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ACTion - reACTion

training course

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FUNDACJA INICJATYW TWÓRCZYCH
I SPOŁECZNO EDUKACYJNYCH

kurdybanek

ABOUT THE PROJECT

This publication summarises the background and the outcomes of the project “ACTion-ReACTion”. The project consisted of a training course for youth workers, educators, teachers and trainers implemented in September 2019 in Zakopane, Poland and follow up phase. The main aim of the project was to introduce youth trainers and educators to the elements of Forum Theatre method, useful when working with youth on vulnerable topics and to equip them with the skills of using the method in favour of facilitating the debates on the topic of fighting exclusion and discrimination in the local and international context. Forum Theater, is, as international DICE research has shown one of the most effective educational methods in raising social competences: deeply engaging, allowing you to directly experience (by entering roles) issues raised and expressing their opinions on the forum. It is also an effective way to open to dialogue, to topics important for young people.

Information about the working methods day by day, photos from the training and the detailed information about the dissemination of the results of this project (mainly photo documentation with the comments from our participants' performances and Forum groups in their countries) can be found on our Facebook fan page: <https://www.facebook.com/fundacjakurdybanek/>

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 - Youth Aim, Greece
 - KASA Swiss Humanitarian Foundation, Armenia
 - League of Youth Voluntary Service, Belarus
 - Cercul Excelentei, Romania
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FORUM THEATRE

Forum Theatre is a drama method derived from the Theatre of the Oppressed, created by the Brazilian director Augusto Boal. The key values of this method are based on the democracy of the entire theatrical and drama process, in which many actors take part in the 'game', becoming active creators of their own fate, able to question the existing order and act for change. The spectacle is created during many meetings, and the characters and scenes are the results of work on a problem participants face, TF is therefore not role-playing, from the very beginning it is based on 'entering the role' - this is a fundamental difference.

Forum Theatre allows expressing disagreement with injustice expressively and symbolically. It is a theatrical method that aims to create a space for dialogue on topics related to the oppressive situation and to look for solutions to get out of these situations and understand the mechanisms behind them.

Forum Theatre is, on the one hand, an activity that empowers discriminated groups through a common feeling of injustice and disagreement with it, and on the other hand, by acting out improvised oppressive situations, it becomes a kind of general attempt at social change.

Oppression presented in the Forum Theatre is focused on the fate of a specific individual, the main character (protagonist). It is with the problems of this character that the audience is identified (spect-actors) and the behaviour of this character can be changed during the intervention. This is of great importance because, in a symbolic sense, the protagonist symbolises us, our loved ones and friends.

So, only we have a say in how we behave in this situation. Trying to change the protagonist's behaviour is like exercising and strengthening one's readiness for change, for courage and strength Forum Theatre is a theatre of questions, not answers. Everyone must answer the question themselves. On the one hand, therefore, the idea of TF is to reflect and research on different topics, but on the other hand, by showing the possibility of change and finding the common ground concerning the subjects it is also about empowerment.

To the question: 'Why do you think we make such a theatre?' - one of the trainees said: 'to learn how to behave in situations that are oppressive for us.'

VOCABULARY

Oppression



it starts when the dialogue turns into a monologue. It may be caused by difficult to solve a political or social problem that affects a person, a 'no way out' situation. The oppressor can be a single person or a system. Oppression is the axis of the TF performance. Oppression in the spectacle cannot be decisive, and it must be possible for the target groups to cope with it.

Protagonist



the main character of the Forum Theatre spectacle. A person who is in a situation of oppression. He tries to overcome it, but he also feels helpless, stuck, in a dead-end. It is the protagonist with whom the spect-actors identify and through their involvement in his situation, look for solutions, intervene and try to change the way he acts. Taking this role, they experience life and reality 'as if' thereby strengthening themselves and the protagonist. Forum Theatre needs to see that the change of reality begins with a change of own thinking and acting. And it does not give an answer.

Antagonist



oppressor. A person who puts pressure on a protagonist 'pushes him against the wall'. The antagonist can be a figure of a personified system. It is worth to follow the principle that the antagonist is less sympathetic than the protagonist. Sometimes the attempts appear to justify the antagonist - which opposes the idea of Forum Theatre.

