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ROMA HEROES BRINGING CHANGE





CASE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY REVIEW ON
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORKSHOP
"HEROES, Eroi nella vita quotidiana"
AND THE PEER TRAINERS' TRAINING PROCESS FOR
THE CONDUCTION OF THE 2019-2020
WORKSHOPS IN ITALY
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INTRODUCTION:

The present script - Intellectual Outcome - documents the process of training for young apprentices to the role of conductor / moderator of the socio-educational workshop called "Heroes, heroes in everyday life" planned within the project "(Roma) Heroes in Theater Education and everyday life" sponsored and funded by the EU educational program Erasmus+ .

This process was led in Italy by the organization A.P.S. Rampa Prenestina representing Italy in the role of Strategic Partner, alongside with Romania and Spain at the invitation of the Hungarian lead association, Women for the Future / Independent Theater Hungary.

The training was carried out by four young volunteer peer trainers under the guidance and supervision of two artists-trainers in the period October 2019 - July 2020 in the city of Rome. The document is a testimony of the work carried out locally, that allows the comparison between the different international actors on the methodologies applied to the diversity of national cases while outlining their common traits.

The study/analysis is also proposed as a basic manual and guide for the continuity and future developments of the project as well as working tool both for the current actors of the project and for those organizations and trainers in the artistic and socio-educational field that want to include the Heroes Workshop among their activities.

It is important to note that the second and final phase of the project activities (March-May 2020) suffered a significant slowdown and a period of stand-by due to the Covid 19 pandemic event and the territorial confinement instituted by mandatory law. The limitations of liberty, still in force as I write, has led to a long period of downtime, limiting the completion of the training through practice and simulation of the workshop with peer friends. The dramatic situation forced objective modification such as the transition to online activities and a significant downsizing of the initial objectives set by the project.

However, the main part of the Peer trainers training had been completed at the international training meeting in Budapest. Online team version of the workshop was prepared, though not put into practice, as in the mean time the lockdown was lifted. Online theoretical training was done, under which the volunteers succeeded to present the workshop with a live audience successfully.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKSHOP

The workshop conducted by a couple of young mixed Roma and non-Roma volunteer peer trainers, focus on the archetypal figure of the Hero, more specifically of the Roma Hero, by the means of storytelling, written and video narration techniques. Using the main tool of social games as creative, playful dynamic and storytelling as main language, the Hero Workshop shed light upon those positive figures who creatively opposes the condition of marginalization that since ever surrounds Roma communities, as today happens to communities of immigrants and refugees. Among the material used is the theatrical production of artists of Roma origins from Italy, Spain, Ireland, Romania, with the purpose of sharing and disseminate the Roma Theater to a wider audience, but also to stimulate reflection, deepen understanding and open-mindedness for different perspectives.

The excerpts of the theatrical works presented in the workshop voices the experience of those who live in condition of marginalization, it compares life experiences, allow us to overcome prejudices, clichés and mono-ethnic visions. The Theater reveals those aspects of reality unknown to most, it shows the hidden side of things of positive and negative events of life, reveals injustices and becomes open denounce. Above all, through its poetic, Theatre awakes the human longing for dignity, freedom, equality that unites all human beings beyond their origin or provenance, reduces the concept of "race", classification and division term of the human race, to its inappropriate and obsolete significance.

The workshop opens to the practice of storytelling as moment of sharing and reflection on human potential beyond stereotypes, the value of individual actions and standpoints. Listening to the stories and opinions of human fellows, create the possible change in ways of seeing things, thus giving space to the best part of the human soul, with its charge of solidarity, empathy, inclusion, while enhancing the courage of a firm opinion.

The workshop is aimed primarily at young Roma, to give them useful tools to know and develop their own potential role of free citizens, who can influence their own destiny and that of their community. Becoming aware of one's marginal condition and mastering the tools of knowledge to overcome it, might be the first step towards becoming citizens of the world, self-reflective, informed, responsible and active in forging one's future. With the conscious use of art and communication in their daily life, they can become integral part of those inclusive communities that embrace the values and potential of Roma communities, their tradition, their artistic values, returning to it's fundamental and necessary element of active citizenship in the development of an inclusive society.

Secondly but not least, the laboratory is aimed at the school world, secondary school, high school, university students and their respective school teachers and operators for whom the playful form of the laboratory represents a valid knowledge tool useful for combating bullying and discrimination. which unfortunately deteriorate the school environment,

causing frequent cases of abandonment of studies by minors from the Roma community. Finally, it is aimed at those active citizens, social workers, formal and informal educators who want to acquire a new tool in their socio-inclusive work.

Generic conduction of the Workshop:

- Reception and Presentation of the workshop
- Social and presentation games among the group of participants as iceberaking.
- Introduction of the Hero theme - all participants are involved in a debate on the meaning of the term "hero" and "being heroes" ranging between ancient mythology, modern history and everyday life, getting indication out of definitions, terminologies and keywords suggested by the participants upon invitation of the moderator.
- Presentation of Roma heroes and their personal stories by watching short videos of Theater Plays by Roma artists and reading short excerpts of their stories – follows an open discussion, exchange of opinions and impressions.
- Work in groups on analysis and creative evolution of the stories viewed. Presentation of the results of the work among the groups (theatrical scenes, poems, writings, songs, etc.)
- Creative games and exercises on the theme "being heroes"
- Pause
- Social games and exercises for energy activation and communication.
- Narration by the Moderators of their own heroic story and of a heroic figure known in their personal life.
- Work in small groups on personal stories and of heroic stories they have witnessed.
- Presentation of the stories to the group, sharing and exchange of the stories among the participants.
- Choice of some of the stories told and work through different creative languages: narration, theatrical scene, video, music.
- Presentation of the “small creative works” to the group.
- Final debate on the laboratory and on the experience gained.
- Closing and final greeting.

Reflections on the creation of the Italian Hero Workshop

(adaptation to local contest)

Starting out from the original version developed by the Hungarian partners through a mixed team of artists and educators of Roma and non-Roma origin, the workshop, in the version developed in Italy, thus keeping the main frame, was subject to a process of adaptation to the specific social context of the institutional and/or informal settlements of the Roma community, together with the social context of their territory, the sub-urban area of the capital city of Rome. The research work shared among trainers and volunteers, based on the direct experience of social characteristics in the Roma community, together with the collection of data on the situation of the communities youth population regarding education, school, work, social integration, have resulted in the creation of a hybrid and modular workshop, adaptable to different categories of participants based on age group and / or social situation, so as to be proposed to mixed Roma and non-Roma groups even of different age groups, to groups of Roma only or only non-Roma. In the case of a workshop for adults only, the main focus will be on theatrical storytelling, the debate, the exercises and the games adapted and differentiated to a level of contents according to the targeted group's social background (ranging from illiterate adults to university students, teachers, social workers etc.). In this case we shall put emphasis on the socio-political aspects, thus preserving the playfulness of the method. In case of workshops for minors (secondary and high school students) and Roma minors in situations of educational poverty, the workshop will have a lighter content, giving more time to social exercises and games, with the possible use of elements of puppetry (puppets, masks), music and singing; in this case the use of written texts will be avoided in favor of storytelling and the resume of the videos of the Roma theatre plays to be done in the form of oral narration. The level of discussion on sociological issues will be raised in presence of older adolescents and young adults (high school) also introducing to current themes belonging in today's high school environment such as racism and bullying.

