

The play is a product of the theatre workshops conducted with teenagers who took part in multicultural camps funded by Action for Cooperation and Trust and of the collaborative writing process by Rooftop Theatre Group members, which bring out the experiences of the participants of the camps.

Rooftop Theatre Group

Performing the Experience

Deneyimi Oynamak

Παρουσιάζοντας την Εμπειρία

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Published by Rooftop Theatre Group / ICC
Lefkosia, Cyprus 2008

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Produced in Cyprus

ISBN 978-9963-9536-0-8



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"VOICING AND STAGING THE EXPERIENCE"

A Short description of the project

Given the continuing political situation in Cyprus, ICC in collaboration with the Rooftop Theatre Group has decided to take theatrical activities one step further and deal with children and their experiences as part of bicomunal groups, more specifically the UNDP summer camps for children and teenagers.

The idea was born when we joined in the Youth Camps Reunion Party on November 4th, 2006, where we conducted a theatre workshop for the kids; we came to realize how enthusiastic the children were, found out about the experiences and stories they were eager to share and therefore decided to extend our activities to this project. These are kids who have gained valuable life lessons through the UNDP-sponsored youth camps, and the greatest danger is that these lessons will soon fade away and become a distant memory, if they are not enforced or supported. The life lessons of tolerance and understanding many of the kids have taken from the camps will be brought back to life through the multiple activities of the project.

Our project consists of 4 basic stages (the entire process has a duration of one year) which will help in the documenting, learning through play, formatting, publishing and staging these experiences:

- weekly theatre workshops,
- the production of a play text based on the experiences shared in the workshops,
- performance of the play text,
- the publication of the text and distribution to educational institutions.

Stage 1: For around 2 months weekly workshops were conducted, where there was an exploration of their experience through theatre games and improvisations, which culminated in the writing of a text. The workshops welcomed children and teenagers between 11 and 17 years old.

Stage 2: For about 2 months, members of the Rooftop Theatre Group had written and edited the play text, which was inspired by the kids' stories. Following, the play was translated into Greek and Turkish.

Stage 3: Production of the play by professional young actors, designers and technicians. At the same time, a dynamic publicity campaign was launched in the Media and advertised widely in teachers' organizations, unions and groups in the communities across the divide. The play was presented before young and older audiences as a way to enlighten Cypriots of these experiences. The plan was to present the play to as many children as possible, both in organized regular performances but also time-and-place specific performances for schools and other groups.

Stage 4: The text of play was published (in a trilingual edition, in English, Turkish and Greek) and disseminated to educators with the help of organized groups and educational authorities. The published play is a guide for the viewing of our own performance of the play, but will give educators the material and guidance to stage their own production of the play (or parts of it).

Preface

For several years now, the Rooftop Theatre Group has done excellent work to face the challenges of a quickly changing culture and society in Cyprus. In addition to the legacy of ethnic conflict that still plagues the island, Cyprus is now an EU member state with the largest number of immigrants per capita in the world. Moreover, the impact of globalization challenges us to examine ourselves and make choices about our culture and our identity.

Rooftop takes up this challenge by enacting through dialogue and performance an exploration of the fears and anxieties that lead to a fixity of identity, and attempting to open up the range of possibilities of who we might be or can be. Theatre and performance give us access to insights and skills needed to live in a multicultural society like Cyprus. Moreover, one cannot forget that this multiculturalism is taking place in a society that is divided within itself and seeking ways to heal the historical conflict between its two main ethnic groups. For this reason the Rooftop Theatre has always foregrounded the bicomunal effort in its activities and outreach. Theatre can and does help develop active tolerance skills in us, an ability that comes from a greater maturity and understanding of ground realities in contrast to the passive tolerance that many of us have today.

Active tolerance implies openness to the other and this is where the space of the theatre is significant as it physically acts out the struggles and conflicts involved in our transformations. Performance is a vicarious way to learn more about ourselves and an important educational tool for children and young people. The aim of Rooftop is to enhance the pleasures of education and break down gender, cultural and social stereotypes through self-questioning. Rooftop achieves this by taking the performance through its different stages: the process of creation, workshop interaction, text production, performance, and publication, all of which involve different kinds of self-reflection and dialogue.

The relationship of ethics, values, and actors in a performance context is explored by probing the complexities of identity and the ethical responsibility to others. This is a question not only of moral obligation but a creative exploration of the sense that identity is not rigidly defined to imprison people within its walls but an open field for exploring our being and becoming in the world.

Stephanos Stephanides
Professor of Comparative Literature
University of Cyprus

Space and Meaning: Multimedia Practices in Rooftop's Performances

The framework of critical practice is a concept that is not quite developed in Cypriot theatre and this condition mainly results from the absence of local performing arts departments. Such a methodology enables experimentation with artistic forms, and the use of multimedia in contemporary theatre has proven to be a popular mode to play with conventional theatrical narrative forms and space. This short note aims to underline how the productions of Rooftop Theatre Group consciously or otherwise attempt to participate in the questioning of established theatre forms in Cyprus. The uses of multimedia in the four performances that have been produced thus far by Rooftop carry a meaningful presence that attempts to enter a dialogue with the paradoxical balance of division; the absence of identity in Cypriot cultural products; specifically the absence of an identity that has not been indoctrinated by nationalist values in educational systems and public service broadcasting.

