

MY BROTHER, MY SISTER

FUNDAMENTAL

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BACKGROUND

Luxembourg's official tri-lingual practice, while presenting many advantages, unfortunately also creates one of the major difficulties for education and employment of under privileged youth from lower social-economic backgrounds, immigrants and youth with special needs.

Not being able to adapt to such multi-lingual environment not only has negative impact on self-esteem but also hinders social integration and has negative impact on school results. Consequently, failure in socio-educational development can result in poor employment opportunities. Within various groups of poorly integrated youth, life sometimes falls into vicious circle: they remain within their cultural/ neighbourhood/street community, they do not improve their language skills other than their mother tongue, they do not have opportunity for integration into wider multi cultural Luxembourgish community and they do not develop necessary skill sets to find jobs and enhance their life conditions.

“MY BROTHER, MY SISTER”

Fundamental ASBL (see details in Appendix II) plans to initiate the theatre project *My brother, my sister*, which would address the various interdependent causes of problematic social and educational integration and provide a platform for disadvantaged young people to develop the skill set they need to overcome difficulties they encounter on a daily basis.

My brother, my sister sees itself as an opportunity for young people from a range of different backgrounds - foreign origin, difficult socioeconomic status, unemployment, special needs - to get a break from their everyday environment, to acquire new skills, to be able to experience and create art in the official languages of Luxembourg. Through *My brother, my sister* young people will be able to address personal issues, collaborate with peers from different cultures and with different cognitive capacities, work on a project for a given period of time and present their solo performances at the fourth Fundamental Monodrama Festival in July 2013.

DETAILS OF THE PROJECT

- Participants: 24 young people (aged 15 to 26)
- Duration: 8 months to create individual solo performances
- Artistic genre: Each participant will be given support to help them find the most suitable genre for their project - drama, music or dance.
- Project leaders and staff: project leaders. Steve Karier and Anne Simon. In addition: professionals from the worlds of drama, music and visual arts as well as teaching staff with an arts background will assist and monitor participants
- CVs can be found in Appendix I
- The following organisations and institutions will assist project participants:
- ADEM (Administration de l'emploi - Luxembourg job centre) – focus on the unemployed, with particular attention being paid to young people from a lower socio-economic background
- CLAI (Comité de Liaison et d'Action des immigrés - liaison and activity office for immigrants) and SNJ (Service national de la jeunesse - National Youth Service) – young immigrants with poor academic performance and poor language skills in Luxembourg's three official languages
- APEMH (Association de Parents d'Enfants Mentalement Handicapés - Parents of children with a mental disability), COSL (Comité Olympique et Sportif/Paralympics - Olympic and paralympic committee) – young people with special needs

WHY THEATRE, WHY SOLO PERFORMANCES ?

The benefits of theatre education for the development of young people are well-documented. The appeal of theatre lies in the quality and the diversity of the knowledge and the skills it imparts to those involved in it. The skills acquired overlap with and reinforce those taught through various academic curricula. They promote the intelligent use of knowledge in all situations of a young person's life (Ashbur, 2008). Learning through theatre means naturally combining language skills (reading, writing, speaking) with maths and science (building sets, costumes, defining timing/pace/rhythm, lighting and sound cues and effects, technical elements, colour theory, problem-solving); physical exercise (movement, stage combat, body awareness); social sciences and history (historical/political/socio-economic/cultural context) as well as dance, music, and visual arts (Catterall, 1998).

When supported by qualified theatre teaching assistants, active participation in theatre offers a unique opportunity for young people to develop and demonstrate their cognitive and emotional abilities, critical thinking, cultural values and beliefs and their understanding of themselves and of others. Theatre practitioners and educators began to develop methods and curricula for theatre in the classroom of the early twentieth century. Key figures of the creative drama movement included Winifred Ward, Viola Spolin, Brian Way, Dorothy Heathcote and Geraldine Siks. They used various combinations of drama techniques ranging from movement and pantomime to creative writing, improvisation, vocal activities and theatre games to create both informal learning experiences and formal performances that they believed provided a forum for children to improve their social and academic skills and to grow as individuals (Cornet, 1999).

In addition to its psychosocial benefits and the contribution it can make to the improvement of academic results, theatre education has been shown to give added value to the business world, too. According to the United States National Governors Association the changing needs of modern employers who require increasingly creative, flexible and competent employees are one of the driving forces behind education reforms that call for arts education to feature on all curricula and for it to be available to all students.

