

# GRUNDTVIG LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

## Smashing Times Theatre Company Ltd

*In partnership with:*

- *The Institute of Adult Education, Helsinki, Finland*
- *Escuela Oficial De Idiomas, Valladolid, Spain*
- *Cultural Company of Educators, Kilkis, Greece*
- *Voksenopplaeringen for innvandrere pa Hamar/The Centre for Adult Education for Immigrants in Hamar, Norway*
- *Foundation for the Development of the Goldap Region, Poland*



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**Smashing Times Theatre Company Ltd**  
Coleraine House, Coleraine Street, Dublin 7,  
Ireland.

**Tel:** (01) 865 6613  
**Email:** [info@smashingtimes.ie](mailto:info@smashingtimes.ie)  
**Website:** [www.smashingtimes.ie](http://www.smashingtimes.ie)  
**Contact:** Freda Manweiler,  
Company Manager

**Design and Layout:**  
Ed Spino Designs, tel: 087 653 7565



# PROJECT SUMMARY



*Members from the Different Partner Groups visit Smashing Times Theatre Company in Ireland*

## GRUNDTVIG LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

### Partnership Title: Drama and Theatre to Promote Active Citizenship and Language Learning

This booklet provides information and case studies from the Grundtvig Learning Partnership supported by Leargas and coordinated by Smashing Times Theatre Company Limited.

This project involved participating groups/partners from six European countries who are involved in adult education and who came together to explore how to use drama and theatre to promote language learning and active citizenship. The partners are from Finland, Spain, Greece, Norway, Poland and Ireland and consist of language schools, arts organisations and schools involved in working with people with intellectual disabilities. The partner organisations are:

- The Institute of Adult Education in Helsinki, Finland
- Escuela Oficial De Idiomas, Valladolid, Spain
- Cultural Company of Educators, Kilkis, Greece
- Voksenopplaeringen for innvandrere pa Hamar; The Centre for Adult Education for Immigrants in Hamar, Norway
- Foundation for the Development of the Goldap Region, Poland
- Smashing Times Theatre Company Limited, Dublin, Ireland

The aims of this learning partnership project were to:

- Bring together participating groups from six different countries to discuss and observe how drama and theatre can be used to develop language skills, confidence building etc particularly with immigrant and other disadvantaged groups
- Explore ways in which the arts can be used

- in adult education to promote language learning and active citizenship
- Promote recommendations for good practice

During the lifetime of the project, the partner organisations all came together and meet on four occasions: in Greece, Norway, Poland and Ireland. At each meeting the partner organisation members had the opportunity to present to the whole group ways in which they were introducing and exploring the use of drama and theatre for promoting language learning and active citizenship – how they were introducing new arts-based methods of learning into their teaching practice and the effects and benefits of the work taking place.

The first meeting was held in Kilkis, Greece and was hosted by the Cultural Company of Educators. The partners attended a festival of puppet theatre and came together to discuss ways in which the use of puppets could be introduced into the classroom to promote language learning,



*Members from the Different Partner Groups visit Poland*

culture, and active citizenship.

The second meeting of all the partner organisations was held in Hamar, Norway and was hosted by The Centre for Adult Education for Immigrants in Hamar, Norway. Again each group came together to present ways in which they had been and were continuing to use drama and theatre in the classroom to teach language and promote active citizenship. All the partner organisations were introduced to the work of the Norway based group and to the experience of this group in relation to teaching the Norwegian language and their experience of running a school for immigrants learners in Norway.

The third meeting was held in Goldap, in Poland and was hosted by the Foundation for the Development of the Goldap Region, Poland. All the partner groups attended a project meeting to discuss worked completed to date by each group. The partner groups attended a shadow puppet workshop, making shadow puppets and were supported to develop their own performance through the use of shadow puppets. The partner groups then attended a festival of drama presented by regional centres for people with intellectual disabilities. Each group presented their individual shadow puppet performances during the festival. Finally the partner groups attended an opening of a photographic exhibition of a visiting photographer from Latvia and took a tour of the local area.

The final meeting was held in Dublin, Ireland and was hosted by Smashing Times Theatre Company Limited. The partner organisations attended a performance of *Testimonies* presented by Smashing Times Theatre Company. *Testimonies* is a professional theatre performance and consists of dramatic monologues adapted

from the experiences of those who have lost loved ones to suicide and from the experiences of those who have been through a suicidal crisis and survived. Each performance is followed by a post-show discussion with a counsellor and invited guest speakers from the Samaritans and other organisations. *Testimonies* is part of a project called **Acting for the Future** that uses participative drama workshops and a professional theatre performance to promote positive mental health and to raise awareness of issues surrounding suicide and suicide prevention. The project is run in association with the Samaritans and the Irish Association of Suicidology, with assistance from a panel of advisors. After the performance, the partner organisations took part in a discussion on how the model for **Acting for the Future** is used to promote active citizenship around the area of positive mental health and suicide prevention. The partner groups also participated in a drama workshop, which was filmed and will feed into the final DVD of a drama workshop to be presented as part of this project.

