



CROSSING THE LINE



Co-funded by the
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INTRODUCTION

Crossing the Line is a collaboration project, funded through Creative Europe, led by three European companies who are all leaders in making and touring performance work created with learning disabled artists. The partners are Moomsteatern in Malmo, Sweden, Compagnie de l'Oiseau Mouche in Roubaix, France and Mind the Gap in Bradford, UK. The partners share a focus on making work that is artistically led, high quality and exciting for audience members with and without disabilities.

There are very few opportunities for artists with a learning disability to work outside the borders of the countries where they live. The purpose of Crossing the Line was to address this gap – finding new ways of working so that more learning disabled artists can collaborate and experience working with companies in different countries.

This report covers activity that took place between November 2014 and March 2017. It explains how successful the partners felt the project was in achieving what we set out to do in our application to the main funder, Creative Europe. The aim is that the work Crossing the Line started will continue into the future, involving more companies and artists.

Some of the main things we achieved and learnt are:

Learning disabled artists took part in three training residencies – one in each country. They learned new skills in different art forms including working with text in different languages and contemporary dance.

There were 1448 attendances at 14 events at the Crossing the Line Festival in January 2017. We welcomed 40 international participants from 11 countries to this event.

Partners learnt about each other's ways of working including how we run our companies, the different challenges we face, how we reach audiences and get people involved, and how we support learning disabled artists to develop their careers.

Four new companies are interested in joining the partnership so more artists from different countries - including Ireland, Wales, the Netherlands and Poland - can be involved in future opportunities.

The artists involved say they feel more confident and inspired. They want to do more international work!

We created a new website, including a "toolkit" of information and resources: crossingtheline.eu

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OVERVIEW OF MAIN ACTIVITIES

Crossing the Line created opportunities for learning disabled artists from the three companies to learn more about each other and their work. This was achieved through three week-long Skills Residencies – one in each country. Artists from each of the three partner companies came together to learn new skills through collaborative workshops.

A total of 58 artists with a learning disability participated in these practical Skills Residencies.

“ It’s been really cool to work in three different languages, and still discover that you have so many things in common. That we have similar experiences that make us understand each other without knowing each others languages. ”

Dennis Nilsson, actor at Moomsteatern

The project also created the chance for the three partners to present their work as part of the Crossing the Line Festival in Roubaix, France, 24-26 January 2017. This meant that audiences including people from the local area, across France, and from other countries could see examples of high quality performance work by learning disabled artists. The Festival included practical workshops and discussion events so people – with and without a learning disability – could share some of the challenges and opportunities they experience.

People travelled from countries including Sweden, UK, Netherlands, Ireland and USA to be part of the Crossing the Line Festival. There were a total of 1448 attendances by people taking part as audience members and participants.



A Dreamplay / Moomsteatern
Photo: Bodil Johansson



CONTAINED / Mind the Gap
Photo: Anouk Desury



Pourvu qu'on ait l'ivresse / Compagnie de l'Oiseau-Mouche
Photo: Nadia Lauro

PARTNERS

MOOMSTEATERN | MOOMS TEATERN

Is a professional theatre company based on actors with learning disabilities, on stage often integrated with non-disabled actors. The theatre was established in 1987 with the expressed goal to work with artistic objectives, banning all therapeutic and social aims. The sole aim of Moomsteatern is always to produce performing arts of high artistic quality. Seven actors with learning disabilities are employed on a full-time basis with salaries and conditions of employment based on the collective agreements relevant to the performing arts. They are trained at the national Theatre Academy and members of the Swedish Actors Guild. Moomsteatern is based in Malmö, Sweden and has been internationally celebrated for its courage and artistic integrity.

