



# REPORT

## **On the dynamics of development and implementation of the project activities in Sofia, Bulgaria**

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### **Introduction**

This introduction has the objective of presenting in brief the work with the children from the school for visually impaired children "Louis Braille", which was carried out during the implementation of the VISION project.

Underneath you will see detailed descriptions of our meetings with the children and we encourage you to go through them, because VISION is all but statistics and the presented information is all but boring ☺

Still, we need to get this done. As of February 2015 until June 2016 inclusive (17 months) we carried out 30 meetings with children and young people from school, who were interested and willing to work in the sphere of drama techniques and approaches in order to consciously and subconsciously develop skills for verbal and physical expressiveness and communication.

Those, who were brave enough to work with the theatrical team were 22 children and young people and the specified number does not include those who came for one or two meetings and due to some reason decided they are not interested to continue.

All the meetings, except the last few ones for 2016 as well as those related to the dance process, organized by Ina Gerginova, took place on Fridays, because the school agenda allowed it. Most of the time the children were separated into two groups – not just because they were too many, but also a part of them were not staying at the school dormitory, but were being taken home by a regular school bus, leaving at 15:30. Thus, we were meeting group one from 13:30 till 15:30, and with group two – from 16:00 till 18:00.

During the meetings with the children, our objective was not to create actors out of them, even if some seem to be really tempted by the prospect and their talents would easily allow them to make wonderful artists. Our objective was, via theatrical techniques and exercises, to help them become more aware of themselves, of the environment that surrounds them, of the other people in this environment, of their skills, qualities, knowledge, talents interests, abilities and to teach

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them to use these resources and to express themselves verbally and physically with self-esteem and in the most confident way possible.

We shall not specify names here, but there are children within the group, who came to the first meeting and then kept being shy and unconfident also on the fifth, and on the tenth as well as on the fifteenth meeting, but for whom we can now say that they have made great progress and have literally blossomed. Because, after all, only if we learn to be open to the world can we accept what good it has to offer. We are not speaking of openness in the communication with the teachers, with the immediate environment, including the fellow students and friends. It is not about that. Because in those relations there is a background of multiannual companionship and acquaintance, deep sharing, perfect knowledge of the other. We speak about freedom of communication with the world beyond, which starts one step to the side from the school, from the bus, from the home, from the goal-ball gym.

All participants achieved wonderful results, which the entire team is very proud of. For some of them though the progress was more visible to us, because the contrast from the first meeting to the last one was more substantial.

Mentioning the team renders me almost speechless, because the project is what it is thanks entirely to this mixture of children, artists, facilitators and educators, who create the magic together. Starting from Tsveta Baliyska, who led the workshops with the children and the artistic team with exceptional love and professionalism, supported by the precious Ina Gerginova, Aleksander Evtimov and Konstantin Kuchev and get to the completely dedicated "Louis Braille" school team – Elka Belokapova, Lyubomir Velkov (a.k.a. lord Lyubo), Desi, Lili, Vyara, Evelina, the ever patient and supportive Rosi and Mr. Minchev, Dido, Ivelina and Eliza, who took care of all the Braille needs of children and project – we were all in a symbiosis that, at least for me, has never been witnessed before. Complementing each other, supporting each other whenever necessary and in the ways necessary, clarifying all verbalized and non-verbalized misunderstandings, explaining to and learning from each other for one common goal – to be useful for the children – we bore through the invisible walls barring communication and separating one human being from another.

If we start speaking about the project teams in Veliko Tarnovo, Palermo, Cardiff, Liege and Luxembourg and the magnificent work they have done, this introduction will turn into a chapter from a popular 19<sup>th</sup> century novel. I will only say we are all incredibly lucky to have discovered each other within this project.

Enormous gratitude to all who worked and will keep working with the visually impaired group. VISION is a magnificent base for further work and multiplication and, we sincerely hope, a life-changer for a great number of both visually impaired children and their families and specialists. Now we have even higher objectives – we would like to turn the leaders among the visually impaired young people into workshop facilitators. Let them add to their set one more precious skill, which would make them useful to other visually impaired children and young people, so



that we all witness a counter-domino effect, because theatre has the power to lift the human being – let more and more humans lift their souls on its invisible wings.

And so the story begins ...

### First meeting ... 24.02.2015

This meeting had the aim of adapting ourselves to the children and the teachers and their regular school agenda. After we fixed the possibilities for work – in 2 groups, because a part of the children leave with a school bus at 15:30, while the others remain in the boarding house – we commenced to becoming acquainted with each other. Each of us had to present him/herself and to describe what interests him/her and what he/she loves to do.

After we were left alone with the children (“we” being Tsveta Baliyska – leading facilitator, Ina Gerginova – co-facilitator, Zornitsa Staneva – supporter, photographer) we helped them to stand in a circle, holding hands and the facilitator started explaining the first exercise – presenting each of us one after the other. It became clear that the children had no idea what an “impulse” is. We explained to them that each needs to say his/her name and then squeeze the hand of the friend standing on the right so that he or she would understand that it is his or her turn. After all participants managed to present themselves, we tried to make something like a Mexican wave. The children found this hard again. So we had to go through all of them, to hold their hands and to show them by touch what the direction of the movement is. They had to use this movement and to sing their names, which the group repeated afterwards. Some of them were really ashamed. We noticed that after the first presentation they had memorized the exact order, in which they were positioned in the circle, so that if someone happened to be a bit late with saying his/her name, they immediately turned towards him/her in order to encourage him/her to speak.

We made a circle with chairs and we all sat down. The facilitator asked each of us to say his/her name and to share something about his/her interests, what he/she loves.

The first one was **Nikola**, who said that he loves to play chess, he likes math and is 13 years old. He is sweet, slightly chubby boy, with a high voice and always smiling as he speaks.

Next to him was seated **Peter** – 11 years old, 4<sup>th</sup> grade, from Pirdop. A dark, thin and talented boy, who never stopped moving nervously.

After that it was **Zara’s** turn, who said that she is 16 years old. She was speaking with an intonation, more characteristic for an adult lady, than for a young girl. We noticed that she had useful vision, but she had some other disability, because one of her arms was not properly developed. She shared that she loves to play chess and fills her free time with it.

**Viki** shared that she loves the pink color, she is 11, from Sofia and lives close to the school. She looked very shy, she wears glasses and has some very limited useful vision.

**Zlati** said that she lives in Sofia, she is 11 years old. She shared her date of birth. She was energetic and smiling, she spoke in a loud voice, needed to be heard.

After her came **Nikoleta**, who was pronouncing the words very unclearly, was moving in her chair a little. She managed to share that she is 13, but was insecure about her birth place. She appeared to have other troubles, besides the heavily impaired vision.

Then it was **Denis’s** turn. Even with his first sentence he managed to make the group laugh. He is tall, speaks in a confident manner, very smiling, but we noticed his strong mannerisms – parasitic rubbing of the eyes.



Followed **Hakan**, a small and very uneasy boy. He also shared his birth date. He is 11, loves math, skiing and is from Sofia. He has some useful vision, because a bit later, when the children were telling us about the popular sport for blind players "goalball", he slid confidently down the floor, stretching his body to demonstrate for us how the ball is saved. The ball has a bell in it so that the players can hear its whereabouts.

**Kosta** said that his age is 11. He made a mistake with his birth date and everybody laughed. He seems like he is one of the naughty boys, he was often correcting the others. He shared he likes chess, but he prefers goalball.

It was **Monika's** turn. She has the posture and behavior of a young lady, she speaks calmly and intelligently. We noticed that when someone is interrupting or correcting the others, she makes good-mannered comments, which no one speaks against. No one was arguing with her. It seemed to us that she was behaving motherly towards the others and they do respect her. Monika shared that she is 10<sup>th</sup> grade, 16 years old. She was smiling and sharp-witted; while speaking, she was holding the girl next to her by the hand. She said she loves music, loves to play the piano, she sings and adores acting. She shared that she had worked with Velimir Velev, as well as she had participated in the dramatization of the Nikolay Haytov story "Manly times". Monika also mentioned the performance, which Velimir Velev placed with children from the school ("The shadow of my soul").

After Monika it was **Ilkay's** turn. She spoke quickly and quietly and said that she is 7<sup>th</sup> grade, 12 years old, but in two weeks would be 13! It appeared that she and Hakan are siblings. Ilkay shared that she loves to meet new people, that she likes acting, mathematics and English language.

After her came **Klara**, a small lovely girl, who appeared really shy. The others were making fun with the way she pronounced the letter "r". Regardless of this she insisted on saying that she is from "Druzha", a neighborhood in Sofia. She was 11 years old. She found it hard to say what she loves, but finally she mentioned English language and the children attacked her again, because they believed she was lying.

**Snezhana (Snezha)** shared that she is 13 years old, 7<sup>th</sup> grade, born in the town of Silistra, loves playing with play-dough and to watch Indian TV series. Snezha has some useful vision, because she could notice other people's movements and reactions in the room.

**Beatris (Bea)** was about to present herself now. She said she was 13, loves sports, loves to paint and to meet new people.

After her came **Nastya**, who keeps using the parasitic "you know" while she speaks. She said she is born in Smolyan, she is 18, loves singing, meeting new people and is interested in acting. She spoke with confidence, without any shyness.

**(15 children)**

After that it was time to play! The first things we did were sound pictures. We started with a tropical rain – the group had to snap fingers, to clap hands, to stomp the feet thus intensifying the sound of the tropical storm to its peak and then gradually bringing it down back to a stop. We continued with the picture of a forest, a rustic yard, a jungle and a seaside. The children really enjoyed themselves and imitated some animals very well with their voices.

**Second meeting - 06.03.2015**



Tsveta Baliyska had created the so called “theatrical commandments” in rhymes. These commandments fixed some rules, which the children were supposed to observe during the theatrical workshop meetings. The participants appreciated them a lot. Braille versions and large print were provided for all.

### **Group one (13:30 – 15:30)**

The first group was joined by Viki, Zlati, Kosyo, Kosta, Denis and Klara **(6 children)**.

This time, at the beginning of the meeting, each participant had to pronounce his/her name with an intonation matching the momentary mood of the child. We did this standing in a circle and every one of us screamed/shouted/sang ... his/her name with joy and a lot of emotion.

In order to prepare the bodies for work, we afterwards used the approach “a rope hangs from the sky”. The children had to imagine that parts of their bodies are tied to something, to some rope, which is moving them, dragging them in different directions.

The children had to move in the space, following our voices and to imagine that they are passing through a forest, walking barefoot in grass, then in hot sand, in jelly, on asphalt, then suddenly a storm started, the skies were pouring and the children were wet through and through. Then the sun came out as abruptly as the rain had started. It warmed and comforted the children.

The six children sat on one of the benches in the play-room, which we have our meetings in. Ina Gerginova sat in front of them on the ground and started speaking about dancing. Denis kindly invited Ina to take his place on the bench and she used his gentle offer to explain that contemporary dancers use the ground and move mainly using the ground; she told them about how contemporary dance appeared as a rebellion against the fixed ballet norms; about the energy, through which dancing influences, about the freedom and the possibility to create our own movements; Ina clarified that it is not so much the shape, but the feeling, which movement leaves us with, is what creates the magic of contemporary dancing. Denis was impressed by that fact that there is theatre, in which dance and music are the main means of expression, making statements and telling stories. Ina asked each child what its perception of dancing was. We knew that for the ones for whom vision loss is congenital, dancing is something absolutely abstract and they probably know it from the inner need to move under the sound of music. Klara very beautifully and metaphorically compared dancing with “music with a path”, for Denis it was a series of connected movements, synchronized with music. Kosta was laconic, he simply said “music”. Considering that he has visual perceptions (his glaucoma only worsened a couple of years ago), his curt answer was not related to lack of idea, but rather to a lack of desire to share it. Kosyo found it hard to express himself. Ina waited a long time and explained to him that whatever he said would not be wrong. In the end he just responded that he has no perception whatsoever (note: he used to be very shy, very quiet, reluctant to respond – now, October 2015, he is communicating with us freely and giving very adequate answers). Zlati imagined “women in frocks, who are dancing” and Viki – “people dancing ballet”.

Contemporary dance often takes place in silence, the rhythm and dynamics being created entirely by the dancers, by their movements in space, their contact with the floor and noises made from slapping their own bodies. Ina decided that she could dance for the children, hoping that they would feel the emotion, the energy and to become intrigued. While she moved, Denis was making suggestions for the emotions she was expressing. He said that he could sense tension, worry, negative emotions. Ina changed the quality of the movement without saying anything and Denis caught it! He asked her if she could change the emotions she was expressing





and she confirmed “I can” right in front of him. Kosta made a joke that Ina sounded as if she was sweeping the floor. We could see that all children were really moved by what was happening.

We continued with imitations of animals. Each of the children had to select an animal, to move and make sounds characteristic for this animal. This turned pretty easy – we were suddenly surrounded by dogs, snakes, lions, monkeys. The children were enjoying themselves and communicating through high pitched sounds and nudges. After this the group turned into a flock of birds, wings spread and flying.

What came next was a grouping in pairs. Each pair was supposed to have a sculptor and a sculpture – one child was sculpting the body of the other child. The first task was to create the body of a bird and then a cat, while the second task required them to sculpt their idea of “meeting” and “travel”. We had a change of roles at some point in order for each child to go through both roles – of sculptor and of sculpture.

Speaking of discipline, which was often broken by mocking and comments, the moderators introduced the so called “magical bell” – an Indian musical instrument – two flat pieces of metal, tied with a thread, that make a specific prolonged sound after they hit each other. When the children heard this sound for the first time, they stood still for a few seconds, as if they were hypnotized. Ina explained to them that this is going to be the sound calling the group to silence – the sound comes from a magical instrument and the space, in which we are gathering is special, because this is where we about to achieve something substantial together and for this purpose we need to be a team, to support and help each other. Much to our surprise the use of the bell always brought order and the children were immediately quiet and ready to hear us.

We finished the meeting with a exercise for trust. The group stands in a circle, one of the children goes in the center of the circle, loses balance and the others around have to catch him/her and to push him/her away, but he/she should not regain his balance in the process. All children took part, but some of them were a bit shy because of the girl-boy contact. They all left happy. We were surprised that they managed to remain focused and to work almost 2 hours without a need for a break.

### **Second group (16:00 – 18:00)**

The second group was joined by Nastya, Snezha, Nikoleta, Lyubka and Mitko **(5 children)**.

