

**WORKSHOP REPORT
8-9 MARCH 2006 ISRAEL**

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BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

British Council Israel held a forum theatre workshop in partnership with the HEMDA Science Education Centre in Tel Aviv and the Bloomfield Science Museum in Jerusalem. The workshop took place over a period of two days 8 – 9 March 2006 and brought together a mixed group of individuals from the world of science, theatre and education.

This event took place under the umbrella of ZeroCarbonCity, a British Council campaign created to help explore the climate issue facing the world.

Raising public interest, awareness and understanding about science and technology issues which affect our lives, forms an integral part of our overall *science in society* programme in Israel. The aim of the programme is to promote a better appreciation of the UK's role in scientific creativity and engage with and inspire audiences to debate issues and impacts science research has on people's lives. To achieve these goals we have established a number of mechanisms and activities to improve communication between scientists and the wider public.

Cafés Scientifiques, exhibitions, workshops, public lectures and debates are some of the means we use to attract and engage interaction between scientists and the public. But there are other ways to inform and inspire audiences. A novel format for improving knowledge of science and increase public involvement is the forum theatre concept, a dynamic interactive theatre involving audience participation.

British Council Science is working with ARC Theatre to engage audiences with the issues surrounding climate change. ARC Theatre has successfully performed *Waiting for Change*, a forum piece to explore climate change, at the Science Museum, WWF in Edinburgh, British Council offices in Denmark and Norway and at the recent British Council Seminar: Communicating Climate Change: Innovations at City Level.

Raising awareness and maintaining a dialogue with the public is a very important area of public engagement with science, both for British Council Israel and its local partners. Having heard about ARC Theatre's approach to communicating and engaging audiences on the climate change issue, we invited the company to develop for us a special 'dialogue through drama' workshop for young scientists, actors, directors and science communicators.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

The aim of the workshop was to build a core group of science communicators who will work with the British Council and its partners, using forum theatre to engage audiences. The objective therefore was to enable the initial development of informed, skilful and creative facilitators who will participate in forum theatre performance events focused on the theme of climate change.

We recognised the need to equip a group of people with the skills to communicate clearly and confidently on science issues on a non-technical level, and the importance of practical training which will provide them with the tools and methodology necessary to establish a dialogue with the wider public.

WORKSHOP PROMOTION

A call for participants was issued, in English and Hebrew, in January 2006. The British Council, Hemda Centre and the Bloomfield Museum advertised the call on their websites, e-newsletters and direct mailings to contacts. The call generated an immediate response, making it unnecessary to advertise in the press. A total of sixty applications were received and thirty-six were invited to participate in the workshop.

ARC FORUM THEATRE

ARC was founded in 1984 and is a leading UK theatre provider with a highly successful track-record. ARC creates and develops original material to explore a wide range of issues affecting society. Using an innovative combination of traditional dialogue-based events with interactive theatre ARC uses the forum format to stimulate dialogue about choices we make and their consequences on a personal and global scale.

Drama is a safe way of getting people to talk about and confront issues and challenging their assumptions, while forum theatre is about change. The use of forum theatre to engage audiences with the issues surrounding climate change allows them to view things from different perspectives, and to advise the characters and decide the outcomes.

ABOUT THE TRAINERS

CLIFFORD OLIVER (Olly). Olly is ARC's Creative Director, Resident Writer and Lead Facilitator. He began his career in the theatre as an actor with the Theatre Royal, Stratford East. Olly co-founded Arc Theatre and has written over thirty original plays for Arc. These plays, including the highly successful trilogy The Football Plays (which Olly created in partnership with the visionary HSBC team) have received critical acclaim and a wide range of awards, including FT, Raspberry Ripple and Rima. Olly's interest in storytelling in business has led to a number of innovative partnerships with companies looking to articulate and embed their brand through powerful and memorable stories.

NATALIE SMITH. Natalie is ARC's Community Education Manager. She manages and delivers most of Arc's work to secondary schools and both performs in and facilitates, forum theatre and training workshops.

Olly and Natalie are incredibly energetic, enthusiastic and versatile. The participants in our workshop were very impressed with their knowledge, skills and ability to transmit ideas and concepts and demonstrate how drama can be used to convey new or difficult issues and how forum theatre can draw in audience participation. Forum theatre was for our participants a new approach in 'acting and communication' and because they came from different backgrounds required of them to make a mental shift in their thinking. It is to Olly and Natalie's credit that they were able to inspire this new way of thinking and communicating and at the same time provide the tools for forum theatre performance.

