

# ART FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

## Empowering young people at risk through engagement with the performing arts

Art for Social Change is a programme of the European Cultural Foundation, in partnership with the network of Soros Foundations. It introduces involvement with the performing arts as a way in which young people at risk can explore their lives and environment and build their self-esteem. It does this through two regional programmes: Art in Action in the Baltic States and Poland, and Play Against Violence in South-Eastern Europe.

For many young people living through the current turmoil of these two regions the value of this involvement lies not so much in developing their role as spectator but in offering them possibilities to create their own work. The use of drama and theatre, in both formal and informal settings, can provide young people, who often face overwhelming challenges in their lives, with a safe context in which to play out their own hopes and fears. It can be a fundamental tool in beginning to build their capacities, give them a voice and involving them more actively in the process of change.

What we are speaking of here is not just the creation of a piece of theatre – theatre that is director led and in which the young people are “merely players”. “Art for Social Change” is concerned giving young people access to the process. A process that can help provide them not with only basic life skills, such as the ability to listen to others, to work co-operatively and to communicate their ideas, but also help them to understand their own and other cultures.

Recent experience has shown that for transformation to be positive and permanent, it must also be social and educational. What Art for Social Change tries to offer is a space in which young people can use theatre and drama to project themselves into imagined worlds – worlds whose rules can be changed, where new possibilities can appear, where social, political and personal aspirations can be tested out. Openness, tolerance and mutual understanding are at the root of what theatre and the performing arts can offer: they are also at the root of social change.

The role of the artist within Art for Social Change is crucial. Their responsibility is not to focus on their own creative aspirations but to work through their art to create a safe and collaborative space for the young people in the programme. A place where the apprehension and enthusiasm of these young people can be met half way by the inspiration and skill of the artist. Where apprehension can be transformed into inspiration, enthusiasm assimilated into skill and the empty space filled with the action of creative collaboration.

# SHELTERING AND SHARING

## THE ROLE OF THE ARTIST IN THEATRE WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE



### BELGRADE

In Autumn 2000, under the umbrella of BITEF, a group of theatre makers, and other performing artists working with young people, came together in Belgrade. The purpose of the meeting was threefold:

- To evaluate the work that had already taken place within the framework of the Art for Social Change programme
- To use that evaluation to develop a shared vocabulary for work in the future
- To explore the possibility of devising a handbook or manual that could act as a guide to other individuals and organisations wishing to work in this field.

The BITEF Festival offered a fitting background for such a meeting. If Art for Social Change can be considered to be about two things – “Art” and “Social Change” then Belgrade in that period provided us with both. In the theatre buildings themselves and outside on the streets, “Art” was being created whilst “Social Change” was taking place, the two were inextricably linked.

What follows is:

- an attempt to recapture the breadth and depth of the debate that took place within that context:
- a synthesis of the experiences that have informed the work of those artists who have already been part of the programme.
- some models of effective practice

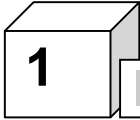
*and*

- some of the mistakes that have been made and learnt from.

We hope that it might provide other artists, teachers, ngos, funders and policy makers with a set of building blocks from which they can go on to construct their own programmes.

Because Art for Social Change is essentially about artistic process and this manual is intended to serve as a practical introduction for those embarking on a similar process we have tried to include, where possible, examples of the practical exercises that created the impetus for each stage of these discussions.

Art for Social Change is an on-going process. This evaluation was not an ending but the beginning of a new sharing.



## THE YOUNG PEOPLE

Art for Social Change is about giving a voice to young people at risk. Young people who are confronted not only by physical violence but all those who have been affected by the detrimental effects of both rapid social transition and conflict situations.

It is important therefore that there is a policy of **open access** to all the projects that come under its umbrella: that all the young people who take part are equally valued. Although some form of performance or sharing may well take place at the end of a project the focus of the programme will always be on the process: a process that the artist and the young people go through together. There are no hidden “selection criteria”, no issues of “ability”, no holding of “auditions” to identify the “gifted and talented”. Everyone who wants to take part in the work is to be welcomed.

This does not mean that some projects will/do not target certain vulnerable groups, such as those living in orphanages or refugee camps. It does mean that, once we have decided to work with a particular group, we will never exclude anyone on the basis of their “artistic promise” or “creative skills”.

What is important about our role as artists, working with young people within this programme, is that we can offer them a space that is very different from that which they may encounter outside.

A space where they are not measured against already existing criteria. But an “empty space” where all their contributions are equally respected and valued.

When we speak of “creating the space” for this work we are thinking not only of a physical space but also of an environment and an ethos.

But all of the artists involved in this seminar, recognised that, once they had identified the group of young people that they would be working with, their next concern was always with the space.

- **Where is the work going to take place?**
- **Will the young people come into our space or will we go to theirs?**

If we, as artists, can offer young people access to our own theatre building or arts centre this may well be the ideal solution. The young people are able to get an immediate sense of the kind of work they will be involved with. It might also help them to feel more confident about entering such places.

Unfortunately, it is rare that we find ourselves in this position. Most of the time we are lucky to get access to an empty school classroom, the orphanage dining hall or the detention centre’s gymnasium.

But whatever kind of space we find ourselves working in the objectives remain the same.

- **How can we turn it into the kind of space that the young people will want to be in?**
- **How can we make it a safe space?**
- **How can we make it a space where collaborative and creative work is able to happen?**

## THE EMPTY SPACE

*“I can take an empty space and call it a bare stage” Peter Brook.*

Since Peter Brook wrote these words, “The Empty Space” has been the metaphor for any place where creativity happens. The word **space** itself suggests - freedom, liberty, emptiness and a lack of borders. The reality will often be very different.

It can simply be that we are bound by constraints of time or place. E.g.: -

- the young people are at school and doing examinations and can only come together for a few hours each week.
- or
- the only room available holds a maximum of fifteen to sixteen people comfortably and we have thirty-four young people who want to take part in the project

It will almost always be that the space in which we find ourselves is cluttered with the leftovers of its other life: desks, chairs, dining room tables.

So how do we begin to turn it into the kind of place that enables the creative work to happen? We have two possibilities. Change it ourselves before the young people arrive - or make owning the space one of the first activities that we undertake in partnership with them.

**Exercise 1: Owning The Space.**

***The group divides into smaller groups of four or five.***

***Each of them decides on two or three things they would like to change to improve the space in which they are working. It might be as simple as moving a row of chairs or opening/closing a curtain.***

***They carry out these changes in turn. If one group's changes contradict another's they must negotiate between them how to move forward.***

***The group discusses the final arrangement that they have come to and what compromises may have to have been made.***

On the face of it this is a simple first exercise. But even for a group of adult theatre practitioners such as those involved in the Belgrade seminar it was not a straightforward process. Everyone's views were different. Some were quite clear about the need for "emptiness" as a first step to creativity  
*"....if we are entering a space, thinking that we want to create something unique between ourselves, then I think we want an empty space. I want to look at you, I don't want to look at your bags, your shoes etc. So in the beginning of the work, I always insist on creating an empty space, visually uncluttered, and so on. But there are other kinds of theatre that work very much with the space as it is. I work with empty space, but I think it depends on what we want to achieve."* Jadranka Andjelic

But others felt differently:

*"...when I worked in schools they wanted preparation of the space and immediately sent all the children to the edge of the space, so the tables go to the sides, they sit down and that is the space. But that is a whole different thing to what I am doing now. Which is accepting that the space is the space, like it is and they create the space they want to create, how they feel like on that day....so there is no rule or reaction at the beginning, there is just the space"* Femke Janssen

As with any group of young people, compromises had to be made. It took time before everyone was able to agree that.

