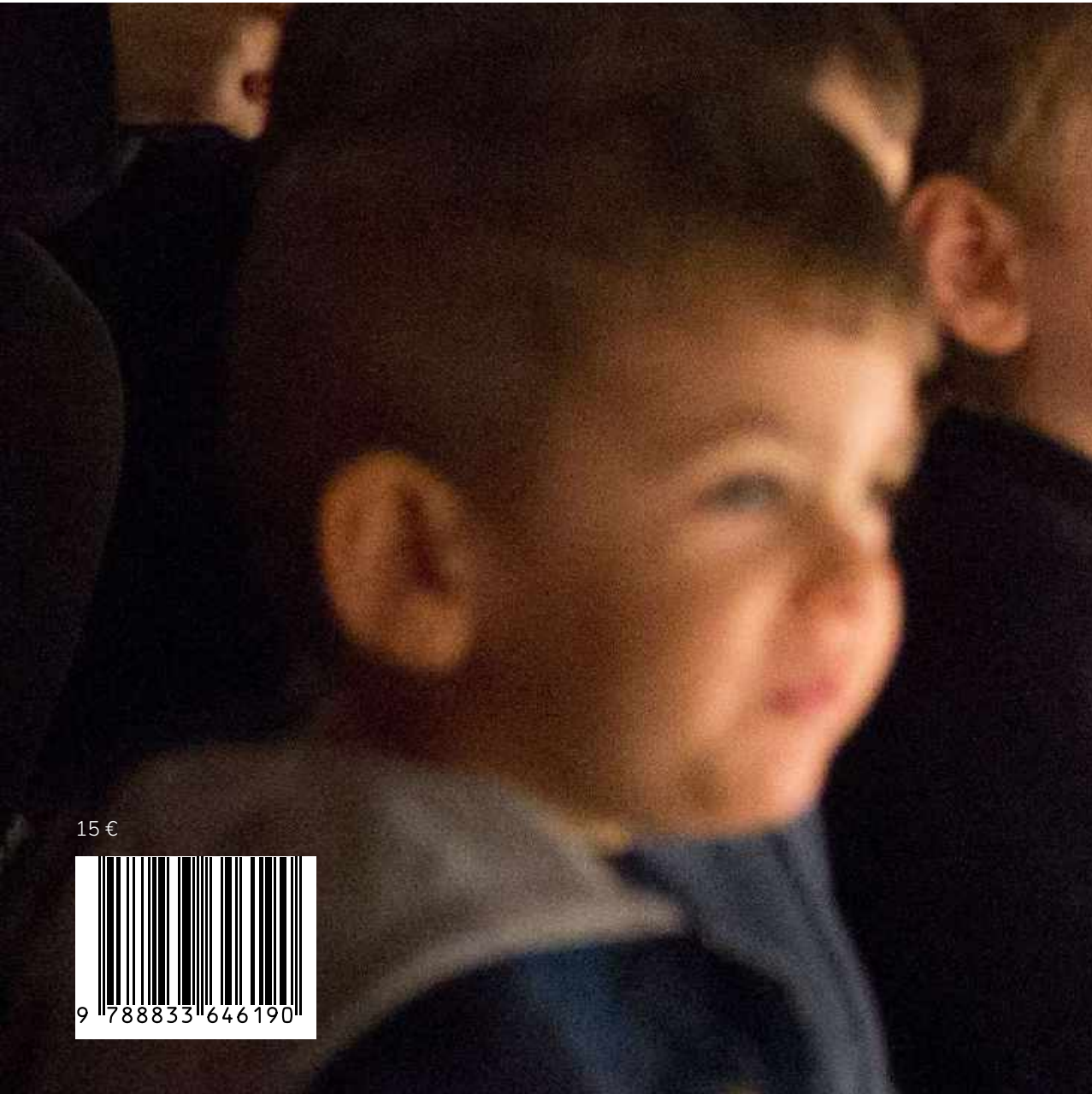


MAPPING PRODUCTIONS A Diary of the experience

This book brings you along the co-production process that took place in the frame of Mapping - A Map on the Aesthetics of Performing Arts for Early Years. Starting from the division into four groups, each focusing on a different pillar of performing arts (image, movement, sound, and word), sixteen of the partners embarked on a journey of practical workshops, online discussions, rehearsals, try-outs, and touring performances, in strong connection among them and with the four researchers investigating their work. This journey, impacted in many ways by the events that have shaped the five years of the project, led to the creation of 27 new productions dedicated to children between 0 and 6 years old that carry in them the traces of the entire process and Mapping research. The 16 articles collected in this book give an insider's view of the journey, allowing for a greater understanding of the many details behind each partner's artistic path.



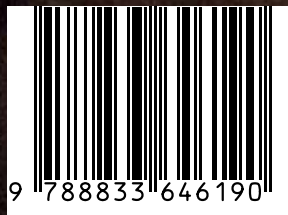
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A Diary of the experience

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MAPPING PRODUCTIONS

A DIARY OF THE EXPERIENCE

INDEX

- 7 **Preface**
Anna Sacchetti, La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi (Italy)
- The Experiences**
- 11 **A Wonderful Day**
Marilena Triantafyllidou, Artika Theatre Company (Greece)
- 15 **The Why Mix**
Päivi Aura and Kati Lehtola, Auraco (Finland)
- 19 **The Organics of Performance for Early Years: Developing theatre
communally, durationally & internationally**
Rachel Baltz and Marc Mac Lochlainn, Baboró International Arts Festival for
Children (Ireland)
- 25 **Music begins with listening**
Michael Lurse, HELIOS Theater (Germany)
- 31 **We grow up together**
János Novák and Attila Eck, Kolibri Színház (Hungary)
- 37 **At the Right Time**
Bruno Frabetti, La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi (Italy)
- 41 **The light at the end of the Tunnel**
Uroš Korenčan, Lutkovno Gledališče Ljubljana (Slovenia)
- 47 **Finding our way**
Anne Hübertz Brekne, Theatre Madam Bach (Denmark)
- 53 **Creating, Learning, Playing, Evolving**
Helen Matravers with Peter Glanville, Polka Theatre (United Kingdom)

59	On our way to “Wait a Minute” Femke Somerwil and Gertien Bergstra, Stichting de Stilte (Netherlands)
65	Transmission through an international cultural community Teater Tre team and Hedvig Claesson, Teater Tre (Sweden)
71	Social Restrictions and the Power of the Encounter Justyna Czarnota, Paweł Gałkowski, Alicja Morawska-Rubczak, Teatr Animacji w Poznaniu (Poland)
77	The dramaturgy of images and the view of the early infancy María Pilar López López, Teatro Paraíso (Spain)
83	A Map for the Journey, not for the Treasure Andra Burcă, Teatrul Ion Creangă (Romania)
89	The image as a universal theatrical passport Gaëtane Reginster, Théâtre de la Guimbarde (Belgium)
93	Theatre beyond generational borders Felicitas Biller and Katharina Schrott, Toihaus Theater (Austria)
99	The productions
119	Mapping Partners
127	Mapping. A Map on the Aesthetics of Performing Arts for Early Years

Preface

Designing a multi-annual project is a future building exercise that is rooted in the present.

When you start designing a project, you imagine it happening in a world that is pretty much the same as the one you are living in. You build for a future that you envision a repetition of the present time. The conditions in which a festival will take place in three years, those allowing a show or a workshop to meet its audience four years from now, should be the same as those you are living in today.

Or at least, this is how it made sense to think when we were building Mapping, in 2017-2018. Five, six years ago, that in some ways now feel like five, six decades ago.

Today we know the unexpected events that affected our life and plans, and our work in the performing arts, in the last five years: from the Covid-19 pandemic to a war at the borders of the European Union, from the coming into force of Brexit to the raise in the inflation rates.

And we know that the Mapping project we are looking at today is not the same as the one we submitted to Creative Europe in 2018.

However, as difficult as it has been for our industry to go through these complicated years, and for our project to reinvent itself while everything around it was changing, the results we have achieved have been shaped by these very circumstances. And the book you have in your hands recounts precisely some of the most interesting consequences of the changes we encountered: the creation of 27 productions dedicated to children between 0 and 6 years old, 11 more than originally planned, through a research process that was renewed as we went along.

As the Covid-19 pandemic hit Europe in the spring of 2020, it became clear that Mapping plans, made of festivals, productions, artistic workshops, and meetings, would suffer a setback. Fortunately, in the following months, we had the chance to redesign the work programme, adapting it to a reality that was ever changing and that highlighted new and different issues. We were able to extend by one year the duration of the project and to reimagine the activities: large gatherings and meetings were postponed or cancelled, thus liberating resources for new and revised

plans. The research addressed to creating a Map on the aesthetics of performing arts for early years – the heart of the project, intertwining with all other elements – found a new shape online, a change that suspended the possibility for artists to physically work together in presence, but allowed for more frequent meetings and discussions that followed the partner's production processes. The meetings connected to the other research paths (on Dramaturgy and on Audience Development), as well as the Common meetings among the partners, were moved mostly online as well, which made it possible for the funds to be redirected towards the creation of new productions, inspired by the questions arising from the Map research. Some larger festivals had to be cancelled or resized, giving the opportunity to smaller, new festivals to arise, resulting in an increase in the total (from 19 festivals envisioned in the application to a total of 27) of events that audience could safely attend. The course of the live work groups workshops (Image, Movement, Sound, Word) was abruptly stopped after one meeting, but the common artistic work regained new life with the Mapping workshops for artists, where the impact of

the shared research process gave impulse to a tangible exchange of practice and reflections.

Part of what was happening in our everyday reality impacted the project in ways that promoted challenges and new goals that we met one step after the other; a ripple effect that touched almost all our activities and that led us to different, unexpected directions. The present in which we had rooted the project design was not there anymore, but the project evolved to adapt. We were very lucky in this.

In designing a project dedicated to 0-6 years old children, there is an additional, inscrutable element of future building: a large part of the audience that will take part in the activities, and that is the very reason of the project itself, does not yet exist in the world when it is being written. Perhaps some part of the flexibility demonstrated by Mapping comes from this familiarity we all have with the mysterious beings we keep at the centre of our imagination.

Anna Sacchetti
La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi

The Experiences

A Wonderful Day



Μια Θαυμάσια Ημέρα (A Wonderful Day), photo by Spyros Perdiou

Marilena Triantafyllidou
Artika Theatre Company (Greece)

The beginning

Our starting point for the creative working process in Mapping, was at the very beginning of the program. From the moment the project began, we already knew that it was going to offer us new insight and inspiring ideas for the creation of theatre for early years. And so it happened. During our very first encounter with the Word Group at the kickoff meeting of the project, there were so many impulses and stimuli, that sowed the first thoughts and questions that would feed our rehearsals and research for many months afterwards.

One month later, the first Follow up meeting for the Dramaturgy in theatre for early years, led by Professor Gerd Taube, took place, where all directors were present from all the working groups, and where we actually had the chance to get to know, meet, talk, and exchange ideas with the artists of the program, many of whom we were meeting for the first time. This encounter was a big revelation for us, giving the space to hidden thoughts and hopes to come out and maybe flourish. One thing was sure, we may be coming from a country where theatre for ear-

ly years was still in its infancy, but we were not alone.

And this was just the beginning.

Poetry, dreams, and reality

As a group, existing since 2006, we have always been working and creating shows the way we knew and were taught, and as we like of course, never distinguishing between theatre for children and theater for adults. Really, where and why this distinction came from? In the process, however, you realize that there are things being implanted in your head without your wish, because art is so much related to who you are, where you come from, in what environment, social and political circumstances were, and are, you living in. Art is a matter of growing and evolving.

So, from the first meetings already there was this question emerging: What kind of text can you use in a performance for very young ages. Could we use something from the “great texts” of the world’s literature? And with no logical reason, just like an intuition, poetry flashed through our minds and was going to stay. Sometimes you may know without knowing why. The prerequi-

site is a fertile ground where you will feel free to create. And the research begun, or should we better say, continued.

Poetry is the oldest literary genre. Even when you do not understand it, it can impose itself. Moreover, it is free, puts the imagination into operation and blends the dream element with the realistic. We found all these characteristics quite common to the way children, especially children in the early years, see and understand the world, but also in the way they make the transition to the symbolic and real world, as they conquer language and speech.

There was a lot of search and research on poems of every kind, trying to find out which poem would be more suitable, what do we want to say to children through a poem and why. While searching, we also started improvising and very soon the world of dreams showed up, which also seemed to have many similarities with poetry and the way language is formed. Basically, in all cases we have a transition from “fantasy” to “reality”.

So, in that way words started becoming movements. Sometimes we worked

completely freely, other times with specific directions such as finding a specific movement for each verse of a poem. Then, the big “how” was there to be explored, how do I say the poem, how do I convey the words, the meaning, the emotion, the memories, everything that can be said and everything that is not said. So, we tried to explore how speech is formed, articulated, and heard. We tried to discover again the sound of letters and tried to play a little with the atmospheres and feelings of the poems, playing in parallel with rhythm and melody.

We went to the first Word Group meeting in Breda full of ideas and questions, to meet even more and rediscover the countless possibilities hidden in art. It was then when we defined our common element for the shows to come, that was, surprisingly, the ... bicycle! Which is very surreal come to think about it. We were altogether for three days working extensively, struggling with words, and texts, and poetry, and meanings and we came out with a common element which was something completely different and unexpected, and still so strongly supported by the majority. Moments like that keep reminding you that

the artistic process remains free and the power it has to unite people.

After Breda we continued to improvise for quite a long time on many different poems, by Greek poets such as Yiannis Ritsos, Andreas Empeirikos, Georgios (George) Seferis and Dionysios Solomos, but also others such as Turkish writer Aziz Nesin, Shel Silverstein, and Pablo Neruda. Maybe for the first time we had so much time to research and exchange ideas in the meantime before the performance was starting to appear.

The genesis of a performance in a state of pandemic

Then, the coronavirus burst into our lives. A big overturn for everybody and everything. And yet, it is so sublime to discover new ways and solutions out of difficulties, however great they may be, like the cyclamen blooming in the cleft of a rock, as the Greek poet says. So, although travelling and working in person was prohibited for a long time, we did not cease to meet online keeping the flame burning and working, realizing for once more that, in our isolation, we were not alone.

It was the time to begin the rehearsals. We went through all the previous work, and we tried to see themes, lines, and threads in the poems, if and how they were interrelated and connected, and what was essential for us to keep. The common place was “falling and standing up again”. Who hasn’t fallen off a bike and never got up to try again?! From the day we take our first steps we literally fall and then we stand up again and again and again as we try to learn how to get better at keeping the balance and keep walking for a longer time. Metaphorically we keep doing this till the day we die. We are doomed in this eternal trial and error process as the only experiential method of discovering the truth for us. What makes us stay up?

Finally, we had our theme!

The impact of the pandemic could not but leave its mark on our theme, too. The pandemic was a metaphorical “fall” that forcibly removed us from the routines of our daily lives. Routines was the key word and how we cope when we lose them. We may fall, but maybe it is a chance to stand up again and rediscover everything around us.



Μια Θαυμάσια Ημέρα (A Wonderful Day), photo by Spyros Perdiou



...και βγαίνω! (Here I come!), photo by Vassilis Konstantinou

Falling and standing up again, as well as routines, are subjects that concern everyone, regardless of age. The crucial question was emerging once more: is theatre for early years only... for early years?

In the dramaturgy sessions we had been talking a lot about limits and boundaries, themes, and taboos, so now it was time to surpass our boundaries as a theatre group. There were many innovations that we tried, in the text –we used poetry and moreover a poem dated from almost a century ago-, in the setting and the colours –we had a black and white setting-, in the music –for the first time we were using amplified sound-, and many others.

What about the bicycle? Was there a bicycle on stage? Well, that we cannot reveal, you will have to see the performance...!

So finally, the show *A wonderful day* was created, with dance and live music and the only spoken text was the first verse from the poem *Morning Sea*, by C.P. Cavafy, as translated here in English by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard:

Let me stop here. Let me, too, look at nature awhile.

The brilliant blue of the morning sea, of the cloudless sky,
the yellow shore; all lovely,
all bathed in light.!

From falling to standing up again, from familiar to unfamiliar, from reality to fantasy, or is it from fantasy to reality?

The show was originally addressed to audience from 2 years old, though through the interaction with the audience when live shows finally took place, as well as through our sharing of impressions with

our partners, we came to realize that it fit better to an audience from 3 years old. Art is an exchange of thoughts, impressions and sensations and always moving.

The end

As soon as a show has been presented, then the creative team has the anxiety to see if it will be embraced by the audience, maybe some adjustments will need to be made after seeing what is actually working or not, and finally you may actually spend some time enjoying the outcome before starting again the questions. When you are part in a program such as Mapping, this is, fortunately, inevitable. Because the research does not end at the preparation stage. Rather, it continues intensely afterwards, too. When you have the chance to present your work in different countries in different festivals, you get out of your microcosmos, and you have the chance to take distance and see where you are in the creative process. You also have the chance to see the work of so many other artists, from different backgrounds and different cultures “shouting” at you that types of performances, styles and artistic approaches are inexhaustible.

At that point, due to the changes the pandemic imposed, adjustments needed to take place and Mapping was redesigned partly, offering us the chance to create a second new performance. This time we would be diving in completely different waters reversing many of the parameters we chose to work with in the first production just to confirm that it is a never-ending process.

Even when the project will be finally over, it will not have ended.

The Why Mix

Päivi Aura and Kati Lehtola
Auraco (Finland)

Auraco's coproduction *The Why Mix* was not born under the lucky stars; on the contrary, it took over three years to get it premiered. The third time was the charm: we managed to premiere *The Why Mix* on January 27th, 2023, even though the performance itself was not exactly what it was meant to be – COVID-19 had changed the plans once again.

There were many other unpredictable things which affected the process of the creation in addition to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of that, the working group renamed the coproduction “Why, Oh Why!” or simply “Why?”. We might not have been able to finish the work without lots of (black) humor and good will.

The idea of the coproduction

The basic idea of this coproduction evolved from one question: do the smartphones and use of emojis reduce children's ability to understand and interpret bodily movement and expression? The interest in geometrical figures and shapes connected with abstract movements guided the creative work of the artists as well.

Residency at Annantalo Arts Centre

Working in the residency of Annantalo Arts Centre gave us a solid base for understanding what we really worked for. We met 178 children and youngsters between 4 to 18 years old in so called aquarium workshops before the rehearsal period. Because of the pandemic restrictions, there was a glass wall between the artists and the participants creating an aquarium-like environment. In all, COVID-19 made the work very challenging, but we succeeded to receive a lot of usable information from the children and young ones. We also got great support from Annantalo's staff during the whole three years' process with all the changes and challenges.

Impact of the Movement Working Group workshops

The first and - what we didn't know then - the last three days of Movement Working Group's (MWG) Workshop in-presence took place in LGL, Ljubljana in October 2019. 16 artists from all the MWG partners – De Stilte, La Baracca, Ion Creanga, City of Limoges and Auraco - dove into the fascinating world of



Miksi Mix (*The Why Mix*), photo by Minna Hatinen

movement to get known each other and find a common theme for the project's coproductions. With the help of Professor Young Ai Choi from Korea National University of Arts we came up with a theme "imaginary something". Each partner was free to interpret this theme in their own way. In Auraco's case there was supposed to be an imaginary map in the performance but in the end this imaginary something was the spectators' interpretation of what they had seen in front of their eyes. Because the performance itself had no story, we relied on the stories which the spectators created by themselves based on what they had seen.

Online workshops among the MWG partners as well as researchers' interviews and discussions proved to be valuable to strengthen the creative process. All the information was not new to us, but it made us to re-evaluate our previous knowledge and make our own thoughts clearer and stronger.

Impact of the project

Without the Mapping Project it's very probable that there wouldn't be this production called *The Why Mix* today. The project worked like a catalyst that gave the starting point and energy to the creative work in the beginning and throughout the whole process. Its financial support was essential.

Impact of time

In terms of time, we had a lot of it. Usually, it takes only a few months to prepare the production to the stage. This time, during the three-year process, we had long breaks between the rehearsal periods and dates of premieres. The time gave us a possibility to rethink all our doings again and again. Yet, we decided to keep the structure, the music, and the lights as they were planned for the first premiere date.

Auraco's coproduction *The Why Mix* is a kind of representative of its time, for instance considering the distance rules for performers on the stage as well as the distance between the performers and the audience. The demand of 1,5 meters



Miksi Mix (*The Why Mix*), photo by Minna Hatinen

between the performers diminished until the premiere in January 2023.

Even though it was a challenging process for each of Auraco's team members, audience gave us great feedback by no-

ting the importance of time that gave the production a possibility to mature to its' best. The mental support from the Mapping Project's partners and researchers was highly appreciated and valuable throughout the process.



Miksi Mix (The Why Mix), photo by Minna Hatinen

The Organics of Performance for Early Years: Developing theatre communally, durationally & internationally

Rachel Baltz and Marc Mac Lochlainn
Baboró International Arts Festival for Children (Ireland)

Baboró International Arts Festival for Children, along with Branar and University of Galway (previously NUIG) participated in the Creative Europe Mapping Project as one of the 18 partners. Baboró's Rachel Baltz interviewed Branar's Marc Mac Lochlainn to reflect on the process of creating Rothar as part of the Creative Europe Mapping Project.

Rachel Baltz: To begin, can you speak to being assigned to the Word group?

Marc Mac Lochlainn: It was quite scary to be in the Word group, because of the fact that we don't generally use words in our production in Branar, not that we ended up using many words in the end, but we did explore the use of lots of words in the development. What did become interesting to us was the bilingual element of words. When we started the project, it was initially going to be Miquel [Barceló] and Ionia [Ní Chróinín] as performers, and we had thought about taking the idea of when words don't come to a child as our starting point. We started to look at words and bilingualism and when does the child's brain begin to understand that a word is in two different languages. That

formed the basis of our questions ahead of the first common group meeting for the Word group in Breda. The questions were around the idea of the bilingual brain and when does the child understand the idea of bilingualism.

RB: What was the devising process like using the Word prompt?

MML: The process was in 4 phases over 2 years. Neasa Ní Chuanaigh was involved from the start as a co-director with me. We did some work, the four of us [Miquel, Ionia, Marc & Neasa] on that idea, and also, the other element that became quite a strong element in this was, "what happens if words don't come?" The idea of children that don't speak, and how adults speak for them. So if you're the child who's shy, people put words in your mouth, or people speak for you. And you don't get a chance to be yourself. Adults say things like; "oh, she's very shy," or "he's very shy," or "don't mind him, he never talks to anyone." The child is apologised for because they are in some way lesser because they don't have words. We had those two thoughts rattling around in terms of where the show would begin.

