

ROMA HEROES IN ACTION



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Trainers' training case study

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1. Introduction:

Formulation of the purpose of the case study

Giuvlipen works in theater production for over 5 years and conducts workshops in which we discuss the problems that Roma communities and individuals face every day using tools that are specific to the performing arts. Through the numerous actions in which we have been involved so far and through collaborations with other associations working in the field of theater or human rights, we have managed to develop working practices and methodologies that have a real impact on the beneficiaries we interacted with. We want the approach that we have developed over the years, both on our own and in partnership with other organizations and institutions to become an open resource for other people or organizations who want to use creative ways of working in order to empower young people and educate them on human rights issues.

We believe that the joint efforts of the group of professionals involved in the development of this program can help both social and community workers to open and address sensitive topics in a creative and non-intrusive way, as well as cultural workers or performing arts practitioners interested in knowing and integrating contemporary Roman culture into their curriculum.

Presentation of Roma Heroes workshop

The methodology developed for the Roma Heroes workshops is structured in two important directions. First of all, through these workshops we aim to facilitate open discussions starting from texts of contemporary Roma drama, which aim to promote and popularize contemporary Roma drama, themes and values promoted through the characters and situations found in the texts.

Roma culture is usually portrayed as being non-contemporary but a traditional one, as a specific one, related only to the Roma community and incapable of contributing to the majority or mainstream culture. The only form in which the Roma culture managed to penetrate and be accepted in the public space is in its traditionalized, folklorized forms (colored skirts, dances, fiddle music,

handicrafts), tamed and broken by the realities of contemporary experiences. However, contemporary Roma culture exists, is alive, is dynamic and should be supported, especially when elaborating themes that emerge from the universe of Roma life.

Therefore, by the means of the Roma Heroes workshops we respond to this urgent need to familiarize the young audience, also non-Roma, but especially Roma, with this extremely important and yet so little publicly explored part of the Roma culture.

The texts used in the workshops are relevant mainly because they are self-reflective and deal with contemporary topics, issues related to identity, belonging, discrimination and other topics that can help workshop participants to better understand the ways in which Roma authors reflect on their own culture and how it is portrayed in mainstream culture and in the eyes of the majority.

The second direction we explore through the workshops is redefining the concept of the classic hero by the means of creative games, storytelling. By putting the theme of the hero in the center of the workshop and discussing it with Roma young people, for whom racial discrimination is still an issue they have to fight with, we bring to attention the importance of self-representation, of assuming your own identity, culture and values and generating your own narratives that tackle these subjects.

We know that art has the capacity to create a space to seriously discuss the social problems of specific communities and it can produce concrete change for the audience and their communities. Besides the concept of the hero, the themes of the workshops, based on contemporary Roma dramas were: violence against Roma people, early marriage, school dropping out, gender inequality. By discussing these topics together with Roma people in the Roma Heroes workshops, we want to create spaces that can be developed further through debates and establishment of support groups for the persons in difficulty.

Thus, the workshops aim to inform and empower Roma communities regarding their values, rights and culture and to establish a meaningful communication between the Roma and non-Roma participants by creating a safe space for dialogue and mutual knowledge.

Description of Erasmus partners and cooperation

Factoria Cultural / / Asociación Cultural por la investigación y el desarrollo independiente del teatro profesional en Andalucía

Factoria Cultural is a new theater whose importance lies in the fact that it functions as a bridge between the majority Roma community in Polígono Sur (a disadvantaged neighborhood in Seville that has become a ghetto of the city) and the rest of the city, breaking the psychological barriers that separate it from other neighborhoods. On the one hand, it provides reasons for residents from other areas to come to the neighborhood to enjoy the cultural offer; and on the other hand, it highlights the art and culture that are generated in the neighborhood, giving them a channel to make themselves known.

The main objective of the Asociación Cultural por la investigación y el desarrollo independiente del teatro profesional en Andalucía is the training and development of people involved in the theatrical production process throughout the cultural, technical and professional processes involved, in all its different directions: theatrical, storytelling, film, TV, video, music, etc.

Asociación Cultural por la investigación y el desarrollo independiente del teatro profesional en Andalucía brings in this project, a 20-year experience in the field of storytelling, but also experience in developing work packages for teachers and students involved in theater projects and storytelling for dealing with topics such as intercultural societies, language learning or intergenerational projects.

The organization also facilitates storytelling workshops as a means of emotional development and improvement of social intelligence, as well as to develop a sense of community.

Independent Theatre Hungary / Women for The Future Association

The main goal of the Independent Theater Hungary - legally and financially represented by the Women for The Future Association - is to support the collection, enrichment and visibility of artistic / human values and the social connection of Roma dramas to empower members of Roma communities to be free citizens, reflecting self-informed, responsible and active, who influence their own destiny and also that of the majority, through the conscious use of art

and communication and their daily lives, in which they are integral parts of certain communities and inclusive activities.

Roma Heroes - International Roma Storytelling Festival is the title of the only international Roma theater festival in the world, which is organized by Independent Theater Hungary and will reach its third edition this year. By presenting a wide selection of contemporary European theater performances, the cultural event highlights the values of Roma dramas and stories, draws attention to the situation of Roma communities in Europe and exposes life paths and extraordinary challenges.

Rampa Prenestina

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 they carry forward a work that promotes artistic languages in socio-educational paths aimed at children from disadvantaged social groups. Rampa Prenestina promotes knowledge of music and other forms of art (theater, circus, dance, visual arts and crafts) as a method of inclusive pedagogy. Their mission is inspired by concepts as the Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire, his work with youth of the Brazilian favelas and others, as the youth orchestra of Josè Abreu in Venezuela. 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, their workspace is open to the attendance of youth, mainly from the local Roma settlement and occasionally from other suburbs.

Personal goals in participating in the program

This program came at a very opportune time for our company - a time when we wanted to invest resources in young Roma people who would develop with us and who would take part in the long-term activities we carry out.

The fact that we were able to prepare 4 peer trainers to work with other young people through a methodology that we developed together, in an international work context is for us an extremely important organizational resource.

The resources provided by international partners, the exchange of experience and work practices in international meetings, have contributed to the development of the skills of trainers and peer trainers, but also to the development of a multidisciplinary working methodology, which, would have we tried to develop on our own, it would have definitely meant a much greater investment of time and resources.

Also, the collaborative and horizontal work process, together with 3 partners with work experience in the same fields in which the Giuvlipen company operates (theater education, human rights and contemporary Roma drama), helped to coagulate professional relationships necessary for the development and promoting the values of contemporary Roma culture.

The whole project was conceived as a form of intercultural and interethnic dialogue, through the mobility of the trainers and peer trainers and the exchange of contemporary Roma dramatic texts and working practices, by collaborating with associations/theaters located in cities with minority audiences and by organizing trainings with people and organizations that address the Roma public or promote Roma art. Thus, another aim in participating was to stimulate inter-ethnic cultural and social dialogue through discussions and exchange of know-how.

