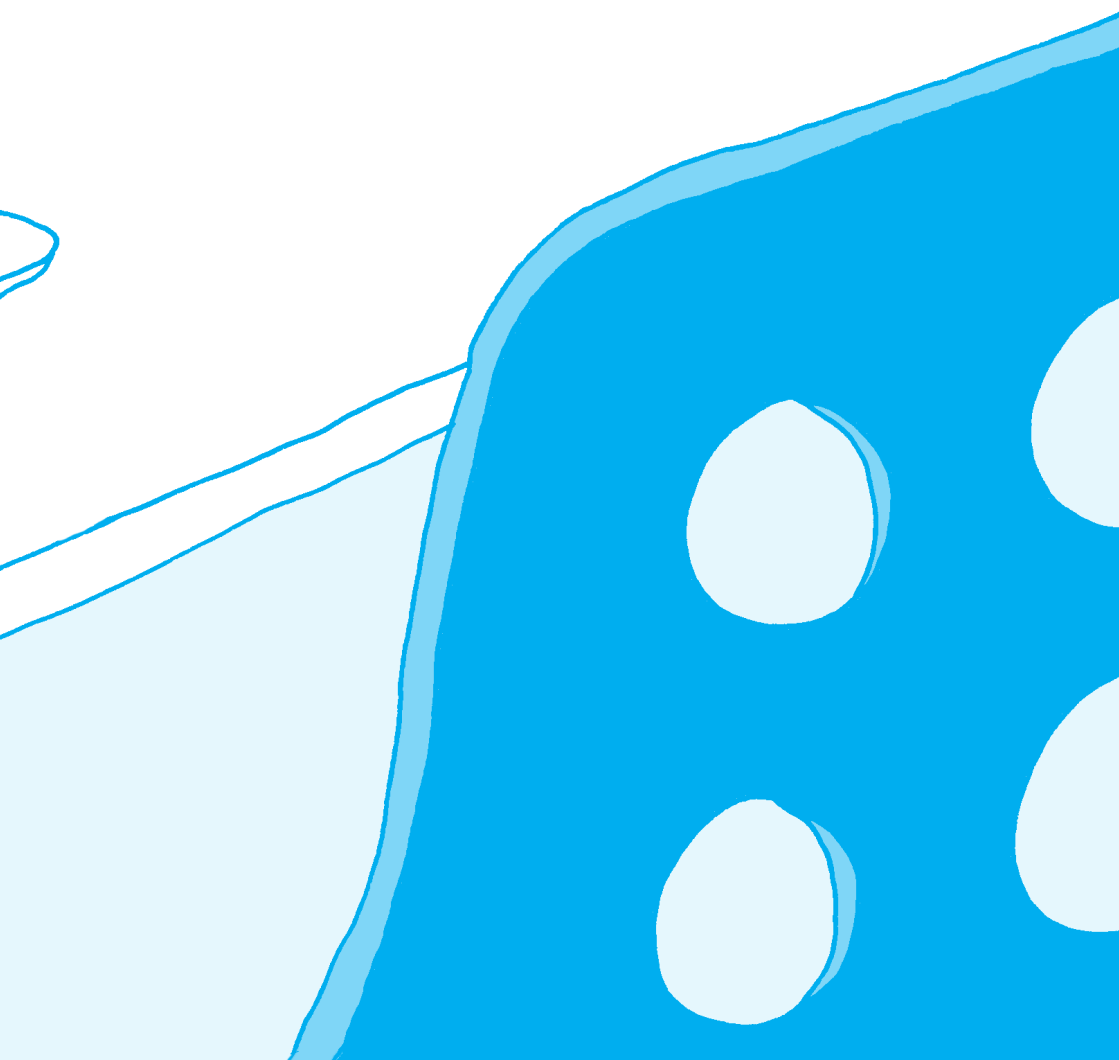
Newspaper or Media Theatre 74

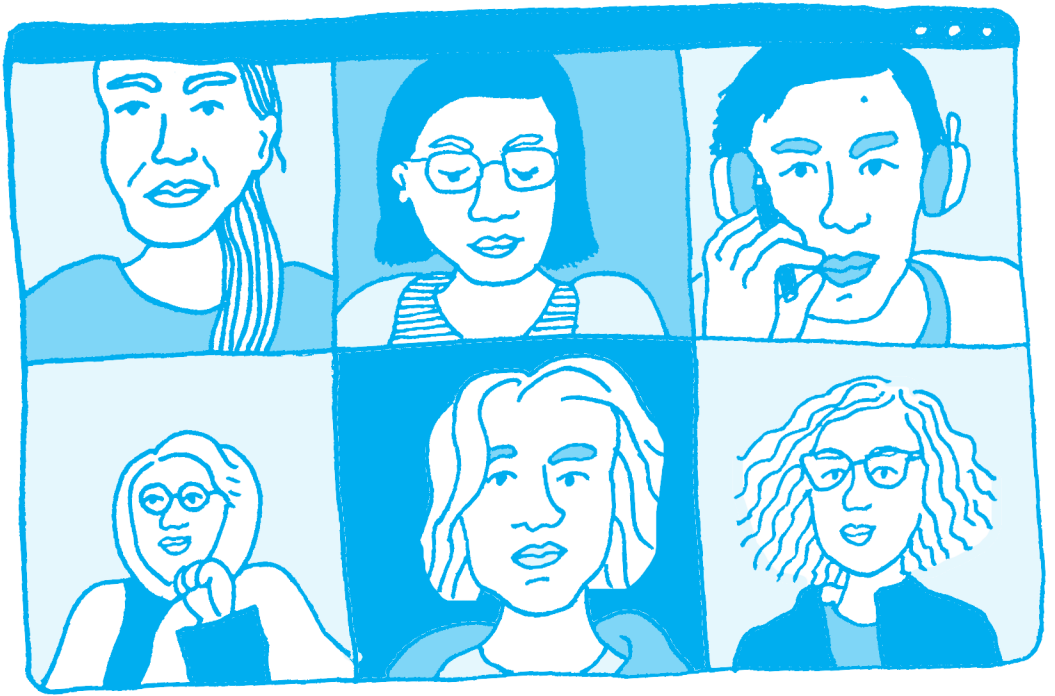
Aesthetics of the Oppressed 78

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE 83



INTRODUCTION





Dear reader, youth worker, pedagogue, tutor, facilitator, T. O. practitioner.

What you are looking at is a handbook entitled “Webbing Theatre” containing exercises, games and techniques from the field of Theatre of the Oppressed and Theatre Pedagogy that can help you to work online with a variety of target groups.

The outbreak of the new coronavirus has strongly impacted everyone’s lives. Among the most affected areas were also theatre and activism which are based on live contact, community and solidarity, group work and cooperation. Facing this situation we asked ourselves: “How to go on?” The answer is, of course: work online. But it is not so easy to digitalise techniques that evolved through live contact over thousands of years by simply setting them in front of a webcam. Deeper reflection and an experimental, laboratory approach was necessary, as well as exchange of opinions, approaches, experience and good practice.

For example, as early as November 2020 we started our first pilot online Theatre of the Oppressed training in Slovenia, entitled School of Theatre of the Oppressed, organised by Pekarna Magdalenske mreže Maribor and facilitated by Barbara Polajnar and Jaka A. Vojevec. Our target group was youth workers and youngsters. We were looking for new ways how to apply theatre online – from introduction and trust games to exploring diverse skills in theatre (improvisation, dramaturgy ..) and Theatre of the Oppressed techniques (Image theatre, Newspaper theatre, Image and Forum Theatre, Aesthetics of the Oppressed, etc.). Contrary to our expectations, participants very much enjoyed spending such creative time together and did not complain about our online methodology and about being physically alone at home in front of their computers. They felt very much connected with other participants, albeit only online, and they expressed their desire to meet up in person when that would again become possible. This was just one of the reasons to initiate the international project Webbing Theatre that connects 3 partner organisations: KUD Transformator (Ljubljana, Slovenia), KURINGA (Berlin, Germany) and POKAZ (Zagreb, Croatia).

The main aim of the Webbing Theatre project was to build a diverse international multiplying community of activists and theatre-makers implementing Theatre of the Oppressed techniques in youth work, in order to equip young people who will participate in online activities (workshops, festivals, performances) with competences for critical thinking, proactive citizenship, creative expression and social engagement. Together we reflected and developed new methods and forms of artistic expression that allowed for fruitful and relevant functioning during adverse epidemic circumstances.

The content of the manual consists of an explanation of the basic terminology, examples of good practices from each of the partner organisations and concrete theatre exercises, games and techniques adapted to working online.

The manual has been translated into four languages: English, German, Slovenian and Croatian.

While reading the manual, we wish you a lot of inspiration in your work and to make good use of these exercises in your practice, which we wish and hope will be transferred from the Internet back to physical contact between individuals in communities as soon as possible.

KUD TRANSFORMATOR

The theatre-activist group binds its activities to the Theatre of the Oppressed, the theatre for social change. KUD Transformator (short for Cultural and Artistic Association Transformator) was formed in November 2010 after a 17-day intensive training in the techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed (October – November 2010) facilitated by the tutor and coach Birgit Fritz from Vienna. The workshops were carried out in the framework of the Global Sofa project. The basic group working since 2010 is the theatre-activist group Transformator which does not produce sophisticated art with professionally trained artists, but rather approaches regular people. Its members draw their creative energy from burning social issues which are presented to the audience (the so-called spect-actors) in order for them to try, process and reshape them and give constructive criticism. Given the variety of areas that can be covered by the members' professional or educational background, the techniques of the Theatre of the Oppressed are combined or used primarily through the prism of personal involvement.

After 2 years working as a non-formal theatre-activist group the Cultural and Artistic Association Transformator was officially founded in January 2012 due to the need to expand and upgrade its theatre-activist mission, primarily, but not exclusively in the Theatre of the Oppressed techniques, which members of the theatre-activist group have been previously trained in (most of them completed trainings for coaches in the techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed).

The main pillars of KUD Transformator's activities are: theatre production, workshops and training, publishing, Non-festival of the Theatre of the Oppressed, Magdalene Krivopete, and international partnerships.

KURINGA

A space for Theatre of the Oppressed has been existing since 2011 in Berlin-Wedding. The theatre space in Grüntaler Straße 35 has become a place for qualification courses in Theatre of the Oppressed, community Forum Theatre group rehearsals and public theatre presentations, as well as other events related to Theatre and Aesthetics of the Oppressed. KURINGA is based in the Wedding neighbourhood and at the same time, part of several international networks, such as the European network TOgether, the global feminist Ma(g)dalena International Network and the Latin American network ReLATO.

KURINGA was founded by Bárbara Santos, Christoph Leucht and Till Baumann.

Centar za kazalište potlačenih POKAZ

Centre for Theatre of the Oppressed POKAZ is an organisation based in Zagreb, Croatia. Their activities are divided into three principal areas:

- 1.** Practice of TO in education. We are working both directly with school children and provide teacher training. Our activities are part of curricula in different University programs in Zagreb (social work, educational studies), as well as part of the National plan against violence in schools by the Ministry of Education.
- 2.** Using Theatre of the Oppressed as an activist tool. We collaborate with different organisations and initiatives in supporting bottom-up change in society. We are actively exploring the intersection of different axes of oppression that are present in our community, looking for ways to use theatre of the oppressed to analyse them and search for strategies to bring sustainable and lasting change at the levels of individuals and society, however, our main focus is on the level of community.
- 3.** Dissemination and development of the methodologies of Theatre of the Oppressed. We are constantly looking for opportunities to continuously educate ourselves in different areas of theatre and group work, and to experiment with and develop different aspects of TO. Some of those experiments, in collaboration with different artists, resulted in new methodologies, such as Poetry of the Oppressed – an exploration of Augusto Boal's Aesthetics of the Oppressed focused on collective poetry creation; Giraffes – using TO as a tool for second language acquisition; and adaptation of TO methodologies, such as Rainbow of Desire, to the digital environment.



TERMINOLOGY



Theatre of the Oppressed¹

Theatre of the Oppressed is a widely used method, be it for theatre-based activism, pedagogical and educational purposes, and also as a tool for promoting social justice, but it can also have therapeutic effects. Its beginnings date back to the 1960s and are attributed to the Brazilian director, writer and politician Augusto Boal, although various techniques have later spread out across almost a hundred countries all over the world. Among its first techniques were Newspaper Theatre, Forum Theatre, Invisible Theatre and Image Theatre. Later on, new techniques were developed and added to its repertory, i.e. Rainbow of Desire and Cops in the Head and Legislative Theatre.

