

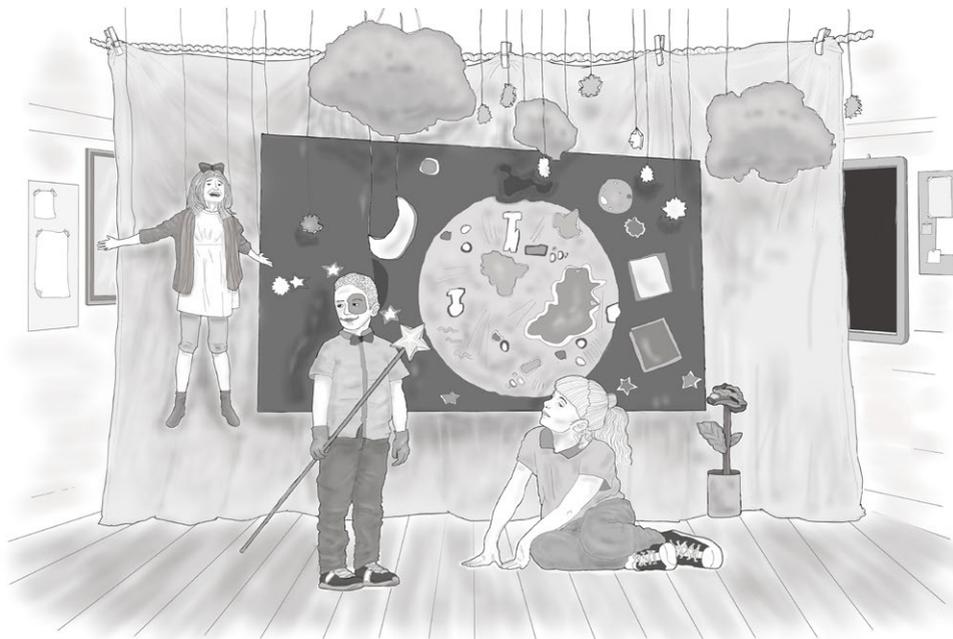
## Between desks and stage. Theatre education paths based on the experience of the small schools of Elba

Claudia Chellini, Caterina Librandi, Rosalia Delogu and Gaetano Oliva

Stories

Tools

Studies



*Between desks and stage: theatre education at school*

Authors: *Claudia Chellini, Caterina Librandi and Rosalia Delogu, INDIRE  
Gaetano Oliva, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan*

Director of the Series and contact person for the research group “Methodological and organisational innovation in small schools”: *Giuseppina Rita Jose Mangione, INDIRE*

The Technical Scientific Committee for the Small School Notebooks is made up of: **Cosetta Lodi**, President of Casa delle Arti e del Gioco-Mario Lodi, **Francesco Tonucci**, Researcher at the ISTC (Institute of Science and Technology of Cognition)/CNR (National Research Centre), President of the National Committee for the centennial of the birth of Lodi celebrations, **Palmira Maccarini**, who was part of the working group of the “Biblioteca di Lavoro” (Work Library); **Juri Meda**, Associate Professor at the University of Macerata and Secretary of the National Committee for the centennial of the birth of Mario Lodi celebrations; **Franco Lorenzoni**, Teacher at Casa Laboratorio Cenci, **Maria Rosaria Di Santo** Head of the national and project group “History and Territory” of the Educational Cooperation Movement; **Barbara Balconi**, Researcher at the Department of Human Sciences of the University of Milan Bicocca; **Francesca Davida Pizzigoni**, Researcher at INDIRE, **Laura Parigi**, Researcher at INDIRE, **Giuseppina Rita Jose Mangione**, Principal Researcher at INDIRE - Head of the Research Structure “Methodological and organisational innovation in small schools” and of the National Movement of Small Schools.

Graphics coordination: *Giuseppe Lucchese, INDIRE*

Editorial staff: *Assunta Gambale, INDIRE*

Web communication: *Michele Squillantini, INDIRE*

Graphics: *Paolo Curina with the collaboration of Martina Trevisani*

Illustrations: *Andrea Paoli, INDIRE*

## **SMALL SCHOOL NOTEBOOKS • TOOLS**

No. 10/2025, Copyright 2025 INDIRE

ISBN/A 979-12-80706-78-2

Many thanks to Pierella and Simona Sabbioni (teachers at the “Istituto Comprensivo G. Carducci” in Porto Azzurro), Anna Bulgaresi (teacher at the Istituto Comprensivo Statale “G. Giusti” in Campo nell’Elba) and Francesca Ria, actress and drama teacher.

Printed and published online on the Movimento delle Piccole Scuole (Small School Movement) website [piccolescuole.indire.it](http://piccolescuole.indire.it) - June 2025



The *Biblioteca di Lavoro* (Work Library) was a unique and innovative editorial work, desired and directed by Mario Lodi and created between 1971 and 1979 by a group of educators made up of Fiorenzo Alfieri, Francesca Colombo, Tullio De Mauro, Caterina Foschi Pini, Alberto Gianola, Angelica Gianola, Roberto Lanterio, Palmira Maccarini, Luciano Manzuoli, Gioacchino Maviglia and Francesco Tonucci.

The idea was an educational project that emerged as an alternative to the single textbook. In a format carefully designed for essential functionality, 80 volumes including “Documents”, “Readings” and “Guides”, as well as 68 flashcards, offered ideas, suggestions and operational tools to teachers, leaving them the greatest freedom of choice for working according to the needs of their class.

A true encyclopaedia of the most significant teaching experiences carried out in Italy. A reference index from which teachers, parents and children were able to take inspiration to carry out activities, in any geographical and social situation, as alternatives to schooling based on the transmission approach, through a methodology structured upon tools permitting concrete and organic teaching interventions.

Mario Lodi and his collaborators wanted to help teachers and families get to know the child and help the child get to know him/herself and others.

We all want a better, humane and scientifically correct school that starts from the child's experience, in order to understand the world we live in. The *Biblioteca di Lavoro* (Work Library) helped to do this.

Cosetta Lodi

President of Casa delle Arti e del Gioco - Mario Lodi

<http://www.casadelleartiedelgioco.it>

Many years after the experience of the *Biblioteca di Lavoro* (Work Library), the desire to build a better school is still alive. However, still today, perhaps even more now than before, the resistance of schooling based on the transmission approach is strong and deeply-rooted, both in practices and in the imagination, as "normal schooling".

INDIRE has the task of providing support and visibility to research carried out by teachers that seek to "carry teaching towards proposals, organisations and learning environments that enhance the value of students' autonomy and responsibility and are capable of developing significant knowledge, skills and lasting competences" (*Indicazioni Nazionali. Nuovi scenari*, 2017.) (National Directions. New Scenarios). The operational tools of the *Biblioteca di Lavoro* (Work Library) conceived by Lodi were very effective in this regard. With their simple, clear language, basic form and the credibility of the research work deeply rooted in the practices and in the living experience of teaching, they contributed to the spread of active, inclusive and democratic ways of teaching. More than many programmatic documents, the documentation and teaching techniques included in this "encyclopaedia" have offered teachers tools for making changes and for acting coherently in practical terms, with a view to pedagogical innovation.

The *Small School Notebooks*, divided into "Stories", Tools" and "Studies", pay tribute to this experience, which is an example of how to value and follow up on the research and educational experimentation conducted in schools.

We thank Mario Lodi's heirs for having authorised the use and reworking of the material taken from the *Biblioteca di Lavoro* (Work Library) and also Grandi & Associati, who collaborated in the publication of this volume.

Researchers of the INDIRE - Piccole Scuole group  
<http://piccolescuole.indire.it>

# Summary

1. School, education, theatre (Claudia Chellini)	7
1.1 Theatre and curriculum	7
1.2 The normative level: which theatre education?	9
1.3 Theatre as an educational exercise	13
2. Planning a theatre workshop (Gaetano Oliva)	17
2.1 Why is planning important?	17
2.2 The role of the educator	18
2.3 Why plan for the expressive arts?	19
2.4 The projects: designing and building an Education to Theatricality project	23
First step: analysing the situation	23
Second step: identifying the objectives	23
Third step: identifying the essential prerequisites for tackling the projects you intend to propose	23
Fourth step: choosing and organising objectives	25
Fifth step: choosing and organising methods and materials	25
Sixth step: verifications, checks, evaluations, adjustments	26
2.5 Methodology: how to conduct a theatrical education workshop	26
2.6 Checks: which and how	27
2.7 The four elements of the creative project	28
First element: the text	28
Second element: the space	28
Third element: the tool	30
Fourth element: communication	30

3.	Theatre education paths based on the experience of the small schools of Elba	33
3.1	Theatre education between schools and community (Claudia Chellini)	33
3.2	Animated readings between mountains and sea (Caterina Librandi)	36
	Collaboration between teachers and the actor	37
	Theatre activity outcomes	39
	Evaluation of theatre activity	40
	Impact on everyday teaching	41
	Comparison of multi-age classes and same-age classes	42
3.3	A wave carries us far away (Rosalia Delogu)	44
	Collaboration between teachers and the actor	46
	Theatre activity outcomes	47
	Evaluation of theatre activity	49
	Impact on everyday teaching	50
	The meanings of the experience	51

# 1. School, education, theatre

by *Claudia Chellini*

This issue of the Small School Notebooks is dedicated to theatre education. The format of the Tools series has led to the creation of a discussion aimed at planning a theatre workshop. We are aware that there are numerous forms of theatre education, which include both watching shows (*seeing theatre*) and a myriad of different expressions of what is called *doing theatre*, the choice fell upon a specific way of understanding theatre education carried out by creating a workshop, for a class or the entire school, in which practice is the heart and driving force of a growth experience.

