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## O3 Performing Shadow theatre and Training

# Report and Training guide with Lessons Learned based on the five pilot training sessions

Authored by Aleksandra Stojanowska, Shadows and Clouds



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## Prologue

Shadow Theater in 2018 was listed as an intangible cultural heritage that needs our utmost care, according to UNESCO. Theater companies that play exclusively with shadows are quite rare, so having one among our partners was of great importance. One of the key focus areas of this intellectual outcome was to educate and raise awareness about shadow theater as a tangible creative profession for wide audiences, including people with disabilities of any kind. The partners themselves were the first ones who underwent the training process, which allowed them to transpose the learnings and skills onto their local training events. That resulted with a series of local performances which included a broader network of participants of different profiles. Lastly the newly formed teams joined their creative forces to work on a transnational joint performance during the final conference in Pécs.

Shadow theater activities took place on different levels, inserting our project activities vertically and horizontally. We'd look at already established models and methods through the prism of shadow theater as an inclusive performing art. Such a case was the adaptation of the Fir Shares Principle for the performing arts sector. We'd look at shadow theater as a new means for expression, aside from words, images, videos, sounds and how that new perspective is inclusive in its core. Shadow theater topics were also integrated in the Training Course as an overlaying module, pointing out that art knows no boundaries and anyone can be a performer.

## Capacity assessment and development among the partners

Planning and implementation of this intellectual outcome has brought learning curves on many various levels for the ARTcoWORKers partners. It has helped our organizations strengthen our creative capacities, mobilizing the utmost artistic skills among our teams, while broadening the horizon of endless possibilities. We were able to identify our true

potential in the sense of diving into the world of performing arts, facilitating journeys some of the partners had not had a chance to even be part of.

The beauty in having a versatile partnering consortium comes from the opportunity of complementing each other's gaps in skills, knowledge and experience. Painting new learning curves together, sustainably developing and opening new opportunities for our organizations as a whole. Therefore we've paid proper attention to the capacity assessment of our organizations - which partners would be new to what topic and how can we support that gap. Except for People First, who've already had hands-on experience with working on a shadow performance, and Shadows and Clouds who are a shadow theater company, other partners were quite new to the topic. This was a great opportunity to learn by doing and practicing the method in its core making with the added element of inclusion. Each of the partners had collaborated with local artists, cultural workers, performers, policy makers in order to strengthen their competencies, while also including people with disabilities who are creative or are artists themselves. This expanded ARTcoWORKers group of multiplier facilitators turned into the core of the project. Regarding the collaboration method related to shadow theater each of the partners had their unique learning journey - some communicated online, others in person. Some would have brief daily meetings, others would have a bi-weekly sessions. Shadows and Clouds was overseeing the process and offering structured and ad-hoc support where needed. Some of the most common questions have turned into project guidelines such as a brief video intro on shadow theater for people who've never seen shadow theater before, or the list of materials needed for a shadow theater workshop.

## Target groups of shadow theater project activities

Target groups were a primary focus for ARTcoWORKers, as they aimed to provide equal access to cultural and artistic events. This goal was achieved through various project activities, including the inclusion of people with disabilities in the art production process. They were supported in gaining awareness of their unlimited creative

potentials and guided towards new career opportunities. In IO3, the target groups were specifically defined in line with these objectives.

1. Based on their role of involvement in IO - as actors, as audience, as partners, as consultants, as artists and most importantly, all of these roles were pretty transferable, so one could also experience the full project cycle.
2. Based on their country - living in each of the 4 partner countries, we had participants with different nationalities, for example Romanian and British.
3. Based on their social status - whether in risk due to disability present and their country of residence, as each of the countries had different social welfare system
4. Based on their experience in similar initiatives - peer education and lifelong learning.
5. Based on their involvement in decision making - levels of engagement in the civic, private or governmental sector.

Here are some of the outstanding participants from our target groups:

- People with disabilities that express interest in engaging with peers in order to artistically explore shadow theater.
  - Hilda Kerekes - an autistic woman from Pecz, Hungary involved in People First activities.
  - Sven Kocar - media designer, foot photographer and has spastic cerebral palsy, from Germany.
  - Ivana Atanasoska - poet who has cystic fibrosis, from North Macedonia.
- People that want to contribute towards ART coWORKers objectives and share the project goals and partner's values.
  - Irena Lozana - mother of an autistic child and inclusion activist, from North Macedonia.
- Performing artists, writers, musicians, crafts people, directors and other cultural workers and arts students that find shadow theater complementary to their field

of art and work.

- Fanny Kunster - Hungarian preschool teacher who'd like to use shadow theater in her inclusion school program.

- Neil Dolan - UK dancer and dance educator who'd like to discover a new approach in body perception among the audience.

- Annika Hirsekorn - German visual artist and art curator, screen printer, museum tour operator who'd like to explore new ways of storytelling.

- Pandemic-affected artists and disabled people are particularly invited to take part.

- Nikki Manuputty - Dutch amateur actress, a wheelchair user due to an autoimmune disease.

- Toma Dimkov - visual artist, percussion musician who has cerebral palsy, from North Macedonia.

- Katerina Stefanovska - shadow theater actor from North Macedonia.

- Paul Littinski - music producer from German

- Non-formal educators and teachers who want to learn new creative educational tools.

- Partizanska Shtampa - screen printing studio from North Macedonia

- Janka Makkai - emerging non-formal educator from Romania

- Annamária Horváth, art therapist, story therapist, mental health professional, educator.

## Continuous production of shadow theater across all intellectual outcomes

Shadow theater was the silver lining of our performing activities. Present in every step of the journey, sometimes in the background, often under the spotlight and on stage.

The concept of preparation of shadow theater performances was broken down to smaller joints and pieces, combined with educational and content elements. Elements of

this intellectual outcome were divided in the following activities, in alignment with project phases and complementing other outcomes.

