



## Questionnaire for theatre expert

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Please answer the following questions giving specific examples where possible:

### **Experience and Expertise**

Outline your experience and expertise in the area of theatre

I have been involved with theater since I was 10 years old – I started in my mother’s theater studio – Iliana Baliyska, who is also an actress, and then continued in Boncho Urumov’s studio in “Slavyanska beseda” – the best theater pedagogue, God bless him. I was in 2001 approved for training at the National academy for theater and film arts – “Drama theater acting”. I used to teach even while studying there – my tutors were giving me assignments. Soon after graduating I started a theater studio “Dramedi” – I have been teaching kids and young people at an age between 11 and 25 for 6 years now. We have had more than 10 performances and many awards from festivals. I also manage a private theater troupe base on playback theater. Each year I place two theater performances and have about 15-20 events per season.



Project number: 2014-1-BG01-KA201-001555



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What has been the impact of theatre on your own life?

For me theater is life. I have been on stage since very young age and this have made me very communicative and easy in making friends. The stage is a grand challenge and each performance is a small death, after which we are stronger and more confident. Theater gave me a lot – meaning, love, tears, pain, ordeals, ecstasy, inspirations and catharsis. I cannot imagine life without theater and art. I consider it as my mission to present theater to people and to give them a chance to be involved in theater (professionally and non-professionally) – to be on stage, to develop spiritually and socially.

What impact do you think theatre can have on our lives and what you consider to be its instrumental value (i.e. the way theatre can be used in particular settings rather than theatre as art or entertainment)?

Theater is much more than art and entertainment, even when we are just spectators. It influences at a subconscious level, especially when the playwriting is a classical and/or valuable one, and the directing – with a good taste. The theatrical experience always makes an influence, including in negative ways. There are plays, which are perfunctory and there are audiences who search exactly this type of performances. Something like theater “chalga<sup>1</sup>”.

The use of theater as a tool for personal development has been practiced since old ages. Dealing with any type of art has a positive influence. Theater however, being a symbiosis of several arts, influences positively even to a greater extent. It develops concentration, skills for controlling the attention, liberation, sense of taste, aesthetic feeling, rhythm, flexibility, expressive speech, correct speech, presentation skills, ability to express oneself and many others. Theater exercises are recommendable for all ages, because they fill in educational gaps (youngsters) and fix creativity shortages (adults).

What strategies do you use and how do you work with hard to reach groups or people who are not usually engaged with theatre or who might be reluctant to take part?

My groups for enthusiasts (amateurs) are always open, the admission is all year round and there is NO casting. I consider that the word “casting” scares people and would stop the less confident.

The first visit is also always free.

<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chalga>



I welcome anyone who would like to try. There are occasions when a person needs to watch for awhile, to get accustomed to the group, prior to getting on stage. I approach all cases individually. Sometimes a person needs to be challenged, to be “pushed” a little, others need to wait a bit, to be given time.

### **Theatre and Working with visually impaired people**

Describe any experience you have had of working with visually impaired people either with theatre or in some other capacity.

I have no previous experience with work with visually impaired people, neither in theatrical or other aspects. I consider them people as all the rest of us, with certain particularities, yes, but not more different.

How was working with visually impaired people (if there was such work) different to the way you would normally work?

The differences in the manner of work are related to the language used, the way in explaining things. The visually impaired lack the possibility to communicate with looks and gestures, which requires careful use of words. The movements are also more limited and alternative ways for managing the body on the stage have to be used.

What impact has working with visually impaired young people (if there was such work) had on your own practice?

I am positive that the influence, which theater work has on the visually impaired kids, is not more different than its influence on the sighted kids – self-confidence is developed, communication skills are improved, concentration is increased, it is good for the studying process, creativity and spontaneity are increased – so important for harmonious life. Being involved with arts increases the self-esteem and gives a new meaning to life. These activities are fun and a kind of an oasis in the stressed daily routine, which both sighted and visually impaired kids have to deal with.

What do you think is the value for visually impaired young people of working through theatre?

The visually impaired kids will be happy to meet various and interesting people, as are those who lead such exercises. The visually impaired kids often communicate with a limited circle of people and it is important to broaden the scope and number of their acquaintances. Second, for most of them art is not a daily practice and submerging into a different world would be enriching and entertaining for them. Third, the preparation of a play is long and hard (even if it



is also fun) and getting to the premier is a challenge, the successful achievement of which awards us with an uplifting and positive feeling. The faith in one's own abilities is increased. The same goes for the level of creativity.

## **VISION**

What do you think we should consider regarding the use of theatre in the VISION project?

The organization of the process must be well considered and consistent. The place where the activity takes place should be one and the same, as well as the day and hour. It is important for a sustainable environment to be created, unchangeable, in order for space to be granted to the new and unknown theatrical art to develop and unfold. Work should be done delicately, allowing the new dramatists to get used to the leading experts, to get to know them and to relax. Rules and discipline should be imposed from the mere beginning in order for chaos and aggression to be avoided. The kids need to understand that only together they can reach a happy finale – a premier. Visits to theater performances and meetings with actors should also be organized. A new way should be discovered for the latter to become acquainted and even work with visually impaired children. A special approach for moving the body and mastering the stage setting should be used. Strict protocol from the exercises should be kept and the process to be monitored under the supervision of a specialist.

What do you think could be the impact of this work?

In addition to everything mentioned above (gaining confidence, self-assurance, creativity, concentration, etc.) it is quite possible some of the kids to demonstrate greater talents and to be directed towards a university for arts. Others could discover more about themselves and about what they want from life, because the topics raised during theater exercises are universal and the issues touched are related to everything that concerns the human beings. Theater exercises would increase the v.i. kids' general intelligence and culture. They would broaden their role capacity. The participants will enter various roles during the exercises and this will enrich their life role repertoire. They will become more flexible in their everyday life routine and will discover parts in themselves they have never used before. They will visit theater plays and will nurture love for this art, which will continue after the project work is done. They will learn a lot about the theater work and this will make them smarter and braver in everyday life communication. They will become competent spectators and will know in details what a theater process comprises of. They will become more artistic and will express themselves in a better way, will enrich their vocabulary and will speak with a clearer diction. They will learn the gestures used by the sighted people and it will be easier for them to adapt themselves in the



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company of sighted people. They will have confidence and will feel pride from their achievements.

**Please attach a current CV with this questionnaire!**

Thanking you for your time and consideration:

The V.I.S.I.ON team

*"This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein."*



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