Olly is a 'real turbo engine' as one of our partners said and it was obvious to everyone that he is a driving force and creative genius, able to improvise at a speeds which left us breathless. Combining all this with Natalie's practical and experienced coaching, the training was indeed an inspirational experience.

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME



LOCATION: HEMDA Science Education Centre, 7 Hapardess Street, Tel Aviv	
Wednesday 8 March 2006	
9.00-9.45	Registration and refreshment
9.45-10.00	Opening: Sonia Feldman - Science & Education Officer British Council Welcoming Remarks: Dr Eitan Krein - Projects Manager Hemda Science Education Dafna Efron - Bloomfield Science Museum
10.00-11.00	Session One- Introduction An introduction to the work of Arc Theatre for Change, the kind of topics it deals with and its with the London Science Museum on "Climate Change" and "Drugs & The Mind" A brief opportunity for participants to introduce themselves and their work
11.00-11.45	Session Two- Art or Science? A description of the process of artists researching with scientists using the consultation model developed with the London Science Museum A brief discussion of the benefits and difficulties of partnership and the possible topics and areas of communication that might be approached.
11.45	Break – 15 minutes
12.00-13.00	Session Three- Story Structure, Part One We all know a good story when we hear or see one- whether it's in a book, a film, told to us by a friend, in a theatre or even a commercial. But what makes a story good? We learn at school that a story has a beginning, middle and end but what is a good beginning? How long should it last? What kind of middle should it be? Where will the end take us? This session will answer all these questions and more. It will offer a practical guide, a way into creative thinking.
13.00-14.00	Lunch
14.00-15.30	Session Four- Story Structure Part Two A practical opportunity to explore and share new and old stories
15.30-15.45	Break- 15 minutes
15.45-16.45	Session Five- Forum Theatre An introduction to ARC's forum theatre and the kind of subjects it can be used to discuss The role of the facilitator Engaging the audience Managing audience participation
16.45-17.00	Session Six- Reflection

Thursday 9 March 2006	
9.30-10.00	Coffee
10.00-11.00	Session One- Creating Scenarios The scenarios that we use in Forum Theatre represent the beginning of a story and characters are all important. In this session we look at how we choose both to address the issues upon which the piece is based. Participants will work in small groups to begin the process
11.00-12.00	Session Two- Improvisation A practical improvisation workshop specifically geared towards use in Forum Theatre Duration: 1 hour
12.00-12.15	Break – 15 minutes
12.15-13.15	Session Three- Over to you! Working in groups made up of scientists, communicators, facilitators and actors participants will devise a forum scenario and begin the process of creation their own science forum piece
13.15-14.00	Lunch
14.00 - 14.30	Session Three Continued- Rehearsal Developing the forum pieces in preparation for performance
14.30-16.30	Session Four- Show Time The groups share their pieces with the others and anyone else we can drag in to participate
16.30-17.00	Session Five- Next steps and farewells

ZeroCarbonCity is a global British Council campaign to raise awareness and stimulate debate about climate change and the energy challenges facing the world's greatest cities. Our aim is to raise awareness and stimulate debate around climate change and the challenges we face, reinforcing the UK's commitment to tackling climate change. The **Science Forum Theatre workshop** is the first of many activities under the **ZeroCarbonCity** banner.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

The aim of the workshop was to provide a learning and training opportunity for people from a wide range of disciplines interested in a new form of science communication. It focused on theoretical and practical issues, and the development of skills, particularly dialogue, for science forum theatre events in general and British Council *Climate Change* forums in particular.

The project was successful in meeting its objectives and was able to involve an interesting mix of people, the majority of whom are keen to work with us on the various activities planned to raise awareness about climate change. This was a unique workshop, bringing together a wide range of people, scientists, actors, directors, writers and teachers and the mix was very successful.

Together with our partners, we are now looking to enable the development of a small and dedicated group who will work with us on climate change activities.

SNAPSHOT HIGHLIGHTS

- A total of 36 people participated in the workshop
- 92% of the participants rated the workshop as 4-5 in terms of enjoyment, when 5 is best
- 60% of the participants felt that the workshop fully/mostly met their professional objectives, 39% felt their objectives were partly met
- **61% said they found forum theatre interesting and attractive as a result of this event and have expressed an interest in working with us**

RESULTS

Changing perception

Clifford Oliver and Natalie Smith were stylish, humorous and very much aware that combining forum theatre with science communication is a new approach for most people. The training successfully shattered the mixed audience's stereotype of the role actors and science communicators usually assume and opened the door to new thinking.

