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SMALL SIZE PAPERS

These papers are part of a series published by Small size, the European Network for the Diffusion of the Performing Arts for Early Years. It is a collection of thoughts and theories on the relationship between art and education. They are analyses, reflections and experiences that help create a specific literature on the theme of the performing arts for early years. The articles published in each issue provide interdisciplinary and international contributions.

As Small size is a European network, English was chosen as its main language. The pieces of writing included in the papers have therefore been translated, in order to highlight the multi-cultural character of this material. However, the articles are also published in the original language.

No.1

EXPERIENCING ART IN EARLY YEARS

learning and development processes and artistic language

This publication collects considerations, provocations, "loud thoughts" of different professionals (educators, pedagogues, actors, directors...), who help get a deeper insight into how the youngest of children can experience art and how the learning and development processes can combine with artistic language.

Experiencing Art in Early Years

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learning and development
processes and artistic language



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S m a l l s i z e p a p e r s

Experiencing Art in Early Years

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processes and artistic language

EXPERIENCING ART IN EARLY YEARS

learning and development processes and artistic language

articles by Sarah Argent, Davide Donati, Nadia Fornasari, Ana Lúcia Goulart de Faria, Carlos Herans, Susan Young, Marina Manferrari, Gaëtane Reginster, Sandra Regina Simonis Richter, Gianfranco Staccioli, Alejandro Tiana Ferrer.

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The articles "¿Por qué hacer teatro para los mas pequeños? (Recuerdos y síntesis de experiencias)" by Carlos herans and "Apontamentos pedagógicos sobre o papel da arte na educação da pequena infância: como a pedagogia da educação infantil encontra-se com a arte?" by Ana Lúcia Goulart de Faria and Sandra Regina Simonis Richter have been written for "Theatre for Early Years. Reseach in performing arts for children from birth to three" edited by Wolfgang Schneider (Peter Lang Publishing House, Frankfurt am Main, et. al. 2009) and published in this book in original language courtesy from author and editor.

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COME ACCOMPAGNARE I NOSTRI FIGLI A TEATRO (E POI RIPORTARLI A CASA)

**Vademecum semiserio per ridere di noi stessi
prima che lo facciano gli altri di quando, come
genitori, andiamo a teatro coi nostri bimbi**

*(fatti, situazioni e circostanze sono realmente
accaduti)*

Davide Donati

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(ITALIA)

*scritto in collaborazione con gli altri pedagogisti
de Lo sguardo altrove – l'osservatorio del festival
"Visioni di futuro, visioni di teatro..." organizzato a
Bologna da La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi: Giovanni
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Anna Sbalchiero, Gloria Tannini, Claudia Zerri.*

Premessa

Accompagnare i bambini a teatro non è solo da intendere in senso fisico, ma anche cognitivo, ascoltando e rispondendo alle domande che fanno su quello che sta succedendo e, a livello emotivo, insegnando a sentire, riconoscere e vivere nel rispetto di sé e degli altri le emozioni che questa esperienza suscita.

E senza fare confusione, se possibile, distinguendo ciò che può essere utile per loro da quello che è un nostro bisogno di adulti. Come quella circostanza dove un papà, alla fine della rappresentazione, quando gli attori invitano il pubblico a prendere confidenza con gli oggetti di scena, era talmente coinvolto dalla situazione che si era scordato del figlio che era a un passo dall'autodistruzione.

Ogni spettacolo fa un po' storia a sé. Nel senso che si può senz'altro dire "A mio figlio piace andare a teatro", ma non va dato per scontato che ogni volta sarà un successo. Possono esserci contenuti che provocano emozioni dolorose nei bambini senza che né loro né gli adulti sappiano perché, oppure possono non stare bene fisicamente, oppure vai-te-a-sapere-cosa ma quella volta non funziona. Per questo è utile avere un occhio per loro e un occhio per quello che succede attorno. La nostra attenzione di adulti è per i bambini, la nostra preoccupazione è che vivano un'esperienza piacevole e positiva, lo spettacolo rimane sullo sfondo.

Il teatro non è principalmente un luogo. Le situazioni infatti dove fare teatro sono molte e diversificate: dalla grande alla piccola sala, all'atelier, ma anche un parco, una piazza di paese, un cortile possono diventare uno spazio utile.

Il teatro è allora più che altro un "modo", una delle possibilità che l'arte ci offre per scambiarsi e condividere storie ed esperienze. L'elemento caratterizzante è la presenza di attori, persone che "raccontano dal vivo" e che innescano azioni che possono essere raccolte dai bambini e che si spera lascino tracce dentro di loro per possibili rielaborazioni.

Le suggestioni che seguono vanno lette in modo ampio, aperto, ma soprattutto come non complete o definitive, perché l'esperienza del teatro offre sempre qualcosa di nuovo e di imprevisto su cui continuare a fare ricerca.

Anche questo fa parte del gioco.

PRIMA DELLA "PRIMA"

Ovvero: da quando si decide di andare a teatro fino all'apertura del sipario

Conoscere la storia, se possibile

Spesso i testi degli spettacoli non sono originali, non nel senso che mancano di fantasia - a volte può anche capitare! - ma in quanto sono ripresi da libri di letteratura per l'infanzia. Può essere piacevole leggere insieme ai bimbi, qualche giorno prima di andare a teatro, il testo da cui è tratto lo spettacolo, specificando sempre che la rappresentazione sarà comunque... una sorpresa!

Quando poi non è possibile leggere la storia prima di andare a teatro, è invece sempre disponibile all'entrata un depliant o un foglietto con una breve traccia dello spettacolo. Questa metodologia prende il nome di *prelettura* e consente, vista la ricchezza di stimoli che il teatro propone, di non dover porre tutta l'attenzione sulla comprensione di ciò che succede, ma di potersi concentrare su altro: musiche, recitazione, luci, ecc. senza la preoccupazione di perdere il senso della narrazione.

E' un po' come per noi adulti andare a un concerto conoscendo le canzoni (lo vedi subito quello che non le conosci!); l'emozione è più intensa, perché parte da un dato di conoscenza: il testo, la musica, gli arrangiamenti, per enfatizzare il dato relazionale:

vedere il cantante dal vivo, anche se a volte in versione "bonsai" data la distanza dal palco oppure fare il "toto-canzone" quando parte l'introduzione musicale di un pezzo completamente diversa rispetto alla versione del cd oppure ancora trovarsi a ballare assieme a qualcuno conosciuto venti secondi prima e pensare di averci fatto asilo, elementari e medie assieme.

Meglio arrivare puntuali

Vivere il teatro non è solo partecipare allo spettacolo, ma fare esperienza di uno spazio, di un tempo, di relazioni che comprendono, oltre alla rappresentazione vera e propria, rituali che ne amplificano il fascino e le sensazioni. Si tratta di cose semplici come soffermarsi all'entrata a guardare i cartelloni degli spettacoli successivi e precedenti o dell'intera stagione, respirare l'aria dell'atrio e dell'attesa, consegnare i biglietti alla maschera, cercare le poltrone, e poi le luci, il sipario, il buio che introduce la prima scena.

Capita invece, a volte, che:

"Porca miseria, proprio oggi che siamo in ritardo hanno iniziato puntuali!"

Cioè: è vero che "inizio sulla carta" alle 16 vuol dire quasi sempre "inizio reale" alle 16.15, però è più bello arrivare con calma, "tirarsela" un po' nell'atrio mostrando quella bella faccia soddisfatta che dice "Che papà che sono...accompagno mia figlia a teatro!!!", oppure avvitarci il collo in sala a destra e a sinistra cercando qualcuno che si conosce. A questo punto possono succedere varie cose:

1) si riconosce un amichetto/a del figlio/a in galleria (noi siamo in quarta fila, distanza: 38 mt.), si direziona la testa del bimbo/a verso la galleria in modo generico, poi si accosta l'indice alla sua tempia e si prova, spesso inutilmente, per una decina di minuti a farglielo riconoscere, desistendo poi con frasi: "Caso mai alla fine lo vediamo fuori";

2) si riconosce una coppia genitore-figlio/a a distanza di "messa a fuoco" e si inizia uno sbracciamento degli arti superiori aperte-incrociate-aperte-incrociate tipo tergicristallo degli autobus anni '80, fino alla risposta dell'altro genitore che spesso consiste in una scossata di spalla al figlio/a che di solito ingoia la cycles e con l'altro braccio in un allungo con dito puntato verso gli avvistatori che ricorda la stoccata finale della Vezzali alle Olimpiadi. E' da precisare che pur di riconoscere qualcuno queste manifestazioni

vengono a volte indirizzate a persone che si conoscono appena, o viste una volta sola alla fila della cassa della Coop e alle quali si è semplicemente chiesto "Mi passa un'altra sportina per favore che l'ananas me l'ha squarciata!", al punto che in questi casi invece l'altro fa finta di niente, poi vista l'insistenza del tergicristallo, abbozza un saluto educato che sembra dire "Ah, salve, anche lei...ehm...era buono l'ananas!?"

Ma questo è ancora poco per godersi l'arrivo per tempo a teatro, perché alle 16 e 10 iniziano i rituali di richiesta di inizio dello spettacolo da parte del pubblico, questi non si possono perdere per niente al mondo. Si va dal battito di mani ritmato con accelerazione, agli urletti (uh, uhu, uhuhuhuhuh) e fischi vari, all'invocazione, anch'essa ritmata e con accelerazione del titolo dello spettacolo. Ovviamente se il titolo lo consente, perché con Zorro viene fuori una roba del tipo: zo...rro...zo...rro...zo..rro..zo..rro..zo.rro.zo.rro.zorrozorrozorozorzrzzrALE'..., impensabile invece con La leggenda della ninfa Clotilde e del fungo Acquaintesta, se solo ci si provasse verrebbe fuori dopo tre secondi uno degli attori dicendo "Ok, ok, cominciamo, basta che la smettiate...ah, domenica prossima c'è Iris, potete sfogarvi!".

E poi, sinceramente, qual è l'alternativa? Arrivare al buio, il più delle volte vergognandosi, chiedendo a uno della fila sbagliata, sottovoce: "Scusi, è lì il 64?" e sentirsi rispondere: "No, io ho il 122, il 64 l'avevo domenica scorsa, è dalla parte opposta!". Non ne vale la pena. Meglio puntuali.

DURANTE L'OPERA

Ovvero: la rappresentazione vera e propria, con annessi e connessi

Spegnere il cellulare (o per lo meno mettere la vibrazione)

Questo primo accorgimento della sezione "Durante" dovrebbe essere inserito in realtà nella sezione "Prima", ma se nell'attesa dell'inizio della rappresentazione la suoneria di un cellulare può risultare tollerabile, durante lo spettacolo è sempre e comunque disturbante. Si tratta di un segno, oltre che di educazione, che dà senso pieno a quello che si sta facendo insieme ai propri bimbi, il messaggio che passa è: Sono qui tutto per te. E ai bambini questo è un messaggio che piace molto. Invece...invece è successo che

proprio nel momento in cui l'eroe chiede all'amata di sposarlo, parta dalla terza fila la suoneria di un telefonino polifonico con il preludio della Carmen di Bizet a volume massimo. Quel volume, cioè, che è a un passo dall'incredibile, che è quasi da solo un concerto, che si sente a centinaia di metri di distanza, quello, per intenderci, che neanche il cellulare ci crede quando lo imposti; infatti ti chiede: sei proprio sicuro di voler impostare il volume massimo?

Il teatro è una festa, ma non un pic-nic: non si mangia e non si beve

E' vero, la tentazione è forte, l'orario in cui si va a teatro coincide spesso con quello della merenda. Forse è però più opportuno organizzarsi per farla prima o dopo, a meno che ovviamente non siano presenti ragioni serie di salute.

E' una questione di rispetto: per il lavoro degli attori, per l'attenzione degli altri spettatori e... per il silenzio che il teatro richiede per poter essere vissuto pienamente.

In modo particolare nelle sale piccole dove già, e per fortuna, si sentono i respiri... figuriamoci cosa possono diventare i rumori di sacchetti che si aprono e si appallottolano, richieste di succhi all'albicocca invece che alla pesca, briciole cadute sulle testa della bimba davanti, "Mi scusi signora! Dài, Martina, cerca di stare un po' più composta, non vedi che stai spargendo crackers ovunque!". Il tutto, caso mai, con l'attore o l'attrice che sta rappresentando col corpo prima il mare che avvolge il naufrago e due secondi dopo il malcapitato trascinato dalle onde (cioè: situazione intensissima). Il minimo che può succedere è un blocco metabolico (dell'attore) che lo renderà incapace di digerire crackers, succhi di frutta e affini per lungo tempo!

Vicino, lontano o a portata di braccio

Il gioco teatrale prevede momenti nei quali il pubblico partecipa allo spettacolo in veste di spettatori ed altri in cui si fa qualcosa assieme: dalla semplice conversazione con gli attori, a veri e propri "assaggi" di teatro, fino al pieno coinvolgimento dei bambini nello spettacolo. Si tratta di ritmare tempi in cui si ascolta senza parlare e tempi in cui si parla sicuri di avere l'attenzione dell'altro.

Per consentire questo è necessaria un'azione di controllo da parte dell'adulto sulla capacità dei bambini di stare al proprio posto. Si tratta cioè di una progressiva educazione all'autonomia

dei bambini, seguendo i loro tempi e ritmi di crescita, per arrivare progressivamente alla capacità di partecipare al gioco teatrale in modo sempre più consapevole.

Si passa quindi dall'esperienza di tenere i bambini più piccoli (1-2 anni) seduti davanti a sé, a quella di tenerli seduti vicino a sé parlando loro sottovoce nell'orecchio quando è necessario e interpretando le loro emozioni (3-4 anni), per arrivare (5 anni e oltre) a lasciarli nelle prime file da soli o con gli amici seguendoli da dietro solo con lo sguardo, pronti ad ascoltare le osservazioni e rielaborare le emozioni che hanno provato in un momento successivo. Ovviamente l'allontanamento dai genitori sarà progressivo. Conoscendo i propri figli si può dunque valutare in modo appropriato se collocarsi nell'immediata fila dietro al bambino, oppure qualcuna ancora oltre, fino alla distanza in cui, pur essendo presenti, il bambino può percepirsi solo e quindi grande. Diversamente il rischio è ovvio. Immaginiamo: telone nero per un cambio di costume che dovrebbe sorprendere tutti... irresistibile attrazione da parte di qualche bambino verso quello che succede dietro...corsa, sbirciatina... annuncio a reti unificate: si sta vestendo da fiore!!! Te possino! (pensiero non detto del genitore).

Fare attenzione che i bambini vedano bene

Specialmente nelle situazioni dove non sono previsti gradoni o poltrone disposte in modo da consentire a quelli dietro di avere mezza testa più su rispetto a quelli davanti, è importante mettersi all'altezza dei bimbi per verificare quello che possono riuscire a vedere. Soprattutto per i bimbi più piccoli, di età o di statura, questo diventa fondamentale. Dopodiché si possono trovare facilmente gli accorgimenti per consentire una visione adeguata: seduti sul giaccone, in braccio, cambio di poltrone, ecc. Altrimenti può ricapitare che una mamma, entusiasta, dica alla figlia: "Gaia, guarda, arriva la fata!", per sentirsi rispondere: "Mamma, c'è un signore alto alto davanti a me!".

Preparare al buio

Si è detto che uno dei rituali del teatro è il buio che introduce la prima scena. Il buio può però essere vissuto come situazione preoccupante, a volte angosciata, soprattutto dai bambini più piccoli o con disabilità; nella maggior parte dei casi invece si tratta di una situazione eccitante e piacevole. Conoscendo i propri figli si può valutare se anticipare loro che "fra un po' potrebbe

esserci qualche momento di buio", rassicurandoli che mamma o papà saranno vicino a proteggerli oppure se lasciare il piacere della scoperta e della novità.

Se poi parte il pianto si può innescare l'"effetto polveriera", una volta cioè scoppiato il primo candelotto, succede frequentemente che anche chi era in forse o chi propendeva per il non-pianto, alla fine si lasci andare a lacrime e strilli. E' ovvio che sia il pianto spontaneo che quello reattivo vanno contenuti con una maggior vicinanza fisica e verbale da parte di noi adulti.

Il teatro è comunque troppo ricco, non si può prendere tutto

Il teatro è ricco, troppo, sempre. Se ne possono prendere dei pezzettini, qualche frase, qualche movimento, qualche atmosfera sonora o di luci, qualche costume, qualche sequenza di sceneggiatura. Ogni bambino decide cosa prendere. E quello che decide va bene. E' opportuno rispettare l'identità, il carattere e lo stile relazionale di ogni bambino, accettando che l'esperienza del teatro faccia emergere comportamenti dei nostri figli che non conosceamo, chiusure o aperture che prima non si erano mai manifestate. Il resto sono problemi nostri di adulti, come quella frase poco felice che suonava grosso modo "Ricky, dà, sei l'unico che non fa "uh" per scacciare il mostro!". Chissà, forse Ricky stava contemplando il costume del mostro o era incantato dall'allestimento della scena che stava cambiando; e chi l'ha detto che questo valga meno di fare "uh" tutti insieme. E' un modo anche questo per rispettare il teatro e la sua forza e per renderlo un'occasione importante di crescita per bambini - soprattutto - ma anche per gli adulti. Proprio perché vengono utilizzati molti linguaggi, molti codici, offre ad ogni bambino la possibilità di scegliere quello che preferisce, favorendo la costruzione della sua identità e sviluppando non una creatività generica ma la sua creatività.

A livello emotivo poi può far ridere, piangere, "ridepiangere", nel senso che può suscitare un'emozione, il suo contrario, entrambe contemporaneamente. Beh, in questo campo di maestri ce ne sono proprio pochi.

In linea ideale non dovrebbe essere strano potersi fare una bella risata, ma anche lasciare scorrere qualche lacrima di commozione per un cambio di luci o per un abbraccio o ancora per l'espressione dolcissima del volto di un attore o addirittura

rimanere un po' storditi perché questi due movimenti emotivi convivono nel nostro cuore e nella nostra mente, lasciandoci un po' interdetti.

Il prolungamento dello spettacolo

Si è accennato all'inizio che è pratica diffusa concludere lo spettacolo con un momento di condivisione fra attori e pubblico, che viene invitato ad avvicinarsi al palco o a entrare nello spazio scenico, dove possibile, per amplificare e rielaborare l'esperienza della rappresentazione.

1) questa fase è parte integrante dell'esperienza del teatro, utile per avvicinare realtà e finzione, per mentalizzare l'esperienza del "far finta" per i bambini della fascia 3-6 anni, inoltre, significa anche vedere da vicino, incontrare gli attori, parlare con la fata, l'elfo, il mago che hanno visto da lontano, pronti a un incontro emotivamente carico ma al tempo stesso forti di una conoscenza durata il tempo della rappresentazione, tempo sufficiente per i bambini di questa età per poter essere certi di conoscersi già molto bene;

2) gli oggetti, neutri e impersonali all'inizio, hanno acquisito col passare dei minuti senso e significati profondi; poterci giocare è come poter strutturare e radicare nel proprio vissuto quegli oggetti e tramite loro, tutta l'esperienza del teatro;

3) come arrivare per tempo aiuta ad entrare nell'esperienza teatrale, così anche fermarsi oltre lo spettacolo crea uno spazio transizionale che accompagna ad uscirne. Non sono movimenti semplici per i bambini, vanno favoriti e accompagnati da questi tempi dove gradualmente ci si avvicina ad un momento forte come lo spettacolo e alla fine, altrettanto gradualmente, se ne esce. E' come il significato del riscaldamento e del defaticamento quando si va a correre, a nessuno verrebbe in mente di partire a tutta velocità o di fermarsi di scatto.

Quindi, non c'è bisogno di dirlo, è importante favorire questo incontro, non scappare via appena finito lo spettacolo, non banalizzare. Come quel papà che durante un momento in cui l'attore presentava alcuni animali giocattolo utilizzati in scena, ha risposto al piccolo che voleva andarli a vedere: "Daje, France", che vuoi annà a vede, so' pupazzetti! A casa cenn'hai duscento!".

Anche se a volte c'è un po' di calca, di caos, se c'è da aspettare pazientemente il proprio turno, ne vale comunque la pena.

Ah, vale anche il contrario, non fermarsi per un tempo indefinito, anche gli attori hanno a casa qualcuno che li aspetta.

DOPO... A CASA

Ovvero: l'esperienza del teatro continua anche quando lo spettacolo finisce

Domande legittime

Un noto cibernetico austriaco, morto pochi anni fa, H. Von Foerster, definisce "illegittime" quelle domande *di cui si conosce già (o è già definita) la risposta*. Mentre, al contrario, definisce "legittime" quelle *di cui non si conosce la risposta*. Le prime ovviamente, contribuiscono a *generare cittadini prevedibili*, esse mirano ad *amputare quegli indesiderabili stati interni che generano imprevedibilità e novità*. Le seconde, al contrario, aiutano a *debanalizzare* le persone. Le prime sono poste per *"controllare il sapere"*, le seconde *per sapere*.

Esempio di domande illegittime:

E lui come si chiamava? E lei? E l'amica di lei? No, attenta, non Fata Ranucolo, si dice Fata RanuNNNcolo...dillo bene. Eccheppalle...!

Esempio di domande legittime:

Com'è andata? Come ti sei sentito/a? Cosa ti è piaciuto? Cosa raccontiamo a papà/ai nonni/... di quello che hai visto? Ci torniamo ancora oppure no?

Detto così sembra quasi facile...

L'esperienza del teatro, in chi lo pensa, in chi lo fa, mira a produrre una cultura dell'infanzia che aiuti i bimbi e le bimbe a crescere come persone competenti, libere, individuate, ricche. E quindi? Quindi ben venga che a casa ci venga detto: Mamma, io faccio Clotilde!

Io sono Clotilde, tu Acquaintesta

A casa ci sono mille modi per rielaborare coi bimbi l'esperienza di essere stati a teatro: riparlandone, rileggendo il libro di riferimento se c'è, tramite il disegno, utilizzando il gioco simbolico per rivivere questo o quel momento, fino a trasformare poco o tanto la casa in un pezzo di teatro. E così il salotto può diventare la scena, quando il tavolo non diventa un palco, la coperta il mantello, un grissino la spada e se fra i cd c'è la colonna sonora dello

spettacolo è la fine. Si possono anche costruire insieme oggetti che serviranno per realizzare semplici scenografie o costumi, oppure utilizzare trucchi o fare travestimenti.

E' davvero un bene che i bimbi chiedano di giocare e rigiocare a quello che hanno visto. Vuol dire che tutto sta funzionando proprio come deve. Il teatro non come esperienza da fruire, ma da rielaborare e da vivere. In questo caso l'atteggiamento più utile è quello di farsi accompagnare dai bimbi seguendo il loro percorso, facendosi portare in un frammento di spettacolo che forse per noi non è mai esistito o che solo, probabilmente, non abbiamo colto, rispondendo alle domande che ci vengono poste e provando a divertirci con loro. Anche per decine e decine di volte. Anche se costa un po' di fatica.

Ma, che dire: papà, mamma... hai voluto la bicicletta...!

MA LA COSA PIU' IMPORTANTE...

Possiamo dimenticarci di tutto quello che è stato scritto finora, ma non di questo:

Il teatro offre ai bambini un'opportunità per crescere, per vivere un'esperienza che li coinvolge nella loro completezza e unicità di persone, a livello fisico, cognitivo, emotivo e relazionale, ma offre anche a noi adulti la possibilità di riappropriarci di codici che abbiamo usato e poi dimenticato, ma che sono ancora lì e che aspettano solo di essere riportati alla luce.

Se impariamo a parlare i linguaggi dei bambini, capiranno tutti.

HOW TO GO WITH OUR CHILDREN TO THE THEATRE (AND THEN GO BACK HOME)

How to laugh of ourselves, before anyone else does, and of the way we, as parents, go to the theatre with our children

(The following facts, situations and events really took place)

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(ITALY)

with the collaboration of the others pedagogues of the Lo sguardo altrove – l'osservatorio del festival "Visioni di futuro, visioni di teatro..." organized in Bologna by La Baracca - Testoni Ragazzi: Giovanni Amodio, Lorella Bertelli, Roberto Maffeo, Marina Manferrari, Claudia Morisi, Elisa Mortasa, Daniela Orsi, Rosanna Restaino, Michelangelo Saldiglora, Anna Sbalchiero, Gloria Tannini, Claudia Zerri.

translated by Letizia Olivieri

INTRODUCTION

Going with our children to the theatre doesn't only mean going with them physically; but it also means going with them at the cognitive level, listening and answering to the questions they ask about what is happening and at the emotional level, teaching them how to recognise, live and appreciate the feelings this experience brings to them, respecting the others and themselves.

Moreover, it means distinguishing between what can be useful for them and what are, instead, our needs, as adults, possibly without any confusion. Let's think for example of that time when, at the end of the show, the actors invited the audience to get to know the objects they used, a dad got involved so much that he forgot his son, who was about to go crazy.

Each show is unique. This meaning that you can surely say "My son likes going to the theatre", but you can't take it for granted that every time is going to be a success. Some contents could cause painful feelings in children, and parents and children themselves could ignore the reason for these feelings; or children could not feel well physically; or maybe that time just didn't work, the reason being I-do-not-know. This is why it's necessary to watch out, both looking at them and at what's happening around

them. We, as adults, must take care of our children, making sure that they experience something positive and pleasant; for us the show is in background.

The theatre is not mainly a place. In fact, the environments suited to perform are many and varied: big and small halls, ateliers, parks, town squares, patios, every place can be used to perform.

Therefore, the theatre is mostly a "way", one of the possibilities art gives us to share experience and stories. The peculiar element is the presence of actors, people who "tell stories live", whose actions can be captured by children, hopefully giving them the impulse for future interpretations.

The feelings caused by the performance should be thought of open-mindedly, above all, they should not be considered as something complete or definitive, because the experience of the theatre always offers something new and surprising that you can use to go on researching.

This is part of the game as well.

BEFORE THE "SHOW"

That is: from the moment you decide to go to the theatre to the opening of the curtains

You should know the story, whenever possible

Often the stories of the shows are not original; that is not to say they lack in fantasy - even if sometimes that could be the case indeed! - but because they are interpretations of books for children. Some days before the show, reading together with children the original book can prove to be a pleasant experience, but always be sure that children understand the show will be... a surprise!

Whenever you couldn't read the story before going to the theatre, you should take one of the brochures or papers, containing a brief explanation of the story, that can always be found at the entrance. This method is called *pre-reading* and it's useful because, due to the abundance of stimuli the show proposes, it allows you to feel free to partly ignore the understanding of what is happening in order to focus on other aspects: music, acting, lights, and so on, without worrying of losing the meaning of the story. For us grown-ups it's a bit like going to a concert knowing

the songs (you immediately spot the one who doesn't know them!). The emotion is stronger because it stems from something known: the lyrics, the music, the arrangements and it ends up attaching greater value to the relational aspect: to see the singer live, even if sometimes s/he looks like a "bonsai" due to the distance from the stage, or to try to guess the song when the music starts and the introduction is completely different from the version in the album, or to dance together with somebody you've been knowing for 20 seconds, while having the feeling you've grown together.

Always be on time

To be in the theatre not only means taking part in the show, but being involved in a space, time and relationships that involve, besides the performance itself, rituals that increase its fascination and sensations. These are simple acts, like staying a little longer at the entrance, watching the posters of the previous and following shows or of the entire season, feeling the atmosphere of the hall while waiting, showing the tickets to the staff, looking for the seats, then the lights, the curtains, the darkness that opens the first scene.

On the contrary, sometimes it happens that:

"God, they've started on time just today that we're late!"

All right, it's true that "starting at" 16 almost always means "really starting at" 16.15, but it's nice to arrive on time, showing off a little bit in the hall, showing your nice satisfied face that seems saying "What a great dad I am... I go with my daughter to the theatre!!!"; or to look around, your neck stretching from right to left, looking for somebody you know. At this point different things can happen:

you recognise one of your child's friends in the gallery (you are in the fourth row, distance: 38 meters); you direct your child's head towards the gallery, then you get your finger close to your child's forehead trying for about ten minutes to make her/him recognise her/him, often without any result, at the end giving up saying something like "who knows, maybe we'll meet her/him outside";

you recognise a couple parent-child at a reasonable distance and you start waving your arms like the windshield wipers of the buses of the 80s, until the other parent reacts, often touching her/his child's shoulder, while pointing the finger of her/his other

But these are not the only reasons why you should appreciate arriving at the theatre on time; as usual, at 16.10 the audience start asking for the beginning of the show, and you absolutely cannot miss these unique rituals. They vary from the accelerating rhythm of hand clapping, to the shouting (like uh, uhu, uhuhuhuhuh) and various whistles, to the calling of the title of the show, with an accelerating rhythm as well. Obviously, only if the title allows you to do that; with Zorro you have something like:

but you cannot think of reaching the same result with The legend of the Princess Clotilde and the mushroom Acquaintesta; if you just tried, after three seconds one of the actors would come out and tell you "Ok, fine, let's start, just stop it, all right?! Ah, next Sunday the show is Iris, you can shout all you want!".

DURING THE SHOW

Switch off the phone (or at least use the silent mode)

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that you attach great importance to what you're doing with your children; the message you give is: I'm here just for you; and children love this kind of message very much. But... on the contrary, it did happen that when the hero was asking the loved one to marry him, a ringing tone of a cell phone in the third row started playing the beginning of Bizet's *Carmen* at maximum volume. That is, exactly that kind of volume you can't believe that exists, the volume that alone seems like a concert, that you hear at incredible distances, in sum, the volume that even your phone doesn't believe you want to set and asks you: "are you really sure you want to set the maximum volume?"

The theatre is a joyful event, but it's not a pic-nic: you can't eat nor drink

It's true, temptation is high because the time when you go to the theatre is often the time when you usually have a snack. But maybe it would be nice if you set up everything to have it before or after the show, obviously unless somebody suffers of serious health problems. It's a respect thing: for actors' effort, for people's attention and for the silence that the show needs to make people go through a fully satisfying experience.

In particular, in small theatres where, fortunately, you can hear people breathing... imagine how much annoying the sounds of opening and closing packs could be; or the requests for orange juice instead of apple juice, or crumbs on the head of the girl in the front row, "I'm sorry Madame! Come on, Martina, try to sit properly, can't you see you're spreading chips all over!". Perhaps, all that is happening while the actor is representing with his body the sea overwhelming the castaway and after two seconds the poor castaway that is dragged by the waves (an extremely intense situation). The least you could cause is a digestive problem (to the actor) who won't be able to digest chips, juice and similar stuff for quite a while!

Make sure your children can see the stage

Especially when seats are not put so that people in the back are higher than people in the front, it's important for you to put your eyes near those of your children to check what they can actually see. This is a fundamental aspect for younger or smaller children. Once you've checked what they can see, you can do something to help them see better: they can sit on some jackets,

on you, or they can change their seats, etc.

Otherwise, it could happen, once again, that an enthusiastic mum says to her daughter: "Gaia look, here comes the fairy!" just to know that: "Mum, there's a very high man in front of me!".

Get ready for the darkness

It has been said that one of the rituals of the theatre is the darkness opening the first scene. But the darkness could be felt as a worrying situation, sometime frightening, above all by younger or disabled children; instead, it is felt as an exciting and pleasant situation by most children. As you know your children, you can decide if it's better for them if you say in advance "in a while there could be some moments of darkness", ensuring them that you're close and ready to protect them, or if it's better to let them enjoy the surprise of the new environment.

Moreover, when a child starts crying, this fact could result in the "domino effect": once the first one has started, often also those who were half-way between tears and no-tears end up crying. There's no need to say that both the spontaneous and the induced crying should be limited by parents through physical and verbal support.

The theatre is way too rich, we can't take everything from it

The theatre is rich, too rich, always. You can take bits of it, some sentences, some movements, some sounds and lights, some costumes, some sequences of scenes. Each child decides what to take; and whatever s/he decides is ok. It's necessary to respect their identities, their characters and the way they relate with others, expecting that the experience of the theatre will help emerge behaviours of our children that we didn't know, openings or closures that never came out before. Everything else is our problem as adults, like that time when it has been said "Ricky, come on, you're the only one who doesn't say "uh" to scare the monster!". Who knows, maybe Ricky was admiring the costume of the monster or was enchanted by the change of the scene; and who said that this is worth less than saying "uh" all together.

This is also a way to respect the theatre and its strength and to make it an important occasion especially for children but also for grown-ups to mature. The many languages and codes used offer every child the chance to choose what s/he prefers, contributing

to the construction of her/his identity, developing not a generic creativity but her/his own creativity. Emotionally speaking, it can make you laugh, cry, "laugh-cry", in other words, it can make you feel an emotion, its opposite, or both simultaneously. Well, not many people can actually do that. It shouldn't be very strange to have a nice laugh, but also to let a few tears out for a change of light or a hug or also for an actor's very sweet face, or even to feel a little strange because both these feelings are in our heart and in our mind at the same time, making us feel a little confused.

The "after-show"

As we said in the beginning it often happens that at the end of the show the audience and the actors interact on stage; people in the audience are invited, whenever possible, to enter the space of the show to elaborate and amplify the whole experience of the performance.

this part is important for the entire experience of the show, it helps to get reality and fiction together, and allows to understand the "faking"

for children from 3 to 6 years of age it becomes a way to see and meet the actors, speak with the fairy, the elf, the magician that they had seen from far, something extremely important for children emotionally. Children with the actors are probably feeling very comfortable because, after the show, they feel like they've known the actors for a time long enough.

The objects, neutral and insignificant at the beginning, have now a great meaning for them, being able to touch them and play with them is like giving an important sense to the whole experience of the theatre.

Just like arriving on time helps to get into the show, also stopping some time after the end of the show is important to create the situation that will lead you out of it. All these experiences are not simple for children, they need to be helped to gradually get close to the moment of the show and at the end they need to be gradually led out of the show. It's just like warming up and cooling down before and after going jogging, no one starts running as fast as they can and then when finished stops running immediately. So there's no need to say that it's important for children to be supported through this meeting, don't be quick leaving the theatre after the show and don't minimize

anything. Like that father that, when the actor was introducing little toy animals used in the show, said to his son that wanted to go see them closer "oh come on it's only a toy puppy, you have at least two hundred of those at home". So even if it's a little crowded and there's some chaos, be patient and wait for your turn, it will be worth it. On the other hand be careful not to exaggerate, don't stop for too long, also the actors have a family waiting for them at home.

AFTER... AT HOME

The theatre experience continues even after the show

Legitimate questions

A famous Austrian scientist, who died a few years ago, H. Von Foerster, defined "illegitimate" those questions of which we already know the answer, on the other hand, he defines "legitimate" those questions of which we don't know the answer. The first kind of question helps *create a society made of predictable people, aiming at cutting out all those hidden emotions inside of us that can generate unpredictable and innovative personalities*. On the contrary, the legitimate questions help *make people less banal*. The illegitimate ones are asked to "control the knowledge", while the legitimate ones are asked to "know".

Here's an example of illegitimate questions:

What was his name? And her's? And her friend's name? No be carefull not fairy Ranicle but Fairy Raninnncle... say it well. For God's sake...!

Example of legitimate questions:

How did it go? How did you feel? What did you like? What are you going to tell dad/gandparents about what you saw? Do you want to go again?

Well it seems easy...

Who thinks of and makes the shows, aims at producing a culture for children that will help them grow as mature people, free and rich inside.

And so? So be thankful if your children at home will say "mom I'll be the fairy!!".