Rooftop has always tried to produce performance texts that would appeal to the average theatre audience, but also to a media literate audience that would be able to communicate with the intertextual system that Rooftop usually applies in its productions. Thus, it could be said that Rooftop employs a postmodernist aesthetic; however, it does that within a space that has not been invaded by the hyperconscious use of such practices, as the media culture in Cyprus is not as rich or informed as in the UK or the US. Rooftop then plays with familiar forms and popular texts in a way that it tries to involve the audience quite actively in the decoding of the performance. Multimedia in Rooftop products usually emphasizes intertextuality through various familiar images and sounds. The different bits and pieces that are brought together to form the space of the performance simultaneously work as distinct elements, but most importantly as frames of the same narrative that tends to reject the paradigm of hierarchical linearity. Bearing in mind the context of these performances, Rooftop is indeed postmodern in a positive and optimistic sense because it has introduced a number of new voices that were marginalized and not artistically explored through theatre. The voice of young people living in "divided" spaces; the voices of women living "within walls." Rooftop has explored with a sense of irony the contemporary way of living in Cyprus, thus wittily commenting on the sometimes absurd socialization of Cypriots through food. The group is now attempting to give a voice to teenagers, whose personality is not being shaped by a clear understanding of where to belong.

One of the important aspects of multimedia in Rooftop performances is the highlighting of the process of the text development workshops through short videos that either occurs during the performance or as the introduction of the performance. This is a usual practice because the text development process before the actual production of the performance text is the most essential part of every Rooftop project. The audience experiences the final outcome of those workshops, which is not the vision of a single person, but the result of a collective creative force that derives from the need to speak out a number of questions that arise from a younger generation of Cypriots. Hence, Rooftop produces art that is created collectively and it is shared as such through narrative devices that enable interactivity. These videos then are informative and at the same time they form part of the performance because they provide a sense of continuity between the production process and the performance. This continuity reinforces the contemporariness of the subject matters that Rooftop deals with, hence the space of the performance and its non-linear narrative structure allow for immediate interaction with the audience.

Video may also be used during a Rooftop performance to project the stream of consciousness of a character, to visually complement the stage or to develop the narrative with flashbacks and other devices. In this performance projections are used to augment space through a coding of signs that simultaneously identifies the space of the performance as something specific or something open for interpretation. The stage also becomes a space, where body and language act and communicate beyond the borders of reality or it is limited to a space that mirrors the absurdness of reality. The desert and the city are two different spaces with a different function in the play, yet they have the same impact. Both spaces invite us to understand and celebrate incompleteness and heterogeneity through a blurring of boundaries and topographies.

Embracing Available Space: Rooftop Theatre Group and theatrical practice

I, Augusto Boal, want the Spectator to take the role of Actor and invade the Character and the stage, I want him to occupy his own Space and offer solutions. (...)

To free yourself is to exist.
From "Theatre of the Oppressed"

Creating theatre in a post-colonial (post Ottoman, post Byzantine... starting the post-talk could take a while!) society like Cyprus has been a challenge and may translate into a constant act of forced re-invention. And more so when this theatre claims to have a social consciousness, when it claims to feel the pulse of a changing society and even claims to strive for change. The cherry on the icing, the biggest challenge of them all, is embracing (and pursuing) these ideas not as an individual, but as a group, more particularly a group of compatriots that have never met. Nonetheless, working with the Rooftop Theatre Group was comforting, it felt like filling a void, creating in a space that had been formerly uninhabited by thought or action.

It is because of these reasons that the Rooftop Theatre Group started: initially as part of our process of artistic re-invention, subsequently creating in the space available, in the space that allows for Spectators to become actors, for ordinary people to take the stage and own characters, and ultimately to take action in our social context. In the last five years the Group has recruited Spectators and has created a lasting bond with them. These are individuals and organizations that have started out as Spectators and have developed into SpectActors, from the vantage point of the Group member, backstage supporter and funding body.

Naturally and inevitably, theatre was created by the Group: firstly in the workshops (in rented rooms and behind closed doors), but always with an eye and an ear stretched out, listening for the pulse of our society. The Group gathers, an Idea is given, energy and good will flow and theatre is borne. Theatre in its most pure and unadulterated form, with no cuts and pastes, no corrections and beautifications: raw and honest. For two months, the Group is immersed in the Idea (the theme around which workshops are designed - it differs every year), bringing their own personalities and interests in the creative process. The coordinators act as moderators, inspiration-and-structure givers, but step back when the process starts rolling. The next steps in the process are depressingly more conventional: the development of the play text, a rehearsal process and the presentation of the performance for general audiences on the whole of the island, and at times abroad. The production of the work has to come into play: this is what people see, this is our platform for dialogue with general audiences. But one must keep in mind that as pleasurable as applause can be, it is an inarticulate approval or rejection of the work and the ideas it encompasses: articulation and action is the sought-after end result.

Boal advocates for freedom as a means for existence. What Rooftop has done through the years are small artistic revolutions, projects that start with "I don't know what this will turn out to be like", and end with group laughter, articles in newspapers, activism against war and oppression, gathering in a house to saw the costumes... our own little personal freedoms.

Ellada Evangelou
Dramaturge

A guide for educators:

How to make the best of the Play

The play was written bearing in mind that the readers would be (mostly) educators, and in making these audiences our priority, an effort was made to make the text versatile enough in order to be used for purposes other than its performance as a linear play text.

The main ideological backbone of the play is based on the dichotomy of trust / mistrust, and the dilemmas people are faced with when called upon to trust someone they do not know. Purposefully, there are no names or ethnicities attached to the characters, these persons can be anyone, regardless of where they come from, what language they speak and what their religion is.

So here is how you can cut-copy-and-paste, break-and-recreate the text, depending on the needs of your unique group of students and your own priorities in teaching:

Join Scenes A1-A2-A3: These three scenes can be joined together to tell the story of the two girls lost in the desert and looking for water. In their path, they meet a Native American. The question is: will they trust this stranger enough to drink from his water?