Impacting participants

The reaction from the participants was clear. The eagerness and enthusiasm expressed by all the participants for this new communication format is reflected in many of the comments highlighted in the Participants Testaments (further below). Some are even considering using this new tool in their teaching and work.

The personal touch

Typical theatre workshops are targeted to professionals or amateurs. The ARC workshop was unique twofold: the workshop was open to a broad range of people and the training focused on a new concept, not on acting, directing or science communication per se, but rather on how to combine all three elements (and more) to engage with the general public on science issues which affect our lives. Ollie used some video footage to show a forum piece. Seeing the actor (Ollie) in action, as a facilitator, was a revelation to the audience. More than any other part, the role of the facilitator is crucial in holding the actors and audience together. This point was very well understood by the group.

Speaking in English

Running a workshop in English for Hebrew speaking people was in itself a special challenge. The challenge was overcome with a combination of on-the-spot translation whenever necessary. Most of the participants had a good enough level, maybe a bit difficult for quick improvisations but in no way was the language a barrier. Both Ollie and Natalie were aware that there could be problems and made every effort to ensure that their presentations were clear and easy to understand.

Smooth operation

With the full and enthusiastic cooperation of the Hemda Centre and the Bloomfield Museum, the two day workshop was very well planned. Special commendation goes to the Hemda Centre, for making their Centre available for the workshop and for their help with all the practical arrangements. This was the first time the British Council worked with both partners on a joint project. The results could not have been more positive.

LESSONS LEARNED

The overwhelming response from the participants was very positive, both for the forum theatre concept, and for becoming involved in our climate change activities. The feedback forms and final round-up discussion touched on some areas which could be improved, for example spending less time on the theory of forum theatre and more time on learning and/or improving acting/presentation techniques for audience interaction. Many participants had expected a

stronger and more intensive practical training. Almost all felt that there simply was not enough time to learn and practice and prepare for their performance!

As we look at the workshop as a whole, including participants' comments and partners' comments, we can see that there are many positive things to be said about it. We found that the practical sessions were extremely effective and, if we had had more time the participants would have had a chance to do more in-depth work on communication, facilitating and topic research/writing. This is a very important aspect of forum theatre.

Seeing as it is always useful to have the participants (especially a mixed-group) prepared in advance, we would recommend that for future workshops of this nature, the theoretical information about forum theatre should be written up and sent to the participants prior to the start of the workshop. We could thus have longer practical sessions, giving the trainers much more time to work with individuals and groups.

The workshop provided a great opportunity for the participants to learn from the UK ARC Forum Theatre experience. If nothing else, scientists discovered drama as a tool for dialogue to convey scientific concepts and ideas, actors learned new techniques, teachers, journalists and writers discovered new methodologies to interact with general audiences, and all of them agreed that Forum Theatre is a powerful communication device.

PARTNERS

HEMDA Science Education Centre

The HEMDA Science Education Centre is the science campus for Tel Aviv-Jaffa's secondary schools. Initiated by the Rothschild Foundation (*Keren Yad Hanadiv*) in collaboration with the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality and the Weizmann Institute of Science, the objective was to create a new model for a regional science education centre dedicated to and responsible for science education for the upper secondary school level in Tel Aviv-Yafo, including preparation for the matriculation exams – the *Bagrut*. Their guidelines were set by an international committee of scientists and educators from Israel and abroad. HEMDA has been operating in Tel Aviv-Jaffa since 1991 and served as the model, both in concept and architectural design, for the Ministry of Education's Eshkolot Pais Science Technology and Art Centres.

The Bloomfield Science Museum Jerusalem

The Bernard M. Bloomfield Science Museum is an informal cultural and educational institution that presents exhibitions consisting of active exhibits on subjects in the fields of science and technology and which integrates these exhibits into a context including a wide range of educational activities. The goals of the museum are to increase interest among members of the general public in science and technology, in the world around us, and to present science and technology as an integral part of human culture. The museum was first opened to the public in the summer of 1992. The establishment of the museum was made possible through close collaboration between the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Jerusalem Foundation and through a generous donation from the Bloomfield family in Canada. Since its opening, the museum has attracted close to 2 million visitors from all parts of Israel. A third of these visitors have been students and teachers.

