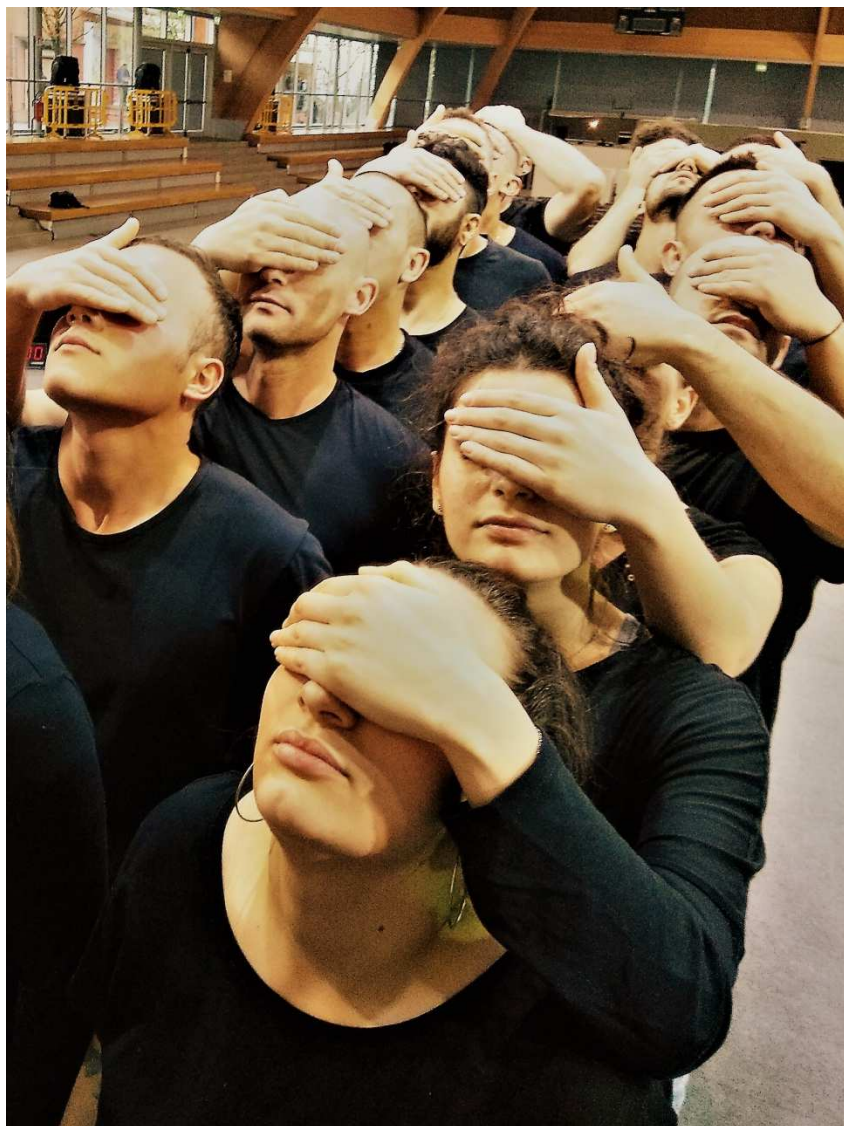


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REcognition of the Social Theatre Operator as a professional to tackle the Risk of social Exclusion

Newsletter N.2 – JUNE 2020



Partner organisations

Oltre Le Parole Onlus (Italy)
Comunità San Patrignano (Italy)
Smashing Times International Centre for the
Arts & Equality (Ireland)
ProSoc Association (Slovenia)
Bielskie Stowarzyszenie Artystyczne Teatr
Grodzki (Poland)
PELE Associacao Social e Cultural (Portugal)
Magenta Consultoria Projects (Spain)

Associated partners

Università Roma Tre (Italy)
Assoc. San Patrignano Scuola e Formazione
(Italy)
Associazione DireFareCambiare (Italy)

***“The Social
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First Joint Staff Training Event in Gijon: food for thought



The first Joint Staff Training Event taking place in Gijon, Spain, from 11 to 14 February 2020 represented not only a success for all project partners, but a good example of how the world of human relations is closely intertwined with that of art and social theatre. The topics on the agenda led participants to investigate the state of the art about the professional figure of Social Theater Operator and describe the related requirements, attitudes and tasks to perform that role according to the experience of the different European countries involved in the project. Each participant was actively involved in a highly creative working session lasting four days, which allowed everyone to throw light on those human and artistic processes implying the meeting with the other.

The training event included also a group visit at the Higienico Papel Teatro, a theatre created with the aim to strengthen artistic creativity and community integration. For all participants it represented a highly stimulating experience. The tour in Espacio Talud de la Eria in the town of Oviedo further widened the training perspective as it provided for an excellent example of regional support to different types of entrepreneurial initiatives.