The partner organisations also attended a community-based performance called *Chalkballs* presented at the National Museum of Ireland Collins Barracks by the community drama group from Hace/St Vincent's Trust. Smashing Times Theatre Company work in partnership with Hace/St. Vincent's Trust developing drama and theatre skills with local people and using the arts for personal and social development with adult learners. Finally the partner organisations had a tour of different parts of Dublin.

The partner groups involved in this project are made up of a diverse range of organisations that work with different client groups and have different mission statements and organisation objectives.

There was a strong level of cooperation between the participating groups and each group involved in the project has written a final report/case study based on each group's own experience of using drama and theatre with adult learners. These final reports/case studies are now available to read in this booklet. The case studies provide a fascinating insight into how drama and theatre have been and are being used to promote language learning and active citizenship. The case studies are all highly distinctive, and the organisations and projects are as individual as those who designed and delivered them.

The booklet also contains a selection of additional observations arising from meetings between the different groups involved in the project in relation to using drama and theatre to promote language learning and active citizenship.

We have prepared this booklet with the intention of making the experiences and information gathered as part of this project available to the wider arts and teaching community so that learning can be shared and discussion generated in relation to promoting the use of drama and theatre to promote language learning and active citizenship.

## Definitions

This report looks at the use of drama and theatre to promote language learning and active citizenship. For the purposes of this report, the term 'drama' refers to the drama workshop process, which might include role-play, devising, improvisation, theatre games and exercises etc. This is what Chris Johnson (2005) describes as 'a collaborative event' in *The House of Games*. The term 'theatre' refers to the production and presentation of a story using drama and other art forms to an audience.

Other terms used are 'role play' and 'improvisation'. In improvisation participants act out a scene or play in their own words. The improvisation is created by the group members themselves with assistance from teachers/facilitators and can be based on themes and information provided either by the teacher or the participants themselves. Role-play can be a form of simulation where the facilitator gives the participants roles to play for example you are the shop keeper and you are the customer or participants can develop roles and situations themselves in an exploratory way. Image work involves the participants making and creating a frozen picture, image or tableaux themselves using their own bodies. These definitions are a guide only and can and do vary from group to group.

# REPORT FROM THE INSTITUTE OF ADULT EDUCATION – FINLAND



*Group Members from Finland Work with Shadow Puppets in Poland*

## The following is the final report received from The Institute of Adult Education in Helsinki, Finland.

This report has two parts. Part One outlines the practical application of the work in relation to using drama in adult education and part two contains a list of lessons and observations arising from the practical application of the work.

### Part One: Practical Application

The development of what we choose to call “cutout figure drama” originally came about as the result of an experiment in drama that was undertaken during a visit to Poland and Greece. “Cutout figure drama” has two versions.

#### Version A:

In the first version of the method, the group cut out pictures of people from newspapers and magazines and stick them onto cardboard. The groups also give names as well as invent background and family information for the cutout figures that have been created. Simple lines are then written for these figures. Students then move behind the cardboard figures and say the lines. “Cutout figure drama” suits beginner level students because the lines are simple. With the help of these outline figures we can go on to practice other simple language structures, for example the possessive case, as well as practice the different situations in which language is used. Also people who are functionally illiterate can benefit from the

method because they can practice written skills such as writing the name of the cutout figure. The same figures can be used in the same course for many different purposes.

#### Version B:

In the second version the same sort of figures are created but complete dialogues are written for them. The same cutout figures can be used the whole time during the course so that they can be made to do various things for example visiting the doctor; going to the shop, etc. Different background information can be prepared which is appropriate to the level of the group, for example interests and characterisations (shy man who practices karate pays a visit to the doctor). The

situations can also vary according to the level of the group. The students can write the whole dialogue themselves or write a less complete dialogue based on different hints and cues. Everything depends on the group and its level. The use of the same cutout figure may be motivating because it becomes familiar and safe over time. It may also allow the student to express in the dialogue feelings that they could not express in the first person.

