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Akademie für darstellende Kunst Ulm gGmbH  
in cooperation with the Teatro delle Bambole  
and the Teatro Pubblico Pugliese

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Video Documentation at:

1. [Melting Point - Theatre pedagogy in an international context - Course 1 - YouTube](#)
2. [Melting Point Theatre pedagogy in an international context Course 2 - YouTube](#)
3. [Meling Point Theatre pedagogy in an international context Course 3 - YouTube](#)
4. [Melting Point theatre pedagogy in an international context Course 4 - YouTube](#)

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## Introduction

The project *Melting Point* under the direction of the Akademie für darstellende Kunst Ulm gGmbH (ADK) in cooperation with the Teatro delle Bambole (Bari) and the Teatro Pubblico Pugliese (Bari) aims to internationalise theatre pedagogical work, to clarify the effectiveness of theatre pedagogical means, The aim is to internationalise theatre pedagogical work, to clarify the effectiveness of theatre pedagogical means, especially with regard to socio-psychological aspects, in order to provide artists working as theatre pedagogues in the future with the means to help people with social difficulties to become actively and positively involved in society.

The group of participants in the project could not have been more heterogeneous and therefore offered a wide range in terms of working methods, demands and experiences that could be exchanged with each other. The age range was between 21 and 44 years, trained actors as well as students of the ADK but also an Italian costume designer who works with disabled people, an actress who has built up a centre for theatre pedagogy are part of this project. Basically, however, it has to be said that the work with regard to the possibilities of non-verbal communication, gestural action in pedagogy and the ability to create a theatre pedagogical unit was not developed by all the participants and had never been brought into focus with such intensity.

Therefore, the work in the first seminar consisted first of all of creating a technical basis in relation to practical body and voice work, which is part of the content to be conveyed, in order to then, in the course of the subsequent seminars, gradually dedicate oneself to the work as a theatre pedagogue, in order to finally, in the last seminar, come to work in a goal-oriented way on a topic/problem and to communicate this to an audience in the form of a presentation of the results.

Universal language played a major role in all learning units, as the target group is supposed to consist of people from poor families, children with social problems and migrants. This is important because, in the history of development, physical expression was developed before linguistic expression, for the mutual exchange of relational information. This means nothing less than that people are only able to enter into a relationship through direct contact and that successful learning is only possible on the basis of trust created in this way. The pedagogical work, however, is above all relationship work. The confrontation with and on the body is a way to build up a trusting relationship with the target persons. Another aspect is neurobiological. When people talk about lack of physical activity in public discourse, the health aspect is often in the foreground. In my eyes, what is much more important is what affects the ability to learn, the ability to concentrate, social competence, etc. To give an example, if a person has a poor sense of balance, he or she is not in equilibrium with him- or herself and the world, appears insecure, has little stamina and will be less able to actively and positively contribute to society.

In order to understand the interplay of body, soul and spirit and to make it comprehensible, exercises were carried out with the participants so that they could literally experience this in *their own bodies*. Another pillar of the work in all the seminars was the morning reflection and theory sessions. Here, the group reflected on the work, explained the applicability and meaning of the exercises, solved problems and exchanged experiences. In addition, practical work was done to stimulate group dynamic processes. In addition to group and partner exercises, the main focus was on developing a common set of values and the possibilities of communicating these values beyond the spoken word.

The Melting Point project has the ambitious goal of initiating an exchange of experience between people working in the arts with regard to theatre education between Germany and Italy. The aim is to provide an impulse to place this form of cultural education at the centre of society. The long-term goal is to balance out the social distortions in the field of education. *Melting Point* is an attempt to train ambassadors who will fulfil the European promise of inclusion directly and unpretentiously where it is decisive: in schools, kindergartens, educational institutions and social facilities.



## 1. Seminar Physical Theatre - or finding a universal theatre language

Lecturers: Nanna Przetak, trained movement teacher, dance pedagogue and choreographer and Peter Przetak, actor, theatre pedagogue and speech teacher

Period: 31.01. - 11.02.2022

Number of participants from Germany & Italy:  
11 people from the field of drama & pedagogy

Place of implementation:

Teatro La Luna nel Pozzo  
Contrada Foragno S.N.  
72017 Ostuni (BR) Italy

### 1.1. *The way of working*

In this first seminar, the focus was on body work and recognising group dynamic processes. The origin of this approach is the idea that the contents to be taught must first be experienced in order to be able to teach them. The other idea was that the physical and mental health of the teachers must be guaranteed so that they can continue to practice their profession into old age.

## 1.2. The learning content

### Theory:

- Developmental psychology (from birth to 6 years of age)
- Physiology (here: especially brain development and functioning of the voice and the respiratory system)
- Effectiveness of the exercises (strengthening the back, developing healthy self-confidence with the help of work with the sacrum, spatial directions/spatial position - meaning and effects)

### Practice:

- Perception and awareness exercises according to Dore Jacobs and Moshé Feldenkrais. Applications and guidance of the same
- Spatial directions/spatial positioning. Relationship work with the help of space and the recognition of group dynamic processes.
- Impulse work/partner work. Effects, applicability
- Partner work (empathy development, closeness/distance effects, working with shame and fear)
- Listening training (here: developing understanding of auditory group dynamics)
- Costume work (here: Continuation of partner work with the help of the costume. The costume as an expression of the self).
- Improvisation technique
- Dramaturgical understanding (here: building up theme-related improvisations)
- Presentation and application of theatre-pedagogical games for group dynamics (circle games, movement games, games with space, perception games, games to sensitise the senses)
- Speech training (breathing technique, diaphragm work, diction, voice position)

## 1.3. The course of the seminar

Practical awareness-raising exercises were given to enable the participants to get to know their own bodies, to evaluate tensions and to ensure that they have a "good stand" in the best sense of the word. Based on this, the participants were made aware of the interrelation between body and psyche. This work aims above all to create the neurobiological prerequisites for good learning, which becomes possible with sensual, emotionally accompanied, i.e. theatrical movement work. The basis of the entire discussion with the body was the teaching of Dore Jacobs. Her credo to meet this on the pedagogical level was: *"Every person's posture is a result of his life story and closely connected with his whole way of living, both mentally and physically. It is, as it were, an enclosure of life that he has built for himself and in which he has become at home"*. In order to understand the above-mentioned In order to better understand and classify the above-mentioned interrelationship between physical and mental attitude, as well as to be able to better assess one's own effect on people, various types of relaxation techniques were first taught. From integrative relaxation, to relaxation with an object (cherry pit cushion, hedgehog balls), to dream journeys, the participants were made aware of the respective effects, as well as being able to assess their own effect on people.