After this first chapter, which aims to outline the conceptual context in which theatre education is placed, the goal of the second chapter is to provide concrete indications on how to plan and manage a theatre workshop at school, while the third part contains two theatre education experiences that took place within *The Small School of Elba as a community school* project implemented by INDIRE and co-financed by the Tuscany Regional Authority.

## 1.1 Theatre and curriculum

Theatre, interpreted as a logical-expressive-cultural activity linked to existential problems, if correctly placed within the framework of the so-called scheduling aimed at promoting the inventiveness, autonomy and socialisation of youngsters, could give the school a considerable contribution by adapting it to the fundamental needs of human, cultural and social growth. However, it must not be considered an after-school activity or one of secondary importance and its essential techniques must be learned, while knowing how to use it in its different forms<sup>[1]</sup>.

### Annotations

---



---



---

[1] Lodi M. & Meduri P. (1982), p 75. *Ciao teatro (Ciao Theatre)*. Rome: Editori Riuniti.

In the early 1980s, Mario Lodi uses these words to remind us of the role and place that theatre has and should have in school time. In fact, in *Ciao, teatro*, he describes his experiences with theatre as a teaching tool created in previous years, when the union between theatre and school had led to experiments in which both worlds had been put to the test, in the belief that the encounter between the two would give rise to the flow of lifeblood, breaking down the structures that had become inflexible, in the field of both education and theatre<sup>[2]</sup>.

[2] Quazzolo P. (2014). *Il teatro a scuola (The theatre at school)*, Quaderni CIRD (University Centre for Didactic Research-CIRD Notebooks), 9, pages 19-33.



Illustration inspired by: *Ciao, teatro* by Mario Lodi and Paolo Meduri

After the season of theatre arts education in the 60s and 70s, *Teatro Ragazzi* (Youth Theatre) emerged and developed in the 1980s, to include shows with specific educational objectives, implemented by professional theatre companies and aimed at children and teenagers. The relationship with the school is structured based on the classes'

**Annotations**

---

---

---

vision of the show and on the workshop activity with pupils and students conducted by the actors themselves<sup>[3]</sup>. In the decade that followed, the relationship between theatre education and schooling changed its form again: a type of theatre created by the pupils/students themselves, aimed mainly at pupils/students from other schools, was established. It is called *Teatro Scuola* (Theatre School) and it is mainly carried out through extracurricular activities, finding its broadest expression in student theatre festivals, held throughout Italy, where student productions undoubtedly have a school audience, although it is also open to citizens<sup>[4]</sup>. From the mid-1990s, a series of agreements signed by the Ministry of Education with the MIBACT (Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Activities and Tourism) and institutional parties from the world of theatre<sup>1</sup>, have brought the attention back to theatre in school as an element to be guaranteed to everyone within the school educational process, but their implementation has been very irregular.

Thus, the relationship between theatre and school has reached the present day in a rough and multifaceted form, which is undoubtedly evidence of its extreme vitality, but also of the ambivalence with which the school system relates to theatre.

## 1.2 The normative level: which theatre education?

There has always been a reference to theatrical art in Italian primary schools, at least since the Gentile Reform<sup>[5]</sup>, in which, among the lower school programmes, also valid for subsequent classes, we find: “reciting of national anthems and poems” (art. 8). This way of considering theatre as “reciting” inherits, by simplifying it, the tradition of using educational theatre in Jesuit schools dating back to the sixteenth century<sup>[6]</sup>, in which “performance was an exercise that served to improve public speaking skills and engage the physical

### Annotations

.....

.....

.....

1. Among the various agreements, it is worth mentioning at least the following ones: *Memorandum of Understanding on theatre education*, 6 September 1995 signed by the Department of Entertainment of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Education and the Italian Theatre Authority; *Memorandum of Understanding for education in entertainment disciplines*, 12 June 1997, signed by the Department of Entertainment of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Minister of Education, the Ministry of University and Scientific and Technological Research; *Memorandum of Understanding on school theatre activities and education for vision*, 21 December 2006 (circulated on 23 March 2007) signed by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, the Italian Theatre Authority and Agita; *Memorandum of Understanding on school theatre activities and education for vision. Activities planned for the second year of validity of the agreement*. Rome, 19 May 2008.

[3] Bianchi, M. (2009). *Atlante del teatro ragazzi in Italia (Atlas of youth theatre in Italy)*. Pisa: Titivillus.

[4] Perissinotto, L. (2001). *Teatri a scuola. Aspetti risorse tendenze. (Theatres at school. Aspects, resources, trends.)* Turin: UTET.

[5] Royal Decree no. 2185, 1 October 1923, *Regulation of school levels and teaching programmes for elementary education*. Gazzetta Ufficiale - Part one (250).

[6] Sirignano F. M. (2009). *Il teatro dei Gesuiti. Un esperimento di educazione del cittadino tra il 1500 e il 1600 (The Jesuit Theatre. An Experiment in Educating Citizens between 1500 and 1600)*. Annali - Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa, Vol. 1, pages 223-231.

and psychological functions in a process of continuous moral disciplining”<sup>[7]</sup> of the personality.

Since the Gentile Reform, almost a century of theatre education activities carried out in schools across the country, in many different forms and in many different historical-political contexts, has brought theatrical language to the attention of education governance bodies, which have always included theatre in the guideline documents for teachers, up to the *National Guidelines for the curriculum of nursery school and the first cycle of education* (2012).

A brief overview of what is envisaged in this area by the *National Guidelines* can be useful in highlighting the main positions being discussed today regarding the relationship between theatre and school. Let's start with nursery school, for which theatrical language is contemplated among the goals set for two fields of experience: *Images, sounds, colours and, the second, Speeches and words*. In the first case, it is intended on the one hand as a performance to be followed “with curiosity and pleasure”, while on the other hand, reference is made to body language as a way of expressing emotions and to “dramatisations” as a form of narration. In the case of the *Speeches and words* field of experience, dramatisations are mentioned again, this time as a test of the creativity of verbal language.

For what concerns the first cycle as a whole, theatre is intended as one of the “equipped places that facilitate operational approaches to knowledge for science, technology, Community languages, musical production, theatre, painting activities, motor skills” (p. 34). Furthermore, among the goals of Italian language, we find a reference to expressiveness in reading aloud seen as an important goal also (and above all) for the purposes of understanding the text. More specifically, for lower secondary school we find the reading of various types of text, including theatrical text, which is therefore basically considered a verbal language, and also written, to be understood and interpreted. Lastly, dramatisations are mentioned in the final

**Annotations**

.....  
.....  
.....

[7] D'Amante M. F. (2013). *The First Jesuits' College Theatre: from Rethoric to Drama*. Education. Journal of Critical Pedagogy, 2, pages 55-74.

goals of physical education under the heading *Body language as a communicative-expressive modality*. The only mention of theatre as an art form is among the learning goals for music at the end of the third year of middle school, in which there is talk of the integration between different art forms starting from the planning of musical events.

As you can see, theatre is very present in the curricula of infant and early childhood schooling, but it seems fragmented: there is never talk of theatre as a whole, but of body management, dramatisation and interpretation of theatrical texts, all elements functional to achieving the goals linked to the skills considered fundamental for a child or an adolescent. Theatre is considered a set of techniques useful in learning subjects and not as an art based on a collection of areas inseparable from each other (body management, relationship with others, self-expression, creativity, understanding simple and complex oral and written messages and the ability to imagine, direct the work of others and conclude group activities).

A different opinion of theatre can be found in the various agreements mentioned above, signed since 1995 by the Ministry of Education, the MIBACT (Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Activities and Tourism) and the world of theatre: they speak about the “educational value of the approach to theatre, to be included among the forms of analogical knowledge as a response to the different educational needs that the school must guarantee as an opportunity for education in verbal and non-verbal languages and in creativity”<sup>2</sup> and also “the need to recognise the specific nature of school theatre, not simply to be considered an imitation of the amateur model, nor slavishly aimed at ministerial programmes, but it must have its own autonomous life, as a place in which free expressiveness and the needs of childhood, adolescence and youth are combined with the methodological rigour of theatrical language”<sup>3</sup>. This is a very different vision, based on a concept of theatre as an art that, as such and in its complexity and specificity, has an educational value.

### **Annotations**

---



---



---

2. Memorandum of Understanding regarding Theatre Education of 6 September 1995, cit.

3. Memorandum of Understanding on School Theatre Activities and Education to Vision. Activities planned for the second year of the agreement, cit.

Hence, over the years, two positions have come together, both supported by the political decision-maker: on the one hand, in the *National Guidelines*, theatre is divided into a set of techniques functional for school learning, while on the other hand, in the agreements, in which the world of theatre also exists alongside the political decision-maker, emphasis is placed on theatre education being autonomous from the educational structure and is seen as something that cannot be pigeon-holed.

