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# STAGE OF mind

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Mind: Upskilling adults living with mental illness  
through multidisciplinary performing arts”**

# **The impact of the ERASMUS+ project “StaGe of Mind: Upskilling adults living with mental illness through multidisciplinary performing arts”**

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## **Introduction**

"The artist is the origin of the work of art. The work of art is the origin of the artist. One does not exist without the other. And yet neither of them is the sole factor of the other." Martin Heidegger, (The Origin of the Work of Art, 1960).

The arts are a fertile ground for people of all ages to liberate themselves, to function creatively, to have fun, to acquire knowledge and cultivate aesthetic sensibility. In addition, they function as a means of emotional relaxation and discharge, while at the same time, they have a therapeutic role by offering the participant the possibility of freely expressing feelings, thoughts and concerns in a creative way and in a safe environment (Alkistis, 2008, Samaras, 2020).

Theater is one of the arts whose contribution and value has been recognized since ancient times. Mentally, emotionally, aesthetically, educationally it contributes to the all-round development and evolution of man (Sextou, 2007, Samara, 2020). In ancient Greece, it was already perceived as a complex art, combining three arts together: dance, singing, acting (Dermati, 2017), something that is also recognized by modern theater theorists, who characterize it as a collective, complex art, as it includes the art of acting, speech, rhetoric, dance, music, visual arts, including, in our times, elements of technology too. After all, every theatrical performance is a partnership of all the above arts, "(...) it is a big 'Project', a term also used in the cross-thematic approach of knowledge and pedagogy" (Sextou, 2007, Samara, 2020).

In addition to the above qualities of theater, according to Faigin & Stein (2010), its role, with its various forms, in the recovery and rehabilitation of people with psychosocial problems is especially important. Widespread forms of cooperation between theater and the field of mental health are the psychotherapeutic methods of psychodrama and drama therapy, which have their roots in a wide range of psychological and sociological approaches, such as psychoanalysis, the theory of object-oriented relations, evolutionary psychology and other social science approaches. Their goals include enhancing self-image and self-awareness,

exploring and processing traumatic events, strengthening problem-solving skills, and providing support for personality, mood, and other disorders (Schnee, 1996, Landy, 1997, Faigin & Stein, 2010).

Data from studies on the effect of art therapies on various population groups, for example homeless people with psychosocial problems, refer to the strengthening of problem-solving skills, adaptive coping and problem-solving and social skills (Golub, Nardacci, Frohoc, Friedman, 1993, Katz, Nardacci, Sabatini, 1993, Schnee, 1996, Faigin & Stein, 2010), as well as ameliorating symptoms such as social withdrawal (Schnee, 1996, Manos 1997).

### **Brief description of the StaGe of Mind project**

The Erasmus+ StaGe of Mind project had a two-year duration (May 2021-April 2023) and was implemented in 3 countries: Spain, Greece, Ireland with the participation of six organizations: three mental health organizations joined forces with three performing arts organizations, in order to give people with psychosocial problems the opportunity to participate in creative activities in the field of performing arts, to co-create on an equal basis with performing arts professionals and to present to the general public a musical performance per country.

Leader: FUNDACION INTRAS (Spain), Partners: RAYUELA PRODUCCIONES TEATRALES S.L. (Spain), Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellaropoulos (Greece), Angels of Joy (Greece), Housing Association for Integrated Living (Ireland), SMASHING TIMES THEATER COMPANY LIMITED (Ireland). The project was co-financed by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

The project, which was originally intended to include at least 45 participants, ultimately reached 62 beneficiaries. Most of the participants were people with severe and enduring psychosocial problems, recipients of mental health services living in the Community or housed in community care housing structures, in Athens, Dublin and Valladolid. In the case of the Spanish participants, the

opportunity to participate in the program was also offered to some homeless people, users of the municipal shelter in the city of Valladolid.

