

Devising Theatre with Diverse Communities Dublin 2022

This Case Study is an account of a workshop led by Border Crossings in Tallaght, South Dublin, during the summer of 2022. Tallaght is the most culturally diverse neighbourhood in Ireland, and a portion of participants in this workshop was drawn from that local community. There were also a range of theatre professionals from across Ireland, France, Italy and Sweden. Although English was the prime language of facilitation, not everyone spoke English well, or in some cases at all. This complex composition of the participating group made the workshop very much a Third Space project. The account that follows details the exercises which Border Crossings used to facilitate the multiple encounters of the week, and offers some sense of the many unexpected and wildly creative results.

Day 1

Warm - up and Group Building

It was important to make new people feel immediately at ease and welcome. The need to establish positive energy, shared experience and enable a group to get to know each other quickly should never be underestimated. This means they then feel safe, creative and open to more complex work. The CRE-ACTORS group in Dublin was a large group of 29, with varying degrees of experience.

All the following games are done in a circle, standing up.

1) Name and gesture

The facilitator starts by saying their name making a small gesture three times. E.g., clapping or clicking fingers. E.g., Lucy + click, click, click.

The group repeat the name 3 gestures, three times. Then person next to the facilitator then says their own name and does a different gesture, which the group repeats 3 times. This is done in quick succession until everyone has had a turn.

This is a very simple game and should be done without pausing or talking. In an intercultural setting, it is best practice if the facilitator demonstrates the game rather than using words to explain it, as that way everyone can understand.

The exercise is also a good way to learn names quickly. It is claimed that if you say a name three times you remember it! A simple name game is a good method to put people at ease as it doesn't require any language to understand and it is easy for everyone to pick up.

2) Bing bong Bing

The facilitator stands in the middle of the circle and points at someone – they are asked to say “Bing”. The person to their right is asked to say “Bong”, the next person says “Bing”, and then the next person says their name. This pattern repeats around the circle. If someone gets the sequence wrong, or hesitates, they are “out” (and could sit down). Once the group gets confident at the sequence the leader changes it. It can get increasingly long and difficult, e.g.:

-Bing, bing, bing, bong, bong, bong, name

-Bing, bing, bing, bing, bong, name

Each time the facilitator changes the pattern it is helpful to get the group to repeat the sequence in unison.

This game is useful for groups who don't speak the same language. It is fun to play, doesn't rely on people knowing each other's names (and helps you learn them) and, as it only needs a couple of simple words, it is very inclusive for people who don't feel confident speaking the host language. The game continues until there is a winner, or (if working with a big group) a small group of winners.

3) Story of your life/ introduce yourself with a match

In a large group some people naturally speak more than others, and it can be difficult to give everyone the space to introduce themselves, especially if time is limited. This technique helps people focus on what they really want to say and limits the length of time that people talk. It gives people a relatively equal time to speak in a fun way.

With international groups, some people might not be confident in speaking English (or any other host language) so it is good for the facilitator to encourage people to do the exercise using the language in which they are most comfortable. It doesn't matter if not everyone can understand what is being said: it is more important that everyone is heard. This is also useful for the group to get used to hearing and using more than one language. Once people have permission, and feel accepted to use any language, they are more likely to use their own language in later activities, which is very freeing and sets the tone for the whole project.

Each person lights a match (a glass of water or a fire bucket should be at hand to drop the match!). They introduce themselves and talk for the length of time that the match burns.

4) Guess who's leading

This is a good game to start a group moving and working together. One person is selected to go out of the room for a moment. Another person is selected to be the leader- they start to move, and the rest of the group must copy them, moving all at the same time. The group must keep moving. The person outside comes in and they have up to 3 guesses to see if they can work out who the leader is. The person who was the leader is the next to go out the room to guess.

Working with Images 1

Before the training began, each participant is asked to find 3 images. For the CRE-ACTORS training, at least one of these showed an intercultural and/or devised performance in which they had been involved, and at least one showed what they understood by "interculturalism". They brought these in printed form, and also emailed them to the facilitator. The Exercise also works with paintings or other images.