<http://moomsteatern.com>

COMPAGNIE DE L'OISEAU-MOUCHE



Is a permanent professional theatrical troupe made up of 23 actors, all of them individuals with a learning disability. Unequalled and unusual, the project remains unique in France. Each creation is the result of an artistic encounter between an invited artist and the actors he or she chooses to involve in this collaborative adventure. As of today, 45 theatre performances have been created and performed over 1,600 times in France and abroad. Since June 2001, Compagnie de l'Oiseau-Mouche is based at Théâtre de l'Oiseau-Mouche in Roubaix, Northern France, a venue designed by and for Compagnie de l'Oiseau-Mouche. Each and every season, the theatre opens its doors to other artistic teams on the basis of an active partnership with the troupe. Compagnie de l'Oiseau-Mouche is accredited and supported by the Ministry of Culture and sustains strong partnerships with local governments.

<http://oiseau-mouche.org>

MIND THE GAP



Mind the Gap is England's largest learning disability theatre company that creates work for UK and international audiences. The company's vision is to work in an arts sector where there is equal opportunity for performers with learning disabilities: a world where performers are trained, respected and employed equally, and feature every day on stages and screens. Mind the Gap work in partnership with learning-disabled artists to deliver a bold, cutting-edge and world-class artistic programme that impacts locally, nationally and internationally. Work that excites, surprises and challenges audiences. The aim is to make great theatre that makes audiences think differently. By "theatre" we don't just mean shows that you can see in arts and theatre venues, but also performances and events in different spaces and places. The Mind the Gap team includes a Board of Trustees, Staff Members, Associate Artists, Resident Artists, Ambassadors, Students and Volunteers. Mind the Gap was formed in 1988 by Tim Wheeler and Susan Brown and is based in Bradford.

<http://mind-the-gap.org.uk>

Jonathan Meth, Project Dramaturg

Jonathan Meth is a freelance Project Dramaturg for Crossing The Line. He has a base at Goldsmiths, University of London where there is a theatre and disability focus in the Theatre and Performance Department as well as a cross departmental Disability Research Centre. This project is feeding into staff teaching and student learning. As a project dramaturg Jonathan's tasks include being a custodian of the total project vision and ensuring the art and the money synthesise. He asks whether all partners are getting and providing what they need, and makes connections across the project. The project dramaturg also tracks and documents what happens artistically, feeding into Project management reporting and hopefully strengthening the Partnership. He helps to build a more developed network interested in the work generated across the three companies. He communicates with Key EU funders and policy makers and other organisations working in this field, connecting where possible with European and wider international opportunities. He also produces an evaluation report on the project, tailored for key stakeholders.



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO

In the application to Creative Europe the project set out to achieve 8 objectives. These were:

1. To enable Moomsteatern, Compagnie de l'Oiseau-Mouche and Mind the Gap to work together for the first time, and learn from each other.
2. To enable learning disabled artists from the three partner companies to work and learn new skills together.
3. To create theatre shows to be part of a joint showcase/festival, and share ideas and knowledge about our working methods and approaches.
4. To share ideas and knowledge about how we reach and get audiences involved, so that we can individually and jointly engage more people.
5. To share ideas and knowledge about each partners' business model – e.g. how we are funded, what touring we currently do, how the economic systems in each country affect us – so that each partner can develop and grow.
6. To involve Associate Partners from other countries in Europe so that more companies and learning disabled artists are involved in creating new opportunities in future.
7. To use the project to raise the profile of learning disabled artists and their work across Europe so that more people understand, support and know about it.
8. To establish lasting and deep relationships between companies and artists in the partner countries, so that there are more opportunities to develop skills and make work together in future.

ACTIVITIES & OUTPUTS

Below we describe the activities we took part in to achieve the project objectives. We explain how successful they were, what we learnt, the challenges we faced, and what we would do differently next time.