In the reflection rounds, the participants were made aware of the differences in perception. The training units were accompanied by supervision and a theory unit, where the individual exercises were specifically dealt with, their mental and psychological effects were named and put into the context of the participants' own experience.

In the second part of the physical awareness work, the focus was on partner work. Permeability and sensitivity were largely given through the active relaxation techniques, so that impulse work could follow. This work reproduces impulses from the environment on a haptic level. Since the aim is to provide the future target group with the greatest possible resilience, this work serves to translate these impulses to the direct physical level. The work was done with the hands, which were placed on different parts of the partner's body without any additional movement, in order to make the participants understand once again that without a basis of trust, any pedagogical action can come to nothing or have a negative effect. At first, this exercise seems like "laying on of hands", but it develops the trust that is crucial for the continuation of the exercise. In the second step, impulses were given to which the partner reacts with a physical movement and swings back into the starting position. In the third step, the impulses were followed in a spatial movement. Sometimes strong, sometimes weak in the most different places. This resulted in a common dance in an unpretentious way, because the empathy of the giver is crucial in order to react appropriately to the respective need for movement of the taker. All impulses given out of egoistic or self-centred motives lead to resistance and struggle. In order to contextualise one's own effect and the partner's reactions intellectually as well, conversations were initiated here with the partner that either refute or confirm one's own perception.

Since the theatre teacher works primarily with his body and his voice, body awareness, awareness of spatial relationships and spatial directions with the help of the work according to Dore Jacobs was also a topic in the further course of the seminar. For this purpose, spatial walks were initiated. This work, which is used in body therapy as well as in psychodrama, made clear to the participants the effect that a position in space and the aforementioned corresponding posture have on the relationship. For this purpose, the group was divided so that the work could be better assessed from the inside as well as from the outside. These exercises, or series of exercises, also serve to be able to better sort out and evaluate oneself and one's environment and, as an educator, to be able to better assess the dynamics and the network of relationships in a group via the space.

As the seminar leaders could not be sure in advance, beyond the CVs sent to us, what level the participants were at, all the exercises started with basic work. This included body composition, work on the stance, work on and with the foot, pelvic work and work with the shoulders. But also impulse work with a costume. After a short time it became clear that the Italian colleagues in particular were not familiar with this work, but the ADK students were. So at this point, what was also part of the application came to pass: a transfer of knowledge and experience. On the other hand, some of the Italian colleagues already had experience as teachers, which was then used as an example to illustrate the content of the seminar.

What emerged in all participants in a short time was a general sensitisation in the body, in the space and thus in the group. Although the attention training initially only concerned the participants' own bodies, progress was clearly noticeable in that a dynamic connection was established through this sensitisation, which was also reflected in the group work.

reflection round. After consultation with the participants, it became clear that if individual sensitisation can be established, trust in the group increases and opens up spaces for new experiences.

#### **1.4. The vocational training aspect**

As this series of seminars is intended to provide artists with tools to help them contribute to society in ways other than artistic ones, and to support acting educators in schools, kindergartens and social institutions, the learning contents and learning outcomes should be explicitly mentioned again at this point.

It can be assumed that every child has the same prerequisites at birth which, if well supported, lead to educational success, the development of healthy self-confidence, resilience and the development of empathy. Theatre work makes a decisive contribution to this, one that has been successful in proven studies. The work on universal language, as suggested in this seminar, is above all a work on consciousness and is based on universally understandable gestures and body postures. The questions the participants dealt with were:

What does a body posture reveal about the state of mind of my counterpart?

How am I influenced from the outside, what do I influence?

What does the position in space reveal about a person's status within a group? What roles are assumed?

How does an object and the way it is handled influence a social interaction or the assignment of roles?

Are these roles self-selected or ascribed?

The learning success for the participants consisted above all in the awareness work and in the realisation of which sensual influences affect my actions. In the improvisations based on this (see videos in the appendix), this network of relationships was once again clarified for the observing sub-group and their powers of observation were sharpened. In the improvisations, expression was exclusively physical. However, the effect of the stage performance was understood equally by all the participants watching. This made the universality of communication comprehensible to the participants and its effectiveness in social interaction clear.

#### **1.4. Conclusion of Learning outcomes**

All in all, it can be said that through the examination of the gestural moment in pedagogy, the participants learned to use their bodies in order to do justice to their role as theatre teachers. This was followed by the question of what kind of teacher personality he/she actually wants to be, as well as the nature of the content to be taught. The second point concerned the transmission of values. For this, the participants had to become aware of which values they represent and how these values also manifest themselves in their body and in their vocal expression. Due to the fact that during the first seminar the group was separated again and again and thus everyone had the opportunity to act both as an observer and as a player, the participants became aware of the energetic interaction between spectator and audience. In other words, praise that shows itself on the physical-gestural relationship level has the chance of

to have a lasting impact on the soul life of the future target group. In addition, the effect of the exercises on the future target group has become clear to the participants on the soul-physical level. Connected to this is a sense of responsibility that they must learn to bear and, above all, understand as future teachers. This is especially important because all the physical and linguistic exercises that are done can, if used incorrectly, also cause damage of a physical or psychological nature. What was also made clear to the participants is that without trust in the teacher and in the group, no learning can take place, and even more: any kind of fear leads to developmental obstacles and therefore any exercise that is linked to fear of social exclusion must come to nothing. It became clear to the participants that the first hours are crucial for building trust in a group. The fact that this heterogeneous group formed into a mutually supportive one within a few hours made the participants aware that it is precisely this relationship of trust that can be established briefly and unpretentiously through bodywork. The universal language formulated in the application took on such a life of its own in the exercises within a short time that there were almost no more misunderstandings.

As far as the language of instruction was concerned, the project management had the advantage of being as fluent in English as in Italian and, of course, in German. This meant that there were almost no irritations in the instructions.