And then after Breda, the bicycle became an element of it. So the next phase of development we did was with Miquel. The show was initially called *Cíúin* [meaning “quiet” in Irish]. And the idea of not being able to speak became something that we were really interested in. We were looking at the idea of a little cockerel that couldn’t talk. And the set was a bicycle that was [on its side], and both of the wheels rotated around. One of them was a landscape and one of them was the farmyard. Ciaran Kelly (our technician) made a hayshed and farm that sat on a bike wheel. That was one of the sets and the other set sat on the other wheel, it was essentially a tabletop puppet piece. We worked with it for about a week and played quite extensively with it. What we discovered to be the most interesting elements was the noises that we were able to make with the bike. So, at that phase, we also discovered that the whole idea of the quiet cockerel wasn’t interesting enough, it was hard to tell that story. But what did emerge was that he went on a journey. The journey to the different locations was what was interesting to us. The two things that came out of that phase was that the bike could make noise, nice noises, and that moving

to different places was interesting for the story.

For the second phase, Ionia unfortunately wasn’t able to continue with the show anymore due to other commitments. We had initially been talking to Moisés Mas Garcia about composing the music for the show. Moises joined Miquel, and we decided to forget the idea of the farmyard and make Miquel’s character the person who doesn’t talk. We then came up with the idea of setting the story in a bike repair shop and Miquel being this bike repair person who goes on imaginative journeys on his own with Moisés creating the music. After about Wednesday of that week it became clear that Moisés wanted to play, and that two people would offer more opportunities to the story. They became a duo, and Moisés was able to make noises to enhance what Miquel created. Text wise, it was still quite silent and then as it evolved Moisés’s character used more and more words. That’s where the show *Rothar* that we have now came from. The bike then became the main instrument, which actually, that was in the next phase, we found a really good bike that sounded really good. And then the adventures that they went on together evolved.

RB: How did the rest of the Words group feed into the process?

MML: There was the in person meetings in Bologna and Breda which set out the stall and gave us all bike as a common thing in all the shows. In December 2020, we fed back to the word group via Zoom, it actually coincide with a development week so I was able to share a video with them. The feedback was quite good in that they thought it was funny. It was great to have other eyes and international eyes on the work because our usual collaborators in schools were closed. There was questions about the link with the word group as there was so few words, but we decided it was more important to make a good show than to stick to that theme. We can make the theme work within it. But I think we wanted to make a good piece of theatre that was within this process. The lock downs meant that we were stuck in one place and forced to be inventive, the two characters are also the same and we found that this joyful inventiveness was a much stronger line of inquiry than the idea of words.

RB: And do you feel you achieved that? How did audiences respond?

MML: We did some sharings with it in

phase 3 in 2021, it went really, really quite well with the school and we had nice feedback. So we knew we were on to something. We then came back in September and worked on it again for the final phase. The first showings were in Baboró in 2021 in the Mick Lally [Theatre]. That was [Baboró’s] first festival back, and the audiences were still small. It was quite emotional to share work after what everyone had been through, and to hear kids belly laughing again. What they saw most in it was not the lack of speaking, but the willingness for the two guys to play, which is something that we didn’t consciously do, but we decided that we wouldn’t get hung up with storyline and character histories and narrative arc, and just to play and let it evolve in that way. And that’s what came across to the kids. That was quite interesting. We didn’t put the limits of a narrative arc on ourselves, which meant that we could go further with the play.

We went on tour in 2022–Spring 2022 it toured to schools in Galway. It was just at the point when the schools were starting to open up again. And it became this little moment of celebration where it was the first time that kids could be back in the hall together. They had a show to see. So



Rothar, photo by Anita Murphy



Rothar, photo by Anita Murphy



Rothar, photo by Anita Murphy

it was like this magical thing of celebrating the end of a horrible period with a show. So that was [Rothar's] job basically in a lot of schools. And then Baboró had us back again, in the Taibhdhearc [theatre]. Which was again another lively affair because again, they were back at a festival in big numbers. They were like cows that were let out of the shed in spring. But at every stage that we took the show back, we learned something else about it. Before it actually went to Baboró it went to London to Polka, to that festival. Which was nice, actually, because then we got to talk about it again at like a little conference and the guys from Theatre Tre were there. We compared the development of both of the shows in a little symposium, which was really, really cool. Because the way they talked about the development of theirs sounded way more mature than the way we did ours. [laughter]

RB: That's actually a good segue, can you speak a little bit more about what it was like having the other companies within the Words group developing alongside you?

MML: Yeah, it was interesting in that we were all really at different stages because of the lock downs. So people were either ahead of schedule or on the old schedule, or else they had been completely delayed. We were chipping away at our idea, which meant that every time we spoke, our idea had changed. It was evolving as we were moving. So in theory then [the Mapping development process] suited the Branar developmental process. But it was really interesting to actually sit down and share with another group of creators what you're doing, and for them to feed back into what they're doing. All of the starting points for the four shows were really different, but really similar. Like, theoretically, they're all basically about bikes, or about movement or journies of some sort. That's all got to do with that workshop in

Breda. So you have to wonder what would have happened if we had all of the other workshops as well? What influence would those communal meetings have had on the shows?" Now, there comes a point in everybody's process where you have to go, "this is my idea, I'm going," and not be influenced. But I think as well as that the way the Word group was organised, we only would have had, one more workshop, pre-making, and then the other workshops would have been after shows would have premiered. So it worked well in a way, that we ended up having more pre workshops. It's lovely to hear other artists talk about their work, and hear them justify ideas. From the same invitation to make, we had a show with Greek poetry about the idea of balance in your life—that's Artika's show, the Polka show, which is about the hidden life of a mother that's hidden in the shed; she used to be a mountain bike champion, and the daughter discovers this about her as the mam. It has an element of bilingualism as well. Ours was about a bike shop. And then Madam Bach is the idea of when words get jumbled, and finding your way through different signposts. And they have a bike element. So, I think by virtue of the fact that we all had to keep meeting every now and again, meant that we were chatting about the work. I wouldn't say that it influenced it, but it did definitely give me confidence in the idea that we had. It was like having an international panel that you could bounce ideas off. And if they said it was shit, then you went, "okay, I can't justify it. So it's probably shit." [laughter]

RB: Do you feel working with the international cohort influenced your practice at all?

MML: I don't know. I suppose it positively reinforced [my practice] more than influenced it. In that we can say, "the work we're making here in Galway can stand up against work from four other countries."

But like, the workshop really influenced *Rothar*, because if we hadn't been to Breda, it probably still would be about a farmyard. If we didn't have that bike—that became the key that unlocked the level of creativity and imagination and investigation that we wouldn't probably have gone down that road [otherwise].

RB: Can you touch on the research element with Yvette?

MML: The research element was this ghost in the background. Yvette wasn't on the zoom meeting, but she was watching the videos of all the Zooms. Me and Yvette had a meeting during Baboro this year [October 2022] when she was over, which meant that we were able to have a really good chat about *Rothar*, about the whole process. But she knew loads about it, because she had been watching the Zooms, which ultimately might be better than her being in the Zoom meeting. It was more natural, we're naturally having artistic con-

versations, rather than it being led by the researcher or her being able to ask questions. And plus, Yvette had seen a video of *Rothar* from the very start, and she had also the videos that I shared in the Zoom chats. I think that it's a really nice way of researching, in that you have a researcher follow a process, which will give them an insight into four different processes of making work for young audiences without any judgement. I think they're looking at the processes rather than the results, which is an interesting way of looking at it, because normally, researchers will retrospectively look at the work or they'll take a look at the research other people have done about a piece of work. But it's a unique position for a researcher to be in, to be in at the start and listening to all the conversations and then follow through to see all of the end products and be able to draw their own conclusions academically as to what happened there. It'll be interesting to see if she makes us sound smart. [laughter]

Music begins with listening

Michael Lurse

HELIOS Theater (Germany)

This production is very closely linked to my first pandemic.

Suddenly I was no longer allowed to meet my audience.

Even rehearsals were restricted, tours, meetings, travel... everything that meant my life was (almost) non-existent. I went out into nature; luckily, I live on the edge of the forest. I listened to the world and breathed deeply. I had time, the pandemic's only gift to me. I listened to more music than I had in a long time, and I thought about the sound, the music. I had worked a lot with musicians and dancers in the theatre. So, I know about the importance of sounds and music in a space, in the context of a narrative or a scenic design, performance, etc. I have always thought about the music. But I have always left the expertise to the musicians, at most giving my opinion when asked, singing, drumming, or moving.

So, I also hired a composer and musician for *Früh Stück*.

At that time, I would not have dared to do such a project without "professional accompaniment". But the composer became afraid of getting infected during the rehearsals and I had to let him go.

I am not a trained musician, and I lost my composer at the beginning of the production. So I had to work out the conception and realization of my investigation myself. I went all the way back to basics, we did soundwalks in the city, sat on the floor for hours and listened to ourselves and the world. We amplified sounds with microphones, worked for a long time with feedback loops... and I read a lot of books. If you want to make music, you first must listen.

One question moved me a lot:

The acoustic is always around us. Our ears are trained to hear only what is supposedly important for us. If we listen carefully, maybe there is already music there?

I read:

Walden - Life in the Woods (Henry David Thoreau)

Thoreau moved to the woods. Completely and utterly...

The simplest sounds were the most beautiful music to him. The bark of a dog in the night, even the hum of a telegraph wire, could inspire him poetically. When



Früh Stück, photo by Anna-Sophia Zimniak

the storm wind roared around his hut, symphonies sounded to him.

“In the evening the mooing of a cow on the horizon beyond the woods sounded so sweet and melodious that at first I mistook it for the voices of some singers who had sometimes brought me a serenade and were now perhaps wandering over hill and dale. But I was soon not unpleasantly surprised to find, on repetition, that it was the melodious and natural music of a cow.”

“I was so deeply moved, as I sat with the doors and windows open, by the soft buzzing of a mosquito taking its invisible, unfathomable flight through my room in the early dawn, as if I heard trombone notes sounding aloud a song of praise.”

It should be possible to tell this, today, in a stage space.

And I ordered a loop station to be able to process and weave the sounds in the room. And then I read on:

Musicophilia (Oliver Sacks)

“We humans are a musical species no less than a linguistic one. This takes many different forms. All of us (with very few

exceptions) can perceive music, perceive tones, timbre, pitch intervals, melodic contours, harmony, and (perhaps most elementally) rhythm. We integrate all of these and “construct” music in our minds using many different parts of the brain. And to this largely unconscious structural appreciation of music is added an often intense and profound emotional reaction to music.”

“Much that occurs during the perception of music can also occur when music is “played in the mind.” The imagining of music, even in relatively nonmusical people, tends to be remarkably faithful not only to the tune and feeling of the original but to its pitch and tempo. Underlying this is the extraordinary tenacity of musical memory, so that much of what is heard during one’s early years may be “engraved” on the brain for the rest of one’s life. Our auditory systems, our nervous systems, are indeed exquisitely tuned for music.”

And:

The World is Sound and The Third Ear (Joachim Ernst Behrend)

“At the root of all power and motion, there is music and rhythm, the play of



Früh Stück, photo by Bülent Kirschbaum

patterned frequencies against the matrix of time. We know that every particle in the physical universe takes its characteristics from the pitch and pattern and overtones of its particular frequencies, its singing. Before we make music, music makes us.”

“The ear as an organ in its own right with many more possibilities than the eye”

“The embryo wants to hear. Alfred A. Tomatis, the great French ear expert, points out that the embryo already begins to form ear attachments a few days after fertilisation - when it is only 0.9 mm tall. It still gets everything from the mother, but it wants to have an ear itself. Four and a half months after fertilisation, the cochlea - the actual organ of hearing - is fully developed. And it's about to reach its final size! We grow until we are 17, 18 or 19 years old. But the cochlea reaches its final size even before we are born - 135 days after fertilisation. So a little creature develops for whom this is the most important thing in the first months of its existence: to be able to hear for itself! To be completely and utterly an ear!”

All the reading, there was much more,

also texts I had read years ago, like everything by Behrend, led me to a question: Could I, as a non-trained musician, dare to present my research on the subject of sound?

And I came up with more questions:

Music is also about the definition of what we consider music.

Who has the sovereignty of interpretation? Is it not a mere appropriation of music by the so-called musicians who traditionally come from the bourgeois milieu?

You can make music and access to music very complicated by saying: “You first have to learn to sing, you first have to learn an instrument, you first have to do a rhythm school. You first must, first, first.... And then you can make music!”. And I thought that was wrong. Everybody can take a glass, for example, and make different sounds and then maybe we have a rhythm. And you don't have to be a percussionist for that. You can also make sounds and music beforehand. You can sing even if you haven't learned to sing.

That touched me very much when I thought about it. Because I have two sons and they always sang when they were little and in kindergarten. And when they

started school, they stopped singing. I wondered about that and then realized that there are music lessons where you must sing according to notes and rules. And then this happy singing to yourself stops. It suddenly stops because you get an assessment for the sounds you produce yourself. I think that's a shame. I think we are allowed to make sounds; we are also allowed to claim that it is music when we knock on the table. This freedom of access to sound and music is very important. Maybe even vital.

The interpretative sovereignty over what we call music must be transferred to everyone.

Can there be right and wrong sounds?

In the best case, such questions arise from my production *Früh Stück* and of course it is meant to create desire, to encourage, to create one's own sounds, alone, in a group, at home. Everyone should be allowed to do this without being judged for it.

Then I read:

You Are the Music: How music reveals what it means to be Human (Williamson, Victoria)

She writes about Mozart:

“According to reports, little Mozart received intensive musical instruction from his father before he could even speak.”

“There is such a thing as talent and there are such things as prodigies, though our present understanding of both concepts is still hotly debated. Perhaps because of this fact I am inclined to believe that it was mostly Mozart's unique upbringing that set him apart musically from the rest of us. Whether Mozart possessed advanced natural musical ability or not, the point I want to make here is that all babies are born musical, not just our finest composers.”

Does that mean that everybody could become a genius in music making?

Are we all born with this potential? Can there be right and wrong sounds?



Früh Stück, photo by Anna-Sophia Zimniak

We grow up together



János Novák and Attila Eck ¹
Kolibri Színház (Hungary)

Kolibri Theatre as Hungary's biggest theatre for children and youth has an exceptionally vast and varied repertoire of 33 performances per season made for children as young as 0 and up to 18 years of age, offering age group plays that are suitable for their mental and emotional development. In the past 30 years we created a space where our spectators feel at home because they are part of an artistic experience which suits their age and interests. Taking the thoughts and problems of each age group seriously, we aim to relieve their anxieties, entertain and amuse them, strengthen their personalities and offer a joyful social experience. The key to preserving our national culture is to ensure access to its values even for the youngest ones. A 6-month-old baby is already consuming and creating culture. It is essential that our audiences master the skills that will enable them to understand and enjoy theatre performances - already at a very early age.

"We grow up together" says our motto. Experiencing as a child a theatre show done with special concern and proficien-

cy can contribute to a richer and happier adult life. We believe in theatre's vital role in forming communities, setting an inspiring example and facilitating social and emotional skills.

The significance of the Mapping Project in our productions

Starting in 2003, our international co-operations have greatly contributed to the enrichment of our repertoire. We bring back treasures that we find across the world to Kolibri Theatre so that Hungarian children can relish them, too. It is of utmost importance for us to take into consideration the needs and demands of our audiences. Beside the well-established, familiar elements we should always offer them exciting novelties and fresh perspectives in the performances. In these endeavours, Kolibri Theatre truly appreciates the value and support of the Mapping Project. Thanks to the cooperation we can be part of a great community that has constantly inspired us by the works of the best professionals and creators from the field of theatre for children. Being a part of

EXtra-INtra/Álommesze (EXtra-INtra/Dream Tale), photo by HSC Stábiskola/Kolibri Theatre

¹ Translated by Anikó Rupp and Krisztina Zsoldos

the workshops and working groups had a huge impact on creating our own productions within the Mapping Project - something which we shall elaborate in the following paragraphs.

EXtra-INtra - Dream Tale

As a member of the Mapping Project, Kolibri Theatre was part of the Sound group, which gave us the opportunity to elaborate in depth the role of sound and music in our forthcoming productions. It was all the more relevant to us since we regularly have live music in our shows, often played by our own orchestra.

The Sound working group meetings organized within the project greatly supported the creative process of our productions and we were able to use the guidelines and consequences we drew from the meetings. In the first workshop which took place in Limoges, France in May 2019, the participants (besides us: Helios Theater, Teater Tre, Toihaus Theater) discussed the role of sound in early years performances and the issues and challenges that are likely to be faced. With the help of researcher Katherine Morley, we focused on analysing the different experiences that each partner brought.

Our first Mapping production, *EXtra-INtra - Dream Tale* has been conceived as an experiment of space and sound imprinting for ages 0-3. Our first production was based on the idea that intrauterine memories are carried through our lives, giving us significant and useful foundations after birth, with special regard to auditory memories, which young children sense directly whereas adults only vaguely sense. The *EXtra-INtra* project operated with these auditory and spatial memories, searching for the boundary line between inside and out. Therefore, the questions raised by Katherine Morley were truly relevant for our working process. What is the difference in perceiving the outside world for children, inside and outside the belly? How do the perception and the acoustic experience change, with pre-recorded and live sounds? Katherine Morley elaborated these questions based on her professional experience, primarily from the point of view of babies as spectators. bringing it all in connection with the development of the brain. To be able to have precise insights into the psychological background of this initial idea, director György Philipp collaborated with psychologist Krisztina András, member of a research group called “Baby-

Lab” at the Cognitive Science Department at Central European University studying human cognitive development.

In *EXtra-INtra* we aimed to create a theatrical space in which we can demonstrate to the youngest audiences how it looks and feels to be a human body living within another human body, and what this kind of existence can be. The performance presents a bunny’s magical journey into the world of dreams. A play with lights, shadows, sounds and echoes. The performance evokes our first auditory and visual impressions, which accompany the bunny through the colourful world of dreams. “What sounds can a baby hear inside her mother’s womb? And what sounds will she hear when she’s born? What kind of prenatal musical experiences connect us to our mother?” The noises of the outside world blend with concrete musical fundamentals, and we can hear the spatial and dynamic distances of sounds and their pulsation even within the mother’s womb. It’s worth toying with the idea of what will replace this soft and friendly realm of sounds after we are born, when we add another, special point to our APGAR score. How do we adapt to the noises of the outer world?

EXtra-INtra opposes these two worlds by evoking auditory memories, and by representing the mother-foetus relationship staged in a unique set of space and sound, creating an intimate ambiance, which allows our youngest spectators to take part in a special shared experience with their parents.

SoundBird

During the follow-up meetings led by Mr. Gerd Taube, crucial aesthetic and structural elements inherent in theatre for early years were discussed. In our meeting in February 2019 in Bologna, we tried to find answers to the most decisive questions about dramaturgy. What is the general meaning of dramaturgy? What are the connecting aesthetic questions? Are there any peculiar problems in the dramaturgy for early years? With the help of Mr. Gerd Taube the participants highlighted three elementary factors: the concept of humour, the existence of taboos and the difference between sense and meaning. During the online meeting in 2020, the focus was on the “dramaturgy of surprise” - a theme that was further developed in the upcoming meetings. This aspect was especially important for



Hangmadár (SoundBird), photo by Gergő Bárdi / Kolibri Theatre



Hangmadár (SoundBird), photo by Gergő Bárdi / Kolibri Theatre

us in the making of our second Mapping production *SoundBird*.

Attila Eck, dramaturge, who participated in the follow-up meetings of Mr. Gerd Taube, that through sharing personal experiences, the participants ended up revealing the everyday dramaturgy and action mechanisms of surprise. They came to the conclusion that everyday surprises have two main components. The first one is the unexpectedness, when an unforeseen event occurs. The second component is the comprehensibility - the circumstances need to allow the experience of the surprise to be explicable in retrospect. In the world of theatre, this means that for the audience the promise of change - either in storytelling or theatrical effects - is an integral part of the performance; thus, for the theatre maker, it is an important tool to keep the audience's attention alive. Change needs to happen unexpectedly and in a creative way, organically deriving from the inner logic, the autonomous interplay and framework of the performance. Theatrical surprise is therefore an essential means to create tension and relief on stage.

Surprise is an essential dramaturgical element of our performance *SoundBird* as well. Basically, the whole play is built up as a series of surprises, which eventually create a theatrical unity. The dramaturgy focuses on the sound effects and music making, closely connected with a rich visuality, the two forming a synaesthesia. In order to create the miracle and surprise we had in mind, we developed a unique and innovative audio technology based on the accelerometer and gyroscope sensors that are built into the objects used by the performer. The challenge was to make children see that the theatrical effects happening right in front of their eyes are indeed real-time and not a result of a technician working outside the stage. The solution was sim-

ple, almost archaic: it is the richness and sophistication of the performer's acting, her presence and relation to the physical world of the play that hold the key to the birth of miracle and surprise.

János Novák, Executive Director of Kollibri Theatre and director of *SoundBird* believes that in order for a performance for early years to be successful it should break with the idea of classical, linear storytelling. The youngest audiences cannot follow a complex storyline; their attention is attached to the momentous actions. For them a theatrical performance is not a tale told but the string of perceivable and observable actions. Young children - as well as adults - seek two kinds of experience in theatre: they want to see things that are well-known and comforting for them, but at the same time they also want to be taken by surprise. If they only meet with familiar things, the play becomes boring; if there are too many unexpected elements, they may get frightened. The right balance can only be established by the creators' intuitive and attentive approach to children. With all this in mind, *SoundBird* has been built up as a series of etudes, wherein we did not intend to tell a story or illustrate a narrative. Instead, we let the actions themselves shape the story, relying on the performer's creativity and responsiveness and using audiovisual elements that retain the spectators' attention all through the play. Sound, movement and music have all been essential components of space shaping, enriched with a spectacular visual background. *SoundBird* does not necessarily mean a melody, but a musical motif that came into being from different sounds connected with the acts and movements of the performer, attaining its final shape at the end of the performance.

Conclusion

In building up our world, we work with a set of tools that we are already familiar with - our own cultural heritage, our musical and literary knowledge, our upbringing. International connectedness, however, puts all our well-established ideas into question by offering a completely different point of view. It makes us think: Do the three-year-olds across Europe and the world think and feel the same? Is what we believe in universally true or culture-bound? Some things are strongly attached to national traditions yet they can

be understood and adapted in an international context, too. Some are more difficult to transfer inter-culturally. The Mapping Project offers a great opportunity for us to step away from our own world and artistic work, to look at it from a distance and re-evaluate it. We have embraced the novel aspects and discoveries we gained from the Mapping encounters, integrated them into our work and transmitted them to our audiences and artistic community. On a similar note, we hope that our ideas and contribution have proved equally fruitful for our partner theatres across Europe.