### **Goals and objectives**

The Erasmus+ StaGe of Mind (SoM) project was created with the main purpose of offering access to people with psychosocial problems and enduring mental health difficulties to the artistic and cultural environment of musical theater with the goal of contributing overall to the improvement of their quality of life, but also to the elimination of the stigma of mental illness, the public awareness, social integration and the development of artistic and creative self-expression skills through their connection to the cultural and artistic scene.

Individual objectives of the Programme were:

1. Improving the cognitive skills and basic abilities of adult beneficiaries with serious psychosocial problems through specialized, vocational training in the performing arts
2. Facilitating the access of people with psychosocial disabilities to the artistic scene, performing arts and cultural events
3. The training of the beneficiary participants in the self-management of a theater group after the end of the project, to promote the idea of presence on the artistic stage and contribute to the creation of a resilient community with an inherent sense of belonging.
4. Advocating for the social integration of people with psychosocial problems, eliminating stigma and social exclusion, and ensuring access to collective and social life through the arts and culture.

The StaGe of Mind project ultimately involved 62 recipients of mental health services from three countries, Spain, Ireland, Greece. The participants had the

opportunity to be introduced to the performing arts through an educational programme implemented in partnership with specialized professionals in the artistic and mental health fields, in order to carry out a co-creation process which finally led to the final representation of three different musical theater pieces performances in theaters of Athens, Valladolid and Dublin.

### **Implementation of the programme**

The programme consisted of two phases. The first phase involved approximately eight months of training in basic principles and methods of the performing arts through structured 90-minute training workshops. The structure and content of the workshops was based on the content of ten training modules developed by the three performing arts organizations and covering the full range of performing arts and training areas required to conduct a musical theater performance.

The second phase lasted about six months and was aimed at the production and preparation of an original theater performance by the participants themselves with the guidance and coordination of professionals. The aim was to utilize the knowledge and training the participants received during the previous phase and start a co-production process in which participants could work with performing arts professionals towards the goal of creating a theater play from scratch.

### **Educational Workshops**

The StaGe of Mind training workshops started at the beginning of 2022 and had a total duration of 14 months, divided into two phases, the preparatory and the creative, to end up with the production and presentation of a musical theater performance between February and March 2023.

The ultimate goal of the workshops was to improve a range of abilities and skills of the participants, such as: motor, expressive, creative, musical theater skills, but

above all, to create a stable community through the cultivation of a sense of "belonging", so that the participants prepare for the self-management of an amateur theater group in the future.

Specifically:

In the first 8 months, the participants had the opportunity to practice activities related to the cultivation of skills in areas such as: memory and concentration, artistic skills of speech production, communication, social skills, creativity and imagination, planning and organization, persistence, physical expression, physical condition, etc.

In the following 6 months, the beneficiaries were invited to design, co-create a musical theater performance, under the artistic direction of their instructors.

One of the main innovations of the programme is the idea of co-shaping and co-creating a musical theater performance jointly by amateur participants and performing arts professionals.

As part of the StaGe of Mind Programme an international group of artists from different disciplines of art collaborated with mental health experts to design an innovative educational-artistic methodology that uses a variety of performing arts - theater, dance & choreography, song - to support adults with severe and chronic mental illness and psychosocial problems to improve a wide range of skills.

### **The StaGe of Mind deliverables**

The project envisaged the close cooperation of the 6 partners for the smooth coordination and implementation of the complex prerequisite actions. The six partners collaborated in the three countries in pairs consisting of a mental health organization and an organization with action and experience in the performing arts and animation, to organize three shows in Athens, Dublin and Valladolid. The smooth flow of communication and feedback was ensured through the digital

governance of the programme, through regular scheduled meetings, reports to partners and to the coordinator.

