

Agua Mar, a Space of Freedom

By Isabel Cristina

Azalea López and Antonella Dalla Rosa arrived at the *Círculo Infantil Los Martianitos* in Centro Habana to conduct the Agua Mar workshop. A room with approximately twenty 3-year-old children became a space of freedom to share emotions. The two theater artists from Mexico and Italy connected through this experience with Cuban children. The workshop was a discovery for the little ones, but also for them, as it was their first time joining forces in Agua Mar. The session began with movement and exploration of the space. Gradually, a circle formed, and some movement guidelines were subtly suggested by the teachers Azalea and Antonella.

As always happens in spaces inhabited by early childhood, some participated with more enthusiasm, while others remained still or apart. With their grace and kind gaze, they captivated even the shyest child in the room. This deep connection with the group was achieved through the teachers' eye contact, respectful and joyful demeanor, close physical proximity, and constant interaction at the children's level, close to the floor. Some were more active, others gentler. One girl jumped, another ran, a boy laughed, another cried. Azalea and Antonella became part of this multiple and dynamic universe.

The sensory aspect played a fundamental role in the encounter. The children used their bodies to imitate animals and create abstract shapes rich in imagination. But the most beautiful part of the encounter was the play with the sheets of paper. When they handed out the large white sheets, each child placed them on their legs in a different way.

Perhaps due to an insular Caribbean impulse contained in their collective memory, the children's first action was to hit the paper as a form of percussion. There was no specific guideline to trigger this action; it was the collective magic, the sensory stimulus they instantly turned into sound. For me, that was the most beautiful and revealing moment. The teachers laughed, amazed, and were surprised by each of the children's responses.

It was a lovely morning for the 3-year-olds' room, and I dare say it was also for Azalea and Antonella, who through Agua Mar, soared as high as the birds.