The Sustainable Theatre Artist

NORTEAS 2018
INTRODUCTION

Dear colleagues, students, mentors, speakers and partners of the Nortea sustainable theatre artist project.

This thing you are holding on your hands is a booklet with reflections on the Sustainable theatre artist project. In Vilnius we asked mentors and students alike provide some questions about topic. We sent those questions to Nortea schools and received some answers and meaningful thought. In this booklet you can find all the questions and eleven contributions, answers. Let’s keep discussing!

The Sustainable Theatre Artist was a two-year pedagogical project that aimed at heightening artistic, professional and societal sustainability of future theatre and performing artists. The project was inspired by the challenge an artist must rise to – how to make meaningful art within the parameters of the professional field, the world around us and our planet and how to interact in an intelligent, resourceful and responsible way with our society in different cultural contexts.

The project aimed at raising an awareness among future theatre and performing artists on:

How to sustain the arts in society?
How to sustain one owns artistic practice?
How the performing arts can contribute to social and ecological change?

Project also aimed at providing practical tools to carry out artistic projects with sustainable focus, create strategies and develop sustainable artistic methods.
The Sustainable Theatre Artist project was carried out from 2017-2019 and contained:

- Monthly online lecture series hosted by the participating schools.
- Series of express courses on sustainability.
- A big intensive course that can host up to 100 students working in groups of 10 for a week on sustainable projects with a correlating sustainable forum.
- A pedagogical seminar for teachers on teaching environment that supports sustainability in February 2019.

Questions posed by and to the participants of the project; mentors, lecturers and students.

Describe the most essential working practice(-s) that your group was using during your sustainability course.
- What was the core of it?
- Was there anything missing from a pedagogical perspective?
- What did you learn about sustainable learning from the course?

How could we change the concepts of time, duration and efficiency in and through our pedagogical practices?

"It is OK to make mistakes!"
- What are “mistakes”?
- How to pinpoint a mistake and what to do with it?
- What are the different outcomes or how can we react and go onwards after “mistakes”?
How much personal involvement and commitment is good or appropriate in a pedagogical situation?
- How can a teacher make it transparent and useful for the student?
- How to create study and working environment which allows different opinions to be heard and is effective?

What creates successful student teacher relationship in performing arts higher education?
- Where lies the responsibilities of student?
- Where lies the responsibilities of teacher?

How to encourage students out of their comfort zone?

How to deal with hidden power structures in a small group working situation?

What is the relation between power and sustainability in a learning situation?

How can a student contribute to her learning when she is clueless about what she needs to or wants to learn?

On the artistic research of teachers and its effect on teaching:
What kind of impact can it have on the students if you inject the self-referencing research into the teaching process itself?
- How might it be problematic to center your research on your current practice?

Evaluation/feedback/critique/grades – what is the best way to guide students to their best selves?

What is the relationship between explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge in your pedagogy?

How to teach tradition?
In a new era are “skills learning” banned?

When one has the luxury of choosing one student out of one hundred applicants, what are our responsibilities to the exceptionally talented student to provide the training that they need to attain the level of virtuosity that their potential deserves?

Where lies the priority of art and artmaking (the quality of art) in art pedagogy?

In which ways could we involve contemporary ecological and political challenges in our syllabus?
• How should they be treated by means of performer training or other areas of the Performing Arts?

What kind of universities will we have in 2030?

What is the teacher’s role in a future?

Is the teacher’s work long lasting or are we just pop-up workers?

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WHAT ARE MISTAKES?
To fail or make mistakes is the only way to grow, to take a step beyond yourself, to reach out too far and fall. Wrongdoing, failure, and mistakes have always been human ways to develop and art's ways to reach new forms of expression. Our present time has little or no room for failure or reflection. Our time is accelerating, 'on demand', competitive, individualistic, and has an emphasis on delivery. We crave the new and different and authentic. This is a gigantic contradiction. To reach the new and authentic you have to make mistakes, be wrong, and fail. Every single progress or invention in human history derives from failure or mistakes. Make space for what you do not know, embrace your errors, and feel strong. Make mistakes and you are on the right track. A wise man said 'If the world were perfect, it wouldn't be'.

In what ways could we involve contemporary ecological and political challenges in our syllabus?

Art and society live in symbiosis. Art spins its web in and around culture/society. Art is the foundation of culture, and without art, society would not exist. That's a fact - at least in my belief. The need for art is really a quite ridiculous discussion; without it we would not be. Art does not operate outside society. Art is not something extra, like dessert or some kind of bonus; art influences everybody's life, whether one likes it or not. However, as Berthold Brecht said, 'Art is entertainment'. But take a closer look at the word 'entertain'. It does not just mean to amuse or enjoy. It also means to give attention or consideration to something; it has several meanings. It means to maintain, support, and question ideas or life itself.

Teaching has many faces; art is about being in society, in life, and trying to unfold and get a grip on ourselves as beings. To teach means to reveal yourself - to give yourself away, strictly professionally. It is never personal; it is close but professional.

Art also involves having fun and keeps one's playful mind on edge. To do wrong is to learn and teach. I find it extremely important that society is visible in education, in the classroom, and in teaching. To reflect society in exercise places the body at the centre of everything. Art 'is' society and the two cannot be separated from each other. It is impossible to educate in art without the surrounding society.

Don't be afraid to stress politics in education. What is politics? The word derives from the Greek 'politicos', meaning 'what concerns the state'; we are the state, so it concerns us! To teach is to dare to share. A director once said, 'Everything you do on stage is infinitely prolonged; make space for it and don't interrupt it. The prolongation touches life - if you break it, art withers.' The work in the classroom touches society - let society touch you.

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