## 2. Seminar Theatre Pedagogy - Methodology and Didactics

Lecturers

Andrea Cramarossa (Teatro delle Bambole)

Peter Przetak (Akademie für darstellende Kunst Ulm gGmbH)

Period: 28.03. - 11.04.2022

Number of participants from Germany & Italy:

12 people from the field of drama & pedagogy

Place of implementation:

Academy for Performing Arts Ulm gGmbH

Eberhard-Finckh-Straße 5

89075 Ulm

### 2.1. The learning content

Theory:

- Developmental psychology (from 6 - 10 years of age)
- History of theatre education (from Comenius to Huizinga)
- Trauma and its effects
- Lesson structure/dramaturgy
- Communication theory (from Socrates to Watzlawick)

Practice:

- Listening school and dissolution of blockages
- Methodology and didactics in theatre education practice
- Improvisation guide
- Observational skills training
- Thematic containment and social effects in theatre play
- Dramaturgical understanding in practice (here: setting up theme-based improvisations and performing them)
- Presentation and application of theatre-pedagogical games for children aged 6 - 10 (circle games, movement games, games with space, perception games, games to sensitise the senses).
- Speech training (breathing technique, diaphragm work, diction, voice sitting - continuing)

## 2.2. The course of the seminar

In this second seminar, the main aim was to link the working methods and competences of the cooperation partners. In the preliminary discussions it became clear that a theoretical concept is difficult to put into practice. Therefore, in order to get to know each other, the parts were clearly demarcated. In the morning lessons, the work of Andrea Cramarossa was presented and documented; in the afternoon lessons, the focus was to be on theatre education under the direction of Peter Przetak. In the course of the seminar, however, it became clear that theoretical parts and reflections were necessary again and again in order to ensure learning success among the participants. In this second seminar, the focus was on auditory perception, speech health and, on the other hand, a basic pedagogical course on the topic of developmental psychology, somatics, the recognition of group dynamic processes, the instruction of guided improvisations and the training of observation skills.

The topics covered here included: history of theatre pedagogy, developmental psychology and the consequences - lecture on "somatic psychotherapy" - body and awareness training - voice training taking into account meta-linguistic aspects (subtext work), speaking and breathing techniques basic theatre pedagogical work (improvisation techniques).

## 2.3. Learning field *Speech health and general Listening school*

Andrea Cramarossa from the Teatro delle Bambole, as a trained singer, had an access to one's own voice that was a new experience especially for the students of the ADK. In this training, the focus was on the nature of one's own voice, one's own "sound". This is of crucial importance for theatre education. Because when dealing with people, especially if they have had bad experiences at home, authenticity is an absolute must in order to ensure trust. Trust is the basis of pedagogical action, because people are only able to develop in a trusting environment. The voice is an important indicator. If it is broken or "made" or artificial, it is almost impossible for the educator to build up such trust. It is important to mention that this was not about diction, not about text composition, but about establishing access to one's own voice without a handicap and being able to teach this in the second course. On the one hand, this served to maintain the speech health of the future teachers, but since the voice is always also an expression of human socialisation, to recognise the psychological blockages and, in case of doubt, to solve them in order to make the above-mentioned authenticity possible in the first place.

Andrea Cramarossa worked on two different levels. One was a group lesson that served to discover the originality in sound, to stimulate group dynamic processes and to listen in the best and proper sense. Sound sequences and pitches played a decisive role in this. In pedagogical contexts, it is crucial to be able to classify the sound of a group in order to draw conclusions for the constitution of a group. Another aspect in this context is how the throat or embouchure tube reacts to different external stimuli. This concerned different body postures as well as direct human contact. The other level

involved a one-to-one lesson with the whole group of participants present. With the help of a piano and vowel sequences such as aaa-ooo-uuu, the corresponding intonation and an inner image in relation to one's own sound, an attempt was made to free the voice and release blockages.

Conclusion: Andrea Cramarossa's work confronted the participants with their own blockages so that it becomes clear with which attitude people are confronted and so that a distinction can be made between one's own personality and the people of the target group.

Building on this, the project leader (Peter Przetak) worked on creating the muscular conditions for good vocalisation. This involved strengthening the respiratory muscles, widening the embouchure tube and coordinating all parts of the body involved in the spoken word (lips, tongue, jaw, etc.). Since all physical tensions affect the voice, an integrative relaxation technique was also established, which is also one of the prerequisites for using the voice without unnecessary tension.

Conclusion: The ADK students involved in the project technically benefited from the lessons they had already enjoyed during their training and were thus able to help their Italian colleagues. On the other hand, through the work with Andrea Cramarossa, they were confronted with their own blockages on another level and were subsequently able to recognise and functionally dissolve them. Since elocution lessons are almost non-existent in Italy, especially when it comes to working on the subtext, as well as the technical requirements for a good voice, this lesson was necessary to bring the group as far as possible up to the same technical level and to create the prerequisites for the next seminar.

## **2.4. Learning field somatics, history of Theatre education**

In order to train the participants as future educators also in theory, Peter Przetak gave a lecture on somatics and the history of theatre education. Of course, the focus was not on the medical-pathological part of somatics, but rather on establishing a connection to the first seminar. Since practice comes first in theatre education work, the aim was to be able to "read" the human body better in order to draw conclusions about psychological injuries through knowledge of somatic connections, i.e. through observation. Since the theatre teacher is not a therapist, attention was drawn here to not retraumatise already traumatised children in the theatre work and thus evoke problems that the theatre teacher is not able to solve. Theatre work, although a game, always has emotional effects. It was made clear to the participants that even in the "as-if" the soul is vulnerable and thus defenceless, especially when a trauma, by its very nature, prevents protective mechanisms from taking effect. At this point, the interaction between body, soul and spirit had to be established. In the first seminar, for example, there was talk of strengthening the lower back and thus what we call the spine in the true and figurative sense. If this part is strengthened, the child is more able to face the adversities of life. Thus, each part of the body sends out certain signals that the attentive educator should be able to read in order to be able to help people from the respective target group in a targeted way.

The second part of the theoretical block consisted in giving the participants an insight into the

history of theatre education. From Comenius' *Scuola Ludus* to Johann Huizinga's "Homo Ludens", from Janusz Korzcak to Maria Montessori, the participants were introduced to the different educational models and ideas. The aim here was to make clear that the idea of play as a learning model has existed for a very long time and thus offers a good argumentation aid in contact with other "classical" teachers.

When asked, it became clear to the participants that the experience gained in the first seminar would have an impact on their own future teaching. Another effect was that the importance of a dramaturgy, a social methodology, in a teaching unit was once again brought into focus. This dramaturgy must follow the laws of the respective group, general human rules and the social goal of a teaching unit.

