



Shadow Theatre

**as an inclusive
non-formal
education tool**



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The 7th edition of the Connector provided a space and context where people involved in learning became familiar with and practiced different non-formal learning methods for use in inclusion and diversity contexts. A special focus was placed on how these learning methods can be used for the integration of migrants and refugees, given the outcome of the Ukrainian displacement crisis that began on 24 February 2022.

CONNECTOR 2022 workshop

What would light be without shadow?

Light and shadow can easily create a “fantastic binomial”, a concept created by Gianni Rodari in his famous book “The Grammar of Fantasy”.

All we need is a beautiful warm light, which stops on a wall or on the floor and our imagination is challenged. The shadow of the hand, of our body, of the curtain moved by the wind, then playing with the opacity and transparency of objects inspires us to create and tell fascinating, mysterious and charming stories.

Shadow theatre throws us back to the times before cinema and television were invented, when moving-image stories brought the whole community together at nightfall to understand the heroic deeds of heroes. By the light of the fire, silhouettes in hand-dyed leather, warred and loved to the beat of the drums that raged, emotionally completing the stories.

Today, shadow theatre as a non-formal educational method has retained its unchanged power to create essential stories, connect communities and provoke deep understanding. It is ideal for vulnerable groups, for those who need the courage to make their voices and stories heard.





Eugenia Barbu

Playing with puppets all my life, being since 1992 an actress at the Țândărică Animation Theatre I had played princesses and witches, bringing puppets to life, singing and dancing in shows for children.

In parallel with this artistic career, I also strived and still do to bring the

art-educational power of theatre into formal education, conducting courses for teachers by using my entire artistic experience in the intercultural world of European projects, addressing children, young people and adults, common people and education professionals alike.

Table of Contents

What is it?	4
General perspective	5
A Historical perspective	6
A social perspective	6
A cognitive perspective	6
Shadow Theatre as a non-formal education method	7
Learning objectives	9
Preparation of the method	10
Logistic	10
<i>Source of Light</i>	10
<i>The Screen</i>	11
Materials	13
<i>Video Resources on the history of shadow theatre</i>	13
Building the team for acting	14
Delivering the method	17
Evaluation	17
Why we use this method?	18
How it can be used in E+/ESC context?	18
Communities of practice and resources	18
<i>Video Resources for Shadow Theatre as non-formal education tool</i>	18





What is it?

General perspective



Theatre, throughout history, has brought together the community in which it was created. It offered explanations of mythological or religious aspects, as well as stories of heroes that happened long ago but seem to fit together as if they happened recently. All these dramas make the audience think, using a language specific to art.

At any time and in any corner of the world, theatre shows, performed by masked actors, fascinating puppets or mysterious shadows, have had the power to awaken new understandings, showing that theatre has an important educational function.

In short, theatre has three important functions: aesthetic, informative and educational. Seen from this perspective, it can be important in changing mentalities and thus can influence social change.

Theatre in the framework of European projects dedicated to education has been able to bring to light, in the most harmonious way, the concept of unity in diversity. The limits created by the intercultural context: the interaction of values or language barriers are easily overcome through the actor's training exercises, through the development of the space for artistic and creative expression, through the satisfaction gained by the "producers" of the show, who, by no means, become aware of their problems, formulate them and bring them to the understanding or debate of the public, especially to those members of the community where they live.

European educational projects bring together representatives from many cultures, speaking many languages, with different levels of education, in training courses, intercultural exchanges, and internships or volunteering.

In a multilingual training and education context, members of a community would need to be trained to use nonverbal language, strongly stimulating visual thinking, minimizing words and bringing communication to a friendlier, more complex and metaphorical level of understanding.

At the same time, the explosion of the digital environment has greatly amplified the drive of our brains to consume visual information. But our position as consumers makes us vulnerable to manipulation by creators of video and multimedia content.

Shadow theatre was the most primitive form of cinema. By training our minds to tell our stories in this medium, we come to understand the mechanisms of multimedia content producers, we become aware of how a succession of images on a bright screen connect our ideas and harmonise our values, ultimately making us to feel good together.