EUROPEAN COOPERATION

The project "(Rome) Heroes in Theater education and everyday life" develops as cooperation between realities of different countries, four as far, Hungary, Romania, Spain and Italy, within the European Educational program Erasmus +. These realities are legally constituted organizations active in the educational and social fields out of an artistic standing point, developing interventions on inclusive issues related to Roma culture and artistic production.

Lead Organization:

Hungary - Women for the Future / Independent Theater Hungary.

Partners:

Spain - Association for Independent Investigation and Development of professional Theater in Andalusia.

Romania - The Roma Actors Association (Giuvlipen)

Italy - A.P.S. Rampa Prenestina

In addition to the artistic language, these organization shares a common ground in the practice of support inclusion and social-integration of Roma youth through artistic and socio-educational projects. Promotes the knowledge of different forms of artistic expression (theater, music, circus, dance, visual arts, crafts) creating a diversified ground in methodology in inclusive pedagogy practiced by the various associations. The common goal is the support of young people in increasing their self-knowledge and the awareness of their skills, their talents and their implicit potential to become active citizens, capable of forging their own future, positively influencing their community and the society that surrounds them.

The first meeting between the members organizations took place during the "Roma Heroes Festival", organized annually in Budapest thanks to the lead association Independent Theater Hungary.

The international meetings planned in this project, held in Rome, Bucharest and Budapest, represented precious moments of exchanging knowledge, experience and work tools between the various realities with the purpose of artistic, social cooperation and mutual support. Today it converges in the conception of further projects of creative collaboration on common thematic.



A.P.S. Rampa Prenestina

As representative of A.P.S. Rampa Prenestina, I participated in the 2018 Roma Heroes International Storytelling Festival with the play "Children of the Wind" written together with Ursula Mainardi. The play is based on my own life experience, the search of my supposed ancient Roma origins, my commitment to Roma rights through art education for Roma Youth, the 5 years long experience has trainer of a Roma Youth Band. The play was well received by audience and specialized press.

A.P.S. Rampa Prenestina is a cultural association, a social work space created in 2013 by a collective of artists, art-educators and therapists. Alongside the artistic production we forward practices and activities that promotes artistic languages in socio-educational context, aimed at children from disadvantaged social groups. We promote knowledge of music and other forms of art (theater, circus, dance, visual arts, crafts) as a method of active inclusive pedagogy. The mission is inspired by concepts of the Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire, his integrational work with the young people of the Brazilian favelas, as well as the youth orchestra of José Abreu in Venezuela, Montessori and other alternative non - formal educational concepts. These concepts are adjusted to confront the reality of Roma Youth living marginalized in Institutional Settlements (Camps) created by the council in the suburbs of the capital city of Rome, Italy.

As contrast to the consequent educational poverty and social marginalization of these settlements, our workspace is open to the attendance of youth, mainly from the local Roma settlement and occasionally from other suburban areas. In addition to artistic activities and educational support, youth have access to activities of crafts and trades that are potential to create professional paths (repair and restoration of musical instruments, photography, video, creative reuse / recycling, artisanery...)

We aim to create supportive, friendly and inclusive environment around creative activities open to Roma and non - Roma youth. We strongly believe that Art in all its forms and manifestation is a powerful tool for creating an inclusive and life supporting society and specifically in the contest of forms of social exclusions such as racism and class division.

The most specific artistic activities we have conducted over the years that have a common ground with our international partners are: Theater workshop (for children, adolescents and young adults). Music school (instrumental techniques and ensemble music). Led by professional actors, musicians and art-educators, the two workshops then interact in the production of plays and theatrical performances presented in the city.

Why Erasmus?

Through participation in the Erasmus + program, the APS Rampa Prenestina has identified the possibility of giving a broader scope to its educational activities by taking part in a network of trans-national dimension, in the belief that cooperative exchange with similar organizations in other countries carries cultural enrichment to the activities hitherto confined to the city territory. We thus aim to make young volunteers aware of the international dimension of their work, give them the opportunity to work in groups outside the territory of origin, exchange experiences and expertises with other volunteers and enrich their preparation by following training led by educators from different countries and cultures.

Through the international relations established thanks to the Erasmus + project, we observe in the young Roma involved, an exponential growth in awareness of the outside world, enhanced sense of belonging to international reality which, in the case of the Roma diaspora, is rich in cultural variations, while maintaining the common denominator of its origins through language and traditions.

We have also identified in the support, development, growth and dissemination to a broader audience of the Roma Theater and its artistic production, an important evolutionary potential for the cause of the whole Roma community, which in its artistic expression has always remained on the sidelines, considered mere curiosity and folkloric expression. Today, thanks to modern technologies, to European inclusion policies and in the first place to the passion and dedication of the numerous Roma artists scattered throughout Europe, Roma theater proves to deserve a place in the artistic context of today's society.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRAINING

and Preparation of the Trainers

During the international meetings, the trainers of the participating countries analyzed and deepened issues related to the project implementation: development of trainers' skills, fundamentals technics and rules of communication, pedagogies and non-formal education, development of the communication skills and competences of the volunteers.

The training of the trainers took place during the international meetings in Rome and Bucharest, generally divided into two phases. In the first phase, the trainers of the Hungarian lead association presented their workshop and conducted the training exposing the methodologies and techniques they use, the themes, the games, the individual and collective exercises, the resolution of inherent problems and difficulties. In the second phase, the Partners of Italy, Romania and Spain in turn proposed possible variants and alternatives in relation to the situation and the specific target of each nation. Working on languages of theater and storytelling, the partner shares many points in common regarding methodologies; however, everyone enriched their technical and creative preparation.

International meeting in Rome, Italy

May 2019 Launch of the project, development of the fundamental guidelines (KickStarter)

The trainers of the Hungarian lead association met the trainers of the Partners from Italy, Romania and Spain. We discussed the guidelines for the creation of a common methodology based on the exchange of informal teaching techniques and methods between the Partners, leaving free initiative on adapting to the specific social situation of each nation.

This latter detail is of fundamental importance, as the educational level of the Roma youth population varies significantly from country to country. From the high and university education of many Hungarian Romas, to the Romanian team's commitment to women's rights in the Roma villages. From the misery of the Roma neighborhoods of the Spanish cities to the shame of the Roma camps in Italy, sharing the high dropout of youth from secondary schools. It was therefore necessary to adapt the languages used to the different conditions and needs of each country.

In the second part of the meeting, the trainers of the Hungarian leader presented the original version of the workshop they had developed, with the other partners acting as participants. Together we have seen some of the plays, compared and shared techniques and methods of teaching, storytelling, performed exercises of theatrical improvisation.

International meeting in Bucharest, Romania

August 2019 Preparation of trainers, definition of the common methodology.

The second international meeting dealt with the deepening and consolidation of the methodology - Games and exercises, the plays, contents of the workshop, the training of volunteers.

Planning of the Methodology in Italy

- During the international meeting in Rome, the exchange and comparison of the methodologies of the various Partners took place, which allowed for the integration and adoption of useful elements to improve, adapt, and complete the methodology of each partner (Foundation Bricks). Secondly, the methodology was tested at the international meeting in Bucharest, which resulted in the creation of a methodology that is common to all Partners but at the same time leaves freedom for individual countries to adapt it to different national situations.

- Locally, a phase of comparison and planning between the two local Italian trainers through research and in-depth analysis, brought to the finalization of a training program with evolutionary phases, by integrating own methodological elements with those acquired during exchanges with international partner



SELECTION OF PEER TRAINERS

The selection took place through personal interviews with candidates whom in various roles or for different reasons follow or have followed in the past the activities of our association. For the Roma component personal talents were taken in consideration rather than at the level of education, given the situation of educational poverty that unfortunately oppresses the young people of the Roma camps in Rome.

