

## Part 3.

# A LIVING QUESTION?

## SHARING THE PROJECT

Having completed the initial in-school work, Big Brum hosted an online event with its partners at Birmingham City University. This was entitled 'A Living Question?'

This event involved teachers, trainee teachers, project partners and other practitioners from the UK and beyond.

In the event, we aimed not only to show project outcomes but to provide a form of Living Through Drama that would allow participants to engage with it socially, creatively and artistically.

### SETTING THE DAY UP

We explained the following to participants.

**The centre of the day** is to work collectively, expressively and be in connection.

**The centre of the 'socially distant' drama** is isolation, disconnection, and repression:

*"Living in this world has made us socially distant from ourselves and each other, where lies and greed conceal our true nature. How then can our true selves be revealed in such conditions?"*

The day is constructed around the play 'Socially Distant' and follows a simple task-based drama, getting at the guts of this centre. The central task of the day's drama focuses on the suicide of a boy during lockdown, but through reflecting on the adult's (the father's) response to the event.

(A film of 'Socially Distant' can be accessed at [www.bigbrum.org.uk](http://www.bigbrum.org.uk))

The father is the adult world, he is us.

**The frame.** Exploring the drama as both ourselves and the organisation given responsibility to fulfil the task (i.e., 'what do you imagine they might suggest?' and then 'we've been considering proposals for...').

**The task.** To make recommendations on the form and placing of a monument to/for a young person that died during lockdown.

**The role.** A socially considerate NGO/organisation is concerned about young people. They have heard about the situation and feel it needs to be highlighted. They will consider appropriate monuments that both reflect on the particular boy and the plight of young people generally.

## PRE-TASKS

### 1. Thursday 24th September

The attendees were posed two questions:

- One image that has stuck with them over this current period
- One image of themselves in this current period

They were asked to write their answers and send them to the organisers. Once their answer had been received, they were sent part one of the film of 'Socially Distant' (approx. 30 minutes) and asked to watch it.

The group leaders for the event met. They had watched the film and tested, online, the enactive task - beating the pan at the window. This was just for them, but it gave them an idea of how to set up the enactive task at the main event.

### 2. Friday 25th September

The attendees were asked to watch Part 2 of the film. They were asked to think about the question: what is socially distant?

## THE DAY EVENT - Saturday 26th September

Introduction. A colleague from Birmingham City University contextualised the day with an explanation of why we are gathered, and how we wish to work.

### TASK 1

Facilitated by Big Brum's Artistic Director and working with group leaders in pre-decided small groups, participants shared their images from Pre-Task 1 (above).

After reading/hearing the images, we collated the experiences in groups, then each group was given a concept that best described it.

### TASK 2

These concepts were shared with all participants, to be used throughout the day. Participants were then asked to watch Part 3 of the film.

### TASK 3

Back in groups, participants tested the concepts in relation to what had just been watched. They were offered the possibility of offering moments from the play where the concepts are. We watched Part Four of the film (to the end).

### TASK 4

In small groups, we returned to social distance. From what we have seen, heard, and shared about social distance, what has changed pre - and post - covid? What is this telling us about society in the individual, and the individual in society?

## INTRODUCTION TO THE MONUMENT

A little about the organisation proposing the monument was explained. We went into a shadow role:

- There is a group of individuals who live in these times.
- The group's task is to erect a monument to the boy and these times.
- What would we suggest?

### TASK 5

In their working groups, participants discussed 'what is a monument?' and 'what are they for?' They then shared back.



# Part 3. A living question? Sharing the project



## CONTRIBUTIONS 1 - Helping form our monuments

At this stage we invited contributions from Big Brum's patron, our Polish partners and another participant. These related to the world around us and helped us begin to explore Bondian Site A: the world and our epoch.

## TASK 6

In their groups, participants began to offer suggestions of what the monument could be.

Over lunch, group leaders met to discuss the session, participants' needs and plans for the afternoon (including whether any adjustments might be needed).

## AFTER LUNCH

Participants returned to their working groups and the task of the monument, beginning to make it material: location, materials, etc. A sub-task moved this on slightly, focused more tightly on these specifics.

## CONTRIBUTIONS 2 - From schools and teachers

At this point we heard from teachers and those working closely with them in the UK and Hungary. This related to Bondian Site B: the play's specific site, including the teacher's situation in 'Socially Distant.'

Working groups then began to consider any words or statements that might be found on the monument. They prepared to share with others.

## CONTRIBUTIONS 3 - Relating to young people

We heard at this stage from the teachers at Benson about the work they had undertaken with the children (see Part 2) and from a specialist in work with children who have profound and multiple learning disabilities.

## PLENARY

Groups then shared their proposals for a monument with the other participants. How did they imagine their monument would be received by community and authority?

We concluded the day by asking participants to consider three questions:

- What are you feeling / thinking about social distance?
- How might today's experience be taken forward?
- How might you take it forward?

## BLOGS

For accounts of this event on the Drama Hub blog, please see:

Dr Chris Bolton (partner at Birmingham City University):

<https://dramamtl.wordpress.com/2020/10/02/socially-distant-teacher-fragility-in-a-covid-supernova-mrcjbolton/>

Paige Brookes (teacher participant):

<https://dramamtl.wordpress.com/2020/10/02/drama-theatre-education-a-living-question-a-response/>

Katja Ropret Perne (Czech partner):

<https://dramamtl.wordpress.com/2020/10/24/you-show-me-but-i-can-not-see-katja-ropret-perne/>