In reality, this position of ambivalence that therefore also extends to the guidelines provided to schools, reproduces similar ambivalence among school and theatre workers and refers to two different ways of conceiving the role and place of theatre in schooling: one that recognises theatre as a tool of knowledge in a broad sense and the other that sees theatre as a basically aesthetic, creative, psychomotor and above all emotional experience. The first considers theatre at school as something that can provide knowledge, particularly textual and critical, and skills, such as basic abilities, and has to do with curricular subjects - like Italian, foreign language, art or image education, music and motor skills - in which a series of measurable and assessable objectives, sub-objectives and performance can be defined. The second recognises goals that, although definable, are difficult to evaluate and that, if anything, can be attributed to emotional or relational-social-civic literacy<sup>[8]</sup>.

On the one hand, that is, a choice to include theatrics in the hours dedicated to subjects is made, for example by creating a play based on a Shakespearean work to stimulate learning of the English language. On the other hand, there is a preference for creating a space that is so to speak “external” for theatre, by organising an afternoon activity in which a real “theatre course” takes place. In the first case, theatre is most certainly weakened, reducing it to techniques, but it is also open to everyone; in the second case, a growth path is offered, which is undoubtedly more profound, but it takes place after school hours

**Annotations**

---

---

---

[8] Guerra M. & Militello R. (2011). *Between School and Theatre. For education in theatre workshops at school*. Milan: FrancoAngeli.

and since participation is voluntary, not everyone will benefit from it.

Law 107/2015, with the subsequent implementing decree 60/2017, attempted to propose a solution to this ambivalence, on the one hand giving impetus to “strengthening education in the arts sector in the *curriculum* of all types and levels of schools, including early childhood”<sup>4</sup>, and on the other hand to “strengthening and coordinating after-school and integrated education offered in the artistic, musical, choreographic and theatrical fields, also in function of lifelong learning”<sup>5</sup>. In this sense, the attempt being made is to strengthen artistic education as a whole, considering all the arts as “fundamental requirements of the curriculum”<sup>6</sup>. The decision-maker’s indications therefore appear to be clear and leave all avenues open: giving schools the choice to opt for the method deemed most appropriate, obviously also considering the inclusion of both methods. In this sense, in the *Strategic Guidelines for the Educational Use of Theatre Activities* (academic year 2016/2017) drawn up by the General Directorate for the Student, Integration and Participation of the Ministry of Education, it is reiterated that “the combined effect of strengthening theatre activities in schools and their use after class time provides the school community the best possible encouragement for implementing theatre activities at school”<sup>[9]</sup>.

### 1.3 Theatre as an educational exercise

In his latest essay entitled *Drammaturgia Didattica* (Educational Drama) Pier Cesare Rivoltella discusses the relationship between pedagogy and theatre, highlighting the latter’s “educational topicality”<sup>[10]</sup>. In particular, the academic argues that theatre education has several characteristics that make it stand out from the main “teaching routines”.

First of all, that linked to theatre is concrete pedagogy, which has discovery as its main learning tool. It is concrete because, in situations of theatrical learning, value is given to how much and how the student

#### Annotations

---



---



---

4. Law 107/2015, art. 181, letter g), point 1.1.

5. Law 107/2015, art. 181, letter g), point 1.3.

6. Legislative Decree 60/2017, art. 1.

[9] MIUR (Ministry of Education, University and Research) (2016/2017), *Indicazioni strategiche per l'utilizzo didattico delle attività teatrali (Strategic indications for didactic use of theatre activities)* school year 2016/2017.

[10] Rivoltella P. C. (2021). *Drammaturgia didattica. Corpo, pedagogia, teatro (Didactic drama. Body, pedagogy, theatre)*. Brescia: Editrice Morcelliana.

feels, acts and thinks in that moment, finding him/herself with those people, in the presence of those stimuli. What the student does and/or says is the starting point for self-discovery on a pathway “along which one’s natural qualities are unearthed through individual work based on one’s physicality and emotional baggage”<sup>[11]</sup>.

As Ausubel (1978) reminds us, the distinctive features of learning through discovery lie in the fact that a person can find something truly unexpected, a “productive surprise”, “something unexpected that strikes the observer with amazement or wonder”<sup>[12]</sup>, which leads to a new meaning being attributed to it: the individual discovers previously unknown sides of him/herself, unthought-of talents, difficulties never taken into account or new possibilities. This leads to redefining the concept of self and the vision of oneself in the world. However, it is also a discovery for the peers and for the teacher conducting the activity, who finds him/herself working with uncertainty. While this seems to be generally true in the school and training context, it appears heightened in the theatrical context, because the subject-based, controllable and structured contents are absent or reduced to a minimum and, instead, most of the space is dedicated to the exploration of the body’s motor and expressive skills and of the individual’s reactions and emotions.

Furthermore, theatre is a type of pedagogy of the active individual, in which the student is the star of his/her own learning. A direct consequence (or primary cause) of learning by discovery and a cornerstone of the thinking and activity of great educators such as Dewey (2018) and Montessori (2016) is that the centrality of the student goes hand in hand with a path of theatre training and with theatre intended as research.

Another typical characteristic of theatre education is the relationships. We can say that the very nature of theatre lives thanks to relationships: between the actor and his/her character, between the actor-characters who move on stage, between the various professionals

**Annotations**

---

---

---

[11] Oliva G. (2017) p.109., *Educazione alla teatralità. La teoria* ((*Education to theatricality. The theory*). Arona: Editore XY.IT.

[12] Bruner J. S. (2005), p 39. *On Knowing. Essays for the left hand*. Rome: Armando.

who contribute to the staging and ultimately and fundamentally between actor and spectator.

By gradually eliminating everything that turned out to be superfluous, we discovered that theatre can exist without greasepaint, without costumes and decorative set designs, without a separate performance area (the stage), without sound and light effects, etc. It cannot exist, however, without a direct and palpable relationship and a communion of life between the actor and the spectator<sup>[13]</sup>. (Grotowski, 1970, p. 25)

Therefore, the focus on the relationship does not only come from the fact that the typical way of communicating in a situation of theatre education is based on dialogue, and it could not be otherwise, but also and above all from the fact that the individual being trained can never ignore the presence of the other person. Indeed, the theme of the encounter with the other person is at the heart of the educational pathway: theatre is, in fact, “the art that most requires attention to be focused on educational teaching issues, human relationships and collective life”<sup>[14]</sup> (Mustacchi, 1999, p. 55).

Last but not least, we can say that the teaching demanded by theatre education is above all corporeality, “which attests to the character of the theatre as an emotional relationship, not a coldly intellectual one, and a complex construction of emotions, symbolic projections and cognitive gains, combined together in a way that is hard to disentangle”<sup>[15]</sup>. The typical work of educational theatre proposed permits exploration of the body, its limits, its potential and the communicative and expressive messages it conveys. That is, it reintroduces into the educational context the corporeal element that seems to have been forgotten<sup>[16]</sup> in Italian schools or at least confined to the few hours a week dedicated to sport. Attention to the body is also expressed with attention to emotions, which manifest themselves in the body (blushing with embarrassment, trembling with fear, the

### Annotations

---



---



---

[13] Grotowski J. (1970), p. 25. *Towards a poor theatre*. Rome: Bulzoni Editore.

[14] Mustacchi C. (1999), p. 55. *Ogni uomo è un artista (Every man is an artist)*. Rome-Bari: Laterza.

[15] Rivoltella P. C. (2021), p. 84. *Drammaturgia didattica. Corpo, pedagogia, teatro (Didactic drama. Body, pedagogy, theatre)*. Brescia: Editrice Morcelliana.

[16] Mustacchi C. (1999), p. 55. *Ogni uomo è un artista (Every man is an artist)*. Rome-Bari: Laterza.

accelerated heartbeat in front of a lover...). Theatre workshop activities, like rehearsals for a stage production, make it possible to experiment the same movement several times, as well as the same physical action and therefore also the emotion linked to it. The meta-reflexive activity that accompanies experimentation opens up the possibility of recognising, knowing and naming what one feels and transforming it if and when one considers it useful. In this sense, theatre education amounts to a real emotional education.

We would like to conclude this first part by remembering the words pronounced by the educator Riccardo Massa in one of his lessons in the 1998/1999 academic year.

There is, in fact, an implicit educational intention, latent in all theatrical experiences. Theatre educates not only in an explicit sense, like the instructive or didactic theatre of Brechtian tradition, but in the sense that there is a project of self-care, self-training, self-education and self-experience<sup>[17]</sup> at stake within it. (Antonacci, Cappa, 2001, p. 27)

[17] Antonacci F., Cappa F. (2001), p 27, Riccardo Massa. *Lezioni su La peste, il teatro, l'educazione (Lessons on The plague, theatre, education)*. Milan: FrancoAngeli.

**Annotations**

---

---

---

## 2. Planning a theatre workshop

*by Gaetano Oliva*

### 2.1 Why is planning important?

Every project in the educational field and, in particular, in a school context, has its own characteristics that develop based on the subjects or fields of experience involved, but the organisation of the project follows a basic outline that includes the following aspects: project title, project contact people, recipients, goals to be achieved, project phases and actions, resources available and evaluation methods.

In fact, projects have the important task of serving the expectation, implementation and evaluation of the individual's journey, monitoring each step, each improvement or decline, each weakness or new skill acquired, each act of learning and each desire to upgrade and increase knowledge.

Projects thus help educators to manage the educational paths of workshop participants, keeping each of their processes and results achieved under control.

