

How Playback Theatre helps to build an inclusive and equal society – the formation and touring performances of Sunshine Playback Theatre

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Abstract

People with Disabilities (PWD) are always be regarded as service users, through the idea of citizen actors, PWD can use Playback Theatre to serve others, in turn, become service provider. Also through the performance, we can experience the real inclusive and equity communication. In the same time, it is a good moment for us to reflect the core value of Playback Theatre, include acts of service, respect one and other and social interaction.

Sunshine Playback Theatre Company

With the support of Providence Foundation Limited, an Ambassador team, Sunshine Playback Theatre Company (Sunshine) is formed after the Playback Theatre Core Training workshop in June 2008 under an ADA project, Story 2008. The project is divided into 3 phrases, the first phrase is a 30-hour Playback Theatre Core Training, the second phrase is regular rehearsals and coaching sessions and the third phrase is to set up an Ambassadors team to serve communities through 10 touring performances. It is hoped that this team would become leader in community building through Playback Theatre.

Logo of Sunshine Playback Theatre Company

In the very beginning, members of Sunshine have different ideas and thoughts on the logo; most of them agreed to use one of those suggested logo after the vote except one. However, to respect everyone's idea and opinion, they tried to discuss and mix and match with different ideas again. Finally, they found a logo that all of them are satisfied.

The process of deciding the logo was a very good example to showcase democratic and the idea of Playback Theatre because the final decision can cater everyone's opinions but not only the majority. It just like Playback Theatre can cater everyone's voices and stories no matter they are majority or minority.

Sunshine Playback Theatre Company Performance

Sunshine is probably the first Playback Theatre group that all members are persons with intellectual disability over the world; they will form inclusive performing teams with different playbackers and have touring performances in different groups and communities. To encourage people sharing their own real

stories and let every voice can be listened respectively; Sunshine becomes 'Community Ambassador' through the Playback Theatre performances, in turn, helping to build an inclusive society.

Since the core training workshop finishing performance, Sunshine has already done six touring performances, included the kick-off touring performance in The 23rd Tsuen Wan Arts Festival, performances at The Jockey Club Hong Chi Sun Chui Workshop cum Hostel, Playback Tuesday, S.K.H. Kowloon Bay Kei Lok Primary School, Lok Wah Hostel, SAHK and Holy Carpenter Secondary School. Four more performances have been scheduled in December 2009, February and March 2010.

During the performance, as playbackers, they are became a professional actor or conductor, and there are expectations where the audience will make sure they get the message right. For example, there was an audience who told a story with a number. In the beginning, the conductor misheard but instead of letting it go, both parties were willing to repeat until it is right. So therefore, through Playback Theatre, they are being seen as a person. If they make a mistake, they have to correct it, just like anybody else.

Conclusion

From the formation and touring performance of Sunshine Playback Theatre Company, the label of PWD that can only be service user is removed. Also, through the performance, it is empowering both PWD and audience because on one side, PWD can use Playback Theatre to serve others and on the other side, audience's own real story is listened and acted out respectively.