At the Right Time

Bruno Frabetti

La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi (Italy)



Cornici. Ricordi in tre atti (Frames. Memories in three acts), photo by Matteo Chiura

Mapping, which will end in November 2023, is the living, or rather still ongoing, example of the saying: “the right place, at the wrong time”.

Among its aims, the project initially set out to create a Map on performing arts for early childhood; not a geographical map, but a collection of 32 questions, born from the work of professionals who have been consistently producing for children aged 0 to 6 for several years.

Sixteen productions, one per partner, arising from a shared research pathway, consisting of four distinct working groups: image, sound, word, and movement.

The productions were then to circulate between the different festivals of the project over two and a half years, and then to be accompanied by an exhibition, a research process on dramaturgy, one on audience development and finally several publications dedicated to early childhood... it all seemed clear, but then everything changed overnight.

At the end of February 2020, the Mapping festival “Visioni di futuro, visioni di teatro...” had to close its doors before it even opened them.

Cause: pandemic, of which one could see

the beginning but not the end.

Suddenly, theatres, such as Testoni-Ragazzi in Bologna, where so many schools and families are welcomed daily, became a place that was no longer safe, that had to be closed until further notice.

And what about Mapping? The research, all the travels and festivals? What would become of it?

We couldn't know back then, and I won't tell it here.

In this article I want to tell you what we were left with, not what could not be done.

We were left with the desire to tell new stories, while waiting for the theatre to reopen to the public.

In addition, we had an unusual possibility for the pace of production in Theatre for Young Audiences: time.

Time to spend in the rehearsal room, even if spaced out, with masks, without being able to touch each other... I don't dare you to imagine it, as we all experienced that moment, not just those who work in the theatre.

Before starting to write about La Baracca's productions, it was necessary for me to retrace in memory and in words those moments that now seem so distant.

Yet a new story had to be born, to be told

when the doors of the theatres opened again, but... what can be told right now? To whom? And why?

These questions, among artists, are some of the most frequently asked when one starts thinking about a performance and before even entering the theatre one is faced with countless questions, possibilities, and decisions to be made. The questions don't have to be answered, they don't need to stop; on the contrary, they usually multiply throughout the process of research and then production.

Cornici - Ricordi in tre atti (Frames - Memories in three acts), is a performance born in a moment in history that, surprisingly, gave La Baracca the time to work specifically on the actresses who, first separately, then together, tell a very emotional and delicate story.

And "Mapping - A Map on the aesthetics of performing arts for early years", a project researching the sensitive relationship with early childhood through the performing act, was the right opportunity to do so.

Thankfully, before the theatres closed, we had the opportunity to meet in Ljubljana, together with all our fellow members of the Movement group.

A three-day physical workshop, in which much was done, and little was said, yet in-

valuable for receiving suggestions on which to reflect and build.

As a group, we shared that, in every performance born from those three days, there had to be an imaginary 'something'. Something which cannot be seen on stage but is there.

Like memories.

Our memory, in fact, is made up of windows, fragments of stories we have heard, images we have seen, emotions we have experienced, ever since we were children.

Memories live in them; they open and close them. Memories in black and white, pleasant and unpleasant, that turn the past into the present for a few moments and which our imagination allows us to relive.

Memories become questions, like the ones children ask adults, with such a lightness and innocence that even the most difficult ones, the ones that do not have an answer, are made lighter: What has gone will ever come back? Why is it that what no longer exists, continues to live inside me, in my dreams, in my memories, and seems so alive? *Cornici* tells a story composed of three moments played out in rapid succession, three acts linked by a common thread.

The first two, individually narrated by each of the two actresses, are two mono-

logues without words, serving to introduce us to the everyday life and differences of two women belonging to different age groups.

They will tell the third one together, revealing only in the finale the familiar and emotional bond that unites them.

Pleasant and unpleasant memories that transform the past into the present for a few moments, through the graphic sign, the continuous transformation of objects and the expressiveness of the actresses.

The memory, within the play, is not only part of the two women's imagination, but becomes visible on stage: the colour red unexpectedly emerges within the black and white frame of the first two acts, disrupting the daily routine of the two characters and accompanying them towards the last act of the story.

Before the debut, however, there were other questions, a proper research journey inside the big Mapping box, which became more and more precious as time went by, because it was able to give us back so many small moments of humanity, when everything outside the theatre only made us drift away.

So, as if the theatres were still closed, let's gather round to answer a few questions.

Why a performance in three acts?

There are stories that follow a straight line and can be guessed right from the start, while other stories can only be understood at the end. This is one of those stories, made up of two different stories that, because they are part of the same story, meet at some point.

What are you trying to tell with this performance?

A performance does not always tell, it sometimes communicates.

This show is like its scenery (black wooden boards of different shapes and sizes on which the actresses draw with chalk as on blackboards [TN]): an open space that everyone can fill with their memories and personal stories.

Who is this show dedicated to?

At La Baracca children, even very young ones, are considered as spectators of today, not just of the future.

They need real, unfiltered emotions. Tales that are sometimes simple and sometimes complex, but still a gift for them.

In this case the dedication goes to children aged 2 to 5, who are still very young, but whose memories may have already begun to take shape.



Abaco (Abacus), photo by Lorenzo Monti



Abaco (Abacus), photo by Lorenzo Monti

Why the decision to represent a cemetery?
Frames also talks about what is normally hidden from children.

Death, which during the pandemic had sinisterly begun to surround us, the artists, and them, the audience, was so present that we liked the idea of representing it not as an end, but rather as a reopening, a new beginning.

A cemetery is an unusual space: young children rarely visit it, and if they do, they do not associate any heaviness to a place that, without the painful memories we associate to it, is not so strange. Some cemeteries are beautiful, like the Certosa in Bologna, some are very impersonal, if I think of the many I have seen around the world.

Ours belongs to neither of these cases. It is a symbolic place, a conscious risk.

Why the choice to use sign and drawing?

When you start a journey, you never know where you will end up.

We needed something that could appear and disappear, but in theatre for children, the most effective magic is the complicity between the performer and the audience.

If the trick is clear you can focus on them, the children, who are the real reason why stories are told.

Where is the movement?

Movement does not always mean choreography.

So many small movements cannot be seen and yet they are conceived or arise naturally on stage. Precise timing, speed variations and balance in the interaction between the characters, both direct and indirect, are very important in this performance.

So many questions, so many words... but when will the theatres reopen?

1 May 2021, in front of a few masked spectators, *Cornici* premieres. At last.

This looks like the end of a journey, but instead it is only the beginning.

Because *Cornici* started travelling to festivals, first digitally and then live, but the desire to reopen the theatre, our theatre, to reaffirm it as a safe place, remained.

And so, from the same creative group, *Abaco* was born: a show dedicated to children from 0 to 2 years old, to represent the desire to play, grow and learn. A long process, nourished by the questions of Mapping Project, which, in the meantime, have arrived just in time, to complete a research process that, after its beginning in presence, has ended online.

From 1 to 3, then 4, 5, 6... when you start counting, you know where you start from, not where you end up!

Abaco is a game of numbers, dedicated to very young children who, step by step, begin to discover the world. The wires of an abacus are a metaphor for a line connecting infinite points, infinite experiences. Our experiences become numbers, and as they add up, they give us more and more courage, help us discover the world and reach ever new milestones.

All these questions and observations, adding up to the ones of the project, which eventually came to count 24 instead of 32. But it doesn't matter: Mapping was not meant to be a handbook on how to make theatre for early childhood, but rather a map inviting anyone curious enough to do so, to produce for early childhood. After *Cornici*, born from the origin of the co-productive path Mapping, *Abaco* is inspired by the product of shared work. It is designed to invite new spectators on a first time visit to the theatre, because after every ending there is always a beginning. Summing up the two productions, we can say that the entire production process of Mapping is a dedication to all ages of early childhood, children from 0 to 6 years old, who can now finally return to the theatre, the right place, at the right time.

The light at the end of the Tunnel

Uroš Korenčan

Lutkovno Gledališče Ljubljana (Slovenia)

Little stars, big stars

Blowing through the night

And we're lost out here in the stars.

Lost in the Stars

(M. Anderson, K. Weill)

The Ljubljana Puppet Theatre's Mapping collaboration project was primarily concerned with research into the use of material as mean of expression. In contemporary puppet theatre, such a departure from traditional puppetry conventions is trendy and is called object theatre or material theatre. The shift from the classical puppet to the material as a signifier can mean a dispersion of the focus of the gaze, but above all, it has important implications for the visual aspect of the performance. This is why the contribution of our engagement in the Image Working Group was very important for the process.

Our first working encounter with the practical and theoretical aspects of dealing with the image in the creative process was a workshop in Salzburg, in the framework of a festival organised by Toihaus Theater. The workshop was attended by key members of our creative

team - in addition to the director, a lighting designer and a sculptures working in the puppet-atelier. The practical aspect was touched upon through working on modern software that allows lighting with video. The renowned Finnish artist Kalle Nio led the practical workshop. We are all familiar with the so-called mapping technique of using video on stage, but Kalle Nio also introduced us to more simple, primitive and old-fashioned theatrical ways of manipulating light on stage. Participants were also able to try their hand at computer modelling of light and preparing dynamic lighting sequences. The practical work with light offered creative settings for the later work of the artistic teams, and certainly in a way shaped the later work, especially given that immediately after the Salzburg workshop an epidemic broke out and there were no more opportunities for similar stimulations of creative potential. Thinking about light as a basic element of the image also opened up exciting starting points for the theoretical work of the working group, and again - indirectly influenced the creative processes.



Peskovnik (Sandpit), photo by Jaka Varmuž

The director Miha Golob's first Mapping production creative treatment of the material was sand, and the symbolic location of the sandpit also served as the title of the performance. Four strangers enter the vast field of possibilities. They build a fragile and changeable world: from grains of sand, the universe, time, creatures, landscapes, natural phenomena, moods and attitudes, architectures and objects are created. They are conceived, piled, blown, swept, poured, out, scratched, etched, drawn, flowed, poured, sown, erased, squeezed, rolled, applied, removed, added, taken away, added... The sandpit, as an active playground, stimulates cognitive as well as emotional developmental processes. The performance, *Sandpit*, illustrates the transition from initial individual through parallel children's play to joint associative play with occasional conflicts, then to cooperative play with a common goal. The elements of children's play are the basis of a performance logic that, on an ideological level, depicts the emergence and development of human civilisation - from the construction of physical space through the settlement and organisation of a common system, which requires a high degree of creativity, innovation and collaboration, all with a view to lasting coexistence.

As the 2020 performance was produced under challenging circumstances, the study was interrupted several times for extended periods. This allowed additional creative reflection but also enough time to produce an extremely polished video. The video was a virtual substitute for the performance at various festival venues in the first period, but in the first half of 2021, the performance could also be physically presented in front of the audience. After watching it, a critic wrote: "Miha Golob, who has put it all together beautifully, is also responsible for

the beautiful visual design of the show. The dramaturgy, which flows before us like a river, has been directed by Mojca Redjko, and the lighting designers Maša Avsec and Gregor Kuhar (and the animators) are to be commended. The show is labelled as suitable for all ages, which is true, as it is non-verbal and therefore universal in general. Like the story. Like sand, which is omnipresent." (Petar Sekelez, <https://www.contempuppuppetry.eu>)

After the "social isolation" caused by various measures to limit the spread of the virus, the next steps in the project's scaling up of our production were limited. A joint workshop - in physical form - was not possible, but online meetings in the segment of reflection or commentary on the exchanged video materials were productive. The director Miha Golob and the creative team entered into the next process, which was essentially the one most strongly linked to the first workshop. He started researching light as a performance material. *The Tunnel* is a co-production with the Lithuanian theatre Klaipėdos Lėlių Teatras. The internationally strengthened creative team created a rich set of light vocabulary over several residency stages, refining and editing it through the process into a performance about light, darkness, fears and overcoming fears. The collaboration resulted in two twin performances - a Slovenian and a Lithuanian version. On the eve of International Theatre Day, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania awarded the traditional artistic prizes of the Golden Stage Cross (Aukšinių scenos kryžių) at the Lithuanian National Drama Theatre in Vilnius. The prizes, which represent the highest theatre award in Lithuania, are intended to recognise the most important works and outstanding achievements of artists in the field of professional theatre produc-

tion in the previous year. In the category of works for children and young people, the Lithuanian twin - *The Tunnel* - won the award in a strong competition.

With this kind of background, in a double pop-up version and with its relatively easy transferability to foreign-language environments, *The Tunnel* has great potential for international touring, where it is sure to encourage youngsters for a long time to come.

The play's message of fears and overcoming fears is of course not accidental and in a way reflects the time in which it was created. The existential insecurity engendered by the epidemic and all the social measures taken to curb it cause a widespread psychosis that is sure to be transmitted from parents to children. And it also affects the creators, of course; it is difficult to create joyfully and to communicate a belief in a better future when people are dying all around you and no one sees an end to the tragedy.

Is it legitimate to bring the pessimism and tragedy of the world around us to the stage? What stories do we tell to the youngest in times like these? And on the other hand, has not the whole of cultural production been put to the test and is in

danger of taking refuge in the telling of easy stories and, in the absence of money, turning to commercial waters? Navigating such risks and maintaining quality standards has been essential over the past few years.

It could be said that the importance of theatre, and of living culture in general, has been re-examined and reaffirmed after periods of closure of theatres and cultural institutions. The demand for tickets for live performances, despite the risks that were potentially "floating in the air", has shown that we humans are social beings and that we need live events where we socialise and learn social patterns. This is particularly important to stress when we talk about theatre for the youngest. The ban on live events has lasted for practically two years - for the youngest children it could be two years when they would visit the theatre for the first time, and so last year we were able to listen on several occasions to excited parents telling us that their little ones were in the theatre for the first time...

Mapping is an international cooperation project and being part of an international partnership was quite complicated and traumatic at the beginning of

the epidemic, but in the second period, I could say even liberating. We had our first tours abroad as part of our partnership network, but at the same time the partnership network also functioned as a kind of social network during the closure, where we could exchange experiences and continue our work. For narrowly limited fields of activity, such as puppetry but also theatre for the youngest, international cooperation and exchange of experience is essential.

I see as one of the most important dimensions or added values of the international cooperation in the Mapping project in openness - not only openness to different performance forms and expressiveness, but also openness to different forms of cultural actors who participate in the project and bring different perspec-

tives and rich experiences to it. In addition to the researchers, who are one of the main foundations of the project, I am thinking in particular of the involvement of the Bologna Children's Book Fair. The contribution of image analysis, illuminated by experts in the field of children's literature and book illustration, was an important feature of our first workshop and has echoed in our work on several occasions since. It is a new dimension in our work and it seems that the creative professions urgently need to explore new dimensions in order to stay fresh.

Our partnership has enabled us to do just that, it has got us through the tough times and kept us in creative shape, through the dark times we have come hand in hand to the light on the other side of the tunnel.



Peskovnik (Sandpit), photo by Jaka Varmuž



Tunel (The Tunnel), photo by Mitja Vasič

Finding our way



Du er her (You are here), photo by Christoffer Brekne

Anne Hübertz Brekne
Theatre Madam Bach (Denmark)

Theatre Madam Bach was part of the Word Group of the Mapping project. As co-ordinator of the group, we were in charge of coordinating some of the physical and online workshops during the project, and of keeping the exchange and conversation going in between.

For Theatre Madam Bach, the idea of diving into Words as a topic was both intriguing and challenging. Theatre Madam Bach's works always carry words and stories within them in a careful combination with images, movement, soundscapes and live music. Each element plays an equally important part. So, to single out one element - words - and pay particular attention to this was new to us.

Our Mapping production was called *You are Here*. Words became an integrated part of the performance alongside the other elements, but the road to get there was new and inspiring. The following is a reflection on this journey, and on the impact of the exchange and research conducted within the Mapping project.

The weight of words

From the beginning of our process, we were occupied with the meaning of words

for small children in relation to sound, movement and image. What comes first? Which of these elements has the most weight for a child? How do small children tackle words and their inherent meaning when their vocabulary is still in the making?

In Breda in the frame of the BRIK Festival 2019, our Word group had its first workshop. Led by Theatre Madam Bach (Christian Schrøder, Pernille Bach and Anne Hübertz Brekne), and under the guidance of researchers Yvette Hardie and Manon van de Water, mapping partners Polka Theatre, Artika Theatre Company, Baboro International Arts Festival for Children / Branar, and Theatre Madam Bach explored the world of words in theatre for early years. Our common discussions and practical workshops revolved around first words, emotions, sensations and memories coming through words, words in translation, the importance of rhythm and pauses in a sentence, and much more.

This workshop also hosted a session with neuroscientist Amy Bidgood on how babies and toddlers develop language, how they learn to connect sounds, images and emotions in words, and what the

different stages in their language development are.

A few questions remained, though. What happens when a child develops these language skills at a later stage? Or if a child just happens to be more visually oriented and connects the dots in a different way?

We became quite interested in exploring these other ways of perceiving the world and started doing some research on dyslexia. Not as a “learning difficulty” or “learning disability” but as a resource, a pool of creative thinking and sensing.

Going into the world with the senses first

Being able to think in images is innate but at the age of 3-5, most of us begin to switch to auditory thinking, i.e., thinking in words and language. Dyslexics, however, tend to think nonverbally and form inner scenarios by creating the meaning of words in experiences and mental images.

Finding my way through letters and words can sometimes make my head spin. But when I'm on my swing, stories find their way all by themselves. And my thoughts just fly away...



Du er her (You are here), photo by Christoffer Brekne

Our intention was not to create a show about dyslexia, nor to target our work to a dyslexic or neuro-diverse audience in particular, but to create a show that speaks in a language where every child feels at home. Our research on dyslexia was an inspiration, a way to better understand our own practice and make conscious decisions on our use of words to produce images and sensations rather than *meaning*. Our research led us to a concrete principle in regards to this; to try to eliminate wordiness and target words that activate the senses instead; words like Strawberry (taste, colour), Wind (sensation), Sea (sound, sensation, smell) Swing or Bicycle (movement).

You are Here

With this research as our backdrop, we started the production of *You are Here* - a gentle performance about finding your way in the world and within yourself. We were occupied with everything from big philosophical questions about finding direction in life, to all kinds of wayfinding systems; written languages from around the world, road signs and sea maps, celestial navigation and the inner compasses of birds, bees, sea turtles and cats.

There are many ways to find your way in the world...

From the child's perspective, the way-finding theme is very concrete in the final performance; we meet the girl who finds her way to the bakery and back again all by herself, the cat that wanders off and goes his own ways, the ship that sails across the sea, the two friends who travel around the world in 196 days - on a bicycle!

For the adult, the stories may carry other meanings too as finding one's way is also about guidance, direction, courage, purpose - and the values we carry with us when we go out into the world. In all of Theatre Madam Bach's work we strive to create a space where children and their adults can have a meaningful, aesthetic experience together. To achieve this, we have to acknowledge their different perspectives. Imagine a child and her mother on a beach for example. The mother would most likely look up, gaze at the horizon and take it all in, while her child would probably be completely absorbed by the shape of a seashell or the colour of a grain of sand. They are experiencing the same thing, but from two very different points of view.

In our performances we try to cater for both perspectives - the little wonders as well as the big picture. But we also invite the adult to actually immerse herself in that 'grain of sand' if only for a moment. We often use archetypal stories or images and soundscapes that evoke childhood memories in the adult to open up for this kind of presence.

*There are days where clouds are few,
and the sun is high in the sky.*

*Then, the seagulls call. And dad says,
let's go fishing!*

Green rubber boots. The red bucket.

Sand worms.

We push the boat into the water.

Jellyfish. Crabs. A plaice. And a big mackerel!

When you go fishing it's nice to have someone leading the way.

The frame

To begin with, we were occupied with a children's game called “The ship is loaded with...” It is a letters and words association game, which we initially saw fit as an overall structure of the show; to move from one scene to another by making a game of letters, words and associations. As we began to work and shared our ideas with our Mapping partners however, we realised a few important things.

Firstly, the game is not universal. After bouncing the idea with the Word group, we found out that, although the game does exist in many parts of the world, it is not universal. For an internationally touring company this is important knowledge, as not all audiences would know the rules of the game without any prior explanation.

Secondly, the game is quite repetitive. As a game or for learning purposes this can of course be extremely valuable. For a theatre show where we need to keep the attention of all children at all times, the repetitiveness of the game proved to be a challenge.

Last, but not least the game does not appeal to all children (or adults for that matter). For some, the game is really hard to follow. It requires a basic understanding of sounds and letters and the ability to make quick word associations. This can be extremely challenging in particular for very young children - and for people with dyslexia - for whom a letter, sound or word may not immediately create any images.

As a consequence of our conversations and try-outs, we decided to let go of the idea of the word game as an overall frame, and instead structure the experience as a

journey itself. Traces of the word game still exist in the performance - in particular in the post-performance space, where we invite children and adults to play with words and images to create stories on their own. But at each child's own pace.

A journey in four parts

As part of our efforts to create a space for children and adults to have a valuable experience together, we are always exploring and developing different ways of engaging our audience. For *You are Here* we created a journey in four parts.

The pre-performance space:

The audience is greeted in a backstage space (the backside of the set), with live music to help them tune in on the atmosphere of the piece. Small hand-sized beach stones with images from the performance are lying on the floor forming two paths. The two performers tell fragments of the stories they are about to hear and then guide the audience to the performance space along the two paths.

The performance space:

Once the audience is seated, the performance unfolds in a world full of musical

instruments, delicate props, cut-out images, maps, small objects and stories.

The post-performance space:

As the performance finishes, the audience is guided to the backstage space again. The live music and atmosphere of the show continues and audiences are now encouraged to create their own stories by making patterns, piles, rows and free associations of the beach stones with images and letters from the show. The audience tends to stay for quite a while in this space before going out into the world.

The book:

As part of our efforts to expand the theatre experience beyond the performance itself, we have also published a book to accompany the show. The book contains words and illustrations from the performance, so the audience can revisit the experience at home anytime.

Arriving at this structure required a lot of trial-and-error. One of the obvious challenges was the multiple beginnings. When does the show actually start? How many - or rather how few - words does it take to prepare the audience for what they are about to see? Another challenge was in re-

lation to the post-performance space. How do we as performers find the right balance between holding the space (as a continuation of the performance) and letting go?

The Map

Throughout the creation process of *You are Here*, we had the privilege of having workshops and regular check-ins with our Mapping partners. Within the Word Group we found it important to not only meet and *talk* about our work and practices but to show and share material at different stages of our productions.

Some had only just started their research, some were in the middle of the production, some had already premiered and were now adjusting or adapting their work for touring. But every time we met each company had the opportunity to present something and get feedback from peers without judgement. It was a chance for everyone to generously share questions, doubts, successes and failures along the way.

The different Mapping partners represent a wide range of theatre practices.

