

CULTURAL EDUCATION THROUGH THEATER

OCTOBER 2018 / HAMBURG

ABOUT PROJECT

The project Cultural Education Through Theater was realized on 22-29 October 2018 in Hamburg. The project was executed by Cultheater-Culture and Theater Research Association from Turkey and MUT! Theater/ Interkulturell e.V from Germany was financially supported by Deutsch-Türkische Jugendbrücke // Germany-Turkey Youth Bridge. The project was run under the supervision of Dr. Nilgün Firidinoğlu and Prof. Dr. Kerem Karaboğa from İstanbul University Department of Theater Criticism and Dramaturgy.

Throughout the project, 24 young people who received theater education and trainer candidate in the field of theater came together in workshops and cultural events for a week and took part in a cultural education program that centered on theater activities. Throughout the project, participants worked on how the theater can be used as a tool in cultural education, discussed how the theater will function within the framework of intercultural dialogue, and shared experiences with peers in the theater in different countries. During the project, three different workshops were held: “Discussion of Multiculturalism with Forum Theater”, “Body Beyond Cultural Borders“ and “Intercultural Dialogue through Theater Criticism”.

The participants also watched the play “Michael Kohlhaas” based on Heinrich von Kleist’s novella and directed Antú Romero Nunes as a preparation practice for Dr. Firidinoğlu’s workshop.

WHAT IS CULTURAL EDUCATION?

Cultural education encourages children and young people to grow up as balanced and mature individuals to find a place in the world in which they live. It is not enough for them to have factual knowledge and understanding of society and the world. They also need to be aware of their selves, to acquire the skills to express themselves and to become true interlocutors of others' forms of expression.

The concept of cultural education is concerned with making all kinds of activities related to the cultural field the subject of education. Cultural education aims to construct the education field in a strong connection with cultural activities. It is aimed to increase the contact opportunities of children and young people with cultural activities, products, artifacts, and places, and to ensure that cultural activities have a permanent place in education programs.

One of the most important effects of cultural education is that it enables young people to look at the world around them from a wide window. Specific cultural education areas such as art, design, dance, theater, film, and music enable children and young people to acquire meaningful knowledge and valuable skills to carry with them to the end of their lives.

Cultural education contributes to the circulation of knowledge, personal development, and participation of people in social life. It enables young people to develop their talents, meet them with art and culture, become aware of aesthetic and ethical values, and teach them to express their feelings within a certain meaning. Cultural education allows children and young people to explore their ways of learning and communication through different disciplines. It also encourages young people to develop historical awareness of individual identities and acquire creative behavior.

The workshops held during the project and the discussions held by the participants in these workshops were designed to explore ways of how the theater can be methodized within a cultural education module. It is aimed that young people who are candidates to be professional in the field of theater approach to the theater activity in their professional life with the perspective of being a subject of cultural education, develop their accumulation and sharing realized during the project and create their method.

WORKSHOPS

Workshop: Multicultural Discussion with Forum Theater

Facilitator: Mahmut Canbay

The workshop aims to discuss the methods of developing the awareness of being a group by using Augusto Boal's Forum Theater and Image Theater techniques while carrying out educational activities with young people with different cultural identities.

In the opening speech of the workshop, Mahmut Canbay emphasized that the problem of employment in the field of theater in Germany reached to a solution by the use of Boal's techniques in education and that many theaters who could not find a regular job as actors in the scenes were employed in the field of education with these techniques in the field of carrying out cultural education activities with children.

This has also helped to overcome the lack of creative courses in research in the field of education in Germany. He emphasized that in Germany, it was realized that the theater was no longer just a goal, but could also be used as an educational tool, and this was mostly done through the techniques developed by Augusto Boal.

Workshop Diaries:

Introduction:

The practices and games in Augusto Boal's Games for Players and Non-Players was used to meet participants and perform team-building exercises. It was observed that the games could be used to create a common working environment for the teams to work together and to eliminate the possible problems in this working environment.