Besides all these, resides the fact that Roma people still face a social exclusion that is deeply rooted in its history, which is in contradiction with the fundamental values of the European Union. The fact that this reality is ignored in Romania may be one of the reasons for the social exclusion that has been perpetuated over time.

A first pillar of support for European and national social integration policy is the evocation of Roma culture and experience and its transposition into consumer cultural goods that diminish social stigma. By presenting contemporary Roma dramatic texts, and by the interdisciplinary methodology used in educational actions, our association tries to correspond to local and European cultural development strategies, which aim through their strategic mission to develop a cultural offer that integrates ethnic diversity.

The realization of this project was essential for the development of the experience of our company in involving Roma people in projects that debate their own identity and reality. We want to remain anchored in the realities of the Roma communities and to maintain a dialogue with the public in these communities, so we addressed all the workshops and trainings especially to the

Roma communities, Roma teenagers and young adults.

The program also addresses some critical needs of the Roma artists community: the marginality of Roma theater and the lack of permanent institutional support for it, the lack of current cultural products that talk about recent history in a critical and captivating way for a young audience, the lack of a theatrical repertoire that responsibly addresses important issues for understanding the past and the present of Roma communities, low consumption of theater among young people. The project responds to these needs through a methodology that incorporates topics relevant to Romanian society in general, informs - in an accessible and interactive format - the young public about these issues, supports and promotes Roma artists and contemporary Roma cultural production, and promotes theater consumption among young people.

As a result, our firm opinion is that any program that uses art as a means to respond to social inequities, to educate young people and develop their critical thinking skills, their empathy and solidarity is worth all the effort and all the enthusiasm one is capable of.

History (previous trainers, experiences)

Giuvlipen (meaning feminism in Romani language) is a feminist theatre group with, about and for Roma women, with the goal of contributing to the empowerment of Roma women in their living communities. Our group creates theatre performances based on life stories of Roma women, about their difficulties living between a traditional patriarchal community and a demanded integration into the dominant (often racist) Romanian community. By the usage of theatre we intend to bring on stage the main issues that Roma women have to deal with every day. Our art is challenging, experimental and highly performative. The themes of our performances are diverse, but they all have something in common: we openly discuss topics that history, mentality and social or political constraints have often silenced. In each show, we seek to reclaim the art, history and cultural identity of Roma, through stories told by us, Roma artists.

Roma Actors Association was founded in November 2015 by a group of Roma actors, artists and cultural experts with the purpose of creating a structure for reflection and action in the art field, as a form of combating Roma exclusion. The objectives of Roma Actors Association are: cultural integration, artistic and

cultural innovation in the art field and especially in theatre, the promotion of Roma rights through art. Roma Actors Association was created in Bucharest, in an active cultural space with the mission of increasing the access to art products for vulnerable groups and to use art for supporting these vulnerable groups.

In November 2017, we organized a three-day-long workshop for journalists, with the support of Roma Initiatives Office, OSF at MACAZ – Bar Theatre Cooperative, Bucharest on the topic of eviction and the way this subject is reported in the press.

The three day workshop was the kick-off of the “JAKHALIPEN” project. In the second part of the project, the film director Leonore Kaspar together with LUFT Film Production produced a short film, with a script based on the discussions which had taken place between the journalists and the representatives of the evicted communities present at the workshop. The main characters of the film are played by Nicoleta Vișan, as her own, and by actress Mihaela Drăgan, as a journalist.

Participating in the workshop were journalists from different independent media publications but also a number of journalists from mainstream press. We also had guests from the communities who faced evictions. The coordinators of the workshop were Mihaela Drăgan, the president of Roma Actors Association and co-founder of Giuvlipen and Veda Popovici, artist and activist, member of Frontului Comun pentru Dreptul la Locuire and member of MACAZ Cooperative.

"Sasto Vesto! For Roma Healthcare through Art" was also launched in the beginning of 2017 and continued throughout 2018. The project, with the support of the Open Society Institute in cooperation with Public Health Care, the Open Society Foundation, consists of workshops and forum theater performances in various Roma communities in Romania. The purpose of the workshops was to empower Roma communities to express themselves through art, against systemic discrimination and against negative attitudes and abuses by local authorities, which abuses directly affect health conditions and help to perpetuate the precariousness of Roma life. At the same time, the performances attempted to capture real experiences of the Roma people involved in the project and focused on topics such as: Roma family relationships, gender stigma, abortion, family discussions about menstrual cycle, sexuality, contraception methods, or unwanted pregnancies.

In the first part of the project, in the spring of 2017, the workshops and shows

were made with the Roma communities in Ferentari, Bucharest ("Ferentari, Health in Sevraj") and Mizil, Buzau County (Dikh te sastimastar! your health! "), in partnership with the E-Romnja organization. At Mizil the workshop was made by Mihaela Dragan actress together with the Mizil Initiative Group. The theater performance at the Community Center "La Stela și Dana" in Ferentari was made by Alin Coman, Nicoleta Ghiță, Toto Horvath, Adina Tatu, Cateluta Vatala and Daniela Vlăsceanu, under the coordination of Zita Moldovan.

By discussing these topics together with Roma people in theatre of the oppressed / forum theatre workshops and after performances, we want to create spaces that can be developed further through debates and establishment of support groups for the persons in difficulty.

In the Roma community in Ferentari, our show was during the time that the Mayor of Sector 5 closed Caracuda - Social Services Center in Ferentari, thus committing an abuse against public health of people in need in this neighborhood. In solidarity, many Associations have signed a petition against abusive authorities. NGO representatives and local activists discussed, in the absence of dialogue with authorities, about ways and forms of resistance to community health problems.

In 2018, the project continued with theater theater performances made together with representatives and representatives of the Roma communities in Colentina and Ferentari, Bucharest. The "Sasti Vesti (The Inaction of Roma Women to the Public Health System, Stories from the Boldean Community)" and "I am ... (The Inaction of Roma Women to Public Health Services, Stories from Ferentari)" took place in the company of several representatives of the authorities, at the Faculty of Sociology and Social Assistance of the University of Bucharest.

The central theme of the two events was the lack of Roma women's access to the public health system and reproductive rights, emphasizing both the intimate space of the family and the community, as well as the relationship between the patient or the patient and the family doctor, and what measure ethnic stereotypes and social labels can influence their lives. "Sasti Vesti" was co-ordinated by actress Zita Moldovan, advisor to Georgiana Lincan and the protagonists of the forum theater show were Constanta Nică, Ana Maria Ioniță, Mugurel Gheorghe Nica and Sherin Sara Hilani from the Boldeni Roma community in the Colentina neighborhood, Bucharest. The artistic and research team of the show "I am ..." was coordinated by actress Oana Rusu and was

made up of Kateluta Vatala, Dana Vlăsceanu and Nicoleta Ghiță.