This is a scene for 2 girls and 1 boy, although you can have different students playing the girls in each scene (A1-A2-A3).

Join Scenes B1-B2-B3: These three scenes can be joined together to tell the story of the two male students lost in an unknown (to them) part of the city and looking for their way home. They run across scary landscapes and shady individuals, who prove out to be less threatening than expected. The question remains: will they trust a stranger enough to accept their (his/her) help?

This is a scene for 2 boys and 1 girl, although you can have different students playing the boys in each scene (B1-B2-B3).

Play with Scene C: Being set in a school, Scene C is probably closest to the every-day life of the students themselves. It consists of a monologue, a series of questions (used as a bridge between the pieces of writing) and finally a humorous scene between two female students and one male student. The scene deals with issues such as identity, violence, homeland and many others. We recommend that the educator discusses the monologue and dialogue with the students and subsequently asks them to improvise. Due to the format of this scene, there is a lot of space for creativity.

Explore Scene D: The most philosophical of the scenes, it tells the story of the relationship between two young men, as it developed in the context of a bi-communal summer camp. The problems faced in this new relationship are discussed by one of the two young men in a monologue that may seem complex, but when talked about can reveal the simplicity in the thinking pattern (which embraces the entire play): Can I really trust someone I do not know? Why should I?

Film aspect: The play is open for experimentation when it comes to the dimension of film also. Students can make short film(s) of various scenes, depending on where they imagine they are set. For example:

Scenes A1-A2-A3 / B1-B2-B3: These scenes can be shot in outside locations, where the students can experiment with the aspect of dealing with the unknown. What is it in their own country / city that scares them and creates insecurities? What is it in their fellow-countrymen that frightens them? How do you deal with the unknown or the lesser known?

Scene C: You can chose to set this scene (its monologue and dialogues) within your own school, taking as objects of investigation the students and their views on the issues of identity.

Scene D: This scene can also be shot in an outside location. The fact that it resembles an internal monologue, is very user-friendly, because these thoughts can belong to everyone. Interpersonal relationships are a source of anguish for many teenagers. Choosing an appropriate external location that may reflect this issue can be a creative challenge for the students.

A diagram consisting of four circles. A large grey circle at the top left contains the text 'Play Text'. To its right and slightly lower is a green circle containing 'English'. Below the grey circle and to the left of the green one is a dark blue circle containing 'Turkish'. At the bottom right is a red circle containing 'Greek'. The circles are arranged in a descending staircase pattern from top-left to bottom-right.

Play Text

English

Turkish

Greek



I like the desert...

Burdayken kimse beni yargilayamaz...





Κανένας δεν μπορεί
να με αμφισβητήσει.



Performing the Experience

This play is designed for five actors,
two female and three male

Actor 1 (female) · Actor 2 (female)

Actor 3 (male) · Actor 4 (male)

Actor 5 (male)



Scene A1

(desert setting)

Actor 1: (thought) I like the desert... Here no one can judge me... No one can doubt me. It's just me and the soil. Me and the sky. Me and the wind. Here I have to justify nothing and apologize for nothing. The desert doesn't care if my sports gear is not in fashion, and it doesn't care if I have a giant zit on my nose. The desert doesn't see all of this and casts no faults...

Actor 2: (thought) I bet there will be journalists at the finish line. And cameras... For sure!! And they'd better be there! What the heck am I getting all this dirt on my face for? And my new Nike's are all ruined. At least something good will come out of this crap I got myself into. I don't know what I was thinking when I let her drag me into this stupid desert. Philanthropy and shit! At least we'll get some TV coverage out of it. So my stupid classmates can see me and burst with jealousy. And then let them dare look at my man ...

Actor 1: (thought) Oh God, I hope she was joking when she said that there would be cameras at the finish. I couldn't live with that. I would be so embarrassed. "Cowardice is the opposite of self-confidence", said a story my mum used to read. There's a tiny, invisible man always trying to run. And he has three cousins: shame, timidity and embarrassment. "Don't be a coward", my mother used to say, time and time again. "Don't be embarrassed to show everyone who you really are". But there are moments when I feel that I am the personification of cowardice and all three cousins put together!

Actor 2: Hey, do you think the next stop is a long way away? My tongue is hanging like a dog and I'm all out of water. I still can't believe it that I let you drag me into this sandy hell. I'll never be able to wash all this dirt from my hair. And my nostrils.

Actor 1: Come on, remember we said that it was for a good cause. This marathon saves lives. Do you know how many little children we'll be able to ...

Actor 2: Who gives a shit about the little children! And 'we' did not say anything. It was you who talked, and me, being an idiot, listened to you. The only thing I say right now is that I'm dying of thirst and if I don't drink some water AT THIS VERY MOMENT I'll start screaming. Give me your water bottle!

Actor 1: But... there's no more water in it. You drank it just a minute ago... Be patient for a while. According to my estimations, the next stop should not be far away...

Actor 2: (thought) Idiot! But you know, the truth is, I don't know who of the two is the biggest idiot: her, with her "let's save the children" slogans, or me, who came along...

Actor 1: (thought) Poor girl... I feel terrible that I've dragged her to this adventure. But she was so enthusiastic when I first spoke about this... But now what, she's suffering because of me and I can't do anything to help her. If we had some more water at least... And we've been cut away from the others...

Scene B1

(Urban setting, a road. Two geeky students are returning home, after a long day at the University. They are waiting at the bus stop.)

Actor 3: This is like, my... what ... seventh year, not year, semester, at University, and I keep thinking that each day will be easier to learn how to handle the equipment in the physics lab. When will we ever have it easy, like everybody else?

Actor 4: I really don't know! I keep eyeing all the other students leaving the lab to go home, so relaxed and happy, and I want to feel the same way, but my mind is telling me "game over".