The group divides into pairs, with each person showing their images to the other, and explaining a little about them¹. The person seeing the images for the first time chooses one which appeals to them, and takes the printed copy, which they keep hidden from view. The images not chosen are discarded.

Each person then finds a second, different partner. They decide who will be "blind" first. This person is blindfolded². The "sighted" person then communicates the picture they have to the "blind" person - but they cannot use words or language. They can move their partner or otherwise apply touch; they can make non-verbal sounds with their voice or body: the only rule is that they must not use words.

Once the sighted partner feels they have communicated the picture, the roles are reversed. The images remain concealed.

¹ Language barrier.s should not be an issue, as at least one of the images will almost certainly speak for itself

² If people are resistant to being blindfolded, or there are known issues around trauma in the group, then it is possible to do this with eyes closed. The only reason for the blindfold is that it's very tempting to open them.

The group re-assembles, with a chair facing the “audience”. Each person in turn sits in the chair and describes the image that they have been led through when they were blindfolded. The facilitator may assist this process by asking questions, particularly when people describe the experience rather than the picture.

It works really well if there is a screen behind the chair, as the image can be projected where the audience can see it but the person speaking cannot. If there is no projection available, then the partner can stand behind the person speaking and hold the printed image for the audience to see.

This activity is hugely freeing in terms of creativity, and helps people to move beyond language into other forms of communication.

Working with Images 2

Part 1 - Image Theatre

This practice starts with a technique adapted from Augusto Boal’s “image theatre”. As a practice in his “Theatre of the Oppressed”³, it is intended to facilitate genuine and deep collaboration on the basis of equality.

Participants work in groups of four or five. The facilitator gives them key words or concepts, in response to which they will create a physical image using their bodies. For intercultural and multi-lingual groups, the choice of words is really important, as this will enable (or prevent) full participation. For CRE-ACTORS, we used three words which are very similar in the three core languages of the project, and which also relate to some of the main issues around intercultural practice and policy in Europe:

ENGLISH	FRENCH	ITALIAN
Host	Hôte	Ospite
Hostile	Hostile	Ostile
Hospital	Hôpital	Ospedale

The fact that there are slight differences of meaning between these words in the different languages is a bonus: for example “Hôte” and “Ospite” can both mean “guest” as well as “host”.

The group of four or five need to make a physical image which they all agree embodies the word. Each individual in turn steps out of the image they are creating and “sculpts” the others to fit their sense of what the image should be. They then insert themselves into the image, and someone else takes their turn to do the same. This should be done without talking. The image is finally agreed when all the members of the group have stepped out and back in again without making any adjustment.

³ The technique is most fully recorded in Boal’s book “The Rainbow of Desire” (Routledge 2015)

This technique requires time, as people often disagree quite strongly on what the image should be. There can be “arguments”, when people keep changing something back and forth. Cultural and political differences can very often be revealed quite starkly. The need to find consensus is actually an exercise in democracy.

Once the images have been found, it's good to share them with the full group. This can often lead to productive discussions.

Part 2 - Devising from Images

The second part of this practice is for the groups to take their three images and to create a short piece of theatre which includes all three. For this part of the process, talking is permitted (and indeed encouraged), so translation may be needed. The images can appear in any order during the performance, and they do not have to be highlighted (although they can be). The original words may or may not be considered. Participants may speak during their performance, but they do not have to.

During the CRE-ACTORS training, it was very useful to use this approach early in the process, when we had our full team of community participants present. The images and scenes that emerge from this practice are often very telling as a form of research. It was very striking how the scenes made in this workshop were very multilingual, and how they all dealt with very dramatic conflicts, whether in serious or comic modes.

Day 2

Warm-Up

The aim of this warm-up is to get the group to move together as a company. It starts slowly and can build to become quite physical.

Each person finds a space to lie down. The facilitator asks them to allow their body to feel the floor below them, and, as they breathe, to let the body sink and have more contact with the floor.

The facilitator encourages the group to breathe together in a slow meditative way: e.g. breathe in for 4, hold for 4, breathe out for 4. Eventually they are asked to start moving their fingers, when they breathe out, then moving on to include their wrist, their arms etc., moving then to the toes, feet, and eventually moving to a standing position.