A Historical perspective

The roots of Shadow Theatre prove it was the first animation theatre format of the humanity. Shadow play, also known as shadow puppetry, is an ancient form of storytelling and entertainment which uses flat articulated cut-out figures (shadow puppets) which are held between a source of light and a translucent screen or scrim. The cut-out shapes of the puppets sometimes include translucent colour or other types of detailing. Various effects can be achieved by moving both the puppets and the light source. A talented puppeteer can make the figures appear to walk, dance, fight, nod and laugh.

“The reality of the puppet that came from death and is reconstructed into a beautiful figure reminds us of the iconic death and reconfiguration process associated with spiritual visions. Take for example the Chinese story that the shadow theatre was created

to allow Emperor Wudi (r.140-86 B.C.) to commune with his deceased ladylove. Or that the Karagöz theatre of Turkey created to bring back to life two clowning men, Karagöz and Hacivat, executed while working on the mosque of Bursa. While these stories cannot be accepted as historical actualities, they show a pattern. Shadow theatre is conceptualized as an art that crosses borders of which death is the most perplexing. Both the practicality of puppet creation and the mythos of materializing the voices of a shadow world may help explain why shadow theatre in a variety of Asian countries has an exorcizing function.”

Plato used the idea of invisibility to discuss human morality. He uses the power of invisibility to suggest that morality is a social construct, which exists as a result of a person’s desire to maintain a reputation as a virtuous and honest man in society. Shadow Theatre between Visible and Invisible was the visual way to put community main problems on the spot.

A social perspective

Like any performing art, Shadow theatre has the power to produce change by bringing the community together to reflect on an issue that provokes debate, that has gaps in its unified acceptance by different categories of community members and that accelerates a change of attitude in those who position themselves most eccentrically or corrosively.

The sensitive and vulnerable groups’ perspectives could have a new perception, increasing their chances to be accepted and integrated in the community normal functions.

A cognitive perspective

The human imagination is challenged by the visual projection to the screen of the realistic image of the characters. The human brain complements with a lot of creative energy what is seen on the screen where the characters move their shadows with emotion and passion. It is creatively stimulating and gets close to the way we think and act in our dreams.

Shadow theatre subtly brings us closer to an intimate inner universe that is well known but little understood.

The visual magic possibility to express in a metaphoric way a story is, for our cognitive capacity, a stimulant to learn by feeling.

Shadow Theatre as a non-formal education method

One of the main functions of the theatre is to educate. So, a performance can be seen as a non-formal educative method from two perspectives:

1. That of its creative process: as a PERSONAL or GROUP EXPERIENCE of transposing a story, even a mythological one, but also a real event into visual language.
2. That of the spectator (GROUP EXPERIENCE), who will be impressed by the drama of the heroes, inspired and stylised by the movement of the shadow characters and the way the scenes follow one another.



The first perspective – the experience of producing a shadow theatre performance is intense and highly reflective, especially if the story told is similar or even based on personal experiences.

The reflective effort is also strong if the team of artists has carried out research analysing the needs of a social group in a wide range of vulnerability or social exclusion. In this process they will come to understand from the inside the causes and effects that lie at the heart of the suffering of those in that group.

In order to produce emotion in a theatrical production each actor will have to create his/her character with great faith and aplomb, deciphering the details of the emotional process that the hero or heroes of the play go through during the presentation of the drama.

The second perspective – that of the spectators: the non-formal educational dimension is founded on the experience lived as a spectator as a basis for debate, for reflection on the situation of the characters who impressed the most.

Shadow theatre involves playing with light and projecting objects' shadows onto a screen, with a greater or lesser degree of transparency or opacity, so that the story makes sense and reaches the audience's soul and understanding.

So, another educative dimension is to dissolve the story in a visual language created by the shadow theatre artists group, which has to obtain practical skills in using, in a creative and aesthetic way, the power of light and shadow belonging to some ordinary materials and objects.

Here are some of the advantages

we've discovered over the years:

1. Less construction time: All but the simplest hand puppets, rod puppets, and marionettes require sculpting, painting, and costuming. Three-dimensional scenery is equally time-consuming. Shadow puppets and projected scenery, however, are just drawn and cut out.

