

WORLDWORK IN THE THEATRE



This graduation work considers the integration of Worldwork principles into documentary theater in the period from 2005 up until now. The presented paper is based on my experience at the junction of documentary theater and process work.

Elena Margo

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 3 |
| On documentary theatre: Teatr.doc experience | 4 |
| The Worldwork is... | 6 |
| Research Project Democracy.doc | 6 |
| The birth of the project | 6 |
| In search of structure | 8 |
| The project structure | 9 |
| Getting acquainted and the rules | 9 |
| Meditation | 10 |
| Election of the Storyteller | 11 |
| The Storyteller tells his/her story | 12 |
| On the roles | 12 |
| Action | 14 |
| Roles voice themselves | 15 |
| A non-theatrical format | 16 |
| Comparison of Democracy.doc and Worldwork structure | 17 |
| The Democracy.doc project statistics | 19 |
| Observations on the project Democracy.doc | 20 |
| The principle of deep democracy | 20 |
| Interest to the project | 21 |
| People's feelings are one and the only playwright | 21 |
| Safety of participants | 21 |
| Connection with the history of the place | 22 |

Elena Margo. Worldwork in the Theatre

| | |
|---|----|
| From the past into the present | 23 |
| The importance of conflict | 24 |
| Awareness tool | 24 |
| The role of facilitators | 25 |
| The dream level facilitation | 25 |
| Democracy.doc as a society diagnostic tool | 27 |
| Follow-up projects | 27 |
| 2008-2014: the Joseph Beuys Theatre | 29 |
| 2014-2017: distant projects with Georg Genoux | 30 |
| Influence of the Worldwork on the documentary theatre | 31 |
| Addendum. Example of one performance in the theatrical format | 34 |
| What people say after a meditation: | 34 |
| He named the following roles: | 35 |
| Interaction between the roles started. | 35 |
| The audience starts to be connected to the action. | 36 |
| Glossary | 37 |
| Bibliography | 38 |
| Press about Democracy.doc | 39 |
| References in Internet and blogs | 40 |
| The list of public presentations | 42 |

Introduction

In 2004 I started studying process work approach and learned about the Worldwork (WW). A year later, my colleague and I were looking for how we could apply the WW knowledge. Theater turned out to be the place that inspired us most. This qualification work summarizes my experience of bringing WW to the theater. I would like to share this experience and support those who want to use and implement WW in different fields of life, at the intersection of various disciplines.

In the period between 2006 and 2014, we were actively collaborating with Moscow Documentary Theater "*Teatr.doc.*" Later, the director of our projects, a documentary theater director, Georg Genoux was forced to leave Russia and started working on his own projects. We continue working remotely and are making joint projects, but he still cannot visit Russia, due to the difficulties associated with the political situation in the country. The history of our cooperation with him and the theater tells the story of how the screws were tightened in our country. And I am still convinced that if it were not for Georg, the experience that formed the basis of this diploma work would never been obtained.



Photo. Left-to-right: Elena Margo, Arman Bekenov and Georg Genoux

Georg left in 2014. Before leaving he suggested me to give a lecture, something like a master class at the State Center for Contemporary Art in Moscow and tell people how our project "*Democracy.Doc*" turned into the project called "*Fear*" and whether it reflected the trends in the life and moods of the society. Indeed, our work in Russia began with the project *Democracy.doc*, where we explored the feelings associated with the phenomenon of democracy in Russia, and ended up with the *Fear* project —exploration of fear and how we can help each other rather than facing those fears alone. I delivered that lecture, and it gave start to my other presentations, where I shared my experience of implementing the WW principles in the theater (see Appendix "List of Presentations"). I would very much like to make sure that more people learn about the WW and the methods and types of its use and that this work is very important and therapeutic for society, and theater is exactly the place where you can and should apply it. My diploma work is devoted to this.

On documentary theatre: *Teatr.doc* experience

Documentary theater or **verbatim** (from the Latin. *Verbatim* - *literally*) is a type of theatrical performance that gained popularity at the turn of the XX-XXI centuries. The performances of the verbatim theater entirely consist of real monologues or dialogues of ordinary people, pronounced by actors.

Theater.doc is a documentary theater whose performances are based on real stories - collected, recorded from the words of people or compiled on the from documents. *Theater.doc* emerged in 2001 in Moscow and covered events and topics that did not make its way into the media remaining in shadow. The performances are devoted to shadowy, marginal, "inconvenient" processes in the society, to something which is not very easy to talk about: HIV, prisons, elderly people, talk shows, Maidan, the Magnitsky case.

There is no scenery, no make-up, no costumes or curtain at the documentary theater, this is "a theater where no one plays".

Theatr.doc was founded at the time when state theater was infinitely far from real life both in Russia and the world. Its founders, Elena Anatolyevna Gremina, Mikhail Yuryevich Ugarov and their team, chose not to run away from reality, but began to hunt for it and create tools to throw a light onto the “alive”, real, today's life in the theater.

They walked the streets of Moscow, traveled through distant regions, interviewed people whom society would not listen to. And these people's stories, their words began to be voiced by the characters on the stage, and it made a significant impact on the development of the Russian theater. Thus new characters of the modern Russian theater emerged:

- elderly women on the streets who make money from collecting and selling thrown glass bottles;
- a city of Murmansk factory worker, who has not been paid for three months;
- an 18-year-old soldier who returned from the Chechen war without legs;
- gastarbeiters (migrants) who live in cardboard boxes on the street;
- women serving a prison sentence.

Teatr.doc cared for people who were ignored and oppressed by the state, and these people became the main characters of their performances.

Teatr.doc was persecuted by the authorities from day one: it has had to change its location for the fourth time by now. The theatre directors Mikhail Ugarov and Elena Gremina were under pressure, but did not give up. Elena Gremina was summoned to the FSB, who claimed that she was making “anti-people” theater.

Not so long ago, both Elena Gremina and Mikhail Ugarov passed away. They couldn't withstand this, fell ill and died ... passed away one after the other... Today, their students and followers, having gained courage, defend the theater and continue their work. It is hard, dangerous, scary, there is little support, but they do not retreat.

Due to the political and social reality in Russia it has become unsafe to speak about complex issues having to do with politics and authority figures. Therefore,

the mere existence of a documentary theater today very much feels like a constant struggle for survival and its very fate is in question.

The Worldwork is...

The Worldwork is one of the directions of *the process-oriented psychology*, which is dedicated to working with problems and conflicts in small and large groups, organizations and communities of any type to resolve problems and conflicts and expand the field of community experiences. The method allows to make use of unconscious, “dreamlike” processes, the level of sensations and pre-sensations, projections, rumors, and creative imagination.

Deep democracy is the principle underlying the Worldwork and community building, which takes into account all points of view and roles, as well as subtle feelings and trends. This principle gives place to what is said with caution, something no one can dare talk about (social, environmental, political, racial, spiritual problems).

The idea of Worldwork is taken from the process-oriented approach created in the 1970s by A. Mindell. A physicist by education, he came to the world of psychology and integrated old and new psychological directions. This work resulted in an integrated approach that has a wide range of possibilities: starting from work with people in coma and finishing with problems of cities and communities. Worldwork professes deep democracy, when it is important to give a voice to everyone and only when all voices are heard, it becomes possible to see the big picture and try to resolve the conflict or bring more awareness to the situation.

Research Project Democracy.doc

The birth of the project

In 2004, I began my acquaintance with the process-oriented approach. And today, I love this approach ardently and continue to learn from it. My colleague Arman Bekenov and I were so fascinated with the Worldwork that we simply had to test

the format in our city. We had a question where, in what place should we do it. We decided to take time and "dream" about it. And we found that the best place for us is the theater. As theater, in its ancient sense, is a place where people get together to sort out relationships with each other and the world.

