

2. 'W2D' WING [Theatre]

"... a poor player

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage."

Shakespeare: Macbeth



The Will to Dream (2007-9)

Funded as a cooperation project through the Grundtvig 1 programme of the EU

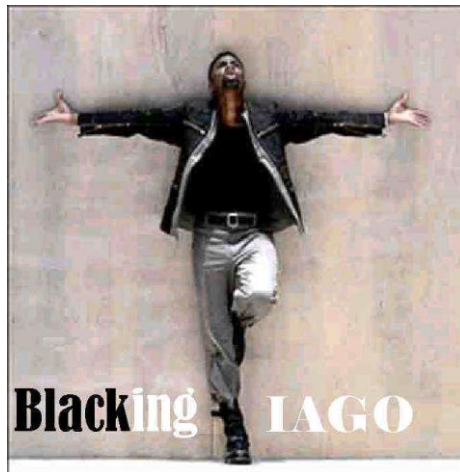
Coordinator:	Dr Alan Clarke
Coordinating organisation:	City College Manchester/ The Manchester College
Partners/countries involved:	9 partners from Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Sweden, UK (England & Northern Ireland)
Partner meetings:	2007: Vienna, Austria; Oslo, Norway. 2008: Sofia, Bulgaria (with the PAN Network); Vilnius, Lithuania. 2009: Stockholm, Sweden; Belfast, Northern Ireland.
Publications:	"The Moral Compass" (DVD), W2D Journal (1 edition)

The Will to Dream project was a very different initiative from PAN, focused primarily on the delivery of theatre/ drama & video in European prisons, particularly drama practice. Its action centred around the 6 transnational partner meetings, which included presentations, practical workshops, and prison visits - the Belfast meeting took place almost entirely inside prisons. The video aspect was covered by animation and video storytelling workshops, with regular video & film showings. A number of theatre performances were organised, including by prisoners themselves, the most invigorating being W2D's funding of a production by inmates of Lovech Prison, the first in a Bulgarian prison. The final DVD, "The Moral Compass", reflected the varied partner experiences, the range of activities undertaken and the end-products produced. An additional bonus was the involvement of the W2D coordinator in developing a unit on Prison Drama in the Foundation Degree on Contemporary Theatre Practice at the Arden School of Theatre, Manchester.

W2D CELL 1

Shakespeare in Brixton Prison

by Alan Clarke



Poster of a production with Brixton inmates by London Shakespeare Workout

My first experience of prison art - of prison even - was when I was invited to attend a drama workshop in Brixton Prison organised by Bruce Wall, the Artistic Director of *The Shakespeare Prison Workout*, which has been operating in this field for many years. I have been involved in performing arts for most of my life, including running drama courses in further education, so I was well aware of the benefits that such activities can have for the disadvantaged and underprivileged. I was therefore especially interested in finding out what possibilities there were in an area I knew little about.

Having gone through the usual security checks at the entrance to this typical and rather depressing 19th century prison building, the last thing I expected was to be shown into a proper drama studio, but that's where I found myself. Bruce had persuaded the prison governor to convert a disused canteen and was holding regular drama sessions with inmates there. You could tell how much the mainly Afro-Caribbean prisoners appreciated the change from their normal environment as soon as they entered the room, and led by Bruce's irrepressible enthusiasm we were soon actively engaged in a range of drama activities, including hurling Shakespearean oaths at one another.

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

I was able to appreciate the contrast with the inmates' normal lives when I unfortunately sprained my ankle joining in an exercise more suited to those younger and fitter than myself, and was taken to the medical wing. This was in fact a converted cell in the midst of the two-storey security wing and I was made all too aware of the oppressive environment in which the prisoners spent most of their time.

Not put off by my initial experience, I began working with Bruce on developing a proposal for a European drama project - using my experience of organising a number of European educational arts programmes - and frequently witnessed sessions at Brixton Prison. During one of my visits I had an experience which more than anything convinced me of the importance of the arts in helping prisoners to cope with life behind bars and to re-integrate into life outside when they are released.

The actor Mark Rylance, known for his work as director of the Globe Theatre and later for playing Thomas Cromwell in the TV version of *Wolf Hall*, had been working with the mainly Afro-Caribbean inmates on Shakespeare texts. On this occasion one of the prisoners, a huge man who looked more like an American footballer than an actor, performed a speech for the rest of the group. He began in a quiet intense way, speaking clearly and precisely:

*"The crown o' the earth doth melt. My lord!
O, wither'd is the garland of the war,
The soldier's pole is fall'n: young boys and girls
Are level now with men; the odds is gone,
And there is nothing left remarkable
Beneath the visiting moon."*

It was not as might be expected something from Othello or a similar tragic role but Cleopatra's lament on the death of Antony. The impressive thing about it was not just the sensitive performance but the totally wrapped absorption of his audience: no embarrassment or mocking of a man playing a woman in the macho context of a high security prison but a total appreciation of an actor's skill. For me, this served as a marker for all the subsequent experiences I had of prison arts and the impact it could have on those behind bars.