2. Low cost: Other puppet forms demand the expense of paint, brushes, glue, papier-mâché, and sewing supplies. Shadow puppets require only paper, masking tape, and brass paper fasteners. Their operating rods are drinking straws or fondue sticks. Most of the materials used for projected scenery are inexpensive or are already in the supply room.

3. Less mess: Shadow theatre is a completely dry construction process, eliminating the messy clean-up of wet art supplies.

4. Fewer art skills required: As mentioned earlier, shadow figures don't need to be sculpted or painted. Working in only two dimensions with a black shadow, one can make puppets as simple or as complicated as one wishes. Also, many dramatic projected scenic effects are achieved with no art skill whatsoever. Besides, numerous puppet and scenery patterns are included, so you really can't go wrong.

5. Less tiring and time-consuming rehearsal: One of the great drawbacks of hand puppets, especially for children, is rehearsing with one arm up in the air. After five minutes, most student-operated hand puppets look like they've had heart attacks, crawling around the stage with their heads hanging off the edge. Rod puppets are a bit better in this regard, but shadow puppets are by far the easiest and most comfortable to manipulate. Also, because the projected image can be seen just

as easily backstage as out in front, teachers can stay behind the screen to direct their students, a much more efficient rehearsal method than running back and forth.

6. Greater range of visual effects: We are still astounded by how many stunning visuals can be achieved with an overhead projector and an assortment of inexpensive materials. Pieces of wax paper turn into mountain ranges. Transparent coloured plastic provides elegant sunrises and sunsets. A strip of lace becomes a moving backdrop for a marathon runner. We discovered most of these effects right after we'd started our business and didn't have enough money for a movie. So, we stayed home and put things on the overhead projector instead. If you find the simplicity of these images intriguing, you might do the same.

7. Young people's familiarity with two-dimensional imagery: Because of the inescapable influence of movies, television, and computers, even very young children now come to school with a savvy eye for 2D images. They are already used to seeing close-ups, scene changes, and shifts in perspective. Shadow theatre capitalizes on this familiarity without furthering the passive behaviour associated with it.

The last point was completely missed by a shadow theatre workshop leader who once reproached us after a performance. "I hope you realize how much your shadow theatre looks like television," she said. "I hope you realize how much television looks like our shadow theatre," I replied. There may be a superficial resemblance, but all similarities end with the screen. Rather than passive viewing, shadow theatre provides active individual and group participation in the writing, planning, construction, rehearsal, and performance of a live production.

Learning objectives



- Development of knowledge of the different modes of expression in the history of the shadow theatre.
- Developing abilities and skills by exploring different light sources and the transparency and the opacity of different materials for producing a shadow theatre performance.
- Developing skills by exploring the transfer from the verbal language in the visual language of the different stories about the most vulnerable beneficiaries in their social and familial environment.
- Becoming aware of the manipulating possibility for creators of video and multimedia content.