During the two-year duration of the StaGe of Mind project, the following deliverables were prepared:

- a) A training programme and educational material/resources tailor-made for training people with long term and enduring psychosocial/mental health difficulties through performing arts. The training programme is divided into 10 modules that refer to the bases and fundamental principles of all disciplines of the performing arts necessary for the production of a play, such as creative techniques of script writing, acting, dance, basic principles of stage design and production, etc.
- b) A Blog that hosted articles produced by the six organizations about the connection between art and mental health.
- c) Three original musical theater performances (play, music, sets, costumes, directing, etc.) in which the skills developed during the first phase of the programme - Educational Workshops were used. The StaGe of Mind 's interdisciplinary training process culminated in the collaborative production of a collective art project per country.
- d) Development of a personalized online portal, where the educational material of the programme will be permanently hosted so that other organizations working with this target group may be able to replicate the programme and contact the project partner organization in case of needing further support.
- e) An integral report that presents the strengths and weaknesses of the programme, as well as recommendations for future replications.
- f) A participants' report that presents the feedback of the persons who took part in the project activities. Their impressions were periodically collected through questionnaires and focus groups to evaluate the programme.



## **Participants and evaluation process**

The initial objective of the project was to involve 45 participants in 3 countries, which means 15 per country. This expectation has been exceeded during the implementation phase. Finally, 62 participants have taken part in the two phases of the training program's implementation: 32 from Spain, 18 from Ireland, and 12 from Greece. However, it should be noted that their participation has not been constant over time, meaning that not all those who started the training have participated in both phases and in the final performance. Additionally, not all the people who eventually took part in the final performance participated in both phases of the program.

A total of 36 beneficiaries participated in the first phase of the program (14 from Spain, 12 from Greece, and 10 from Ireland), while 48 people participated in the second phase (22 from Spain, 18 from Ireland, and 8 from Greece), which involved the preparation and final representation of the show. It is worth noting that the Greek group involved 35 additional beneficiaries in the second phase through video recordings for the final performance. Including these 35 beneficiaries was a response to the dropout of some participants from the Greek group during the second phase of the program's implementation. The Greek mental health organization proposed including users from the four geographic regions where they offer mental health services in the project, thus giving the opportunity for more people to participate, albeit remotely, in the creation and representation of the final work. Their contribution consists of a series of videos that are an integral part of the narrative represented on stage.

The beneficiaries did not remain stable throughout the duration of the project until its end for various reasons, such as: inconsistency, withdrawals from the educational program, difficulties in concentration, illiteracy, etc. This fact prevented the process of comparing results at regular intervals and deriving results. To bridge this methodological impasse, in the second phase of the

programme implementation, when additional participants were engaged, additional data were collected through focus groups and interviews in the preparation phase of the final show, as well as after the performance.

All participants were aged between 20 up to 70. There was a high concentration of participants in their 40s and 50s in the 3 participating countries. There were significantly more male than female participants in each phase of the project. Engagement of males was higher than female in all 3 countries. There were shared challenges expressed in the recruitment and engagement of participants and some participants withdrew from the process for various reasons, some noting their discomfort with a public performance. For others, their housing situation changed or challenges with their mental health recovery impacted their ability to participate.

### **Evaluation of the Programme**

A complex evaluation process according to the standards of action research was followed which included: the initial design of a questionnaire for the evaluation of the training program by the participants, the distribution and completion of the questionnaires, the extraction of preliminary results and the preparation of local reports which were then summarized in a unique joint report. The process resulted in redefining the objectives of the next phase following the identification of common themes regarding the needs that emerged, the capabilities achieved and the degree of achievement of the objectives of the reference period.

The evaluation process by the beneficiaries of the programme through questionnaires was repeated 3 times from the beginning of the educational workshops to their end, namely: a few weeks after the beginning of the first phase of the programme, in the middle of its implementation and immediately after their completion. A questionnaire was also distributed shortly before the musical theater performance, although in the second creative phase of the programme,

the partnership decided to use new tools to collect participants' feedback. After the show, focus groups and interviews were carried out to gather meaningful data and insights from participants.