Here most of the young people drop out of education as early as secondary school, rarely continuing to high school. Originally, it was opted to give opportunities only to young people from the fields who are in greater need of human and educational support, but the circumstances required otherwise.

We had great difficulty in finding a female Roma candidate with the necessary requisites since, unfortunately, the women of the local community already from adolescence, are engaged in early marriage, and therefore we turned to the choice of two young men. Of the two initial candidates, however, one was selected to work by another association. A young Roma girl proposed, who does not belong to the communities of the camps, but comes from a regular immigrant social status. Representing an atypical case for a foreign Roma, we welcomed her with the idea that her preparation and education would be of support to the other Roma candidate. Also for the non-Roma components of the volunteer team it was not possible for us to involve a woman for which we had again to fall back on two male volunteers.

Despite indications from the original project about a group consisting of four volunteers, two men and two women, a group of three men and one woman, two Roma (man and woman) and two non-Roma (men) will be representing Italy. Two of them had already been previously attending the activities of our organization; consequently, the first phase of familiarization involved mainly the other two volunteers, through individual meetings, followed by informal meetings with the whole group of volunteers and trainers. During the first collective meetings, everyone was able to tell about themselves and their expectations regarding the project.

In order to consolidate the group, strengthen friendship and deepen mutual knowledge, the trainers organized occasional informal meetings, city walks, trips out of town, collective viewing of videos and theatrical performances. Later the group of volunteers created a whatsapp group to communicate and come together autonomously both for working together and for friendly meetings.

The agreement concluded through the signing of a written collaboration agreement between the volunteers and the organization before the formal training started.

PEER TRAINERS' TRAINING

The phases of the training of "Roma Heroes" volunteer Peer Trainers

The training of young volunteers for the conduction of the "Roma Heroes" workshop, before deepening into the technical and creative aspects, went through a process of in-depth mutual knowledge and the comparison between the realities of volunteers of Roma and non-Roma origin. Different in social, cultural, economic terms, analyzing their differences and similarities. Separating personal opinions and feelings from prejudices and clichés.

The training of the volunteers, characterized by different levels of school education, required necessary adjustments in order to reach the degree of intellectual and equal maturity, inherent the final goal of conducting the practical workshop. Ranging from secondary school degree, through high school diploma and to university degree, the volunteers have an extremely diverse educational and scholastic background. This required the deconstructing concepts through simplifying processes of general notions, followed by a process of gradual restoring of the original depth to the topics covered.

The support provided by the trainers, as well as technical, was of a transversal nature with particular attention to the enhancement of the emotional quality of the volunteers even in the simplest expressions of the different personalities, a fundamental aspect for the workshop based on intimate and personal narrative.

As the four volunteers are young and with little or no experience in conducting events, the training requires an in-depth study of various aspects of public communication within diverse groups of people. The goal is to develop interlocutory skills and in-depth knowledge of the topics covered, to equip volunteers with a wealth of useful tools to lead a group of participants through a playful educational experience, with the proper competence, preparation and ease. Much of the same games and exercises practiced during the volunteer training will be part of the creative work with the workshop participants. This allow the moderators to have a wide range of choices to diversify the workshops from time to time and test the effectiveness on the different types of participants.

Below is a description of the topics covered in the various stages of training.

Verbal communication

We started training by working on the most obvious difficulties for young people at their first experience dealing with audiences, namely shyness, insecurity, authority in presenting themselves to the audience. Specific theatrical training exercises were used:

- Entering an empty scene and introducing yourself (posture, gaze, emotional control through breathing)
- Communicative skills (in-depth knowledge of the topic, the ability to speak in public, speech rhythms, the importance of pauses, the role of silence)
- Space awareness (Where and how to stand openly in front of the audience, do not turn your back, share the space with your collaborator in a balanced way.)

In this phase, the training based on play and the exercise of playfulness, aimed at eliminating the barriers and limits created by the mind and the judgment of oneself and others in human relationships. We used individual, couple, circle and team games. These are expressly adapted games and popular games adapted for the purpose. In the immediate experience and the energetic, emotional charge of the game, volunteers can rediscover the value of spontaneity towards others and deepen concepts such as lightness, complicity, fair play, balance, which will be useful in the experience with the public.

The volunteers will use the same dynamics during the presentation of the workshop:

- Knowledge of games and theatrical ice-breaking exercises among the participants.
- Create complicity and group intimacy, overcome mistrust and dissolve the discomfort created by shyness and personal closures. Make sure to involve the whole group and that the participants do see and hear clearly, use eye contact frequently.
- Discursive clarity and simplicity in presenting the various phases of the workshop, in giving instructions and explaining the mechanisms of the games and exercises. Make sure that all participants follow and understand.

During the games and exercises observe that everyone is involved in body and mind, be ready to clarify the instructions if necessary. When necessary, give diversified possibilities and information, to accept suggestions and modifications, to give attention to all participants.

- Make the various phases light and fun while preserving the seriousness of the objectives. Giving opinions or suggestions while playing the games.
- During the debate, emanate the right charge of authority without being authoritarian, overbearing or constricting towards the participants, but always kind and inviting.
- Share and participate in the group atmosphere without losing authority.
- Avoid competitive games. Challenge must always be motivated, directed and cooperative.
- According to the needs of the moment, use energizing and thematic games in different ways. Have a list of alternative games available to replace if the atmosphere of the group requires it.
- Respect the set times in the games.
- When the games are over, where appropriate, evaluate with the participants the effect, the meaning, the usefulness of the game, evaluating the results for supportive and positive purposes. Compare the games with real life situations, taking care not to detail, judge or personify.



MODULAR GAMES AND ADAPTATIONS

- The Flower - In a circle, all participants clenched fists joined and turned upwards, open your hands one after the other until the circle is completed, all fingers then vibrate like the petals of a flower that has just opened. *Symbolic opening game to create a unitary group atmosphere.*

- Presentation Game - In a circle, one at a time Participants enter the center of the circle and say their name. On the second round, a gesture of choice representative of one's being is added to the name. On the third round, a theatrical bow of greeting is added to the first two actions, followed by a collective applause of the circle. *Interpersonal presentation and ice breaking game.*

- Presentation Game 2 - In a circle, Participants, one after the other, say their name, adding a gesture and a phrase representative of their personality that rhymes with the name. Following the order of the circle, the other participants, before their name, must repeat the names, phrases and gestures of those who preceded them. *Interpersonal presentation and ice breaking game, suitable for memorizing everyone's names.*

- Occupy the Space - The whole group walks distributing themselves throughout the space, the moderator gives orders to change the walking speed and to stop suddenly. Possible variants: look into the eyes of the participants who cross each other. At the stop, look into the eyes or hug the closest participant. *Ice breaking game, awareness of the body in space, of sharing space with others and of the various degrees of closeness with others, public space, intimate space.*

- This is a Cat - In a circle, the leader offers an object to the person next to him, both on one side and on the other, starting a short dialogue: "Here, this is for you!" "What's this?" "It's a cat!" "What?" "It's a cat!" "Ah!" The passage of objects continues in both directions creating funny situations. The leader can add any other objects besides the two initials giving them a name of their choice. *Energizing and ice breaking game*

- Balthazar Says - In a circle, the group walks, the leader in the center gives commands (Walk fast or slowly, stop, scratch your head etc.) Only the commands preceded by the keywords "Balthazar says" must be executed. The leader will try to mislead the group by occasionally omitting those keywords. Anyone who gets confused leaves the game. *Concentration game*