## Part Two: Lessons Arising

- Drama methods and drama themes are very well suited for language and cultural teaching.
- Drama methods and drama themes are well suited for the cultural and language teaching of prospective students with differing levels of language skills, or/and with varying educational and professional backgrounds, but drama must be applied or used in a limited or an appropriate way with the students.
- Because drama is multifunctional, its use is very suitable even in cases where the student's language ability is still weak. This means that drama can enliven the teaching in a pleasant and enjoyable way.
- Drama is also suitable where the student already has a good level of language skills. A drama-based course in the proficient use of language can be developed for them. Drama should, however, be practically based.
- Familiarisation with the drama method and drama elements should be part of teacher training, and preferably deeper than just scratching the surface. Practical experience is useful. If you have experience of drama, you will know what you are talking about.
- The use of functional drama should be boldly started in teaching. Its potential as a versatile and enlivening tool in teaching has to be personally seen and felt. If the teacher has himself participated in a drama it can be very motivating.
- The students should not be forced to have drama teaching, and they have to be given the opportunity for more traditional types of teaching. The use of drama requires going through matters thoroughly in advance as well as justifying the use of drama. Sometimes students may, because of cultural or other reasons, have difficulty in understanding the value of drama as a tool in teaching. Motivation is important, as is the choice of subject.
- Teachers should familiarise themselves with the drama method, for example, with the help of someone from the theatrical profession and in a learning environment where one is not afraid of being made to feel a fool.
- It should be understood that the methods of drama and the elements that make up drama represent a broad and perhaps vague concept. These may range from structured and carefully prepared situations – as part of regular sessions and courses – to improvised and spontaneous use of drama in order to teach the students. They cover almost all the art forms as theatrical production embraces a variety of things such as music and song and visual and symbolic expression. No one element is more important than the other.
- Finally regular meetings of teachers from different countries were important for the creative process and the further learning of the students.

*“Because drama is multifunctional, its use is very suitable even in cases where the student’s language ability is still weak. This means that drama can enliven the teaching in a pleasant and enjoyable way.”*

# REPORT FROM ESCUELA OFICIAL DE IDIOMAS DE VALLADOLID – SPAIN

## The following is the final report received from Escuela Oficial De Idiomas, in Valladolid, Spain.

The teachers at our school involved in this project have practiced a variety of theatrical skills in their language classroom context. They involved both staging sketches in the classroom and performing certain theatrical games. Here are a few examples:

### 1. Name with Action:

Players stand in a circle. One player says his/her name and at the same time invents a matching action or movement. The player to the left then repeats the name and action and adds his/her own name and action. Then the next player does exactly the same, including the names and actions of the people before and so on around the circle. If any player makes a mistake, the action returns to the first player.

This game has certain risks for the students involved: becoming the centre of attention may cause stress, or speaking in a

foreign language, or feeling vulnerable by being forced to be creative and spontaneous. Some students/age groups fare better than others.

### 2. Questions only:

Players stand or sit in a circle. Players go around in a circle asking different questions. The objective is to not answer or react to the question in any way, simply turn to the person next to you and ask another question. There is a possible variation: two players are chosen to start. The group establishes the who and where of the scene and the two players produce a dialogue consisting of questions only. The first player to hesitate for too long or to answer with a statement must sit down and be replaced by another player and the game continues with the same situation or a different one, depending on consensus.

### 3. Hot Seat:

Players stand in a circle passing around a

rolled newspaper. One player is in the centre with his/her eyes closed. When the player in the centre shouts stop, the player holding the newspaper must name six items in a category selected by the player in the centre before the newspaper makes a complete circle. If the player is successful then he/she moves into the centre and selects the next category. Suggested categories can be: six breed of dogs; types of flowers; vegetables, etc.

This game forces the players to think quickly and focus on the task of naming the items. It is therefore good for a group of more advanced students.

### 4. Party Game:

The players are given an identity, which may be an occupation or personality. One player is chosen to be host of a party. Guests arrive and should show who they are without saying it directly. The host has to try to guess the identity of his/her guests.



Group Members from Spain at the Shadow Puppet Workshop in Poland

## 5. How's Yours?

One player is sent out of the classroom and a topic is chosen that the group is going to talk about. You cannot say the name of the topic. The person, who has been sent out, upon being called back into the room, has to return and tries to guess the topic by asking general questions. Suggested topics can be: your home; your memories; your music collection; your car; your hobbies, etc.

## 6. Where are you going?

A player carries out a mime indicating through his/her action where he/she is and where he/she is going. Through observing the player's mime the audience has to establish where the player is and where the player is going when they leave. The mime finishes when the player opens the door to leave. You can provide an opportunity to ask questions in relation to the action either during the actual mime or you can wait until the mime finishes and then ask where he/she is and where he/she is going? You can also ask for the mime to be repeated and have time to ask additional questions such as: Is he/she tired? What is he/she wearing? Etc.

