

Participatory performance reflection

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Participatory performance portfolio.

For the project of Participatory Performance, due to the circumstances of the coronavirus (Covid19), I was given the idea of making a creative writing workshop as a video, in which I take participants through workshops for poetry, story-writing and mindfulness. I got the idea since everybody is forced to pitch in with this lockdown in order to maintain health and wellbeing. Creativity is a good way to escape through a lockdown.

Project design

I decided to make a live event on Facebook, saying what will happen and at what time inviting a variety of people. I decided, at first, to make my workshop twenty minutes (which was told on the assignment brief) but with the circumstances of this lockdown, it was free to be longer. After feedback on the event details, I decided to make it a one-hour presentation so that the participants will have enough time to write their poems and to move through the exercises.

Throughout the course we are constantly subject to loss and change. Change can be consciously sought and determined or thrust upon us. As the principal of a college said somewhat oxymoronicly in the annual address 'Change is here to stay'. Change I inevitably accompanied by loss; sometimes that loss is to be welcomed, sometimes to be struggled with and needs to be worked through. Writing can be a very helpful way of reaching a different kind of understanding of the self in all its different phases (Bolton, Field and Thompson, 2006, P. 212).

Preparation

Beginning to piece it together, I searched through the internet, mainly YouTube sources with the hopes that there may be some benefits to help me through the idea. With the lack of books on making a creative writing workshop, I took matters within my own hands so far and came up with a few improvised ideas: I just so happen to be a poet and I have written a great variety of them since September last year. Poems of faith, poems of love, poems of courage, poems of nature and even poems of letting out my own personal feelings. But I digress, my writing of that poem gave me the idea of getting people to explore their inner feelings: angry, sad or happy. I would plan to get them to explore their minds and feelings and write the poem (rhyme or free verse) based on their own feelings, which in my perspective seems a nice, refreshing remedy opposed to pills to help with pain, anger or trauma, a remedy to show that people are reading and listening to that person. Since the workshop will be a live video, I would ask people to post their content onto the comments as I make some motivational words doing so with writing it until the time is up.

Researching from Behn (2001, p.5) I researched hints of creating poetry and what methods there may be to offer. While scanning through any relevant points that may benefit for the poetry exercises, I will be performing, I came across the topic of the Automatic-Writing Exercise, as quoted:

The point of this exercise is to gather and then to cull, extract, from a large pile of stream of unconsciousness or automatic material the one or two ounces of goods that then might be applied to the writing of poems. General Rule: Be prepared to do this exercise every day and if possible, more than once a day for at least ten days. It can be done at any time (even at its lengthiest it will not take more than about twenty minutes) but it sometimes works better if it is done when one is, for example, tired, or just waking up, or agitated, or elated, etc. In other words, when one's synapses might be a little askew, when one is not feeling most *average*.

While I cannot understand what it means, I can interpret it as practice doing it in what mood you are in what you feel; tired, hungry, or any other feeling of the system etc. I started taking part in a People Speak-Up workshop based on creative writing, ran by someone called Eleanor Shaw. I wasn't present at the time of the previous one, but I was taken through the results of other people's works on an exercise called *I Am*. It is a thing in which you say stuff about yourself, emotions, feelings, facts while beginning with the words 'I Am'. For an idea, this is my piece as quoted and written:

"I am forgiving to the past but doesn't prevent anger. I am a speaker to the fiction; whose warm voices push me forward. I am a follower to Him above who guides me every. I am a person who takes refuge in greenery which keeps my happiness bright as the richest flower planet. I am a human who holds faith that everything will change for the better, through the flaws that every human including myself must face".

I also thought this can work for my workshop to know the feelings of my participants as it will be interesting to see how they manage themselves and their inner positivity, for it will be observant to see their emotions in words. First of all, I decided to begin the workshop with mental exercises; to explore in the mind of everyone else I will start the exercise of exploring through music.