Actor 3: Ahah. Oh, there it is, at last.

Actor 4: Hey, you got 10 cents?

(They see the bus coming, but it bypasses them and doesn't stop. The two actors run through the stage chasing the bus.)

Actor 3: Hey, where are you going? Stop!

Actor 4: Hey, stop you ass, HEEEEEEY. Shit.

Actor 3: He left. What an idiot. He actually left.

Actor 4: I am so writing a letter to the dean about this.

(Stranded in the middle of the street, in a strange part of town, now they have to take a shortcut in order to reach home as soon as possible. They are tired, thirsty and there is no other way to get home.)

Actor 3: Oh man, that was one hell of a day! I can feel it all over my body, and now I already feel the pain from the distance we need to cover to go home.

Actor 4: I'm almost hallucinating. I think I'll start seeing a mirage real soon. You know, like in the deserts, when you see a huge lake in front of you and by the time you reach it, it's just sand and more sand!

Actor 3: I know what a mirage is, stupid. Can you please make yourself useful and think of a way out of here?

Actor 4: Worry not! I know a shortcut. Follow me.

Actor 3: Are you actually suggesting that we go through this neighbourhood? All this graffiti on the walls makes me really nervous.

Actor 4: Ok, so I guess I shouldn't tell you that this is the gangsters area! I don't wanna scare you too much...

Actor 3: What gangsters? There's gangsters? Where? Don't give me all this freaky shit without explaining it!

Actor 4: There's nothing to explain.

Actor 3: I don't even see any regular people walking! You think it's a sign?

Actor 4: A sign of what?

Actor 3: That we should start running? Because it's what everyone else does?... Hey, I see some kind of big building over there.

Actor 4: Let's walk over there. It shouldn't be TOO dangerous. Which reminds me, there was an article in the paper the other day, it was the story of this kid that ended up here by mistake and was beaten so badly his own mother couldn't recognize him at the hospital. But he survived!

Actor 3: I didn't... em... see this article, I'm just wondering how I missed it. You know what else is strange: there's only one light bulb in this street. It seems all the other ones were shot or had rocks thrown at them! It gives me the creeps just walking here...

Actor 4: Yeah right: rocks! I don't think the people here have used any rocks since the last Stone Age.

Actor 3: Oh no, great, see that thing over there?

Actor 4: What thing?

Actor 3: That writing on the wall! How can you miss it?

Actor 4: That's funny! "Bubba died here!" Who comes up with this anyway? What is this, Chicago?

Actor 3: I don't care who came up with it, all I know is that we'd better get out of here soon, before we go meet "Bubba" at his resting place!

Actor 4: Let's just go to that building over there, it looks quite safe, plus there might be water. I could use some right now.

Actor 3: Yeah, anywhere but here is fine with me!

(Sound of a door opening, cough is heard behind the door.)

Actor 3: Great, just great! What are we gonna do now? Let's hide behind that car! (Points to a parked vehicle.)

Actor 4: Are you out of your mind? What if it's his car and he goes right to it?

Actor 3: Shit! I never thought of that! What are we gonna do? What are we gonna do?

(The door can be heard closing again.)

Actor 3: Phew! That was close!

Actor 4: Oh yeah!

Actor 3: You were scared shitless too huh? (Chuckles.) I thought you... "knew all about this place"!

Actor 4: Knowing doesn't mean I'm not scared.

Actor 3: So you were scared huh? (Chuckles some more.)

Actor 4: Yeah, like YOU weren't scared big boy!

Actor 3: I never said I wasn't, but you... Wow, you should've seen the expression on your face!

Actor 4: Ha ha ha. (Mocks laughing.) This amuses you, oh brave one?

Actor 3: You know, instead of picking a fight, let's look around and see if we can find any water. My thirst is killing me.

Actor 4: That's the wisest thing you've said in a really loooooong time.

(The two students start walking faster and in a few moments they reach the outside of the building.)

Actor 4: Hey it's a school.

Actor 3: It looks abandoned.

(They walk around the fence.)

Scene C

(School setting)

Chauvinist without a cause

(Reaction to monologue by 2 bodies, possibly shadows behind the screens. Puppet people who turn slowly into human beings.)

Actor 5: Why are we proud about the heroic feats of our ancestors? Who is shaping our understanding of what identity means? Of what is patriotism? And even more difficult is how you deal with these things when you grow up in a divided country?

Being proud about something is not a crime. As long as it suggests an act of modesty. It's how you perform your pride that can be a problem. People do this in many ways: they resurrect the past, build facades that do not correspond to the everyday individual, even to the everyday life of going to school. Even that can prove to be a cause for division. It makes you wonder whether a person at this age is proud of the feats of his or her ancestors or mechanically reacts to music, symbols and words.

But the question lingers: how can you transform from a teenager with a weak voice to an individual with a strong voice? How does someone transform from a neutral personality to someone with a real cause, a real presence and a real voice? Think about a sponge, it absorbs everything: so how do you know which is the water and which is the poison?

(Brainstorming of Questions by the actors.)

Actor 1: Why am I proud?

Actor 2: Should I be Proud?

Actor 3: Why do I hate you?

Actor 4: Should I hate you?

Actor 5: Do I have to consider you as my enemy?

Actor 1: Why do I consider you my enemy now?

Actor 2: Are you my enemy?

Actor 3: Why should I live with you?

Actor 4: What can you offer me more than my ancestors?

Actor 5: What is property?

Actor 1: What is land?

Actor 2: What is motherland?

Actor 3: Can you really harm me?

Actor 4: Can I really trust you?

Actor 5: Where are you when I don't see you?

Actor 1: So, why do they let you come to my school anyway?