## Sketches

Apart from the games referred to above, we have also practiced our language and theatrical skills by performing sketches. These can be memorised in advance or not; in the latter case the students perform their parts while holding the written scripts and reading them, but we rehearse the pronunciation of the sentences beforehand, and try to make the scene as lively as possible. This exercise is good for improving the student's pronunciation and fluency even if there is no memory involved.

Another variation of working on sketches is to provide the students with sketches which are open-ended. Before performing

them the students have to work in groups and write down their own ending to the story. It adds an element of creativity to the final result and is performed as previously stated.

It is also possible to include a language exercise of reading comprehension to these sketches, especially when working on pieces that contain more difficult language or have advanced content, so that before rehearsing and performing them the students work out the meaning of the text and the teacher makes sure that they understand the contents before attempting to perform the prepared sketches.

It has to be said that these sketches usually involve no more than five or six characters, so the typical class of 20 to 30 people has to be divided into groups (for example five groups) who then perform the sketches one after the other. This can become slightly repetitive but it also involves an element of competition as each group may aim to outperform the other groups, and when the sketch is open-ended that alone provides enough variety. The end result depends very much on the motivation and liveliness of the groups and classes, and that which was a success with one class may turn out to be a fiasco with another, but that is life!

Finally we had a show at the school's auditorium where some of the more motivated pupils played in front of a general audience some of the sketches which they had previously practiced in the classroom, obviously improving in their performance after a few rehearsals. The show was a success both for pupils and audience. Last, but not least the teachers involved in the project improvised a sketch, which left us rather satisfied with our little taste of the limelight. Needless to say, having at least one such public performance after the schoolroom practice makes a lot of sense and is good fun, too!

# REPORT FROM THE CULTURAL COMPANY OF EDUCATORS – GREECE



Group Members from Greece at the Shadow Puppet Workshop in Poland

## The following is the final report received from The Cultural Company of Educators in Kilkis, Greece.

We, all the members in the Cultural Company of Educators, are teachers in primary and second level school and we work as volunteers in our free time with adults and children. We work as amateur actors and animators, organising educational seminars, theatrical games and puppet-theatre training for adults and children. We also organise and do excursions in order to visit cultural events or to watch performances.

### Performances:

1. We gave more than 40 performances of the play *Odyssevach*, performed by children for other children and their parents.
2. We gave more than 12 performances of the puppet-theatre-play *Pinocchio* performed by teachers, for the children and their parents. The performances had live music, which is composed and played by teachers. With the play *Pinocchio* we will continue giving performances during

the next year and will participate in the 10th International Puppet and Pantomime Festival of Kilkis.

3. We dramatised the story *Euroanimal Community*, an allegorical story about the European Community, by children with and without disabilities, in over ten Primary Schools.

### Seminars and Workshops:

In Kilkis, we organised two educational seminars with workshops:

- Greek and Balkan Traditional Songs – the ways of teaching and searching for old traditional songs
- Narrating Traditional Fairy Tales – accompanied by live music

In Cyprus, we organised two educational seminars with 26 hourly workshops:

- Puppet Theatre – theatrical games and handmade puppets
- Black Theatre – from the experimentation to the performance

### Excursions to visit cultural events and watch theatrical performances:

We organised a three-day excursion to

Athens in order to watch the plays *John Gabriel Borkman* by Henrik Ibsen and *Radio-Killer's Night* by Nick Silver. We also visited the Ancient Parliament of Athens and Tholos and we experienced the Virtual Reality of an Ancient Market (parliament) and the ancient way of living. Other performances we saw included: *What a comedy! Hair dryer for killers* and “...with the silence.”

Our workshops in Kilkis were open to teachers at all levels and in Cyprus the workshops had a large attendance and were very successful in providing teachers with the opportunity to explore new ways of promoting the art forms of drama and theatre.

Our performances provided the opportunity for more than a thousand children and adults to come in touch with and to enjoy drama and the art of theatre. We used drama and theatre to promote language learning, giving emphasis to culture and to citizenship for children and for adults. For the Greek reality and the local common view, we think that the project had all the expected results and it was really successful.

# REPORT FROM THE CENTRE FOR ADULT EDUCATION FOR IMMIGRANTS – NORWAY

**The following is the final report received from The Centre for Adult Education for Immigrants in Hamar, Norway, in relation to the use of drama in Adult Education for immigrants.**

At the *Centre for Adult Education for Immigrants* in Hamar we have used Drama in different ways for different kinds of students. In the following passages four teachers will describe how we have incorporated drama in our institution's daily practice in different ways.