Tsveta presented a song from Malaysia, the text of which goes like this: „I am happy here, I am happy there, I am happy everywhere.“ Ina helped with learning a simple choreography, which included two steps to the side, a full vertical turn of the body, and finally jumping in a circle in pairs.

After a short discussion of favorite fairytales, we managed to select “Hansel and Gretel”. The roles were allocated and we quickly went through the scenario – Tzveta was passing lines to the children and they were repeating them. Then they had to replay the story on their own, with as little support from the mentors as possible. Nastya was Gretel, Mitko – Hansel, the witch was Snezha, the mother – Lyubka, the father – Zori, Ina and Tzveta created the surrounding sound picture Nastya was really artistic, she was using proper intonation and had remembered her lines very well. The children love to listen to audio fairytales and probably this is what lied in the foundations of Snezha’s impressive performance. She completely submerged in the image of her character. She was brave, casting herself on the ground, enriching her lines, changing her voice successfully (she has some remaining vision and this is definitely affecting her psycho-physical behavior).



Ina told the history of contemporary dance also in this group and asked the children for their perceptions when they hear the word dancing. Nastya made a comparison with a “ball room full of people”, Snezha – with Indian music (she is obviously very much into the topic of Indian TV series and music), Nikoleta could not give a description but at least tried to say something. Mitko’s description seemed to have a slight sexual element – he said that dancing is “a man and a woman who have love and they are dancing alone”.

We tried again the sculpting exercise, but in this group there was some resistance. Nastya said she cannot squat (she has very weak physique, her muscles are underdeveloped), Snezha was doing her best, Nikoleta was passive, Mitko was constantly asking questions and was not trying to find any physical expression in his body. This changed after we played to them different music styles - then the children finally managed to feel the need to move around and use their bodies.

### Third meeting - 13.03.2015

#### First group

This time present were Zlati, Viki, Klara, Ilkay, Kosyo and Beatris **(6 children)**

Hakan and Kosta, who had just participated in a rehearsal in the same room, excused themselves with the need to do math homework.

We disseminated the theatrical commandments in Braille to the children. We read them together with those that had not heard them previously. All liked them very much. Then Ina brought out two small drums. Each child had to “play” his/her mood at the moment and sing his/her name. They liked the task. They were really impressed with the drums themselves and felt them thoroughly with interest in order to study their shape. After that they concentrated really hard and tried to hear how the drums sound. Then they played their moods; some were more hasty, wanted to get it done and over with; others were shy, ashamed or said they cannot play the drums. Still all children tried them out. We explained to them that it is not necessary to know how to play. We just wanted them to check how their mood sounds, expressed through the drum. Kosta even got carried away in researching his mood. We offered the children to make a dialogue with the drums and then the listeners to try and tell us all what the dialogue had seemed like to them. Most of the “dialogues” sounded like arguments, there were some variations, but even when “fighting”, in most of the cases, the participants were hearing each other out and the dialogue was progressing dynamically, but smoothly.

Well warmed up we continued to the next game – “A story by word”. Sitting in a circle, each of us had to say only one word in order to form logical sentences, shaping up a whole story with a beginning, a plot, a climax and a finale.

Viki, who is the only one who reads large print, was the shyest one and was slow to give her words and when someone seems slow the others immediately start to pick on him/her. Kosyo was also shy from time to time and his involuntary movements would be unlocked (shaking off his palms, pressing his lips very tight, moving his eyes and head to the side really quickly), still he would manage to say his words and they really made sense. We noticed that when the children sense someone to be shaking to the sides or to be unnerved they immediately corrected him/her. We noticed that they speak about that freely. We managed to “create” two whole



stories; both having a thriller element – either someone would shoot the bunny or the lad character got bitten by a wolf while he was searching for his dog in the forest, but still the stories were logical and had a happy ending, as far as that was possible.

We stood up and removed the chairs in order to move a bit. We tried the following game: one clap means a squat, two claps mean a jump, three claps - a turn, four claps – a squat and a jump. We noticed that children with no vision at all, such as Ilkay, were really concentrated and were the quickest to memorize the commands. It was hard for them to move around in between the claps and they preferred to stay in one place. Then we tried giving simple and specific commands for movements, quickly – one after the other (for example: right hand – up, squat, left hand – down, jump, turn, hands on the waist, step to the front, hands – to the sides and so on). When we decided to repeat the movements, the children remembered the initially given commands perfectly. The last thing we tried with this group was a task involving taking gesture positions. The first one had to represent anger – we reached a pose with arms folded and frowning eyebrows; we had to work with the arms of the children and to touch the eyebrows of some of the children, because they had no idea what these positions meant and mimicking was extremely hard for them. They made so many faces. Ilkay expressed her artistic abilities again – regardless of being completely blind, she was posing very convincingly and even frowning seemed easier for her than for the others.

We tried the pose for surprise, arms spread out and slightly open mouth; a scared pose – with hands in front of the mouth; and a sad pose – with hands by the body and head down. The children made very appropriate sounds for each pose – again the verbal expression being easier for them than the physical one.

We thought about approaches through which we can acquaint the children with moving, with entering roles, with expressing feelings through the bodies and other ways with other means, different than oral. We were thinking how little by little – from simple to more complex – we can teach their bodies to move in a more confident, controlled and aware way through the environment.

## **Second group**

The second group was joined by Monika, Snezha, Nikoleta, Nastya, Peter, Nikola and Mitko (**7 children**).

Prior to starting, Ina spoke with Nikoleta, for whom we already know that there is some additional problem - when speaking she was doing it hard and slow and it was not quite clear when she was following the information, which was being exchanged back and forth among the other participants. She managed to ask if there are going to be rewards. Ina tried to understand what she means by rewards, but she failed to explain and Ina told her that our rewards are not tangible, they come from the experience, the playing and the better knowing of ourselves as a result of this. Nikoleta smiled.

We started with reading the theatrical commandments. We continued with saying one's name and playing it out on a drum. We continued with dialogues. This group liked the dialogues a lot, some of the children trying it out more than once. Monika was giving very adequate descriptions about what the dialogues seemed to her. She was using nice words, very specific with a lot of nuances (hasty, restless, etc.). The drum presentation was giving very precise indications about the momentary condition of the children. Some were sincere, they tried to make us understand that they cannot play, but when we encouraged them to try – they were doing quite well. Others were more expressive and noisy, but they were trying to “get it over with”, so that their turn would pass quicker. Nikola was anxious for someone to recognize the sadness in his performance and quickly shared that he is love-lorn – the girl he likes is not responding to his





feeling. The topic of love aroused the group. We continued with music dialogues and the children were convinced how expressive could be the sounds they make, even if they are not able to play the instrument at hand.

We tried to create a ***“story by a word”***, but this time this proved to be a big problem. Snezha was taken aback and kept failing at finding a word, the others were annoyed by this and she became angry with them and said “she will give up theatre”. We think she was just trying to get the facilitators’ attention. We tried the word game several times with Nikola and Peter insisting on the word love for a start. Nikoleta was unable to join in and we asked her to be audience. She was not insulted by this and she even appeared more motivated to be active afterwards.

After a number of attempts, we manage to make one story, the logic of which was lost at the end (an obvious difference with the first group). Then the leading facilitator proposed to do “vampire” – an amusing game (which is played with eyes closed – so those who had some vision had to close their eyes; one of the participants is a vampire; he/she should catch someone’s shoulders and thus the latter is also turned into a vampire, who makes a blood curdling shriek and can also continue turning others; when two vampires meet they laugh in a sinister way; the game is over when all become vampires); the children needed time to understand the rules of the game.

Nastya remembered the Malaysian song from last time and we continued with it. We reached the time for making poses that express a feeling. Again we were impressed by the inherent intuition, which the visually impaired children demonstrated – Nastya and Monika created the most expressive poses and without needing of our help, the poses came naturally and were very organic (Nastya represented sorrow by covering her face with a hand bent at the elbow and Monika – by placing her hand under one cheek and bending her head a little; the anger pose presented to be hardest again because of the mimicking – some of the children were unable to frown their eyebrows; the surprise and joy poses were easier for the girls). The children selected one of the poses, they froze in it and they had to say a spontaneous sentence. Nastya was afraid to speak from first person, but what she said was quite adequate to her sad pose. Monika was expressing her melancholy and said “I so wish it was summer!” Monika is able to convey emotions and moods on an energy level.

Since the mood was a romantic one, we decided to play “Cinderella”. We allocated the roles. Monika took two roles – that of the step mother and that of the fairy godmother. Her expressiveness was impressive. She could sense the different characters’ nuances of both characters, however her artistic skills remained mainly in the verbal expression, the body was participating to a little extent. Nastya was Cinderella. When excited, she also demonstrates quite visible mannerism. In the role of the prince was Peter, who was stunning – without any shame or restrain, he boldly fell to his knees and asked Cinderella to marry him; he kissed her hand, expressed himself kindly and gallantly – we had not showed him what to do, we had not given him any lines; he was wonderful.

The two of them with Nastya tried to dance. We showed them how they should support each other for a waltz, but we could not achieve much more than a slow shaking. Peter was quite mobile, but Nastya was obviously unwilling to study her body movements. The story ended with a ball and with this ball finished our work for the day.



## Fourth meeting – 20.03.2015

Ina and Tsveta are discussing the possibility for Ina to organize a purely movements focused process parallel to the theatrical one. Ina want to know the children better in order to select a few with whom to work in researching the body and its movements.

Ina and Tsveta were also considering various exercises for movements for the whole group; “speaking” only (!) through movement; dance with air as a partner; a stretching rope, connecting all diagonally and having them make movements and freezing in various poses at the end; lines – of three persons, making a certain number of steps – a pose – melting of the pose and doing the same. We were thinking of coordination and simple exercises for balance, for self-awareness and shifting the body weight.

### First group

Klara, Nikoleta and Kosta (3 children)

One of the teachers (who is really cooperative) excused herself that some of the children are unable to attend, because they were having a spring celebration on Monday and had to rehearse for it.

At first we only had Klara and Nikoleta but then also Kosta showed up. He was really talkative this day. He shared that he has glaucoma and was had lost his vision two years ago. He got operated in Germany but his condition worsened. He told us that his family has a restaurant and he played the percussions there.

We decided to make a “story by a word”. Kosta was really active. We tried to involve Nikoleta, but Kosta was impatient with her – he kept giving her words in the beginning, but at a certain point she stopped participating logically and was only listening to the game. Our time was running away. We managed to create only one story about a gold fish.

### Second group

The participants were Monika, Mitko, Nikola, Peter, Snezha, Nastya, Nikoleta, Lyubka and Petra (9 children)

Monika came a bit earlier. She brought her computer and after some ado (because the voice program was not functioning properly), we managed to play the two songs she was going to participate at a competition on the following Saturday and for which she wanted Ina’s help with stage behavior and movements.

Monika sang magically. We congratulated her, she was amazing. She was happy we liked her singing and shared that she is very self-critical and wants to be perfect. Ina assured her that almost all artists feel this way. Monika shared that her parents come from a village near to town of Kozloduy and that she is born on 24 March and would soon be 17. We were impressed by how aware she was, interested in studying and moved by art.

At that time the other children arrived. Nikoleta, who lives at the school boarding house, often stays during both groups. In addition to the children we already knew, there were two new girls – Lyubka and Petra.

Tsveta offered Monika to sing the songs for the other children as well. Tsveta was going to show dance movements to the others, while Ina trained Monika individually. While Monika sang the ballad, Ina was standing behind her back, supporting the movements of her arms and hands while the song was progressing, using gestures that are adequate to the text, emotion and gradation. Monika became really enthusiastic during the more dynamic song, because there was “more dancing” there – movements of the thighs and the arms. It appeared really hard for her to isolate her hips and to move them alone. After Ina showed her, it became a bit easier. Monika



kept enjoying herself profoundly and was really doing things with zeal and aspiration to be as articulate in her moves as possible.

While Monika was singing, Ina attended also the other children. Snezha was the best at doing the hip moves, but she seems to be boldest one of all and more mobile than most. Today Nastya was trying really hard. Initially her hips were not moving. She was only shifting the upper part of her body, but after some tactile explanations she managed a few hip moves. In general she is facing the greatest difficulties with physical mobility.

The children were really enthusiastic, it seemed that they really wanted to move.

So we continued in this direction. It took the children some time, but they managed to form a line almost entirely on their own. For the first time we tried a simple synchronous movement. After some explanations, they understood that on “one” they should make a step to the right, on “and” – to add the left leg to the right one, on “two” – to make a step to the left, on “and” to add the right leg to the left one. Even such simple coordination required enormous concentration and a great effort on their behalf, as well as verbal guidance in the above described fashion. They almost managed to synchronize themselves so we tried to quicken the tempo. They really did well.

Lining themselves up with their profiles towards us took them some time. We asked each of the nine participants to tell us how they felt and together we figured out poses, matching their emotions/feelings. Most of the responses were “good”, “great”, Nikola remained “in love”, but their bodies expressed these words in unique ways.

We intensified and enlarged the poses and then the participants were asked to remember their poses, the new task being to do them in canon (in succession, feeling the move of the one before). (Monika took a very expressive pose again – she stood as a flamenco dancer, she only need to stretch the arms a bit, to turn the feet and the pose was complete).

First we tried the exercise with number first – from 1 to 9 – Ina would count, the children knowing, which number in the line they represent, would make the pose and stay in it until the end. They did just great. Then we returned the wave backwards (from 9 to 1), then repeated by this way the sign was just a clap; even if Ina was moving and clapping next to each whose turn was coming, this setting of the exercise proved really tough for them.

Afterwards they tried to create the canon without our help – only by feeling each other. The first time they managed brilliantly and it was really exciting for us to see these children who see with their ears and bodies. From the back to the front seemed a bit harder, because Nikoleta, Lyubka and Petra were too shy and the others in the front were not able to feel them clear enough. Still, this task had a significant success, especially considering that we did it for the first time.