Last but not least, the European Theatre Fair for children made the exchange experience in Gijon even more pleasant. Every year, different performances take place in various theatres throughout the city and are also staged in schools and centres of learning. One of the main aims of the fair is to highlight new theatrical works and to encourage promoters and schedulers to contract them.

The scrupulous monitoring of the project progress, the willingness to overcome common challenges and the opportunity to achieve the same goal, are in line with the founding principles of the social theatre operator's mission. In a world which is longing for true relationships and real changes, the training event showed how human cohesion can overcome any divergence of opinions in the name of a culture of giving and solidarity.

This is only the first step: next appointment with the RESTORE project will be at the transnational meeting taking place on 22 and 23 June 2020. Due to the current pandemic, the event will be entirely online. However, the project does not stop as well as our work on the three intellectual outputs!



COVID-19: The RESTORE project does not stop

The Covid-19 pandemic is hitting the whole world in a very dramatic way. Despite the hard times and the rules of social distancing, probably the hardest one to follow in nowadays' society and culture, our project did not stop.

Now, it is time to rise again, stronger than ever and even more committed to the project's goal: society asks for it.

In this newsletter you will find all the most relevant project news and trends in social theatre during the Covid-19 crisis.

Defining the figure of Social Theatre Operator: first results from the preliminary research phase



Who is the STO? What are its specific features and requirements? What kind of services does it deliver? The preliminary research carried out by partners started to give the first answers to this questions.

The main goal of this phase of the project was to outline the state of the art at European and national level concerning the employability and professional condition of the STO, as well as to define the standard requirements of the STO professional profile.

In Spain, it is common to talk about “teatro aplicado” and “teatro comunitario” as if they were interchangeable terms; indeed there is a slight difference between these two expressions.

The first one is seen as the umbrella term, which encompasses community theatre: a theatre from, by and for the community. Community theatre, in general, aims to channel and catalyze the artistic expression of community members, for which they have the mediation of an artist or “facilitator”. Similarly, Teatr Grodzki has been recently contacting representatives of local institutions supporting disadvantaged persons that work closely with theatre and art practitioners. Similarly, Magenta Consultoria has been contacting different local, regional and national organisations which work with and support different disadvantaged groups through various theatre practices.

Hereafter you can find the first definitions of “Social Theatre Operator” formulated by the two organizations as a result of the preliminary research phase.

Heading towards the second Transnational Project Meeting

The second TPM, which will open the second phase of the project, is expected to take place online on 22 and 23 June 2020.

The meeting will be aimed to jointly work on the three intellectual outputs: besides commenting the various aspects of the professional profile of Social Theatre Operator, partner organisations will start discussing in detail the structure of the training course for STO (O2/A1) and identifying the key competences for trainers (O2/A2).

“STO is a person who understands the psyche – mind and feelings of workshop participants and is able to build a community which creates art.”

Director of a state puppet theatre

“The most important and essential feature of the STO as a professional is the ability to create good relations with socially vulnerable people. STO is someone who can manage the group and finds appropriate working methods for everyone, despite participants’ different needs and constraints.”

Director of a self-help centre

“STO must be sensitive and open. He/she must also have practical skills and knowledge of how to work with a group. The only way to find out if a specific person we want to employ is suitable for working with disabled people is to put him/her into work with the target group and see what happens.”

Director of an occupational therapy workshop

Coronavirus and theatre: social support is staged

"Social theater will be an important tool for social inclusion, participation and integration in the coming months".

The theater becomes a laboratory where one can sublimate the dismay and disorientation, and overcome the psychological barriers that one builds around oneself when fear becomes unmanageable.



Rome, 20 May (Askanews) - "WHO and the Ministry of Health have recently published news on the psychological impact of lockdown and post Covid-19-pandemic: fears, loss of control, social stigma towards particularly vulnerable people. Let's think about the elderly, immigrants and foreigners, individuals with psychological frailties, as well as consider the emotional stress that can affect those who are or have been at the forefront in fighting the pandemic (nurses, doctors and health professionals), consequently seen as possible "carriers of contagion" by ordinary people. "Social theater will be an important tool for social inclusion, participation and integration in the coming months". This is the opinion of Pascal La Delfa, playwright, director, teacher and facilitator of theater workshops, president of "Oltre le parole" association based in Rome, the RESTORE project's lead partner.

In this moment, social theatre becomes more relevant than ever to combat social exclusion, which gets even worse during times of crisis. The association, founded in 2003, has made its experts available to carry out "theater in the social" projects at local level in the immediate future, to help the most vulnerable people in overcoming their fears and post-quarantine difficulties and avoiding discrimination and isolation: all through the arts in general and theater in particular.