The activities fell in to 3 main categories:

1. Sharing and Learning through Skills Residencies
2. Partner Meetings
3. Crossing the Line Festival

“ The greatest joy was working together in the same room, to see the performers connecting, how they want to communicate across language barriers and create something magical together. ”

Alan Lyddiard, director of CONTAINED

“ For me the project was three things: intense, lot of work and rich of many things. ”

Florian Caron, actor at Compagnie de l'Oiseau Mouche



SHARING & LEARNING THROUGH SKILLS RESIDENCIES

The Skills Residencies enabled artists from the three partner companies to learn about each other, their work and culture, and experience working alongside people who speak different languages.

These activities particularly supported Objectives 1, 2 and 8.

Mind the Gap	hosted Residency:	March 2015	Bradford, UK
Moomsteatern	hosted Residency:	December 2015	Malmö, Sweden
Compagnie de l'Oiseau Mouche	hosted Residency:	January 2016	Roubaix, France

“ Enjoyable moments of sharing and moments of artistic work, and I would like it to continue. I went to Sweden and it was nice, I remember the Chekhov workshop. It's great to live these moments. We need to extend and do it again! ”

Lothar Bonin, actor at Compagnie de l'Oiseau Mouche

What was most successful about these Residencies?

- When artists from the different companies could spark ideas off one another.
- Artists from the different companies taking inspiration from each other.
- The chance to work alongside people with the same work ethics, values and ambitions.
- Artists from the three partner organisations admired and respected each other and their work.
- Artists improved their skills in critically evaluating their own and other's practice, identifying strengths and weaknesses they could learn from.
- Learning disabled artists leading training workshops for peers and other participants.
- Learning disabled and non disabled artists discussing their work and methods together, and trying out new ideas.
- A wide range of skills and artforms were tested including choreography and dance, working with written scripts, clowning techniques, contemporary theatre practice.
- Inviting other people – fellow artists, people who programme work in theatre venues, writers for newspapers and blogs – to find out more, and speak to us about their experiences and challenges e.g. at the International Event held at Mind the Gap in March 2015.
- Arranging Skype chats for artists to keep the conversation going between Residencies and events.
- Artists, as professionals, were positively challenged in their practice.

“ The performers show proper discipline, we can take a leaf out of their book. ”

Howard Davies, actor at Mind the Gap, reflecting on Moomsteatern's A Dreamplay

What were the challenges, and what will we do differently next time?

- Making sure everyone understood what was going in the three different languages of Swedish, French and English was difficult! Next time we will involve specialist translation support as well as creative and learning support.
- The experiences were intensive with long days and lots of content and new challenges, for example a non-reader working with written text in a different language. Next time we'd like to work with smaller groups and over longer timescales – e.g. two weeks rather than just one to make sure artists get a really deep learning experience.

“ I prefer to do less script and more improvisation, but enjoyed working with Clement, Therese and Frida when in small group on script. ”

JoAnne Haines, actor at Mind the Gap

“ This has changed my view on how to be an actor. I love being here with French and English colleagues. For me it's a dream to be an actor, I get on stage and do what I do best. ”

Ronnie Larsson, actor at Moomsteatern



Working with the same script in three languages, in Malmö 2015
Photo: Sandra Johansson

PARTNER MEETINGS

To make sure everything ran smoothly, the partners met 8 times throughout the project.
These activities particularly supported Objectives 1, 4, 5, 6 and 8.

As well as planning for the Residencies and Festival, this was a chance to learn more about each other's work. In particular, we discussed how we reach audiences, and shared ideas and successful methods. Also, we learned about how each partner runs their organisations, discussing different ways of managing people and our work, how we raise money and earn income from touring, and different ways we support learning disabled artists to develop skills and work in the arts.

“ Through the project we learned about ourselves and others. We would question why our organization had developed the way it has, and how that was different from Mind the Gap and Moomsteatern. For example we discovered that the actors at Moomsteatern are not in the social sector, like we are, and why is that? In a way, before this project, we had developed in a French bubble and not really looked out into Europe. “

Annabelle Mailliez of Compagnie de l'Oiseau Mouche

What was most successful about the Partner Meetings?