- Joint staff training 3 days of partners and stakeholders representatives during TPM3, which resulted with 4 transnational performances.
- Piloting training of ARTcoWORKers Course as blended learning and E-learning with interactive and transnational sessions, where shadow theater was included as one of the 7 modules.
- Production Workshops - Simultaneous 5 performance processes (1 from each partner) and with different content but same inclusive methodology. Performances of the shadow theater plays by all 5 partners, video production.
- Final performances - Simultaneous 4 performance processes, performed during the Final Conference event in Pecz, March 2023.

## First steps into the shadow theater world - Joint staff training

For the shadow theater training for short-term trainers in Skopje, 4-8 April 2022, each of the partners had chosen a group of participants who were going to transpose the knowledge gained into the local implementation of the Training Course, where working on a local shadow theater performance was embedded within the activities. It was highly essential to educate our ARTcoWORKers partners as very few of them had any sort of prior experience with shadow theater or performing arts as a whole. The team of Shadows and Clouds delivered a presentation of the key techniques ..., filled by a tips and tricks session on how to combine refurbished and recycled materials at hand in order to create your performance. We touched upon the following areas:

- History of shadow theater - China, Turkey, Indonesia all the way to Europe

- Writing the script - adapt a famous fairytale or write your own story. As big as a book, as short as a sentence.
- Elements of light - graphoscope, overhead projectors, lamps, flash lights, phones, reflectors etc, as sources of light, techniques on how to operate with them.
- Stage elements - screen frame and material, paravans, curtains. DIY home theater stage.
- Crafting the set and puppets - design, paint and cut puppets using different materials.
- Use of words - language or no words, recorded narration or performed live.
- Use of sound - recorder music or performed live, using musical instruments and everyday objects to produce the sound picture.
- Mobility of the performances - context of the performance in the space, to be performed only once or repetitively, to be mobile or always have it in the same location.
- Inclusion aspect of the method - exclude the elitist stereotype of high art and allow space for everyone to join.
- Resourcefulness of the method - can be done anywhere, by and with anyone, using anything.
- Shadow theater with the body - cast shadows with your body, hand, face.
- Key roles and duties - writers, designers, crafters, performers, directors, musicians etc - roles that may or may not be interchangeable. Note that all can be done by every person, no matter their abilities.

For the need of learning-by-creating a performance we've guided the group through a joint storytelling session. We've created 4 internationally mixed groups, each containing representatives from each partner, and given them to pick one of the 4 combinations of techniques they need to use in their performance (light, sound, crafts). This way we ensured a visually versatile performance and offered basic hands-on experience with all of the methods within each partner. The unifying topic was water and how it changes over the 4 seasons of nature - Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn giving them the

freedom to use any character(s) they like. The performances were to last up to 5 minutes each and needed to include all group members in both the process of creation and presentation.



WINTER - <https://vimeo.com/698135382/008d9d3b5b>

The stage is dark, at night, the screen is barely lit by a moving reflecting shadow in dark purple and blue color. The sound is loud and echoing, as if a wind is about to start blowing. You see and hear the the material is moving, creating a glitch in the image. Maybe a storm is coming, snowing us on its way? Perfectly caught experience of anxiety and fear of the unknown, resembling the feelings during the pandemic. A stream of light moves in the right corner dropping a spot of light over a profile silhouette of a woman, sharp nose, big eyelashes, long hair and a bum. She is calm, serious and her hands appear to be communicating with the sparkling blue light that starts shivering when she appears. Two palms of hers appear, hands can tell stories in such a small movement. Her hands are big and strong yet with gentle movements. Maybe that is the feeling of snow, cold yet soft? The feeling of the pandemic - dividing yet uniting us? They are trying to touch her face, which stays still no matter what. One hand takes over, grabs her by the nose and pulls her down, away from the light. We fight our fears, we choose our own battles. Pair of glasses appears as big as the whole screen. They float through the scene, levitate. As if this winter happens in space. Then all of a sudden a bright image with a vivid blue round object. A hand draws around it, is it the same hand? Splashes of liquid of grey and white take over. The drawing resembles an eye and liquid



pours out of the eye, is it crying? Again blinding blue light and shivering hands that are searching for something. Way out of the pandemic maybe?

- Inclusive group: director, art curator, inclusion activist, amateur performer
- Materials used: glitter paper, glasses, plastic bottle, oil, water, graphoscope
- Methods: hand movements, everyday objects
- Artistic discovery: They were able to identify the various reflections that glitter materials and glass have on the screen and made the whole performance around it. This was a perfect example when one technique itself is enough, no further complications are needed, which proves that shadows are inclusive. Less is more!

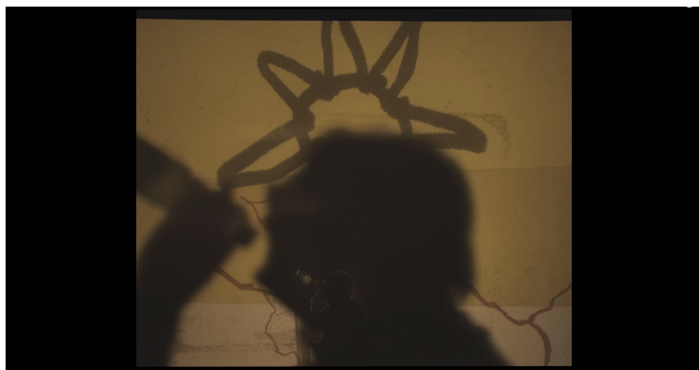


SPRING - <https://vimeo.com/698139117/3c909f99cc>

A free-hand drawn plastic foil represents the transition between the cold winter and the warmish spring. The foil is slid over the graphoscope with a full screen projection. The performance starts when a shivering snowflake is barely making it through the winter. Then slowly it turns into a drop of water that from the high mountain peaks falls into a valley with dry trees which slowly awake. From the young spring grass emerges some green color on the scene. Instrumental classical waltz occupies the space along with a dancing silhouette of a young woman with a flourishing cape. Spring has come and is here to stay. The cape is transcendent and hand-drawn flowers and fluid forms are vividly dancing along with the woman's gestures. Flashing moving lights in bright colors

randomly pop imitating flying bugs in the warm weather. Nature is dancing as the spring is giving us fruits and gifts. Lastly a cricket comes in and tells the spring to leave as it is time for the next season. Interesting in this approach is that they have focused on the transition between the seasons, rather than only the season itself. In a border sense the group sought for context, needed some layer of history and future, which in the perspective of ARTcoWORKers this is exactly what we want to achieve. Understand our different pasts (arts and people with disabilities) but work towards a common future.