W2D CELL 2

"The Moral Compass"

by Mike Moloney

[published in the W2D Journal]

The main outcome of The Will to Dream project was a DVD capturing some of the best practice in prison theatre. It was divided into four sections: 1) Why Prison drama? 2) Getting In, Staying In; 3) European Practice; and 4) Productions in Prisons. Over 25 examples from a dozen countries provided a comprehensive range of the diverse ways in which drama was being delivered in European jails. The inspiration behind this concept was Mike Moloney, the creative director of The Prison Art Foundation of Northern Ireland, who unfortunately died in a domestic accident in April 2013, shortly before he was due to join me in a meeting of another project in Lithuania. Mike taught me almost everything I know about delivering arts to prisoners, and I was honoured to count him as a close friend. As a tribute to his contribution to the many prison arts projects I have been involved in, including The Will to Dream, I present extracts from an article published in the Will to Dream journal, based on an interview with a performing arts student at an English further education college in November 2008.



Mike Moloney at the PAN/W2D Conference in Sofia

How do you go about creating drama with or for prisoners, what is the actual process?

You go back to what they know - their own stories; this enables them to 'see where they fit into a time-line, how those timelines interconnect and what else was happening. ... If a prisoner/actor can take on a character convincingly then we are not a million miles away from standing in the shoes of the victim. The more we do this with positive reinforcement, the more able will he/she become to deal with the same questions through Probation Services dealing with his/her offending behaviour.

Do you believe drama can truly rehabilitate prisoners?

All artistic activity in the prison setting can be sub divided into three categories. These are:

- 1) **Doodling** is the creative shaping of bits of bread, the scribbling on bits of paper. It is what happens first, where ideas are generated and creativity must have its expression. This is done in isolation.

"A prisoner in prison meets and has to spend time with the one person he/she did not think they would meet - themselves." (Carlo Gébler - Writer in Residence for PAF)

- 2) **Drama** is the 'trade off' that happens next, the role play, the exchange (I'll give you a doodle for a cigarette). It creates interactions, and sometimes conflicts. ... This next stage is the interaction stage. A prisoner strives to get better at an activity while they have time to concentrate. This 'getting better' is learning at its infant stage. This is the beginnings of the conduit into education or more formal ways of learning - life time skills positively reinforced.

- 3) **Exhibition** is the performance part. "Here I am. This is my offering." It is when the pictures are hung on the wall, when the drama has an audience. This is when community is built; when sets need to be made, uniformed and non uniformed officers can be involved, resources pooled. In an ideal situation the whole prison can become part of this process. When a prisoner can stand alongside the work they have produced and say 'this is what I have done' in a creative way with confidence then they have a positive reinforcement to the other changes they must make to address their offending behaviour.

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

Another important element in taking drama into prisons is that of bringing in live Theatre, and professional artists. Inmates can get a sense of what is good theatre/art. They can build judgment criteria. Most of them will not have seen any professional theatre nor mixed with people who lives are built around creative production; these are positive exchanges that inspire change and other viewpoints.

When we bring in their families as well as other professional artists to 'witness' the work we allow prisoners and their families to see that this activity is not just to 'pass the time' [jail craft if you like] it is important in a process, the journey to change. Markers, if you like to allow self esteem to take place in the rehabilitation process.

We all have a **MORAL COMPASS** - for all decisions we make in the world. It can be argued that the reason that someone is in prison is because their compass is 'off-kilter'.

"Art is a medium for change - Prison is just a venue".



Mike during a Will to Dream meeting in Oslo

Case Study: 'Talking Heads' Maghaberry Theatre Group. 1995

by Mike Moloney

6 prisoners agreed to be 'interviewed' on video by their peers. A cross section of offending behaviour that resulted in prison sentences in a maximum security establishment - 2 were life sentenced prisoners. The interviews were conducted giving a free hand to the questioners - other prisoners. The interviewees could 'make it up if they could get away with it'.

As Director I had the referee's whistle so there was no 'blood and snotters' [it got extremely heated during the interview of a bank official who try to continue with a charade that he was an embezzler instead of the murderer he was] but if we turned into unproductive cul-de-sacs it was video we could go back and mine a richer seam - that richer seam was a democratic process of the group but I as Director had an ulterior motive.