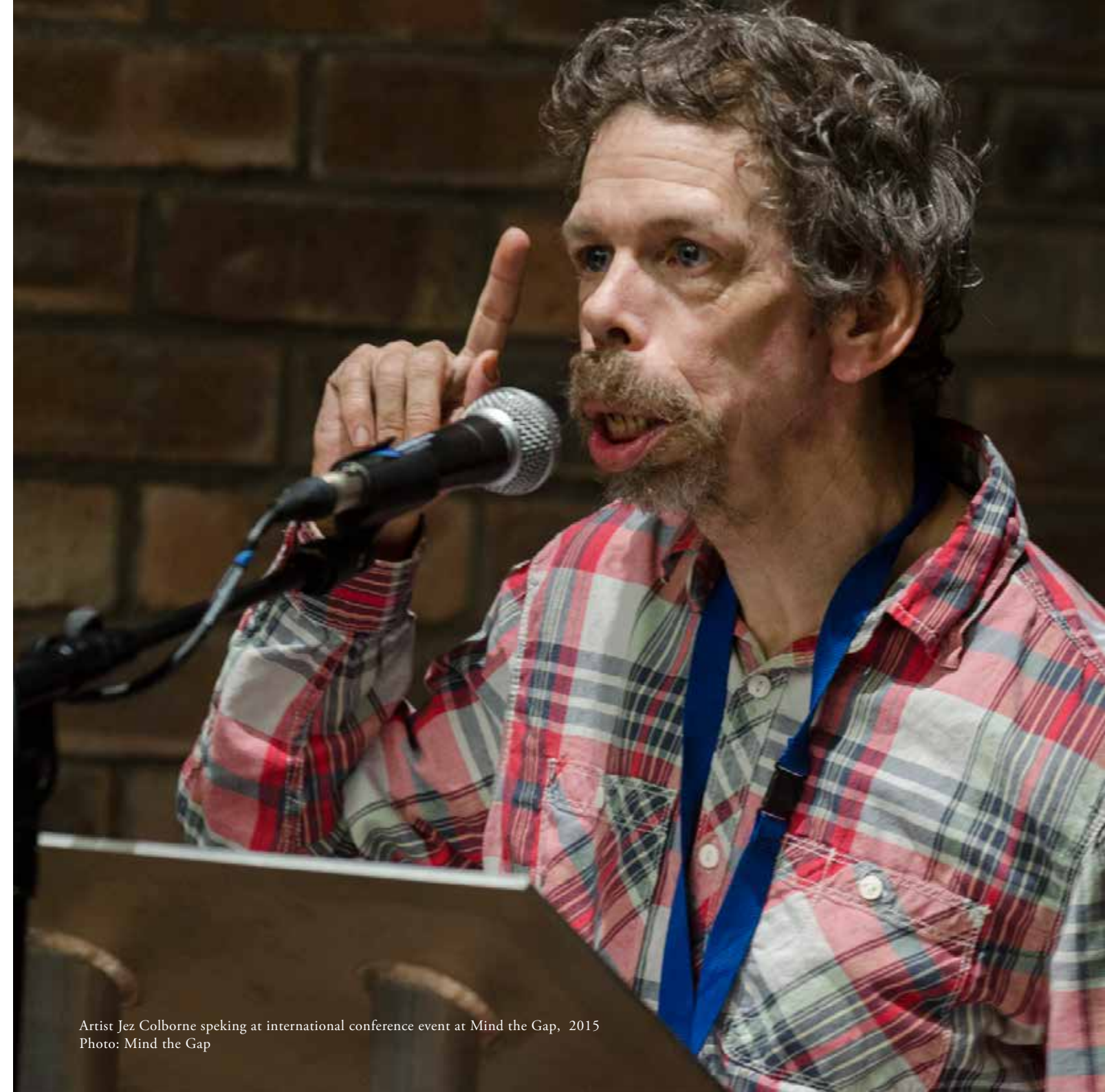
- We learned that there are different systems in each country for employing and supporting learning disabled artists. While there were different strengths and weaknesses there are shared challenges connected with combatting prejudice and low expectations about the potential of learning disabled artists.
- There are important differences in the ways theatre touring is organised in Sweden, France and England. This has a big impact on how each company makes its work, the timescales, and who books it. In spite of the differences in each country – the partners were able to learn from each other, and get new ideas about how to build relationships with people who programme and fund touring in order to reach new audiences. We talked about the advantages and disadvantages of learning disability/disability focused festivals compared with festivals that include non-disabled work as well.
- We shared information about our international touring experiences. We came up with ideas about other people we need to involve in discussions – like funders and programmers – to create more opportunities in future.
- Depending on who the productions are aimed at – for example, for younger people, or general theatre-goers, or peer audiences with a learning disability – all partners use different methods and activities to get audience members interested and involved. For example, Moomsteatern open up rehearsals so anyone can see how a show is developing before it opens. Compagnie de l'Oiseau Mouche run workshops led by their artists in schools for young people, both before and after a show has been performed. Mind the Gap run practical workshops and talks at venues where a show is being performed, to get different audiences involved and create opportunities to discuss the company's work and aims.
- We learned all three partners employ specialist staff to support learning disabled artists. We discussed the similarities and differences in our approaches. We agreed this is an area of specialist expertise amongst our partnership.