- Mime Game - In a circle, the leader silently with gestures mimes an object that he offers to the neighbor. The neighbor receives it, using mime gestures transforms it into another object, and offers it to the next neighbor and so on. *Body expression and creativity game. The moderator can precede it with pantomime motoric exercises.*

- The Killer - The participants face the wall, the moderator will choose a member who will be the killer, his weapon will be the wink of the eye, and his duty is to kill as many people as possible without being detected. Victims are not allowed to react or report, but only fall to the ground pretending death. Whoever discovers the murderer cannot report him publicly but only in a whisper in the ear of the moderator. If he guesses the game ends, if he does not guess the complainant leaves the game. *Game of concentration, observation, complicity.*
- Guards and Thieves - two groups of chairs in rows facing each other, minimum 2-3 meters apart. The thieves seats, while behind the chairs stands the guards, one of the chairs has a guard but no thief, the chair is empty. The guards use the gaze and with the eyewink invite the thieves of the line in front to flee and come to their chair. *Dynamic, energizing game of complicity, control of physical energy.*
- Boats - The group walks scattered occupying all the space, as if they were swimming in the sea. The leader calls out to boats of 3, 4 or 5 crue members. Participants must quickly assemble into groups of the given number. *Energizing game, of complicity, useful as it randomly divides the participants into work groups of the desired number.*
- The Statues - Divided in two teams, actors and audience, a first participant enters the center stage and takes a sculptural pose. In turn one at a time, the other members of the team enter and pose holding a point of physical contact with the others, the team create a collective statue that can be abstract or representative. *Creative body expression game.*
- Family Photo - Divided into teams, the participants pose to represent a family photo. *Creative acting game of body expression.*
- Yatzi -- Divided into teams, actors and audience. The space is imagitively divided into a chessboard of the size suitable for the number of participants. One at a time, the members of the team enter the board by moving exclusively forward, backward and sideways, gradually adding a repetitive gesture to the movement and later a sound or a word. When all members are in action, random occurrences and significative interactions will casually happen between the actors. At the closing signal of the game, the audience team applauds. *Creative game of theatrical improvisation.*
- 1-2-3 Star! - popular game with variations. One participant (the buk) faces the wall, counts and turns to surprise the competitors in motion, the others in a horizontal row at the other end of the room can advance until the leader looks at them, when suddenly everyone has to freeze, whoever is caught moving leaves the game. The first competitor that touches the buk's shoulder wins. Significant variants can be added gradually: a.e. Upon freezing Competitors must take a specific pose (monster, grimace, attitude, etc.) In pairs, upon freezing they must take a significant pose. (Hug, quarrel, statuary pose, etc.) *Energizing game of creativity and complicity.*

- Sensorial Corridor - divided into two groups located in a row one in front of each other to create a corridor. A participant, with his eyes closed, slowly walks along the human corridor. The group, using physical contact (caress massage, pinching, etc.) and/or sounds (wind, rain, forest, animals, etc) create a sensorial experience or a sound landscape. *Game of trust, creativity, sensitivity and care of the other.*

- The Guide – In couples, one participant, holding by the hand or otherwise the other participant blindfolded or with his eyes closed, guides him through a sensorial journey. The path can be casual, abstract, or planned to create a meaningful dramaturgy. *Game of trust, creativity, sensitivity and care of the other.*

- Zombies - Chairs distributed in the space, as many as the number of participants plus one empty chair. A participant named Zombie; he starts walking from the farthest point in space, imitating the slowness and attitude of a zombie. Competitors moving quickly from one chair to another must prevent him from sitting on the empty chair. Everyone can move except the competitors closest to the empty chair. *Energizing game, ice breaking and acting elements.*

- Silent Conductor - In a circle or, more difficult, scattered in the space, A participant leaves the room. The rest chooses a participant who will silently guide the actions and movements imitated by the rest of the group. The participant left outside re-enters and has to guess who the guide is. *Team building and energizing game.*

- The Opinion Game - The space is divided in two, each space assigned to a different opinion on a topic that emerged during a discussion or debate. Individuals shall take place in the space corresponding to their opinion. When everyone has taken part, the moderator invites everyone to motivate their position, avoiding to implement any judgment and leaving open the possibility for everyone to change their opinion and consequently their position in the space. *Useful game to peacefully settle any conflicts that might arise between participants during debates or discussions, enhances respect for others personal opinion the value of non-judgment.*

- Creative Writing – For larger or entire group. The first participant writes a one line sentence on a given theme on the sheet of paper, fold it behind so it's not visible and pass the sheet to the next that writes his or her sentence, fold it away, pass it, and so on. The result is the accordion folded sheet that returns to the first participants that opens it and read aloud all the sentences as one complete text. *Creative game.*

Other games exchanged between international partners during the meetings.

Brainstorming

- In order to create a useful thematic background, the training was preceded by in-depth research and analyzes on the theme of the Hero, meanings, mythology, ancient and modern history, art, fantasy, the collective imagination in different cultures and traditions. With the help of a blackboard and felt-tip pens, the volunteers experimented how to start and moderate a public discussion. In turn individually and later in couple in search of the right balance of intervention between the two.

We have studied in depth concepts such as:

- How to introduce the topic through keywords.
- Involve, create interest and curiosity, make individuals and the group at ease by creating the conditions of protected non-judgemental ambient; under no circumstances oblige participation.
- Initiate and facilitate the debate among the participants also providing objects necessary for carrying out the exercise, such as paper, pen / markers, post-its etc.
- Acquire the authority and the necessary preparation to bring together the diversity of views in the desired direction.
- Manage the division of time in the various stages of the debate.

Conflict resolution

We have examined the different ways of resolving difficulties and even bitter conflicts that can arise between participants of different views during the development of the debate and other phases of the workshop:

- The first useful and fundamental tool to create a solid basis that fosters mutual respect is to share with the participants the possibility of creating a list of rules of behavior during the course of the workshop. Participants themselves will adapt to rules dictated by themselves.
- In the presence of elements reluctant to participate, do not put into practice forcing, opting for discreet interventions, without exerting pressure but in a mild way. In some cases, the person can invites to act as an external assistant, thus leaving the space for him to get involved.
- Always calmly manage the resolution of conflicts that may arise between different opinions, fears, and emotional reactions; without ever losing calm or raising your voice but always with resilience, moderating tones and directing towards positive dialogue, maintaining the atmosphere of open dialogue even in the case of conflicting discussions.
- Do resort to ban anyone only in the event of serious disrespect among the participants, specifying that law prohibit any form of incitement to hatred and racism.

Vision, analysis, choice and synthesis of Roma theatrical works

The trainers, after having viewed the different theatrical works proposed, have selected two particular works to be adapted for use in the laboratory. The choice based on various compatibility factors and parallels between the contents of the theatrical works, the personal characteristics of the volunteers and the social conditions of the Roma communities in our area. The Hungarian work Chamaleon Girl choice was for the female protagonist and the focus on the condition of women in the Roma community that chooses to evolve through study, to face the difficulties and isolation given by prejudices in force in the two cultures Roma and non-Roma.

The other work, from Irish Traveler, "It is a cultural question or what". Chosed for the male protagonist and develops the issue of discrimination toward children at an early age in school environment. Discrimination forced upon not only by classmates but often unwittingly also by teachers and often based on the evident poverty of the subjects, on the different lifestyles, more often on ignorance and prejudice.