They are asked to observe the other people in the room and try to move at the same tempo and style. Participants are encouraged to explore the space but should move while observing each other, trying to keep breathing together and moving in the same tempo and style as the rest of the group. They are then asked to connect with another person and maintain physical contact with one other at all times, whilst still observing the whole group. They are then asked to connect with two people and should be connected to one at all times. This will then eventually go back down to touching one person, then being on their own, and finally just breathing together again.

Music is played and the tempo is changed to reflect the group. The exercise needs to be given enough time to develop and to allow the group to come together.

Working with Languages 1

The exercise is useful for intercultural groups to explore the cultural and languages in the room and to use difference as a strength to create theatre. They are encouraged to spend time exploring and finding ways to communicate with each other which then can be used to create a scene.

Border Crossings' play CONSUMED had 3 characters: one who spoke only Mandarin, one who spoke only English, and one who spoke both. The actors in the company reflected the characters and the director spoke only English. The play had some scenes with a couple in love trying to communicate despite not speaking the same language, and used a variety of methods such as Google translate, or a translator.

The CRE-ACTORS participants were asked to get into smaller groups of 3-5 with least one person who spoke a different language from rest of the group.

They were asked to create a scene around "A meal" and told that the scene should explore understanding and misunderstanding, when people do not speak the same language. The meal was chosen as a setting, because food is an excellent way to bring people together and can highlight cultural difference.

Participants were asked specifically to think about how we can play with understanding or misunderstanding of language, as well as thinking what the audience would be able to understand. It's helpful for each group to explore how they have seen others try to communicate across languages. The groups were given 20 minutes to prepare their scene.

The scenes were performed back to the rest of the group.

Working with Languages 2

This technique is open to variation according to the cultural and linguistic make-up of the group. It works very well if you can divide the group into threes, two of whom speak one language which the third does not speak, particularly if the third person speaks another language which is not known to the other two.

For example, in the CRE-ACTORS project, we had these examples:

- Edward and Hanna worked in Swedish, with Dominique working in French
- Thais and Amanda worked in Portuguese, with Kunle working in Yoruba
- Andrea and Romi worked in Spanish, with Xevi working in Catalan
- Sandra and Bronwen worked in Irish, with Jonathan working in English
- Micky and Nicola worked in Italian, with Lucy working in BSL

It is good if the facilitator acknowledges that there is a politics to the language combinations, and that the participants should be sensitive to this.

The participants are given a VERY short time to prepare a scene - 2 minutes maximum. All they need to decide is what the situation is that they will present. The scenes are then performed to the full group as improvisations.

What is particularly exciting about this approach is that the performance is REAL. When people don't understand what another performer is saying, that is useful for the drama. The challenges posed by an intercultural, multilingual group are turned into something advantageous. The exercise also generates scenes that raise important questions about the relationship between language and power structures.

Kabosh and the North

Day 2 of the CRE-ACTORS training ended with a talk by Paula McFetridge about her intercultural theatre work in Belfast.

In response to her discussion of working in and with specific places and spaces, each participant was invited to send the facilitator overnight an image of a particular (non-theatrical) place that they found

in some way stimulating. These could be images from their time in Dublin, their home town or elsewhere.

Day 3

The Seven Levels of Tension

Part 1

This technique is based on the work of Jacques Lecoq.

The group moves through the room, and the facilitator leads them through various physical “states” or “levels of tension”. It is important that there are objects around the room with which participants can interact, and these should not be valuable or breakable. Chairs, tables, bags, water bottles and shoes are all very useful.