What were the challenges, and what will we do differently next time?

- There was a lot to discuss in a short time, which meant long meetings and a lot of talking! This is not accessible or interesting for all learning disabled artists. Next time we will make sure Partner Meetings also include practical, creative activities so more learning disabled artists can be actively involved.
- The meetings were conducted in English language. Internal staff from Moomsteatern and Compagnie de l'Oiseau Mouche provided excellent translation support, but next time it would be helpful to have expert translation support.

“ As organizations we have learned about each other, but we have also learned a lot about ourselves. When you have to define yourself to someone else, and really explain how you work and why, you discover new things about yourself. ”

Anna Gustafsson of Moomsteatern



Artist Jez Colborne speaking at international conference event at Mind the Gap, 2015
Photo: Mind the Gap

CROSSING THE LINE FESTIVAL

Throughout the process of Crossing the Line, the festival grew in ambition and aspirations, moving from a small scale showcase to an international festival. It opened up Crossing the Line to the outside more widely than ever before. The festival was hosted by Compagnie de l'Oiseau Mouche, on 24th to 26th January 2017 in Roubaix, France.

Crossing the Line Festival involved live performances presented by each partner, practical workshops and discussion events. *It particularly supported Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8.*



What was most successful about the Festival?

- Audiences responded positively to the three shows presented by the partners. They said they were high quality, very different in style, and showed a wide range of talents and skills.
- The shows and events were well attended. Overall there were 1448 attendances at the different events.
- Audiences said the Festival was well organised, welcoming and friendly. There was a good mix of shows, discussions and practical workshops. They wanted even more!
- Among the learning disabled artists, a real sense of community and the beginning of a collective “we” emerge during the festival.
- The seminars were well attended by audience and participants from all the international visitors and resulted in very interesting discussions about the project, the arts and inclusiveness.
- The social events enabled connections to be made between representatives from the various organizations visiting the festival.
- We achieved our aim of reaching international audiences and welcomed 40 delegates from 11 countries.

“ The best thing is going international, my dream! ”
Vincent Watkins, actor at Mind the Gap

40 Delegates
from 11
Countries



FESTIVAL PROGRAM:

Tuesday 24 January 2017

11am – 12pm
Theatrical Aperitif: warm up, body attack and imaginary journey.
Workshop by Compagnie de l’Oiseau-Mouche.