*"This space is ours because we arranged it. Now it is our place."* Tsvete Yaneva

For many of the young people we may be working with, answering the challenge to make such decisions about their environment could well be one of their first steps towards independence. It may be the first time that anyone

has consulted them about anything. Using an opening task such as this can help us to make clear to them that what we are offering them is a different way of working: a process through which all their contributions are equally valued.

### **Bodies in space**

But whatever we decide to move or change, once we and the young people are inside the empty space it quickly becomes something else. As Peter Brook goes on to explain:

*“A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and that is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged”.*

Like Brook’s walking man we are already in the performance. We, with the young people, are already positioning ourselves in that space. And where we sit, where we stand, where we place ourselves in relation to the group matters.

*“You have to be aware that where-ever you put yourself in the space, affects every other person in the room. Because you are in a group of people. And this kind of group awareness on top of this freedom is a complicated dynamic”.* **Henrietta Seebohm**

If we, as artists, place ourselves apart from the young people, or choose to sit on a chair while they are seated on the floor they soon learn to read the signs.

*“...this awareness is somehow always popping up during the process of theatre making. This awareness of space and the people that are in the same space”.* **Nan van Houte**

By working together to create the space we initiate that process of negotiation and collaboration that forms the basis of a shared performance or piece of art.

There are some groups of young people for whom even this first moment of openness and freedom will present difficulties. In this case we may feel it important to adjust our plans.

*“ We are working with orphans or other children from the poorest backgrounds and it is impossible to begin our work with such preparing of the space. If they have to start to their tables and chairs it isn’t interesting for them at all. First we must create something interesting for these children and after that we can make a beautiful place...”* **Tsvete Yaneva**

What matters is that we are able to create a place where the young people want to come; a space where they can work creatively and enjoy a sense of freedom.

It is for this reason that this arrangement of the space will often lead us to standing or sitting together in a circle – where the artist/facilitator is standing or sitting as part of the group. It is a shape that makes a statement about our

relationship, as artist/facilitator to the group and of the members of the group to each other. We are not placing ourselves apart, as the traditional theatre director or teacher may do, as one who already knows the answers, but as a fellow seeker.

Sitting or standing in a circle also enables everyone to see and be seen, to hear and be heard, to be both performer and audience at the same time.

So that, even before we begin the activities that we have chosen to do with the young people, allowing them to take part in the process of setting up the space can form one of the first building blocks of our shared learning.

### 3

## ENTERING THE SPACE

Having created the space both we must then find a way for ourselves and the young people to enter this space together.

Most workshops, like most rehearsal processes, begin in the same way; with a physical “warm up” or a game. It may be as simple as one of the games that we used to open our working session in Belgrade.

### **Exercise 2. Who’s here? A name game.**

**One person in the circle begins introducing themselves by telling the others their name, and accompanying this with an action. Each time the group repeat the rhyme.**

**“Names, names, we’ve all got names, I’ll tell you mine and you’ll do the same – (NAME.)”**

**e.g. Peter. Peter jumps in air with arms outstretched and calls out his name – Peter**

**Group jump in air with arms outstretched and repeat his name - Peter – and so on until everyone knows everyone else’s name.**

Why do we so often begin our work by playing games? Even with a group of adult theatre practitioners?

We need do little more than observe any group, of adults or young people, as they enter a new space. They cling to the edges, stand in small clusters, hover near the door. Once we have created the space for the young people we want them to feel comfortable in it: be able to occupy it physically, to “take up the space”. These kinds of games can help them to do this. By moving through the space together, by laughing, by engaging in physical activity we can begin to break down some of the barriers, release tension and develop a shared energy. This can provide a safe framework in which to open our dialogue.

“Warm up” games can be a means of taking the group’s “temperature”, their willingness to engage and to work with each other. They can also serve another purpose. Most games involve us entering a “contract” – we have to be willing to go along with the “rules” for them to work successfully and for every participant to have equal enjoyment. In this way they can also be a very good way of allowing the young people to realise, that whilst what we, as artists, are offering them is freedom, it is not a freedom that comes entirely without responsibility. In order for creative work to happen in theatre individual need will almost always have to be balanced with a respect for the contributions of others.

*“because if you give freedom to young people, sometimes they can be extremely individualistic and not meeting each other at all. You have to establish a certain kind of way of creating the awareness of the group that is*

*the next step. It starts from freedom and moves towards awareness of the group” Igor.Dobricic*

With any group of young people, especially with those lives have already been beset by overwhelming challenges, there may be those for whom even this first step is difficult. There may well be some young people for whom we must accept that just entering the space is enough to begin with.

*“somebody in the group decided that they didn’t want to do anything. And they sat in the space for a long time, for weeks maybe, doing nothing, and nobody really paid much attention. The spirit of the group was that he or she had the right to do whatever he or she likes. If he or she wants to sit in the corner, behind everyone else, and do nothing but doesn’t choose to go away, nobody wanted to make a problem out of it. Because if they decided to stay and not to run away, that is more than enough, with some young people” Igor Dobricic*

What we may have to learn to do is to create an atmosphere where the rest of the group are able to feel comfortable with such a situation.

*It is a matter of respect between the individual and the group. If the group doesn’t respect an individual then that individual will not respect the group. It’s a very touchy balance. Suncica Milosavljevic*

Finding this balance between the needs of the individual and the needs of the group is important. It is for this reason that many artist/facilitators do feel that it is important to agree upon some shared “rules” right from the beginning. Especially if we want to ensure that the time we and the young people spend together is equally productive for everyone.

*“I think we can make some rules within the group at the beginning of the work. Those rules can be changed, they are not once and for all. And they can change depending on the purpose of our work. If we need to see each other, then we sit in a circle. I always try to make a compromise between discipline and freedom. Because total freedom becomes chaos and anarchy and that is OK, but you can’t produce anything from that. So if we have a purpose to make theatre, to make anything, we have to collaborate. This is a very concrete task. So we make rules according to our objective and if we change objective of the work, then we change rules. The group together with me.” Slobodan Bestic*

It is a matter of working with each new group to come to a shared agreement. The “rules” may be as straightforward as:

- Not interrupting when anyone else is speaking.
- Making sure that we can all see each other when we’re talking
- No bullying anyone and no intimidation.

Often little else is needed. Usually, if we can allow ourselves to trust the young people we will usually discover that, given the opportunity and the

responsibility, most groups will come up with a workable set of principles. Taking time to find these “rules” together will form a sound basis for the next steps: the collaborative work of making theatre.

