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## ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

### KEY ACTION 2: Cooperation between organizations and institutions

#### KA210-SCH - Small-scale partnerships in school education Field- School Education

Project Title: Shadow Theater in Preschool Education

Project number: 2023-2-BG01-KA210-SCH-000178703

Project Acronym: STIPE

# STEP-BY-STEP MANUAL IN SHADOW THEATER





## Introduction

Shadow theater is a really simple and interesting form of art to perform and very suitable to provoke creativity and curiosity in children. This is why shadow theater can be played in kindergartens, for the joy of kids, parents, and kindergarten staff.

Chinese shadow theater uses figures made out of cardboard or other materials, but in the “Shadow Theater in Preschool Education” (STIPE) Project we work with the bodies of children. This way the kids are the main actors and their own shadows attract the attention of the audience.

Shadow theater is also a very powerful tool for kids to learn, play, experiment, create own stories, improve discipline, and also convey messages to the audience.



*Shadow theater workshop with kids in Sofia, Bulgaria*

## Background

An INTRODUCTORY TRAINING IN SHADOW THEATER took place in Mezdra, Bulgaria from April 15 to April 19, 2024 under the Erasmus+ project **"Shadow Theater in Preschool Education"**, 2023-2-BG01-KA210-SCH-000178703. In it, trainee were pedagogical specialists from kindergartens representing the four project partners from Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey and trainers were art-facilitators of "Values, Virtues, Integrity" Foundation.

During the next stage of the project, the trainees at this training will become art-facilitators themselves. They will work with kids in at least four kindergartens located in the three project partner countries to create small theatrical performances based on the shadow theater method.



*Introductory training in shadow theater, "MIR" Kindergarten – Mezdra,, under the STIPE project.*



## Purpose

The purpose of this manual is to help in the process of creation of children's performances under the “Shadow Theater in Preschool Education” (STIPE) Project, using the shadow theater method in kindergartens and other institutions of that type.

It may also be used in similar occasions and initiatives promoting learning through theater in the fields of preschool, school, and adult education as well as in the Youth Sector of the Erasmus+ and related programs.



*Shadow theater with kids and adults under the KA210-ADU “Theatre TRAILS” Erasmus+ Project.*

## Participants

The group of participants in shadow theater activities can range from 4-5 to over 20 persons. It's good to keep in mind that usually up to 4 actors can project their shadows on the screen at the same time.

In the STIPE project we will make shadow theater miniatures with children as main actors and participants. Otherwise, participants in shadow theater may be of different age, social status, experience etc. Shadow theater is a particularly inclusive tool. It could be done with amateur actors, especially coming from vulnerable social groups, as well as with professional and/or semi-professional actors. The process could also include people with disabilities, representatives of mainstream and/or disadvantaged groups, kids, youths, adults, seniors, etc.

The participants don't need to have specific experience with theater. They just have to be open for experiments and creativity. If the group is composed of more than 10-12 persons, two facilitators may handle the related tasks.



*Participants in a workshop from a family-type accommodation center for children and youths.*



## Resources and materials

A sample list of needed equipment for shadow theater:

- A white sheet (approximately 3,5m x 2,2m)
- Rope – around 4 m long
- 12-15 tongs
- A source of light – projector, multimedia or even a mobile phone flashlight
- Sound equipment (for more complex tasks that include not only visual, but sound effects as well)
- Theater props and materials (real ones like, for example, a bunch of artificial flowers, or such made by paper, cardboard and other suitable materials)
- In order to perform the exercise you need a dark room/space.

