

SELF EVALUATION OF THEATRE WORKSHOPS

UNA FIESTA PARA BORIS

www.unafiestaparaboris.com

Ca L'Estruch, Sabadell
April 2011

1. DESCRIPTION

1.1 Format

Organisers: An artistic team consisting of professional theatre and dance practitioners: Matthias Janser (stage director and producer), Nora Sitges (choreographer and assistant director), Claudi Bombardó (choreographer), Gabriel Gálvez (dance therapist), Gonzalo Suárez (marketing and communication) and Xavier Bonet (project coordinator).

Participants: Non-professional actors, double-leg amputees with various backgrounds and lifestyles (different previous theatrical experiences, cultural, economic and social backgrounds, etc.)

Number of participants: maximum 30.

Objectives:

For the participants to take part in a gratis drama workshop with a particular emphasis on the working methods of a professional theatre company.

For the organisers to get to know and experiment with the possibilities of theatrical expression of a group with the above characteristics.

To select the most suitable participants from within the group for a future presentation of the play.

For the communication department to contact different media in order to publicise the 4 workshop days via articles, interviews, reports or news items and to increase the number of workshop participants.

1.2 Organisation

Organisation before the workshop sessions:

The artistic team begins devised plans and prepared for the workshops six months before their commencement.

During these 5 or 6-hour long preparation sessions the possible exercise, tasks and structure of each session were determined according to the aforementioned objectives.

Each member of the artistic team presented his or her proposals relating to their professional field/expertise. The proposals were then discussed during the meetings.

At the end, the tasks and the order of events were agreed upon by mutual consent.

The finance for the realisation of the workshops (consumables, catering, transport, posters, internet, flyers...) was provided by a private German industrial company, which has an interest in the project. No public subsidy was received.

Organisation during the workshops:

The artistic team met once a week to adjust the workshop programme following direct contact with the participants (movement limitations, content to be added, etc.).

Parallel to the whole process, a coordinator was in charge of ensuring the project ran smoothly (timetables, means of transport, contact with and amongst the participants, personal requirements, purchasing of materials, etc.)

The artistic team was responsible for the organisation of travel arrangements as well as food and drinks for all participants.

1.3 Content

Various tasks which relate to all areas of the production and the future presentation of Thomas Bernhard's play *Una fiesta para Boris*: physical expression, movement, composition, enunciation, knowledge of professions within a theatre or theatrical production, text work, preparation of scenes, set design, working with props, etc.

Dates and times of the sessions:

12.03. 2011, 15:00-19:00	Session I: Introduction of the project
19.03. 2011, 11:00-18:00	Session II: Dramatic resources and theatrical tasks
26.03. 2011, 11:00-18:00	Session III: Movement
02.04. 2011, 11:00-18:00	Session IV: Scenic presentations

2. INFORMATION OBTAINED

2.1 Before the sessions

A questionnaire was devised and sent to all participants to collect personal details, particular requirements, conditions and special needs of each individual participant.

Each participant was asked for their consent and authorisation with regard to the use of photo and video taken during the sessions (photo and video release).

2.2 During the sessions

Photos and video of the most representative moments of each workshop session were recorded. Time for comments and questions at the end of each session was given. Additionally, open discussion was held on the last day to give opinions and to share the experience of the workshops with the rest of the group.

2.3 After the sessions

-Anonymous questionnaires were given to the participants in order to obtain information on all participants' views of the organisation, exercises more or less useful, suggestions for improvement, etc.

-A Facebook profile and web page forum of www.unafiestaparaboris.com was made available for the continued exchange of opinions.

-Workshops were evaluated.

-Video and photographs of the workshops were compiled.

-A short video of the workshop was created.

3. EVALUATION

3.1 Results obtained

The expected results (considering the objectives) have been obtained and expectations have been exceeded at every level: communication, commitment, interaction, confidence, motivation, participation, etc.

3.2 Evaluation by the participants

Questionnaire: The answers given by the participants in the questionnaire were generally unanimous. Below is a list of questions and the given answers. Answers, which depart from the general response, are also given.

What did you think about the organisation of transport? Did you have problems getting to l'Estruch such as difficulties with parking, etc?

Nobody had any problems. The participants arrived using three different means of transport: their own car (plenty of parking spaces available), by train (the organisers were efficient when it came to collecting people from the station), being collected from home and driven in the cars of other participants or team members (the communication between participants and drivers was much appreciated).

Do you think you received sufficient information before and during the workshops?