In 2019 we continued the Sasto Vesto project and aimed at finding ways to empower Roma women from Bucharest communities to tell their own stories, by directly involving them in the play writing, production and acting. We wanted to find young Roma women who want to express their experiences through theater and need professional support to make their first steps in the field (through writing, acting, or singing), collect and make public stories that speak about tabu subjects like sexuality, gender fluidity, abuse and privacy, encountered by Roma women with different sexual orientation in their personal and professional lives and maintain these stories in circulation by including the resulting theater play ("S E X O D R O M") in the Giuvlipen repertoire.

The project included two main activities: organizing one playwriting workshop (with theatre professionals and non-professionals) led by Bogdan Georgescu and Mihaela Drăgan, and afterwards the development of a theater performance (written and played by the participants from the workshop). The experience was important and empowering for the participants: not only it allowed them to tell stories important to them, stories that are hard to tell even to the people in their own community, but it was also a self-validating experience, as the young participants wrote, rehearsed and played the scripts themselves and saw them take the shape of a theatre performance.

2. Training for trainers

One of the main objectives of the programme was the development of a new methodology that would help young people interested in the performing arts know more about contemporary Roma dramaturgy and also find new ways of talking about Roma culture and identity, racism, and contemporary issues that Roma people are struggling with on a daily basis. In order to build this method of working, that would be relevant and easy to adopt and adapt to various types of groups – from university students to marginalized and/or disadvantaged communities –, we figured that getting together with 3 other organizations with different approaches and skills on similar topics and go through an exchange of experience in the form of trainings held for the trainers, would eventually get us to the best result any of the organizations could ever get on their own.

The training of trainers, which happened in the first international meeting in Rome was necessary firstly because it helped every partner refine their general goals and get to a common ground regarding the frames in which the workshops will take place, the target groups they want to address to, the educational materials that each of them will use, the ways in which each partner can make use of the others' know how.

The general frames then led to more specific problems, from the most appropriate communication strategies and approaches for delicate and/or risky situations that could arise during the workshops, talks about the dramatic texts and how to generate relevant discussions leading from the situations and/or characters presented in them and which of these texts would be more appropriate for which target groups, to the best communication strategies that each partner should use in finding the peer trainers and different types of risk that we could encounter along the way.

It was important that the draft version of the methodology was put into discussion in a common training where all the partners worked together in order to improve it and all the trainers brought their professional experience in polishing it to its final form.

This first meeting was actually a really good introduction into the process of training the peer trainers and it helped us go through all the steps that we would later have to check in order to prepare them to assume their role and make them fully understand the working method with all its subtleties, theoretical and ideological aims.

3. Training process

Planning and preparation

One of the most important steps in the program was the training of four youngsters in using the methodology of the Roma Heroes workshop, in order for them to further lead these workshops for other Roma and non-Roma groups of young people. We decided to organize the workshops under the coordination of people that are in the same age range as the participants in order to create a safe space for them to open up and freely express their thoughts and ideas, without the fear of being misunderstood because of cultural and age barriers.

In the process of selection we had in mind some clear guidelines. We knew we wanted to train young people who expressed a strong interest towards the performing arts and/or community work, activism and human rights. We decided to think about young Roma people and women in particular whom we already encountered in our professional network and who caught our attention as being talented, motivated and determined and also shared our group's values and ethics. Because we are an intersectional Roma feminist theatre company and we usually work with people that identify and / or belong to Roma and LGBTQ+ communities, we saw fit to look for young people that are also part of these communities, so that the spaces we create through the Roma Heroes workshops would be safe and inclusive for all participants. Therefore we looked for young Roma that were also intersectional feminists, LGBTQ+ friendly and social/political theater enthusiasts.

Call and selection of candidates

We realized that we already had some names in mind from our network of young collaborators, but we also decided to make an open call that we communicated on our social media platforms and towards our press collaborators and partners, just to make sure that the persons we choose will have strong personal and professional interests for participating in the program. We received 6 applications. First, we planned interviews with each one of the candidates and talked about their motivations in being part of the programme, the things they expect out of it and, since some of them were from other cities in Romania, we also tried to figure out the logistical parts, like availability for travel and flexibility of schedule. We informed them on the

structure of the workshops they will eventually have to coordinate and tried to find out how comfortable they are with the English language.

After this first discussion we sent them the selected 3 plays that we decided to work on during the workshops: two Romanian plays (Mihaela Drăgan's "Del Duma" and Alexandru Fifea's "You didn't see anything") and Márton Illés's "Chameleon Girl" videos and excerpts. We translated in advance the full play for "Chameleon Girl", so that everyone could understand, as we didn't want to exclude people only for not speaking or understanding English. We asked them to read all the three plays, then try to extract the main themes, think about the central characters and how they would define them in relation to their own definition of hero and eventually, what types of discussions and creative exercises they could develop in a group starting from the plays. We gave the applicants 2 weeks to prepare, then had a second individual interview to discuss all of the above.

Following this second discussion we selected the four peer trainers. We decided to continue the training with three Roma girls and one guy, all of them under 30, two of which are English speakers and one with good listening skills.

A.G.L. – she's an activist for Roma women rights at E-Romnja, has an active interest in Roma theatre, speaks English and also had some experience with international projects;

B.P. – she's studying theatre in Timișoara, writes short fiction and poetry; we met her during the preparation of a play we launched in spring 2019, Sexodrom. She rolled in as a participant in the drama class we organized with the purpose of developing the texts for the play.

N.G. – she is part of the Playhood theater group as an actress and singer and she already played in 2 Giuvlipen shows: Sexodrom and Romacen.

R.A.U. – he works as an actor and performer for many years now, plays in many political/documentary theatre shows and has experience in coordinating theatre workshops with kids.

Familiarization phase and professional foundation

Development of trainer competencies, communication training, informal knowledge transfer, development of the skills of peer trainers

After the selection, the two trainers held a one week training for the peers, following the structure commonly agreed upon during the training for trainers. The two trainers and four peers met every day for 4 hours and went through all the theoretical, organizational and creative processes necessary in order for them to fully understand the methodology and the aims of the program.

The trainers started the training with some open discussions about the three selected plays, their main themes and how they reflect the broader context of Roma people in Romania in particular and Europe in general. Following this introduction, they moved the focus on the characters, their actions and the ways in which these actions speak about their views about the world and their values. We worked on selecting some excerpts from each of the 3 plays that the peers found relevant for the construction of the characters or interesting in terms of analyzing the development of conflictual situations. Then we watched the Heroes videos, discussed them and also talked about the more general context of the Roma Heroes International Storytelling Festival.

This phase was followed by talks about the concept of the hero. The peers were invited to share what a hero means for them and make a collaborative profile of the hero they had in mind and also give some personal stories as examples. First we asked to share an example in which a person they knew acted as a hero and after that we asked them to think of an experience in which they were the heroes.