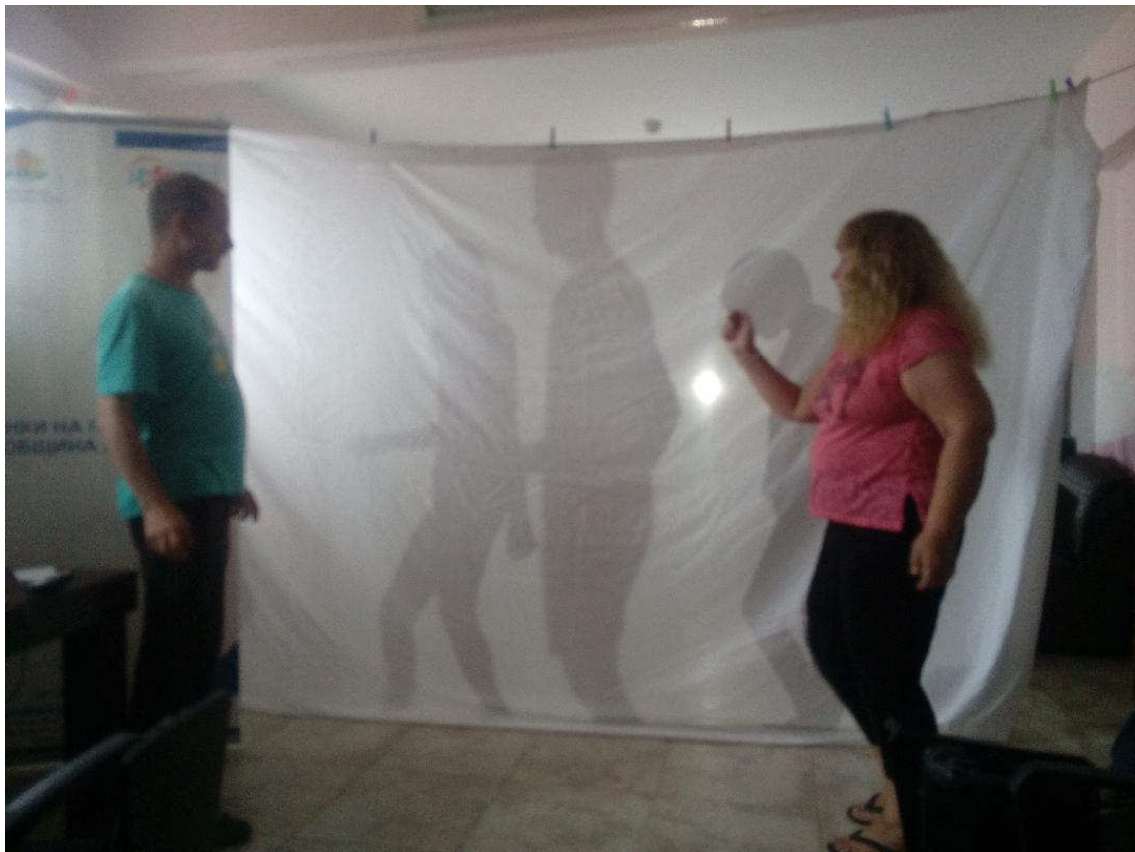


*Shadow theater can be staged almost everywhere, even in a park at night.*



## Getting familiar with your shadow

The facilitator asks the participants to pass slowly between the source of light and the sheet and to observe their shadows on the sheet. The point of this initial exercise is for each participant to figure out how his/her shadow looks and to do free simple actions, observing how the shadow reacts. Participants enter and exit the “stage” one after another, giving time to each other for small experiments with the own shadow. Depending on the number of participants, there might be up to 3-4 circles (appearances of one person on the stage). The activity takes place for up to 10-15 minutes.



*Going through the stage can be one at a time or in small groups.*



### “Walking on the rope” exercise

While in the previous exercise the participants walk across the width of the stage, in this one they use its depth. They imagine that there is a rope on the ground, oriented from the source of light to the sheet and they walk on it, keeping balance. The idea is to see how their shadow changes from the moment they enter the lighted area to the moment they are closest to the sheet and vice versa.

Each participant passes the rope at least twice. This exercise also takes 5-10 minutes.



*It's almost like in Charlie Chaplin's movie The Circus.*



## Playing with perspective

The next exercise is also about perspective. It works with pairs of participants. First they demonstrate a real action (for example, handshake) and see how that action is reflected on the sheet. Then they do a fake handshake, which should also look realistic. One participant is closer to the sheet, and the other is further away. So they don't do a real handshake (or similar action), but try to coordinate their movements and shadows so that on the sheet it looks real. Every pair tries one or the other. The exercise can take up to 15 minutes.



*Example of a fake handshake.*



## Performing simple actions

This next stage is a series of individual exercises in which the kids one by one present simple actions: for example licking an ice cream, brushing teeth, etc. On one side of the sheet, each young actor does a specific action, while the others, watching the action on the other side of the sheet, where the audience is, manage to guess the corresponding action. For convenience, the facilitator prepares cards with about 20 such simple actions for everyone to have. So, if the group is smaller, the participants can present two or more such actions.



*Driving a nail (a real, as in this case, or imaginary hammer may be used to visualize this activity).*



## What is my profession?

The next step in shadow theater presents tasks that are more complex. In the manner of presenting simple actions, the participants now have to present an occupation/profession so that the observers can recognize it. The difference is that the respective occupation/profession can be represented by more than one simple action inherent in it, until it is recognized. In the same way, participants present one or two professions during the whole session.