The diversity in practices, cultures, backgrounds, sizes, circumstances and artistic preferences was exactly what made the exchanges so rich and inspiring. For Theatre Madam Bach these generous exchanges have made us reflect not only on our use of words, but on our artistic practice as a whole; the careful balance between words, images, movement and sound, the aesthetic choices we make, the delicate relationship with our audience, the dramaturgy of our work.

The Mapping project is not about arriving at a manifesto or a set of rules on how to make theatre for early years, but to create a map that helps to find our way, step by step, within the sensitive relationship between the young child and the artist. Theatre Madam Bach's performance *You are Here* is all about navigating and finding one's way in a new and exciting world. We feel that the core of this performance perfectly mirrors the surrounding process of the Mapping project, and we are happy to be contributing to this wonderful and curious Map on the aesthetics of performing arts for early years.



Du er her (You are here), photo by Anne Hübertz Brekne

Creating, Learning, Playing, Evolving



Ready, Steady, GO!, photo by Ali Wright

Helen Matravers with Peter Glanville ¹
Polka Theatre (United Kingdom)

Polka's rehearsal rooms are akin to very creative classrooms; the learning is as key as the creating. Over the process of making *Let's Build!* and *Ready, Steady, GO!* we learnt often and importantly into the voices, reactions, imaginations and input of children from all ages of the shows' target audiences. These interactions alongside the workshops with the Mapping participants, helped Polka successfully create two imaginative, accessible and playful productions for children, and premier a festival dedicated exclusively to the work of Early-Years theatre.

A key component of taking part in the Mapping Project for Polka was the opportunity to celebrate and platform European culture. In conversation with artists from all over the continent, we were able to garner information and practice which greatly influenced the approach to making work. To centre development of the plays around the need and desire for universal audience understanding, and de-centring a "British-ness" in the language and visual aesthetics, were crucial when it came to con-

veying emotion and narrative in the pieces. This was also necessary on a need-to-tour basis, where audiences enjoying the work would speak different languages in different venues, and so would need to aurally and visually connect with the show beyond the use of language.

The Mapping workshops provided the chance to discover how play, comedy and imagination are communally celebrated and understood by Children, and that language is so much more than just spoken words. Both shows developed by Polka through the project primarily used phonetics, song, simple repeated words or language, and grand visual cross-culture gestures in props, costume and music to be understandable by wide reaching audiences from different backgrounds.

On a very practical level, both productions were created for Early Years audiences, and so had to counter the need for exciting, intimate and surprising spaces that young people immediately wanted to interact with, with the health and safety

¹ with contribution from Polka Theatre creative teams including Trina Halder, Verity Quinn and Lynette Shanbury

of the situations. Peter Glanville and Trina Haldar, the Directors, had to both develop a performance language with the actors which allowed them to manage unexpected stage invaders, and adjust design needs in order to create spaces that children could safely explore and learn more about. The bike in *Ready, Steady, GO!* for example was placed the furthest from the audience as possible as part of the set design so it couldn't be reached easily by small children, and in *Let's Build!* the invitation to interact and play on stage came implicitly from the body language and spoken word of the actors to the children.

Ready, Steady, GO!

From the workshops, the shared stimulus of 'Bicycle' emerged as a recognisable commonality between the Word group. *Ready, Steady, GO!* Directed by Peter Glanville, focused on the complexities and intricacies of bilingual expression, told through the story of a young girl discovering her mum's racing bicycle and by extension, a life before motherhood. With mother and daughter in the play both speaking different native languages, and through both having to navigate the best way to communicate openly with one another around

difficult topics, a show emerged in which sounds and phonetics overtook the need for explicit understanding with language.

The Bicycle became a metaphor. For travelling physically, and emotionally through life. It allowed the scope to play with what it means to cross borders, to overcome hurdles and mountains, to compete and acknowledge fitness in ageing – but also to recover and discover strength and passion that may have been lost.

The celebration of European shared experience as part of the wider Mapping networking programme inspired the play's setting being an adventure across the Alps. At a time when Brexit dominated headlines, this felt like a key and celebratory way to acknowledge the partnership. The nationality of the parent in the piece was kept completely open during casting, so as to be reactive to the performer that best fit the understanding of the role - leaving the characterisation, story and some of the language to be completely discovered in rehearsal.

The project afforded the time to fully interrogate the relationship between au-

dience and performer and how communication outside of the spoken word was integral to conveying the emotion behind the show's storyline. Practically the show was also touring to countries where use of one language would otherwise be a barrier, and so developing a shorthand where percussive, musical language took over any need for literal understanding was key.

The decision to stage the show in Traverse meant that the audience were intimately involved, from all angles of the space in the story. The Director, Peter, hadn't worked in a Traverse setting with Early years before, and this allowed him to observe the artistic response of the piece when there didn't feel like there were rows and rows of barriers between the children as an audience member, and the performer. It afforded more intimacy, access to the more visual storytelling aspects of the production, and an immediacy in emotional response.

As a departure from other pieces of work that Polka has developed, the research around *Ready, Steady, GO!* led to an exploration of how a parent can be the protagonist in a piece of children's theatre, whilst still maintaining the necessary engagement and investment from a target audience of children. The vast majority of work produced by Polka Theatre for Children has featured children as lead characters, and so the opportunity to explore if children would as easily connect with the storyline of an adult instead was a hugely informative exploration. Working alongside Dramaturg, Sarah Argent, the decision to lead with the parents' story was taken, and proved highly effective.

There was a key motif in the production which depicted children learning to process that adults, and specifically their parents, have lived full and potentially very

different lives to the ones that they now take on as carers. It was essential for the team to develop a language which carefully tread a line between truth, censorship around what adults are able and willing to reveal to children about their past, and what they feel they want to hold on to. The impact of this on the experience for adults in the audience meant that the show successfully straddled the line between being child-centric, but understood on multiple levels of interpretation. This also led to the Director and Designer incorporating design elements that "encased, concealed and protected" other pieces of set and props. In particular the use of the Shed, which remained "unopened and left untouched" by the adult until the child in the piece became inquisitive enough to explore and want to ask searching questions – revealing other parts of their histories.

Audiences fed back on the show:

"It was very imaginative and pitched very well to the children's age"

"WE LOVED IT! So sensory, such a lovely story and so well performed!"

Let's Build!

The initial concept behind *Let's Build!* was to explore the built environments of well-known cities, how children experience and engage with them, what's exciting about the structures that exist in those spaces, and how instantly recognisable they are.

The production drew on the principles of the Italian practice of Reggio Emilia during its research, placing the child firmly and autonomously at the centre of the development of the piece. By adopting this child-centric approach it eventually led to changing the course of the production's storyline and aesthetic from its original stimulus. Following extensive work in local schools, the decision was made to build



Let's Build!, photo by Steve Gregson

entirely from imagination, with humour, and not directly from recognisable city-scapes. The children in these schools drew on incredibly imaginative resources to build “the biggest”, “the tallest”, “the funniest” things, leaving behind any desire to create Big Ben, Sydney Opera House or The Eiffel Tower. The cities initially discussed (London, New York, Paris, Sydney) were sometimes familiar to the older children in the target age bracket, but didn’t connect with all the children we researched and developed the piece with - many of whom weren’t sure exactly what a “city” was - therefore didn’t feel creating these worlds were universal enough to translate successfully across all audiences.

The research and development phase has left the creative team and Polka artistic team with a renewed vision of the role of children during the very initial concept and development phase. Should Children always be asked for the spark of an idea in the first place, if the show is for them, and for the production to build from there?

Where initially ideas around a bright, colourful city-playground were part of the design concept for the show, it emerged

through our workshops in schools that texture, shape and balance were the most important elements. That imagination completely took over when the colour or brashness of an object weren’t the leading factor in creating something new. As adults we set aside our preconception that “it must be bright” to be appealing and playful, and instead provided neutral tones to the design and props to leave the *what could it be* completely in the hands and minds of the children.

“This process has reinforced my drive to research alongside children, observing the importance of keeping an open mind to their interpretation of the adult world and words around them. Providing this space can give rise to new meaning and often evoking humour. My main reflection is the impact of how children play in relation to invitation in and materials that they are invited to play with.”

Trina Haldar, Director of *Let’s Build!*

The process shone a light on the commonality and importance of humour between children. The difference in development from ages 2-5 is evidently significant, and yet the same tropes of comedy sang to



Let’s Build!, photo by Steve Gregson

all ages – the toppling of building blocks, the falling over of the actor, the wobbliest of towers etc. The casting of two clowns became integral, but came to light only through the research and development phase where we learnt that without words, communication through humour was vital in order to be universal.

As a primarily visual and musically driven piece, written word and language came second to the need for audiences to physically engage with the action on stage. The show therefore featured a full-length composition from Arun Ghosh, which also significantly aided the possibility to shift tone and emotion without spoken word.

Audiences fed back on the show:

“Excellent. Professional, appropriate for audience age- high standard actors. Respectful of audience- not patronising. Enthusiastic. Engaged - audience contact”

“Amazing idea about using imagination to build things”

Big Dreams

Polka’s first-ever festival celebrating Early Years work, afforded through the Mapping Project, was an invaluable opportunity to showcase European and exploratory work to our local audiences on a large scale. Throughout the festival week we hosted performances from companies who were challenging the boundaries of what’s possible when your audience are so young, and from fellow Mapping partners, Theatre Tre and Branar whose work complimented perfectly the themes we have been exploring around the necessity for universal communication and humour.

We were able to delve deeper into the making process around Early Years shows in a wider context too. Inspired by the Mapping set-up, we curated a series of workshops which explored how work can be

made more accessible, how devised work for babies is developed and hosted and provided a clowning workshop in partnership with Branar. A key moment of the festival was a Long Table – the chance to discuss at length how consent and touch in children’s theatre is such an important topic. *We Touch, We Play, We Dance* from theatre company Second Hand Dance in which the performers touched the young audience throughout and invited them to interact through hugging and dancing was the source inspiration for the discussion. Following the pandemic it felt particularly prominent as a topic to explore, and especially as it tied into the performer/audience relationship that had been so key to developing *Ready, Steady, GO!*. Our communication through touch is incredibly sensitive when we don’t have words to use, but also without words how do we establish the consent for touch to occur? The acute need for extensive research and development on any project that encourages touch was highlighted, and was carried forward with great care into the creation of *Let’s Build!*

Future impact for Polka

Polka’s unique place in the theatre sector, both in the UK and across Europe, is one of Early Years specialism. This project has been an opportunity to further our knowledge and understanding of the needs of both young audiences and also their adults, particularly around how we communicate with one another when spoken word isn’t always possible. As many Early Years audiences are still developing language as a tool, it has been a way to interrogate how we universally recognise emotions and symbols. The celebration of shared experience without barriers will be something Polka continues to platform and champion.

The Mapping Project has also led Polka to reinvigorate and interrogate the role of

our Young Voices panel of children as advisors. This move to look at how they shape our work extends beyond the stage to our building as an overall experience. Audiences are experiencing a performance as soon as they arrive through the doors, and as a Children's theatre, it is key that their vision is upheld. From the food served in our café, to the games and books provided as creative activities – we ask our Young Voices panel to let us know what they want to engage with.

The workshops and discussions have also impacted our approach to interrogating the appropriateness and desire to engage children with more challenging con-

tent. We are faced with an audience who have such immediate and regular access to digital, advanced and ambitious work – the subject matters of which are often challenging and can leap beyond parental and artistic understanding of what is appropriate for certain age groups. The concept of “taboo” subjects for Early Years is also heightened by tense conversations currently in the UK around protecting children from certain topics. There can be a hesitation for example around exposing children to topics around death and grief, but it is often through fictionalisation, dramatization and empathy that skills around understanding and coping can be developed.

On our way to “Wait a Minute”

Femke Somerwil and Gertien Bergstra
Stichting de Stilte (Netherlands)

Reflections from Femke Somerwil

My mind at the beginning of this project in 2019 started to go into overdrive while thinking of Theater for the Early Years. The big question for me was: Why would we make theater for babies or toddlers? Wouldn't the world around them be enough to explore? I was not at all convinced that theater in any form would matter so much for them. Now some years further I'm convinced that theater for the youngest is relevant for their development as humans. It not only stimulates their curiosity, wonder and imagination. Watching a performance together strengthens the bond between kids and their parents. The parent experiences the performance through the eyes of the child and the child perceives the performance from a reliable and safe perspective, the lap of the parent.

Getting to know so many colleagues all over Europe through the Mapping project made me feel more strongly about the necessity of our work. To be part of the artistic upbringing of generations of children. To give them the right tools to cope with the world around them through theater. We provide an intimate setting in which

we zoom in on the interrelational bond between people. This teaches children to make connections which is a skill you need in real life.

I discovered that colleagues working with words, images, or sound work are not that different from us. The language we use when creating is different, the tools we use are different, but we start creating from the wish to have an honest communication with the Early Years. Our tool is movement, but we need images and sound to elevate what we are expressing with our bodies. I remember while creating and working together with a composer, light designer and visual artist that we all had to collectively grow towards the end result.

I learned that a theater visit for the Early Years is at its best when the way to the venue, and everything they need to do before entering, is well taken care of and is an important part of their theater experience. Therefore making a piece for the youngest demands that you go back to your own inner child, to your own sense of wonder. I noticed that I feel a lot



Blikvangers (Eyecatchers), photo by Loet Koreman

of respect for the youngest people, who are still without any prejudices, who are masters in sensing. You can encounter the honesty of their open minds during performances. Don't underestimate little children, everything is there already, it only needs to come out through stimulation and communication.

Let me look back at all the activities we the "Mapping group" shared the last years.

There were meetings in the flesh and there were zoom meetings (due to the corona pandemic) that were supposed to be normal meetings. Meeting each other through Zoom was for most of us not as stimulating as meeting live. The senses needed to work harder, to reach and inspire each other. But when we met for real, it was wonderful, inspiring and uplifting. Like the first workshop of the movement-group in Ljubljana October 2019. Three days of intensive workshops. We shared our different approaches towards creation for children through movement workshops we gave each other. We visited performances that we discussed, we listened together to a lecture by Jackie Chang through Zoom. I remember that Jackie explained to us that movement and sensation are intertwined, that when babies sense something, some movement starts automatically. That perception, vibration and temperature are the first movement activators. Very valuable background information when creating for Early Years that also stayed with me from that time in Ljubljana is realizing that puppeteers and dancers have similarities. Where does the puppet start and where does the dancer end? To give life to a lifeless puppet requires a physically skilled puppeteer.

During our first meeting with dramaturg Gerd Taube we talked about the do's and

don'ts within performances for the Early Years. The use of humor, about taboos, about sense and meaning. I remember that having a discussion about those subjects was stimulating. There are differences in what's perceived as taboo, humor, sense and meaning because of the different cultural backgrounds amongst us.

During the pandemic we had a follow-up meeting with Gerd Taube online. He made us reflect on our creative process by asking when and why we made dramaturgical changes in a piece. Gertien and I decided to play, in front of the camera, with small props from a helicopter view. This way we were able to show clearly why and when we took different directions. I will definitely repeat this method when creating another piece in the future. It made everything very clear to me. I was able to view the piece from a distance.

There is a moment in those past few Mapping years which I cherish very much. That was the moment we had an online meeting with our researcher Yoona Kang. We were in the middle of our process, we still had so many doubts and questions. And there was Yoona questioning us in a very honest and gentle way about the content of the piece. It helped us and we loved how she found the words to describe our intuitive process.

Reflections from Gertien Bergstra

Our creative journey started in January 2019 in Bologna, during the kick off meeting of the Mapping project. Until then, de Stilte had made dance performances for children aged 4-12. Dance, by nature, needs space. Which implies performing in venues with a grandstand and a spacious floor to dance on. Children see the show at a given distance.

Young children under the age of 6, es-

pecially the 0-3 years old, need an atmosphere of intimacy. Participation in the Mapping project meant for de Stilte and for me personally deepening into the world of theater for this young age. Of intimate spaces where children could comfortably sit around or even be allowed to enter stage and immerse themselves in the performed event. Of meeting theater companies with quite a history in developing Theater for Early Years.

Being able to make work for the very young was fairly new to us. And therefore it has an appeal. Could we defy the spacious nature of dance and make a piece for 0-3 on a small dance floor of 5 x 5 and the audience close by?

It opened all sorts of questions on our side. Questions that were freely shared amongst our Mapping partners. What can children of 0-3 see at what distance? What can they hear? How can we invite their sensory beings to engage into the show? What parameters need to be met to take them along? What is visually attractive? What is dynamically interesting? What keeps curiosity going? Can it be a show with a fourth wall, according

to theater principles, as de Stilte has been creating so far, or should it take the form of an immersive experience? Or any form in between? How do companies of other performing art forms create a progression throughout a piece that keeps children captivated?

In the 28 years of de Stilte's existence, there has never been a dramaturg to advise the choreographer. The whole concept of dramaturgy as a separate part of the choreographic process was new to us. The workshops with Gerd Taube taught us that dramaturgy means different things for the various disciplines that are common in theater for early years. When words come into play, one could work along the lines of a story that starts somewhere and ends somewhere else. In dance other factors are involved. If it can be told in words, it doesn't have to be danced anymore. Yet there is an evolution. Time and space have meaning. The movement language does speak somehow. A framework in time is needed, like anchor posts, resulting in a change of dynamic flow. Each scene provokes the following one in an organic way like a tree with more and more branches. Carefully choreographed at the service of

a bigger underlying idea and dramaturgic development.

Back to the questions that arose and were shared amongst our Mapping partners, specifically with our Movement Group partners La Baracca, Auraco Dance Theatre, Ion Creanga Theatre, Ville de Limoges and researcher Young Ai Choi, I would like to share some insights I gained while working together with them.

Being fascinated by movement and dance since I was two, I never gave much thought to what makes us move in the first place. Once it became my profession I was primarily intrigued by visual and dynamical aspects of dance. Shapes fluently moving into each other according to a rhythmical setting.

Although I was mildly aware that it's the human being inside the dancer expressing something. And a human being inside the spectator that perceives it by something other than the brain.

During our 3-day workshop in Ljubljana we received a lecture on movement by Jackie Eun Ju Chang from Seoul, which

made us dive back into the very origin of movement itself. I remember how she spoke of the movement of breathing that is felt by a child clinging on to a parent or caretaker. Once that child starts to perceive the world beyond, movement bridges the gap with the physical reality around. So movement connects us. Even the smallest of things, a vibration, a change of temperature, can be a movement activator. One could say that dance theater is an aesthetically organized way to connect to the audience, colleagues on stage and the environment around. Each connection ramifies into multiple others, touching on a new aspect of what's brought to life on stage. Why music and sound play such an important part in this, was confirmed to me by the fact that hearing is fully developed at four months old. It has become an integral part of our pieces.

So what does it mean to consciously express something in dance? How can one be moved by movement? How is it perceived by a child? Ever since I started dancing for children I was captivated by the honest, heartfelt exchange. It changed my way of understanding what expression in dance can be. The human being



Wacht 's Even (Wait a Minute), photo by Hans Gerritsen



Wacht 's Even (Wait a Minute), photo by Hans Gerritsen

inside the dancer is vital. As we started to work together intensively with our partners from La Baracca, Auraco, Ion Creanga and Limoges theater, it was our first chance to exchange so deeply and openly artistic practices with professionals from other theater disciplines. Each having its own signature in the approach towards creative processes and the outcome on stage, we found a lot of similarities. One that stood out for me is the importance of sensitivity of the performer. Who you are and how you move functions as a vessel to connect to the artwork. Ego plays no part.

The close encounter with other ways of creating has augmented my conscience on clarity of movement. Is it the entire body that is expressive or can it only be a body part? How can invisible things be suggested to start to exist in the mind of the spectator? Even such a thing as an emotion?

As Femke and I created our piece *Wacht's Even* (Wait a Minute) we were at the same time trying to respond to all the questions that popped up. Let's say the piece is the temporary answer. New "answers" are on the way in our next creation *Eyecatchers!*

Transmission through an international cultural community

Teater Tre team and Hedvig Claesson
Teater Tre (Sweden)

A reflection on the Mapping project, by Teater Tre team

Teater Tre is a big little theatre based in Stockholm, Sweden, offering visual and physical performing arts to a young audience since 1979. Teater Tre is a producing theatre with an average annual audience before the corona pandemic of twenty thousand children with their adults. Teater Tre's participation in the Mapping project was led by the company's former artistic director Sara Myrberg, the producer Lina Karlmark and the freelance director, long-term collaborator and board member Hedvig Claesson.

It is a necessary and humbling experience to partake in a large-scale European network and collaboration such as Mapping. One of the most striking - and beautiful - experiences of our Mapping engagement is getting to know our partners' different artistic practices. Learning how they engage with their audience; which sounds, textures, lines, colors and emotions they choose when talking about and creating performing arts for the early years. Which dramaturgical structures do each and everyone choose and why? How do they portray movement, language and rhythm?

It creates such a massive, interesting and intricate web of aesthetics, which will take a lifetime to fully comprehend yet, has been served to us throughout this project.

Teater Tre was introduced to Katherine Morley and her research 'Spectatorship in theatre for early years audiences: towards a working taxonomy of stillness' through the Mapping project, as Morley was assigned the sound group as our researcher. Morley has collaborated with Teater Tre since 2019 in workshops, seminars, during a production process and at our autumn festival in 2022. Katherine Morley has grown to become one of the theatre's dear collaborators and Teater Tre has invited her to participate in a possible future project focusing on the infant-parent dyad Morley is investigating in her research. Morley has introduced Teater Tre to yet another battery of thought analyzing the audience through sound and silence in time and space.

The Mapping project has produced many festivals around Europe and Teater Tre has had the privilege to perform in Poland, Italy and England as well as hosting our



Drömskt (Dreamy), photo by Martin Skoog

own festival in Stockholm. A festive celebration of the arts for young audiences, however, the essence of a festival is so much broader. An opportunity for partners to grow relationships with local communities as well as the European community. It is about diversity and network, about establishing a joint voice of the importance of the arts as well as producing artistic work that challenges audiences. A festival is a cultural and political commitment. The festival creates a platform where artists, audiences and organizers meet in activities such as artist-talks, lectures, workshops and shows – a melting pot for the arts. The buzz of the festival is often generated by the more informal meetings, in the foyer after show, in conversations during a mingle, in the “in-between”. It is in those “in-between” meeting points new collaborations and networks are born.