The analysis carried out together with the volunteers resulted in the choice of specific isolated passages of the works, that reflect personal situations and experiences lived in their own local area that facilitate the launch of debates on the various inherent subjects. Full translation was made of these excerpts and the videos subtitled to facilitate viewing which has remained in the original language. The texts of the excerpts are studied in depth, transformed into oral narration acquired by the volunteers to be to narrated as storytelling in presence of illiterate participants or with limited reading skills.

The vision of the theatrical works during the workshop will allow disseminating the knowledge of Roma Theater and introducing the Roma and non-Roma theme, bring attention to cultural differences and similarities, deepen the knowledge of Roma culture, and diversify typical features and social classes of the Roma people that hardly correspond to the clichés in force in our society.

Storytelling training

- Knowledge and acquisition of oral and theatrical storytelling techniques - stage presence
Winning and keeping the attention of the public - Define the difference between oral storytelling, theatrical storytelling and other theatrical forms - The importance of including oral tradition in modern culture.

Through the initial choice of simple stories, we analyzed various techniques of storytelling, using exercises on stage presence, body expression, in-depth themes such as the connection between imagination and reality, the ability to transmit energy to one's audience, create a protected space in which participants can feel safe and more easily enter into intimate situation with others.

Exercise and games with Dixit card games is done as training at this stage. These cards, due to the quantity strongly suggestive images, are an ideal support both for the narrator, to stimulate the imagination, create new stories or enrich the narrative of their own stories, and for the participants of the workshop as the cards stimulate the inventiveness and facilitate creative inter-relationship.

In a second phase, we invited volunteers to develop and write stories about their heroic actions and characters from their personal life that reflect the hero's qualities. With the support of the trainers, we worked on the texts, the choice of the most suitable words and terms, the narrative consequentiality suitable to give shape and balance to the narration, the techniques of memorization of the texts through images and keywords. The volunteers took turns presenting the stories to the others until they acquired the necessary familiarity and naturalness. Finally, we deepened the possible use of singing and music in theatrical storytelling and group work.

Storytelling exercises:

- Enter an empty space in front of the public, introduce yourself and introduce a story.
- In couples, tell stories to each other and the story of the relationship between the two.
- Individually, tell a story for more than two minutes.
- Card games (Dixit, Tarot etc.) Sitting in a circle, each participant chooses a card without showing it. Each one takes turns telling an anecdote inspired by the image on the paper and then showing it. Together they build a collective story based on everyone's cards.
- Text memorization using keywords and images.

Exercises with objects

- Take turns individually telling the story of an object.
- In circle, tell the story of the other's object.
- In couples, tell the story of the same object together.
- Take turns individually, standing in the center of a space, persuading viewers to purchase a chosen object, as a seller.
- Use of masks, puppets and marionets in the storytelling.

Music and soundscapes

- Attention to sounds, building soundscapes to support the narration, also involving listeners.
- Use of background music or live musical accompaniments.
- The importance of singing and songs in the narrative.

Creative work exercises

- In pairs, the participants, after listening to the moderators' stories, are invited to develop a short personal story about their own heroic action, tell it to the other and create their own version of the other's story. Back in the circle, each couple will tell the story of the other, the group must guess the real protagonist of the story.
- In small groups, the participants create a theatrical scene on a story of their choice.
- In pairs or in groups, participants work to imagine further developments or epilogues of a story, in theatrical, written or video form made with the smartphone.
- Choice of a song that reflects the contents of a story.
- When working with secondary school students and Roma children: In pairs or small groups with the support of the moderator, they tell the story using masks, puppets and music.

Technologies

We have trained in the use of the tools and applications necessary for the projection of the videos of the theatrical works (PC, projector, sound system). Working in pairs, the volunteers take turns to take care of the preparation and start-up in a fluid way during the unfolding of the workshop's activities. Volunteers also worked on developing the online version of the workshop, forced by the advent of the pandemic in March 2020,

English language

Some time was given to the study of English language, thus help a single Roma volunteer improve the basic rudiments necessary in view of the coming international meeting. We worked on the study of English through singing, thus combining the study of singing and music for use in the workshop. This is an informal teaching module, part of our organization's yearly activities, in which two of the volunteers joined previously. The activity was not included in the project and was a discretionary initiative of the trainers.

International Training for the volunteer Peer trainers

In February 2020, the meeting held in Budapest, attended by trainers and volunteers from the four nations involved in the project.

Preparation for the meeting carried out by exposing the planned work program to the volunteers and creating simulated exercises. The training included a day in which the groups of volunteers from each nation would take turns leading independently a workshop proposal to members and trainers of the other groups. Reviewing all the games and exercises studied, our volunteers prepared two alternative proposals. The ideas proposed and the exercises chosen thereby partly incorporated in the final version of the Italian workshop. Two of our Roma and non-Roma volunteers prepared a song in English to propose in choir with the other groups of volunteers.

The program of the meeting also planned the trainers of each country to propose a specific workshop on one of the training topics. The Italian trainers proposed a workshop on storytelling and a second workshop on the use of music in theatrical storytelling. We advised our volunteers to participate mainly in workshops held by trainers from other countries to enrich their wealth of experiences.

The meeting characterized by an intense emotional charge given in large part by the encounter between Roma volunteers from the different countries, combined with a general sense of great expectation from all participants. The volunteer immediately builded friendship and joined in groups that in the free time took the opportunity to sight-seeing the city and get together among members from various nation.

Reflection on the International Meeting

The meeting had a different impact for each member of our group of volunteers: three of them had previous travel experiences and lived everything with a certain clarity, touched especially by the relationships established with volunteers from other countries. The reaction of the fourth Roma volunteer was different, had rarely traveled, never outside Italy and never by plane. The experience of the Journey itself was compelling, especially experimenting the reality of Roma in other countries, it touched him deeply, we observed him being moved and crying at the stories told by other Roma in job circles.

Overall, the experience proved to be a strong incentive for the interest shown and the commitment shown by the volunteers in the work they resumed upon returning to Italy.

LOCKDOWN AND SOLUTIONS

Confinement due to the Pandemic Covid 19

A few days after returning to Italy from the international meeting in Budapest, the project has suffered a heavy setback due to territorial confinement and the ban on gathering imposed by the national authority for almost three months from March to May 2020. The situation, forced us to abandon the training foreseen in that period, which consisted of laboratory simulations with a group of Roma children of secondary school, with groups of Peerfriends of the volunteers. The early closure of the schools prevented the presentation of the laboratory. Meetings with volunteers continued at the same rate as before the confinement moving to online platforms. Having no certainty about the duration of the boundary, we proposed the volunteers to create the online version of the Hero workshop presented through video-conferencing platforms such as Skype or Zoom. The response from the volunteers was initially negative; two out of four volunteers declare that they are not familiar with video communication. This for us trainers was an understandable reaction, given that all the training done had been a work close contact with people and many games and exercises cannot be executed online. In addition, the trainers had setbacks about it, being specialized in working with groups and audiences.

Online workshop

With the total lockdown, with the risk of an indefinite prolongation of it, with the support of the trainers, volunteers worked to overcome the difficulties, created a collective presentation video of the laboratory and developed the written and audio-visual tools to present the workshop module for five participants, broadcasted during two videoconferences. The video material and the texts of the Roma theatrical pieces e-mailed to the participants be viewed and studied in a short period between the two videoconferences. The games for obvious reasons are limited to personal presentation games and along the "Hero" debate, the exchange of personal stories and the final phase of the workshop moderated by the Peertrainers in turn or together.