The process had been initiated by me to develop the group's powers and skills at maintaining character. They always wanted to take their characters from literature; I wanted to push them into observation of what was all around them. Drama wasn't just created fantasy. As and by the nature of the situation [prison] and the groups make-up [prisoners] the interviews were 'no holds barred'. I leant a thing or two about motivation, action and consequence and logical reasoning within the 'criminal' mind based on a 'skewed' premise.

6 x thirty minute tapes were recorded [a major point here to note is the high amount of trust the group afforded me ... these tapes could not 'fall' into the hands of security and would be erased after the project.] Those tapes were put into a big brown paper prison sack and 6 members of the group drew out a tape and that was their character that had to be studied and 'hot seated'. At the 'hot-seating' an almost identical scrum happened as had happened at the original questioning/interview session. They continued to relentlessly 'be' not 'play' bad cop.

At the debrief at the end when this was brought up - the way in which in my opinion they 'tore at each other' the reactions were of guilty realisation. The group realised they got caught up in the powerful psycho-drama of 'a kangaroo court' scenario. Rather than testing 'characterisation' they understood that they had fallen into 'judge and jury' roles and they all to a man were 'hanging judges'.

W2D CELL 3



Six International Meetings

[published in the W2D Journal + W2D Final Report]

A particular aim of *The Will to Dream* (W2D) project was to highlight the crucial importance of experienced centres not only developing their current work but also of finding ways of sharing them with organisations with limited experience in the fields of drama and video. By designing a programme where the participants experienced both live performances and practical drama workshops, the partners had the opportunity to share good practice in drama and video and develop new ideas for future action. The international meetings were a key feature of this exchange, each meeting having a different focus.

During the course of these meetings, the partners were able to witness over a dozen productions (some involving prisoners), more than 18 practical workshops on drama, masks, video and animation, and numerous presentations from practitioners, and teachers. Alongside the partner organisations, W2D was able to attract inputs from such diverse groups as *Aufbruch* from Berlin and *Coatre* from Chile

1. Vienna, Austria – March 2007

The first meeting in Austria enabled partners to get to know each other, their work and the situations in which they had to operate. The highlights were a visit to a drug-offender rehabilitation centre where some innovative and clearly effective art work was demonstrated, including drama & video work by the *Wir-Hier* group whose exhilarating work with women had been recognised with a national prize.

This was followed by an extraordinary theatre performance by the *Galli-Group*. *Männerschlussverkauf* (*Men for Sale*) was a two-woman satirical look at how men manipulate vulnerable females, with one of the actors transforming herself into a series of objectionable male stereotypes.

2. Oslo, Norway – October 2007

Hosted by the Groenland Adult Learning Centre, our meeting in Oslo proved a wonderful mix of thought-provoking visits, practical workshops and lots of laughter! All those involved came away with the warmest of admiration for the work of our Norwegian hosts. The visit to the main security prison in Oslo was a surprise, in that the building did not give the impression of a place of punishment, with its walls painted in warm pastel shades, but one where offenders could relax and be creative. We were shown videos of drama work, including recordings of fathers reading stories and singing songs, so that they could communicate with their children at home.

The visit to "Way Back", a government-supported centre where ex-offenders could help those just released from prison to adjust to outside life, was equally impressive with some interesting exchanges with the ex-prisoners and a performance by the newly-formed "Way Back" band.

A most appropriate climax to our stay was the visit to rehearsals of a new production by the Vardeteatret, a theatre group of former inmates. Although the production in Danish was difficult to follow, the discussion with the actors afterwards was extremely illuminating and inspiring. The statements by the cast about their feelings struck a strong chord with the visitors:

- *"if we weren't doing theatre we'd be doing heroin & time"*
- *"even when you're released, you still feel as if prisoner was branded on your forehead - this helps us to feel human again"*
- *"drugs are a form of escape, so is theatre; theatre helps us to escape from drugs."*



An actor from the Vardeteatret talking to the W2D partners

3. Sofia & Lovech, Bulgaria – March 2008

The PAN Conference in Bulgaria [PAN CELL 6] was not only a huge success for the network but also an opportunity for W2D to shine on a larger stage. Its contribution - 4 theatre performances, 3 drama workshops plus a presentation by an internationally renowned theatre group [W2D CELL 6], together with contributions to the "OFF Limits" Film Festival - certainly had a strong impact on the event. The workshops by representatives from CETEC, Italy, the Arden School of Theatre in Manchester, and London Shakespeare Workout were complimented by live performances of James Joyce's *Molly Bloom* by Mountjoy Prison, Dublin, Johannes Galli's *Star Money* (Austria) and *Shakespeare's Outsiders*, written and performed by Alan Clarke. The highpoint for the project though was undoubtedly the performance by inmates of Lovech Prison [W2D CELL 4].