In November 2022 Teater Tre held a performing arts festival, inviting Toihaus and their piece *Ton in Ton*. A contemporary dance piece for one year olds. The audience sat on stage in a circle around the performance. On stage, there were a dancer and a musician playing a classical guitar. The dancer was performing with a piece of clay with a little pool of glitter inside which was shown at one time. It was such an intimate and engaging performance. After the performance followed an artist Q&A between one of Toihaus’ artistic directors Cornelia Böhnisch and Teater Tre’s new artistic director Anne Jonsson. We were inspired by the way in which Böhnisch talked about their art, process and audience. Although Teater Tre has spent the last twenty-something years developing and perfecting our engagement with our audience in the most endearing way possible to create bridges between the outside world and the theatrical experience, Böhnisch introduced us to yet another way of meeting the audience on equal grounds. On the question of crying, Böhnisch responded: “Well, I often feel

like crying in the theatre, so why should they not?” At another time she explained the audience reacting to a high note with “The baby was moved!” The meeting with this artistic experience inspires us, has led to many interesting new ways of viewing our audience, and has opened up to many more reflections about our art.

How research and workshops impacted our process of creating the performance *Dreamy*, by Hedvig Claesson

When I was doing a recap of these years of working on a production in Mapping, I went back to one of our first workshops in Bologna in 2019 where we listed questions relevant to us. I have carried these questions with me ever since. It was obvious when attending the last follow-up workshop in Charleroi in May 2023 that these questions were still important to me, and I would say to all of us.

I attended the Mapping workshops in my role as the director of the production *Drömskt* (*Dreamy*). It is clear when I look back and reflect on these years, what an enormous influence these years still have on my work as a director. At the end of the workshop in Charleroi, I could add my way of working, as number 6 of our principles when we listed ways of participation for a young audience. I now conduct research by meeting the young audience on a regular basis over half a year before starting the rehearsals. This gives participation in both directions, to and from the child that I incorporate in the text and dramaturgy of the play.

As we belonged to the Sound group with the performance *Dreamy*, I carried the reflection and work around sound with me on different levels. I had these questions regarding sound and the narrative with me, as a map for my work and for how I constructed the play.

What does engagement look and sound like? Silence or noise, attention or apathy,

how do children show their engagement during a show?

When, where, and how does a performance begin? The performance is not just the show; it is also the whole experience of travelling to and from the theatre. And to broaden that question further, to the thought of participation all along, from welcoming the children to saying good-bye. The very idea of a beginning and an end for the child? Where do we say we start and end dramaturgically?

When does silence speak? If they can't speak, they express themselves through sounds and silence. Silence for children is an important tool of communication, through eye contact.

We wanted to explore the natural sound, the sound of music and the sound of language. And further, what is the ear and what is listening? When is it sound, music, noise? How do we open up and close the sound in the picture?

As the first and last sense in our lives is hearing, we wanted to explore the young and the old (the dead) in the work. If you close your eyes, you won't see, but you can't close your ears in the same way as an audience. The workshops in Bologna and Limoges inspired and led us forward

in the search for a soundscape from that specific thought.

I was led by the dramaturgical questions, the construction of the play as dreamlike with no obvious structure but still in the structure of a circle with a beginning, a middle, and an end (the closure). The guide through the dream was the two sides of one person, as a young and an older version of oneself. That has been an ongoing issue for me ever since, exploring it further in other plays. I did a play called *The Forest* last year and investigated these questions more in the personas of a character named Little and his other half, the Shadow. In that work, I brought the same sound designer as in *Dreamy*, Love Kjellson. So we have continued this work together. Here we also went from *Dreamy's* children of 1 to 3 years old to children at the age of 3-6 years old. The main focus was also the sound, the silence, and the singing of the actors. Who was telling this story in *Dreamy*? It was the two sides of the traveler, as we called them.

I have also brought with me the constant battle of the question if there is a special dramaturgy for small children. The question of understanding the emotions of that

certain age. That we still talked about many years later now in Charleroi 2023 and for me, the answer to that question is yes. There is a complex and compromised dramaturgy that is the same as for adult plays, just more distilled. You have another beginning, middle, and end; the greeting of the children, the play and the moment of interaction after. The so-called bridges in between for the children. Because of Corona, we could never explore that fully in *Dreamy*, but mostly that is the case for me when I work.

Where to start – where is the starting point? We communicated with the young audience that the sound was as important here as one of the main actors, and that was in line with the whole process. The sound of the body and the materials, the clothing and the way the actors moved objects. The way they used the silence and the humming, the few words spoken and also a lullaby. As well as we had the electronic sound from the whole space, interacting with the actors' voices and movements. How to soundscape your own body was a main theme, and also the difference between the pointed sound and the undirected sound from an unidentified space in the theatrical room, which

was obviously much harder for the very youngest; the more they could see where the sound came from, the easier to adapt to it and not get frightened by it.

A focus was also the idea of sound from within, like the belly of the mother, to the sound from the outer world. In an earlier play for babies, we had explored the heartbeats and now we wanted to see further how the sound in the outer world would sound and behave with the youngest. Still in the light of the young and old theme of the traveler persona.

I tried to connect these questions raised to the play all along. With that, I carried a conversation we had in one of the groups about the volume of the sound for small children. The specific taboos we were stuck in, that we took for granted. One director from Serbia told us that for him volume wasn't an issue. Since the war and all the bombing, they could have a punk band on stage and the smallest child wouldn't care. They were so used (and traumatized) from the alarm and bombing that they didn't react anymore. But regarding the lighting, on the other hand, that was very sensitive and they could never have a dark room. The personal experience the audience bring to the theatre, no matter how



Drömskt (Dreamy), photo by Martin Skoog



Drömskt (Dreamy), photo by Martin Skoog

young they are, have had a deep impact on me, and I've carried that image with me ever since.

How does the quality of sound color meaning? Does music add meaning to words, through emotions? I think we found a yes to this question; we did color meaning of the sound. We worked with the difference between the singing, a small piano and the dance rhythm to highlight this. It was a balance of where in the dramaturgy we gave the sound a broader meaning. We wanted to add humor to the sound, therefore we did an "eating orchestra". The two actors had a small pic-

nic and the composer made them eat in the rhythm of a piece he wrote for that. So the cracking of crackers and mashing of a banana made a certain meaning (and laugh) to the sound.

And to that, I'd like to add the latest question from Gerd Taube, "The child as a spectator and as a defining force in an artistic encounter. To lead up to the child as a participator." This is an ongoing investigation that will follow me all along in my work. I'm grateful for the workshops and questions raised by Mapping to have this out in the open and to share this journey together.

Social Restrictions and the Power of the Encounter

Justyna Czarnota, Paweł Gałkowski, Alicja Morawska-Rubczak
Teatr Animacji w Poznaniu (Poland)

The basis for the creation of this text are the experiences gathered during the processes of creating two performances: *Whispers from the Woods* (2021) and *We live here* (2023) in the frame of the group Image in the "Mapping" project. The article is a polyphony, a combination of the statements of the artist implementing the performance and the accompanying researchers of the creative process - Justyna Czarnota and Paweł Gałkowski. Researchers' role during the rehearsals was to observe the process of making key decisions and applying the experience gathered by the director during the workshops led under the Mapping project. Especially looking at the topic of building the dramaturgy of the audience in the context of relationships and conditions specific to the time of creating the performances - first under sanitary restrictions, second after the experience of pandemic and war.

Whispers from the woods

The performance process was a search for new possibilities of artistic meeting with spectators in the time of a pandemic and was created taking into account the

guidelines related to the sanitary regime. We tried to use the limitations, make an artistic search for forms of new closeness, and create a scenic world rich in sensory experiences, giving spectators a sense of security. In a pandemic situation, it has become a priceless asset that allowed us to catch our breath, seek and explore new bonds - both with ourselves and with our loved ones. That is why the dramaturgy of relations as a dramaturgy of the audience (Gerd Taube's idea shared during the mapping workshops) was so important for the creators of the performance from the very beginning of the creation process.

From the very outset, this show was conceived as intended for children between the ages of 2-4, as well as adults attending with them. It can therefore be treated as an example of theatre intended for "earliest age" audiences, its constituent quality being the creation of relations between performers and audiences. Performers often offer up simple sensory activities - such as those based on the invitation for audiences to touch elements of the scenography and props, encouraging



O czym szepcze las (*Whispers from the Woods*), photo by Maciej Zakrzewski

them to engage in guided play together during or after the show. Meanwhile, sanitary restrictions affecting theatres made close contact with audiences impossible, imposing the need to actually maintain a fixed distance between performers and audiences. This obligation imposed the need to explore new artistic decisions leading to enhanced reception using different senses. The most important idea was using visualisations that filled the space demanded by social distancing restrictions, those that could supplement our vision of forests and their subterranean environments. Alongside visual sensory inputs, the aim was to enhance audio sensory inputs using sounds which surrounded audiences from four sides. Thinking about the sense of smell led to use of essential oils with antibacterial benefits.

Performance *Whispers from the Woods* is based on themes of woodland ecosystems – it seems that of particular importance was the inspiration emerging from a children’s book by Peter Wohlleben titled *Can you hear the trees talking?*. Small sections taken from it were used in the show, and so this was no mere hint. Similarities emerge mostly from the simplicity of the message and exploration of the interesting aspects of the life of trees in an accessible way – mainly through activities children are familiar with (drinking, eating sugar, talking) and relationships (especially the mutual support offered by the members of family units).

The initial version of the script was composed before rehearsals by the director. The story of the life of trees became a sort of setting within which smaller scenes performed by solo puppeteers were to be staged.

The topic of forests as ecosystems was taken up due to the pandemic scenario – experiences gained by future audienc-

es which had in the past year or so most likely spent time in natural environments, allowing them to engage more freely with theatrical experiences that were most likely completely new to them. The initial stages of work on the show revealed that engaging memories of woodland walks could be just as important as allowing the families taking part in the performance to then return to this space and discover it anew, thereby checking if we are relating to it differently: more intensely, with greater curiosity.

Whispers from the Woods is one of many productions which were forced to cope with pandemic period restrictions and simultaneously one of the few in which its creators treated these restrictions as a challenge forcing them to utilise their creativity and flexibility in order to work around the restrictions. We believe the greatest value to be extracted from this performance is in looking at it as a unique symbol of the “sign of the times” – using the example of the show described above, we can conclude that the pandemic became a decisive factor affecting the process and the artistic shape of the work. It led to a break in rehearsals, which disrupted the planned schedule of work. In addition, aspects of the performance relating to audience safety issues were of key importance and were non-negotiable unlike the other initial assumptions, which could be influenced by the artists involved in co-creating the project.

After the performance’s premiere, we felt that the distance built between the stage and the audience has a huge impact on the dramaturgy of the spectator’s actions and reactions. Their focus was very often lost. The power of relations that can be built between performers and audience members but also via pup-

pets was limited. Trust in the early years audience focus is deep and we were sure that not the contemplative power of this show is a problem but distance-induced energy flow. Nevertheless, after the pandemic, the scenes with puppets do not need to be limited to only watching. We decided to bring them closer to audiences and open scenes to their reactions.

We live here

We live here is a combination of dance theatre and theatre of the form. The performance was created from an interactive installation in which the creators are children. It is to them that we give space to act, believing that their open hearts, purity and, above all, good intentions are what we, as adults, need most. Since co-creation was the starting point for the development of the show, it is also its ending: the show gently moves from the form of presentation to interaction.

The formal end of the pandemic coincided with the beginning of another crisis - the outbreak of a tragic armed conflict. Given that the length of the border between Poland and Ukraine is more than 535 kilometres, the outbreak of the war had a tremendous impact on the situa-

tion in the country. Work on the play *We live here* began nearly a year and a half of living in a completely new reality. Seventeen months during which our society underwent the biggest changes we have faced since World War II. The influx of new people, their adaptation to life in our country on a scale we have not experienced before.

Since March 2022, we have worked with refugees on a daily basis, and our conversations have very often focused on issues of co-creating communities. We talked about adaptation, trying to find ourselves in a foreign place, how we create relationships, what is the basis for them. We looked for connections, diagnosed differences. Although the awareness of how difficult these processes are did not leave us for a moment, we were looking for what connects, builds, and consequently - creates a sense of security.

The situation around us was a shock, and made us look at our everyday life differently. Another distant word whose meaning we had to assimilate, and from which we were completely defenceless, was war. Although it did not affect us directly, it was with us through the people

who experienced it. It shook our vision of the world and made us question the foundations of our existence.

The concept of the performance was born from the experience of feeling insecure and lost. The artistic process took a completely different course from that of "Whispers from the Woods." The pandemic limitations were long gone, and instead of distancing ourselves from each other - we desperately sought closeness, the feeling that by creating a community we are stronger. Looking for the smartest solutions - we turned to children by inviting them, along with close adults, to a series of workshops that took place in the performance setting. Together with the children, we explored the objects and their creative potential on the one hand, and on the other, we explored the theme of the show - we talked about our household habits and the habits of people who live close to us. Are we connected to each other? Do we know and support each other? Inspirations gathered from working with children were creatively processed by the art team in a democratic, inclusive rehearsal process.

Along with the questions and concerns related to a sense of security came oth-

ers, including those related to the role of the artist and the meaning of his creative work. Some of the most important were those related to the question of what it is to 'be together', to 'be a community' in new conditions. About who we are for each other. About a relationship that does not have an individual dimension, but is related to the question of what is *common*, what is *between*.

Therefore, we focused on the moment of 'encounter' and tried to ask ourselves the "old" questions again. When and under what conditions is dialogue born? How can an encounter enrich us? When do *you* and *I* begin to create something that we can call *we*? To what extent is the encounter with the *other* important in creating community?

The creative transformation implied first and foremost a focus on the positive, on the fact that relationships can be nurturing and supportive. The capacity to open up to another stranger is not easy, but can lead to the creation of beautiful relationships. We wanted to encourage viewers to look around them, look at what makes them different and look for the source of understanding in those differences.



Tu mieszkamy (We live here), photo by Maciej Zakrzewski



Tu mieszkamy (We live here), photo by Maciej Zakrzewski

Summary

The Mapping project gave the artists full freedom of creation, without imposing form or theme. Accompanying the rehearsals of the show, we saw the personal involvement of the artists, their private stories weaving together into a coherent story. It was a very emotional process, deeply moving and conducted with a sense of mutual respect that created an overall sense of security. This need to talk about relationships, about how our vulnerability has the potential to become the foundation of understanding came directly from all the difficult experiences of the past many months, the consecutive crises in the world.

The overall feeling is that the Mapping project gave our artistic duo - Alicja Morawska-Rubczak and Barbara

Matecka - space to not only explore different topics, aesthetics and artistic approaches but most importantly to reflect on the process itself. For it turns out that the process of artistic creation is just as important as the final product, which is the performance. The team that is genuinely involved in the realisation of the artistic endeavour is genuine, sincere in this activity. For it seems impossible, given the current state of the world and the dynamics of the changes taking place in it, to disconnect the artistic process from the emotional condition of the artists involved. The need to take up subjects that arise directly from the realities of life is connected with the need to touch the most sensitive places, and this process requires delicacy and full concentration.

The dramaturgy of images and the view of the early infancy

María Pilar López López
Teatro Paraíso (Spain)

*Young children and artists live in the same country.
A territory without borders,
a place of transformation and metaphors.*
(Elzbieta)

We begin this reflection on the path we have taken by stressing the idea that theatre must always be understood as a process of two-way communication between the audience and the creators. That is why, when we address an audience as special as young children (0 to 5 years old), the communicative process needs to set out from an understanding the developmental context of the viewers, as they have specific developmental characteristics. For this reason, our work has focused on both theatrical creation through images, and the relationship that a young audience has with them. We understand that one cannot be understood without the other.

Throughout our participation in the Mapping research group, which has looked into images as a tool for stage creation for audiences from 0 to 5 years old, we have focused our practice and reflections on three major themes. The first, *The journey from*

abstraction to narration, allowed us to understand the development of this audience in relation to images and the consequent evolution of their gaze as spectators enjoying a scenic work.

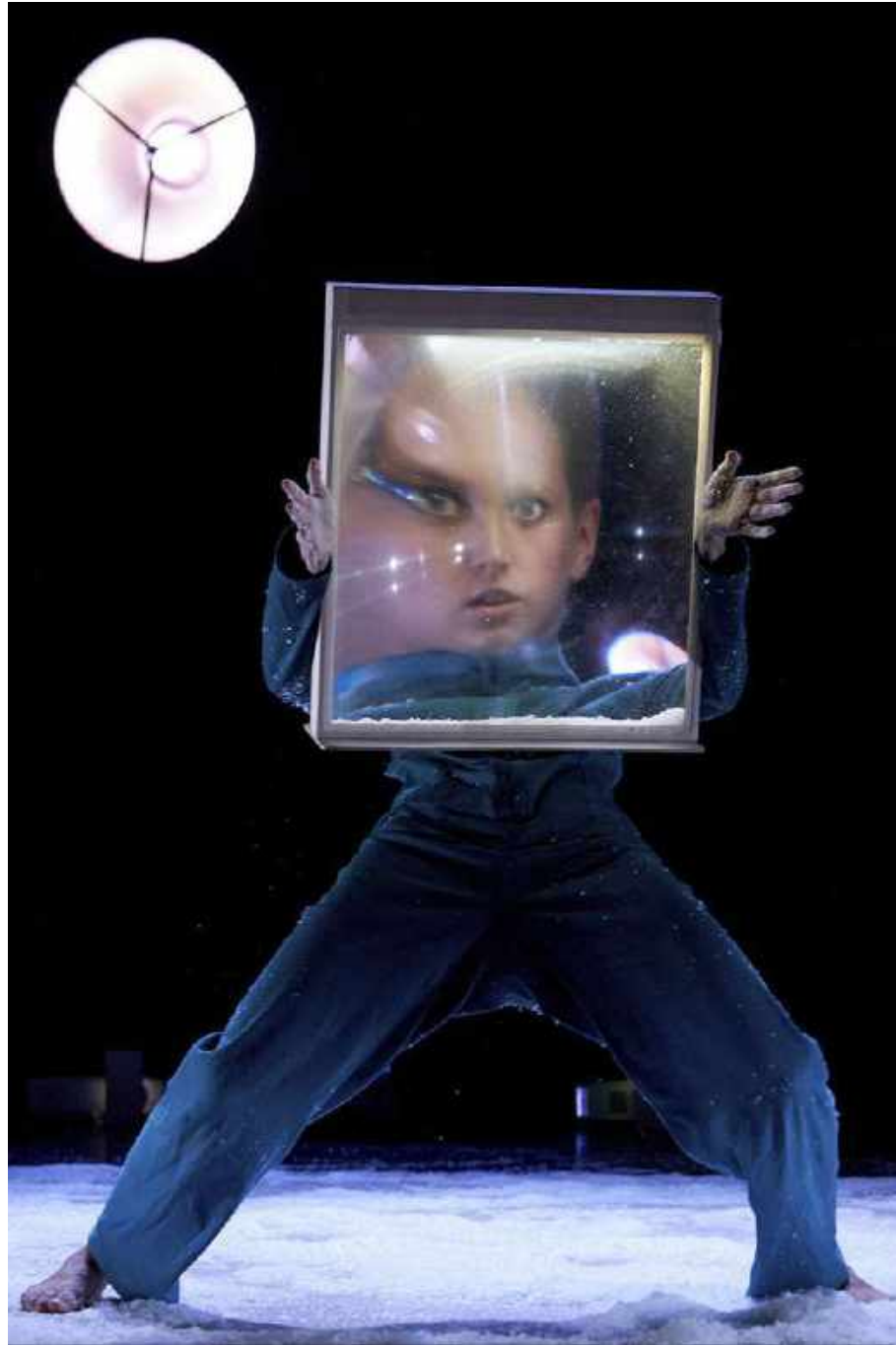
With the second theme, we approached the *Creation of images*, using both external tools and devices and the human brain itself, understanding that the mind is the primordial machine used to produce images.

Finally, the third theme, *The nature of images*, looked into different ways in which this nature can manifest.

The journey from abstraction to narration

We became aware of the developmental process of young audiences with respect to the way they see images through the research of Serge Tisseron, an influential French intellectual in the fields of Psychology, Psychoanalysis and Technology. Development occurs through four successive phases.

- Nostalgia for hallucination
This develops in the first few months and plays a key role in one's relationship with images.
In the first phase, an infant learns to dis-



Ventanas (*Windows*), photo by Gerardo Sanz

tinguish internal and external images. At the age of a few months, they discover that there is a difference between how they depict someone who is absent - generally their mother - and how they depict someone who is present. One representation is dependent on imagination fed by memory, while the other reflects material reality, as informed by the senses.

In general, infants go through this phase and make a marvelous and yet also terribly frustrating discovery: they learn to identify the difference between an image based on the physical senses and an image generated for oneself in the imagination, when the material object is not there. Going through this stage provokes in each of us an unspeakable nostalgia for the stage that preceded it.

This is the reason why simply being “in front of an image” leaves us deeply unsatisfied. We want to be immersed in an image as in a dream or a hallucination, and not only see, but also live and feel what we would feel if we were in an equivalent real landscape.

The ability to go inside an image is therefore not only a question of being immersed in something visual. It is also the ability to immerse oneself in a multi-sensory world.

The consequences this developmental transition has on human beings is: the desire to enter images as if they were real spaces; the desire to be able to touch objects contained in these images, to use them and manipulate them like real objects; and, finally, the desire to be inside images with others.

- The happiness of fingerprints

The second developmental phase consists of the immense joy that a child experiences when he or she leaves their first fingerprints. These are what adults call, with some levity, scribbles.

At around thirteen or fourteen months, small children start to notice their foot and

fingerprints and to get as excited about them as their family members do. At this stage, they start to splash around, put their hands or feet in almost everything within reach and observe the marks they leave behind. The more they leave, the happier they are - a reality that sometimes causes despair in his parents. At this early stage, the child has no control. Control as an ability comes later. First, children have access to the ability to visually track their actions. Later, they begin to visually monitor the traces they leave behind. This means that, if given a felt-tip pen, they will not be satisfied with just making random marks, but will apply themselves. Despite this developmental transition, if leaving traces had not been accompanied by the initial joy of discovery, Action Painting and perhaps no artistic painters would exist.

- The figurative encounter

The third phase occurs when a child discovers that what they paint may mean something to an adult.

This stage is the encounter with the figurative. A child makes a scribble that does not represent an object, but rather a movement, or an intention. However, an adult, usually a parent, says, “that’s great, you’ve drawn the sun”, or “you’ve drawn daddy [or mummy, or the dog]”. The child is absolutely astonished to discover that his or her drawing can represent something. Only then do they engage in the production of figurative traces.

This, too, is an incredibly exciting and formative experience: a child discovers that what they draw can represent something in the world. This experience also has a darker dimension: as soon as a child discovers that what they draw can represent something, they will try to make sure their drawings always represent something. They engage in what is known as the figurative, and it becomes difficult to return to abstraction.

- Narrative discovery

In the fourth stage, children discover that images can be integrated into a sequence. It is important to understand that when a child under the age of six watches a feature film, they experience it as an adult would a circus or a music hall spectacular. They see a succession of performances or even a sequence of fragments of performances. They do not construct an ongoing chronology of more than a few minutes. They may enjoy the show, but do not grasp that they are experiencing a complete work to be enjoyed over its full duration. From the age of six onwards, children develop the ability to understand a sequence.