The end of Lockdown in the third decade of May 2020 allowed us to restart the organization of live workshop with audience, version strongly favored by the volunteers so the online version got in stand-by. We have not yet had the opportunity to experiment and put into practice this module except in internal simulation. Nevertheless, it is a finished product which constitutes an additional tool ready to be deployed where necessary and which will allow in the future to reach far audiences. The collective video of the online version incorporated in line-up for the opening of the live workshop

HERO WORKSHOP LED BY PEER TRAINERS

In compliance with the institutional health rules of prevention against Covid 19 for the safety of participants, on 10 and 11 July 2020 our organization presented two workshops conducted independently by Peer trainers, through social media, sending invitations by e-mail. Participants from different realities joined the call: young Roma from the neighborhood Roma camp, highschool students, volunteers and operators of the social sector, teachers of secondary schools attended by Roma pupils, representatives of the local citizens. The workshop held at the headquarters of the "Casale Falchetti" social center, hosted in the theater room, refreshments provided by the center. The activities were planned partly outside, in the garden of the center for dynamic games, and partly in the theater room, but due to the high summer temperature, we opted to stay inside the theater room. Three of the four Peer trainers completed their task successfully, the fourth, E.L.C. unfortunately was unable to be there because of school commitment. The Roma Peer trainer E.N. moderated both workshops reversing roles in turn with the two other volunteers.

Despite some moments of insecurity given in particular by technical obstacles in the projection of the videos on the first day, Peer trainers demonstrated they had acquired the necessary preparation. Some moments of "slowdown" determined by the different



intellectual structure and verbal skills between the two moderators. S. S. the volunteer older than the Roma volunteer, had tendency to intellectualize, using complicated terms during the debate phase. In doing so, he unwittingly put his Roma colleague E.N. in

difficulty, but this in return displayed a brilliant reaction, asking questions and simplifying concepts, a factor that was decisive in bringing an element of lightness back to the debate.

E.N. was fundamental in the phase of the games for his inviting attitude and quickness of reaction. The assortment between the two volunteers, the diversity of languages and their different preparation proved to be a winning factor.

The trainers of the project participated as external observers, provided their supervision and gave suggestions on the practical preparation of the event, however leaving total freedom to the volunteers in organizing, carrying out, choosing the games and exercises inside the prefixed structure. After the first workshop, a meeting held between Trainers and Peer trainers to evaluate the progress and make any improvement needed to improve the following workshop.

The second workshop of course was more alive; E. N. repeated the experience with greater confidence, due in part to the different approach of the second Peer trainer, S.F. who is closer to his colleague in terms of age and preparation. The two together exhibited greater ease, verbal promptness, clarity in the presentation of contents, games and exercises, confidence and authority in the presence. The workshop ran smoothly without technical problems.

A third workshop held successfully by E.L.C. and E. N. at a major suburban youth center in Rome in November, with adolescents and young adults with complex background.



Line-up of the independent conduction by Peer Trainers.

Greetings, with introduction and presentation of the workshop

(Introduce yourself, talk about the theme of the workshop, that there is a Roma storytelling theater and a festival)

Each one introduces itself - Game of the name in rhyme

Game to break the ice and presentation in the group

Walk in space, change of pace, stop and look in the eyes

Dixit cards in small groups

Invitation video

Brainstorming on the figure of the hero: who is a hero for you, what defines a hero, etc.

Youtube video of Roma storytellers

Reading the extracts...

Pause

Facilitators' narration of their own heroic story

Work in small groups on personal and heroic stories

Presentation of the stories to the group (guess whose it is)

Choice of some stories told and creative work through different creative languages: storytelling, theatrical scene, video, music

Presentation to the group of "small creative works"

Final debate on the laboratory and on the experience gained

Closing and final greeting

Outcome of the workshops in the experience of the participants

Forty participants joined the two first workshops; for the given moment is a satisfying number, with heavy hot summer and the Corona Virus soft limitations still in charge. Ten participants joined the third workshop held so far.

After the obvious initial embarrassment partly due to have Roma e non-Roma people, finally together in the same space (!) we recorded a satisfactory evolution in the interest, the general involvement and by the end of the workshop a clearly positive change in the relationships between the participants. We witnessed situations of complicity, intimacy, collaboration and the birth of new friendships.

In the first workshop experimented with a group of mixed age, from adolescents (two Roma aged 15-16) to adults, but we found that the two adolescents present were intimidated by the presence of adults, they tended to isolate themselves, remain silent during the debate, responding only when addressed directly to them. Still, they joined actively the games and the phase of creative work, proving to be fundamental in the theatrical scenes also for their innocent and direct suggestions regarding Roma issues.

This confirms our experience about games and playfulness being the right language for younger participants. On the other hand, the mixed Roma and non-Roma composition of the participants gave a highly positive outcome. Here in Rome Italians do not usually talk with "Gypsies"; many of the non-Roma present, had never talked long, interacted or spend a longer time together with people of Roma origin; this led to lengthy dialogues between the parties during the workshop and after! Much wonder caused the presence of several Roma workers and human rights activists displaying a good preparation and behaving outside the prejudicial schemes. The significant comment of a secondary school teacher who in her classes has Roma pupils living in the neighbor camp, where there is an almost total percentage of unemployment: *"I had never met a Roma worker or activist before"*.

During the debate as well as the exchange of personal stories and creative work, the Roma side had the opportunity to explain, clarify, and contextualize rumors, legends, clichés and prejudice, typically in force in the non-Roma society. On the other hand, non-Roma people have shown satisfaction in being able to verify for themselves, that not all Roma are the way they usually are pictured by clichés, demonstrated their esteem in return, clarifying that they are part of those citizens in solidarity with the cause of Roma, against all social injustice that our society manage to create.

In the third workshop joined only young people from suburban territory, most of them with complex background such as low education, family issues, and social isolation. We expected to have more difficulty in create the right ambient due to age, shyness, rebel attitudes, so we added more time for the games to bring the participants to an open attitude toward each other. It worked out well and we had generous feedbacks from all of them.

Some written comments left by the participants:

... I do not know if I have "learned" something. However, I take away the very pleasant experience of having been able to interact with neighborhood neighbors that I had never been able to meet, and therefore of having exchanged ideas and moments of life. I think this aspect was very useful. Thank you!

.. Apparently, simple actions unfortunately become almost heroic in the face of indifference.

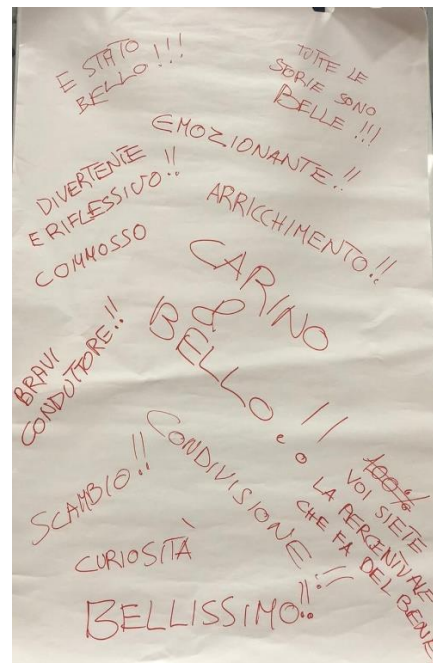
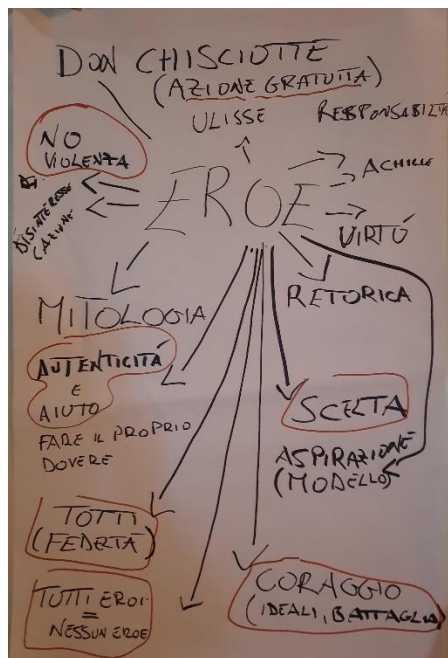
... I enjoyed both moments of discussion; it was a way of getting in touch with people with whom I rarely have the opportunity to confront.