I'm the fairy you're the frog

At home there are many ways to reelaborate the time passed

at the theatre: speaking about it, reading the book that the play was referred to, drawing, playing games that will remind her/him of particular moments of the show; it is also possible to turn your house into a piece of the theatre. And so the living room can become the scene, and why not a table the stage? A blanket will be a mantle and a broom will be the sword and if you're lucky enough to have a cd of the soundtrack of the show, well that's all you need!! You can also build things together and create objects that will become part of the scene, use makeup and dresses. It's really a good thing if children ask to play and play again the game of the show they saw. It means that everything is working as it should. Not only is the theatre an experience to enjoy but it also needs to be elaborated and felt inside. In this case the right thing is to let the child lead you, follow her/his path through a new way of seeing that had never existed for us, answer the questions that are asked, and try to have fun with her/him. Even if it has to be done many times.

Even if it's not always easy!

Mom, Dad... no-one ever said it was going to be easy!

BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING...

We can forget anything that's been said until now, but never forget this:

The theatre gives children an opportunity to mature, to live an experience that will help them become complete and unique persons, at the physical, cognitive, emotional and relational levels; but it also offers us adults the chance to discover codes that we have used and then forgotten, but that are still there waiting to be brought out. If we learn to speak children's language, everyone will understand.

¿POR QUÉ HACER TEATRO PARA LOS MAS PEQUEÑOS? (Recuerdos y síntesis de experiencias) *

Carlos Herans

Director Acción Educativa, Madrid
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Una anciana campesina habla con el príncipe. La acción se sitúa en un escenario, con un decorado de papel pintado que representa una casita en el campo. En un momento dado una panel de la casa, que corresponde a una chimenea, cae hacia los actores, el príncipe lo sujeta y empuja hacia atrás y la acción continua...

Ignoro lo que ocurría en aquella escena, pero un poco mas adelante de este incidente, el príncipe entregaba una bolsa de monedas a la anciana y esta dice: "gracias porque así podre arreglar la casa que se me cae a pedazos".

Yo tenía 5 o 6 años. Es unos de mis primeros recuerdos de infancia. En la memoria esta escena aparece con toda nitidez. ¿Por qué? Me he preguntado tantas veces. ¡difícil respuesta!

Algunas posibles, (aunque tópicas):

- Porque estaba atrapado por la magia de la escena
- Porque asistía a la vida en directo y fantásticamente recreada ante mi
- Porque...

En definitiva no recuerdo nada de aquel espectáculo mas que esta anécdota.

Creo que esta situación puede estarse produciendo con frecuencia cuando nos dirigimos a los niños con nuestras propuestas escénicas.

Creo, también, que cuando trabajamos para los mas pequeños, les situamos en un universo sensible y simbólico que entronca con su necesidad de juego y exploración, que cumple un papel fundamental: hacer posible situaciones y personajes, conflictos o ficciones que se desarrollan en tiempo presente y que permiten a niñas y niños realizar un experimento de dominación de "esa realidad".

* Este artículo ha sido escrito por "Theatre for Early Years. Research in performing arts for children from birth to three" bajo la direction de Wolfgang Schneider (Peter Lang Publishing House, Frankfurt am Main, et. al. 2009)

En ese juego el universo poblado de personajes, sonidos, movimiento y artes plásticas, se someten al encantamiento del niño. (no se puede obviar que las teorías psicoanalíticas han puesto el énfasis en la importancia de estas elaboraciones para la construcción y mantenimiento del Yo y como salida de las pulsiones inconscientes).

También hoy día nos resulta evidente que el juego teatral en la infancia, es un juego social. Según diversos investigadores entre 2 y 5 años¹ se juega a partir de una regla no escrita basada en la cooperación en el desarrollo del juego, tanto en el momento que se planifica el mismo, como en el intercambio de roles entre los jugadores y las modificaciones que se pactan entre ellos en la estructura del mismo (¿no es esta la base de tantos procesos creativos que desarrollan los adultos?). Como consecuencia los juegos simbólicos toman como punto de partida temas sociales: médicos, maestros, tiendas, etc... sin que nos olvidemos de aquél momento del desarrollo infantil en el que el comienzo del intercambio social nace de juegos egocéntricos en los cuales a través de la imitación de conductas niños y niñas reproducen los comportamientos de los adultos que les rodean.

Estamos pues en las primeras edades, frente a un juego, que tiene sus raíces en la propia vida. Actuar, pues de eso se trata, es una manera de vivir, una forma de adquirir conocimientos sobre la vida, y no gratuitamente o a partir de elementos transmitidos por el profesor/a.

Este es un juego comprometido entre personas. De uno mismo hacia uno mismo. De uno mismo hacia los otros, aprendiendo a ser uno mismo y a dirigirnos, entender, conocer, a los otros.

De este juego de ser otro, raíz de la actuación teatral, nace antes de nada el ser uno mismo, el "fingirse" uno u otro. Generalmente, nos fingimos en primer lugar aquellos que nos rodean. Somos papás y mamás, regañando a nuestros bebés, -muñecos-, porque se han ensuciado; alimentando a nuestros hijos, con polvo de ladrillo rojo, con cucharitas de plástico, con papillas de arena mojada, con el malhumor de quien se nos resiste, con el cariño conque nos acunan, con la manipulación argumental de nuestros padres... Con esos elementos de la vida aprendemos a ser los que nos rodean, nos ponemos sus zapatos adivinando donde nos aprietan, no solo en un sentido descriptivo, sino también simbólico, jugado.

Estas ficciones infantiles, este afán de disfraz para ser otro y ser más uno mismo, es la raíz nutricia del teatro. Ser otro y contarlo a otros. Una manera de proyectarse más allá de uno mismo, en espacios de juego-ficción, suministrados por el hueco de "debajo de la mesa". Escenarios fantásticos articulados a partir de la silla del comedor, convertida en nave espacial, casa, mesa, barco... Donde habitan los personajes que desde muy niños construimos, como diría Bogart en "El halcón maltés", con la materia de la que están hechos los sueños... (cita con seguridad shakesperiana).

Esa materia y esos personajes, siempre los mismos pero diferentes, acabarán por construirnos nuestro personaje... algún día. Concluyamos este punto con una afirmación banal: este juego es muy importante.

Me he introducido en este mundo con un pie en la educación y otro en la vida - si es que alguna vez han estado separadas, por mucho que los sistemas educativos se empeñen - porque mi experiencia teatral ha venido determinada por el contacto directo con los niños y niñas, al dedicarme más de diez años a desarrollar en un centro educativo talleres teatrales, juego dramático o dramatización, el término que se prefiera, en diversos niveles de edades.

Este contacto directo con la realidad de "sus" producciones y los procesos que siguen para realizarlas, forma parte, con los recuerdos antes expuestos, el bagaje de experiencias, descubrimientos y emociones que me han conducido posteriormente en el trabajo de puesta en escena, traducción, adaptación de textos y otros oficios teatrales, a los que he dedicado al menos los últimos veinticinco años, tras mi paso por las aulas.

En este punto me gustaría detenerme brevemente sobre un tópico que entonces en las aulas, luego en los cursos que he impartido para formación del profesorado y en otros ámbitos, me ha asaltado con relativa frecuencia: ¡es que los niños tienen tanta fantasía!

En el lenguaje común al término "fantasía" ¿que significado se le atribuye?. Generalmente se suele hacer referencia a la habilidad para inventar, imitar sobre todo a personajes públicos (digamos artistas), contar situaciones imaginarias a partir de sucesos cotidianos... Sobre estos fenómenos subyace la necesidad de parecerse a alguien que recoge aplauso, reconocimiento

social, cariño y la elaboración de situaciones deseada por el niños. El adultos ante estos fenómenos -los padres y algunos maestros sobre todo- adjetiva con el término fantasía, y le suele connotar con la "capacidad de imaginar, de inventar" de su hijo o sus alumnos, confrontándola con la desaparición de la misma por parte de los adultos.

Nome parece que esto determine que un niño es mas imaginativo, cabe deducir que solamente se ha realizado un trabajo imitativo, por consumo visual fundamentalmente, pues se suelen nutrir de figuras de la televisión, que reiteradamente aparecen en la pequeña pantalla, adornados con una serie de latiguillos lingüísticos y gesticulatorios fácilmente caricaturizables.

Elaborar "fantásticamente", es otra cosa bien distinta y lejos todavía de los niños y niñas de estas edades.

Lo que nos solemos encontrar en los talleres teatrales en un primer momento de trabajo, casi siempre son elaboraciones elípticas, reducidas en su estructura dramática y con fuerte componente proyectivo; surgidas de la realidad más inmediata: familia, escuela, otros niños... y sobre los que pueden fabular en los límites que se marcan los propios niños, circunscritos a lo observado puesto en relación con su propia experiencia vivenciada.

Este proceso objetivamente, no lo pueden reproducir, ya que está determinado por aspectos inconscientes.

Como de nada, nada sacaremos, es imprescindible que el marco de referencia quede claro: jugamos a contar y eso no implica mayores dotes artísticas, tan solo integración de etapas evolutivas, de observaciones y recursos expresivos, coherentemente madurados, y en el enriquecimiento de este marco de referencia es dónde creo yo que el teatro hecho para ellos juega un papel determinante.

En primer lugar porque sitúa al espectador/niño ante un fenómeno en directo que "jugando con ficciones" le muestra a través de sus códigos específicos un universo de elaboración, en este caso si, fantástica, que adquiere la dimensión de verdadera porque se está produciendo en el aquí y ahora. Porque ante un espectáculo adecuado a las edades, tanto en la propuesta temática, como en la concreción de los elementos que intervienen en la puesta en escena, se abre la puerta a que desarrollen según sus necesidades y capacidades, una elaboración de lo que les estamos ofreciendo.

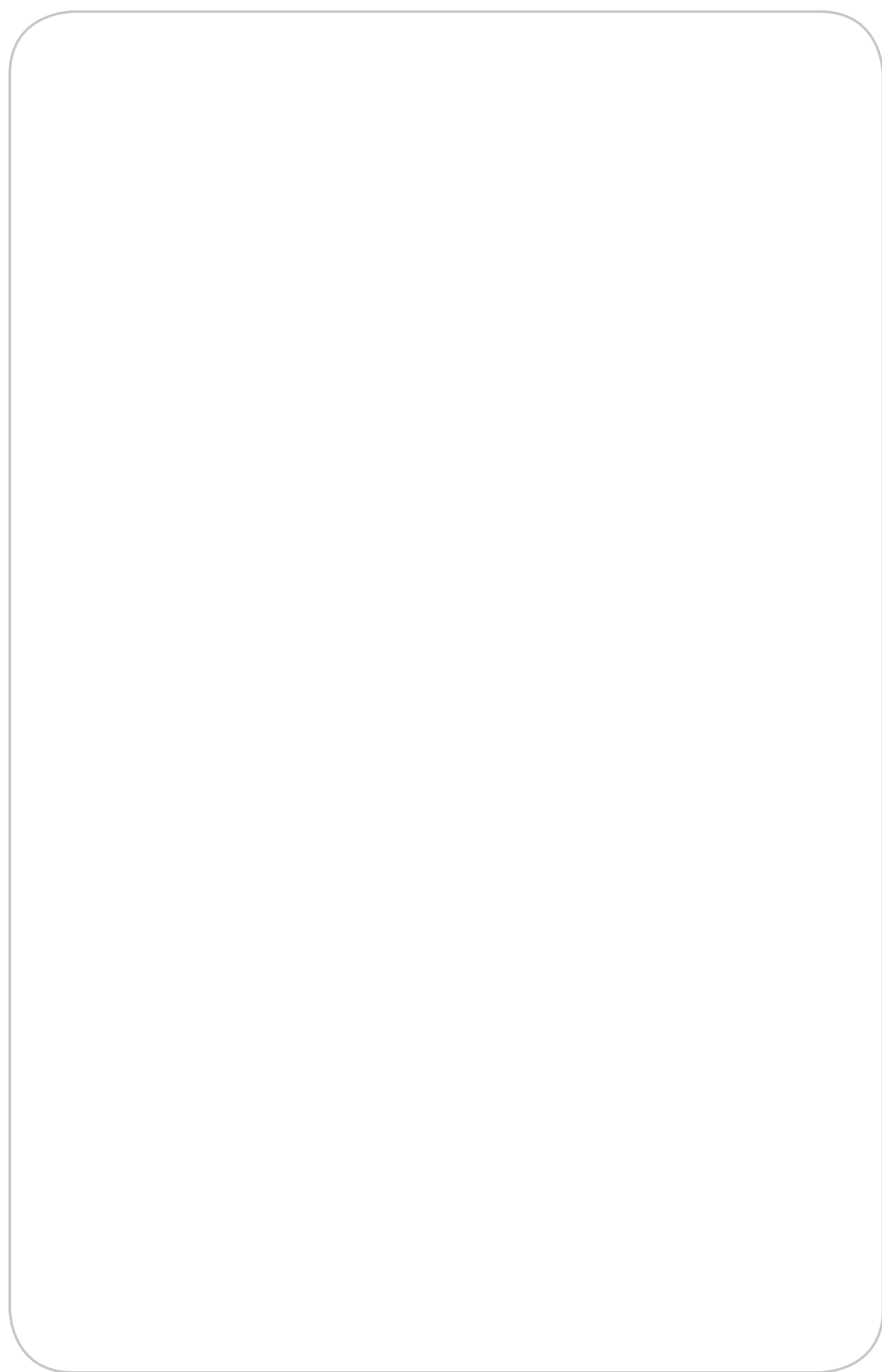
Por mi parte puedo afirmar que en mi historia personal mi

aprendizaje no se lo debo a los estudios realizados, sino que ha surgido a través de ese contacto con la infancia: ellos mismos me enseñaron, los niños y niñas que me ¿padecieron?.

La emoción de las actuaciones y trabajos ¿teatrales? que viví con ellos, la que transmiten los espectadores infantiles cuando contemplan espectáculos que con respeto y originalidad se les dirigen, no la encuentro en los espectáculos para adultos que puedo contemplar hoy día -salvo escasas excepciones-, quizás porque cuando trabajaba con ellos, no estábamos haciendo teatro. Ellos me mostraban el espectáculo de vivir con intensidad su vida.

Hacer llegar esa emoción y estimular la contemplación y observación de propuestas estéticas y éticas, debiera ser, creo yo, el papel de los padres y de la sociedad. Atender las "creaciones" de y para niños y niñas, debiera ser misión primordial de las administraciones públicas, para que pudieran encontrar un marco cultural propio, desde el cual se podría construir verdaderamente "su" cultura y acceder mas adelante como adultos, con sentido crítico y criterio propio a lo que, los adultos hemos dado en llamar creaciones artísticas.

Si seguimos en ese camino, sacrificado y difícil, entre otras cosas por el escaso reconocimiento social que conlleva, por la falta de reconocimiento que se produce en el mismo ámbito de los profesionales del teatro, entre otras limitaciones, es porque en una superficie oceánica de dudas cada vez que iniciamos el trabajo de puesta en pie de nuestros proyectos, navega la confianza íntima de que -parafraseando a un poeta de mi país- EL TEATRO ES UN ARMA CARGADA DE FUTURO.



WHY SHOULD WE DO THEATRE FOR THE EARLY YEARS? (Memories and highlights of experiences)*

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translated by Letizia Olivieri

An old countrywoman talks to the prince. The action takes place on a stage, with a paper prop representing a house in the countryside. At a certain point a panel of the house, that corresponds to a chimney, falls towards the audience, the prince catches it and pushes it backwards and the action continues... I ignore what was going on during that scene, but soon after this, the prince gave the old woman a bag full of money and she said: "thank you, with this I will be able to fix my house, because it is falling to pieces".

I was 5 or 6 years old. It is one of my first childhood memories. And in my mind, this scene is very, very vivid. Why? I have wondered so many times. The answer is difficult.

Here are some possible answers:

- Because I was totally fascinated with the magic of the scene
- Because I was witnessing real life and an imaginary reproduction of it
- Because...

Actually, I remember nothing of that show but that anecdote. I think that this can happen quite frequently when we perform for children.

I also think that when we work for the early years, we place them within a sensible and symbolic universe that is related to their need of playing and exploring, which, in turn, plays a major role: it makes situations and characters, conflicts or fiction come true, and they develop in the present tense and allow young boys and girls to carry out an experiment on how to control "that reality". In that game, the universe is inhabited by characters, sounds, movements and plastic art, and everything is made for the children's fascination. (We cannot forget that psychoanalytic theories have stressed the importance of such elaborations to

* This article has been written for "Theatre for Early Years. Research in performing arts for children from birth to three" edited by Wolfgang Schneider (Peter Lang Publishing House, Frankfurt am Main, et. al. 2009)

build and maintain the Ego and as a way out of unconscious drives).

Even today it is plain that theatrical games during childhood are social games. According to several researchers, between 2 and 5 years¹ children play following a non-written rule that is based on cooperating while playing, both while planning it and when players exchange their roles, as well as in the changes made in its structure (isn't this the basis of many creative processes carried out by adults?). As a consequence, symbolic games take social themes as a starting point: doctors, teachers, shops, etc... and we should not forget that particular moment in children's development when the first steps in social exchange originate from self-centred games in which, through the imitation of manners, young boys and girls reproduce the behaviours of the adults that surround them.

In these age groups, the game played is deeply rooted in life itself. Acting - this is what we are talking about - is a way of living, a way of acquiring knowledge about life, neither for free nor taking the concepts conveyed by teachers as a starting point.

This game implies commitment among people. From one's self to one's self. From one's self to others, learning how to be ourselves and how to relate to, understand and get to know the others.

Being ourselves, pretending to be one or someone else, stems out from this "being another" game, which is the basis of theatrical acting. At the beginning, we generally pretend to be those who surround us. We are mothers and fathers reproaching their children-puppets because they got dirty; feeding red brick dust or wet sand to their children with plastic spoons or with the bad mood of those who stand us, with the love with which they lull us... imitating our parents' arguments... We learn to be those who surround us through these elements of life, not only in a descriptive sense, but also in a symbolic and "played" one.

Such fictional creations typical of childhood, such anxiety to disguise ourselves to be someone else and then become ourselves represent the root that nourishes theatre. Being someone else and telling it to others. It is a way to go beyond ourselves and enter spaces of game-fiction provided by the hole "under the table". Fantastic scenarios created from a chair in the kitchen turned into a space shuttle, a house, a table, a ship... inhabited by the characters we have been building since we

were very young "with the matter of which dreams are made...", as Bogart would say in "The Maltese Falcon" (quoted here with Shakespearean certainty).

This matter and these characters – always the same and always different – will end up building our own character... one day. Let me conclude this statement with a commonplace: this game is very important.

When I entered the theatre world I was engaged both in education and life – if they have ever been separate entities at any point, no matter how much educational systems actually invest on it – because my theatrical experience was influenced by a direct contact with young boys and girls, having dedicated over ten years of my life to creating and developing theatrical workshops, theatrical games and dramatisations (whichever term you prefer) in an educational centre for different age groups.

The fact of being in touch with "their" productions and the processes that follow their development is part, together with the memories previously mentioned, of that baggage of experiences, discoveries and emotions that led me to commit my efforts to staging, translating and adapting texts and to other theatrical tasks during the past 25 years, after teaching in schools.

Now I would like to briefly comment on a topic that in classrooms first, and, later, in the courses I held in professional training and other fields, was often discussed: children are so imaginative!

In common language, what meaning do we assign to the term "imagination"? It is generally intended as the ability to invent, imitate public figures (let us say artists), draw inspiration from daily events to create and tell imaginary situations... Behind these phenomena there is the need to be like someone successful, socially acknowledged, loved, and the elaboration of situations children usually would like to live. In front of these events, adults – especially parents and some teachers – describe these events using the word "imagination", adding that it is their children's or pupils' "ability to imagine, to invent" and commenting on the fact that it disappears in adulthood.

It does not seem to me that this can determine the fact that a child is imaginative; we simply can deduce that there has been an imitation process, mainly guided by visual impulses, since they are usually fed TV characters who repeatedly appear on the small screen with all those linguistic and gestural clichés that can be easily mimicked.

To elaborate concepts in an "imaginative" way is instead a very different process, difficult to find in these age groups.

What we usually witness in theatrical workshops is a first approach to this type of work; they are generally elliptic elaborations, with a very simple dramatic structure and they usually originate from the reality that surrounds them: family, school environment, other children... all situations about which they can fantasise, normally within the boundaries given by their observations and experience.

This process cannot be objectively reproduced, because it is triggered unconsciously.

It is essential, however, that the reference framework is clear: we are playing the "game of telling", which does not require major artistic skills. On the contrary, it simply means to put different and coherently developed stages together, relating to evolution, observation and expression. It is within this ever-enriching framework that, I believe, theatre for children plays an essential role.

Firstly, because it places the audience/children in front of a direct phenomenon that, by "playing with fiction" and through its specific codes, can convey a whole universe of elaborations (which in this case are, in fact, imaginary) that has a "true" dimension because it is being reproduced here and now. Because from the point of view of both the themes treated and the elements staged, a show for this particular age group is an invitation for them to process what we are offering them, in accordance with their needs and abilities.

As far as I am concerned, I can say that I do not owe what I have learnt to the things I have studied; on the contrary, it has developed thanks to the fact of being in touch with the early years: *they* have been my teachers, the boys and girls that had to put up with me.

The emotion that the theatrical performances and work I experienced with them has provided me, the same emotion an audience of children conveys when watching a show cannot be found in any of today's show for adults - apart from some rare exceptions. Perhaps this is because when I was working with them, we were not doing theatre. They were showing me how they fully live their life.

I also think that the role of parents and society should be to convey this emotion, to encourage the contemplation and

observation of aesthetic and ethic proposals. Paying attention to the "creations" of young boys and girls should be the public administrations' primary objective, in order for them to find their own cultural framework and take it as a starting point for building "their" culture and enter it as adults with their own critical eye and ability to judge by themselves. We, the adults, like to call this "artistic creations".

If we follow this path – a difficult one, especially for its limited social acknowledgement and for the frequent lack of acknowledgement among theatre professionals -, it is because in an ocean full of doubts, every time we start putting into practice our projects there is the intimate certainty that - to paraphrase a poet from my country - THEATRE IS A WEAPON LOADED WITH FUTURE.

INTERACTIONS AND INSTALLATIONS: DIALOGUES BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Introduction

If the arts reflect a society and what it values, then the recent increase in theatre for babies and very young children, not just in Scotland but across the whole of Europe, says important things about the way our very youngest children are viewed and valued in European society.

Starcatchers was founded in Edinburgh in 2006 for the purpose of developing theatre for under threes. Edinburgh is well known as a city vibrant with arts and culture. The Edinburgh Festival is an internationally renowned annual festival of the arts and its Fringe festival is fertile ground for innovative and experimental work. In the field of children's theatre, Edinburgh hosts a large annual festival run by the arts organisation Imagineate, dedicated to promoting and developing performing arts for children. This then, is the cultural and artistic crucible from which Starcatchers is evolving. It is no surprise, that Rhona Matheson, director of Starcatchers has close links with Imagineate and that all the artists working on the project which includes producers, actors, musicians and visual artists, identify with a spirit of creative innovation which is in the air in Edinburgh. Since devolution artists in Scotland are conspicuously inventing, reclaiming and celebrating what it is to be Scottish. For those of us 'south of the border', coming from England, there is always a strong sense that somehow in Scotland they do things well, with wisdom and flair.

Alongside the contemporary face of 'new Scotland' are shadows of the old Scotland. Not just in Scotland but across the whole of the UK, our society is riven with inequalities. A prospering Edinburgh sits side by side with serious neglect and poverty. The walk to North Edinburgh Arts Centre where Starcatchers is based takes visitors past boarded up shops and a drug advisory centre, where the grey Northern light and cool air which creeps in from

the nearby Firth seems to wrap everything in a listlessness. If the recent increase in arts activity for very young children says something important about our UK society, it is also motivated by a deep concern with inequality and a desire to even up opportunity by providing enriched experiences in early childhood. These two motivations, a focus on creating innovative work and a concern with remedying uneven opportunity come together in early years arts projects such as Starcatchers.

Starcatchers is funded by NESTA, the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts, an organisation dedicated to funding projects which will break new ground. In Starcatchers artistic development works hand-in-hand with academic analysis and insights generated from fields of theory. This synergistic relationship between researchers and the creative team working within the project is one its key characteristics. As academics we were not acting merely as external advisors, nor (as is often the case in UK projects), as evaluators who make objective judgements about the impact or worth of a project from a detached position, but we were working within the project contributing the skills, experience and knowledge that we can bring. As researchers our role was to analyse work in progress, link it with theories that might offer further insights – and then to re-theorize in a cyclical process of elaboration between the work itself and theory, trying to achieve a genuine integration and negotiation of theory and practice.

In this article I take two viewpoints, one which moves from theory to practice and the other which moves in the opposite direction, from practice to theory. First I describe the theoretical framework which we brought to the work and how that influenced its development. Then, I describe the opposite process, where the artistic practice suggested a theoretical perspective which is fruitful for theorising and making sense of the work's evolution.

Since its inception in 2006, the Starcatchers project has moved through a number of different phases, each defined by the piece of work that has emerged. This article focuses on the most recent piece of work entitled Peep. Described by its creative team as an 'installation with performance elements', it represents, I think, some interesting and valuable departures from earlier pieces of theatre for this age phase and so is worthy of focussed attention.

The Research Dimension

At the start of the project, having been commissioned to undertake the research dimension of Starcatchers, it was immediately obvious that Emeritus Professor Colwyn Trevarthen, of Edinburgh University would be a valuable ally. Trevarthen's work on adult-infant interaction is widely known and has been strongly influential on birth to three practice in the UK. He also takes a strong interest in early childhood arts. Given the close alignment of the project to his own interests, his commitment to work in his own locality, he quickly became a supporter. Through his influence, a member of Professor Trevarthen's team joined the Starcatchers project as one of the two researchers. Trevarthen's work now spans several decades, but over this time his interests have broadly focussed on social development in the very first years.

The focus on engagement – how to know if the under threes are engaged, to discover what engages them, and then how to sustain and extend that engagement – has been a key dimension of the project. The creative team, consisting of director, visual artist/designer and musician spent initial time in early childhood settings, observing the children carefully and playing with the children in order to develop ideas as to what things are already familiar to the children and how they play. They searched for small things to provide starting points.

For example, an early visit to the childcare setting revealed that toast played an important role in daily life: the babies and toddlers sitting in their high-chairs, the warm smell of toast spreading through the daycare rooms as it was prepared and the sensory experiences of eating buttery toast. The creative team prepared a small dramatic piece around toast which they took to the setting the following week. The actors elaborated and exaggerated aspects of toast making, savouring its delicious smell, spreading it with smeary butter and jam, and passing it back and forth pegged on to a pulley line. Analysis of the video recording from this small visit revealed the children's interest in the artists' repetition of the word 'toast' with exaggerated inflexion and the children's interest in something familiar being used in some unfamiliar ways. In the final version of Peep – the main character, a bird, is coaxed out of a hidey hole with nibbles and sing-song calls of 'toast'. At the end, everyone sweeps out of the main room to be met by the smell of warm toast and platefuls of

buttered triangles.

Research Method

In the traditions of academic research I now take a short diversion to explain the method used for collecting information, then analysing and drawing interpretations from it. The reasons for explaining the method are two-fold. First it demonstrates that the research has been carried out in a thorough way so that the findings and interpretations are trustworthy. A second reason to explain is so that others interested in doing similar work might learn from the processes.

Early developmental work with children in daycare settings was recorded, sometimes using video camera on a tripod in a fixed position or using a handheld camera. This served to capture something of this activity and the children's responses, even if the fixed position of the camera also meant that some aspects were obscured. For later work in progress and final performances in the arts centre, a more complex arrangement of video recording was set up, using two fixed cameras at different sides of the room and one handheld camera which could track individual children. This ensured a more complete recording of the work which could show both the action and the children's responses. The video recordings were subject to a two-layer form of analysis. First a broad descriptive overview of the data was made and then short portions selected for more detailed, micro-analysis. The central question was – what theatrical things seem to engage the babies and how might they be developed?

From theory to practice: Interaction, a view from theories of infant psychology

In adopting this method we took our lead from Colwyn Trevarthen and his colleagues. They have recorded on video mothers and babies interacting and through painstaking micro-analysis of these interactions have discovered the non-verbal, multi-modal exchanges that are made unconsciously between a mother and baby who are successfully communicating. Tiny dramas. They have described and analysed the temporal foundations of these expressive communications and how they develop into 'narratives' of expression – longer phrases which unfold through repetition, with variation to climax and then repose. So clear were the rhythmic, phrasing and music-like structures

of this expressiveness that Trevarthen with a colleague, Stephen Malloch came up with a theory of communicative musicality (Malloch, 2000). The idea of 'communicative musicality' defines features of pulse, quality of sound and narrative form that underlie sympathetic interactions not only between adults and infants, but between people at any age. Trevarthen emphasises that his idea of 'musicality' is broadly defined and could be said to include all the temporal arts, theatre and dance as well as music. So we might also talk of 'communicative theatricality'.

If the actor is to engage babies and very young children then the expression of emotion through vocalisations – either single words, very short phrases or vocal sounds – is central. The actor in *Peep* is a bird – trilling and cheeping, uttering single words, repeating them and at one time singing a short, wordless, lyrical melody. These expressive vocalisations are accompanied by bodily movements and facial expressions of similar quality and dynamic. There is a restraint, a care to keep the expressive qualities very clear and direct so that they are unambiguous. And at the same time to avoid anything too loud, or sudden, or too close in proximity which might hint at negative emotions. That said, there is nothing saccharine, artificial or precious about the actor's presence. This is a fine dividing line to tread and the actor must be skilful.

The performed action in *Peep* has been pre-designed to create a number of small, structured events. In many of these short events a 'narrative sequence' is created that has a beginning, a development, a climax and a resolution. The bird takes a wash with a pretend bowl of water saying 'splash!'... 'splash, splash, splash' – and matches words with small flicking hand gestures of exact same dynamic and feel. These events often focus on an object – a banana, a toy hippopotamus, some keys, a bowl of water – everyday things which will be part of children's lives. All children must have experienced splashing water in the bath, or waited while parents search for keys to unlock the door. Yet, within these events the actor has some leeway to respond or engage with children if they initiate it, to be flexible to the spontaneous and unanticipated. A child who shows interest in the hippopotamus toy, can receive it, pushed gently in their direction. Another intrigued by the half-munched banana, can toddle in and discover it again under an upturned bowl.

Colywn Trevarthen's interests have extended to thinking how the

rhythms and emotions of interaction and sensitivity to temporal communicative expression may support cultural learning and the ability to be socialised (Trevarthen, 1995). More specifically, several researchers have proposed that the interpersonal dimension provides the foundations for language and meaning (see Trevarthen and Marwick, 1986). The sharing of pleasure, interest and excitement one with another is very important in the development of social collaboration, and, ultimately, social collaboration is essential to effective learning. There is evidence to suggest that emotion has a role in intelligence, and that emotions may regulate brain development, cognition and learning (Trevarthen, 1983). It is not that theatre for very young children is designed only with an eye to the instrumental – that its purpose is justified only in terms of its benefits to learning – but that in the current context, particularly in the UK, these priorities are imposed by those who fund, support and endorse children's theatre. Starcatchers, like many arts organisations working with young children is strongly encouraged to provide evidence of its longer-term potential value to children. If the arts reflect a society and what it values, then the preoccupation of funders, managers and policy-makers with proving the 'worth' of arts experiences for very young children in terms of its future benefits reflects a disappointingly impoverished view of young children. The focus is all too often on their 'becoming', how experiences will benefit them in the future – and usually a future driven by dry economic imperatives - rather than the richness and enjoyment of 'being', of living in the here and now – and for adults, of living with young children.

From practice to theory: Installations, a view from theories of art

In asking the creative team to describe this most recent piece, Peep, they called it an 'installation with performed elements'. Although other work for babies and toddlers in the UK has been devised around the idea of an interactive installation, dismantling the conventional spacing of performers and separate audience, Starcatchers has developed the idea of installation further. Children and parents enter a large room where the space is fluidly defined. Two areas where the 'audience' might settle, grassy verges with cushions set out, are implied, but not fixed and children are free to move and roam around the space in which a number of items and objects have been set out, partly as a

kind of set, partly to stimulate exploratory play. After a period of play, the main character, a bird, performs a short series of events and then invites the children to explore again – mainly, now, a house structure with interesting peep holes and windows. After another period of exploration, some performed elements again occur culminating in an upbeat dance for everyone to join in. Across all the artistic fields innovative artwork is increasingly being created from mixed forms of representation, where the visual, auditory and kinaesthetic combine to create new types of art. In recent years there has been a significant shift from works of art to be contemplated by a detached ‘audience’ to works of art as generated within a social context. In contemporary theatre, interactive installations and performances, the ‘viewer’ of the work is replaced by a ‘participant’ in a relationship with the artists and art works.

Claire Bishop, in writing about contemporary installation art says (2005: 11)

‘because viewers are addressed directly by every work of installation art – by sheer virtue of the fact that these pieces are large enough for us to enter them – our experience is markedly different from that of traditional painting, sculpture, or theatre. Instead of representing texture, space and light, installation art presents these elements directly for us to experience. This introduces an emphasis on sensory immediacy, on physical participation (the viewer, the audience, must walk into and around the work) and on a heightened awareness of other people who become part of the piece. Many artists and critics have argued that this need to move around and through the work in order to experience it activates the viewers, in contrast to art that simply requires optical contemplation (which is considered to be passive and detached).’

Peep directly activates the participating group of parents and their children. The movement of the actor requires the audience to shift attention and to look here and then there to track the activity of the bird. Different audience members see from different viewpoints and sometimes may see only part – or miss some small events all together. Unlike conventional theatre, the ‘audience’ has to sometimes make a special effort to see or enable their children to see.

The design of the room also seeks to set up relationships between the objects set out and the active, playful participation—privileged over detached contemplation more conventionally associated with theatre experience. In this installation the 'audience', the participants are invited to act, to play with the objects provided and, in a sense, 'to perform' play. In children's play there is artistry, there is spontaneity and imagination which become part of the piece, elaborated collectively. When yellow feathers float down towards the end, this happening would be nothing if the parents did not vocalise 'wow' and 'oo' and the children were not directed to look up, holding out their arms to catch them, scrambling to collect them up and play tickling games.

Peep's emphasis on first hand, direct, participatory experience produces a kind of heightened awareness of body, of self, of place, of the children and relationships to children. It aligns closely with contemporary, middle class (white, Western) parenting as a self-conscious, considered process in which parents expect to be play partners to their children, to enter in to their worlds and take pleasure in doing so. Play and parenting have become, in themselves, kinds of performance. Stimulating and structuring children's play is a dramatic event that contemporary adults find entertaining and enjoyable, in and of itself. One small boy, for example, confident enough to run back and forth and explore without inhibition, briefly took centre stage, drawing amused laughter from all the adults watching.