The creation of images

- The brain as an image-generation machine

To understand how young children discover images, we must bear in mind that images fascinate human beings so much because every one of us is an imaging apparatus. We are in fact ourselves the first imaging device that each of us comes into contact with. Our brain is an image-generation machine during the day and, even more so, at night as we dream. This is the reason why human beings have always been passionate about images.

- Going inside images

When, in early childhood, human beings begin to elaborate material images that they consider, accurately or otherwise, to be a reflection of what is inside them, they also feel the desire to go inside these images. When a child sees an image, they feel that of course they are standing before it, and this is true if we look from the point of view of the position of the body in relation to the image. This perspective is, however, false from the point of view of the desire that drives very young viewers: when “standing before” an image, in reality, they always imagine that they are “inside” it.

- Transforming images

This desire, which exists alongside the desire to go inside images, is linked to the relationship between a young audience and their “inner images”. Let us not forget that the images present in childhood dreams take young children beyond real images. Therefore, at this age, we accept that images transform us, but on condition that this happens in accordance with our own objectives, we want to keep images under our control so that we can transform them according to our desires.

- The pleasure of images

Going inside images and transforming them are two fundamental desires that pervade human relations with images. Young children derive pleasure from images, first when they decide to go inside them, and secondly when, fearing that they cannot get out of them, they decide to transform them.

The nature of images

We believe that approaching images as material for stage creation requires knowledge and reflection on their very nature.

- Images as a social product

Images occupy an increasingly important place in contemporary society, and constitute an element of identity, communication and community integration. In this context, early childhood can be negatively impacted by over-exposure to representations of itself and a massive bombardment of external images.

Understanding them as having a social nature, we identify three different categories of image:

- a. Images that represent the real. These provide information, be it more or less complete or ambiguous, about

people, animals, objects, nature and moments experienced, among other things.

- b. Images created by humans. These express the “point of view” of the person who created them and are a personalised expression that demonstrates human creativity. We prioritised these images in the creation processes of our stage projects linked to Mapping.

- c. Images created using technology. The ubiquity of mobile phones and their capacity to document, create and expand images has profoundly transformed the relationship that human beings in general, and children in particular, have with images. This reality is transforming young children’s evolving need to leave their mark, with children being able to spend longer spans concentrating and creating at a younger age.

- The image as an iconic sign

Images are tools for the transcription of information, thought and imagination. The work of C.S. Pierce in this area has been of special interest to us. He defines different classes of visual sign:

The icon is primarily representative. While working as a symbol, it retains a resemblance to the object it represents.



Ventanas (*Windows*), photo by Teatro Andoain



Ludi, photo by Irene Fernandez-Createctura

The index maintains a physical relationship with the object it refers to (such as a footprint in the snow).

The symbol has a socially established relationship with the signified.

In reality, the images we create or contemplate are arrangements of iconic, indexical and symbolic elements. It is important to keep in mind that creative work with images aimed at young children cannot be based on images with a high cultural and social symbolic level. The receivers have not developed the capacities and knowledge to decipher their content. This said, we can approach the creation and contemplation of images as a symbol of the human capacity to enjoy making the world one's own through the development of personal creativity.

- The polysemy of images

We set out from the general acceptance that the meaning of images is ambiguous, even within a shared cultural framework. Meaning varies according to the receiver and the context in which the image is placed and perceived.

Gaining awareness of the polysemic nature of images toward the end of early childhood is an indispensable life experience that facilitates the overcoming of egocentric thinking and encourages the development of critical thinking.

For this reason, we have focused our artistic work aimed at this age group on three areas:

- a. Discovery of the self and the environment. Images can help us to show children different realities that they do not have direct contact with. They can also encourage acceptance of one's own body and contribute to developing self-image. Images are also a form of personal expression that can constitute a reminder or personal trace.

b. The way that images, the development of language and the development of cognitive abilities work together. We understand that prioritising images as artistic material does not imply the negation of language, as receptors redefine images in their heads by naming them. Jacquinot says that "One of the functions of language (among others) is to name the units that sight isolates (but also to help it to isolate them), and one of the functions of sight (among others) is to inspire the semantic configurations of language (but also to be inspired by them)".

c. The development of means of expression other than language. We have chosen to activate the power of the imagination and to encourage a broad view of images as one element of personal expression, understanding that imaginative activity can involve "doing", or the production of the image itself, and not just work on imbuing a finished image with meaning.

It is in this exploration of the relationship between images and our young audience that the first inspiring images for the creative teams emerged. Images of who the members of this audience are, how they feel and, above all, how they imagine.

We see early childhood as:

An age of experimentation in which there is always something to discover.

A poetic whisper in the language of children.

A whirl of emotions in continuous movement.

One tiny cell and the whole universe.

A sea of inspiration to navigate with innovation.

A light bulb always switched on.

A forest of seedlings.

An endless labyrinth, in which to lose oneself in order to find oneself.

A Map for the Journey, not for the Treasure

Andra Burcă

Teatrul Ion Creangă (Romania)

One of the purposes of a project like "Mapping. A map on aesthetics of performing Arts for Early Years" is giving the chance to meet artists that are coming from different parts of Europe. It is a kind of window open for artists, made of common activities, Festivals, co-Productions, Research and training activities. This is the reason why Ion Creangă Theatre has been involved in this European Network since 2006, in the frame of the project "Small Size, Big Citizens", and wants to go on with this partnership so deeply interested in Theatre for Early Years challenge. After so many years, considering very young children as spectators has become a kind of commitment, both on the national and international side. But why has Mapping been something new, compared to the previous projects? First of all, because of the theme: an artistic research project focused on creating a sensory-based relationship with very young children, from 0 to 6 years, through performing acts. A Map made of questions and reflections, rather than answers. Not telling how to do it, but challenging artists and professionals to gather and research together, as the Map started from suggestions coming out from artistic

gatherings. For us, it has not been an easy challenge, as our team, from management to artists involved, was completely different from the past. All new, a scary and exciting sensation, at the same time.

Luckily, in the intentions of the project, many occasions to meet were planned, starting from Common Meetings to working group meetings, particularly interesting for artists under 35 as we were. Such a special occasion for three artists from each partner, director plus two performers, for a total of 12-15 professionals per working group. We have been called as participants of the Movement Group, which met for the first time in presence, in 2019, in Ljubljana.

In the artistic journal that recalls these days are written these words: "Make a map of the inside of your own body, as you feel it today". A first fragment of our Mapping Path, but also an invitation for the artists to connect with their own body, to be aware of their sensations and to create a map of feelings as purpose of those three days of artistic research. During the process, we have discovered that this sentence often came back in our minds and guided us in our artistic journey during



CUTInE, photo by Tiberiu Răducu

the project. Through the Project, we have discovered that being in touch with ourselves, as artists and human beings, is the key to communicating truthfully with the very small children. Communication is essential when you are creating for this age group. It is not so much about us or them, but more about the free space in-between, which both children and artists can fill together with words, movements, sounds, stories and meaning.

One year after Ljubljana, we were locked down, while we were working on the first production, not being able to meet physically anymore. We were forced to rehearse and have meetings online, trying to guess what the world would have become. It was hard to figure it out, even just in our imagination. At that moment, thinking back to the meaning of that sentence written in Ljubljana, suddenly the concept of “the wall” popped out. We were experiencing the separation, the border we cannot cross, physically and emotionally. The wall is a physical element, but it is also a concept able to shape minds and cultures. Human beings used to say that they built it to create the sense of protection and bring security, voluntarily forgetting to say how walls limit access to the view or to the possibility of going beyond, with body and imagination.

But how can we bring these concepts to small children? Why would it be interesting for them? How do we create a show that talks both to children and to their parents or caregivers? How to bring on stage not only an artistic interest but also some added value from the audience, in a few words a real artistic encounter with them? The Mapping project, offered indeed also the possibility to attend dramaturgy workshops and open discussions with fellow artists that inspired our artistic decisions and helped us to navigate through that process, full of questions and uncertainties, which we call a show.

As adults, we use to build walls around children, in order to protect them, but perhaps we should create more windows for them to see further and open doors for exploring the world, through senses and imagination. A wall is a provocation, an obstacle. It is order and symmetry, but can also be an invitation to the chaos beyond it. Children are attracted to order as well as chaos. They like to build things, with Legos for instance, as much as they like to destroy it afterward. So, while thinking about how they used to behave, the show became itself a provocation for us. We build and destroy walls made from our certainties, as adults and professionals, and then we destroy them during the rehearsal process, giving space to further questions and artistic possibilities on stage.

The Mapping Project gave us also the possibility to attend Festivals all around Europe, online and in presence. The experience of performing in Festivals, made us realise how much the audience can influence the performance of the actors and how strong is the relationship of that day, between the audience and performers. No walls between the audience and the artists on the stage, we have seen it clearly while performing at the festival “Visioni di Futuro, Visioni di Teatro” in 2021. Besides the cultural differences, we noticed a strong change between the family audience, where parents come together with their children at the theatre, and the audience made up of kids from kindergartens. Furthermore, we had the chance to perform the show outside the theatre box, inside educational services. That was an extremely important experience for us! We realised how the show is changing, as space, time, energy, rhythm, as well as the performance of the actors, how important is the connection between children and performers. That inspired and motivated us to move forward and try to create

a network with the educational services also in Romania. The very first steps has been made, by bringing show *CUTInE* in kindergartens in Bucharest and organising a first reflection meeting between educators and artists during the International Theatre Festival for Children “100, 1.000, 1.000.000 Stories”

With the second production from the Mapping Project, *Tales with threads*, we wanted to research more about the different age groups that Early Years are made of, trying to create a show for even younger children. The first production was created for children 0-3 years, while in the second production for children 1-4 years. In the second production, we have three performers on stage, different materials to explore and a new theme. No walls anymore, but connections between us, human beings. Threads to bring together, as when we create a show, we have always to consider when the show is created, which are the needs of people at that specific time. We were inspired by the artistic relationship created between the Mapping partners but also by Romanian mythology. In Romanian folk tales, at the birth of a child, there are three fairies called “ursitoare” who pick the fate of the

newborn child. They represent the future, the present and the past. Without trying to put on stage any of the traditional stories, we tried to explore the transformations and the sensory-based possibilities that strings allow, by creating an installation at the end show, where children can enter and play, to have their own experience.

This dramaturgical decision was strongly influenced by the Workshops of Dramaturgy we attended and by the questions raised during these meetings. We tried to make conscious decisions during the creating process, to be re-discussed after the première. For both productions, we took the risk of introducing elements of surprise and hide and seek, since the shows start. In *CUTInE*, at the beginning, there are two boxes that move on the stage, without any character pushing them visible on stage. Only later, we discover that they are hidden inside the boxes. In *Tales with threads*, there is a string curtain that creates a see-through effect. The relationship on stage too is deeply different. In the first show, the characters gradually get to know each other until getting a close collaborative relationship. In the second show, the characters know each

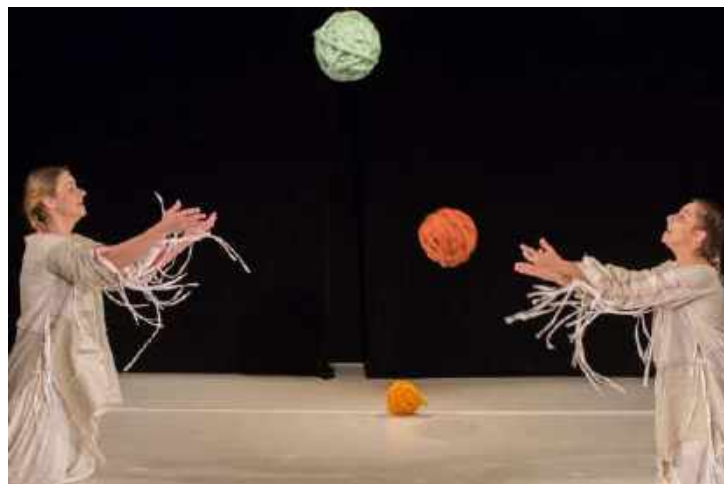
other already but they end up going separate ways. The materials transformation also played a very important role, through constructions or deconstructions, as they were metaphors for the subject we were working on.

Still, the main focus in both productions was the audience and trying to create several layers of meaning, both for adults and children spectators. We decided to keep the after show ritual, with the interaction with children in the performance space. So we thought from the beginning of the show how to create a setting where children could enter and play and how to make the end of the performance a smooth transition with the after show moment. In *CUTInE*, the characters are building at the end of the performance a city with a road as a bridge between the stage and the audience, and in that moment, the kids are invited to enter on the stage. In

Tales with threads, the characters build an installation through all the performing space and, at the end of the show, they invite children in.

During the five years of the Mapping Project, we have reflected a lot about the role of children spectators in workshops, artistic meetings and festivals. Small children are an extraordinary and unique audience and we have the responsibility to go on with the research and to continue investigating the many different shades of Early Years. Indeed, a 1+ child will always share his or her sensitivity with the artist differently as compared to a 3+ child, and as artists, we have found the language and the key to “speak” to all of them.

We know that the Mapping Research is “an invitation to participate” open for all people curious about the Early Years world and we are happy that in Romania is growing the interest on this artistic field.



Povești cu fire (Tales with threads), photo by Oana Monica Nae



Povești cu fire (Tales with threads), photo by Oana Monica Nae

The image as a universal theatrical passport

Gaëtane Reginster

Théâtre de la Guimbarde (Belgium)

My artistic approach seeks to build bridges between Europe and West Africa. In my creations, I try to make the toddlers' world resonate with the beauty (even rough) of the world, the music, the voice, the gestures, and the bodies of other humans.

Tiébélé is a project that took a long time to mature. It was first born from my fascination for images created in Burkina Faso, within the Kasséna culture, not far from Ghana. In the villages of the *Tiébélé* township, women paint the houses that the men have built in earth, resulting in a set of magnificent and unique buildings.

From the beginning of the process, I gleaned many images that seemed to have a gestural or iconographic kinship with what I had discovered. When we had the first workshop of the Image group in Salzburg in 2019, I already had with me a catalog of images composed of works by Mark Rothko, Cy Twombly, Gabriel Belgeonne, Antoni Tapiès, but also photographs by Hans Silvester or Dale Morris, as well as artisanal fabrics like "bogolans". I was trying to make a link between the gestures of these women, these recognized artists, and the toddlers. Instinctively, I felt that there was a strong link between this African cus-

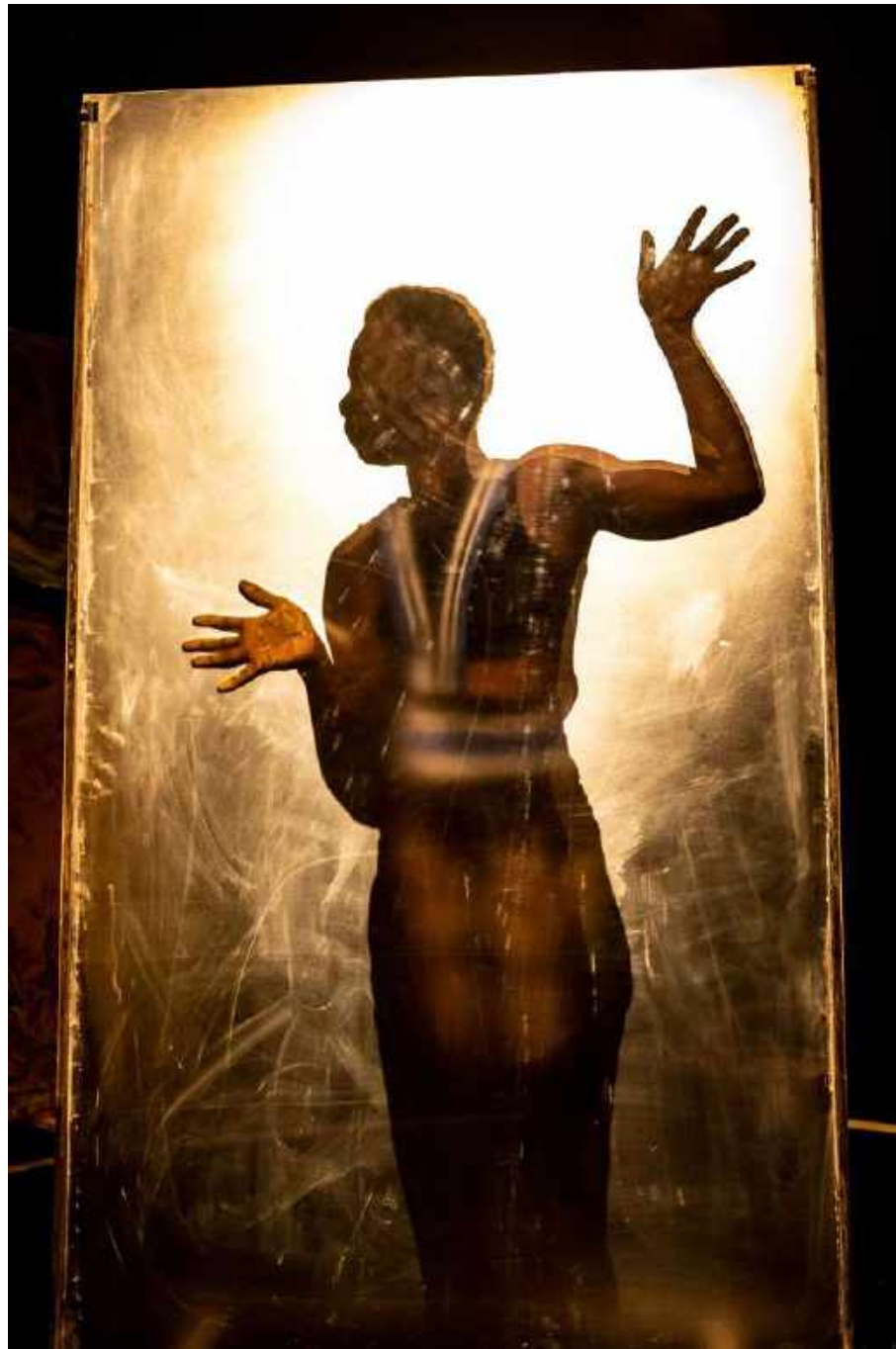
tom and the way in which a toddler seizes the world around him, seeking to sketch his first traces, in his purees or on his body and then gradually on paper.

For her part, plastic artist and scenographer Laurence Jeanne Grosfils was already looking for a way to translate on stage the toddler's motor skills development and the traces that it creates. She quickly came up with the idea of a village that develops step by step with plexiglass panels, translating the main stages of drawing in child development. She built a stage design narrative that goes from the uncontrolled scribbles to the first 'tadpole' man, from the trace of a drawing to the outlines, from the intimate to the landscape.

While I was fascinated by these women's gestures that seemed so daily, so universal, she directly saw a parallel with the toddlers' psychic development and the evolution of the gesture and drawing.

Practical workshop on visual Arts in Salzburg

Reflecting on the image with Finnish visual artist Kalle Nio in March 2019 was interesting, especially since we were looking to integrate moving images into



Tiébélé, photo by Olivier Calicis

our project. As Master of illusion, he questioned us on the merger between magic and image, illusion and reflection of reality.

This is in line with one of the two research questions of the Mapping project that accompanied us throughout our creation: what could be the meaning of life for toddlers, and what roles do image and imagination play in that? What is the relationship between context, image, and imagination?

Inspired by the fact that children are constantly flooded with images from their very first months, we looked for a pathway where the construction/making of images was clearly apparent.

The idea of ending the five paintings with an animation came up and felt coherent and obvious. As the paintings unfold, the gesture is built, and the spectator appropriates images corresponding to the ones drawn by the child. The last step, the stage of the mastered gesture, called “visual realism” by Luquet, presents an animation made from an illustration by Laurence, strongly inspired by the houses of the Tiébélé village. The image is projected on all the plexiglass panels and appears little by little, from below, house

by house. The animation was created by Mathieu Georis.

By this means, we show the building process of images and the importance of nursing ourselves step by step and developing a visual culture. The gradation is there, accompanied by a final song just as intense and which reminds us of what Kalle Nio underlined: the magic of the image reflection.

An endangered pictorial art

How can culture be transmitted through theatre for early years?

In January 2020, I travelled to Ouagadougou and was able to meet three of these women who still paint houses traditionally. The royal court of Tiébélé has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2012. Despite its beauty, this female pictorial tradition, which is passed down from mother to daughter, tends to disappear due to climate change, the threat of terrorism and the desire of the inhabitants to build hard houses, which they will not have to repair after each winter.

When I met Esther Ayaguikoga Nakema, Marie Nassé Katiga and Florence Yirido Kabanga, I was struck by the fact

that they dance and sing as soon as they take hold of the materials and colors. Alongside with them, I tried to transcribe the lullabies and songs in their Gourounsi language. For the show, I kept the ones that spoke to me and/or corresponded to an action.

The chosen and/or adapted songs, all organically linked to the scenic path, gradually gave shape to the show. And, on stage, the creation was born thanks to the complicity of the artists who enriched the project with their talent.

Nadège Ouedraogo, an actress and singer from Burkina Faso living in Belgium, delved into her memories to reconnect with her roots. She embraced the material, painted on her body, and with her body. She gradually took this secular path that goes from the intimate to the painting, from oneself to the picture.

Bérénice De Clercq, a Belgian actress and singer, played the bewitching Kamélé n’goni, a traditional West African instrument, and with her voice, she accompanied the gestures, the breaths, the happy hazards of this (re) construction.

Surprise was gradually invited into their play, and pleasure nourished the common adventure. This research work was

enriched by the meeting with early childhood professionals, which helped getting closer to what children live in their development.

In the course of the project, during our online meetings, I questioned researcher Manon van de Water on the impact of images on such young children. Manon came to see the show live at our “Pépites” 2022 festival and was impressed to see that, as soon as the show was over, the children wanted to touch the material.

The pandemic, which made us debate on our shows on the basis of videos, reminded us of the irreplaceable role of the living encounter that is theater. For us adults but also for the children to whom we address this human and artistic sharing.

Meeting the languages and voices of the world

Songs and lullabies share roots in a distant past common to all humanity. Historically and in all cultures, music and singing have given rhythm to the days, accompanying the thousand facets of human life. When the women of Tiébélé paint their houses, they accompany their gestures with numerous collective songs that tell the story of life and carry common stories.



Tiébélé, photo by Olivier Calicis



Walangaan, photo by Aurélie Clarembaux

All over the world, mothers sing traditional songs or establish sung rituals to stimulate, reassure or put their babies to sleep. And in return, toddlers are captivated by the musicality, the melody, and the rhythm of the songs. These are the first stories that mobilize the child's whole body and provide a valuable psychological foundation.