Preparation *of the* method

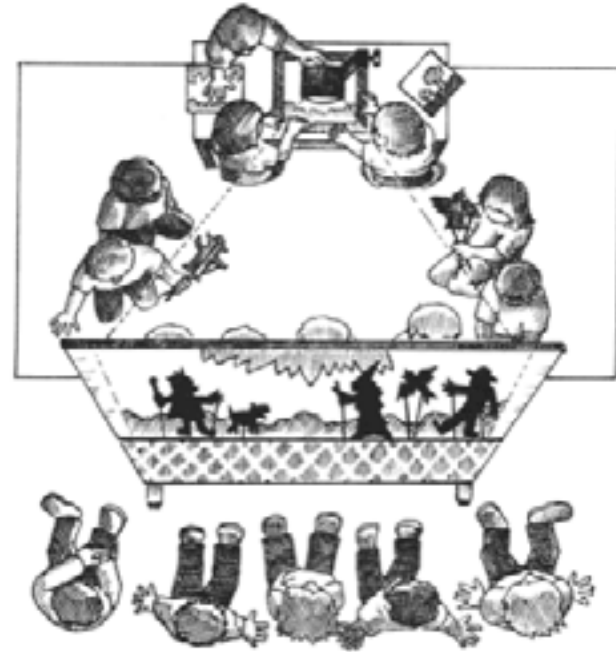
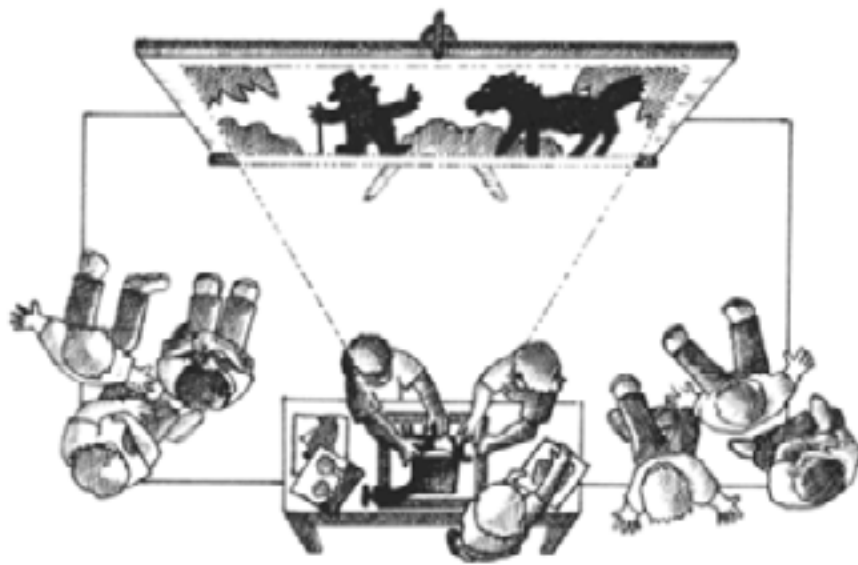
Source of Light

Logistic

Will be chosen according to the interest shown in the technical complexity of the various potential categories of beneficiaries. So, from the perspective of the technical complexity of the project there is:

- an usual lamp - although these little lights are inexpensive and often have spring clips or clamps to attach them to the shadow screen or backstage tabletop, they give limited and unfocused light.
- a theatre spotlight
- an overhead projector
- a video projector will be paired with a computer and video editing and graphics processing software.





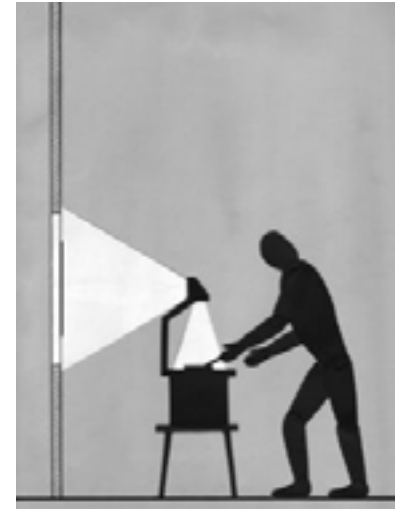
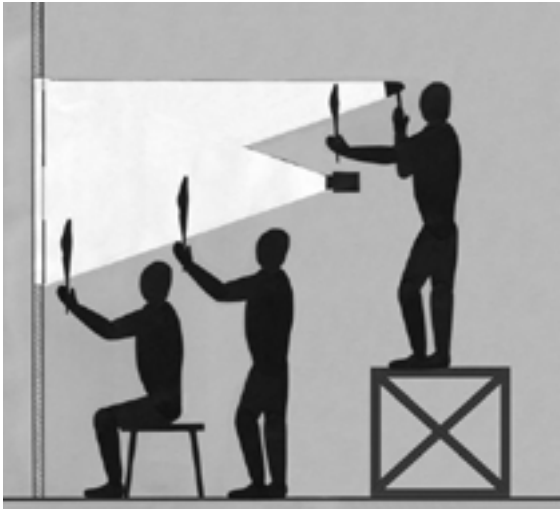
The Screen



When choosing it, it is necessary to take into account:

1. the complexity and demands required by the understanding and conceptual needs of the target group for whom the project is created,
2. the space in which the final performance will be presented:
 - a minimalist formula - a white wall (for example of a hospital room or a sports hall in a school);
 - a creative formula - a screen made of a frame (for example a clothes hanger). Several can be used together for a larger frame, wrapped in white material, which can be:
 - textile;
 - a few white flipchart sheets taped together with clear plastic tape (care should be taken not to leave space between sheets, but also not to overlap sheets);
 - a white shower curtain made of a plastic-coated fabric, which is advantageous as it protects the audience's eyes best;
 - a professional formula - a fabric hung on the left side of a theatre stage.