What is interesting is that the theatre is, of course, not for the children alone, but for children with an adult. While it is designed to be theatre that will be appropriate for the very young, the part played by the adults, particularly adults as parents rather than daycare workers, is also crucial (Young, 2004). How the actors involve the parents – or not – as the case may be, and the parents response to that invitation is the interesting dimension of theatre for under threes. The parents bring their children, with certain anticipations and then during the piece they convey their own emotional responses, of pleasure, anxiety, disinterest or whatever. There are, then, many faceted, potential spaces in the triangles of parents, children and actors. Many parents reported that they were working hard to 'read' the situation, to work out what was required of them, how much freedom and control they might allow their child. There were some parents who appeared to shield their own slight anxiety by holding the child firmly on

their lap, or some who took pride in their child's adventurousness and curiosity and encouraged it. A child's behaviour is always implicitly reflected back on to the parent. For some, insecure about their parenting competence, this reflection back may increase anxiety, and a display of their parenting in front of other adults may add to that stress. However, mostly parents are very proud of what their children do, their pride is increased by this 'reflection back' and they find it an endless source of pleasure and enjoyment to watch their children play. As a brief aside, while we discuss the involvement of parents, it is fair to say that the work tends to speak to a community of parents who have something in common, an interest in the arts and an interest in forms of active, playful parenting. The greater challenge is to speak to wider communities of parents whose interests align less directly with the opportunities offered by theatre experiences such as Peep.

If the arts reflect a society and what it values, then Peep, by its concern to understand the world of very young children in order to create art which is both appropriate for age and of high artistic quality is reflecting the value placed on the very young. The dialogues between theory and practice play a part in that process.

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**GLI OCCHI DELLA MENTE LE ORECCHIE
DELL'ANIMO LE DITA DEL PENSIERO**
Riflessioni sull'espressività infantile

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Le mie riflessioni nascono da una constatazione e al tempo stesso da una domanda.

All'interno dei nostri servizi educativi viene offerta ai bambini una molteplicità di esperienze, alcune suggerite dal contesto, altre dal ritmo della giornata, quasi a scandirne e ritualizzarne i passaggi, altre ancora appositamente preparate ed intenzionalmente proposte.

Se la progettualità è il tratto dominante dei nostri servizi, nella progettualità si innestano e trovano spazio anche le consuetudini legate al quotidiano e le caratteristiche personali e di gruppo. Ogni Nido e Scuola d'infanzia è un microcosmo che ha tratti propri ma in cui sempre si alternano ripetitività e scoperte, perché è di questo che si nutre il lavoro educativo ed è di questo che i bambini hanno bisogno: assaporare il conosciuto e cimentarsi nello sconosciuto, trovare conferma nelle consonanze e spiazzamento nelle dissonanze.

Ogni proposta che facciamo ai bambini ha una sua motivazione, una sua radice, una sua origine, che è difficile indagare e forse è sbagliato valutare.

Ma è indubbio che non tutte le esperienze hanno la stessa pregnanza, lo stesso valore. Non tutte le esperienze che proponiamo ai bambini e che viviamo con loro hanno nei bambini - e attraverso loro in noi - la stessa risonanza.

Ci sono mattinate al termine delle quali è palpabile un senso di pienezza e di appagamento ed altre che passano così senza lasciare traccia. Ci sono momenti in cui sentiamo che le cose "funzionano", che i bambini sono "presi", che il tempo si sospende e si dilata, accanto ad altri in cui si avverte che l'esperienza è frammentata, il gruppo disgregato e l'attenzione vola via.

Si creano a volte momenti magici, le espressioni dei bambini concentrate e intense, i silenzi bellissimi... a volte ma non sempre.

Cosa rende questi momenti così pieni? Quali sono gli *ingredienti*, se ci sono, che danno questo valore aggiunto all'esperienza?

Come dicevo, una constatazione, molto semplice, e al tempo stesso una domanda, che da un po' mi gira in testa.

Nella ricerca di questi ingredienti magici lascio volutamente da parte tutte le variabili istituzionali e di contesto, tantissime e tutte incidenti: il numero di bambini, il benessere dei singoli e del gruppo, il numero di adulti, la loro motivazione e sintonia, la qualità delle relazioni, l'adeguatezza degli spazi, ecc. Provo a lasciarli tutti fuori perché ho la sensazione che a fare la differenza non siano solo il *chi* e il *come* ma anche il *cosa*.

Perché alcune esperienze restano più in superficie mentre altre toccano più in profondità?

Penso a queste ultime e provo a farmele scorrere davanti.

Occhi spalancati e bocche leggermente socchiuse effetto dell'incantamento di una storia.

Espressioni accigliate in una concentrazione assoluta mentre le mani impugnano un pennello che scorre sul foglio.

Risate contagiose, divertimento puro che una gag teatrale sollecita e scatena.

L'immersione nel colore, nell'acqua, nella materia malleabile e plasmabile. La scoperta emozionante di lasciare traccia di sé, in modo occasionale prima e via via sempre più intenzionale.

Esplorare un oggetto, dargli vita, trasformarlo in un altro, svelare l'anima delle cose, metterle vicine, combinarle, assemblarle.

Trasformarsi in altro da sé, o forse in uno dei propri sé, sperimentarsi attraverso il gioco del teatro in infiniti ruoli, inventarsi ed inventare.

Giocare con la propria voce, impigliarsi e perdersi nella voce di un altro, riconoscere un timbro che ci è caro, una tonalità rivolta proprio a noi. Assaporare i suoni ed il silenzio. Scoprire il potere evocativo di un gesto.

Cos'hanno in comune queste esperienze?

Sicuramente consentono ai bambini di *esprimersi* attraverso una molteplicità di linguaggi, sono dunque *vie per dire di sé*.

Questo è importante, importantissimo, ma non è tutto, mi sembrerebbe riduttivo.

Prima ancora di esprimere e quindi "portare fuori" ciò che è dentro, i bambini hanno bisogno di comprendere, di spiegarsi il mondo esterno e il loro mondo interno, di dare un ordine e un

senso a ciò che accade fuori e dentro di loro. Un dentro e un fuori che, come sappiamo, hanno confini labili, che per differenziarsi devono fare un lungo cammino.

I bambini hanno bisogno di capire che gli eventi che accadono non sempre e non necessariamente dipendono da loro, che non sono responsabili di tutto quello che succede, che il mondo gira indipendentemente da loro (e questo è un grande sollievo).

Ma anche che possono agire sul reale, incidere, lasciare la loro traccia, che non sono in balia degli eventi. E devono poter agire senza essere confusi o, peggio, identificati con i loro comportamenti.

E' un'impresa potente per un bambino differenziarsi e produrre qualcosa d'altro da sé senza perdersi.

Se le relazioni e le esperienze che ha vissuto saranno state "sufficientemente buone", il lungo percorso della crescita lo porterà verso un'identità definita ma non per questo rigida, un'identità che si percepisce in armonia col mondo, un dentro e un fuori in rapporto dinamico, autonomi ma non scollegati.

I bambini cercano risposte alle grandi domande tipiche dell'infanzia, le grandi domande filosofiche sul mondo e su se stessi nel mondo, molto prima di avere la capacità di formularle.

Hanno bisogno di linguaggi per dare forma al caos.

Per questo definivo riduttivo il concetto di "esprimere" come "portare fuori". E' una dinamica più complessa che consente, attraverso la manipolazione, la sperimentazione e l'ascolto di materiali, oggetti, suoni, parole... di portare dentro ciò che appartiene al fuori e portare fuori quello che appartiene al dentro¹, di incorporare, dissociare, riunire, di esprimere e di imprimere.

Le esperienze che ho citato consentono di fare questo, su un piano simbolico e reale. Ecco perché toccano così in profondità.

Ma c'è un altro aspetto che rintraccio all'interno di questo modo di fare esperienza di sé e del mondo: è la dimensione poetica che lo permea, "poesia" nel suo significato di "produzione artistica", "fare", "creare" qualcosa che prima non c'era (greco poiesis: produzione, creazione; poien: fare). Una dimensione poetica creativa che sta fra il sogno e la realtà o, meglio, "la dimensione del sogno declinata sul piano della realtà"², perché la realtà non è solo quella che gli occhi vedono e che i sensi

1 Cfr. Francesco Caggio, in F. Caggio, R. Abbatinali (a cura di), "...QUASI ARTE..." manufatti di bambini impegnati, Edizioni Junior, Bergamo, 2004, p.43

2 ibidem, p.42

permettono di percepire.

Lo sappiamo che per conoscere occorre uno "sguardo sottile"³, capace di andare oltre ciò che appare... e tuttavia abbiamo bisogno che qualcuno ogni tanto ce lo ricordi.

In modo meraviglioso e molto poetico appunto, ce lo ricorda Amos Oz, in un suo racconto semplice e profondo sull'infanzia:

"A parte Almon il pescatore, che nessuno ascoltava perché tutti si facevano beffe di lui, non c'era nessuno in tutto il paese che potesse insegnare ai bambini che la realtà non è soltanto quella che l'occhio vede e l'orecchio ode e la mano può toccare, bensì anche quel che sta nascosto alla vista e al tatto, e si svela ogni tanto, solo per un momento, a chi lo cerca con gli occhi della mente e a chi sa ascoltare e udire con le orecchie dell'animo e toccare con le dita del pensiero. Ma chi avrebbe mai dato retta ad Almon? Era un vecchio verboso e quasi cieco, sempre lì a discutere con il suo spaventapasseri"⁴

Molto prima ce l'aveva già ricordato il Piccolo Principe: quello che è davvero importante non lo si vede, "Non si conosce che col cuore. L'essenziale è invisibile agli occhi". Un messaggio potente rivolto agli adulti perché mantengano o recuperino la capacità di immaginare e fantasticare tipica dell'infanzia.

Una capacità immaginativa che tende ad assottigliarsi, lungo un percorso scolastico che ancora troppo tende a separare ciò che non è separabile e a privilegiare un solo modo di apprendere, che tende a perdersi in una quotidianità che incalza e disincanta.

*Ma è l'invisibile la molla che stimola l'immaginazione e spinge verso la conoscenza. E' grazie all'affettività e alle spinte emozionali che la mente pone domande e formula ipotesi. La conoscenza stessa non è più intesa come conquista di una realtà oggettiva ma come attività interpretativa, processo di costruzione di ipotesi di senso all'interno della personale esperienza emotiva di contatto col mondo.*⁵

3 espressione mutuata da Sergio Neri, intesa come capacità di lasciarsi stupire dall'imprevedibilità e dall'unicità degli eventi e di guardare oltre l'apparenza immediata. Cfr. L. Rondanini, M. Longhi, *Quello sguardo sottile. Una scienza romantica per l'integrazione scolastica*, Edizioni Erickson, Trento, 2005.

4 A. Oz, *D'un tratto nel folto del bosco*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 2005, p.47

5 L. Perla, *La forza del pensiero – bambino. Appunti per l'adulto*, in E. Beseghi,

Ma torniamo ad Almon: a parte un vecchio strambo che parla col suo spaventapasseri, nessuno insegnava ai bambini che la realtà non è solo quella che l'occhio vede... C'è bisogno che qualcuno lo insegni ai bambini? Non è una qualità che i bambini hanno naturalmente e che è l'adulto a perdere? La capacità immaginativa è un tratto infantile ma questo non significa affatto che i bambini non abbiano bisogno di adulti capaci di condividere e dare valore a questo spazio intermedio, così ricco e fecondo in termini di relazioni. Penso ancora alle esperienze offerte ai bambini.

Che tipo di esperienze regaliamo ai bambini quando raccontiamo loro una storia? Quando leggiamo per loro un libro o cantiamo per loro una canzone? Quando ci disegniamo una faccina sui polpastrelli e facciamo apparire e scomparire le nostre dita al ritmo di una filastrocca? che tipo di messaggio trasmettiamo ai bambini quando fingiamo di inseguirli senza riuscire a prenderli, quando fingiamo di non vederli e ci preoccupiamo di averli persi? Quando esageriamo i nostri gesti e le nostre espressioni per divertirli, stupirli, essere loro complici? quando stiamo al gioco nei loro giochi di finzione? In quale realtà trasportiamo i bambini quando li avviciniamo al teatro, a quel palcoscenico pieno di artefatti ma anche di persone in carne ed ossa che sono lì per loro?⁶

Sono tutte esperienze che riguardano il senso profondo della nostra relazione con i bambini, del nostro stare in relazione con loro. Con la voce, con i gesti, con l'espressività del corpo, con discrezione ma anche vicinanza fisica ed emotiva, con rispetto per le loro visioni e fantasticazioni, lasciando aperta la possibilità di far convivere i contrari. Il concetto di relazione sta proprio nella dinamica tra unione e separazione, tra identità e alterità.

Stare con i bambini sapendo condividere le loro illusioni. La parola "illusione" è spesso guardata con sospetto, confusa con "inganno". Ma c'è una differenza di fondo: l'inganno vive grazie al trucco, se il trucco è scoperto, svelato, l'inganno svanisce; *l'illusione invece è parte della realtà*, è un mondo intermedio, un'area transizionale in cui entriamo sapendo che possiamo uscirne. La realtà è complessa, l'illusione ne fa parte.⁷

C. Laneve (a cura di), Lo sguardo della memoria. Rileggendo "Il Piccolo Principe", Laterza, Bari, 2003, p.54

⁶ cfr. J. Mata, prefazione a M. Manferrari, R. Frabetti, Un alfabeto di 21 lettere, Pendragon, Bologna, 2006

⁷ cfr. A. M. Iacono, Bambini, miti, filosofia, relazione all'Incontro Internazionale di Castiglioncello "Il bambino ir-reale", maggio 2006

Il gioco, il teatro, la poesia, la fiaba consentono ai bambini di sperimentare l'illusione rimanendo se stessi. Permanenza e mutamento vanno insieme. Saper creare e attraversare contesti è un bel modo di crescere. Incoraggiare i bambini ad attraversare mondi intermedi è un messaggio di fiducia, di libertà, di autonomia. Mantenersi aperti e disponibili ad entrare in contatto col mondo attraverso molteplici vie per conoscerlo si traduce nella possibilità di acquisire identità plurali, decentrate, empatiche, di elaborare forme di pensiero flessibili, mobili, erratiche, capaci di conservare e potenziare un altro tratto tipico dell'infanzia: la curiosità.

Come ho cercato di dire, l'apprendimento nasce da un continuo scambio tra dentro e fuori, tra qui e l'altrove, nel gioco dialettico delle loro rappresentazioni, in un'epoca della vita in cui disponiamo di alfabeti immediati, legati al sentire, non ancora traducibili in parole.

Lo esprime molto bene Juan Mata: "I piccoli sono sempre stranieri nel mondo di odori, oggetti, spazi, gesti, sapori e suoni in cui arrivano all'improvviso e senza bussola (...) Il titanico lavoro dei bambini consiste nell'*andar comprendendo* progressivamente i loro significati"⁸

Via via le sensazioni e le emozioni vengono elaborate, categorizzate, ordinate, tradotte in simboli, trasformate in parole.

E' un passaggio importantissimo: la parola sostiene il pensiero e lo rende condivisibile. Nella comunicazione con se stessi e con gli altri la parola diventa allora il linguaggio privilegiato.

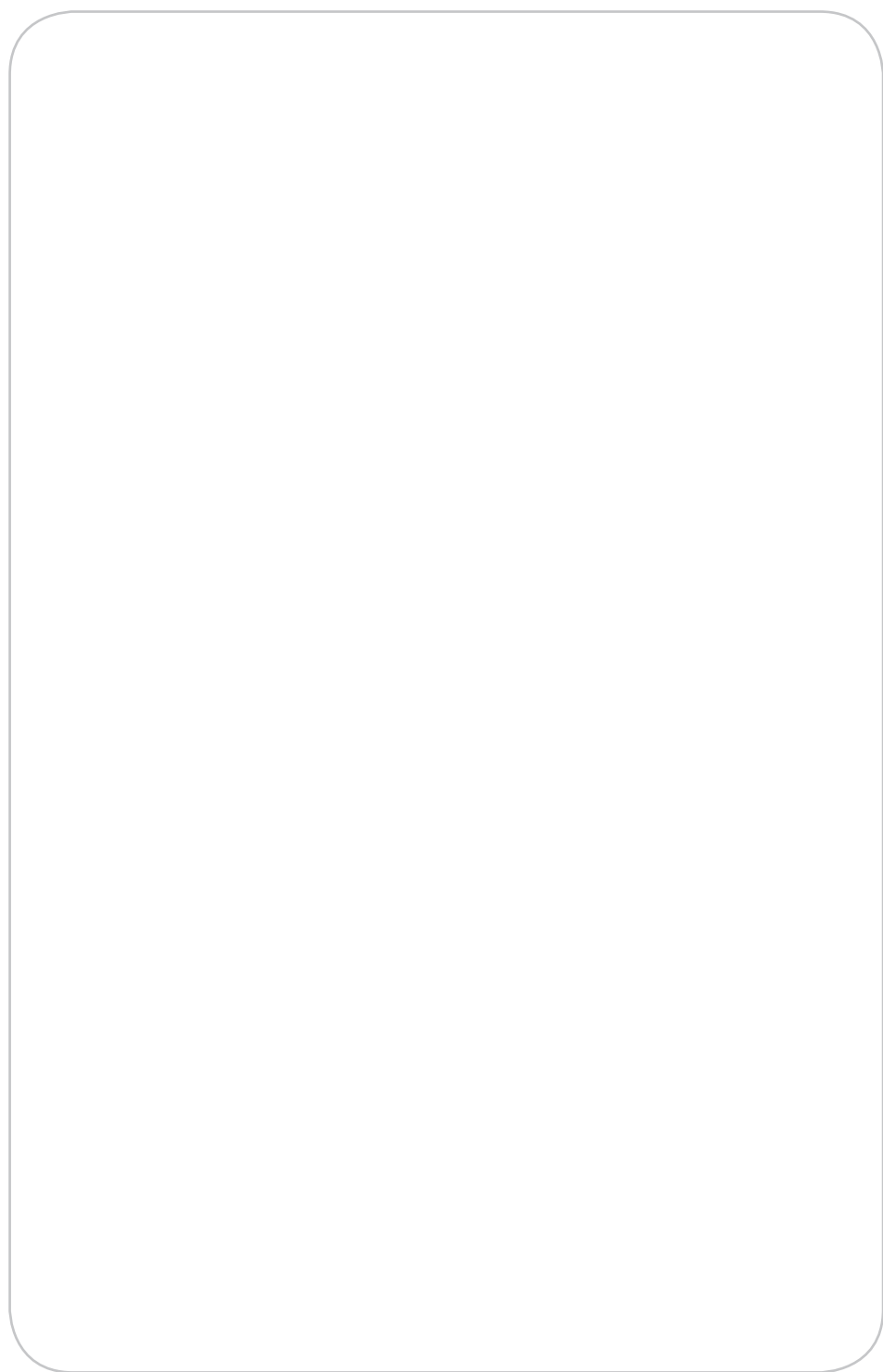
Un "primato della parola" legittimo pur di non perdere la doppia connotazione che la parola possiede: c'è la lingua dell'immediato, del quotidiano e c'è la lingua dell'immaginazione, del desiderio. Le parole danno nome alla realtà ma anche la ampliano, la trascendono. Questa capacità trasformativa della parola che ritroviamo nella narrazione, nella poesia, nel canto, nel teatro, nel gioco non la dobbiamo sottrarre ai bambini.

Un "primato della parola" legittimo purché non si atrofizzino gli altri linguaggi, anteriori alla parola.

Concludo allora col frammento di un romanzo di David Grossman, centrato proprio sull'importanza dell'immaginazione nei rapporti umani e sul potere della parola:

"Naturalmente non ho bisogno di dirti la mia felicità
quando iniziò a parlare. Di sicuro ricordi il momento

meraviglioso in cui un bambino comincia a parlare. Eppure, ogni volta che imparava una parola nuova (...), persino la sua prima parola, una parola bella come *luce*, io provavo una stretta al cuore, perché pensavo: chissà cosa sta perdendo in questo momento. Chissà quanti tipi di chiarore ha visto e assaggiato e odorato prima di stiparli tutti in quella piccola scatola chiamata *luce*, con quella <c> nel mezzo, come un interruttore per spegnerla"⁹



**THE EYES OF THE MIND THE EARS OF THE SOUL
THE FINGERS OF THOUGHTS**
Comments on the expressiveness of children

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translated by Letizia Olivieri

My thoughts arise from an observation and at the same time from a question.

Our educational services offer children a variety of experiences; some of them are suggested by the context; others from the rhythm of the day, almost as if they could mark and ritualise its phases; others are prepared and proposed on purpose.

Planning and project development are actually the main features of our services, but also daily habits and personal and group characteristics can play their role. Each crèche and nursery school is a little world with special traits, in which, however, repetitiveness and discoveries continuously alternate, because the educational work is based on this and it is what children need, i.e. to taste the known and to venture on the unknown, to find confirmations in consonances and wrong-footings in dissonances.

Anything we propose children has its reasons, its roots, its origin, which are difficult to investigate and it may be wrong to judge them.

However, there is no doubt that each experience is not equally meaningful and worthy. Not all the experiences we propose children and share with them generate the same interest in them, and in us through them.

Some mornings end with a tangible sense of intensity and gratification, whereas others go by without leaving any trace. There are moments in which we feel that things "are working", that the children are "involved", that time stops and expands, and others when we perceive that the experience is fragmented, that the group is broken up and that the attention is diverted. Sometimes magic moments arise, when the children are intensely focused and wonderfully silent... Sometimes, but not always.

What makes these moments so intense? Which are the *ingredients*, if any, giving this added value to experiences?

As I said, this is an observation and at the same time a question, and it has been crossing my mind for a while.

I am intentionally leaving aside the several and all equally important institutional and context-bound variables in my search for these magic ingredients: the number of children, the well-being of the individuals and of the group, the number of adults, their motivation and agreement, the quality of the relationships, the suitability of the premises, etc. I am trying to leave them aside because I feel that not only the *whos* and *hows* can make the difference, but also the *what*.

Why do some experiences remain superficial while others touch us deeply?

I am thinking about the latter and browse them.

Eyes wide open and half-closed mouths because of the rapture caused by a story. Extremely focused frowning faces while hands hold a paintbrush running on a sheet of paper.

The contagious laughter and pure fun triggered by a theatre gag.

Immersions in colours, water, pliable and malleable materials. The exciting discovery of the ability to leave a trace, first occasionally, then more and more intentionally. To explore an object, to give life to it, to transform it into something else, to reveal the soul of things, to put them near, match them, assemble them.

To become someone else, maybe one of one's different selves, to experiment endless roles through theatrical game, to invent oneself and to invent.

To play with the voice, to get tangled up and lost in someone else's voice, to recognise a cherished timbre, a tone addressed to us. To taste sounds and silence. To discover the evocative power of a gesture. What do these experiences have in common? They certainly allow children to *express themselves* through a variety of languages, considered as *ways of talking about themselves*. This is important, almost essential, but it is not all, because it would be restrictive.

Before even expressing and therefore "bringing out" what is inside, children need to understand, to account for the outside world and for the one inside of them, to arrange and give a sense to what happens outside and inside them.

We know that this inside and outside have fleeting boundaries, and they will become different only after a long time. Children need to know that each event that happens does not always and necessarily depend on them, that they are not responsible for everything happening, that the world goes around anyway apart from them (and this is relieving).

However, they also need to understand that they can also affect reality, act on it, leave their mark. They need to understand that they are not at the mercy of events.

Moreover, they have to be able to act without being confused with or, even worse, identified with their behaviour.

To be unique and to produce something different from themselves without getting lost is a powerful experience for children.

If the relationships and experiences they have lived have been "good enough", the long path of growth will lead them to a definite but not fixed identity. They will perceive themselves as in harmony with the world; the inside and the outside are dynamically connected; they are independent, but not unrelated.

Children try to find the answers to the important philosophical questions, typical of childhood, about the world and about themselves in the world a long time before being able to formulate them.

They need languages to give chaos a shape.

This is the reason why the concept of "expression" as "bringing out" is restrictive to me. It is a more complex process, which allows to take in what belongs to the outside and to bring out what belongs to the inside¹, to include, to separate, to gather, to express and to imprint through manipulation, experimentation and attention to materials, objects, sounds, words...

The experiences I mentioned allow to do this on both a symbolic and real basis. That is why they are so intensely touching.

However, I noticed another aspect of this way of experiencing oneself and the world, that is, the poetic dimension pervading it. I mean "poetic" in the sense of "artistic production", "making", "creating" something that was not there before (from the Greek *poiesis*: production, creation; *poien*: to make). It is a poetic creative dimension lying between dreams and reality or, better said, "the dream dimension rendered on a reality basis"², because reality is not only what eyes can see and sense allow

1 Cfr. Francesco Caggio, in F. Caggio, R. Abbatalini (edited by), "... QUASI ARTE..." manufatti di bambini impegnati, Edizioni Junior, Bergamo, 2004, page 43.

2 Ibidem, page 42.

to perceive.

We know we need a "keen eye"³ able to go beyond appearances... and we need someone to remind it to us anyway.

Amos Oz evokes it wonderfully and poetically through a simple and intense tale on childhood:

"Apart from Almon the fisher, whom no one listened to because they teased him, there was nobody in the whole village who could teach children that reality is not only what our eyes can see, what our ears can hear and what our hands can touch, but also what is out of our sight and touch, and reveals itself once in a while, just for one moment, to the ones who try to find it with the eyes of the mind, the ears of the soul, and touch it with the fingers of thoughts. But who would have listened to Almon? He was a verbose and almost blind old man, always talking to his scarecrow".⁴

"The little prince" evoked this concept a long time before: what is really important cannot be seen; "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly. The essential is invisible to the eye". This is a powerful message addressed to adults, so that they can keep or regain their ability to imagine and fantasise, which is typical of childhood. This creative ability tends to dwindle because of a school system which keeps on separating what is not separable; it tends to give preference to a single modality of learning, and loses itself into a pressing and disenchanting daily routine.

However, *the invisible is the trigger which stimulates imagination and pushes towards knowledge*. Thanks to affections and emotional drives, our mind asks questions and formulates hypotheses. Knowledge itself is not meant as the conquest of an objective reality anymore, but as an interpretative activity, as the process involving the creation of hypotheses on meanings in the scope of personal emotional contact with the world.⁵

3 Sergio Neri means by this the ability to let oneself be amazed by the unexpectedness and uniqueness of events and to see beyond immediate appearances. Cfr. L. Rondanini, M. Longhi, *Quello sguardo sottile. Una scienza romantica per l'integrazione scolastica*, Edizioni Erickson, Trento, 2005.

4 A. Oz, *D'un tratto nel folto del bosco*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 2005, page 47.

5 L. Perla, *La forza del pensiero-bambino. Appunti per l'adulto*, in E. Beseghi, C. Laneve (edited by), *Lo sguardo della memoria. Rileggendo "Il Piccolo Principe"*,

But let us go back to Almon: apart from this weird old man speaking to his scarecrow, no one taught children that reality is not only what can be seen with our eyes.

Do children need to be taught this? Is it not a quality which children naturally have and adults then lose? Imagination is a typical characteristic of childhood, but this does not mean that children do not need adults who can share and enhance this transitional space, so rich and fruitful as far as relationships are concerned. Again, I consider the experiences we offer children. What type of experience do we give children when we tell them a story? When we read a book or sing a song for them? When we draw a little face on our finger tips and we make them appear and disappear to the rhythm of a nursery rhyme? What type of message do we convey to children when we pretend to chase them without catching them, when we pretend not to see them and we worry that we lost them? When we amplify our gestures and our expressions to amuse them, to amaze them, to be their accomplices? When we play the game with them? Into which world do we take children when we introduce them to theatre, to that stage full of fiction but also of real people who are there for them?⁶

All these experiences deal with the deep meaning of our relationship with children, of us relating to them with our voice, gestures, body expressions, careful but also physically and emotionally close to them, respecting their visions and fantasies and giving them the possibility to let opposites coexist. The concept of relationship actually lies in the juxtaposition between union and separation, similarity and difference.

This means being with children and being able to share their illusions. The word "illusion" is often seen suspiciously and confused with "deception". Anyway, there is a basic difference: deception only works with a trick; when the trick is seen through, the deception disappears. On the other hand, *illusion is a part of reality*: it is an in-between world, a transitional area in which we get in, knowing we can come out of it. Reality is complex, and illusion is a part of it.⁷

Games, theatre, poetry, tales allow children to try out illusions

Laterza, Bari, 2003, page 54.

6 Cfr. J. Mata, foreword to M. Manferrari, R. Frabetti, *Un alfabeto di 21 lettere*, Pendragon, Bologna, 2006.

7 Cfr. A.M. Iacono, *Bambini, miti, filosofia*, report at Castiglione International Meeting "Il bambino irreal", May 2006.

while remaining who they are. Permanence and change follow the same path. To be able to create and to cross over different contexts is a good way of growing up. To encourage children to cross over transitional worlds is a message of confidence, of freedom, of independence. To keep oneself open and enthusiast of coming into contact with the world through various paths in order to wholly understand it turns into the possibility to acquire a plural, decentralised, empathic identity, to create flexible, dynamic, erratic forms of thought, which can keep and enhance another typical trait of childhood, i.e. curiosity.

As I tried to explain, learning develops from a continuous exchange between inside and outside, between here and elsewhere, in the dialectic game of their representations, in a period of their lives in which we have immediate languages on hand, linked to feelings but not yet translatable into words.

Juan Mata perfectly expresses this concept: "Children are always strangers in a world of smells, objects, spaces, gestures, tastes and sounds where they arrive all of a sudden and without guidance (...) The gigantic work which children have to carry out is to *progressively understand* their meanings"⁸.

As time goes by, sensations and feelings are processed, categorised, classified, translated into symbols, transformed into words.

It is a fundamental phase: words support thoughts and make them shareable. Words become the preferential language to communicate with ourselves and with others.

It is a rightful "supremacy of words", but the double connotation which words have must not get lost: there is a language of directness, of everyday life, and a language of imagination, of wishes. Words give a name to reality but they also enlarge it and transcend it. We must not deny children this transforming power of words, which we find in narration, poetry, songs, theatre and games.

It is a rightful "supremacy of words", but the other languages prior to words must not be atrophied.

To conclude, I will quote a fragment of one of David Grossman's novels, focused on the importance of imagination on human relationships and on the power of words:

"I do not obviously need to tell you how happy I was when he began to speak. You will certainly remember

the wonderful moment when a child begins to speak. However, each time he learnt a new word (...), even his first word, such a beautiful word as *light*, it was heartbreaking to me, because I thought: who knows what he is losing now. Who knows how many types of glows he has seen and tasted and smelled before storing them in that small box called *light*, with that <g> in the middle of it, as a switch to turn it off".⁹

⁹ D. Grossman, *Che tu sia per me il coltello*, Mondadori, Milano, 2000, page 19.

LA IMPORTANCIA DE LA ACTIVIDAD DRAMÁTICA EN LA EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL Y PRIMARIA

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¿Puede un palo convertirse en un avión surcador de espacios, en una varita mágica que transforma sueños en realidades, en un caballo veloz? Todos recordamos cómo en nuestra infancia cualquier objeto poseía la virtualidad de convertirse en aquello que deseábamos.

Los niños y las niñas de estas edades viven en un mundo mágico, donde todo es posible. Desde pequeños participan en situaciones y juegos simbólicos, en los que recrean formas de vida y personajes con los que se identifican, y, al hacerlo, adoptan comportamientos y características propias de otras personas o de seres fantásticos. En el juego simbólico los niños son lo que quieren ser.

Este tipo de juego que se produce de forma espontánea refleja la percepción global e intuitiva de la realidad que el niño tiene a esas edades, actuando como un instrumento que le permite apropiarse de la realidad, para comprenderla mejor y para participar en situaciones y experiencias que de otro modo no podría vivir.

En el juego simbólico, los más pequeños utilizan un lenguaje basado fundamentalmente en la acción. Es un lenguaje que les resulta familiar, porque en él, además de acercarse a lo real y asimilarlo, se afirman como «yo». Es una forma de expresión que les sirve para explorar y experimentar comportamientos motores, afectivos e intelectuales, que les ayuda a adentrarse en mundos a los que no tienen acceso, que les permite recrear realidades, representarse el mundo y hacerlo con sus iguales.

Este juego simbólico, estas dramatizaciones espontáneas, facilitan la construcción personal y surgen tanto de la necesidad de comunicarse como la de dar significado al mundo para poder “representárselo” a sí mismos, para poder comprenderlo. Pero este juego que se manifiesta de forma natural en niños y niñas de todas las culturas ha de ser objeto específico de

atención educativa. Ha de ser aprovechado didácticamente para ayudar a los niños y las niñas a enriquecer sus posibilidades expresivas. Esta forma natural que tienen los niños de representar el mundo debe abordarse de forma sistemática y planificada en las aulas, porque posee un inmenso potencial educativo.

El juego dramático infantil, "el teatro", ha sido objeto de estudio permanente por parte de las ciencias de la educación y forma parte del quehacer habitual de maestros y maestras, que siempre han sido conscientes de su capacidad educativa.

Por todo ello, esta modalidad de juego, que predomina sobre todo entre los niños y niñas de dos a seis años, está siendo objeto de atención específica en el currículo elaborado en desarrollo de la Ley Orgánica de Educación, que lo recoge como un elemento inestimable para la construcción del pensamiento y de la identidad individual. Y es que este juego constituye una manifestación de la función simbólica que se produce cuando el niño adquiere la capacidad de codificar su experiencia en símbolos, cuando puede recordar o evocar acontecimientos e imitar el mundo de los mayores asimilándolo por medio de sus propias estructuras de pensamiento. Esta capacidad de ficción, de representar situaciones reales o imaginarias, es vivida intensamente por los niños y les ayuda a confrontar la realidad, a revivir experiencias que les han sido gratas, y también a evocar escenarios desagradables, difíciles o conflictivos.

Esta "puesta en escena" les prepara para superar situaciones que a veces constituyen retos o realizaciones deseadas que los niños esperan convertir en experiencias. Además, les facilita la expresión de pensamientos y sentimientos subjetivos. Piaget llegó a decir que el juego simbólico era una forma de pensamiento del niño, como si los pequeños compensaran la dificultad que les supone pensar sobre sus propias experiencias con la facilidad que muestran para representarlas.

Este tipo de actividad juega, pues, un importante papel en la construcción de la personalidad infantil y en la adquisición de aprendizajes y favorece, sobre todo, el conocimiento social. Así, cuando un niño de cuatro años juega a inventar aventuras con muñecos o con marionetas crea relaciones entre ellos y representa conflictos y diversas situaciones de carácter social. Cuando atribuye significados figurados a los elementos de una escena está, de algún modo, reproduciendo esquemas sociales, simbolizando la idea que tiene del mundo, explicando

con sus actos y sus frases hechas lo que todavía no es capaz de expresar con razones y reflexiones.

Desde el Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia compartimos la convicción de que la dramatización es uno de los contenidos más globalizadores e integradores del currículo. El sistema educativo ha de dotar a los niños y niñas de recursos expresivos y representativos que amplíen las posibilidades de uso en situaciones variadas. Por ello, este tipo de contenidos han de ocupar un lugar propio y claro en la planificación de lo que se desea que los niños aprendan.

El currículo ha de recoger la importancia de la comunicación dramática desde su componente estético y lúdico y, sobre todo, ha de incidir en su potencial formativo en un sentido amplio: como ayuda para conformar la propia personalidad; para ir adquiriendo los contenidos a partir de su experiencia social, emocional y cognitiva; para establecer relaciones con el entorno utilizando el cuerpo, la voz, el movimiento, las artes plásticas, la música o la literatura.