At that time, in 2005, *Teatr.doc*'s director Georg Genoux and playwrights Ivan Ugarov and Nina Belenitskaya were working on creation of a documentary play, which was devoted to democracy, to how people feel and understand it. The performance was planned to be the story of about 15 years experience of the young Russian democracy. The director was interested in the period of the late 80s and early 90s of the XX century, when people seemed to be holding democracy in their hands, and then everything changed. It was a difficult, painful process, which took place against the background of the collapse of the Soviet Union, and was accompanied by two coup d'états of 1991 and 1993. Then there was a tectonic shift in Russia from the totalitarian Soviet regime to democracy, to a market economy, to parliamentarism. Part of the action was to take place at a psychotherapist's office, where they work with the feelings of people who have gone through those events.

The team was collecting materials with the help of *verbatim* method. The text of the play is cut out of real monologues and dialogues of ordinary people recorded in everyday situations, found on the Internet, overheard in the streets. The guys had done a great job before we joined them. They prepared questionnaires and collected a lot of interviews, but when the interviews were decoded, it turned out that the material lost its dimension, it was not sufficient to make up a play. Something was getting lost in deciphering. That's why they decided to call psychologists to use their techniques and skills to perform this task.

Thus they called us - psychologists Arman Bekenov and me: at the time we had just finished an introductory course to the basics of the process-oriented approach. We were invited to participate in creation of the *Democracy.doc* performance. They asked us to design some work format that would allow them to collect the necessary material.

We carried out two types of work: individual, based on geo-psychology, where we used vector exercises, and Worldwork.



All of this was recorded on camera. And after watching the eight-hour recording of work with a small group of ten people, our colleagues decided that they didn't want performance any more, but an action similar to what they had just seen. And it would be no longer verbatim, but *Life Verbatim*, an action that is born right in front of your eyes, and you are its direct creator. The roles of a playwright and a director change. Their main task now is to help the Worldwork become a theatrical format. Later I asked the production group what exactly attracted them when they were watching the recording. And one of the key words were *sincerity* and *involvement* of the participants. Also it appealed that the action was born in front of their eyes and there was a plot, roles, and a conflict in it. At that moment Georg was out of town. When he returned and watched just the video track with no sound, he was struck by people's faces, and the expression on their faces fascinated him. Georg said that he really liked everything, and wanted us to do exactly the same on stage.

We were faced with a challenge: how to make a theatrical project based on the format of psychological work, where the action will be new every time and will be born out of people's feelings. Where everyone can be an author, a performer, a spectator ...

In search of structure

Six months later, we managed to turn psychological work format into a theatrical performance format, the project that researched how people perceive democracy in Russia. For six months, we had been testing this format on our friends, relatives and everyone who was interested. As the basis we took the

structure of the Worldwork and its core idea: *every voice is very important for us*. It was also necessary to invent some techniques that could add intrigue, attractiveness, make the project "theatrical", and not something like a training, free debates or also popular in our country Bert Hellinger's Systemic Constellations.

The project structure

Roughly sketched, the project looks like this:

- Introduction and rules
- Immersion in feelings - meditation *Democracy in Russia and Russia Today*
- Election of the Storyteller via two round voting
- The Storyteller tells a Story. Picking of people for roles within the Story and their arrangement in the space
- Action, unfolding of the process, and the plot to detect a conflict and conflict facilitation
- We ask each participant of the action to briefly say what they feel now when the action is over.
- 2 hours 20 minutes passed - end of work

Getting acquainted and the rules

We tell audience about ourselves, that we are not actors and there will not be any actors here, that we are psychologists, and this is not a performance, but a research project, where we explore not how we *understand* democracy, but how we *feel* it in our everyday life, how it manifests itself in our everyday life and what feelings it causes. Both participants and spectators will have an opportunity to clarify their attitude towards powerful forces and figures with whom there is no direct contact in everyday life: *Power, President, Corruption, Poverty, Aggressors, Victims* etc.

“What will happen here will be born from the feelings of the people who have come here tonight. In order for this action to happen, it is important that everyone is involved. Since we believe that only by voicing the whole field and all the feelings we will be able to see the entire picture, every voice and any manifestation of feelings are very important for us. During the action, you will assume a role. You are going to put on a role at the beginning of the action and take it off at the end of the action”.

We warn participants that the action takes place in roles, and if someone is accused, insulted, etc., it is important to remember that this does not apply to oneself personally, but to her role.

We explain that as facilitators we will today guide this action, we will help to make this process easier and clearer. The process will last 2 hours and 20 minutes and then it will finish. There will not be customary performance end or catharsis, it is an action with an open finale.

We say:

“If you want to do something extraordinary in the course of the action, please let us know. And if you are overwhelmed by strong anger, we ask you not to use force, but tell us, and we will help you find a form to express it without crippling yourself or others”.

“If what you have just heard is not what you expected and you do not want to take part in it, you can leave now and we will refund your ticket. And most importantly, if someone gets into the field of very strong feelings and emotions, we will definitely stay beyond the end of the action and will not leave until you feel that everything is alright”.

Meditation

We suggest people close their eyes and feel the way they are sitting, notice how they are breathing, what they are feeling:

“Open yourselves to all the feelings, images, senses, stories that arise when we spell *Democracy in Russia or Russia today*.”

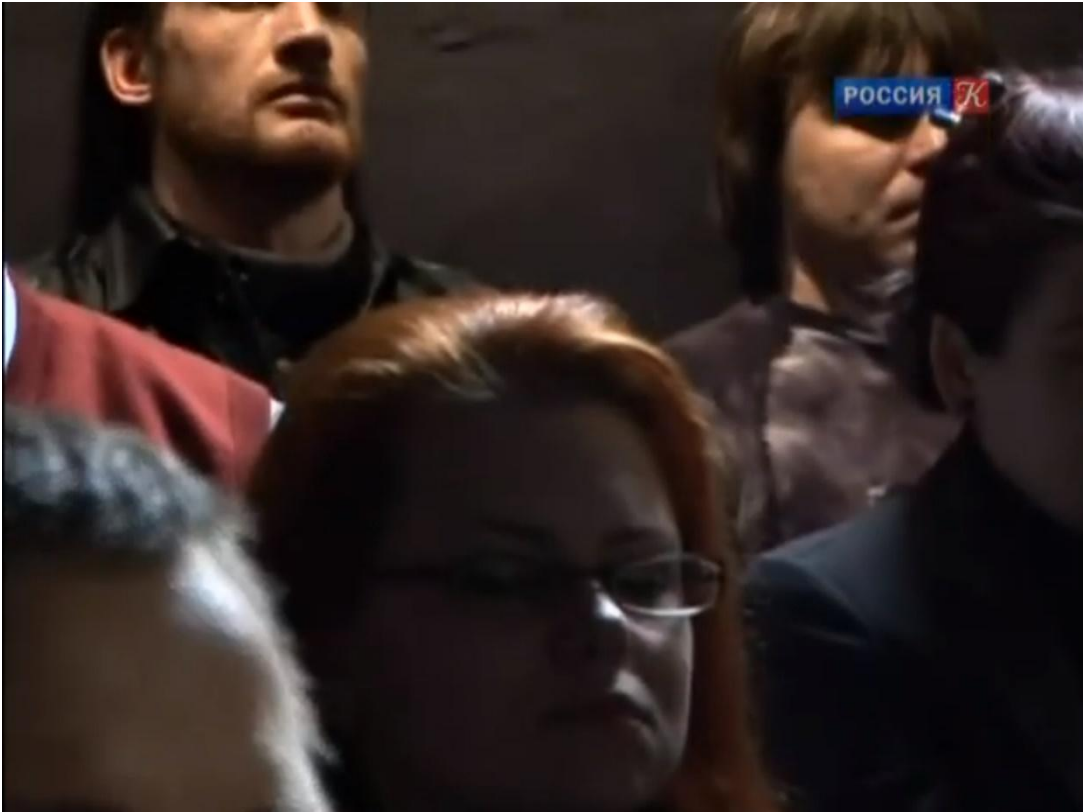


Photo. Meditation. Snapshot from a TV documentary dedicated to Theater.doc

Staying in contact with what you have received, try to name it very succinctly. Express it literally in a few words or a phrase that will capture it. Take a few minutes and open your eyes, then we will understand that you are ready”.