Theatre of the Oppressed opens up a space to talk about topics that are otherwise not being addressed and gives voice to people who otherwise remain unheard. As such it democratises theatre and gives it back into the hands of people – as it used to be in the beginning, when theatre represented a place for free outdoor singing of people for the people. Thus also the topics it addresses derive from people themselves. It offers ways to address questions and explore the ways of fighting inequality, discrimination, racism, injustice and other forms of oppression that may not be seen or evident at first sight. The fundamental concept of the Theatre of the Oppressed is power, through which the method explores, discusses and exposes power relations between oppressors and the oppressed – when, how and where do oppressors abuse their power for the purpose of exploiting and oppressing the Others, the oppressed who do not possess any power or have had it taken away. With this in mind, the Theatre of the Oppressed also deconstructs and abolishes conventional relations of power among (active) actors and (passive) spectators, as it creates a space for dialogue among them and places them in a new position of actively involved spect-actors (both spectators and actors).

¹ KUD Transformator. *Theatre of the Oppressed*. KUD Transformator, [kudtransformator.com/portfolio-item/delavnice-in-izobrazevanja/#tab-id-2](https://www.kudtransformator.com/portfolio-item/delavnice-in-izobrazevanja/#tab-id-2), seen 3. 5. 2022.

Oppression

– a central concept of the Theatre of the Oppressed²

We understand that oppression is structured and based on contexts of social injustice that harbour imbalances of power and opportunity. These injustices and imbalances perpetuate privilege, calcify social conditions, naturalise segregation and reinforce inequalities. Such injustice determines who has access to the right of expression and knowledge and at what price or to spaces of power and decision-making; the means of production; material, cultural and symbolic goods; or justice and rights as a human being and member of a given society. It privatises collectively produced riches and socialises problems resulting from this concentration.

Such injustice guarantees advantages to select groups in clear opposition to the disadvantages for groups of the oppressed. Oppression refers not only to the use of these advantages but also to their mere existence. Our theatre investigates the mechanisms of oppression and the relations between individuals who belong to and/or represent social groups.

Feminist Theatre of the Oppressed³

The objective of the Feminist Theatre of the Oppressed is the identification, aesthetic investigation, artistic representation and collective discussion for overcoming situations of oppression. With this in view, it stimulates critical observation of and taking a stance on reality. It aims at creating consciousness and concrete actions.

The Feminist Theatre of the Oppressed (Teatro de las Oprimidas) as systematized by Bárbara Santos consists of a specific methodological approach and creation of a set of original exercises, games, and techniques based on the artistic investigation of feminist aesthetics. It was born from the need for developing theatrical productions in which women would no longer be blamed for the violence and oppression they face, as well as to expand the participation of female artist-activists as facilitators in both theatre production processes and forum sessions. It was developed as a feminist perspective on the “Theatre of the Oppressed” methodology as systematized by Augusto Boal.

² SANTOS, Bárbara. Theatre of the Oppressed ROOTS & WINGS, a theory of praxis. Los Angeles – USA, KURINGA in conjunction with UCLA Art & Global Health Center and UCLA Prison Education Program, 2019

³ SANTOS, Bárbara. Teatro de las Oprimidas (Feminist Theatre of the Oppressed). Buenos Aires, Ediciones del Signo, 2020

If Theatre of the Oppressed represented a revolution in the way of conceiving and implementing theatre, its feminist perspective – Teatro de las Oprimidas – constitutes the revolution within the revolution, as it deepens and expands, as well as problematises its methodology.

The Feminist Theatre of the Oppressed seeks to overcome the individualist approach in scenic representation by including social contexts which limit (and often prevent) personal choices of the oppressed subject. As an aesthetic and political working process, it sheds light on the variables that interfere with a given situation to reveal the mechanisms of oppression that support the patriarchal system behind it. Through this approach, oppression is presented as a collective problem that involves different groups and social actors. Therefore, in forum sessions, the audience is encouraged to reflect on the complexity of the staged problem and to consider possible collective interventions available to them from their social position (social class, gender, race, profession, etc.). This methodology values the artistic perspective and structural approach of theatrical productions through feminist aesthetics.

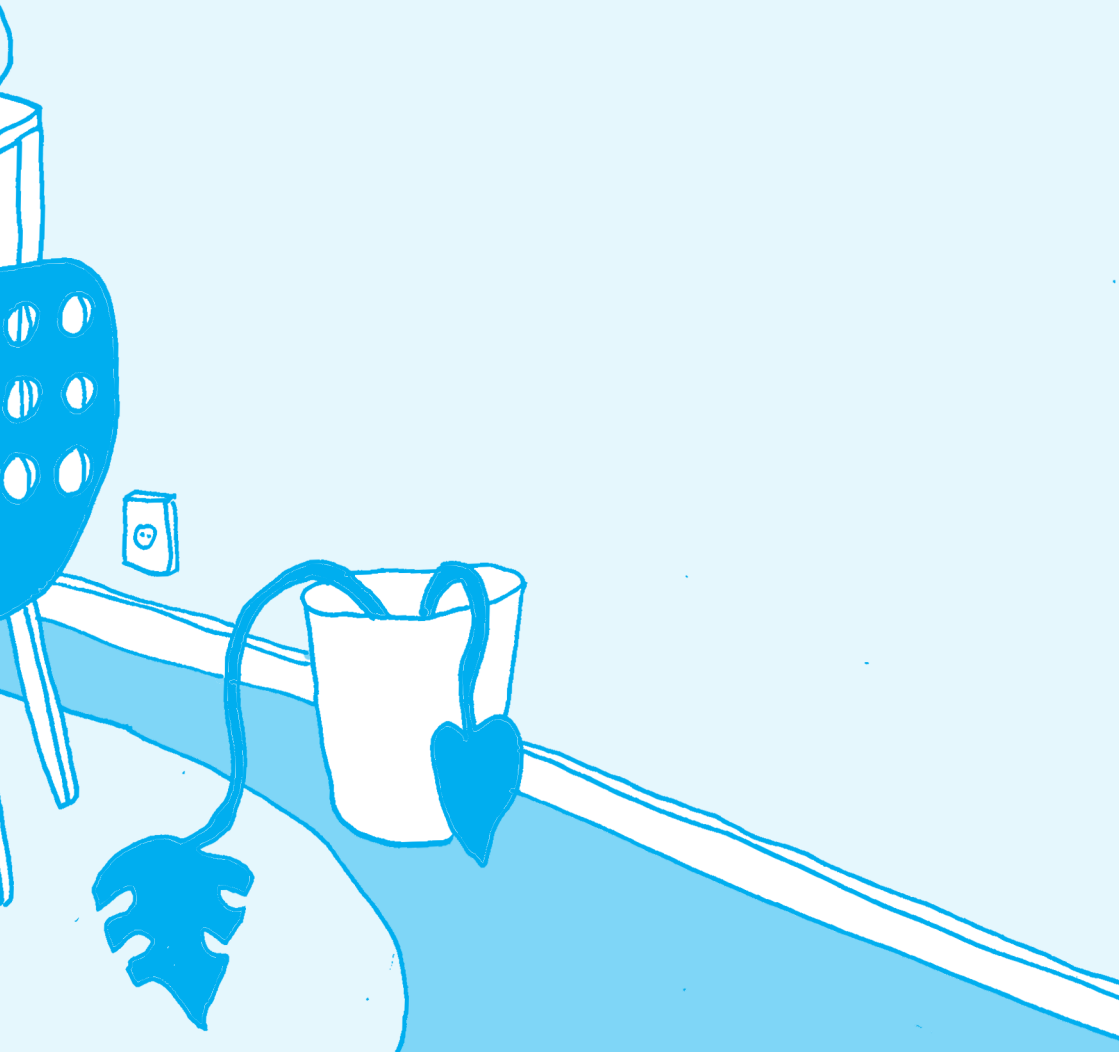
Theatre pedagogy

Theatre pedagogy⁴ includes the three aspects of integration of theatrical elements into the educational process: theatrical literacy (cultural and artistic education, spectator education), theatrical creation (design of theatrical events, public performances), and learning with theatrical approaches (theatre as a means to achieve educational goals).

⁴ Takatuka. *Theatre Pedagogy*. Takatuka, [takatuka.net/gledaliska-pedagogika](https://www.takatuka.net/gledaliska-pedagogika), seen 3. 5. 2022.



CASE STUDIES



KUD TRANSFORMATOR

Webbing Theatre Lab

In the scope of the present project, the organisation KUD Transformator decided to carry out a series of online sessions with experienced theatre/ youth workers and other interested parties. These sessions were conceived explicitly as a laboratory for exploring and trying out the possibilities and constraints of conducting theatre exercises and activities in an online environment.

When you are conducting a workshop or training with particular targets groups and outside participants, you mostly focus on the content and smooth running of the pedagogical process, since there is usually a determined goal that needs to be reached, either to give the participants the opportunity to learn a certain body of skills and knowledge or to create with them some kind of a product – e.g. a performance or action, etc. Thus there is not so much time to experiment and try out new approaches or new ways of conducting exercises and activities.

When the pandemic struck and we were forced to move all our activities into the virtual environment, we found ourselves reeling. Theatre is an activity that by definition requires physical presence of all involved, be it in a workshop, a rehearsal, or a performance. Thus, when we suddenly had to translate all of this work online, we found ourselves utterly out of our depth and unprepared. As we started conducting theatre workshops and trainings via zoom, we had to learn on the fly, learning the new approaches by doing them. There was never enough time and opportunity to really try out this new environment, to test out not only its constraints but also the possibilities that it offers.

This was in essence what inspired us to start the project Webbing Theatre in the first place. It also inspired us to organise a series of online laboratory sessions in the scope of the project precisely with the aim of trying and testing out the possibilities of this new environment without the pressure of conducting a pedagogical process for 'real' participants.

Facilitators: Webbing Theatre LABs were facilitated by Jaka Andrej Vojevec, Jana Burger and Barbara Polajnar. Also, any other experienced participant who wanted to share any exercise was invited to join as a facilitator of a specific game/exercise.

Time: The sessions were carried out in February, March and April 2022, each session lasted for 2–3 hours.

Participants: The participants were mostly members of our organisation, but we also invited other participants, all experienced theatre and youth workers, who were interested in experimenting and testing out new possibilities.

This way we were able to take the time to really try out the various new possibilities offered by the zoom platform. We were able to apply the options of turning on/off the cameras and microphones, the possibilities of breakout rooms, of mirroring, of introducing filters and virtual backgrounds, all with the aim of adapting more traditional theatre exercises and transposing them into the new virtual environment.

All activities described in our toolkit have been tested in this way and adapted for online use.

Workshop Layout:

Exercises used in the Webbing Theatre Lab:

- Name and Image
- Counting up to twenty
- Verbal Associations
- Pen around the world
- Names in sequence
- Mirroring / Dancing mirrors

Tips and Tricks:

If it is possible, take the time to try out the possibilities offered by the online platform beforehand, before you conduct your official workshop/training. Knowing how to use e.g. breakout rooms or different types of views in ZOOM can help a lot in the process. Also, try out different approaches to exercise. For example, if an exercise is verbal or vocal, is it necessary for participants to have their cameras turned on at all? Or is it better to focus exclusively on the sound? And vice versa for visual exercises. This can also help in the case of slower network connections. In our experience, less is often more when conducting exercises online.

Another general tip is to forget about games and exercises that call for simultaneous action, be it visual or auditory. This will simply not work. You either have to adapt such activities so that synchronicity is no longer required or abandon them altogether.

Be patient, take your time and do not attempt to recreate the same atmosphere, pace and intensity as with in-person workshops. This can only be frustrating.

Take it as a challenge. Try out and experiment with new approaches to exercises in order to adapt them. Also, think about the possibilities for exercises specific to the virtual environment.

Challenges:

Theatre as we are used to it is a very physical activity, requiring the bodily co-presence of participants in the same space and time. We are used to carrying out workshops live and in person, so any attempt to re-create the same level of intensity, responsiveness and effectiveness online is sure to be perceived as a downgrade or even a failure. Thus the biggest challenge is to let go of the expectation that it is possible to reproduce an in-person workshop online. It is not possible. You need to accept the limitations of the medium and learn to work with them or around them. This being said, it is possible to adapt a lot of games and exercises to the virtual environment. However, you need to take into account that everything will take more time and energy. You will need more time to explain activities and to implement them. Due to technical difficulties, you will sometimes have to repeat exercises. It can happen that a participant's connection breaks up and they simply disappear. All of this needs to be taken into consideration. First and foremost, do not assess the quality and effectiveness of an online workshop/training with the same measure as workshop/training carried out live and in person.