## 1. Drama in the Classroom (Randi) – a method to grasp the Norwegian language.

The group of foreign students started to learn the Norwegian language in November 2007. Some of the students have little education from their home country. But all are able to read and write. The book the group is using to learn the language is mostly based on small dialogues. This makes them very familiar with drama as a method. We have made four small plays. They consist of some of the simple new beginners' vocabulary. In this way they could repeat words and sentences. They also were urged to use Norwegian intonation. The teacher wrote down the first play, but used many sentences the students themselves were familiar with. They got different roles and had to read the lines at home. We practiced many times in the classroom before we filmed the whole story. The students took the task very seriously and were very enthusiastic. To repeat many times is important when learning a language, but because we were making a play together, it was not boring.

The three other plays were not written down. The teacher told the story and gave the lines orally. In this way we saved time, and it also was easier for the students. In one of the plays two groups were together. The other group consists of students who are learning to read and write. We found out that they managed to join very well. One reason may be that they were explained what we were going to do in their native language of the other group. The lines they

had to say were given orally and read aloud together. The students were able to learn the sentences by heart. Three of the plays dealt with topics from social studies. The last play was made to illustrate a grammatical topic, which is rather difficult in Norwegian (one type of pronoun). Because the plays were filmed, they can be of educational use in our Institute.

## 2. Drama used as a Method to teach Norwegian to students with literacy difficulties (Ellen Cathrine)

After many inspiring meetings with my Grundtvig group, I wanted to try out some of the things I have learned on my new class. In February 2008 I started up with a group of students with literacy difficulties, who have been at our school for two or three years. They are what we call learners with slow progression. I was recommended to try out different learning methods to see if I could get them to a higher level in Norwegian. Drama has been one of the methods I have tried out.

I have met some difficulties, and the biggest one has been that they do not understand why they should pretend to be someone else other than themselves. To overcome that barrier, I let them act as themselves but in different settings. I will still call it acting, because the setting was

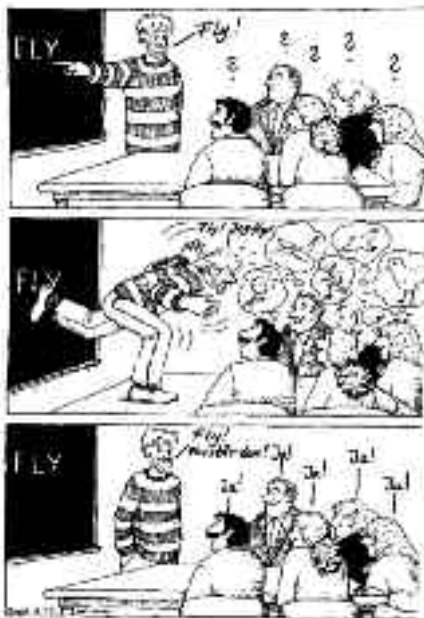
new. Examples of role-plays: How to buy things in a shop, how to give personal details in an office, how to start a conversation or how to talk about the weather.

I also gave them small sentences to learn by heart, and later I videotaped it when they presented it. To my surprise they really enjoyed watching it, even the Muslim ladies who normally refuse to have pictures taken of them. We discussed the mistakes they had done, and I think that it is a good way to practice the language. We showed one of the films to another group, and I saw that my students' self-esteem increased. As a teacher of students with literacy difficulties you have to act every day, but it is very important to make sure that they do not misunderstand.

## 3. Drama as an Optional Subject (Anette and Marte)

In addition to ordinary classroom tuition in Norwegian, students in "Voksenopplæringen for innvandrere i Hamar" (Adult Education for Immigrants in Hamar) can choose between various optional subjects. *Drama* is one of these subjects. Currently we are working on fairy tales from different countries, which we are dramatising together with the students. At the moment we are working on two fairytales, one from Norway and one from Algeria. Even though working with fairytales gives us an opportunity to learn about the historical backgrounds of different cultures, we are not necessarily true to the story. Together with the students, we discuss how we want to present the fairytale.

Because many of the students in our drama class have difficulties with oral Norwegian, especially pronunciation, the play we started working with (the Norwegian fairytale) includes only short dialogues. Working on the next fairytale, we knew the students better, and could adjust the lines to suit each different actor. We have done this in cooperation with the students themselves. This way we have not only been able to give students challenges adapted to their level of language performance, but they have also decided themselves how big a challenge they have been ready to take on.