Yes, before the workshops all necessary information was available on the website and during the workshops via clear communication with the team and via detailed emails. Some participants valued the information given about what to wear for the workshops and the objects (props) they were asked to bring. Without having been given too much information an element of surprise was maintained.

Do you think that the timetable was adequate? Would you have preferred shorter or longer sessions?

No, the duration of each individual session was adequate. To start at 11.00 in the morning meant that they did not have to get up too early. Finishing at 18.00 left them the evening free for other activities. They would have preferred more than 4 sessions.

Do you think the communication between the team and the participants was sufficient?

Yes, very clear communication, which inspired confidence.

What do you think about the artistic team? Do you think someone from another professional discipline was missing?

They were all very professional and well organised. Many participants were not in a position to comment on whether different professionals were needed because of their lack of theatrical experience.

Which part of the workshops has been most useful to you? Which part of the workshops has been less useful to you?

Generally everything seems to have been useful. The least popular exercise was the organisation chart explaining the hierarchy within a theatrical team and the game where they had to try and pronounce foreign names.

Is there something you would change?

No, only to add more sessions to the 4 carried out. It felt too short for everybody. One of the participants asked for more acting exercises.

Do you think that the workshop activities will help you when it comes to staging the play?

Yes, without a doubt with the exception of one participant who already had more theatrical experience. She or she enjoyed the workshops but they did not help her/him to improve their acting technique.

Did the workshops help you on a personal level? In which way?

The majority of the participants stated that they discovered their artistic and performance interests, and they viewed the workshops as personal improvement.

Many managed to overcome certain taboos relating to their disabilities before, but they had never done so in front of others. To work on a theatrical character has helped them to overcome inhibitions. They also valued the opportunity to work without a prosthesis.

Reading of the play: After the workshops all participants were sent the script of the play and they were invited to read it. The script was not made available sooner because the content of the drama was meant to be discovered via the workshop exercises. The participants were asked to share their thoughts on the script via Facebook, the webpage and email.

3.3 Evaluation of the artistic team

3.3.1 Achievements

- Knowing how to present and carry out the exercises so that the content of the play could be discovered in a creative and gradual way. Examples:

- The participants were asked not to read the play until the end of the workshop period. This meant they discovered the play via the proposed exercises.
- One of the exercises consisted of making up a story in the large group. Members of the artistic team would introduce key elements of the play which meant that the participants could familiarise themselves with the names of the characters, the drama and its context...

- Creating an atmosphere of confidence amongst everybody in the group so that the exercises would trigger conversations about personal experiences, which are indirectly related to the themes of the play.

- We discovered that the work of the artistic team, which was collaborative, consensus, and based on listening and knowing how to share and manage ideas and contributions from each individual team member, transferred to the participants during the workshops.

- Not to take the effectiveness of the exercises for granted but to be conscious of the participants' limitations, which made us reconsider the proposed exercises.

- Since each member of the team could contribute with concrete exercises from their special fields of work, the exercises were varied and each member could take responsibility for certain exercises. This rotation could have resulted in confusing the participants but instead, it produced a certain agility and dynamic during each of the workshop sessions. This rotation principle facilitated a support system between the artistic team and the participants. The success of this structure was mainly due to clear decisions during the preparation sessions as to by whom and how each exercise was to be carried out.

3.3.2 Suggestions for improvement

- To increase the marketing effort to create a larger group of participants from a more diverse social and economic background. The majority of the participants were already part of a group or association and we didn't succeed in locating participants with different backgrounds. Neither did we succeed in locating a large enough group of double leg amputees and we accepted people with other disabilities. The number of participants was 18, fewer than expected.

- Time management:

Since the programme of exercises was perhaps a bit too ambitious, time management was difficult or complex. Might it have been better to do fewer exercises in order to have more flexibility to carry out each one of them? Or did the pressure of a full timetable actually help us?

- Communication department:

Different national and local media were contacted and information about the workshops and the project “Una fiesta para Boris” was sent out. The response was practically negligible.

Possible reasons for this negligible response could be:

- a) The most frequent response given was lack of space to include news item with the amount of activities and events to be included.
- b) A form of scepticism was felt towards a project that was not part of an organisation that normally deals with social issues.
- c) More interest could have been created in the future production of the play rather than a series of workshops that were aimed at a selected group of participants and not at the general public.

3.3.3 Comments and suggestions

-One of the few outside audience members, Pasquale Marino, thought it was a shame that we did not have a larger audience since acting in front of an unknown audience could have increased the energy of the participants.

MORE INFORMATION:

If you would like more detailed information, please do not hesitate to contact the artistic team of the project. All contact information can be found on our website www.unafiestaparaboris.com.