Having set up these agreed parameters with the group, it will be easier for us to negotiate our own place within them.

*For me it is very important that the young people can leave the space and come into the space and know that the space has a safety to it. And also that, as a leader, there are moments, when I am almost invisible. So at times, I am in the space, but actually it is the young people who are holding the space. At certain moments I can leave the space. At others I am looking over the space at what is happening. But there is also an awareness of the outside world as well. And what's above? I am always conscious of how the external world is effecting what is going on inside. **Henrietta Seebohm***

**3****OPENING THE COMMUNICATION**

Once we have decided on “how” we are going to work together - we can begin to work with the young people to look at “who” we are. What are the personal qualities that each of us, artist or young person, brings to the space? How do we share those qualities with others?

**\*Exercise 3 – Sharing Ourselves – A Game of Intuition**

**Find a partner that you don’t know already.**

**Sit opposite your partner and, without talking, write down your answers to the following questions. The group might want to agree their own.**

**What kind of holiday does this person enjoy?**

**What is their favourite food?**

**What is their hobby?**

**What historical figure do they admire?**

**What are their hopes for the future?**

**Share their answers.**

**Share some of their most interesting findings with the group.**

It is an important “rule” of this game that there are no right or wrong answers. It doesn’t matter whether we guess the correct answer or not. What matters is the act of communication that happens between partners once they begin to share their answers, the dialogue that takes place between them. If someone says, “I thought you liked Chinese food” and their partner responds “No. I hate Chinese food” – is of no relevance. The fun is in having the conversation: in talking and listening, understanding and checking, accepting and empathising.

This can be an important discovery for young people whose lives outside this space are frequently divided into what is “right” and what is “wrong”.

*“These kids, That I work with, have maybe four spaces in their life in a day: school, home, in the theatre and the coffee break. When they are home they are very pushed by the parents, when they are at school they are very pushed by the teachers, when they are in the theatre, they are coming to make something for themselves, but they have some rules that they imagine about the theatre. But when you give them in a coffee break for five minutes, it is their space.... and they become very open in this space... so, if we can bring that space [the coffee break space] to the theatre space.....” Goran Stojanovski*

If bringing the openness of “coffee break” into our creative space is something we want to aim for, then it is important that we develop strategies to create the kind of atmosphere in which it can happen.

In order to be able to help us do this successfully we may have to learn to work more closely with our instincts and trust to our intuition. In the same way

that we can encourage the young people to begin to look, listen and pick up signals from each other so we, too, can begin to train ourselves to be more receptive to the needs of the group. Most of us, as artists, will have developed strong instincts about our creative work. We need to draw on these skills to start to find out more about the young people we are working with. To find out who they are, how they might want to work, how they want us to work with them.

When we enter the space we will need to have all our antennae working. In the same way that we would if we were in a rehearsal room, working with other performers. E.g. One day we may go into a group and have a session prepared that asks for a very fast, very energetic response but we immediately sense that the group's energy is low. We will have to learn to know when we need to scrap our carefully made plan and be able to say, "OK that **was** what I had planned for today but now I'm going to have to go with something else." It is about taking the flexibility and creativity that we would expect to use in our own work into the process that happens with the young people. It is about setting up a structure and then being prepared to tear it down.

Retaining this sense of spontaneity and flexibility can be daunting for many artists when they begin working with young people. It always feels safer to stick to what we have planned. But if what we are offering the young people is ourselves as artists, not pedagogues or teachers, then this is what should inform our work with them. We have to build up a sense of mutual belief and respect. By allowing ourselves, and the group, time to really listen to each other and be aware of what is being offered then we can begin to make our time together a really creative shared experience. We can establish trust.

## 4

### ESTABLISHING TRUST

Developing mutual respect and learning how to trust both themselves and each other can be a difficult step for many of the young people we will be working with. Trust games and exercises can be a start.

#### **Exercise 4. Establishing Trust - Blind cars.**

**The group divides into pairs.**

**One is "A". The other is "B".**

**"A" is a very precious vintage car. "B" is the driver.**

**"A" closes her/his eyes. "B" drives them around the room.**

**They don't talk but communicate by touch. In the centre of the back to start, the left shoulder to turn that way, the right to turn that way. Hands on shoulders to stop. "B" must stop "A" from crashing and must make "A" feel totally secure in their hands. As they both get more confident they may begin to speed up. They stop and change places.**

Establishing real trust between the artist and the group and within the group itself is, of course, much more complex than just learning to play a game. But the game can provide a launching pad from which we can begin to explore the issue, a model of behaviour that can be examined with the group in terms of creating a space in which the risk taking that might be necessary for creativity to really happen. It is also a useful model for us to bear in mind when we begin our work with a new group of young people. We are often in the position of the "driver" of the "blind car" and they are "trusting" us to guide them safely along the road.

For this reason it is essential that we have a very clear sense, not necessarily of what we will do in the work but of what we want to achieve through the process. It is important that we think of it not in terms of what we wish to achieve as artists but what we want the young people to get out of it.

In many ways the process of evaluation needs to be part of our thinking right from the beginning. If we establish a clear set of aims and objectives we will be able to be clearer about anticipated outcomes. If we are to establish a real sense of trust between ourselves and the young people, and to deepen the communication that takes place between us we will need to share these aims with the young people. They are the most important part of that final evaluation and they will have already come to us with hopes and expectations of their own.

*"they are entering with all kinds of preconceptions of what's going to happen, what is expected of them" Igor Dobrovic*

Feeling able to include them in our plans is one of the best ways that we can begin to set up that trust. Why should we have one set of objectives that we present in our project proposal and another set of outcomes that we offer the

group? Of course it can sometimes it may be difficult to be totally open and it may not always be appropriate to let the young people know that they have been identified as a group with problems, but:

*“...being honest doesn't necessary mean that everything is understood the moment that you start. If it is about opening a mental space in their lives, it doesn't make any sense if you tell them that you want to “trigger their imagination”.. So sometimes you might say “we are going to make some theatre because it is fun” and of course you will have a hidden agenda but that is something that you can't explain, the only way to do it is through the experience.” Nan van Houte*

There are real dangers in excluding the young people entirely from the process. If we are inviting them to work with us then openness should be one of the first steps in establishing trust. There is little point in us working with a group of young people who think we are training them to be professional actors when the goal of the project is to improve inter-ethnic relations. Endeavouring to develop such honesty will also help us to plan an exit strategy that will prepare the young people to face the future and empower them to make their own decisions about how they will deal with it.

Many of us have had to learn the hard way of the problems that raising young people's expectations can cause:

*“ We need to ask where the limits are of the freedom we offer them. Because when they leave the safe space within the group, they have to cope with reality, which might make them fear more, be more insecure, put them in conflict situations and we cannot do anything about that. We worked in a refugee camp where the kids lived in very bad conditions and during our work, they felt very good, so that they wanted to leave this village and go to Belgrade with us. They wanted to be with us all the time and when the project was finished, we left them. And the question is, if we had done something good or bad?” Slobodan Bestic*

Sometimes when we consider such issues it can be difficult to be sure of the benefits of the work we are doing. And it may be that such problems are inherent in all temporary projects. This is why we owe it to the young people to prepare them as well as we can.