- Inclusive group: visual artist, inclusion activist
- Materials used: plastic, garbage bags, markers in colors, graphoscope, hand lamp
- Methods: dance with body, improvisation music
- Artistic discovery: They were able to identify the double exposure of both the person dancing and their shadow on the screen, hence the dancer (Spring) wore a skirt of folded foil, which only adjusted the silhouette on the shadow but added glittering elements which were visible due to the screen's transparency. They turned the defect into effect!

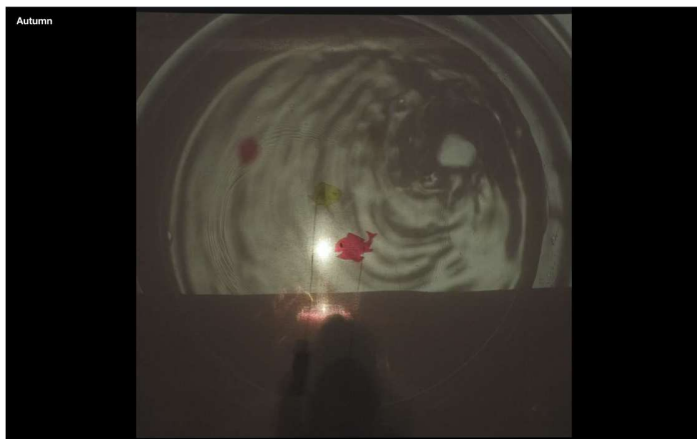


SUMMER - <https://vimeo.com/698134339/0ef0a2de17>

Crafted out of squishy material, the childish-like sun visually occupies the stage with nuances of yellow and red background. A cricket walks by resembling a timeless desert. This feeling is amplified by the shushing sound of sand and heavy breathing, when we

see a man's silhouette who seems to be feeling tired, hot and exhausted. Here it was all about being slow, synchronized and precise. The thirsty man grabs and opens a bottle of water which he eagerly drinks, while can hear every little sound of that action, acted out in real life. The bottle opener, the cap falling on the floor, the swallowing... as well as the burp. A drop of sweat falls as he's wiping his forehead, a drop that becomes a character herself. She starts to fight with the sun and then disappears.

- Inclusive group: able-bodied actor, diabetic, blind person, inclusion trainer
- Materials used: graphoscope, straws, plastic and glass bottles
- Methods: musical instruments and live sounds combined with recorded music
- Artistic discovery: The man wears glasses which project very thick transparent shadows to make the human look even more supernatural. They have discovered this and intentionally performed that way



AUTUMN - <https://vimeo.com/698138391/d47b4e865b>

An aquarium, a pond, or a small lake - we see a couple of fish gladly swimming. Few leaves are hanging from the tree who is a man. The appearance of this shadow of a man holding 2 tiny leaves sends a message that this team has paid attention to details, and have taken into consideration the things they would not be able to avoid. All of a sudden a wind starts to blow and the water forms neverending rings. A fallen leaf falls into the pond dancing on the waves. But the wind brings a breeze and then a storm, many more leaves and sticks fall into the pond. The storm is audibly achieved by

musical instruments and imitation of rain, Simple but strong and enlightening! Another proof that shadow theater is inclusive - shows can last literally a couple of minutes but they can tell meaningful stories in a powerful way. Perfect for someone with impaired movement or weak stamina.

- Inclusive group: able-bodied actor, project coordinator, autistic woman, wheelchair user
- Materials used: graphoscope, straws, glass bowl, painted foil, wire, thread, wooden
- Methods: musical instruments, live sounds, liquid performance, different screen dimensions.
- Artistic discovery: They were able to play with different dimensions and ratio of the sizes of the puppets while performing on 2 parallel areas - screen and graphoscope. This usually requires proper planning and resourcefulness. Another important thing is that this performance did not have a black screen, meaning there was no blank pause in between the changes. That requires good team work and synchronization.

The reasoning behind choosing the topic of water and its transitions from one season to another was to highlight the element of adaptation - peak of discomfort and then change - become part of something new, something comfortable and soothing. Just like arts and culture for people with disabilities, during and after the peak of the pandemic.

Another group result was the fact that none of the performances had use of language. They were able to tell their stories with no narration which goes in favor of the fact that people with hearing or speech impairment could be performers.

It was interesting to observe how the groups were deciding who will take which duty in the process of preparation and performance. They all had different approaches. Some were quite democratic and shared duties equally, others let the people with disabilities say where they feel most comfortable or most challenged. One of the groups did not even officially divide roles, they took over their spots organically, unlike the last group

where a leader emerged - an able bodied person who was able to maintain solid relations within the team and delegated the roles.

The group dynamics was quite mixed - there was no fixed order of storming norming performing as they were not aware of their potential and the final outcome. Few would lose interest over the course of the preparations but then come back full speed. Overall it was a pleasant working atmosphere and participants enjoyed both the process and the result.

The performance and rehearsal venue were the same in order to eliminate as many unknown obstacles as possible. The groups were each other's audience - encouraging, cheering and being amazed by what their colleagues have achieved. The competitive spirit was also there - making them all equal players no matter their abilities or disabilities.