*Group Members from Norway working with Shadow Puppets in Poland*

**The goals for Drama as an optional subject:**

- The students experience social interaction with people outside their Norwegian classroom.
- The students get familiar with a way of working which is common in traditional school settings in Norway.
- The students experience “raising their voice” in Norwegian.
- The students train Norwegian pronunciation.
- The students are training their cognitive skills by learning off by heart.
- The students are contributing to social events inside and outside of school.

**Experiences/recommendations from Hamar:**

- When students are in situations where

they need to help each other to grasp the meaning of the play they are working on, or when they are discussing in what way they want to present different elements of the play for an audience, we find that this often leads to communicatively challenging situations. In our experience this is a rare and useful thing. Rare; because the school setting is often characterised by understanding teachers, who help out whenever there is a problem of communication. Useful; because it is precisely these kinds of situations that can prevent the language from fossilisation.

- We have found that filming the plays is useful for us in many ways. It makes it possible for students who have a low rate of attendance to participate in Drama, and still feel that they can contribute and have

a positive experience. In addition, the actors can watch themselves and together with the teachers discuss their language performance, and learn from that. However, we choose to focus on what is positive about their language performance. When planning the filming, one must of course consider the possibility that some of the students do not wish to participate in being filmed.

- We believe that students who wish to work in the drama class, but off stage, also will find it to be rewarding both educationally, and language wise, hence the first paragraph.
- We have the following advice to offer others, who may wish to try out drama on students with literacy difficulties:
  - Let the learners play themselves instead of giving them roles, at least in the beginning.
  - Videotape some of the things they do. Show the best result to other students. This will make the learners proud.
  - Do not make it too ambitious, start by doing small role-plays.
  - Watch drama with the students and talk about it later.

*“We believe that students who wish to work in the drama class, but off stage, also will find it to be rewarding both educationally, and language wise.”*

# REPORT FROM THE FOUNDATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GOLDAP REGION – POLAND

**We are an association ‘Partnership of Arts’ consisting of theatre workers. We are theatre makers and our client group are people with intellectual disabilities.**

Every man is creative and unique. We accept everybody as equal, providing everyone with the same chances of development and the joy of creating. Everyone can become the actor. Theatrical performances are part of our work and they are the natural result of dramatic games and creative work from theatrical material gathered from participants. It is important to remember the spectators as they are also the participants; making the work and also watching the work. The local community are the spectators. We work with people with intellectual disabilities supporting

them to create and perform their own theatre pieces.

The ‘animator’ deals with the work of the theatrical group, the part of guardian.

The role of the ‘animator’ is to enliven, inspire, bring out the ‘actor’ in the person, the aim of arousing the participants personal activity, to provide help and information about tasks to be completed, about new requirements and to support learning. The ‘animator’ helps participants to overcome difficulties, but he/she does not show the participants “how to make this”, the mood of the participants leads and it is very interesting the different kinds of work that can arise. It is important to take seriously the creativity of all those taking part and also provide challenges. When working with handicapped persons and able bodied people, it can not depend on the realisation

of able bodied people’s ideas only, but on partnership.

We begin our work with participants by working on concentration and the utilisation of the five basic senses: hearing, sight, touch, smell and taste. We work with story as an way of introducing the work and the participants take part in creating the story and in making the story. Participants take parts by copying work coordinated together so the story unfolds through actions and involves the participants in the arrangement. The story is the basic element of drama and it is connected closely with imagination. The next stage of work re the technique of drama is the use of movement and improvised sound. We use many games led by the theatre makers and involving everyone. The benefits come as participants working and using the senses freely, reacting



*“Every man is creative and unique. We accept everybody as equal, providing everyone with the same chances of development and the joy of creating. Everyone can become the actor.”*

*Performance in Poland*



*Shadow Puppet Workshop*

spontaneously, the hidden possibilities revealed, of dreams, overcoming set-backs, they are liberated in the process of activity.

In the association “Partnership of Arts” we invite all partners to participate in theatre. It is known that not all are able to work so alone. It happens that the groups have less interest in working from dependable or established material and they adapt this material so that it can be used by all. The creative process is important however it does not exclude the final group performance or collective spectacle. It is also a positive experience having gone through the experience together and presented a piece of work that everyone is satisfied with.