*“ Maybe before a beginning of any project, we must explain to them what the results might be? Tsvete Yaneva*

We have to acknowledge that we will not always be there for them and will not necessarily be able to protect them from the world outside the project.

*“in one case I actually felt that the young people had been abandoned by the people running the project. But as a result of the project, some of the kids started up their own drama group and they are still working now. So, although on one hand they were abandoned, it also gave them a sense of autonomy and they did learn some skills. Two of them then went on to lead the group so*

*that they were their own drama group. So there were different levels operating and the results are different.* **Henrietta Seebohm**

We may also need to make it clear to them that their lives might be changed in some ways by being involved in the project and that we cannot guarantee what the final outcome of that might be.

*“ I met them later and I talked with them because they had some problem with the school, with the teachers because they had changed a lot, their behaviour was changed, they were a lot more free. They are talking and they asked for their rights in school. And I asked them if they are sorry because they are working with us because maybe now they have troubles? But they said; No, no, no, no, they are very grateful because they had no hope to fight for their position in the village, or in the school. They are feeling much more secure.* **Gordana Lebovic**

But we also have to trust that if we have been open with them and have not betrayed the trust we have asked them to put in us that we will have created something on which they can begin to build when the project is completed.

*“There was one woman in the refugee camp who said “if there was one moment when they felt free and they understood that they can be free in some way, it is enough for us.” Maybe that is the highest level of what we can achieve – that they can understand that it can be different in their lives, that sometimes it can be different.”* **Slobodan Bestic**

**\*A note - the issue of “Drama therapy” and “psychodrama”.**

Often, when we speak about setting up this kind of relationship with the young people, where we are open about the kinds of changes we believe may come about through participation in our projects we may be faced with certain issues. If we are using the performing arts as a tool for bringing about social change is what we are doing therefore using drama as a kind of therapy or psychodrama.

Striving to maintain our openness with the young people will help us, and those we are working with, be clear about the particular nature of this work. What we are doing is making theatre together. Both psychodrama and drama therapy require the individual consent of the patient. The young people are not our patients. Of course there is a crossover where the drama exercises used in both these therapeutic treatments will be very similar to those we use to create theatre. But what we are saying to the young people is “You are coming here to make art; to make theatre. At the end of this work we hope you may feel able to communicate better, you might get on better, you might enjoy life more, but what we are offering is a space, a space to use our imaginations, to have fun, to create something together.”

This does not mean that artists involved with the Art for Social Change programmes do not want to empower young people. Give them tools to help them to feel more confident, able to speak out or even to take action to

improve their lives but we are doing this through the shared activity of making art. This is why developing mutual trust is one of the most fundamental of our building blocks.

**The role of the art**

If what we are speaking about is developing trust and openness and the empowerment of young people then why does Art for Social Change make place such a particular focus on the role of the artist and the collaborative making of art? Might it not be more appropriate to look at ways in which to teach young people about civil society? What is the special contribution that art can bring to this work and what is it that artists can offer to young people that is different to what their teachers, social workers or other carers might offer? A game that we might play to get young people to examine their own competences might also enable us to look at the particular skills and qualities that the artist can bring to this work.

**Exercise 5. Fruit bowl**

The group sits round in a circle (on chairs if possible).

One member of the group stands in the middle.

Going round the circle they give everyone the name of one of four fruits: Apple, Banana, Pear, Orange

When the person in the centre calls out one of these fruits everyone who has been given that name must change their seat. They cannot go back to the same place once they have moved. If they call out "Fruit Bowl" everyone must change. The aim of the person in the centre is to take someone else's seat and leave them standing in the middle.

After a few rounds of this the game can finish or it can develop in a series of interesting ways.

- a) the person in the centre asks those people to change seats who share something in common with them, such as "anyone wearing black shoes".
- b) the person in the centre asks those people to change seats who agree that something is true about them that is also true about the person in the centre, such as "anyone who doesn't like getting up in the morning"
- c) the person in the centre asks those people to change seats who agree that something is true about them that is also true about the person in the centre but this time it is something they are good at, such as "anyone who is good at making paella, swimming etc."
- d) the person in the centre asks those people to change seats who agree that something is true about them that is also true about the person in the centre but this time it is something they are good at (possess a skill in) in their work, such as "anyone who is good at helping young people to try new things out". (for young people it may be what they are good at in school, at college or at work)

Even for a group of people used to working in the performing arts it was difficult to “confess” to what we felt were our real skills. The first list to emerge was a rather modest one.

- Enthusiasm
- Making people feel comfortable in the space with us
- Making projects
- Hearing the truth
- Being patient when working with difficult people
- Stimulating talent
- Creating opportunities for others
- Listening to people
- Putting people together
- Synthetic thinking – making one thing from very different materials from other thing
- Creating fun
- Solving problems in creative ways

When we took some more time to explore this list further we began to see that there were other things that were important to add. Such as:

- Imagination
- Intuition
- Ability to generate enthusiasm
- A sense of empathy
- Working for the process and not the result
- Working for the process but having a good result!
- A sense of humour
- Leadership within a shared process
- Encouraging fantasy and imagination
- Talking about the need for art in society and the place of art in the future
- Honesty - finding ways to tell people the truth about their creative work
- Having the courage to admit when you're not right
- Not being afraid of being wrong
- Knowing that it isn't always a case of right or wrong
- Being prepared to work for little money
- Able to cross the barrier that exists between adults and young people
- Able to bring out the best in other individuals

None of these skills referred to the particular creative skills of the individual artist. That we all possessed those skills had, we realised, been taken completely for granted. We recognised that although our “artistic” skills are always crucial to the quality of any creative piece of work, being able to work successfully with young people depends on very much on the artist being able to bring these other qualities to the fore.

*“Apart from art, the most important thing that comes to me is identification and somebody mentioned empathy and sympathy, which is something that they will probably not learn at school and we can build upon this ability.” Suncica Milosavljevic*

What we can offer young people through the collaborative process of making theatre is the opportunity to:

*“investigate the world, human relationships, society and some other questions of life, from their own experience. Slobodan Bestic*

To:

*“give them a little model of survival.. Aare Toika*

a chance to

*“..... take on other roles ..to be able to say, this is what I like, this is what I don't like. I think this is a way to know who I am [and] where I am. Polixena Kostova*

And:

*“give support to the growing of the emotional, intellectual and physical side at the same time, which is not often the case in the society where we live”.*

**Jadranka Andjelic**

But this does not mean that the art form is not important, and that the expertise of the artist within this form is not central to the success of this work. We owe the young people the best of our skills in making stories, in creating other worlds, in offering new and exciting ....

Like all good theatre we should be offering young people the opportunity to experiment with other solutions, other possibilities. To create a bridge between the reality of their own experience and the imagined worlds that they create in their performances.