The last movement attempt for the meeting proved to be the hardest one. We relate this with fatigue, because – in contrast with the verbal theatrical games – movements require a lot more efforts, concentration and tension, which means that the children become tired much quicker and they need another type of action in order to rest. The children were divided into three groups, each with three participants. We moved to one part of the room. Each group had to move synchronously. Ina was counting “one, two, three, and” (steps – right, left, right, left to the right), pose, melting – slow relaxing of the limbs into neutral position (preparation for three more repetitions – four, five, six). The first group included Nikola, Mitko and Peter. Peter was really active, focused and interested. He understood the task really quickly and was trying to repeat the commands even while Ina was still explaining. It was a bit hard for the children to understand that the steps should not necessarily be special, but quite ordinary. After a few more attempts and explanations, we understood that it is time to stop with the movements work and to direct the attention to playing a story. From the mere start of the meeting the children expressed desire for the story to have a criminal plot. We all sat down. It took the children some

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time before they became calm and quiet and started hearing each other out. Each of them had to say his or her preference. Half of the children restrained themselves from giving an opinion - they left the others to decide.

Finally we chose the "Three brothers and the golden apple". With the help of the children we reminded ourselves what the plot was. Peter told the whole story almost by himself. Snezha tried to join in, but Peter corrected her that she is mixing stories and she was angry again. The roles were allocated. Mitko was the oldest brother, Peter – the one in the middle, and Nikola (who was in love) – the youngest brother (the plot was modified a bit – at the end of the story the youngest brother would fall in love from first sight in the youngest daughter of the dragon, while the other two brother – in the other two daughters). The daughters were played by Nastya, Monika and Snezha. Nikoleta, Lyubka and Petra were the tree with the golden apple and later on – the well leading into the under-world. Ina, Tsveta and Zori were the dragon. Peter was really creative. He was making his own lines without any hardships and was even using metaphors and very exact comparisons in the game, he was full of energy, thrashing himself on the floor (to sleep!), jumping, twisting, he showed great interest in moving and was really happy when Ina told him that the floor is very much used in contemporary dancing and that she can help him for some flips. He was really pleased while playing. He was only a bit shy to use intonations, obviously too agitated from the intense meeting, because at the end he started laughing a lot and – compared to the previous time (now he was supposed to propose to Monika), he was slightly deconcentrated and started exiting his role. When we reminded him of his previous performance though, he decisively fell on his knees and kissed her hand. Mitko and Nikola found it much harder to think up their lines. They literally needed dictation. They were distracted easily. The daughters were focused, but not too intrigued. Monika also played the old man who leads the brothers to the well. She was trying to be expressive, trying with her body some of the poses we had tried previously. The three girls who played the tree and the well felt quite comfortable in this role, because they were not required to speak. They were visibly amused and agitated. We finished with the story and the meeting ended.

### **Fifth meeting – 27.03.2015**

The first and only group, because of Easter holidays, for which some of the children had already left.

Participants: Denis, Mitko, Nastya, Zlati, Kosyo, Klara and after the gymnastics class – also Monika (**7 children**).

Since we had only about an hour and some of the children had not participated previously in this game, we decided to make "story by a word".

The moods were loveable again, this time the romance was originating from Nastya – every time when the story would take this turn, she expressed such joy that her face would lit in a wide smile and she would start doing her typical mannerisms – turning her head from side to side and wringing her hands. All children participated really adequately, they were attentive and followed the logic. Klara and Zlati were approaching the game rather childishly (but this is quite logical considering their age). Kosyo was starting to impress us more and more with his intelligence. Always when formulating his thoughts before expressing them, he would start intensively to do his mannerisms – shaking his hands, twisting his lips – and as soon as he expressed himself the



mannerisms faded away. We were surprised that for Mitko logical thinking and formulation of sentences appeared to be a problem. When communicating he was doing it freely, but when he was supposed to listen, to follow a line of thought/story and to structure sentences, he was failing both grammatically and logically. Denis was really aggravated by this and Monika was making harmless jokes with him. We could sense that Denis wanted to lead the story into the fantasy genre and when Ina started to support him actively in this endeavor, he was really pleased – he said nothing, but he turned towards her (obviously he knew very well who was sitting where) and patted her on the head as an act of gratitude.

### **Sixth meeting - 17.04.2015**

This was the first meeting after the spring break and some of the children were not back yet from their home towns. Quite a few of the children in the school live in the local boarding house and only get to see their families two or three times during the year.

We had one group this time – the participants were: Kosta, Zlati, Viki, Ilkay, Beatris, Kosyo, Klara, Peter, Mitko and a new girl, for whom this one a one-time event **(10 children)**

The 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher – Rositsa Milcheva, who is very supportive and always does her best to cooperate with us – managed to find all children, including those coming in the second group, so that we could work with all children in one group – otherwise the second group would have consisted of 3-4 participants.

The first ones to appear were Kosta, Zlati and Viki. After them joined also Ilkay. We tried to find out what is interesting for them at the moment. Viki was really bashful, she could not say a word, being shy and passive most of the times. Unlike Viki, her friend Zlati is quite talkative, smiling. She said that in this warm weather she prefers to ride a bicycle (we wondered how she manages it, but she sounded pretty realistic and not dreamy), but she has a lot of homework. She said she feels so hot, she would enjoy a nice cool pool. She repeated that a few times. Ilkay was thinking about computer games and she spoke with Kosta about some games for visually impaired players. At that time the teacher brought Beatris, Kosyo, Klara, Peter and a new girl who hasn't come before (her eyes were moving quickly, but we noticed that she has a percentage of useful vision – from the way she was moving, as well as from the mimics she was using).

We sat in a circle and each of us had to share how he/she was feeling.

We noticed again that the children freely use expressions such as "I have not seen him today", "This game is for the blind" and so on. They really do not care about the official census, which sighted people are imposing within their communication with the visually impaired.

From the mere beginning Kosta wanted to play "story by a word". The first attempt was not quite successful. We tried with a second story, but again there was some teasing between the children and lacking of logical words. At the end of this game – arrived Mitko.

We continued with some warming up. We tried to warm up the joints. The children did not know how to do circular movements with their wrists, elbows and shoulders. Some of them openly said they were too lazy to squat and when they did squats they did them wrong – bringing the knees together or moving them sideways. We tried to explain to them through touch and a lot of verbal clarifications how they should move their bodies correctly and harmlessly. None of them could touch the ground with their fingers when bending forward with straight legs. We tried





balancing on one leg and most children succeeded. We were really impressed by Ilkay. She was very concentrated during the whole time, listening, trying to sense the touch in order to understand how the moves should be made properly, after finding her balance she would remain like that, without moving, as if she was at perfect inner peace.

After the warming up, we tried to play *“entangled”*. All participants are holding hands and without letting go, they should get entangled and then untangled. We did it in the easiest possible way and it turned out really well. However, we noticed that the children have no developed sense of partnership. They gave way to their aggressive impulses, started pushing and pulling each other.

It appears that the greater the group, the harder their response especially to tasks that require a higher sense of concentration. This is due to the fact that they distract each other with jokes and teasing. Something, which is typical for children their age.

The next game was done in a circle again. *“Switching places”* was about one player saying the name of another one and the two involved needing to switch their places. The second phase of the game required the same action, but done by two couples at the same time. The children were finding their way quite well. Some of the entirely blind would stop in the center of the circle and we had to help them find their new place, still if they had heard clearly enough the voice of the person calling their name – they managed to switch placed on their own.

The last movement exercise for the day had the purpose of showing the children the full span of their bodies with the help of a wall behind their backs. Ina stood by the wall for a while to show them what they could do and they went to her and started inspecting her position – “it is a sea-star!”. When it was their turn however, they were not very active and quickly lost interest in it. This exercise has a great potential, but we finished quite quickly with it today.

We continued with selecting a fairy tale to play. There was a conflict between “girl” and “boy” fairy tales. The girls wanted “Cinderella”, “Sleeping beauty”, “The frozen kingdom”, while the boys wanted “Ali Baba and the forty thieves” or Wily Peter. Finally we decided to make up our own story. Beti wanted to be a princess, while the other girls joined her as her supporters and servants. Klara, influenced by the wall exercises, asked to be a sea-star (Ina told her to imagine that her fingers are giving out sparkles and she started moving her hands and fingers). Kosta and Peter were bad boys. Kosyo was the guard of Beti’s kingdom. Ilkay was going to be the fairy. The story started with the two bad boys. They started fighting and fairy who appeared because of their bad behavior enchanted them and sent them away to the past in a distant kingdom. When the bad boys met the princess and her servants both sides were not too surprised or amazed (only afterwards we analysed that in a situation such as this one the initial startle would come from the visual perception of the difference in the outer appearance and only later – from the language used).

The bad boys continued to behave improperly and the princess called the guard. At that moment Kosyo released and long suppressed anger, because he attacked them quite realistically with all his might and with a clear intention to give them a good spanking. We managed to stop him and then we noticed that he seemed really satisfied. Obviously this outburst has done him good. Ina held her hand on his back for a few minutes, while he was still jumping and repeating his mannerisms. He needed some time to calm down.

Kosta and Peter went to jail but they had no intention to apologize for their behavior. Then Ina introduced Mitko in the action. He was a prisoner too, enchanted by the same fairy, who has been in this jail for a hundred years now. The two bad boys were not impressed or intimidated by his faith. This is when the fairy appeared and turned them into mice. In this form they managed to go through the bars of their prison doors and went into the kingdom again. The



princess said that she would marry one of them. Kosta and Peter started reacting boyishly: "You merry her! No - you!"

The fairy appeared again, really angry (Ilkay was really great in the text, something, which she was making up herself on the go). She warned them that if they refuse to change their opinion, she would curse them to remain mice forever. They however insisted (they would not take her conditions seriously, they preferred to remain in the form of mice, but not to be nice, especially to girls, especially when it is within a make-belief story). The fairy did her magic and Ina finished the story with the words that the obstinate and bad boys were the ones that had brought the bad luck and misery upon themselves. Then sounded the magical bell for a finale and the children hurried to leave. We wishes each other a nice week and so long until our next meeting. Ina called Peter and Ilkay in order to offer them to join the dance process that was soon going to start. They responded to the offer with enthusiasm. During our previous meeting Monika had already agreed to the same!

## Seventh meeting – 24.04.2015

A very active and rewarding meeting.

**First group** – Denis, Kosta, Kosyo, Klara, Viki, Beatris, Ilkay, Nikoleta and Zlati (9 children)

At the beginning the children had to focus and to decide themselves what kind of movements warm up they needed. We told them to search their bodies for tension – mentally and by moving a bit, until they imagine that the tense place is becoming relieved. We told them that warming up should be done in a way, which brings them pleasure. The children made only small moves. Those of them who are practicing various extracurricular sport were doing more confident classical warming up exercises.

We continued with warming up each specific body part, including a classical "roll down" with the head weighing down and the spine untangling gradually until we touch the floor. At the end of the warming up we made a trust game – each child had to lean back into the arms of the facilitators. Initially the children were afraid, but still they demonstrated bravery and after they discovered that we would not let them fall – they actually started enjoying themselves with the lovely adrenalin of the free fall. Denis and Kosta offered to assist us in bearing the weight of the falling children.

The main topic of this meeting was the body. From the mere beginning Ina asked the children to use minimum words when expressing themselves. This was naturally quite difficult for them. They limited themselves in the span of their movements, but we noticed that their shyness is different from that of their sighted peers. The exercise for **expression through movements** required the following: all should remain quiet, the person presenting him/herself should say something about him/herself or his/her feelings through some motion, without the use of words and sounds, Ina being the "interpreter" to the group.

Denis was first – as usual, very active, even though he believes he cannot dance and his movements are too "wooden", is actually quite mobile. He was trying to use the capacity of space, doing various gestures. He discovered a chair and sat in it, imitating that he is writing a story on the table in front of him. Ina was helping with questions in order to discover more. Then he stood up, went down to the floor and did a few push ups. Then he started walking around. Ina asked him to express something, which was important for him and he demonstrated sculpturing.



We thanked him. The children reacted with laughter to some of Ina's comments, but as a whole they kept almost perfect concentration until the end of the exercise, even if it took quite awhile until all managed to express themselves.

Then it was Zlati's turn. She and Viki have some remaining vision, compared to the other children (Viki even carries spectacles and probably sees best from the entire group we are working with), this however does not make them more confident – even to the contrary, they are more ashamed probably because they have the possibility to make a visual assessment and give more thought to the way they look in the eyes of those who are sighted. We had to encourage Zlati quite awhile before she dared to move. Viki did something similar. As usual, she was closed and showed almost no emotion, but even she was not able to relax due to shame – now she managed to let go of her fears for a little while and danced around. Klara was moving her fingers, similarly to the sea-star form last time. She was also imitating a ballerina.

Then it was Kosyo's turn. Kosta was joking that he probably wants to eat stakes. We offered to Kosyo to share with us how he feels. He reacted stormily and started stepping from one leg to the other. Ina interpreted these moves as animation and desire to tell something to someone, but not knowing how to do it. He was smiling contentedly.

Then it was Ilkay's turn. She was able to do the tasks in concentration even if was not among the most expressive and communicative children. She looked as if she was dancing. She was happy when Ina used information about her, which she knew from before, and mentioned that Ilkay obviously would like to play some computer games. Nikoleta was now participating more eagerly. Especially when no one was attacking her and she had a chance to use her time in order to react. She started making interesting circular movements, which were interpreted by Ina in a rather abstract manner. Beatris and Kosta who were most distracted, decided to be last and when it was their turn, Ina allowed herself that she can do a little "dubbing". Beatris was shy and wanted to speak, but Ina was always stopping her and encouraging her to use her body in order to express herself. When she finally held her hands in front of her body, slightly bent, as if she was discomforted and started making small steps to the left and to the right, Ina started interpreting on her behalf: „Oh, the things Ina is making me do ... I don't want to do them, I can't, hm, I am probably managing, because she can guess what I am thinking..." Beatris laughed. Ina was trying to use her own language and ways of expression. She did the same with Kosta: "oh, this theatre thing is so boring, I have no idea why I keep coming .. probably because I like to tease the others. I would prefer to be doing something selve now ... or maybe I like it, I keep coming first to the meetings..." Kosta said nothing, he just smiled a little. This was the end of this exercise, which was closed with some final remarks how the body should be used when we want to express ourselves.

We continued with music – different types and styles of music; the children were encouraged to move a little – they had to study the feelings, which the sounds were evoking and to express these feelings with a dance, as if the bodies were telling a story. Denis was doing his best to fill his movements with content and his performance looked like an etude.: he looked tired, he was yawning, then stretching his hands, turning his head as if trying to hear something or find someone. The other children also relaxed even if their moves were mainly shifts in the rhythm of the music. Ilkay was trying to change the tempo. It was hard for her to coordinate herself and to command the moves her body was supposed to make, but she was nevertheless trying. Ina tried to provoke Kosta by saying that dancing could use movements from martial arts. Then suddenly Ina played classical music and to our surprise the children danced with even greater enthusiasm. Ina did a pick up and turn move with Ilkay and Denis and they were really impressed. Denis mentioned that he practices judo and he caught Ina and turned her with such confidence that even some dancers do not possess.