Jacinta Sheerin as Molly Bloom

4. Vilnius, Lithuania – December 2008

The meeting in Lithuania was an opportunity to share good practice with colleagues in a country with little experience of prison arts. A public seminar in Vilnius Pedagogical University included an introduction on *Why Arts in Prison Education* by the project coordinator, a keynote speech on *Delivering Drama in a Prison Context* by The Prison Arts Foundation, Belfast; and a research presentation on *The Arts Needs of Prisoners* by the Lithuanian host. These were followed by to *Panevėžys Women's Prison* and *Lukiškės Men's Prison*, Vilnius included drama and animation workshops.

5. Stockholm, Sweden - March 2009

The Swedish meeting was notable for a couple of presentations on Chilean prison theatre from the *Coatre* group, and on producing Samuel Beckett in San Quentin Prison, USA, by the Swedish actor Jon Johnson. There was also an unusual and impressive workshop on circus skills by Mike Moloney with young offenders at the *Bärby Juvenile Detention Centre*.



Circus workshop with young offenders and W2D delegates in Sweden

6. Belfast, Northern Ireland - September 2009

The final W2D Conference in Belfast, which took place almost entirely in two prisons, Maghaberry and Hydebank, proved a fitting conclusion to the project. The Conference was introduced by the Director General of Northern Ireland Prison Services, and was attended by 21 delegates representing 16 organisations from 11 countries. The event included two theatre productions by inmates and ex-offenders - *No Kissing* by Mike Diamond and the premiere of *Pipe Dreams* by Maghaberry inmates in cooperation with Queens University - along with three drama workshops and presentations on prison drama practice in 7 countries: Italy, Germany, Norway, Lithuania, Latvia, Ireland and Chile - an impressive coverage. The event also hosted the first performance of *The Movable Barres Blues*, written by Alan Clarke, by the Maghaberry Heavy Wackers, a band of lifers formed by the musician Marty Rowlands.

W2D CELL 4

'The Fortune Teller' in Lovech Prison

[published in pARTners 3]

One of the first initiatives organised by the *Will to Dream* project was to fund a professional actor to direct a theatre production with inmates at Lovech Prison in Bulgaria. This was the first of its kind in the country and the play - based on a folk tale "*The Vrazhalets*" (*The Fortune Teller*) - was premiered to an international audience attending the 2nd PAN Conference in June 2008 in Bulgaria, held jointly with *Will to Dream* project. Not only was it a unique event for Bulgarian prisons but also an important milestone in encouraging prison arts interventions in countries with little experience of it. The rapturous reception given to the performers at the end of the play, shown on the internal TV channels of all Bulgarian prisons, and the subsequent discussions between conference delegates and cast gave some indication of the positive impact of the event.

"However it was only later when the director together with the event organiser, Valentina Petrova, read letters from the prisoners involved that the full impact on them became clear:

"It was the first time in my life when people applauded what I have done. All inmates envied our reception to the governor. It is really great to be someone."



The Vrazhalets performed by inmates of Lovech Prison

Some of the reactions were predictable for anyone performing to a strange audience for the first time: scared and wanting to hide before the performance, elated afterwards; realising that boring repetition during rehearsals was necessary for a successful performance. Another wrote of his potential embarrassment at having to take on a female role:

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

"Thank you so much for convincing me to play the female role! You were right when you told me that I would not become the laughing stock of everyone. Although I didn't understand any word in English, I felt that the audience likes my play. Strangely, but also the other inmates stopped making fun of my role after the premiere. I feel really proud and a stronger man now."



The actor playing the female role

Another wrote of bursting into tears in the dressing room afterwards, again without any mockery from his fellow inmates. A couple expressed their frustration at not being able to talk in English to the audience afterwards, and their determination to study harder in language classes. One wrote a long letter about how he was expelled from the group for selling props for cigarettes, how hard it was to summon up the courage to apologise and be reinstated, and how determined he was to learn from this experience:

"I would like to reintegrate me in a group of serious people after my release. I don't want to come back to the prison, believe me. I will never forget the feeling of being accepted by the audience. Thank you for giving me these moments!"



Alan Clarke congratulates the actors on their performance

W2D CELL 5

Drama & Language Learning

by Dr. Bruce Wall,

Executive Director London Shakespeare Workout/LSW Prison Project

[published in the W2D Journal]



Sava & Bruce during the Sofia Conference

It was my pleasure and privilege to be able to run a workshop at the wonderfully stimulating PAN/Will to Dream Conference in Sofia, Bulgaria. ... In direct response to the Conference itself; specifically (a) after meeting the delightful Bulgarian ex-offender, Sava, and having with him several conversations in animated (and, dare I say it, highly original) sign language, and (b) responding to the issue of multi-language communication, I disposed of my original prepared research and used the time allotted to explore new ways of employing Shakespeare and drama as an effective interactive tool with which to learn a new language. Given that our workshop would involve by definition a number of English speakers and a separate number of Bulgarian speakers this seemed too opportune an occasion to miss. There can, I think, be no question but that it proved - for me as much as anyone else -highly instructive.