Planning means on the one hand creating an action programme that takes into account the individual's conditions, needs and his/her need to grow by taking advantage of new knowledge; on the other hand, it means organising times, tools and finances available for implementing the activities. All this, but there's more. In reality, creating a project means not only developing paths that allow individuals to get to know themselves and experience the relationship with others, but it also means thinking and organising activities that guarantee them knowledge and skills to use in their daily work, allow them to feel part of a social community and create and maintain their innate spirit of inquiry active,

#### **Annotations**

---



---



---

allowing them to achieve the project goals. Educators are well aware that research is a fundamental element in the development of a project, because certain choices lead to the discovery of new educational tools for achieving the goals of the project itself.

## 2.2 The role of the educator

The task of the educator is to improve and facilitate the students' living conditions, intra and interpersonal relationships and openness towards resistance to change. He/she favours comparing individuals' different experiences and skills, so that these can become the starting point for redefining personal growth, self-realisation and self-care.

The educator must be able to welcome and listen to individuals when they manifest their needs - the need to communicate, learn, change and represent themselves in their own and other people's eyes. Furthermore, he/she must facilitate the processes and procedures of learning and an increase in know-how that make an individual different from before, by leading him/her to make an existential change, albeit always in close intercommunication, because by changing his/her life expectations, know-how changes too.

When taking care of people, the educator must be able to intervene early but, once again, in order to do so, he/she needs to have adequate skills for offering and suggesting a life project.

Therefore, planning is a specific action pertinent to his/her profession; the problem is linked to *how*, which, based on the way in which it is intended, can lead to completely different results.

Planning *for* or planning *with* are two very different approaches that are oceans apart and, as Freire states, when examining the dissimilarity between talking *to* people and talking *with* people, if this deeper analysis of experience is not taken into consideration, we will find ourselves abandoned at a starting point from which we can move beyond<sup>[18]</sup>.

### Annotations

---

---

---

[18] Vico G. (2009), p. 14.  
*Mantenere la promessa. Il fardello pesante dell'educazione (Keeping the promise. The heavy burden of education)*. Assisi: Cittadella Editrice.

It is clear that, in the field of educational, we must “plan *with*”: the educator does not develop a project for an undefined individual a priori, but for and with *that* specific person, with *that* culture, *that* personality, *that* experience and *that* social role, taking into account that the other person is a free being, with the faculty and capacity to choose whether to undertake the planned journey or not.

In order to plan, the educator must learn to be silent and listen: these are the conditions for gaining awareness and speaking.

The educator also needs to know how to be flexible: to accept the evolution of unforeseen situations and reinsert him/herself into reality by continually trying to grasp its meaning. Focusing attention on others and suspending judgement are the qualities that every educator must possess in order to make sure that his/her planning action is of value.

Furthermore, he/she must know how to plan in a network: through the knowledge of his/her skills and limits, he/she is able to define the boundaries of his/her work. In fact, in an educational service, planning must be devised in relation to different professional figures who deal with the student.

Lastly, knowing how to enhance value, be empathetic, dedicate time and listen must be part of his/her personality within his/her relationships and socio-cultural context. This is because “planning means not only working to achieve something, but also working *on something*”<sup>[19]</sup>.

Planning therefore allows us to avoid running the risk of making the educational relationship and professionalism of the educator trivial and superficial, while his/her specific characteristics entail being an agent of human, individual and collective promotion.

## 2.3 Why plan for the expressive arts?

Expressive arts and expressiveness as a tool of communication are the protagonists of the educational context. The expressive arts

### Annotations

---



---



---

[19] Santerini M., Triani P. (2007), p. 64. *Pedagogia sociale per educatori (Social pedagogy for educators)*. Milan: Educatt.

workshop, experienced in its context of rules and goals, does not appear simply as the acting out of a story, but materialises through a process of building and knowledge of one's self, implementing exercises that evoke the individual's desire for a real encounter with the other person: being collaborative, establishing relationships of trust in the group, recognising the group as a community of equal individuals. At the same time, the individual, by working on his/her own self, develops his/her creative side and approaches the world of learning with non-formal methodologies.

The training process carried out during the workshop experience is not only aimed at children and young people, but can include all individuals, regardless of age or their educational roles. Participants in the theatrical experience do not act alone or only with the teacher-educator, but establish friendships and collaborations with everyone present.

The context of the theatre workshop makes it possible to:

- *Enhance the value of active practices.* Learning in a theatrical context takes place through practices, exercises, experiments and discussions.
- *Create collaboration between students.* This occurs through dialogues based on discussion, developing exercises and common projects, creating and implementing shared plans.
- *Work and learn through projects.* To put a final creative project into practice, a path made up of study and technical practices aimed at achieving goals, useful resources and a good working method must be created.
- *Know and get used to constructive criticism.* Rather than evaluations, observations are made, which aim to further develop the individual's creativity. Listening to external opinions encourages those constructing the theatre work to improve themselves and their work.
- *Build a repertoire of strategies and methodologies of action.* Possessing these things allows the artist to show what he/she is and what he/she knows and can do.

**Annotations**

---

---

---

- *Always seek new stimuli.*
- *Create an integrative process between cognitive/quantitative/scientific aspects and emotional/qualitative/artistic aspects.* For many disciplines this connection is decidedly difficult to achieve, but it emerges spontaneously for theatre. Nothing can be expressed with attention and specificity if there has not been a high-quality study that, to be of value, has touched the individual's emotions. Theatre allows children and adults alike to start from a path of self-knowledge and introspective vision and then approach the know-how, techniques and skills necessary for consciously setting a meaningful theatrical work in motion.
- *Reflection on oneself and one's work.* The examination of an actor has no public value, but it has a purely individual and personal value. By observing what is done and achieved, the actor scrutinises his/her own desires, needs and results to be achieved in depth.
- *Self-realisation through creativity.* After achieving knowledge of the techniques, getting to know the training exercises, understanding their expressive capacity, the actors reveal their own educational journey, by exploiting their creative side, and take pleasure in showing themselves for what they are<sup>[20]</sup>.

[20] Oliva G. (2015). *Educazione alla teatralità: il movimento creativo come modello formativo (Education to theatricality: the creative movement as an educational model)*. Scienze e Ricerche, 3, pages 42-43.

**Annotations**

.....

.....

.....



*Theatre workshop at school*

Hence, theatre is the finest educational tool that, by following training strategies that differ from the usual educational routine, brings about a complete change in the individual, involving body-soul-intellect and ultimately manifesting his/her own self.

Thanks to the workshop activity, individuals discover and explore their own limits and resources and are encouraged to delve into new situations and look for solutions.

For this reason, the artistic work, which must be carried out through projects that have goals, times and resources, exposes and accustoms the individual to self-discovery and cooperation with others.

**Annotations**

---

---

---

## 2.4 The projects: devising and building an Education to Theatricality project

The practical methods for devising and implementing an Education to Theatricality project are defined below.

It is very important to underline the fact that projects can be devised and implemented in the school or extracurricular environment and during free time, for every age group.

In each case, the Theatricality Teacher actively collaborates with the educational staff (teachers, educators, parents, etc.) both in defining the project and in implementing and checking it.

To build a project, the Theatricality Teacher and the teacher must follow several steps.

### FIRST STEP: ANALYSING THE SITUATION

The starting point consists of an open dialogue with the educational people of reference (e.g. Teachers and parents and with the individuals themselves); analysing the structure's architectural availability and services, which should not be interpreted in an exclusive way, but should be adaptive and creative, and lastly, the environmental needs linked both to the territory and the governing bodies.

### SECOND STEP: IDENTIFYING THE GOALS

The main goals involve: strengthening personal identity from a physical, intellectual and psycho-dynamic standpoint; acquiring a degree of autonomy in relation to age; developing competence.

### THIRD STEP: UNCOVERING THE ESSENTIAL PREREQUISITES FOR DEALING WITH THE PROJECTS YOU INTEND TO PROPOSE

The right methodology for setting up planning and multi-interdisciplinary projects is based on prerequisites, that is on a

#### *Annotations*

---



---



---

graduated point scale, from the simplest to the most complex ability, in sequence. The tests with which these abilities are measured include questionnaires, tests, etc. and their purpose is to demonstrate the patrimony of innate talents and culture that the entire class and, in particular, each individual possesses.

An example of planning based on prerequisites can be structured as follows: establishing the final goal in terms of learning-behaviour; identifying the stages and relative prerequisites according to sequential progression; establishing methods and tools for both learning and recovery; responding to individual needs linked to time and resources; developing continuous evaluation for optimising the procedure. This process, called *Mastery Learning*, therefore requires curricular, subject-based and psychological competence, particularly with regard to developmental psychology.

Creating graduated scales of abilities may seem complex, since there are numerous difficulties in translating the multiple aspects that make up human personality in the evolutionary process into observable and quantifiable behaviour. The system most commonly used is based on identifying the basic areas: motor, cognitive and emotional. It is clear that this division is susceptible to changes, both in determining the areas and classifying the abilities with regard to the areas themselves.

Another fundamental aspect is the sequentiality of the abilities. In fact, arranging things in a hierarchical order in big stages is quite simple and the systematic observation of individuals during developmental age has contributed to highlighting the stages, while it is harder to obtain operational sequences and organise them from the simplest to the most complex. For this reason, we try to identify a division that, on the one hand, takes into account the prominent aspects of the levels of maturation and, on the other, allows for a more detailed definition of the subject fields, in relation to the development and formation of the different forms of intelligence.