Spect-actor



the audience of the Forum Theatre session, involved in the process of generating solutions to the protagonist's situation. This involvement is possible due to the fact that the spectacle is dedicated to a homogeneous group by which the presented problem is identified. This condition makes the audience speak. In order for the audience to transform into spect-actors, it is necessary to break the barrier: stage - audience. That is why Boal emphasises the importance of establishing contact with the audience through various exercises, establishing a theatrical community and introducing Joker - a person who builds a safe atmosphere.

- Intervention**  a situation in which, during the second performance, the spect-actor can stop the action at any time, „stop”; and try to solve the situation of the protagonist in a different way, give him a different behaviour/resolution. Thus, it expands the spectrum of possibilities for action, empowering the protagonist, the audience who identify with the protagonist and themselves.
- Forum Session**  the whole event, starting with introducing the audience to the subject, presenting actors, breaking the barrier: stage - audience, playing the performance twice, interventions, summary, the role of the Joker.
- Dynamization**  a category that replaces catharsis in Forum Theatre. It is a concept introduced by Augusto Boal, which consists of the active involvement of the spectator in the activities taking place on stage and thus transferring them further into real life. Crossing one's own boundaries in intervention, in thinking, contributes to attempting this transgression in reality. The viewer leaves the theatre with a desire to change the harmful social situation.
- Joker**  the person who runs the entire Forum session, asks questions. He introduces spectators to the subject, manages interventions; he is the link between the actor, the audience and the intervening person. He assists, but does not affect solutions; he is impartial. One of the most important things that the Joker is responsible for is always referring to what has been said, and not to his own interpretations. He formulates statements in the form of questions; he does not decide on anything.

FURTHER READING

Games for Actors and Non-Actors, Augusto Boal

Theatre of the Oppressed, Augusto Boal

VIRTUAL LIFE

PROTAGONIST

➤ **Dorota** – 16 years old, famous blogger.

ANTAGONIST

➤ **Olga** – Dorota's friend, who comes from the internet, also likes Instagram

ALLIES OF THE PROTAGONIST

➤ **Edy** – Dorota's real friend since childhood, prefer real chatting

Maria – Dorota's teacher, who tries to help

ALLIES OF ANTAGONIST

➤ **Anna** – Dorota's mother, like glamour life, don't spend a lot of time with daughter

Sasha – Dorota's father, businessman, takes care only about his business.

1 Scene At home

Father talks by telephone, the mother makes make-up.

Dorota: (try to speak with the father) Hey, father! Can you hear me? Just give me one minute, please!

Father (don't stop talking): Dorota, what do you want??

Dorota: Just listen to me, please!! It's Friday! Let's go together with mum to the café or to the cinema tonight!

Father (don't stop talking): Sorry, darling! I can't! Tonight it will be an important business meeting; I should be there!

Mother: As usually...

Dorota: But father, this is Friday! We should spend time together..

Father: Sorry, darling! This is for you (gives to Dorota money). Go to the shop and buy something for yourself. Take care!! Buy... (father goes away).

Dorota (unhappy): Mum, and what about you? Let's go together tonight!

Mother (continue to make make-up): Well, ok! Let's go...

Dorota (happy): Really? Are you sure???

Mother (continue to make make-up): Yeah sure!! This is Friday...(remind something)...oow sorry, sweetie! I forgot about one business presentation...but you can with me if you want!

Dorota (unhappy): Ok, mum...I will think about it...

Mother (hugs Dorota): You are the best daughter!! See you...

Dorota stays alone. She looks at the money, she is sad. Then she takes her phone and makes new photos for Instagram, makes it with unreal, pretended smile. At this moment, the assistant brings hand-made Instagram page, where the audience can see 5,000 Dorota's followers.

2 Scene _ At school

Dorota looks at the phone, Olga comes.

Dorota (happy): Hey, Olga!! Did you see it?? I have 50 new followers!!

Olga (happy): Woow!! You are becoming famous more and more!!

Dorota: Yeees!!

Olga: I've seen your new photo! You are so beautiful there!!

Dorota: Ow, thanks!! And did you see the comment from that guy?? He is sooo cool...

At this moment, Edy comes.

Edy: (try to speak with Dorota) Dorota...Dorota...

Dorota: What??

Edy (shy): Would you be so kind to go to the cinema with me tonight??

Dorota (with interest): Well... I will think...

Olga (disturb Dorota): What?? Look at him!!

Edy: What's wrong with me??

Olga: He hasn't enough followers on Instagram!!

Dorota: Really??