National Holidays and Spike Heels

Actor 1: How do I look? Does this tie look awful?

Actor 2: God I hate these clothes. Why do we have to wear them anyway? You look fine. Unbutton your shirt a little bit lower though.... There you go.

Actor 1: Do you think he'll come? To see me... I think he's so hot. Sizzling even.

Actor 2: I dunno. I'll ask my boyfriend; see if they're coming together.

Actor 1: Ok, thanks. You're the best!

Actor 2: What's keeping them so long? Why aren't we starting the rehearsal? Where's that stupid teacher of ours? She said 1:30 and she's still not here.

Actor 1: I hate these stupid parades. They make us practice under the hot sun and then we get, what in return, nothing. Such a waste of time.

Actor 2: Precious coffee time. Hey, I even got some cigarettes from my mom's purse!

Actor 1: Great! So lets hope we finish with all this crap early. I'm so sick and tired. Just because you're tall, you get stuck in stupid parades. What's it for anyway?

Actor 2: I dunno.

Actor 1: Me neither. Hey, you like my shoes?

Actor 2: Yeah. They're great. Where did you get them from?

Actor 1: This store close to my house, the one I was telling you about, where I got my other heels from, too. They have great stuff. Plus my mom knows the owner, so we get a discount.

Actor 2: They're really cool. Let's go together one day.

Actor 1: Sure. Where are they? Come on people, some of us have a life.

Actor 2: Come on already.

(Noise is slowly heard in the background. Projections of fighting between young people.)

Actor 1: Hey, what's going on there?

Actor 2: What's that noise?

Actor 1: It sounds terrible.

Actor 2: (Actor 5 is passing by them in a hurry.) Hey, what's the matter?

Actor 5: There's a fight, there's a bunch of kids that are protesting about the national holiday, they want it banned.

Actor 1: So?

Actor 5: What do you mean so? Do you know what would happen then? We would loose our identity, forget about who we are.

Actor 2: Seriously?

Actor 1: I never thought of it that way.

Actor 5: Well, it's time you did. All these people have a plan, an agenda: they want to make us indifferent towards our identity.

Actor 2: Who? Who are these people?

Actor 5: Does it matter who specifically?

(Pause, Actor 5 looks at them both.)

Actor 5: Does it?

Actor 1 & Actor 2: No, no. Definitely not.

Actor 5: So, are you just gonna stand there and do nothing?

Actor 2: What can we do?

Actor 5: You can go in and kick some ass, tell them they can't mess with us.

Actor 1: You bet. Let's go.

Actor 2: Hold on, we have a rehearsal.

Actor 5: Don't worry about that, what we're doing is more important. Saving our cultural values from those who seek to undermine them.

Actor 1: Sure. Absolutely. Cool, let's go.

Actor 5: I'm going, don't be too late.

Actor 1: Ok, we'll be right there.

(Actor 5 exits.)

Actor 1: Let's go.

Actor 2: Where are we going again?

Actor 1: I'm not sure. But we'll follow him, he seems to know what he's doing. And he's right, those people are taking everything away from us: our identity, our pride, our.... identity...

Actor 2: What if my shoes get ruined?

Actor 1: Stop it. Come on, this is more important.

Actor 2: Oh, ok.

(They exit. On the projector is a short film with kids fighting over symbols OR voices heard in the background, shouting slogans, shadows at the back.)

Scene A2

(Desert setting)

Actor 2: Oh no! The soles from my Nikes came off! I can't believe what is happening to me! My new, expensive Nikes! They are gone! Ruined. And this is the least of my problems, I'm barely hanging on myself.

Actor 1: Come on, don't behave like this, for a pair of shoes...

Actor 2: I don't expect you to understand. With these ancient old shoes you're wearing! It'll almost be a blessing for you if they melt off your feet and get lost forever into the desert... But you know what the worst thing is: there's no mobile signal here.

Actor 1: What do you need your mobile for right now?

Actor 2: Alright! The sun has damaged your brain, that's certain! Is that an actual question? What do I need my mobile for? I just wanted to call my mother and tell her what a wonderful time we are having, ask her about the weather, that kind of thing. Does that answer your question?

Actor 1: There's no need to be sarcastic...

Actor 2: How can I not be with these stupid things you're asking me. I need to call someone, anyone, to get us some water before I faint!

Actor 1: I told you we should have stayed close to the others, didn't I? That's exactly what I had in mind when I told you that it's dangerous to create a distance with the others. And now look at us: we run out of water, and we might be lost, and what if something happens to one of us, there's no one around to help us. But you...

Actor 2: But me what? Is it my fault now? Is it my fault that the rest run like turtles and pissed me off? Is it my fault that you - the studious and wise - were way off with your estimations, plus our water is over? And is it my fault that the next stop we'll be seeing only as a vision because of the sunstroke?

Actor 1: The only thing I'm saying is that it would be better if we stayed close to the others...

Actor 2: (thought) Stupid girl! Did you really think that I would have crossed the finish line with a bunch of anonymous losers, with no life and no reputation! That I would suppress my superiority by staying behind and missing the chance to prove to everybody how much better I am from them. From all of you!

Actor 1: (thought) There was one more story in that same series my mum used to read to me... That one spoke about hatred. And said, I remember, that hatred is a little man with an ugly fat head, two teeth coming out of his mouth and seven red hairs on his scalp, that looked a little bit like smoke...

Scene B2

(urban setting)

Actor 3: Hey look at that!

Actor 4: Wow! A tap! Do you think it has water?

Actor 3: More importantly: do you think it might be safe to drink?

Actor 4: The way I'm feeling right now, I'd drink anything!