***Annotations***

---

---

---

#### **FOURTH STEP: CHOOSING AND ORGANISING THE GOALS**

Goals must be chosen and organised based on the prerequisites identified to promote the development of all forms of intelligence that contribute to forming the person and the citizen. Therefore, the most opportune way to proceed is by first organising the activities based on continuous and responsible flexibility and operational inventiveness of the individuals, on personal variations in rhythm, times and learning styles and on the diversification of motivations and interests; secondly, by operating in a way that avoids excluding any individual from any subject area and therefore from any goal, especially individuals who encounter difficulties due to impairments or disadvantages, including those who come from different cultures. For all of the latter, specific points of arrival must be established, linked to their possibilities, methodological pathways and monitoring indicators, which enhance the value of their abilities and potential.

Educational scheduling and teaching projects are therefore aimed at bringing out individual work in a group effort.

#### **FIFTH STEP: CHOOSING AND ORGANISING METHODS AND MATERIALS**

Research-discovery, research-construction and research-invention methodologies must be preferred, within which activities are to be promoted and organised. In the school environment, differentiated methodologies can be favoured for groups of individuals in the same class or in different classes, therefore in open classes; furthermore, individualised interventions that also respond to particular circumstances must be planned, but they need to be systematic to ensure the integration and development of all individuals in difficulty.

#### ***Annotations***

---



---



---

**SIXTH STEP: VERIFICATIONS, CHECKS, EVALUATIONS, ADJUSTMENTS**

During the meetings, the councils formed by the project’s representative educators (theatrics educators, teachers, educational staff, parents, etc.) will verify the overall progress of the educational and teaching activity and will propose appropriate adjustments based on the students’ actual needs, possibilities and interests. The checks and evaluations, accomplished respectively during and at the end of the activities, will not be carried out with the aim of categorising the individuals based on expected evaluation levels, but to verify whether, and to what extent, the planned and proposed activities have actually responded to each individual’s possibilities for learning, development, social and cultural education. The aim of all this is to carry out those re-programming and feedback interventions that turn out to be necessary, so that all individuals can achieve the maximum goals, which they can reach based on their own prerequisites.

**2.5 Methodology: how to conduct a theatre education workshop**

Each meeting along this path aims to be a playful and educational moment, within which techniques and work materials that stimulate unconstrained imagination will be made available to each participant. In addition, each topic will be introduced by explicit references to the History of Theatre and Entertainment relative to developmental age. This itinerary consists of moments that are divided into meetings in which languages are explored: verbal, non-verbal, spatial and creative writing. At the end of each meeting, there is a moment for feedback, dedicated to verbalising what was addressed during the work; this favours the externalisation of opinions, experiences, learning, elements that promote criticality towards the experience and the ability to share one’s thoughts in a context that does not aim be judgemental; this is accomplished through tools suitable for the age and abilities of the recipients.

***Annotations***

.....

.....

.....

## 2.6 Tests: which and how

The intermediate and final tests, which are of an indicative and cognitive nature, are carried out both during and at the end of the course, through a series of individual and collective tests. With respect to the stimuli offered, the results make it possible to evaluate the changes that have occurred both in each student and in the relationship between the members of the group. The changes will concern the content of the theatrical path in which each student has put him/herself to the test and the degree of interest and activation linked to the themes of the modules proposed. Therefore, this test will be carried out by the theatricality teacher leading the workshop, who will tend to broaden the test in collaboration with the teachers and/or educators participating in the activity.

The operational itinerary includes:

- a. The use of moments of verbalisation to create a discussion between participants about the activities carried out, the degree of understanding and experiences and the proposed stimuli that the theatricality teacher recorded in his/her log during the workshop;
- b. The motivation of operational proposals and their goal to allow individuals to reach a level of self-assessment;
- c. The idea of having a few moments in which the spectators participating can become part of the scene, for example by answering or being prompted to respond;
- d. Timely information on the content and on the development of the subject matters concerning the final creative project;
- e. The creation of illustrated billboards that summarise the experience, to structure an exhibition with the function of presenting and introducing the final performance.

### *Annotations*

---



---



---

## **2.7 The four elements of the creative project**

The creative project is the final outcome of the process carried out by each individual during the workshop. If we consider the theatre as a box, it is possible to indicate a particular figure that participates in the creation of a spectacular moment, on each side of it. In fact, there is the actor who acts on the stage, the playwright who writes the text, the technicians who deal with the invention and creation of the stage designs, the music, a potential video, the costumes, the make-up and any other scenic element, the choreographer and lastly the director. Everyone has a role and specific skills: good collaboration from everyone and good direction ensure that the staging of the work is implemented. Instead, the work proposed in the workshop, even if in a group, is designed to stimulate each student from different standpoints and allow him/her to see the box from all sides. Thus, the creative project engages the imagination and skills of each person who has the task of bringing together the experiences being tackled and organising them in a coherent and, at the same, time creative way.

It is made up of four elements, closely linked to each other.

### **FIRST ELEMENT: THE TEXT**

First of all, there is the text It may be written by the individual him/herself or chosen from theatrical works or from passages taken from novels, short stories or poems; however, it is essential that, whatever its origin, the text respects the characteristic rules of playwriting when acted out.

### **SECOND ELEMENT: THE SPACE**

Another aspect is represented by the space. This is divided into two parts: the space for the performance and the theatrical space. The first is the physical place for the performance: a stage, a conference

#### ***Annotations***

---

---

---

room, a classroom, the school entrance hall, a square, a park, etc. In this regard, it is important to consider whether the space chosen is outdoors or in a closed space, because this conditions the individuals' use of languages in the theatrical performance; furthermore, the space for the performance is of fundamental importance for the placement of the audience: whether in front of the stage, around it, in a semicircle or in some other way. Instead, the theatrical space is that designed for on-stage action and is therefore made up of a series of stage elements: objects, lights, sounds, costumes, make-up and any projections of still or moving images, all aspects that must be functional to the individual's work during the performance.



*Space and action*

**Annotations**

---

---

---

**THIRD ELEMENT: THE TOOL**

The *tool* used by the individual to carry out the creative project is of extreme importance. It is represented by his/her own body and consequently by theatrical communication languages: verbal, non-verbal and spatial language.

**FOURTH ELEMENT: COMMUNICATION**

The last aspect to consider is the most important of all, since it gives meaning to the performance itself: *communication*, that is what the individual wants to express through his/her own creative project.

The creative project can be developed individually or in a group, according to the needs of the workshop participants, their training needs and their levels of expressive growth.

In order for an individual to perform a true, heartfelt, desired and original creative act, he/she needs to follow a path enabling the development of his/her own creative project.

Starting from simple exercises of awareness of their own body, the individual begins to discover and re-educate him/herself into being a person.

Through the experience of communication, individuals continually experiment on themselves and in relation to the world around them, initiating a process of introspection and discovery of their own emotionality, also with regard to the knowledge of and encounter with others. In this way they are able to reformulate a thought that is transformed into action and then into a creative representation.

In this way, the theatrical message is characterised by its communicative potential, it supports the exercise of judgement and reasoning, induces reflection, refines critical thinking and encourages aesthetic sensitivity. It also provides spaces for autonomy and creative, unique and non-standardised thinking. For all this to happen, a process is needed with a serene, shared, playful, free and planned climate, in

***Annotations***

.....  
.....  
.....

which each individual presents him/herself as a person ready to receive and give something of him/herself. This is when the theatrical experience becomes a real educational, formative, psychological, emotional and empirical experience but also a new place “of the possible” where a new expressive art can be developed and studied.

***Annotations***

---

---

---



## 3. Theatre education paths based on the experience of the small schools of Elba

### 3.1 Theatre education between schools and community

by *Claudia Chellini*

In 2021, INDIRE launched the project entitled *The small school of Elba as a community school* co-financed by the Tuscany Regional Authority with the aim of supporting Elba's comprehensive schools in their cultural and social protection function. The vision that supports this project is that of the school as a learning hub (OECD, 2020), capable of linking and bringing together different educational opportunities that engage the community they belong to and enhance traditions, local assets and resources, favouring forms of learning, civic engagement and social innovation in continuous evolution.

The project as a whole has included the creation of several training courses for teachers, followed by a teaching activity in their schools. One of the topics addressed was linked to the art of theatre. In June 2021, an intensive training activity was carried out on the following topics:

- *Theatre and curriculum.* Within the school timetable, what place can be reserved for theatre that, as a whole, is not part of the curriculum?
- *Teachers and artists.* How to configure the relationship between the teacher and the artist from planning to conducting the activities?
- *Evaluation.* Can the artistic activity of theatre education be evaluated? How? Whose role is it to do so?

#### **Annotations**

---



---



---

[21] Facchinelli C. (2011), p. 148. *Dramatopedia. Spunti di storia, etica e poetica per il teatro della scuola (Dramatopedia. Ideas from history, ethics and poetics for school theatre)*. Perugia: Edizioni Corsare.

[22] Gentile F. (2011). *Il nome prima del cognome: l'esperienza del Progetto LAIV – Laboratorio delle Arti Interpretative dal Vivo – nelle scuole secondarie di secondo grado (Name before surname: the LAIV Project experience – Live Interpretative Arts Workshop – in secondary schools)*, Social Communications, 2, pages 208-216.