Engaging in a creative art like music helps to foster and develop these vital emotional skills. Self-expression and creativity through improvisation, songwriting, and expressive performance allow the client to have structured experiences in skills like risk taking. These creative experiences contribute to

developing ego strength and emotional intelligence during this stage of psychotherapy (Crowe, 2004, p. 263).

For this exercise, I selected five pieces of instrumental music:

- . Paradise Found (*Moving & Heart-Rending, Vol. 1*) by Warner/Chappell Productions
- . Soaring (*Moving & Heart-Rending, Vol. 1*) by Warner/Chappell Productions
- . Terminal Mission (*Epic, Vol. 1*) by Warner/Chappell Productions
- . The Eternal Loser (*Kpm 1000 Series: Storytellers*) by Paddy Kingsland
- . Nature?S Colours (*Kpm 1000 Series: Seeds in the Wind*)) by Eugene Cines

Each of these pieces I came in my childhood and adolescence when listening to story tapes on radio cassettes / audiobooks / YouTube and I fell in love with these pieces due to their serenity and motivations. I decided that using these for the exercise, the participants will listen to them and decide which piece of music they relate to the most and then comment on what they see in their mind when listening to them. Music is that sort of medicine that releases the soul and let out what you want others to hear which I believe relevant to the workshop as music first triggers the brain as it makes you decide what music you like or do not.

I have argued that even so basic an element of musical experience is that of hearing the transition from dominant seventh to tonic resolution reveals that Hanslick's claims are quite misconceived. What is evoked by this harmonic transition is emotion, and that emotion is directed to an object. Once experiences a desire for the release of tension, and satisfaction when the discord is resolved. Both the desire for 'yearning', and the satisfaction, or 'joy' are emotions aroused by the music. If the harmonic transition does not result in resolution, the feeling evoked could well be sadness about 'everything' or 'nothing', but about the failure of the hoped-for resolution to come about. Since, as it seems to me, it is clear that music evoked genuine emotion, emotion whose intentional object is musical feature, we need to ask what can account for the very widely held view that music cannot express genuine emotion, since it cannot 'identify for the listener' an object of that emotion. I have suggested that the acceptance of this doctrine is seen to be demanded by the dominant 'judgementalist' analyses of emotion, an approach which construes emotion as essentially a matter of making certain judgement or evaluations, something which characteristically results in certain feelings. If this view is rejected, the way is open to construct a different conception of emotion, one which does justice to our musical experience. Before I attempt to

do that, it is necessary to look in rather more detail at what our experience of music is (Madwell, 2002, p. 49-50).

The next exercise listed will be “What is my fairy tale?”. This is another self-explorative exercise where you compare your own life and analyse it to a fairy tale. For example, my fairy tale life would be that of *Pinocchio*. Due to the fact that I am a person with learning disabilities and even in my mid-twenties, I am still learning the ways of the adult world; what’s right and what’s wrong and me being somewhat autistic symbolises a manner of being different, my disabilities link to Pinocchio being a wooden puppet rather than a real boy. I tested this exercise on two already and they analysed their lives to the Little Red Hen as she often does the shopping without others helping her and the other saw herself as Belle from *Beauty and the Beast* as she longs for adventure around the world and see and experience new things, so I think this would work promisingly for people because seeing themselves as these type of characters who are at misfortune, they can try to follow the same, correct paths they lead themselves to such as the three previous characters mentioned triumph by becoming a real boy, self-rewarding for hard work and finding love within a monster.

I found a website (allwomenstalk.com) with seven tips to make the participants consider and to help them through the exercise to make them realise how their life is like a fairy tale:

1. Stressful Struggles
2. Assisting Animals
3. Respect is Rewarded
4. Buried Beauty
5. Lifelong Love
6. Sweet Soundtrack
7. Friendly Fairy Godmothers

With these tips, I will point them out and make them realise how they can manage through the struggles of this dark year and their personal problems, if any.