## Inclusive audience to an “exclusive” by design theater show

The Skopje training participants attended the “Alice and the Wonders” shadow show produced and performed by Shadows and Clouds Theater. It was a unique opportunity to test new inclusive approaches and receive constructive feedback. As the audience was an inclusive group with a variety of needs we were gladly able to touch ground with Nikki from the Netherlands, who is a wheelchair user and Marci from Hungary who is blind.

As the theater was fairly accessible, and knowing that Nikki is a freelance actress herself, after the show we did a rehearsal with some of Alice's dance movements she was able to see in the performance just minutes ago. This time Alice was a wheelchair user and Nikki had the liberty of taking the movement narrative and adding some of her own movement style. As the performance has now words, doing this exercise was very important, as the dance and movement are the “language” of the show.

Before we started the show, during an empty theater stage we invited Marci to come behind the white screen (the show is performed from behind the screen) and get himself acquainted with the majority of the puppets and sets used in the show. He was able to feel the different materials, textures and dimensions of the puppets, their mechanics and mise-en-scene as we would explain the plot and dramaturgy of the show. This method is somewhat easier when the show is based on a popular story, as it has its limitations in its interpretation. Marci also was given space and time to explore the stage setting and screen, so he'd easier grasp the visual element of the shadows. So when the personal translator during the show would say that the Cat represented by a big head with flashing eyes in green enters the stage, he'd already have prior information based on all other senses and would be able to experience the show in a more vivid way. The cat is as big as a third of the screen, and was made using cardboard, duct tape, marker, scissors, bamboo stick and the glowing eyes are green foils with flashing Christmas lights. Furthermore, he was able to play with the instruments used to create the music, which for the show was pre-recorded, so he'd be able to recognize them and form opinions on the director's decision to use which instrument and melody at what time. This gave Marci a different palette of communication channels with the show, compared to an able-bodied audience. By including him behind-the-scenes, he's feeling represented, valued and trusted.

This is just an example that even when not designed from the project initiation, inclusion can be taken into consideration at a later stage, once the project is done. For instance "Alice and the Wonders" is a show that's been on the repertoire for 9 years already. As long as we focus on sensitizing the stakeholders, theater and visual artists in this case, only sky's the limit!

## ARTcoWORKers training course - How to have shadow theater across all training modules

### MODULE 1: DEVELOPING SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Aims to collect personal materials which are going to be used as supporting puppets, scenography, backgrounds.

#### Self-representation

- On a foil with marker, draw a self-portrait where the FEET plans, HANDS skills, HEAD knowledge, EYES curious about, MOUTH loud about, BACKPACK burden, HEART values. Cut out these characters (with or without the text) and use them as puppets in a scene where these characters appear in a dream.

#### Developing creativity

- Take small everyday objects (for example used for medical care, hygiene, eating) and craft a few paper or foil elements by sticking them to the objects. These objects now have become puppets.

- Listen to the performance music or read the performance script and draw wave looking-lines in blue color on an A4 foil. Then use the foils one by one to perform a background of moving water or upcoming storm, adding layer by layer.

- My Name Poem can be used for character building for our script. After delivering the exercise with the participants then invite them to fill in the list for the names of the main characters of the story. This is crucial to have the audience get to know the characters better, give them more nuances that are similar to actual human beings so they are able later on to build connections and relations with them. For instance the puppet will wear a scarf and eyeglasses after realizing that it's favorite book is Harry Potter!

#### Building self-confidence

- Deliver the Wheel of Life Method and invite the participants to cut out the outer circle

or the newly created balance form and visually use them as “islands” or “planets” in your performance.

## MODULE 2: INDEPENDENT LIVING

Aims to develop the story and write the script.

- Some of the aspects of independent living could be the general topic of the script that should be created very early on in the training. Have some of the personal experiences of the group as a foundation to build up the story. Ask the questions “what would have happened if” or “what if you had done the opposite” and fix the story by including both real cases and fictional ones. Then change all the names, locations, season of the year. And use these characters in some of the exercises by inviting the participants to answer for them. The intention is to build a strong story with strong opinions and attitudes by the participants about it. Have in mind you will be coming back to that story many times in other exercises so make sure you have it presented somewhere publicly easily accessed by the participants.

## MODULE 3: UNION CITIZENSHIP AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Aims to have the participants understand and build relations towards the main characters.

- By this time all of the main characters' puppets should be crafted with their basic look. Divide the participants in small groups and have 1 representative to hold the puppet, preferably the person who will be performing with it the most. Then carry out the Invisible race with the puppets moving along the line. Allow 2-3 minutes discussion within the small groups after each question so they align on the step ahead. Have 1 participant out of the groups following the continuity of the story (this should not be a blind person, nor a mentally challenged person) Elaborate the outcomes with the group and have the continuity person comment on the overall achievements of the task.



## MODULE 4: COMMUNICATION

Aims to build and strengthen the team building among and ensure group performing.

### Conflict management

- Deliver the Video analysis 3 times, by using shadow puppet performance videos that include different techniques and certainly show a certain conflict. Rotate the groups for each of the videos and elaborate the outcomes to the plenary. This will help educate your participants in analyzing shadows (before having to perform themselves) and understanding better the different techniques.

### Positive communication

- This topic could be the basis for a whole scene as positive communication is an underlying topic in every other topic of our training. Showing a “fight, struggle, challenge” between one of the characters and Words will definitely send a strong message. One of the most direct and simplest ways to do it is to have different I-formation words or roadblocks spelled on cut out pieces of foil and act as puppets or objects. Drawing certain emotions through facial expressions could help. This could be a dance and purely visual scene with no narration, fierce music potentially performed live (hand bells, kids plastic blocks, plastic bottles filled with rice, any friction sounds or voice manipulations, which is a super opportunity for a speech disabled person). Maybe you could have the Words put as name tags to the people holding instruments (if they are seated beside the screen or in front of it) and have the main character be a human body “dancing” to the attacks of the words with shadows.

### Assertive communication

- After delivering the Assertiveness Inventory exercise, go back to the story and have some of the Assertiveness inventory cases included as plot twist. This will help the participants to identify with the puppets and feel represented when the performance is delivered.