The workshop facilitators filled in after the end of each session an evaluation form to record the degree of achievement of the objectives of each workshop and the individual progress of each participant, as well as the achievement of the entire group, to keep a track of the entire process and adjust the plan according to the specific needs of each group.

## **Results**

The results of the evaluations demonstrate for the beneficiaries - people with severe psychosocial problems living in the community or in community care housing structures - significant changes in the areas: Mood/Emotional State, Behavior and Action, Cognition/Thinking and Decision Making and Life Skills - Autonomy & Independence.

In general, the training programme appeared to have a positive effect on the daily life of the participants making them more functional and willing for daily tasks, it also had a positive effect on the maintenance of their daily routine and personal hygiene and care, and provided them with the possibility of adopting a new routine which brought about significant improvements in management of dysfunctional behaviors, such as self-injury, neglect of personal hygiene, etc.

Through this process participants were supported to develop new social connections and friendships. Many participants increased the frequency of social connections outside the family or mental health services bubble. As a result, some participants suggested that the process supported independence in their daily life.

A significantly large percentage of the beneficiaries who answered the relevant questions reported that during the training they felt they became more creative

and learned something new; that they would motivate others to take risks and try something new in their lives; that they felt happier after the sessions and that during the sessions they developed new social relationships and friendships outside the family and became more autonomous and independent; that they feel more and more present by letting go of thoughts and worries outside the session each time.

Some who previously reported generalized anxiety and distress felt this anxiety level decreasing during their participation in the training programme, while a smaller number of beneficiaries reported that despite their discomfort with memory and concentration exercises, they have noticed improvements in these areas through their participation in the workshops.

Regarding their relationships and connection with the team, they reported that they enjoyed teamwork and cooperation with other team members and that they developed new ways of communication, leadership skills, interest in teamwork, interest in learning from experience of others and interest in shared goals.

Most participants agreed that the programme improved their communication skills. This was reported more intensely in phase 2 as trust and relationships were established within the groups. Since the groups were formed, participants expressed a sense of safety around taking risks in communicating. A number of participants presented with a diagnosis that impacted their participation in some way; some participants disclosed speech impairments and some others were limited in their verbal capacity or were nonverbal. In some groups there was a language barrier impacting participation.

However, all participants felt included as part of the group and all participants felt that they contributed to the group. In relation to language/communication, an inclusive approach was implemented by trainers to ensure all participants were part of the process. There were a mixture of verbal and nonverbal exercises and support around use of voice and diction. Participants reported that they felt

supported by the group and that the trainers/facilitators increased social interaction and opportunities to express themselves.

Regarding their physical condition and the relationship with their body, they reported that they were given the opportunity to explore their body through movement and that therefore, they feel more able to express themselves physically than before. Fewer reported some feeling that space for reflection developed within them, and others that their imagination and creativity developed as they discovered new interests and new sides of themselves.

Regarding the biggest challenges experienced during the programme they mentioned: physical movement and physical proximity, timing and coordination with each other, memory and retention of information, self-awareness, individual expression, taking initiative and leadership roles, the struggle with perfectionism - not to make mistakes - to have self-confidence etc.

Regarding the overall design of the Programme, the beneficiaries reported general satisfaction. They recognized that their facilitators adapted to the needs of the group, that they needed more exercises and time to improve their confidence and self-confidence and to familiarize themselves with the vocal and musical exercises.

Regarding the attitude of their facilitators, beneficiaries from all countries agreed that they were supportive and encouraging; they also, were defined as constantly motivated and motivating; they prioritized workshops that encourage participants' initiative and creativity. In addition, they cared for creating a safe space, a warm atmosphere and trust, and they were well informed and clearly communicated the exercises and objectives of the programme. At the same time, they remained authentic and showed a real interest in the project while maintaining respect for the participants, especially in matters of self-confidence and self-awareness.