KATIS (Professional development program for teachers supported by Ministry for Education): Theatre on Web

In 2021, when the pandemic times started, we initiated an online workshop called Gledališče na spletišče (Theatre on Web), where we share ideas for games and exercises that teachers can use in their online classrooms. During the pandemic (2020–2021) schools in Slovenia were closed for 235 working days (81 during the 2019/20 school year and 154 during the 2020/21 school year), which was the longest period in Europe. Meanwhile, classes were held online and it was a huge challenge for teachers, children and parents, raising many questions and uncovering systemic holes, social inequalities and discriminatory practices.

The program Theatre on Web got supported by Katis. It is a program of professional development for teachers and employees in schools supported by the Ministry of education, science and sport in Slovenia.

It was a challenge to find participants, however, those who did attend gave very positive feedback. One of the advantages of meeting online was getting to know colleagues, teachers from around Slovenia, who would have probably never met offline, because of the distance barriers and costs of travel and accommodation that schools usually do not have the means to cover. Another advantage was sharing games and exercises, not only from our side as moderators but also among teachers, recreating them and sharing ideas on how to use them within the classroom.

Since doing games and exercises online was new for us as well, we started with barely a vague idea about the program, dedicating a lot of time to the exchange of practice and ideas. At the same time, we are not working as teachers, so our main idea was to present some games and exercises and see the reaction of teachers and develop it further together. It was a great learning process both for us and the teachers, very balanced in creation itself. We suggested a game, we played it together and then we discussed it, in some cases we re-created it to make it fit a specific classroom. We got the feedback that they really enjoyed the time of exchange and collaboration with us and other participants of the workshop. The whole process influenced the group process and so many teachers left with the feedback that they felt supported and encouraged to continue the work during harsh times.

Time: We divided the program into four sequences, each approximately 4h long. We didn't want to be too long online, so we also presented some texts and individual work that participants were able to do offline.

Participants: Participants of the seminar were teachers both from high schools and primary schools who wished to learn new methodologies of working with schoolchildren online and combine regular curriculum with creative, involving and dialogic approaches.

Dramaturgy of the workshop:

The four sequences were:

- getting to know each other, individual work and group dynamics
- games and exercises for topics
- image and newspaper theatre (focused on texts applied in schools)
- sharing ideas and feedback

Facilitators: The program was facilitated by Jana Burger and Barbara Polajnar.

Workshop Layout: We describe the games and exercises for each sequence further down. First, we will only name them and note the feedback we got from participants.

1. Getting to know each other, individual work and group dynamics
2. Here we played the games Names in sequence and Pen around the world. The first worked well to get to know each other and to introduce different levels of the game, from simple to complex. This game also gives meaning to playing games, it is very bonding and stimulates group dynamics. The second one is a game we've invented to use with online applications (like Zoom) and to play with it. It stimulates imagination and coordination in the group, as well as patience and attention, you learn about yourself and learn from observing others who are passing the pen.
3. Games and exercises for topics.
4. Image and Newspaper theatre (focused on texts used in schools)

From this sequence, we would like to point out two exercises called Sculpturing and Cross reading. We've asked participants to bring lecture books and newspapers from school. The selected topic was "Pedagogy for sustainable development". We used five words, five concepts from

an article written by Paulo Freire. After introducing image theatre, we did the sculpting process on five concepts. It turned out the participants later used it for work in groups and to complete the cross-reading exercise. For this, we asked participants to find words, sentences or short texts from their material on the same topic. With cross-reading they created short presentations, with one of them reading the concept, while the others were making dynamised images. The feedback we got was that this is an unpredictable exercise that leads to nice results. They immediately had ideas on how to apply it in different school subjects.

5. Sharing ideas and feedback

We allowed for time to exchange ideas whenever it was needed, we paid attention to not stopping the ideas flow. After every 2–3 games and exercises we took time to share the experience and ideas. Especially because we were looking for content that could be useful for teachers. We took time for feedback at the end of the workshop. Everyone appreciated the flow and the dynamic we had. Especially the time we allowed them to create together and exchange ideas. As to what could have been done differently, they all wished to have done the exercises in person.

Tips and Tricks:

Make sure that you always start with the simplest version of an exercise. This goes for offline versions as well, but even more when working online. Very subtle details can make a difference. So make sure you start simple and slow, with very clear instructions. Only then, once you notice the progress, continue with more complex versions step by step. Consider the fact that online reading of body language is very limited. The same goes for the sound. If you notice that people are lost, unable to follow the exercise, start the exercise again by repeating instructions. Patience helps.

Ask for feedback after each exercise (what worked, what didn't, do they imagine conducting this exercise with their students, etc.) in order to improve it for next time. This way you will also get information about what works best for different groups. Be curious about how others perceive the exercise. Every time you conduct an exercise, you can learn something new, hear or experience a new perception of it.

Challenges:

A TO practitioner is always in process. You can never master an exercise to its full potential. The possibilities are limitless, that is the beauty of the TO process. Learn, be open and listen.

However, when you are coordinating a workshop, be it online or offline, be sure to know what you are doing and why you chose to do a specific exercise at a specific time in the sequence. What are you trying to achieve and how will this exercise help you and the group to investigate a certain stage of the process? Make an exact plan of the exercises you will do and follow it. This way you can be fully involved with the group and with the process. This is challenging because in our head we believe we got it (the exercise), but in reality, we often forget details that can influence the process. Ask yourself what it is that you want to suggest or investigate with the group and make a plan and sequence of exercises and/or games.

Another challenge we notice during online sessions is to make sure that you are in a place where there are no distractions (sounds, movement, bad internet connection,...). If you, for example, work from your kitchen and another person is making dinner, it will be disturbing for you and other participants. Again, patience will help when it comes to connection shortcuts. Do not exclude people because they have internet connection problems. Make sure they are included, can finish their thoughts, process, get instructions, etc.

POKAZ

Giraffes

Within the scope of the Webbing theatre project, we have developed an online workshop for youth workers who needed support in their work with helping children to acquire a second language – be that minority language speakers learning the official language of the country or majority language speakers learning a foreign language. During the COVID crisis, a lot of such activities were taking place online and there was a great need to support the learning with creative methodologies. In developing the program for using TO for this purpose we focused on the idea of language acquisition – which is defined as a non-structured, unconscious process that occurs when focusing on communication. Every exercise is followed by some ideas for accommodating learning difficulties in order to assure and support inclusion.

Time: The workshop was structured into five sessions. Some of them build directly on each other and others can be used independently.

Participants: The participants were mostly teachers and some youth workers who were working with language acquisition outside of the educational system.

Dramaturgy: In the first session we focused on games and exercises that fostered trust and group building, in the second one, we started exploring body and voice through creating characters and co-writing poetry, in the third one, we were exploring poetry through the body and aesthetic response, in the fourth one, we created mini forum situations, and in the last one, we used some basic techniques of Newspaper theatre to explore hidden ideological messages behind some popular music.

Facilitators: The facilitators of the sessions were Katherine Gray, Josipa Lulić and Marinela Neralić.

Challenges: The largest obstacle was creating a sense of responsibility with the participants – somehow the mere fact that the training was held online seemed to allow for people to come late or leave early, or to participate even if they didn't have appropriate conditions – while driving, for example. Since one of the main advantages of online workshops for youth workers was the

possibility to cram more education into their busy schedules, we even had situations where teachers participated in the workshop from their classrooms, while their students were working on a written assignment. This kind of dispersed attention was happening even if participants were attending from their homes, and this proved to be one of the biggest challenges.

Our conclusion was that although participants reacted really well to the training, we should insist on creating smaller units that would last for up to an hour in the hope that it would be easier for participants to pay focused attention during the shorter time frame. On the other hand, we have had people participating who otherwise wouldn't be able to do so. Some of them were living on small teacher salaries or were even unemployed people living in rural areas, so the obstacle of travelling to attend training would have proven insurmountable otherwise. Others still were housebound due to a disability or illness.

Another common problem was the difference between the number of people who applied for the workshop and the number of people who actually showed up. This problem was especially big since we tried to keep an optimal working number of participants, in the same way we would do in an in-person environment. This often resulted in a less-than-optimal number of people who attended the workshops, while at the same time we had to decline a number of applications because we were full. This difference proved significantly higher in online situations than we expected from our experience in in-person work. The possible further investigation for us would be how to scale our training in order to be able to work with a much larger number of people (using separate digital rooms and only brief interactions in plenum), so that we could accept a significantly larger number of participants, thus mitigating the problem of too few people showing up.

KURINGA

Ma(g)dalena international network

Our case study focuses on the Ma(g)dalena International Network which is composed of theatre groups of practitioners of the Feminist Theatre of the Oppressed from Latin America, Africa and Europe. It was created as a result of theatre laboratories and international meetings which started in Brazil in 2010 with the support of the Centre of Theatre of the Oppressed (Centro do Teatro do Oprimido – CTO). The Ma(g)dalena International Network is a space to revalue and spread the expression of feminist collectives; it is a space for exchange, struggle and encouragement for solidarity and justice. International seminars offer opportunities for the qualification of multipliers and the updating of methodological development. International meetings aim to strengthen the network and create concrete conditions for sustainable consistent exchange and articulation among groups. Festivals offer the opportunity to both celebrate the network's political and artistic advances and a place for planning further transnational collaborations.

Our process was an exploration of the digital possibilities of the Ma(g)dalenas Laboratories – a hitherto analogue process – that is a right of passage for practitioners of feminist Theatre of the Oppressed (in Spanish gendered: “teatro de las oprimidas”) to be initiated into the feminist network. Under normal circumstances, the laboratories with participating women (cisgender and transgender) would take place over several days and in person. Historically, the process required the physical presence of these women in order to open up emotional space for each other. The Ma(g)dalenas are always growing and developing our methodology. Now, in the reality of our digitally-bound Covid lifestyles, it is time to adapt and to look into the digital possibilities of facilitation and practice. The reality of digital space and digital opportunities opens up new questions about the functioning of our network. Our one-day digital laboratory aspires to examine the following questions: How can a set of workshops which normally evoke a very deep emotional component be reduced to a single-day online workshop in a way that is both meaningful and investigative? Can the deep emotional component be maintained? Can the transformative power of this work be felt online? And ultimately – can women be initiated into the network through digital means?

Time: The international workshop took place on November 28th, 2021; the national workshop was held on December 12th, 2021. In both cases, the workshop lasted for three hours.

Our Laboratories were implemented using Zoom Video Communications.

Participants: Our case study focuses on the implementation of two laboratory workshops: an international one conducted with women who are already part of our network, and a national one for new women to be introduced to it.

Dramaturgy of the Laboratories:

The Ma(g)dalena laboratories are composed of five chapters that build off of one another.

- 1. Ancestral work:** work with both objective and subjective memories: of mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers and a prehistoric woman;
- 2. Reflection of socialisation:** here the question is asked: when did one first come into contact with the concept of “gender” and one’s own assigned gender;
- 3. Self-declaration:** Who am I? Who are we?
- 4. Visions For the Future:** Declaration of wishes for the future;
- 5. Investigation Into Alternatives:** The driving force of theatre of the oppressed, the desire to change and the examination of alternatives that help achieve the desired outcome.

It is imperative to begin with chapter one. These digital laboratories focused on chapters one, two and three. It was essential to work in small groups, with groups of four or five women being each other’s partners throughout the duration of the workshop. Each workshop follows this general structure: **Introduction, Warm-Up Exercises, Investigative Exercises** (with a respective performance of the findings), and a **Feedback Round** at the end.

Facilitators: The international workshop was facilitated by Bárbara Santos. The national workshop was facilitated by Eva Gloria Fernandez and Elly Jarvis.

Pre-Workshop Contact and Set-Up: All registered participants were e-mailed a week prior to the workshop and asked to confirm their attendance. All cancelled spots were given to women from a waiting list.

Before the workshop, we gathered information on how the participants discovered the workshop (primarily through the published Facebook event or through prior contact either with Bárbara Santos or Kuringa). Each participant was given instructions about how she was to log into the Digital Lab. Participants should change their names to include this information (in sequential order) 1. *language(s) you speak*, 2. *Name*, 3. *Preferred Pronoun*. For example: "IT / FR / DE / EN, Sofia, she/her."

The clarification of spoken languages is implemented for pragmatic reasons: it simplifies the technical support task of dividing women into small groups according to a common spoken language. The space to be invited to share pronouns is part of our feminist practice. We take it upon ourselves to open this space so that the participants can begin the workshop in a space where they are recognised for their gender and can move freely and comfortably.

Workshop Layout:

Exercises marked with * were used for the national workshop with new participants.

Introduction about RMI and Feminist Theatre of the Oppressed

(Not necessary for beginners.)