Olga: Yes!! And his shoes are awful!! (at this moment Olga stand between Dorota and Edy, Dorota hesitates between Olga and Edy, but stays with Olga).

Edy (disappointed): Well it's up to you, Dorota... (goes away).

Olga: Just look at your page!! You have one more new comment!!

Dorota (happy): Yeah..you are right!

The teacher comes to the class

Teacher: Dorota...Dorota... Can you come to me??

Olga (nervous): What does she want??

Dorota: Don't know! Wait a minute! (Dorota goes to the teacher but does want it)...Yes, mem!

Teacher: Dorota, I've checked your homework, you've made so many mistakes!! What happens?!! You were one of the best students in our class...

Dorota: I don't care about mistakes!! I have an auto editor on my phone, and it corrects all my mistakes...

Teacher: This is not the right way, Dorota... Anyway, you should learn the rules and study better!

Dorota (pretended): Ok-ok...I will do my best!! Can I go??

Teacher: Yes you can.. (Dorota goes to Olga, Maria goes away).

Olga: What did she want??

Dorota: Doesn't matter... Let's make a new photo! (make a new photo).

3 Scene At home

Dorota sits with her phone, father and mother are arguing.

Father: It's enough!! I leave you!!

Dorota (tries to stop father): Daddy, stop!! Please!! Don't go away!!

Father: Noo! It's my choice!

Dorota (runs to mother): Mum, please, tell me what's wrong?

Mother: I'm sick and tired!! Don't wanna talk about this!!

Dorota: But, mum, please, tell me!! Are you getting a divorce??

Mother: it's not your business...(mother goes away).

Dorota: But wait..I'm also a member of this family!! I want to know...

Dorota is disappointed. She stays alone and speaks with the audience.

Dorota: I'm bewildered...Don't know what should I do?? I just want to be an ordinary teenager, with a real family and kind parents who will spend time together and with me!! Do you understand what I'm talking about?? Have you ever felt the same?? Ow, maybe I should tella my followers about the problem?? Yes, they supported me earlier, then they should support me now!!

(Dorota posts her problem on Instagram, but nobody wants to support her. Dorota's followers start to disappear. At this moment assistant brings one more Instagram page, where the audience sees only 1,500 Dorota's followers).

4 Scene At School

Dorota is disappointed, her clothes aren't so bright as usual, sits alone, then Olga comes.

Dorota: Olga, hello! Come to me, please!

Olga (with no interest): Hello..

Dorota: Sit here please and just listen to me...

Olga: Well...I haven't enough time...

Dorota: But you are my friend! I need your help cause I have a problem...

Olga: Yes, you have a real problem!! You lose followers sooo quick!! Did you see it???

Dorota: It doesn't matter now! Cause I have a real problem with my family!! My parents are getting a divorce!!

Olga: Well, ...everybody has problem...I don't care about this...sorry...(looks at another girl and goes away)...Hanna, you have such nice photos in Instagram...

Dorota sees Edy, tries to speak with him

Dorota: Edy, do you have some minutes for me?

Edy: Some minutes for you?? And did you have some minutes for me when I offered you to the cinema?? No, you didn't...That's why stay with your friend Olga, and I will go to clean my ugly shoes.
(goes away).

Dorota: But...please...just listen to me...(stays alone, the teacher comes).

Teacher: Dorota, can I help you?

Dorota: No, I'm not sure...

5 Scene

Everybody stands back in the semicircle around Dorota; she is in the centre. All characters start making noise which connected with virtual life (pretended laughing, clicking keyboards, sounds of messengers, etc.). Dorota tries to speak with anybody, tries to knock to anybody, but all characters stand back. The noise gets louder and louder; Dorota doesn't understand what should she do. She sits

in the centre with the hands-on her head, which means that she doesn't want to hear it anymore.

The end

COMMENT

This story is about a teenager who is immersed more and more in the virtual world. Unnoticed by her parents, who have no time for her, she realises her need for closeness and acceptance online. From there, she gets confirmation of her value, and the number of followers on Instagram gives her a sense of being noticed, liked, popular. Dorota, step by step, rejects real friendships that do not meet the conditions of the 'ideal' virtual world. However, the virtual world does not offer friendship, does not accept weakness, sadness, problems. And with that, the main character is left alone.

This is a universal story, which is the participation of many young people in the contemporary world. Almost everyone can identify with the protagonist who, in the pursuit of the basic human needs: love, attention, acceptance - has been driven into the virtual world, which offers only the appearance of these values.

TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In Forum Theatre performance, the antagonist should be a distinctive character if it is to represent the oppression of the virtual world. There is no distinctive single antagonist in the script. Parents who don't have time for their child; a friend who is really interested in knowing Dorota, if she's in the top (on Instagram), are the figures of oppression. In fact, the oppressor is the virtual world, which forces notorious activity on the web to maintain popularity, interest in others. This virtual world in the performance can be more personified in the form of an antagonist, a particular person or group of people who exert pressure on the need to be online. This can give the audience more space for intervention.



VIRTUAL REALITY

The scenario is about Victoriya who is 17 years old. She has several problems in her life. She wants to have the opportunity of talking about problems with her parents. But her mother has aggressive character and nowadays she argues with her husband very often. He is deputy chief at Security company and he is main ruler and he was always too much stuff to do. That is why mother always complaining. And recent days Victoriya tried to open out to her family about problems, but she never had a chance because of conflict between mother and father. Victoriya has two close friends. One of them really loves Victoriya but she met her love nowadays and she paid all her attention to her boyfriend. She is constantly messaging or calling to her boyfriend. She also has an elder sister which is giving YOGA courses and a really big fun of her own profession. Another Victoriya's friend is Suzy, who is a big fan of a social network. She loves to have an Instagram account with many followers. She knows that Victoriya has about 20000 followers and being a friend with Victoriya (taking pictures together and tagging) helps her rise number of followers. In such a situation, Victoriya couldn't have the opportunity to talk to her friends.

Mother calls daughter at home. The girl comes to mother:

Mom: Victoriya, today, your birthday. Are you ready for guests?

Victoriya: Yes, mom.

M: Is this the dress that you are gonna wear?

V: Yes, mom.

M: Now, go and change your dress. I don't want you to be in this dress on your birthday.

V: Mom, but this is my outfit. I feel comfortable in these dresses.

M: No, go and take off these dresses, wear what I bought for you.

Girl starts disagree with mom, the mom gets angry of this and asks girl to change her clothes strictly. Girl goes to her room with dissatisfying.

Mom calls her husband (father):

M: Where are you?

Father: Hi, honey, at work what is happening?

M: You ask me, what is happening? Don't you remember your daughter's birthday? Did you buy a cake and flowers?

F: Oooh, honey I forgot about it at all. I will try to be there in a few minutes.

M: I can't go on like this anymore, every time you forgot about something, you have 10 minutes for being here with cake and flowers!

After an angry speech mother ends the call without listening to her husband.

Victoriya's friend and her elder sister also been invited to a birthday. They are meeting somewhere close to Victoriya's house:

Friend: Oh, hi sister, how are you?

Sister: Hi my dear, you look so sweet, I am good. Did you buy a present for your friend?

F: Oh, I forgot about it, nowadays I am a bit busy because of Karl.

S: Karl? Oh, you are in love? I'm so happy for you (she hugs her little sister) let's go to your best friends birthday.

F: Well, I really love Victoriya, but I don't want to see her mom's face.

S: Put a smile on your face, sister.

They ring the door.

When Victoriya wants to open the door with happiness, her mom doesn't let her and opens herself.

They greet each other with fake kindness. Father arrives at home with flowers and cake, as usual, he is talking on the phone. Mother opens the door and takes out the phone from fathers ear. Father starts to greet guests. After 1 minute Suzie (who is the fake friend of Victoriya) rings the door. Suzie starts meeting with all and mother suggests happy family photo. They assemble for photo and they take it.

The other side of home mother and father started to argue with each other. Mother had a business evening and a few days ago asked her husband to join her, but as usual, father forgot about this because of densely arranged business meetings. While they are arguing with each other Victoriya approaches and wants to talk about her problem at school. The fight is so loud that both of parents ignore Victoriya.

Victoriya, Victoriya's best friend and Suzie walk on the street. Suzie was busy with her Instagram account and friend was trying to message her boyfriend. In this situation, Victoriya tried to talk to her friends but useless. She felt ignored herself again.

She decides to walk alone. Sister of Victoriya's best friend saw Vic walking on the street and approached her:

S: Hiii , how are you honey today? I didn't see you good today.

V: No, everything is good.

S: Are you sure? Do you want to come to my Yoga classes and drink a chay?