In summing up the work of our organisation in relation to theatre workshops and performances we have found:

- The groups and individuals involved are enriched by developing knowledge about theatre. Through this medium they experience different ways of meeting people and this also proves inspiring and can support individual and team activity
- Using theatre with groups can prevent boredom, monotony and homogeneity
- Using theatre can help with the participant’s understanding of the surrounding world and can help participants transfer into a different world, into a different reality
- Through the process of theatre the practitioner works with participants through exploration and investigation and those involved learn about themselves. The process can encourage liberation in three categories of activity: intellectual activity, emotional activity as well as practical activity
- Given a choice the participants can bond using more technical forms of theatre such as puppets, physical theatre and shadow puppets
- Using theatre games provides the participants with an exceptional opportunity to achieve success

# REPORT FROM SMASHING TIMES THEATRE COMPANY LIMITED – IRELAND



*Group Members from Ireland at the Shadow Puppet Workshop in Poland*

## **Smashing Times Theatre Company are using drama and theatre to promote culture and active citizenship within local communities.**

In keeping with its commitment to making theatre accessible, Smashing Times Theatre Company Limited has developed a long-term partnership with HACE and St Vincent's Trust. HACE is the adult and community education programme run by St Vincent's Trust based at 8/9 Henrietta Street, Dublin 1. St Vincent's Trust is a non-profit community service of the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, based in the North Inner City of Dublin, Ireland.

Each year from September to June, HACE, as part of its adult and community education programme, advertises for and supports a yearly drama and theatre workshop programme, which is facilitated by artists from Smashing Times Theatre Company. Both organisations work together

to support professional artists to work on a long-term basis with men and women from the north inner city area of Dublin who wish to develop their drama and theatre skills as well as using drama and theatre to promote personal and social development and to encourage and support active citizenship.

For 2007/2008, both organisations ran a collaborative arts project titled **A Dramatic Response to Modern and Contemporary Art** that supported professional artists to work with local people from the central area of Dublin to develop drama and theatre skills and to use those skills to collaboratively respond to contemporary and modern visual art forms. Special thanks are extended to Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane for their involvement in this project and to Harp Minor for funding this project.

The project consisted of weekly drama workshops conducted by professional drama workshop facilitator/director Wilma Nicholl to develop drama and theatre skills running

from October 2006 to June 2007; specialised workshops with a visual artist, Kitty Rogers, from Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane and outreach visits to the gallery including a tour of the permanent collection and a tour of the work of the artist Tacida Dean; meetings and support from theatre artists in Smashing Times Theatre Company; specialised writing and directing workshops with theatre artist Andy Hinds of Classic Stage Ireland to develop a new script called *Chalkballs* (using the introduction to modern and contemporary art as the initial impulse for script development); ongoing skills development (in terms of drama and theatre and personal and social development); ongoing rehearsals and the final performance of *Chalkballs* by participants themselves from St. Vincent's Trust on 7th, 8th and 9th May 2008 at the National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks.

Smashing Times Theatre Company linked this project with the Grundtvig funded partnership project. Members of the six

partner organisations from Poland, Greece, Norway, Finland and Spain attended the performance of *Chalkballs* in May 2008.

This was a collaborative project between Smashing Times Theatre Company and St. Vincent's Trust. In terms of promoting active citizenship and local culture, local people from this inner city community developed new skills in drama and theatre as well as confidence building and communication skills. There was a sense of celebration and community spirit as local people developed their own performance which was presented to the wider community in a unique and historical setting.

There was full public attendance by the public and local community at three performances in the National Museum of Ireland Collins Barracks. A total of 16 from St. Vincent's Trust were involved in drama workshops, tours to the Dublin City Gallery the Hugh Lane, visual art workshops, script development workshops, rehearsals and performances.

This project makes use of drama and theatre to encourage local people to directly engage with and respond to national visual art museums situated in their local areas. The project provides access to the process of making theatre for local women and men in the central city area of Dublin – an area of social and economic disadvantage – enabling participants to engage with professional artists and arts practices and provides for the long-term development of artistic skills for local people of a high artistic standard.

This project has brought numerous benefits as the project develops the creative potential of the participants in terms of drama and theatre skills and also promotes awareness of visual arts processes. There is increased personal development in terms of confidence and self-expression that arises from involvement in the on-going workshop/devising process. There is also a sharing of experiences and knowledge and this experience is then passed on to the wider community through public performance.

### Comments from Participants Who Took Part in This Project:

- *Very Interesting, learned some things about modern art*
- *Eye Opening*
- *Very friendly museum staff*
- *Excellent facilitators*
- *Enjoyed visits to the Hugh Lane*
- *Friendly atmosphere, very helpful to drama group*
- *Comfortable environment, great fun*



*A scene from Chalkballs presented by HACE and St. Vincent's Trust*

- *Many thanks to Freda for the venue and all the work behind the scenes*
- *I thoroughly enjoyed the experience*

Evaluation forms indicate that those taking part considered the standard of the workshop programme 'excellent'.