*“...what is important are these layers of communication. Reality and fiction and the communication between them. To have the possibility to be in reality but also to jump into a fiction and to act in this fiction and find freedom to do something that is not possible in reality....But through acting in this space of freedom, you can empower yourself and if you are living in oppressed reality, you can be empowered through jumping into this fictive world. Ljubica Beljanski Ristic*

This can only be done if we are really prepared to be open to giving the young people the opportunity to contribute to the creative process:

*“ we must give them the opportunity and we must also let them know that we want them to contribute. So they have to be there”. Suncica Milosavljevic*

### **The Enabling Artist**

This is why this work depends, ultimately, as much on what the artist is able to leave outside the room – such as her/his own ego and self-aggrandisement - as it does on the artistic skills that she/he brings in.

## **EXERCISE 6 – COPYING**

**The group divides into groups of three**

**They label themselves A, B and C**

**A stands/sits in what they feel is their usual posture.**

**B copies this as accurately as possible.**

**C assists B in doing this by helping them to get it as accurate as possible- not physically moving them but giving them advice.**

**When both C and B are happy that the copy is as accurate as possible B makes a statement – “if I was to sit/ stand in this position all day I would feel, behave, like this” and states how they think they would be.**

**They then change positions so that each has a turn to experience the A, B or C role.**

**They discuss how and what they felt in each different role.**

One of the most difficult questions that we face as artist working in collaboration with young people can be the complex, and sometimes paradoxical relationship between our role as leader and expert and our need to allow space for the young people to make their own contribution. This exercise may help us to look at ways in which we might both preserve the distance that we need to be able to see what is happening in the group and yet also be within the work and able to empathise with the young people? How does this impact on our role as artist and our role as director?

Once we had taken part in this exercise in our meeting in Belgrade the first thing that we wanted to talk about was the role of the person that we have labelled C. If we were to play a word association game what were that would come into our minds if we were asked to describe this role? In order for the exercise to work most effectively what would we like C to be able to do? The list that we started with was:

Reflect  
Guide  
Compare  
Balance  
Connect  
Clarify  
Help to shape  
Facilitate

For B the actions were

Copy  
Observe  
Show  
Empathise  
Use our intuition  
Understand

Be sharp/clear  
Become aware of the differences between oneself and another  
Not judge

And for A:

Be truthful  
Be honest  
Be clear  
Be open  
Just be

As a model for a relationship between the artist and the young people they are working with it is very different from the one of the traditional director and her/his actors.

*“ most of the time the director just corrects the actor and when the actor doesn't give what he wants, it is because the director is not giving the right information. C is much more of a supporter. “ Rui Frati*

What we discovered through working on this model together was that it could offer the possibility of a new relationship that could develop between the artist and the young people.

There is one person A - who is trying hard just to be. Then there is B – someone who is trying to empathise with them, understand them better, through copying their physicality. But there is also C - some one who is able to step back and say; “Did that work? How can I go back in again and make the relationship between A and B better, clearer?”

Most of the time A is the young people and as the artist/facilitator we are trying to move between B and C. But sometimes A can be ourselves. We can watch ourselves in the same way when we are watching young people. By moving between these three roles. We are looking at allowing ourselves to be A, B and C at different times. Being comfortable with saying, “I had my own ideas about this but I now look at what is being offered here I can understand what the young people may want to say” ....and then finding a way to help them realise this by using our skills as an artist to make it clearer. Helping them to get it across to the audience - bBut by giving support, reflecting on what has been done, making suggestions to clarify the action rather than to impose our own ideas.

*“I noticed one moment when this group was copying each other and Luuk said: “There is something ironic about your eyes. Can you relax your eyebrows and your eyes?” And it was exactly that – that he wasn't saying; “You're doing it wrong you should be like this!” But he was saying; “Can you try and relax your face because this person doesn't have any irony in their eyes.”*

When we are working with young people there are times when we need to challenge, times when we need to arouse, excite or energise the group. There are other times when we need to validate, give confidence, encourage reflection. If we are able to identify which role we are in and which role is needed at each point will become clear.

If we are only ever in A – although we may be being open with the young people we are very much caught up in our own world. We are telling and we are showing. If we are always in the space of the “other” - B - then maybe nothing will ever happen because we are being so sympathetic with the young people, trying so much to empathise with them, that we do not offer them any creative ways of dealing with these emotions. It may be that when we are in C the different possibilities are clearer. But we can be aware that we can move constantly between these three roles. And find ways in which it is going to work best from one moment to the other.

It is this kind of flexibility and openness to the contributions of the young people that Art of Social Change is asking of the artists who work within its programme. To have an honesty in their work and to be able, like all the best actors, to “be in the moment”.

**Exercise 6**

Everyone in the group is asked to make a visual image of the way that they work - using paper, pens, scissors, any other objects that have been provided. They are then asked to place themselves within that image.

What does our way of working look like as a physical model? Is it circular? Is it moving along a straight line? Is it radiating out like spokes of a wheel? Is it shaped a pyramid or more like a column? Are you floating out and in or are you always there at the centre of things?

Although there is a shared philosophy that supports the work in Art for Social Change we acknowledge that every individual artist will work in a very different way. And we hope that each of them is drawing on her/his own strengths. It is almost impossible, and perhaps not even advisable, to attempt to capture on paper the very different practical approaches that each of the artists involved in this seminar takes to their work. All we can try to do is convey:

- some of the shared principles and values that inform and underpin this work
- and
- offer some general guidelines for those wishing to work within the Art for Social Change programme or similar projects.

Of course there are books and theories that we can use to guide us. And we have included a list in the appendix. But, as one of the Yugoslavian experts, Lubica Beljanski-Ristic, makes clear, we will always have to find our own way through the complexities:

*I need theories like food. But I don't use these theories in a way...I think it is about process. Asking a lot of questions. A lot of changes... I want to research things, to discover, to work on things, to create something like an "open system"...a creative process. To use structures - but always drama structures. ...to hook together everything that we are doing - but, never, ever to lose the secret of children. Lubica Beljanski-Ristic*

The paper sculptures, constructions and devices that we made helped to focus our minds.

**MOVING FORWARD**

A number of artists based the objects they had made on the construct of a spring or a coil. This they felt was partly as an image for the kind of energy

and commitment that is required for any artist embarking on this kind of work. But also to suggest the forward movement of the work.

*I think what I am doing is creating a spiral and somehow putting myself in the centre. From there I'm trying to move the young people, to stimulate them, to give them the possibility to move, which is a great thing. And I think I trying to support them at the same time. Moving forward with the energy of a spring or a coil. I don't always know exactly where we are going and I am not sure at all how it will be possible, .but I am ready for when it happens* **Jadranka Andjelic**

For others the hub and the spoke was a more useful metaphor.

*"it is like a bicycle wheel, there is a central device that is the hub and the spokes are separate but they need to be connected and things are able to move round because they are connected. The wheel travels on its own journey and the hub is always at the centre of this movement: I try to work with the differences between people. To connect them."* **Rui Frati**

In both of these models the artist has placed her/himself at the centre of the creative activity but very much connected to the young people. Like the hub of a wheel, or the base of the spring, they are in a position both to support the young people as they make their own journey through the work and to provide the connection between them.