Most of the participants stated that they would gladly take on a co-facilitator role, if they have the opportunity to replicate the programmes in the future.

Regarding the general features of the training programme that were positively evaluated as essential methodological elements for any iteration of the programme in the future were: the flexibility in the choice of activities per workshop and the adaptation of the activities to the capabilities of the participants; the completeness and clarity of the training units provided precise instructions to the animators and to the participants; the use of music that worked supportively, as a tool for relaxation, expression, better coordination and concentration in the "here and now" and to combat the participants' anxiety and uncomfortable feelings; the music also worked as reinforcements in connecting the team and creating a climate of familiarity and trust.

In addition, capitalizing on the particular characteristics of each participant and integrating them into the plot and the final performance enhances acceptance and inclusion, not only serving the purposes of the project, but also empowering the participants, who gradually realized how important material the personal story and their experience for the performance, for the colleagues, for the director and finally for the audience that will watch the final performance.

The animators used the potential of the participants unaltered and with acceptance, without judgement or any attempt to change, improve or beautify it. This non-directive methodological approach appeared to facilitate group cohesion, the assumption of responsibility and initiative, the connection with common goals, but also that it worked positively in making members responsible and reinforcing the development of attention and memory, improving cognitive skills in general, but also in strengthening physical and mental endurance.

In addition to the impact on the individual cognitively, socially or emotionally, this programme sought to have a cultural impact on its participants. In the implementation it was revealed that the participants did develop new insights into the arts and cultural events. Many participants initially expressed that they felt somewhat alienated from the arts and had not participated in anything like this programme or attended a play. Participants reported that they developed an

increased confidence to connect with culture and the arts. They expressed that they felt decreased stigma and felt less alienated from the arts after participating in the programme.

In some cases, the participants reported that they began to develop relationships and links with other community groups using community arts and specifically drama to maintain their learning and development through drama and to support local and community theater. Participants also acknowledged that they would like to have a long-term presence in drama and cultural events and to be part of a durable arts community. The objective to promote long-term presence on the artistic stage and create a durable community with an intrinsic sense of belonging has been somewhat achieved although some need for further support and training to progress this further.

In terms of a next phase of the project in the future, a video-based project similar to what was implemented by the Greek partners in this process could support a less stressful level of exposure, focus and visibility and facilitate the same positive outcomes for participants. A training programme engaging experts in the field, similar to the StaGe of Mind programme, could be developed.

### **Dramaturgy and artistic impact on StaGe of Mind**

StaGe of Mind set the bar high and, therefore, confronted the essence of dramaturgy, with the very essence of theater: our truth; and in other words, our human existential truth; not with the objective, the measurable truth, but with the subjective, the infinite, the truth of each person who is both a creator and an eyewitness of his work and experience.

And if this truth has infinite faces, heroes and themes, through the experience of StaGe of Mind it was proven that the partial can express the whole, and that the musical theater is a unique place that concerns us all and includes us all as human beings indiscriminately.

The dramaturgy of StaGe of Mind 's theatrical performances conveys on stage the truth of its creators: the truth of mental anguish in the face of trauma, loss, separation, loneliness, frustration, the truth of the tragedy of human existence that is faced with life's challenges such as psychiatric diagnosis, stigma, loneliness, the adversities of the environment; the truth of human relationships, friendly, family or casual; but also the other truth, that of the transformation of drama into catharsis, into liberation, into an education of soul in the ancient Greek sense and finally, into a rewarding experience.

For this reason, the theatrical performances created with diversity as a tool, ultimately did not only express the perspectives of the participants. They concerned their public everywhere, in each country, and not only that. They were universal in their themes and relevant and relatable and about everyone. They were about all of us humans; as persons and as eyewitnesses of our experience; as protagonists of our history and as an audience.

