

#3 ON GENDER



INTRODUCTION

About Europefiction and the Academy

EUROPEFICTION is an association of 10 youth theatres from 6 European countries. In a network of five theatres for young audiences from the Ruhr area and five European partner theatres, we want research transnational encounters and develop new aesthetic forms together with young people and other partners.

Every year a group of young theatre people come together a summercamp for an encounter and exchange with performances, workshops, conversations and firetalks. Encountering creates the basis of our society: community and solidarity. We want to develop an artistic utopia for a common future through art.

After two years of working together on the project of Europefiction, the Europefiction Academy is a next step to strengthen the partnerships between the co-working theatres, their local networks and to reflect on innovative methods in collaboration between the professional group leaders, talented ex-participants and students from a variety of theatre minded studies.

With this academy we want to develop new artistic and communicative strategies to convey the value of a democratic future with an interplay of political issues and art to a wide professional public of formal and non-formal youth-education.

Want to know more about Europefiction and the Academy?

<https://europefiction.org>



0_PROLOG_MOTIVATION:

Why are we dealing with the issue of gender?

- There can be no democratic society without inclusion.
- ALL people have the same basic rights.

Let's look at **Articles 1- 3 and Article 7** from the Declaration of Universal Human Rights as adopted by the United Nations in 1948.

Article 1 (Freedom, Equality, Solidarity)

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and shall treat one another in a spirit of solidarity.

Article 2 (Prohibition of discrimination)

Everyone is entitled to the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration without distinction of any kind, such as racial or ethnic origin, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, legal or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether independent, trusteeship, non-self-government or otherwise restricted in sovereignty.

Article 3 (Right to life and liberty)

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 7 (Equality before the law)

All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without distinction to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination contrary to this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

If we look at these **4 articles of human rights** and compare them with reality, we have to conclude that we are far from ensuring that all people, regardless of their gender identity, enjoy these basic human rights. Even within the member states of the EU, there are a number of laws that contradict these four articles. So it is necessary to develop a deeper understanding and empathy here to change this situation.

We have deliberately chosen a playful and low-threshold approach so that it is possible to enter the topic without prior knowledge.

Basic questions:

- **Who decides who you are?** What makes you you?
For example: Who tells you if you are a boy or a girl?
- **What does this classification actually mean?** Is there nothing in between or something beside it? What does our (assigned) gender in the society we live in mean for our actions and interactions with each other?
- **What roles do we take on?** And which ones do we never consider for ourselves?
- **What about phenomena like "Girl Power" or "Toxic Masculinity"?**

What else were we interested in?

What are the effects of gender-sensitive language in German and in other languages? What is the performative structure of gender? What is the history of gender, the different codes in different times? What is the benefit for the system if there are only two normative genders? What is the impact of social media on the consciousness of gender and the coming out of celebrities like Miley Cyrus and Lachlan Watson? Distinguishing between social, biological and personal gender identity.

That's how we approached it:

- We played with the representation of different gender identities through clothing, styling, gestures. We experimented with behaviour - or representation without gender or mixing of genders.
- We asked, how does this affect self-perception? To what extent does age play a role in these aspects?
- We tried analogue ways and digital playgrounds.

Output

- 1_Performative questionnaire
- 2_Escape Game on Gender

Goals

- **Artistic:** We want to provide a mixed-reality hybrid theatre experience.
- These skills are to be expanded: **Perception; Empathy; Sensitivity;**
- **Change of attitude: towards tolerance and solidarity.**

1_ THE PERFORMATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE:

- Possible uses of (parts of) the questionnaire:
 - getting to know each other “authentically”
 - developing roles/figures
 - as part of an approach towards a dramatic base, i.e. speaking out of the position of an existing role
 - with further depth: a means of increasing trust/closeness within a group
 - as inspiration to develop exercises for a performance
- create/adapt rules following the context of the use of the method

Possible rules:

- Be honest, unless you don't want to be.
- Don't ridicule others, don't discuss other's answers
- If further clarification of an answers seems necessary, ask for permission of the 'author' of the answer given
- (Don't inflict harm: Physically, physiologically,..)
- support each other if needed

It should be possible to use the questionnaire for different kinds of groups due to the way one wants to use it.