In preparation for the practical part of this second seminar, the focus was now placed on the development of children aged 6 to 10 years. The aim was to make clear to the participants what a child in this age range is or could be capable of as well as how it understands the world and itself. Methodological possibilities were discussed to use sensory learning in teaching in a meaningful way in order to promote the development and resilience of the children.

## **2.5. Theatre education in practice**

In the first part of the practical lessons, the theoretical knowledge, the trained listening skills and the theatre pedagogical exercises tested with the participants were to flow into a practical lesson. Small groups were therefore formed, whereby care was taken to divide the groups as equally as possible between the Italian and German participants. These small groups should now think about a fictitious first lesson that they want to implement. One person from each small group was to be democratically elected to lead this improvisation task.

In the course of the first seminar, various scenic improvisation tasks were set, which were used in small groups under the supervision of the project leader.

Now these learning experiences were to be transferred into independent practice. As noted above, these served to make the training part a real experience so that what was learned would manifest itself in the long-term memory. This is to illustrate that the "programming" of the brain is the prerequisite for real learning. Conversely, this means for the educational institutions that an important contribution is made with the theatre pedagogical work so that learning success in school contexts or also in vocational training can occur at all. Another learning effect was to first orient oneself in the small groups, to develop ideas together, to make compromises, in short: to live through all aspects of joint learning independently. The basis of the guided improvisation and thus in the discussions within the small groups was the examination of the fairy tale *Snow White*. Here, too, it first had to be made clear to the participants that the theatre play here is not an end in itself, but must have a social effect. In the fairy tale *Snow White*, the seminar leader first had to clarify which themes were dealt with there in order to narrow down the improvisations thematically. The themes that emerged were:

- the absence of the father
- Envy / resentment

- Growing up
- Sense of responsibility

The work was done in two trains. The first was to create a small theatre pedagogical unit (30 minutes) based on the themes of the fairy tales and the second was to attempt a guided improvisation, also in small groups.

The group had the task to behave like children at the age of 6 and the leading educator (i.e. one of the participants) had to learn how to deal with this dynamic.

The result was very revealing for the project management. It became clear in practice that there were enormous deficits in terms of observation skills, lesson dramaturgy and the thematic relationship of the exercises/games to the fairy tale. The trial lessons ended with a supervision by the project management, in which the deficits were once again named and suggestions for solutions were made.

The second part was to lead improvisations. As it was not possible to give everyone this experience, two course participants were chosen as leaders, neither of whom had any experience in leading groups.

The improvisations that followed contained a further learning aspect. Namely, that of non-judgemental observation. Since the group was divided, the other part had the opportunity to train their observation skills. It had to be made clear that the educator's view is a special one. When an educator observes children, the primary goal should be to develop an understanding of the respective strategies in order to accompany the child on its way in the best possible way. It was important to make clear to the participants that attention for a child is more than a desire to be praised. It is about the recognition of the person in his or her entirety. The theoretical part dealt with the fact that traumatised children suffered from the so-called "still face", among other things. This means that the facial expressions of the caregivers froze and no longer made any reference to the child. This is nothing less than existentially threatening for these children. This means that the theatre educators' attention must be highly trained and reflect the children's behaviour. This does not necessarily have to be done verbally, but on the contrary through the relational communication on the non-verbal level described above.

The small groups then performed the previously discussed small scenes on stage, were observed by the rest of the group and the scene was further developed and changed with the help of the respective leader.

The learning effect for the participants was:

- the audience could observe that small changes in the room or already during the performance can have a big effect
- it became clear that the realisation of an emotional consistency in relational contexts cannot be planned intellectually
- Above all, however, it was made clear to the respective leaders but also to the playing group that the primary goal to be achieved within such an improvisation is to make it clear to the future target group that every action has social consequences and that they realise the responsibility for this.

## 2. 6. the vocational-training aspect

The aim of this seminar was to make the participants aware of the impact of their work in practice and to provide them with basic linguistic and vocal knowledge. In particular, (learning) blockages were named that affect the voice but also the body. There are physiological connections between the emotional world and the body, which are important to recognise in order to apply appropriate theatre pedagogical means that can potentially solve these blockages. In addition, the view should be sharpened. This was especially true of the improvisations, in which it became clear that even small scenic changes, the choice of vocabulary but also the attitude of the teacher have an impact on the behaviour of the group. In the reflection rounds, it became clear that a change of perspective is needed to understand the connections between the group, the individual and consistent action. It also became clear that the change between independent and guided work is fluid and must be adapted to the situation in order to allow the future target group to be independent on the one hand and to keep the frustration threshold as low as possible on the other. This is especially crucial when working with stigmatised, traumatised or marginalised people. Because experience has shown that the frustration tolerance threshold is low here and may only be increased in small steps and with all due caution.

## 2.7 Conclusion and Reflection

In the final round of reflection, it became clear that the concept of pedagogy, i.e. working on and with people, was developed in different ways. There were two opposing principles: the one that says that pedagogy serves to prescribe a path of development for people by means of various tricks, i.e. to manipulate them in a direction, even if it is a good one, and the other that "only" serves to empower the individual to make his or her own decisions beyond socialisation, which then corresponds to the highest nature.

It became clear that an educator's influence on the target groups is limited, at best it can provide an impulse, a push as a first step on the very own path. And this does not necessarily have to be a path that the educator approves of. Another point in these discussions was the teaching of values in relation to racism, anti-Semitism or tolerance in general. What values does the educator hold and are their own values congruent with their work with the children? How congruent are non-verbal communication and the spoken word? How and by what means does the value conveyed by the educator come across to the child on a gestural level? How do misunderstandings arise? How do I recognise them and how can they be eliminated?

The impulse lecture on the part of the project management dealt mainly with neurobiological findings and general information from developmental psychology, serving as an intellectual background to bring the observed findings into line with developmental psychological contexts. In the context of theatre education, which makes use of both the senses and the intellect, it means providing the people entrusted with an emotional toolkit so that learning in the true sense of the word can come about at all. Namely: the comparison of experiences, the contemplation of one's own potential and the learning of the ability to

to be able to recognise correlations and consistency.

It was made clear to the participants that people are primarily able to learn when knowledge is linked to a positive sensory experience. Because then it has a better chance of ending up in the long-term memory and thus becomes a behaviour in which learning is not linked to fears. The brain sorts the experiences and discusses with itself how to categorise the sensory experiences gained. Basically, when talking about individuality here, the aim was to convey to the participants that when a child is aware of itself in the best sense, i.e. when it realises who it is, it can perceive the boundary to others more clearly. Along this border to other people runs a line of communication made of understanding, tolerance and above all: willingness to compromise.