[23] Turner V. (1986). *Dal rito al teatro (From ritual to theatre)*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

7. Progetto LAIV – Laboratorio delle Arti Interpretative dal Vivo (Live Performing Arts Workshop), implemented by Fondazione Cariplo in collaboration with the Regional School Office for Lombardy and the Lombardy Region. The project, which still exists, has expanded and changed over time: <https://progettolaivin.it/>

[24] Chellini C. (2021). *Teatro educazione e curricolo. Una questione aperta. Ricerche di Pedagogia e Didattica (Theatre education and curriculum. An open question. Pedagogical and Didactic Studies) – Journal of Theories and Research in Education*, 1, pages 105-121.

- *Educational needs*. How to build an artistic training path to respond to a specific need of your class or school?
- *Theatre, school, territory*. How can education on and with theatre connect the school to the territory in which it operates?
- The training involved both school teachers and theatre workers together who, at the end of the training, planned a theatre education activity, implemented during the following school year 2021/2022.

The decision to build a training-intervention path that witnessed the joint participation of teachers and theatre workers was based on the consideration that the so-called “Latin model” (Facchinelli, 2011, p. 125) is very widespread in Italy and is the one that sees school and theatre in a partnership managing the activities aimed at students. However, dialogue between the two worlds is not always easy, also because the training paths of each remain basically separate starting from the earliest education. We were inspired by the LAIV<sup>7</sup> project, between 2006 and 2010 in Lombardy, that promoted “a sort of integrated training”<sup>[21]</sup> between upper secondary school teachers and theatre workers as the first phase of a process of building and managing theatre workshops in schools<sup>[22]</sup>. However, we transferred it to the first cycle of education and reduced its scope in order to focus on the activities.

In building the project, we were guided by the concept of theatre as a threshold activity<sup>[23]</sup> between two worlds that seem so far apart, like institutions and art, and that, in reality, have interesting affinities and analogies (see below § 1.3), also in their ability to contribute substantially to personal growth.

Theatre is also configured as a border space between school time and extracurricular time: the monitoring of theatre pathways promoted by the first year of the Three-Year Arts Plan 2017/2019 shows that 26% of schools include theatre education during school hours, 47% in extracurricular hours and 27% in both<sup>[24]</sup>. However, the issue is

### Annotations

---



---



---

not merely bureaucratic (even though bureaucratic constraints have a significant impact) and the choice of theatre time in school implies an educational concept: is theatre education considered something that should be an integral part of the school curriculum for all students because its educational value is the foundation of educational success? Or is theatre considered an experience that enriches students, but something extra that comes after subject-based learning? Part of the schools choose to try to include theatre in the curriculum, at least partly, to allow everyone to experience it.

Theatre education also takes the form of a border space between the subjects that can be encountered in theatre activities at school, between inside and outside school from the viewpoint of the spaces used, but also of the professional figures involved in planning and managing the paths.

However, the border also lies in the encounter between body and mind that, in the game of theatre, are equally involved in what Gardner calls “bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence” and defines as “the ability to use one’s body in very differentiated and skilful ways, for expressive as well as concrete purposes”, also working skilfully with objects<sup>[25]</sup>. It is unfailingly found in the encounter with the other person, with other people, because “theatrical experience is awareness of one’s own existence and of being with others”<sup>[26]</sup>.

[25] Gardner H. (2013). *Frames of Mind. The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Milan: Feltrinelli.

[26] Lipani D. G. (2016). *Sul filo dell'Incontro. Teatro, scuola, pedagogia nell'esperienza di Balamòs (a partire da Hom. IX)* (In line with the Encounter. Theatre, school, pedagogy in the experience of Balamòs), (starting from Hom. IX). Dionysus ex machina, VII, pages 233-250.

### Annotations

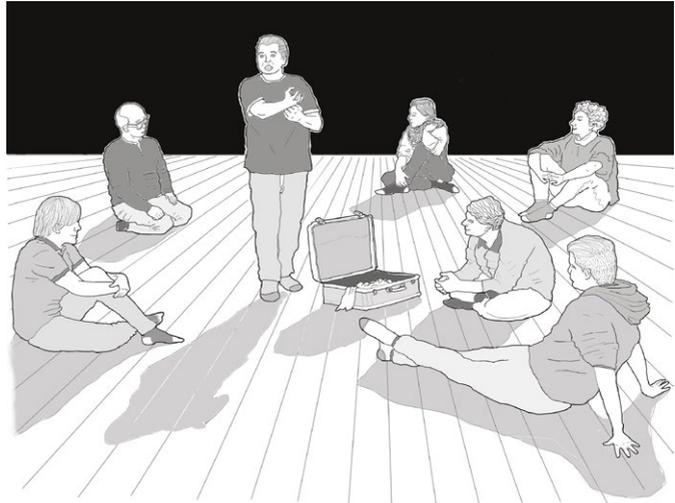
---



---



---



*Theatre as an encounter with the other person*

Seven theatre education paths were created with the project *The small school of Elba as a community school*, most of which were still in progress at the time we interviewed the teachers and the actors. Thus, below are the narratives of the two experiences that were already concluded, based on the analysis of the documentation (project, logs) and on in-depth interviews with the teachers and the actress who planned and managed the workshops.

### **3.2 Animated readings between mountains and sea**

*by Caterina Librandi*

The experience entitled “*Animated readings between mountains and sea*” was devised and implemented for the two multi-age classes at the Marciana Primary School and all the classes at the Marciana

#### **Annotations**

---

---

---

Marina Primary School that are part of the “Istituto Comprensivo Statale G. Giusti” (LIIC803009).

The project emerged from the need to introduce children to the pleasure of reading and its goals were to help students rediscover, develop and strengthen their imagination and expressive abilities and become aware of their own verbal and artistic expressive abilities.

The classes involved in the project were the two multi-age classes at the Marciana Primary School (one class with children from years 1, 2 and 3, another with children from years 4 and 5) and the classes from years 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 at the Marciana Marina Primary School. Each class participated in 3 one-hour meetings (4 meetings were planned for the larger classes only).

The meetings took place in the classes involved in the project, in school time, during Workshop hours. In each meeting, the actress read a story, that was different depending on the age of the pupils, in which the sea was a common thread, while the children were asked to listen actively, for example by tapping on the desk when they heard words they did not know or those connected to the topic of travel or the feeling of fear.

The project was presented to the Interclass Council and then to the Teachers’ Board. Engaging the other teachers at the Comprehensive Institute during the training course proved to be more difficult, but once the project started, all the staff actively collaborated.

### **COLLABORATION BETWEEN TEACHERS AND ACTOR**

The teachers and the actress involved have been collaborating for many years now and are accustomed to planning and conducting the activities they organise together, so it was easy to establish the roles of both figures: in the planning phase the teachers mainly defined the part linked to the goals and objectives, while the actress concentrated more on the part linked to methodology; the teachers first met among

#### ***Annotations***

---

---

---

themselves and then with the actress in order to ensure the project was consistent with the annual scheduling.

The meetings were conducted together. The actress dealt with reading the story and giving the students instructions, while the teachers had the role of active spectators.

*The teacher must support [the actor] just like she supports us. There must be collaboration. For example, we are now lucky enough to have mobile phones and I use the camera function when she is there, so that I can keep track of what happens, also because she goes to several schools. It is clear that she almost never forgets anything, but every now and then a joke or a passage or something that was suggested to her, especially things suggested by the children, can be missed out. It is basically a kind of diary, so that next time we are ready, organised and we don't forget. (Teacher)*

*There are tenured teachers, there are teachers who have just arrived, there are teachers, substitutes, etc. When you have been working together for a long time, the problem practically doesn't arise, meaning that the roles are clear and defined from the beginning and it is obvious that when there are teachers who are less familiar with the method and who may not have been at that school for long, they know less about this experience and the relationship is more complicated.*

*In my opinion, the presence of a teacher, at least one of the teachers of reference, is essential. However, every now and then, a teacher who finds him/herself there a bit by chance, tends to take a step back, becoming a spectator, and this just does not work right from the start. In this specific context of listening, it worked, because the extent to which the children were engaged in their roles as listeners prevented them from being distracted by the teacher's passive listening. Hence, this attitude did not cause major problems in the performance, but, in general, I feel that a piece is missing when this happens, because the active function of the listeners is also the elaboration of something that comes after. [...]*

*It was a four-handed direction, in the sense that I gave instructions and the teachers managed the class and therefore also the task. The*

**Annotations**

---

---

---

*teachers were also active spectators: partly spectators, partly enablers, partly co-directors. They were an active part of the children's listening: while I concentrated on the emotional part of the listening, they kept the attention alive, for example. (Actor)*

Between one meeting and the next, teachers and actor met to make small changes to what had been planned: in one class, for example, the presence of a child with little knowledge of the Italian language had not been foreseen. After seeing that he was unable to follow the story proposed, it was decided that he would be assigned a specific task - that of illustrating the story as it was being read - thereby involving him in the activities. In another class, a different listening method was explored in the three meetings: in the first meeting, the students remained seated at their desks (as planned and as in all the other classes), while during the second listening session they sat on the floor and in the third they sat on the floor with cushions.