Actor 3: Yeah, and regret it later on, during the long hours you'd be sitting in the toilet! That is IF you're lucky enough to make it there!

Actor 4: Man, the way you always spoil the little pleasures of life!

Actor 3: I'm just trying to protect you! Have you ever had a bout of diarrhoea?

Actor 4: Em... no.

Actor 3: That's why you're so ready to drink anything you find! Trust me, it's not at all fun...

Actor 4: Much ado about nothing: this tap is completely dry.

Actor 3: Let's leave then.

Actor 4: Are you sure this is the right way?

Actor 3: I'm as sure as you are mister!

Actor 4: Great! Just great! Not only is it hot, not only am I tired, not only am I thirsty, not only are we in this area, now you're telling me we could be lost too?!

Actor 3: Hey, don't you worry! The last people that were lost, are now superfamous! Don't you watch tv, LOST?!

Actor 4: I'll give you this: you have the weirdest sense of humour!

Actor 3: I'm just being positive.

Actor 4: Positive about what? The fact that we're positively lost?

Actor 3: Oh shut up and keep walking! I see some lights down the street, and people. We'd definitely be safe among a crowd.

Actor 4: Or we'll just get a better beating...

Actor 3: Just shut up and walk, ok?

Actor 4: All we'd be asking for if we go there is trouble! Can't you realize that?

Actor 3: Listen, I'd rather have something to drink and maybe face some strangers, than keep hiding from some unseen "monsters" and die from dehydration!

Actor 4: How about dying from internal bleeding and severe damage to your vital organs?

Actor 3: I don't wanna hear any more nonsense! We are not in the jungle! These are our fellow countrymen! Not some savages that eat raw human meat for breakfast!

Actor 4: How about I don't wanna test YOUR theory? I'm staying here! And if you're a good friend, you'll come and tell me all is ok and how to get out of here.

Actor 3: And what if those people over there beat me to death and I never come back to find you? (Ironically.) You'd still be here, still be lost and still be thirsty. Ever think about that?

Actor 4: If you're saying all this to scare me, I have news for you: you did it! Remind me to seriously kick you in the morgue!

Actor 3: Just walk. (Contemptuous look.)

(They start walking towards a brightly lit place that appears to be a bar as they go near it.)

Scene D

(At a campsite)

Today someone called me a bad person.

Actor 5: Today someone called me a bad person. This was my first encounter with the "faceless ghosts" that lived on the other side of the border and I had never seen before. I could have called him a bad person, but I was willing to become his friend, since in my mind, the purpose of this camp was to bring us together as people.

The boy who called me a bad person does not know me, my character, my personality, but he knows my ethnicity, my race and the label history has put on me. But, you know, forget about History: think "Hollywood movies". In their stories, there always need to be two character types, that's how the world is made: the good and the bad, OK, ok and sometimes the ugly.

(movie trailer voice recording.) Hollywood! We are here to save the world, we should stop the invasion of the others, shoot, kill, bomb, bring it on. One Man, apparently good and never hurt by bullets, has a mission. Seek and Destroy the fear of the Other and save the blonde, always in make-up, love interest from the hands of the Other but in the mean time destroy the infrastructure of a country. We are the good guys. They are the bad! Soon in the Movie Theatres of your free from such problems neighborhood. The movie "Long live Stereotypes" or "How Hollywood determines the perception of our identity".

Actor 5: How can a child my age call me a bad person? Who gives him the right to judge me as a bad person? Is it Hollywood movies that try to impose on us that there is a centre and the rest of the world is the enemy, the rest of the world is ugly? Or is it History?

(television presenter voice recording.) History! Books that claim objectivity! Books that shape the collective identity of a nation! Books that determine your enemies! Books that praise you as the proud inheritor of collective memories that you need to pass on! Books that hide the truth! Books that are about stories and not about facts! Books that are ratified by Ministries of Glorious Nations and give new meaning to cultural learnings! Books that promote hate instead of knowledge.

Actor 5: I want to be perceived as an individual identity not as part of a collective identity whose simple definition is: bad person. I am one of the Others therefore I am bad, I am one of Us therefore I am good. I understand why I had to be part of his game, but at the same time I was amazed because the faceless ghost suddenly has a face and a solid body. It is an individual which I wanted to get to know, to forgive, and to play with. It was a challenge, the whole idea of creating a community consisting of them and us, it was a challenge. I did not know what to think about Them, but "bad" was not how I would describe them. I had to work hard, I had to prove to him that I am not a bad person.

Today he did a bad thing.

He broke the rules of our community, but I decided not to tell on him. He was no longer a faceless ghost, it was no longer about us and them, it was about a new condition, a new state of being. That made me think whether I should avenge him or not. He did something reactionary that many kids of my age could have done regardless of their cultural background.

Therefore, I chose to cover for my friend and his small revolutionary act against the rules of the "grown ups".

I was no longer a bad person.

Scene A3

(desert setting with fire)

Actor 2: What on earth is...

Actor 1: What?

Actor 2: Don't you see the smoke?... Or is it just me, starting to have hallucinations? Over there, at the ...

Actor 1: Oh yes... What could that be?

Actor 2: I don't know... but whatever it is, it better have water!

Actor 1: Oh yes... I hope so... but look! It's a man! If only he has water! If only... let's go, quickly, go ask him...

Actor 2: Hold on a minute... hold on. This is not an ordinary man! He is an Indian!
Are you blind or has the sun made you really dizzy?

Actor 1: But does it matter now? He is a man, he is alive and most probably he has water!
Isn't water what we want? Well, we found it!

Actor 2: The only thing we found for the time being is an Indian. And from what I see, a classic sample. Feathers on his head, painted face! As if he got out of a western movie! I'm sure he carries a hatchet under his clothes.... Oh my God! Who's gonna save us now, I wonder. And who's gonna find us in this damned desert! Slaughtered...