The exercise is especially targeted for kids as this is a pleasant, useful, and joyful way for them to learn about various professions. It is recommended for the facilitator(s) to give to the children cards with a picture of a profession and to ask them to perform the profession depicted on the card. One kid performs at a time. By observing the shadow, the rest of the group should guess what the profession is. The acting kid stops performing when the audience guesses the role right.



*Ballerina*



## Animals

The next part usually is very attractive for children, because they receive new challenging tasks. The kids have to visualize an animal with their bodies: crocodile, mouse, dog, etc. They have first to think about the shadow and the behavior of the animal, because sometime small details make the difference (between rabbit and kangaroo, for example). Another new interesting moment here is that the participants may choose to present the specific animal individually or seek the cooperation of other participant(s) to complete the task (for example, one, two, or even three participants can visualize an elephant). Making specific sounds for the animal is not permitted.

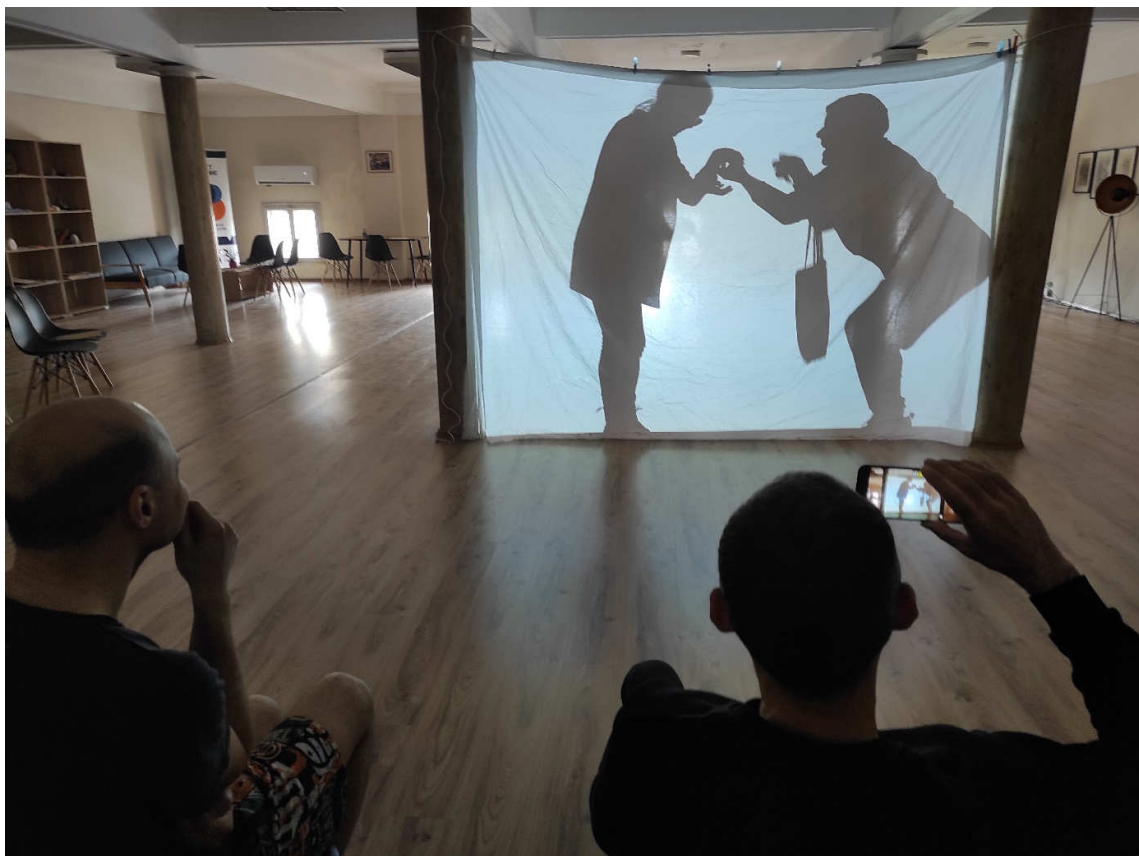


*T-Rex*



## Situations

The tasks become more and more complex as the transition from individual to creative group work continues. The facilitator divides the participants into pairs and give them the task to act out a certain situation (from situation cards). Situations can be: marriage proposal, waking up the Sleeping Beauty, etc. In this exercise, the participants should receive more time to coordinate the actions and develop the sequence of the task, after which each pair presents their situation. Alternative presentations of the same situation can be thought of and discussed.