The size of the projection is directly proportional to the distance from the light source to the screen. The height of the projected shadow is directly proportional to the height at which the light source is placed in relation to the actors or dolls chosen to become the shadows of the characters.



The overhead projector has a system of mirrors that will provide you the creation of theatrical situations on two planes simultaneously, and the video projector brings with it the possibility of inserting animations or specially created images in a power point, with which silhouettes of actors or specially created dolls can interact. The height of the projected shadow is directly proportional to the height at which the light source is placed in relation to the actors or puppets chosen to become the shadows of the characters.

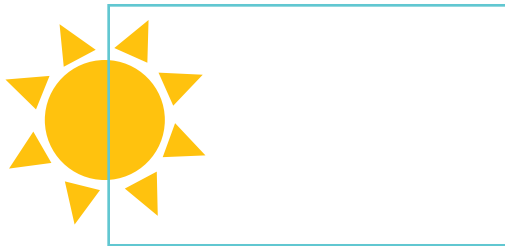


Materials

The link between the materiality of the objects that will be used in the creation of the performance and light must be clarified from the beginning, helping participants to look at materials with expressive potential from three points of view: transparency, translucency and opacity.

Transparent

describes a material that allows light to transmit; objects can be clearly seen through the material.



Translucent

describes a material that allows some light to transmit; objects cannot be seen clearly through the material.



Opaque

describes a material that absorbs or reflects all light; objects cannot be seen through the material.



For a shadow theatre performance, various materials can be used: cardboard, materials with different textures and with a wide range of capabilities: from transparency to opacity, with geometric potential in the structure. For colouring it can be used transparent plastic sheets on which you can apply drawings with permanent markers.

Video Resources on the history of shadow theatre

1. **The Master of Shadow Puppets**
2. **Jawa**
3. **Rhinoceros Live Shadow Puppet Performance**
4. **Dancing Shadow Theatre**
5. **Sand shadow theatre**

Other Resources

1. [The Kennedy Center](#)
2. [Article](#)



Building the team for acting

The trainer who has to lead a shadow theatre workshop with the aim of social inclusion will be concerned with the following aspects:

1. An introspection into the case study that will be the theme of the performance: analysis of the situations through which the participants have learned, understood and/or lived the dramatic situations of the future characters.
2. Stimulating the capacity of each participant to express themselves in basic acting skills: through exercises of self-confidence and group confidence, improvisation, scenic exposition of their own ideas and feelings. (*August Boal's "Games for Actors and Non-Actors" can offer a basic support in planning the design*).

3. Transferring these new elements of scenic behaviour to the breathing of the characters created through the use of lights and shadows. (The metaphoric language of the shadow theatre will ask participants to see the connection between the characters rhythm and movement with their feelings, to be aware of the importance of stylizing the movements of a character expressed with minimalist visual elements, to adapt the meaning of their verbal discourse to a carefully thought-out sequence of images, using as a model the visual discourse specific to film editing and cinematographic language)

- This last requirement seems very complicated, but, in fact, any participant who is faced with exploring the expressiveness of shadow theatre will realise that they have very clear requirements, as the daily consumption of video messages has made us very intuitive and aware of what "works" and what "doesn't work".