At the last song we shifted to creating a rhythm (with claps, stomps, etc.), with Bobby McFerrin in the background.

After the song was over we continued with creation of sound pictures, following Tsveta's proposal. We tried to do a market, but since this required more talking, the children were not too bold. When we changed to a rustic yard, suddenly appeared all kinds of animals and very finely imitated at that. We continued with a forest. Tsveta asked them to try and give each animal its moment of fame, so the children were trying to listen to each other and leave a certain animal to prevail at certain moments. The it was time for a each during high summer, then children at a recess. Kosta was seated in the red sofa, which we call the throne, drumming on the adjacent seat – either as a wood-cutter or as something else – but he was present and participating actively in the task. The last picture was that of a jungle – the animals there were as varied as with “rustic yard” and the children had great fun.

All children except Nikoleta left. She remained in the room, because she wanted to be a part of the second group as well.

Later on we met their children and she shared with happiness that she had no idea what we were doing to the children, but they are really satisfied and that Nikoleta has made progress – she is happy after each meeting we have. This brought to us smiles, but also some sadness. The fact that could contribute to her general feeling or more fulfilling communication was giving us hope.

During the break we met Viki's mother – a very nice and intelligent woman – also visually impaired. She shared that her daughter is really shy, but dreams about going to a mainstream school. She is in fifth grade now and they intend to move her after 7<sup>th</sup> grade. From all our talks with parents, teachers as well as the vice-headmaster himself, we discovered that most of them have graduated this school and some had obviously dedicated themselves to work in it and help the young one, who are going through similar difficulties.

### **Second group**

The second group included Snezha, Nikoleta, Nastya, Lyubka, Petra, Mitko and Peter (**7 children**).

We started with a warm up of the joints. Tsveta showed the exercise with simultaneous circular movements of one hand on the tummy and the slight taps on the top of the head with the other hand. The children managed quite well. After that Ina decided to teach them a different coordination, but without tactile demonstration. She wanted to do the explanation orally only. We were surprised how well the children managed. The coordination was quite complex and Ina and Tsveta was surprised how quickly Peter understood it and mastered it. He even started teaching it to Mitko, who was waiting for someone to assist him. Obviously Peter has a very well developed logical thinking and the path of his hands was smooth, as successive commands in his head.

We continued with an exercise, which aimed at creating a feeling of a theatre framework and presence on stage. All the directions that were given were only oral. We placed a chair in the middle of the imaginary stage and we set the conditions: each child had to enter the stage, to get to the chair, to turn to the audience and to say “hello, I am ... (name)” and to express him/herself with its body, having Ina as the “interpreter”. At the finale the child had to exit the stage. The children worked very well. Most of them found the chair easily and expressed themselves without words quite confidently and with pleasure. The fact that one way or another they were

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always participating in the tasks, made them feel important and useful. They were intrigued and concentrated.

The last movement task was already familiar to the children. They lined up in three lines, Ina being present in the second one, giving exact instructions what should have been done (one, two, three – normal, every-day steps: right, left, right, on “and” left leg joins right leg, on “four” the children make the pose and on five, six, seven, eight – slowly they melt the pose and reach neutral position, then repeat).

The children found it hard to focus because of the great number of steps they had to manage. Luckily Peter and Snezha strictly followed the instructions and soon the first two lines achieved concentration. The task was repeated a few times. Tsveta was working with the last 3 girls who found it really hard to make the connection between the instructions and the actions and they attempted to do together only the first 3 steps. They were doing the poses with great enthusiasm. The exercise was useful to them.

We spoke with the children about listening and hearing and how in life we often speak a lot, but pay insufficient attention to what is being said to us; we also spoke about the attitude towards the body – if we take care of it, it will treat us back with its wellbeing.

After that the children had to make suggestions about the story to be played. The ideas were various and finally we agreed upon the story in a Turkish TV series „Mirror world”, because it consistent of love, poverty, richness, intrigues, thriller and everything the children wanted to play at that moment. We allocated the roles. The main character was Snezha – she was playing Feria – a poor girl in love with a rich boy. Nastya was her mother – Zehra. Peter was Emir, the rich boy, Mitko was Halil, Feria’s fiancé, whom she was not in love with. Zori was Jansy – the evil rich woman who wants to take Emir from Feria. The rest were friends of the good and the bad. We proposed that we avoid following the series story exactly, but rather think of our scenes, keeping in mind the motivation of the respective characters.

The children were so artistic! They followed the story and actively participated in its adaptation; Snezha and Nastya (they were probably most moved) stayed in their roles throughout the entire play. Peter was also doing well, Mitko managed to stay concentrated, to create his lines and to stop his laughter. Lyubka and Petra were quite adequate, they joined the logic game. Nikoleta was also made part of the action and she was happy to participate. All children were demonstrating improvements and the readiness with which they were acting brought us great pleasure.

## **Eighth meeting – 08.05.2015**

### **First group**

Participants: Denis, Klara, Nikoleta, Viki, Zlati and Zara **(6 children)**.

We started with a physical warm-up by showing everyone how to implement simple movements with the various parts of their bodies, in order to prepare it for active physical movement.

We did an acting exercise for facial muscles, which is called “kiss-smile”. Everyone had to present with sound and lips the gesture of kissing and then smiling broadly.

We discovered that even the imitation of a kiss was hard for the children to mimic – even if they kiss their friends and parents they have not seen what a kiss looks like. When trying to imitate blowing a kiss for example, they did various faces in order to try to mimic what we were





explaining to them. We continued with a vocal warm-up – a prolonged pronunciation of the vowels “a”, “e”, “o”, etc., combined with certain physical activities. This exercise is focused on developing the capacity of the lungs and achieving conscious allocation of air, because breathing in takes place only in the beginning of all the vowels and they need to be vocalized within one breath only. After we had prepared the voices and bodies, we reminded to each other the Malaysian song that we had already learnt, together with the simple choreography. More and more often we were deliberately giving descriptive and exhaustive instructions to the children and the latter were becoming better at understanding and implementing some of the simple movement tasks on their own.

Zara was really active in this exercise. She offered to teach the children a game, called “Flowers, girls, boys and everything else”. The others approved of the activity and were really happy that they managed to teach us something, which was new for the facilitator team.

After that we played “broken telephone”. The first few words changed on the way round in such a way that we laughed very hard. Finally though we managed to transfer one and the same word from the beginning till the end of the chain. Even Nikoleta, who is usually challenged by dynamic group exercises, took active part and was visibly satisfied.

We continued with choosing a myth to play. The children demonstrated in-depth knowledge on this topic. If we were discussing any kind of literature Denis was at his best. It felt as if he can discuss and explain forever. We already knew that Viki is shy and spends most of the time of the workshop in something like stupor. Today she managed to express herself at the end of the workshop, when it was sharing time related to the roles the children had played. As if soon before leaving Viki would relax, because she was aware that the time to go home was fast approaching. So we chose an ancient Greek myth about the creation of the world, which was proposed by Zlati. The roles were allocated: Geya (the Earth) was Klara, Uranus (the Sky) was Ina, Kronos (the Time, Geya’s and Uranus’ son) was Denis. His wife Reya was Zlati, Zaeu (son of Kronos’ and Reya’s) was Zara. Viki and Nikoleta were the other two children of Reya and Kronos, whom he had swallowed. Tsveta and Zori were musicians. So, Geya was born out of chaos. She created Uranus. Then their son Kronos came and he killed his father in order to take over his power. Out of greed and jealousy Kronos kept eating his own children, but his wife found a way to trick him. She gave him a stone instead of their third child – Zeus – and had ordered to a group of musicians to play as noisily as possible in order for Zeus’ crying to be unheard. After many years Zeus returned to his father, gave him a magical elixir and the latter spit out the children he had eaten.

There was lightness and smoothness in the way the children played the story out. They did not need our help. Klara, despite her small figure, discovered a loud and strong voice when she needed to sound as the Earth. Denis was enjoying his cruelty as Kronos. At the end he shared that he considers himself a positive and good person, but that he is also strongly attracted to the roles of villains, vampires and aggressors. Everyone said how they felt. Viki shared that she felt really oppressed when she was eaten, but when she was reborn again she gained new powers and this was to her liking. The children were really concentrated and explored their roles diligently, doing their best to follow the logic of the story during the whole time. (the topic of swallowing, rebirth and the new possibilities it brings, was interesting; the chance to let your aggression exhibit itself, to be free to do whatever you want. It was quite logical that the group chose this particular myth.)

## **Second group**

Participants: Snezha, Mitko, Nastya, Lyubka, Nikoleta, Peter and Nikola (**7 children**)



As a whole the group was full of energy, which needed a channel to be exhausted. The children were wild, shouting, interrupting each other and for us it was not easy to withhold the situation. So Ina decided that in the beginning of the warming up we should do a quick run that was supposed to culminate to a sprint and a finale with a common shout. This brought about a short-term calming of the passions and ensured temporary concentration.

We then made a short warming up of the joints and reminded ourselves the Malaysian song. The children in this group remembered the text and the choreography better. The song, combining funny movements and sounds, aroused a new wave of laughter and screams. Concentration had been lost once again. It was tough for the children to line up for their next task. They argued and insulted each other, so we decided that something needs to be changed. We signaled to each other to preserve perfect silence. None of us (facilitators) spoke for about 5 minutes. This was the time necessary for all of them to understand their behavior was not productive and to regain their peace. We asked them to take neutral position, to stop moving, to focus on their breathing and to feel as a group. As the directions were being given we noticed that the children gradually calmed down, took control of their parasitic movements and started to suppress them.

We encouraged the children to decide on a pose and to make it and hold it one after the other. The exercise was repeated several times – from the front of the line to the back and the other way around. At the end the children started to feel each other perfectly and knew when it was their turn to make a pose.

This was probably the first time we saw them so serious and focused. Afterwards they were not interrupting each other when they had to choose a myth to play. They were not mocking each other and were doing their best to express themselves correctly with well structured sentences. We noticed that the knowledge of the second group concerning mythology was poorer than that of the first group. Nikola chose Troy and since there were no other proposals, the group decided to play this myth. Nikola had seen the movie and described the story in detail. We had to create a shorter version; otherwise the children would have played for a minimum of 3 hours. The roles were allocated and we supported the children with lines and comments about the story. Without a proper idea of how the battles should have looked like, the boys really enjoyed the action, the energetic jumps and strong war shouts. Nikola kept correcting us, because he did not want to miss a single scene from the story. Finally we managed to recreate a suitable version of the myth. Afterwards we did a sharing and were really surprised when some of the children told us they really felt like on stage.

Nikola was asking many questions to Tsveta and wanted to know if we will ever play the Troy myth again. Peter shared that he really liked the feeling of being someone great. We were surprised that when Nikoleta's turn for sharing came and she, again replied with one word, the other children attacked her that when with friends she is loud and talkative and during theatre workshops she is so quiet. It seemed as if the others felt insulted by her lack shared opinion and participation and wanted to encourage her not to be shy.

Most children wanted to know if they have performed well and we decided to offer them a criterion, according to which they can judge on their own if they have worked well or not so: if they are active participants in the present, if they put their souls and hearts in what they are doing, if they give their best and a focused in this particular moment – this means that they have performed well. We told them that we can easily guess when they are concentrated and staying in a role and when they are not following the action. We thanked them and told them that being 100% in the present moment is a precious skills and they better remember it, because it will be useful for our future work.

Tsveta encouraged the children to enjoy the game and the exercises, because they are special for a certain moment, they may never be repeated and have the aim of teaching the artist in them.



Zori said that the more stories the children go through the richer persons they will become and the better they will know themselves and the world. Our meeting ended with this.

## **Ninth meeting – 15.05.2015**

### **First group**

Participants: Kosta, Zlati, Viki and Viki's little sister **(4 children, out of which 3 from the group)**, who had asked their mother to bring her along, because she is interested in theatre.

We sat in a circle and initiated a nice conversation; we discussed the bad habits each of us has. After some sharing we discovered that the children are aware of their mannerisms and parasitic movements. Zlati shared that she is trying to overcome her characteristic "leaning forward". This information was very useful to us, because we considered it a green-light for freer talks about these issues and to work in the direction of overcoming the bad body habits. Kosta shared something interesting – he said that some of the children press their eyes hard in order to generate some lightning inside. Probably this is their way to get in touch with the visual world, an illusion that they recognize light and they can see (!)...

Kosta proposed his favorite game "story by a word". The children were active. Viki's sister was thinking logically and unlike Viki, was not shy. We created a very interesting fantastic story, which told about magical rooms, in each of which magical things were taking place. The story kept going and going because each time the main character awoke, the magic continued. Viki was much more communicative this time, probably stimulated by her little sister's competition who told her at a certain time "that you cannot achieve things through shyness". We continued with "Suddenly", in which two members of the group lead the story – one of them creates the story line, while the other one – creates the twists.

Since none of the others took the initiative, Kosta decided to take the role of the twist creator, while Viki's sister the story maker. Kosta said that he likes the way she thinks. Together with the other children Tsveta and Ina created the atmosphere through sounds and words, passed on to the story maker. Considering how often little evil creatures and devils appeared in our stories, we decided our next game to be the "Devils' gathering". First of all each of the participants had to search for a typical walk and a characteristic voice for his/her devil. The girls were much better in this task. Kosta was shy to try to speak in a different voice. We joined forces and decided to destroy the humans, to devour their corpses and then – out of boredom – we returned to the land below. The children really enjoyed themselves. They obviously needed to express their destructive impulses today. Our time passed very quickly and they soon had to leave in order to catch the school bus.

### **Second group**

Participants: Nikola, Peter, Nastya, Lyubka, Monika and Snezha **(6 children)**.

We had a talk. We discussed birthdays, because it so happened that it was Peter's birthday – twelve years. For him this was really not exciting. We spoke a bit about their attitude towards their personal celebrations.

We started with a psycho-dramatic presentation: each had to stand behind his/her chair and had to tell the group about him/herself, observing the rule that the only true thing in the story had to be his/her name. Nastya needed some time to focus and to stop laughing. The others after her



were quite focused, except probably Snezha, for whom it seemed a bit hard and she kept saying things which were true about her.