These negotiation processes were dealt with exhaustively in practice (in the work in the small groups) and in theory (communication theory).

The participants also learnt that the strengthening of self-confidence in the target group should be anything but an exaggerated self-confidence that serves to assert itself against all others with all its might, in case of doubt with violence, but that the awareness of the self, with all its strengths and weaknesses, has been developed to such an extent that this can be communicated without fear. It became clear to the participants that this form of cultural youth education, which could also be called heart education or personality education, is the primary goal of this work.

### 3. Seminar - Theatre pedagogy in youth work Cultural management and project development

Lecturers

Peter Przetak (Akademie für darstellende Kunst Ulm gGmbH)  
Lino Manosperta (Teatro Pubblico Pugliese - online access)  
Period: 30.05.-10.06.2022

Number of participants from Germany & Italy:  
12 people from the field of drama & pedagogy

Place of implementation:

Academy for Performing Arts Ulm gGmbH  
Eberhard-Finckh-Straße 5  
89075 Ulm

#### Introduction

At this point, I think it is necessary to say a few words about the progress of the seminars up to this point. This concerns the goal formulated in the application to work directly with young people in the seminars.

This was not possible for several crucial reasons. The first reason was that there were reservations on the part of the education partner about letting people from Italy come into contact with the young people. The fears of contracting Covid-19 could not be dispelled despite the participants' proven vaccination and continuous self-testing.

The second reason was of a different nature. Since the education partner serves people from disadvantaged families, the responsibility to independently design a theatre pedagogical unit is great. According to the assessment of the project management, the participants were not so far advanced in their theatre pedagogical competence that they would have been able to design a theatre pedagogical learning unit. This would have led to the young people becoming part of an experiment that fulfilled all the conditions for failure.

Therefore, the project management decided to have this practical part carried out only within the group with the support of the pupils from class 1 of the ADK. This meant that mistakes made were not at the expense of the young people, but could be supervised and discussed within the group, and since the pupils from class 1 were not part of the project, the participants from *Melting Point* had the opportunity to take another objective look at their work.

The next aspect concerned the invitation of Lino Manosperta, who was in Romania during the period of the seminar, to spend two days training the participants in project and self-management. This was not possible for him for structural reasons. In agreement with Lino Manosperta, who joined online, this unit was led and conducted by Peter Przetak.

### 3.1. The learning content

Theory:

- Project development (from the idea to the concept, target group analysis, participant acquisition)
- Project coordination (time schedule, structure, desired results)
- Financing models/preparation of financing plans (presentation of European programmes, budgeting)

Practice:

- Structure and composition of a theatre education unit
- Hourly dramaturgy
- Recording and continuation of group dynamic processes
- Development of a teaching personality
- General methodology and didactics in theatre education
- Conflict management
- Ritualised action within a theatre pedagogical unit
- Dealing with praise and reprimand
- Development of theatre pedagogical goals (social competence, self-confidence, dialogue work, communication strategies in relation to the learning unit)

### 3.2. The way of working

In this seminar, the participants were supposed to apply their previous experience in theatre pedagogical practice. The consequence on the part of the project management from the results of the last seminar led to the fact that the group should now act as what it is: a colourful mixed group of different ages, with the most diverse social backgrounds and linguistic abilities. The reason for this was the realisation that group dynamic processes can be transferred to any group, only the vocabulary used and the demands on the exercises differ.

In order to adequately prepare the participants for this, the project management has previously summarised what has been taught so far. From theatre pedagogical games and exercises to the connections between physical and mental aspects of this work, to the precise power of observation in relation to the assessment of group dynamic processes.

The project management provided the impetus in terms of content by specifying another fairy tale, which, just like *Snow White* before it, also enjoys great popularity in Italy: *Rumpelstiltskin*.

The history of the fairy tale, its meaning especially with regard to today and thus a thematic limitation also played a role here. The participants now had the task of creating a theatre pedagogical unit of 2 hours. These were to be prepared individually. This preparation time was accompanied intensively.

Another item on the programme of this seminar was the planning of theatre education projects. The most diverse financing possibilities were discussed here, as well as the

such as structure, time management and social relevance. In particular, this unit pointed out the possibilities of how and in what way *Europe promotes* culture. In addition, the project management, with the help of the project manager Lino Manosperta, looked at how and in what way Italy promotes culture and pedagogy and in what way Germany specifically promotes here. The focus, however, was on European opportunities, as the project management wanted to promote cooperation within the group of participants. The programmes *Interreg*, *Global Europe*, *Erasmus+*, *A Single Market*, *Digital Europe*, *Creative Europe*, *the European Solidarity Corps* and *the European Social Fund* were presented in detail. On this basis, the participants now had the task of designing a fictitious project in small groups, drawing up a financial plan and working out its social relevance.

The results were presented in short papers. The results of this planning led to the fact that alliances were already forming within the group of participants, which had the chance to actually be implemented.

### 3.3. Theatre education in practice

The decision not to let the participants meet young people proved to be a good one. Because in this way, mistakes in structure, vocabulary or aspiration, had no impact of a negative nature on any target group.

Despite all the differences in methods, personalities and thematic focuses, the following learning progress or learning deficits can be noted at this point:

The progress:

- a. The physical and linguistic awareness work has led to the use of only exercises and games that have been penetrated in their effectiveness.
- b. Due to the diversity in the artistic training of the participants, training units were exchanged that led to a transfer of knowledge or a broadening of pedagogical horizons.
- c. The work with space and the spatial relationship were applied in the training sessions in a pedagogically meaningful way.
- d. the power of observation regarding group dynamics was sharpened and led to spontaneous adaptation of concepts to the needs of the group within the unit to be given.
- e. the pedagogical objectives were related to the thematic limitation of the given lesson. The work of one participant can serve as an example. She dealt with the father who boasts in the fairy tale that his daughter can spin straw into gold. She took this pitiless boasting and the qualities of the bad father as an opportunity to work on the positive qualities of a father in general. Her work with the strengthening of the lower back and, further on, with a lead-and-consequence game has led to an intensive examination of this topic and has been able to unfold its effect in a very unpretentious way. The pupils from the

This was confirmed by the 1st class of the ADK, who in the reflection round, without the father topic being named, were able to feel exactly this confrontation and their personal lack of this energy and compensate for it, at least in part, in the exercise.