Election of the Storyteller

"We are going to ask everyone about your feelings and sensations. All the rest please listen to what will be said and select the statement or person who speaks to you most".

And we ask everyone, voicing the whole field. When all the voices are heard, we ask everyone what statement has struck a chord in them and with what statement or person they, so to speak, would stay, whom they will choose. Thus we choose leaders, people whose statements are the most popular.

Then we invite them to the stage. Usually it's 2 or 3, maximum 5 people. This moment is called "elections". We inform people in the auditorium that we need to choose one person and one topic through which today's story will unfold itself.

We ask each candidate for the role of the Storyteller to feel themselves at the moment and say just one word out of those feelings: word “I”. From the feelings.

“And you all will listen and choose the one who is more appealing to you. If you find it difficult to choose by how they said “I”, you can come up to them and feel what you are experiencing next to this or that person and make your choice by touching the person’s shoulder, and we will record and count the results and, when everyone votes, we will find out who the leader is”.

The Storyteller tells his/her story

Further, we thank all those who participated in the elections, and only one person remains on the stage. We ask how he or she feels, give him or her our support and ask to tell us a little more about their statement, about how he or she feels democracy in the country and what figures and roles he or she sees in their plot. The Storyteller gives some details on the story and voices the roles. We ask him or her to choose people from the audience for these roles and arrange them in space.

We thank the Storyteller and warn him or her that the plot and characters are from now on shared with everybody, and most likely the action will unfold itself in a different from the expected by him or her direction.

On the roles

More often than not, we used a theatrical format in which the person, who has been chosen by the majority of the audience, chooses the roles. And those roles were always different. In case the format was non-theatrical, the theme was firstly chosen by the audience, and the roles and polarities were chosen by the facilitators following the umbrella principle. The way we would call the roles and their message was pre-discussed with the audience. And, as a rule, those roles were also different. Please find examples of roles in theatrical and non-theatrical format below.

Roles from the theater format:

October 06, 2006 Moscow

Initial roles: a Neat Man from the Boulevard, a Taxi Driver, Social Ghetto, Ethnic Ghetto, Bottom

Roles, added in the course of the action: a Woman loved by a Neat Man from the Boulevard, Wife of a Neat man, Criminal world, a Psychoanalyst/President

September 15, 2007 Petrozavodsk

Initial roles: a Man of Action ("flies in a balloon, ready to do something"), a Guard ("with a Berdan rifle, an ear-flaps hat, a bottle under the table; responsive"), a Human Being (no gender, everything is cardboard in him/her) a Thief ("comes, takes something away and leaves"), Luck ("something that accidentally falls on the head")

Roles, added in the course of the action: Future

March 17, 2018 Moscow (the day of Presidential elections in Russia)

Initial roles: Power-Hybrid ("we are here forever, until we die, and we will grow sideways and absorb you as cancer does"), People-nation ("passive people, live badly, they are those who are being absorbed by the Power-Hybrid. They feel worse and worse, but they are passive and their passivity supports the power"), Changes

Roles, added in the course of the action: He who made it all up/ Something godlike; He who fiercely protests; Freedom; Movement; Game; Choice; Involvement; Action; Soul of the Hybrid; an Active role, which does not know how to call itself, Death, Child.

Examples of roles from the non-theatrical format:

May 11, 2012 Moscow

Initial roles: an Optimist ("somebody, who believes that changes in the country and life are possible, something can be changed and, despite the threat and risks, is ready to try to implement those changes", "Let sprouts grow"), a Pessimist ("I live and work here as long as it suits me, but the minute something starts to threaten me or my family, I will immediately leave or hide. I am not going to risk myself. In this group there are people who are satisfied with what is happening in

the country and if their interests are infringed greatly, they perceive it as the norm”)

Roles, added in the course of the action: Doom, Russian Roulette, Repressions, a Child, a Sprout, Somebody who opposes himself to what is happening on stage and does not understand what is going on, an Independent Individual (somebody who does not share anything), a New Leader

Action

Thus, number of roles (usually around five-ten) find themselves on the stage and begin to interact with each other. We also tell the audience that we all will now help the roles to voice their positions, and we all can participate: “Notice roles that are close to you, go out to voice them, and also explore those roles whose position is remote to you. And if you feel that you are not represented, go out and say who you are”.

We suggest that people in roles take a step forward and name their role, and thus put it on and at the end of the action get out of it. Now a step forward: “I am the People”, and at the end a step back, “I am Elena”.

We begin to unfold the process with asking people about their physical and emotional state at the moment. We suggest listening to feelings and physical sensations as they enter a role: “Do you feel a rise or a drop in energy? Do you have a sensation of strength or weakness? With which of the roles do you have contact? Do you feel any connection with other figures in the field: with whom more, with whom less? ”

And this is the way we understand more about these roles, and they start to interact and some story develops. We make the existing field visible, people begin to notice what is happening to them, some action unfolds itself, and the whole audience takes part in it. Sometimes all the audience find themselves on the stage, and there are no “observers”, sometimes someone remains purely in the role of spectators. But there are always active participants who enter roles, and there are always those who are quiet and inconspicuous, and our task is to help them to manifest their voice and make sure that this voice is heard by everyone.

We as facilitators are on the stage to help the action unfold, formulate the messages of the roles to each other more capaciously, track “*hot*” and “*cold spots*”¹, draw to them the audience’s attention, voice all the voices in the space several times during the action, notice and name “*ghosts roles*”. And in the course of the action we several times address those who remained silent, did not join any of the roles or did not go into the role him/herself and ask what he/she feels and what he/she wants to bring into this action.

Roles voice themselves

The action is going on, the plot is unfolding itself. Ten minutes prior the end of the action, we inform the participants of the impending completion and ask the roles to succinctly articulate their point of view and take the best and most suitable for them position in space. We also ask all the participants of the action about their feelings and the final message from their role. For example, in one of the projects a participant who has joined the People’s figure feels discontent, pain and indignation toward the Power figure and chooses to remain with the People’s figure, while another participant who joined the People also feels displeasure with the Power but chooses to join the Change figure.

¹ Please see Glossary at the end of the document



Photo. Action is going on

We say that this is the end of the action; we offer the participants to stop for a while and, before leaving the role, try to remember what is important to keep in your memory about this action. We give it a short time, usually about a minute.

Then we announce the end of the action and offer everyone who is in the roles to get out of them by taking a step forward and naming themselves. Thus, a participant leaves everything difficult, unpleasant and intolerable, associated with his or her role, such as Power, People, Poverty on the stage, and does not take it home.

A non-theatrical format

There also exists one more format to conduct *Democracy.doc*.