We created a stage space, placed two chairs in it and asked the children to play an improvised scene, using the fake personalities they created previously. The first ones to go were Peter and Nastya – the shallow woman and the rich boy. Nastya really tried to submerge in her role and even to control her body posture, which is very hard for her. Peter tried to imitate a spoiled rich boy, but later, when they went for coffee, he was really gallant and said: „I cannot allow such a beautiful lady to pay her bill.” Both of them did really well and tried to stay in their role until the end.

We noticed that the children have no sense concerning the position of the audience and we pointed out that they should try not to stand with their backs towards the spectators. The next scene was between Nikola and Monika, at a sports symposium. Lyubka and Snezhka were at a restaurant.

For the end we broadened the stage space and placed all children in a common scene. They were at a trade center. We explained to them some of the theatrical laws, which require concentration, partnership and attention to what is happening on stage in order for all participants to have their space for expression... Suddenly there was an earthquake (in the scene). Together with the children we searched for the body reactions in such a situation. There was turmoil, Nastya's character passed out, Snezhka joined in as a doctor in order to help and since the children seemed unable to find a closure to the scene, Ina decided to join in and informed them that they can stay calm and that this whole thing is an experiment and the situation had been contained. The children were “outraged” and the play continued with Tsveta, who entered and informed them that they are on a space ship and they have all been chosen to go to her home planet. This finally closed the scene.

## **Tenth meeting (last for the school year) - 05.06.2015**

### **One group**

Participants: Denis, Klara, Viki, Zlati, Kosyo, Nikoleta, Snezha, Petra, Ilkay, Hakan, Nastya and Mitko **(12 children)**

Tsveta was out of town, so Ina was going to lead the workshop and Zori was going to assist her. We asked the teacher to call all children who had still not left for the summer vacation, to join us in one group. Monika had to go to a concert and she only came to thank everyone for the joint work and to share that she is looking very much forward to renewing our meetings with the beginning of the next school year and fresh energy. She was really kind.

In order to warm up we stood in a circle and everyone had to say his/her name with the support of a sound and a gesture, corresponding to the feeling at the moment. Then the group had to repeat the name and the gesture/sound. The children moved very boldly and were looking for ways to express themselves. Ina was helping by describing the gesture they need to repeat. The atmosphere was really intense and kind of celebratory. Then we did a “broken telephone” game but by drawing on each other's backs. The first one had to draw something with his/her finger – a simple image – on the back of the next in line and then this picture had to pass on to the last one. We failed to get a clear idea about the pictures, but the children enjoyed the activity very much.



Afterwards everyone lined and one by one they had to pass in front of the others and to touch palms in order to discover whose hands were the biggest and whose – the smallest. The children touched their classmates' palms very gently and with great concentration. To our surprise they remained concentrated during the entire exercise, even if it required quiet and patience. This physical contact during our last meeting for the school year was quite important for us. We thought that an energy connection of this kind is of great importance for the finale of our creative work, before our reunion during the autumn.

Each expressed his/her guess about the size of the hands of the others and the three who got most votes had to do a movements and sounds scene – according to their discretion – to make the group laugh or sadden. Denis, Petra and Klara were chosen and while Zori was helping them, Ina was working with the others. She was creating feelings and conditions, to which they had to react with a mimic and a gesture; the children were excited, they were laughing and looking for the most appropriate expression. Ilkay was using some of the gestures, which Ina had taught her during the dance process; Mitko left earlier, because someone came to take him to the Home for parentless children.

The movements and sounds scene cause even more laughter, even if it was quite unclear; Denis, Petra and Klara were trying to imitate the three fools, communicating without words; Denis was the most attractive one.

We lined up in a circle again. Each one was proposing the first word to come to mind and the group had to respond with its spontaneous sound association. There were all kinds of desserts, fruits, vegetables and cars, things relatively easy to turn into sounds.

At the end the children separated in couples. Each child had to think of a personage, to mention a few of his/her characteristics and then each pair had to decide in what kind of situation they were – improvising before the others. Each pair had a few minutes for preparation. The condition was for them not to organize themselves in advance about how their scene would evolve.

We shaped up the stage space and the performance started. The children were wonderful. After each scene Ina was giving them feedback and was advising them to pay attention to the logic of the story in order to create a convincing improvisation, to accept the passes from their partners and to keep their sense concerning the audience – never turning their backs to it. When all pairs had finished their stories the children still wanted to play and insisted upon Ina joining them. The other participants were Denis, Klara, Snezha, Viki, Ilkay and Hakan (he had only joined our first meeting, but today was artistic and participated quite actively in the whole exercise, the body expressiveness did not present a great challenge to him because of his partial vision).

The action was taking place on a train. Ina's character got dizzy and was delirious. The other passengers took her for crazy when she started telling them that the little girl on the train with them is a fairy (Klara), they refused to believe her, but in the end the fairy enchanted them all and all together they flew and returned to early childhood. The children were really into their roles. They had been adults converted back to children and started shouting: "O-o-o, I will ride my rollers again, I will not work, I will play all day and eat cherries! Long live the childhood!"

Time had passed without us sensing it. The children had to run to catch the bus. Before leaving each shared how theatre had moved him/her. The children hugged us and our meeting ended.

All children we worked with demonstrated behavior progress. They were able to create relatively easy spontaneous improvised scenes, they moved a lot more, they were searching for new and varied ways of expression in their bodies, felt comfortable and enjoyed the play. This was a great basis for the work to follow.





## Eleventh meeting – 16.10.2015

Beginning of the school year and first meeting with the children. To our surprise the children are more than organized. Our meetings will keep happening as previously – in two groups – the first one from 13:30 till 15:30, when they need to take the bus to go to their homes (those who live in Sofia) – from 16:00 till 18:00 – staying in the boarding house at the school or whose parents had the chance to pick them up later. **This time we had 12 children in the first meeting and 6 in the second!** There was a lot of catching up to be done – how each of them had spent the summer. All children told about their experiences – fun, happy, worrisome, critical...

Both groups warmed up and did some movement exercises. We studied a game for concentration and coordination (slapping the hips – 7 times in a row, then 7 slaps but hips and palms take turns, and then – 7 times hips, palms, hips, palms, snapping fingers, palms, hips). Then we spoke about the forthcoming short presentation that we want to shape up together for Palermo next year.

The group is joined by **Julieta** – 16 years old, from Stara Zagora, first year student at the school. She says that she counts most on her grandparents, who have cared the most for her – and **Stefan** – 10 years old, first grade, from Troyan, who had not studied before, he stayed home. Both of them are really eager to participate.

Ivan, who is also a first year student at the school, coming from 16<sup>th</sup> secondary school, also joins the group. Despite the fact that he is very well-intentioned he has certain slight behavioral deviations and is obstructing the discipline.

## Twelfth meeting – 23.10.2015

### First group

Participants: Beatris, Hakan, Nikola, Kosyo, Peter, Ilkay, Klara, Viki and Zlati (**9 children**)

Ivan did not appear again on this day and from Hakan we understood that Kosta is not going to continue, because all activities require participation and he does not like to do that even when the tasks are really easy.

Ivelina Vateva joined us today and recommended one new girl – Bena, who is 24 years old, 12<sup>th</sup> grade. She loves music, sings in the vocal groups, jazz, pop, folklore music. She took part in the rehearsals for the “Shadow of my soul”.

Each participant has to say with one word how he/she feels:

Beti – great!

Hakan – perfect!

Nikola – entertained!

Kosyo – ideal! ☺

Peter – super mood!

Ilkay - wonderful!

Klara - good.

Viki – just wonderful!

Zlati – very good!



The facilitators and the other participants also share how they feel – Tsveta is worried (personal reasons), Ina – thoughtful, Zori – happy, Sasho – curious, Ivelina Vateva – inspired from what she sees.

Exercises follow. We are seated, arms bent and positioned in such a way that the left palm is placed on the right knee of our neighbor on the left and the right palm is placed on the left knee of our neighbor on the right. The first in line makes two slaps and then all hands follow in a single slap order one after the other.

We do the exercise with the sevens (7 times hips, 7 times hips and palms, etc.).

We do a rhythm exercise – each needs to offer his/her own rhythm to the group and the others have to reproduce it as perfectly as possible.

There is a body warm up, which imitates a dance.

Then we warm the voices with bri, bre, bru, bra, bro, bryu, then “I speak low”, “I speak normal”, “I speak high”. „Shnicelche (schnitzel), shtepselche (plug)”.

After that all sit in a circle and Tsveta asks them all how they see each other in roles. Each participant describes him/herself in a way – a good person, a princess, an evil queen, a witch, a mythical creature, enchanted by an evil wizard, a policeman, etc. Then follows the playing of a scene, in which each participant needs to enter the role he/she has described him/herself in.

### **Second group**

Participants: Peter, Nikola, Nikoleta, Beatris, Julieta, Snezhka, Beni, Lyubka, Monika, Nastya and Stefan (**11 children**).

Kosyo (Konstantin Kuchev) appears. Together with Sasho the two will create music for the text of the poem “The true vision” by Yordan Georgiev (a Bulgarian visually impaired journalist):

If goodness you believe in with sincerity  
and fight alone each vice you have,  
even if you’re blind, it’s no disaster, cause  
that’s how God is seen, they say.

If all your dreams you bind into a flock  
and fly with them above the ground,  
even if you’re blind, it’s no disaster, with  
a nightingale song surround.

If you give a friend your oath  
and then you duly keep it,  
you’ll find your soul aglow  
and each mistake – forgivable.

Even if you’re blind, be needed  
by brother, life and world,  
because the true vision is within you,  
all-seeing through the prism of love.



We discussed the forthcoming performance, which would include music, theatre, dance and rhythm. Monika would do the solo singing, but all the others will also sing.

We read the poem together.

Then the children do theatre exercises – they are positioned as on a chess board – they do a dance step with Ina, then a partial knee-bending, turn and look to the back as if someone called upon us. All join a tight group afterwards and need to do a synchronous wave and, supported by music accompaniment, they say „We are one. We come from the same place and we will all go back there.“

We exercise the following: the children are divided into 2 lines, facing each other ... on signal they make one of two steps towards each other and touch their palms. After all couples have done this, a tunnel is formed under their arms. Monika goes through it and sings something to the audience.

The main pretenders for Palermo appear to be:

Beatris

Monika

Zlati

Viki

Lyubka

Klara

Ilkay

Hakan (? – not disciplined, enters into fights, not bad intended, but breaking everyone else's rhythm)

Kosyo (? – need to check if he can travel)

Snezhka

Nastya

Peter

Stefan (? – very tough to be disciplined)

## Thirteenth meeting – 06.11.2015

### First group

Participants: Ivan, Nikola, Nikoleta, Ilkay, Snezha, Klara **(6 children)**

The meeting starts with a warm-up, the exercise for coordinated steps, then the exercise with the sevens (hips, palms ..).

After that we continued with reading the script of “The road”, which Tsveta has created for the children in Sofia, involved in the VISION project. It will be played on several occasions. There is an allocation of roles, which are based on pure characters – a lazy person, a wily person, a hard-working person, an envious person, an aggressive person, a good-natured person, a pessimist, an optimist, a confident person, a shy person, etc.

Ivan decides to be lazy, Nikola – wily, Nikoleta – hard-working, Ilkay – aggressive, Snezhka – good-natured, and Klara – envious.

After discussing the details of the different characters, we reached phrases, which describe each one of them well enough.



Lazy Ivan's phrase is "Ohhhhhh (yawning), I am so tired. You do it!". Wily Nikola's phrase is "Easy money goes easy."

Good-natured Snezhana's phrase is "I would help everyone!"

Envious Klara's phrase is "I want everything that you have! If you refuse to give it to me, I will kill you!"

The aggressive Ilkay says "Go away or I will kick you out, you fool!"

Hard-working Nikoleta says "Less talking and more work!"

Each phrase is supported by a gesture, a movement, which is bright enough and supports the respective character. After a few attempts all children manage well. Nikoleta finds it a bit hard, but she is so happy because of the tasks and her participation. The children are brilliant and they really manage to get into the skins of the assigned roles. They all understand that the choice of character does not define us as people. We all carry the various features of these characters within ourselves – demonstrating some of them to a lesser degree than others. However, an actor should be able to go through all kinds of characters without identifying him/herself with them off the stage.

## **Second group**

Participants: Nikoleta, Monika, Beatris, Julieta and Viki **(5 children)**

Sasho is joined by Kosyo, whose guitar and violin bring a lot of beauty to our day. The children are so delighted with them. They study them and experiment with them.

We start with the exercise with the sevens.

Then we read the play. All are very impressed. Then comes the time for roles allocation. During the first allocation of roles we see Beti as a confident person, Monika as a pessimist, Julieta – romantic, Viki – shy, Nikoleta keeps being hard-working!

The lines we reached after some discussion concerning the chosen characters, are: „I don't know what to do. I am afraid they may not like me!“ (the shy one), „I can, I know, I will succeed!“ (the confident one), „It is not working out – it will not work out!“ (the pessimist), „I love to love!“ (the romantic one). We continue with searching for suitable gestures for each character. After the initial play-out, Tsveta decided that it would be good for the children to try out other roles as well ... Viki becomes confident (after we discovered that for the role of the shy one she needs no acting at all ☺), Monika becomes a shy one and Beti – a pessimist.

The children do just great. Julieta is born for the role of the romantic – she does not exit the role. Her character makes a few steps to the front, looks around for the person she loves, then spreads her arms as if to hold and keep him. When the romantic person's arms are folded around her body she says her line "I love to love!" – she is great.

When the children need to be born into their characters – from kneeling down they need to stand up and to take the respective pose and gesture and say their text, we see that Monika is the first one to sense what has to be done. With some advice from Tsveta she shyly looked around and stood up insecurely, vocalizing her line after that. With some precious advice from Tsveta Beti also achieved a great success – her pessimistic character makes a few feeble attempts to stand up, but is discouraged and knees back down, holding her head and saying her pessimistic line – nothing is going to work out and there is no sense in straining oneself. Viki does just great in the role of the confident person. The children did fantastic and then finally they had to enter into improvised dialogues of extremes, in which compromise is unreachable. The confident one and the romantic one argued for a long time about the role, which love plays in life and what meaning, if any, it has in general. The shy one and the pessimist could not help each other in any way, there was nothing positive coming out of their conversation – the shy was too scared to impose her help on the other one, who was unable to see how something could work out at all in

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“this never stopping rain, which is here just to confirm once again that nothing can turn out in a good way out of this”.