An answer to those who think that theater and art are only "fun", an opportunity for some entertainment workers to get back into the game by deepening their skills: theater is social.

Social theater, "mission" operators. There are many theater operators in the social sphere, experts who are able to operate precisely in situations where integration is more difficult, where fighting commonplaces becomes fundamental to achieve true coexistence, where integration can be (re-) activated by tackling through theatrical practice. Fears that can be overcome thanks to specific training.

Not (only) performance "for" but "with" stakeholders, as well as numerous experiences testify in Italy: with populations affected by natural disasters, starting from the 1976 Friuli earthquake and going up to L'Aquila and Amatrice. The theater becomes a "laboratory" where one can sublimate the dismay and disorientation, and overcome the psychological barriers that one builds around oneself when fear becomes unmanageable. Social theater operators are professionals who work in the social area, often in teams with other professionals (psychologists, educators, social workers) and use their expertise in the sector resulting from specific studies, as well as their artistic skill.

“Special training for STOs is fundamental, especially because I found myself working with a fragile humanity, and the theatre can be so powerful that it must be correctly and consciously managed with competence and measure”

“The activity of the Social Theatre Operator does not stop at working with its users, but it impacts the whole territory and society”

Inspiring inputs from the Italian round table

The round table on the figure of the Social Theatre Operator in Italy took place on 27 April 2020. Due to the current pandemic, however, it was carried out online instead of taking place at the Faculty of Education of Roma Tre University, as originally planned.

The event allowed different representatives of the social theatre sector to debate and confront their opinions. Participants included prof. G. Scaramuzza from the Roma Tre University, prof. A. Rossi Ghiglione from the University of Turin, Prof. G. Malini Innocenti from the Catholic University of Milan, Prof. Roberto Prestigiacomo from the University of S. Antonio (U.S.A.) and prof. A. Pontremoli from the University of Turin, as well as members of the Artistic Centre of Comunità San Patrignano and the National Academy of Theater and Art in the social area. The round table, which lasted 150 minutes and took place on the Zoom online platform, was moderated by Pascal La Delfa, president of the project leader organisation Oltre le Parole Onlus.

At the end of the discussions, participants were able to ask questions to the individual speakers and receive an immediate feedback. The event was greeted with great interest by the speakers and the guests who participated as listeners.

The main points foreseen for the round table discussion entitled "Who is the Social Theatre Operator", were the following:

1) Who is the Social Theatre Operator? 2) To take stock of the "state of the art" at (European and) national level with regard to the employability and the professional conditions of the STO, also taking inspiration from the partial results of the research carried out insofar; 3) Define the requirements and areas of the professional profile of the Social Theatre Operator in social work. The following points, instead, will be the basis for future discussions.

The roundtable started with a first round of speeches from the rapporteurs, who briefly mentioned their work and made some considerations on the three points. A second round of interventions followed, which was led by the speakers who commented on the previous interventions with their personal experience. In particular, they started from the provisional definition agreed by the RESTORE project team during the first transnational meeting, which was also the result of the research carried out for the Intellectual Output 1, as follows: "Social Theater Operators facilitate theatrical and creative processes for people of any age, with different backgrounds and conditions. The main focus of the activities should be on the process itself with respect to the quality of the performance, aiming to favor empowerment, interpersonal relationships, and personal awareness and to improve participants' quality of life and social inclusion."



“SOTTOVOCI”: San Patrignano Theater Company in the post-Covid era



The Coronavirus emergency that hit Italy at the end of February 2020 obliged Comunità San Patrignano to immediately close all external ways of access with the aim to preserve the health, safety and security of its community residents. Therefore, theatrical activities were temporarily suspended.

However, in order to ensure stable employment for the twenty young people working in the theater company, they were invited to participate to an online initiative where they would be protagonists of some theatrical readings taken from the book “*Sottovoci*” (whispered), which collects stories of men and women of San Patrignano, written in the first person by the protagonist of each story. The volume, published by Mondadori, includes an inspiring introduction by the Italian writer Marco Missiroli.

The initiative “SOTTOVOCI” will start taking place on a weekly basis from the second half of May 2020. Theatrical readings will be available

online on the Facebook page of the WeFree programme, the drug use disorder prevention project designed and implemented by Comunità San Patrignano.

With the aim of showing their solidarity, some Italian artists and intellectuals are also participating in the project, which represents for them a way to say “our theater hasn't stopped anyway”. Among them, Marco Missiroli, the journalist Angela Iantosca, the actor Francesco Apolloni, the theater coach Valentina Capone, the communication manager of *La Scala* in Milan Lanfranco Licauli, the singer Marco Guazzone and Stefano Tè, artistic director of the Theater of Winds in Modena (UBU prize for the best staging 2019 with the show “*Moby Dick*”).

If you want to follow the theatrical readings, please follow this link <https://www.facebook.com/wefree.network/>.