Actor 1: Please tell me that you're just joking! You can't be serious about what you said... The man looks just fine. Ok, he's a Native American, so what? Not to mention that we are in his territory! You cannot be so prejudiced. That comes to the point of racism. Or are you so affected by the western movies you've been watching as a child that you are under the impression that all Indians go around carrying hatchets and arrows and their only purpose in life is to kill innocent white people and then skin their scalps?

Actor 2: You can say whatever you like... Call me a racist or anything you want for that matter. I, definitely, don't wanna go close to him. Just tell me, don't you find it weird that he's sitting in the middle of nowhere, under that heat with a fire in front of him as if he's preparing to start a war?...

Actor 1: I can't believe what you're saying! How can you say things like that? And mean it. Next you'll say that he's been waiting for us! That someone told him about a bunch of white marathon runners passing through his territory and he made up a devilish plan so he could slaughter them all, one by one and make a collection of their blonde, white scalps. Please!!! Cut it out.

Actor 2: Me? Cut it out? You said that story, not me. The fact that you said it means that you thought it! And don't try to be all brave and superior now. You know perfectly well that this ... "gentleman" could be quite dangerous...

Actor 1: The only thing I know is that this gentleman most probably has water with him and he might be kind enough to share it with us, if we ask him nicely. And that is exactly what I intend to do! As for you, you can come with me or keep running alone until the next stop. And that just because you are full of prejudice and suspicion. You decide...

(Actor 1 moves decisively towards the Native American while Actor 2 follows in caution from a distance.)

Actor 1: Hi there...

Actor 3: Hello to you too. What brings you to our area?

Actor 1: Eh, well... we are running for a Marathon, it's called the Marathon of Love. There are other people with us, they just stayed a little behind, they'll be here in a while...

Actor 3: A Marathon of Love! That sounds great! You cannot find many young people with a social consciousness and sensitivity. Most kids nowadays just want to have fun and watch TV.

Actor 1: Yeah, well... not all! As I said there are many people running today with us. We moved just a little faster to get to the next stop before them. But you see, we run out of water and...

(Meanwhile Actor 2 has come closer, but keeping a safety distance.)

Actor 3: You run out of water? With all this heat? That is really dangerous! Come on, come on... I've got clean cool water, enough for all!

(Actor 1 first turns and looks at Actor 2, waving her to come closer. Actor 2 shows annoyed with her but moves towards her anyway and they start speaking in whispers.)

Actor 1: What else you need to hear, heh? The man is perfectly civilised! And totally polite!
Plus HE HAS WATER! Enough for all, he said! You heard him!

Actor 2: Yeah, yeah... I heard him! And so what! I still have my doubts. After all, how do you know what kind of water this is? What if it's dirty? Or even contaminated?

Actor 1: Are you crazy? Have you been watching Erin Brokovitch or Conspiracy Theories last night? Contaminated!..

Actor 2: Why? Do you think it's impossible? I don't! Not at all! Can you see how dirty he is? Full of dust. Besides, I only drink bottled water...

Actor 1: Ah... you are completely out of control. Go get your Evian then! When you find it! I'll take the risk and I will drink from the dirty, contaminated water of the gentleman over here!

(Actor 1 makes a sudden turn and gets close to the Native American again. Actor 2 shows to hesitate.)

Actor 2: What the hell! If she is going to try first... I'll wait for a while before I drink. Or even better. I'll see this savage drinking first! One way or another, I cannot stand being without water for long...

(Actor 2 finally starts to move towards them. As she gets closer she suddenly stops as if she is thinking about something. She takes her mobile phone hanging from her neck.)

Actor 2: But of course! If I get out of this alive, at least I'll get something useful out of it! I'm sure everybody at school will be totally jealous when I show them a picture of the authentic, wild Indian I met in the middle of the desert! Let alone the boys, they will come like flies!

(She is ready to take the photo when the Indian sees her.)

Actor 3: NO!!! Please don't do that!

Actor 2: And why not? It's just a picture. To remember your kindness. (ironically.)

Actor 3: Don't do that please! (in a severe tone.)

Actor 1: Stop it! You heard what he said! Don't you know that you should not take a photo of an Indian? In their culture, when someone takes a photo of them it's like taking their soul!

SCENE FREEZE

Scene B3

(Urban setting. A motorbike sound is heard approaching, just as they arrive.)

Actor 4: Oh God. Look at that monster bike!

Actor 3: Don't be dramatic. Bikes like that are sold all over the country. Chill man.

Actor 4: Yeah, but can you see the driver of this one?

Actor 3: No, can you? You think it might be a fellow student of ours and give us a lift home?

Actor 4: Student? He looks like a real criminal to me! Can't you see the black leather outfit he's wearing? I've seen a few guys on TV dressed like that and they were totally nasty.

Actor 3: First of all, I've seen a lot of people dressed like that when they ride a bike in MY neighbourhood: leather is the best protection in case of an accident. It reduces the friction with the asphalt. And then you tell me you can think... I don't know how you got that scholarship of yours.

(Person on bike is slowly switching off the bike and getting ready to dismount.)

Actor 4: It's very clear to me that we are SO busted right now, that anything you say does not even register with me.

Actor 3: Hey! Listen to me! You should not carry all that prejudice around. It can be very dangerous. To YOU!

Actor 4: Dangerous is that we're lost in THIS part of town. And it was all YOUR idea!

Actor 3: MY idea? Hell, you are to blame about our situation as much as I am! Wasn't it you that thought about taking a "shortcut"?

Actor 4: I suggested the shortcut? Listen mister, you might not think I'm too bright, but I do have perfect memory!

