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Skills Training And Growth through Erasmus+ Theatre

Report on Theatre Professionals' Interviews - C&C Training

Table of Contents

1. *Introduction*
2. *Methodology*
3. *Demographic Overview of Participants*
4. *Theatre as Space of Inclusion*
5. *Theatre as a Tool for Personal Growth*
6. *Theatre and Social Connections*
7. *Barriers and Challenges in Social Theatre*
8. *Recommendations for Greater Engagement*
9. *Theatre, Technology, and the Future*
10. *Conclusions*

1. Introduction

This report presents the results of an analysis conducted on a series of interviews with Italian theatre professional. The purpose of the study is to explore their vision of theatre, with particular attention to its social dimension. Theatre is not only perceived as an artistic practice but also as a cultural institution capable of fostering inclusion, empathy, and community development. The testimonies collected highlight how theatre can act as a transformative tool, shaping both individual growth and collective cohesion.

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2. Methodology

The analysis is based on qualitative interviews with professionals engaged in independent and experimental theatre. The interviews included actors, directors, and educators with diverse experiences - from physical theatre and commedia dell'arte to community theatre projects to contemporary dramaturgy and residencies. This variety enriches the thematic synthesis. Their responses were examined thematically, allowing the extraction of recurring ideas and insights. Rather than focusing on individual stories, the report synthesizes the content into broader categories, emphasizing the shared vision of theatre as a social practice. This approach makes it possible to highlight common perceptions and underline the collective meaning attributed to theatre.

3. Demographic Overview of Participants

The participants in the interviews were all Italian nationals, ranging in age from their early twenties to mid forties. Both male and female voices were represented, and their educational backgrounds varied, although most had completed high school and then obtained academic certificates. Their experience in theatre ranged from just a few years to more than fifteen, and their professional involvement was primarily in independent and experimental contexts, with occasional connections to cinema and audiovisual sectors. This diversity of age, experience, and professional engagement provided a rich basis for understanding how theatre is perceived across different stages of personal and professional development.

4. Theatre as Space of Inclusion

One of the strongest themes emerging from the interviews is the perception of theatre as a space of inclusion. Professionals described theatre as an environment where differences in background, education, or social status are diminished. The practice of listening, which is central to theatre, is often contrasted with the lack of genuine listening in everyday social contexts. Within the theatre, participants felt that everyone's voice could be heard, and that collaboration created equality among diverse groups. Theatre was seen as capable of bringing together marginalized youth, people with disabilities, and

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individuals from different social classes, thereby dismantling barriers and fostering empathy. The circle of theatre practice was described as inherently inclusive, offering a model of social interaction that transcends divisions.

5. Theatre as a Tool for Personal Growth

Theatre was also perceived as deeply transformative on a personal level. Participants emphasized how it develops self-esteem, confidence, and courage, enabling individuals to confront their fears and insecurities. Theatre was described as therapeutic, offering a safe space to explore emotions and personal histories. Many professionals highlighted the importance of connecting private experiences with public performance, seeing theatre as a way to transform personal struggles into collective meaning. Discipline, concentration, and creativity were identified as essential outcomes of theatre practice, and the process of rehearsals and staging was seen as a journey of self-discovery. In this sense, theatre was not only about artistic expression but also about personal empowerment and growth. Gennaro Di Colandrea explained how physical theatre builds organic unity between body and voice, empowering actors to embody emotions authentically.

6. Theatre and Social Connections

Another recurring theme was the strong capacity of theatre to build social bonds. Participants consistently described theatre as a community-building activity, where collaboration on stage fosters trust and solidarity. The friendships and connections formed through shared passion were seen as enduring, often extending beyond the theatre environment. Working together on performances was perceived as a way to strengthen interpersonal relationships, creating bonds that remain even when the professional collaboration ends. Theatre was thus understood as a social institution that nurtures both individual relationships and collective cohesion.

7. Barriers and Challenges in Social Theatre

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Despite its inclusive nature, participants acknowledged several obstacles. Fear and anxiety before performances were common, particularly for newcomers, and the difficulty of joining already established groups was seen as a challenge to inclusion. Social mistrust and introversion were also mentioned as personal barriers that can hinder participation. The lack of resources and motivation was identified as a structural barrier, limiting opportunities for broader engagement. Moreover, outdated classical repertoire, bureaucratic challenges and funding cuts threaten theatres, along with lack of financial support for research phases, which are essential for innovation but often overlooked. These challenges highlight the need for strategies to make theatre more accessible and welcoming, ensuring that its social potential can be fully realized.

8. Recommendations for Greater Engagement

The interviews offered several suggestions for expanding theatre's social impact. Professionals emphasized the importance of bringing theatre into everyday spaces such as schools, workplaces, and communities, thereby reaching audiences who might not otherwise engage with it. Social media was identified as a powerful tool for promoting theatre and attracting larger audiences, along with a contemporary rewriting of classical text to speak to younger audiences. The involvement of youth was seen as particularly crucial, with theatre presented as a means of fostering emotional and intellectual growth. Creating welcoming environments with clear but inclusive rules was also recommended, encouraging initiative and mutual support while avoiding judgment or exclusion. Giuseppe Gaudino stressed how the "Nest" Theatre reused an abandoned gym to create a cultural hub accessible to all in a complex neighborhood, with initiatives like "suspended tickets" and free training projects for disadvantaged audiences. Anna Broegg emphasized theatre workshops in schools, with practices as "forum theatre", as inclusive spaces where students discover talents beyond academic performance. These recommendations reflect a shared vision of theatre as a practice that should be integrated into daily life and made accessible to all.



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9. Theatre, Technology, and the Future

Participants expressed concerns about the impact of technology and artificial intelligence on the entertainment industry. While acknowledging that these tools may enhance certain aspects of production, they emphasized that theatre's human dimension—its warmth, creativity, and emotional depth—cannot be replaced. Theatre was seen as rooted in human connection and lived experience, qualities that remain unique and irreplaceable. The consensus was that theatre will endure as a cultural and social expression, even in the face of technological change, because its essence lies in the human encounter.

10. Conclusions

The analysis of these interviews demonstrates that professionals view theatre as far more than performance. It is a social institution that promotes inclusion and equality, develops essential personal and interpersonal skills, and builds strong social connections and communities. Theatre offers therapeutic and transformative experiences, enabling individuals to confront personal challenges and discover new strengths. At the same time, it fosters empathy, listening, and collaboration, creating bonds that extend beyond the stage.

The findings highlight the importance of social theatre as a tool for education, cultural growth, and community development. To maximize its impact, efforts should be made to expand access, integrate theatre into everyday contexts, and promote its social value. In the vision of these professionals, theatre is not only art: it is a serious game of empathy, listening, and human connection, essential for both individual and collective development.

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