This exercise brought to the surface new ideas and perspectives about who can qualify to being called a hero and helped the members of the group know each other in a deeper and intimate way.

Also on the basis of the 3 plays, we challenged the peers to propose creative methods and games that can be used to critically discuss the social issues identified in the texts. We mostly developed on the following types of activities:

- Hello games are games that aim to bring participants to get to know each other better, to discover particularities about each other and make short presentations of themselves using creative tools.
- Warm-up games aim at "warming" the body, mind and emotion of the

participants, these are games that usually start the sessions of a workshop.

- Dramatic writing exercises aim to deepen, expose and, at the same time, develop a short dramatic text based on a given situation, be it real or imaginary.
- Role-playing games are games that involve searching, discovering and taking on a role from a dramatic text. The purpose of this game is quite complex, but summarizing in a few words would be: change of hierarchies, social positions, identity, etc.

We also tackled individual and group storytelling exercises, imagination and drawing games. At the end of this session, the trainers introduced their own recommendations and tested them in the group. A wrap-up session followed, during which they made a shortlist with a collection of games and creative exercises that they decided would be fit to use in the workshops.

Because we thought that the workshops could bring into discussion personal stories that could make the participant vulnerable and easily triggered, the trainers advised the peers to take some time at the beginning of every workshop in order to set some common workshop rules that would help them to easily manage tensions that could arise. The rules we agreed upon included not using phones during the activities, not interrupting a person while he/she speaks, not using hate speech, not making mean jokes or judgmental remarks of any kind, trying to keep an open mind to different opinions and perspectives, being present and listen to others with consideration, respecting each other, not touching a person without consent, not forcing anyone do something they are not comfortable with etc.

In the process of developing the rules of the workshops, we inevitably got to the topic of potential conflict situations, which led to setting some basic rules about communication techniques, conflict solution, how to moderate difficult situations that may appear and also how to make the participants feel welcomed, understood and safe, so they can open up and be themselves without the fear of being judged or ridiculed, even when disclosing personal stories.

Also connected with the aim of creating a safe space for the participants, we continued with a module about body language and appearance, in which we talked about the importance of showing that they are self-confident, trustable and in control of the situation, but at the same time to be friendly and respectful, to listen carefully and show a positive attitude towards the

participants. Because the age gap between the peer trainers and participants would be so small and in some cases the participants could be older than the peer trainers, we realized that the fragile balance between being too friendly and imposing oneself as leader could be problematic and the boundaries have to be clear from the start in order to maintain a comfortable atmosphere for everyone involved.

Furthermore, we were aware that the 4 peer trainers had different skills and backgrounds and we intentionally selected two persons that already had some experience in working with young people and other types of community work and two persons that were inexperienced, but had know-how in theatre and the performing arts. We thought that this difference in practice could be helpful because, as the peers were supposed to coordinate the workshops in pairs of two, so the less experienced peers could be paired with the more experienced ones. By coupling them in this way, the less experienced peers were the ones responsible with taking photos, making sure that the timetable for each activity is respected, noting the rules and the ideas debated during the discussions on the flipchart, coordinating the energy games, helping participants understand the activities etc., while the more experienced ones were responsible for coordinating the groups of participants, explaining the rules, presenting the plays and the rules for the more complex activities.

In order to make sure that the two coordinators are always in sync and know what to do and when to do it, we also set some guidelines on how to communicate with the other peer trainers during the workshops, and held improvisation sessions on various situations and how to handle them. We also reserved a whole day for holding workshop trials, followed by feedback sessions. The peers swapped teams during these trials, so we could observe who their best match is.

During the last day of the training we discussed the main strengths and weaknesses of the methodology and other exercises or methods that could be included in the workshops.

International meeting

The national training was part of the preparation for the international meeting with all the other trainers and peer trainers from the partner countries. Before the departure we made short presentations of the partners and trainers in the program to the peer trainers, so they could be knowledgeable about the professional background of the group they were going to meet and work with and also to get them excited about the new experiences and the know-how that they were going to get from the partners.

During the five days we spent together in the international training the peer trainers had the opportunity to rehearse and deepen the creative methods and practices that we introduced to them during the national training. Besides this, they had several training sessions held by the trainers of the international partners groups, therefore they learned new skills and approaches that they could insert in the workshops.

The structure of the training followed the structure of the workshops and this was useful because it revealed its logical construction. Therefore, in the first evening, the participants introduced each other, they fixed the frames for the following days together and played some group games. The next day we started with movement, concentration and cooperation games, then we talked about the bases of facilitation and got to sharing hero stories and group creative work. This was followed by exercises meant to teach the peer trainers how to react in conflict situations. The third day was dedicated to storytelling workshops and the watching of the "Chameleon Girl" theatre play. In the fourth day of the meeting, after experimenting with all the modules of the training, all the groups of peer trainers had the chance to organize a one hour trial version of the workshop and in the last day of the meeting the peer trainers had to present their plans for the workshops that they would later coordinate and had a feedback session.

Overall, the international training of the peer trainers helped them develop their interpersonal skills, their critical thinking and above all, they felt like being part of a real community, alongside other youngsters that want to generate change in their own communities. In this inclusive group they found and also offered empathy, trust, support and they were more convinced than ever that assuming their identities and their true selves is one of the most rewarding and empowering acts.

Thematic development. How did the developed theme come together?

Determined by the specificity of our theater company and the general objectives and values that we apply to all of our projects, the theme of the workshops finally revolved around the concept of female heroes, so we renamed the workshops Roma (S)heroes and mainly searched for stories that had strong female characters as protagonists. This way, we wanted to bring to the public and participant's attention that generally when we think about heroes, the first image that comes in our minds is that of a man, usually a strong one. That has to do, mostly, with the images fed to us by popular culture, mainstream media and Hollywood movies. As a result, we wanted to shift this perspective towards a more pragmatic one – who are the everyday heroes, that take care of us and “save us” on a daily basis?

We believe that immense resources of strength reside in nurturing, vulnerability, caretaking, compromise making and we know, as a fact, from numerous studies and from our own interactions and documentations, that women are confronted with many more types of aggression and discrimination than men are, so the stories that women hold have the potential of revealing that we've been unevenly distributing power and status and admiration based on the wrong premises. By proposing an intersectional view on the subject of discrimination we are able to critically understand more facets of the problem and hopefully also get to identify some solutions for ending it.

4. Methodological overview of the training

Group selection

The first workshop held by the peer trainers happened in Mizil, under the coordination of A.G.L. and N.G.. We planned the workshop with the help of our long term partner association, E-Romnja, our long-term partner association, has already developed active initiative groups consisting of Roma women. In each community we had a facilitator who belongs to the community and mediated between our team and the participants of the workshops. Also, our peer trainer, A.G.L. , is one of the team members of E-Romnja and she has been working with the Roma Youth Initiative Group in Mizil in the past year. All the 15 participants were Roma, aged between 16 and 25 years old. We decided to work with a mixed group, both girls and boys, because we knew that they met each other before and worked together in E-Romnja's projects, so we didn't think there would be a risk of feeling unsafe or uncomfortable to share personal stories. She was the one who maintained direct contact with the community and the young people who applied to take part in the workshop. We organized the two days of workshop in Mizil, in a public space – a park – due to the sanitary restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the second workshop we decided to have an open call and we selected the applicants based on their motivation for participating in the workshop. We took into consideration their interest for the performing arts, in social or community projects and we prioritized the Roma candidates. We selected a mixed group of both boys and girls, aged between 16 and 30 years old.

