

**Short report and statement from the participants in the Open Art Seminar held at the Levuk Centre in Hillerød (Denmark) from the 26<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup> of April 2007**

**“Dialogue of Cultures!”**



Workshop with Jamie Beddard, Graeae Theatre.

The Levuk Centre (DK), in association with the I’dad Centre (Lebanon), Graeae Theatre (UK), Mind-The-Gap Theatre (UK) and Glad Teater (DK) held a 4 day Seminar, with a series of associated arts workshops and performances, at the Centre premises from 26th to 29th of April 2007.

The Seminar, and its associated arts workshops, was initiated to celebrate the first two years of the Artists-in-the-House (Huskunstner) project.

The Artists-in-the-House project took place in the Levuk Centre in Hillerød in the period 2005 - 2007, and involved professional artists from the theatre, film, music and dance worlds in a series of artistic interfaces with young people with learning and/or physical disabilities. The Artists-.in-the House project is supported by The Danish Ministry Of Culture and Hillerød City Council.

The aim of the Seminar, and its associated arts workshops, was to bring together international experts in an investigation of the role of the arts in promoting the mental and psychomotor development of people with learning and/or physical disabilities.

The Seminar further aimed to emphasise the crucially important role the professional arts can play in providing creative opportunities for people with learning and/or physical disabilities.

In this connection the Seminar aimed to underline the necessity for radical improvement in access opportunities for people with learning and/or physical disabilities – particularly the young - to the arts worlds at all levels. The seminar aimed to look with particular regard at active participation in the arts, whether this be in the sphere of the professional arts, the non-professional arts or education.



Young artist from Idad.

The aim of the Seminar was also to ensure that people with learning and/or physical disabilities – who often find themselves on the periphery of society – are able to use the arts as a bridge which they can use to cross from the periphery to the centre. It was however emphasised by the participants in the Seminar that this bridge should also be used by those at the centre to travel to the periphery!

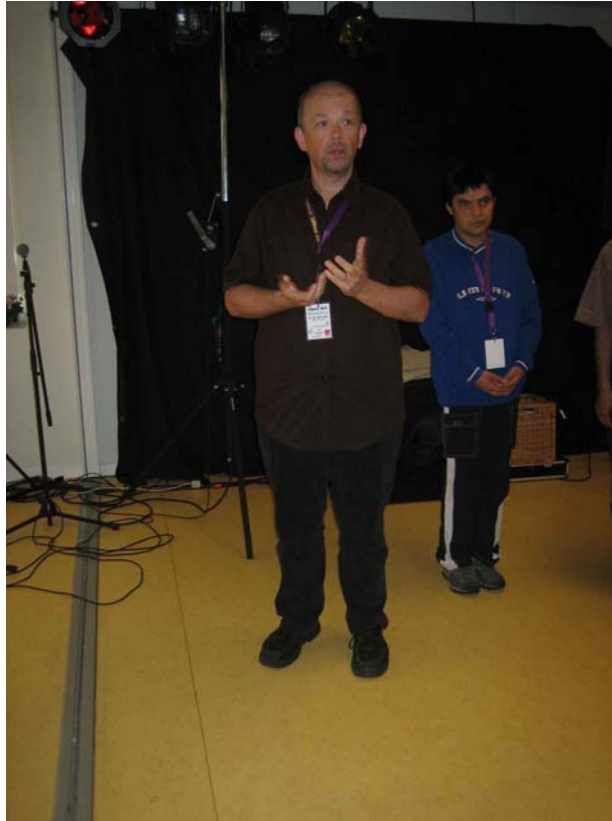
The Seminar was also a concrete opportunity for a “dialogue of cultures”, bringing together international experts from the artistic professions, and the fields of special education and clinical psychology from East and West.



Jamie Beddard, Graeae Theatre

Amongst the many participants were Mr. Tim Wheeler (Artistic Director of Mind-the-Gap Theatre, UK), Mr. Jamie Beddard (dramatist, actor and former Associate Director of Graeae Theatre, UK)

and Mr. Ian Breslin (workshop leader and access worker with Graeae Theatre, UK), Mrs. Rita Merhej (Director of the I'dad Centre, Lebanon), Mr Benjamin Goings (Director of the Levuk Centre, DK), Mr. Lars Werner Thomsen (Artistic Director of Theatre Glad, DK) and Mr Peter Bensted (Theatre Director, Seminar Co-ordinator, and Director of the Artists-in-the-House Project for Hillerød City Council, DK/UK).



Tim Wheeler, Mind-The-Gap Theatre

The Seminar itself encompassed 4 days of creative workshops, presentations, and panel discussions, offering the participants a unique opportunity of getting acquainted with very different, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives concerning the role of the arts and disability.

The “living” theatre and dance performances presented during the Seminar by the young artists from both the I'dad and Levuk Centres were a visible and impressive translation of this rich dialogue between the East and West.



Rita Merhej, I'dad Centre

The seminar ended on the 29<sup>th</sup> April with a plenum discussion where all the components of the 4 day seminar were openly discussed, with the young artists actively and movingly participating in the discussion as their own advocates.

The following conclusions of the seminar were agreed upon by all participants:

1. The absolute necessity of ensuring the continuation of the dialogue and exchange begun during the seminar. To this end it was agreed that the I'dad Centre would host an international Seminar and Training Workshop on Arts and Disability where staff and disabled young people from different Lebanese disability organisations could meet and interact with the Levuk Open Art Seminar participants, as well as other invited international guests.
2. That the Levuk Open Art Seminar be viewed as a preliminary experts group meeting for the development of further action in the field of Art and Disability, namely the creation of an international network to promote the role of the professional arts in relation to disability.
3. The creation of such a network was seen to be of the utmost importance, and it was agreed that investigations should be begun as soon as possible into how best to coordinate and develop the activities of such an organisation. Potential partners and funders mentioned were UNESCO, WHO, EU, DCCD etc.

Approximately 40 people attended the Seminar and the performances were seen by over 150 people.



The “Butterflies from Beirut” with Deputy Mayor of Hillerød Kirsten Jensen, Tim Wheeler and Rita Merhej.

Attached is the programme for the Open Art Seminar and workshops.

Reporters: Mrs. Rita Merhej (I’ dad - Lebanon) and Mr. Peter Campbell Bensted (Levuk - DK)

Place: The Levuk Centre, Hillerød, Denmark

Date: 1 May 2007.