## MODULE 5: INCLUSION

- As the presentation says, Inclusion is an invitation to the dance. This is how we could invite participants to the shadow dance floor.

- Do not use able-bodied actors to represent disabled characters or participants.
- Pre-record small hand gestures and movements, or micro details of facial movement of a wheelchair user and project them on the screen, by having another participant as a shadow dancing and acting with those gestures
- Invite visually impaired people to narrate the performance.
- Invite visually impaired people to select materials for crafting the puppets, based on touching sensations.

Invite visually impaired people to perform with different smells during the performance(spices, perfumes, freshly washed clothes)

- Invite speech impaired persons and their assistant to co-host the event.
- Invite disabled-bodied people to produce sounds
- Invite disabled musicians to compose the music, artists to draw some of the backgrounds, visually impaired to co-direct some of the scenes.
- Use different alphabets and translations in the show.
- Write the promotional material about the performance also in simple language.
- As we are expecting that the audience should also be an inclusive group of people, think of ways to potentially include the audience in the performance. (give them small bells to ring in certain moments, have them react in a specific way when told so, interact with them by asking questions (usually about things that are repetitive in the show))
- Plan a certain % of improvisation in the performance as the experience of performing could be quite stressful for some people so better give that space for exploration up front so when something different happens on stage they do not feel discouraged.
- At the end of the performance, present the full team of involved people, one by one.

- Think of recording the making of, rehearsals and the performance, from both sides of the screen. Later use that material to present the process to the audience and to create promotional materials in inclusive formats.
- Repeatedly check on the group of performers during the process, make sure they feel present and motivated, included and creatively challenged.
- Make sure the group is aligned with why this shadow performance is important, what are you trying to achieve as a team and how will you measure the results. (Direction, Alignment and Commitment is a three-leg chair in a performing team, one them is absent and the chair falls down)
- Think of ways for instant satisfaction and prompt feedback from the audience after the performance because this will make the group proud and motivated.
- Make rehearsals with technical equipment early on, as microphones and cameras are quite disturbing if they appear in later stages.
- Use recycled materials and find other “topics” to fight for together with the team, as the topic of inclusion will most likely be an omnipresent topic to the group.
- Some of the last rehearsals before the premiere have a flipped rehearsal - where the whole show is performed in switched roles (have everybody take someone else’s place, take a different puppet or act in a different role, do a different technical job etc). And try to record it as part of the making-of. This flipped concept helps the performers to be in someone else’s shoes. As all they can do is replicate what they have been witnessing on the rehearsals, this gives to the team a great idea of how each of the roles is actually perceived by the audience (as while acting you are not fully aware and in control of what you are actually manifesting while performing) And gives information to the organizing team how solid is the group work and how stable is the performance few days before the premiere.
- Create space for giving and receiving feedback during the process of creation and rehearsals among the group.
- Have in mind that the process is equally important as the result. And make the process an enjoyable one. As art fights great things with small means.

## Local Shadow theatre productions and training workshops

A plethora of approaches emerged into each of the local shadow theater workshops and final performances.

From the aspect of the content, each of the project partners found inspiration in different topics such as love, traveling, dancing, magic, space, film-making etc. Methods used also offered quite a range of options for each of the performances - shadow theater in a shoe box was the innovative element brought by People First from Hungary.

Participants were able to experience dancing, singing, acting, crafting, performing to a whole new level.

The team formation also took a different turn for each of the project partners. Some used the series of creative activities as a team building activities, so they have included their core colleagues and fresh interns together as part of the creators. Being able to perform side by side with your colleagues has a very strong bonding element, as the wellbeing of organizations delivering these projects, our project partners in this case, is of very high importance, especially in the context of post-pandemic reality.

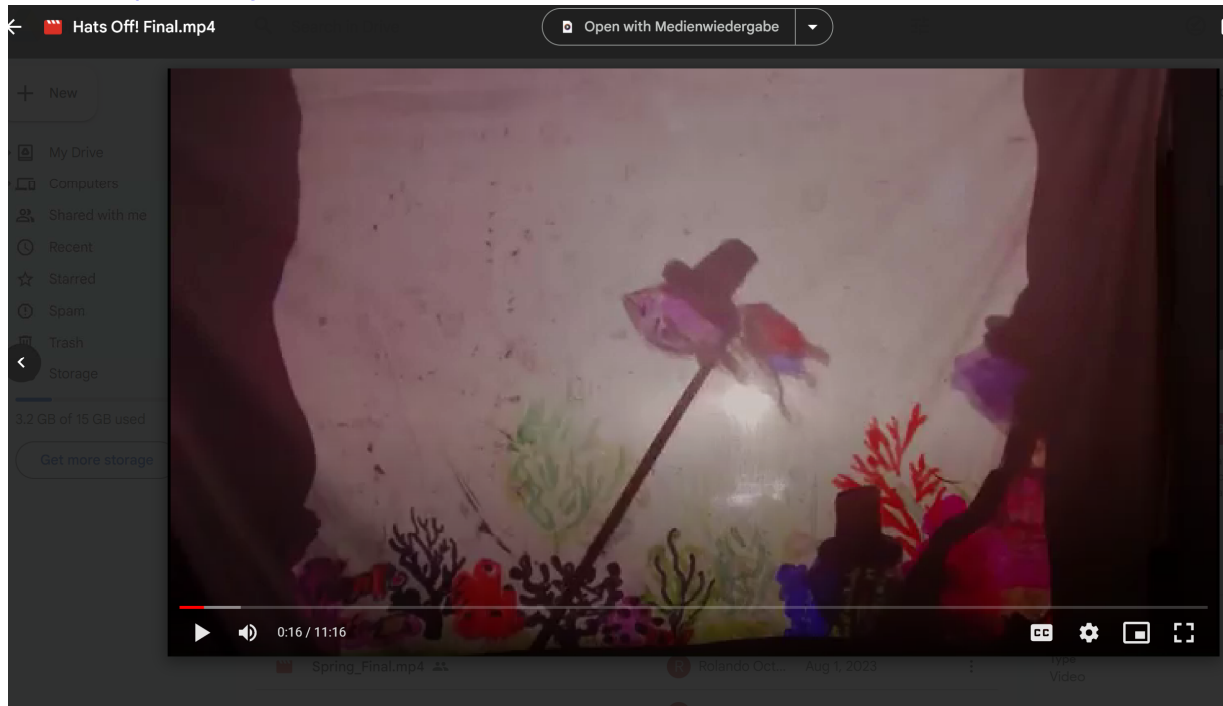
Shadows and Clouds from North Macedonia decided to build up on the challenge of not having people with disabilities in their crew and announced an open call for disabled artists. Ended up including a couple of the submitted artworks into the final performance - as backgrounds, puppets or even full scenes.