1:30pm – 3:30pm
Workshop: “Pourvu qu’on ait la danse”
led by Lééo Lequeuche & an interpreter from Compagnie de l’Oiseau-Mouche.

6pm
Official Launch of the Festival.

7pm
Performance: CONTAINED – Mind the Gap

9pm
Performance: A Dreamplay – Moomsteatern



Wednesday 25 January 2017

11am – 12:30pm
Workshop: Voice and presence of actor, led by Moomsteatern.

2:30pm – 4:30pm
Seminar: “Art & Disability in an international context.”

5pm – 6:30pm
Roundtable discussion: “Disability aesthetics”

7pm
Performance: A Dreamplay – Moomsteatern

9pm
Performance: Pourvu qu’on ait l’ivresse
– Compagnie de l’Oiseau-Mouche

Thursday 26 January 2017

11:30am – 1pm
Workshop: Explore the techniques used in the creation of CONTAINED. Led by Alan Lyddiard, Mind the Gap.

2:30pm – 4:30pm
Performance: Aujourd’hui en m’habillant
– Compagnie de l’Oiseau-Mouche.

Time: 5pm
Screening: Fix you – a film by Moomsteatern.

7pm
Performance: Pourvu qu’on ait l’ivresse
– Compagnie de l’Oiseau-Mouche

8:30pm
Performance: CONTAINED – Mind the Gap

10pm: CLOSING PARTY



Photos from *Crossing the Line Festival*: Anouk Desury



What were the challenges, and what will we do differently next time?

- Audiences told us they wanted even more to do and see! Next time we hope to include more companies and their work, and more practical workshops to take part in.
- We did not give films and digital work as much exposure as we would have liked. Next time we will make sure film and digital materials are planned and promoted alongside live performances and workshops.
- Compagnie de l'Oiseau Mouche as host of the Festival had a lot of work and responsibilities to deal with. Next time we will delegate roles amongst partners so that we can share the work more equally.
- This Festival was held in January for practical reasons, but next time we would try and avoid winter as this is not ideal, especially for international visitors.

“ A very important event, I think, and given the international connections that were demonstrated and established through the project, as well as some of the discussions that were taking place, it may well mark a particular turning point in the development of theatre and learning disability. It was great to see all three companies and get a real sense each company's established history, ambition, rigour and aesthetic. It was also valuable to see the aesthetic differences between the companies in such a (generally speaking) non-competitive, non-judgemental context. ”

*Dave Calvert, Senior Lecturer in Drama,
University of Huddersfield*





Photo from *Crossing the Line Festival*: Anouk Desury

IMPACT

The project has already led to positive results for the partners. For example, connections made at the Crossing the Line Festival have led to:

- Moomsteatern are in discussion with Arts & Disability Ireland about touring *A Dreamplay*.
- Compagnie de l'Oiseau Mouche are in discussion with Royal Court, London about touring *Pourqu qu'on ait l'ivresse* to a festival at the venue.
- Mind the Gap were booked to present *CONTAINED* at the Mittenmang Festival, Bremen Germany in May 2017 alongside other high quality presentations by Danza Mobile (Spain), Hijinx (UK) and Theatre Thikwa (Germany).