The levels are:

1. Pond Life. There is no tension at all in the body, which is inert.
2. The Californian. The body is deeply relaxed, and as a result the performer feels very much at ease, laid back and friendly. It’s a bit “druggy” really. When you meet people, you love them.
3. The Stage Manager. This level is clear-thinking, efficient and organised. Nothing is a problem. If something has to be dealt with, you go to it without rushing but without dawdling. If something needs to be fixed, you fix it. When you meet people, you greet them politely.
4. The Baby. This level is perpetually excited and stimulated by everything, but cannot concentrate on any one thing for more than a second or two because there’s always something more exciting to see next. When you meet people, you probably want to know whether their hair is real - or something like that.
5. Late for work. This level is getting pretty tense. Everyone else seems to be a bit useless, and you really have to impose your will on them otherwise nothing will get done. The world feels like it’s moving out of your control and you have to assert yourself to get it right.
6. Bomb in the room. Panic, rushing away, screaming.
7. Rabbit in the headlights. Paralysed with fear, you’re so tense.

It works best to start from level 3 and to introduce the other levels one at a time, going back to 3 whenever it’s necessary to explain. Once the group have got the idea of each level, there’s a lot of fun to be had by shifting around between them.

Part 2

Once the group know the seven levels, the facilitator can set some improvisations in motion. The group gathers around a space, and music is played: lighter, dancey pop music works best. The facilitator sends participants into the space one at a time, specifying a level of tension for them to work with. Make sure there’s always an interesting mix. If someone seems to be getting tired or in a rut, bring them out of the scene. People learn as much from watching this as from doing it. The key is the dramatic conflicts that arise between the different levels of tension.

Working with the Body and Space

This technique works well just after participants have done Seven Levels of Tension, and also when they’ve been thinking about place and space.

The facilitator creates a PowerPoint presentation of images which show a range of different places and spaces. For CRE-ACTORS, many of these were the images that the participants themselves found in response to Paula’s presentation about site-specific work in Belfast. Images of theatres and performances should not be used. Images without people in them work best.

As in the previous exercise, the group gather around an empty space. There is a screen behind the space, so this is an end-stage exercise. The facilitator puts on a playlist of music - spacey, open sounds work best for this. For CRE-ACTORS, we used Mogwai, Sigur Rós, Pink Floyd, John Adams and Arvo Pärt.

The images are projected. Participants are encouraged to go into the space and to improvise in response to the image and music. The facilitator changes the image when they feel the need for a new energy.

Make sure you allow time for discussion at the end of this. It's very helpful for people to say which moments they found particularly powerful or striking - that way they are "banked" for future use.

As with many of these techniques, language is not an issue here. You don't have to speak during the improvisation - and if you do, then the fact that others may not speak the same language is a given.

Beginning a Text

For this technique, the facilitator needs a supply of "seed lines". These are pairs of lines, which can either be especially written or taken from existing texts. It's important that they should be quite "open" (no specific references to time, place etc), and in a variety of different styles.

For the CRE-ACTORS training, we used two sets of seed lines. The first were a wide selection of paired lines that are particularly suited to the exercise. Here are some examples:

A: I have been searching for the stream all night.

B: It is the other way.

A: Right, we'll indulge him. Let's start.

B: Just a moment. I'll bring some of them.

A: He forgot, even his language.

B: It's as if nothing happened.

A: Went that way. To church.

B: Right. Sunday.

The participants work in pairs (a group of three can also work, but is more complicated). They take the two seed lines and write a six-line play that includes them - so they write four further lines. The point is to "disguise" the seed lines, so that others won't spot the initial stimulus. The seed lines can come anywhere in the scene, but they must stay together - you can't put another line in between. This is really useful when the two lines are apparently unrelated: it gets people thinking about the open nature of good, succinct theatrical dialogue.

For multilingual groups, the seed lines (or just one of them) can be translated into the participant's own language. It's obviously important that the partners can speak the same language as each other - but they do not have to make a piece that can be literally understood by everyone in the room. In the

CRE-ACTORS training, there were some really strong pieces that communicated even though the six lines were in languages other than English.

The scenes are presented to the group, who have to guess which were the seed lines. Translation can be useful for this, but it's best not to do it immediately. Getting a sense of the scene in the language in which it was made is more useful.

The second set of seed lines we used in the CRE-ACTORS training were taken specifically from Irish plays, and dealt with some of the key issues arising across the project, particularly in relation to land, occupation and identity. Here are some examples:

A: Couldn't you say that at first without making a song about it?