### Observations and Recommendations:

- When using drama and theatre with adult learners aim to create a fun, supportive environment and to ensure the artistic, creative process is central
- Each project unique and implemented in collaboration with key artists and participants
- Work underpinned by a rights-based approach and a commitment to artistic excellence and social engagement and to inclusion and respect for all
- Work for a collaborative process. At the beginning consult with participants/learners to check that they are interested in working through drama and theatre and ensure collaboration with group members re; the development of the work
- If working in a local community try to link in with support organisations relevant to the project you are working on
- Take time to plan projects

In relation to using drama and theatre with local communities:

### Preplanning:

- Identify key artists and partner organisations
- A process of collaboration including

meetings to develop relationships between key artists, partners, participants and funders

- Ongoing respect and recognition of different experiences, skills, knowledge, needs and practices of all those involved
- Ensure clarity on roles
- Define aims, objectives, outcomes and benefits arising
- Identify timelines, action plans, key personnel, roles and responsibilities, insurance, health and safety, child protection (where applicable), resources and budgets, specific requirements such as space, equipment, materials, provision for participants with special needs, awareness of host organisation/participant/funding requirements
- Identify management and financial requirements
- Identify documentation and evaluation procedures

### Implementation

- Ongoing creative engagement between key artist, partner organisations and participants
- Ongoing reference and review of objectives, intended outcomes, timelines etc, review of work completed to date and work still to be done including incorporation of new developments as they arise
- Ongoing management and financial reviews
- Ongoing documentation and evaluation

# ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

## Additional Observations arising from meetings between the partner groups taking part in the Grundtvig Learning Partnership

- The use of drama and theatre to promote language learning and active citizenship is a fun way for getting adults to learn
- Thoughts on Role Play:
  - Alternatives to role play can be successful (see reports for further observations)
  - Role-plays must be culturally relevant for them to work. For example setting up a role play in a shop and expecting players to speak will not result in a successful role play if speaking in a shop is not what they would normally do in reality
  - Role play or improvisations should be based on real experiences; something from the students real life
  - Role plays must reflect the different cultural and language abilities of the students
  - Role Play can be too demanding for some students particularly those with problems with literacy.
- Using role-play and images with people with disabilities can make things more equal; it can open up their world to the people and support them to develop their own voice.
- Having able bodied people and people with disabilities working together can create equality in the performance.
- Performances can be presented without the use of language and can for example use movement only
- It can be helpful to begin an improvisation without text/language and as people begin to feel more confident with the work, to start developing the work by introducing and using text/language
- Using an 'icebreaker' game can be a good way to support shy people to start talking, particularly on the first day of a class
- Sometimes it can be useful to combine students with theatre professionals
- Encourage and support the students to develop their own short scenes for inclusion in final performances however, the abilities of the group always has to be taken into consideration
- Use dance to start the class as students become relaxed and are ready to start learning languages
- Computers, film cameras, and new technology such as speech machines can and should be used where possible
- Using puppets in a classroom works well
- There are many simple, fun games to use and techniques such as music, movement, storytelling etc
- Suggestions for language learning when working with people with disabilities include: writing stories; using music; using pantomime; having a narrator; etc.

*“The use of drama and theatre to promote language learning and active citizenship is a fun way for getting adults to learn”*

# ABOUT SMASHING TIMES THEATRE COMPANY LTD

## SMASHING TIMES – THEATRE FOR CHANGE

### Performance Training Participation

Smashing Times Theatre Company Ltd is a professional theatre company involved in professional performance, training and participation. The work of the company is underpinned by a rights-based approach and a commitment to artistic excellence and social engagement.

The company was established in 1991 by a group of women actors, who met at the Focus Theatre, Dublin.

### Smashing Times are committed to:

- Professional performance
- Professional training and education in drama and theatre
- Participatory theatre practice – supporting direct access for local communities and communities of interest
- Theatre for change – supporting the use of theatre as a form of knowledge and as a means of transforming society so as to promote social justice and equality
- Links and research between professional

and participatory theatre within Ireland and on an international basis

The company has four high profile patrons – Maeve Binchy, Brian Friel, Tim Pat Coogan and Robert Kee.

Smashing Times Theatre Company is supported by Dublin City Council Arts Office.

### Board:

Dr. Patricia Kennedy  
Dr. Eric Weitz  
Dr. Ciara Mc Mahon  
Finola O’Riagain

**Artistic Director:** Mary Moynihan

**Company Manager:** Freda Manweiler