Warm-up exercises:

- **Contraries: Do the Opposite!**

Opposites / Contrary

Sad (Participants make a sad face) / Happy (Participants make a happy face)

Open (Body as big as possible) / Closed (Body as small as possible)

Slow (Movements) / Fast (Movements)

- **1, 2, 3 by Bradford***

- **Song and Dance of Names**

- a) Each participant makes a proposal of how to sing and dance her name and the others follow her.
- b) In small groups: the group creates a collective composite choreography of their names

**In the national workshop we sang just the vowels of the names, omitting the consonants. This practice is called Tore Yanomami and is a practice from an indigenous tribe in the Amazon, who believe the soul of a name resides in its vowels.*

Act One, Ancestral Memory: Investigation into the actions (and thereby the lives) of women before me. Time travel from Mother (or a person who had this “function”) to Grandmother to Great-Grandmother to a Prehistoric Woman (in Africa) and back. “What did she love to do? What did she hate to do? What did she have to do?”

In small groups: Presentations of their paths and discussion about individual discoveries: surprises, emotions experienced during this time-travel.

Current-day Application: Which of the discovered images/topics does each group find to be common and still present in their lives? Create a collective performance of these images.

Acts Two and Three, Reflection of Socialisation / Self-Declaration

Internet investigation: which of the above-discovered images of our ancestors’ actions would be punished or valorised by society?

- a) Finding images with a google search (individual research)
- b) Selecting images (collective)
- c) Which slogans would our society use to underline it? Creating one slogan per image.
- d) Creating an artistic expression using images found and their slogans
- e) Using the participants’ bodies to oppose social slogans with contrary messages.

Final discussion / Evaluation

For the investigations in Chapter 1 – ancestral work – each woman did research on her own, in her home, away from the computer. This is when the participants felt their separation from one another most strongly, despite being connected by the facilitator who was present and guiding the process the whole time, ushering in all further steps. In this case, the exercises are still effective, but the production of collective energy fails.

Feedback from the participants was very strong in regard to ancestral work. Participants commented on how the exercise makes the amount of energy being expended by women visible. Participants remarked, dismayed: “Where is the pleasure? What about the passion to read or to travel outside home?” The movements focused on pain and great effort. Some groups were so overcome with the emotion of the exercise that they didn’t speak about them but instead only focused on the physical movement. One participant in the national workshop was so paralysed with emotion while working on her mother that she became stuck and couldn’t continue on to her grandmother or further. “Emotions overcome emotions,” one participant shared. There was not enough time to go deeper into the investigation; almost all participants remarked that they would have wished for more. One participant remarked. “Deep shit and short time do not mix.”

In Chapter 2, the reflection of socialisation, the access to the internet and google image search offered a possibility that was new and not yet present in the otherwise analogue laboratories. Participants had just undergone an investigation into the gestures and activities of their ancestors – in small groups, they found common images and agreed on commonalities. Then the participants were instructed to do a google search of particular actions and to analyse whether these activities are either valorised or punished by society. On the following page, there are some of the images that were examined by participants. This exercise opened a new branch of “Image Theatre”, one not yet discussed in the Theatre of the Oppressed – the digital image. When participants googled, for example, “woman eating,” instead of finding one image in a magazine, as would normally be the process, one is presented with forty images at once – making the connotation, be it positive or negative, immediately apparent. For example: a google image search of “woman eating” shows a plethora of images associated with guilt and denial or with “fat” women who are collectively understood to be “undesirable”. A google image search of “pregnant woman” shows overwhelmingly positive connotations. Particularly in the national workshop, the time for chapter 2 felt too short and lacking to the participants. (Look in the next text box for an example of discussed images).

Google Image Searches



"woman eating"

A google image search of a woman eating paradoxically shows innumerable images of women decidedly not eating. The implications of this picture are clear: a woman must have strong willpower to withstand the seduction of evil, fattening cupcakes and donuts (which she would actually like to eat).



"multitasking woman"

A woman with more arms than any woman on earth has – despite being absolutely overextended she manages to cook, be a caring mother, clean, do sport, read a book, eat healthily, answer messages, work, and above all – smile in spite of her exhaustion.



"pregnant woman"

A pregnant woman is shown as 'connected to nature and her own nature'. Serene, calm and at peace.

Tips and Tricks:

ZOOM is a highly visual medium. Because of varying internet connection quality, it is best to use exercises that primarily utilise images. Exercises from Image Theatre – either from Augusto Boal or Bárbara Santos’ books – can be adjusted to work on ZOOM with great success.

Attempts to have several participants speak or sing at the same time will result in a very broken sound. With this in mind, we circumnavigated the unsynchronised sound that otherwise occurs when several participants try to speak at once on ZOOM by assigning one participant to be the “voice” of their small group; for example, during the “Song and Dance” of the names. In this exercise, each participant introduced herself by singing her name and dancing a simple choreography in accompaniment – the other participants then “danced” her name while she introduced herself a second time. After this, in small groups, name choreographies were combined to create a dance. However – only one participant would sing the text for the entire group, while the others danced their collective dance. This strategy of division was new in this laboratory and worked very well.

In general, it is good to have participants turn on “Gallery View.” For performances of scenes or choreographies, have all participants who are not performing mute their microphones and turn off their video.

When doing exercises such as “1, 2, 3 by Bradford” it is beneficial to use the ZOOM “yes/no” function to determine teams. Assign one team to “yes”, one to “no” – then it is visible for all to see which volunteer a participant is following.

Differences Between the National and the International Workshop:

A workshop that is conceived for a group of participants already familiar with the methodology cannot be transmitted directly to a group of new women. At least 45 minutes should be accounted for introductions and getting to know each other when doing a workshop with new participants.

Feedback from participants at the end of our national workshop suggested it would be helpful for participants’ comfort to be told at the beginning of the workshop that they will remain with their small group throughout the laboratory; this would afford them emotional security that the small group they are working with will be their companions and compañeras for the whole process.

In our national laboratory, all participants were familiar with ZOOM, meaning we didn't have to spend time explaining its functions. However, it is imperative to ask all participants prior to the workshop if they are familiar with the tool. The Internet was another challenge, as not all women had an equally strong internet connection. Due to this, we lost three participants during the national laboratory and another one could only be heard by audio but not seen by video.

Time was the biggest adversary in the laboratory, with the national workshop feeling nearly like a relay run from one exercise to the next. While we are still uncertain about how to improve this – either by making the workshop have a workshop “window”, meaning that it could take anywhere from 3–5 hours, by spreading it over several days, or by reducing the number of exercises – it is clear that we cannot have this amount of content in such a short span of time. An inability to “dig deep” or to let emotions “be” led to some participants getting a sense of frustration or dissatisfaction that is not helpful for the process. In our feedback round at the end of the national workshop, this point was reiterated and underlined by nearly every participant, particularly in regard to the ancestor work. Hopping from one exercise to the next didn't always ensure the space and time required for the processing of emotions that arose. A proposal for further workshops would be to have an “Awareness Breakout Room” in which an “Awareness Person” is available for anyone who feels the need for a break and wants to voice their thoughts and feelings one-on-one with another person.

Some expressed the concern that opening up emotional floodgates in a digital setting comes with great risk. “When the workshop is over, she turns off her computer and she is left alone to process these feelings” one participant voiced. A solution for this would be affording more time for the ancestral work – more time for the examination of the actions, but even more for the exchange and sharing of feelings. The need to share time with each other is in some ways a substitute for sharing physical space with each other. If participants cannot physically be present with one another, they need enough time to feel present and connected to the others – with new participants, this might demand quite a significant amount of time.

Conclusion:

The workshop proved that an online laboratory can facilitate a stimulating and investigative process. Digital Theater of the Oppressed exercises are of a different form, more focused on image and less on touch or sound. The possibility of an investigation of societal opinions, mores and norms through internet image searches is the biggest “new” take-away and will be utilised more in the upcoming workshops. Sensible time frames for the laboratory differ, depending on the composition of the participants: laboratories for new participants require either more time or fewer exercises than those for participants familiar with the methodology. Nonetheless, an online laboratory can prove to be fruitful, however, necessary changes and adjustments relevant to the digital possibilities and limitations must be accounted for.

KURINGA, POKAZ, KUD TRANSFORMATOR

Webbing Theatre Festival

Webbing theatre festival was created as a pinnacle of our research into the possibilities of transferring the forum theatre format online. The basic principle of Forum Theatre is interactivity: the idea that the audience is invited and encouraged to enter the stage and join the process initiated by the group, which is to analyse oppression, and join in the search for strategies for direct, concrete and continuous action that would lead towards a change of the society. The basic principle of this process is the physical action of breaking the barrier between the actors and the audience and entering the stage. There is no possibility of performing physical action in an online format, however, we wanted to keep the main ideas while transporting them into another medium. This is why we choose to start all of our forum theatre sessions with some warm-up games and also with some exercises that would prime the audience to think about the questions that we have proposed. Also, since we haven't had the opportunity to directly engage the audience in the performance, we widened the options for the audience, so they were invited to use aesthetic, theatrical tools in order to analyse the questions and propose strategies. This way, by widening and democratising the creative process even further, the Forum Theatre piece became a work in progress which can change with every public performance.

The general structure of Forum Theatre performances/workshops that we used for the festival was divided into several phases: introduction, warm-up, the viewing of the performance, feedback about the performance, online forum and check-out. In the introductory part, we introduced the form of online TO, the topic of the performance and the history of the group and the performed piece. In the warm-up section we often used games to introduce the topic – e.g. we would ask the participants to make images as associations to the topic of the piece – for instance, images of a “good girl” or a “good boy”. In the feedback round, we used Mentimeter as an online tool that enabled us to create a graphic representation that showed the words that the audience most often associated with the play, as well as the bodies and objects of the audience members in aesthetic response to the presentation. This aesthetic response was developed further in small groups, as audience members were invited to collaborate and present their collective response and collective propositions to the entire group. The discussion that developed from the

aesthetic interventions allowed for much more nuanced and creative ideas and understanding. The check-out round would close off the workshop by again asking for an image or a single word as a way of closing the session.

The experience of the online forum showed the boundaries and possibilities of the online format. While it definitely lacked the immediacy of direct performance with actors on stage, it still allowed the audience to use their bodies and aesthetics as a tool for engaging in the discussion and analysis of the presented oppression, it involved them more directly in the creative process of the play, while the simultaneousness of the digital medium allowed everyone to contribute (by creating an image or writing the words to the Menimeter) in a way that was not always possible in the analogue world of offline theatre.

PROGRAMME

13. 1. 2022 (18:00 – 21:00)

One Pink is Enough

(performance and workshop):

KUD Transformator, Magdalene Krivopete

The play has been developed as a response to a recent decision by local and state courts in Slovenia in a case of rape that was not recognised as such. Through the process of creating a play and interacting with spect-actors, the creators confirm the assumption of every “yes” and “no” to be in favour of men, regardless of international conventions and agreements.

One is enough, to be the reality of every woman.

Kuringas: Jana Burger and Jaka Andrej Vojevec

Video to the Forum play:

m.youtube.com/watch?v=dmSL5xZKHUc&feature=youtu.be

19. 1. 2022 (18:00 – 21:00)

Noises of the Silence

(performance and workshop):

Kuringa and RED MA(G)DALENA INTERNATIONAL

It's a story of a group of feminists that find themselves ensnared by patriarchal traps when they discover their inability to decipher the meaning of silence of their own companions and hear the dangerous noises lurking behind it. How to deal collectively with one's own vulnerability and care about failures and mistakes without self-punishment?

Kuringas: Eva Gloria Fernandez and Sofia Casarrubia

Video to the Forum play:

[youtube.com/watch?v=ut9J108e1Fs&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ut9J108e1Fs&feature=youtu.be)

25. 1. 2022 (18:00 – 21:00)

Do We Have a Choice?

(performance and workshop):

**Centar za kazalište potlačanih POKAZ
and Roma youth organisation Croatia**

The performance "Do we have a choice" consists of six short scenes that follow the life of Štefica from age 16 to 24. In the play, we can see how some Roma families cultivate the cult of virginity that instead of protecting young girls results in early marriage. It depicts the custom of arranging a price for the bride, the patriarchal rule that results in domestic violence and a trial by a Roma community court. Taking multiple oppression into consideration, we pose the question: Do we have a choice?

Performers: Rosa Oršuš, Dijana Musić, Mirjana Destanović, Severina Lajtman, Marina Horvat, Danijela Halilović, Siniša-Senad Musić, Muhamed Husejini, Manuel Tairovska, Ricardo Osmanović, Kemal Delić

Kuringas: Josipa Lulić and Rosa Oršuš

Video to the Forum play:

m.youtube.com/watch?v=UtvavJ1UVtQ&t=217s



LET'S DO (SOME) WEBBING THEATRE!



Basic principles

Below we list certain guidelines and general principles for preparing TO workshops that can prove useful for creating a safe environment for participants. The basic principles consist of the ethics of taking care of each other, broadly speaking, and they are not applicable just for online sessions.