The third workshop happened in Cluj, at the invitation of the Cluj Cultural Center. The host organization heard of the two workshops that we organized in Mizil and Bucharest and wanted to replicate one for the Roma and non-Roma people interested in contemporary theatre. The host assumed responsibility for making the call and selection of participants. As in the first two workshops, the group was mixed and also some members of the LGBTQ+ community enrolled and this was satisfying in terms of the complexity of the debates and stories that were shared, because it reveal that discrimination is not only triggered by ethnicity, but also by gender and sexual orientation, which was one of the main issues that we wanted to explore in the context of the workshop.

Getting to know and narrowing plays

Taking into account the time limits of the workshops and the number of topics that we would be able to develop in a relevant manner during the decided timeframe we decided to work on 3 dramas: “Del Duma / Tell them about me” (written by Mihaela Drăgan) and “You didn’t see anything” (written by Alexandru Fifea) and “Chameleon Girl” (written by Márton Illés). Firstly, we chose “Del Duma / Tell them about me” and “Chameleon Girl” because the theme of our workshops revolves around female heroes and these two dramas present strong female characters and thereby create the perfect context to build a debate around how we examine the actions of young Roma girls that are put in complicated and stressful situations in/by their communities, families and schools.

“Chameleon Girl” stands as a faithful example for one of the most common discriminatory practices in Romania - the education system. Schools with high percentages of Roma students offer poor facilities and a large number of unskilled staff. This has a detrimental impact, as high dropout rates among Roma are partly the result of their negative experience at school.

To address the issue of Roma children receiving differentiated education and being avoided in lower classrooms separately from other children, the government issued a notice in 2004 banning school segregation, but in 2020 this practice is still in place, because schools in Romania are little to no involved in processes of reducing racism and integrating Roma or other ethnic children. In fact, we can say that most schools and societies repeatedly practice segregation as a “solution” to the problem of discrimination against Roma.

Assumed or not by the authorities or by society in general, racism still exists and makes victims. Of these, adolescents are probably the most vulnerable. When forming the personality of the individual, it is important that he/she is not judged for elements of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and race. It is important that bullying, a phenomenon that affects the most vulnerable children and young people, ceases or becomes less and less common and in order to get there we have to start talking about these issues as often as possible.

On the other side, “Del Duma / Tell them about me” stimulates discussions

about early marriages, another hot topic in Romania, and that's because the Romanian media, out of a desire for sensationalism, is using the issue of early marriages in Roma communities in order to strengthen the racist vision according to which Roma people are barbarians who do not want to give up such primitive practices. Early marriages were never the subject of Roman traditions, however. Marrying your minor children is not a Roma cultural practice. The problem of these marriages is found in Romania and in the Romanian majorities or in the other minorities, especially in the rural areas with risk of poverty and lack of access to education.

The biggest impact of early marriages is reflected on girls, who have to drop out of school to adopt the traditional family model in which their role is to take care of the house, become mothers and raise children. It does not matter that, in fact, cases of Roma early marriages represent a small number in relation to the entire Roma community, because mainstream media made a cliché out of luxurious weddings with 12-year-old Roma brides. It is important that there is a replica to the stereotypical images with grandiose Roma weddings. And that's precisely what "Del Duma / Tell them about me" does - it talks about what is usually silent, about what is not shown on TV about Roma early marriages. It is important to hear the voices of girls who have to go through an early marriage and have a message about it.

It is necessary to bring into the discussion Roma artists who use art as a tool to make the invisible visible and talk about their Roma community when others speak on their behalf. And this brings us to the third drama we selected for the workshops, "You didn't see anything", which aims to analyze and deconstruct the social mechanisms and the public discourse behind the murder of Daniel Dumitrache.

On March 4, 2014, Daniel Gabriel Dumitrache, age 26, working as an informal parking attendant in the Old Town, was beaten to death at the 10th police precinct. This murder is part of a very long series of abuse perpetrated by law enforcement against the most defenseless persons - poor people, informal parking attendants, the homeless, sex workers or Roma people. Violence and fear are the main means of control which the police use to preserve the current class structure and power relations. Police violence is the direct result of the violence and racism which has permeated the entire society, where the anti-Roma discourse intertwines with the discourse against "poor people", "hustlers" or "beggars".

Alexandru Fifea's text serves as a starting point for a more general discussion about the authoritarian, racist system and about the institutionalized racism that in Romania is to be found in schools, hospitals, police, trials etc.

Brainstorming, debates and story sharing based on the stories in the plays

We opened debates starting from the excerpts handed to the participants. We began the discussion by asking who they identify as being a hero from the characters presented in the plays and requested them to explain their option.

Afterwards, focusing on each play, we gave details about the context in which they were written and we tackled the different themes that we identified together, by asking questions and provoking the participants to answer, as following:

"Del Duma / Tell them about me":

- How can we talk about Roma early marriages without reinforcing the stereotypes against the Roma community?
- How can you build another identity that will define you more than the Roma identity (in this case, a religious identity)?
- To what extent does this need to be part of a specific community undermine your own ethnic identity?
- How do you solve the conflicts that can appear between two identities that come with different traditions and requirements/ pressures from the communities?

"You didn't see anything":

- Can a victim become a hero specifically because he/she is a victim?
- What meaning has the concept of being a hero in this particular case?
- What is the difference between a martyr and a hero then?
- Can the author who takes the story to a large audience be a hero, even if he/she at the same time capitalises on the story and has had the privilege and the means to get the story to the public?

"Chameleon Girl":

- How do you solve the struggle of a girl who is stuck between the expectations of her own family and community, the expectations of society in general and the pressure of her own needs and wishes?

- How do you manage and deal with the pressures that come from different areas of life without betraying yourself?
- Why is the Chameleon girl a heroine even though she decides to drop out of school and thereby does not conform to the social standards of what the right choice should look like?
- Can the Roma people be held accountable/ guilty for the fact that they are uneducated, even if education is not always accessible for them, even if segregation and discrimination are still to be found in many schools?
- Is choice and agency all you need to succeed in life, as the neoliberal discourse proposes?

