

Final report from the residency

Date: 26. 8. – 8. 9. 2024

Venue: Sladovna, Písek

Project: POLO

Participants: Zbyněk Rohlík, Luan Goncalves, Jana Nunčič, Domen Šuman

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESIDENCY

Our purpose of the residency was to make a puppet performance based on my previous experiments with performative sound installation Can I. We had a brief frame of topic, and since we wanted to make the full show in the time of residency, preparations started already before the residency, from May on. With the team we had been meeting, making set design and developing the story in a way that we are prepared before the residency and that when we come, we can start rehearsing. The process was still very open to improvise and try, and Sladovna Písek was for us an inspiring place to do so. We had a rehearsal space just for ourselves, and full approach to it, in any time of the day.

We had an apartment in Sladovna Písek, so we were close to rehearsal space and in general we were very satisfied to be able to work and we had no limitations over all.

Sladovna Písek also took care of us, gave us a tour around the place and showed us their exhibitions and presented their work, as well as gave us tips where to go around the city. Together we had our prepremiere in Sladovná Písek with test public, and for the future we are planning to perform there with our performance in February 2025.

CONTENT AND PROGRESS OF THE RESIDENCY

First day we settled in, prepared the space set up, the speakers and our gear, we had next days for improvisations and exploration. In second week, our dramaturg Domen Šuman joined the team, and we also got the technical equipment (lights). We normally worked from 10:00-13:30 and then from 16:00-22:00. This was the maximum, we had lots of breaks for snacks and coffee, and as well some free time that we decided on our own. We went together to a trip in the forest and once to have a swim in the local river.

Our methods mostly followed our scenery, and the key idea behind what we were doing. The rehearsing was divided into working with text, reflecting on our own experiences and writing about them on a certain topic, adopting a classical approach to directing, and exploring alternative approaches to discover the best ways to express something on stage. We worked with puppets that were made beforehand, which allowed us time to explore their movement and characters. Over time, we found their unique style of animation. We were finding an inspiration in Werner Herzog's videos, and we also

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watched one of his movies – Encounters at the End of the World. On the last day, we had our public presentation – a pre-premiere. Approximately 25 people, including children, attended. Presenting our work publicly after 14 intensive days was a satisfying experience and a great opportunity to receive feedback. It was also valuable to see how children responded to certain topics and scenes.

THE SPECIFIC BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES OF THE RESIDENCY

The benefits are very product-focused, and we knew from the start that we wanted to create a performance. The benefits regarding our group are that we didn't know each other very well before, yet we managed to do amazing collective work. Personally, I believe it strengthened our relationships, turning us into a nice, productive, and also friendship-based group.

Our residency was challenging, especially because, honestly, who can make a show in 2 weeks? There was a lot of pressure and many long working hours, but all the effort paid off. We are all happy with the result and very grateful to Nová síť and Sladovna Písek for offering us their support and this opportunity. I knew some employees at Sladovna Písek beforehand, so the communication went smoothly and without issues. There was only one small problem, which we solved easily. In the last days, there was a scheduling collision with the space where we were working, so we had to move to another space to rehearse. However, this was communicated in advance, so I wouldn't say it was something that complicated our work.

Many families attended the final public presentation, as well as some artists. We received some very beautiful feedback as well as practical comments. Now we know which age group the show is best suited for, as well as the challenges of visibility (our show is mostly performed on the floor). If there are too many people, they can't see well, so elevation is needed.

FUTURE VISION

We are hoping to perform more. We are satisfied with the show and are currently applying to festivals and reaching out through people we know. We hope the show won't be forgotten but will have the chance to be performed again and many times.

Our vision for the future is simple – to continue working, improving, and adding new elements with each reprise to make the show more effective, as well as to keep developing new performances. We would like to find a producer, work on establishing our new performing name, Divadlo Šutr, and gain a clearer overview of future possibilities. Being independent cultural workers is a challenge in itself, and we will need to find a balance for sustainable production.

I also believe there are many innovations we can apply. The topic of the show is about leaving – the cat in the show dies or leaves the world where she was. It is presented subtly and gently. What we noticed is that children understand this, but they don't really want to talk about it. It's a taboo, something they aren't used to discussing. I believe the show could be a helpful tool to open up discussions or workshops on this specific topic.

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CONCLUSION

I am very happy to have the opportunity to work. Without the residency, we wouldn't have been able to make it. It was also an important step for me personally, as a director and scenographer, to be able to fulfill my vision, and for the group to have concentrated time to be creative and collaborate together in this collective flow.

We have a premiere in Prague at Punctum on 30.11. at 15:00, and you are very welcome to join us.

Looking ahead, we have more performances scheduled: in February in Písek, in May in Brno, and in July in Banská Štiavnica.

26. 11. 2024
Jana Nunčič



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