Tradicionalmente, la escuela ha potenciado los contenidos que tienen una mayor carga académica y ha concedido una atención menor a la expresión artística y creativa. Sin embargo, ya hace muchos años que se reconoce la importancia de las actividades expresivas y creativas en el desarrollo personal y el papel que desempeñan para la expresión y comunicación de los pensamientos, experiencias y sentimientos. Cada vez más se entiende que ello es responsabilidad del conjunto de las áreas escolares y no exclusivamente de la Educación Artística, cualquiera que sea su denominación. Todas las áreas han de promover el desarrollo de la creación, de la iniciativa, de la comunicación y de la sensibilidad estética. Por ese motivo, la expresión teatral debe abordarse desde el conjunto de los ámbitos de experiencia en Educación Infantil o de las áreas de conocimiento en Educación Primaria. Ha de ser considerado un contenido transversal, porque adquiere sentido en la convergencia de numerosos ámbitos, porque desarrolla aptitudes motoras, perceptivas y cognitivas, porque activa procesos en los que están implicadas vertientes afectivas (emociones, sentimientos), de socialización (trabajo cooperativo, ajuste grupal) y de educación en valores (dilemas morales, empatía). La capacidad creativa se ha de basar en la actividad intelectual que combina, reelabora y modifica los elementos de

la experiencia, configurándolos de manera distinta a como han sido recibidos. La dramatización hace intervenir la imaginación y la fantasía, las emociones y las ideas previas, para reconstruir o dar vida a experiencias, personajes y vivencias, de forma personal y propia. Por eso la dramatización, sustentada sobre habilidades de exploración y de experimentación, suministra un campo inagotable para el desarrollo de la creatividad.

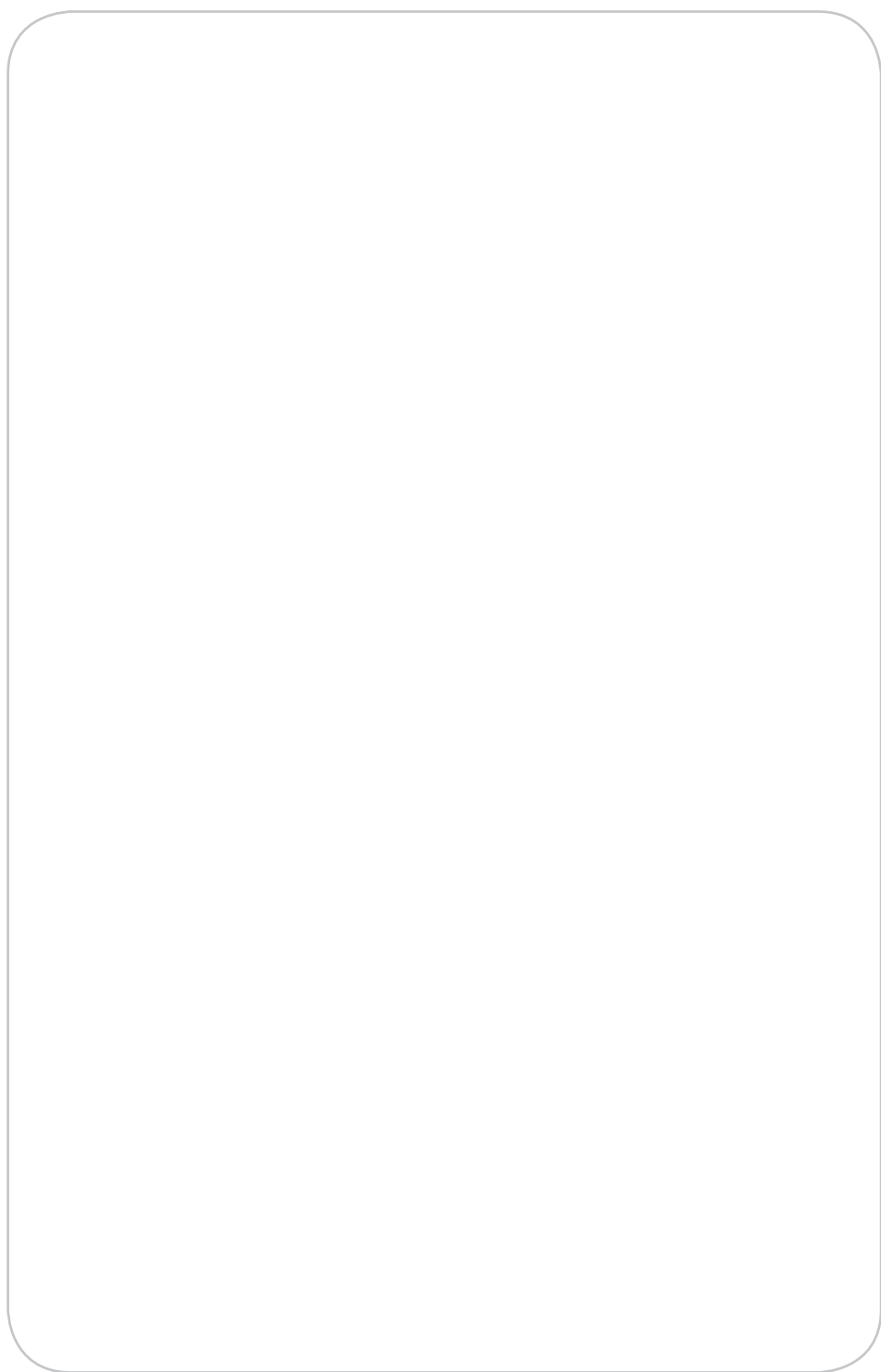
La expresión dramática debe tener a estas edades un carácter esencialmente lúdico, al tiempo que debe insistir especialmente en el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa. Estas representaciones son un gran apoyo para mejorar la competencia comunicativa en la lengua propia, tanto en lo que se refiere a mejorar el uso de la lengua (expresión, dicción, corrección, coherencia y cohesión del discurso) como en lo que hace a la lengua como vehículo de expresión y de apropiación de emociones y sentimientos. Y son, en el mismo sentido, un recurso excepcional para aprender lenguas extranjeras.

Las escenificaciones, dramatizaciones o juegos simbólicos podrán realizarse con el propio cuerpo o a través de sustitutos simbólicos (marionetas, materiales u objetos diversos, técnicas...), podrán ajustarse o no a un texto o guión previo, a través de roles en los que los niños desarrollan espontáneamente una escena o situación. Pero en todos los casos, habrán de responder a dos objetivos: la expresión de sí mismo y la comunicación con el otro, en su sentido más amplio.

Por ello, el currículo deberá propiciar que las niñas y los niños se sirvan de la expresión dramática para elaborar significados y para comunicarlos. El currículo contemplará la dramatización como un aprendizaje que, a estas edades, se adquiere cuando se trabaja en diferentes contextos y desde distintas perspectivas. Así por ejemplo, la dramatización se debe trabajar en educación física, en la medida en que los niños van aprendiendo a dominar progresivamente los aspectos motores y de expresión corporal; también debe trabajarse en el área lingüística, al abordar el aprendizaje de textos, la elaboración de diálogos con diferentes intenciones comunicativas o la dicción, por ejemplo. Y, naturalmente, tiene que abordarse en estrecha relación con los contenidos musicales y plásticos, pero sin agotarse ni reducirse sólo a ellos.

El currículo español, que en el momento de escribir estas líneas se encuentra en proceso de elaboración, apuesta por incluir

la dramatización como una herramienta fundamental para la construcción personal y colectiva, como un instrumento con un gran valor educativo. Este es el reto que tenemos por delante y al que esperamos dar la respuesta más adecuada.



THE IMPORTANCE OF DRAMATIC PLAY IN EARLY AND PRIMARY EDUCATION

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translated by Letizia Olivieri

Can a stick turn into a plane flying through the skies, or into a magic wand that makes dreams come true, or into a fast horse? We all can remember how, when we were children, any object could become anything we wanted.

Little boys and girls of this age live in a magic world, where everything is possible. As children, they are used to taking part in symbolic play as well as role play, creating parallel lives and imaginary characters they identify themselves with. And while doing this, they take on behaviours and characteristics of other people or fantastic beings. In symbolic play, children are what they want to be.

This kind of play, which usually takes place spontaneously, reflects the global and intuitive perception of reality children have at this age. It is a means that allows them to better understand reality and live and experience situations that otherwise they could not experience.

While engaging in symbolic play, the youngest of children use a language which is mainly based on action. It is a language they are familiar with, because it allows them to express their being "me", as well as to approach and grasp reality. To them, it is a form of expression useful for exploring and experiencing intellectual, emotional and sensory-motor behaviours. It helps them enter worlds they usually have no access to, recreate realities and represent the world, often together with their peers.

This kind of symbolic play and these spontaneous dramatisations make their personal growth easier, and they emerge both from the need to communicate and from the need to give the world a meaning in order to "represent" it to themselves and then understand it.

This natural kind of play - which can be observed in any culture - has to be taken seriously in the field of education. It has to be applied pedagogically in order to help little boys and girls

enrich their range of expressive possibilities. This natural way children have to represent the world has to be approached systematically and methodically at school, because it has got a great educational potential.

Children's dramatic play - "theatre" - has always been one of the topics studied in science of education, and it is part of the daily working life of teachers, who have always been aware of its educational potential.

For all these reasons, this kind of play – which can be more often observed in the 2-6 age group – is now being introduced in the curriculum in the development of the Organic Education Law, where it is considered a basic element for the development of thinking and individual identity. And this special type of play is actually an expression of the process that is taking place when children become able to encode their experience into symbols, to remember or evoke events and to try and copy the adults' world thanks to their patterns of thinking. This ability to produce 'fictions', to represent imaginary or real situations, is a very intense experience for children and it helps them face reality, re-experience moments that have been happy for them, as well as evoke unpleasant, difficult or conflictual situations.

This "staging" is useful for them to face challenges and to express subjective thoughts and feelings. Piaget argued that symbolic play was one of the ways in which children actually think, as if they could counterbalance the effort they make to think about their own experiences with the spontaneity with which they represent them.

This kind of activity plays a major role in building their personality and in acquiring knowledge but, most importantly, in establishing social relationships. So, when four-year-olds play with dolls or puppets inventing adventures, they establish relationships among them and represent conflicts and various social situations. When they give imaginary meaning to the elements of a hypothetical scene, they are, in some way, reproducing social patterns, symbolising their idea of the world, expressing through their acts and phrases what they are not yet able to explain with reasons and reflections.

At the Ministry of Education and Science, we firmly believe that dramatic play is one of the most important aspects of the curriculum, as it can encourage the development of social relationship and integration. The educational system has to

provide children with expressive and symbolic resources, allowing them to adapt to a variety of situations. That is why this kind of activity has to occupy a clear position in the planning of what we want children to learn.

The curriculum has to acknowledge the importance of dramatic communication for its aesthetic and playful characteristics and, most importantly, it has to influence its educational potential in a positive and broad sense: as a helpful means to form the children's personality; to let them learn through social, emotional and cognitive experiences; to establish relationships with what surrounds them using their body, voice, movements, plastic arts, music or literature.

Traditionally, school has always focused on more academic contents, paying less attention to artistic and creative expression. Since a few years ago, however, the importance of the activities involving creativity and expression has started to be acknowledged, as well as the role they play in expressing and communicating thoughts, experiences and feelings. It is increasingly being acknowledged that this is a task that should be undertaken by education as a whole and not exclusively by what usually goes under the name of "Artistic Education". Education itself has to promote the development of creation, initiative, communication and aesthetic sensibility. For this reason, theatrical expression should be approached both in Early Education and in Primary Education. It should be considered as a cross-sectional "subject", because it acquires meaning in different learning areas, because it helps develop motor, perceptive and cognitive skills, because it triggers processes that involve emotional aspects (feelings and emotions), social aspects (cooperation and group work) and the learning of values (moral dilemmas, empathy).

Creativity has to be based on intellectual activity, which combines, re-elaborates and changes the elements of our experience, which are then perceived in a different way. Dramatic play involves imagination and fantasy, feelings and biases to build or shape experiences and characters in a very personal manner. This is the reason why it represents an inexhaustible goldmine for the development of creativity.

Dramatic expression should consist, at this age, essentially in play, but at the same time it should foster the development of communication skills. Dramatic representations are a great support for improving communication skills in the mother tongue,

both in language use (expression, pronunciation, accuracy, coherence and consistency in speech), and in language as a means to convey feelings and emotions. In addition, they are really useful for learning foreign languages.

Representations, dramatisations or symbolic play will be realised by children using their own body or its symbolic substitutes (puppets and a variety of materials, objects, techniques...); they will be based on a text or script and on roles thanks to which children develop a scene or situation. In any case, however, they will have a double objective: expressing their self and communicating with the others, in the widest sense of the expression.

The national curriculum should therefore support children's dramatic expression in order for them to build and communicate meanings. The curriculum will include dramatic play as a learning method that, at this age, can be acquired when working in different contexts and from different perspectives. So, for example, dramatisation should be worked on in physical education lessons, in so far as children progressively learn how to control their motor skills. It should also be worked on from a linguistic point of view, for example while reading texts or dialogues with different communicative intentions. Finally, it obviously should be worked on in relation to music and plastic arts.

The Spanish curriculum, which is under development while writing this article, is taking on the challenge of including dramatic play as a crucial tool in developing personality and social relationships, and in education as well. This is the challenge we need to face in our future and to which we will try to give an adequate response.

LE THÉÂTRE DE LA GUIMBARDE ET LES TOUT-PETITS

Gaëtane Reginster

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Quelques notes sur la démarche de notre compagnie

Il y a aujourd'hui 8 ans que le Théâtre de la Guimbarde, par le biais de Charlotte Fallon, a initié le théâtre à la crèche en Belgique.

Sur ces 8 années, six créations et coproductions ont vu le jour : « Ombres et lumières », « Terres », « Duo des Voiles », « Au jardin », « Bach... à sable » et « Bramborry ». Des créations accompagnées d'un foisonnement d'envies et d'idées nouvelles mais aussi de questions. Si la philosophie de base du projet – l'éveil culturel des bébés par le biais de spectacles conçus pour eux – est restée la même, la méthodologie qui l'accompagne s'est peu à peu affinée.

Nous ne souhaitons pas que les spectacles pour tout-petits deviennent un produit de consommation supplémentaire à destination d'un nouveau public. Nous cherchons davantage à ce qu'ils soient une première approche culturelle pour les petits et une possibilité nouvelle d'éveil des sens et des émotions.

Cette proximité avec le monde sensoriel des petits et les questions qu'elle soulève nous amènent à travailler également avec les professionnels qui les accompagnent.

Le théâtre est un outil qui permet d'éveiller le désir à la culture des enfants et des adultes qui les accompagnent. En tant qu'artistes, nous voyons l'art pour les tout-petits comme un mouvement, une démarche qui se construit en collaboration avec tous les professionnels de la petite enfance.

Nous choisissons de créer pour les tout-petits, parce que nous pensons que le théâtre – et l'art en général – peut nourrir leur imaginaire et les aider à grandir.

Nous souhaitons partager avec eux l'univers imaginaire du spectacle, les amener à s'étonner, s'émerveiller, rêver, contempler, exulter, avoir peur... un peu.

Nous travaillons en partenariat avec les professionnels de la

petite enfance. Ce sont les puéricultrices qui connaissent les enfants, les sécurisent et, d'une manière pas toujours consciente, les autorisent ou non à apprécier le spectacle.

Si les adultes de la crèche se sentent en accord avec la venue du Théâtre, qu'ils ont été mis au courant du sens et de la forme du spectacle ainsi que de son déroulement, il y a beaucoup de chance pour que cette expérience soit un plaisir pour tout le monde.

Pourquoi la toute petite enfance ?

« Les bébés et le théâtre. J'aime ces deux mots côte à côte, explique Charlotte Fallon. Cette association étonne et pose question. Avant d'être moi-même prise par le désir de créer pour ce public, je me suis demandé s'il n'était pas aussi important de laisser les bébés vivre tranquillement. C'est en assistant à une représentation de « Câlins » du Théâtre Athénor avec Brigitte Maisonneuve que j'ai découvert l'émouvant et fascinant échange qui peut exister entre une comédienne et des tout-petits.

Les tout-petits m'émerveillent. Ce qui est me touche chez eux, c'est le contraste entre leur force et leur fragilité. Leur force dans leur capacité à être là, complètement disponibles au moment présent, inlassablement curieux; leur fragilité dans leur absence de barrières par rapport à leurs émotions ».

La petite enfance, c'est l'âge de la page blanche où tout peut encore être inscrit. C'est le moment des toutes premières expériences. Il nous semble dès lors important de nourrir le vécu et l'imaginaire du tout-petit d'éléments de qualité. L'enfant en a besoin pour vivre, pour se reconnaître.

« Parce qu'ils sont au début de la vie, les bébés découvrent souvent les choses pour la première fois dans une attitude de curiosité et un sentiment exaltant de découverte. Pour moi, dans leur désir de découvrir le monde, les tout-petits sont au départ de l'expression artistique. En cherchant leur équilibre pour marcher, ils dansent. En jouant avec les sons, ils sont dans la musique. En explorant un matériau, ils expérimentent et ils manipulent. Leurs manières d'être réveillent notre regard et provoquent des questions. A nous ensuite de chercher des formes de spectacle simples et fortes ».

Avec quels objectifs ?

Les objectifs du travail de La Guimbarde sont triples : créer des spectacles, permettre aux enfants d'entrer en contact avec le théâtre et collaborer avec les adultes qui accompagnent ces enfants.

« Il n'y a rien de plus beau que de regarder vivre un petit, de suivre le chemin de sa curiosité dans un lieu pendant une journée. J'ai eu de plus en plus envie de les rencontrer, jouer avec eux, les regarder vivre, les écouter, proposer musiques, chants, histoires, situations et personnages, glisser vers le théâtre. Susciter l'étonnement et être étonnée en retour. Vivre le plaisir d'être ensemble, apprendre à communiquer sans être envahissante... »

Curieux de la vie, les petits ont besoin d'être aimés, entourés et protégés. On n'entre pas dans une crèche comme dans un moulin, il faut laisser à la porte l'hyperactivité, la productivité, le désir de résultat. C'est presque suffisant d'être là.

Néanmoins, si on propose aux tout-petits un univers où ils peuvent exercer leur curiosité, on peut observer de leur part de longs moments d'intense concentration.

« Avec mes spectacles, j'ai envie de contribuer à leur construction en leur partageant le meilleur de ce que j'aime : les images, les musiques, les peintures, les danses les plus belles. Et ceci dans une forme sensorielle et organique ».

Les petits nous interrogent aussi en tant qu'humains. Ils vont un peu à contre-courant de ce que l'on nous demande : l'efficacité, la rentabilité. Les observer nous amène à réfléchir à notre société, aux personnes, à la fragilité, à notre rythme de vie. Ils (re)donnent place à l'intime, à l'écoute, au plaisir, au partage.

Comment créer pour les tout-petits ?

Là encore, pas de règle pré-établie sinon celle de l'écoute et du plaisir partagé.

« L'inspiration me vient n'importe quand. Elle vient d'une émotion, d'un tableau, d'une musique, d'une idée, d'une discussion,

d'échanges, de rencontres... Elle vient de la vie. Si un thème m'inspire, j'essaye de vérifier s'il touche aussi les enfants. Ce n'est pas parce qu'on est petit qu'on a de petites émotions. La joie, la confiance, le bonheur des rencontres, le besoin d'aimer et d'être aimé, la peur, l'abandon, la solitude, la colère, l'insécurité,... nous concernent tous. Puis ce thème trouve une forme, qu'elle soit plus théâtrale, plastique ou tournée vers la danse... »

Si les petits de un an à trois ans sont un vrai public, ils regardent néanmoins le spectacle autrement que nous adultes : ils le regardent avec le corps, les sens, le cœur. Ils reçoivent les images, les sons, les chants, les mouvements, intensément. *« Comme ils perçoivent la vie de manière sensorielle et émotionnelle, je cherche à donner à ce travail une forme sensorielle et organique. Pour la scénographie, nous cherchons à créer un décor qui puisse entrer dans une crèche, dès lors souvent minimaliste, mais qui transforme l'espace quotidien de la crèche en espace théâtral ».*

L'investissement personnel des comédiens

En cours de création, la Guimbarde se rend toujours en crèche pour expérimenter les étapes de la création, observer comment les enfants réagissent et partager des impressions avec les puéricultrices qui les connaissent bien.

Quand le spectacle est créé, il est ensuite expérimenté une dizaine de fois avant d'atteindre sa forme définitive.

Ces expérimentations servent à familiariser les comédiens avec le public des tout-petits. Jouer pour les plus petits est d'abord insécurisant : ils ne fonctionnent pas dans des codes pré-établis. Un enfant peut se lever, avoir envie de se promener dans l'espace de jeu, se mettre à parler, à rire et parfois à pleurer. Jouant à deux mètres d'eux, les comédiens ressentent directement les émotions des enfants et ne savent pas toujours comment les recevoir, surtout les pleurs. Petit à petit, les comédiens apprennent à se détendre, à ne pas avoir peur des émotions des enfants. Une communication non verbale se crée. Et, par l'échange des regards, le jeu devient plein de douceur et de plaisir.

Les comédiens disent souvent qu'ils acquièrent beaucoup plus d'honnêteté dans leur qualité de jeu en travaillant pour les tout-petits. Les enfants les mettent en face d'eux-mêmes, ils les obligent à « être » avant de faire.

Le travail se conçoit en relation avec une psychologue
Lorsque nous concevons un nouveau spectacle destiné aux tout-petits, nous n'hésitons pas à consulter une psychologue ou une psychopédagogue. Ces professionnelles viennent nourrir notre travail artistique de leurs connaissances « scientifiques ». Depuis 2005, notre travail se construit également avec le soutien et le regard des psychomotriciens de la Ville de Charleroi. L'idée est de vérifier si le spectacle proposé est adéquat par rapport au développement de l'enfant. En quoi aide-t-il l'enfant à se construire ?

« Ils nous expliquent l'évolution psychologique des enfants par rapport au thème que nous voulons aborder. Ils reçoivent nos questions et nos inquiétudes. A une comédienne qui avait très peur, qui se sentait un bourreau dès qu'un enfant pleurait, une psychologue a dit : « Ce n'est pas grave de pleurer si nos émotions sont reçues et reconnues. La crèche n'est pas un cocon mais un endroit pour grandir. »

Quelques observations sur le déroulement d'un spectacle

Les tout-petits sont des spectateurs nés parce qu'ils découvrent la vie. Ils ne sont pas seulement spectateurs de théâtre, ils sont spectateurs de la vie qui se déroule autour d'eux, c'est un public de rêve ! Mais c'est un public qui peut aussi rapidement être perturbé.

« Pour cette raison, je préfère que les enfants soient présents et participent à la transformation de l'espace de leur crèche. J'aime les laisser s'approprier le décor, s'approcher des comédiens, les regarder s'échauffer, ... »

Pendant le spectacle, il est normal que les enfants s'expriment, qu'ils parlent, qu'ils chantent, qu'ils bougent sans toutefois entrer dans l'espace scénique des comédiens. Si un enfant pleure, il suffit bien souvent que sa puéricultrice ou sa maman le prenne dans les bras ou s'éloigne un peu de la scène pour lui donner un espace de distance sécurisant.

Si on sent que l'enfant est terrorisé, il vaut mieux sortir avec lui. Le spectacle ne doit pas être une expérience traumatisante.

Nos spectacles pour les tout-petits ne racontent pas une histoire avec un début ou une fin. Ce sont des moments reliés par un fil. Souvent, les adultes commentent et expliquent le spectacle

aux enfants. Il est préférable de ne pas intervenir et de laisser les enfants être dans le ressenti et vivre le spectacle chacun à leur manière .

Petits... et grands !

Nous aimons rencontrer les adultes qui vont participer au spectacle avant la représentation pour leur expliquer le sens de ce travail artistique pour les petits. Il est important que la représentation se passe de la manière la plus harmonieuse possible pour les enfants comme pour les adultes.

Notre travail dans les crèches est avant tout un travail de partenariat. Si l'adulte se sent sécurisé et impliqué par la venue du spectacle dans la crèche, s'il est au courant du déroulement pratique de la représentation, il peut alors sécuriser l'enfant qu'il connaît bien mieux que nous. Il peut aussi se laisser aller à son propre plaisir. Plus l'enfant sent le plaisir de la puéricultrice, plus il se laisse aller à son propre plaisir.

L'idéal est d'avoir également un échange avec les adultes après le spectacle pour recevoir leurs émotions et leurs questions par rapport aux attitudes des enfants et à la forme théâtrale qui est peut-être inhabituelle pour eux.

Un temps pour le jeu

A la fin du spectacle, nous aimons prévoir un temps de partage et d'échange avec les enfants et – si les contraintes techniques le permettent – ils sont invités à s'aventurer dans le décor, à explorer cet univers qu'ils ont jusque là observé et à y expérimenter les différents matériaux.

La formation des puéricultrices et des futures puéricultrices

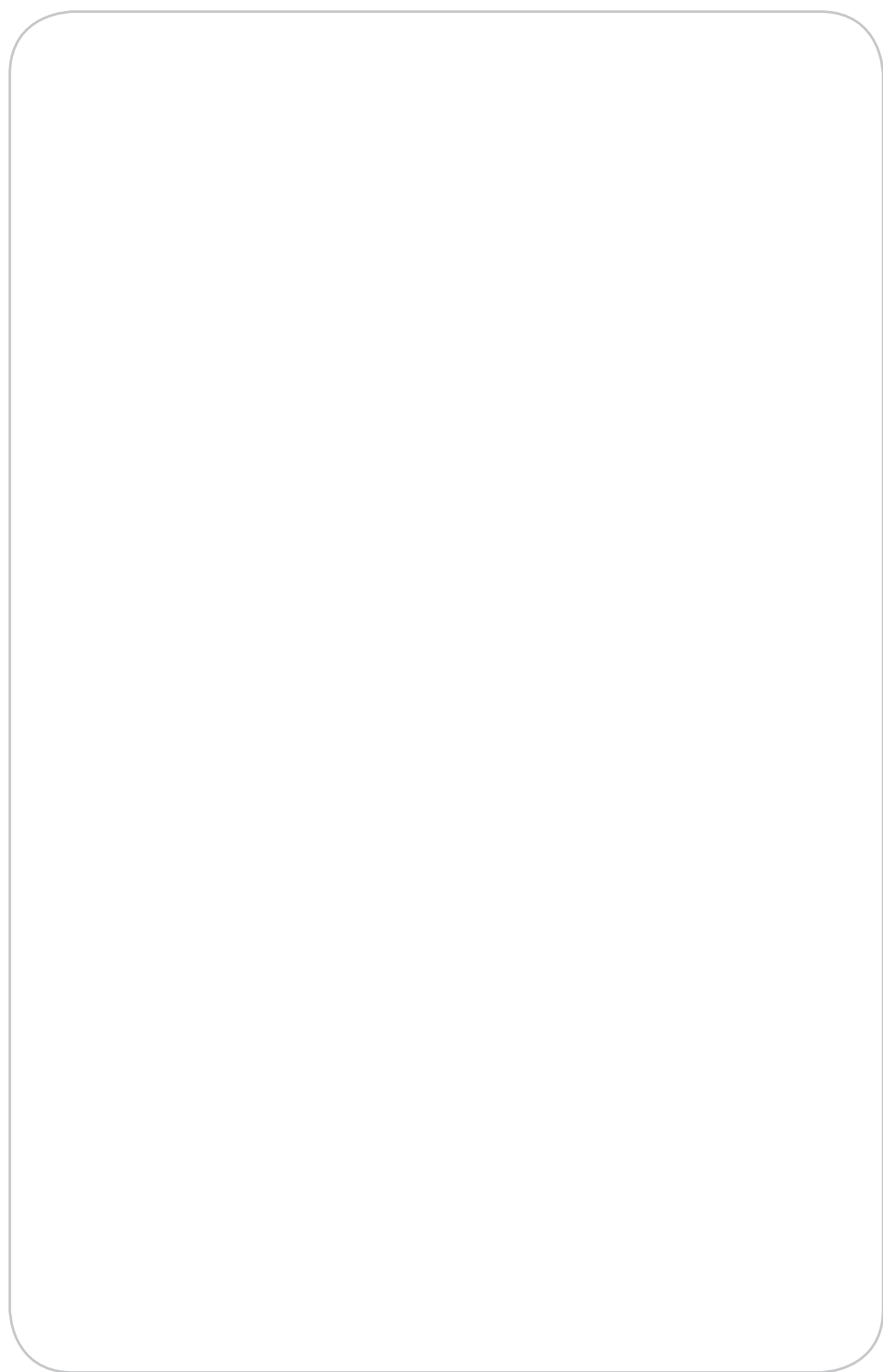
De plus en plus, la Guimbarde entend s'investir dans la formation artistique des puéricultrices et des élèves en puériculture.

Nous proposons des formations sur le mouvement, le travail de la terre, la sculpture, la musique, la vidéo, le théâtre d'objets, la transformation de l'univers quotidien de la crèche, la peinture, le tracé, le jeu,...

Autant de formations au cours desquelles nous insistons sur des expériences de plaisir, de confiance, d'acceptation de son expression personnelle. « *Je travaille avec les adultes pour leur faire retrouver le plaisir et la spontanéité du jeu. Et nous allons à la découverte des matériaux d'expression* ».

Les puéricultrices qui participent aux formations quittent la crèche et sa routine. Elles sont là pour elles-mêmes, en contact avec leurs émotions. De retour à la crèche, elles nous disent redécouvrir celles des enfants.

Il est également intéressant d'aller voir ensemble des spectacles, des expositions, des concerts destinés aux adultes pour prolonger la démarche d'ouverture culturelle.



THE THEATRE DE LA GUIMBARDE AND TODDLERS

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translated by Muriel Reginster

A few notes on our approach

The idea of introducing theatre in Belgian crèches was first initiated 8 years ago by Charlotte Fallon and the Théâtre de la Guimbarde.

In the course of those 8 years, six creations were produced: « Shadows and Lights », « Earth », « Duo des Voiles », « In the Garden », « Bach... in the sand » and « Bramborry ». Those creations have sparked numerous wishes, new ideas and questions. If the initial philosophy of the project – i.e. to awaken babies to culture through shows created for them – has remained the same, the methodology was progressively refined.

We do not wish for shows for toddlers to become another consumption product aimed at a new public. Rather, we aim for them to become a first cultural approach for toddlers and a new possibility for them to awaken to senses and emotions. This proximity to the sensory world of toddlers and the questions it raises, bring us to work more and more closely with the professionals who accompany them.

Theatre is a tool enabling to awaken a desire for culture in children and their carers. As artists, we see art for toddlers as a movement, an approach which is built in collaboration with all early childhood professionals.

We choose to create for toddlers because we think that theatre – and art in general – can nourish their imagination and help them grow.

Our wish is to share with them the imaginary universe of performing arts, to amaze them, dazzle them, make them dream, contemplate, exult, be scared... only just a little.

We work in partnership with early childhood professionals. Nursery nurses are the ones who know the children, who give them security, and without always knowing it, who allow them to

enjoy the show or not.

If the crèche' staff is in agreement with the arrival of the theatre company, if they have been told of the meaning, form and running of the show, chances are that this experience will be a pleasure for everyone.

Why the early childhood?

"Babies and theatre. I like the sound of those two words together" explains Charlotte Fallon. "This association surprises and raises questions. Before wishing to create something for this particular public, I asked myself whether it wasn't important to let babies live quietly. But when I saw at the Théâtre Athénor a show called "Cuddles" performed by Brigitte Maisonneuve, I discovered the moving and fascinating exchange which can exist between an actor and toddlers.

Toddlers fill me with wonder. The contrast between their strength and their fragility touches me. Their strength lies in their capacity to be there, entirely available to the present time, with an endless curiosity. Their fragility lies in their absence of boundaries regarding their emotions".

Early childhood is the age of the blank page, when everything can still be written. It is the time of very first experiences. It seems therefore important to us to nurture the toddlers' real-life experience and imagination with elements of quality. Children need them to live, to acknowledge themselves.

"Because they are at the beginning of their lives, babies often discover things for the first time in an attitude of curiosity and with an exhilarating feeling of discovery. As I see it, in their desire to discover the world, toddlers are at the source of artistic expression. While looking to find balance to walk, they dance. When playing with sounds, they are into music. When exploring a material, they experiment and handle. The way they are catches our eyes and induces questions. It is up to us to then find shows that are simple and strong".

What are the objectives?

The Théâtre de la Guimbarde's objectives are threefold: to create

shows, to allow children to discover theatre and to collaborate with the carers of those children.

"There is nothing more beautiful than to watch a baby be, to follow the path of his curiosity in a place for a day. More and more, I felt the urge to meet them, play with them, watch them be, listen to them, suggest music, songs, stories, situations and characters, slip into theatre. Arise surprise and be surprised in return. Experience the pleasure of being together, learn to communicate without being intrusive..."

Curious about life, toddlers need to be loved, supported and protected. You cannot enter a crèche like you would a work place; you need to leave your hyperactivity, productivity, desire for result at the door. Being there is almost enough.

However, when we offer toddlers a universe in which they can exercise their curiosity, we witness them having long moments of intense concentration.

"Through my shows, I wish to contribute to this development by sharing with them my favourite images, music, paintings and dances, in a sensory and organic form".

Toddlers also question us as human beings. They go against the current of what is being asked of us: efficiency, profitability. To observe them leads us to reflect on our society, on people, on frailty, on the pace of our lives. They make room (again) for intimacy, listening, pleasure and sharing.

How can we create for toddlers?

Here again, there are no pre-established rules, except that of listening and sharing pleasure.

"Inspiration comes to me any time. It can be sparked by an emotion, a painting, a piece of music, an idea, a discussion, an exchange, a meeting... It comes from life. If I feel inspired by a theme, I check whether that theme also affects the children. Being small does not mean having small emotions. We are all concerned by emotions such as joyfulness, confidence, the happiness to meet, the need to love and be loved, fear, neglect, loneliness, anger, insecurity,... Then, this theme finds a

form of expression, whether theatrical, plastic or geared towards dance..."

Although a real public, toddlers from one to three years old do watch shows differently than us adults: they watch it with their bodies, their senses, their heart. They receive images, sounds, songs, and movements with intensity. *"As their perceive life in a sensory and emotional way, I try to give my work a sensory and organic form. For the scenography, we try to create a décor which can fit in a crèche. It is often minimal but it transforms the ordinary space of the crèche into a theatre space"*.

The personal investment of actors

During the creation process, the Guimbarde always visits crèches to experiment the various steps of the creation, to see how children react and to share impressions with the nursery nurses who know them well.

Once a show has been created, we test it a dozen times before its final form is reached.

These experiments help actors get used to the public of toddlers. To play in front of toddlers can be daunting at first: they don't function according to pre-established codes. A child can get up, want to walk around the playground, start talking, laughing and sometimes crying. As they play two meters away from them, actors can straightaway feel the children's emotions and don't always know how to react, especially when they cry. Little by little, actors learn to relax, to not be afraid of the children's emotions. A non-verbal communication is established. And once they start exchanging glances with each other, the game becomes full of softness and pleasure.

Actors often say that they acquire a lot more honesty in their acting quality when working with toddlers. Children make them face themselves; they force them to "be" instead of to do.

The work is done in connection with a psychologist

When we create a new show for toddlers, we don't hesitate to consult a psychologist or a specialised teacher. These specialists feed our artistic work with their 'scientific' knowledge.

Since 2005, our work also receives the support and advise of the city of Charleroi's psychomotor specialists. The idea is to check that the proposed show is in line with the child's development.

How does the show help the child to evolve?

"They explain to us the psychological evolution of children in relation with the theme that we want to explore. They answer our questions and worries. To one actor who was scared and felt guilty every time a child cried, a psychologist said: 'It is not a problem to cry as long as our emotions are received and recognised. A crèche is not meant to be a cocoon but a place to grow up.'"

Some observations on the progress of a show

Toddlers are born-spectators because they discover life. They are not only theatre spectators, they are spectators of the life that surrounds them; they are a dream public! But it is a public that can also easily be disturbed.