B: I don't believe there's horses in the stable at all.

A: Men like you, says I to myself, is getting scarce nowadays.

B: I wasn't going to let myself be maligned by a chancer.

A: Seven years. That's all it's been. Some seven years.

B: You've no notion of what it was all about, have you?

A: Trading, buying and selling. What I'm so good at.

B: God. The years I've spent wondering what you'd hit me with next....

A: I'm the one who lives here, if you recall. I'm going nowhere, I've only just got home.

B: We're not talking personal issues, not any longer. This right here is Nazi [name of place⁴] now, and it's us playing the Jews.

The texts that are created in this way can often be very rich and suggestive. It's often possible to combine two scenes into one. Here's a piece which was created by putting together two pieces written by Hanna and Kunle, and cutting two lines (as it happened, the seed lines) from the second one:

A - Pablo?

B - Went that way. To Church.

A - Right. Sunday.

B - You ready?

A - Are you sure you know what to do?

B - Be careful.

A - Will you try to get them to talk?

⁴ Note that the last example slightly breaks the rule about specific reference to place. In the original (Stewart Parker's "Pentecost") the reference is to Belfast - but the participants can add any place name here.

B - When do you think?

A - This is doing my head in!

B - I have no more ideas.

Translations

Day 3 of the CRE-ACTORS training ended with a visit to the Abbey Theatre to see a production of "Translations" by Brian Friel. The production was discussed by the participants the following morning.

Day 4

Non-Verbal Warm-Up

The group is in a circle.

This warm-up has been developed through Border Crossings' work with young people and women's groups from refugee backgrounds. Many of the vulnerable people we work with are not used to theatre or group work, and there is often no common language. It is good practice to use as little language as possible in explaining exercises, so as not to overwhelm the participants. It encourages a group to listen and respond to each other through nonverbal communication. It is a useful way to develop acting and interacting with others. It has also proved very effective with deaf groups.

- 1) The facilitator starts by smiling at the person next to them, and then encourages that person to pass the smile to the next person. So the smile is passed all around the circle and back to the facilitator. They receive the smile from the last person, but then change the emotion. It's helpful that they contrast. The interaction should get longer and have more of a dialogic feel as the task progresses. Example of emotions and ideas to pass include:
 - Anger
 - Sadness
 - Excitement
 - Flirting
 - Needing help
 - Having a secret to tell.
- 2) The facilitator takes a piece of imaginary chewing gum out of their pocket and chews it, plays with it and passes it on around the circle.
- 3) The facilitator takes a deep breath and passes it to someone across the circle. They encourage the person to take the breath in and pass to someone else. Depending on the experience of the group the facilitator might demonstrate different ways to do this. The breath could be shot across the circle- which would involve the receiver to react strongly as if hit by a bit gust of air - or lovingly blown and received. The group is encouraged to experiment and get physical.

The more experienced the group, the less the facilitator needs to do. It is helpful for all exercises if a more experienced or confident member of the group is the second person in the circle.

Working with Space and Place: A Further Development

Many of the vulnerable people we work with do not always feel welcome, or feel like they belong. They can feel out of place in a setting they do not know. Dramatically potent conflict and tension can be created through using space and place to develop how characters behave and so to tell stories.

The facilitator asked the CRE-ACTORS group to get into 3s (if numbers don't work out exactly have a 4 rather than a group of 2). Each group was asked to select one of the images of place or space that the group had sent in at the end of day 2.

The facilitator asked them to think about how places can feel different at certain times of a day; e.g. a school at midnight. There are places where we are not supposed to be or go into, and places we are not welcome in. We behave differently in spaces at different times of the day. For example, a beach feels very different on a sunny morning than at 2am. How light or dark a space is, the time of year or who is occupying it can make us feel and behave very differently.

The groups were asked to create a scene that used the place at a time of day when the characters would not usually occupy it or when they would not be welcome or shouldn't be there.

Working with Difference

This is another very useful activity to do when engaging with community groups, and we had hoped to do it earlier in the week so as to take advantage of the Tallaght participants' presence. However, it also works very well with a diverse group of professionals.