..I do not know if the right word is "learned". I certainly reflected on the importance of doing things together, the only true way to know and know each other.

.. I have learned something about theatre.

... I have learned that play games is the best way to know the others.

... To have more confidence with people.



ROMA THEATER PLAYS video excerpts

“Chameleon girl” (Marton Illes)

There was this woman who came to the group that I go to once every two weeks.

I'm the only gypsy at school, but everyone is here

Then came this woman wearing a long skirt and colorful shoulder-length earrings

It was she who looked like a parrot

He said we are not Gypsies, but Roma

What?

"Gypsy" is a name given to us by others to mock us.

Believe me, you are suffering because you are not even aware that you are Roma, you think you are a gypsy.

But you are not even Roma, you do not speak Roman and you dress as if you were a gadji.

How come you don't wear skirts, what's up with jeans? You shouldn't be ashamed of your beauty.

Check out these cute colorful earrings I brought you. Not some cheap Chinese shit at just 2000 for a couple. A real Roma girl must always look pretty.

Guys, learn the language of your ancestors and don't walk without a hat!

I will help you. If you act like a real Roma, everyone will envy you.

Since I was 6 I have heard nothing but:

You can become a good gypsy, like your sister. At school you have to prove that you are as good as the others. If your classmates make fun of you, you don't have to be angry. You have to be twice as smart, twice as smart, twice as clean and twice as beautiful as white girls.

The super gypsy overcomes obstacles and learns and learns until her hair turns white.

"Maybe the good gypsy is that she wasn't even a gypsy, she studies and works so perfectly that you hardly notice. It's as if she didn't even exist. I could become a photographer, or a secret agent, a smiling special soldier, or an obedient maid. , but I could also become a beautiful integrated blonde or a gypsy to show off.

Because a chameleon can transform into anything and fulfill any expectation.

But every now and then she has to decide for herself or she will never live her life.

"It's a cultural thing or is it? (Michael Collins)

This new nun arrived one day, we didn't know who she was. She was what nomads would call a clumsy nun. He went to the desk and said: "Children, today we will draw a picture!" "Jesus Christ Sister, I said, we can do something else, we always draw!"

"Children, you will draw a drawing of your house!" "Ah that's fine." I started drawing the wagon, I was about to draw the dog's bed when she came to the companion in front of me and said: "No no no no no no"! I kept drawing the dog and she came to me, looked at my drawing and said: "No no no no no!" And I said: "why all these No, sister?"

"What are you drawing?" "I'm designing my house, sister"

"This is not a house! "But we are sister nomads, we live in caravans and this is our home."
"This is not a house, I'll show you what a house is"

Then he went to the blackboard and drew a large house with windows, with an apple tree next to it and a white fence. It looked like something out of a movie. I said "okay, but look I made the most beautiful drawing!" She sits behind her desk and says nothing more.

I said "sorry sister! you said that who ever drew the best photo would have a surprise. "

"Only if you pronounce it correctly!"

"Soorpresa! Surprise! " "That's not how you say it! You will have nothing! "

"Anyway it will be just another apple.

MEET THE TRAINEERS AND THE PEER TRAINERS

Trainers

Sebastiano Spinella

Born 1965 in Catania, Italy, artist with over 30 years of experience as actor, mime, musician, puppeteer in the field of theater, music, circus, performing arts. Self-taught, precocious traveler as street artist residing in several European countries, through his career he worked with the Nobel Prize Dario Fo (1997/98) and later, as part of the theater company "Teatro de los Sentidos", directed by the Colombian Enrique Vargas, the prize for anthropological theater (2000/13). Artistic director and theatre trainer in the program "Teaching language through theater" at the Faculty of Human Sciences - University of Minas Gerais -Brazil 1999/2000

In parallel with his artistic career, since 2002 he has been working on social projects based on artistic non-formal education with Roma children in the outskirts of Roma Capital city. Collaborates with various social organizations and theater companies in shows and activities for the children in refugee centers throughout Europe. He is also a craftsman, trained in the tuning and restoration of musical instruments. Founder of A.P.S. Rampa Prenestina and during 2015-2019 the cultural space of the same name, with free arts and crafts workshops, along with non-formal educational support to young Roma from the outskirts of Rome, Italy.

www.rampaprenestina.it

Ursula Mainardi

Born 1973 in Rome, Italy. Bachelor's Degree in Art Therapy with orientation in Psychological-Physiological Orientation, Degree in Literature and History of Theater at La Sapienza University of Rome, Italy

Storyteller, actress, clown and musician, art therapist, trainer.

It carries out projects with minors in the cultural, educational, social, therapeutic and ecological fields. She is a trainer for professionals in the social and pedagogical sector; collaborates with cultural and environmental education associations, schools, libraries, parks, theaters.

He works through storytelling and theater, music and singing, the intertwining of art and nature, art therapy.

www.eloheh.com

Volunteer Peer Trainers

E. L. C. born 05/15/1995 in Romania

Originally from a Romanian Roma family, she moved to Italy with her mother, a working immigrant. Unlike Romanian Roma immigrants post-annexation to the European community, the mother does not live in Roma camps but pursues a legal immigration process, finds a home and a job, which has allowed E.L.C. to grow well integrated into Italian society and follow the normal course of her education process. She is an enthusiastic young woman full of determination and ambition, currently in the process of obtaining a high school degree, while at the same time working to maintain her studies. She lives his Roma origin with serenity and pride and annually visits his grandparents in Romania, where she maintains contact with the Roma culture. She followed the training process with enthusiasm and interest, his influence on the group was often fundamental being the only woman in the volunteer group. Her support in the crisis that occurred during the confinement period of the pandemic was also positive, intervening to keep the group of volunteers together. Her contribution to the creation of the online version of the laboratory was also important. She completed her workshop in november 2020. She is determined to participate in the future psteps of the project.

Her words:

there was an immediate working connection and we were able to share the workspaces with ease and understanding. This was very reassuring right from the start. We opened the workshop with the game of presentations, a very nice game that immediately dissolved tensions and made everyone have fun, thus creating a pleasant and friendly atmosphere. From then on it was all very emotional. The increasingly united group, thanks to our enthusiasm and lightness, the boys immediately made themselves available and even if with a slight embarrassment they got involved and tried to have fun.

The 3 hours that we had set ourselves have passed between games, reflections, exchanges of opinions and many emotions. All this obviously is the result of the upstream work, with the Budapest team and all the training done on site, and not only, the credit goes to Sebastiano and Ursula who have always tried to keep us active and present in the project, despite all the difficulties of the moment. The day ended with many emotions. The final feedback of the guys was wonderful, there is one in particular that made me particularly excited, and says: "you are the percentage that does good".