"For this reason, I prefer for the children to be present and participate when we transform the space of their crèche for a show. I like them to get used to the décor, to approach the actors, to watch them warm u,..."

During the show, it is normal if children express themselves, talk, sing, move around, provided they don't enter the actors' space. If a child cries, it is often enough for a nursery nurse or the mother to hold him or take a few steps away from the scene to give him a securing distance space.

If we sense a child is terrorised, we think it best to take him outside. A show should not be a traumatising experience.

Our shows for toddlers don't tell a story with a beginning or an end. They are moments linked by a thread. Often adults comment and explain the show to children. It is however best not to interfere and let them be with what they feel and let them live the show in their own way.

Children... and grown-ups!

Before a performance, we like to meet the adults who will participate to the show, to explain to them the aim of this artistic work for toddlers. It is important that the performance takes place in the most harmonious way possible for both children and adults.

Our crèche work is above all a partnership work. If the adult feels

secure and involved in the arrival of the show in the crèche, if he is aware of the practical development of the performance, he will then be able to secure the child whom he knows better than we do. He can also surrender to his own pleasure. The more the child feels the pleasure of the nursery nurse, the more he will be able to indulge in his own pleasure.

Ideally, we also like to exchange with the adults after the performance, to receive their emotions and their questions regarding the attitudes of the children and the theatrical form they may not be familiar with.

A time for playing

At the end of a show, we like to plan time for sharing and exchanging with the children. And if the technical conditions allow, they are invited to venture on stage, to explore this universe that they so far have only observed, and experiment with the various materials.

The training of nursery nurses and students in childcare

The Guimbarde intends to get more and more involved in the artistic training of nursery nurses and students in childcare.

We offer training on movement, work with earth, sculpture, music, video, object theatre, the transformation of the daily universe of the crèche, painting, drawing, playing...

During the training, we insist on the experiences of pleasure, confidence, and acceptance of everyone's own expression. *"I work with adults in order to make them reconnect the pleasure and spontaneity of playing. We explore expression materials".*

The nursery nurses who participate in the training leave behind the daily routine of the crèche. They are there for themselves, in contact with their emotions. Back at the crèche, they tell us they rediscover the children's emotions.

It is also interesting to go together and see shows, exhibitions or concerts made for adults, to extend the approach of cultural opening.

I QUATTRO LATI DEL TRIANGOLO ARTISTICO

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I triangoli hanno tre lati, lo sanno anche i bambini. Spesso però i disegni dei bambini ci presentano un mondo ai nostri occhi "illogico". Le loro "irregolarità", non sono sempre frutto di incompetenza, ma sono la conseguenza di una loro fase di "ricerca". Stanno provando a trasformare la realtà "vera", in una immagine "falsa" (dove vero e falso però non vogliono dir nulla). I disegni che spesso producono i bambini sono veri e falsi allo stesso tempo. Sono logici e illogici. Un volto con tre occhi potrebbe essere un viso che si sposta di lato (come Ricasso), una persona con quattro gambe potrebbe non essere un animale, ma una signora che si muove veloce (come Duchamp).

Un triangolo non ha tre lati, lo sanno anche i bambini. E tutti e quattro i lati sono collegati fra loro ed interagiscono (prospettiva interazionista).

Primo lato: Tanti anni fa (più o meno duemilacinquecento) un tragediografo greco che si chiamava Euripide faceva recitare ai suoi attori che "l'atteso non si compie e all'inatteso un dio apre la via". Come dire: è inutile cercare di progettare in maniera ossessiva la vita perché avvenga ciò che ci si è previsto; c'è sempre l'inatteso che va considerato; anzi, è proprio l'inatteso l'elemento importante, non ciò che noi si è ipotizzato. La via all'inatteso viene spianata da un dio; c'è perciò un elemento "divino", che appare in Euripide il più importante. Un elemento che non solo non può essere evitato, ma è anche costitutivo di ogni progetto. Anziché attendersi l'atteso, occorrerebbe predisporre all'inatteso. Se si seguisse questo viatico – lo diceva anche il filosofo Nicola Cusano quando scrisse nel 1463 il suo *De ludo globi* -, anche la didattica scolastica se ne gioverebbe. Nonostante gli apporti dell'epistemologia contemporanea e delle varie psicopedagogie, a scuola si continua a pensare in termini di "atteso". Si programma (lo fa l'adulto), si organizza

(lo fa l'adulto), si agisce (questo tocca ai bambini), si verifica (questo è compito esecutivo degli allievi e compito di controllo dell'adulto). In questo modo il dio dell'inatteso se ne fugge dall'educazione scolastica e con lui si allontana anche una moderna concezione della conoscenza e dell'apprendimento.

Secondo lato: "La conoscenza è una navigazione in un oceano di incertezze attraverso arcipelaghi di certezze" scrive il sociologo Edgar Morin in un suo fortunato volumetto (*I sette saperi necessari all'educazione del futuro*). La navigazione della quale parla Morin non avviene casualmente, essa prevede un muoversi fra gli arcipelaghi, ma guarda all'oceano, sapendo che i rischi, gli imprevisti, le possibili derive fanno parte del viaggio. Anzi il viaggio è una navigazione, non un itinerario preciso con una meta prefissata da raggiungere. Conoscere è navigare, non arrivare ad un qualsivoglia porto. E a voler essere ancora metaforici si può affermare che conoscere è una passeggiata. La navigazione si associa ad eventi pericolosi (fino all'affondamento del vascello), la passeggiata dà un'idea più serena di un possibile percorso (un mio libro sulle attività espressive si chiamava non a caso *Passeggiate fra le immagini*). Passeggiando si arriva sempre da qualche parte (magari si ritorna al punto di partenza arricchiti da qualcosa che si è visto o che si è percepito), passeggiando si rallenta il ritmo, si cerca il benessere, ci si dà tempo per ascoltare, guardare, odorare, non solo "fare". Passeggiando si ha l'impressione di non far niente eppure qualcosa ci succede, si ha l'impressione di avere vissuto, di essere stati attenti alle cose, di aver scoperto le loro caratteristiche, di aver apprezzato la loro estetica...

Terzo lato: Nel film *Il piccolo buddha* c'è una scena molto interessante che ci riconduce all'idea di inatteso e di percorso come passeggiata. Il padre del *piccolo buddha* va a visitare un monastero tibetano ed i monaci stanno completando in quel momento un mandala di sabbia bellissimo. Le sabbie colorate disegnano elaborate decorazioni, l'occhio si perde in un equilibrio di colori e di forme. E' un'opera d'arte meravigliosa, che è stata realizzata da più monaci e che ha richiesto mesi di lavoro. "Quando sarà finito – dice il monaco allo sbalordito occidentale – sarà distrutto con un solo gesto, così" (e nel pronunciare queste parole allarga il braccio a significare lo

spostamento delle polveri colorate). "Ma perché?", domanda l'incerto spettatore. "Per significare che ogni cosa nell'universo è impermanente", gli risponde il monaco. Lo scopo del fare non è arrivare ad un prodotto finito, ma è un agire dentro la cosa che si fa, procedendo con passione e competenza, con impegno e con amore. Il resto ha un'importanza relativa. "La creatività è una fatica d'amore", come disse in un'intervista uno scienziato premio Nobel.

Dette in termini più "pedagogici", queste tre idee possono essere tradotte in un modello preciso che si chiama *ecologia dell'azione educativa*. Il primo concetto rimanda al tema della costruzione di una conoscenza che va intesa come processo non completamente prevedibile perché direttamente connesso alle elaborazioni delle persone (costruttivismo); il secondo rimanda all'importanza di situare gli apprendimenti in un tessuto fatto di azioni tranquille, significative e significanti (contestualismo); il terzo riprende la grande questione del rapporto fra mezzi e fini che ha avuto in John Dewey il grande maestro (attivismo in chiave fenomenologica).

I tre lati del triangolo che garantiscono una crescita di competenza "artistica" si riferiscono al "costruire" un "contesto" dove prevalgono i "significati". Ma, al di là delle etichette teoriche, il lavoro educativo nella dimensione espressiva non può ridursi ad insegnare una "materia". La parola materia ci rimanda al senso "materiale" del fare; ad un'idea di "oggetto", a qualcosa che si può vedere, toccare, misurare, controllare. Definiti i limiti ed i contorni di una cosa, si pensa di poterla insegnare pezzo per pezzo, unità per unità, costruendo sequenze dal semplice al complesso; controllandone le acquisizioni passo passo... Questo non è il modello che riprende i tre concetti prima indicati.

Le discipline artistiche sono altro. Casomai sono materie nel senso etimologico della parola che proviene da *mater*, termine che gli agricoltori riferivano un tempo alla "sostanza materna" dei tronchi d'albero. La sostanza è interna, profonda, non sempre visibile. La sostanza si può alimentare, ma vive anche di una forza propria che trae linfa da un contesto sano (ecologico). La linfa che garantisce una crescita di competenza "artistica", si "costruisce" in un "contesto" dove prevalgono i "significati". La formula è di una semplicità estrema, fatta di tre soli concetti. E tre concetti da far vivere non sono apparentemente una gran cosa. Eppure questa formula triangolare trova ostacoli nella

scuola come istituzione e negli insegnanti, come persone. L'arte e l'educazione artistica, per definizione, non si possono rinchiudere in formule geometriche ed anche i triangoli possono avere quattro lati. Per costruire un bel triangolo quadrato occorre costruire un quarto lato: l'adulto, l'educatore.

Quarto lato: Le competenze tecniche e metodologiche (pur utili) non bastano. Un educatore d'arte insegna il suo stare nel mondo, la sua filosofia di vita. La creatività artistica utilizza strumenti e materiali come "pietre" (Rodari) per denunciare in modo "leggero" (Calvino) le illogicità e le incertezze che si annidano nel rapporto persona/realtà (interna ed esterna) e nella stessa cultura nella quale siamo immersi.

Nel 1973, Rodari intitolava il secondo capitolo della sua *Grammatica della fantasia* "Il sasso nello stagno". "Un sasso gettato nello stagno suscita onde concentriche che si allargano sulla sua superficie coinvolgendo nel moto... oggetti che se ne stavano ciascuno per conto proprio, e che vengono come richiamati in vita, obbligati a reagire, a entrare in rapporto fra loro" (pag. 7). E le onde si propagano in tutte le direzioni ($\leftrightarrow$) anche dalla superficie al fondo ($\downarrow$) disseppellendo oggetti dimenticati, coinvolgendo "suoni e immagini, analogie e ricordi, significati e sogni". La parola muove, muove come un sasso gettato in uno stagno muove l'acqua e le cose che vi si trovano.

L'esempio che ci offre Rodari per muovere la superficie dell'acqua è la parola sasso. E ci fa vedere alcuni meccanismi "grammaticali" che possono muovere la parola sasso. Detto in altri termini: Rodari lancia dei sassi sorridenti.

Il primo lo chiama "le associazioni pigre". La parola "cadendo nella mente si trascina dietro, o urta o evita, variamente si mette in contatto" con parole che cominciano con la stessa lettera S (tautogramma), con le parole che rimano con ASSO, con le parole che le stanno lessicalmente accanto, "per via del significato", con parole che iniziano con le lettere che la compongono (acrostico). Le associazioni pigre portano all' "accostamento fantastico": si parte dalla parola sasso e si creano accostamenti sequenziali "capricciosi", imprevisti, impertinenti. Ogni coppia "interessante" può diventare uno stimolo per inventare storie per bambini (più avanti lo chiamerò il "binomio fantastico").

Il secondo meccanismo gli consente di "affondare nel mondo del passato". La parola si fa meccanismo per "disseppellire

campi della memoria che giacevano sotto la polvere del tempo". Come le "madeleine" nella memoria di Proust. (cfr. ludobiografia)

Infine, c'è un terzo ingrediente che deve esserci perché si produca creatività (e non solo curiosità). Scrive Rodari: "nel processo apparentemente meccanico si cala, come in uno stampo, ma anche modificando lo stampo stesso, la mia ideologia... (le mie "idee sociali"). La realtà fa irruzione nell'esercizio surrealistico" (pag. 10). Siamo qui di fronte ad una visione più complessa dell'uso della "fantasia" (almeno come lo si utilizza spesso con i bambini di oggi). La grammatica non viene usata solo per "giocare" con la lingua, ma per parlare della realtà, del mondo, delle ingiustizie, dei dolori, delle stupidità degli uomini e dei popoli. Si tratta di un "riso civile" che si fa tramite di messaggi etici, culturali, politici, filosofici. Ridere non basta, divertirsi a manipolar parole non basta. Il gioco si fa "serio", non è più *iocus*, ma *ludus*.

Il ruolo dell'educatore è quello di aiutare l'allievo a percorrere tutti e quattro i lati del triangolo artistico.

Il primo lato richiede una sua presenza come colui che segue l'allievo e che non si pone davanti indicando la strada da percorrere. E' un seguire mentalmente, che non abbandona l'allievo, ma che si pone di fianco, è un compagno che lo sostiene nei momenti di tempesta o di smarrimento (anche di fronte a temi artistici che non trovano facile soluzione: che cosa è bello? Che vuol dire essere creativi?).

Il secondo lato è ancor più difficile da perseguire, perché viviamo nell'epoca della fretta, in un tempo dove le esperienze "si bruciano" ed abbiamo imparato a percepire come "tempo perso" il fare meditato, il fare lento. Dovremmo recitarci ogni giorno la poesia di Rilke che dice: "La luce e la tenebra, il fiore, il poema e la stella ha vita in un grembo: l'indugio".

Il terzo lato è drammaticamente complesso da perseguire (eppure si può). I francesi usano – per spiegare la funzione degli educatori - lo slogan: "*défricheurs du quotidien*" (che sarebbero quelli che fanno pulizia). Il nostro quotidiano è invaso da cose inutili, da troppi stimoli e da bisogni indotti dal contesto massmediatico o dalle pretese dell' "ingegneria scolastica". Occorre rimuovere le condizioni che impediscono scelte più autonome e sensate. Occorre ripulire il nostro ambiente di vita cominciando da quello più vicino, la classe, la scuola, il giardino,

i tempi di apprendimento, i "contenuti" dell'insegnamento...

Il quarto lato riguarda l'adulto stesso e le competenze che sono necessarie perché lui possa seguire tutte e tre queste cose assieme, aggiungendosi del suo. Perché per lavorare nell'arte con i ragazzi, bisogna che anche l'adulto entri in gioco, che apra le sue capacità relazionali, di empatia, di coinvolgimento, di attenzione e di rispetto.

Nessuna materia può sostituirsi ad una "filosofia" dell'educazione artistica. Nessun apprendimento ha senso se non lo si ritrova nel significato che noi diamo alla vita (l'esempio è sempre uno dei metodi più antichi e più efficaci). La nostra idea di passeggiare in maniera "artistica" ci convince. Non neghiamo l'apprendimento, ma non lo identifichiamo con le "cose" apprese. Ci piace di più pensare a un bambino curioso, un po' avventuroso, che si meraviglia, che cerca, che si impegna, che indugia, che sperimenta, che sente l'arte come elemento del sé e del contesto (l'educazione artistica non si identifica con la stanza dell'educazione artistica). E con lui ci piace pensare un insegnante che lo "segue mentalmente" per fargli scoprire che non è tanto importante il detto: "Impara l'arte e mettila da parte", quanto quello che dice: "Imparo l'arte percorrendola ogni giorno". Ed ogni giorno è possibile scoprire oggetti e incontrare persone "meravigliose", che ci invitano a "rivederle" in maniera "creativa" Roberto Rossellini ha scritto che "il più minuto avvenimento della vita quotidiana contiene in sé una straordinaria potenza drammatica". Come dire: la banalità non esiste, siamo noi che la costruiamo e siamo noi che possiamo evitarla, con la formazione artistica, tirando – come direbbe Rodari – delle pietre sorridenti.

THE FOUR SIDES OF THE ARTISTIC TRIANGLE

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translated by Letizia Olivieri

Triangles have three sides, even children know it. The world shown in children's drawings, however, is often "illogical". Its "irregularities" are not always a consequence of a lack of competence, but the result of a stage of a piece of "research". They are trying to transform "true" reality into a "false" image (where true and false are, however, meaningless). Children's drawings are often true and false at the same time. They are logical and illogical. A face with three eyes could be a face turning round (like in Picasso's paintings); a figure with four legs could be a lady moving rapidly and not an animal (like in Duchamp's works).

Triangles have not three sides, even children know it. And their four sides are connected to one another and interact (interactional perspective).

First side: Many years ago (approximately two thousand and five hundred) the Greek tragedian Euripides made his actors say that "the expected does not always happen, and God makes a way for the unexpected". In other words: it is useless to try and obsessively plan our life to make our expectations come true, we always have to consider the unexpected. In fact, the most important element here is the unexpected, not what we hypothesise. It is a God who makes a way for the unexpected, and there is therefore a divine element here, which is the most meaningful one in Euripides. Not only cannot this element be avoided, but it is a built-in element in any project. Instead of expecting the expected, we should try to prepare ourselves to the unexpected. If we followed this path, then didactic methodology would benefit from it – philosopher Nicola Cusano stated this when he wrote his *De ludo globi* in 1463. In spite of the many contributions provided by contemporary epistemology and by the different psycho-pedagogical theories, in schools we

still think in terms of "expected". We plan (adults), we organise (adults), we act (children), we check (pupils and adults). In this way, the God of the unexpected moves away from education, carrying a modern conception of knowledge and learning away with him.

Second side: "To know is to sail on an ocean of uncertainty in which are found isolated islands and archipelagos of certainty", writes sociologist Edgar Morin in a successful book (*The seven necessary kinds of knowledge for the education of the future*). The sailing Morin is talking about implies moving among archipelagos, but it pays attention to the ocean, because risks, unforeseen events and drifts are part of the journey. In fact, the journey is a sail, not a route with a destination to reach. To know is to sail, not to arrive at a port. And, using another metaphor, we could say that knowledge is a stroll. Sailing is often associated with dangerous events (even with the sinking of the vessel); whereas the stroll gives a more peaceful image of a possible journey (a book on creative expressive activities I wrote was titled, not by chance, *Strolls through images*). When you stroll, you always get somewhere (perhaps to the starting point, but enriched, for something you have seen or perceived), you slow the rhythm, try to feel good, take your time to listen, look around you, smell, and you do not simply "do" something. When you stroll, the idea you get is that you are doing nothing, but something is actually happening. You feel like you have lived, paid attention and observed things and appreciated their aesthetic value...

Third side: In the movie *Little Buddha* there is a very interesting scene, which takes us back to the idea of the unexpected and the journey as a stroll. *Little Buddha's* father visits a Tibetan monastery where the monks are completing a beautiful sand-painted mandala, which has taken months of work. The coloured sand traces complex patterns, the eye gets lost in a perfect balance of shapes and colours. "When it is finished - the monk tells the amazed westerner - it will be destroyed with one simple movement, like that" (and while saying these words, he stretches his arm out as if indicating the movement of the coloured sand). "But why?", asks *Little Buddha's* father, hesitating. "It means that everything in the universe is impermanent", answers the monk. The aim of "making things" is not to obtain a finished product,

but it is to act within the thing that is done, proceeding with passion and competence, commitment and love. All the rest is relatively important. "Creativity is an effort of love", as a Nobel Prize scientist once said during an interview.

In more "pedagogic" terms, these three ideas can be translated into a definite model called *ecology of the educational action*. The first concept refers to the theme of building knowledge, meaning a process not fully foreseeable because it has a direct relationship with the idea-making processes of people (constructivism); the second one refers to the importance of locating learning in a texture made of calm, significant and meaningful actions (contextualism); the third one refers to the issue of the relationship between means and objectives that was firstly theorised by John Dewey (activism in phenomenological terms).

The three sides of the triangle that ensure a growth of "artistic" competence refer to "building" a "context" where "meanings" are the predominant elements. Leaving aside theoretical labels, however, education in an expressive dimension cannot be simply about teaching a "subject". The word "subject" recalls the "material" sense of making things, the idea of an "object"; something we can see, touch, measure, control. If we define the limits and the contours of something, we then think we can teach it bit by bit, unit by unit, by building sequences that become more and more complex and by controlling acquisitions step by step... This model does not embrace the concepts illustrated above.

Artistic disciplines are something different. Rather, they are subjects in the etymological sense of the word, which derives from *mater*, a term once used by farmers to refer to the "mother substance" of tree trunks. This substance is internal, deep, not always visible. Substance can be nourished, but it has its own strength, which is drawn from the lymph of a healthy (ecologic) context. Lymph, which ensures a growth in "artistic" competence, is "built" in a "context" where "meanings" are the predominant elements. This is an extremely simple formula, made up of just 3 concepts. It does not seem so difficult to give life to 3 concepts. This triangular model, though, finds obstacles to overcome, both in school as an institution and in teachers as individuals.

However, art and education cannot, by definition, be confined in geometric formulas, and triangles can have four sides too. The missing side is about adults, educators.

Fourth side: Technical and methodological competences (though useful) are not enough. Artistic educators teach their own "being in the world", their philosophy of life. Artistic creativity uses instruments and materials as "stones" (Rodari) to condemn "lightly" (Calvino) the illogicalness and uncertainty that lie in the relationship between person/reality (internal and external) and in the culture in which we live in.

In 1973, Gianni Rodari titled "The stone in the pond" the second chapter of his *Grammar of Fantasy*. "A stone thrown into the pond generates concentric waves that expand on the surface involving in their movement... objects that were already there but were separated, and they come back to life, they are forced to react and interact" (page 7). And the waves propagate in all directions ($\leftrightarrow$), also from the surface to the bottom ($\downarrow$), unburying forgotten objects, involving "sounds and images, analogies and memories, meanings and dreams". Words move; they move like stones thrown into a pond that move the water and the things inside it.

According to Rodari, the word that moves the surface of the water is stone. There are some "grammatical" mechanisms that move the word "stone".

He calls the first mechanism "lazy associations". "Falling into the mind, the word drags along, hits or avoids, enter into contact in various ways" with other words that start with the letter S (tautograms), with the words that rhyme with TONE, with the words that stand lexically or semantically next to it, with the words that start with the letters of that word and that form a message (acrostics). These lazy associations lead to "fantastic connections": from the word "stone", it is possible to create sequential connections that may be "whimsical", unexpected, irreverent. Every "interesting" pair can become an input to invent stories for children (further on, he will call them "fantastic binomials").

The second mechanism allows him to "delve into the world of the past". Words become a tool to "unbury fields of the memory that had been long covered by dust". Just like the "madeleines" in Proust's memory (cfr. Ludo biography).

Finally, there is a third ingredient that must be there in order for creativity (and not only curiosity) to be produced. Rodari writes: "my ideology (my "social ideas") flows in the apparently mechanical process, as if it were a mould, and it also modifies the

mould itself... Reality bursts into the surrealistic exercise" (page 10). Here, we are in front of a more complex vision of the use of "fantasy" (at least more complex than the way it is often used today with children). Grammar is not only used to "play" with language, but to talk about reality, about the world, injustices, sorrow, mankind's and peoples' stupidity. It is a "civil laugh" that becomes a carrier of ethical, cultural, political and philosophical messages. Laughing is not enough; playing with words is not enough. The game becomes "serious", and it is no longer *iocus*, but *ludus*.

The role of the educator is to help pupils go through all four sides of the artistic triangle.

The **first side** requires the presence of educators as someone who follows the pupils and does not indicate the route to be followed. They follow pupils mentally, stay close to them; they are companions who support them when they are lost or troubled (even in front of artistic issues: what is beautiful? What does being creative mean?).

The **second side** is even more difficult to pursue, because we live life in a hurry; in our time experiences "burn" quick, and we have learnt to perceive meditation and slowness as "wasted time". We should read Rilke's poem every day: "Everything is now at rest: darkness and light, blossom and book".

The **third side** is dramatically complex (but it is possible to pursue it). To explain the role of educators, the French use the expression "*défricheurs du quotidien*" (meaning "those who clean daily life"). Our daily life is invaded by useless things, too many inputs and needs induced by the media or by the claims of "school engineering". It is necessary to remove the conditions that prevent us from choosing in a more meaningful and independent manner. It is necessary to clean our life environment, starting from the one we are closest to: the class, the school, the garden, the learning timings, the contents of education...

The **fourth side** is about adults and the competences that are necessary for them to follow these three aspects, and to allow them to add something personal. Because, in order to work artistically with kids, adults need to get involved in the game, they need to be involved relationally, empathically, with attention and respect.

No subject can replace a "philosophy" in artistic education. No type of learning is significant if we cannot find it in the meaning

we give to life (examples are always one of the most ancient and effective methods). Our idea of strolling "artistically" is convincing. We do not deny learning, but we do not identify it with the "things" learnt. We prefer to think of curious, adventurous children, who get amazed, search and feel that art is inside them and in their environment (artistic education is not the classroom where it is taught). And we also like to think of teachers who "follow them mentally", to make them discover that art should not be learnt and put aside, but rather experienced every day. Roberto Rossellini once wrote: "the tiniest event of daily life contains an extraordinary dramatic power". In other words: there is no such thing as banality, it is us who make it real and who can avoid it, through artistic education, throwing – as Rodari would say – smiling stones.

APONTAMENTOS PEDAGÓGICOS SOBRE O PAPEL DA ARTE NA EDUCAÇÃO DA PEQUENA INFÂNCIA: COMO A PEDAGOGIA DA EDUCAÇÃO INFANTIL ENCONTRA-SE COM A ARTE? *

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No descomeço era o verbo.
Só depois é que veio o delírio do verbo.
O delírio do verbo estava no começo, lá onde
a criança diz: Eu escuto a cor dos passarinhos.
A criança não sabe que o verbo escutar
não funciona para cor, mas para som.
Então se a criança muda a função
de um verbo, ele delira.
E pois.
Em poesia que é voz de poeta,
que é voz de fazer nascimentos –
O verbo tem que pegar delírio
(...)
A ciência pode classificar e nomear os órgãos
de um sabiá mas não pode medir seus encantos.
A ciência não pode calcular quantos cavalos
de força existem nos encantos de um sabiá.
Quem acumula muita informação
perde o condão de adivinhar:divinare.
Os sabiás divinam.
Manoel de Barros

* Este artigo foi escrito para "Theatre for Early Years. Research in performing arts for children from birth to three" tratado por Wolfgang Schneider (Peter Lang Publishing House, Frankfurt am Main, et. al. 2009)

Com a enorme mudança em curso na contemporaneidade na maneira de ver e entender as crianças, também produto das atuais modificações sociais na organização do tempo cotidiano, das transformações na família e do papel da mulher, discutiremos aqui a emergência de uma pedagogia que contempla a pequeníssima infância como sujeito de direitos e, portanto, com direito a ser educada por profissionais diplomados, no coletivo infantil das creches, complementar à esfera privada da família, resgatando a arte já presente na *paidea* grega (ciência, arte e técnica). Este texto parte das "primeiras aprendizagens" como é entendida pelos filósofos e pensadores, nenhum pedagogo, interessados na vida humana e no seu transbordar: a arte. Como diz Ferreira Gullar, a arte existe porque a vida não basta. Faremos uma crítica à pedagogia escolarizante fundada apenas nas ciências da regularidade, voltada ao ensino analítico, centrada na docente e na transmissão de conhecimento, muitas vezes imposta nas pré-escolas e as vezes até nas creches, como única forma de garantir o direito à educação. O que o encontro entre arte e infância tem mostrado são as lacunas na formação do pedagogo(a) que convive e trabalha com crianças pequenas, principalmente com as pequenininhas, para educá-las muito além do cognitivismo reinante. O destaque aqui dado à imaginação poética, à alegria e à complexidade de aprender, ao direito à beleza, à comunicação não-verbal, enfim, à arte como experiência de um corpo em suas primeiras aprendizagens, evoca uma pedagogia que não separa experiência e saber, corpo e mente, pensamento e ação no mundo. Problematicando as bases exclusivamente científicas da Pedagogia e seu tecnicismo estrutural - a didática - estamos tentando com a arte preencher a lacuna da formação docente, rumo a uma pedagogia da infância. Assim, apostamos que também uma outra pedagogia é possível.

Portanto, este texto escrito por duas mulheres, professoras e pesquisadoras de crianças de 0-3 anos, é um esforço para criar uma interlocução entre arte, educação e pequeníssima infância superando também as nossas lacunas da formação pedagógica. Nosso encontro busca problematizar o mito da imaginação livre e desenfreada na infância, o mito da arte como adereço da pedagogia, assim como o mito da ciência neutra que sempre vai garantir o direito das crianças à educação e o seu reconhecimento como cidadã mesmo sem estar atenta que

pode vir a ser uma maneira de captura e de escolarização precoce nos sentidos da disciplinarização, normalização do corpo, das palavras e gestos, na produção de um determinado tipo de aprendizagem trazendo, portanto, uma rejeição à alteridade e às diferenças que as crianças anunciam, enquanto tais (ABRAMOWICZ, 2003, p.16).

O direito à educação das crianças pequenas é um direito diferente do direito à educação obrigatória. Diferente também foi a luta para alcançá-lo. O mais recente direito à educação em creches tem inovado a formação docente. Até então, quem exercia essa função eram muitas vezes *guardadeiras*, enfermeiras, assistentes sociais e, às vezes, até pedagogas, que apenas cuidavam e tomavam conta das crianças, educando, portanto, sem os referenciais científicos (nem artísticos) da educação. Assim, se por um lado a Pedagogia não estava sendo vista como uma Psicologia aplicada, por outro lado, essas práticas pedagógicas não-escolares foram sendo construídas por profissionais (com ou sem diploma), muitas vezes já centrada na animação e na manipulação e não com a didática e a transmissão de conhecimentos.

O direito das crianças pequenas à educação supõe ir contra o senso pedagógico para reivindicar que a diferença está em não ser o verbo o mobilizador de ações e transformações na infância. É a experiência sensível do corpo, o movimento afetivo no mundo, que toca sua materialidade para daí extrair um *e-movere*: a interrogação, o espanto, a admiração. Onde há espanto e admiração há um corpo transfigurador que abole molduras estabelecidas por conhecimentos prévios. Um corpo *estesiado*, um corpo *em movimento*, um corpo que tem que aprender a tomar posse da experiência temporal através do movimento de *tornar-se* operador *fabuloso* de linguagens: lançar uma voz, iniciar um gesto, deixar um traço, uma marca, inscrever-se no curso das coisas.

Nesse sentido, a educação infantil não está centrada na aula, no ensino, na figura da professora, no binômio ensino-aprendizagem. A educação infantil está centrada na experiência da criança, no processo, e não no produto ou resultado. A professora de creche é uma professora de criança e não professora de disciplina escolar. Portanto, sem salas de aula, sem classes, sem alunos(as).

O que aprendemos e o que nos ensinam nos cursos de pedagogia, no Brasil, para poder trabalhar e conviver com crianças que ainda não falam, ainda não andam, ainda não lêem nem escrevem com as letras? O que aprendemos sobre as crianças de 0 a 3 anos, além do enfoque científico predominantemente psicológico que geralmente isola a mente do corpo? Como constroem as crianças, desde bem pequenas, saberes e falares entre elas? Como se dá a produção das culturas infantis nesse espaço coletivo de educação na esfera pública (complementar à esfera privada da família), com profissionais docentes que criam condições adequadas organizando o espaço e o tempo?

Na verdade, temos uma profissão que está sendo inventada: a docência na educação infantil exige integrar a ciência, a arte e a técnica, portanto, superando o tecnicismo pedagógico e o cientificismo sem cair no praticismo. Exige resgatar suas bases filosóficas e estéticas, como estamos tentando fazer neste texto cuja intenção não é discorrer sobre arte e infância mas entre elas firmar uma cumplicidade de mútuos aprendizados. Com elas re-aprender o pacto poético de fazer nascimentos: com elas recuperar o delírio dos começos na humana aventura de afrontar o desconhecido e o incerto. Trata-se de construir uma pedagogia da infância para o coletivo infantil desde as crianças pequenininhas partindo dessas características humanas aí projetadas. Uma pedagogia enquanto ciência da prática impõe um esforço interdisciplinar superando a fragmentação do pensamento, articulando permanentemente teoria e prática.

As pesquisas sobre o coletivo infantil em creches, e é esta a grande novidade do século XX, realizadas apenas desde os anos de 1970, demonstram que as crianças aprendem mesmo quando os adultos não tem intenção de ensinar (GUNNARSON, 1994). Portanto, se faz necessário um currículo para a educação infantil em continuidade – creche (0 a 3 anos) e pré-escola (4 a 6 anos) – e também se faz necessário contagiar a educação das crianças das séries iniciais da escola obrigatória e construir um currículo para uma pedagogia da infância centrado na criança de 0 a 10 anos levando em conta suas especificidades etárias: ampliar a formação teórica para a docência sem antagonizar a cultura lúdica e com as culturas da escrita, além de profunda formação em arte, que proporcionará atenção para as diversas formas sofisticadas de organização do corpo

e do pensamento durante a infância, distinta da poderosa organização alcançada com a escrita e que devem estar em concomitância nas sociedades grafocêntricas.

Devemos parar de pensar em educar através de ensino e de currículos prontos. Devemos privilegiar a auto-aprendizagem das crianças e encontrar com elas os currículos e os campos de experiência¹. E, tendo conosco nesta empreitada, as contribuições das famílias. Se nós adultos colaboramos discutindo, pensando e pesquisando fora de qualquer conformismo, então podemos oferecer às crianças um modelo de valor. É isso que tentamos. (...) Ver, tocar e demonstrar é algo extraordinário para uma pedagogia que, freqüentemente, ao contrário, simula, oculta e se limita somente às palavras. (MALAGUZZI apud AMBECK-MADSEN, 1992, p.19. destaque nosso).

Trabalhando, educando, observando crianças bem pequenas. o saudoso italiano Loris Malaguzzi, desde os anos de 1960, buscou em outros campos de conhecimento novos diálogos e interpretações do mundo infantil e adulto e, recuperando a dimensão estética na forma de produção de conhecimento humano, propôs a criação do atelier para a organização do trabalho pedagógico em creches e pré-escolas. Podemos dizer que esta pedagogia tem na arte seu fundamento, além da ciência que é permanentemente problematizada. Para tanto, Bruner e Dewey, entre outros, são seus interlocutores. Diz Loris:

A arte aprende-se fora da arte, o desenho não se aprende somente desenhando - certamente há necessidade de aprendizagem de técnicas, porém se aprende tanto desenhando quanto fazendo outras coisas...e, por outro lado, a lógica se aprende também pelo desenho, projetando e construindo...

¹ Eis os campos de experiência educativa das novas orientações para a escola da infância italiana de 1991: a) o corpo e o movimento; b) os discursos e as palavras; c) o espaço, a ordem, a medida; d) as coisas, o tempo, a natureza; e) mensagens, formas e mídia; f) o eu e o outro. Para as crianças de 0-3 anos em creche, os italianos Borghi e Guerra (1999) propõem: a) percepção e movimento; b) o gesto, a imagem, as palavras; c) os problemas, as tentativas, as soluções; d) a sociedade e a natureza; e) o eu e o outro.

A arte usa as roupas de todos os dias, não a roupa de domingo (MALAGUZZI apud RABITTI, p.149, 1999).