The group divides into pairs. It's important that partners should be able to talk to one another, but it's best to avoid people you know well if possible (so for CRE-ACTORS, we made sure everyone's partner was from a different organisation).

Each person tells their partner a personal story about a time when they, in some way or another, felt "different" or were made to feel "different". It's important to emphasise that nobody but your partner will hear this personal story, and to give people a sense of having to care for the personal story that is told to them. This part of the practice can be done quite quickly - detail is less useful than overarching narrative and emotional content.

The full group re-assembles, with the chair facing them again. Each person in turn tells the full group the story that they have HEARD - **BUT** they tell it as if it were their own. This can involve huge changes to the narrative - and that's the point. So a story about a woman may have been told to a man, and he must now tell it back to the group in a way that makes it credible and meaningful that it could have happened to him.

The stories are told in whatever language is most comfortable for the teller - translation is used throughout.

The facilitator should point out the challenges inherent in the exercise:

- What happens when you retell the story in the first person?
- What choices do you make when there is no easy transposition?

Participants then divide into groups of three or four, avoiding working with the person whose story they told, and mixing up the national and linguistic groupings. Each group chooses a story which particularly struck them, but which is not one they told to the group, or one which originated with them. They create a piece of theatre which tells all or part of that chosen story. As with the previous stage of the process, they should make the story credibly their own.

The pieces are performed back to the group as a whole and discussed.

Day 5

Warm-Up - working through the “other”

- a) The facilitator asks the group to walk around the space in “neutral”, standing tall and walking at a medium pace.
 - 1) As they walk, they are asked to observe someone else. Look at how they walk, any specific mannerisms etc.
 - 2) Copy how that person walks
 - 3) Exaggerate it by 10 %
 - 4) Exaggerate it by 50 %
 - 5) Exaggerate it by 100 %
 - 6) Repeat the exercise again observing a different person.

The whole group will end up doing the same walk together as everyone is copying someone who is copying someone else etc.

- b) The Group is asked to walk in neutral again. The facilitator asks them to find another person to observe. They are asked to get as close to them as possible without running, and without touching them.
- c) The Group is asked to walk in neutral again. The facilitator asks them to find another person. They are asked to get as far away from them as possible without running
- d) The Group asked to walk in neutral again. The facilitator asks them to find two people to observe. They are asked to get as far away from one of them as possible, and as near to the other as possible without running, and without touching anyone.

Structure and Consolidation

This is a technique we’ve developed to help turn the material generated through devising tasks into something more like a play. It’s great to do on the last day of a week-long training, because it brings together a lot of what’s been covered, and gives people a strong sense of achievement.

Participants are divided into groups of five or six. The facilitator should be very careful about how the groups are made up - it’s not a good idea just to let people drift into a blob. In multilingual groups, you have to take care that everyone can participate in discussion - so if there are people who don’t speak the main language of the project, make sure there is somebody with them who can translate. Be careful also to ensure that each group includes some more experienced and some less experienced people. Mix up the national teams. If there are people who have worked very well together during the week, try to put them in the same group. If there are dramaturgs or writers, distribute them across the groups so that those skills aren’t all concentrated in one team.

Each group has a pile of Post-It notes. Everyone thinks back across the week’s work, and writes down the pieces of theatre created that have made a particular impression on them. It doesn’t have to be work you have made yourself, or even work made by people in your group. Just things that you liked or admired.

This might be complete “pieces” - like the six-line pieces made in response to seed lines - but it could also be specific moments, for example something seen during the place and space exercise with projected imagery. Use on Post-It to write down each thing you liked.

At the end of a rich week, this process tends to involve a lot of Post-It notes....

Discuss the notes among the group. Take particular note of work that several people have chosen. If there are any “lines of thought” that seem to run through the group’s choices, point those out and discuss them.

As a group, sift through the materials and decide which elements are most resonant with you as a team.

Next, work with the Post-It notes to create a possible structure for a play. Think about an order in which the different moments could come in order to tell a “story” (in the widest sense of the term). Don’t look for consistency of theatrical form - diversity is at the heart of this process. You can move the Post-Its up and down the emerging storyline and see what emerges. You may find that you need something you had previously discarded to bridge a gap, or (just possibly) that you need to write something new.