First of all, before starting the group process, it is important to have enough time to build a safe and trusting environment with the group – to play warm-up games, observe netiquette, designate an awareness person, share responsibilities, discuss the needs and try to create adjustments when possible, even before the workshop starts.

Some useful basic principles for working with different groups using Theatre of the Oppressed or Theatre Pedagogy:

Take care of yourself and others.

This is a learning environment for all – including the facilitators.

There is always experimentation involved, which includes celebrating failures.

We choose topics that come from our social position and everyday experience.

Be mindful of the process and specificities of the group, not only the goal, speak from your own experience and listen actively.

Exercises are suggestions.

Start with simple and build to complex.

Allow space for discussion about a process that happens in the group (especially in terms of power structures; name it and allow the group to bring it up as well).

Be aware that the power structures are always present, including in TO groups.

Games and exercise are also an opportunity to have fun, enjoy and explore new experiences.

Be ready for surprises.

The people who are there are the right people – everyone can play, everyone is an actor.

Expectations can kill you.

Real learning starts out of our comfort zone – the process is not always comfortable – *conscientização*.

The games included here are usually adapted from the existing arsenal of Theatre of the oppressed and Theatre Pedagogy that subsequently developed and tested by different organisations. In POKAZ people developing these games were Katherine Gray, Marinela Neralić, Andrea Damjanić Firšt and Josipa Lulić. In KUD Transformator the facilitators who were developing and adapting online TO were Jana Burger, Barbara Polajnar, Jaka Vojevec and in KURINGA Sofia Casarrubia, Elly Jarvis, Bárbara Santos, Eva Gloria Fernandez.



Name Games & Warming Up

When the group members don't know each other it's very important to create a good connection between them right from the start. This part of the workshop is essential for the subsequent consolidation of the group so that the members can trust each other and start co-creating the content during the next sessions/hours. For this purpose, we introduce here some name games and warm-up exercises which introduce playfulness, creativity, being here-and-now, trust and connectedness.

Cross and Circle · KURINGA

Step 1: The facilitator asks all participants to make a cross with their right hand.

Step 2: The facilitator asks participants to keep making a cross with the right hand and add a circle with the left.

This game can be used also for de-mechanization.

Writing A Name in The Air · KURINGA

Step 1: The facilitator asks participants to write their name in the air.

Step 2: Make a circle with the leg on the opposite side from the arm with which they are writing their name in the air.

Step 3: Write your name and make a circle with the same arm and leg.

This game can be used also for de-mechanization.

Ball With Rhythm · KURINGA

A volunteer creates an imaginary ball, then they “play” the ball by making a movement with an accompanying sound. The others learn to play it, but only the creator, the one who has their microphone on, makes the sound. After some moments, the player who is playing their ball says the name of another participant and sends the ball to her. They should send and receive the ball close to the camera. Whoever receives the ball has to transform it, creating another rhythmical movement and a new sound. The game continues.

Please note: For this exercise, all microphones have to be open, but only the creator of the ball makes the sound. Usually, the facilitator creates the first ball as an example.

Name Game

– say your name with an action · POKAZ

Say your name with a big action using your whole body. This can include raising hands, turning your head, or a small dance move. It is important to be aware of the camera frame, so all of the participants can see the movement. If you don’t have enough space to do a big movement, try to put emphasis on your facial expressions.

“My name is Katherine” (makes an action)

Everyone replies

“Hello, Katherine” and repeat the action.

Katherine can invite the next participant

Adjustment:

Show your name or a picture that describes you.

If someone doesn’t know what to do, the facilitator will repeat any movement that the person does. Or the whole group creates a big action for somebody’s name.

Name is a number · POKAZ

The game is played by the whole group. Every person picks a unique number (from 1 – n, n being the number of participants). The game starts with the facilitator calling out any one of the numbers. The person whose number is called is in turn calling out a new number. Everyone needs to be alert because their number could come up next – it is not counting, but randomly choosing numbers.

After a few rounds, when the participants get acquainted with the game, you can make it more complex by adding a mode in which to say those numbers. That can be an emotion (call out numbers sadly/happily/excitedly), but it can also be a genre (call out numbers like we're in a horror movie/opera/soap opera), or in animal voice and physicality (everyone performing the same animal, or each person choosing their own).

Adjustment:

If children have difficulties remembering their numbers, you can write the numbers on a post-it and children can glue them to their slippers so that at any time they can see their number and the numbers of the others. On a video call, you can use the rename function to have the number constantly visible.

If you want to add different aspects to make the game more complex, make sure to use an in-between step, where you try out just saying numbers with emotions in a circle or in a group. You can also have pictures or videos to help them to act on emotions, animals, or genre.

Names in a sequence • KUD Transformator

- a) Everyone should be present with their video turned on. Each person puts one hand on their head. The kuringa starts and calls the name of another person. When you hear your name, you put your hand down from your head and you call another person. The sequence of called-out names stays the same for the next circle. Slowly it becomes like a common rhythm, sound, maybe even a song.
- b) Next level is to turn the sequence around, to “sing our song” in reverse.
- c) Another form of this game can also be to change your name for your favourite fruit or animal. So in the new sequence, the new song will be with different fruits or animals.

Name

– sound and movement • KUD Transformator

Short scenes/choreographies in smaller groups

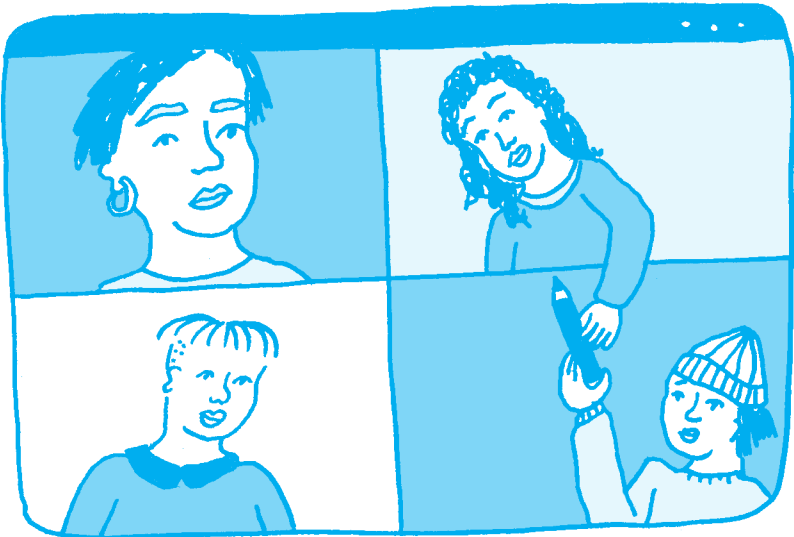
- a) The onset occurs spontaneously when the first person takes over the position and makes an image and sound with their body – a statue illustrating their current feelings – and then utters their name. The group then repeats the picture and name together. It is replaced by the next one, and so on until you hear and ‘see’ all the names.
- b) Smaller groups are created (using the ZOOM breakout rooms function), where the participants show their movement and sound again and combine them with the movements and sounds of the participants in the smaller group. Thus a short scene or choreography is created that they later present to the rest of the group.

Group Building

One of the mottos of Theatre of the Oppressed is “Personal is political”, which means that we collectively work on our performance. When we share our personal stories, these stories become not just a reflection of society, but also a group story. To achieve the feeling of trust and safety in the group, we use group-building exercises.

Pen around the world (or Flying pen) · KUD Transformator

Each person grabs a pen. One person starts. They start passing their pen along the screen and call another person’s name and the direction from where the pen is coming to them. The pen can be passed on from the left, right, above, under, or... use your imagination. What is important is that the pen flies around the world smoothly. Therefore we have to pay attention. Another person hears their name and ‘receives’ the pen by pulling their own pen from the side that has been called out, passes with it over their own screen and calls another name and direction where the pen will travel next. Practise this so that the ‘transitions’ of the pen from one screen to the other appear as smooth as possible.



Secret conductor · POKAZ

There are three roles to be distributed: one person is a detective, another one is a conductor, and all the others are called the orchestra. The detective keeps their eyes closed while the group chooses the conductor. The conductor needs to create movements that the orchestra follows, and the detective needs to guess who the conductor is, they need to 'catch' the person initiating the change of the movement. The conductor needs to be careful to be aware of the video frame when performing the movements.

Adjustment:

Before playing the game, you can try different moves with kids. You can even specify the topic to be really about a conductor and an orchestra, so that the moves imitate the playing of musical instruments – for children with (especially severe) learning difficulties it can be easier to imitate concrete movements rather than to invent abstract ones.

Verbal associations · KUD Transformator

- a) Everybody turns off their cameras.
- b) The facilitator introduces the first word and adds the name of the participant who is up next.
- c) The participant who has been called out first repeats the original word, then adds their verbal association to it and finally adds the name of the next participant in line. Etc.
- d) Once everybody gets into the activity and it is going smoothly, it is no longer necessary to repeat the original word. Participants just give their association and add the name of the next participant.

Pointers:

- It is very important for all participants to speak loudly and clearly.
- Encourage participants not to self-censure their associations. The interval between the original word and association should be as short as possible, especially once everyone gets the hang of the activity.

Potential upgrades of the activity for more experienced participants:

1. Associations on a predetermined topic; 2. Associations in alphabetical order – each new word should begin with the next letter of the alphabet.

Counting up to 20 · KUD Transformator

This is an exercise in group dynamics. The goal is for the group to be able to count out aloud from 1 to 20 as a whole, with each participant free to add the next number at any time. However, each number can only be added by one participant at a time. There is no predetermined order of who will say which number and when. There are no time constraints on how long it takes them to reach 20. There are only two constraints:

Each participant should count at least one number.

If it happens that two or more participants say a number at the same time, the game is reset and counting starts again from one.

This exercise aims at increasing group awareness and at the same time develops the 'ready to lead, ready to follow' attitude in individual participants. This means that for the benefit of the whole group, each individual member has to be ready to step up and take the initiative and responsibility if they see that this is what the group needs. However, often they also need to be ready to hold back and just follow the lead of some other member in order not to disturb the unity of the group.

Variations:

It is good to first try this activity with a video function turned on, as it might benefit group awareness to be able to see other participants. However, once the group gets the hang of it, they should try it also with the video turned off, as it will pose an extra challenge.

Complete a Rhythmical Movement · KURINGA

This exercise requires five volunteers with the audio function turned on. The first volunteer creates a rhythmical movement with a sound. The others learn it without making the sound. After some moments, the second volunteer has to add a new piece of movement and sound to the first. Then the third, fourth and fifth volunteers add new movements and sounds to the previous contributions, thereby creating a short sequence. All other participants learn the sequence of movements without making the sound. Alternatively, the facilitator can create breakout rooms for up to five participants to create new sequences. In the end they, present the result in the main room.

Sensory Games & De-mechanization

Working with diverse theatre approaches means using our bodies, our voices, our sense organs. Theatre brings dialogue (verbal or non-verbal) in which we connect to others and to the world around us. In everyday lives, we often forget about all this. And through theatre games and exercises we de-mechanize our bodies, awake our senses and activate ourselves as individuals in communities.

Simon says · POKAZ

Give an instruction that includes some kind of action and precede it with “Simon says”. The complexity of action will depend on the language level of the group. It can be a realistically feasible action (for example “touch your nose”) or an imaginary one (“walk in space”). The group needs to do the action (but only if they heard “Simon says” beforehand). Get a few of the participants to have a go at the exercise. Video link of the instructions: [youtube.com/
watch?v=KhJsyTQk0Hs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhJsyTQk0Hs)

Adjustment:

You can prepare images of possible actions. If you are conducting this exercise in person, you can physically help children to make the action, otherwise, you can divide it into various stages and children can imitate each stage.

What am I doing? · POKAZ

Say the sentence “What am I doing”, then mime the action of an activity. Some possibilities can include simple actions, e.g. playing football, cooking or swimming, and it can progress to a more complex activity (reading a book while being chased by a lion). Participants have to guess the activity.

Adjustment:

Before starting, you can show images of some activities that kids can imitate so that they can use this as a joker card if they can't think of what to show. As mentioned above, if you are conducting this exercise in person, you can physically help children to make the action, otherwise, you can divide it into various stages and children can imitate each stage.

Voice exercises · POKAZ

Give the following instructions:

- Using the sound of *shooo*, pretend to flick a fly off your hand, then arm, then legs and toes.
- Using the sound of *Brrrrr* pretend that you are driving a car. Pretend you are turning corners, going up a hill, down the hill, driving fast, slow, stop and go. Change the pitch with different directions.
- Yawn really hard – yawning is good to open the back of the throat. So do a big yawn. Yawn saying the days of the week. Yawn saying your name.
- Throwing the ball on the sound of a *ahhh* – pretend you are throwing the ball from a different resonating area – from your head, chest, abdomen...
- Pretend you are chewing gum or candy. Chew the gum and use your mouth and tongue to chew it.
- Stick your tongue out in the air and write your name.

