EDUCATORS' RESOURCE PACK

SSSLIP

Ziguzajg
Arts for Children & Young People
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# PRODUCTION DETAILS

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With special thanks to the team at Spazju Kreattiv, Academie voor Theater en Dans and the artistic leader of the Mime Deparment Loes van der Pligt.
Synopsis

Two ssslippery characters live in a very ssslippery world. Shloooop! They just lost their balance! Plonk! They just missed a footing! But then they slide smoothly along the slick surfaces all right. Ssslip is a performance for children and their guardians where physicality is the stimulus for a fascinating adventure. They will be immersed in this poetic exploration of stability and instability, driven by a desire to encourage play and risk in young audiences. Ssslip is a spectacular theatrical experience combining the physical, the visual and the musical in a way that makes it impossible to Ssslip your mind so easily.
WHAT IS ALL THIS SSSLIPERY BUSINESS?

How often were you playing as a child and heard phrases such “Be careful!” “Not so far!” “Get down!”? Surely parents, teachers or other authoritative figures have at some point yelled these comments at you fearing you will get hurt. Yet recent research shows that children would have to play outside for three hours per day for approximately 10 years before they were likely to have one medically-treated (and likely minor) injury. As a contrast children who engage in risky play at a young age learn more intuitively about the world and how it works while learning about themselves and what their limits are.

With this in mind we came up with the idea of Ssslip! Slipping can be both related to danger but also humor, shock and perhaps then laughter. Someone slipping may be regarded as failure but what if someone chooses to slip on purpose...because they know they can catch themselves? We choose to slip because this movement has a lot of connotations which we would like to explore. What are the borders? We discovered that this same movement, explored from a variety of angles, has the possibility of moving us to new places. Furthermore, it is also replete with metaphorical and poetic connotations for both young and old.
WHY IS THIS WORK BEING CREATED?  
WHY NOW?  
WHAT MAKES IT RELEVANT?

In the past decade ample research has been done regarding risky play and young children. The term risky only appears in recent literature with certain ways of playing earning this status only now; in a very safety obsessed society. The main aim of all the literature around this topic was to create awareness about how risk, adventure and thrill in playing is healthy and even vital for holistic child development. Parents and teachers are often too concerned about injuries or in the case of outside playing traffic and the threat of kidnapping. However over and over again research showed that parents perceptions about danger is often disproportionate to actual dangers.

In view of all this Ssflip aims to spark children to play more adventurously! We hope that through watching us perform the children will experience the excitement of risk and embark on doing so themselves. Especially now! When green spaces in Malta are on the decrease and children’s outdoor play becomes increasingly only more an indoor activity. Taking away children´s play spaces, filling up their free time with organised activities and supervising children at all times means that they are not able to draw upon their own skills and resources.
WHO ARE KATAPULT?
Katapult are Tom and Ruth, a duo creating physical and visual theatre. Currently we are in the same education together. We study mime at the Amsterdam University of Arts where we are trained as performers and makers. To catapult means to hurl or launch something with energy and this is what we intend to do with our first performance. Furthermore, we are both balls of spirited energy so we thought it an apt name.

WHAT IS MIME?
As opposed to acting, were you start from text and psychology, mime starts from physicality. It starts from your body. So an actor can only talk and a mimer can only move? No it’s not exclusive it’s just start that our starting point are different. We work and create from different approaches. A mimer is a physical actor.

AAAND IS THAT THE SAME AS PANTOMIME?
Definitely not. Pantomime is solely related to the art or technique of conveying emotions, actions, feelings, etc... by gestures without speech. In fact people often ask us if we are doing the classic hands-on-imaginary-wall thing or "pulling the rope”. What we do is more physical theatre and that can still involve text, sounds and so on.
HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THIS THEME?

At the mime we learn how to start from just a little spark, a little idea. That's enough as long as it moves you. So that's what we did. We thought of focusing first on the physical form because we are both enthusiastic about that as a starting point for creation. We chose one clear but challenging movement: slipping. There is something about this movement. Someone on the street slips accidentally and tries to hide it and act 'normal'. The fact that people try to hide it, thrills us! Why is it so embarrassing to slip? And why are there big yellow signs that warn us for a slippery surfaces?

