



Erasmus+

EVENT 1

Teaching and performing an ancient Greek tragedy

SUBJECT (THE TOPIC):

Drama class – Ancient Tragedy Performance: Euripides' Trojan Women.

THE TYPE OF THE EVENT:

Ancient drama performance by the students, to an audience consisted of the students and teachers of the whole school community.

The performance was also open to a wider audience of parents, relatives and friends, local authorities, and any other resident of the neighbourhood and fellow citizen.

The performance was repeated three times (three afternoons, as an extra-curricular event).

THE AIMS AND THE TASKS OF THE EVENT.

The objectives were multilateral:

- ❖ To show the timeless value of the ancient drama.

Into the darkness of our times we seek for remains of humanity, lost sources of joy, keys to open our locked souls and our smile less mouths.

The study of this tragedy and placing it into the present gave us those keys.

Tragedy is about our time: No one really cares today about the murders, the ancient wars and all kinds of past deviations and torment, when today's world faces challenges such as unemployment, lack of relationships, violence in all forms or individualism. Ancient tragedy, with its heroes and stories, is full of symbols – easily recognizable symbols in all times, and thus in ours as well.

In Trojan Women, the ultimate anti-war tragedy, we were able to identify the following symbolisms:

Troy is today's world.

The Greeks are the carriers of the New Order: the powerful of the world and their troops, the power of money and the Banks. This is where Troy is surrendered to and totally destroyed by.

The Trojan women - mothers, wives, sisters, friends, former queens in their world – are taken as slaves by the conquerors to a foreign land. They lose the dignity of their earned lives. All pure and humane is unworthy and thrown away. Emotions and every “personal fortune” are worthless.

Helen of Troy is the dazzling but deadly life model that the New Order proposes, the bait for people to be greedily lead on to War. Astyanax, Hector’s son, who is thrown off the burning castle, is the world’s last hope, forever gone.

- ❖ To express ourselves through improvisation, cultivating our inventive and creative spirit.
- ❖ To overcome our fears, to enhance collaboration and solidarity, since a theatre group can only function and deliver when there is mutual support and collegiality among its members.
- ❖ To be taught – through our meetings, study and rehearsals – and to teach – through our performance – the timeless values and meanings of the play.

DURATION:

The activity lasted a whole school period.

It began shortly after the beginning of the school year – in early October – and ended almost a month before the final exams. Our meeting lasted three hours, every Sunday at noon. So the students were creatively engaged during the whole school year, but they were dismissed on time to devote themselves to a good preparation for the demanding exams, in order for them:

To have the best possible results in the exams, without the distraction of any extracurricular activity, to come to the exams with the satisfaction and joy of having completed a project (the performance) – emotional content, enhanced self-confidence, recognition from the school community.

PARTICIPANTS:

- ❖ The Calling was addressed to all students of all three grades of Lyceum.

No grade or class was excluded for any reason. The objective was the creative co-existence of students of all ages and the elimination of any age discriminations (freshman, senior e.tc).

The Calling was also addressed to all students regardless of individual class performances. In a healthy school students are not divided into “good” and “bad”. Every student has a right to expression and every student can show a variety of interests, skills, and talents that can be surprising and that is not always relevant to a good or bad performance at school. Finally 26 students, girls and boys had been participated.

- ❖ We also had the participation of teachers, who played in this performance side by side with their students.

In that way, we were all able to overcome any prejudices and to enhance the mutual trust. That helped improve the pedagogical procedure in its whole.

METHODS:

- ❖ With the beginning of the school year (September) all students were called to participate in the group. No students were excluded but also no one was invited to participate with other motive except for their own personal will.
- ❖ After discussing the wishes and needs of all group members, we gave tasks to everyone (cast, set, costume and light designers, tailors, creating of the poster and program, stage crew)
- ❖ For all our meetings everyone's presence was obligatory so that everyone can learn the significance of reliability in a collective project (every Sunday, at the same time, having prepared each week's task)
- ❖ During the classes we had a lot of theory (discussion, extra educational material, such as books, photocopies, internet and music) but also a lot of improvisations, games, movement and elocution lessons.
- ❖ We did everything by ourselves: the set and costume design, the poster, the program and the invitation. We had some help by professionals (musicians, choir members, choreographer, graphic designer and actor) who gave us the tools to reach our objectives in every level in the best way possible.
- ❖ We rented a theatre and used it (except for the final performances) for 2 rehearsals, so that we could be more familiar with the stage, the lights, the back stage etc.

MATERIALS:

- ❖ For the set we used cardboard boxes and garbage bags to symbolise Troy's catastrophe.
- ❖ As props we used a minimum of personal items that each Trojan woman would take with her after the disaster.
- ❖ Greeks-destroyers were dressed with strict suits and had an overall appearance of an "army" of bankers/executives who ruthlessly destroy lives.
- ❖ Trojan Women were dressed in a modest, unpretentious way. Simple and grave every-day women of all ages.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EVENT: (What we are doing)

- ❖ The class ended up with a final performance:

We had one performance in the morning for all our school's students and teachers. This performance was important: The teacher in charge of the class gave a small speech to the school community about the course of his class and the pedagogical objectives obtained by the group, made a presentation of the play and the "director's" choice and invited everyone to be part of this alternative form teaching approach.

- ❖ After the performance there was a discussion. All participants in this unique experience (on and off stage) had a lot to share with each other.
- ❖ Following the morning performance we had another two evening performances addressed to a mixed crowd: parents, relatives and friends of the participants,

teachers and students from other schools, local authorities, but also neighbours or any other person who was informed about the event from our poster, the press release and all advertising material (in the press or the internet) prepared by the Group.

The performances were recorded for the school's archive.

- ❖ A dinner followed the last performance to celebrate our joy for the completion of our efforts. This experience was unique and the satisfaction and contentment that everyone felt could not easily be put into words.
- ❖ The next day, all group members – in an atmosphere of joy and emotion – were gathered to clean up the theatre and stage. We took all sets, props and costumes back to our school, in the “Drama Class room”, where they are ready to be used again in any other activity by students in the future.

At the end of the school year, when our workshop completed the study of this monumental play, we realized that we all had some unforgettable experiences, when at the same time, we had the opportunity to “touch” and reach in a sense the eternal, great, tormenting passions of the human kind.

With this performance we tried to communicate to our fellow students and the rest of our audience some of the unique and great things we had learned in the process.



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