The response was electric. It should be pointed out that the entire undertaking would not have been possible to accomplish were it not due to ... the participation of Valentina Petrova. not only as a workshop participant (fulfilling her assigned role of a dutiful and caring prison officer) but crucially as the instantaneous translator. Valentina - as any inspirational prison warden should be - was a most telling go-between. She was, in effect, magical.

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

Following a brief introduction which included original inmate writing from the United Kingdom (delivered both in English and Bulgarian), each participant ... was asked to go out of the room and to re-enter as their 'favourite inmate'. I must say that it was a very motley crew that I had the privilege of greeting with a warm handshake and 'Zdravei' or 'hello/welcome' as they came in. Certainly they did not disappoint in the proceedings.

Although the team presented themselves as best they could (being a very challenging and challenged group) each took his or her part in the exercises at hand (whether it be portraying a primary bunny with two side kicks or realising a small segment from 'Macbeth'). One participant, remarked afterwards that: "even though I was portraying a very depressed individual, I found it impossible NOT to be engaged. The energy made it impossible 'not to be'. When I pulled the line of Shakespeare out from that envelope ('Nothing comes from nothing') it really hit home."

Language suddenly became universal. Without labelling it became a living model for mutual understanding. Physical and textual exercises equally employ the Bard's words. Those dealing with the theatrical art form itself - "Actor/актьор, Listen/слушам, Respond/ектения, Confidence/доверие" - became highlighted both in English and Bulgarian. Both languages lived side by side because they were applied in a living - thinking - context. The suspension of disbelief within the vast Meeting Room No. 1 was heady.

"You are a great teacher," the gifted ex-offender from Northern Ireland, Michael Diamond, exclaimed. I thanked him, but on this occasion I was as much a student as anyone else. That was the real joy. Perhaps that was the real test; the response to a very real need in interactive translation there was a decidedly two-way interaction. All learning was as at its best it should be: 'of the moment'. Even Prospero's plea: 'We are such stuff as dreams are made on' shone with added relish.

One thing I promise: This simple and exciting workshop will have helped shape LSW's future as much as it may influence anyone else's. ... Pure and simple, the weight of language was the currency all participants were dealing. On the trading floor this morning it would probably have been shoved into the tray marked 'futures'. Let there be no doubt: There WILL be a credit return. That much I think we can promise.

Letter from Marin Kalchevski, Governor of Lovech Prison

*responding to Bruce Wall's offer of 800 euro to fund the refurbishment of a room in his prison
following the inmates' performance*



Marin Kalchevski & Bruce Wall after the theatre performance at Lovech Prison

Dear Mr. Wall,

First of all I would like to thank you for the unexpected gesture of support that means a lot for us. Thank you also for applauding our actors at the stage of the Male Prison Lovech. The expressed high opinion of their artistic efforts had a truly positive influence over these inmates. Your donation arrives in a moment when it could give an impetus to the creative activities in our prison. The expected moral effect could exceed many times the financial aspect of your support.

We plan to equip the room with used computers, which are available as the prison administration got some new computers not long ago. The room will be suitable for individual and group activities. The location of the room satisfies the security measures and each prisoner will have a free access to the computers. The use of computers can play very motivating role to learn. The symbolic sunshine of knowledge together with your idea about the sunny decoration are good reasons to call that room "The Sunny Room". In some month "The Sunny Room" could become the small isle of creativity. So "The Sunny Room" can pave the way to the establishment of a "Sunny Centre" for what I thank you once more! ...

Best regards,

Marin Kalchevski

Governor

Male Prison Lovech

W2D CELL 6

aufBruch ART PRISON CITY

[published in pARTners 2]

aufBruch is a free and independent Berlin theatre project, concerned with artistic and political processes and social issues. For *aufBruch* the prison institution serves as an example par excellence, in that it excludes the prisoners from society, re-creating them within their own walls away from the public eye. This is the starting point for *aufBruch*'s artistic activities.



Nibelungen 2006

- Its aim is to make the closed prison space accessible to the public by the **means of art**.
- Its aim is to give the prisoners through **performance skills** a language, a voice & a face that creates the possibility of an unprejudiced encounter between outsiders & insiders.
- Its aim is a **living theatre at an artistically high level** arising out of the combination of personalities & dramatic texts and convincing through authenticity & expressive powers.