E. N. born 08/24/1998 in Italy

Born from Serbian Roma father and Italian mother. His story is singular, as the mother, originally from southern Italy, married the Roma father and has always lived in the Roma camp perfectly integrated with the community. E. therefore received a mixed education of the two cultures. He is the main representative of the local Roma community involved in this project. Like the majority of the young people in the camp, he has a limited degree of school education, interrupted after secondary school. Nonetheless he strived to continue his training by enrolling in institutions of the professional field. His main passion is hairdressing, for which he distinguished as the best student of his institute, but also suffered the derision of his Roma peers, however winning their esteem in the long term. He approached our organization from the age of 17 following our courses in music, English language, driving license preparation. He is a highly sensitive young man who more than others has infused passion into the project, always hungry for knowledge, a book eater, constantly striving to improve his preparation for life and his integration into external society while maintaining loyalty and attachment to the Roma community. With his sensitivity and simplicity he represented the heart of the project. He's committed to continue the cooperation in the future developments of the project.

His words:

I experienced the project as an opportunity for growth, because, before the project I had never had the opportunity to get involved in the world of theater (which has always fascinated me), especially in an environment of Roma artists who help different parties of the world to fight against anti-Gypsyism. It was also an opportunity for me to first travel abroad from which I gained a broader view of the world and greater independence.

I really liked the city of Budapest, its history and its monuments but even more the group of the Independent theater, a group of wonderful people who spend themselves on social.

The thing I liked least unfortunately was not being able to train as we hoped for the final workshops due to the global pandemic that has hit us lately and that has put a spanner in the works; but even not having had a lot of time, with our enthusiasm and tenacity, and above all that of our teachers, we managed to do some workshops, still reaching our goals with great satisfaction for us and especially for the participants.

I hope that this project can reach as many people as possible to improve the concept of brotherhood and erase many idle prejudices.

An infinite thanks to those who allowed us to participate in this project and personally I would be very pleased to continue participating in these projects in order to improve myself and the world in my small way.

S. F. born 16/10/98 in Italy

S.F. is the representative of the Italian youth of the same neighborhood of the Roma settlement from which his colleague Erik comes. He completed his baccalaureate at the institute that houses the venue of our organization and has been following the music and musical instrument repair workshops since two years before the launch of this project. A great music lover on which he spends a lot of his free time, even before taking part in the project he was a glue element in the birth of a group of mixed Roma and non-Roma friends who, in addition to gathering around artistic activities, lead continuous friendly attendance, with Roma peers, a successful manifestation of integration and inclusion between the two cultures. He enthusiastically joined the project where he included his passion for music by intervening with songs and musical pieces in support of storytelling. His familiarity with technologies was fundamental, he edited the collective presentation video, shared his technical notions with the other peers and oversaw the organization of the technical structure of the workshop. He's committed to continue the cooperation in the future developments of the project.

His words:

I had already known the Rampa Prenestina for years, due to the common artistic and musical interests; the meetings, the work and the rehearsals we did, allowed me to have a cultural background and to be able to compare it with the other European participants in the "Roma Heroes in Theater, Education and Everyday Life" project.

The Hungarian (and non-Hungarian) welcome allowed me to overcome as much as possible, despite some of my shortcomings in foreign languages, problems regarding expressing oneself; in Erasmus I learned different workshop structures and different ways of understanding it, to adapt to the context and to the participants.

I tried to make the most of the skills learned from the days of stay in Hungary in the workshop done by me and Erik, focusing on raising awareness about Roma Heroes.

I would participate in the project a thousand times more if I had the opportunity, because in addition to the work done with peace of mind, as well as personal growth, I also bring many friends with me around Europe.

S. S. born in Italy on 03/24/1990

He is the oldest member of the peer trainers group, with a degree in philosophy and currently engaged in a doctorate. He approached our organization during his commitment as a volunteer of the National Civil Service. During that time, he had the opportunity to get to know the other members of the group, which led him to join the project. Due to age and degree, he represented a reference and an element of security for his younger colleagues. His intellectual contribution, encountering the importance of deconstruction and simplicity in relationships with others, created a balanced communication through which he was able to maintain an equal role among his younger colleagues. Due to his current occupation will not continue the cooperation within the project but might collaborate in future occasions.

His Words:

Participation in the "Heroes in Theater, Education and Everyday Life" project, promoted by Independent Theater Hungary with the participation of the A.P.S Rampa Prenestina, was a great opportunity for me to get involved and get to know previously unknown realities. Both the work with my peers group and the interaction with the tutors have enriched me from a relational as well as cognitive point of view and have provided me with various ideas for personal development. The experience in Hungary further cemented the conviction of the importance of such a project thanks to the exchange with Roma and non-Roma children of different nationalities. Finally, the planning and execution of the workshop, given the limitations due to the health emergency, proved to be very stimulating. In fact, they allowed me to expose myself personally, overcoming shyness and reluctance. I am therefore extremely happy to have had the opportunity to take part in this project, as I believe that only by extending the possibilities of collaboration between members of distant countries and social spheres is it possible to think of a real sharing, a recognition in diversity, a respect born from mutual knowledge and not only from an abstract ideal of interculturality.



CONCLUSIONS

As stated in the introduction, the entire final part of the project, including the implementation of the concepts developed and the final presentation of the Hero workshop by the Peertrainers been severely limited by the advent of Covid 19 and the legal institution of confinement areas on the national territory.

Nevertheless, as this happened after the international training in Budapest, which according to the project planning was the finalization of the training period began in October 2019. Despite the practical training based on simulation was affected, the general preparation of the peers made possible the presentation of the workshop after the period of confinement. We consider the result satisfactory and plan to improve it in continuous practice during the coming year. The organization, in agreement with the volunteers, intends to continue the path of the laboratory in the future, proposing it in the future to the world of social, education and Roma communities.

The creation of the online version, not enthusiastically welcomed by the whole team, trainers and volunteers, but fulfilled more out of sense of duty, was not put into practice despite the module was finalized and ready for implementation, and was lastly postponed to needed situation, not remote given the continuation of the pandemic. We cancelled the presentation due to the situation of general reorganization and sudden transfer to online activities by the realities interested in the topic, schools, NGOs and social organizations of the territory.

The optimal conditions for carrying out the laboratory is live work; direct contact between people is the optimal condition for the structure that has developed on the basis of theater and narration, it requires atmosphere and inter-relationship, intimacy and complicity that are limited and inhibited in online communication, modality that we intend to use only if needed. While waiting for the general situation to settle and despite our preference for living communication, it is our intention in the future to test the module, as the Hungarian colleagues have already done successfully.

The general experience of the project was lived with greater enthusiasm by the volunteers S.F. and E.N. who were previously close to our organization, while younger and more enthusiastic about increase their knowledge and training. The experience was more incisive for E.N. who grew up in the Roma community in conditions of social exclusion, on his first experience in an unusual context and on his first plane travel outside Italy; he experienced the encounter of his peer Roma from the other countries with great wonder and completed the training with conviction and passion.

S. showed more detachment also due to his age and his university education great influence on his approach to the project, on whose objectives he perhaps had an overly analytical look. However, it was a fundamental element of encouragement for the other volunteers.

Finally, E.L.C. followed the training phase with interest and commitment; despite some irregularity in the phase of the presentation of the workshop, mainly due to commitment with her formal studies, she succeeded to lead the workshop in November with good results.

The organization, in agreement with three of the volunteers, intends to continue the dissemination of the Hero workshop in the future. Agreements are in evaluation with organizations of the local socio-educational sector and we plan to reach Roma communities in the territory.





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