Victoriya didn't feel herself comfortable for opening about problems, and she ignored her kindly. She felt herself so alone that appreciated and continued walk alone. Couldn't stop herself crying andwrote status in Facebook: Am I invisible? Also, there was some type of mockery comments underher status: (you are too little, come to my yoga classes honey and etc).

COMMENT

Victoryia's story is very universal. Busy parents, lack of their attention, conversations, friendship with people immersed in the virtual world - it shows how the 'network' has entangled everyone. It is difficult to ask anyone for help because, in a sense, everyone has the same problem - lack of time for their loved ones. Actually, from the first scene, the heroine is already 'against the wall'.

TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The protagonist can't handle a situation. She doesn't find the strength to oppose what happens to her; she cuts herself off from people who could help her, makes mistakes, spoils relations with his allies; she is increasingly helpless.

Victorya is helpless from the beginning. The oppression of her parents and the superficiality of her relationship with her friends from the beginning are so strong that she can't cope with it. Meanwhile, it would be good if the oppression in the play grew gradually, but also if the protagonist's mistakes were visible (withdrawal, failure to start a conversation, breaking the relationship with an ally) - then a larger space for intervention opens up, and the whole session has a more educational dimension because we can see the mistakes we make ourselves in difficult situations, which often lead us to a situation 'without an exit'.

THE DWARF

The main character, Leo, is a 16-year-old boy, who has been homeschooled by his mother all his life. His parents got divorced and we meet him on his first day of going to public school.

First scene:

In the classroom, Leo is standing in front of the class telling some things about himself. The Teacher (Emily, 25- main antagonist) is not paying too much attention to him; she is more focused on starting the class. She sits him down next to Hannah (15) who has been making eye contact with him while he was talking, but the other kids started to make fun of him, saying he's a dwarf. The teacher asks Leo what he knows about sinus in math, but Leo cannot answer the question, Hannah hands him her notes nicely. Leo then asks for a pen from Hannah, but the teacher tells him he's not supposed to talk in class.

Leo: Hello, everyone I am very excited to be here! I was homeschooling until today so...

Classmate 1 and Classmate 2 laugh.

Emily: Girls, stop it...!

Leo: ... I have a lot of hobbies...

Teacher: Ok, Leo, thank you. We don't have time for your stories... Sit down!

Classmate 1: Look at him! He looks like a dwarf!

Leo sits. Classmate 1 pulls his chair. Leo almost falls on the ground. The teacher pretends that she doesn't notice what is going on.

Emily feels pity for him.

Teacher: Leo, do you know what sinus is?

Leo: Who, me?

Classmate 2: He was homeschooling. How would he know?

Teacher: You are old enough to know this, Leo. You should tell your mother...

Classmates 1 and 2 are laughing and whispering to each other.

Teacher (to Classmate 2): Or maybe you can tell us what sinus is?

Classmates 1 and 2 freezes.

Second scene:

At home, Leo arrives home and wants to talk to her mother (Alice, 45), but she's cooking while she's on the phone, being very busy talking about divorce papers, work etc. Leo tries to talk to her about his day but she doesn't have time to listen. Leo then calls his best friend Jenny (19) who he met at a camp some years ago, but she now lives in Brazil.

She picks up the phone while doing yoga and starts asking Leo about his first day. She encourages Leo to talk to his mother and teacher about the other kids bullying him.

Mom: Really! How could he do it?! What did you say to him?

Leo: Mom...

Mom: Leo, don't you see I am busy?

Leo: Yes, but I what to tell you something...

Mom: I can't do it right now! I am leading a conversation here!

Leo goes aside and calls his friend Jenny on the phone.

Jenny: Hi, Leo? How are you?

Leo: Well...

Jenny: How was your first day at school?

Leo: Well... Fine... I guess... How is Brazil?

Jenny: Brazil is great. Leo, what happened?

Leo: Well... Some of my classmates were kind of rude to me...

Jenny: What do you mean?

Leo: They were bullying me...

Jenny: They were what? How?

Leo: They were laughing at me... and called me 'the dwarf'...

Jenny: Did you talk to your mother about it?

Leo: I tried, but she is very busy right now...

Jenny: She is always busy! And what about the teacher?

Leo: She didn't seem to care.

Jenny: Leo, you must tell your mother and your teacher what is going on! Please, promise me!

Leo: But they...

Jenny: You must tell them how you feel! Please!

Leo: Ok, Jenny, I will try. Bye.

Jenny: Bye!