This format is less “theatrical”: the Storyteller is not elected. We use alternative format when there are a lot of people in the audience and it is impossible to practice a standard format, as it would take more than 2 hours and 20 minutes. We also use a “non-theatrical” format when the action is interpreted into another language.

There we also start with a meditation, ask the audience what “democracy in Russia” is for them and choose, together with the audience, the topic that resonates most with all those present, combining the statements of this particular group of people. We call this topic an *umbrella topic*.

Further along with the audience, we look at the roles in this umbrella topic, and, as facilitators, start to voice these roles, revealing the differences between the positions and a possible conflict between the roles.

We invite people from the audience to continue, to support the dialogue of these roles. Further, the action develops as in the "theatrical" format.

This format allows you to save about 30-40 minutes of action.

Sometimes it so happens that the work does not entirely follow the fixed structure, and partly changes in accordance with the circumstances. For example, at the IAPOP conference in Dublin, the Storyteller got into such strong feelings that he was not ready to tell his story, but chose not to leave the stage. I as the facilitator, and the audience, decided to follow the Storyteller and his process. We decided that the state and feelings of the Storyteller were an important part of the group process and we moved away from the standard structure.

Comparison of Democracy.doc and Worldwork structure

A comparative table of the Worldwork and Democracy.doc project structures.

| | <i>Worldwork</i> | <i>Democracy.doc</i> |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Selection of the topic | The topic may be offered or is discussed by the audience until everyone is for it. The topic is an umbrella topic, as it may include many other topics. | The topic is determined by a meditation on some particular topic, for example, “Democracy in Russia”, “Russia Today”, “Switzerland Today”, “Democracy in Your Country”. |
| The Storyteller | | People share feelings, dream reality sensations. Then those |

Elena Margo. Worldwork in the Theatre

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| election | | whose statements scored the most votes are invited on the stage. And the Storyteller is chosen from those people by means of getting to know him or her better and voting. |
| Roles | Usually two polar roles. The topic already allows for some roles. The facilitators help to name and voice them, then people from the audience go into these roles, voice them, research them, and try themselves in different roles. | Unlimited number of roles, usually 3-5. The Storyteller names the roles he or she sees in this topic. |
| The starting point | | At first, the roles interact with each other without audience participation. |
| Action | Roles interact. The rest of the audience joins them little by little; people come out taking different roles. Interaction. A conflict manifests itself. It unfolds itself. <i>Phase 1, Phase 2, Phase 3, Phase 4.</i> | |
| Conflict | It may reveal itself very quickly and vividly | It does not always reveal itself very quickly. It is necessary to notice, monitor, manifest - the work of facilitators. |
| Storyline | No | Is there, unfolding itself during the action |
| Participants | Most are more or less prepared audience. They know or practice Worldwork. Come to actively participate in the | Ordinary citizens come to the event in the "spectator", i.e. passive position |

| | | |
|-------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| | action. However some participants are new to the Worldwork. | |
| Levels of reality | The action takes place on all levels of reality. | Mostly dream reality level is there |

The Democracy.doc project statistics

In the period from 2006 to 2014, we conducted the Democracy.doc project more than 30 times in Russia (Moscow, Mytishchi, Petrozavodsk, Norilsk, Krasnoyarsk, Perm) and in Switzerland (Khurt and Basel). The participants were ordinary people, townspeople.



In 2012, we participated in the Pilorama International Civic and Cultural Forum. It took place on the site of the last camp for GULAG (system of forced labor camps established during Joseph Stalin's rule) political prisoners "Perm-36", now this camp is a museum of political repression.

Process-oriented psychologists got acquainted with the project on March 17, 2018 in Moscow and in April 2018 in Dublin, at the IAPOP Conference.

On average, there were from 20 to 60 people in the audience.

Observations on the project Democracy.doc

How curious and surprising it is that we, fascinated by deep democracy and dreaming of making WW in the theater, were almost immediately invited to the documentary theater to work on a play about democracy in Russia. In my opinion, this is a surprisingly fast synchronization. After that, we agreed not to get surprised and to even more trust the process and learn from it.

In this chapter, I tried to collect important and sometimes elusive things that happened in all or several works. These observations summarize my 12-year-experience of project facilitation.

The principle of deep democracy

Based on the principles of deep democracy, at the beginning of each performance, we told participants that our project was designed in such a way that every vote mattered for us, and we welcomed diversity. In a country where the value of human life is devalued, and the voice means almost nothing, this is a very strong statement, because historically it turned out that for the most part people in Russia do not believe that their voice is important.

For me personally it was important to interact with each person so that he or she could feel that they are important and unique. And to support the voice of the minority, i.e. those who are ousted, hurt, who are not heard. These are people who are ill and cannot lead a full life, people with addictions, elderly people, abandoned children, sexual minorities, people who are oppressed because of their nationality. We were trying to create a format in such a way that people felt equal opportunities.

There are people who are able to express their thoughts and are able to reason deeply, there are less rational or less educated people. We deliberately did not set difficult intellectual tasks, so that everyone present could easily cope and express their thoughts and emotions regardless of age, level of education, and communication skills.

Interest to the project

The *Democracy.doc* project always enjoyed interest, lots of people came to the performances. There were those who came two or three times, at first they watched, and then actively participated.

There were those who participated in our project, and then tried to organize similar projects in other places. They did not succeed, because at the end they got something that looked more like debates or talk shows. Maybe it happened so, because from the outside, it seemed that we, facilitators, were not doing anything, that everything happened by itself and so it can be done by everyone. However, there were those who said that such interactive forms are the future of modern theater. Now, when more than twelve years have passed, the number of theaters using direct communication with the audience has increased, and many interactive theater projects have appeared.

People's feelings are one and the only playwright

But up until now the unique and brand-new point of our project is that the action is born from the feelings of people, while the script is minimal, not interfering with spontaneity of what is happening. Speaking in terms of process-oriented psychology, we invite people into a dream-like reality. People bring their feelings into the joint field, some picture reveals itself, and the plot of this picture is recognizable by those present. It is associated with consensus reality, but it is much more multidimensional.

Safety of participants

When we were inventing the project, the issue of safety and respect for the feelings of the participants was in the first place. Twelve years ago, offering people who came to the theater to close their eyes and feel their body, and how they breathed, to share sensations and feelings with the rest of the audience, was quite an extreme undertaking. However, we believed in what we were doing so passionately, that we succeeded.

To maintain safety, we used roles, entered them at the beginning and left them at the end of the action.

We made sure that if a participant, being in some role, brings in his or her personal experience, we did not answer them from the role, but from ourselves, from our own experience and feelings.

Connection with the history of the place

As we used roles and dreaming and sensual reality, an interesting thing seemed to have happened. As soon as people entered this or that role, they had no inhibitions to voice it and clearly understood where geographically this role should be located, with respect to other roles.