Actor 3: I'll let you and your perfect memory here and I'll go up to that person and ask for directions and perhaps go in the bar and buy a softdrink.

Actor 4: You gotta be out of your mind! There's no question about it! Get real and let's get outta here before it's too late!

(Actor 3 does not respond and starts walking towards biker.)

Actor 4: Don't even think of asking for my help when he attacks! I won't even be here, you hear me?

(Actor 3 continues walking and does not respond. When he is near enough to the biker, he starts talking.)

Actor 3: Excuse me man, me and my friend there are a bit lost and I was wondering if you could give us some directions.

(Biker starts slowly taking off the helmet.)

Actor 4: Perfect! My last chance to catch a glimpse of him in case I survive long enough to be called for testimony at the murder trial.

(Biker carefully takes off helmet, revealing two full, glossy lips, painted in black, then a pouty nose with a diamond stud on it, then a mop of black hair above two friendly eyes and eventually a smiling female face.)

Actor 2: Last time I checked, I wasn't a man! Not even close! Do you think something might have happened to change that on the short ride from my place?

Actor 3: I'm sorry madam, I thought you were a man. I apologize. I didn't mean to offend you, my lady, madame.

Actor 2: Nobody has ever called me that! Where ARE you from? And, by the way, no offence taken.

Actor 3: We're from another part of town. We were just going home, we missed the last bus and my friend there, suggested we take a shortcut and, well, here we are.

Actor 2: Well, if it was only one of you, I wouldn't mind giving you a ride, but I can't possibly take two people on my bike. It's against the law. And I have a perfectly clean driving record, which I intend to keep that way. You have the sweetest brown eyes by the way...!

Actor 3: Well, thank you for the compliment. You look very nice yourself. Tell me, did it hurt too much having that nose thing done?

Actor 2: He, he. No pain, no gain, is what they say, and it sure is true for this baby here. (Points to nose stud.)

(Actor 4 slowly starts approaching them.)

Actor 4: Oh, am I, uh, interrupting something here?

Actor 3: Uh, no, not really, I was just explaining our situation and that we are lost and very thirsty.

Actor 4: I'm sure you meant to say that you GOT us lost, right?

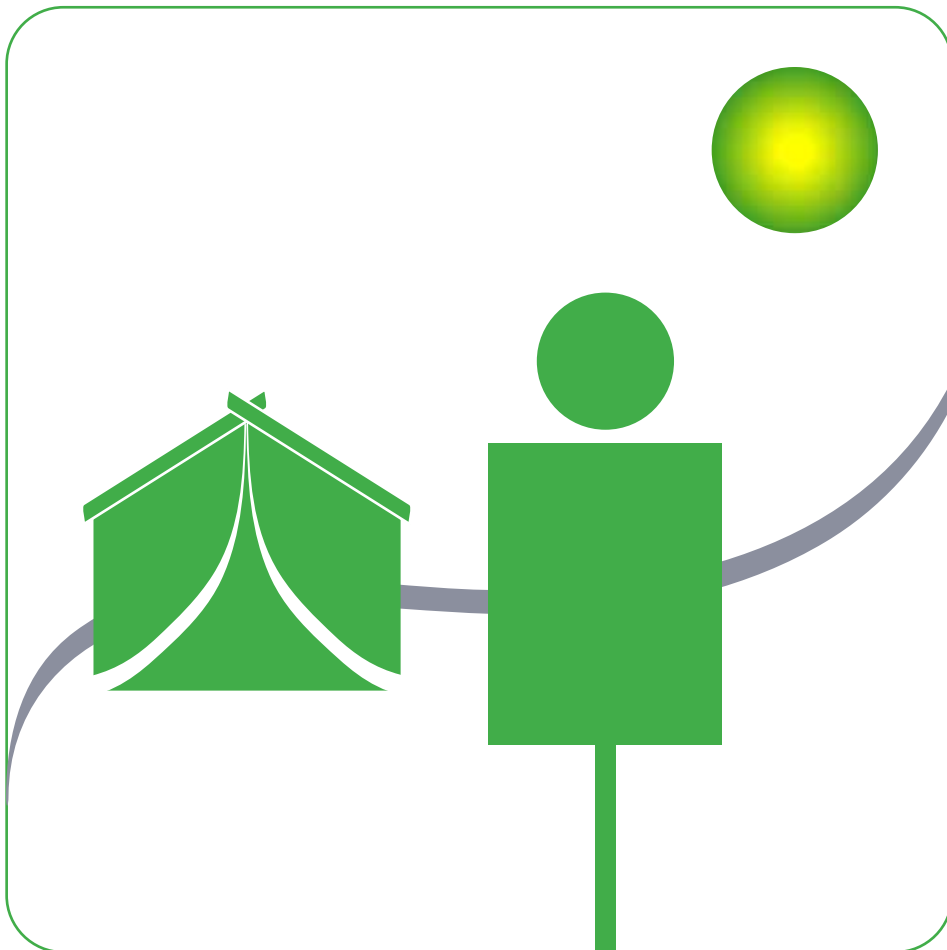
Actor 2: Hey guys, guys! I'm going in the bar for a drink. I could buy you one, at least to you, cutie and later we can see how we'd get you guys home. You can stay here and fight or you can join me inside. What do you say?

Actor 3: Um, sure, I'd be glad to join you. Are you coming or not?

SCENE FREEZE

(Two stories merge on stage and on the screens. The actors ask the audience for an ending, the actors improvise the endings of both stories.)

The end



Σήμερα κάποιος με είπε κακό άνθρωπο.

Bugün biri bana kötü bir insan olduğumu söyledi.



Today someone called me a bad person.