Look for through-lines. It may be, for example, that the character Dominique played in one scene could also be the character that Pauline played in another. Don’t feel you have to explain every detail - audiences are good at working out what may have happened in between two scenes involving the same person.

Once you have created your structure - rehearse the play and perform it back to the group as a whole.

In the CRE-ACTORS training week this process led to an extraordinary set of very different pieces, drawing off a wide range of styles and forms. Some were comic, some were definitely not - but all of them enabled participants to see their work being developed, re-purposed and structured towards a possible performance.

Evaluating within the Third Space framework

The key questions generated by our academic partner, the University of Cukurova, form the basis for this evaluation.

Distance/proximity

- What kind of a space was used?

An airy, open room in a shared community facility, in a very diverse area of South Dublin. A number of people live in the building, many of whom are disabled or vulnerable in other ways.

- Can you define the space as a social space?

Yes. We not only used the hall for work, but also took breaks and meals in the shared community canteen. The canteen and outdoor spaces were employed for breakout work.

- Can we say “the space is neutral” or can we talk about the neutrality of the network?

The space is not neutral: it is deeply coloured by the community who use it.

- Is it open to anybody, easy to get, inclusive etc.?

Yes.

- What are the physical components of the space?

The space is open, flexible and fully accessible.

Participation

- Who is included? And who is not?

Our work included theatre professionals from a range of countries, and community members from a broad range of backgrounds, both migrants and native Irish with a range of different heritages.

- Can you reflect on power structures? Are they diminished?

The approach used was one of facilitation rather than instruction or direction, with participants continuously encouraged to generate their own creative outputs. Facilitation was shared between two leaders, one female and one male. Both were white people, which could be considered to reflect broader political power structures, but the self-reflexive nature of the activity deliberately highlighted this, so as to enable wider consideration of such issues.

- What is the level of involvement of participants?

All participants who were present on each day participated fully in activity. There was no division of participants: professional theatre-makers worked closely with community participants.

- Did every participant attend to all components of the activity?

Yes, with the proviso that some community participants were not able to be present every day.

- Please describe the decision-making process on the space.

The facilitators outlined the exercises to participants, who were then jointly responsible for the creative response.

Interactions

- Do activities include all participants?

Yes.

- Can we talk about a multimediatized environment?

Yes. The work blended live and digital elements, with music and images being used as stimuli as well as language.

Reflexivity

- Is there a defined feedback activity?

All participants submitted a detailed questionnaire generating quantitative and qualitative data. Professional participants also submitted a written report. On the last afternoon, the dramaturgical partners facilitated an open evaluation session.

- Are the activity outcomes defined at the beginning?

No.

- What are the activity outcomes?

Short performances. New skills. Political and cultural thinking, Creative ideas. A sense of being valued. Respect for the "Other".

- How do you evaluate the impact of the activity?

Ongoing discussions with participants and partners about the way they have responded to the work and the use they have made of what they learnt.

A response to the workshop

This response was written by workshop participant Micaela Casalboni, Joint Artistic Director of Teatro dell'Argine (Italy). Her organisation is an experienced exponent of Third Space methodologies in relation to theatre and community engagement practice.

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The week in Dublin was alternatively centred on and mixed theatre and politics, practices and reflections-in-practice, exercises and games apt to potentially involve anybody in the discussion and in the action, and complex structures for collective creation in intercultural contexts.

We started every session with playful and very varied theatre exercises that may represent both a wonderful starting point for a group of theatre beginners and a great warm-up and training for professionals: exercises on rhythm and relationship, on imagination and focus, exercises that run without words or are based on exchanges of stories and thoughts in couples... All these tools can well be used, with only a little translation and mediation, while working in intercultural contexts with people who don't share the same language or theatre experience. I think of adopting them for example in those groups including people with a migration or refugee background who have just arrived to Italy, and with whom we are working at the moment.