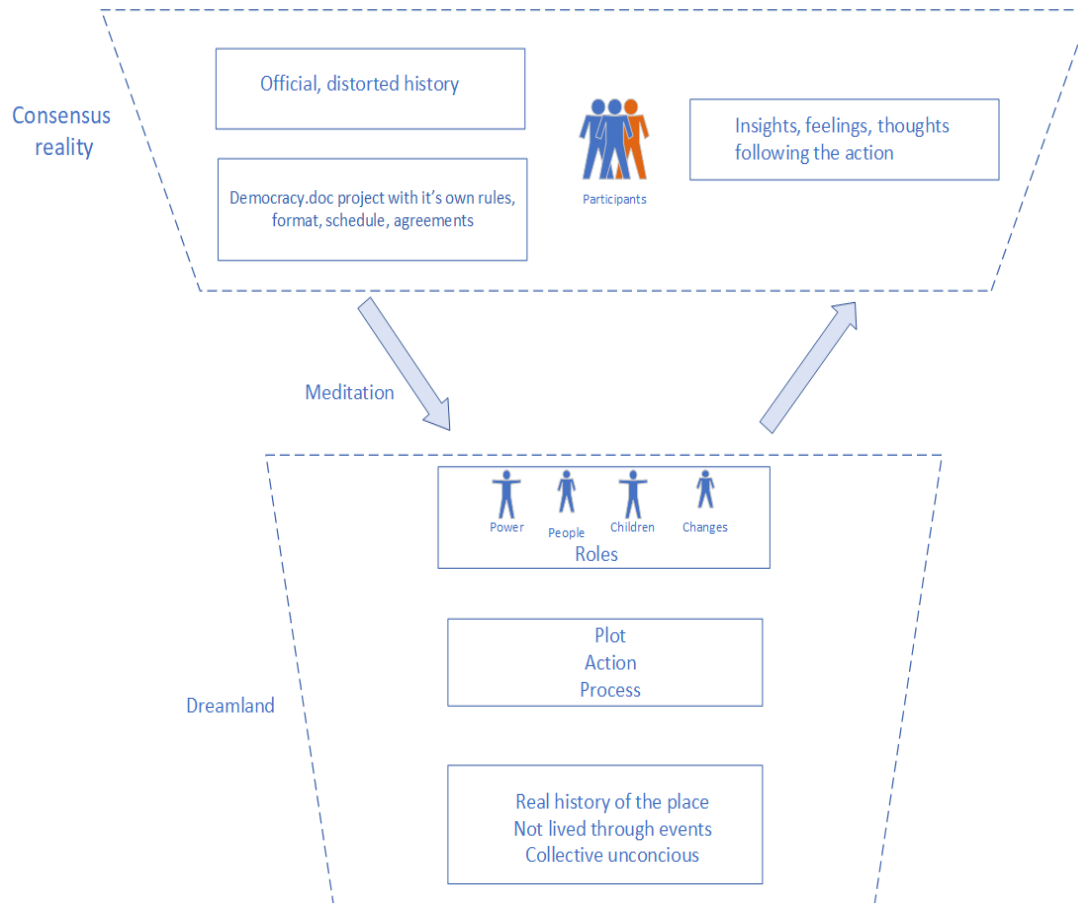
I observed a similar effect in Bert Hellinger's Systemic Constellations and other psychological approaches, which are based on the phenomenon of representative perception. A person who has entered someone's role can reproduce, feel, voice what the represented person felt, and it does not matter whether he or she is alive or died a long time ago. There is also an idea that repressed, frozen feelings of the past, as well as people excluded from history, influence the present in such a way, that history repeats itself. Destinies of the once excluded are repeated. They need to be given a place, they need to relive the stories that require reflection and acceptance.

During the project both participants and we, facilitators, observed our relation to our history. We observed how roles and figures from the past are here in our present and in our feelings. Participants, leasing themselves to the process, work with difficult moments of our history, where there are strong feelings and where there was not enough time to comprehend what was happening.

Our project referred not to ideas or thoughts, but to people's feelings, to the collective unconscious, and we opened the doors to the past, to what happened long ago, but for various reasons, turned out to be traumatic and has not become meaningful. It is something stuck, shocking, but not permitted, not lived through in the society.

Project participants provide an opportunity to live out and transform this experience. And in each and every work through different groups of people different plots of difficult historical periods reveal themselves.

In terms of process-oriented psychology, it can be expressed as:



From the past into the present

As a rule, in the process of action, everybody started to recognize some historical context. In such moment people would say: "So this is such-and-such events in our country, well, everything is just like in real life". Even if the roles were very abstract like fairy tales characters or just colors (the role of red, green, blue). When they began to express their thoughts and positions regarding other roles, quite often real-life period and context could be read.

We also noticed an important trend: the more often we carried out our project, the less abstract the names of the proposed roles were. Moreover, with each

work, the plot more and more resembled nowadays, instead of looking into the past. Thus, in the first works, people recognized the nineties, and each subsequent work brought us closer to now.

In the works of 2013, when there was a peak of protest rallies in Russia, people came to the project and their roles coincided with the roles of those involved in the ongoing conflict. And some people said that it was very important to do this work on the stage and that there was a chance to see how events would develop and whether blood would be shed. And when some of the participants who were in the role of the People went out of action and left the stage, it was commented as “they emigrated”. Thus, it was possible to observe how events would develop.

The importance of conflict

We wanted people to be less analytical, listen more to their feelings and sensations and succinctly convey the message to the roles. This allowed the action to unfold more rapidly and at some point the audience started to recognize something similar to what was happening in life.

Then a conflict always revealed itself, and our task was to make it clearer, amplify it, otherwise the action would have become cyclical.

Awareness tool

Stuckness and cyclical moments were always there. I cannot recall a single simple work. And we, facilitators, and participants always left the space a little stunned by what we had seen and lived through. My colleagues and I agree that *Democracy.doc* is a complex product and it takes time to digest it. And this is hard for both the facilitators and those who participate.

The action allows you to feel the whole picture, to feel, but it does not always automatically mean to understand, name or be able to describe. There were people who participated in the project several times. They just needed to feel and comprehend their role and their attitude to the past and present of their country. What disturbs them in society, which problems worry them most; with which part of society they identify themselves, and with which part they do not identify

themselves at all. Moreover, during the action, they could be in all these roles and achieve more awareness. Such an action makes a lot of sense and allows you to see the situation from a different perspective.

The role of facilitators

After the premiere, we conducted *Democracy.doc* every weekend for two months in a row. Now, when I understand more about this experience, I would not have agreed to do it. Even now, after so many years of practice, it takes me a lot of time to recover after each work. Every time I hope that I will develop some kind of immunity and it will get easier, but it does not happen.

If we talk about us as facilitators, then we can confidently say that our teacher was the process. At the time, there were no teachers (in our reality) who could share the experience of conducting a WW, especially in the theater. Our main meta-skills are openness to everything that wants to manifest itself, audacity to try new things and go into the unknown, learning from the process. Every time you step on the stage, you do not know what will happen, who will come, which plot will want to unfold itself and how. Stepping onto the stage is a step into the unknown, and it is important to let everything that wants to be manifested and named be manifested and named.

The dream level facilitation

Without even knowing it, we managed to create an action that unfolded itself on the dream level. Such facilitation had its own peculiar features: you had to go a little crazy, become somebody who muted their everyday mind. And do it in public. You had to trust what was there to happen and believe that the action that was going to take place and unfold itself through abstract roles has to do with the stated topic, and through that action a new vision and message for the group would come.

“This is absurd”, “Theater of the Absurd” could often be heard from the audience. But we kept up believing and did not stop, and this faith helped the audience to go beyond the edge and share the common plot of dream reality.

Before each work I fell into a specific state of mind. I felt facilitation as my mission. It was important for me to be honest, open and not doubting the significance of what I was doing. Not to betray your values, what you believe in, even when it is scary, when you are accused, when people make unpleasant remarks, etc. In the end, it allowed us not to freeze, not to be stuck, but to continue facilitation. At these moments of connection with my mission I was more than I. And I felt less vulnerable.

Being in this state, it was not at all difficult to feel your partner-facilitator. Perhaps it happened so because we shared common values. We were on the same wavelength. Over the years, we have never had any conflict having to do facilitation. Arman always started, he very clearly explained what was going to happen and how, kept focusing on the structure during the process, and that allowed me to dive deeper into the dream level and bring in my observations. In other words, we were very complementary.