The deficits:

- a. the exercises carried out individually had, with a few exceptions, no relation to each other whatsoever
- b. The dramatic structure was almost non-existent. This means that decisions about when to work in the large group, when to work with a partner or individually were made arbitrarily.
- c. the explanations of the individual exercises were imprecise, so that the amount of language and explanations was too great and thus it was not really possible to work in depth on any exercise.
- d. the lessons were, with two exceptions, too overloaded. The work of one participant was exemplary in this context. His theme was: that of envy, letting go and forgiving. The work with the ball, swings and throwing to each other was supposed to introduce this theme on the physical level. However, the participants were not physically able to do this because the sensitive conditions for this were not created. This led to the participants fulfilling this task without really being involved internally.
- e. It was unclear what kind of authority they should exercise. Thus, the leaders varied from being quite brash to being overly accommodating.

### **3.4. The theoretical part/project planning, Cultural management**

In this theoretical learning field, the focus was on applying for cultural projects with private or public institutions for participatory work with children and young people from difficult backgrounds. In this context, it was illuminated:

- Cultural work in deprived neighbourhoods
- Cultural work in rural areas
- Cultural work with people with disabilities
- Theatre pedagogical cooperation with educational institutions to support normal lessons
- European cooperation, possibilities and opportunities

After the participants were clear about the nature of the project, the second step was to narrow down the project thematically and to classify its social relevance. The focus of the discussion was, as clearly formulated in the project application, on working with young people from difficult backgrounds.

The book "The Wow Factor: A Global Analysis of the Quality of Arts Education" by Anne Bamford was presented. It summarises the results of the first worldwide analysis of research-based case studies on the influence of arts-based programmes on children and young people or the impact of the arts within general (school) education. The study was commissioned by UNESCO in 2004.

This data served to substantiate the respective concepts in terms of content and with reliable data from research. Another learning effect for the participants was the realisation that theatre pedagogical work is also playing an increasing role on the educational policy level and can serve to give children and young people from disadvantaged families access to education. It became clear that in Italy, as in Germany, education is socially inherited and the permeability of educational institutions is not guaranteed.

Promoting recognition, resilience and autonomous learning on a socio-psychological level was thus the theme in all projects designed by the participants.

In the further course, it was about the financing of such projects. With which project do I approach which agency? As described above, a wide variety of funding bodies (municipal, national, European) and foundations (Bosch, Mercator and, for Italy, ARCI, Teatro Pubblico Pugliese) were presented, where funds are made available for such projects.

### 3.5. The vocational training aspect

In this seminar, the learning effect for the participants was to become clear about their own possibilities and fields of learning as theatre educators. In the reflection and supervision rounds, one aspect was always clearly emphasised: everything I do, say and feel as a teacher has a positive and negative impact on the group dynamic processes. The choice of vocabulary, position in the room, consistency and

The structure of the exercises and learning objectives must be coordinated and placed in harmony with the group. Working in this protected space and being allowed to make mistakes had a positive effect on the overall learning success. This also included the fact that ego-based or purpose-oriented action, which does not aim to encourage the individual to be as independent as possible, is not very beneficial. Another learning effect was what should be praised and in what way. Since everyone wants to be recognised for what they do, the only question was how this should be done. The participants of Melting Point were encouraged in the supervision sessions to use words of praise only when they are really convinced of the quality of the results.

Purposeful praise is to be avoided. The key moment in this learning unit was the guidance given by a participant already working as a drama teacher. During her exemplary teaching unit, she praised almost exclusively self-evident things and completely lost sight of her goals. The other effect was that the individual exercises were no longer taken seriously by the other group members. This is an example of how the ambition of the target group can be undermined by the educator. When everything is praised, there is no more striving.

Furthermore, it should be noted that it became clear to all participants with whom and what they were confronting a group. An example of this is the teaching unit of another participant who has changed from a reserved person to an almost dictatorial pedagogue. This could be seen in some of the participants. When asked about this, insecurity and fear were the reasons for this metamorphosis, which of course affected the liveliness and learning ability of the group. It became clear that authenticity is the key to the development of a teaching personality. Finally, it should be noted that the participants realised that repetition has a learning effect on several levels. Here, neurobiological connections played a major role. Through the trial and error principle, people learn without having to exceed their frustration tolerance threshold. This means that rituals are always to be kept because they mean security and at the same time represent a mirror for the state of mind and personal progress. Another effect also became clear, namely that creativity and process orientation are simply not possible without rituals. For all participants, these consisted exclusively of physical exercises that they had learned or further developed in the context of *Melting Point*.

### 3.6. . Conclusion and Learning outcomes

The conclusion of this seminar on the part of the project management and the goals to be achieved at this point is that all participants now felt equipped to face the target group.

All the participants, who had previously only worked artistically, have now come to realise that this work is indispensable for cohesion within a society and makes an important contribution to living together well. The comprehensive theoretical work, but above all the practical work, has made the participants aware of their personal qualities and developed them as far as possible. Overall, it can be seen that above all the awareness of the body and its possibilities in relation to the socio-psychological effects has increased. In addition, it was shown that the trust within the group had strengthened to such an extent that conflicts were dealt with openly and without injuries. These conflicts consisted mainly in different images of human beings and the difference between artistic and pedagogical work.

## 4. Seminar - Conclusion, what is the human being?

Lecturers

Peter Przetak (Academy for Performing Arts Ulm gGmbH) Nanna

Przetak

Period: 12.09. - 21.09.22

Number of participants from Germany & Italy:

11 people from the field of drama & pedagogy

Place of implementation:

Teatro La Luna nel Pozzo

Contrada Foragno S.N.

72017 Ostuni (BR) Italy

### Introduction

In this last seminar, the aim was to initiate a project work within a limited time and to give the participants possibilities to achieve a social goal with the help of theatre pedagogical work. These social goals need an explanation at this point. In theatre education, especially when working with young people and children from difficult backgrounds, the principle of self-empowerment is paramount. This means that it is necessary to assess exactly when a group needs to be guided and when it is ready to work independently. Furthermore, it was important to make it clear to the participants that in working with this clientele, prejudices against a learning unit play just as much a role as reservations about theatre in general. In addition, dealing with authority has to be checked again and again, because the children's and young people's experiences with it are mostly negative. It is one thing that a theatre teacher cannot and should not punish in the school sense. However, this limits the measures that can be taken to sanction antisocial behaviour. How to deal with this was part of this seminar. A healthy authority that selflessly serves the cause and the group, but puts itself and its needs second, is just as counterproductive as an over-authoritarian whip who works with volume and command tones. This was discussed at length in the reflection rounds on the basis of the insights gained in the last seminars but also by introducing the participants to the work in this seminar.