Communication training

In the national as well as in the international training, the peer trainers were advised on the importance of their verbal and non-verbal communication skills. In order to create a safe space in which all the participants in the workshops feel listened to, confident to engage with the trainers and other participants and share personal stories, but at the same time to inspire respect and keep a professional distance, we offered the peer trainers the following pieces of advice:

- Never contradict one another in front of the participants;
- Be careful not to take over the discussions and always leave space for the other peer trainer to intervene;
- Try to complement each other, be present and take control if one of the peer trainers is not feeling well or if something unexpected happens and he/she can't continue the coordination of the activities as planned;
- Trust each other and collaborate, check out on each other constantly by making eye contact and reassuring each other that everything goes according to plan;
- Be careful not to make any inappropriate gestures;
- Be self-aware and not let feelings like tiredness, lack of motivation or stress show in front of the participants;
- Pay attention to body language – keep a straight spine position, do not slouch or hunch, try to stand akimbo, or with their hands over their waist and with their arms at their sides, try not to cross their legs or hands, move their hands when they talk or explain something but be careful not to gesticulate in an exaggerated manner, never keep their hands in their pockets or grip their hands, arms and/or wrists, don't fret too much with hands, and try to keep the palms open, stand with their legs apart, never fiddle with their nose using their fingers or cover their mouth or face;

- Pay attention to the tone of their voices – try to speak calmly and keep a linear pace, never raise their voice, try not to make long pauses, put pressure on the words they want to give importance to;
- Be careful at the way they are addressing the participants – try to stand facing the person they are communicating with, always address the person they are talking to by his/her name, never face sideways from their listener/s, try to stand akimbo or with their hands over their waist, make eye contact without intimidating him/her, respect personal space, try to mirror the person they are talking to, practice assertive communication: use "I" statements, try to get to workable compromises in situations of disagreement or when having to deal with a pushy participant, accept their errors or faults when dealing with hostile criticism, but not apologise.

Also, we talked about how to communicate in conflict situations, had a series of exercises regarding this subject and we noted some basic rules:

- If two or more participants get in a conflict situation they should try to ask questions that would clarify the reasons why the participants got upset and eventually smooth over the conflict by listening to all the sides of the story and try to get to a friendly compromise;
- If someone is repeatedly offensive to one or more participants in the group and does not accept a compromise, this person is invited for a one-to-one discussion by one of the peer trainers and if the discussion comes to no positive resolution the participant is asked to leave the workshop;
- Pay attention to any frictions or disagreements between participants and be careful not to put them in the same team during the group exercises;
- Always draw back to the rules agreed on in the frames. The main reason why the frames are collectively discussed at the beginning of the workshop is exactly this – in situations of conflict the participants are reminded that they all agreed with these common good practices in order to create a safe space where everybody can feel respected and comfortable.

Coaching competencies

- Presenting a professional image
 - Reflects on the participants' needs for each workshop and chooses the most effective approach;
 - Uses a range of tools and techniques to support the participants and assists them in achieving their desired results;
 - Clearly explains the purposes of the activities and exercises;

- Demonstrates and maintains confidence throughout the workshop session;
 - Shows respect and adapts to the participants' learning styles, ideas, actions, perceptions, beliefs and fears;
 - Manages the training process so that the workshops end on a positive note;
 - Manages the time well in the workshop.
- Creating a safe environment
 - Creates an environment built on trust and respect;
 - Responds to the emotions of participants with empathy, but without personally becoming involved;
 - Shows respect for the participants by not judging their thoughts, words and actions;
 - Remains neutral during the workshops, showing neither approval nor disapproval of the participants' thoughts, words and actions; is comfortable sharing views when necessary;
 - Creates an environment which enables the participants to freely explore without the fear of being judged;
 - Treats the participants as equal partners.
- Questioning Skills
 - Asks open questions; avoids using multiple or confusing questions;
 - Uses powerful and incisive questions that challenge or promote clarity, discovery or learning;
 - Is unafraid to ask questions which may be uncomfortable for the participants and those which address "the elephant in the room";
 - Asks questions which allow the participants to self-discover options and uncover the unknown in order to increase awareness.
- Effective Communication
 - Demonstrates effective listening, questioning and clarifying skills;
 - Uses honest, direct, easy-to-understand language;
 - Uses friendly, open, confident and flexible communication, with no passive-aggressive tones;
 - Provides relevant feedback to support the participants' needs;
 - Communicates clearly, confidently and credibly;
 - Encourages participants to share their views and takes time to understand and reflect on these views;
 - Is comfortable in exploring emotions with the participants in a non-intrusive manner;
 - Demonstrates the use of effective body language.
- Listening Skills

- Actively listens; focuses completely on what the participant is saying;
- Pays attention to the participant's words, tone of voice, and body language;
- Accurately summarises, paraphrases and mirrors back what the participant has said to ensure clarity and understanding;
- Acknowledges the participant's concerns, values, and beliefs as their perception of the world;
- Understands, evaluates information and reflects back interpretations that help the participant to gain awareness.
- Facilitating Growth
 - Helps the participants to discover their beliefs, personal strengths, and abilities;
 - Helps the participants to increase their self-awareness;
 - Challenges the participants to provoke new ideas, gain understanding and improve their performance;
 - Encourages the participants to acknowledge and recognise their own successes, realisations and learnings;
 - Helps participants to explore, identify and overcome their resistance to change;
 - Encourages the participants to find solutions by themselves;
 - Encourages the participants' self-discipline, responsibility and accountability.

Storytelling training

Storytelling was one of the many tools in our training arsenal. It's one of our favorites as it allows participants to draw on their creativity and it also creates an emotional connection between learners and lessons. As stories draw us in, we continually react, both emotionally and physically as they unfold. Storytelling helps us put a face on a topic, connect us to deeper issues, humanise abstract concepts, raise the stakes of the discourse, and go beyond telling to showing.

Oral and written culture shape the way we view the world, all the stories that we consume through movies, books, articles and news influence how we construct the framework that we use in order to analyze situations and people and attribute positive or negative values to them. Therefore, the stories we tell about ourselves and the ones around us define how we see ourselves and others.

By the means of the storytelling workshop we tried to deconstruct the narratives that generally overflow the public discursive space. We questioned the types of characters that populate these stories (age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation), the actions they are involved in, the messages they convey, the effect they induce on listeners/readers, then we asked ourselves what types of people or situations are never found in the stories that roam around us and why.

Following this introduction, we invited the participants to make room for these invisible characters and try to construct new narratives that would refresh the trite recipes that we can find everywhere around.

During the training of the peer trainers, we worked with several tools that would help them easily get the participants in the workshops to bring personal stories to life or quickly envisage situations that transmit powerful messages. Here is a list of storytelling exercises and creative group work that we recommended:

- Ask the participants in the workshop to bring an object or photo that has a symbolic or personal meaning for them and tell the story from the perspective of that object;
- Use playing cards like tarot, dixit or other types of oracles to create a story from scratch (for an extra creative layer they can try to do this without using words);

These exercises are designed to be presented individually, by each participant, in a working group of maximum 5 people.