Facilitating a process on the dream level resembles facilitating of a group sleep. And there is a place for magic here. There have been works in which you clearly felt that someone facilitates through you. You cannot say that it is yours or say that you do it. It happens through you, you just have to be attentive, feeling and open, and you have no clue how to invite this magic again. This will either happen or not. You need cordiality, courage and openness for this to happen. Magic is there when you can feel that connection of everything in the world. Connection of people in the audience, in the country, in the world. Connection of the past, present and future. It is like living several lives in a short time and realizing something that was previously escaping your attention. It is very difficult to convey this state or experience in words. If magic occurred, it was impossible not to notice. It was everybody’s feeling. It changed the atmosphere. In such works there was a feeling of completeness and clarity. Everyone experienced it in his or her own way. My sensations tell me that at such moments we touched the essential level of reality.

Democracy.doc as a society diagnostic tool

At some point during the action there always appeared people who were not satisfied with how the plot was developing: too slowly, boring or it simply made them mad. In such cases, we would say, “As facilitators, we only help the action unfold. If something does not suit you, or causes such strong feelings, you can go out on stage and try to change something”.

Participants from the audience said they wanted to change what was happening on the stage. They felt a lot of energy to go into the role and change the plot. We supported their momentum and offered to find their place on the stage. We often observed how people, having stepped on the stage, ceased to feel that emotional and energetic charge. They themselves were very surprised by such a difference in feelings between the off- and on- stage, and the fact that the state also changes very quickly at this or that point on the stage. When a strong impulse from the audience could not be realized on the stage, we said that a certain tendency appeared in society, but it had not yet manifested itself, perhaps there were no conditions for this to happen in reality and accordingly on the stage.

The more performances we facilitated, the more actively the participants behaved. There were more and more of those who were willing to make changes to the action. Fewer people returned to their off-stage seats, losing their impulse. In addition, we noticed that very often the role of those who will make changes, negotiate, roles of deal-makers, were delegated to the youngest participants of the project, to teenagers.

For me, *Democracy.doc* was a kind of measuring device that revealed what society was concerned about, a project that showed new trends that are emerging in the society. It showed their development, what people felt and what they feared in this regard. It would not be much of an exaggeration to claim that *Democracy.doc* is a tool for social diagnostics.

Follow-up projects

Our attempt to introduce the principles of the process-oriented approach and Worldwork into the documentary theater, turned into creation of many projects at the junction of theater and psychology, as well as creation of a new theater platform - the Joseph Beuys Theatre.

Project *Democracy.doc* set a direction for our subsequent creativity. We devoted our subsequent projects to what we had managed to notice in the project *Democracy.doc*.

For example, we set up a *Society of Artists Anonymous* to help people believe in their uniqueness and the importance of their voice. The main idea of the project was: "Every person is an artist".

Connection with the history of the place is reflected in the projects and performances, which were aimed at understanding the history, and dedicated to relationship between the past and the present. The projects covered traumatic periods of the past: war, genocide, suppression of historical facts and their distortion by the ruling regime.

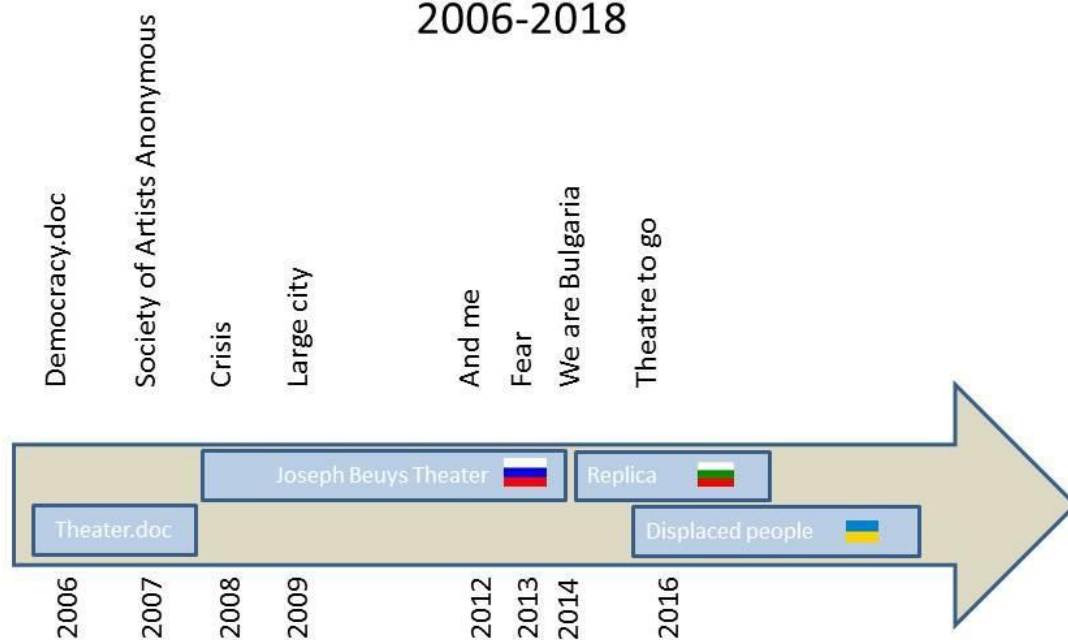
The *Drama of Memory* project was created jointly with the Memorial Society, an organization which investigates political repressions in the USSR and collects archives of that time. The main idea of the project is *theater as a place of reflection*, and on the stage a reflection exercise of that terrible experience and interdisciplinary discussions take place.

There were also projects devoted to national conflicts and problems of disunity of people living in a big city: *Big City*, *Working with the World*. *The Nationality Problem*.

In the period from 2011 to 2014 the situation in the country was changing. The civil movement was suppressed, there were mass detentions of the "dissenters", our society began to plunge into apathy, and fear grew. The last two projects were devoted to working with these feelings: the projects *And Me* and *Fear*. These projects were devoted to how people can heal each other not staying alone with their fear. The feeling of fear changes and can decrease if you share it with others. These projects allow us not to escape into inner emigration, but to remain social and live our feelings not only within ourselves, but also out, within a community.

Theatre Projects

2006-2018



2008-2014: the Joseph Beuys Theatre

In 2008, Georg Genoux created an independent theatrical project called the Joseph Beuys Theater, where we based our further projects.

The Joseph Beuys Theater is a place where everyone, regardless of nationality, education, etc., can apply with an idea or personal life crisis and based on this create a theatrical project that will help them overcome difficulties and see new life perspectives.

This is a place where there are no actors on the stage telling memorized texts or copying reality. Out of people's feelings, the world is born right before our eyes, and there is a place for everything that it wants to be voiced. People are spectators, directors, actors and characters at one and the same time.

The theater took part in many national and international festivals, was nominated for *Golden Mask*, the main theatrical award in Russia, in nomination as "The Best Theater Experiments of the Year". In 2012, our team, together with the Hebbel

Theater in Berlin, created the project *Crisis* as part of the 7th Berlin Biennale of Contemporary Art.

2014-2017: distant projects with Georg Genoux

In 2012, Russia adopted a law on foreign agents, which tightened and restricted the work of international non-profit organizations and foundations in Russia, which caused difficulties in theatrical projects funding. In 2014, Georg Genoux closed the Beuys Theater and was forced to leave the country. From that moment on, active and conscious development of process-oriented theatrical projects in Russia stopped.

Before leaving, he suggested me to give a lecture and a master class on how *Democracy has turned into Fear*. This is how rethinking of what has happened started.