Most importantly was trusting the process equally as trusting the results.

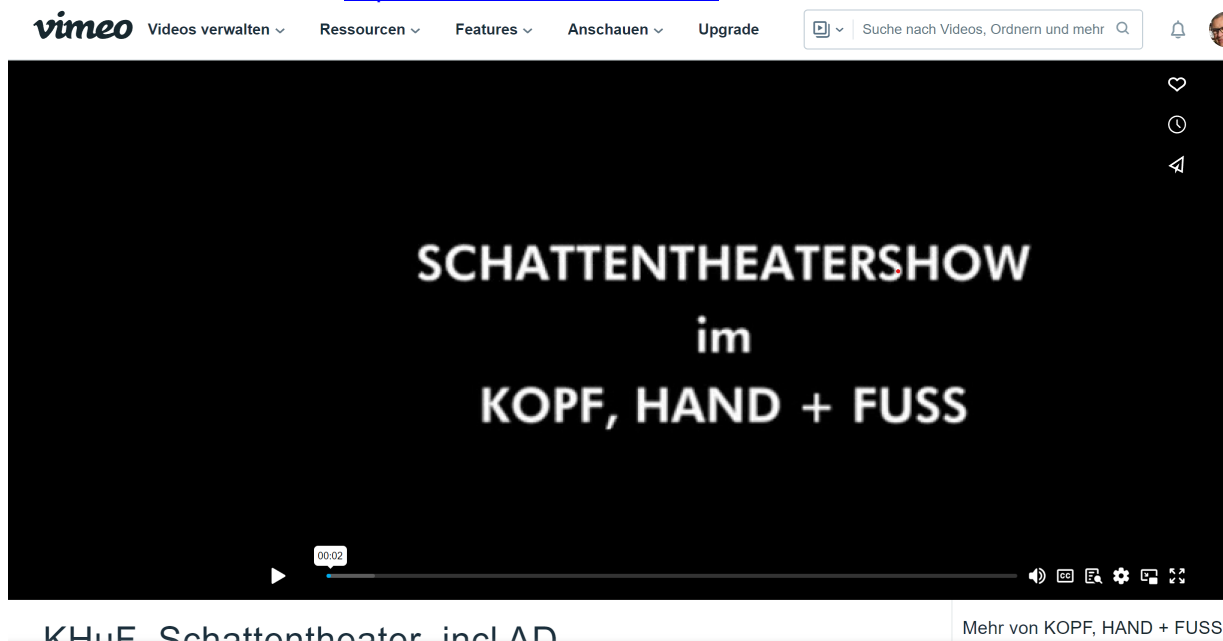
Some teams had more flat management and gave space to everyone to explore and join the performance in a variety of roles. Others followed a more structured pattern, giving the director - again a disabled person - the chance to guide the group towards a common creative discovery.

Here are the results:

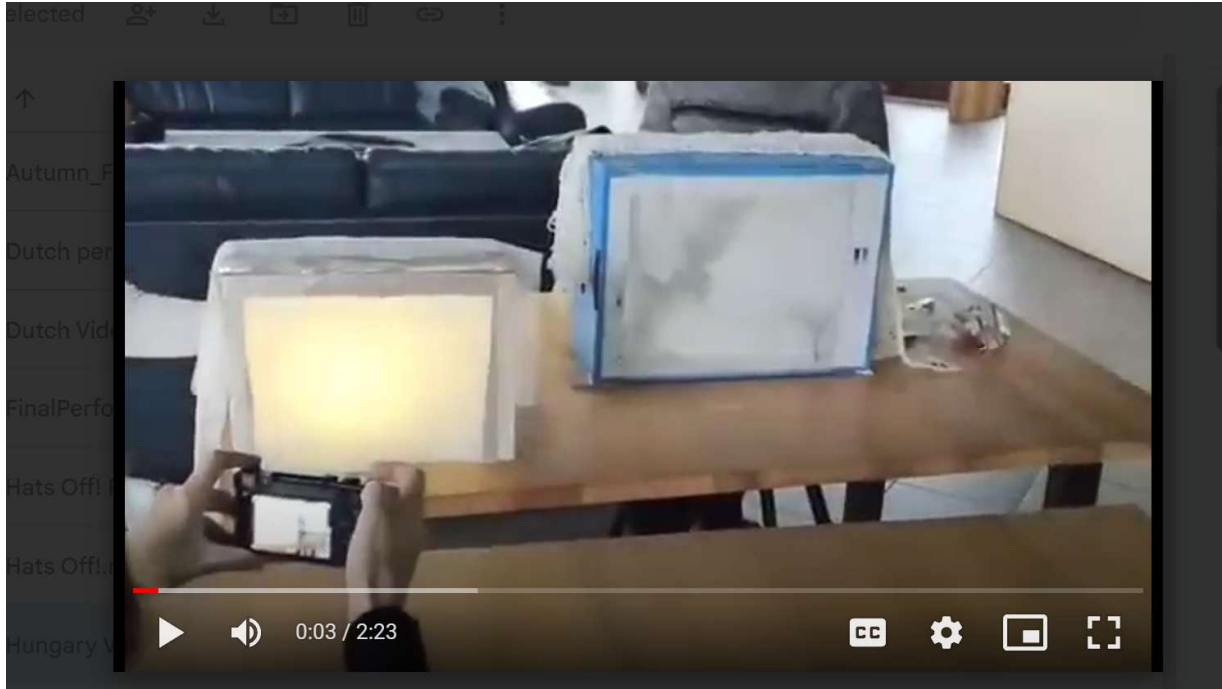
VSBI: Hats off! <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YjHTJY9Up7SuXXsTkDKNjz6ITJ5-Y0-d/view?usp=sharing>