With a smaller group, you can try to do these exercises with all of the participants' audio functions turned on. This creates a sense of camaraderie and belonging – it will feel less awkward than doing it in silence, so even if there is a big group keep at least your microphone turned on.

Tongue Twisters · POKAZ

Practice tongue twisters together, with only your audio turned on. Use different speeds – start by pronouncing every word isolated, then speed up. Also, use intonation – try to sing out tongue twisters (this method also works for lines of text that children have problems with later on, if you are preparing a play). Invite some volunteers to try to say a tongue twister as fast as they can in front of the group.

Possible tongue twisters in English (find corresponding ones for the language you are using):

- Betty bought a bit of butter. But Betty found her butter bitter.
- Red Lorry Yellow lorry
- She sells sea shells on the sea shore

Adjustment:

Each child can be assigned one word in a sentence so that it becomes a group Tongue Twister.

If the sentence is about the letter R, kids can make a sound (clap hands) every time they hear or see the letter R.

Rubber chicken · POKAZ

Shake your arms and legs, one by one, while counting down from 10, then 9, 8 etc (ten shakes right arm, ten shakes left arm, ten shakes right leg, ten shakes left leg, then nine shakes right arm and so on) until you reach a single shake in each limb, and after that shake your entire body simultaneously, like a rubber chicken. This exercise is really useful if played later in the day, or as a break after sitting in front of the screen for a long time.

[youtube.com/watch?v=P-nAkhupPiE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-nAkhupPiE)

Adjustment:

Before you start a game, you can show a picture or a video of a chicken and talk about why this game is called rubber chicken.

Again, adjusting manually the child's body or segmenting the movement into manageable chunks can help.

I went to the zoo · POKAZ

Each person starts with the sentence "I went to the zoo and I saw a.....". Remember to use the movement and the sound of the animal you choose.

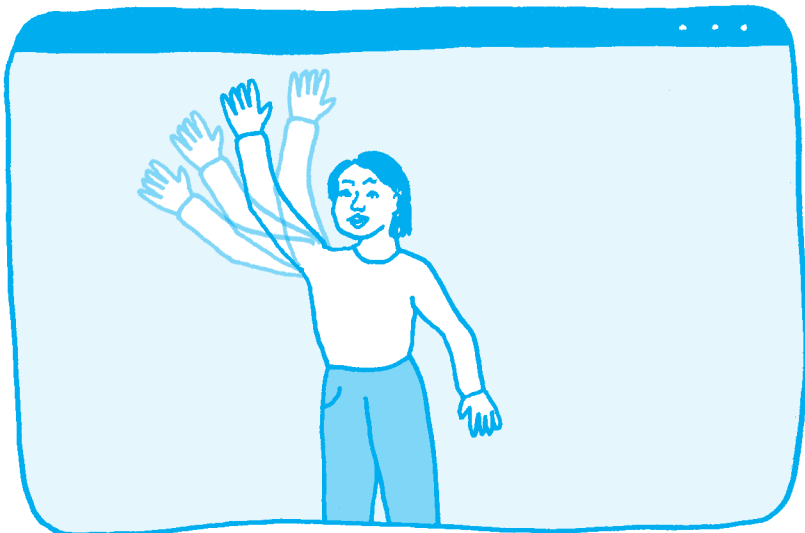
For example, if you choose a lion, you need to pretend to be the lion physically and sound the lion's roar. The next person needs to begin with the same sentence "I went to the zoo" and then imitate the animal of the participant who went before and then they can do the action and sound of their own animal.

You can adapt this game. For example, you could get all the participants to repeat each person's animal with their movement and sound as you are going along. This way everyone is constantly engaged.

Adjustment:

You can prepare images of the animals that can always be present on the blackboard or on your screen, alternatively, every child can choose one picture, if they can't think of any animals. This can be a group game or done in pairs, so the children are not "alone" in making movements and sounds.

You can turn this game into a guided improvisation, where the whole group goes to the zoo and with the help of the pictures you play the game "We went to the zoo and saw a...." You can divide the movement and the sound into stages and children can imitate each stage separately.



1, 2, 3 by Bradford · KURINGA · KUD Transformator

Instructions must be explained first, even an example can be shown before participants go to smaller groups / ZOOM breakout rooms. Participants divide into pairs in ZOOM breakout rooms in which they will count to three. Person A starts with “One”. Person B continues with “Two”. Person A continues with “Three”, then Person B starts with “One” again, and so on. Once they master the exercise, you can make it harder by replacing number one with a specific movement and vocal sound that you articulate, for example by shaking your hand and the sound of “Kabum!”. This movement and sound replace “One” in counting, everything else remains the same (exchange between A and B, the order now goes ‘kabum’, ‘two’, ‘three’). The rule applies to both persons. Once the pair have mastered counting by substitution, they can add another movement and sound to the exercise in place of counting ‘two’, and later a third one in place of counting ‘three’.

Video from the workshop School of Theatre of the Oppressed by Pekarna Magdalenske mreže Maribor.

[youtube.com/watch?v=Q3qY1uC-s0k&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3qY1uC-s0k&feature=youtu.be)

Variation or upgrade:

You can add a variation of silent execution to the end result of three movements and sounds – the counting should be as quiet as possible, later completely without sound. Or the sound on the ZOOM is muted. Then upgrade the exercise by doing the exercise with your eyes closed or with the camera turned off and the microphone on. After a few minutes of rehearsing, share with each other the little ‘choreographies’ that thus emerge.

Possible Variations:

- a) The same game can be repeated in new pairs.
- b) The facilitator can create breakout rooms for two people. They make the sequence alone: count from 1 to 3 alternatively and replace the numbers for rhythmical movements and create a choreography by combining them. All participants come back to the main room and each pair presents their choreography. The other participants can follow them or simply observe.

Knowing the five senses (sensory, imagination, topic) · KUD Transformator

- a) You start this exercise by inviting all participants to turn off their camera and microphone in order to first investigate by themselves. They should investigate the room they are in with all the senses. You lead the process of naming the five senses and encourage imagination with abstract suggestions (for example: what can be the taste of objects or the sound of it, what song would be sung by a red pen,...).
- b) Each participant finds one object in their room and focuses on its description in an abstract sense and using all five senses. Give them time to create a story about this object through their five senses. When they are done, they turn on the camera and sound.
- c) Make break-out rooms for pairs. The pair share their stories and try to guess each other's objects. The point is not to guess the object but to awaken our imagination and share what we imagine when hearing certain words, what it wakes up in us.
- d) Everyone together in a big group shares the experience.

Sculpturing · KUD Transformator

We work with words that we chose from a text we all read. This can be an article about TO or about a topic that we want to investigate.

- a) As the joker, find five words or concepts from the text (you can also make a separate process to find words together with a group).
- b) Say one word or concept and ask everyone to make an image of this word. At this stage we are all together in one room, with cameras and microphones turned on. Repeat for all five words or concepts.
- c) Say the words again, so that each person repeats their images one more time. Then we dynamise the images. Each participant adds movement and sound.
- d) Everyone turns off their cameras. Calling out one word or concept, we turn on our cameras one by one, showing our dynamised image. The idea is to make a common choreography of the given concept.

Contraries: Do the Opposite! · KURINGA

The facilitator chooses precise actions for participants to perform, all of which have to be seen within the frames of their screens. Initially, participants follow exactly what the facilitator says. Then, the facilitator tells the participants to do the exact opposite of what they say.

In the sequence, the facilitator can make combinations among the commands. For example: far and up; close and optimistic; etc.

Some possibilities:

- *Close* (Each participant comes as close to their screen as possible) / *Far* (Participants take as much distance as possible)
- *Up* (Participants raise their arms) / *Down* (Participants lower their arms)
- *Optimist* (Make an optimistic facial expression) / *Pessimist* (Make a pessimistic expression)
- *Sad* (Participants make a sad face) / *Happy* (Participants make a happy face)
- *Open* (Participants make their body as big as possible) / *Closed* (Participants make their body as small as possible)
- *Slow* (Movements) / *Fast* (Movements)



Generating Content

Before we start to create a theatre play/performance, we need to find a relevant topic for the group. While in Theatre of the Oppressed we are working with real-life stories from our lives/communities that address systemic oppression, it is important how we enter the process of opening our hearts and minds. Games and exercises selected for this phase can be of great aid to us in order to touch on the first topics which are budding in the group.

Lecture with pop-up words · KUD Transformator

- a) One participant is selected to be the lecturer/storyteller. The rest of the group decide on a title for the lecture/story that the selected participant will be telling.
- b) All other participants turn off their cameras and mute their microphones so that only the lecturer/storyteller can be seen and heard.
- c) The lecturer/storyteller begins an improvised monologue on the selected title.
- d) As the lecturer/storyteller gets into the activity, other participants use the 'chat' function to write down words that the lecturer/storyteller must then include into their monologue. The faster they do this and the more sense this inclusion makes to the overall narrative (i.e. the more it is organically integrated into the narrative), the better.
- e) After a predetermined time limit (approximate), the facilitator writes 'find a finish' into the chat. After this no more words are suggested, the lecturer/storyteller has 1 more minute to wrap up their monologue, preferably so that the whole thing makes sense.
- f) Participants take turns so that everyone tries out the activity. Each one gets a new title.

Pointers:

It is nice to first give the lecturer/storyteller a bit of time so that they can get into the activity. Leave them to improvise their monologue for a minute or two without suggesting any new words.

Once words start popping up, keep them connected to the topic of the lecture/story at first. Later start introducing more and more unconnected, bizarre or even absurd words to present an ever bigger challenge to the lecturer/storyteller.

Movement using words · POKAZ

Start by inviting the group to think of three positive words to describe themselves. You can also offer a list of words. If someone is unfamiliar with a certain word, invite someone from the group who already knows it to explain it, but try to use pantomime and paraphrasing to describe it – avoid translation as much as possible.

Once everyone has chosen their three words, invite them to express them by using three different actions. Once you have three different actions, use a fluid movement to connect the three actions together. The result should look like a movement piece or a short choreographed dance. Ask each person to show their piece without the descriptive words.

Creating characters from movement · POKAZ

Move around the space by following different parts of your body. Try to think about a character who would move in this kind of way. Add a voice to the exercise – how does your body position change your voice?

[youtube.com/watch?v=-VZizDo1bKg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-VZizDo1bKg)

Adjustment:

You can show a few movements and have the child imitate them one by one. When children imitate you, you can comment on what they added in the movement and ask others to imitate that too.

You can use pre-prepared images of some characters, or even videos or costumes.

Improvisation · POKAZ

After creating the characters, participants do improvisations in pairs (divided in break-out rooms or on private video call).

They could think about where those two characters met. What are they doing there? What happens? They try to create a small performance with a simple dramaturgy – introduction, main conflict, resolution.

The main point is to be as playful as possible, to have fun with the characters, to explore them in different settings. This can be done in several rounds, in different pairs, or even with more characters together.

Participants are put into a life-like situation where they need to use their language creatively, in order to communicate without the script, and they have the possibility to adjust the situation to their language level.

Adjustment:

You can make this a group activity if it doesn't work in pairs. You as a teacher can also be part of the improvisation and help children who find it difficult to improvise by asking them some extra questions.

Collective associations · POKAZ

While one pair is performing, the rest of the group writes down their associations – words, images, sentences, exclamations that come to mind. Then the participants are invited to each write a poem made from this collective pool of words. This can be done just by putting words and phrases together in a different order, or they can be used as a starting point for a completely different poetic creation.

Besides fostering creativity, this technique allows the participants to create in the target language without putting too much stress on correct grammar and syntax.

Adjustment:

You can prepare some pictures or words before starting this game so that children can use some of them if they don't have any associations. If some of the participants are using screen readers, it is important to ask the group not to post into the chat or any other collective documents before the end of the improvisations. This goes for any writing while someone is talking.