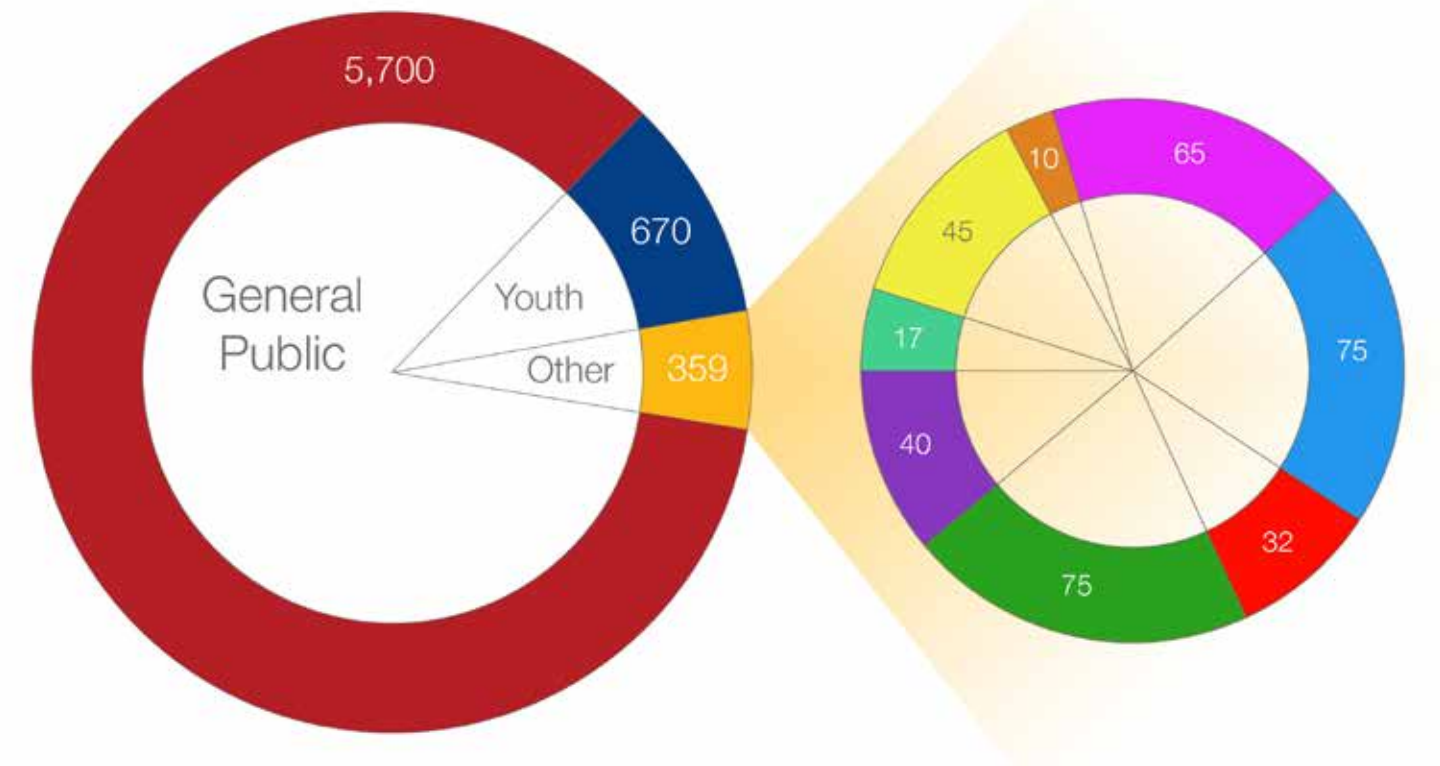
For the longer-term all the partners feel they have learned new skills that will help them tour work internationally in the future. Artists feel inspired for new challenges.

All partners feel they have learnt new skills and deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities of international work. Through new connections there are opportunities to create a bigger partnership with more member companies and artists in future. The feedback from the Crossing the Line Festival audience members shows that other people also thought it was an important event.

“ Not only a great opportunity to see the work developed through the project in one place, but also a unique opportunity to bring together the hugely experienced project partners and other key delegates to enter into a very rare and important series of conversations ... I thought the conversations which took place were genuinely exploring new ground. ”

Ben Evans, Head of Arts & Disability, EU Region, British Council

BREAKDOWN ON PROJECT REACH



- Students
- Senior Citizens
- Students in the field of cultural and creative industries
- Artists
- Cultural workers (technicians, etc.)
- Staff from educational institutions
- Staff from local, regional and national institutions
- Other

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Collaborating to deliver the Crossing the Line project was a refreshing, challenging and enjoyable experience for the partner companies and learning disabled artists involved.