Led by Peter Atanassow, the director, Sibylle Arndt, the production leader, and Holger Syrbe, designer, *aufBruch* has worked continually for over twenty years in Tegel Prison, the largest men's prison in Europe, and more recently in Plötzensee Young Offender Institution and many other venues in and around Berlin, mainly prisons and juvenile detention centres.

NB The group organised a presentation of their work at the Sofia PAN Conference, several partners witnessed performances of their outstanding work in Berlin, and Holger Syrbe was a partner in the *CredAbility* project.

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

"The prison & the city"

by Natasha Siouzuli

extract from an article in PerformART - Hellenic Centre of the International Theatre Institute,

In November 2007, the theatre ensemble of Tegel Prison *aufBruch* showed for only few performances and intra muros *The Atreides*, a spectacle based on texts of Sophocles, Euripides, Jean Paul Sartre, Heiner Müller et al. While dealing with murder, vengeance, guilt and morality, the performance played also with the biographies and the reality of the members of the ensemble. ... The spectacle constructed a complex relation between biography and role, between historicity and (staged) presence, by playing consciously with the situation ... of perception between representation and presence



The Atreides 2007

The Atreides in prison was an absolutely particular - because particularly complex - spectacle. Its complexity relied first of all on the fact that the performance questioned definitions, identities, roles, otherwise common in theatre: Who was playing and who was consuming the spectacle after all? To which extent did the actors play a role and in what part their own biography? ... The interned spectacle managed to maintain an admirable openness, which forced one, rather than to give answers, to ask more and more questions.... Special mention belongs to the central axis of the performance, a chorus of men, who sang in unison, moved together, commented, warned etc.

The staging of this excellently trained and disciplined chorus referred to the "choreography" of the prison: to the arrangement of the interned during the inspections, to the special way of grouping them etc. Moreover, it literally confronted the group with the spectators, setting up an often cruel game with the physical presences of inspected and inspectors, of "anti-community" and "community". ... '

W2D CELL 7

"Theatre Behind Bars in Italy"

by Donatella Massimilla, Director of the Centre for European Theatre in Prison

[published in the W2D Journal]

"Art as a place of change" (B.Brecht)



Donatella with the ex-offender & actor Luigi Povelato

If you practise and promote art, dance, theatre and music in imprisoned places, you can easily stop wanting to make theatre in traditional theatres and spaces. You very soon discover the power of art as "a place of change", a place to research a new contemporary dramaturgy made with the lives, the wishes, the dreams of people that we meet in that special time that is the "time of inside". It is beautiful, after so long a journey inside and outside prisons, to start to see how many people and how many different realities all over the world are involved in this great "change". A lot of theatre and university students ask to us not to run a normal course of theatre but to make with us an artistic experience inside a prison or, after the first Rome Edge Festival, in different "edge" places...with the homeless, the handicapped. This is really interesting for us, to pass witness and produce through our new projects memory and pedagogy. For the past and for the future.

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

Even if CETEC is one of the first makers of theatre in prison in Italy, we have been working over the last few years not to build an "official and traditional" theatre inside the prison, but a bridge from the inside to the outside, to give opportunities for work to the prisoners through different professional roles in the theatre outside, and now, with a small group of ex-offender actors, we are trying to explore what is possible within our artistic work. We don't look for political help, we just live with all the difficulties of a "young" research company, not looking for big theatres, where we are often invited, but for *different places* where it is possible to feel the power of **Theatre as Place of Change**, inside hospitals, with migrants, with young people at risk.

We are also trying to improve the dissemination of our performances and training programmes on to a national and European level (our actors speak English!). We want this to be our way of life, we want to work as a professional company, with high standards; but we also know that it is difficult to be an artist and earn a living as an artist. But now, after all our European projects, we can also say that ironically it is easier to find a job as an actor if you are an ex-prisoner, at times we even seem to be starting a "fashion"...

"Everybody could perform... because we are all actors - at last I can do what I always wanted for my life: performing, playing the game I couldn't do before, ignoring any kind of reproach or blame. This is the place where I can bring into play all my resources and nobody will object..."

Romeo Martel

In October 2008 Donatella Massimilla organised a festival of theatre, video, dance, music and practical workshops in Milan around the theme of **"Arts for Social Change"**. The Festival was partly sponsored by *The Will to Dream* project, represented by W2D partners Mike Moloney, Geoff Moore and Alan Clarke. The Festival included a range of theatre and other arts performances, a number of interesting discussions and debates, and visits to three prisons, including readings of the inmates' own poems. Of particular interest was the first public reading/ performance of **"No Kissing"** by Irish writer and ex-offender Mike Diamond, who together with Sally Elsbury from the *Galli-Group* took part in the bi-lingual production with two Italian actors. This performance was directed by Donatella Massimilla and the English text was performed during the final *Will to Dream* conference in Belfast.

