

T.I.P. in Cardiff – a week of magic

Theatre as inclusive practice is an Erasmus+ project conceived as an attempt of several European organizations to make a difference in young people's chances and opportunities for inclusion through the use of different theatrical methods.

When we developed the project we had an idea of which these methods would be (verbatim, devised, theatre of the oppressed, participatory theatre, sensory labyrinth theatre), but even in our bravest dreams we couldn't have imagined the impact, which T.I.P. would have on the young people involved.

The path we have taken so far, involved us working with our young people in our own countries, using the method we are experts in and eventually adding the methods of the other partners, as those have been explained and exemplified within detailed training planners.

The work locally involved the young people in both online and physical interactions, depending on the possibilities and limitations each partner had been facing.

We had numerous online meetings for our team, but also an online meeting, a preparation for the Cardiff event in August 2022, which had young participants from all partner regions involved in a day of sharing of different drama exercises and games.

As a peach tree we survived a winter of covid, blossomed during a spring of buzzing local activities and ripened during a summer of togetherness.

Despite all the hardships and visa problems, believe us we've had quite a few (those wounds are not healing any time soon), we managed to bring our young participants and trainers together in Cardiff, Wales during 19-25 August 2022. The University of South Wales (USW) had kindly provided us with their rooms and theatre hall and hosted our activities as courteously as possible. We responded with gratitude and by gifting the University audience a worthy theatre play.

The first 2 days the experts from the partner organizations worked with the young people, delivering theatre and inclusion workshops within mixed international groups. After that the present young trainers took over and together with the young participants, in a peer-to-peer fashion created the "You can't sit with us!" theatre play within 2 days and a half.

On the last day of our get together in Cardiff, the young people performed “You can’t sit with us!” before an enchanted audience in the USW theatre hall. The play consisted of an opening (in full group), three main scenes – one for each group of young people formed – with transitions between the scenes that had been masterfully developed in order for the organic flow of the play to be preserved – and a full group closure. The play was an emanation of our understanding of what exclusion and inclusion are and how we can guarantee inclusion via theatre. We had verbal explanations of what was happening on stage.

We used a lot of gestures and body movements. We had the topics of exclusion and inclusion infiltrating the entire duration of the play. We had personal stories, which make the greatest impact and a sustained long-term difference. We took care of each other on stage and much more. The feedback provided by the audience came as proof of how profound and effective the young people’s work had been and how deeply it had touched and transformed those present in the hall of the USW Atrium. Here some of the comments shared:

“A wonderfully warm sense of togetherness and inclusion...”

“We loved it! Very touching and moving message from each and every one of you. Keep up the amazing inclusive journey of the arts.”

“Completely eye-opening! Absolutely outstanding! You all completely moved me. Thank you for sharing your experiences and stories with us all. I am truly and forever grateful.”

“Magic! Crying inside and out, celebrating community that you’ve created for all of us. We are strong together and can overcome anything!”

“A reminder of the importance of hearing people speak for themselves and use their own words. And it was beautiful to see the care the group showed for each other on stage.”

After the play was over and most of the audience gone (because some lingered in the theatre hall, still under the influence of the drama message), the young people sat in a circle on stage for a group sharing. The Cardiff week had created a network of friendships, openness and protected vulnerability, which all cherished deeply. There were tears of joy and relief from the realization that we are not alone and will never be alone as long as people like the ones in this lot are around. There was gratitude and there was an expressed desire for more activities of the same kind.

Most of us left Cardiff on the day following the day of the performance. The few locals stayed. Wherever we go to though, we remain connected

as particles of a giant constellation of inclusion and unity. The red thread can stretch to infinity!

p.s. Curious enough? Watch the whole show [here](#) and follow the YouTube channel Theatre Inclusive Practice @theatreinclusivepractice for more videos in the nearest future..