HOW DOES THE FACT THAT YOU ARE BORN IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES EFFECT YOUR WORK?

Oh, greatly! Ruth (Maltese) was raised in a country which is sunny, emotional and conservative while Tom (Dutch) was raised in the rain, surrounded with order and open-mindedness. All these qualities of course have their positive and negative sides but for us this combination is great. We infect each other a lot and our cultural differences make our work multilayered. Often we press each other’s buttons and challenge the other.

WHAT DOES YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS LOOK LIKE?

This is the first time that we are creating a performance together. But we have been working together in class for two years. This developed a strong physical language and a common ground between us. Therefore for this show we started from a form which is physical and challenging because that gets the both of us going! From the idea of slipping we created physical exercises and then creative material flowed out of there.

WHAT KIND OF RESEARCH IS INVOLVED?

The research for us is always highly physical in the firm belief that the body transcends language. We are also always very conscious of images; those we create with our body and those we create with costume, set, colour, music etc… While we both love text we do believe that the physical and the visual awaken a more unconscious reaction from the audience. Reactions that do not come from the mind (for once!) but from somewhere else. You’ll find out where!
ACTIVITY 1
If it's sunny, go outside!

Props: Blindfold for each child and a medium-sized soft ball

Form a circle.
The teacher has the ball in hand.
The ball is passed round from one student to the next until it arrives back to the teacher. Easy!

Now put on the blindfold.
The teacher asks the children to do the same... pass the ball round in a circle but this time with a blind fold.
This will encourage the students to start moving away from perceiving everything visually and to open the other senses.
The ball should go around in a circle three times or however necessary but enough so that the students are comfortable with what is going on.

Now still in the circle we take one small step back.
So now students might need to extend their arm further in order for them to pass on the ball to the other.
When they are comfortable with this we can take another step back.

Olé we now start throwing the ball!
It's ok if the ball falls! Find it with eyes closed with the guidance of the teacher or of a friend who feels the ball next to her foot.

The final step is not to throw the ball to the person who is next to you but to call out someone's name in a circle and throw it to them!

NO PEAKING ALLOWED.
ACTIVITY 2
If it's still sunny, stay outside!

The teacher should watch the video Fighting Monkey - "Practice Ball" on youtube first. This video demonstrates a very high level of this game however children are capable to do it in their own way. Ideally try it with someone else first so that you experience the game yourself. Like this you can teach it more comfortably.

Props: Small soft ball with a little rope attached. The ball should be soaked in water so the children play they now and then feel some droplets of water.

Pair up! Child A has the rope with the ball at the end in hand and Child B stands a meter away, still but ready to go. Feet are parallel, not next to each other though in front of each other. This will allow the child more mobility.

Child A starts to do a turning motion with the rope in order to try to touch the body of Child B. Child B does not want to be touched by the ball. But she also cannot move her feet too much from the position they are in. Therefore Child B must remain grounded with the two feet and only move the rest of the body (as much as they can). This can be done by leaning back or forward for example, or ducking down or arching to the left and then to the right. All this in attempt to avoid the ball.

This is not a competition and the ball will surely touch the child at some point. Especially in the beginning until the brain orients itself to what is going on. At some point the brain orients itself so then you start doing the same movement patterns to avoid the ball. When you notice the children are doing this encourage them to move their bodies in a different way. Then they switch.

When playing this game if you are the one holding the rope there is a tendency to only hold the ball in the mid-trunk or lower-trunk of the body because that is the most comfortable. It's ok to start with this but then encourage the children to try other parts of the body like the upper trunk or the lower leg. The lower leg stimulates jumping and the upper part stimulates movement in the head.
ABOUT ŽIGUŽAJG
The Festival’s vision is to position the creative arts for children and young people at the core of Malta’s creative ecology. It does this by:

- Presenting an annual programme of high-artistic excellence that celebrates creativity and diversity in the arts;

- Nurturing audience development and active participation through our practices;

- Providing professional development opportunities for artists seeking to work in the sector;

- Developing a national repertoire of creative work for children and young people;

- Championing social inclusion and accessibility in the creative industry;

- Establishing international networks and collaborations with strategic partners.
Ssslip will be presented as part of the ŻiguŻajg Season at Spazju Kreativ in February 2020