Working with young people is very much about finding ways to connect. More than one sculpture involved manoeuvring objects of different shapes, sizes and colours into new forms. There was an agreement between these artists that one of the central objectives of our work should be to enable young people, not only to value and own their differences, but also see how these differences could make a positive contribution to their understanding of others.

*What I want to give young people is the opportunity to experience - that is to recognise - their differences. But to realise that, out of working with that difference, and embracing it can come something new and different and exciting* **Nan van Houte**

Starting to work together to create a piece of theatre that draws on the richness of diversity can be an important learning point for young people who come from communities where difference is often used as a reason for dividing them.

*When I start to work with young people, I try to use all my skills, my knowledge, my tricks. And I look at each child, from every way. Each child for me is a different organism and I have to look at it very gently and to find a way to open it up and to look what is inside. And after that, I go from one child to another and try to open each of them and each of them has surprises for me and after this I try to show these children to each other. And to say to each child – "Come on ... I want to show you something". And then each*

*children sees “Wow... here is one thing and then another and another and another..”*

Of course it is not only the young people who have to deal with difference. Working with and acknowledging difference may often mean that the artist has to learn to listen carefully to the differences that separate them from the young people. To ensure that they are hearing what it is that the young people would like to say about their lives rather than having the answers ready made for them.

*With all my work with young people – I want to give them everything. But people are different, and everyone has different potential so I try to make something that is comfortable and interesting for all of them. Like the paper shapes I made. The paper shapes represent the young people. If I put them together one way it might be possible to make a castle or a flower, or an animal. If I do it another way it is possible to make soldiers. I don't really like making soldiers but each time I work with young people I try to listen to them, to make something that they want, something special for all of them. Tsvete Yaneva*

Learning to listening to the needs of the young people is central to the ways in which we begin to consider the ways in which we will structure our workshop sessions.

### **TO STRUCTURE OR NOT TO STRUCTURE.**

As we examined the wide array of constructions that we had created it became clear that addressing and dealing with the issue of structure was critical. If what we are concerned with, as artists, is not instructing young people but in creating safe spaces in which they can do their own learning, then the kinds of structures that we set up to support this are vital. Maintaining the equilibrium between chaos and order can be a delicate balancing act. For a majority of artists taking part in the seminar, clarity of structure was exactly what they felt enabled them to work creatively. It was an essential part of their tool-kit for working with young people.

*I see it as a book of secrets. All of them formulas for good facilitating but they are also like secrets because I have to work them out anew each time. Each of the pages has different signs. There is a man – probably because that is whom we are trying to understand. There is a bird, a flower, a fish, a star. There is chaos - because this is a very important part of our work - but there is also structure.*

*I need structure in the end. One of the most important images for me for me is the Tree of Life. Because in the end I hope the work will look something like this. There is a phase when we are gathering material and trying to make something out of it and a phase when we are giving it shape. Then there is nothing because this can also happen. There are different kinds of structure, different ways that we can put everything together. We need different structures to make the book. Slobodan Bestic*

But there were those who felt strongly that what the artist should be offering young people is total freedom. That this is the only way in which “spontaneity and creativity” can truly happen. That the artist must always endeavour to enter the space with a completely open mind, no structure in place, no decisions made.

*When I do anything with young people, I have no clue. My method, generally speaking, is that I don't have one. There is a term that is used to explain how primitive societies work – ‘bricolage’. It means that you look around, find different things and put them together and the only reason for putting them together in a particular way is that is how it happened. And then when you have done it you decide to give meaning to it.....*

*We are living in a society that is so highly structured, by knowledge. You have to do radical things, in my opinion, to break through that. What is really problematic is the issue of being spontaneous.....I don't want to instruct others I want to search with together with the group...to produce a situation in which everyone can be comfortable with not knowing.....*

*The end should be freedom and creativity. And creativity is about flexibility and the ability to react to what is coming at that particular moment as it comes. Reacting to what comes at the moment when it comes. If you are able to do that, then you are really very resilient. Very able to cope with life. It essentially empowers you.... It is the only way you can deal with very difficult circumstances. Igor Dobricic*

This was felt to be a very valid approach but one that might need more time than most artists working in a project-led situation have available.

*“I have never known the experience of an open-ended situation. There is always a moment at which the performance has to happen” Nan van Houte*

And it was agreed that

*“..it is a matter of timing. And the way ...that you work is very much dependent on how much time you have. So I had a lot of time and I was in a very particular and exclusive situation.” .Igor Dobrovic*

But even if few of us may ever find ourselves in such a privileged position it is worth considering how adaptable and open we have left our project planning. Creativity can rarely take place within a structure that is too rigid. We need to be prepared to let the young people into our plans and also have the humility

to allow them to know that we, as the artists, do not have all the answers. But what we are prepared to do is work together with them to discover some.

It therefore often becomes about learning to strike a balance between having a structure in our minds whilst continuing to be flexible and responsive:

*“to be able to formulate a structure together with the material. In order to avoid framing or losing some very precious side effects or side-tracks, which might turn out to be the real way in the end. And the structure comes afterwards. It is not that you build a house and then come into it, it is like living and building at the same time” Suncica Milosavljevic*

And being comfortable with the recognising that:

*“It is often very difficult to predict what is going to happen. Because things start being worked out within the process, not beforehand. It is not that we start out with; “it is going to be like this, and now we are going to work towards it.” It’s getting started and seeing what happens. Luuk van Leeuwen*

This need not mean throwing all our plans and schemes out of the window. We can use our skill, as artists, to be ready to step in at the appropriate moment and have strategies “up our sleeves” that will enable us to help the young people make their voice heard with clarity and artistic form

*“it is good to know consciously what can happen. You know, this can happen, this can happen, this can happen...And then what I need to do? That is the way of taking things forward..... Slobodan Bestic*

There was a concern from a number of artists that in not offering young people some sort of structure – or a theme to work with - we might end up with a workshop that was of more value to the artist than the young people. So that it becomes:

*“..what is interesting for you...as a leader. Myself. My creativity I come into the room and say- “ what if I say we will do nothing?”. It is a point of research, an experiment” Jadranka Andjelic*

But, as with structure, it is the ways in which we introduce these themes to the young people that can be all important.

*“this figure is me, entering the space.. So I am here and I am trying to open myself up and let something out into the space. It might be music I bring, or it might be... something that I tell. It is really about meeting. I try to be open. So they will meet me and I can meet them*

*And then I try to see how they react to this. And then hopefully they are opening up as well.*

*And then, there is a theme. But... the theme comes much later. I try to push myself to the edge as well as trying to, not push, but find out what is their*

*thing. I want to have everybody's vision in the work we show and not only my vision. So I have the theme in my mind already. But I haven't decided anything about the theme. And sometimes .... it corresponds to what they want, and sometimes it has to change. But that is maybe my only security line. If they don't like what I have offered – OK I can take it back. But I have shown myself. Femke Janssen*

Being able to share something of ourselves with young people is part of developing our creative relationship with them. It is also part of letting them know that we do have an expertise that we are able to offer them.