Third scene:

At the teacher's office, the Teacher and Leo's Mom are sitting facing each other, Leo is sitting between them. The two of them are talking about how Leo is doing in school. They are talking over each other, saying that everything is fine, but when Leo tries to say something three times about the fact that he has problems with the kids in school they don't listen to him, his Mom says that they can talk about things when they get home, the Teacher says she is talking to the Mother, so Leo shouldn't bother that etc. so Leo stays quiet.

Mom: So how is he doing? Is everything ok?

Teacher: He is doing fine... Perfect actually!

Leo: Well...

Mom: Leo, please, I am talking to your teacher!

Leo: But...

Mom: How are his classmates treating him?

Teacher: Oh, they adore him!

Leo: Not really... they...

Mom and Teacher: Leo!

Leo: But this is not true! They are mean to me! They are bullying me!

Mom: What? Is this true?

Teacher: Well, I don't...

Mom: You are his teacher! He goes to school for the first time in his life! You are supposed to protect him!

Teacher: I didn't know about this... From now on, I will keep an eye on them!

Fourth scene

At the party, Leo arrives at a party where Hannah greets him; happily, she hugs him, and after they have a shot, she pulls him to dance. Leo then takes a risk and tries to kiss her awkwardly in front of everyone. Hannah puts her hand on Leo's mouth and pulls away, while the other kids are seeing this start making fun of him. He runs out and tries to call Jenny, his best friend but she doesn't pick up the phone. Hannah then goes after him asking if he's okay, but he doesn't say anything, just runs away.

Classmate 1, Classmate 2, Emily and other students are dancing at a party. Leo enters. Everyone starts gossiping and laughing.

Classmate 1 (loud): The Dwarf is here!

Classmate 2 is laughing.

Classmate Emily welcomes Leo.

Emily: Hey, Leo!

Leo: Hi, Emily!

Emily: Do you need a drink?

Leo: Sure!

Fifth scene

At the classroom, Hannah and the other kids are talking about last night's party when Leo arrives. She sits down next to Hannah, but the others are starting to make kissing sounds and are making fun of him again. Hannah kind of tries to stop them but not strongly. Leo tries to tell them to stop, but the argument just gets louder. The teacher then shouts at Leo, telling him to get out of the classroom.

Classmate 1 and 2 (behind him): Hello, Romeo!

Leo: Shut up...

They start imitating the sound of kissing behind his neck.

Leo: I told you to stop!

Emily (to her friends): Stop it...

Teacher: Leo, please, be quiet!

Leo: But they...

Teacher: Leo, I don't have time for this...

Classmate 1 and 2 go on mocking at him.

Leo (very angry): Stop it!!!

Teacher: Leo, this is enough!

Leo jumps, his chair falling on the ground.

Leo: This is not fair!

Teacher (pointing at the door): Get out of my class!

COMMENT

This scenario is about emotional education, and on how looking out for student's wellbeing should be important for teachers. How realising and knowing our internal problems could help us communicate about our feelings and our needs and help us understand our struggles and self-consciousness.

TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Leo suffers from various types of oppression: from his peer group, from the adult world (lack of interest, lack of time), yet he is positive, trying to cope on his own, trying to start a conversation, trying to explain something, but the antagonists drown him out. Actually, he has no allies. In the last scene, he expresses his anger and opposition to injustice, to lack of attention, but does not force the antagonists to dialogue. The audience is supposed to help him with this. The only mistake of the protagonist in this story is that when he collides with an oppressive reality, he first tries to deal with it, but eventually gives up and withdraws too quickly. Meanwhile, the protagonist's character in Forum Theatre performance is worth complicating in such a way that he not only passively endures difficult situations but also confuses himself with them. This will give us (the audience) a greater spectrum of ways to react to oppressive situations.



COMPETITION

17-year old high school student Sofia Nowak is facing a dilemma of participating in a math competition.

Although her mind is inclined towards poetry, her father wants a victory for her.

Should she accept the unachievable challenge facing the negative emotions of the oppressive parent?

1st scene

Mother, Sofia at home.

Sofia demonstrates her latest poem to her mother, of which she becomes excited.

Sofia is concerned about the father's expectations.

Father comes from work and asks a couple of questions about the upcoming competition.

Sofia shyly confirms her desire to participate in it.

Father notices Sofia's copybook, which has both math and poems in it.

He points out she should better be focused on one thing when the context is that soon.

2nd scene

Sofia, Kinga, Natalia, Teacher at school.