My next activity links to the fairy tale comparisons; this exercise comes from inspiration from the text *Childhood Education*; Onley. The topics about the Create-a-Story Boxes by Joanne E. Gilles. What she came up with was this for the gimmick: you put a variety of objects into each box, examples being a toothbrush, a shoe, a slice of bread, a spanner or a bobby pin. The participants will take a lucky dip and they write a story about these objects or rather linking it to importance of the story. This is an exercise very similar to another which goes by the name of the Given Circumstance. What explains the parallel is what I’ve learned in college; you have a list of objects and you try to connect them

together to make them link to an accurate, improvised story. Circumstances given about being in isolation, I have adjusted and improvised the exercise by picking out my own belongings; a Mary Poppins snow globe, a Harry Potter notebook which my uncle had given me for my poetry writing, a carved lion's head, a red comb and a wooden rabbit ornament. I decided I would present each of them one by one during the live filming. I will then give my participants the task of picking one of these objects and creating ten story points which relates to what they have selected. When they have finished listing it, I will then ask them to type them on to the comments to see their results but keeping the reviews short and sweet due to ticking time.

To conclude the workshop, I will give them the analysis of the twelve archetypes they see in their daily life. The twelve archetypes are as follows; the Warrior, the Orphan, the Child, the Seductress, the Rebel, the Magician, the Mentor, the Ruler, the Lover, the Creator, the Joker and the Caregiver. All these archetypes were discovered by psychologist Carl Jung when exploring through the characteristics of individual human beings. This is known as the Collective Unconscious. I will make the participants think of the people of their daily lives and think of the archetypes they view themselves as or with the people around them. I would want them to think of their life as a fictional story with only them as the writer and the protagonist because we, logically, are main character of our own story and it will be very explorative to discover the archetypes of one's family or friends.

Logically, there is not much of a guarantee with participants arriving staring on the dot like getting line when the school bell rings. I will start the live stream waiting for around five mixtures so to get the workshop started. I will explain to them that I have organised this hour's workshop so to transport them out of isolation and into the world of mind exploration and through music before starting the proper workshop.

Even as an online session, it still involves ethics for obstacles that are bound to occur through the sessions, as practitioners Dorothy Heathcote and Augusto Boal would always influence ethics for their workshops and sessions. If there was a certain participant who write a vulgar poem, I would delete it and explain why I did and that I'm looking for tidy poetry and to keep frustration or whatever at a level, same with the storytelling exercise if there was anything sexually related. Understanding is another thing to consider such as sexuality and then there are personal lives where the fairy tales exercise and ten writing points comes around because they are to reflect on their lives to compare them, so the seemingly only option is to say they do not have to do this if they are too comfortable and that they can write about their own ideas such as the objects linking to Star Wars or Lord of the Rings. And if anyone has any questions to ask or struggling, I will be patient and go through it again or help them through the process until we come to the end, treating everyone equally and with kindness and respect.

I agree with well-beings as a law, so everyone is treated positively and with equality. As previously mentioned, there are some things I need to be wary of such as religion and sexuality and that the decisions we pick must be flawless so keep ourselves recommended by futuristic workshops, depending on how well we motivate people into reaching their goals. The seven goals are relevant for what we intend to achieve with safety including making people feel welcome if they shy or lack confidence.

Reflection

I think the workshop went very well despite a few technical mistakes such as the phone (supported against the computer screen) fell or unbalanced when I was charging it when it showed signs of losing power. I think I responded well to the questions everyone asked through the exercises and treated them all equally with their poems and fairy tale comparisons. I was pleased that everybody enjoyed it and I appreciated their criticism on what I could work on. All in all, I was content with the final result.

Specific areas for improvement consist of the following;

- In future I should use a tripod for my phone to make it easier to mount, and to avoid any issues of it falling over.
- Create and send links to the people involved in advance, since I have learned the hard way when getting requests about the link just prior to the workshop.
- Give more specific instructions as I tended to miss out emphasis with certain exercises and learned that some things weren't clear enough.
- Try to find a different way to communicate with people, because I was in a rush to find a way to film myself. Facebook live worked OK, and I felt it was the quickest option, but I should look at other software such as Zoom.

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