Wonderful meeting and exercises with the children. We all left in a fantastic mood and very happy.

During the first group, Zori and Ivelina Vateva spoke with Klara’s mother. Klara shared that she is really worried that her parents are reluctant to let her go to Palermo. Let us hope that after all the details provided to the parents over the phone – they would agree and let Klara cjoin the others on the trip to Italy next year.

## Fourteenth meeting – 20.11.2015

### First group

Participants: Hakan, Peter, Ivan, Nikoleta, Klara, Ilkay, snezhka, Nikola, Viki, Zlati **(10 children)**

The meeting started with a warming up, which was followed by a sprint on the spot. Then there was deep breathing and slow circles with the head, he shoulders and the hands, plie and kneeling down after plie.

After this Tsveta offered the children to do the exercise with throwing one’s voice from the stomach with a powerful “ha”. All participants took their places in a circle and took turns to test their “ha” and to prepare for group work. Lined up in a circle the children had to stand at attention, because one of them was assigned the task to do his/her “ha”, combined with a small step forward, and the others had to do their best to implement a “ha” and a step together with the leader as synchronously as possible. All tried it. The exercise had a very liberating influence on the children, but also urged them to keep that calm, focus and attention, which were necessary in order for synchronous movements to be achieved.

The exercise was followed by a shooting game, which the facilitators learned during the short term team training in Italy and which make a great impression on them. This game was demonstrated by Mared, a visually impaired member of the UCAN Productions team and consisted in the following: the participants are lined up in a circle, in the center of which stands one member of the group – the leader. The leader is turning around in all directions, but at a certain point stops and chooses someone from the circle and shouts his/her name. The one whose name has been shouted needs to get down to the ground while his/her neighbors on the left and right must shoot each other with imaginary guns. The slower one leaves the game.

After we reached the point of having one winner – Zlati – the children tried Sasoh’s drum and then did the exercise with the sevens, which all of them have already mastered perfectly.

Then there was baby talking. All children took turns in couples.

It was time for the children to enter different characters. Hakan and Peter had not entered roles. We decided what it means to be stingy and to be generous. Some of the sentences the children said for stingy were: “I give my money to nobody. They are mine!”, “I watch over my purse!”, “I watch over my gold!”, “I count my money in order to know if someone steals from me!”, “I let none in my house!”, “I will take it all and give nothing to you!”, „I will not buy anything in order not to spend any money.”

The generous person was described by the children as someone who thinks about the others and helps them. Some of the characteristic sentences were “There you go, brother!”, “I will help





to all poor people!". Peter did the stingy monologue and Hakan – the monologue of the generous person.

### **Second group**

Participants: Hakan, Nikoleta, Julieta, Nastya, Stefan, Beti, Kosyo and Monika **(8 children)**

They start with the exercise for the "ha" coming out from the stomach, together with a synchronous step forward. They do the same exercises as the first group.

## **Fifteenth meeting – 04.12.2015**

### **First group**

Participants: Hakan, Ivan, Nikoleta, Klara, Ilkay **(5 children)**

After the school trip from the previous weekend a big part of the children are still suffering from influenza. Because of that the first group is much smaller this time.

We start with warming up the bodies, from the fingers, through the whole bodies to the ankles and the feet.

Then we do the shooting game, in which one player is in the center of a circle of children, he or she is turning around and suddenly picking someone. The picked participant needs to get down to the ground immediately and those on his/her left and right have to shoot each other. The slower shooter drops out of the game. This game brings a lot of fun to the children every time they play it. Today is not an exception. ☺

The children continue with the synchronous "ha" and step forward.

Then the children find one kids' song to be really amusing: „Tell me, Yanichke, do you remember when we were babies ...“

The text is as follows:

Tell me, Yanichke, do you remember when we were babies,  
Crying here, crying there,  
Crying here, crying there.  
(a gesture with the hands as if rubbing the eyes, imitating crying)

Tell me, Yanichke, do you remember when we were little girls:  
Writing here, doll there,  
Writing here, doll there.  
(one hand is writing, while the other one is swaying the doll as a baby)

Tell me, Yanichke, do you remember when we were little boys:  
Kick here, kick there,  
Kick here, kick there.  
(the feet kick to the left and to the right)

Tell me, Yanichke, do you remember when we were big girls:  
Make up here, make up there,  
Make up here, make up there.



(the hands imitate applying make-up on the left and right cheek)

Tell me, Yanichke, do you remember when we were big boys:

Girl-friend here, girl-friend there,

Girl-friend here, girl-friend there.

(the arms are stretching to the left and to the right in desire to grab the mentioned girl-friends)

Tell me, Yanichke, do you remember when we were mommies:

Washing here, baby there,

Washing here, baby there.

(the hands are imitating a washing movement – clothes in a hot water – and immediately after that – swaying a baby)

Tell me, Yanichke, do you remember when we were daddies:

Smoking here, drinking there,

Smoking here, drinking there.

(it is clear what the hands are imitating – one is holding a cigarette, the other one is lifting a bottle)

Tell me, Yanichke, do you remember when we were grannies:

Knitting here, kitten there,

Knitting here, kitten there.

(the hands are imitating knitting and then patting a cat)

Tell me, Yanichke, do you remember when we were grandpas:

Ouch from here, ouch from there,

Ouch from here, ouch from there.

(the hands hold the left hip and then the right hip in pain)

Tell me, Yanichke, do you remember when we were skeletons:

Screeching here, screeching there,

Screeching here, screeching there.

(the arms are lifted at the shoulders so that the part from the elbows to the shoulders is parallel with the ground and the part from the elbows to the wrists is hanging loosely and screeching – first the left one, then the right one)

Tell me, Yanichke, do you remember when we were ghosts:

Scaring here, scaring there,

Scaring here, scaring there.

(the arms are stretched in front of the body, slightly upwards, imitating the scary movements of ghost who are terrifying every living creature around them)

All children enjoy themselves so much! ☺

## **Second group**

Participants: Nikoleta, Stefan, Lyubka, Petra, Monika, Nastya, Julieta **(7 children)**

Tsveta and Zori are joined by Konstantin Kuchev (Kosyo) and his guitar.

We started with breathing lessons.



Kosyo talks to the children about the so called resonators – “The sound reverberates in our head, it resonates there and gets out. Resonators are the forehead, the nose, the places on the two sides of the nose, the place under the nose (above the lips), the chin, the throat itself and the chest – in the front and in the back.”

We try various sounds, which help us feel specific resonators more clearly – for example “nnnnnnnnnnnnnnnn”, “vvvvvvvvvvvv”, “mmmmmmmmmm” and so on.

Then we all sing together.

This group also plays “ha” and then the shooting game.

It is really interesting for us how some of the participants can do a very distinct “ha” so that the others can feel them and move as one, while others are shy and actually confuse the others. Tsveta gave a wonderful advice to one of these shyer participants: “Imagine you are someone whom you respect, whom you consider confident and whom you would prefer to be like.” The participant in question immediately thought about someone like that and her next attempt was incomparably better than the previous one – the group felt the “ha” and did a confident synchronous step forward, following the given signal.

When it was the turn of another, similarly shy participant, she said right away “I know what I have to do now! I know whom I would like to resemble!” and again it worked! The group felt itself and reacted perfectly. All children were really happy.

There was a short discussion about what it means to be confident, how this would influence or determine our behavior, also about the fact that if we have doubts, we are unable to think clearly about the given tasks, wondering what the others would think about our performance. We spoke about attention and how at a certain moment of time our attention can only be focused in one direction. How important it is to control the attention, to be able to focus and hold it. One of the participants, Stefan, who finds it a bit hard to control his emotions and is almost constantly ready to jump, to express something, to interrupt the speaker, sunk into thought for a while and then stated „I will listen to you! You are doing really important things and I am saying that I will listen to you and learn from you!”

This was a wonderful statement. Really moving for all of us, imposing a few moments of perfect stillness in the room!

## **Sixteenth meeting – 11.12.2015 (last one for the year 2015)**

### **First group**

Participants: Hakan, Nikola, Peter, Klara, Nikoleta, Zlati (**7 children**)

Facilitators – Tsveta, Ina and Sasho.

The meeting starts with a warming up of the joints. Then the children play a freeing game with touching of various body parts (knees, elbows, shoulders).

This game is followed by another one, during which the children are supposed to walk as if they are holding a jug on top of their head and eggs in their hands. They need to be careful not to spill the jug or to break the eggs.

Then there is grouping in couples – one of the two is a musical instrument and the other – plays on its partner.

The game that follows is “in the giant’s house” – testing of a game used by the Welsh team during the meeting in Palermo in November.



After the games comes time for some sharing – what has 2015 been for us.

Ivan – he is happy, because he went to the seaside. During 2016 he wants to go to the movies.

Nikola – he is mostly happy because of the meetings with us, he enjoyed greatly also horse-riding and his conversations with Peter (they are obviously close friends).

Hakan – enjoyed the skiing holiday at Yundola, as well as the sea holiday he went to. In 2016 he wants more friends and the year to go better than 2015.

Peter – happy about the chess competition, the success he achieved in goalball – 2<sup>nd</sup> place. He is also happy about finishing 4<sup>th</sup> grade with good results. For 2016 he wishes 1<sup>st</sup> place for goalball as well as at least a 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> place during the chess tournament.

Nikoleta – she is laconic, 2015 is a good year. For 2016 she wishes many friends.

Klara – 2015 was a good year for her, because she went to the sea. For 2016 she wishes everyone to be healthy and well!

Zlati – 2015 was a good year for her, because she successfully finished 5<sup>th</sup> grade, she went on a trip to Dobursko and the horse farm there. For 2016 she wishes the homeopathic treatment of her eyes to be successful.

Ina – she is happy about her masters graduation and the seaside holiday. She wishes for 2016 to be a healthy year with a lot of traveling and dancing.

Sasho – a nice 2015, the summer spent in a hammock with his loved one and a rainbow on the anniversary. For 2016 he wishes many concerts, good health and happiness, a calmer world without wars.

Tsveta – successes, recognition and admiration, insecurity, lack of confidence; a movie “Voevoda”. For 2016 she wishes health and harmony.

Since there is time for one more game, Tsveta decided to recreate a story. In this story, the role of the criminals (the Wolf brothers) is taken by Nikola and Ivan. Klara and Zlati play a mother and her daughter. Hakan and Peter are policemen!

The mother sends her daughter for bread and milk. On the way though the criminals intersect the daughter and kidnap her. The mother calls the police. The policemen start looking for clues and eventually find the criminals. There is a shooting, the policemen manage to arrest the criminals and to free the girl, who is returned to her worried mother. One of the two policemen even did the shopping for the family!

## **Second group**

Participants: Nikoleta, Stefan, Kosyo, Julieta, Nastya, Monika, Lyubka, Petra and Diana, who has so far only been accompanying her friend Julieta, but now joined in actively **(9 children)**.

The meeting starts with the exercise, in which the children each say their names in the current mood and then the group repeats each name, trying to also imitate the mood as accurately as possible.

Then we continue with a warming up of the joints. Then the “ha” game with the synchronous step forward.

Then there is connecting of body parts in couples – elbows, knees, cheeks.

Then there is sharing time.

Julieta – for her 2015 was not so happy, but rather sad. She wishes for 2016 to be better with more friends.

Nastya shared that 2015 was a fun year with some bad moments of course. She wishes everything to be alright for 2016. She wants a new phone.



Monika – 2015 was a good year for her. Only one thing made her really sad. The year was successful also from the professional perspective. One of her dreams came true – she got an apartment in Sofia. She wishes for health and success, as well as a digital piano with 88 keys.

Petra – 2015 was a very nice year. For 2016 she wants two telephones and to be healthy.

Lyubka – 2015 was a nice year, but there were also bad things. For 2016 she wishes to make up with her neighbors – they are throwing stones, swearing at them, there is police involved.

Kosyo – 2015 was bad initially, but then it turned good again. For 2016 he wishes to be healthy and to have good marks.

Diana – a wonderful year with some bad moments. For 2016 she wishes that it is successful and wonderful.

Nikoleta – 2015 was a nice year and in 2016 she wants to continue meeting us. She wishes for a new friend.

Stefan – 2015 was a fun year with many mischievous activities with his cousins. Some things are really hard for him though. He wants to be better and to have good relations with everyone. He does not want any problems. For 2016 he wishes to pass 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and to have good marks.

### **Seventeenth meeting – 08.01.2016 (first meeting for the year 2016)**

**There is one group only – all the children who had returned after the Christmas holidays gathered in one prolonged exercise.**

Participants: Klara, Ilkay, Viki, Nikoleta, Ivan, Beatris, Petra, Lyubka, Monika, Julieta, Diana and Kosyo (**12 children**). Diana joins in again, accompanying Julieta. We consider that she likes our activities a lot and is now coming because she wants to participate herself.

The meeting started with warming up of the bodies. Then each child had to say his/her name and to list three qualities.

It appeared that it was not so easy to think of our positive features, characteristics or skills. Tsveta asked herself as well as the others if it would have been so difficult for us to list our flaws. We all doubted that. Still, with joined efforts, we managed to list and discuss: loveable, diligent, good, funny, artistic, crafty, persevering, optimistic, realistic, idealistic, communicative, sensitive, dreamers, focused, disciplined, loyal/faithful, honest and confident. We spoke about the fact that each of us has a space in the universe and if we are missing – it would suffer.

Then there is some confidence practicing, which is very moving for all present. The exercise consists of the following: the participant goes to an improvised stage and stands with his/her back to the audience; then he/she turns to face the audience, feels the moment when the attention is focused on him/her and then says „I am ..... (name) and am here!“ This way we test our confidence, we exit the comfort zone.

Lyubka goes first and does just great. Then it is Petra, who is also wonderful. Then Beti, Viki, Ilkay and Klara. Monika is the last one.

Then there is a similar exercise, but with a chair. The participant stands with his/her back to the chair and the audience. He/she should turn, grasp the back of the chair with one hand, pass in front of the chair with a minimum number of steps and sit down on it as gracefully – princess-like - as possible. All the girls try it. At the end also “prince” Konstantin does it. In addition to sitting down he also had to present himself like in the previous exercise, because he missed it. The same goes for Julieta and Diana.