KOPF HAND UND FUSS: <https://vimeo.com/830337373>

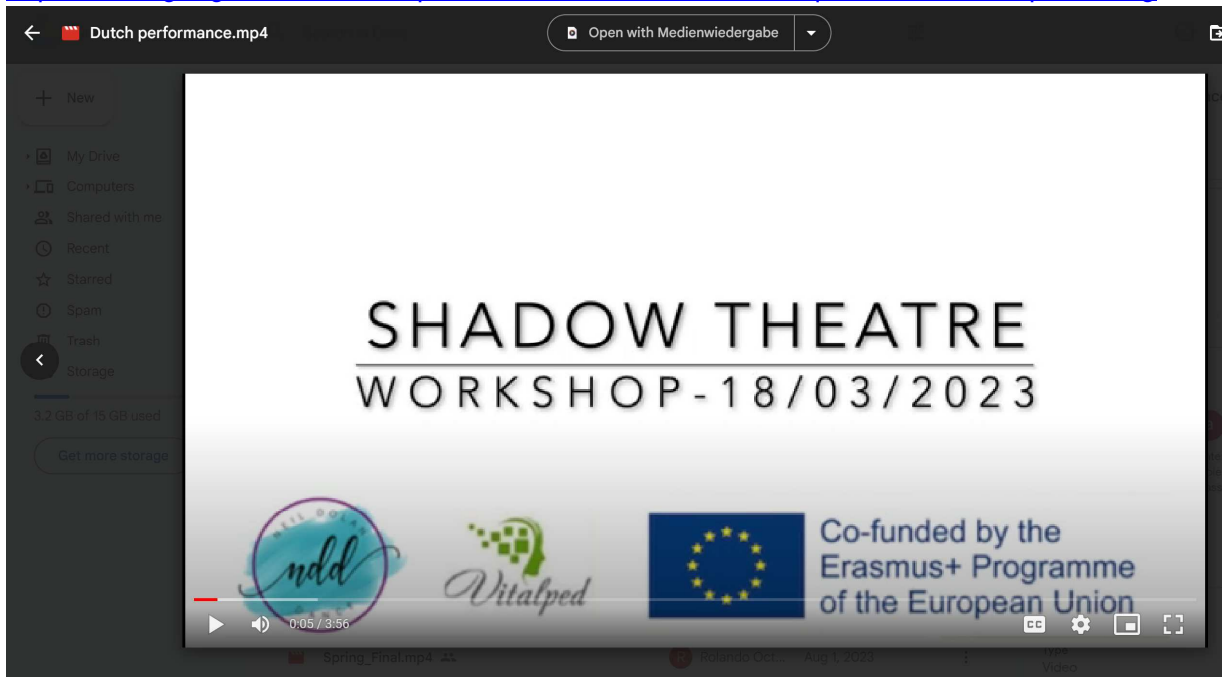


PEOPLE FIRST: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1u-iAlvbrXlx7rSg6Kj6oy3pxCmpAbzd/view?usp=sharing>

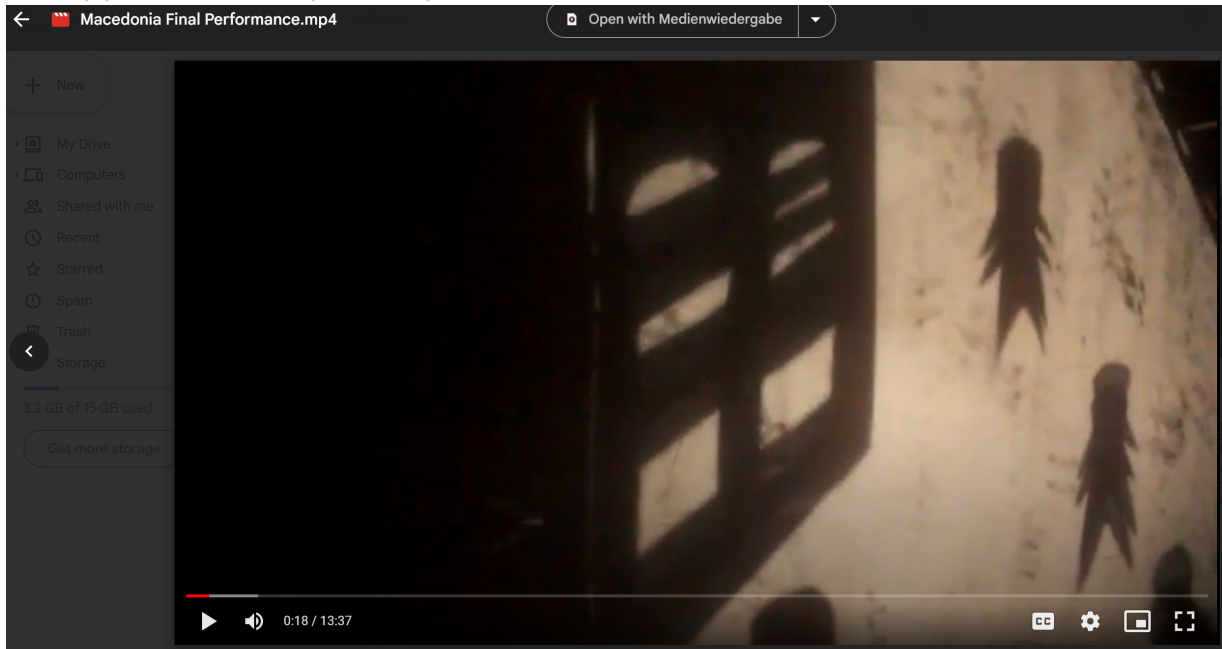


VITAL PED:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/17p2UhvsGxmvsMLJd0Eu1oaiAfqtNuPtW/view?usp=sharing>



SHADOWS AND CLOUDS: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-5FYaDtUHfmvfO3k8z0-6lEH0pgYQiSF/view?usp=sharing>



## Are we ending, or are we actually starting? - Final performances

The word final is associated with a grand finale and a full stop.