Solo performance puts young individuals in the spotlight and makes them conceive, decipher, discern, choose, and then apply visual, aural, physical, emotional and psychological decisions to tell a story that may educate, enlighten and/or entertain others. The process of creating end-to-end solo performances calls for a range of skills from the most basic to the extremely complex, requiring students to exercise physical, mental, vocal and creative discipline while using their individual skills cooperatively within a group. (Anderson, 2000)

Both Steve and Anne have been involved in a number of social projects where theatre was used as an expressive medium. They have seen how such projects, with support provided by theatre professionals, can result in inspirational work and life-changing experiences for disadvantaged persons.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

SELF-CONFIDENCE

Taking risk in class and performing for an audience teaches young people to believe in their ideas and abilities. The confidence gained in drama, and particularly in solo performance is an experience that students can then replicate at school, throughout their career and in life in general. One of the main advantages of solo performance is the fact that it is a genre that allows individuals to express themselves at their own pace.

IMAGINATION

Making creative choices, coming up with new ideas and interpreting familiar material in new ways are essential for successful lifelong learning.

EMPATHY

Performing roles that portray contexts and cultures different from our own promotes compassion and tolerance for the feelings and viewpoints of others. In My brother, my sister projects, participants will have the opportunity to work with different nationalities, different lives and different genders.

COOPERATION

Theatre is a combination of the creative ideas and abilities of its participants. It is a cooperative process based on negotiation, rehearsals and performance. In addition to the focus on solo performance the Fundamental ASBL team will encourage mutual assistance between the participants involved. While each participant will have the opportunity to organize their own solo performance, all participants will help one another and provide support to each other to fulfill tasks related to stage design, costumes, and any other backstage roles.

CONCENTRATION

Playing, rehearsing and performing encourage a sustained focus of mind, body and consciousness, which in turn can benefit the student in other school and life situations.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Drama improves the verbal and non-verbal expression of ideas. It also has a positive effect on voice projection, enunciation, fluency and persuasiveness. Rehearsing, performing and watching theatre can enhance students' listening and observation skills. All staff members involved in the project are fluent in all three of Luxembourg's official languages and are therefore in an excellent position to provide all the necessary support for each participant to be able to perform in one or more of those languages at the end of the project.

THEATRE AS AN EMOTIONAL OUTLET

Pretend play and drama allow young people to express a full range of emotions. The stage is a safe, controlled environment where they can vent their aggression and tension freely, which can help them manage antisocial behaviour issues.

SELF-DISCIPLINE

The journey from inspiration to performance teaches young people the benefits of practice and perseverance and improves their self-control.

TRUST

The social interaction and risk-taking in drama improve self-confidence and trust in others as well as in the creative process.

SOCIAL AWARENESS

Stories portrayed on stage will teach participants constructive lessons about social and personal issues, cultural clashes and conflict resolution.

In addition to the above-mentioned benefits Fundamental ASBL aims for a wide-reaching positive impact:

- Their knowledge of the local drama scene and their expertise in drama and applied theatre will allow Steve and Anne to lobby for the project successfully and to bring schools and local institutions on board. Particular attention will be paid to bodies and agencies that work with disadvantaged young people. To maximise the benefits of the project Anne and Steve will provide training for the teachers and institutions involved and thus ensure that the impact is long-lasting and that it can be replicated in other more general contexts.
- My brother, my sister-participants become ambassadors who raise awareness about the benefits of art in practice in their community and among peers
- The acclaimed annual Fundamental Theatre Festival can be used as a platform for young participants to showcase their work alongside theatre professionals. The event is also an opportunity for the theatre community to communicate with its audience to raise awareness about the socio-economic problems young people are currently faced with and to present the positive educational outcomes their work has achieved.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I : BIOGRAPHIES

STEVE KARIER

Steve is a Luxembourg-based actor and director. He has featured in a myriad of plays and films and has recorded over 200 radio plays. From 1982 to 1984, he studied at the University for Music and Performing Arts in Stuttgart, Germany. He then joined the Basel City Theatre company for 4 years.

From 1988 to 1995 Steve worked as a freelance actor for the Piccolo Teatro in Milan as well as for theatres in Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, Cologne, Wuppertal, Hannover, Lucerne, Zurich, Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam and Luxembourg. In that same period, he took part in the Festival d'Avignon and toured through Sweden, Denmark, Ghana and the United States.

He was awarded the CIVIS award for his recording of Robert Schneider's monologue *Dreck* in 1992. In the same year, his interpretation of the role of Gyges in Hebbel's *Gyges and His Ring* was deemed best male performance in North Rhine-Westphalia.