Then Sasho told the children about Giovanna Virga from the Institute for the visually impaired in Palermo. Ms Virga is completely blind. Sasho explained to the children how she entered the hall of the institute, how she sat on the chair and how she was speaking, always moving her head from right to left and backwards, scanning the audience with her gaze, so that all would meet her eyes and stay engaged in what she was speaking about. We discussed with the children the importance of moving the head, turning towards the speaker, even if this may not appear necessary to the children, it creates a sense of comfort and calms the sighted.

For our next meeting the children must select the role of a genius professor – subject of his/her professorship – and to prepare for an improvised speech.

### **Eighteenth meeting – 15.01.2016**

First group: Participants Nikola, Nikoleta, Viki, Stefan, Klara, Ivan, Peter (**7 children**)

Second group: Participants Monika, Beatris, Petra, Lyubka, Nikoleta, Julieta, Diana, Kosyo (**8 children**)

The facilitators on this day are Sasho, Ina and Kosyo. Their task is to warm up the children and then make them enter the roles of professors, who have made some discoveries or have something extremely important to share with the audience. The aim is for each professor to be able to move freely towards his/her chair, look around the audience that has gathered to hear his/her lecture, then proceed with sitting down on the chair with minimum movements and deliver his/her speech.

Tsveta and Zori are in Hereford, England for the fourth partnership meeting under the project.

### **Nineteenth meeting – 22.01.2016**

First group: Participants Nikola, Nikoleta, Viki, Klara, Peter (**5 children**)

Second group: Participants Monika, Beatris, Petra, Lyubka, Nikoleta, Julieta, Diana, Kosyo (**8 children**)

Both groups start with a warm up. Afterwards the children exercise their voices and their concentration with a “ha” action – lined up in a circle all wait for the appointed leader and try to feel his/her “ha” and the step forward, so that the group looks as synchronous as possible. Then both groups continued with a free walk around the stage. The idea was for the children to move freely, calmly and carefully, trying not to bump into each other. Some of them are doing just great. Then they had to walk as a small child, as a beautiful woman, as a soldier, as a professor at the end – someone who has a lot to share with the others. After the walking came the turn of the exercise concerning getting up from, moving around and sitting back on a chair with minimum movements.

Then the children had to enter the role of a certain professor, who has made a discovery or has invented something. This time however, in order for all children to participate, regardless of the limitation of available time, each professor was facing journalists asking him/her questions, aiming at getting more information or provoking the professor.

Viki was a professor who had discovered a fish colored as a rainbow, 6 cm long, lives in salty water, not a bottom fish, feeding on sea-weed.



Nikola had discovered a new kind of tigers – motley Japanese tigers. They eat elephants and other big animals. They live in the water, because their fur is so thick that 15 degrees feel like 45. They live in coastal forests in order to be able to swim during the day and hunt during the night.

Peter had discovered an extraterrestrial. Small, green, with antennae instead of ears. Humanoid. Still being studied by Peter's team. It is still not clear if it is male or female and if others of its kind are also here on earth.

Klara had discovered a two-legged dog, similar to a golden retriever. The two legs are one to the front-left and one to the back-right. The front leg is the stronger one. The dog lives on the ground.

Petra is an optometry professor. She teaches on her own thousands of students (doctors, interns, etc.) how to treat all kinds of visual impairments.

Lyubka has invented a kitchen for the blind. The samples of the kitchen equipment can be seen and tested at Lyubka's restaurant, where interested buyers can order their own set as well as taste some lovely food cooked on sight with the v.i. utensils.

Monika created a program for training of visually impaired hair-dressers.

Beatris – sports expert, she presented goalball with all its rules, as well as other sports for visually impaired people.

## Twentieth meeting – 12.02.2016

**First group:** Nikoleta, Hakan, Zlati, Viki, Ilkay, Klara, Peter (7 children)

Facilitators – full group: Tsveta, Ina, Kosyo, Aleksander and Zori

The meeting this time started with a question from Tsveta „Why do you come to the theatre workshops?“ There were various answers, from Hakan's „because I want to become an actor!“, through „I am enjoying myself“ (Peter and Nikoleta), „it is nice and I love theatre“ (Ilkay), „I am interested in it“ (Klara), „I feel good and it is nice“ (Zlati), to „in order to learn something more than I already can do!“ (Viki). It seemed as if this short discussion added some seriousness to the meeting and after its end, the children were really focused.

We continued with moving the joints, warming up, doing jumps, plie and so on.

After that Aleksander took the floor and asked the children to put their backs on the walls that we had freed from furniture. He asked the children to study the wall, to get to know it and to get to know the outreach of their bodies and to prepare themselves for creating figures, according to his instructions. They started with a tree, then banana, window, princess/prince, soldier, champion, happiness, tiredness, bird, ant, confusion followed ...

After this we continued with the topic of „travel“. We have all traveled and we know that every trip starts with leaving, then goes through the travel itself, as a process, and ends with arrival in the new place.

At the beginning the children had to take the pose, which according to them matched the stage of „leaving“ (first stage of the trip). When Aleksander asked them what the feeling was in these postures, the children answered in the following ways: „good; I am happy; I am glad, but also a bit worried; I am great because I am leaving, I am impatient; I feel pain; I feel happiness; I am moved and happy; I am torn between wanting to leave and wanting to stay“.

After this came the stage of the trip itself. The children took their positions according to their feeling and summarized their emotions in: „tired; slightly tense; impatient; I have pain in my



back and my legs, but I feel satisfied; I am interested; I am excited; I am joyful and curious despite the fatigue“.

We finished with the third phase – “the arrival”. Here the list of emotions included: “nice; moved; happy; lively and happy; joyful and relieved; warm, I breath lighter“.

After this, all were asked where they have arrived. The answers were London, Paris, Macedonia, Serbia, California, India, England, on an island.

All these destinations were then led by Aleksander, holding hands, doing a circle around the world and going back to Sofia. Aleksander summarized what had taken place, the emotions we went through from leaving to arriving. Then he pointed out that in addition to the trips outside there are also trips within ourselves, leading to the inner London, England, Macedonia, Serbia, etc. and that quite often people undertake external trips in order to search for something, which they should be searching for within themselves.

Prior to doing an etude for closure of the meeting, we all played a game, offered by Hakan. According to this game, the players who are seated in a circle have to create a story in the following manner: the first one says something, then the second one repeats what the first one had said and adds something from himself, then the third one repeats what the first and second have said and adds something from himself and so on until the end.

The story we made was as follows: “I am going to Italy! I will take my perfume and some clothes, but I will not take my watch, flip-flops, shoes or a comb. I will most certainly not take my worries, but I will take my excitement and I will have a great time. Still, I am also going to take my football and I will not forget the ticket!“

The etude, which Tsveta proposed for closure, included flying with an airplane. The room was arranged appropriately and the roles were allocated among us all – travelers, stewards, a pilot, an official from the transportation company. The sketch went just great. All entered their roles and had to present themselves briefly (an accountant, a life-guard, a medical doctor, a business lady, etc.) while Konstantin Kuchev created a musical image of each character. A wonderful closure of the meeting with the first group! ☺

**Second group:** Monika, Beatris, Petra, Nikoleta, Diana, Nastya (6 children)

The action evolved in the same manner as with the first group. When asked why they come to the theatre workshops the children answered as follows: „I come because I learn new, useful things!“ (Monika), “because I am having fun, because it is nice and because I am interested in theatre. I was curious to meet you all even before we started this“ (Nastya), „it is interesting for me, it is nice and also useful!“ (Beti), „it is nice for me“ (Petra), „in order to learn something and to have fun“ (Diana), “because I am having fun“ (Nikoleta).

We continued with a warming up and then the game with the postures on the wall. The exercise was facilitated by Aleksander again. The children had to create a princess, a flower (a wonderful effect of wind in the garden was created! ☺), a tree, a banana, a soldier, a baby, tiredness, anger, happiness, a bird.

Then followed the etude with the traveling – leaving, the trip itself, arriving. The evaluations of the children concerning their momentary emotions in the various trip phases were similar to those from the first group. The places they arrived to were England, America, Varna, Nova Zagora, Las Vegas and “all of the abroad”. Aleksander then led this succession of destinations, the children holding hands with him on a circle around the world and then a return to Sofia. The activity was analyzed in brief.



For closure of the day, Tsveta organized the etude with the airplane travel. It went just as well as with the first group. Monika was great, deliberately speaking in semi-English, semi-Bulgarian being an English-native actress.  
A wonderful meeting!

### Twenty first meeting – 19.02.2016

**First group:** Nikoleta, Hakan, Zlati, Viki, Klara, Peter, Ivan, Nikola (8 children)

**Second group:** Nikoleta, Beatris, Nastya, Petra, Lyubka, Monika, Stefan, Julieta, Diana (9 children)

Facilitators: Tsveta, Ina, Konstantin and Aleksander

There is a warm up with music accompaniment. Then the children move around the stage freely – all walking calmly and freely, trying not to bump into anyone.

The scene that both groups played was a first love date in a café.

### Twenty second meeting – 26.02.2016

**First group:** Nikoleta, Hakan, Zlati, Viki, Klara, Ilkay, Nikola (7 children)

The meeting started with some time for sharing. The questions, which Tsveta asked the children, were as follows: “How do you feel when acting? Which exercises from the list of things we do together are easiest/hardest for you?” Do you use some of the things you learn in your daily life?”

Klara shared that she feels well as an actress and that she most loves it when we play various scenes. Warming up is hardest for her.

Viki said that the games we play are easiest and most fun for her. She says that sharing is still hard for her to do sometimes.

Zlati shared that the exercises and the sharing are quite easy for her. Playing various scenes is hardest for her, because it requires concentration.

Ilkay – everything is easy and pleasant for her. There is nothing special – she enjoys every minute.

Nikoleta – mostly loves the games and says her favorite role is of a girl in love at a first date in a café. During the workshop the previous week she got a first kiss during the pretend date from her future boyfriend.

Nikola – nothing is hard, except probably the sharing. When he comes to theatre he enjoys everything we do. His favorite role is probably the role of the professor, which he played. He shares that he is trying to apply everything he learns in the workshops concerning the structuring of speech, during the classes at school.

Hakan – everything is easy and pleasant. He states again that he wants to be an actor. His favorite role was the one from the scene with the thieves and the policemen.

We continued the meeting with a warming up. Tsveta sings and plays her ukulele to the children, which they move freely and casually on the improvised stage.

Then we played a court room! The accused is Ilkay, who severely beat a cashier at a bank and then robbed her. The defense and the prosecution do quite well – Ilkay gets only 10 years of

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imprisonment sentence for her brutal crime. Hakan is the judge, Zlati – the lawyer, Nikola – prosecutor, while the others are witnesses – Viki is the sister of the accused and Klara is the beaten bank cashier.

**Second group:** Nikoleta, Monika, Stefan, Julieta, Diana, Lyubka, Petra, Nastya, Kosyo (9 children)  
This meeting started with some time for sharing, just like the first group did. The questions, which Tsveta asked the children, were the same “How do you feel when acting? Which exercises from the list of things we do together are easiest/hardest for you?” Do you use some of the things you learn in your daily life?”

Monika is the first one. She shares that if anything can be classified as hard, then this would be the mimicking/playing of objects. Everything is nice. The skills she adopted and is using – to be concentrated, to skillfully lead a conversation, to use the stage behavior skills, which Tsveta and Ina shared during the workshops. Her favorite role – when she played a famous skier. The greatest challenge was the dance with miniature with Ina. |

Julieta is content and happy with everything. Imitating objects is hard to her.

Lyubka shares that her most favorite and easy role was the one of a girl in love at a first date in a café.

Kosyo finds it hard to share sometimes. He likes the physical warming up. He likes the scenes and the various etudes, which the children play. His most favorite role – in the café, first date.

Petra very much liked the scene at the coffee shop and the waiter personifications done by Sasho Shaman. She likes the sharing and the physical warming up.

Nastya – she finds it hardest to imitate objects. Physical warming up she finds very useful. The scene at the café was awesome – she likes the role she created. She considers that her stage behavior has greatly improved.

Stefan also finds it hardest to imitate objects. He mostly enjoyed his role in the café at a first date. He also greatly enjoyed the mafia, pirate and other roles he did. He enjoyed many new friends in the school.

Then we continue with playing a court room. Julieta (Iliana Dimitrova) is the culprit. She is a maid at the mansion of a rich elderly couple. She tricked them into transferring their property to her and then killed both of them. Monika is judge Metodieva, the lawyer is Diana Ivanova, Stefan is a witness for the prosecutor – he is the son of the killed elderly couple, Nastya is prosecutor Lukanova, Lyubka is a witness for the defense – a cook in the mansion, a friend of the accused maid-murderer.

## Twenty third meeting – 11.03.2016

**First group:** Nikoleta, Hakan, Zlati, Viki, Klara, Ilkay, Nikola, Peter (8 children)

The meeting started with the question “how old do you feel today?” The children gave different responses – some felt old and tired, others – grown up, and others were simply enjoying the age they really are at. After this we made a circle and each had to take a posture, matching his/her age and feelings. Then we all had to make a corresponding sound and the others were supposed to repeat it as adequately as possible. Then followed a warming up of the bodies and the voices. We tried to speak low, normally and high and then the children created dialogues each picking a different voice.





This fun experience was followed by the “suddenly” game. In this game, one of two story tellers describes the story, while the other one introduces the sudden changes. While two of the children are creating a story, the others play what they hear.

**Second group:** Hakan, Julieta, Nikoleta, Nastya, Monika, Lyubka, Petra, Kosyo, Beatris (9 children)

The exercises for this group are the same. The main objective of the facilitators (today they are in full group – Tsveta, Ina, Aleksander, Konstantin and Zori) is to encourage the children to train their story telling skills.

### Twenty fourth meeting – 18.03.2016

**First group:** Nikoleta, Hakan, Ivan, Viki, Klara, Nikola, Petar (7 children)

The meeting started with a warming up, during which the instructions were given in EN joined by simultaneous interpretation to Bulgarian. The objective was for the children to get used to listen to the two languages almost overlapping and to stay focused.

After this we spoke about Italy and Great Britain – what we know about them.

The game begins. The children are separated in pairs and they play sculptors and sculptures – while one in the pair is the material, the other is sculpting him/her. Then the roles are switched.

After this activity the children are separated into 2 groups and receive a task to shape up an etude, to allocate the roles, then to set up their stage and to play out the etude.

Nikola, Ivan, Nikoleta and Klara played an etude, which included 3 policemen, one of them corrupted, who were chasing a criminal, who was evading them all the time.