- Ask participants in a working group to pick a partner and exchange personal heroic stories. After the exchange they should return to the initial group and swap stories, so that each person will actually tell the story of his/her partner. At the end of the exercise each of the participants should talk about how he/she felt to hear a personal story told by someone else;
- The participants are grouped in pairs and are asked to tell each other a personal heroic story. The person who is listening has to keep him/herself as inexpressive as possible while the other tells his/her story. At the end, ask the participants to talk about how they felt during the exercise.

The results/feedback can be presented in front of all the other participants, or, if the time doesn't allow it, the presentations can be held in smaller groups of 4-6 people.

- Drawing from the stories in the selected plays, ask the participants to change the development of the action, or change the ending of the story (they can choose to do this in a video, in a performance or improvisation or by writing a short story);
- Tell a story only by using sounds and motion;
- Present a freeze frame depicting the climax of a story and invite the other participants to try to figure out and explain what happened before and what will happen after the depicted situation;
- Ask the participants to choose a situation that they find unjust from the selected plays and propose a version in which they illustrate a reasonable solution or a happy ending for the situation (they can choose to do this in a video, in a performance or improvisation or by writing a short story);
- While working in groups, ask participants to tell the others in the group a story in which a person they know did a heroic act and then ask them to tell another story in which they themselves did a heroic act. After that, the group should choose one of the stories, turn it into a small performance and then present it in front of the other participants.

All of the above exercises are recommended to be organized in groups of 3-5 participants. After completing each exercise, they should show their work in front of the others.

Examples of creative group work's results

In one of the workshops, during the discussions, we reached the theme that people are not born equal. We talked about privileges and their lack, about the fact that not everything has to be an individual struggle, that some situations are dependent on the way the system is structured and we have to find new ways to fight and overcome these injustices.

We decided to adapt a creative group exercise to fit the new topic, so we paired them into groups of 4 and asked them to build a small improvisation starting from the following idea: "You go back to a key moment in which you developed

a shame / fear, a moment in which you want to confront someone / something / yourself at that moment. <<If I could go back in time, what would I want to change>> - answer this question, it can be personal, but it can also extrapolate to politics and be related to an entire system that you want to change."

One of the groups presented the resulting performance:

Three people started walking from three different points in space, trying to reach a certain arrival point. The person standing farthest from the point where he should have reached was a non-binary person carrying many chairs and could barely move forward. After them came a woman that was carrying two chairs and closest to the arrival point was a white man who had to travel a much shorter distance to reach the end point and did not carry anything. Moreover, the guy was holding his foot on a chair. He came to meet them and began taking the chairs away from them, so they could also reach the end point. Although they didn't need so many chairs, they brought more in order to make room for other people, so not everybody would have to go through the same hardships as they did. This way, they made their struggle a collective one, instead of an individual fight.

Another exercise that we proposed was to present a photograph and ask the other participants to interpret it. A participant showed a photo of two people caught in a fight and in the foreground the face of the person taking the photo, clearly laughing and making fun of the situation. The participants settled on the following interpretation: The person taking the photo/selfie is the system that makes you fight with people who are in the same situation as you are, intending to create divisions between people for profit/power driven purposes, instead of trying to bring people to collaborate and work together.

Presentation of the trainers

Mihaela Drăgan is an actress and playwright who lives in Bucharest and works in other several countries. Since 2014 she is the cofounder of the Roma feminist theater company Giuvlipen. She was one of the six finalists for The 2017 Gilder/Coigney International Theatre Award from New York which acknowledges the exceptional work of 20 theatre women around the world. In 2018, she was a resident artist in Hong Kong at Para Site Contemporary Art Centre where she was developing Roma Futurism - that lies at the intersection of Roma culture with technology and witchcraft. In the same year is acknowledged by PEN World Voices International Play Festival 2018 in New York as one of the ten most respected dramatists of the world.

Zita Moldovan is an actress and presenter of the show "From the Life of Roma" which airs on National TV. As a graduate of the Faculty of Theater and Television in Cluj, in 2006 she collaborated with the Ion Dacian Opera House in Bucharest, in the show "Broadway Bucharest". In 2014 she co-founded the Giuvlipen Theater Company, in whose shows many of you have seen her perform. In 2018 she was part of the Romanian-French production "Uprooted" presented in Paris during the Romania-France season in 2019. The latest film in which she stars is "Two lei sixty" directed by Camelia Popa. In addition, during her 15-year career, she has been actively involved in the Roma feminist and antiracist movement, working as a theater trainer in Roma communities and in various campaigns for Roma rights.

Presentation of peer trainers

A.G.L. is a 24 years old Roma feminist and activist, graduate of the Master of Politics, Gender and Minorities within National University of Political Studies and Public Administration in Bucharest. Since 2013 she has been active in the E-Romnja Association for Promoting Roma Women Rights. She has experience in grassroots activity with Roma women and Roma youth initiative groups, in community development, advocacy and identity papers. Through her work she wants to open up opportunities and to encourage Roma girls and women to become leaders and do what they like.

B.P. is a student at the Faculty of Music and Theater in Timisoara, in the Acting and Performing Arts Section. She is an artist and a poet. An enduring and

ambitious person, "too "shukara," [beautiful], too intelligent, too too too everything", as she defines herself. She has participated in several festivals in the country and abroad, including the Biennale ArtEncounters 2019, and the theater festival in: v z b l, with the forum theater piece, "Let's do it" —part of the program "Timișoara. European Capital of Culture 2021." At Kunsthalle Bega, she performed a poetry-jam style performance with feminist astral projects together with artist Virginia Lupu. She travelled to Berlin with the Basca Theater at Festiwalla. Her poems have appeared in the feminist magazine CUTRA.

- N.G. is an actress, she is young and very talented. She transmits messages through music and theater and tries to motivate those who believe that "life has offered them little." Since 2015 she has been part of the group Playhood, a group of young artists from the Ferentari neighborhood of Bucharest who combine education with performing arts. They've had performances in numerous cultural spaces, from the National Theater of Bucharest, the National Theater of Craiova or Arcub, the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Godot Cafe or Green Hours.

- R.A.U., actor, performer, drag queen and trainer, graduated from Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, The Arts of Theater Performance.

In the period 2013 - 2016 he made several theater performances within the theater faculty, and in the period 2017 - 2019 he worked within the independent stage of the Romanian theater and collaborated with NGOs, the projects in this time frame concerning mostly socio-political themes and issues. Between 2018 and 2019 he collaborated with the NGO CARUSEL for the project "Story S - Springboard to Roma Youth Success" where he had the role of mentor. The aim of the project was to support Roma youth in continuing their studies and pursuing a successful career.

Between 2019 and 2020, R.A.U. developed his interest in training coordination, participating in several workshops and training workshops that concern topics such as: racism, homophobia, anti-discrimination, inclusion in the society of minorities and contemporary drama.

Where are we now, what next?