Here is a video tutorial for better visual explanations:
<https://youtu.be/lkyueN5FQQ8>

Shadow Theatre Workshop Design

Inclusion, intercultural & drama	The inclusion map of the usual beneficiaries profiles - created by the workshop's participants
Introduction in Shadow Theatre Universe- a historic perspective	Presentation and videos samples of different kind of shadow theatre performances
Discovering the shadows and lights expressivity to perform	Trust and team building exercises Improvisation and nonverbal dialogs with free hands and human body in shadow
Transforming the personal experiences in working with groups at risk of exclusion.	Developing short texts by transforming the victims and oppressors in shadow theatre heroes
Understanding shadow theatre as the old cinematographic art	The logic of translating the words in visual language (the effect of the framing and the succession of the pictures for the brains' receivers)
Exploring shadow theatre arts and tools	Opacity, transparency, shapes, mirrors, materials, playing with the body and all these elements for performing
Preparing the final shadow theatre performance	Deciding the teams, projects, artistic methods and planning the work of the next 6 working hours
Building the final performance	Working on the group or individual project
Building the final performance	Presenting the results to the team, feedback from the others participants
Building the final performance	Reshaping the initial plan
Building the final performance	Presenting all the projects for the Connector's audiences



**Group
Members**

Rubric: Shadow Puppet Play

Students will be able to:	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Comments
Create original shadow puppet character					
Collaborate with group members and fulfill individual theater role responsibilities					
Demonstrate appropriate shadow distances, effects, and puppet placement					
Demonstrate understanding of the terms "transparent", "translucent" and "opaque" through the creation of shadow puppets					
Use a variation of materials to show different shadow effects.					
Write a 5-minute play with a beginning, middle and end.					
Integrate all members' puppets into the storyline.					



Delivering *the* method



The method has the potential to create cohesion in a group of beneficiaries, to help them understand internally the problem of the target group, whose story they tell, through the light and shadow show. In this way, each member of this team gains the potential to be actively and emotionally more involved in acts of social and civic intervention, dedicating themselves more to developing solidarity.

The audience, that will have the opportunity to watch the show, will have to reflect on the dramatic aspects highlighted and, a little facilitation at the end the story, will trigger in the mind of each spectator the curiosity to try to find out more about the theme and issues of the characters at risk of exclusion.

Evaluation



The progress of every participant has to be analysed following these criteria:

- How was the team's work?
- How and if was changed the commitment for the solidarity cause used as the main topic for the workshop?
- How comfortable was preparing for being a performing artist?
- In what way was developed the critical thinking in the visual communication?



Why we use? *this method* ?

Arts for social changes adds velocity in understanding the realities by using feelings and emotions in a proactive way.

At the same time, the fun, the emotional connection with the team members in the performing stage and the playful experience create strong learning experiences, which cannot be compared with other learning methodologies.

The space to explore the impact of the visual language of the stories for the personal learning process and for the emotional reception in the audience is creating a new user perspective regarding the world of multimedia and video expression.

How can it be used in E+/ESC context?

Communities of practice and resources

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcgagLQYcVA>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HEGPHMxaZw>
3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2zQgpX_W-c

Video Resources for Shadow Theatre as non-formal education tool

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7HEGPHMxaZw>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GqLi6HbTjc>
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcgagLQYcVA>
4. https://youtu.be/F2zQgpX_W-c
5. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qySUu9BGLow>
6. <https://youtu.be/Ht6RhcoKpS8>



Playwriting Outline

Instruction:

Use this organizer to record ideas for your play.

This outline will serve as a guide for creating the dialogue and action for your scene.

Name of assigned act:.....

Characters:.....

Setting:.....

Events:.....

Props:.....

Costumes:.....

Music/Sound Effects:.....

List any lines from the act that you will use in your play......





Criteria for Success: Shadow Puppet Play

- Create original shadow puppet characters.
- Collaborate with group members and fulfil individual theatre role responsibilities.
- Demonstrate appropriate shadow distances, effects, and puppet placement.
- Demonstrate understanding of the terms “transparent,” “translucent,” and “opaque” through the creation of shadow puppets.
- Use a variation of materials to show different shadow effects.
- Write a 5-minute play with a beginning, middle, and end.
- Integrate all members’ puppets into the storyline.
- Create clear elements of a shadow play:
 - Characters
 - Script/Dialogue
 - Scenery
 - Shadows.







CONNECTOR

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