“Art Connects”: the Irish theatre goes online



Many theatre companies decided to go online as they seek to adapt to COVID-19 lockdowns. This is the case of the Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality in Dublin, which since April 2020 has been sharing a new online series of curated arts content, newsletters and events open to artists and citizens from all over the world.

Every day from Monday to Saturday, they also send out a daily social media post with recommendations on positive stories and ideas for the current times. Besides, every Wednesday they send out “Art Connects: At Home with Smashing Times”, a weekly themed newsletter with inspiring artworks, poems, ideas, articles, and suggestions, along with news from the centre and a weekly blog on a specific topic. Topics include A Reflection on Change, Nature, Time and The Arts for Positive Mental Health and Well-being.

Moreover, they planned a series of events online to livestream theatre, film, discussion and chat. Livestream events include Tell Them Our Names, a screening of a film directed by Mary Moynihan, followed by discussion with special guests Clodagh Finn, author of *A Time to Risk All*, the incredible untold story of Mary Elmes, the Irish woman who saved children from Nazi concentration camps and Mary Moynihan, writer, theatre and film-maker and Artistic Director.

The next phase: Intellectual Output 2

After the professional profile of the STO has been defined and partners have shared their good practices and methodologies during the three Peer Learning Workshops, the RESTORE project team will focus on the next phase: the development, test and validation of a standard training course eventually leading to the qualification of Social Theatre Operator. Pilot courses will be run by the staff of partner organisations in Italy, Ireland, Portugal and Poland and will be implemented in two phases.

In the first phase lasting 180 hours, participants will work in groups and learn the theoretical basis and practical approaches

of Social and Community Theatre. In the second phase lasting 120 hours, they will put into practice the learning outcomes and apply the methodology on different groups of disadvantaged adult learners in specific theatrical workshops. The learning activities will be then evaluated both by students and participants to the theatrical workshops and the evaluation results will serve as the basis to adjust the methodology and training program, as well as the final version of the second intellectual output (IO2).

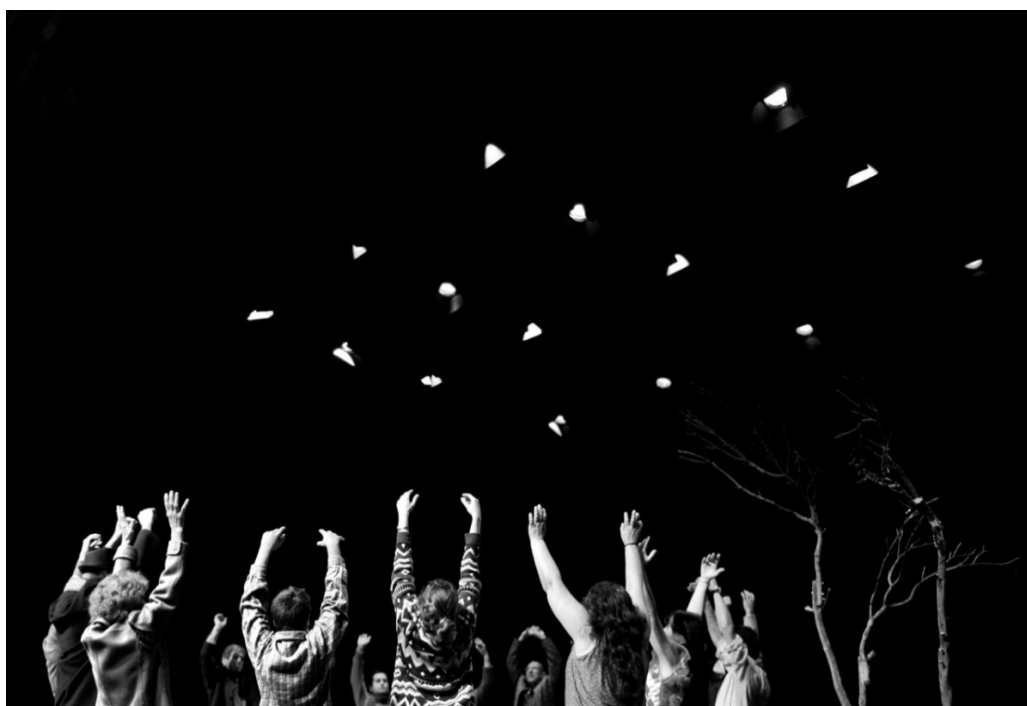
Next RESTORE round tables, stay tuned!

11 June 2020
18:30 pm - Meet
Spain

17 June 2020
12:00 am – Zoom
Poland

18 June 2020
16:00 pm – Zoom
Portugal

24 June 2020
15:00 pm – Ljubljana
Slovenia



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For further information about the RESTORE project, please write to: info@restore-project.com

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