**THEATRE ACTIVITY OUTCOMES**

With the aim of involving the largest possible number of children, it was decided that a short-term project (3 or 4 meetings, depending on the size of the classes) would be created, aimed at all the classes of the two primary schools involved. This is because one of the goals was to create moments of emotional sharing, which could help children get back in touch with social relationships after such a long period of isolation due to the pandemic. It was therefore important that everyone had an opportunity to participate.

As well as the brevity of the path, the type of activity proposed produced small changes that were not very evident at an individual level in the dynamics between peers. However, the sharing of emotions aroused by the reading and by the theatre activity most definitely contributed, in an obvious way, to dissolving the tensions that had accumulated over the last year and a half and created a more relaxed atmosphere, in which the children - and the adults - felt more freedom to express themselves.

**Annotations**

.....

.....

.....

*It's a slightly more subtle level than the observation of group dynamics, which you do when carrying out the more specific theatre exercises on collaboration, exchanging of roles, parts, objects, actions and movements. This was all on a slightly more subtle and more refined level; I feel very confident because the quality of that moment was very special. [At the beginning] I wasn't so sure about the success of the activity. [The children] were really quite unaccustomed to listening in that way: we responded to a clear need that they had. (actor)*

*During these hours, aspects of the children emerge, which you can't really evaluate in class: they feel freer, even among themselves. [...] We all find ourselves doing something physical, which demands everyone's concentration, so after the theatre time any tension that had built up in the morning is often resolved. [...] This same easing of tension that applies to them, and between them, absolutely applies to us adults too. Carrying out an activity of this kind also helps us teachers in our relationship with them. (Teacher)*

**EVALUATION OF THE THEATRE ACTIVITY**

The project did not include a formal learning evaluation. Therefore, the students did not receive any judgement resulting from the pathway undertaken: the teachers explained what had been achieved to the parents, providing an overall judgement on the activity and the class, but there was no formal evaluation.

In fact, the teachers and the actor agree that theatre activity should not involve a formal evaluation of results for each child. It should, instead, be accompanied by continuous observation, while maintaining the individual and collective level together, allowing us to recognise progress and difficulties at an overall level while they are occurring.

*They were not evaluated by me. I had not planned to do it, as I don't believe that it is my task and I also like working with the teachers for this reason. From my point of view, evaluation is not necessary; apart from the logs, which is the tool we are given in this project, I always*

**Annotations**

.....

.....

.....

*make final reports where I note, analyse and see. I also I look for ideas, as I progress, when I see that the answer expected is not there, etc. In any case, there's quite a distance between making an evaluation and my educational approach. (Actor)*

*Making a judgement... no, definitely not. We evaluate when we talk to parents and participation in these activities is taken into consideration, as well as "tenacity"; the commitment they put into these hours is certainly not evaluated through a judgement, but it often does influence the way we formulate an overall idea of the student. [...] It's not that theatre should not be evaluated, but it should contribute to the overall evaluation and, in my opinion, it cannot have a separate grade. (Teacher)*

## IMPACT ON EVERYDAY TEACHING

What happened during the theatre practice also had an impact on everyday school life, both in the teacher's professional activity, and in the students' engagement in the curriculum.

*Hearing a story being read by an expert and by an actress, engaged them so much that they also appreciated the teaching instructions more. The act of stopping, exclamation, adding intonation to the voice, movement of the body... It's not that they had never done it with her before [the actress], just not in such a specific way. Those three hours were really aimed at creative reading and, therefore, at this way of acting. The children participated during the reading. It was very useful for making them concentrate. For example, if the name of a country was mentioned, the children had to jump or clap their hands or make a body movement... (Teacher)*

An interesting consequence from the educational point of view is the fact that the teacher places different and greater attention on his/her way of reading and stimulating the children's attention. This highlights how theatrical activity aimed at children can also take the form of a particular training activity for teachers, providing new

### Annotations

---



---



---

stimuli and new tools to use during their everyday teaching activities. One consequence, also in the educational field, but aimed at the students, is represented by the fact that the topic of listening, in the ways explored with the actress, was once again addressed, in another context: the aim was to consolidate and strengthen the experience, creating links with other areas of learning and thus including it in the children's educational and formative journey.

*It was a good way to help them listen to the smallest details of what was being read. Obviously, we then worked on this again, because otherwise it would be rather like something that is an end unto itself. I must say that, when reading, some students have started to use a little mimicry [...]. A mechanism has been triggered, by which [...] I also undoubtedly read the stories in a different way and consequently they are more engaged.* (Teacher)

The result of all this was that the children have started to modulate their voices independently and use the expressive abilities of the rest of the body when reading outside of the theatre workshop, during daily educational activities.

*They don't do this when reading a page of a science book, but when reading a story, some of them really start to get into the character and at least they're not shy any more. Maybe they already had it inside them, but seeing it done by a person you've known for 5 years who tears her hair out, or pretends to, while reading... Well, it makes it easier for them.* (Teacher)

**COMPARISON OF MULTI-AGE AND SAME-AGE CLASSES**

The project was implemented in five same-age classes and in two multi-age classes (one with children from years 1, 2 and 3 and one with children from years 4 and 5). Both for the teacher interviewed and for the actress, working with children of different ages is generally an advantage:

**Annotations**

.....

.....

.....

*[...] she pushed the little ones, by imitation, to be more attentive. ...and the older ones to be more responsible and to be the “best” (Teacher).*

*There are some great advantages, meaning this whole thing about exchange, mutual help, with the older ones educating, acting as assistants, at least in actions. However, in this case, since they [the children] were called upon to develop a sense of attention, the disadvantages may have emerged a little more than the advantages: that is, the same-age class was certainly easier to manage than the multi-age class, due to the different attention spans. In this case, in this specific path, I perceived these disadvantages maybe for the first time. (Actor)*

The central objective of this theatre workshop was to develop listening skills, and therefore also the attention span that changes according to age, in relation to the complexity of the story and the distance from what is familiar. This also brought out several difficulties in the theatre workshop, typical of teaching in mixed-age classes, which require specific solutions. In this case, a decision was made to focus on fairytale-type narratives, as they can be rich and captivating regardless of age and every child can get something from them, moving with progressive levels of difficulty, making it possible to accompany even the youngest.

*In the multi-age class of children from years one, two and three, the first story worked well because it was “The Little Goldfish”, a traditional and very simple fairy tale that did not create problems, even for the boy who was not very familiar with the Italian language; the second fairy tale was somewhat more complex and was intended to satisfy pupils from year three a bit, but it was a little tiring for the children from year one. (Actor)*

*[...] A very noticeable gap is starting to appear between some pupils from year five, the older ones, and the youngest from year four, and therefore attention spans change and interests change. In fact, in the end, the choice to read “The Adventures of Sindbad the Sailor” was a*

### **Annotations**

---



---



---

*little bit for this reason; I had initially thought about reading something different for pupils of year five - I wanted to read some extracts from "The Old Man and the Sea" by Hemingway, but it then occurred to me that perhaps, thinking about the multi-age class in Marciana, it was not suitable for the youngest children from year four, so I had to choose something that would be captivating for all of them. I must say that "One Thousand and One Nights" was very well received, to the point that I then decided to repeat the same module in both schools and, therefore, also for year five at Marciana Marina. (Actor)*

### **3.3 A wave carries us far away**

*By Rosalia Delogu*

The Comprehensive Institute of Infant, Primary and Lower Secondary School "G. Carducci" in Porto Azzurro (LIIC805001) boasts a long tradition of theatre workshops, which have engaged students from infancy to early adolescence, school teachers and external experts. In fact, in the preamble to the project, we read:

*[...] we have always believed in the importance and power of emotional expression linked to a project and a workshop, the goal of which is to develop each person's potential and abilities. Providing education to theatricality represents an opportunity to reveal the expressiveness of children in the age group that involves the maximum development of individual growth.*

*[...] The workshop allows for an in-depth exploration of various kinds of texts, based on individual and group artistic-pictorial creativity and gestural and vocal expressive research. It also enhances the value of those who have no other opportunities to succeed and make themselves visible, making the group cohesive, reducing conflicts and competitiveness and bringing out the individual's true self in a real emotional training ground, where one's own emotional world can be socialised.*

#### **Annotations**

---



---



---

The project involved the entire Institute but below we will analyse the experience that took place in the two year four classes at the Porto Azzurro Primary School. This workshop was set in motion during school hours as part of the curricular schedule, as an interdisciplinary activity.

The general goal of the project was to combat educational and socio-cultural awkwardness, promoting the school's inclusion of students, education in diversity, self-awareness and personal autonomy, favouring expressiveness through the use of various languages, strengthening peer relationships and enhancing the value of the students' different abilities.

In particular, these objectives are linked to what is included in the National Guidelines (2012) with reference to *Body language as a communicative-expressive modality*.

The methodology used required students to reflect on the project topics and contribute to developing a written outline. Subsequently, through the workshop conducted by the actress, the stage potential and possible languages were explored to turn what the children had come up with into a show.

As a verification tool, the project included both a log, kept by the teachers (in which the progress and difficulties encountered and strategies for getting around and overcoming them were taken note of), and ongoing and summative interdisciplinary tests, within the curriculum.

As already mentioned, the workshop was carried out during school hours, during Italian class, to be specific. The course was identical (6 one-hour meetings, starting on 1 March) for both classes of year four students, but the activities were always carried out separately. This choice was dictated by organisational reasons as well as by the anti-Covid distancing rules, which precluded the possibility of combining the workshops of the two year four classes.