*Poisoning of Snow White*



## Shadow theater miniatures

The last task for the kids is to prepare and preform a theatrical miniature. The facilitator forms teams of 4-5-6 participants. Each team has the assignment to produce own mini-performance (from 1 to 5 minutes). For this purpose, preliminary work on the internal division of tasks/roles is necessary: for example, actors, lighting (the person who turns off and on the lights when changing the different scenes), theater props manager, music arranger, assistant director, etc. Each team gets plenty of time to develop its theatrical story (in one, two, three or more scenes), to invent the scenario (including via a storyboard), to refine the details, to have rehearsals in front of the projector and, finally, to present their production to the others. The facilitators lead this complex process, coordinating the team effort, but also giving creative freedom to the participants as much as it is possible. The kids might opt to perform a well-known fairy tale or to develop their own story, depending on their preferences and interests. After enough rehearsals (including a dress rehearsal), the final version of the performance will be ready for presentation to the large group and/or an external audience.



*Presentation of a miniature based on the Bulgarian fairy tale "Grandfather pulls a turnip"*



## Shadow theater special effects

Some shadow theater effects refer to the light. The source of light is usually white, but color filters might be used to have a screen of a different color – red, blue, yellow, pink, etc. You just put a transparent plastic sheet of the respective color in front of the source of light and the frame on the big cotton sheet becomes of that color and serves as a colorful background of the scene.

If the source of light is a multimedia projector, we can have various background settings through preliminary prepared slides. These slides may visualize a forest, a desert, a river/sea, a famous geographical location, etc. By performing on the background of such a slide, you may show exactly where the activity is taking place (for example, the Eiffel Tower image symbolizes that the plot is developing in Paris).



*Here the situation takes place in an urban environment, near a tramline.*



### More shadow theater special effects

Other shadow theater effects refer to the chosen theater props and the perspective. You can cut different shapes from cardboard and add their shadows to the screen image. The same cutout placed closer to the light source or the screen will look different on the frame.

For example, a cutout of a flying saucer near the source of light will appear large (showing the landing of aliens) and the same cutout near the screen will fit in the palm of a person. It is the same with the image of animals, plants, buildings, gadgets, etc.



*Feeding the pigeons (cut out of cardboard and operated with long and thin sticks).*



## Last tips

When appropriate soundtrack is added, we come up with a comprehensive theatrical performance. There are two basic approaches to music. The first is for it to only be a musical background to what is happening (without precise synchronization with the performed actions). The other is to record it in advance and let the actors follow it. You can also combine the two approaches. For performances in kindergartens, children's songs can be used to play during the performance and determine the content, rhythm and tempo of what is happening on the screen.

You are now ready to begin. Don't forget the bow at the end of the performance!:)



*Applause after a successful shadow theater performance in kindergarten “Mir” – Mezdra, Bulgaria.*



## Authorship

This step-by-step manual was created under Activity 3 of the Erasmus+ project "Shadow Theater in Preschool Education" (2023-2-BG01-KA210-SCH-000178703) by:

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*As the song sings, "The Show Must Go On!": the audience awaits your shadow theater masterpieces!*



## Resources and useful links

The photos used in this publication are from the photo archive of “Values, Virtues, Integrity” Foundation. They are from events of the following projects in which the foundation has been a lead organization or partner:

- ***“Shadows of the change in Lesichovo Municipality”***: 2020, under National Youth Program (2016-2020)

(<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=сенки%20на%20промяната%20в%20община%20лесичово%20общност>)

- ***“We speak through our shadows”***, 2022, under Amateur Arts Program of "Culture" National Fund (<https://www.vvifoundation.org/en/pages/projects>)

- ***“SOCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH INTEGRATIVE ARTS”***, 2018-3-BG01-KA205-061002, leading partner “Values, Virtues, Integrity” Foundation (VVIF), Bulgaria (<https://www.vvifoundation.org/en/pages/projects/social-inclusion-through-integrative-arts>)

- ***“Shadows in the Mountain”***, 2019-3-BG01-KA105-077813, VVIF, Bulgaria (<https://www.vvifoundation.org/en/pages/projects/shadows-in-the-mountain>)

- ***“Learning through theater”***, 2020-1-BG01-KA104-078330, VVIF, Bulgaria (<https://www.vvifoundation.org/en/pages/projects/learning-through-theater>)

- ***“Without words”***, 2020-1-UK01-KA204-079187, “Headway Arts”, UK;

- ***“THEATRE TRAILS: Theatre fosTeRing Adults' skills and IncLuSion”***, 2022-1-IT02-KA210-ADU-000084400, Associazione Culturale Smascherati! APS, Italy

- ***“Shadow Theater in Preschool Education”***, 2023-2-BG01-KA210-SCH-000178703, “Mir” Kindergarten, Town of Mezdra, Bulgaria (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61557344369664>)



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