In order to achieve a so-called social goal, a precise power of observation is just as necessary as the ability to adapt one's concept to the needs of a group. That's why it seemed obvious to the project management at this point to turn again to the fairy tale *Snow White*. The reason for this was that envy, resentment and the inability to really forgive each other came up again and again as a theme in relation to the contact with the target group. The participants, who were already working as theatre educators, reported that in their work, these were precisely the issues that were most urgent with their children and young people.

Now it was a question of showing the participants of Melting Point, by way of example, which possibilities are offered by the means of theatre in order to achieve the greatest possible success with the target group.

to achieve benefits. This benefit consists of resilience, which is often cited in this report. The attitude of the project management on this point had to be communicated and linked to the values of the participants. Resilience cannot be achieved without creativity and a willingness to compromise. The ability to deal with life's adversities, to take good care of oneself and others in order to lead a fulfilled life is something that needs to be acquired.

At the end of the seminar series, a fundamental misunderstanding had to be dealt with again. The misconception that theatre is a leisure activity without relevance. Although the studies on this topic were presented and the effectiveness of theatre pedagogical measures became increasingly clear, there was always the question of how exactly a project can really be put into practice from the planning, through the process, to the result.

In the following, I will try to clarify the process of concluding the seminar series in order to summarise at the end what impulses the strategic partnership *Melting Point* has offered for further work beyond the project.

## 4.1. The learning content

### Theory:

- socio-psychological effects in relation to stigma (here the writings, books and findings of the psychiatrist Asmus Finzen were explained and related to theatre education)
- The bodywork of Dore Jacobs was theoretically related to neurobiological development.
- the parent-child relationship or the effect of the so-called *Still-Face* was explained and the experiment of the psychoanalyst and developmental psychologist Edward Tronick was presented.
- The consequences of taboos in child development were discussed in detail. In particular, the effect of transgenerational trauma was addressed
- Group dynamic processes and role attributions within a group were discussed and examples of role dissolution or expansion were named.
- Casting types and techniques were explained. In particular, how a piece must be cast in order to achieve a social goal.

### Practice:

- Repetitions of different theatre educational games: such as circle games, Mirror exercises, trust exercises, exercises in space
- Raising participants' awareness of the congruence or incongruence of communicative means.
- Theatrical realisation of a social goal
- ritualised action on stage and its effect on the target group
- General: Movement work to expand theatre-pedagogical possibilities for action

- Speaker education exercises on the topic of metalanguage and universal comprehensible phonation
- Dissolving speech and body blockages (here: showing exercises to achieve this)
- Rehearsal planning and organisational necessities for a performance (stage set-up, lighting and costume)

## 4.2. The way of working

At the beginning of this work, the previous practical parts (especially the games on relaxation, group dynamics and position in space) were repeated again and built on.

On the physical level, this meant that the participants again became clear about the social interaction on the non-verbal level. On the one hand, the learning objective was to become clear about one's own gestures/mimics and their effect on the other person, and on the other hand, to be able to better assess the group or the partner (and thus the future children and young people) on this level. Linguistically, work was also done on the meta-linguistic level and this was translated into generally understandable sounds. These sounds clarify relationships in the same way as is possible with non-verbal communication. For this, a permeability in the speech apparatus had to be achieved in order to arrive at a congruent phonation that is understood by the other person. This way of working proved to be very profitable, because it made congruent communication possible on the meta-linguistic level, beyond the information content.

In parallel, the social goal had to be formulated and the different levels of the fairy tale *Snow White* had to be explained. The question of the absent father appeared there as well as the puberty Snow White finds herself in and her childhood, which has to die at the end. The symbols in the fairy tale (mirror, comb, belt, shoelaces) played just as big a role here as the social aspect, such as the stepmother's envy of Snow White's beauty while her own is decaying, the theme of exclusion and subsequent liberation.

With regard to the future target group, another aspect had to be explained in the discussions. Regardless of whether the participants work with disabled people, migrants, addicts, prisoners, poor people or in "normal" school classes in the future, the theme runs through the history of theatre education because it is a human theme. The theme was that of stigmatisation. The question that was explained here was put up for discussion on the basis of social pedagogical findings. It was clarified that stigmatisation is a very complex issue and that it shows the interrelation between the person affected and society (in large and small ways). In this context, historically developed and unquestioned ideas of normality and deviation from the norm usually play a decisive role. After the deviation from a norm has been established, a community now starts to ascribe negative stereotypes to this abnormal (Poles steal, poor people cannot behave, migrants exploit the social systems or are lazy etc.pp.). This social ostracism leads to negative beliefs such as "I'm no good", "I am not worth anything", "I am a burden". But the promise of modern civil societies is based on

on the other hand, that anyone can "make it" if they really want to. This tension that arises between social ostracism and the subsequent negative beliefs and this promise must be compensated for in some way. The consequences of this tension can be: Propensity to violence, suicide, drug addiction etc. etc. . How and in what way theatre pedagogical work can help here was dealt with extensively; measures were discussed (building trust in the pedagogue and/or in the group, clarifying rules of conduct within the work spaces, but also clarifying the limits of action. A theatre teacher can only help people to help themselves. And this is only possible if there is some form of will to change the situation.

The results of this debate were manifold. I will only mention the most important ones here.

The laboratory character in theatre pedagogical work can help stigmatised people to reveal their behavioural patterns in a protected setting, in order to then leave them bit by bit. On the other hand, since a lie is immediately unmasked on stage, since social control is carried out by the watching pedagogue or by part of a group, it is possible to unmask perpetrators and also free them from their role. The acceptance of a role is just as important as its attribution, therefore the work can help both sides to approach each other in order to cultivate respectful interaction. Through direct human contact, a comparison is made between an assertion and its truth content. This comparison is read from the non-verbal interaction and leads to an assessment of the other person, which in turn can be checked and re-contextualised. To recognise these processes in order to develop a group-specific conception from them was designed as an example.