Next to these ones, we were offered practices and structures for creation (both in playwriting and in direction) that are at the same time very strong politically and very elegant theatrically:

- Sharing and experiencing pictures: each of us has brought and is asked to share 3 pictures with another person. One is linked to our theatre work and two mean "intercultural" to us. Each one in the couple chooses one picture belonging to the other, then s/he chooses another person, and try to make her/him "experience" the chosen picture while blinded, without using words, but all of the other senses plus space. After that, the blinded person tells everybody what s/he has "seen" or experienced while the original picture is projected behind her/him.
- Collective image theatre: 4 groups of 4-5 people have to create 3 group images titled Host, Hostile, Hospital, and have to do that collectively. Each person is a part of the picture, but, in turn, each one is the director, watching from outside and adding/correcting the image. This goes on as much as needed until a final image is found on which all agree.
- Understanding-Misunderstanding 1: building a scene with actors/characters who don't (or don't all) speak the same language and play on understanding and misunderstanding.
- Understanding-Misunderstanding 2: in groups of 3, 2 speak the same language, the 3rd doesn't. This time it's forbidden to use translation on stage and there's only time to think of a situation, not to build the entire scene, that will be improvised.
- Place and Space: using pictures of spaces and places that the participants have taken around, interact with them as they are projected on the wall, and interact with other participants in the same space.
- Writing a scene starting from 2 lines: we are given 2 lines; we have to invent a scene adding other 4 lines. We cannot separate the 2 given lines, we have to possibly write in the same style because the others have then to guess which were the seed lines. The structure has different possible developments.
- Exchanging personal stories: in couples, we share our personal story of feeling "different". Then we retell all the others the story of our partner, keeping the deep sense of it but adapting it to ourselves so that it is credible to others as of our own.

This second group of practices is also of extreme interest for me, as a practitioner working since many years in intercultural contexts, and I will for sure make use of many of them, too, especially those dealing with the use of images and the mixture of languages. Many of them were new discoveries, and this is also very exciting after 30 years of theatre practice!

What makes these ones different from the exercises of the first group, is their multilayered structure and deep meaning, that for sure requires more mediation when working, for example, with professionals coming, as myself, from a different theatrical and cultural background, but especially with people having no, or little experience in theatre, and with people who don't share the same language or are less educated or illiterate. They also require more focus and a longer time for building the final creation, a play or a performance, of course.

So, in the end, it would be so interesting to me now, to go on and see how BC works using these structures with professional theatre-makers in the longer and deeper process of rehearsals: to see how these structures are seeded, how they grow and build up things, how things built are then kept or thrown away in order to build and rebuild different things and so on, in the marvellous, continuous and unique circle of devised theatre creation.

To conclude with the Dublin week, two special highlights and one note.

First highlight: having the possibility to work with members from different communities in and around Tallaght Community Arts, was wonderful, and inspiring... and it was fun, which is not something less important in the learning process! We were welcoming them into our project group, they were welcoming us into their whole world, and the exchange was so fruitful to me, in terms of new perspectives and languages acquired, and of competences in the room.

Second highlight: the intense, thought-provoking, emotional, and so interesting encounter with Paula Fetridge from Kabosh Theatre Company. It was meeting "Theatre on the Border", and it was at the same time physical, symbolic, political, human, inspiring. So necessary, especially in these times.

One note: the performance 'Translations' by Brian Friel at the Abbey Theatre. The evening at the National Theatre of Ireland was planned in advance, and we all – as not being English mother tongue – had the opportunity to read the script in advance in our own language. Watching the performance was an interesting exercise of what Bertolt Brecht would call *Verfremdungseffekt* ("estrangement effect"): contents and stories that are so strong, harsh, tough, and so important for the whole history of a people, had been somehow "domesticated" at a point that they had completely lost their ancestral strength. Some of the Irish in the Cre-Actors group were disappointed and even angry with what they felt as a betrayal of the original meaning of the play. This also demonstrates the power and potential of theatre: it can be an amplifier of meanings or something that is simply ornamental. Watching this in a huge theatre institution, for most audience could mean receiving this as the truth. Up to us theatre-makers to really serve the deep meanings and have an impact.