When we talk of flexible and open structures we do not mean that the artist avoids responsibility for the process. By introducing them to theatre skills and offering the support of our expertise we can not only provide them with a vocabulary for re-telling their own stories we can also help them to gain deeper insight into the lives and experiences of those around them. We are also in a better position to be able to feed new information into the group so that the dynamics of collective discovery are sustained throughout the creative process.

Although young people may well be able to work with great imagination and if they are finally left to themselves they may never create work that extends them beyond what they already know. So we do have to take responsibility for this and find out what it is that they need to know from us.

*"I believe ....there is a secret sound – in every person. So I try to help young people to find secret sound in themselves.....But also...to make a bridge between that secret sound and outside world. Through creativity. To say something to the others. And for that, I use theatrical techniques, not to learn them for their own sake but to enable them to ...say what they want in the best, most beautiful way they can.*

*Because if you want to say something and you don't have the instrument – if you want to play something and you don't know how....., So that part of the work is very important work for me. Gordana Lebovic*

So if we are passing on skills to young people do we suddenly become teachers rather than artists? What is the real essence of our relationship with the young people?

## TEACHER/FACILITATOR/ARTIST?

### Exercise 7 Negotiating the Spectrum

The group is asked, without talking to each other, to get into a line. The tallest person at one end. The smallest person at the other.

They must negotiate without speech. One person can be in front of another if they feel they are the same. Then

- The person with the longest hair at one end and the person with the shortest hair at the other end.
- The person with the darkest eyes at one end and the lightest eyes at the other.
- The person with the coldest hands at one end and the warmest hands at the other.
- The person who has travelled the furthest distance to come to this meeting at one end and the person who has travelled the least distance at the other end. (speaking allowed)

And finally:

- The person who feels most close to being only an artist – that is they simply make art at one end and those who see themselves mainly as teachers at the other. (for young people this exercise can develop in any way that is appropriate to the subject they are discussing)

Almost everyone found it impossible to make a decision about where they stood in the last line. For most artists it is, and always will be, changing:

*I have been changing from one point of the line to another as the work goes on. When you have a group and you work together in a process which lasts for six months or a year you have to have both sides: Slobodan Bestic*

One artist was clear that when we are working with very young children we must be good teachers as well as good artists:

*The first steps are really, really important for children. They need someone who will teach them - a professional. If you make a mistake in the very first steps, you lose children. This is how we create a safe space. The steps are very important. After that they can take their own space with you where ever you are but the first steps matter Aare Toika*

But it is often more complex than that.

*It has so much to do with your methodology. Whether or not you have to be a very skilled teacher to start working with children. Sometimes it is more than being very skilled. It is having the gifts to transfer this." Nan van Houte*

On one level many of the group felt that the way that we define our role is very much linked to the ways that we measure our own success and the success of the young people we are working with.

*Sometimes I especially feel it when I work with young people that the energy they are giving, is the most excellent thing - I can feel a sense with them, more than in any other production. Sometimes I think; "Oh it is that. It is their energy. It is the way they are open to what they are doing at that moment." And that amazes me... I don't know if that is excellence" Femke Janssen*

Perhaps for the young people it is about energy and commitment.

*One thing that is very important is this energy here. The energy meaning the point when people have come together and discovered something. And from that moment of creativity, what energy is released. And that is something which I think I am always searching for. How to release this energy together. Henri Seebohm*

For the artist it may be more concerned with expertise or skills.

*Is it professional skill? Technical skill? I can analyse what I feel when I see a good performance. It is something that touches me emotionally, that makes me think of life differently, which I can understand some things in a different way. So it is shifting levels of being, of thinking of the world. So maybe honesty is one of the most important things. And honesty – comes from asking the right questions. So we start from the empty space with a need to say something, very honestly. To ask some questions and then after that we have something that can be art. It will be art, if it is honest. If it comes from the heart. Slobodan Bestic*

But for most participants at this seminar it was always about:

*Finding ...Openness? Honesty? A moment of discovery. Because ...in a sense everything we have looked at is about seeking and searching and exploring and that moment of discovery, even if we don't know what it is, is a moment of something – that we might call excellence, I don't know. I think it is a very difficult word – the word excellence. Henri Seebohm*

Perhaps it is this need to search for honesty in their work, that matters almost more than anything else that we can pass on to the young people we work with. And then we are not teachers in the traditional sense but fellow seekers after truth and knowledge. Guiding them towards the possibility of choice.

*"It is important (for me as an artist) to be aware about this. And to try to help young people find a way in this world, because we can't change the world but we can change ourselves to be aware about what is happening in our society and to make a choice about this. I try to [help] my young people to achieve a level of understanding about what is going on in this whole world.... And what I am receiving from them is very important. What are their expectations? They know very well where they are standing. What kind of things are painful. My expectations are to enable them to go on much more safely. And also we have a little bit of fun. This is also necessary for them. Gabi*

When we talk about work that focuses on the process rather than the performance then we are always left with the question of whether we close the project with a public presentation or not.

It is always a matter of debate. On one hand we are talking of a process that we hope will empower young people, give them a voice and enable them to feel confident in communicating their own ideas. And there might be no better conclusion for our work together than to share it with the world outside. On the other hand focusing on the performance too early in the process can mean that we lose much of the content and only have form.

It will often be a question of sensitivity to the needs of a particular group. But most of the artists in the seminar felt that young people often feel the need for some kind of sharing.

*I think it is a crucial moment in the process – the realisational showing of what we have been working on. I don't know how you can do without it. Or, at least I really like to have this moment. It also makes a community out of the group. It makes people feel more dependent upon each other. Nan van Houte*

And establishing the “community” with young people, and taking the trust work that we have done to its conclusion can be an important part of closure.

*It is about the stages of work. This is the first – this is our chaos – where we, me and Goran, are in the centre and all the children in the space. We are trying to establish the communication, the collaboration but it is still chaos here. Then there is the second stage – things are establishing – forming - the materials are collecting. And then there is the third stage, when the nucleus is made, when the piece is completely formed, the creation is made and together we are emulating this creative energy- as a team. Jasmina Bilalovic*

*The performance is very important, because they are sharing with themselves and others. Gordana*

*And at the same time, they are themselves. Tsvete*

This sharing or presentation does not need to be a full-scale production:

*I think there are a lot of moments in the process which have a kind of “showing”, but if we want to go to the stage, this process should in a way, be more structured in a theatrical way for the audience. The process can be one month, a year, or six months, or maybe also one workshop or 3 days - as we had in our trainings, but after three days, we had something, we had performances in a way. I think that if you have set up a constructive process, (with the young people) it is easier to make performance than in the classical way. Lubica Beljanski-Ristic*

What matters, most of all is that what we do share or offer the world outside is the work of the young people and that it reflects their, not our, concerns.