It offered a rare opportunity to focus on the artistic concerns of the participants, and find practical solutions to advance the creative skills and work opportunities for learning disabled artists. Learning disabled artists are often deprived of this opportunity when a lot of their work continues to be viewed as participatory, educational or even therapeutic.

Through this project the partners have developed a deep trust and respect for each other's ways of working. Each company's differences have been as important as the similarities in shaping the project's priorities and future ambitions. Sometimes the things individual companies "take for granted" have been the most surprising and inspiring learning for other partners.

Moomsteartern, Compagnie de l'Oiseau Mouche and Mind the Gap believe that Crossing the Line started something important. The feedback from audiences and participants shows us that there is the will and commitment from new partners to continue this work into the future.

To continue our work in the future we will:

- Apply for new funding to keep the partnership moving forward and involve new companies and artists. This will include Erasmus+ and Creative Europe large-scale project funding.
- Share our learning including this report with new companies, artists, media critics and bloggers so that more people can find out about the successes and challenges we faced.
- Communicate with and visit festivals and venues who are not disability focused, to encourage them to see high quality learning disability work, and book it in to their programmes so that bigger audiences can see it.
- Keep up the communications and connections between the artists, through Skype chats, newsletters and seeing each other's work whenever possible.
- Promote and support learning disabled artists to be leaders and advocates for new international opportunities, including speaking at meetings, events and conferences.

List of participants in the Crossing the Line project:

Jonathan Meth, project dramaturg

From Moomsteatern:

Gunilla Ericsson
Ronnie Larsson
Pierre Björkman
Niclas Lendemar
Frida Andersson
Therese Kvist
Dennis Nilsson
Frida Schriver
Suzanne Hedström Hellberg
Anna Gustafsson
Per Törnqvist
Sandra Johansson
Hans C Roupe
Martin Kullberg
Malin Stegerling
Therese Hedelius
Sanne Hellberg
Jan-Erik Sääf
Erik Almgren
Pelle Öhlund
Nina Jemth
Ola Hörling
Signe Krogh
Kenneth Ålander
Emma Dock
Mats Hellerstedt-Thorin
& Board members, guest artists
and staff from Moomsteatern

From Mind the Gap:

Robert Abbey
Liam Bairstow
Paul Bates
Lorraine Brown
Alan Clay
Jez Colborne
Alison Colborne
Melissa Conyers
Denis Darzacq
Howard Davies
Alex Elliott
Sheila Emsley
Anna Gray
Damien Grogan
Joanne Haines
Joyce Nga Yu Lee
Alan Lyddiard
Lisa Mallaghan
Zara Mallinson
Clementine March
Jack Riley
Ben Pugh
Dave Searle
Naelah Shahzad
Julia Skelton
Charli Ward
Vince Watkins
& Artists and Students from
the Mind the Gap ensemble

From Compagnie de l'Oiseau Mouche:

Stéphane Frimat
Cécile Teurlay
Nathalie Bauduin
Chrissie Carpentier
Elora Decoupigny
Rémy Brasseur
Lucie Lardeur
Annabelle Mailliez
Sarah Elghazi
Marylène Dekeyser
Elie Vallez
Joseph Ferreira
Clémence Villette
Roxane Garnaud
Marina Butterdroghe
David Amelot
Myriam Baiche
Valérie Waroquier
Thierry Dupont
Léa Le Bars
Florence Decourcelle
Martial Bourlart
Lothar Bonin
Jérôme Chaudière
Clément Delliaux
Chantal Esso
Hervé Lemeunier
Caroline Leman
Florian Spiry
Jonathan Allart
Florian Caron
Frédéric Foulon
& Artists from l'Oiseau-Mouche
ensemble, guest artists and staff

MOOMS
TEATERN



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Please read more about the project on crossingtheline.eu