W2D CELL 8

Getting Drama into Prison

Extracts from a Cork Prison Project Diary by Sally Elsbury, Galli Group, Ireland

[published in the W2D Journal]



November 2007: Initial visit to Cork Prison, Ireland

This contact was made by myself, just as a lay person, and as such did not prove very fruitful. We had a general discussion about my proposal to offer some drama sessions in the Prison, which was met with approval in theory, but a reticence due to practical considerations. I was advised that the *Cork Prison* population was very unpredictable, with a large percentage of short term prisoners, some long term, and some remand. It would be difficult to organise a group of prisoners who could commit to anything over a period of time. Also, space was a major consideration, as overcrowding was a big problem and the Education Department was very overstretched; there was no space suitable for a drama session.

January 2008: Visit to Maghaberry Men's Prison and Hydebank Women's Prison, Belfast

This trip was extremely useful and enjoyable on many counts, as it gave me some first hand experience of going inside and working in the Prison environment. I was generally shocked on first entering *Maghaberry Prison*, as it was my first experience of going into a High Security Jail. ... On the gate my photograph was taken and I was presented with a plastic, fingerprint encoded, swipe card with my picture on, and the words 'Sally Elsbury Escorted'. (The police check had been carried out two weeks before.) I felt very grateful that I was indeed escorted throughout my whole visit, as the tension that builds after fingerprint readings, a metal detector scan, five floor-to-ceiling turnstiles, red and green lights, lockers for personal belongings, and cameras, before one even gets inside the prison is a little unnerving.

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Once inside the Prison, the sound of clanking keys and huge metal doors continues as you pass from one area to another, and it's a relief to get to the Education Department where the Institution of 'School' feels like a safe oasis. I was welcomed very warmly by teaching staff in the haven of the staff room, and shown around the various teaching rooms. This visit was a preliminary only, and I met only a handful of prisoners.

I began also to become more aware of the complex personal politics that operates between teaching staff, security staff, prison officers, and between the prisoners themselves. There is a whole language at work that I was unfamiliar with, but one of the most encouraging aspects of this visit was the notion that drama and theatre has a unique potential and real ability to bridge some of the gaps that exist between these various groups of people, by involving all members of the prison 'community'. *Prison Arts Foundation* has facilitated shows where prisoners have performed alongside officers, where set and costumes have been made inside, and where both inmates and friends and family from outside have made up the audience. This has proved a very positive experience for the prison as a whole.

Workshops in a Women's Prison

In contrast my two visits to the *Women's Prison in Belfast* were very different. These saw me leading drama workshops with small groups of women. One was a *Galli 'Kellerkinder'* workshop, the other a mask workshop. ... My experience in the women's prison was to discover that one cannot function as a teacher within the prison context in the same way as one can operate in any other setting. One of the reasons for this, is the unpredictable nature of the group. In other words, one can never predict who is going to turn up on the day, or even what kind of emotional state they might be in. ... One simply has to improvise, to work 'off the cuff' and to think very rapidly on one's feet.

My reading of the women's energy levels was also such that too much 'preparation' work was inappropriate; they needed a very informal start, with chat in a relaxed atmosphere in order for them to get the measure of who was 'teaching' them. Self esteem and confidence levels were exceptionally low, despite well formed masks of bravado, and in this context my teaching 'material' was consumed very rapidly (done that, now what's next?). The women were so immediate, so 'in the moment' that it was impossible not to let down one's guard in some way.

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Once engaged however, the level of sensitivity and creativity was impressive, but the attention was often quick to fly off to a disassociated issue. Had I not had the level of experience I have had, I would have found the experience very difficult to manage. I would say it is important to have a great deal of material to hand, then still be prepared to throw it all out of the proverbial window and follow something else. The women are apparently a mass of contradictions; not suffering fools gladly, but at the same time greatly insecure. Their work in masks was particularly impressive, as they excitedly took the masks out to perform them for the officers on duty, and being very quick to pick up technique.

Visit to Mountjoy Prison

I visited *Mountjoy Prison* to see a circus skills workshop and a performance of fire blowing and bed of nails show (The Bad Billys). There were a large number of long-term prisoners at this event, so it was an ideal opportunity to gauge the responses. The show was very well received; a lot of fun and laughter was had, although the audience was volatile and not the easiest to manage. Numbers for the workshop were very large, and many men were reluctant to participate. However, the ones who did clearly found the work rewarding in many ways, and undoubtedly gained *kudos* for having participated.