In any case, the impact and dimensions taken by StaGe of Mind theatrical truth comes in accordance with the general principle that the essence of the absolute theatrical truth is identified with the essence of existence; the human epic from whatever community, civilization, culture, race or diversity it may come from.

That's why the StaGe of Mind shows touched the hearts of special audiences and the public interest in three different countries. Academics, mental health professionals, actors, directors, musicians, journalists, members of the press, friends of the six partner organizations, relatives, friends of the troupe and a large general audience flooded the packed theaters in Valladolid, in Dublin and in Athens. An even larger audience was interested in seeking more general, specific, or even scientific information through the project blog, website, social media, and scientific articles published to describe the project methodology and results.

**The impact and dimensions taken by StaGe of Mind theatrical truth by country.**



- **Dublin, Ireland. Performance title: “Awakening a Wake. Families are complicated, even when you're dead”**

*“In “Awakening A Wake” we meet Mike, a recently deceased Dubliner, whose fate in the afterlife will be judged by how he is remembered by his family, friends and neighbours. Guided by the Angel of Death, Mike has three days to learn from what his family and friends think about him. His spirit observes his family and friends talking about him at his wake, and a kinder side of Mike is revealed. The play concludes with an opportunity for redemption, will Mike ascend or descend. The angel of death reminds him that he made his own hell on earth, now it is the time for Mike to make a decision on the journey he will take next. His fate is in his own hands...”*

The play is set around the great Irish tradition of 'wake'. The Irish wake is a celebration of life, a final party, a final song and a final toast in honor of the deceased. According to this tradition, loved ones deserve a loving exhumation of the dead and as a ceremony moves down memory lane. Irish people laugh and cry as they reminisce during the wake about some of their most cherished moments with the deceased.

The original theme came from an experience of grief and loss of the beloved father of one of the beneficiaries of the StaGe of Mind project in Ireland. For him, the loss of his father was the beginning of the shock of his mental health. The StaGe of Mind workshops provided the participant with a safe space to name and explore this experience.

Despite the initial resistance and discomfort to approach such a challenging subject, the Irish team agreed to work with this theme and offered him an opportunity to explore his story and his experience in a safe way and to imagine alternatives. His peers in the play used this opportunity to explore their own and experiences of grief, regret, loneliness, the unsaid and redemption collaboratively with him and he was provided the staging area and the theatrical means to enact it with accompanists and eyewitnesses from all the team members.

The group members gave one another the confidence to share a part of their own character and explore a part of their own story. Building trust and exploring the powerful and interesting representations of people grieving, they were surprised, when the story finally came out, to face another truth: even in death, families can be complicated.

- **Valladolid, Spain. Performance title: "Una fiesta de despedida" (A Farewell party)**

*"A farewell party is a musical work in which its participants say goodbye, for a while, to the pressures, invalidation and exhaustion of a norm that neither listens to them nor gives them a voice. They become protagonists and writers of their own history. A farewell party is a plea to resilience. The performers prepare the stage space and the party in which they will participate. They dress in their best clothes and tell:*

*That according to the INE (Statistics National Institute in Spain) there are 3.4 million empty homes and 28,552 homeless people; that sometimes you have to stop, build a nest and cry in solitude; that there are times when your wings are clipped and after a year of freedom you wait 5 to recover your flight; that anger turns into sadness and your happiness does not depend on you, but on the opportunities you have or the "idiots" you meet that day; that there is a wall that prevents them from passing, deciding if they want to walk, fly or both.*

*Since the wall is still there, they return to their shelters. They see the Harry Potter saga or the football game on duty, watch the sea from the shore, listen to music in the room or on the stage and have a farewell party, with lights, chocolate with churros, lots of golden clothes and their ideal Playlist ..."*

"A Farewell Party" is a surreal musical work in which the participants say goodbye, for a while, to the pressures and exhaustion of being part of a society that doesn't listen to them, and doesn't give them a voice. They become the protagonists and

authors of their own story. They issue a call for resilience to all. The performers prepare the stage space on stage and, at the same time, the party they are participating in. They dress up in their best clothes; they dare to shout the painful truths of their society.

