



Playwriting for Peace: Actualizing Perpetual Peace in Post-Conflict Pristina, Kosovo



Photo Credit: Matt Harmon

By Matt Harmon and Emily Russell.

The theatre is a place to develop empathy and explore one's own humanity. We believe creative expression is instrumental to establishing a common understanding from which sustainable peace can be created and enacted. [Playwriting for Peace](#) is an Applied Theatre intervention staged in Pristina, Kosovo by us, two American playwrights and two Kosovar scholars, from Pristina and Mitrovica respectively. We are generously funded by the Davis Projects for Peace Fellowship out of the University of Michigan.

Playwriting for Peace innovates by bringing Applied Theatre to countries even after conflict has left. Typically, Applied Theatre programs work with populations currently facing conflict or to those experiencing institutional discrimination, like Shakespeare in Prison programs and performances staged at refugee camps. Our program took place in the post-conflict period of Kosovo's history, when young people are considered most susceptible to security force recruitment and risk othering one another, heightening the risk of violence.

The Workshops

Our workshops utilize multiple forms of verbal and nonverbal techniques as well as varied artistic mediums, including visual arts, text, music, and movement. With a five-week program, students are able to grow in comfort and vulnerability with their own expression. At the program's conclusion, the participants get an opportunity to see their work realized with a public revue of their work staged in a Pristina theater.

Our first project location was Termokiss, a large, warehouse-style creative space. Here, in addition to writing workshops and round-group discussions, students participated in large movement activities, trust exercises, and led a showcase of their own work. Utilizing the open floor, “Space Walk” involved three squares of tape on the floor, each one smaller than the one before. First participants were told to move about the largest space. Then, they moved into the middle square and eventually the smallest square, in which practically no one could move. When we reflected on this activity, one participant observed that in the largest square, everyone was like strangers. When they got to the smallest square, everyone was close and laughing and it felt like they were old friends. The theatre brings us together and reveals our connectedness.

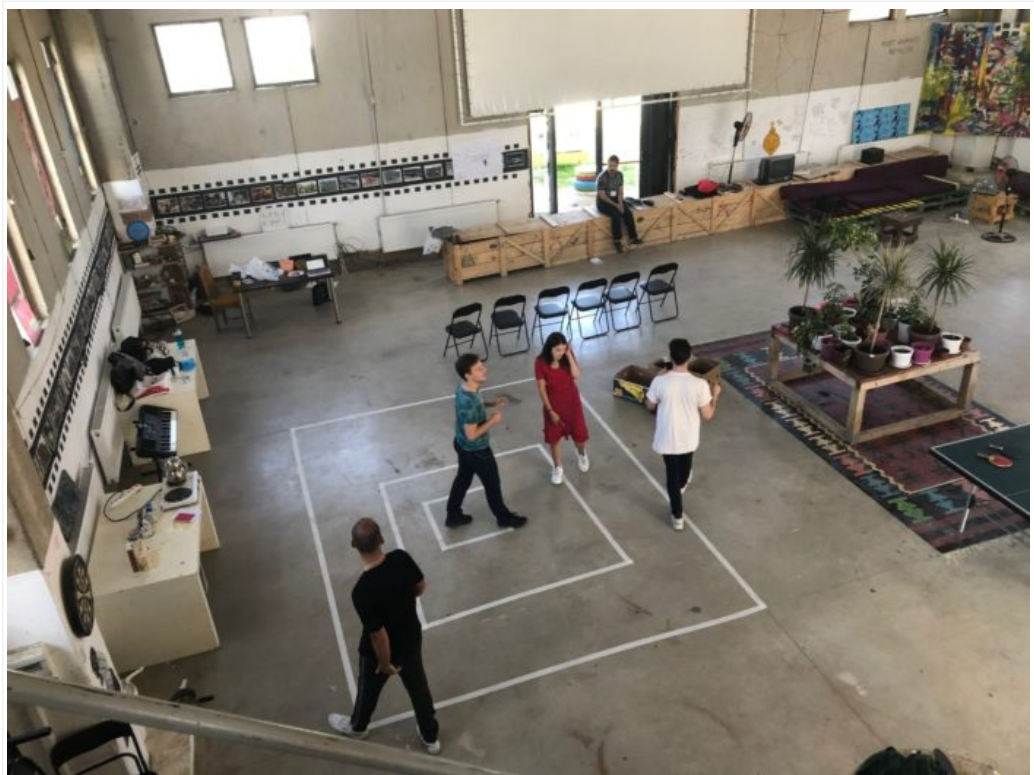


Photo Credit: Matthew Harmon

We then moved to Foundacion Shtatëmbëdhjetë, an intimate space allowing for a focus on writing, and equipped with projection for the fusion of visual art and theatre. In “Placemaking through Postcards,” participants drew a location on one side of a postcard and wrote the setting description on the back. One participant drew a childless nursery in 1959 Los Angeles, expertly relating the “personal in the political” and how human stories take place in all types of “micro” locations (gardens, living rooms, street corners, etc.) but they are not separate from the “macro” locations — a country or a time of war, for example

At our final location, Kino Armata, students will learn the basics of performance in preparation for their final revue.

The Future

As part of our commitment to establishing recurrent innovations in post-conflict theatre, we have trained young people around Kosovo (Pristina, Mitrovica) and created a training manual to be used by those working in post-conflict settings anywhere in the world. We know that providing a toolkit for expression can act as a deterrent to violence, and we are hopeful that Applied Theatre can bring students on opposing sides of cultural and national boundaries closer to a universal language. Playwriting for Peace hopes to demonstrate that peacebuilding is not over when country borders are solidified, but rather, is a journey that is just beginning.

Get in touch

Authors can be contacted at: playwritingforpeace@gmail.com

Project details can be found at: <https://playwriting4peace.wixsite.com/kosovo>.



