

Trace and Jump with Cuban Children

By: Isabel Cristina

The ASSITEJ World Congress, held in Havana, Cuba, has showcased new ways to engage with young audiences. One of the highlights of this event has been the workshops conducted by members of the International Small Size Network, dedicated to performing arts for early childhood.

The workshop "Trace and Jump," led by Michelle Guerra from Mexico and Sara Myrberg from Sweden, took place at the Saltarines del 2000 Children's Circle in El Vedado. This was the first time both theater artists teamed up to conduct a workshop, guiding the five-year-old children in a new experience full of movement and creativity.

Everyone formed a circle and began moving different parts of their bodies. The interaction was very dynamic from the start. Michelle asked the children about other body parts that could move, and they enthusiastically suggested new movements. The exchange flowed for a while, always enlivened by Sara's theatrical movements, which featured a clownish gesturality that connected with the children in a spontaneous and magical way.

Using colored chalk, the workshop leaders made various traces on the floor: a straight line, a zigzag, and other shapes recognizable by the children. The guideline was to walk on the traces while incorporating new bodily movements each time. The children walked like a lion, a frog, a butterfly, all freely and creatively following the initial guideline.

Then they distributed the chalk so each child could make their own traces. One girl drew a doll, one boy painted a rainbow, another a swirl, and another a sailboat. The most beautiful part was how, after painting on the ground, each child danced on their own drawings. This logical structure is one of the foundations of this workshop for early childhood. First, free movement, then guided by a trace from the leaders, followed by the child's exploration through drawing. It promotes the development of fine motor skills, free movement, gesturality, balance, concentration, as well as creativity and imagination.

Sara and Michelle bid farewell to the children of Saltarines del 2000, with the joy of having provided them with a wealth of sensory stimuli, like a warm and affectionate hug through theater, between traces and jumps.