The workshops were carried out in the gym and in the schoolyard in order to ensure distancing and allow the children to avoid wearing

### **Annotations**

.....

.....

.....

masks. However, in some cases, these spaces proved to be unsuitable and so the activities continued inside the classrooms.

*We did them in the gym, in the school courtyard, expressly using the space in order to take off the masks and look at each other. That is also important.* (Teacher)

*We used the gym once, but there was a problem with reverberation and cold, so we decided not to use it any more. We used the schoolyard once. Then we used the classroom for the other meetings, moving all the desks up against the wall, as there is space in the classroom, with the windows open, since the acoustics are basically better than in the gym.* (Teacher)

**COLLABORATION BETWEEN TEACHERS AND ACTOR**

Only one of the two teachers had previously had the opportunity to collaborate directly with the actress. The other had attended one of the shows performed at the end of one of the workshop paths held at the school several years earlier.

The two teachers therefore approached the actress in different ways, and not without some prejudice: one thought that the possibility offered by *The small school of Elba as a community school* project was an opportunity to work with the actress, with whom she collaborated in extracurricular projects, while the other had a more cautious approach.

*I had seen her working at school [the actress] because she had already participated in other projects but not in the classes where I worked [...] and I must say that she surprised me! In the past, I had seen two final performances that had left me perplexed. I had seen that the children very well prepared from a technical point of view but I found the shows to be very “scholastic”, based on a very traditional form of theatre for schools. It was very “let’s learn the parts off by heart”. I come from an experience of theatrical improvisation and, when I did some workshops in class with my children, also making use of improvisation experts, I*

**Annotations**

.....  
.....  
.....

*had focused a great deal on imagination and on a very broad outline that gave children more possibilities. This is why I was a bit perplexed when I saw Francesca's shows years ago.*

*I must say that the work she did in the classes was, on the other hand, extremely interesting, because she was able to combine the technical aspect with the expressive aspect. (Teacher)*

The discussion between teachers and the actress, which took place from the initial planning phase, made it possible to clearly state the objectives that the project group wanted to achieve, giving the actress the opportunity to build a path that would take these goals into account and be in harmony with the other teaching activities. From the story told by the teachers, shared planning emerges, not only in the initial phase of the project but also during the creation of the workshop.

*We [teachers] made a plan at the end of last [school] year. We presented a plan and discussed it with the actress. We indicated our goals and our timing and, based on this, she went off to build the path. We discussed it and the project was defined based on this. [...] She then asked us if we had a specific goal or if we had a final dramatisation [...] Since there was no goal for a final performance, we preferred to do some experimental work instead. She worked on expressiveness, cleaning up of gestures, choreography and timing.*

*At the beginning, it was important to bring out the expressiveness and then we tried to clean up the gestures, taking out what was not needed, get a good understanding of what the emotion linked to the gesture was and thus try to propose that and nothing else, work together, enter respecting the timing of others, without creating confusion; then there was the choreography, representing order within the space on stage. (Teacher)*

## **THEATRE ACTIVITY OUTCOMES**

The workshops were conducted by the actress, with the help of an educator and a support teacher. The teachers thus had the opportunity to completely dedicate themselves to the activity of observing.

### **Annotations**

---



---



---

*I participated a little, on and off, in the games inside the circle (we worked in a circle, spaced apart). Since there was an educator and a support teacher in the class, it was a precious moment for me, allowing me to observe. The educator and the support teacher joined the group with the children and I mainly did documentation and observation work. I took photos, made some videos and observed. As I am constantly in the classroom for teaching activities, this was a very precious moment, allowing me to watch my children, without having to “teach”. A moment that let me see things that normally escape me. (Teacher)*

*Sometimes I participated too. At times, I entered and then left. In the first and second lessons, also to help the children get involved. If the teacher is the first to start doing strange things, it’s easier for them to do so too. (Teacher)*

No active role by the families in the planning or implementation of the workshop emerged. Both teachers highlighted the fact that the families were happy with the children’s experience. One teacher underlined the fact that no parents challenged the educational value of this activity.

As for the students involved, the teachers did not find any major changes from a relational point of view, especially among peers, but rather a development of individual expressive ability.

*Let’s say that, above all, individual characteristics emerged, but the children are accustomed to doing things together, helping each other and collaborating. We could say that the class had to be less patient with those with whom it usually has to be very patient. Those who usually require a lot of patience realised that they can avoid putting themselves on a pedestal every now and then. They realised it on their own, without the teacher having to intervene. (Teacher)*

*In fact, I was very pleased to see the shy children, who still feel like toddlers... discover that they had lovely strong voices. (Teacher)*

The teachers talk about the great enthusiasm shown by all the children during the workshop, the difficulties they expected due to the

**Annotations**

---

---

---

presence of some problematic children and how not only were these difficulties overcome but they even turned out to be a resource for the whole group.

*The children liked it very much [...] There were three of us adults observing the work. We watched the children on a beautiful journey, one of growth and acceptance of others, which led some who were very egocentric and self-centred, to hold back their desire to be the protagonist (because otherwise things wouldn't have worked).*

*Some natural talent emerged in one child [...] Despite difficulties, his talent in identifying with a character and playing at being someone else emerged... it was remarkable! Truly remarkable! In spite of all the difficulties he has in complying with direction and with an extremely limited attention span and very little concentration, he is however very creative and very imaginative. This has led him to have a very positive role in the group.*

*Even now, when we read aloud in the morning [...] this child, who has difficulty reading and always wants to be one of the protagonists, has his own role with a character who always has very short lines, whom he was able to portray very well and instinctively! This certainly created something positive, making him feel good at something he had never felt good at before.*

*It was validation for the others. [...] Another very shy child needed a little more time but later on he opened up. At the beginning it was something like "well, I'm doing this thing because I'm at school and I have to do it, but I'm not enjoying it very much", but then he ended up having fun. He learned to take himself less seriously.*

*This is basically what theatre is to me: the ability to joke with ourselves and to take ourselves less seriously. (Teacher)*

## EVALUATION OF THE THEATRE ACTIVITY

Both teachers explain that, as it takes place during school hours, the theatre workshop undoubtedly contributes to the overall evaluation of the students.

### Annotations

---



---



---

*I am going to evaluate the activity in the context of physical education and civic education, because it includes the relationship with others, working with others, the acceptance of rules and the construction of common rules, so I can consider it an assessable activity. Since the new evaluation came into force, from the middle of last year, I have been working hard to learn how to evaluate using the new system. [...] So I made myself a binder with the assessment rubrics, indicators, discipline by discipline... a ring binder... I add check marks and use that. On this occasion, I had a chance to do it while I was there with the children. (Teacher)*

**IMPACT ON EVERYDAY TEACHING**

Both teachers decided to propose some of the activities carried out in the workshops again, as part of their normal classroom activity. Among these, were the compilation of a personal diary, expressive reading and expressive games.

*There are undoubtedly some activities carried out during the workshops that I will use again during classroom activities. The log of what they did for sure: the next day and two days later, they wrote down their experiences and their emotions, in a free form, without any corrections by the teacher. We made a personal diary. Narrative text. Dear Diary. I said: children, I will not be correcting it for you. I might point out what needs to be fixed, but I will not “evaluate”. If you tell them “I’m not going to evaluate”, they feel freer. (Teacher)*

*Then, during physical education, I propose expressive games again. Maybe not with Francesca’s skills and competence, but I do play a lot of expressive games. Also because, being a class with two or three children who are a bit self-centred, I try to carry out very few competitive activities and plenty of collaborative activities. So, the game is often a game in which you “create together”. In games of movement, I can also form two teams, but the team only wins if the classmates collaborate with each other. (Teacher)*

**Annotations**

.....  
.....  
.....

## THE MEANINGS OF EXPERIENCE

The workshop ended with the staging of a creative class project, in which the children recited a poem, each interpreting a verse using body language.

*I really liked the final proposal: a very short poem, six verses I think, or even less. The children each memorised a verse and interpreted it with their bodies. I really liked this idea of poetry because they actually learned it and visualised it. They probably understood it much better than they would have by reading it four times out loud. It was a very interesting way of proposing poetic language. I might try to propose this again.* (Teacher)

*It was also nice to see them collaborating with their bodies, with others, positioning themselves in the space... oh, they were really good! Then, two by two, they interpreted a verse of this poem, acting it out, while they formed a large tree. It was a really lovely moment, one of real theatre, in my opinion.* (Teacher)

The experience achieved through *The small school of Elba as a community school* project shows us, among other things, what is theorised in literature, that is, that the experience of a theatre workshop at school undoubtedly has an influence on the students and their pathway of growth, but also on the teachers' everyday activity, with an important methodological impact. Today, theatre, which has been an educational tool since its beginnings in Athens in the 5th century BC, is still, after more than two thousand years, a driving force of transformation and innovation in the life journeys of children and young people, as well as in the professional development of their teachers.

### Annotations

---



---



---



REGIONE  
TOSCANA



The small school of Elba as a community school  
CUP (Unique Project Code): B92F20000330002

---

Florence, Via M. Buonarroti 10  
+39 055.2380.301

**[www.indire.it](http://www.indire.it)**  
**[piccolescuole.indire.it](http://piccolescuole.indire.it)**

Follow us on



ISBN/A 979-12-80706-78-2



9 791280 706782