Afterwards I was introduced to some of the men in the audience in an informal way, as we chatted after the show. The conversations were not about the show or workshop, but more an interview of me! The prisoners wanted personal information, and what they couldn't get out of me with direct questions, they interpreted from my clothing, my body language, the minutest of details. The prisoners were, to a large extent, 'running the show'. They were concerned with the 'here and now', with the woman who was sitting in front of them, with any information they could get out of her. The show may have left an impression that seeped in slowly and was to be digested at a later time, but for now the prisoners were just straight back into what I would call 'survival mode'.

The prison officers may hold the keys, but I wonder who really controls the prison?

Prison Theatre Unit in Manchester Degree

by Emma Kanis, Lecturer at the Arden School of Theatre

[published in the W2D Journal]

In 2008 Emma Kanis, a lecturer at the Arden School of Theatre, and Alan Clarke, the W2D coordinator, started to explore the possibility of developing a unit on Prison Drama to be included in the Arden's Foundation Degree on Contemporary Theatre Practice. Below are extracts of the diary of its progress.

The new **Foundation Degree in Contemporary Theatre Practice** for *The Arden* has been in development over the past two years and started with 15 students in September 2008. The main purpose of the course is to train students in the processes of contemporary theatre, making and apply their skills according to industry needs. The strength of the course is the industry links which provide work based opportunities for students. After a very inspiring W2D meeting in Oslo, I began to feel the importance of good and specific education for practitioners of theatre in prisons.

Although there are courses around the UK that send students to prisons to do drama, there tends to be a student outcome-centred approach generally, both in the delivery of workshops and performances. This may lead to a *satellite* experience both for the students and the recipients of the work. By this I mean that the student has a one off experience of working in the prison without the depth of knowledge and understanding of the importance of the work. It may be that the work is 'parachuted' in, delivered and then parachuted out (a term borrowed from Mike Maloney of *PAF*). Students may not have fully engaged with the purpose of the work, the suitability of the material, the resonant impact of the work and many other issues that have arisen out of discussions with W2D partners. The aim therefore, in writing the Prisons Unit was to address some of these issues, including *why have theatre and drama in prisons?* It is important that there is a sense of clarity about the work and questions are asked of the purpose of the work.

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Differing practices

There are many practitioners who operate in different ways offering different experiences for people in prison. For example, *Elin Barth* based in Oslo, uses drama as a form of escape. She believes that the men she sees have enough time to reflect and face their situation. To her drama is about discovery and finding a space to be something different.

Compare that with *aufBruch* [W2D CELL 6] (who) stage lavish performances with prisoners from Tegel Prison involving as many as ten members in the production team. There is an intensive rehearsal process and the actors are expected to perform to a professional level. There is a political edge to their work and they aim to open up the prison to break the barriers that exist in relation to the rest of society. This is a very different approach to Elin's but what the two share is clarity in their work and a very specific purpose that drives it.

With this diversity in mind, the challenge is then to define the purpose of the work. Should it be motivated by the need to rehabilitate people? If so then using what methods? Should it be about providing an escape? Should it be about accessing art for its own sake? These are fundamental questions in the process of developing the work and should be the cause of debate.

Aims of the unit

So once a specific purpose has been applied to the work, the method of working and delivery has to be developed. By this point in the course students will have nearly completed two years of study so in terms of their experience they should have developed many techniques and forms from which to draw on. I wanted to be clear that whatever mode of delivery was chosen I would like them as much as possible to avoid the *parachute effect*. This does not negate the effectiveness of a one off workshop which can be invaluable as evidenced by Bruce Wall of *The London Shakespeare Workout* who delivers workshops in prisons around the world [W2D CELL 5]. But again, it goes back to clarity and purpose and these two things are driving forces behind the work.

POSTSCRIPT: After successfully piloting the project with Arden students, Emma's Unit was formally approved with Alan Clarke invited to be a member of the Validation Panel, and was included in the Foundation Course from September 2008. Over ten years on it was still a part of the Arden degree course.

W2D CELL 10

Mickey B.

A stunning video production filmed in a Northern Irish prison

[pARTners 2 & esc. Films website]

During a visit to Northern Ireland, W2D partners were shown *Mickey B.*, a film production based on Shakespeare's *Macbeth* set in a maximum security prison. Produced by *esc Films* in cooperation with, amongst others, the *Prison Arts Foundation*, it is a modern adaptation of the play exploring the themes of ambition, betrayal, murder and revenge – themes that one prisoner said "are played out every day here".



The film was shot in HMP Maghaberry with prisoners taking on acting, set building, continuity, and helping with sound, production, make-up and even script-writing. Accompanying it is a 27 minutes long documentary with comments from the prisoners and prison staff on their reactions to participating.



Mickey B. was the winner of the prestigious *Roger Graef Award* for Outstanding Achievement in Film at the 2008 National Arthur Koestler awards for arts in prisons. It has been translated into seven languages and has toured worldwide.