But not in our case, not in our ARTcoWORKers project! After taking part in their local training and jointly working on a shadow theater performance, the cohesive and inclusive group joined forces to do a sequel joint performance during the final conference in Pecz.

The groups were formed having equal representation in mind. Each of them consisted of at least one person from all partner countries and 2-3 disabled people. There were groups where assistants did take equal part as a participant in the preparation, while others have remained in the background. This was decided between the assisted person and the assistant only and both groups gladly accepted their decisions. The working space for preparations was the same as the session space, so it was expected that by now the participants are going to feel well accommodated. One thing that was different from many other workshop processes was the silence. Due to the busy days of the training program the floor in Pepita, our working location in Pécs was flooded with noise, songs, different languages, talkative coffee breaks, fruitful working sessions and many other exchanges. But silence was absent. So this space for crafts and working in small groups helped raise the focus, save the energy for key moments and communicate effectively within the small team.

Some general directions were given by the Shadows and Clouds team. The teams were to decide what is the story they wanted to tell, they needed to draw a storyboard, choose from the working materials, delegate roles during the preparation and performance period while having in mind equal participation.

Instead of starting from scratch, coming up with a story, dividing the roles and orchestrating a massive show, where most likely one would wait 30 min to perform only



for a minute, we took a different turn. We built upon a mindset and a feeling that was already present in the group, freshly built during a heart-warming art therapy workshop for crafting teddy bears. There we had it, right in front of us, a group of people already connected to the character of a Teddy Bear so might as well put it under the spotlight and multiply that effect! And have not 1 but 4 more intimate performances, give 4 different Teddy Bears a chance to win the audience's hearts. So they did, all of them in their own way. Some of them traveled the Universe, while others traveled to school. Some of them were in colors while others were black and white. Some of them were accompanied by live music, while others by music from our phones. But they all became dear to us - the audience and most importantly to them - the inclusive group of performers. Why? Because they were all designers, writers, actors, dancers, director, crafters and did it all by themselves, together.

Easier said than done, in a very creative and amusing way of course! All of a sudden you have this very vibrant group of participants, with all sorts of differences among them - their backgrounds, their needs, their nationalities and many more. But all have in common at least one thing - the will to change things for themselves with the help of art. We had participants from Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, North Macedonia and our days were voiced in German, English, Simple language, drawing, dancing, crafting, performing and playing music. We'd switch hats constantly - participants were becoming facilitators and vice-versa. This fluidity was much needed and welcomed as the group started to feel comfortable and ready to explore one's needs, abilities and disabilities. One of the important elements of working on a performance is making sure everyone feels appreciated, which is the next level of inclusion. Nothing is impossible as art knows no boundaries.

Value the process as equally as you'd value the result. In a live performance of a shadow theater the instant validation of getting applause at the end of the show means the world to the participant. But, this is just a single % of the journey they will go back to in their memories. For most of these experiences it takes time for the learning to sink in, weeks sometimes months. But when it comes, performers will mostly remember

moments of the essence of the rehearsals, coming up with the story, crafting the puppets, voicing the movements, solving a challenge they've encountered as a team. They will recall feelings rather than things. And that is the power of performing arts. The ongoing smile it puts on faces even though nothing looks as expected and the performance is just minutes away.

Nevertheless, this compact concept of working on a joint final performance has given proper space for stage time to all participants, no matter their skills and abilities. But most importantly, due to the creative collaboration in a pleasant atmosphere among a smaller team (5 people), the experience is full of enhanced feelings, enrichment and motivation to keep on researching with shadow theater. As it turns out, our final performance ended up opening doors to new beginnings.

## Sustainability of working with shadow performances

Working with arts can be challenging, especially when you are performing live or have limited access to resources. Therefore learning from past experiences can and always should be a welcoming action. As a way of thinking forward and making your next process even more successful we have created this Self-reflection checklist.

We suggest you go through these questions together with your team. Take turns in answering each question and do not interrupt each other, nor try to change each-other's opinions. Summarize the input in a pdf document and store it for further use. If you are feeling creative you may even draw or design something out of the inputs, in order to memorize the process as a collective.

Next time before you, your team or someone else from your organization initiates a similar project, you will have a simple how-to guide and a good place to start.

Happy team session!

## THE PREPARATIONS

How did you prepare for the process?

Where did you need support the most during this phase?

## THE PROCESS

What is the format you've carried out the process?

How often did you meet and for how long?

Who was your team of facilitators?

What was the level of inclusion of people with disabilities?

What is the age range of the participants?

What were the languages used during the rehearsals?

Are there any anecdotes you would like to share?

Any statements that were shared during the rehearsals that come to your mind? (In order for us to quote them in the report)

Any risks you weren't able to mitigate on the spot?

In what sense (if any) was the context of the pandemic included in the performance?

Where did you need support the most during this phase?

## THE RESULT

Are there any links you could share, either of the process or the result?

What is the story / are the stories about?

What materials and light techniques did you use?

How did you decide whether to use language?

Which of these elements are included in your performance?

What are the 3 topics you are addressing with the content of the performance?

What are the 5 keywords you would use to promote this performance on social media?

What are the 3 lessons learned for you after delivering this?

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