Desta forma, vê-se a pedagogia enquanto política. O atelier atualizou a cultura italiana da imagem gerando, não um espaço separado onde é cômodo pintar, desenhar, fazer esculturas, construir engenhocas, etc, e onde se pode sujar e bagunçar, mas gerou o trabalho conjunto da atelierista, da professora e das crianças. Nessa relação a três se potencializa o desenvolvimento integrado das *cem linguagens* como diria Malaguzzi. Isto é, a construção interada das dimensões humanas e assim de todas as formas de expressão e comunicação de estar no mundo. Este processo representa uma ruptura nos métodos da pedagogia tradicional, que devem ser revolucionados para contemplar a abrangência da infância: a observação e a documentação são inseparáveis no atelier.

O atelier supõe uma transgressão física: segundo a idéia de Rodari, seria "...um diálogo que interrompe a assim chamada normalidade educativa". Malaguzzi já tinha comentado: há muita normalidade na escola. O atelier convida as crianças e os adultos a experimentar, a provocar, a procurar, a brincar com a loucura. (HOYUELOS, 1998, p. 7)

Talvez, diante da afirmação, tenhamos que interrogar com Bachelard (1991, p.76): "crianças, éramos pintor, modelador, botânico, escultor, arquiteto, caçador, explorador. E o que aconteceu com tudo isso?". Éramos ao mesmo tempo artistas e cientistas experimentando o mundo e aprendendo a conhecer o poder inventivo de nossas fabulações e a força construtiva de nossas mãos. Para Beltran (2002), as artes plásticas e a ciência apresentam aspectos comuns em seus diferentes modos de conhecer a natureza pois tanto no atelier quanto no laboratório opera-se sobre materiais, grande parte deles comuns à prática das artes e à realização de processos envolvidos nas investigações científicas sobre a matéria.

Malaguzzi e Bachelard permitem compreender que cada criança aprende a alcançar maior complexidade na sua experiência languageira através do exercício continuado do corpo operante sobre o mundo. É através da experiência

lúdica com materiais e ferramentas diversificados que podemos explorar diferentes possibilidades de manipular e transformar materialidades². Convém advertir que manipular algo nunca é mero “mexer” com as mãos. Manipular, desde a infância, é extrair valores da dinâmica do encontro tensivo do corpo com a plasticidade do mundo; é dar forma – *transformar*; agregar à coisa um pensamento (imagens, sensações, lembranças, palavras).

É sob a perspectiva de que tanto a arte quanto a ciência envolvem operações sobre a materialidade do mundo que Loris Malaguzzi (EDWARDS; GANDINI; FORMAN, 1999, p.98) nos adverte que as crianças, desde muito pequenas, não são moldadas pela experiência mas dão forma à experiência. Para Malaguzzi, estar com crianças pequenas significa estar com *todas* as suas complexidades. Trata-se, portanto, da importância formativa de garantir, desde a creche, diferentes modos de operar linguagens. Como diz Bachelard (1994, p. 44), “a maneira como se imagina é mais instrutiva do que aquilo que se imagina”. Não para “adquirir” ou “acumular conhecimentos” mas para que as crianças possam constituir outras narrativas para si. Para que seus poderes – a espera de serem expressos através da solicitação das mãos, do raciocínio lógico, da surpresa, da escuta, do encantamento, do interesse, da atenção, do movimento – não fiquem acorrentados às limitações de imaginar e perceber um único real: o escolarizado.

Os modernistas, já no início do século XX diziam que as crianças são inventivas e quando expressam essa inventividade, por exemplo, nos desenhos, (re)inventam inclusive a perspectiva (GOBBI, 2004). Apesar de concordarmos que a curiosidade e o estranhamento da arte e da ciência promovem diferentes modos de aprender a abarcar a complexidade do mundo – natural e social – os projetos educativos na infância insistem em submeter a diversidade expressiva das diferentes linguagens à lógica do discurso verbal que, por sua vez, ancora-se na lógica temporal e espacial do “aluno na sala de aula”.

As pesquisas recentes têm mostrado que as crianças são comunicadoras por excelência, são construtoras da história e da

2 Bachelard utiliza o termo materialidade para abranger não somente alguma substância, mas tudo o que está sendo formado e transformado pelo humano. Se o pedreiro trabalha com pedras, o filósofo lida com pensamentos, o matemático com conceitos, o músico com sons e formas de tempo, o psicólogo com estados afetivos.

cultura, são capazes de múltiplas relações e não são alunas – sem luz – mas são capazes de sofisticadas formas de organização do corpo e do pensamento e de sua manifestação em diferentes formas de expressão mesmo antes de ler e escrever. O ato de rabiscar, figurar, manchar, modelar, construir e destruir, enquanto acontecimento plástico de decompor e transformar na simultaneidade que torna presença e mostra – amplificando as coisas – são insubstituíveis na infância. Por configurar a experiência de um corpo brincando com suas possibilidades e com suas limitações de linguagens, com seus medos e regozijos, são irrepetíveis.

Assim, faz-se necessária uma outra formação profissional docente (formação + pesquisa = inovação), também sofisticada, e uma pedagogia para a infância que não seja apenas sinônimo de ler e escrever, que não faça da palavra um atalho para o conhecimento (Malaguzzi, 1988), com professores(as) capazes de trabalhar com idades misturadas, em duplas de adultos sem hierarquia, “alfabetizados” nas cem linguagens, críticos das pedagogias espontaneístas e cognitivistas, superando os binarismos, o adultocentrismo, o sexismo, o racismo, enfim, todos os preconceitos e desigualdades. A professora não ensina, mas, com intencionalidade educativa planeja, organiza e coloca à disposição das crianças tempos, espaços e materiais que favoreçam provocações à imaginação e desafios ao raciocínio, dando asas à curiosidade, proporcionando espanto, descoberta, maravilhamento e todas as formas de expressão nas mais diferentes intensidades. Para Malaguzzi, a inteligência se adquire usando-a. Assim, a organização do tempo e do espaço físico também precisa ser revista para permitir o imprevisto, como protagonismo infantil, e que uma pedagogia da escuta, uma pedagogia das relações, uma pedagogia das diferenças possa ser construída em continuidade com a escola obrigatória.

A pedagogia malaguzziana é complexa: ‘se permite’ interpretações subjetivas, divergentes e independentes sobre o mundo, em contraste com uma idéia de progresso linear e cumulativo. É cética em relação às certezas passadas, presentes e futuras; está preparada para libertar-se dos cânones hegemônicos da pedagogia e da psicologia. A pedagogia malaguzziana também é estética pela

sua capacidade de mostrar o essencial através de novas relações, com proximidades aparentemente longínquas. Vive uma tensão transgredindo ela mesma, sem trair-se, e ao mesmo tempo [...] uma comunicação metafórica e simbólica que multiplica a nossa imagem do mundo e da infância (HOYUELOS, 2004, p.7).

O convívio das diferenças permitirá que a criança, desde pequena, possa conhecer a origem da desigualdade. Portanto, temos um(a) docente comprometido(a) com o conhecimento, cúmplice da invenção de saberes com as crianças, que cria instalações. Sem dar aulas atuará como se fosse um(a) cenógrafo(a), um(a) criador(a) de ambientes para que a infância aconteça. Um(a) performático(a). Como diz Walter Benjamin (1984), o professor de crianças é como um diretor de teatro: convida a criança para sentir, pensar e agir concomitantemente, sem separar a cabeça do corpo, cria as condições para que cada uma se articule com o coletivo divertindo-se, partilhando sensações, comunicando-se.

Podemos ser muito criativas e inventar muitas formas de educar as crianças pequenas sem didatizar o lúdico e sem pedagogizar a arte. Agora, para não perdermos tudo isso, é necessário contagiar a escola obrigatória. As professoras de creche e de pré-escola e as de 1ª série deverão ser aliadas nesse processo. A arte será a grande aglutinadora. A construção do indivíduo como eixo central da escola, que geralmente se transforma em individualismo, pode ser superada com a presença da infância, do coletivo infantil, da diversidade. Articular o sistema nacional de ensino/educação também com as práticas de educação não-formal pode favorecer a construção de uma Pedagogia da Infância centrada na criança e principalmente nas dimensões humanas negligenciadas pela escola obrigatória: o lúdico, a imaginação e o senso estético, o ficcional.

Trata-se, portanto, de outra formação docente, que garantirá a continuidade da educação no coletivo das crianças de todas as idades. O compromisso com o conhecimento, produto da formação científica e artística na docência para a infância, favorecerá a construção de uma pedagogia capaz de formar o cidadão de pouca idade centrada em ações integradoras do ser, tais como o brincar e as manifestações artísticas,

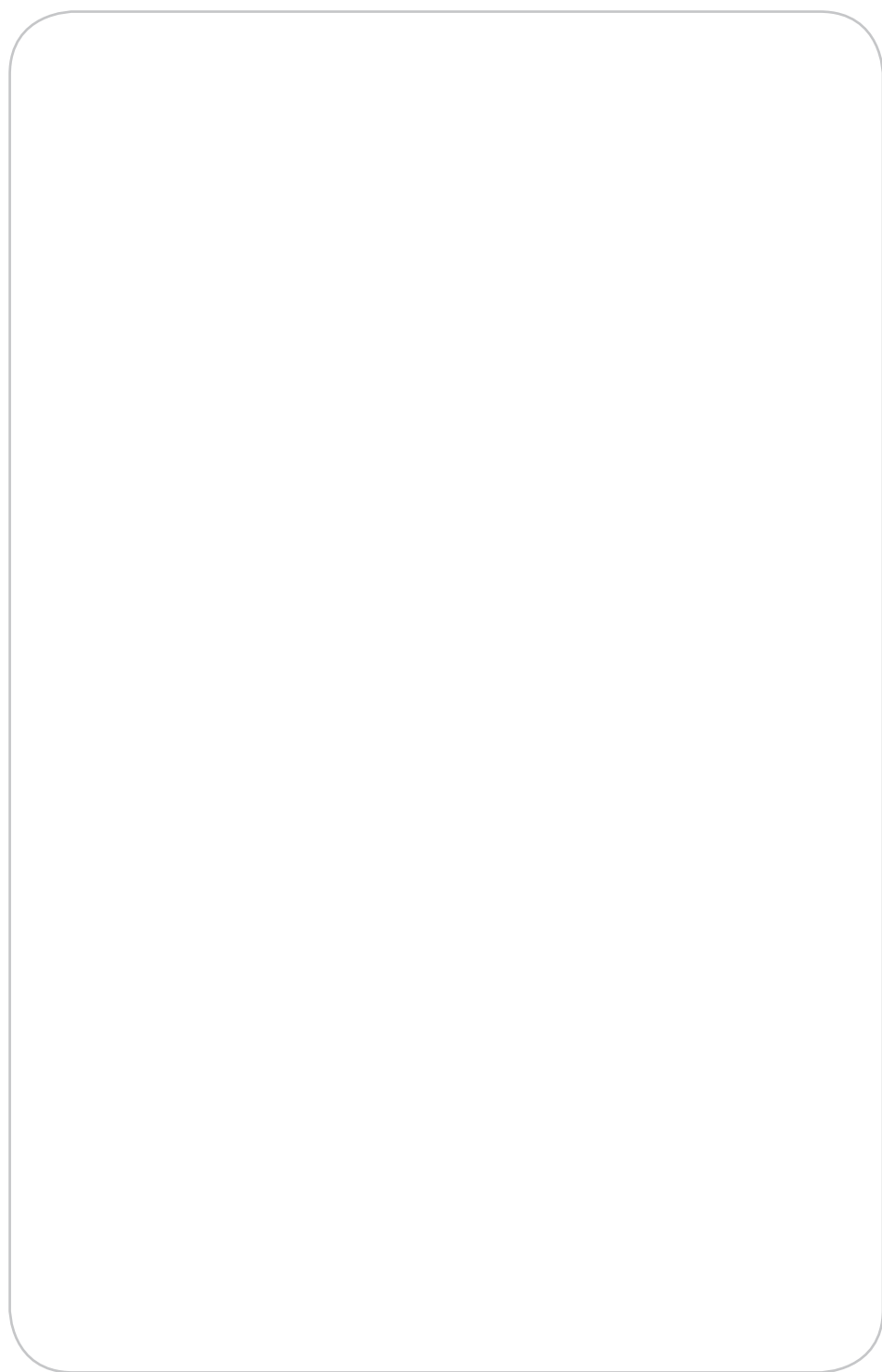
ações humanas onde sentir, pensar e fazer podem não estar dissociados desde que a intencionalidade educativa do adulto profissional assim o desejar. Essas ações corresponderão a mais um "ensaio de humanidade" já que estamos longe de constituí-la plenamente. São *uma confirmação esfuziante da possibilidade do homem* (GARDNER, 2004).

Terminamos sem concluir, cheias de perguntas e vontade de continuar essa interlocução entre arte e pedagogia. Interrompemos com uma frase escrita em 1929 (o mesmo período em que Benjamin está escrevendo sobre infância) de um poeta brasileiro, Mário de Andrade, que em 1935, quando foi diretor do Departamento de Cultura da prefeitura da cidade de São Paulo criou os parques infantis para as crianças das famílias operárias, onde sem terem aulas, foram educadas na diversidade cultural brasileira, brincando. Implica, portanto, considerar uma atitude crítica corajosa cujo desafio é a nossa própria condição de professoras e pesquisadoras de crianças pequenininhas.

A criança é essencialmente um ser sensível a procura de expressão (...) ela é muito mais expressivamente total que o adulto. Diante de uma dor: chora – o que é muito mais expressivo do que abstrair: "estou sofrendo". A criança utiliza-se indiferentemente de todos os meios de expressão artística, emprega a palavra, as batidas do ritmo, cantarola, desenha. Dirão que as tendências dela ainda não se afirmaram. Sei. Mas é esta mesma vagueza de tendências que permite para ela ser mais total. E aliás as tais "tendências" muitas vezes provêm da nossa inteligência exclusivamente (MARIO DE ANDRADE).

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**PEDAGOGICAL REMARKS ABOUT THE ROLE OF ARTS
IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: HOW DOES PEDAGOGY
MEET ART? ***

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*In the unbeginning there was the verb.
Only later on came the delirium of the verb.
The delirium of the verb was at the beginning, there where
the child says: I hear the colour of the birds.
The child does not know that the verb 'hear'
does not work for colours, but for sound.
So if a child changes the function
of a verb, it delirates.
And so.
In poetry, the voice, which is the voice of the poet,
which is the voice that brings about births –
The verb has to get a delirium
(...)
Science can classify and name the organs
of a song thrush, but it cannot measure its enchantments.
Science cannot calculate how many horses
of power there are in the enchantments of a song thrush.
Who accumulates too much information
Loses the power of guessing: divinare.
The song thrushes divine.*

Manoel de Barros

With the enormous ongoing contemporary change in the way of
seeing and understanding children, which is also a result of the
current social changes in the organization of the quotidian time,

* This article has been written for "Theatre for Early Years. Research
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Schneider (Peter Lang Publishing House, Frankfurt am Main, et. al. 2009)

of the transformations in the families and of the role of women, among others, we will discuss here the emergence of a pedagogy which contemplates very early childhood as a subject to rights and, therefore, with the right to be educated by graduated professionals, in the children's collective of day care centres, complementary to the private sphere of families, recovering art, which is already present in the Greek *paidea* (science, art and technique). In this text, we assume "the early learnings", through philosophers and thinkers, no pedagogues, who are interested in human life and in its overflowing: art. We will make a criticism of scholarising pedagogy, which is grounded only on regular sciences, focused on analytical teaching, centred on the teacher and on the transmission of knowledge, many times imposed in pre-schools and sometimes even in day care centres as the only way of guaranteeing the right to education. What the encounter between art and childhood has shown is the gaps in the training of pedagogues who deal with and work with young children, especially with the very young ones, to educate them a far beyond the mainstream cognitivism. The highlight here is given to poetical imagination, to the pleasure and to the complexity of learning, to the right to beauty, to non-verbal communication, in short, to art as an experience of a body in its early learnings. It evokes a pedagogy which does not separate experience from knowledge, the body from the mind, thinking and action in the world. Problematising the exclusively scientific bases of pedagogy and its structural technicism – didactics – we are trying, with art, to fill the gap of teacher training, aiming at an early childhood pedagogy.

Therefore, this text, written by two women researchers of children aged 0-3 years old, aims at creating the interlocution between art, education and the very early childhood, as well as overcoming our own gaps of pedagogical training. This encounter also seeks to problematise the myth of free imagination as an ornament of pedagogy, as well as the myth of neutral science, which will always guarantee the right for children to education and their recognition as a citizen even without being aware

that it can be a manner of capturing and of premature scholarisation, in the sense of disciplinarisation, normalisation of the body, of the words and gestures, in the production of a

determined type of apprentice, and bringing, thus, a rejection to the alterity and to the differences that children announce, as such.
(ABRAMOWICZ, 2003, p.16)

The right of young children to education is a different right from that to obligatory education. Different as well was the struggle to achieve it. The most recent right to education in day care centres for 0-3-year-old-children has innovated teacher training. Until then, the ones who exercised this position were informal children caretakers, nurses, social welfare assistants and, sometimes, even pedagogues, but who only to take care and looked after children, educating them and, thus, without having the scientific (or artistic) referentials of education. Therefore, if on the one hand pedagogy was not being seen as an applied psychology, on the other hand those pedagogical informal practices were gradually built up by professionals (with or without a degree) very often focused on the animation and manipulation, as opposed to the didactics and the mere transmission of knowledge. Since then, one has been able to think of a pedagogy of process, rather than of a pedagogy of result.

Young children's right to education presumes opposing the pedagogical sense so as to claim that the difference lies in the verb not being the mobiliser of actions and transformations in childhood. It is the body's sensory experience, the affective movement of the world, which touches its materiality to then extract an *e-movere*: the interrogation, the awe, the admiration. Wherever there is awe and admiration there is a transfiguring body that abolishes frames established by previous knowledges. A *feeling* body, a *moving* body, a body which has to learn to take possession of the time experience through the movement of *becoming a fabulous* operator of languages: uttering a voice, initiating a gesture, leaving a trace, a mark, inscribing itself in the course of things.

In this sense, childhood education is not centred on the lesson, on teaching, on the figure of the teacher, on the binomial teaching-learning. Childhood education is focused on childhood experience, on the process, rather than on the product. The day care centre teacher is a teacher of children, not a teacher of school subjects. Hence, with no classrooms, no classes, no students.

What do we learn and what do they teach us in pedagogy courses so that we can work and deal with children who do not speak, or walk, or read, or write with the letters yet? What do we learn about 0-3-year-old children, besides the scientific approach, predominantly psychological, which usually isolates mind from body? How do children, from a very young age, build up knowledges and speeches among themselves? How does the production of children's peer cultures happen in this collective space of education in the public sphere (complementary to the private family sphere), with professional teachers who create appropriate conditions, organising space and time? In actual fact, our profession is being invented: the teaching profession in early childhood education, which ought to be integrated into science, art and technique, thus, overcoming the pedagogical scientific technicism, without falling into practicism. Therefore, it is important to rescue its philosophical and aesthetical bases. Our aim, in this encounter promoted by common restlessness and questions is precisely to emphasise that "the intention is not to discourse on art and childhood, but rather to establish a closeness of mutual learnings. With them, to re-learn the poetical pact of bringing about births: with them, to recover the delirium of the beginnings in the human adventure of facing the unknown and the uncertain". Thus, it has to do with constructing a childhood pedagogy for the children's collective, from very young children and based on these characteristics there projected. A pedagogy, as a science of practice, demands an interdisciplinary effort, overcoming the fragmentation of thought, permanently articulating theory and practice.

The researches on the children's collective in day care centres, and this is the great novelty of the 20th century, which have been carried out as late as since the 1970s, demonstrate that children learn even when adults do not intend to teach (Gunnarson, 1994). Therefore, there must be a curriculum for childhood education in continuity – day care centre (0 to 3 years old) and pre-school (4 to 6) – and also it is necessary to contaminate primary school education and build a curriculum for a childhood pedagogy focused on 0-10-year-old children, taking into consideration their age specificities: to widen teacher theoretical training without antagonising the playful culture and the cultures of writing, as well as a deep training in art, which will provide attention to the several sophisticated forms of organisation of the body and the thinking during childhood, different from the powerful organisation

achieved with writing and which must be simultaneous in the graphocentric societies.

We must stop thinking of educating through the teaching of ready curricula. We should privilege the self-learning of children and find with them the curricula and the fields of experience¹. And, in this pursuit, have the contributions from the families. If we, adults, collaborate by discussing, thinking and researching detached from any sort of acquiescence, then we can offer our children a valuable model. This is what we try to do. (...) Seeing, touching and demonstrating is something extraordinary for a pedagogy which, frequently, on the contrary, simulates, conceals and limits itself to words only. (MALAGUZZI apud AMBECK-MADSEN, 1992, p.19 (highlights by us).

Working, educating, observing very young children, the late Italian Loris Malaguzzi, from the 1960s sought, in other fields of knowledge, new dialogues and interpretations of the world of the children on the world of the adults and, thus, retrieving the aesthetic dimension in the form of production of human knowledge, proposed the creation of the atelier for the organisation of pedagogic work in day care centres and pre-schools. One can say that this pedagogy has its fundament in art, in addition to science, which is permanently problematised. For this purpose, Brunet and Dewey (among others) are his interlocutors. Loris says:

Art is learned outside art, drawing is not only learned by drawing – certainly there is the need for learning techniques; however, one can learn both by drawing or by doing other things... and, on the other hand, logic is also learned through drawing, projecting and building... Art wears everyday clothes, not Sunday clothes (MALAGUZZI apud RABITTI, p.149, 1999).

¹ These are the fields of educational experience, according to the new trends of Italian children's schools in 1991: A) body and movement, B) discourses and words, C) space, order, measurement, D) things, time, nature, E) messages, forms and media, F) the self and the other. For children aged 0-3 years old in day care centres, the Italians Borghi and Guerra propose: A) perception and movement, B) gesture, image, words, C) problems, attempts, solutions, D) society and nature, E) the self and the other.

From this perspective, in which pedagogy shows its political side, the atelier updated the Italian culture of image, generating, not a separated space where it is comfortable to paint, to draw, to sculpt, to build gadgets, etc., and where one can get dirty and messy, but rather it generated the conjunct work of the *atelierista*, the teacher and the children. In this tripartite, there is the potentialisation of the integrated development of the hundred languages, as Malaguzzi would say. That is, the construction of all human dimensions and, hence, of all forms of expression and communication of being in the world. This process represents a break in the methods of traditional pedagogy, which must be revolutionized in order to contemplate the broadness of childhood: observation and documentation are inseparable in the atelier.

The atelier supposes a physical transgression: according to Rodari's idea, it would be "... a dialogue which interrupts the so-called educative normality". Malaguzzi had already commented: there is too much normality in the school. The atelier invites children and adults to try, to provoke, to search, to play with madness. (HOYUELOS, 1998, p. 7)

Perhaps, in the face of the statement, we have to ask with Bachelard (1998): "as children, we were painters, modellers, botanists, sculptors, architects, hunters, explorers. And what happened to all this?" We used to be at the same time artists and scientists experiencing the world and starting to learning the inventive power of our fabulations and the building force of our hands. For Beltran (2002), the plastic arts and science present common aspects in their different forms of getting to know nature since "both in the atelier and in the laboratory one operates over materials, a great part of which are common to the practice of arts as well as to the performance of processes involved in the investigation over matter".

Malaguzzi and Bachelard claim that each child learns to achieve more complexity in his or her language experience through the continuous exercise of the operating body over the world. It is through the ludic experience with diversified materials and tools that we can explore different possibilities of

manipulating and transforming materialities². It is worth warning that manipulating something is never merely “touching” with the hands. Manipulating, since childhood, is to extract values from the dynamics of the tense encounter of the body with the plasticity of the world; it is to give form – *transform*; to add a thought (images, sensations, memories, words) to things.

It is under the perspective that both art and science involve operations over the materiality of the world that Loris Malaguzzi warns us that children, from a very young age, are not molded by experience, but rather give shape to experience. For Malaguzzi, to be with young children means to be with *all* their complexities. It is thus of formative importance to guarantee, from when they are in day care centres, different manners of operating languages. As Bachelard (1994) says, “the way one imagines is more instructive than what is imagined”. Not in order to “acquire or accumulate knowledge”, but so that the children can compose other narratives to themselves, so that their powers – waiting to be expressed through the request of hands, of logic thinking, of surprise, of listening, of enchantment, of interest, of attention, of movement – are not chained by the limitations of imagining and perceiving an only real: the schooled one.

The modernists, as early as in the early 20th century, said that children are inventive and when they express this inventivity, for instance, in drawings, they (re)invent even perspective (Gobbi, 2004). Although we agree that the curiosity and strangeness of art and science promote different ways of learning and embracing the complexity of the world – natural and social – the educational projects in childhood insist on submitting the expressive diversity of different languages to the logic of verbal discourse which, in its turn, is anchored on the space-time logic of the “student in the classroom”.

Recent researches have shown that children are communicators *par excellence*, they are story and culture builders, they are capable of multiple relations and are not *alumni* – without light –, rather, they are capable of sophisticated forms of organisation of thinking and of their manifestation in different manners of expression, even prior to reading and writing.

Therefore, another form of teacher training is necessary (training

2 Bachelard uses the term materiality to comprehend not only some substance, but all that is being formed and transformed by man. If the builder works with stones, the philosopher deals with thoughts, the mathematician with concepts, the musician with sounds and tempo forms, the psychologist with emotional states.

+ research = innovation), also sophisticated, and a childhood pedagogy which is not only synonymous with reading and writing. A pedagogy which will not use the word as a path for knowledge (Malaguzzi, 1998), with teachers who are capable of working mixed ages, in pairs of adults without a hierarchy, "literate" in the hundred languages, critical of spontaneist and cognitivist pedagogies, overcoming binarism (as well as adultcentrism, sexism, racism, homophobia), in short, every prejudice. The teacher does not teach, but rather, with educative intentionality, he/she plans, organizes and makes available to children time, space and material so as to encourage imagination and challenges to reasoning, giving room to curiosity, providing amazement, discovery, marvelling and all the forms of expression in the most varied intensities. Intelligence is acquired by using it (Malaguzzi). Therefore, the organisation of time and of the physical space also has to be reviewed in order to allow the unpredictable as a childhood protagonism, and a pedagogy of listening, a pedagogy of relations, a pedagogy of differences may be built, in continuity with obligatory school.

The malaguzzian pedagogy is complex: it 'allows itself' subjective, divergent and independent interpretations of the world, in contrast with an idea of linear, cumulative progress. It is sceptical about the past, present and future beliefs; it is prepared to break free from the hegemonic canons of pedagogy and psychology. The malaguzzian pedagogy is also aesthetical for its capacity of showing the essential through new relations, with apparently remote proximities. It lives in tension, transgressing itself, though without betraying itself and, at the same time [...] a metaphorical and symbolic communication which multiplies our image of the world and of childhood (HOYUELOS, 2004, p.7).

The experience with differences will allow children from different social classes, from a very young age, to be able to learn about the origin of inequality, and thus they will find the possibility of overcoming it. Therefore, we will have a teacher who is committed to knowledge, to the creation of it, and closely

connected with the invention of childhood knowledges, which creates installations. Without teaching classes, he/she will act as if he/she were a scenographer, a creator of environments in which childhood will happen, a performer. As Walter Benjamin (1984) says, the children teacher is like a play director: he/she invites children to feel, think and act simultaneously, without separating his/her head from his/her body, creates conditions for each one to act and to articulate him/herself with the collective, having a good time, sharing sensations and communicating.

We have been very creative and invented many manners of educating young children, without didactising playfulness or pedagogising art. Now, so as not to lose all this, it is necessary to contaminate obligatory school. Day care centre, pre-school and first grade teachers must be allied in this process. Art will be the great agglutinator. The construction of the individual as the central axis of school, which usually becomes individualism, can be overcome through childhood construction, of the children's collective, of diversity. Articulating the teaching/educational national system along with non-formal education may favour the construction of a childhood pedagogy focused on children and, especially, on the human dimensions which are neglected by obligatory school: the playful, imagination, the unpredictable, the aesthetic and fictional sense.

It has to do, thus, with another teacher training, which will guarantee the continuity of education in the collective of children at every age. The commitment to knowledge, a product of scientific and artistic preparation of childhood teachers will favour the building of a pedagogy which will be able to educate a young citizen who will be focused on integrated actions of the being, such as playing, and the artistic manifestations, human actions, where feeling, thinking and doing may not be detached, as long as the educative intentionality of the adult professional wishes so. Such actions will correspond to another "humanity rehearsal" (Milton Santos), since we are far from establishing it fully. *They are an irradant confirmation of the possibility of man.* (Gardner, 2004).

We end this paper without a conclusion, full of questions and the will to continue this interlocution between art and pedagogy on the perspective of teacher training and of the pedagogical practice. We will interrupt it with this sentence wrote in 1929 (at the same period of time in which Benjamin writes about childhood) by

the Brazilian poet Mario de Andrade, who in 1936, when he was director of the Department of Culture in São Paulo's city council, created playgrounds for children of working-class families who, without attending classes, were raised in the Brazilian cultural diversity, playing. Therefore, it implies considering a critical and courageous attitude whose challenge is our condition itself of teachers and researchers of very young children.

A child is essentially a sensible being in search of expression (...) he/she is much more expressively total than the adult. Before a pain: he/she cries – which is much more expressive than to withdraw: “I am suffering”. A child utilises indifferently every means of artistic expression: he/she uses the word, the beats, singing, drawing. They will say that his/her tendencies have not become firm yet. I know. But it is the same vagueness of tendencies that allow him/her to be more total. And besides, these “tendencies” often originate exclusively from our intelligence (Mario de Andrade).

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A SUITCASE FULL OF STORIES A REPORT ON AN EARLY YEARS

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THE IDEA

Several years ago, I first read "The Boy Who Wanted to Be a Helicopter", an account by kindergarten teacher, Vivien Gussin Paley, of her Storytelling/Storyacting work in a nursery in Chicago. In this work, through careful questioning, a child begins to construct a story which is recorded verbatim. This story is then acted out by the child and his/her classmates.

More recently I read of a project in which puericultrici (nursery nurses) who worked with La Baracca in Bologna, had created a performance/workshop - "Una Valigia .. Tante Storie" - ("One suitcase ... many stories") - which involved a suitcase containing an array of tactile objects.

Having created and directed theatre productions for nurseries for Theatr lolo, I was keen to develop the company's relationship with Early Years' settings, and when I saw an advertisement by the Clore Duffield Foundation calling for applications for Performing Arts Education Initiatives, a source of funding for this project (which fell outside the core remit of Theatr lolo) identified itself. And so the story begins...

GETTING STARTED

Selecting the nurseries

We immediately set about selecting three nurseries in which I would work intensively for 6 weeks. We wished to work with children from a range of cultural backgrounds across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan and, therefore, chose three nurseries with which we had some previous contact and knew to be supportive of the company's early years' work.

These were:

Moorland Nursery, Splott, Cardiff

Nursery Unit, Ninian Park School, Grangetown, Cardiff
Nursery Unit, Barry Island School, Barry, Vale of Glamorgan

Buying the objects

My next task was to go on a shopping trip; buying objects which I anticipated would arouse children's curiosity and provide a stimulus for the creation of stories. In keeping with the aesthetic of Theatr lolo's plays for nurseries, I endeavoured, as far as possible, to avoid primary colours and plastic, focusing instead on objects in more muted colours and a variety of textures and materials.

Getting to know the children

Prior to starting work on gathering stories, I spent a session in each nursery, simply observing the children and their routine, joining in their games when invited, and getting to know them and the staff.

STORYTELLING

RECORDING THE STORIES

On my second visit to each nursery, I identified a table which was designated "The Story Table" and I invited (or the teachers selected) various children to come and join me, to see what was inside my suitcase, and to tell me a story.

The opening of the suitcase – lined with purple and gold silk – regularly resulted in gasps of delight and wonder at the beautiful objects within. Admittedly, the children's desire to touch the objects was sometimes hard to contain, but my exhortations to take care of the dragon "...because it's only a tiny baby" or the chicken "...because it's sleeping" were usually successful.

I would begin by asking the storyteller his or her name and writing this with great care at the top of a new page – explaining "That's your name, because this is your story". Sean was adamant that I should write his full name, so Sean 'Mr' O'Flaherty duly appeared at the top of his page; the same applied to Sean Brian Michael Hurley.

In the early days in each nursery, it was necessary to ask, "How would you like to start your story? Once upon a time? There was once" The children would also require a degree of prompting before they got into their stride – "Whose ironing board is it?", "What did the bee do next?" but, as they became

more and more au fait with the process, they would simply wait for me to write their name at the top of the page and then launch into their story.

In recording the stories, I followed Vivian Gussin Paley's way of working to the letter:

"My role in the process is made clear from the start. First, I enable others to hear the storyteller by repeating each sentence as I write it down. This also gives the storyteller a chance to correct me if I am in error, or to change the contents of the story if another idea comes to mind.

I question any aspect of the story I might misinterpret – any word, phrase, sound effect, character or action that does not make sense to me without further explanation."

The children always informed me in no uncertain terms when I had taken their story down wrong.

READING THE STORIES BACK

After notating each child's story, I would then read the entire story back to them – their delight at hearing their own story read aloud with the cadences and intonations of storytelling was clearly evident.

THE CHILDREN'S STORIES

"Practitioners frequently comment on their children's lack of creative and imaginative ability. This is not actually the case. Children are by nature imaginative but the imagination requires nurture and encouragement."

Supporting Drama and Imaginative Play in the Early Years,
Lesley Hendy and Lucy Toon.

Many of the children who told the following stories have English as an additional language – this may not always be evident from the stories, as some of the stories these children told were of an incredible length and degree of creativity.

MAGIC MOMENTS

Charlie Jo

When I first met Charlie, she was incredibly shy – she was averse to making eye contact and when she did say “Yes” or “No” (her only responses) it was in a barely audible whisper.

Over the course of the project, with much nurturing and encouragement, she began to engage in eye contact and would occasionally even smile at me. For a number of weeks, each time I asked her whether she wanted to tell me a story, she shook her head. Then finally, in the fourth week, I asked her and she nodded and smiled. It required a little prompting at first but soon the words came tumbling out. Charlie was delighted at seeing the words which were coming out of her mouth taking shape on the page and I was thrilled by her story’s quirky, imaginative strength:

Maybe you bought one shoe for a one-footed baby. It broke its other foot off. The baby cried. “I’ve got to buy a new foot”, said the mummy.

She went to the foot shop. “I would like to buy a new baby foot, please”.

The shopkeeper said, “I don’t have any baby feet today”.

The mummy said, “I’ll have to come back another day”.

When she had finished and I whispered to her that it was my favourite story so far, she looked at me suspiciously – was I simply humouring her? When she realised that I was sincere, a huge smile spread slowly across her previously intensely serious face.

Cameron

The week after Cameron had dictated his story to me he accosted me as soon as I entered the classroom and said very politely, “Hello, Sarah. Can you tell my story, please?” When I started to read, it became apparent that Cameron had total recall of every word and phrase of his story, as he prompted me verbatim:

Once upon a time there was a dragon and a queen frog. And then the dragon saw a big, big pumpkin and the queen frog said “I’m going to splash in the water and throw it on somebody’s head”. And then the dragon said, “I’m going to

eat somebody up". The queen frog said, "I'm going to eat the dragon because he's not my pet". And the dragon said, "I'm going to be her pet". And then they set off to bounce in the trees and they landed in the pirate ship. Then they splashed into the water and the shark ate them.

In subsequent weeks, any time the frog was mentioned, Cameron reminded me what he had called it in his story - "a queen frog".

