

Question! Encounter! Play!

Transformative Dialogue Through Theatre

A project by the Youth Section at the Goetheanum in collaboration with the *Initiativforum für Geflüchtete* and the *Friends of Waldorf Education*. Supported by Movetia's Youth In Action program and the Anthroposophical Society in Switzerland



About the project

Question! Encounter! Play! is a program hosted by the Youth Section at the Goetheanum that aims to foster encounter, inclusion and creativity amongst young people from different backgrounds through art. In October 2021, 21 young people from 15 different countries gathered at the Goetheanum to work for 6 days together on an original performance piece. "I think that it's very important for young people from different backgrounds with different stories to come together. This shows that it doesn't matter where we come from when it comes to making bonds with each other", said a participant.

Some of the participants were young people who had to flee their home countries because of war, violence or conflict and are currently living as refugees in Switzerland. Other participants were young people living in Switzerland and Germany, some of which had taken part in the volunteer programs by the Friends of Waldorf Education. Together they developed the script, acting, music, set and costume design from scratch with the facilitators, who guided them through a process of encounter with self and others in biographical sessions, artistic activities and rehearsals.



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Participant, 23, Germany

The performance

The final performance told the story of an artistic troupe attempting to tell the journeys of three travellers who leave their homelands in search of a dignified life. The director, avid for drama, leads the story in a way that the characters' journeys develop dramatically and become challenged by hectic city life, to the extent that they are threatened by the loss of their names and identities. The play ends in an affirmation of each individual identity, with each of the troupe performers remembering their names.

A participant said that "the play is about many of the questions that humanity is going through today. In a way, it is just a way of expressing these questions today, because maybe people before already had them, but we are kind of showing in a really strong way how young people feel today, at least in the western societies".



Youth Section
at the Goetheanum

LÄDT SIE HERZLICH EIN ZU
**Frage!
Begegne!
Spiele!**
EINE KÜNSTLERISCHE REISE

**16 OKTOBER 2021
16:30
FELSLI AM GOETHEANUM**

Ein Theaterstück unter freiem Himmel, kreiert und aufgeführt
von jungen Menschen am Goetheanum

Freier Eintritt (Kollekte)

Youth Section
at the Goetheanum

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Exchange and mobility

Autorenforum
» Geflüchtete

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Participant, 20, Argentina



The process

Biography sessions, music, theatre, stage & costume design and cooking

A diverse program of activities

09:00 - 10:30 Morning warm up with games and song
11:00 - 12:30 Biography sessions
12:30 - 14:30 Lunch inspired by our diverse cultures
14:30 - 18:00 Music / Theatre / Stage & Costume Design in groups
18:00 - 20:00 Dinner inspired by our diverse cultures
20:00 - 22:00 Games, music and dance - open contributions from the group

The program was designed with the following objectives in mind:

1. To foster cultural exchange
2. To encourage self-reflection about one's own identity
3. To develop individual initiative in connection with others

Each session was dedicated to developing aspects of the final performance, in which all groups and activities came together in a communal - artistic expression for the group involved and the Dornach/Goetheanum local community.

The sessions

Morning warm-ups: every morning the group began with a check-in round to give feedback on the previous day's experiences and to express how they felt that day since waking up. This was followed by rhythm, singing and drama exercises that were in fact turned into the group scenes of the final performance.

Biography: three questions led us through the biography sessions "what is my journey so far?", "who am I today?" and "what is our common journey?". In these sessions the participants could reflect on their own journeys and share with each other the

similar and different aspects of their upbringing and arriving at where they are today. Music group: focused on developing three songs for the play which included percussion, singing, cello and violin.

Theatre group: 11 actors developed characters, scenes and script for the final performance.

Stage and costume design: designers developed props, designed the stage and scouted for materials for costumes and elements used by the actors on the final performance.

Production: the production team took care of the food, drinks, and spaces being apt for the development of the groups' initiatives and creativity.

The Impact

The play was performed outdoors to be able to welcome anyone interested in attending without the need for a COVID Certificate. On Saturday 16th of October, around 100 people gathered by the Felsli's garden stage to watch the performance. Afterwards, food and drinks were served for the public and performers, who shared their questions and impressions with each other.

For the participants

The participants described the experience as "an unforgettable week" and the highlight of the program for them was the relationships that took shape through the encounter and by taking initiative together. It was clear that new friendships had been formed amongst all the participants regardless of where they came from; friendships that are likely to continue beyond the program. "I am taking a lot of experiences with me, and answers to questions I never realized I had, and realizing that I was even more privileged than I thought it was", said a participant.

For the organisations involved

For the Youth Section, it was an invaluable experience to work with this unique group of young people, learning from their rich and diverse biographical experiences and cultures. New relationships were formed also for the organisations involved. For example, after the positive experience, the Section looks forward to collaborating again with the Zentrum für Asylsuchende Degenbalm which is managed by Caritas Schweiz and houses 8 of the program's participants.

For the community

The Goetheanum's community members were touched by the final show and also by the spontaneous cultural atmosphere present at the Goetheanum gardens, a much-needed community experience during the COVID pandemic. An audience member said that it was "a fabulous statement of the human being's resilience and strength. I was so moved I could not clap at the end, the tears came instead. Thank you for restoring faith in humanity".



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Audience member ”



“

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The collaborators

The program was made possible thanks to the financial support of Movetia Switzerland's Youth in Action program and the Swiss Anthroposophical Society. The concept was developed by the Youth Section's team together with Milena Kowarik (Initiativforum für Geflüchtete), Henric Lewengard (artistic director), Massa Ando (Monte Azul Community Association), Guadalupe Olaizola (set and costume design) and Angel Chiok (StART international).

We thank the Goetheanum Eurythmy Ensemble for sharing their own artistic process with us; the Rudolf Steiner Archiv and the Goetheanum Gartnerei for supporting the outdoor performance at the Felsli; Steven Thomas and his team for their help in gathering materials and Annemarie Savin at the Goetheanum's Costume department for clothing our play.



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