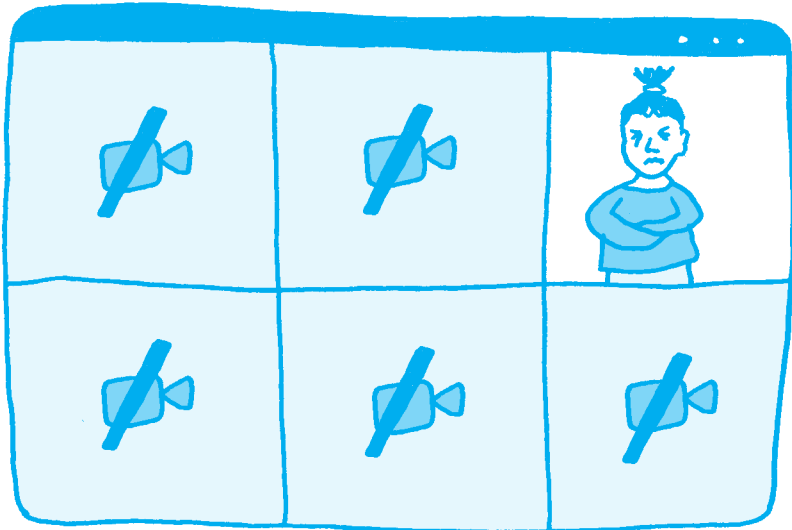
Hot seat • POKAZ

Every participant needs to think about their character's back story. Then they answer questions from the group, in the voice and physicality of the character.

They need to make up answers on the spot and use the first person while answering. Example questions: What is your name? Who is your best friend? What do you think about ____? Where do you see yourself in 5 years? Etc.

Adjustment:

As a variation, you can put two persons in the hot seat: the main character and a friend or family member of theirs who also knows their back story. So if the child does not know how to answer the questions, there is a person with them who can answer.



The worst role · POKAZ

This is an improvisation game. Everyone turns off their cameras and turns them on when they get an idea. This is the drama's take on brainstorming! The task is to choose a role and to do a series of short improvisations investigating the worst that the role can be. If the role is 'parent', it could be a parent who neglects a child, who either beats them or is over-protective.

It is good to start with a role that is familiar to most participants (parent, teacher, friend, partner), and only later move to a specific topic that is being investigated. For example, if the group is of neuro-diverse participants, the role might be 'the worst neurotypical person' – this is a vehicle for investigating the oppression that the group suffers. If the topic is bullying in schools, the role might be 'the worst classmate'.

This way the workshop can help the group to better understand or communicate their own perspectives, and also as a potential introduction to forum theatre. But it doesn't need to have the full forum theatre follow-up – you can always use this exercise as a starting point for discussion.

From the perspective of language learning, this creates intrinsic motivation – those are the topics that are really relevant to students, and this will help them to speak up: the goal is not to speak the language, but to find a way to communicate their reality.

Adjustment:

This can be transformed into playing in groups or pairs so that the pressure of waiting and performing it is not just on one individual.

Image Theatre

Image Theatre⁵ comprises several techniques that are often used as preparations for other techniques. The participants, using non-verbal forms, embody their feelings and experience using only images and space. The actresses express themselves with the means of 'frozen images', by placing attention on the position of their bodies, frozen movements and facial expressions. In the process of image making, words are not allowed – 'the sculptress' shapes the statues by moving parts of the body of other participants or by presenting an image herself, which has to be copied as closely as possible. Later on, the images are turned into dynamic ones by adding movement and key-words or sentences.

Photographing the Image • KURINGA

(2 to 4 Volunteers)

Two volunteers create an image with their face and body – all other participants turn off their cameras, so only the two volunteers are visible. The observers should pay close attention to the images of the two volunteers and try to memorize one of them.

The facilitator then asks the volunteers to "erase" their image, meaning they let it go.

Step 1: The facilitator asks the observing participants to reproduce one of the images.

Step 2: The volunteer shows their image again to see which participants reproduced it correctly. In a sequence, they have to reproduce the other image and check afterwards with the other volunteer. The game can continue with more complexity, for example with three volunteers and then four.

Note: the game can also start with only one volunteer.

The amount of people always depends on the amount of time, the aim of the facilitator and the interest of the group to continue working with the same game.

⁵ KUD Transformator. *Theatre of the Oppressed*. KUD Transformator, kudtransformator.com/portfolio-item/delavnice-in-izobrazevanja/#tab-id-2. seen 3. 5. 2022.

Mirror Game • KURINGA • KUD Transformator

The facilitator divides the group into pairs. If necessary, the facilitator can participate to complete a pair. Each participant clicks on the video of their partner and focuses just on them. They define who will first lead and who will follow. The follower reproduces anything their leader makes. After a while, the facilitator stimulates the follower not only to reproduce but also to amplify expressions and movements. After a while, they trade roles and repeat the process. In the end, both become the leader and the follower developing a dialogue, influencing each other.

Also used for generating content and de-mechanization.



Identifying Topics of Oppression: Improvisation

Five Images and Words of Oppression • KURINGA

After the facilitator has explained the Feminist Theatre of the Oppressed's concept of oppression, five volunteers are stimulated to create images related to their understanding of oppression as a social relationship. Each image has a number: 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Using the numbers, the facilitator helps the participants to learn and memorise the images, repeating them and also creating sequences among them, exploring possible connections. After a while, the facilitator asks the group to name each image using only one word. They repeat the exercise, using the words selected as a title for the image. The combination of the titles and the images now explores the definitions collectively agreed upon each image. The facilitator stimulates participants to suggest rhythmical movements and sounds to complete and fill in the content of the images.

In small groups: participants have to choose three of the five images. Using them with rhythm, movement, and sound, they create a narrative about oppression through non-verbal performance.

Before the presentations, the facilitator has to assign each group to another one. For example, Group 1 will be attentive to Group 2, Group 2 to Group 3, and Group 3 to group 1. Each group is asked to pay close attention to the contribution of the other group.

After the presentations, each group thinks of a title for the performance of the observed group.

Further options: they can also write a collective poetic text, find a rhythmical way of reading it and explore the combination of image and text.

End with a discussion on the topics of the performances.

How Many “As” In a Single “A” · KURINGA

(This can be used as an expansion of the previous exercise)

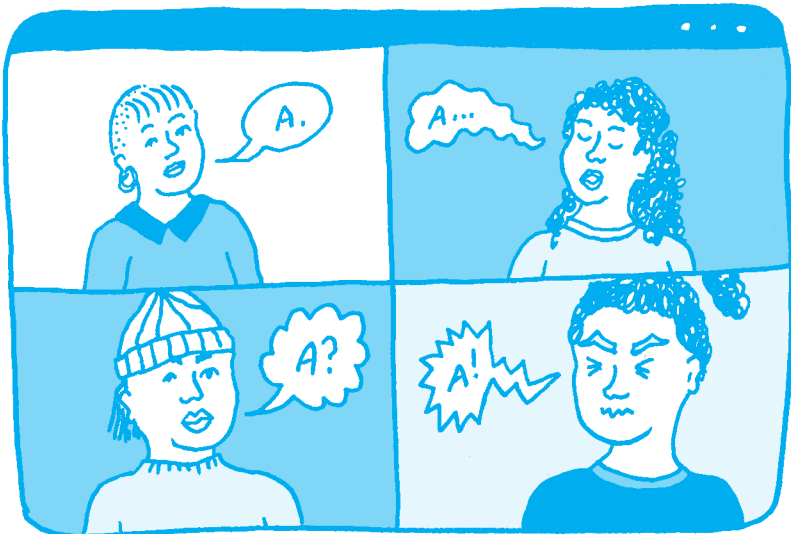
Step 1: Using only vowels (a, e, i, o, u) the facilitator stimulates participants to find different ways to express different content. The participant should connect the vowel “a” (or e, i, o, u) with some sort of narrative: for example, a participant points at something and screams “A!” as if she had seen a spider. The group should generate content by trying out many different ways to say “a”. When the facilitator has the feeling that enough has been tried with one vowel, they can move on to the next one.

Step 2: The group explores the five words from the previous game, finding different perspectives and approaches to it.

Step 3: Participants have to find daily life sentences that express concrete social experiences connected with the topics previously discussed. The facilitator takes note of these sentences. Participants try out different ways of saying each sentence, investigating different contents that they can carry.

In small groups: choose two or three sentences from the exercise to be developed further rhythmically and create a performance with them.

Present the results and discuss.



How Many “As” in a Single “A”

(As an Independent Game)

Step 1: Using only vowels (a, e, i, o, u) the facilitator stimulates participants to find different ways to express different content.

Step 2: Participants explore words suggested by the facilitator (for example: Yes, No, Maybe) and try to find different perspectives of the same word through their different manners of performing it.

Step 3: Participants choose daily life sentences that express oppression in their social experience. The game can finish here or go on to the next step.

The facilitator takes note of these sentences. Participants try out different ways of saying each sentence, investigating the different contents and interpretations they can carry.

In small groups: Choose two or three sentences to develop rhythmically and create a performance with them.

Present the results and discuss.

Five Differences · KURINGA

The facilitator asks a volunteer to make an image with their body. Then, all participants should pay close attention to their image: their body and their surroundings. After a couple of minutes, the volunteer turns off their camera and changes 5 aspects of her body and surroundings – every change must be visible on the screen. When she turns her camera back on, participants try to scrutinise what was changed.

Images – what we do at certain times of day · KUD Transformator

All the participants turn on their cameras and microphones and begin the exercise. Initially, each person plays on their own. It's a mime game, with no talking and without dialogue between the players. Each person focuses on his/her own experiences.

The game leader calls out the time of day and the players show what it is that they typically do at that hour. We begin at one o'clock at night. Two o'clock, three o'clock, four o'clock etc. until we arrive back at one o'clock once more.

During the hours which have more activity, more time is given for nonverbal performance. To make the group's work more interesting, we can also intersperse other, special moments into the exercise: it is Christmas time, your birthday, voting day, you read shocking news in the paper, you're doing your favourite thing.

Variation

You are allowed to have a quick look at what the others are doing. If they are doing something you prefer, then you may do it with them for a moment, before returning to your original favourite activity. Then things continue with the normal daily schedule. This is a good exercise for observation of our own routines and daily sequences, also offering (especially with young participants) the facilitator an opportunity to recognize what is present in their lives at the moment.

Follow-up exercise

Repetitive movements: find three movements in your daily routine that you repeat frequently and learn them like choreography. Find two other people and each one teaches their choreography to the others. Then try to weave them into a new collective composition. You can also add a song or invent an accompanying soundscape.⁶

⁶ FRITZ, Birgit. InExActArt: The Autopoietic Theatre of Augusto Boal. Stuttgart, ibidem-Verlag, 2012.

Newspaper or Media Theatre

(KURINGA, POKAZ, KUD TRANSFORMATOR)

Example of the Newspaper Theatre online presentation by the Slovenian group Resilient Revolt: [youtube.com/watch?time_continue=43&v=E9_fySpggVc&feature=emb_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=43&v=E9_fySpggVc&feature=emb_logo)

(Upogljivi upor, KUD Transformator)

Newspaper theatre: Working On Social Context

Newspaper Theatre emerged in the 1970s in Brazil as an aesthetic response to authoritarian censorship imposed on the media, artists and society by the military government. Its rediscovery has involved the need to democratise mass media controlled by economic powers and to explore options offered by new means of communication such as the internet. In Feminist Theatre of the Oppressed, Newspaper Theatre is also developed mainly as a structural foundation for researching Social Context.⁷

At the time it was created, the main purpose of this technique was to provide a way for people to engage with and deconstruct the messages often hidden in newspaper articles. Today, these techniques are used in order to work with any kind of texts other than literature – news, commercials, popular songs etc. The goal is to use the body and aesthetic means to deconstruct the ideological messages that surround us. To this purpose we can work with any kind of text, however, the use of popular music in the target language can prove especially useful. This is intrinsically motivating and relevant to the students' own context.

⁷ SANTOS, Bárbara. Theatre of the Oppressed ROOTS & WINGS a theory of praxis. Los Angeles – USA, KURINGA in conjunction with UCLA Art & Global Health Center and UCLA Prison Education Program, 2019

Media Theatre

The facilitator asks participants to use their digital devices to find news, articles, images, slogans, advertisements, videos, social media posts, etc, related to the topics developed/discussed in previous activities. The aim is to find connections through group discussion with social understanding and its representations of it.

In Smaller groups: each participant presents a summary of their discovery and explains the motivation for this choice. After a short discussion, the group selects one or two pieces from all of the observed/shared material. The group has to define what material they are going to use, for example, part of an article, a headline, a photograph, etc.

Please note that these materials are only to serve as inspiration (participants should feel free in their own creativity), but here are some possible techniques to be used to create an improvisation: presentations and collective discussion on the social context, how society understands the topic and societal representations of these topics.

12 techniques of Newspaper theatre

Simple reading

The text is read outside of the original context, in a neutral voice. This technique is especially striking when used with the lyrics of a popular song – the text reads completely detached from the music.

Complementary reading

We can add the information that is relevant, but not present in the original text. This can provide a more complete version of the text. The participants can ask themselves “what is missing, what is being omitted?” and do the research to add that information in the reading, as a complementary text from another source.