In the next etude Petar and Hakan were two best friends who started fighting over a girl they both like. After they had a fist fight they understood that there is no sense in fighting over a woman. They forgave each other and made up.

The meeting ended with analyzing the roles and who each actor had felt in his or her role.

**Second group:** Julieta, Diana, Nikoleta, Nastya, Monika, Petra, Kosyo, Beatris (8 children)

the meeting started with warming up and instructions in EN with simultaneous interpretation.

Then the children separate into pairs. In each pair there is one grown up eagle and a small eagle.

The grown up eagle is teaching the small one to fly. The roles are switched after some time.

When all had tried both roles, we asked them how they had felt as a grown up eagle and as a small eagle. Almost all small eagles shared that they had felt vulnerable, scared, feeling that the mother eagle wants to do the flying lesson quickly and send them off, that not enough attention is paid to them, they are neglected, etc. – negative emotions and a feeling that not enough efforts are being made for them to learn and be confident. Most big eagles shared that they had felt confident, responsible, willing to share their knowledge and skills with the youngsters. There were of course grown eagles who considered that they were not good teachers and they were not doing a good job with the young eagles.

Then the children were separated into 2 groups and each group was assigned to create its own etude, to allocate its roles, to prepare its stage and then play out the etude.

Within the first group Monika, Nastya, Diana and Beatris were 2 quarreling students, a teacher who was constantly on the phone, during class as well, and a headmaster, who was not satisfied with the teacher. For greater dramatism Nastya's character was pushed by the class-mate



(Diana) and broke her leg, while at the same time the teacher was on the phone. Great scene! The children were really focused and they stayed in the roles during the whole time.

The second group included Julieta, Petra, Nikoleta (three friends, who wanted to find a cozy café and have a cup of coffee there) and Kosyo (a careless waiter, who was sick and tired of working and refused to serve them ... after some time the etude changed and Kosyo became a confiscator who wanted to confiscate Julieta's table, which she had inherited from her grand-mother). The scene was great, very emotional and very humorous. Julieta demonstrates actor confidence and self-esteem, which are not really characteristic for her when she is being herself.

### Twenty fifth meeting – 25.03.2016

**One group:** Nikoleta, Beatris, Nastya, Lyubka, Monika, Zlati, Viki, Nikola, Kosyo, Petar, Petra (11 children)

The exercises include warming up, then presentation of information about the trip to Palermo. After the group is joined by Konstantin Kuchev, we start singing exercises – practicing with “True vision” and „I see you, ti vedo, vizhdam te“.

### Twenty sixth meeting – 15.04.2016

**One group:** Nikoleta, Hakan, Ilkay, Viki, Klara, Nastya, Peter, Zlati, Monika (9 children)  
Retrospection after the week in Palermo. Exercises for warming up and then playing etudes. Facilitators are Tsveta and Konstantin.

### Twenty seventh meeting – 13.05.2016

**First group:** Viki, Zlati, Klara, Nikola, Petar, Ilkay, Kosyo (7 children)

Facilitators are Tsveta, Ina and Aleksander (Zori is helping)

We start with warming up. Then we continue with a question from Tsveta about how each of the participants feels. We have not seen each other for a few weeks and need to catch up, besides the idea of the exercise is for the group of children to express the feelings and emotions they hear from each individual sharing. This expression should be as correct as possible, using bodies and voices.

First to share is **Nikola**, who finds it really hard to formulate his feelings. He shares he feels hot and he does not like it when the weather is warm. He is not comfortable. His relations with people are somewhere in the middle as far as warmth and intensity is concerned. Considering how many questions were necessary on the side of the facilitators, they also specified for him that he is having difficulties to express his feelings. The other children play him, but at the beginning find it really hard. They need lots of encouragements from Tsveta in order to fully grasp the idea. The lack of emotion in Nikola's status creates additional obstacles.



Next is **Petar**, who is quite jolly, his day is great. The vacation went without emotional events, but he did not need any such events. He had an exam on Wednesday. He feels awesome (we dare to think that we are among the reasons for him to feel that way ☺). The children play his emotions and experiences from the last weeks with much greater success that they played Nikola previously. Tsveta reminds them that they need to listen as actors and not as class-mates, in order to be able to decide what sound would be most appropriate for expressing what had been shared.

**Kosyo** shares that he is ok, happy and that nothing unusual happen to him. He went to Bansko, where his family has a house. They all went to the church. He shared he does not really like going to the church. Almost everything is fine at school – he just needs to know his result from the exam. The others played him wonderfully. Kosyo himself is really adequate when playing the others – he is able to spot important moments from the other's sharing and to use them. We are quite impressed that since several months now he has started to communicate freely and with much greater confidence with all of us.

It is **Zlati's** turn and she shares that she feels excellent. She is happy. The day is nice. She was also slightly worried about the exam in Bulgarian language, but she thinks her results are going to be alright. Everything is great, her friends also. The children play her perfectly.

**Viki**, who during Palermo and afterwards has been much more open and communicating in a freer and calmer way with all of us, shares that despite the exams she feels just great. She went to a concert, which does not happen frequently for her. She was there with many friends and feels excellent. These again were bright and well pronounced emotions, which the children played brightly.

**Klara** shares that she is fine, but is angry with Kosyo, who is mocking her. The children play her, including Kosyo who is the reason for her discomfort, joining intensively and playing both her and himself. Klara however is reluctant. She is not sure that the children expressed her emotions appropriately – she is quieter, but the children play her really noisily and stormy.

**Ilkay** is tired from all the exams. She is well played by the children.

**Ina** shares she felt cold. Then one day, after she finished her work and went outside where it was warm and sunny, her mood was immediately improved.

**Aleksander** shared about some misfortunate events, about some health problems at home, about a moment when he was really angry but is calm again. The children played him well, but somehow missed the return to tranquility point, which probably means that they feel that he is not calm yet.

**Tsveta** shared that for 10 days she is staying alone with the children – the husband is leaving for Japan – and she feels both restless because of the long separation but also curious about all the amazing things he is going to bring back to the family from this distant land. The children played her very brightly.

**Zori** shares about a physical trauma, about a feeling of vulnerability, about pain. But now everything is alright and she is back to normal. The children played the emotions and the physical feelings.

Considering the forthcoming conference in Sofia, where the children should present a workshop, Tsveta and the other facilitators encouraged them to share, which of the exercises they have experienced during the last year and a half made the greatest impression to them. The following stand out:

- The court room – the children had allocated the roles of judge, prosecutor, accused, etc. and played various stories;



- Fake description – when the children described themselves with false characteristics and facts, so that nothing of the things they say about them should correspond to their true personality. After that the made up personages entered a scene that they play together from the perspective of their “fake” characters.
- Creating a tropical rain;
- Meetings and dialogues in a coffee shop;
- Professor personages and journalists – who discovered what, why is it important, etc.;
- Story by word;
- The tale of the evil queen;
- Dialogue (argument) with drums;
- The plane situation, when Konstantin Kuchev played each of the described personages, which were a part of the etude;

The meeting continued with playing a story about 5 enchanted princesses in a forest – Zlati (princess Teodora) is a rabbit, Viki (princess Rozalina) is a cat, Ilkay (princess Penka) is a dog, Klara (princess R point) is a crab and Sasho (Aleksander Evtimov – princess Lili) is a piglet – who meet three brothers, who are hunters. The first one is Nikola (Simeon, first hunter of the tribe of the Khazars), Petar (second hunter, older and smarter of the three, called Rozcho) and Kosyo (third hunter, who is called Mister Spade, while his real name is Ivan Ivanov the Spade – the youngest of the brothers, but also the sharpest shooter of them all), who can liberate them from the enchantment only if each of them kisses each of the princesses.

After the roles are fixed the children play the story.

**Second group:** Monika, Lyubka, Petra and Beatris (4 children)

The meeting is marked by the need to plan – there are quite a few dates, which must be fixed so that the children and the facilitators can prepare for the 10<sup>th</sup> of June – the project conference in Sofia – and the 15<sup>th</sup> of June – the performance in the school hall, when Monika is supposed to be workshop facilitator and imitate the facilitators who worked with the children during the last year and a half.

Konstantin Kuchev arrives. We all sing, preparing for presenting the “True vision”, „I see you, ti vedo, vijdam te” and “Hajda”.

The fixed dates for the next meetings, which except for those on the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup>, should involve all children and take place in the school hall:

27<sup>th</sup> May – Friday, a regular meeting.

1<sup>st</sup> of June – from 13:00 till 16:00 – in the school hall

7<sup>th</sup> of June – from 14:00 till 16:00 – in the school hall

8<sup>th</sup> June – Monika, Petar and Ina – work on the miniature

10<sup>th</sup> June – conference in the St. Sofia hotel – 13:00

12<sup>th</sup> June – Monika, Petar and Ina – work on the miniature

14<sup>th</sup> June – main rehearsal from 14:00 till 16:00

15<sup>th</sup> June – performance from 14:00. Meeting for preparation at least 2 hours in advance.



## Twenty eighth meeting – 27.05.2016

**One group:** Beatris, Hakan, Petar, Kosyo, Nastya, Klara, Diana, Julieta, Nikola, Viki, Zlati, Ivan, Nikoleta (13 children)

The children start with warming up and studying the stage in the hall where today's meeting is taking place. Afterwards they start creating their own personages. They play themselves, they seek for the interesting and characteristic elements in order to demonstrate and exploit them. After this follows the playing of group scenes, the condition in which is for an unexpected turn and also an unexpected finale.

The children are grouped in couples or threesomes as follows:

- Petar and Beatris
- Nikola and Julieta (very good playing – both of them are psychotic patients, but they consider themselves important persons with many responsibilities. Julieta's character even considers herself a medical doctor in the psychiatry)
- Kosyo, Ivan and Viki – Kosyo is really artistic and with wonderful imagination, even though he can still not control his emotional reactions and jumping
- Zlati and Nikoleta
- Diana and Klara
- Nastya and Hakan

We all confirm our next meeting to be on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, when there should be perfect clarity about the demonstrational workshop for the conference on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

## Twenty ninth meeting – 01.06.2016

**One group:** Beatris, Hakan, Petar, Kosyo, Nastya, Klara, Diana, Julieta, Monika, Viki, Zlati, Nikoleta, Lyubka (14 children)

Facilitators: Tsveta and Ina.

They offer to the children the following structure of the performance planned for the 15<sup>th</sup> of June:

- Miniature
- I see you
- Monologues of the personages, selected by the children; each personage will be played by Kosyo
- Movement on stage with music in the background, until the couples find each other
- Couples scenes; each two scenes are separated by a dialogue with drums
- Tropical rain
- Finale with "True vision"

The personages, which the children selected, are as follows:

- Julieta – an old woman, who is complaining constantly – from the politicians, the new price of the tickets for the public transport, etc. (needs a hair cover)
- Monika – a business lady (needs a jacket, official clothing)
- Viki – an Indian police-woman, 30 years old, yoga, harmony, light (needs a scarf)

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- Nastya – a wily shallow woman, who likes to go shopping and needs money for the purpose
- Klara – a poor Roma girl
- Beti – a pessimist, who believes that nothing is going to work out, everything is really bad and nothing will happen as planned or envisaged
- Hakan – a fitness maniac, 21 years old, a fitness instructor from Pernik
- Zlati – a surgeon, 27 years old. No husband, no boyfriend, because her job is really important to her. She leads a lonely life (needs a white apron)
- Diana – a model, photo sessions and reviews non-stop
- Kosyo – a drunk, who has been raised with wine porridge
- Petar – a young gentleman, in love, wants to propose to his girlfriend (needs a ring case)
- Petra – a construction entrepreneur (Parashkev), a user, who tortures his workers
- Lyubka – dreams to become a signer, a student, works as a casing worker in order to make her living
- Nikoleta – old woman number two, who is rather deaf and keeps asking “Whaaat?” (needs a stick and a cover for the hai)

The couples are as follows:

Viki + Beti

Diana + Hakan

Pepi + Monika

Nastya + Kosyo

Zlati + Ilkay (needs to pick a role)

Petra + Lyubka

Julieta + Nikoleta

Klara + ? (probably only a monologue)

Follows a testing of the dialogues of all the children who are present. So much fun. Monika takes the responsibility to work with Klara on her Roma accent.

A great meeting! We fix our next meeting to be June 7<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday, same time – 13:00 – in the school hall.

## Thirtieth meeting – 07.06.2016

**One group:** Beatris, Petar, Kosyo, Nastya, Klara, Diana, Julieta, Monika, Viki, Zlati, Nikoleta, Petra, Ilkay (13 children)



Facilitators: Tsveta, Ina, Konstantin and Aleksander.

The children are rehearsing the forthcoming performance they are about to present on June 15<sup>th</sup>. They are trying entering the stage and allocation on it. Then each of them presents the monologue of his/her character and the facilitators give advice and recommendations for intensifying the personages and making them more alive.

Nastya is a beautiful young lady, working in the sphere of cosmetics. She likes cool men, nice cars and shopping. She needs a fancy bag, a dress and some shiny shoes.

Zlati is a young doctor, who lives and works in Washington. She has no private life. She says her profession is her life. She needs a stethoscope and a doctor's garment.

Julieta is an old lady, who is complaining about absolutely everything. She needs a cover for her head and a long skirt.

Klara is a poor gipsy girl. She needs some torn and shabby clothes.

Viki is a young Indian lady. She is a policewoman. She needs a beautiful shawl.

Beti is a pessimist.

Diana is a young beauty, a photo-model.

Ilkay is a vicious and malicious chemist, who creates poisons for various vermin. Still she would like to poison lots of people as well. She needs a bulb and a white garment, matching her profession.

Petra is Parashkev Topalov, a 50 year old man, a construction entrepreneur. Everybody hates him very much, because he keeps his workers busy till 10 o'clock in the evening. She could have a hat and a big sketch of a building for example.

Kosyo is a drunk! He needs a bottle with some alcohol (mixing water with apple juice).

Petar is a young gentleman, in love with Monika's personage. She is a young business lady. She needs appropriate garments.

The succession above is also the succession of them making their monologues within the performance.

The combinations (the duets), which will follow shall be: Nastya + Kosyo; Julieta + Nikoleta; Diana + Ilkay; Beti + Viki; Petar + Monika; Zlati + Petra + Klara.

The next and final rehearsal before the performance shall take place on June 14<sup>th</sup> at 13:15.