The following ideas envision a smaller group of 6-10 people. With more people it would make sense to split the group or to work with it individually.

ARRIVAL

- 1. Introduce yourself to the group: Say the name that was given to you or one you want to give yourself.**
 - a. From that moment on, everyone will be referred to by said name. Duration of “a)” varies depending on the context of the method’s use.
 - b. How would you describe the sound and look of this name as a word? What are your emotions towards this name? Do you like it? Are there moments you dislike your own name or the name that was given to you?

- 2. Close your eyes. First envision these tasks for yourself, then utter them out loud to the rest of your group. Feel free to touch your own face before doing it. (due to covid, disinfect your hands before)**
 - a. Describe the outer appearance of your face.
 - b. Describe the color of your hair, it’s length and if you have any at all.
 - c. Try to speak as vividly as possible about the shape of your eyes, the impressiveness of your eyelashes.
 - d. Elaborate on the form and colour of your lips, explain the shape of your jaw.
 - e. Try to clarify the form and size of your nose.

- 3. Find a position in the room, go there and stand there for a bit. Locate other people and objects in the room. Look into each others eyes for a few seconds when your eyes meet.**

How was your day? Think about it while continuing to look around. Find a pose for your whole body to communicate your mood to the others. Hold that pose for 1 minute. Remember it as exactly as possible.

Change your location.

Afterwards, find an object that catches your eye. Observe it for a while. Find a pose for your whole body to imitate them. Hold that pose for a minute. Remember it as exactly as possible.

Change your location.

Afterwards, watch another person in the room. Imagine zooming in on their shoulder, what are they wearing, what is the texture of the fabric, what is its colour, notice how tight or loose it is, does it have any wrinkles? You are now becoming part of that fabric. Find a pose for your whole body to express that. Remember it as exactly as possible.

Roam through the room. Picture your three poses before your mental eye. Develop an order for them and try it. Try to find a way to get from one pose to the next. Once you find an order you like, keep it that way.

- Try to make the transitions from pose to pose as smooth as possible. Think about softness, tenderness, curvature, waves and velvet.
- Try to make the transitions from pose to pose as rigid as possible. Think about physical strength, stones, wood, squares and toughness.

NOTE: At this point - if deemed practical for the further process - the pedagogue can initiate a small "showing". Split the group in half, one half becomes the audience, the other becomes the performers - let the performers show their pose transitions multiple times. Start with either soft/hard and then proceed to the other transition style. After a couple of repetitions with both styles, let the 'audience' describe what they saw, anything they noticed, some things that they found odd or remarkable. It is important that there is no judging at this point as there is not right or wrong, the discussion of the observations should be focussed more on the differences in style, not so much individual abilities. After the reflection, swap the groups and repeat.

BODY/IMAGE

4. Pair up and sit on the floor or on chairs back to back. Ask each other alternately the following questions. You can choose the order of questions on your own and you can also skip some if you want to. Try to answer fast without thinking about your answers too much, if you do not want to answer the question say "skip".

- ★ What do you wear to "dress-up"?
- ★ How often do you think about your own appearance a day?
- ★ When was the last time you asked for help?
- ★ What is the best object you own?
- ★ What piece of clothing would you wish to own?
- ★ How would you describe your own scent?
- ★ What is a daily thing you love to do?
- ★ On a scale of 1-10, how powerful did you feel today?
- ★ If you could choose a costume to wear right now, what would it be?
- ★ How often do you see yourself a day?
- ★ When was the last time you cried?
- ★ What do you wear when it is very hot outside?
- ★ How many selfies did you take this week?