Cross reading

The participants can find a text that is linked or contradictory to the source text. By reading them in alternation they can provide a new dimension and in-depth explanation.

Rhythmical reading

The participants can use a (different) rhythm to the text, as a way of music commentary. When the source text is already used as part of music, changing the genre completely can add some completely new connotations: what if a rap song is sung as a ballad or a revolutionary marching song?

Parallel action

The reading of the text is accompanied by parallel actions that show the social and political contexts of the text.

Improvisation

The participants can improvise the situation from the text, and open it to interventions and suggestions from the audience

Historical reading

The text is put into historical context – this could mean showing some scenes or including some facts that show that the ideology that seems natural was created at some point in time. For example, if we are working with the lyrics “work hard play hard” we can show how many work hours people typically worked in different social and historical contexts.

Reinforcement

The idea behind the text is reinforced with a new aesthetic dimension, by adding jingles, advertisements, or other material that underlines the main theme of the performance.

The concretion of the abstract

We have become desensitised to certain concepts due to the overwhelming overuse of some terms. By showing the real meaning of the terms such as “refugee crisis” or “austerity measures” on stage, this technique allows the participants to take a step back and to re-think the real meaning and impact of those terms.

Text out of context

When the text is read in different settings, it can have a completely different meaning. This is in some cases done with music videos. In this way a love song can be understood as a fighting song for a just world.

Insertion into the actual context

With this technique, we try to make the real context as present as possible – it is a different experience reading the news about war at home from an armchair, or in a setting that recreates a battlefield on stage.

Field interview (interrogation)

During the performance, the characters from the text are interviewed, giving them a possibility to talk about their perspective of the situation.

An example of experimentation with using newspaper theatre with a popular song in a video call: youtu.be/c4Lb_WatEYA

Aesthetics of the Oppressed

• KURINGA

The Aesthetics of the Oppressed is a set of activities.⁸ It aims at dismantling the oppressive system's strategy of influencing and convincing oppressed women and men that they are incapable of creating, producing, deciding, so they should be content to consume. The Aesthetics of the Oppressed is an exercise of freedom that stimulates the creative and critical production of culture and knowledge.

Sound, image and **word** are the three basic trajectories at the root of the Aesthetics of the Oppressed to promote conscious liberation from the traps set by the aesthetics of the oppressor. This aesthetic process requires that subjects seek to understand observed reality from their own perspective while keeping in mind the context surrounding it; and capture and express this perception in artistic creation: drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, dance, poetry, music, image, text, performance, etc. The representations they produce reveal and reflect not only the discovery of creative potentials but also experimentation with reflexive processes. It is a radical move towards positioning oneself in relation to reality.

⁸ SANTOS, Bárbara. Theatre of the Oppressed ROOTS & WINGS a theory of praxis. Los Angeles – USA, KURINGA in conjunction with UCLA Art & Global Health Center and UCLA Prison Education Program, 2019

Exploring the poem by speaking it and with movement · POKAZ

This exercise can be done by building upon collaboratively created poems from earlier sessions, or you can use any other poems.

The first exercise is done in pairs (separated into breakout rooms or on private video call). Look at the poem together. Decide who is going to read and who is going to do the movement.

The person reading the poem: Practice reading the poem out loud. Make sure you take your time and don't rush. Embellish the words with different expressive means, for example, say specific words loudly, softly, fast, slow, lengthen the words, sing the words, repeat words if you want.

The person doing the movement: Use your whole body to express the words. It doesn't have to be every word but rather those words that stand out to you. Let the movement go into your spine. Use different levels, for example, high or low. Extend your body or make it small. Use facial expressions. Use the space you are in, for example, you might want to spin around or jump.

Remember there is no right or wrong way of doing this. It is whatever you create and want it to be. It is your creation.

Take 10 minutes to explore the words together.

When they return, let each pair show what they have done. Everyone can observe. The observers can give feedback.

Adjustment:

You can turn this into a group game or a game in pairs.

First, you can read and show the movement to the group and ask the group to imitate it. After rehearsal, you can only read the poem and the group does the movement that you have been showing before (encouraging improvisation).

If the work with the entire poem is too complex, pick one verse, and have different participants give their interpretations.

Song and Dance of Names · KURINGA

Each participant makes a proposal of how to sing and dance their name and presents it to the others, who follow them by dancing to their name. All participants learn the dances of each another's names while listening to each other's songs.

In small groups: the group creates a collective choreography of their names. *(Note: The group can use the whole name or only the vowels.)*

After working, there should be a presentation of the collective choreographies. *(Note: This exercise does not work when all participants sing at the same time.)*

Dance of the Daily Life (Identifying Topics of Oppression) · KURINGA

The facilitator stimulates participants to think about their daily routine and select five different movements of concrete activities which they consider relevant. (Be mindful of the pandemic as a new social experience.)

Individual: Each participant has to choose three of their movements and explore their meaning, importance, physical consequences, etc., and combine the three into a repeatable sequence.

In small groups: Each person presents their sequence. The members of the small group create a collective choreography using some of the movements presented by their partners. Note: They need not use all of the movements.

All groups together: Each group presents their choreography.

Then the facilitator assigns each group to another group. When one group makes its presentation, the responsible group writes down words that align with their perception of the performance.

Each small group then comes together to exchange their perceptions about the other group's choreography. Collectively, they have to transform their notes into a poetic text and find a rhythmical way of reading or singing it to others.

After the presentations of the poetic texts, there is a group discussion about the topics that inspired the choreographies.

Creating A Character: Object · KURINGA

The facilitator stimulates each participant to find an object in their home connected to the topics previously discussed. It is important to ask participants to pay attention to the size, weight, fragility, and risks assigned to the object and to make it clear that it will be used in an aesthetic investigation.

When each participant has their object, they have to present it to the others and give the reasoning behind their choice.

First Step: Individual Investigation

Explore all of the possibilities of the object: sounds / rhythms / different functions / relationship to the participant's body, etc.

Second Step: Finding a Character

Each participant starts to define a specific relationship to their object; they should ask themselves to whom this object could belong, and how this character could express themselves through this object.

Third Step: Collective Performance

In small groups: each participant presents themselves doing a non-verbal action. They meet each other's characters in pairs and make a non-verbal dialogue using the objects. Pay close attention to the balance between action / reaction. Use the exercise as a way of getting to know each other and understand each others' will, desire, aim...

From this experience, the small group creates a group performance, and a possible narrative involving these characters and their objects. The result should preferably be a non-verbal performance with sound/rhythm. Participants can also use costumes to make their point more evident.

Fourth Step: Presentations

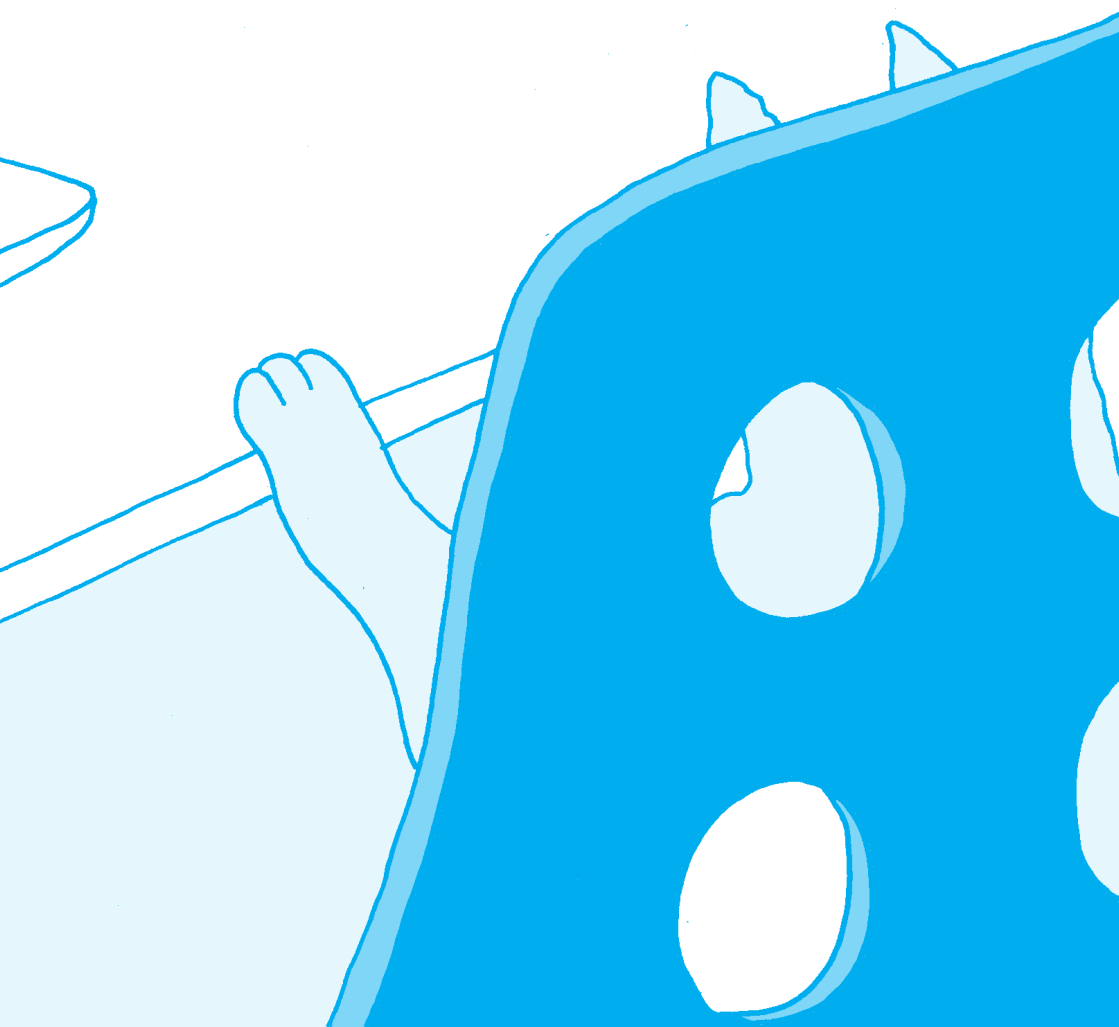
Discussion of the social problems represented in the performances.

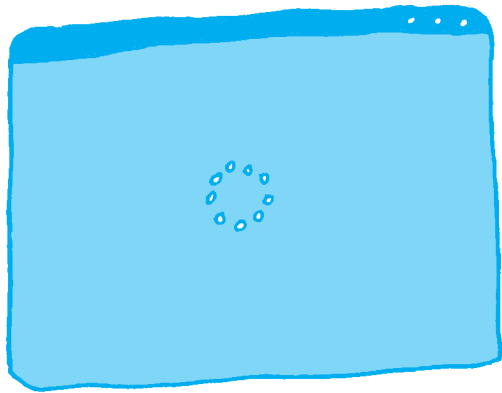
Possible Further Steps:

Aesthetic Synesthesia: writing a poetic text for the performance (like in Dance of the Daily Life)



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE





With the pandemic becoming a more established and normal part of our daily lives and routines, with the ability to leave the home and meet in person again, the desire to make theatre “in real life” is growing and superseding digital theatre. However, it is fair to expect the demand for digital theatre will decrease in the coming months and years. However, this doesn’t mean that digital theatre doesn’t have a space or an application in the future. We certainly believe that it does, as the benefits of digital theatre are many and singular to its format.

Many benefits of digital theatre have been discovered through the pandemic. Most essential: digital theatre allows for participants in different places to meet. Online meetings and rehearsals provide an opportunity to be present to those who otherwise live too far away, have no means of or cannot afford transport. Furthermore, digital meetings can allow a wide net of international practitioners or participants to meet, exchange and practise together online.

Indeed, we mustn’t forget digital theatre doesn’t come without requirements that can be exclusionary for some: in order to participate in online theatre, an individual requires a device with a camera and internet connection. However, the barriers preventing participation in online spaces are significantly smaller than for in-person meetings. If a group, for example, works in a big city but has individuals in rural areas who are interested in being involved in the process, hosting an online rehearsal can allow for their presence and participation.

Through the pandemic theatre of the oppressed, practitioners have created a wide net and made their communities and networks bigger than ever before. We believe that these communities and networks will remain active by keeping in contact through digital means. Undoubtedly, the methods and formats developed during this time will remain in use to keep these connections vibrant and strong.

Furthermore, there is the application of digital theatre pedagogy, through videos – such as in the case of POKAZ and their work with alphabetization – that teach or facilitate viewers with videos through platforms such as YouTube. Presumably, this will remain a strong staple of online theatre pedagogy in the years to come.

Project partners: KUD Transformator, KURINGA, POKAZ



Financed by: Movit, ERASMUS+, JSKD Slovenia



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