The participants faced intense insecurities, fears and doubts until in the end, the cast managed to captivate and move the audience. In the performance, they manifested themselves with confidence and self-confidence that none of them previously thought they had.

"A Farewell Party" is a simple, but smart and modern project. One of the most important achievements of the creative process of its origin was that a need emerged in the participants that they did not have before or did not know they could have: that of being in front of a microphone and discovering that, in addition to being therapeutic, it is also valuable and important to live the shelter for a while and share life experiences with other people who might feel the same way.

- **Athens, Greece. The Cafe of the Shy Ones**

*"The "Cafe of the Shy Ones" is a daily meeting place, in a neighbourhood of Athens, like Kallithea and in an era like ours. This Sunday, however, is different... What is hidden behind Mr. Fotis the shopkeeper's bad mood? How is a song written? And how can an innocent game lead to the recognition and reunion of two lost brothers? The shy people who gather there come closer than usual and witness both the loneliness and isolation that dominates life against our will, and the power of human communication when it blossoms in acceptance, respect, celebration and the joy of coexistence..."*

The Greek performance was also the result of teamwork. From the title of the work to the plot and the characters, the composition of the action belonged exclusively and without exception to all the members of the group, even those

who did not make it to the end of the journey, whose presence and imprint are nevertheless registered in the scenes and phrases of the play.

No one auditioned to participate in the Cafe of the Shy Ones. A simple invitation brought together mental health service recipients, therapists, artists and volunteers, equal members of a large group with a common purpose—kind of like what communities of people should be: different people, with different abilities who brought what each had in the wise supervision of the group. They decided to say a resounding "yes" to life against "no". Every trial and rehearsal were a test and trial between these two forces.

Their great allies were Art and especially Music, enhancers of human expression. They accompanied, accepted and praised everyone's words and gradually led them to celebrate what they all created together. Within this temporary and more ideal little community they shared the reality of departures and transitions. They eventually acquired a common code and became supporters of each other. And in the end, they managed to celebrate shyly or less shyly in the soul, the important fact that the goal was achieved.

The audience that flooded the packed theater laughed to tears, cried to laughter, sang along with the shy and shared the charge and their own emotion.

## **Conclusions**

The StaGe of Mind project provided the framework to give participants the opportunity to reflect on past or present relationship problems and then project into the future new and unexplored ways of problem solving. Their ambitions were tested in the space of reality, in the transitional space of the stage that functions supportively, perhaps even protectively without ceasing to be reality, in terms of the potential of communication and the possibilities of expressive media. Participants explore this without this ceasing to be the only undeniable reality in the present and in the here and now.

Thus, the stage of StaGe of Mind was transformed into a means of investigating the self, emotions and areas of the mental life inaccessible or for years abandoned in the denial and oblivion of the personal history of the beneficiaries of the programme.

Through role play, the use of myths, fairy tales, fantasy, dreams, traditions and more, personal experiences were revived and dealt with in a much more direct way. Paradoxically, despite working through aesthetic distance for the subject of the show, they ultimately approached their personal process very substantially. Although they did not directly talk about themselves and their problems, they eventually processed them deeply through metaphor and symbolism.

The inclusive power of art, theater and creation thus worked, once again redemptively, reminding everyone that on the stage of StaGe of Mind there is always room, not only to ensure entertainment and release, but also to claim back our lost pride, faith, hope, and to envision all that we deserve more as individuals and as a society. Everything that we all deserve without exception.

## **Epilogue**

So, what do the StaGe of Mind 's theatrical productions have in common? What do they have in common with other creations of the world theatrical ark?

The philosopher M. Heidegger gives us his resounding answer: "So the essence of art seems to be this: to place in the process, or else the activation or the stabilization of the truth of beings."

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