*And so really it is the landscape that you can create together with the young people – I have this very strong feeling that that is what we are doing. It is creating our own landscape and then enabling everyone to create their own individual landscape as well. Which is a place they can carry with them.*

*And so, more recently, in terms of what I have been doing with young people, it is much more about their own material. And working with them, rather than imposing something that someone else has told them to do but actually creating something from the young people. And that is for me something that is more and more important. **Henrietta Beerbohm***

This does not preclude us offering our assistance with the final structuring of the work. Particularly with a group that is inexperienced:

*With our work, we decided to work without text, to create the text. And they would offer the material and we were going to shape that into a text altogether. They were very enthusiastic about that – they brought the materials, but they became nervous and lost faith during the process and asked questions all the time – “What is it going to be?” And because we had never done this before we didn’t share the responsibility of shaping it with them. We saved them that agony of shaping the materials and I am not sure if that was honest enough from our side, but I can imagine the panic and chaos that would have happened if we had told them “We don’t know, we don’t have an idea”. They were not ready for this” **Jasmina Bilalovic***

Most people had had the experience of allowing a desire to be inclusive to outweigh intuition and knowledge. So that the young people were left more exposed by guidance not being given than by the artist stepping in.

*I also did it, I talked them through the structure, and there were four or five people in the process and we had very different opinions about what should be where. So we were honest in the process but we couldn’t find a way to say OK – do you feel secure enough? Because we had to make a decision at a certain moment to say; “OK we start with that and then we can go on”. So it became very complicated and then I said; “OK let’s not make a decision, - let’s see on the evening what you feel like doing. We have all the material, we don’t have a structure. So you can make the structure that evening”. But that was impossible for them. It was too much. **Femke Janssen***

In the end, it was the process was what most participants agreed was central. If the process has been open and honest young people will accept, and indeed welcome, the artists’ support in turning their work into something that meaningful for a wider audience:

*It is about using something that Igor mentioned – a synthetic way of thinking. So that the artist is not a classical director, but is a person who is shaping the*

*material and synthesising everything – not taking structure and analysing, but thinking synthetically. In a way that is the difference between the director and the director. If you understand that!* **Suncica Milosavljevic**

Because:

*There is a structure in theatre and at the end we all come this point, that somebody has to shape it.* **Jadranka Andjelic**

And enabling them to combine form with content can help give a clarity to their work that will make it possible for them to share their own thoughts and feelings and sensibilities with confidence.

*At the beginning of my work I did not want to use those rules working with young people because I thought - then it is a theatre school. But now I have changed my opinion and I think that in one point of the work it is very important to include form – theatrical form, because they can learn to work together in a group. They can aim for an objective that is greater than their individual possibilities, so they can work to achieve something **together**. And if they create a good artistic piece, it has an emotional effect, a cognitive effect, and a theatrical effect. And then we can see practically how art can affect people in society.* **Slobodan Bestic**

Learning that they can achieve so much more by working “together” is probably one of the most important things that creating a piece of theatre or drama together can offer young people.

Because theatre is an art form that depends on teamwork. On learning to trust, to compromise, to listen to each other and to respect each others’ contribution:

*We have the experience, that if you believe that any young person... can reach a good artistic level, if you don't treat them as if they are below that, then they can come to moments of art that the whole group recognises. And when this happens this person feels a sense of being integrated - into the group and (maybe) into society. I saw that work very well...to help young people express themselves on a level that impresses other children* **Jadranka Andjelic**

A detailed approach to the process is set out in Appendix ???  
And the young people will always be a central part of this process. In many ways the presentation or sharing that the young people are involved with will form a conclusion to the work. But often there is a need to allow space for a less formal kind of closure. Something that will allow the young people space to reflect on how they will take what they have discovered about themselves, about the group and about the art they have made into their lives outside the “empty space” that we have created for them.

The personal evaluation exercise below was used at the end of our three-day seminar. In many ways it was particular to this group of artist and to our own need to feel that this was not the end but rather a deepening of our co-operation. For this reason it is included in the form it was used in Belgrade but we hope that, like everything that we have offered here, will have reverberations in other circumstances

## **Exercise 9**

The group were asked to find their own space in the room. Then asked:

- Find for yourself, physically, where you were, not like “I was sitting at a desk “ but where you were in your head, in your mind, in your life before you came here to Belgrade. Think where you were and try to find a physicalisation for it. Ask yourself “ What sort of space was I in - the night before I came to this meeting? Can I physicalise that in some way?” Now take that shape up and breathe. Feel what that feels like, breathe and just be there for a few moments.

And then

- Can you then find yourself, where you think you were when you first came into this space, when the meeting began, where were you? How did you feel How was that? What stage were you at, what were you thinking about? And as you physicalise that shape can you then make a movement? The way that you feel you were inside as you first came into the meeting? And from that position can you find a way of saying “Hello” - in your own language – to anybody, to nobody, or to the space. How did you move from there? How did you enter the space. Move into the space and vocalise the greeting..

And then

- From there can you find the physical position that reflects, for you, and there is always one in every workshop/seminar/meeting, the worst, hardest, most difficult part, of doing this work for the last three days. Find that moment and physicalise it. And when you have found it start to make a sound that reflects that feeling.

And then

- Try to remember to work out how you got out of that moment – was it by yourself or was it through other people? And move from the physical position and sound that reflects the worst moment to the point at which you actually emerged from it. In movement and sound.

And

- Now can you now find a physical position to suggest where you feel you are now. And in that position, sing whatever song/tune comes into your head. Whether it's a happy tune, a dirge, a nonsense rhyme. And sing it out loud. And louder and louder and louder. And stop.

And then, almost the last thing.

- Come into a circle and just breathe quietly for a moment. The I want you to think, firstly, of one thing that you learnt from somebody else this week. Something that you learnt, something that happened, that you learnt by watching this person and listening to what they had to say. And remind yourself that before we all go away that you will tell that person. So something that you learnt and remind yourself to tell that person about this before you leave them today.
- Then I want you to think about one thing that you have learnt about yourself. That you think; “Yes, I know about myself now – I have got that skill, that possibility, that is a quality that I have”. Something positive that maybe you have learnt about yourself. You know I have

**a good sense of humour, just anything that is a positive thing about yourself.**

- **And then think about something that, having gone through this process, something you want to work on. Something that you feel “I should work on that.” And then how soon you want to work on it. Now? Tomorrow? Can you put it off until next year? How important is it to you? Is there something that you can work on that you have learnt? That you want to take out from here and think; “Right. I am going to try and do that from now on”.**

Our final act of closure was completed by going around the circle stating in, just one word what we would wish the other participants as they went back to their own countries, to their own work and their own futures.

This was our list:

**Energy**

**Power**

**Reliability**

**Courage**

**Forgiveness**

**Sense of Humour**

**Luck**

**Love**

**Kisses**

**Power**

**Wisdom**

**Co-operation**

**Friendship**

**Faith**

**Words**

**Responsibility**

**Freedom**

**Success**

**Fun**

**Optimism**

**Openness**

**Money**

This is also what we wish for all those other artists who want to undertake this work. And even more we wish it for the young people whom they will work with.