

Kurt Murray's Report On Spot Festival

Spot Festival 7 2014 in Carei, Satu Mare, Romania

Myself and Iulia presented a street performance leading up to the festival as promotion for the presentation of our children's theatre show 'Remember Doctor Bubble, The Bubble Magician' at the a Halloween festival in the town amphitheatre. The response was extraordinary with adults barricading children from their own excitement and enthusiasm having never before seen such a performance including giant soap bubbles. We drew a crowd of between 500 and a 1000 for our two presentations and were given accolades of appreciation for that performance from locals and council members leading up to the festival.

In promotion for our work in the festival Iulia and myself attended a local radio station and were quizzed on the connection between local arts and the election atmosphere that was surrounding the country leading to the new president. We made those connections whilst simultaneously promoting the various activities we were to take part in, our children's show, Mesterul Manole (theatre show I directed in Romanian with a Romanian cast), cabaret performance with George and the workshop series for the attending student body. Radio Transylvania very enthusiastically appreciated our work thus far and to come and wanted more than anything else to know when we were to return to bring more work to the community and encouraging any listening government body that our work was worthy of more substantial funding to continue building a life blood of art in Carei.

Our second media promotion was with the local morning show on TV1 in Satu Mare during the festival, we again promoted our works and were encouraged to speak upon the importance of the Spot Festival and its importance to the cultural development in Satu Mare. On this program I also brought along one the performers from Mesterul Manole dressed in full costume as a bronze, living statue and created a series of bubble sculptures at the end of the program. Chico and Vlad the presenters made wonderful efforts to support us and George and Naima the following day to bring us on air and promote our work.

The festival's beginning brought about how obviously Iulia and I had overloaded ourselves with work. We were in the position of managing the execution of two theatre productions and a cabaret performance as well as daily workshops and having to make sure the organiser kept his promises. Sleep became a secondary occupation to our fulltime occupation of managing our work load. We succeeded brilliantly although I do not think we would commit ourselves as heavily in the future.

THE WORKSHOPS

The organiser Paul Savadi attempted to cancel our first day of workshops so that people could go watch the slaughtering of a pig. We told him they would go ahead to give people the option of doing either activity on that first morning. We were not in the position of cancelling a workshop as we had promoted it already to begin on that day and did not want to break the momentum. As a result Iulia was forced to find a sound system we had requested for the workshops and was not provided, she had to ask the DJ of the motel who works wedding functions if he could provide one, he was a lovely man who gave it without question. Our first workshop contained 30 people in all and was by far the most successful in terms of participation. What happened as the days past was people were partying of the evening and the numbers varied wildly from between 1 attendee and 30. Teachers from the Cluj university were the most encouraging after seeing our first days workshops made pains to make their students come and apologised when they could not due to show commitments. It was easily seen that we were in competition constantly with the previous night's party every day and it revealed the commitment of certain student who would do both and others still that would abstain in order to attend our teachings. By the end of the week the main supporters of our work the Cluj teachers could not praise us enough for our efforts and hoped for a restructuring to the festival to maintain this workshop process in future years. This was the first year

in this festival that workshops had been successfully presented and was an innovation of myself, Iulia and George that we are grateful in spite of the occasional frustration that Paul Sarvadi took on.

REMEMBER DR BUBBLE THE BUBBLE MAGICIAN

We had two presentations of this work, one at the local high school and another at the festival stage. We worked on promotion of both but the initial performance at the school was by far the most successful. With attendance of between 200-300 students that show was a wild and energised experience executed by myself and Iulia with a cast member of Mesterul Manole (Iosif Ahmed) on sound tech. George, Naima and two other cast members of Mesterul Manole (Ana and Larisa) worked on seating everyone and managing the excitement that occurred as children who had never seen a theatre show in their life would occasionally leap up on stage at the sight of enormous bubbles. The last 10 minutes of the show had a similar feel to our street performance the previous week with our four crowd managers moving back an audience of joy that wanted to run wild amongst the final explosion of bubbles that closes the show.

The second performance was not promoted at all by the Spot Festival past being listed on the poster, as a result, Iulia and I could account for 95% of the crowd with only half of the seats occupied. It was a great looking show, now standing on a proper stage with stage lighting but did not have that same vibrant energy of the previous day. It did however result in the technician of the spot festival from the Cluj University saying that he would try and get us booked in his city as he had never seen such an entertaining show, which he watched beginning to end. A high compliment as I know that Victor given the opportunity to see a show or sleep through a show during the spot festival if he is not needed often takes the latter. To have him engaged in a show for children was an honour and pleasure from someone who sees as many theatre shows a year as he does.

CABARET PERFORMANCE

Our cabaret performance followed Dr Bubble and was even worse publicized. Apparently the posters had listed the event for that day whilst (as we later found out) the online promotion had its listed for the following day. As a result we had only 10 people in the audience to start with that built into 35 by the end. The work presented by myself, George and Iulia was praised by all in attendance but it was sad that not more people were able to attend due to a publicity error.

THE HUMAN GALLERY OF MESTERUL MANOLE

This work was presented earlier in the year and was presented at Spot Festival as the closing performance of the festival, as such we were concerned about the turn out as nearly all of the visiting artists had left and often had made up over half the audience of majority of the shows up until this point. However in spite of previous lacking publicity for our other projects, between the efforts of Paul Sarvadi, Iulia and I this performance was packed with people from the local community. They numbered over 140 and were engaged, focussed and applauded for over 5 minutes at the end of the show. Our rehearsal process to bring this work back to life had been during the festival as well, and we had made certain redesigns to the work making it a performance that moved the audience from one theatre to a revived stables in the centre of town. Everyone there had a great time, the actors fought against a five degree temperature drop that came out of nowhere that night making Carei the coldest place in all of Romania for that one night. In spite of these challenges the show was an immense success in spite of our time restrictions to put it together and audience members even participated in bumping out the show at its end whilst quizzing me on it. It was a fantastic night.

THE ORGANISER PAUL SARVARDI

Paul Sarvadi was often a burden to deal with. I appreciate his efforts in single handily putting on a festival alone but despise the chaos that he brings with it. He attempted to cancel our initial workshops, did not publicise shows or workshops effectively, changed our accommodation from what we originally asked for, did not provide items that he said he could with no issue and then told

us that in spite of a public promise 'Nobody leaves the festival with getting money back'(for flights) turned around and said it would not be possible. Iulia and I had already an outstanding debt of £300 from two months previous and were still waiting, we received after placing immense pressure on him 250euros which we accepted and have decided to leave this working relationship behind unless in the future certain conditions are met. I would not recommend working with Paul Sarvadi in the future unless the condition of payment up front, one month in advance of the project is met. He is unorganised and he has lied to me several times directly on various subjects, mostly stemming from the fact that he says yes to everything to make things happen and has no ability to accept consequences of breaking these promises.

Had he only been able to refund myself, Iulia, George and Naima on time all else would have been forgiven, but to the best of my knowledge George and Naima have yet to receive their air ticket reimbursement.

Having worked with Paul three times now I can safely say his behaviour in this is getting worse not better and likewise with his organisational skills. I would recommend that in spite of the wonderful experience we had in Carei any further projects with Paul Sarvadi and Spot Festival need to be approached with a money up front policy and an awareness that many other things are likely to go wrong in dealing with him.

I would like to personally thank the Reboot the Roots Trustees for supporting this project. It has been an immense learning experience for all involved and an experience for life for any who got to work with us or see our performances in Romania. We have made a marked change in the artistic environment in Romania, a place that rarely gets the opportunity to have such an experience and to know these results came to fruition was not possible without your support.

Thank you,