Plans, stall (access restriction, advantages and disadvantages of online space)

Even though the actual health crisis imposes lots of restrictions regarding meetings, social interactions and travels, our long term plan is to continue using the Roma Heroes methodology as a means to open important debates on topics that are hardly ever put in focus in the public discourse. In the following two months we plan on organizing a dissemination event in which we will invite the trainers, the peer trainers and some of the participants in the workshop, alongside members of other organizations and institutions that work with Roma people or with other communities that are subject to discrimination and marginalization and talk about the Roma Heroes project, its results and also about how to continue the work that we have started through this project, what are the best ways in which to share the methodology and know-how accumulated in these two years of practice and what resources to rely on (both human and financial).

At this point, we have reservations about transferring the workshops online, because the topics targeted by the workshop and the exercises require intimacy and the confort of a safe space that is hard to recreate in an online meeting, especially if the participants don't already know each other. In the absence of these important factors, we are afraid that the participants won't feel that sharing personal stories and making themselves vulnerable by talking about themselves and their experiences is appropriate. Also, translating the method for an online version would also imply rethinking many of the exercises and creative practices.

Therefore, we would much rather concentrate our efforts in preparing other theater professionals and community workers in using the workshop's methodology with their beneficiaries. In order to do so, we plan to apply for national funding from the National Cultural Fund Administration.

In the meantime, we are making everything we can to keep our four peer trainers involved in our company's activities and projects and we are determined to help them further develop their skills in theater, activism and community building.

We know for a fact that one of the peer trainers – A.G.L. – has the proper

context and will continue to organize workshops in the Roma communities in which E-Romnja is developing initiative groups for young people.

Closing - experiences of the peer trainers, and participants'

Instead of writing a summary, we chose to insert two testimonials, one from a peer trainer and one from a participant in the workshops. We believe that these are more revealing and real than any intellectualization that we may engage in.

Peer trainer testimonial – R.A.U.

"The experience of being a trainer was challenging because it was the first experience of this kind. Being a trainer is, first of all, a big responsibility. And somehow that made me ask myself a lot of questions - Can I do that?, Can I make people understand the message I'm trying to send?, Do I have the power to tell people something important, something that will have a real impact on them? Do I have the skills and presence necessary to empower other people? - but at the same time I was aware that the message of the workshop is very clear and easy to understand and that by using theater exercises the atmosphere will get relaxed and fun for everyone involved.

And indeed, when I met the participants all my anxieties went away. It was a pleasure to have debates with them, to observe other perspectives that, perhaps, were not similar to the perspectives of the network of people I usually socially interact with and as a result it was interesting to see how other people relate to the concept of a heroine / hero, how they critically analyze social and ethical issues."

Roma (S)heroes Workshop participant testimonial

"I write because I know I have a voice and I want to make it audible. Because I have personal experiences that, if I don't give voice, I'm left alone with them. But the moment these feelings, traumas, and vulnerabilities are articulated and given the opportunity to be heard, they can potentially act as a common ground. To build relationships with others, we need to understand our personal experiences together and move forward together to create communities that can act differently from the repressive systems in which we currently exist and participate.

One of the three-day theatrical and creative writing workshops held by two creators of the Giuvlipen theatre company in Bucharest, Mihaela Drăgan and Zita Moldovan, was to continue the first sentence of the above paragraph and articulate who writes (drama) from what personal motivation. The Roma

(S)heros workshop in Cluj-Napoca is part of an international project of similar workshops in Spanish, Italian, Hungarian and Romanian, promoting contemporary Roma drama and concentrating on heroic figures -roma youth. After analyzing excerpts from several dramatic texts, we talked about theater and social issues like racism and sexism - based on our own experiences.

It was a therapeutic experience with familiar and unfamiliar people to reflect on the social and political importance of writing, speaking and theater. Together with the participants and the workshop leaders, we managed to create a safe and inclusive space in which we could even share personal traumas with each other, and then talk about the possibilities of dramatizing them. It is one of the most important duties for me to speak responsibly about the problems that affect us and those around us. And due to its form, a theatrical work is always a common cause. Theatrical performances will not replace dictatorships or destroy unjust power systems, but theater has the power to shape the community, for example, when the values it represents point to a fairer future, as is often the case with political theater.

Any power that destroys theater is trying to destroy the community - as if the unequal conditions in our societies no longer do. We need to write and create in order to reconnect, to become stronger, to face the injustices that affect us all, but in different ways, as equals, in solidarity."

Appendice

Videos

“Voi n-ați văzut nimic / You didn’t see anything”, Alexandru Fifea

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tD5DBqU2P2I&list=PLVQTLcJ3YrIPLp7lj-hMOTeUIVrAZTOEi>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqvLS8j7d_w&list=PLVQTLcJ3YrINH0IWZ6_NhUYUVoXFL0OLD)

[v=NqvLS8j7d_w&list=PLVQTLcJ3YrINH0IWZ6_NhUYUVoXFL0OLD](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqvLS8j7d_w&list=PLVQTLcJ3YrINH0IWZ6_NhUYUVoXFL0OLD)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5jBs7Mx_QQ&list=PLVQTLcJ3YrINH0IWZ6_NhUYUVoXFL0OLD&index=2)

[v=P5jBs7Mx_QQ&list=PLVQTLcJ3YrINH0IWZ6_NhUYUVoXFL0OLD&index=2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5jBs7Mx_QQ&list=PLVQTLcJ3YrINH0IWZ6_NhUYUVoXFL0OLD&index=2)

“Fata cameleon / Chameleongirl”, Márton Illés [https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wydAzvprG5o&list=PLVQTLcJ3YrIPLp7lj-hMOTeUIVrAZTOEi&index=2)

[v=wydAzvprG5o&list=PLVQTLcJ3YrIPLp7lj-hMOTeUIVrAZTOEi&index=2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wydAzvprG5o&list=PLVQTLcJ3YrIPLp7lj-hMOTeUIVrAZTOEi&index=2)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o64otGeX6u0&list=PLVQTLcJ3YrINH0IWZ6_NhUYUVoXFL0OLD&index=3)

[v=o64otGeX6u0&list=PLVQTLcJ3YrINH0IWZ6_NhUYUVoXFL0OLD&index=3](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o64otGeX6u0&list=PLVQTLcJ3YrINH0IWZ6_NhUYUVoXFL0OLD&index=3)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9t-](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9t-WLHEouU&list=PLVQTLcJ3YrINH0IWZ6_NhUYUVoXFL0OLD&index=10)

[WLHEouU&list=PLVQTLcJ3YrINH0IWZ6_NhUYUVoXFL0OLD&index=10](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9t-WLHEouU&list=PLVQTLcJ3YrINH0IWZ6_NhUYUVoXFL0OLD&index=10)

“Del Duma (Vorbește-le despre mine) / Del Duma (Tell them about me)”, Mihaela Drăgan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XXa5-rRgGk>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-xi7g_bSFA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2PAdb5TIDs>



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