Thematically related to stigma is the taboo. What "one" may or may not say or do is a social convention, but taboos also exist within a family, which in the worst case can lead to the silencing of the child. These taboos can be recognised in the body as well as in the vocalisation. If, for example, a child hesitates when saying the word "father" and it is accompanied by a movement in the lower back, a problem can be suspected. A theatre teacher can use this assumption to work thematically and check the truth of this assumption. Another insight was that even an educator only looks out of his/her own eyes and thus his/her perception is subjective. In this example, if the educator has problems with his/her father, he/she may be able to recognise these problems more easily, but it may also be a matter of projection. Therefore, it was necessary to encourage the participants to keep questioning their own perception and never let it become a complete certainty. This would again lead to stigmatisation, which would have a negative impact on the behaviour of the children and young people. The principle of the "blank slate" was considered authoritative. This means that an educator must always look at a group anew, be in the moment and really forget all previous opinions/views about the individuals.

One aim of this final seminar was a presentation based on these findings in relation to the fairy tale *Snow White*. It was performed on the outdoor stage at *Teatro La Luna nel Pozzo*. The audience consisted of educators working there, educators from *Teatro Di.Versi* and the director of *Teatro Monte Folle* and two English teachers working in a school in Ostuni. For structural reasons, the performance had to take place at 6:30 pm. The results were shared on social media by the participants,

to achieve a broader impact.

During the time of the seminar, the theoretical and training part was completed in the morning hours, in order to devote the afternoon hours to rehearsals on a play on this basis.

The presentation lasted about an hour and exemplified the course of the seminars. The language was almost always non-verbal or vocal, culminating in a poem that was recited in chorus in both Italian and German.

### **4.3. The vocational training aspect**

In addition to repeating the theatre pedagogical exercises for sensitisation, relaxation, spatial relations, and for activating the speech apparatus and thus creating the conditions for trouble-free and blockage-free speaking, the main aim was to place these exercises and collections of exercises in a project context. The participants should understand that all exercises, from greetings to farewells, must be connected with each other and mean a consequence, which can then find its way into a stage performance. As described above, this is part of the aspect of self-empowerment that the target group should achieve. An action has, in a positive as well as in a negative sense, a consequence that differs from situation to situation.

This achieves both adaptability and strengthens the sense of responsibility.

The individual exercises, in particular the extension of the mirror exercise, and by simply doing them before and after, it was once again made clear how empathy can be promoted in the exercises. Here, too, neuronal connections that arise through sensual movement were once again described. The difference between this and a purely athletic training session also had to be explained once again. For this purpose, the exercises explained which senses are addressed and activated when and how in order to positively influence brain activity. In what way can a training session be designed in such a way that it has a positive effect and thus makes a real change in behaviour possible in the first place? Overall, it can be said that this aspect has almost taken on a life of its own with the participants. Through the artistic training, the senses have been trained per se. Now it was necessary to draw conclusions from one's own experience to a training unit related to it. In the repetitions, the effect was therefore repeatedly pointed out, the structure explained and the common social goal could then be defined unpretentiously.

In the afternoon rehearsal work, these learning aspects were translated into practical work.

You can see the result of this rehearsal work as a video in the enclosed materials. Nevertheless, I would like to describe the learning effect that occurred during the rehearsal work. According to the participants' own statements, they noticed that there was a great freedom on stage due to the absence of any evaluation. This circumstance was not yet clear to the participants in its dimension. Especially the younger participants, both in the divided group exercises and in the reflection rounds that took place during the third seminar, repeatedly had difficulties not to evaluate the work and to conclude from the specific to the general. In the discussions, the project leaders repeatedly intervened to correct those who did not report on their individual perceptions in the exercises, but rather formulated generalities.

It is therefore positive to note that the ability to communicate appreciatively was trained and its effect could be felt directly. Connected to this is the fact that

every group member was involved in the success of such a presentation. There were no individual interests being pursued here, but rather group interests that were negotiated over and over again. The resulting effect was that there was no loneliness or ego-based action on stage. Neither in the rehearsals nor in the live performance.

## 5. Overall conclusion and Perspectives

In summary, I can classify the seminar series as a success. In the mid-term review I was asked what score (from 1 - 10) I would give this project. Then as now, I give the project a nine. The reason for the missing point is the learning effect that had to occur for me during this first Erasmus project I led. This concerned the definition of the respective tasks of the cooperation partners as well as the values concerning the work that had to be clarified in advance. I did not make this clear before the start of the project, which is why there were always misunderstandings with the partners, which could then be cleared up. But this is only a small drop of bitterness on a thoroughly positive effect that occurred during the project.

The possibilities and opportunities that arise for people working in the arts through this new perspective are enormous. Both for the German and the Italian participants. Theatre education work in this dimension is still in its infancy in Italy and in Germany, unfortunately, this work still ekes out a niche existence.

The shortage of skilled workers affects Italy and Germany equally. That is why it is all the more important to remind people of their own talents or to develop them. These can be technical as well as artistic or academic. The fact that theatre education can make an important contribution to this is something I have dealt with exhaustively in the last few pages. However, the more important part of this work is that it facilitates living together in Europe by means of the approach via the body and the appreciative approach associated with it.

One participant commented: "Until now, Europe has been an empty phrase for me. But through this project and through the intense and intimate cooperation across borders and language barriers, Europe has become tangible and palpable for me."

I cannot describe my impression of this project more aptly.

The alliances that have come about through this project concern a participant who has invited her colleagues to teach a workshop at her place, another participant who is now setting up his own theatre education centre in Lecce, and a participant who is just discovering this work and is now, with a lot of effort, also initiating a theatre education centre in Calabria with courses and regular performances. Among the German colleagues, it has emerged that one participant will now travel to Portugal by means of a project to implement the work at a German school in Silves. For an alliance of three participants who are currently actively seeking a collective application at the Theatre House in Jena and want to explicitly dedicate their concept to children and youth work. A student of theatre pedagogy who is about to complete her training and is already leading a project at a hotspot school in Ulm. A German-Italian collaboration is also being planned. The aim is to produce a play about women's rights with an accompanying theatre education programme. This work was an enormous gain for the participants and a great challenge for the project management.

I would like to thank you very much for this and for the opportunity that the Erasmus programme offers people and for the trust you have placed in us.

Ulm, 12/22, Peter Przetak  
academy for performing arts adk-ulm gGmbH