Toddlers also enjoy hearing adults sing. These precious moments of sharing are a source of exchange and complicity and have a very important emotional and relational dimension.

By transmitting lullabies and songs, the artists, like all the adults around the child, transmit aesthetics, a melody, a text, rhythms, an interpretation, a vocal color... and allow the children to become creators themselves by opening their imagination.

The lullabies and songs in *Tiébélé* are as much about poetry as they are about tradition. They are an invitation to travel, from one country to another, from one African language to another, from one emotion to another.

To give them to be heard is to try to restore a little of the feeling, the emotion and the authenticity that prevailed during their creation.

When I participated in the Word workshop in Breda in June 2022 during the Brik Festival with the *Tiébélé* actresses, we felt in our bodies all these languages that, sometimes even without constructing a structured narrative, are carriers of prosody and emotion.

Staging artists who are bearers of an elsewhere

When the toddler leaves traces to experience the reality around him, he builds sensitivity, and he answers his vital need to feel creative.

Like the child, the artist tries to give a singular form to unanswerable questions, to create outside what he feels inside. The works of the artists are interpretations, points of view on reality. They make us dream, think. They leave traces, sow, and nourish the imagination of toddlers and adults.

I don't know if the children who have seen or "lived" *Tiébélé* will have any memory of it. Perhaps, if they were able to play with the materials after the show, something will be inscribed in their body memory or in their unconscious emotional reservoir. Perhaps, the images created will later echo other discoveries. What is certain is that the images will be present again in my new project called *Walangaan*, "what flows" in Wolof language (Senegal), on the theme of water.

My project is also to stage artists who are bearers of an elsewhere. An elsewhere that exists more for the adult than for the child. For me, transmitting a culture through theater for toddlers has become a crucial issue. To give priority to human sharing and encounters on stage is to believe that these values can slowly take root. I hope, secretly, and in a probably utopian way, that these sensitive and fragile moments participate in the foundation of the first "poetic roots" of the young human beings who will make the world of tomorrow.

Theatre beyond generational borders

Felicitas Biller and Katharina Schrott
Toihaus Theater (Austria)

Toihaus Theater is a contemporary theatre that embraces a continuous process of searching, learning, developing, and understanding. Its artistic concept revolves around exploring basic poetic approaches, promoting sensitivity and creativity, and enabling intergenerational exchange. This theatre produces unique plays not only for the very young but also for grown-ups, setting it apart from other European theatres. As part of the Creative Europe Culture project, which is one of the EU's largest projects for young children's theatre, Toihaus Theater stands out as the only one among 19 partner theatres that also produces plays for adults. The international team at Toihaus Theater includes artists from various fields such as dance, music, visual arts, and poetry. Together, they create several productions each year, staged in Salzburg and toured worldwide. These productions aim to convey poetic theatrical moments and offer experimental perspectives to viewers of all ages. Unlike pre-scripted theatre works, Toihaus' pieces are free from linguistic boundaries, allowing for inspiration, sensation, and perception to take centre stage.

Toihaus Theater attaches great impor-

tance on art education, which takes place on multiple levels. This includes workshops, collaborations with educational institutions and art spaces, as well as guest performances in toddler groups, kindergartens, and theatres. By engaging with children, Toihaus Theater not only imparts knowledge but also learns from them, rethinking approaches and recognizing the connection between generations as a core mission. In addition to its educational endeavours, Toihaus Theater also contributes to the local art scene by providing spaces for rehearsing and performing. The theatre is always open to new collaborations, seeking points of intersection and exchange. Through its multifaceted activities and dedication to artistic exploration, Toihaus Theater serves as a beacon of creativity and inspiration.

Mapping - Impacts on our theatrical work

The performances for children at Toihaus Theater engage live music, which is developed by composers for each production. As member of the EU project, Toihaus Theater was part of the sound group, along with other groups that dealt with the themes of movement, word and image. This gave



Im Flatterland (Flutter Land), photo by Fabian Schober

rise to our motivation to place a special emphasis on the musical component in the children's productions and to understand music as one of the central elements within our theatre work.

The first workshop in Limoges, France, which took place in May 2019, marked its beginning. In it, a group of experts shared their knowledge about children's theatre and Katharina Schrott and Yoko Yagihara from Toihaus Theater were able to present their artistic and, in particular, musical approaches. Yoko Yagihara emphasized the different roles that music can take in a performance: it can be seen as an atmospheric surface, as a reaction to the stage play, or as the main protagonist. An important impulse was to ask more specific questions regarding the development of children's plays. In addition to questions about the choice of instruments, other important questions were asked that were central for the elaboration of the upcoming productions: How loud can loud be, how quiet? How does material become sound, how does sound become music? How can rhythm be developed and how does rhythm become music? How important are dynamics and dynamic change for children? Is it different from the perception of adults? One realization from this process was that it is difficult to use "ready-made" pieces of music for children and that a musical adaptation of a work is necessary in the development of a children's piece. Furthermore, the effect of the human voice was reflected upon, which can serve as a direct connection to the audience, especially with children, and thus become a door opener to the heart, to the emotions, to a very original sensation. Thus, the voice can be seen as the first instrument in the hierarchy of instruments.

During the follow up meeting online in 2020, further aesthetic elements were discussed within the joint network – in particular, the concept of short- or long surprise. This discussion gave insight into different

approaches of how to construct the dramatic golden lining. In autumn 2022, the general meeting took place in Odder, Denmark, in the theatre area of the company Madam Bach – a cozy venue surrounded by a large garden with different permanent sound installations. This was the first in-person meeting since the outbreak of the Corona pandemic. In addition to the joy of the reunion, the main focus here was to take stock of the work done so far and to clarify financial project issues.

In retrospect, it can be summarised that the Mapping workshops have promoted the sensitization of musical perception within the artistic work of the Toihaus Theater; moreover, they have made us aware that the sounds on stage form music, just like the music of instruments that the material sounds.

Natural material as a starting point

Since the theatre season 2020, a specific natural material is the starting point for the artistic work of the Toihaus Theater. This material is explored throughout the whole season and several productions are developed from it. This also allows the audience to follow a common thread throughout the whole season and grow with each production, piece by piece.

For the year 2020, the Toihaus Theater chose clay as the material for intensive exploration. The artistic work with clay appeals to all the senses and both meaning and movement find their specific expression in this material: putting objects together, taking them apart and recombining them provides them with content and meaning. In particular, working with clay implies physical engagement. This merging of material, movement, and meaning reveals ways of experiencing and understanding the world. Such process forms the core of every learning experience and is therefore, in the work with and for children, a basic premise for the exploration of the environment.

In the Mapping production *Ton in Ton*, which premiered in 2020, the artistic interest lay in investigating the interaction of early music with the archaic material clay. Baroque music should be captured in its original sense, performed in a new way and placed in a contemporary context. The basic setting for the performance was a music piece from the baroque period, two musicians, a dancer and a lump of clay. The clay is formed by the dancer on stage - but she as well is formed by the clay itself. The dance of this movement sounds, for example, when clapping and mashing with clay, when pouring water on the clay, or during the almost prevailing silence while kneading. The scene forms itself and this form leads to music.

A special experience was the first *Ton in Ton* guest performance after the lockdown, which took place in May 2021 in Bologna - in contrast to Austria, the theatres in Italy were already open again at that time. Due to the pandemic, there were very few children in the audience - and the long period of general closure of the theatres probably also contributed to the fact that the performance on stage was perceived very intensely. Even very quiet things seemed incredibly loud.

In addition to the production *Ton in Ton* (for audience members from 1 year), two other pieces were created in an exploration of the material clay: The evening piece "TON - Performance in a circle" focuses on the elementary effect of circles, sounds and movement. As a participatory piece for kindergartens and toddler groups, *Spieltöne* builds a bridge to children's play and invites them to touch and grasp. The entire rehearsal process of this theatrical triptych was accompanied by fine artist and ceramics specialist Gerold Tusch, who supported the productions with his precious knowledge of this material. He reflects on the collaboration with Toihaus Theater:

"For me as a ceramist, the product of my work usually makes its way through the drying process into the pottery kiln. There, clay becomes ceramic. The result then feels final: solid, hard, and perhaps even covered with a glassy glaze skin. After that, the object is no longer malleable, but it is fragile. That still fascinates and scares me - so much creative will, literally burned into the material, permanent and irreversible. It's entirely different when working with clay on stage. The material there is soft, malleable, virtually invites deformation: it gets kneaded, squeezed, torn, thrown, shaped.

The fascination is in the abundance of possibilities. The potential of clay, its plasticity, its weight, all this becomes palpable."

In 2022, the Toihaus Theater intensively explored various textiles: from huge, light-as-air silk scarves to shimmering textiles and heavy velvet. This work resulted in the performance "Tilting Moments" as well as the Mapping production *Im Flatterland* for adults and children from 3 years on, showing two dancers and a musician with percussion instruments on stage.

"BimBam" Festival

The "BimBam" Festival in 2021, which had already been entirely planned and organized was financially supported and planned as an EU project, but had to be entirely canceled due to COVID-19. The uncertainty of the further development affected the preparations for the "BimBam" Festival 2023 as well: International festivals started hesitantly and performances that were considered for screening were sometimes cancelled at short notice.

On the upside, it was a special honor to finally be able to organize "BimBam" again in 2023 and to provide the artistic stage for diverse theatre even for the youngest

children and their caretakers and elders. The ninth edition of this festival in 2023 was themed "Dance of Things": a swirling mop, dancing cloths and tables warming themselves at night by a campfire - a great deal can be discovered in changes of perspective. Ten international companies, four of them Mapping partners, presented their pieces for the very youngest audience at various locations in the city and province of Salzburg, Upper Austria and Bavaria. Furthermore, a two-day artist workshop was held during the festival by choreographer Isabelle Schad, which was made possible by financial reallocations due to the corona-related shortfalls of previous years. Here the focus was on the theme of movement and about 15 artists, some of them part of the Mapping network, participated. In addition, during the festival there was a Mapping exhibition in the foyer of the Toihaus Theater, presenting a selection of the diverse illustrations which was announced for the exhibitions "Children-spectators". On summary, the synergies created through the Mapping process have been extremely fruitful and Toihaus Theater is very happy to have been part of this project.



Im Flatterland (Flutter Land), photo by Fabian Schober



Ton in Ton, photo by Ela Grieshaber

The productions

Μια Θαυμάσια Ημέρα (A Wonderful Day)

Ages: 3+

Dramaturgy: **Katerina Alexaki**
 Direction: **Marilena Triantafyllidou**
 Music: **Vassilis Kazis**
 Stage and Costume designer: **Georgia Bourda**
 Lighting: **George Pavlopoulos Agiannitis**
 Performers: **Vassilis Kazis, Kleoniki Karachaliou and Maria Baloutsou**

From the moment we come into this world, we grow and shape our lives on habits and routines that offer us security and the feeling that everything is under control. There comes a time, when a seemingly accidental event, swipes like a hurricane the “perfect cosmos” we have created. But, a global shift, if we allow it, can bring “a wonderful day” in our lives.

...και βγαίνω! (Here I come!)

Ages: 10 months +

Concept – Direction: **Marilena Triantafyllidou**
 Dramaturgy: **Katerina Alexaki**
 Choreography: **Irida Kyriakopoulou**
 Music: **Vassilis Kazis**
 Stage and Costume designer: **Georgia Bourda**
 Light designer: **George Pavlopoulos Agiannitis**
 Performers: **Maria Baloutsou, Vassilis Kazis**

Inside it is beautiful, calm, warm. Outside it is... awful! I don't want to go out. But I want to see... touch... explore... discover... Here I come!
 How do very young children perceive and discover the world of adults?
 How does imagination help our understanding of reality?
 Where does the “I” end and the world begin?
 With these questions as a vehicle, the performance “Here I come!” becomes a meeting point between the “inside” and the “outside”, the “I” and the “other”, as all parts of the same world.

Miksi Mix (The Why Mix)

Ages: **4-6 years**

Director: **Päivi Aura**
 Choreography: **Päivi Aura, Kati Lehtola, Veera Lamberg, Maria Autio**
 Costumes: **Piritta Kämi-Conway**
 Lighting: **Nicolas Salo**
 Music: **Heli Hartikainen**
 Performers: **Kati Lehtola, Veera Lamberg, Maria Autio, Heli Hartikainen**

Mime, dance, music. Mazes, circles, spirals. Emojis of three wise monkeys. That's what *The Why Mix* is made of. The word "why" is key to understanding and knowledge. "Mix" is a mixture. *The Why Mix* throws questions in the air about the meanings and interpretations of bodily movement. *The Why Mix* is a geometric, thrilling, colourful and partly serious mixture of contemporary dance, mime and music.

Rothar

Ages: **4+**

Director: **Marc Mac Lochlainn**
 Set Designer & Animator: **Maeve Clancy**
 Costume Designer: **Elaine Mears**
 Performer & Composer: **Moisés Mas García**
 Performer: **Miquel Barceló**

Set in a little bike shop at the end of town, the show follows two boys and their bikes as they conjure play from the everyday and discover a world where anything is possible. This joyful production celebrates the places your imagination can take you through gorgeous design and brilliant physical comedy.

Produced in association with Baboró International Arts Festival for Children and University of Galway.

Früh Stück

Ages: 3+

Direction and stage: **Michael Lurse**
 Sound/Music: **Jan Leschinski, Michael Lurse**
 Performers: **Minju Kim, Michael Lurse**

What do we hear when we listen? What does the space around us sound like? And when does music begin? Two performers explore the sound of things, of bodies, of others and of themselves. A rhythm evolves, a melody, a song, an auditory landscape emerges in our ears and in front of our eyes. An invitation to “breakfast” - not only for the ears...

EXtra-INtra / Álommese (EXtra-INtra / Dream Tale)

Ages: 0-2 years

Director: **György Philipp**
 Designer: **Ferenc Sebestény**
 Consultant: **Krisztina Andrási**
 Costumes and props: **Dóra Reymeyer**
 Production assistant: **Veronika Vajdai**
 Performers: **Rita Alexics, Zoltán Mózes, György Philipp**

Intrauterine memories are carried through our lives, giving us significant and useful foundations after birth, with special regard to auditory memories, which young children sense directly whereas adults only vaguely. Our project operates with these auditory and spatial memories, searching for the boundary line between inside and out. The unique use of space and sound creates an intimate, soft ambiance, which allows our youngest spectators to take part in a special experience shared with their parents.

Hangmadár (SoundBird)

Ages: 3-5 years

Author-director: **János Novák**
 Dramaturge and co-director: **Attila Eck**
 Designer: **Klaudia Orosz**
 Artistic assistant: **Károly Szívós**
 Video: **Ivó Kovács**
 Interactive audio: **Péter Márton**
 Technical manager: **István Farkas**
 Music: **János Novák**
 Assistant director: **Veronika Vajdai**
 Performer: **Melinda Megyes**

How wonderful it is to create and to receive sounds! Every living thing produces a sound – singing, squeaking, laughing, stomping, rustling. Now it is our turn to make music together! The play is built up of sounds, colors and images. The SoundBird and the Storyteller invites us on a magical journey. The interactivity of the performance is made possible by a unique and innovative audio technology. Everything happens in real time, thus enabling the performer to time interactions based on the audience's reactions.

Cornici. Ricordi in tre atti

(Frames. Memories in three acts)

Ages: 2-5 years

Director: **Andrea Buzzetti**
 Authors: **Andrea Buzzetti, Giada Ciccolini,
 Bruno Frabetti, Sara Lanzi**

Graphic consultant: **Enrico Montalbani**
 Performers: **Giada Ciccolini, Sara Lanzi**

Our memory is made of windows: fragments of stories we have listened to, images we have seen, and emotions we have felt. Memories live in these windows; they open and close them. Memories in black and white, the pleasant and the unpleasant ones, that turn the past into present for a little while and that we can relive thanks to our imagination.

This show in three acts creates a connection between different memories.

Abaco

(Abacus)

Ages: 1-3 years

Directors: **Directors: Andrea Buzzetti, Giada Ciccolini**
 Authors: **Authors: Andrea Buzzetti, Giada Ciccolini,
 Bruno Frabetti, Sara Lanzi**

Original music: **Matteo Balasso**
 Costumes: **Tanja Eick**
 Movement consultant: **Andra Burcă**
 Performers: **Bruno Frabetti, Sara Lanzi**

From 1 to 3, and then 4, 5, 6... when you start counting you know where you begin, but not where you might end up! Abaco is a game around numbers, dedicated to very young children who are starting to discover the world one step after the other. The wires of an abacus serve as a metaphor for a line that connects infinite points, infinite experiences.

Abacus is a wire to walk along balancing back and forth, an elastic band to swing on, a rope to hold on to, a string to play on, a friend to count on.

Peskovnik

(Sand Pit)

Ages: 5+

Concept and direction: **Miha Golob**
 Dramaturgy: **Mojca Redjko**
 Music: **Miha Arh**
 Video Projection: **Gregor Kuhar**
 Lighting Design: **Maša Avsec, Gregor Kuhar**
 Performers: **Miha Arh, Barbara Kanc, Gašper Malnar,
 Filip Šebšajevič**

The sandpit as an active children's playground encourages both cognitive and emotional development processes. The production illustrates the transition from children's early solitary play, through parallel play, to associate play, where conflicts occasionally arise, and finally cooperative play, where children are working towards a common goal.

Tunel

(The Tunnel)

Ages: 5+

Co-production: **Lutkovno gledališče Ljubljana and
 Klaipėdos Lėlių Teatras**
 Director, art director, set designer: **Miha Golob**
 Dramaturgy: **Mojca Redjko**
 Costume designer: **Dajana Ljubičić**
 Music: **Andrius Šiurys**
 Virtual content designer: **Borut Kumperščak**
 Lighting designer: **Gregor Kuhar**
 Performers: **Miha Arh, Gašper Malnar, Barbara Kanc,
 Filip Šebšajevič**

The Tunnel is inhabited by both light and darkness. Light is inseparably linked to colour, shape, structure, depth, distance, and activity. When there is no light, it is dark. In darkness we cannot see colours, we cannot perceive actual shapes and sizes, we cannot perceive structure without touching, we can hardly determine distances. The world revealed in the light disappears, sounds become distorted without a clear picture and many people feel discomfort. Fear?

Ready, Steady, GO!

Ages: 2-5 years

Director and writer: **Peter Glanville**
 Designer: **Verity Quinn**
 Composer: **Rex Horan**
 Lighting designer: **Joe Hornsby**
 Dramaturgy: **Sarah Argent**
 Stage managers: **Lois Sime, Jordan Whitwell**
 Performers: **Marta Carvalho, Jennie Eggleton**

When Sofia discovers a mountain bike in the boarded-up shed at the bottom of her garden, she doesn't realise the thrilling adventures that await her. Join Sofia and her Mum as they travel across mountains and lakes, through day and night, in a race like no other. A gentle show which introduces different natural environments and explores the bond between a mother and her young daughter.

Let's Build!

Ages: 2-5 years

Director: **Trina Haldar**
 Designer: **Verity Quinn**
 Lighting designer: **Rajiv Pattani**
 Sound designer: **Arun Ghosh**
 Stage manager: **Katie Bingham**
 Performers: **Marshall Defender Nyanhete, Joey Holden**

Follow two very curious builders who are committed to getting the job done. Their biggest challenge is they have never built anything before... This interactive show embraces the magic of discovering things for the first time, where mistakes are a door to something new. Audiences will be invited to get building too. Will things turn out wonderfully or could they topple to the ground?

Wacht 's Even (Wait a Minute)

Ages: 6 months-5 years

Concept: **Gertien Bergstra, Femke Somerwil**
 Choreography: **Gertien Bergstra, Femke Somerwil**
 Light design: **Rob Touwslager, Twan Mensen**
 Decor: **Bert Vogels**
 Music: **Jeroen van Vliet**
 Costumes: **Czakon**
 Performers: **Pablo Dávila Iglesia, Eduarda Santos, Catarina Paiva, Donna Scholten, Kaia Vercammen**

From an assembly kit, a world unfolds. Snow-white objects fill the void. A small table, a stool, a door, a tiny piano. But wait a minute... is somebody here? In a pristine landscape, two people disappear and reappear when the inevitable happens: they meet! How to deal with somebody different? Someone whom you can't even tell what type of creature it is? A human, a dog, a bird? Luckily, there is no need to change each other. Wait a minute... simply stick to being who you are.

Blikvangers (Eyecatchers)

Ages: 1 +

Concept: **Gertien Bergstra, Femke Somerwil, Helene Jank**
 Music: **Helene Jank**
 Choreography: **Gertien Bergstra, Femke Somerwil**
 Light design: **Rob Touwslager, Twan Mensen**
 Costumes: **Aleksandra Pershay**
 Performers: **Donna Scholten, Ivar Draaisma, Elvedin Šiljdedić, Chiara Aldoriso**
 Musician: **Helene Jank**

In the beginning, the world was uninhibited. Life was so pristine, that curiosity wasn't yet troubled by fear or anger. Like the open mind of the one who was watching the world - that's how pristine it was. The sound of water, the stream of movement, nature was without words. To discover was a piece of cake. Every touch was the start of an adventure.

Two dancers and a musician return to that beginning with unusual instruments and unusual encounters, which become evident, simply because they are there.

Drömskt (Dreamy)

Ages: 1-2 years

Concept: Sara Myrberg
 Director: Hedvig Claesson
 Set design and Costumes: Ylva Sanner
 Music and sound: Love Kjellsson
 Light design: Maria Ros
 Technician: Anthony Cooks
 Mask: Johanna Rönnbäck
 Dramaturgy: Maria Clauss
 Poster: Klara G
 Photo: Martin Skoog
 Producer: Lina Karlmark
 Performers: Anna Svensson Kundromichalis,
 Nelly Zagora

Does a little one dream of warm water, endlessly surrounded and safe?
 Or is it a sound in the dark, a gentle rustle of unknown tunes that mesmerizes and gets you rocking?
 The body with arms and legs that sometimes live their own lives or the warmth of a friend who tickles and plays?
 A room that transforms, it grows big and then small again.
 We create a dreamplay and invite the youngest audience and their adults to a fantasy world inspired of dreams.

O czym szepcze las (Whispers from the Woods)

Ages: 2-4 years

Direction: Alicja Morawska-Rubczak
 Set & costume design: Barbara Matecka
 Music: Wacław Zimpel
 Video projections: Paulina Ptaszyńska, Bartosz Posacki
 Research: Justyna Czarnota
 Performers: Julianna Dorosz/Anna Domalewska,
 Aleksandra Leszczyńska/Marcin Chomicki,
 Marcel Górnicki/Zuzanna Łuczak Wiśniewska/
 Alicja Helfojer

The performance is an invitation to listen to the stories that the forest wants to tell us. In a poetic way - on the level of word, sound and image - it invites spectators to get to know the richness of the world of trees and their inhabitants. Beautifully animated puppets, intriguing images and visuals, surprising sounds - all this will make you feel the magic of the forest and make you want to go for a walk to the forest with even more open eyes, ears and heart.