Story-building exercises:

The German and Turkish teams formed a circle divided into two groups. It was aimed to create a common story by saying one sentence after each participant. An audio recording was taken to share the story between the groups.

Mahmut Canbay does not make any directive except that there is a German and a Turkish character in the story. The participants in the two circles list their sentences without thinking much after each other and try to form a story. The groups, who took these sentences as audio recordings, made them listen to the other participants after the stories were completed. Following the story of a group of Turkey, Mahmud story in a rule that says that between German and Turkish characters and understand that they are just good friends.

He mentions that when he did this work with a group of teachers in Germany, the Turkish character emerged as one who was constantly late for his job.

When we heard the story of the participants from Germany, there was another common point between the two stories. Both stories were somehow involved by the police.

The characteristics of Turkish and German characters in the created stories, their roles in the story and their relationship with the patterns we encounter in daily life were discussed. Mahmut Canbay shared his experience that the rapidly established story sentences produced stories that would be far from political truthfulness and that prejudiced stories increased with age.

Island-Ship exercise:

Ten chairs were put back to back on the stage for the game called *Island*.

Mahmut Canbay emphasized the importance of this play for multicultural theater work that the purpose of the play is that no one is left out of and elimination of social statuses that are socially constructed.

The game starts by dancing around the chairs while the music is playing, and when the music is over, the players try to jump on the chairs. As the game progresses, the number of seats is reduced so the difficulty of the game is increasing.

When this study was conducted in schools, it was stated that it was important for children to see that someone whom they excluded in normal life could help them not to leave them below, or that children who felt alone and excluded could be part of the team in this study. It was mentioned that the players were not able to act with political concerns during the game

and that they were able to act jointly with someone they did not like in normal life through the game.

Image-Representation Exercise:

The participants were divided into four groups. Each group thought about an image of oppression, hegemony, mobbing, and staged them as photographs by using their bodies. Then they made three different paintings by depicting one stage before and one stage after these photographs.

They showed these photographs to the other participants respectively. After the photographs, the facilitator asked the participants to form a sentence to support the photographs.

In the evaluation of the study, it was emphasized that the participation of young people and children in the studies without giving a text would provide a more active production.

Workshop: Body Beyond Cultural Borders

Facilitator: Dr. İhsan Kerem Karaboğa

In the Professor of Theater Criticism and Dramaturgy from Istanbul University. Dr. Kerem Karaboğa's workshop "Body Beyond Cultural Borders", participants performed exercises based on Theodos Terzopoulos and Vsevolod Meyerhold techniques aimed at transcending the boundaries of the body that originates from cultural codes and exploring on-stage energy.

In the workshop, which was based on on-stage performance and bodywork, the participants worked on the description of the body in different cultural backgrounds and the use of the body as an actor by the facilitation of the trainer Kerem Karaboğa.

In addition to performative studies, the effects of cultural differences on body use and reflections on body perception and the use of sociopolitical transformations were discussed. The discussions about the historical and cultural background in the workshop are summarized as follows:

Workshop Diary:

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We all reach certain physical characteristics and habits from certain geography and culture. Our cultural development determines our physical and verbal characteristics and gives us different features. At the beginning of the last century, cultural differences between countries were much more apparent, but at the end of the century, with the new culture that developed with neo-liberalism, these differences began to disappear. This new situation gives rise to features that further away from our bodies. Technology and the time we spend sitting down is increasing. Even if this situation disappears when we turn to various interests, we can talk about this for a very limited group. Acting training in our age is based on the actor's presentation of his / her own body in the most comfortable, most demonstrative and realistic way.

However, the use of an actor's body as his/her instrument is a very important opportunity. We have a chance to go beyond the bodily characteristics that daily life necessitates and to use another bodily function.

One of the first to notice this was Meyerhold at the beginning of the last century. He creates actors who go beyond the daily physical habits, which are special to the body, working the body piece by piece, which he calls biomechanics and presenting the reality to the audience in a way they have never seen before. The period in which Meyerhold began to study this technique was the time of the October revolution.