Luke

Luke's story took most of the afternoon to tell me, as it developed into a wonderful ritual. He would tell me one sentence of the story which would then end with Sportacus saying the words, "*And I'll be back – toot-te-toot!*" At this point, Luke would run off and make a circuit of the garden – his route always the same ...the log ...the house ... the pirate ship. He would then return to where I was sitting and dictate another sentence of the story. Then, with the words "*And I'll be back – toot-te-toot*" off he would run again.

THE DANGER OF ANTICIPATING PARTICULAR STORIES

Kaseyleigh

Kaseyleigh and Logan had informed me "We know the names of all the princesses". They then started to reel off the names of the heroines from the Disney cartoons. So, when Kaseyleigh started her story, I imagined that what followed would be a retelling of the Disney story. But no, Kasey's Snow White lived in a much more prosaic world:

Once upon a time there was Snow White. She was cleaning the dishes for the Three Dwarfs. Then the Three Dwarfs knocked on the door and they said, "Hello! Is anyone in there?" And Snow White said, "Yeah! It's me. Snow White". And they said, "Hi! Can we come in please?" And Snow White said, "Yeah!"

Snow White opened the door and said "Hello" and Three Dwarfs said, "What you doing today?". And she said, "I'm cleaning the dishes and then I'm going to my Nanny's". And the Three Dwarfs said, "Can we come with you?". And Snow White said, "Yeah, it's a very long way".

So they got up and went in Snow White's car and went to her Nanny's. And then she woke up and that was only a dream.

Athika

Working through a Language Support worker, Athika (who had recently been to visit her family in Bangladesh) began her story inspired by the jewel-encrusted box:

My teacher gave me this present. So I opened the present and I found a key – a magical key. With the key, I opened a door ... a door to a house ... there was a princess cartoon inside and Popeye and Spiderman."

Her story went on to outline her exploits with her favourite cartoon characters:

And then we all danced together – we put our hands together and danced.

While both the stories she proceeded to tell me did contain wonderful, magical imagery:

We played with a magic stick and when Tamby used the magic stick - when she went "Hey" - my dress turned into a princess dress ... and suddenly, to my surprise, I looked to my dress and it changed to a princess dress. "I can't believe you made me a princess".

They mainly revolved around her visit with her dad to a large superstore in Cardiff where he allowed her to choose the cartoon DVDs. This, rather than her visit to Bangladesh, had obviously been the highlight of the last few weeks for Athika.

Mae Lee

There were also moments during stories where I imagined what might be coming next. Mae Lee had me worried with her story:

Matilda has a little bow in her hair. Her dress is blue and white. Her pocket is red and white. Matilda is friends with the chicken – the chicken's name is Jessica. Matilda and the chicken play barbecues

But thankfully, Matilda didn't eat the chicken:

They ate sausages and toast and flat cheese. And they play with hula hoops. The chicken bit my leg off at the beach.

USE OF LANGUAGE

Many of the children "appropriated" the language of a particular community or role:

*"Oy hoy, my hearties" said the pirate. Anthony
And then my mum came upstairs, "Don't worry! Everything is fine. Dance with Tamby, dance like a princess." Athika
And then grandma said, "Shoo! Shoo away!". And then the butterfly just flew away. Sejal*

Many of the children had an innate understanding of the repetitive oral refrains which are so regularly found in stories: -

*There once was a dinosaur and there was once a frog.
And the frog was a bit nasty to the dinosaur and the dinosaur was quite nasty to the frog. And the dinosaur had lived for many years and the frog had lived for lots of years. Jaya*

The snake and the spider went "sssssss". Then the snake and the spider said "I've seen some apples and I'm going to eat them". And then they saw some little little little little little little oranges and then little little ice creams and then little little little chocolates. Niall

The frog – he jumps. Jump, jump, jump. He says, "Jump, jump, jump". Chelsey Leigh

GRAMMAR

As Vivien Gussin Paley suggest, I did not correct the children's grammar as I recorded their stories, as encouraging their creativity is the aim of this way of working.

Where the children did make grammatical errors:

- *"the snake eated his hat"*
- *"It comed off his nose"*

- *"and then they beed friends".*
- *"He slided down the slide."*

They were almost invariably entirely logical. As Steven Pinker writes in his book *The Language Instinct*, "The errors children do make are rarely random garbage. Often the errors follow the logic of grammar so beautifully that the puzzle is not why the children make the errors, but why they sound like errors to the adult ears at all."

Pinker also states, "Sometimes children create words to conjure up logical meaning where the correct word is unknown to them":

The bumble flew away with his bee babies – he had two. He killed the spider. The spider killed the bumble.

There was a chicken – he was big. The chicken lived with his baby. They lived in the henhouse with a dragonfly ... It's like a dinosaur with wings and a tail and it flew away and ate the chicken. Jack

SHORT STORIES

Some of the children (mainly boys) dictated very short stories but, with their innate understanding of the structure of a story, they were adamant that this was as much as they wished to write; my question, "Have you got any more story to tell me?" was always met with a firm "yes" or "no" – they never seemed to be in any doubt:

The soldier marches. He salutes. He wears a red jacket. His hat is black. His face is serious. Ewen

Once upon a time there was a dinosaur and a cat. They fought. The cat said, "Stop that" and the dinosaur said "Ok". And then they were friends. Jamie

The only exception to this was Tom who initially insisted that he didn't know any stories but who, having got into his stride told me a story about a spider:

Incy Wincy Spider climbed up the water spout. Then he fell on the floor. 'Ouch', he said. "'I've hurt my leg, my front leg."

Doctor Spider came. He said, "What's the matter?".

"'I hurt my leg." Tom

When he had finished, Tom turned to me very earnestly and said, "Do you know what, Sarah? I think I have got some stories in my head ... I've got four stories. No! Wait a minute ... I've still got seven!"

CHILDREN'S PREOCCUPATIONS AND INTERESTS

Individual children's preoccupations came through clearly in their stories.

Jack - who rarely speaks to adults, told a lengthy story about animals (his major fascination). I had wondered during my first conversation with him whether I had really heard the word "Warthog", but indeed I had – it soon became apparent that his still quite elementary speech was littered with words such as "meerkat" and "armadillo" and his story made mention of a tiger, a donkey with reins, a chicken that lived in a henhouse, a "bumble", a spider, a moth, a black frog and a dragonfly.

Naomi - a tiny little girl with a big personality and huge charm and presence, told stories about her arguments with her family for whom she obviously had great affection. When dictating her stories (she told me several), Naomi conveyed the personalities of her cross-patch Grampy, her brother and her nanny with great emphasis and portrayed herself stomping and stopping:

Me and my mum was driving to the christening. Then I was doing – I was eating rice and chicken, but I don't want it. I said, "Jed can have it, cos I don't like it!" and I went back home.

Last week, yesterday I was doing the poem and my brother was doing the poem in the house last. He's always annoying me today. "You're annoying me and you won't leave me alone".

In Nanny's house, Grampy was annoying me – he called me stupid because and I tell my mum on him. He called me "Stupid Headache". But he gave me a headache and I don't ever want to hear that word again about Grampy and I don't care!!! Naomi

an extremely eloquent girl, was telling me a long story:

Once upon a time now there was a frog and a butterfly and they were friends. And they were very good friends and one morning there was a egg in their home. Another creature - a bird - laid it and they didn't know what it was. "What's that thing?" they both said. Then they just left it. And they asked their friend what it was. Their friend was the dolly; they had only one friend. "It's a egg!"

And then the frog and the butterfly flew onto the treasure box, jumped onto the treasure – “Ribbit, ribbit, ribbit”. And they fluttered off to where they were first. Boing, boing, boing, boing. They went over to the egg – the butterfly and the egg – and the egg. And the butterfly got the egg onto the wing and the egg rolled off the wing and they just left it again and fluttered and the frog had a ride.

They went back to where they were first again and they brought the egg with them. They tried jumping on the egg. They tried to break it to see if there was a baby inside – they tried cracking it too.

As we approached the bottom of the page, I suggested that she should look for a way of finishing the story as we were about to finish the page (and it was time for another child to tell me their story). Kitty continued dictating her story:

So they just looked after it and the frog sat on it to keep it warm but the frog fell off. The butterfly tried but the butterfly fell off. The bottom of the page was getting closer and closer but Kitty fixed me with a steely stare and said:

*They walked through the page >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>
The egg cracked and there was a baby tiger inside. The butterfly
said "Would you like a ride?" and the baby said, "Yes!". The
baby girl tiger hopped onto the wing and the butterfly said
"Lift off" and then said "Hold on tight" and zoom up into the
air. "Look! The butterfly's on your head." And the dragon flied
down and the baby was scared of dragons. The dragon ate
the baby...*

I couldn't help but admire her ingenuity, so I asked her if she would like me to draw footprints from the bottom of one page to the top of the next? She nodded vigorously, obviously very pleased to have found a way of continuing to engage with an activity she was so obviously enjoying.

Owain

Owain told me stories week after week. On this particular day, he stopped mid-sentence, looked at me slightly apprehensively, reached out his hand towards my pen, continued looking at me intently in order to gauge my response, took the pen out of my hand, then moved my notebook towards him. He looked at me again and said, "You tell a story". As I did, he began to "write" my story in the notebook in emergent writing, mirroring exactly how I had written down his stories – stopping writing when I stopped speaking, continuing when I continued.

STORY ACTING

Once a number of stories had been gathered, I would assemble the children round an area of the classroom or playground which we marked out as the stage. The child whose story it was decided which character he or she wished to play and selected other children to play other parts.

The precise form in which we acted out the stories varied from nursery to nursery and from week to week. It ranged from the children sitting on the story rug and acting out the story with their faces, voices and upper bodies, to a group of children - either a specific group (in one nursery I worked with all the children who were about to go up to reception) or a fluctuating, self-selecting group of those who wished to work with me – acting out the story using their entire body through to the entire class doing the same.

We worked in the book corner, in the corner of the classroom, in the garden, and on the stage.

In the playground of Barry Island Primary School, there is a covered area with a raised stage. The teacher suggested to me that we might like to see how the children responded to acting out their stories on the stage. As the classroom itself was quite cramped, I thought this was a very good idea ... so did the children, especially those whose stories were selected to be performed

there. It became apparent that, in the children's eyes, there was a clear hierarchy of performance "venues" emerging; a couple of the children whose stories had only been acted out while sitting down said to me rather plaintively, "Sarah, you haven't done our stories yet". We therefore acted out their stories again the following week using our entire bodies and the children were satisfied.

The children always seemed to know instinctively how to portray "a silly butterfly" , "a mummy duck" or "a sunbeam having a lovely wash" and always participated very respectfully in each others' stories.

At the end, the storyteller was applauded, the actors were applauded – all bowing in the best theatrical tradition (or curtsying as some of the girls insisted on doing) - and the audience members patted themselves on the back for listening and watching so attentively.

Oliver

When we began acting out Ewan's story, Oliver opted to be a rattlesnake:

He is a rattlesnake. The rattlesnake hit him – the spider - "Pinger!"

He eat him. The spider spins a web. And he spins a web on him. And he died.

Oliver played this role with great gusto and obvious enjoyment, until he suddenly became sullen and announced "This is boring!". His teacher and I realised immediately it was because of the turn the story had taken – the perceived hero (the rattlesnake) had become the under-dog and had been killed off by a spider – and Oliver didn't want to be perceived as the underdog!

Morgan

Morgan had consistently refused invitations to become involved in acting out either his own or his classmates' stories. Then, at last, the idea of being a fierce dog captured his imagination and he leapt onto his four paws, teeth-gnashing and snarling ferociously and chased me (a cat) up a tree.

Zina

Zina, one of the first children in her nursery to tell me her story, took part week-in-week-out in the acting out of other children's stories. She made me laugh one week, when, being asked if she'd play a dinosaur, she raised her eyebrows with an air of resignation and muttered, "Oh great. A dinosaur again!"

Six lads

In Moorland Nursery, I worked in the afternoon of each week with a group of six boys, all of whom have speech difficulties of some kind. Even at such a tender age, the machismo of an all-male group resulted in their favourite moment (and the moment they asked to re-enact again and again) being the point in Luke's story where:

*Sportacus fights pirates. He says "Stupid!" and he fights them.
With Sportacus, he cuts the pirates in half.*

Thankfully, they did heed my pre-emptive "Don't actually touch one another while you're fighting", but they enjoyed this rumbustious activity all the same.

ACTING OUT

"'Pretend' often confuses the adult, but it is the child's real and serious world, the stage upon which any identity is possible and secret thoughts can be safely revealed."

Vivien Gussin Paley, *The Boy Who Wanted to Be a Helicopter*.

PLAYING SNOW WHITE

Safiyah did not want to tell me a story but, having spotted the extremely life-like fake apple in my suitcase, she was very intent on having me act out her version of Snow White. I was to play The Wicked Queen and I was to offer the apple to Snow White – or a bevy of Snow Whites as it became (both male and female). Snow White would then "fall down dead". We then needed a group of handsome princes to come and wake Snow White with a kiss – a number of children obliged. The following week, Safiyah insisted that we play this game once more. As we were now in the garden, I was also to chase the Snow Whites.

During all this, Lydia had been hovering nearby, desperately wanting to become involved, but her fear prevented her from joining us. Eventually, I asked her whether she would like to play

the Wicked Queen with me. She stared at me for a moment and then took my hand. We walked together and then turned towards our array of Snow Whites. Lydia's portrayal of the Wicked Queen as the old beggar woman offering Snow White a poisoned comb and apple was wonderful – complete with hunched back, screwed up face, witchy-voice and long, bony fingers. She was delighted to realise that she could confront her fears by actually trying on the role of the character of which she was afraid.

The boys then decided to join in our game and quickly devised a means of turning the Wicked Queens to stone. As this would effectively have put an end to the Snow White game, I told them that they could freeze the Wicked Queens for three seconds only; then we would come to life again. Safiyah was not keen on the boys' involvement, nor on this element of the game which she had not invented ... Safiyah most definitely regarded this as her game.

The game then took a gruesome turn with Safiyah insisting that, rather than the Snow Whites being woken with a kiss, the Wicked Queens should cut out their hearts. I was fairly certain that, even in the original Grimm's version of the story, the huntsman who had been instructed to kill Snow White actually ripped out a deer's heart and presented it to the Queen. My attempts to suggest this to Safiyah were to no avail; she was adamant that the Queens should cut out the Snow Whites' hearts. In the face of a chorus of "Cut out her heart! Cut out her heart!" what could Lydia and I do, but pretend to remove the vital organ from a series of small royal step-daughters, lying in a row on the ground.

THE THREE LITTLE PIGS

Eve, the teacher in Barry Island, was obviously very skilled at engaging the children in imaginative play, as the children (and me!) had thoroughly enjoyed a session in the school field – making a house for the Three Little Pigs (well, about 15 of them) from the long, newly-mown grass. The pigs had squeaked and squealed "Not by the hair on my chinny chin chin" as at least half a dozen wolves had rampaged round the outside of the house. Eve and I discussed whether the work I was proposing to do would be of benefit to the children, as they seemed to have ready access to this type of activity, but she assured me that the added element

of the children by having their own stories acted out made up for any similarities between the methods of re-enactment. She was right!

DELIVERING THE SUITCASES FULL OF STORIES

Once all the stories had been gathered and acted out, a small suitcase containing copies of each of their children's stories was presented to the three nurseries. (The length of a number of the stories created by the children of Ninian Park meant that I had to purchase a larger suitcase – and this, in spite of the fact that the majority of children in the nursery have English as an Additional Language).

The stories were illustrated with photographs of the objects which had inspired that story and were laminated.

The majority of the children glowed with pride when presented with their stories – validating their work by making their stories permanent on paper (and laminating them) had obviously conferred a status on their work.

The children ran round the nursery showing their stories to one another and asking either me or a member of staff to read their story aloud – often several times in succession. In one nursery, story-time on that day consisted of the children's stories being read.

When I presented Charlie Jo (the teller of the tale of the one-footed baby) with her story, she asked me to read it aloud. I read it once. She asked me to read it again. I read it again and this time she began to say the odd word along with me. The third time I read it she joined in with whole phrases. I think I read her story seven times in total. The final time she joined in with the entire story verbatim, at a volume that I would never have believed possible and with a level of excited exuberance which would have been inconceivable when we first started working together.

The only sad note was one little girl who asked "Are we allowed to take these home to show our mummies and daddies?" When, I replied, "Yes, of course" she grinned from ear to ear. Suddenly, her smile faded and she confided – "My dad will say it's crap anyway". Thankfully, this was an isolated incident.

THE TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO THE PROJECT

"It's been fantastic for the children to have another adult

to relate to and tell stories to. They have appreciated having someone listen to them; it's increased their self esteem and they've responded to the intimacy of being able to work one-to-one with someone special. Because the project's taken place over a number of weeks, everyone has had a turn to work with you."

"The children have responded so well to a stranger, because you've taken them seriously. You were completely at ease with them and they were completely at ease with you."

"You've given us ideas for working with the children. We're going to have a suitcase of artefacts in our new library area, so that the children can create stories independently. We're also going to get a tape-recorder so that they can record their stories."

"A number of the children's responses to the project have particularly surprised me: one little girl who's possibly somewhere on the autistic spectrum, a little boy who rarely talks to adults, a little boy who has very low self-esteem and a little boy who's been away since before Christmas so we've hardly seen him, have all responded so well to this work and have come up with wonderful stories."

"I've been particularly surprised and delighted by the responses from the special needs children especially by one boy who is currently at the solo play stage."

"I would never have considered asking the children to make up stories out of the blue inspired by an object, as I'd never have believed that I'd get results. Even children I thought wouldn't have any imagination have become so involved in the project. Some of the stories have been very short, but for those particular children, the stories were really good. Some of the less confident children have greatly appreciated working in a small group where they've been able to "go with the flow" and to participate as and when they felt ready."

"You've stretched their imaginations and their vocabulary. The work you've been doing has been reflected in their play – the other day, two of the children were walking round the nursery collecting things that they could make up stories about. Another little girl has spoken a lot about the project at home and has been making up songs and getting her parents to transcribe the lyrics."

"This is a new and creative way of actually recording their stories – it's been really good to have an end-product."

"It's been lovely to have been involved in a project in which story is seen through the children's eyes – we usually read or tell them stories. They've worked really well together with a sense of well-being and caring. They've had such a sense of pride in their own and one another's stories."

"The artefacts you've brought are totally different to the ones in the nursery which in some respects has been very inspiring. It might also be interesting to use the theme of the school at that time, to have a box of familiar things, or to find objects with which the children are totally unfamiliar, to see what they make of them."

"It would be good to repeat this project in the spring term, so that we could make more use of the stories – one story might have led to a theme for the entire summer term."

"You introduced them to new language and new words in your explanations of concepts and words."

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SCARABOCCHI TEATRALI

Dall'esperienza degli atelier con i bambini dei nidi d'infanzia

A cura di **Marina Manferrari**

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IL PROGETTO "IL NIDO E IL TEATRO"

L'esperienza che presentiamo è parte integrante di un progetto più ampio che da quasi vent'anni coinvolge i servizi educativi per la prima infanzia della nostra città. Si tratta un percorso di ricerca nato per avvicinare i bambini dei nidi alle forme comunicative dei linguaggi teatrali, un progetto che intreccia dunque ambiti educativi ed artistici.

Qualche elemento di cornice per contestualizzare l'esperienza, a partire dai referenti istituzionali: da un lato La Baracca -Testoni Ragazzi di Bologna, in quanto centro di ricerca e produzione teatrale per bambini e ragazzi, dall'altro il Comune di Bologna, in quanto titolare di una ricca rete di servizi per l'infanzia sul territorio cittadino.

All'interno di questa cornice, qualche dato numerico per dare concretezza e dimensione all'esperienza:

- 375.000 circa gli abitanti della nostra città
- 59 i nidi d'infanzia comunali
- 2.800 i bambini da zero a tre anni che li frequentano (2.930 con i posti dei nidi in convenzione)
- oltre 800 gli operatori (educatori e collaboratori) che vi lavorano, prendendosi cura ogni giorno dei bambini e relazionandosi costantemente con le loro famiglie
- un'équipe cittadina di coordinamento pedagogico responsabile della qualità dei servizi educativi e della formazione del personale.

In questi anni le educatrici di quasi tutti i nidi cittadini hanno scelto di aderire con modalità diverse al progetto "il nido e il teatro": accompagnando i bambini nella fruizione degli spettacoli, partecipando alle occasioni formative messe a disposizione in maniera permanente, progettando loro stesse performances teatrali per i bambini, accogliendo artisti nei propri nidi, consentendo quel prezioso scambio di saperi che ha permesso all'esperienza di uscire dai confini della nostra città.

Ancora qualche numero:

- 22 gli spettacoli che dal 1987 ad oggi La Baracca ha prodotto in specifico per i nidi d'infanzia
- 20.289 i bambini dei nidi di Bologna che in questi anni vi hanno preso parte
- 163 le educatrici che hanno partecipato al laboratorio di formazione istituito presso il teatro in forma permanente
- Il progetto è coordinato da un gruppo di lavoro misto, formato da artisti, educatrici e pedagogisti.¹

I LABORATORI TEATRALI

Nel nostro percorso di ricerca grande spazio è dedicato ai laboratori. Le principali piste di lavoro sono infatti la produzione di spettacoli per i bambini, i laboratori di formazione sui linguaggi teatrali rivolti alle educatrici e i laboratori teatrali con i bambini (che, per distinguerli dai primi, chiameremo atelier). Tre piste di lavoro diverse, confluite spesso una nell'altra, con intrecci, arricchimento reciproco e scambio di idee.

I laboratori teatrali intesi come momenti formativi per le educatrici sono iniziati con la nascita del progetto, a partire dalla convinzione che un lavoro centrato sulla comunicazione non potesse prescindere dalla disponibilità delle educatrici a mettersi in gioco personalmente, per ritrovare tutta la forza espressiva del proprio linguaggio corporeo.

Insieme agli spettacoli per i bambini sono nati quindi i laboratori, parti integranti della ricerca. Dal 1987, data di produzione del primo spettacolo, esiste al Testoni un laboratorio di formazione permanente che consente alle educatrici di sperimentare la propria teatralità. Via via questo spazio è cresciuto, come luogo

¹ Sul progetto cfr.:

M. Manferrari, F. Marchesi, P. Vassuri, R. Frabetti, *Il nido e il teatro. Adulto e Bambino: un rapporto da soggetto a soggetto*, Pendragon, Bologna 2000;

M. Manferrari, R. Frabetti, *Un alfabeto di 21 lettere. Appunti da un percorso di ricerca tra il nido e il teatro*, Pendragon, Bologna, 2006

di ideazione, di scambio e di fiducia tra professionalità diverse attraversate da idealità comuni.

L'adesione a questo particolare percorso formativo è libera, e non potrebbe essere altrimenti. Ogni anno c'è chi si avvicina per la prima volta, chi ci passa dentro ma anche chi sceglie di rimanerci. Molte sono infatti le educatrici che, accomunate da una stessa passione, hanno mantenuto costante la loro presenza. Questo gruppo, aperto ed in continua evoluzione, ha maturato nel tempo una competenza particolare proprio per quell'intreccio di capacità di stare nella relazione educativa con i bambini e di proporre loro momenti narrativi e teatrali di alto livello.

Queste condizioni hanno consentito di far evolvere l'esperienza: il laboratorio, pur restando prioritariamente un luogo formativo, ha assunto anche carattere progettuale, diventando una fucina di altri laboratori, in questo caso rivolti ai bambini.

GLI ATELIER CON I BAMBINI

Quando parliamo di atelier teatrali con i bambini pensiamo ad una struttura che prevede un primo momento in cui l'adulto propone una breve "narrazione teatrale" ed un secondo momento nel quale i bambini sono invitati, anche se non esplicitamente, ad entrare nel gioco teatrale, potendo esplorare, toccare, rielaborare immediatamente quello che hanno ricevuto. L'adulto li incoraggia e li sostiene senza mai forzare e senza guidare troppo ma con l'attenzione a mantenere il clima e l'atmosfera della comunicazione teatrale.

E' una struttura complessa, che richiede molto equilibrio nel bilanciare attesa ed intervento, molta capacità osservativa, molta attenzione a raccogliere e a rilanciare, a tenere senza trattenere. Richiede delicatezza con i bambini e intesa tra gli adulti.

E' un percorso interessante e fortemente innovativo basato sulla convinzione che anche un bambino molto piccolo possa "dire" qualcosa di "suo" in un contesto che lo contiene e lo sollecita senza forzare. Un "dire" inteso come espressione corporea carica del suo mondo interno. Una ricerca originale di segni teatrali o meglio, in questa fase, di precursori di segni e dunque di *scarabocchi teatrali* sollecitati e sostenuti da intenzionalità comunicativa. E' questo il cuore della ricerca che ha negli atelier teatrali un osservatorio privilegiato.

Questi contesti, così intensi sul piano relazionale e comunicativo, sono spazi preziosi per osservare l'intreccio tra gioco e gioco teatrale, per riflettere su cosa differenzi l'uno dall'altro, per raccogliere ogni traccia di teatralità prodotta dai bambini ed indagare sul possibile rapporto tra bambini molto piccoli e linguaggio teatrale.

"L'atto teatrale nasce dalla necessità espressiva di un soggetto, elemento che accomuna tutti gli atti artistici, e dalla necessità recettiva di un altro soggetto (individuo o gruppo). Il bisogno dell'attore deve incontrare il bisogno del pubblico (...) Entrambi i soggetti devono avere coscienza del bisogno dell'altro. E della profondità delle rispettive intenzioni."

E' questa *"l'intenzionalità dell'atto teatrale, ovvero la coscienza che in quell'attimo teatrale si sommano sguardi, gesti e suoni non casuali ma intenzionali. Segni voluti e cercati per esprimersi e trovare un contatto specifico che rispecchi o riveli un frammento intimo."*²

Questo bisogno, questa intenzionalità e questa ricerca espressiva possono appartenere anche ad un bambino molto piccolo, di 2-3 anni?

E' presto per dare risposte, c'è ancora molta strada da fare, è necessario proseguire l'esperienza e trovare risorse e contributi per rielaborarla, dalla teorizzazione dell'esperienza tornare poi – arricchiti – all'esperienza stessa. E' questo l'unico modo serio per fare ricerca, è un obiettivo ambizioso ma ci sembra ne valga la pena.

Le esperienze che qui presentiamo ci dicono già molte cose: sulla disponibilità dei bambini a lasciarsi catturare su un terreno inusuale ma evidentemente molto vicino ai loro linguaggi e alle loro emozioni, sulla loro inaspettata recettività, sulla loro voglia di mettersi piacevolmente alla prova, di riprendere le suggestioni dell'adulto, di rifletterle su di sé, di cercare suoni, gesti e interazioni che hanno la carica espressiva di uno scarabocchio, che saggia ed esplora lo spazio e nello spazio lascia traccia di sé.

Gli atelier: evoluzione dell'esperienza

Per diversi anni gli atelier sono stati proposti dalle educatrici all'interno dei propri nidi.

Nell'anno educativo 2002/03 è stato realizzato un passaggio significativo: per la prima volta alcune educatrici hanno proposto

gli atelier all'interno di nidi diversi dal proprio. Una nuova fase finalizzata a valorizzare la competenza acquisita e farla diventare una risorsa anche per altri, a far uscire l'esperienza dal circuito un po' ristretto in cui si stava radicando e farla circolare in una realtà più allargata, offrendola anche a quei nidi che, pur non avendo al proprio all'interno educatrici con questa particolare predisposizione e formazione, si mostravano interessati ad ospitare gli atelier e a sperimentarli con i loro bambini.

Nello stesso anno (maggio 2003) alcune delle stesse educatrici hanno avuto l'opportunità di presentare il proprio lavoro a Charleroi, in Belgio, in occasione di un importante appuntamento europeo sull'arte e la prima infanzia.

L'anno successivo gli atelier hanno trovato un nuovo spazio di confronto all'interno del festival internazionale di arte e cultura per la prima infanzia *"Visioni di futuro, visioni di teatro"*, tenutosi a Bologna nel gennaio - febbraio 2004.

Lo stesso anno è proseguito anche lo scambio con la realtà artistica e ed educativa di Charleroi.

Nell'anno educativo 2004/05 è stato attivato per la prima volta, nell'ambito del laboratorio formativo permanente per le educatrici, uno spazio di progettazione autogestito per la realizzazione di nuovi atelier teatrali con i bambini. Da questo particolare spazio di lavoro, che di seguito descriveremo, sono nati i cinque atelier oggetto della presente documentazione.

Quest'anno in occasione della seconda edizione del festival internazionale *"Visioni di futuro, visioni di teatro"* (Bologna, 1-12 marzo 2006) gli stessi atelier verranno proposti in diversi nidi della città. Tra questi anche un nuovo atelier condotto da educatrici di Charleroi, a testimonianza dell'interessante scambio avvenuto in questi anni a livello europeo.

Il laboratorio teatrale autogestito

Lo spazio-laboratorio autogestito offerto ad educatrici con formazione specifica pluriennale era finalizzato alla produzione di nuove proposte di atelier teatrali per i bambini dei nidi.³

Un laboratorio inteso innanzitutto come riconoscimento di un livello di formazione già acquisito che necessita di spazi e tempi

³ E' stato definito "autogestito" in quanto le educatrici hanno potuto concordare in maniera autonoma spazi e tempi di lavoro individuale e/o di gruppo. E' stato comunque coordinato da Roberto Frabetti e Marina Manferrari, ai quali era affidata una supervisione complessiva delle proposte sia per gli aspetti più propriamente artistici che per quelli educativi.

di progettazione e confronto per continuare a tradursi in pratica educativa. Ma inteso anche come luogo di autoformazione e di ricerca, con una consegna più alta e più complessa per fare evolvere l'esperienza. E' stato chiesto infatti alle educatrici di progettare strutture di performance aperte, a carattere modulare, in grado di offrire spunti ripetibili all'interno della seconda parte dell'atelier, quella più propriamente laboratoriale, in cui i bambini entrano nello spazio scenico ed interagiscono con gli adulti e con gli altri bambini. Particolare attenzione doveva essere dedicata proprio a questa fase in cui l'atelier diventa luogo privilegiato di osservazione dei piccoli *scarabocchi gestuali* dei bambini, ovvero quei momenti in cui viene cercato intenzionalmente un contatto espressivo con l'altro, adulto o coetaneo che sia.

L'ESPERIENZA CONDIVISA CON I GENITORI

In ognuno dei nidi in cui si sono tenuti gli atelier le famiglie sono state informate e rese partecipi dell'esperienza attraverso le modalità ritenute dagli operatori più efficaci.

Da un confronto nel gruppo cittadino di progetto è emersa tuttavia, proprio da parte delle educatrici, la difficoltà a trasmettere e dunque a far comprendere davvero il significato della proposta.

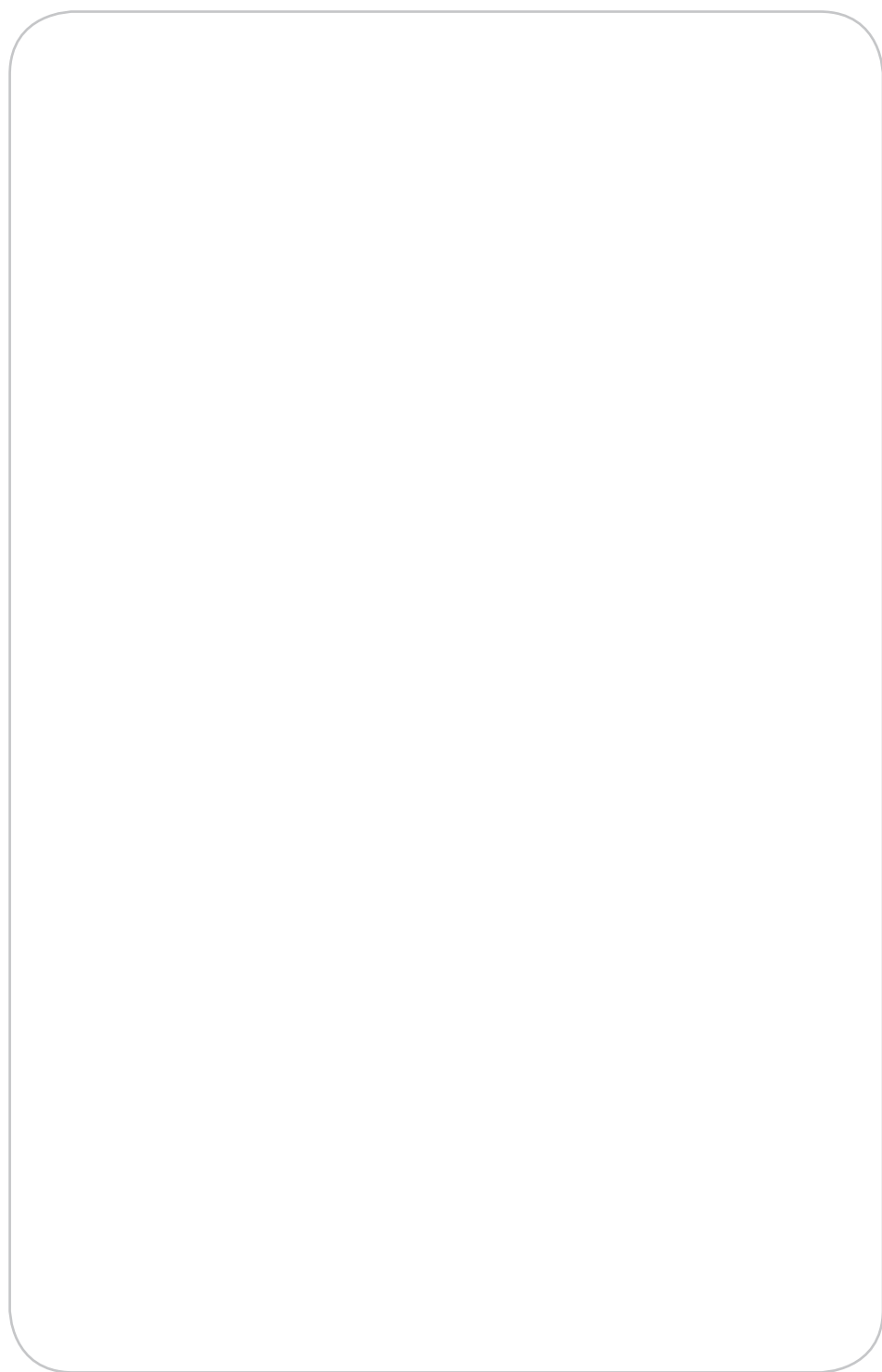
Parlare di esperienze teatrali per bambini così piccoli spesso fa scattare l'associazione con le attività più diffuse e conosciute, come la drammatizzazione di storie, il gioco dei travestimenti, l'animazione di pupazzi e burattini. Più difficile è immaginarsi un percorso di ricerca espressiva attraverso il linguaggio teatrale e difficile è anche descrivere, raccontare con le parole un'esperienza che è in gran parte non verbale, che ha il suo fuoco sulla relazione e che si colora di forti tonalità emozionali.

Per questo si è pensato di invitare al Teatro Testoni tutti i genitori dei bambini che frequentano i nidi per un incontro di presentazione del progetto, evidenziandone il carattere cittadino. L'incontro, che si è tenuto nei giorni scorsi, è stato volutamente organizzato all'interno di uno spazio teatrale e più precisamente della sala che abitualmente ospita il pubblico dei più piccoli, allestita con le scenografie di uno spettacolo che proprio in questi giorni sta circuitando nei nostri nidi. In questo clima, il più possibile caldo ed evocativo dell'atmosfera teatrale offerta ai loro bambini, è stato proiettato un filmato sull'esperienza degli atelier. La forza espressiva delle immagini e la testimonianza dal vivo delle educatrici hanno provocato emozione, curiosità ed interesse nei genitori presenti, dando avvio ad uno scambio di grande interesse.