Tu mieszkamy (We live here)

Ages: 2-5 years

Direction: Alicja Morawska-Rubczak
 Concept & set design: Barbara Matecka
 Music: Iwona Skv
 Movement creation: Paulina Giwer-Kowalewska & Antoni Kurjata
 Choreographic assistance: Ula Zerek & Aniela Kokosza
 Assisting researcher: Paweł Gałkowski
 Performers: Anna Domalewska/Paulina Giwer-
 Kowalewska & Alicja Helfojer/Antoni Kurjata

Installation based performance focused on dance, movement and objects, exploring the theme of community and cooperation in search of the essence of togetherness. "This is our house. Home. Can you see other homes? Open your heart, open the door and join us in this special moment. We are all connected, so we want to be kind and build our community together. Through the eyes of the children we can see the pure relationships and believe again that a new, empathetic society is possible".

Ventanas / Leihoak (Windows)

Ages: 2-5 years

Direction and Dramaturgy: **Jesús Nieto**
 Set desing: **Jesús Nieto**
 Costumes: **Alejandra Calderón**
 Lighting design: **Jesús Nieto**
 Photography: **Gerardo Sanz**
 Music: **Pedro Guirao**
 Video Assistant: **Paula Alemán**
 Performers: **Rosa A. García, Jone Amezaga**

Through this game-based performance, the public begins a journey that brings to mind the construction and deconstruction of images in the early years of life, recreating a magical and fantastic imaginary. A woman experiences an adventure through which she recovers the curiosity she had lost. Her own journey teaches her how to get excited about life again, taking her back to a lost time of memories in which she played as a child: she returns to the space of her childhood and travels through a window back to a time and place where a girl who played and dreamed of discovering the world used to live.

Ludi

Ages: 2-5 years

Direction: **Rosa A. García**
 Dramaturgy: **Rosa A. García, Irene Fernández Alvarez (Createctura)**
 Technician and Costumes: **Ana Fernández**
 Set desing: **Irene Fernández Alvarez (Createctura)**
 Lighting: **Ana Fernández and Irene Fernández Alvarez (Createctura)**
 Performers: **Rosa A. García/Maitane Goñi/Aritz Bengoa**

“Ludi” is a polysemic word, with different meanings. In Spanish it means “game”, in Basque it means “world” and in Esperanto the meaning is “to make an instrument sound”.

Ludi is an interactive show, a scenic poem, in which artists and audience are immersed inside the elements that make up the nature in order to experience, from sensoriality, that a more sustainable world is possible, if we place art and game as a central element of upbringing.

CUTInE

Ages: 2-5 years

Concept and direction: **Andra Burcă**
 Set design: **Andrei Răduț**
 Music: **Radu Mihalache**
 Performers: **Andreea Mera/Eliza Teofănescu and Tudor Morar**

Are you ready to discover a world made of oversized boxes hiding all sorts of surprises? *CUTInE* is a performance that enables us to transform the surrounding space. We will place box on top of box and with the help of dance, movement and creativity we will form new objects. A wall, a tunnel, a bridge, a house – all these metaphorical and physical spaces are waiting to be explored in our playful adventure.

Povești cu fire (Tales with threads)

Ages: 1-4 years

Concept and direction: **Andra Burcă**
 Set design: **Viaceslav Vutcariov**
 Music: **Radu Mihalache**
 Performers: **Andreea Gaica, Andreea Mera, Andra Mirescu**

In a timeless space, we prepare to set off into a realm carved out of unexpected encounters. Guided by an invisible thread, before us, a giant sphere of wool and three interesting characters will appear one by one. Together, we will start discovering and unraveling the threads that surround us. *Tales with threads* is the ideal universe of any child lets himself be detached from the hands of his parents and, guided by curiosity, enjoys exploring the unknown.

Tiébélé

Ages: **18 month+**

Concept and direction: **Gaëtane Reginster**
 Scenography: **Laurence Jeanne Grosfils**
 Musical arrangements: **Zouratié Koné** Video
 Animation: **Mathieu Georis**
 Costumes: **Elyse Galiano**
 Lighting: **Vincent Stevens**
 Support in BurkinaFaso: **Laure Guiré**
 Artistic support: **Daniela Ginevro**
 Photography: **Olivier Calicis and Gaëtane Reginster**
 Graphic design: **Pierre Papier Studio**
 Performers: **Nadège Ouédraogo and Bérénice De Clercq**

In the courtyard of a Kasséna house, a young woman mixes clay and water, and scribbles, explores the path of the first traces. By re-appropriating these ancestral gestures, she puts her steps back into those of the toddlers playing in the soil. By her side, a woman accompanies her with her voice to the sweet sound of the N'goni. Together, they sketch the features that will later brighten up the walls of their homes, and they travel closer to the roots of humanity. *Tiébélé* echoes the beautiful footprints left on their houses by the women of a village in Burkina Faso.

Walangaan

Ages: **18 month+**

Concept and direction: **Gaëtane Reginster**
 Scenography: **Laurence Jeanne Grosfils**
 Costumes: **Elyse Galiano**
 Lighting: **Vincent Stevens**
 Artistic support: **Daniela Ginevro**
 Project inspiration, dissemination
 in Senegal: **Patricia Gomis**
 Photography: **Aurélie Clarembaux**
 Graphic design: **Pierre Papier Studio**
 Performers: **Agsila Breuil Joob, Honoré Kouadio**

Walangaan ("water that flows" in Wolof) tells in its own way the cycle of water. The water that feeds, that runs down the skin, splashes, cleans, sings, gushes... and the water that sometimes, more and more, runs out. A singer and a percussionist follow the course of water, reveal its sounds and play with their voices and their bodies. From the drop to the rain shower, from the splash to the waterfall, until the intimate moment of bedtime, when children go to sleep and the city lights are lit. A sung interlude celebrating the preciousness of this element that is renewed since the dawn of time.

Du er her (You are Here)

Ages: **2-6 years**

Idea and staging: **Pernille Bach**
 Composition, live music and
 performance: **Christian Schrøder**
 Dramaturgy: **Anne Hübertz Brekne**
 Lights and visual media: **Christoffer Brekne**
 Stage construction: **Frederik Eberhardt**
 Illustrations: **Anne Uhrenholt Kjeldsen**
 Performers: **Pernille Bach, Christian Schrøder**

You Are Here is a gentle performance about finding your way in the world – and within yourself. In a world full of musical instruments, delicate props, cut-out images, maps and small objects, two performers weave stories of adventures big and small; the girl who finds her way to the bakery and back again, the cat that goes his own ways, the ship that sets sail... Live music and projections complete this delightful show for curious little minds.

Ton in Ton

Ages: 1 +

Direction: **Cornelia Böhnisch, Katharina Schrott**
 Dramaturgy: **Felicitas Biller**
 Music dramaturgy: **Yoko Yagihara**
 Stage design and Costumes: **Cornelia Böhnisch**
 Lighting and tech: **Alexander Breitner, Florian Kirchmayr,
 Robert Schmidjell**
 Visual arts collaboration: **Gerold Tusch**
 Performers: **Anna Bárbara Bonatto (dance),
 Raúl Rolón (musician)**

A clump of clay, a dancer, a musician – their bodies fill the space with sounds, notes, tones, forms. Push, press, spread, splat! What else is there to be discovered? Within each note is a touch, in each touch a sound, out of each sound a new arrangement. The piece *Ton in Ton* sets out on a search to find left behind traces which show us where tones of color, sound, material and body cross paths.

Im Flatterland (Flutter Land)

Ages: 3 +

Choreography: **Cornelia Böhnisch, Katharina Schrott**
 Choreographic Assistance: **Anna Bárbara Bonatto**
 Dramaturgy: **Felicitas Biller**
 Stage design and Costumes: **Cornelia Böhnisch**
 Lighting and tech: **Alexander Breitner, Robert Schmidjell**
 Visual arts collaboration: **Gerold Tusch**
 Performers: **Agnes Distelberger, Elena Francalanci/
 Anna Bárbara Bonatto, Jadwiga Mordarska
 (dancers), Yoko Yagihara/Martina Weninger
 (musician)**

A dance with a huge piece of fabric transforming continuously: small ripples grow into oceanic waves and breezy sculptures emerge from whirling winds. A swelling and subsiding, a peeling off, an upwards expansion. We envelop ourselves in a cocoon and wait for new skin: where does the wave begin, where does the fold end? Breath becomes movement – and then we flutter away.

Mapping Partners



Artika Theatre Company

Athens, Greece

artika.co

Artika is a non-profit theatre company founded in July 2006. Since the beginning, Artika has been creating theatrical performances for the early years and performing in Greece and abroad. Besides production, the group's activities include art workshops, educational programs and courses, for both adults and children. Our goal is the research and creation of new forms of expression and communication through performing arts, and in collaboration with other art forms, in Greece and abroad, that will bring the public closer to theatre and art. Our vision is a theatre without signs, a theatre that can be addressed to everyone regardless of age. Artika consists of a group of artists with different backgrounds working together with continuity, combining the artistic vision of the team with the individual vision, with respect to relationships and interaction.



Auraco

Helsinki, Finland

auraco.fi

Dance and mime theatre Auraco was founded in 2006 and is run by non-profit association Kuukulturit ry. The touring company is based in Helsinki, Finland. Since 2010 Auraco is one of the most internationally touring Finnish dance companies, with 26 countries so far in Europe and Asia. Auraco's performances trust the performers' presence and the vulnerability of the movement itself. With minimalistic or no décor, the performers fill the empty stage, creating a responsive atmosphere. The relationship with the audience is open and sensitive. The performances break boundaries between the performers and the audience. Audience development is a key element of Auraco's work. Auraco is or has been a partner in several European Union co-funded projects since 2010.



Baboró International Arts Festival for Children

Galway, Ireland

baboro.ie

Baboró International Arts Festival for Children nurtures children's innate creativity and curiosity for the world around them through their experience of the creative arts. Baboró is Ireland's flagship arts festival devoted to children and families; a week-long programme of theatre, dance, puppetry, music, visual arts and workshops. Throughout the year, Baboró leads programmes that support artists to produce work for younger audiences and equip educators with creative tools for the classroom. In 2009, Baboró joined "Small size, big citizens" project to become a part of a network of artists with a passion for developing work for younger audiences. Baboró is delighted to be collaborating with Branar and University of Galway as part of Mapping Project.



Bologna Fiere Bologna Children's Book Fair

Bologna, Italy

bolognachildrenbookfair.com



The Bologna Children's Book Fair is the event in the publishing year's calendar, built around children's content today. With over 50 years of experience the fair has succeeded in bringing together a unique and diverse global audience. The result is the world's premium copyright exchange hub when it comes to publishing and now it includes an extra core that extends to all multi-media and licensing business for children's content. The world famous Illustrators Exhibition and industry recognized BolognaRagazzi awards are some of key pillars that make this event so special. With more than 26,000 people taking part in 4 packed days of events, it is a unique mix of a cultural book show and an international rights business forum for all types of content for children.



HELIOS Theater

Hamm, Germany

helios-theater.de

Helios Theater is led by Barbara Kölling and Michael Lurse, who imprint the work of the theatre since its founding in 1989. In co-operation with performers, puppeteers, musicians, authors and visual artists, they develop theatre performances for all age groups. HELIOS Theater has developed performances for the very young, like Woodbeat, H2O and Circles. The company's productions are regularly invited to theatre festivals in Germany and throughout Europe. The ensemble fosters theatre for the very young through research and exchange in Germany and internationally. Biennially, HELIOS Theater organizes "hellwach", the international theatre festival for young audiences and regularly hosts conferences and symposia dealing with current questions in theatre for children and young people.



Kolibri Színház

Budapest, Hungary

en.kolibriszinhaz.hu

Founded in 1992 by Executive and Artistic Director, composer and theatre director János Novák, Kolibri Theatre for Children and Youth is the only professional children's and youth theatre in Hungary which has its own company and performs for children as young as 0 and up to 18 years of age. Kolibri's extensive and manifold repertory of 33 plays ranges from adaptations of classic, Hungarian and world literature, through contemporary Hungarian and international authors' plays, to performances, puppet shows, fairy tale plays, operas and physical theatre for young children and adolescents. Kolibri is a pioneer in establishing new genres in Hungarian children's and youth theatre by introducing live music on stage, theatre for babies and toddlers, classroom theatre, youth plays, operas, and new adaptations of novels for screenplay and stage.



La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi

Bologna, Italy

testoniragazzi.it

La Baracca, founded in 1976 in Bologna, is a theatre company dedicated to young audiences. Since 1987, the company carries out a specific theatrical research focused on very young children (0-3 and 3-6 years old). La Baracca produces shows that tour in Europe and beyond, programmes theatrical seasons for family and school audiences, and organises "Visioni di Futuro, Visioni di Teatro" international festival of performing arts for early years.

Since 2005, the company has been project leader in several European projects dedicated to performing arts for this specific age group that also led to the foundation of Small size Network.

La Baracca is project leader of "Mapping – A Map on the aesthetics of performing arts for early years".



Lutkovno Gledališče Ljubljana

Ljubljana, Slovenia

lgl.si/en

Ljubljana Puppet Theatre (LPT) is the main Slovenian puppet theatre staging puppet and drama performances for children, youngsters and adults. Its predominant target audiences are children and young people. The theatre was established in 1948 (as the City Puppet Theatre) and has been based in Mestni dom in Krekov Square since 1984. In its work, LPT builds on the hundred-year tradition of Slovenian puppetry. With the establishment of the Museum of Puppetry at the Ljubljana Castle, the LPT officially became the caretaker of this precious, century-old heritage. The theatre manages five regular and several smaller venues. At these venues, which offer seating for approximately a thousand people, it produces fifteen premieres a year and is visited by around 110,000 spectators.



Polka Theatre

London, UK

polkatheatre.com

Polka is one of the few theatres in the UK dedicated exclusively to young audiences aged 0 – 12. Based in Wimbledon since 1979, Polka gives over 100,000 children, parents and teachers each year the opportunity to experience world-class theatre through its productions and creative learning programme. It offers opportunities for all children, regardless of age, ability, culture or background. Polka has an international reputation, known throughout the world as a pioneer of theatre for children, consistently setting the standard and raising audience's expectations, and supporting artists to create innovative new work. Following a major redevelopment, Polka reopened in 2021 with new rehearsal and community spaces, café, learning studio, state-of-the-art 100-capacity studio theatre, and refurbished 300-seat theatre.



Stichting de Stilte

Breda, the Netherlands

destilte.nl

de Stilte dance for children is focused on developing and performing productions for children of all ages. Thanks to a multi-layered creative approach, the performances are also enjoyed by older children, parents, grandparents and everyone in between. With multi-faceted, non-verbal performances and dance activities that stir the imagination, de Stilte seeks to stimulate children's playful curiosity and encourage their artistic skills. While playing with heart and soul, children learn about their world; they learn how to position themselves in an overwhelming society. de Stilte creates ambiguous shows offering time and space to the audience's imagination. Shows which take children seriously.



Teater Tre

Stockholm, Sweden

teatertre.se

Teater Tre create finely crafted performances for children from baby to youth. Teater Tre create movement-based performances, cradled in a visual and rhythmic expression. Teater Tre was founded in 1979 and has been based at the beautiful and renowned theatre at Rosenlundsgatan 12 in Stockholm since 1999. The theatre tours extensively throughout Sweden and the world and receives support from the Swedish Arts Council, The Cultural Administration in the region of Stockholm and Creative Europe.



TEATR
ANIMACJI

Teatr Animacji w Poznaniu

Poznań, Poland

teatranimacji.pl

Established in 1945, Poznań's Animation Theatre is a city cultural institution that draws on the traditions of the Polish puppet and object theatre, creating productions for both children/teens and adult audiences that explore a variety of artistic languages from traditional puppetry to new media and tour nationally and internationally.

The Theatre's artistic team strives to maintain the quality and reputation as pioneer and blazers of new trails in theatrical expression that have earned it awards and rave reviews.

Animation Theatre pays lots of attention to offer truly inclusive projects to the audiences, aiming to build a diverse program that is dedicated to everybody – despite age, nationality, background or any other issue that can exclude people from experiencing arts.

In Mapping Project, Animation Theatre cooperates closely with Art Fraction Foundation, a non-governmental organization focused on art and culture for the youngest children.



Teatro Paraíso

Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain

teatroparaiso.com/en

Teatro Paraíso is an Arts Organisation dedicated to childhood, youth and the democratisation of culture. With a strong public service vocation, it works to promote the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Paraíso is recognised in its sector as an innovative enterprise in terms of subjects, formats and working methods. In 2012, it received the "National Performing Arts Award for Children and Young People" from the Ministry of Culture, which honoured "the creativity and variety of the scenic languages performed over the last 30 years", with a particular highlight on "its international audience, which makes it compatible with a work rooted in its immediate surroundings".

Paraíso's activity focuses on the creation of performing arts and audience development projects.



Teatrul Ion Creangă

Bucharest, Romania

teatrulioncreanga.ro

Ion Creangă Theatre has been present on the cultural scene of Bucharest since 1965, being one of the first performing arts public institutions set up by the local authorities for the young audience. Nowadays, Ion Creangă Theatre is a landmark in the Capital's cultural environment. Its programs and projects, whether performances or festivals, remain relevant to the stage reached by performing arts for children at national and international level.

The institution creates and promotes highly artistic theatre performances, to coordinate and implement research programs and educational, social-educational and aesthetic projects for children aged 0 to 12 years, teachers, academics, parents and legal tutors, in order to increase the access to cultural activities.



Théâtre de la Guimbarde

Charleroi, Belgium

laguimbarde.be

Théâtre de la Guimbarde creates shows that bring together the world of children and the world of adults. The company's work is aimed at children and young people, offering them unique artistic moments which awaken emotions and raise questions. Through theatre, La Guimbarde brings a balanced view of the world, a critical outlook on society and brings today's "living together" into the spotlight. The company chooses artists who explore unique theatrical forms, weave ties and constantly nurture the project. La Guimbarde initiated performing arts creations for the very young (0-3 years old) in Belgium, and today it keeps carrying out fascinating research work aimed at this specific audience. While interested in children, through its creations the company also wishes to challenge those adults who accompany them in their artistic discoveries, inviting them to interweave emotions and questioning.

La Guimbarde's creations have been travelling in Belgium and through the world since 1973.



Theatre Madam Bach

Odder, Denmark

madambach.com

Theatre Madam Bach creates visual theatre for children between 0-6. Through rich imagery, captivating soundscapes and a poetic use of words, the performances speak to the senses – in a language where the child feels at home. Theatre Madam Bach's shows often branch out in other formats too; music, illustrated books, installations, workshops or art projects that promote creativity and curiosity, encouraging the child to engage beyond the theatre experience itself.

Theatre Madam Bach is formed by artistic directors Pernille Bach and Christian Schrøder. The company tours extensively both nationally and internationally. Theatre Madam Bach's goal is to make high quality children's theatre that gives the child a sense of how to use simple tools to create a magical space.



Toihaus Theater

Salzburg, Austria

toihaus.at

A continuous process of searching, learning, developing and understanding – this forms the artistic concept of the Toihaus Theater. Toihaus brings together an international team that includes various fields of art such as dance, music, visual arts and poetry. Each year, several productions are created, staged in Salzburg, and also toured worldwide. They convey poetic theatrical moments and offer experimental perspectives to viewers of all ages. Free of linguistic boundaries and without resorting to pre-scripted theatre-works, Toihaus' pieces open space for inspiration, sensation and perception.

Art education takes place on several levels, be it through workshops, cooperating with educational institutions and art spaces, or guest performances in toddler groups, kindergartens and theatres. Toihaus also provides the local art scene with spaces for rehearsing and performing and is always open for new collaborations, points of intersection and exchange.



Ville de Limoges

Limoges, France

limoges.fr

The Municipal Cultural Centers (CCM) are a service of the City of Limoges. They include five venues, including three theaters, and organise two biannual festivals: one for contemporary dance, and one for the very young audience, "Kaolin & Barbotine". The team consists of 48 permanent agents. We are contracted with the State, the Region and the Department for our actions in favor of the Contemporary Dance. We host more than 200 events, shows, workshops, animations per year between September and July. The CCM are a member of Small Size network since 2007, and have been partners in Small size projects since 2009.

MAPPING

A Map on the Aesthetics of Performing Arts for Early Years

Mapping has been a process made of questions that generate other questions, useful for starting to "map" the aesthetic dimension of young children, trying to detect the signs, the many aesthetic moments that children display during the artistic relationship.

Children live in the peripheries of culture, and the youngest ones even more so, because we know so little about their feelings. And yet, artists who work with children soon realise that they are an extraordinary audience, and that focusing their artistic research work on them is definitely worth the effort. Small children watch and listen to learn, discover the world and perceive its innumerable details. And the many experiences the partners of Mapping have collected during their journey with the little ones are proof of it.

Young children have their own cultural dimension and their own way of perceiving and feeling, as well as their own pace. They think in a complex way and feel in ways we don't know yet. We might not understand them, but with them we can establish strong sensory-based relationships.

In spite of all the difficulties and even a pandemic, and thanks to the active participation of all the partners and researchers involved, the Mapping project produced the Research on the Map, 27 festivals and 27 new productions for early years, a number of specific studies on Audience Development, Direction and Dramaturgy for early years, the final exhibition "The Map", 4 editions of the exhibition "Children-Spectators", 7 publications on the Research, studies and experiences, including this book.

Mapping has been supported by Creative Europe, the EU programme that, with its Culture sub-programme, next to the Media strand, co-finances performing arts, visual arts, cultural heritage, and museums, selecting projects for both children and adults.

The Mapping partnership is formed by theatres, cultural institutions and artists who have established a deep relationship with early years over time, and who are willing to offer their specific know-how in developing this piece of Research.



The partnership is spread across the entire territory of the European Union, **involving 18 partners from 17 European countries.**

La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi (coordinator) and **Bologna Children's Book Fair-BolognaFiere**, Italy / **Artika Theatre Company**, Greece / **Auraco**, Finland / **Baboró International Arts Festival for Children**, Ireland / **HELIOS Theater**, Germany / **Kolibri Színház**, Hungary / **Lutkovno Gledališče Ljubljana**, Slovenia / **Polka Theatre**, United Kingdom / **Stichting de Stilte**, Netherlands / **Teater Tre**, Sweden / **Teatr Animacji w Poznaniu**, Poland / **Teatro Paraíso**, Spain / **Teatrul Ion Creangă**, Romania / **Théâtre de la Guimbarde**, Belgium / **Theatre Madam Bach**, Denmark / **Toihaus Theater**, Austria / **Ville de Limoges**, France.