After leaving Russia Georg moved to Bulgaria, and we remotely worked on an interactive performance on ranks and privileges in the country. Later this performance was shown at the *Newdrama* festival in Sofia.

Having worked several years in Bulgaria, he moved to Ukraine, to the places where hostilities were taking place. He continued practicing WW through theatrical projects: he created a theater in Kiev, the *Migrant Theater*, for people who were forced to move there because of the hostilities on their land. People had to give up everything, saving their lives and the lives of their loved ones. The theater gave place to real first-hand stories about this tragedy.

A person who appeared on the stage could become a character of a theatrical action, and stop being a victim of terrible circumstances and political games. After such performances, life of these people often changed. The spectators offered their help with housing, work, some other help. It will require another diploma work to describe all Georg's projects and the scale of his and his team's work in Ukraine. And it is important to note that Georg continued to work with Ukrainian military psychologists. Psychologists have become an integral and important part of the documentary theater team.

Now Georg works in Germany and continues to produce projects on the theater platform in Kiev. We continue our interaction.

Influence of the Worldwork on the documentary theatre

Documentary theater in itself is an innovative and avant-garde achievement of the end of the 20th the beginning of the 21st century and it is radically different from traditional theater. Let us see how the Worldwork influenced the format of the documentary theater productions:

| Repertory theatre | Documentary theatre | Interactive theatrical projects (WW) |
|--|--|--|
| Actors, a director, a screenwriter, makeup, an orchestra, spectators, scenery, a stage, a curtain. Plays written long ago. | Actors, a director, a screenwriter, spectators. | Spectators, facilitators (psychologists). A director, a screenwriter-in a new role (part of the team) |
| An imaginative work created by a professional playwright. | A play is based on real people stenography. Themes are usually provoking, “socially inconvenient”. | The story and the plot are born from the feelings of the spectators. There may be any theme. |

Table. Theatre evolution: from repertory to interactive

As a result of practicing Worldwork in the theater, we got a completely different genre of theater. It might be called *Interactive Theater*. However, in fact, we have not given any name to this direction, and when I talk about this experience, I call it *Worldwork in the Theater*. The power and strength of the Worldwork was in demand in the theater. It turned out that through a theatrical format WW can influence social processes, help people realize their role in the society, recognize and resolve conflicts, better understand their place in the history of their country.

Since people understand and love theater as a form of art, they enjoy going to the theater, it seems to be an easy and affordable way to get acquainted with the format of Worldwork and participate in it. The entry threshold into the Worldwork through theatrical format for ordinary people is much lower than in the traditional Worldwork organized by the psychological community. Thus, our

project implicitly served for popularization of the Worldwork ideas in several countries.

Interactive theater is a place where people can look at themselves from the outside, notice what they feel and understand their attitude to the hot points that accompany our daily life. We do not have enough time or place to live them through, being not alone or inside our family, but in wider community. It's because to reflect on our feelings related to public life has become difficult, unsafe, and we are too busy to do it.

While our projects every time reveal on the scene powerful conflicts, which clearly reflect some tension in the society. In a world where many hot topics are hushed up and sometimes ignored, our theater projects perform an entirely new task: to show all the voices of the society, and especially those that are usually not audible and remain in the shadows.

In conclusion, I would like to cite several quotes from articles and speeches of people closely connected with the project.

“Project *Democracy.doc* is a vivid example of a modern theater which “has gone to all lengths” in its striving to initiate and unleash creative potential of the spectators: Not just involve them into some experience, but into shaping the action on the stage. The *Democracy.doc* project is a form of a cultural action that is not just an innovation, but a meaningful cultural and political action. The authors of the performance managed, first and above all, to create an original form of the action. An action, which allows spectators to turn from passive objects in front of the screen (most often television ones) into tribunes, leaders, figures, and publicists. Summing up the theatrical experiment, we begin to understand why in our country, where there are lots of educated, creative, strong and intelligent people, an authoritarian management style ultimately wins. In order to find an answer to these and other questions, one must turn not only to political or economic systems. Just like a human being bears in himself all the diversity of the world, so does a stage action; arranged according to the principles of freedom and self-expression, it models and manifests global processes taking place in the country today. An important result of the project is that there appeared more people who started thinking about their future, the future of the

country and problems that they being its citizens have to solve” **Elena Zelentsova**, *the Democracy.doc Regional Supervisor*.

“I participated in four *Democracy.doc* performances. At the first performance I only watched, though with curiosity; at the second I took part in the final demarche of part of the public who came on stage to join hands with the Roles; at the third one I was chosen for the Role, and I performed it rather diligently; at the fourth - I joined the role that interested me. The last experiment helped me to feel and ponder how some power manipulations occur in the spiritual space. To become a “professional player” in *Democracy.doc* is hardly a good idea, but I have a feeling that some of the possibilities of this platform have not been revealed to me yet” **Nikolai Gladkikh**, *candidate of Philological Sciences, human rights organization Memorial staff member*.

“Yes, when people take responsibility for what is happening on the stage – I call it democracy. When at the third performance a man in the role of the Dictator took all the power into his own hands and had many sympathizers at the same time, one Moscow businessman said: “Stop! I won't let you do this to me!” And the rest of the public supported him, and he turned the tide of the action. Yes, there is another situation when the action comes to a standstill and there is no real effort to break it. This reflects a dead end in a country, no one knows how to get out of it and the worst - no longer wants to get out. As if everyone has fallen into a kind of hole, and they do not want to get out of it, they just scream "do not touch us!" in that hole” **Georg Genoux**, *the Project Director*.

“The main advantage of *Democracy.doc* is that it is a constantly changing living matter. It seems to me that thanks to our experiments, a rather peculiar way of interacting with the spectator was born. Recently, I have seen several theater projects that are trying to walk this path. It means we were right. *Democracy.doc* taught me to see and understand what is happening today in our country, and to hear the “opposite” side, that is, those with whose opinion I completely disagree” **Nina Belenitskaya**, *Playwright, Member of the core team*.

“*Democracy.doc* provides a unique opportunity in this confined, protected space to sort out relationships with any figures, phenomena, processes of the social field. In this format, you can go deep and try to solve your problems and conflicts

associated with this field. And that's where the great social value of our project lies" **Arman Bekenov**, *A process-oriented psychologist, Project Facilitator*.

"And psychologists offer the spectators to join one of the established parties - and most of the audience join Bourgeoisie, a little less - President, just as many join the Homeless-anarchist (and the director of the Goethe Institute is among them). And those who remain in their seats say that it is their right not join anyone. This is democracy as it is. And the main feeling that comes later, next morning, is that the world was created right before your eyes and anew. And that yesterday there was an opportunity to fix something out there" **Elena Kovalskaya**, *Specialist in drama study, Theater critic*.

"*Democracy.doc* is a very unusual performance where there are no actors at all, but the audience with two psychologists play. They meditate on what democracy is. The results are fantastic. It's just that you don't need to write any scientific papers, you see everything clearly, at what stage of democracy we are, and what awaits us at all" **Anna Kolchina**, *Philologist, Moscow State University, Faculty member of the Journalism faculty*.

Addendum. Example of one performance in the theatrical format

What people say after a meditation:

Democracy in Russia is:

the bell tolls; Democracy is me; Treasure, power, unbearable load; Anxiety; Illusion; Obnoxious; I did not subscribe to it; Hopelessness; Smell of sweat; Democracy under control; Abroad - the topic.

Two statements received the majority of the votes: "Democracy in Russia is an illusion" and "Democracy is under control".