PARTNERS TESTAMENTS

From Hemda Science Education Centre

Since October 2005, HEMDA has expanded its activities to reach the community with a new project aimed to engage the public with science. The Culture-Science programme attracted almost 1,800 participants in its first year of operation. The British Council Israel supported our programme and cooperated with us in several events.

The ARC Forum Theatre Workshop was one of the highlights of our partnership with the British Council this year. The workshop enabled us to bring together a unique mix of people that usually don't have the chance to interact with each other: young scientists and theatre people.

The interaction between them, at HEMDA, served well the objectives of our Science-Culture programme.

Moreover, with the British Council and The Bloomfield Science Museum, we hope to develop a new programme of Science-Theatre performances with the workshop participants. This will be unique and new for the Israeli public.

From the Bloomfield Science Museum

The organization of the workshop was very well taken care of. Information was received on time and the schedule was clear and kept to. The participants were chosen carefully. This choice made the group very high in its level. The diversity in peoples' backgrounds was evident in the presentations at the end of the second day of the workshop. The first day was dedicated mainly to telling about what Forum Theatre is, the second day was more practical. This balance should have been much more on the practical side, as people understood the idea quickly, but didn't have enough time to practice it and experience it. The presentation was professional, but could have been much more focused on the "handing down" of the technique.

The idea of using Forum Theatre and debate as a means of enticing curiosity and encouraging a point of view towards science and technology issues, appeals to our Museum's educational search for new and fresh directions. This is the reason the Museum has sent a number of its guides to the workshop.

We hope to be able to use this innovative way of working and thinking in our continuing dialogue with our different audiences.

PARTICIPANTS TESTAMENTS

- The most useful parts were all the practicing and the acting in the forum. This gave me a chance to experience both acting and preparation and only then did I start to understand the whole concept of ARC.*
- A very enjoyable and enlightening process, lightning up the power of personality of Olly and Natalie, the acting potential in me, both in my personal life and on the level of communication*
- I think this workshop was too short and it could be expanded as to receive more information, more examples and more time for each participant to actually participate*
- The workshop was very interesting - a new way, unconventional, bringing together a unique group; the English was understandable and Olly communicated great with the group*
- For me, the most useful parts was experiencing in building a story and a character, experiencing being a character in a story, experiencing improvisation with theme and word*
- Olly and Nataly were excellent and very professional - we have so much more to learn from them!*
- The technique was an eye opener. It is very powerful.*
- The workshop was very entertaining and enjoyable. I learned a lot from this new interactive theatre method (as a Playback player I'm used to something slightly different). Olly and Natalie were brilliant. My only criticism is the shortage of practical practice and 'stage time'. Bottom line - thank you so much!!*

- *Thank you for this unique, educative and enjoyable experience. Personally, I have learned so much, met a great selection of people, and I would like to be involved in this kind of activities in the future (when my schedule will allow it). Keep doing the great work that you do!*
- *The workshop was a real pleasure. I would personally to thank you for this blessed opportunity and the wonderful hospitality you have shown us*
- *The workshop was indeed a thoughts enhancing workshop.*
- *Thank you very much for the most interesting and stimulating workshop. Is there a chance to run a similar programme in the north (Nazareth or Haifa)? It can relate science, English studies or any other educational subject (Arabs-Jews relationships for example etc.) I'm willing to help as much as needed to form a group in the north. Thanks again for great two days*
- *Workshop was both educational and a pleasure. I will be happy to take part in future activities with the British Council*
- *The event was brilliant. 2 days of total fun and learning. I am waiting for the next steps and I am willing to help wherever I can.*
- *I learned a new technique of forum theatre, another one, than the one I use normally. It was great*
- *I found the Science-Theater workshop in Hemda very interesting and inspiring. I enjoyed participating, and it was very interesting to meet people and see how this kind of work brings people together. I would love to participate in any further activities involving this subject, and I offer my help in anything related to it.*
- *Thank you for this wonderful opportunity you. I, as one that never really learned acting, learned a lot of new things. I don't know what are you going to do in the future with all of this but for me, I am going to use this method in my work with the subjects I do. Thanks again to all of you brilliant two days*
- *I really enjoyed the science forum theatre workshop, it was a wonderful experience! I would really like to be involved in the continuation of the project, and would be happy to do whatever I can, although I think I couldn't act/improvise in Hebrew, but would be happy to help research and write the plays.*

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