- ★ What do you do when you're nervous?
- ★ What specific part of your body feels the softest?
- ★ What specific part of your body feels the hardest?
- ★ What part of your body feels the strongest?
- ★ How do you sit, when you sit comfortably?
- ★ What is the first body part you realize on another body?
- ★ What part of your body belongs to you the least?
- ★ How many pillows do you have in your bed?
- ★ If you were an animal, what animal would you be?
- ★ What is your favourite sweet?
- ★ What does relaxing look like to you?
- ★ How many hours a day do you spend outside?
- ★ Name the locations you grow body hair
- ★ What are parts of your body where you would like to be touched?
- ★ ...

BEHAVIOUR

5. The group sits in a circle. One person voluntarily declares to leave the room. From the group of the remainders, one person is chosen to be the movement leader. All the others have to emulate the leader as perfectly as possible. Posture, movement speed, 'radiation'. Once the detective comes back in, their task is to try to figure out who the movement leader is. The present pedagogue may suggest certain questions, e.g. "Think of personality traits associated with the posture everybody is in right now. Use them as leads to the leader."

6. Think of a scene that you experience in your daily life or choose one of the scenes we collected for you. Try to reenact every person in the szenario after the other. How is the person moving? What are they saying? What kind of gestures do they use? What are they thinking of?
 - a. A little boy is rushing to the bus station. The driver closes the doors right in front of the boys face.
 - b. An elderly woman is trying to overdraw her account at the bank teller. The bank teller is trying to avoid the overdrawing fee for her.
 - c. Two teenage girls are buying some smoothies. The smoothie klerk winks at one of them.
 - d. The parents are watching the news on tv. Their daughter comes in and introduces her girlfriend to them.
 - e. A group of three boys is playing soccer on the streets. Suddenly the ball lands on the balcony of a grumpy neighbour.

HISTORY/NARRATIVE

7. Fill in the blanks

Idea: Saidiya Hartman/ The term "*critical fabulation*" signifies a writing methodology that combines historical and archival research with critical theory and fictional narrative.

Set Up: A narrator reads out scenes that are subsequently enacted by designated people from the group. The scenes are texts (mostly stereotypical scenes/maybe famous movie scenes [Romeo and Juliet, Titanic, Alice in Wonderland, Chekhov, The Magic Flute, West Side Story, Faust and Mephisto, Oedipus at the Oracle, Hamlet's last scene, Pulp Fiction Diner Scene, lion king]) in which key information has been erased. The information categories are grouped in three or more groups. A for ..., B for ..., C for ...

A: People: that can be names or descriptions, i.e. The Queen, very sneezy Harriet, David Hasselhoff, Diogenes the diabolical dean, sad Sadie, old Jones with green curls, a princess in a suit, nervous banker, Libby loving camping, Peter Parker, catloving Dave

B: Adverbs: The way in which things are done/said: passionately, whiny, aggressively, fearfully, embarrassed, intimidated, motivated, strongly, weakly, mysteriously, loudly, romantically, powerfully, unsurely

C: New Props: A jackhammer, a flower bouquet, a newspaper, a pistol, a packet of wet wipes, high heels, a mobile phone, a rubik's cube, a calculator, a bike pump, a bell, a red lipstick, a basecap, a fan, a glass of orange juice,

Before the readings take place, the group collectively produces words for said categories. The words can be extreme and/or gender-specific, i.e. "really strong", "jackhammer"...

Open Questions: Who enacts? How many? Who chooses the fillings for the gaps?

2_ESCAPE_GAME

a. Pre-test

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScVzTFD5jlcEzSmQjgZ301s9imis372-nF3w9P04R67KbqtFA/viewform>



b. as pdf: (in english)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DsEAPkcKK56QHsZrLo-NCxmfXWlf4cET/view>

as word: (in english)

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LrYimvogOYyG-OCTQCyqpjrAz5MEMo1V_qci-sfUNnw/edit