From 1995 to 2000 Steve was under contract at Schauspielhaus Bochum, one of the most renowned theatres in Germany. The monthly Theater heute (Theater Today) listed him as one of the best actors of the year in 1996.

He was director of Kulturfabrik in Esch-sur-Alzette from 2000 to 2002 before leaving for Germany in 2003 where he worked predominantly for the Mainz State Theatre.

He returned to Basel and the City Theatre company in 2006.

Steve Karier founded Fundamental ASBL in the summer of 2009 with a view to staging a monodrama festival in Luxembourg: the Fundamental Monodrama Festival. The third edition of the Festival took place in June/July 2012. In addition to this ambitious annual undertaking Fundamental ASBL has made it its business to organize and promote theatre events.

Besides working as an actor Steve also directs plays in Luxembourg and has been specializing in vocal coaching and verbal communication since 1992. He has been active as a coach in Germany, Switzerland, Vietnam, Niger and Luxembourg and has worked with a wide range of individuals and groups from different backgrounds - from young unemployed people to sales managers, from businesses to public radio staff, from teachers to professional actors.

ANNE SIMON

Anne Simon completed her Drama and Theatre Studies degree at Royal Holloway, University of London, where she focused on conception and directing, stage management, theatre in education and drama therapy as well as on the use of visual media on stage. She acquired her first professional experience as assistant to the director and deputy stage manager at Théâtre National du Luxembourg and Ruhrfestspiele Recklinghausen.

At TNL she founded both a youth theatre group and a theatre group for children, which are unique in Luxembourg in terms of form and content. Both groups were borne out of a desire to spread more information about theatre and about the different ways in which young people can be involved in the dramatic and creative process.

The focus in both groups is not on acting exclusively. The children and teenagers involved are also introduced to writing, lighting, set and costume design, directing, and they are in charge of advertising the plays they script from scratch. The main goals of the initiative are to foster different kinds of creativity, to raise awareness about theatre as well as to guide some of the participants towards a potential career in the field.

Anne won a competition for young directors (Champ Libre) with her first piece as director in 2007, mixing kitchen sink drama of the 1950s and In-yer-face theatre of 90s Britain. Anne then went on to work as a director all over Luxembourg - at TNL, Théâtre des Casemates, KUFA (Kulturfabrik), Théâtre des Capucins and was involved in a number of experimental projects with the independent group Independent Little Lies. In 2009 she directed her first play in Germany and has been working as a director in Germany regularly for 3 years. Anne's work is characterized by strong visual influences, elaborate kinetics and, increasingly, a strong self-referential tone. Electronic music is another key component of most of her work. She mainly directs in English and German. Her main objective is to make theatre accessible to new audiences (by making additional material available alongside "ordinary" productions, by organizing workshops for schools and younger audiences etc). In 2009, she played her first part in a play under her own direction in *Bug*.

APPENDIX II : FUNDAMENTAL A.S.B.L.

Steve Karier founded Fundamental A.s.b.l. in the summer of 2009 with a view to staging a monodrama festival in Luxembourg – the Fundamental Monodrama Festival. Fundamental A.s.b.l. also organizes and promotes theatre events.

The organization's first production, *Mein Körper in 9 Teilen* by Raymond Federman took place at Kulturhaus Niederaanven on the 27th November 2009. The play was then invited to feature at the Fujairah Monodrama Festival (UAE) in January 2010.

In addition to its annual monodrama festival, Fundamental A.s.b.l. main focus this year will be on two theatre productions: *Homo Sapiens : TerrorTerrestris* by Martin Engler (Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg) and *Renert de Fuus am Frack an a Maansgréist* by Michel Rodange (Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg).

Finally, throughout the year, Fundamental A.s.b.l. manages the global distribution of the productions created specifically for the Fundamental Monodrama Festival.

APPENDIX III : FUNDAMENTAL MONODRAMA FESTIVAL

Fundamental Monodrama Festival is an annual international festival for solo performances.

The festival is supported by the International Theatre Institute, a UNESCO organization and member of the International Monodrama Forum, a global network of monodrama festivals. FMF is one of the network's biggest festivals and boasts one of the most acclaimed programmes. FMF is characterized by an unusual mix of traditional theatre or opera monologue, lecture performance, dance, art performance and voice/music performance as well as an impressive number of original productions (no less than seven out of eighteen performances premiered at the latest edition of festival).

The festival is held over eleven days in the summer and takes place at up to five different venues. After three editions, international critics and directors are showing an increasing interest in the festival and FMF has firmly made its mark on the international festival calendar.



Steve Karier and Fundamental/Arène Théâtre workshop participants in Niamey, December 2012