He aims to abandon the bodily characteristics of the bourgeoisie and to use a new and revolutionary body. This approach became very popular when he was stated the first time. However, this new body use became popular again in the due to the post-Second World War conjecture and other developing events. It surprises 60s directors such as Grotowski, Barba, and Brook. In nowadays, Suzuki and Terzopoulos are contemporary directors with whom we can constantly relate to his techniques. Today, we will focus more on Terzopoulos' work in this study.

He is one of the directors who showed us the re-use of the body of a person who has moved away from his body and whose use of consumer life has decreased to a minimum. Both Meyerhold and Terzopoulos aim to destroy the body in those habits.”

Workshop: Intercultural Dialogue through Theater Criticism

Facilitator: Dr. Nilgün Firdinoğlu Tiryaki

As part of the project, participants watched the play Michael Kohlhaas, which was staged by director Antú Romero Nunes at Thalia Theater.

In the “Intercultural Dialogue through Theater Criticism” workshop, the participants had the opportunity to discuss how the discussions in the text of Michael Kohlhaas, written by Heinrich von Kleist, were expressed in the staging they followed, and what themes such as justice and human rights in the text meant for them today.

In this workshop, they sought ways to establish a participatory and pluralistic discussion environment in the discussion activities conducted in cultural diversity groups.

In the workshop, it was aimed to see the possibilities of theater criticism in order to discuss people from different cultures together and to produce objective, non-biased critical thinking.

While the play was criticized and evaluated by the participants, the trainer facilitated the discussion with several questions.

- What are the indicators on the stage? Are these indicators familiar to us? What do they represent? What kind of meaning do they produce?
- How does the use of the body help gestures and facial expressions to produce meaning?
- Which of the non-verbal and verbal parts of the play did you establish a more comfortable relationship with the stage?
- Is Kohlhaas a rebel? Or is he a passionate advocate against corruption and nepotism?
- Could being wronged be a reason for us to resort to injustice? Or in what situations?
- Do you think you are prejudiced while you were watching the play?
- Do you think your assessment includes prejudices?

Following these discussions, the critique of a theater play and its beneficiary effects on the actor and trainer candidates was gathered under the following headings:

- Improves autocritics so that the player can look at his / her performance from a distant angle.
- Develops the practice of evaluating criticism of production/art as a professional actor and using them in future artistic productions.
- Theater plays' criticism develops the ability to produce critical thinking by extending the limits of intellectual and aesthetic perspective.
- In the process of criticism, one can enrich his / her thinking from different people's perspectives rather than being stuck in his / her position.
- When the trainer/actor focuses on theatrical pedagogy, he/she can incorporate the creative dimension of the act of navigation into the method as well as theatrical.

PROJECT PARTNERS

CULTHEATER – Culture and Theater Research Association

The main objective of the Cultheater – Culture and Theater Research Association is carrying out comprehensive projects in the cultural field to ensure that the arts accessible to everyone in Turkey, to organize in workshops for theater practitioners, to organize artistic creation and production processes with young people develop participatory models. Association studies focus on the theatrical study as a functional model in the field of cultural education and the creation of creative methods to bring together the civil society field and the cultural field.

MUT! Theater/Interkulturell e.V.

MUT! Theater / Interkulturell e.V. is a multilingual youth theater that works for the public good. The MUT Theater is funded by the district council and the cultural department of Hamburg. It carries out international youth exchange projects once or twice a year. In the last four years, MUT Theater has implemented youth exchange projects with Malatya, Bilecik, Yalova and Diyarbakır and İzmir. Young people of German and immigrant backgrounds participate in Mut Theater's projects. Therefore, the projects include a bilingual and multicultural concept.

Deutsch-Türkische Jugendbrücke // Youth Bridge Germany-Turkey

Youth Bridge Germany-Turkey (DTJB) is a civil society initiative that was established by a state-backed Turkey-Germany partnership. DTJB works with both private and public partners and supporters in both countries. It aims to increase the opportunities for youth exchanges between the two countries and improve the relationships between states and societies with concrete programs and initiatives.