Sofia shows her latest poem to Kinga.

Kinga advises Sofia to take part in a poetry competition instead.

Sofia refuses the idea because of the possible pressure.

The teacher announces the competition. First place is securing the free place at the best university in the city.

The teacher asks those who want to be a part of it to raise their hands.

Kinga abstains, Natalia (eagerly) and Sofia (rather anxiously) are in.

While the teacher goes on with the details, Kinga asks Sofia to hang out together, but Sofia rejects the proposal because of studies.

Kinga makes the same proposal to Natalia, who is able to allocate an hour for the walk.

3rd scene

Sofia, Mother at home.

Sofia is scrolling through social media in a state of rejection of studies.

She desperately wants to avoid studying, but then the mother enters the room, and Sofia retakes the copybook.

Mother tries to argue that maths are important and that with hard work Sofia could win.

4th scene

Sofia, Kinga, Natalia, Teacher at school

The teacher announces the results: Natalia is the first, but Sofia did well too and hence has the second place.

Kinga, Natalia and teacher celebrate. Meanwhile, Sofia is panicking about her father's reaction.

5th scene

Mother, Father at home.

Lunchtime, Sofia is about to come home.

Father is reading a book, wonders why the daughter is a bit late today.

Sofia enters and tells parents the results.

Mother is satisfied and tries to comfort Sofia, but father explodes with aggression: free university place is lost.

Sofia wasted time on poetry still.

Natalia won despite hanging out with friends.

Scene freezes on the words 'I'm so upset'.

COMMENT

Another universal story of a young girl whose preferences and predispositions are different from those of her parents. The parents' concern turns out to be the oppression that the girl feels fearful of, under which she obediently does what is 'good for her' (according to her parents), in the face of which she gives up her talents and tastes. Oppression on the part of her loved ones, dictated by the 'good of the child', is difficult to resist. And many people can identify with such a story, with the story of 'cut wings', because it is not worth flying in this world.

TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This is a well-built Forum Theatre story in which the protagonist experiences oppression from her father - who would probably want his daughter to do something concrete in a world where there is no room for sensitivity, for poetry, for art. The protagonist has her allies: her mother, her friend - she has a support group on which she can rely. She takes advantage of this, but the fear that dominates her movements weakens her, makes her withdraw and not fight for herself. A well-motivated character, for whom the audience can find many points of support and reinforcement.

SUMMARY

'This story is fictional, but it could really happen' - with these words, the Joker (the Forum Theatre session leader) starts the Forum show.

Stories created by participants of the Forum Theatre training (project: 'ACTion - ReACTion', people coming from different countries, cultures, customs - are universal stories. They show that regardless of the attitude, the problems faced by young people are common and similar: loneliness, exclusion, transfer of social life to virtual reality, breakdown of relations, lack of dialogue and understanding.

The protagonists and heroines of these stories are like Everyman - a hero of medieval moralities, who had to struggle with the forces of good and evil that fought for his soul. Everyman - is a character who represents an ordinary person, one with whom everyone can identify themselves. So he resembles a protagonist. The difference is that good and evil fought for the medieval Everyman, while the protagonist from the Forum Theatre can influence his own fate, he decides on his own behaviour. The spectacle and the multitude of solutions (realistic!) are therefore intended to give him (and thus) and us the tools and strength to decide on his actions.

These difficult but necessary topics are good material for public debate, and the tool of Forum Theatre creates a space for open discussion, for trying solutions, for practising specific behaviours, for strengthening one's readiness to engage in bold conversations, to resist, to ask for help from others, and finally - to take care of oneself.

During our training, the participants had the opportunity not only to create Forum spectacles but also to present them in front of a real audience - young people from High School in Zakopane (Secondary School: Liceum Ogólnokształcące im. Oswalda Balzera w Zakopanem) and to gain real experience of the whole Forum session - the spectacle and public debate.

According to the Forum Theatre formula - after seeing the performances for the first time, the Joker (the person leading TF) asked the audience (or rather: spect-actors) the question: Would you like to help the hero? How to improve his situation? How would you behave if you were in his place?

The students of the school, entering the stage, sharing their ideas on how to improve the protagonist's situation, could check how the different behaviours are realistic, probable, and what effects they bring.

Augusto Boal wrote: 'We all have to create theatre to find out who we are and who we can become'. We believe that the action we take by doing Forum Theatre allows us to become better, more reflective, people.

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