We invited the authors of those statements to the stage and the audience almost unanimously voted for the author of "Democracy in Russia is an illusion" statement. He said that democracy in Russia for him is like this: "There is no rotation in power; there are no concentration camps, but there is a feeling that there are. State control and detention of people who do not please the

authorities. There is no one who understands how to build democracy, and whether it exists at all, maybe it is just another illusion”.

He named the following roles:

- Power-Hybrid: We are here forever, until we die, and we will grow in all directions and absorb you as cancer does”;
- People-Nation: Passive people, live badly, they are those who are being absorbed by the Power-Hybrid. They feel worse and worse, but they are passive and their passivity supports the power.
- Changes

Further, the Hybrid chose people from the audience for those roles.

Interaction between the roles started.

He said that he felt as if he was hungover. He used foul language, said he wanted to have the People in all meanings of the word, and when he uses and abuses it, he gets better. And the People attracts him a lot. “I have the People, I use and abuse it and I serve it - a complicated relationship. And I also have the Changes in a way. To stay here, I need to change, but I do not know how. They offer me a means for staying where I am. I feel nauseous and hopeless. I fear, but I don’t know what I’m afraid of, it’s definitely not the People or the Changes. Nothing of the kind can be found here. Everything is bad”.

Changes says, “It is important for me to keep a close eye on the Hybrid and People. When People stepped away and sat down, I felt calmer inside, it seemed to me that it was safer for it. What the Hybrid said was offensive to me and I wanted to influence him, awaken him, pour icy water on him, but I realized that I did not have anything that could affect him. There is nothing human in him, nothing can permeate him. I want to shout obscenities in return and beat him. I want to attract a force that I don’t possess. There is only one way out - to hold him at gunpoint”.

The Hybrid replied that he was actually very human, comes and shits at everyone. People said that there is some part in it that wants to speak up, but there is another part that wants to hide away. It pulls People in different directions and there is a feeling that Change and Power are not related to People. People says, “I want to crawl away to see both Power and Changes and then I feel better”.

Changes tells People, "This is not a show to watch it, this is your life. Your life depends on your actions. How can I make you my ally?" The Hybrid becomes even more impudent, Changes is in despair and does not understand what to do. People says that it does not care who is in power.

The audience starts to be connected to the action.

The role of Normal Man appears. He is enraged with what is happening, "I have a lot of resources and privileges (three citizenships, 3 languages, and a lot of money) I don't care who is in power. I build my city, "my state". What is happening is anti-democracy. I feel deceived as a participant. I thought that we would be free to choose the topic of today's work, and here is this "Democracy.doc"!

I, as a facilitator, said that it was a charge against me and I was ready to discuss it after the action. And I asked him if it made sense to introduce that role into the action. He agreed and we put a chair for the role of the one who decides what the rules will be.

And in no time a man went out and sat down on that chair. I asked Simple Peasant to express what he feels to that role, and he said that his attitude towards it had changed and he perceived it as something divine and was grateful to it for being able to see how everything worked, and most importantly, that might not join what he did not like. That he might not be part of People and stay at home with his family. He bowed to the figure of People. At that very moment Changes sat down. Here Simple Peasant says that he chooses to live in this country, that he has choice and privileges. People do not understand him. A new role comes out of the audience. It is someone Hybrid is afraid of. The role of Freedom, Movement appear on the stage. The role of somebody violently protesting joins People. Some more roles manifest themselves: Game, Choice, Inclusiveness, Action.

There is an actively involved person, but he cannot name his role. He turns to the Hybrid and asks what he is afraid of. The Hybrid says that he is bored and he wants to play. The active person from the audience offers him to play in "change of power" just to do something. The Soul of the Hybrid turns up. The role of Freedom announces that freedom does not mean struggle, it is when everyone starts to do, what is important to him/her and does not ask a permission for that.

Simple Peasant calls everyone up to him to build his city and live there. The figure of the Soul does not influence the Hybrid, and the figure of Death appears. It asks the Hybrid how he wants to die. Hybrid says that he is only partly a human being and cannot be killed. He is the governance structure of the country. "I am like a mountain, like a natural phenomenon". An active person from the audience, "If I take away the chair, you will not be a mountain anymore!!! Changes mean: pull the chair out abruptly, unexpectedly and inconspicuously". An active person from the audience gets up and knocks that chair right from under the Power, from under the figure of the one who sets the rules. "The chair is evil. It must be destroyed". He takes the chair away and goes out to the center. This causes anger in Simple Peasant, and he comes out of his city to fight Active Man from the audience. Simple Peasant blames Active Man for his troubles, adolescent behavior, capturing the territory. He urges people not to support Active Person from the audience, but to be on his side, since he is ready to take responsibility and protect people. Active Person answers Simple Peasant that everything he said was his imagination and had nothing to do with reality.

The Hybrid says that all he has seen increased fear in him. "I want to tell you that you have an illusion that if the power is loosened, then everything will change, that everything will be fine, but it will only get worse". An active person from the audience addresses the Hybrid, "Well, will you die at last!!!" The role of the Child appears. It sits on the floor and moves and shakes the chair on which the power sits ... The Hybrid says, "I have less fear now, but more melancholy, you squandered it all. I am a historically formed system, I am encoded in you. It makes no sense to overthrow me", and it gets up from the chair. The chair is empty, as soon as someone sits down on it, other people begin to move it, wanting to cause inconvenience to the occupant.

Glossary

1. *Hot spots* – Strong emotional moments. When hot spots are not focused on, they often become the source of future escalations. Therefore, it is helpful to notice and slow down at hot spots, then go deeper into the feelings and to the deep essence behind each side of the conflict. Hot spots are often doorways to deepening the relationships between people
2. *Cold spot* – Moments of relaxation and de-escalation, time to rest and review.

3. *Ghost roles* – Ghosts are those things or people spoken about but not directly represented by anyone. Some typical ghosts are ancestors who are spoken about but who are no longer present, the “bad” person who is not in the room, the environment, etc. Representing + expressing the views + thoughts of ghosts can help the group process.
4. *Consensus Reality* - Facts and figures, issues conscious problems and ideas, the diversity of people.
5. *Dreamland* – all viewpoints and unrepresented figures, + as roles or ghost roles. Roles on-local and belong to all of us. Worldwork includes creative expression of roles thru speaking, singing, movement, visual art, etc.
6. *Essence* – The common ground that connects all of us. When the essence arises it expresses itself in terms of parts and processes of Dreamland + Consensus Reality
7. *Deep Democracy* – is a skill, a philosophy and a metaskill: The basic idea is that reality and dreaming, verbal and non-verbal deep states of consciousness, are all equally important in inner, organizational and world issue work. We need to represent all the different peoples and issues and the dreaming states of minds as well.

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2014 Moscow, Russia. Lecture and master-class, State Center for Contemporary Art in Moscow «How Democracy has turned into Fear or how can you start believing that your voice is important».

2014 Process Work Center of Portland, USA. Master-class, presentation “Worldwork in the Theater”

2014 Sophia, Bulgaria. Theatre Laboratory NEDRAma, master-class, presentation “Worldwork in the Theater”

2014 Warsaw, Poland. Worldwork, master-class, presentation “Worldwork in the Theater”

2016 Worldwork Porto Heli, Greece. Master-class, presentation “Worldwork in the Theater”

Elena Margo. Worldwork in the Theatre

2018 Moscow, Russia. Master-class for process-oriented psychologists, presentation “Worldwork in the Theater” and theatrical project Democracy.doc

2018 IAPOP conference Dublin, Ireland. A speech about Worldwork in the theater and theatrical project Democracy.doc.