Il prossimo mese, in occasione del già citato festival sul teatro e la prima infanzia, altre proposte saranno rivolte in specifico alle famiglie, tra queste un momento di confronto sul come condividere l'esperienza del teatro con i propri figli.

E' un ambito del progetto importantissimo, fino ad ora rimasto un po' in ombra, sul quale tante idee sono in cantiere, alcune intriganti e complesse come l'avvio di laboratori per i genitori.

La strada è aperta, le deviazioni possibili sono tante... d'altronde il teatro non è il luogo del possibile?



THEATRICAL SCRIBBLES

From the ateliers with nursery children

Edited by **Marina Manferrari**

(Pedagogic co-ordination of the Municipality of Bologna) credits: **Nadia Fornasari** and Documentation and Education Workshop Education Department Municipality of Bologna **(ITALY)**

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Roberto Frabetti, La Baracca – Testoni Ragazzi

translated by Letizia Olivieri

THE PROJECT "THEATRE AND CRÈCHE"

The experience presented here is part of a wider project which, for the last twenty years, has been involving the educational services for early childhood of our city. It is a research conceived to approach nursery children to theatrical languages and communicative forms, criss-crossing educational and artistic fields.

I shall introduce now some important elements in order to put into context this experience, taking as a starting point the institutions involved: on the one hand, Testoni Ragazzi, centre of theatrical research and production for children and young people; on the other, the Municipality of Bologna and its net of services for childhood in the city.

I shall provide as well some statistical data:

- 375.000 inhabitants of our city;
- 59 crèches;
- 2.800 children from 0 to 3 years old attending the crèches (2.930 if we consider the children attending private crèches which have reached an agreement with the Municipality);
- more than 800 operators (educators and collaborators) working in these crèches, taking care every day of the children and interacting constantly with their families;
- a pedagogic equipe responsible for the quality of the training and of the educational services.

During the years, educators had the possibility to choose how to take part in the project "Theatre and crèche": accompanying the children to the shows, participating to training workshops, projecting their own theatrical performances, welcoming artists in their schools, contributing to that precious exchange of knowledge which allowed the project to expand beyond the boundaries of our territory.

Some more statistical data:

- 22 shows for children produced by La Baracca from 1987;
- 20.289 children who have taken part in them;
- 163 educators who attended the permanent training workshop organised by Testoni Ragazzi

The project is co-ordinated by a "mixed" working group, formed by artists, educators and pedagogues¹.

THEATRICAL WORKSHOPS

In our research, workshops play a major role. The main guidelines regard the production of shows for children, training workshops for educators about theatrical languages, and theatrical workshops with and for children (from now on, we will refer to them as "ateliers").

Three different guidelines which often meet and cross each others, in a continuous and reciprocal exchange of ideas.

Theatrical workshops conceived as training opportunities for educators went hand in hand with the development of the project.

The basic idea was that a communication-based work cannot "be" if educators do not want to rise to the challenge, in order to re-discover the expressive strenght of their body language.

From 1987, year in which the first production for children was staged, Testoni Ragazzi organises a permanent training workshop whcih allows educators to experiment their own "theatrical skills". Little by little, this space has "grown" and has become a place where ideas, exchanges and trust can be shared. Obviously, this training path is open to everyone. Every year

¹ About the project cfr.:

M. Manferrari, F. Marchesi, P. Vassuri, R. Frabetti, *Il nido e il teatro. Adulto e Bambino: un rapporto da soggetto a soggetto*, Pendragon, Bologna 2000;

M. Manferrari, R. Frabetti, *Un alfabeto di 21 lettere. Appunti da un percorso di ricerca tra il nido e il teatro*, Pendragon. Bologna, 2006

people either approach it, or simply try to step into it, but there is always somebody who chooses not to leave it. Indeed, many educators with the same passion have constantly participated. This open group, continuously evolving, has been improving their knowledge and competence as regards the ability to maintain an educational relationship with children and, at the same time, to offer them “high” narrative and theatrical moments.

Such conditions have allowed the project to develop further: workshops, despite remaining an “educational place”, have become projects, which in turn produce other workshops (in this case, for children).

ATELIERS WITH CHILDREN

When we talk about theatrical ateliers with children, we usually think about something organised as follows: firstly, adults present a brief “theatrical narration”, then, secondly, children are invited – even though not explicitly – to enter the theatrical game, to explore, to touch, re-elaborate what they have just received. Adults encourage and support them, but they never exceed in guiding or preventing them from doing something: they simply try to keep the atmosphere of theatrical communication stable. It is a complex structure indeed, it requires a balance between waiting and acting, as well as a developed ability to observe, to pick up things and launch them, to have them but not to keep them. It requires softness towards children and understanding among adults.

It is a very interesting and innovative path, based on the idea that even a very young children can have “something to say” in such a context, where they are guided but not forced. With the expression “something to say” I mean an expressiveness of their bodies which includes their inner worlds. They originally search theatrical signs, in other words, especially as far as this stage of their lives is concerned, precursors of signs: *theatrical scribbles* supported by communicative intentions. This is the heart of this process, and theatrical ateliers are a privileged point of view indeed.

Such contexts, extremely intense on a relational and communicative level, are precious spaces in which we can observe the weaving between game – in its wider sense – and theatrical game, reflecting upon their differences, in order to pick up any theatrical sign produced by the children and to

investigate the possible relation between very young children and theatrical language.

"A theatrical act is due to a subject's expressive need and to another subject's (individual or group) receptive need. This is a common element of any artistic act. The actor's need has to meet the audience's need (...) Both of them have to be aware of their mutual need, and of the depth of their intentions".

This is "the intentionality of the theatrical act, that is, to be aware of the fact that in that moment intentional glances, gestures and sounds are put together. They are "wanted" and "looked for" signs, which help to express one's self and to find a specific contact reflecting and revealing an inner fragment" ².

Can this need, this intentionality and this expressive research belong to a 2 or 3 year-old child?

It is too early to give an answer, there is still a lot of work to be done and it is necessary to go on with the experience and to find resources and contributions to re-elaborate it: from a theoretical approach to it we should be able to come back – enriched – by the experience itself.

This is the only way of researching, and it a very ambitious aim indeed, but we think it is worth it.

The experiences presented here tells us several things about how children let themselves go in this unusual field, which is actually very close to their languages and emotions, to their unexpected receptiveness, to their longing for challenge. At the same time, they pick up the adults' emotions and reflect them upon themselves, they look for sounds, gestures and interactions which have the same "expressive load" as a scribble exploring space, leaving a trace behind it.

Ateliers: evolution of an experience

For several years, educators have been performing the ateliers in the schools they worked in. In the school year 2002/03, there has been a significant change: for the first time, a number of educators have performed the ateliers in other crèches. This new stage of the project had the aim of improving the competence acquired and to turn it into a resource for others. In addition, we wanted this experience to get out of the restricted area in which it was developing, providing other crèches – whose educators were not yet ready to undertake this path – with it.

² Roberto Frabetti, in: M. Manferrari, R. Frabetti, *Un alfabeto di 21 lettere*, cit.

In May 2003, these educators were given the opportunity to perform their ateliers in Charleroi (Belgium), in the context of an important European event about art and early childhood.

The following year, ateliers found a new space to be performed in, that is, the first edition of the International Festival of Art and Culture for Early Childhood "Visions of theatre... visions of future" (Bologna, January – February 2004).

At the same time, the artistic and educational exchange with Charleroi continued.

During the school year 2004/05, a self-managed space for projecting new ateliers for children was established for the first time. The five ateliers described in this piece of documentation were created in this context.

This year, during the second edition of the Festival "Visions of theatre... visions of future", the same ateliers will be performed in several crèches of the city. Among them, a new atelier by the educators from Charleroi, witnessing the interesting exchange developed during the past years.

The self-managed theatrical workshop

The self-managed workshop for educators was aimed at producing new theatrical workshops for nursery children³ and at improving the knowledge previously acquired. In fact, educators were asked to project workshop structures divided into sections, in order to give a few hints to be repeated and transferred the second part of the workshop, in which children interact with the adults and with the other children. Indeed, our attention was mainly focused on this aspect: the atelier becomes a privileged point of view from which we can observe the little *scribbles* of the children, that is, the moments in which they intentionally look for a contact with others, either adults or children.

THE EXPERIENCE SHARED WITH PARENTS

In every crèche involved in the project, families have been informed of what was going to happen. However, most of them seemed not to understand it completely. When we talk about theatrical experiences for children has most of the times the effect of evoking the dramatisation of stories or the animation of puppets. It is more difficult to understand

³ It has been defined as "self-managed" because the educator could decide when and where to meet and work together. It has been co-ordinated by Roberto Frabetti and Marina Manferrari.

such a complex reality as a theatrical workshop can be. It is difficult to describe too, because it is not easy to tell with words something that is almost totally based on non-verbal language.

For this reason, we decided to invite all the parents of the children taking part in the project to come to Testoni Ragazzi, to explain to them what it really is: the meeting took place in a "theatrical space", where we projected a video about the workshops. The expressive strength of the images, together with a speech given by some of the educators, impressed them very much indeed.

During the Festival "Visions of theatre... visions of future", other meetings with parents will take place, and this will be an additional opportunity to exchange ideas about how to share the theatrical experience with their children.

The way has been cleared, there are a lot possibilities to change direction... but isn't theatre a place where everything is possible?

TEATRO PARA NIÑOS, UN FUTURO POR RECORRER

Carlos Herans

Director Acción Educativa, Madrid
(ESPAÑA)

crear. (Deriv. por vía culta del latín <<creare>>; v. <<CRIAR>>) 1. Hacer que empiece a existir una cosa. Particularmente hacer Dios el mundo. Producir una obra artística. Iniciar una empresa, una institución etc.(.....) Representar con arte muy personal un personaje en el teatro (Mas frecuentemente <<hacer una creación>>)
Diccionario de uso del español.

María Moliner

...tú tienes una cosa que contar y, como cualquier persona que tiene su trabajo, tienes que hacerlo lo mejor que puedas; respetándote a ti mismo y al trabajo que haces.(...) Yo no sé lo que es un creador. Vamos a ver, eso de ser un creador no es algo que esté limitado a unas cuantas actividades profesionales muy especiales. Si uno esta plantando un árbol, o moviendo un bloque de mármol, o está haciendo algo con sus manos, usando unas herramientas, todo eso es creación en un sentido amplio. Entonces yo si reconozco la creación, pero es algo que atañe a muchas personas.

José Saramago

(El País semanal. 29 Noviembre 1998)

- El teatro, todo el teatro, es una parte, importante, de la cultura universal.
- Ha perdido su carácter de espectáculo popular, y hoy día lo consume un publico minoritario.
- La producción cultural dirigida a la infancia, esta sometida a las leyes del mercado, se consumen productos, que están a su vez diseñados por una industria de ocio, que utiliza los conocimientos psicológicos para hacer asimilables los productos

por los consumidores infantiles, de una forma absolutamente acrítica.

Dicho esto, conviene detenerse en el teatro, y hacer una reflexión sobre este humilde trabajo, que se supone que es la *creación teatral* para la infancia, y que entiendo en la clarificadora afirmación de José Saramago y en la acepción que se cita del estupendo diccionario de uso del español: *Representar con arte muy personal un personaje en el teatro (Mas frecuentemente <<hacer una creación>>)*.

Los espectáculos teatrales que se ofrecen a la infancia, los voy a tratar de colocar en comparación con algunos rasgos fundamentales de la situación en nuestro país, con algunos modelos que he tenido oportunidad de conocer en otros países. De las experiencias que he vivido, me parece que las que particularmente me han impactado mas, han sido aquellas que tenían, menos pretensiones culturales, creadoras, y mas conocimiento del oficio, de la artesanía, del trabajo teatral y lo que este implica de oficios antiguos y de aplicación de tecnologías tan simples, como la utilización de un calcetín como recurso simbólico.

Como estrategia de futuro, creo que sin enriquecer la relación escuela/teatro difícilmente se van a desarrollar propuestas innovadoras, ya que de lo conceptos previos que tenga el profesorado sobre el teatro y sobre lo que desde él es adecuado ofrecer a la infancia, se están generando las expectativas que las compañías teatrales y los programadores, utilizan en su acercamiento a estos ciudadanos, todavía de segunda clase, que conocemos como niñas y niños.

Si pensamos que es necesario establecer una política cultural para la infancia, no podemos dejarnos llevar por la dinámica de las leyes de mercado que en este momento, están propiciando una invasión cultural ligada a formas de consumo de marcas, de una parte y de otra a la anulación de toda iniciativa que pretenda ceder un mínimo espacio protagónico de niños y niñas en la creación, producción y contemplación, de todo fenómeno cultural, que no responda a la lectura automática de imágenes, tal y como en una loca carrera de despropósitos, podemos contemplar en nuestros canales de T.V.

El Teatro para los más pequeños: ¿un mercado? ¿una posible

supervivencia de los profesionales? ¿una coartada cultural para ilustrados?

Me pregunto, sin tener demasiado clara la respuesta.

En la actualidad si revisamos someramente el panorama europeo, ya que de una u otra manera es donde nos situamos, podría avanzar como hipótesis, que la tendencia es ir hacia un sector especializado en la producción, difusión y creación de espectáculos para niños, que tienen como rasgos característicos:

- *Profesionalización: esto quiere decir que los integrantes de las compañías teatrales han optado por la infancia como espectadores reales de sus propuestas.*
- *Amplio desarrollo de organizaciones profesionales que mantienen un diálogo abierto y permanente con las diversas administraciones, logrando recursos económicos, y de infraestructura técnica, que permiten la subsistencia de equipos de trabajo durante largos períodos de tiempo.*
- *Creación de Centros Estables de producción y/o difusión de teatro para jóvenes audiencias, con estructuras paralelas de formación, tanto de actores como de profesores.*
- *Cooperación entre autores, compañías, actores, técnicos, de diversos países para realizar proyectos conjuntos.*
- *Realización de actividades interdisciplinarias con la colaboración de Centros escolares, que permiten desarrollar proyectos de creación, edición de literatura infantil, formación, y trabajos de investigación.*

Esto por lo que respecta al ámbito general, en los aspectos estéticos y temáticos, se puede constatar:

1 Aspectos relacionados con la creación:

- *La desaparición casi absoluta de los clowns en sus formas tradicionales, de las historias articuladas en sucesión de quechts, 'etc...que explícitamente tratan*

¹ Ver al respecto el interesante estudio realizado por el CENTRE DE SOCIOLOGIE DU THÉÂTRE: "THÉÂTRES ET JEUNES PUBLICS", publicado por el MINISTERIO DE EDUCACION Y DE LA CULTURA FRANCESA, colección CAHIERS JEB, Bruselas 1981.

de transmitir una moraleja, o aleccionar a los jóvenes públicos.

- La elaboración muy cuidadosa y estilizada de las escenografías, vestuario, y elementos de escena, abandonando prácticamente el naturalismo o la mera ilustración waldysneiana.
- Un nivel imaginativo, actoral y de puesta en escena, difícilmente igualable por el, digamos, teatro para adultos.

2 Aspectos estructurales y profesionales

- Circuitos públicos: (Teatros Nacionales, regionales o locales en exclusiva dedicados a jóvenes audiencias), y acceso a centros culturales y circuitos de exhibición en igualdad de condiciones que las compañías para adultos, tanto en el tratamiento técnico como económico.
- Como consecuencia un público infantil habituado, respetuoso y apoyado por sus familias, que ha dado paso a un nuevo concepto: el teatro todo público, con espectáculos susceptibles de ser representados para diversas audiencias, sin transformarlos ni en su puesta en escena ni en su contenido.
- Mantenimiento de repertorios, que permite a las compañías distribuir varios espectáculos simultáneamente, lo cual garantiza la estabilidad de sus miembros.

Quizás tras este somero y esquemático repaso, algún escéptico considere que idealizo, siguiendo una tradición muy hispánica, todo aquello que viene de fuera y menosprecio lo que tenemos dentro. Lamento desilusionar a quien tal piense, simplemente estoy tratando de ser objetivo. Existe una sensibilidad social respecto al tema, que proviene de tradiciones culturales muy diferentes a la española, todavía deudora del yermo cultural de la dictadura. Pero... pero... sí hay que decir, que el teatro como fenómeno de consumo cultural, es propio de determinadas clases sociales, ilustradas, ya que el público medio que lo

Otros estudios que tienen relación con este trabajo: "L'IMMAGINARIO BAMBINO. (Proyecto infancia e consumo culturale negli anni ottanta)" Ed. La casa Usher

1985. Varios Autores. "TEATRO SCUOLA E CENTRI MULTIMEDIA IN UN SISTEMA FORMATIVO INTEGRATO" Bulzoni Editore. Varios Autores. Compilación Ana Maria Sinibaldi.

podía consumir habitualmente, como entretenimiento, ha desaparecido mayoritariamente del teatro, de igual forma que las multinacionales del espectáculo audiovisual han homogeneizado las expectativas del público, según modelos culturales transnacionales, ligados a la industria audiovisual. Si observamos al público asistente a los espectáculos para niños, fuera de la asistencia escolar, podemos establecer estas tipologías:

Se puede constatar que hoy día el teatro para niños es un mercado que mueve una sustancial cantidad de dinero, que no solo permite la supervivencia de aquellos que quieren profesionalizarse en este sector, sino también de aquellos otros que a través de campañas institucionales, o de promociones privadas, con estos "trabajos" de cubrir sus necesidades mientras llegan a los espectáculos "verdaderamente profesionales y artísticos".

No sigamos por ese camino, conviene decir claramente que no es eso, no es eso. Estamos planteando una actividad que tiene que ver con los mismos orígenes de la comunicación humana, que se encuentra en las raíces de la ceremonia comunicativa con la divinidad, que celebraba el hombre primitivo.

Que estamos hablando e incitando a practicar actos comunicativos sociales, que parten del juego simbólico, para pasando por el juego de roles, llegar a la comunicación grupal.

Y el teatro no es precisamente un adorno de la escuela, sino una necesidad vital del niño en tanto que niño y como ser en formación. Esto es, que forma parte de su cultura y al tiempo le es necesario para articular su propio sistema de comunicación como niño y como posterior adulto. Y desde esa construcción personal, podremos pensar que además, como algo añadido, podrá llegar a ser, por ser mas culto, un futuro de gustador de teatro, que no mero espectador.

INFLUENCIA DE LOS MASS-MEDIA

Pese a los estereotipos comunicativos, el Teatro y las primeras edades, mantienen una relación que desde el juego simbólico a la creación y representación teatral, se convierte en un acto vital, de crecimiento humano. La influencia de los mass-media, ha generado un determinado estereotipo de espectáculo dirigido a niños y jóvenes, gritón, mimético, asociado a marcas

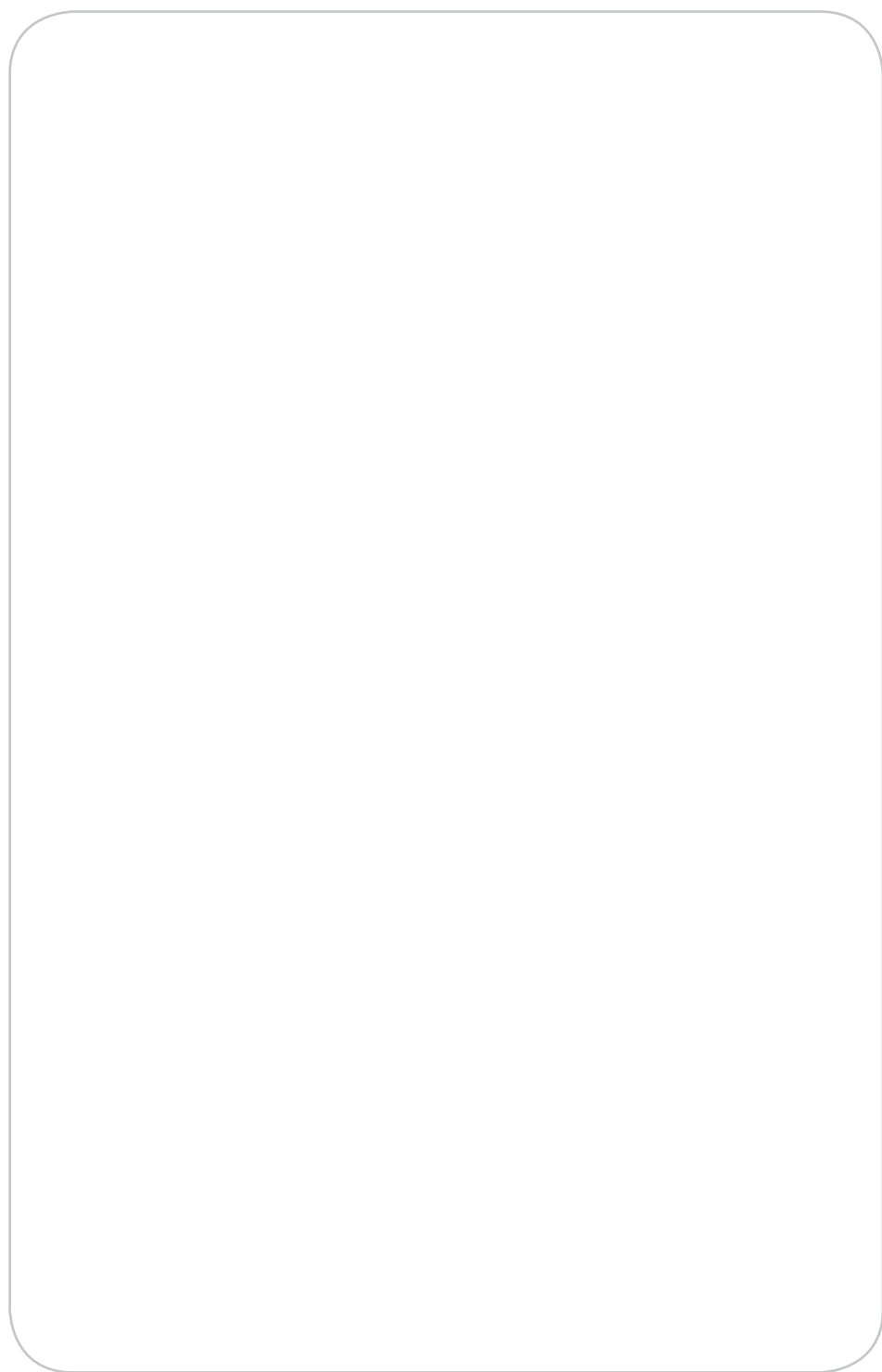
comerciales, de nula capacidad crítica, con un nivel elemental de elaboración de los mensajes y de contenido temático profundamente paternalista y reaccionario. No hay necesidad de citar nombres y/o cadenas de TV, -entre otras cosas para que no se envanezcan por la cita- tan solo debemos practicar el zapping durante el horario llamado infantil, para acceder a un museo de los horrores, que a toda sensibilidad minimamente despierta le pondrá los pelos de punta.

El niño y la niña perciben de esta forma los referentes de lo que es espectáculo o teatro, en tanto que el fundamento general es la actuación, y ésta a su vez es la raíz del trabajo del actor, y por ende del teatro como fenómeno comunicativo. La magia, hoy día casi naïf, del escenario, con una tecnología muy evidente e incapaz de competir en tanto que creadora de ilusión, con los medios audiovisuales y los grandes espectáculos rock; posee un encanto y una capacidad de proyección e identificación entre público y escena, que caso de lograrse no tiene parangón con otras formas de comunicación. El escenario, pese a todo, sigue ofreciendo la "carnalidad" de lo tangible, la inmediatez irrepetible de aquello que sucede ante nosotros sin intermediación tecnológica; la cálida emoción de la palabra, del timbre y de la intensidad de la voz humana, arropados por el acto de fe que todo espectador realiza, frente a aquello que surge según se ilumina el espacio escénico.

Para finalizar estas reflexiones, se me ocurre que quizás la presión tecnocrática y tecnológica (que nada tiene que ver con el desarrollo científico), está permitiendo que el sistema educativo se dirija hacia opciones pragmáticas en detrimento de las humanísticas, con el grave detrimento social que puede generar. Otra cosa no se puede esperar de una sociedad competitiva.

Hacer llegar esa emoción, debiera, cero yo, ser misión del maestro y de aquellos que se dirigen a la infancia desde el escenario. Permitir estas emociones debiera ser, creo yo, el papel de los padres y de la sociedad. Atender las "creaciones" de, por, para, niños y niñas, debiera ser misión primordial de las administraciones públicas, para que pudieran encontrar un marco cultural propio, desde el cual se podría construir *verdaderamente* la cultura y acceder como adultos, con sentido crítico y criterio propio, a lo que los adultos hemos dado en llamar obras de arte. Y así desarrollar sus potencialidades creativas, tantas como seamos capaces desde nuestra creatividad, de proporcionarles.

Me parece un objetivo simplemente humano, que no tiene porqué remitirnos a: *Hacer que empiece a existir una cosa. Particularmente hacer Dios el mundo.* Sacralización del trabajo que a su vez clasifica, hace diferente, segrega a espacios de uso restringido a quienes, simplemente, ejercen un oficio, hacen su trabajo.



THEATRE FOR CHILDREN, ROUTES NOT YET EXPLORED

Carlos Herans

Acción Educativa Director, Madrid
(SPAIN)

translated by Letizia Olivieri

create. (From Latin <<creare>>) 1. To cause something to happen or exist. In particular, God making the universe. To produce a work of art. To set up a company, institution, etc. (...) To represent with personal art a character in theatre. (More frequently, <<to make a creation>>)

Diccionario de uso del español.

María Moliner

...you have something to tell and, like anyone does when they work, you have to do it at your best, respecting yourself and the job you do. (...) I don't know what a creator is. Let's see... being a creator does not involve just a few, very special professional activities. If someone is planting a tree, or moving a block of marble, or doing something with their hands, using some tool, all this is creation in a wide sense. So I acknowledge creation, but it is something that has to do with many people.

José Saramago

(El País semanal. 29th November 1998)

- Theatre, all theatre, is an important part of universal culture.
- Theatre has lost its character of popular show, and it is now a product for a minority audience.
- Cultural productions for early years are ruled by the laws of the market; the products consumed are, in turn, designed by an entertainment industry that exploits psychological knowledge to make products "assimilable" by young consumers, and in an absolutely uncritical manner.

Having said this, let us focus on theatre and reflect upon this humble work, which is supposed to be theatrical creation for early years, and which I personally conceive with the meaning we find in José Saramago's statement and with the one reported

in the excellent dictionary of use of Spanish: *To represent with personal art a character in theatre* (More frequently, <<to make a creation>>).

I will deal with theatrical shows for children in our country by comparing them with a number of models that I could observe in other countries. Of the many experiences I had, I think that the ones that impressed me more were those that had fewer cultural and creational pretensions, and a deeper knowledge of the theatrical art, craft and work, and of the elements it takes from ancient arts, as well as the application of very simple technologies, such as the use of a sock as a symbolic resource.

As a future strategy, I believe that if we are not able to enrich the relationship between school and theatre, it is unlikely that new, innovative proposals can be developed. This is mainly because it is from teachers' knowledge about theatre and about what they should offer children that the expectations of theatrical companies and art workers are originating, and these expectations are used by them to approach children.

If we think that it is necessary to establish a cultural policy for childhood, we cannot let ourselves be dragged by market dynamics, which is currently bringing about a cultural invasion, especially as far as the consumption of brands is concerned. At the same time, there is a complete lack of any initiative having children as the protagonists of the creation, production and enjoyment of any cultural event not consisting in an automatic reading of images just like the ones we can watch on our TV channels.

Is theatre for early years: a market? A way of surviving for professionals? A cultural alibi for the enlightened?

I wonder, and the answer is not so clear.

If we take into consideration Europe, I could hypothesise that the tendency is to go towards a specialised sector as far as the production, diffusion and creation of shows for children are concerned, and it has the following main characteristics:

- *Professionalisation: that means that those who are part of a theatrical company have opted for young children to be the audience of their proposals.*
- *Development of professional organisations that maintain an open and constant dialogue with the different authorities, obtaining economic and*

technical resources allowing workgroups to endure over long periods of time.

- *Creation of Stable Centres for Production and/or Diffusion of theatre for young audiences, with parallel structures for training, both for actors and teachers.*
- *Cooperation amongst playwrights, companies, actors, technicians from different countries, to develop shared projects.*
- *Carrying out interdisciplinary activities together with educational centres, which allow to develop projects regarding the creation and publishing of literature for children, training and research.*

On the other hand, as far as the aesthetic aspect and the themes are concerned, we can state the following:

1 Aspects relating to creation:

- *The almost complete absence of clowns, sketches, etc... that explicitly try to transmit a moral, or to instruct young audiences.*
- *The careful and conventionalised creation of set designs, costumes and stage objects, leaving aside naturalism or Walt Disney's style.*
- *Imaginative, acting and staging standards that can be hardly equalled by theatre for adults.*

2 Structural and professional aspects

- *Public circuits: (National, regional or local Theatres for young audiences), and access to cultural centres and exhibition venues at the same conditions as theatrical companies for adults, from both a technical and economic point of view.*
- *As a consequence, the fact that young audiences are now used to attending shows, a new concept has been brought about: a truly and entirely public theatre, offering shows for different audiences with the same staging and contents.*
- *Maintaining a repertoire, thus allowing companies to perform several shows simultaneously and ensuring the stability of their members.*

After this short and schematic summary, some sceptical may

object that I idealise – according to a very Hispanic tradition – everything that comes from outside and that I despise what we actually have, but I am simply trying to be objective. In this respect there is a social sensibility that comes from cultural traditions very different from the Spanish one, which is still strongly influenced by the cultural wasteland of Franco's dictatorship. However... however, yes, it is necessary to say that theatre, as a phenomenon of cultural consumption, is typical of some particular social classes, mainly enlightened, since the 'average audience', which could enjoy theatre as an entertainment, has almost completely disappeared from the theatre.

It is clear that today theatre for children is a market that involves large amounts of money that not only allows those who want to specialise in this sector to survive, but it also helps those who, through institutional campaigns or private promotions, are trying to survive while getting to "truly professional and artistic shows". We should not follow this path. We should be honest and say that it is not the right one, not at all. What we are talking about is an activity that has to do with the very origins of human communication, which can be found in the ritual for the deities that the primitives used to perform.

We are talking about and encouraging the practice of social communicative acts that have symbolic play as their starting point, they involve role-play and they finally achieve group communication.

And theatre is not a simple ornament of school, but a crucial need for children while they are still children and they are growing. It is something that is part of their culture and, at the same time, it is necessary to build their system of communication, as children and as future adults. And starting from this process, we could think that being more cultured will help them become, in addition to all the rest, future theatre enthusiasts, and not just spectators.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA

In spite of communication stereotypes, the relationship between Theatre and early years – from symbolic play to theatrical creation and representation – is a vital act, of human growth. The influence of the media has generated a specific stereotype of show for children and youngsters. A loud and imitative stereotype, associated with commercial brands, with no critical ability whatsoever, a very low standard of message interpretation

and deeply paternalistic and reactionary contents. There is no need to mention names and/or TV networks; it is enough to zap during the hours of the day dedicated to children to enter a horror museum, which would make anybody's hair stand on end.

It is in this way that children perceive shows or theatre, because the basic point is the performance, and this is, in turn, the heart of the actors' job and, finally, of theatre as communicative phenomenon. The magic of the stage is now provided by technology but still it is unable to compete with audiovisual media and big gigs; it is charming and it is able to 'blend' audience and scene. When this happens, it is absolutely not comparable to any other means of communication. The stage still offers the audience something 'tangible', the 'immediacy' of what happens in front of us without any technological mediation; the warm emotion of words and human voice.

As a conclusion, it may be that the pressure of technocracy and technology (which has nothing to do with scientific development) is letting the educational system go towards pragmatic options to the detriment of humanities, with the great social damage all this implies. It is the only thing we could ever expect from a society based on competitiveness.

The task of a teacher and of those who address early years from the stage should be, I think, conveying that feeling. Allowing those feelings to take place is, I think, the task of parents and society. Paying the right attention to "creations" of, by and for little boys and girls should be the primary task of public administrations, in order for them to be included in a specific cultural framework, from which culture could be *truly* built and then we, as adults, could have access to what we like to call works of art, with our own critical sense and opinions. We could therefore help them develop their own creative potential, as much as we are possibly able to offer them thanks to our creativity.

It seems to me that this is simply a human objective, and it has probably not very much to do with: *To cause something to happen or exist. In particular, God making the universe.* This means sacralising work, which in turn classifies, makes different, gives restrictions to those who simply practice a profession and do their job.

Small size, the net... a short presentation

Small size, the net is a three-year project (2006-2009) for the development of the European Network for the diffusion of performing arts for early childhood (0-6 years, with particular attention given to the 0-3 age-group).

The Network "Small size" was founded in 2005 with the support of the European Commission and the Culture 2000 programme. It was established by four professional theatre and educational arts organisations, La Baracca (Italy), Théâtre de la Guimbarde (Belgium), Acción Educativa (Spain) and GOML – (Slovenia). Later in the same year, three additional partners were invited to become co-organisers to support the development of Small size: Helios Theater (Germany), Polka Theatre (UK) and Teatrul Ion Creangă (Romania). Further funding from the European Commission and Culture 2000 programme was subsequently awarded in July 2006 for the three-year project, to allow an extension of the network across Europe and beyond.

Small size provides a structure through which to meet, share expertise and exchange knowledge; to develop collaborative projects and disseminate information and research. Through its networking, it aims to promote an awareness of the significance of performing arts for early childhood with objectives that include increasing children's creative potential along with the comparison of different European cultural traditions. In addition, it aims to give value to projects and events that support the development of training and educational programmes for early years educators and artists, and for producers and artists creating productions for the early childhood audiences, through widening opportunities for research and collaboration.

The principal inspiration of Small size rests in the children themselves, and our value of them. Through the network we trust the beneficiaries will be these children, alongside artists, teachers, early years educators, carers and service managers, parents and grandparents... in effect, everybody involved in performing arts, education and care of young children.

SMALL SIZE ACTIVITIES

The Small size project organises and promotes several activities which can be grouped into three areas: **production, training and diffusion-exchange**.

Productions and artistic research play a lead role. During the project, the partners have realised many productions, co-productions and artistic performances for children 0-6 years, and supported the production of new pieces of theatre for children 0-4 years by other European companies through a "Small size seeding fund". In addition, a piece of shared Artistic Research was commissioned and undertaken last year. This workshop-based research has been led by three directors from three of the partner companies (Helios Theater-Hamm, Germany, La Baracca-Bologna, Italy and La Guimbarde-Charleroi, Belgium). The various training activities differ in content and structure – workshops, research groups, internships – addressing artists, teachers and children. These activities are fundamental, especially when thinking about an improvement in expertise and a wider advocacy of the arts as a basic right for the very youngest children

Amongst these activities are the "Small size workshops" addressing young artists and playwrights, or nursery nurses and teachers from several European and non-European countries - workshops designed and intended to offer them the opportunity to share a common artistic experience

Diffusion-exchange activities are of key importance to an expanding network, and this because of their capacity to nurture relationships, provide opportunity for sharing and, in doing so, help create an active memory. These activities include publications, multimedia documentation, research and exchange amongst the partners, alongside events such as festivals and showcases. The experiences and knowledge developed over these almost-three years of the Small size project are gathered into three books, one of which is in your hands now.

Information

For any information about Small size and its activities contact:

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