

# Multilingual Devised Theatre

Created with and for Adult Learners of English as a  
Second Language

August-November 2020

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āçts and  
wörldmākîng

<http://www.languageacts.org>

## Project Background

Multilingual Devised Theatre project was a collaboration between a performance artist, adult learners of English and researchers who wanted to gain a better understanding of learners' needs, aspirations and reservations when it comes to the use of creative methods in the process of language development.

This project was based on the principles of a devised theatre and explored the impact of embodied and sensory experiences and multiple (home, second and modern foreign) languages in the process of language learning through developing a physical and multilingual performance.

Devised theatre is an approach to creating a piece of performative work that is process-led and inclusive of all members of the group. The process places emphasis on the journey of the making and engages the enablement of participants to develop the ensemble-based way of working that is built upon trust, communication and awareness. As the group take ownership of developing and writing their own script providing opportunity for members to participate in the work, in ways that they feel most comfortable and confident.

With no given title, script or expectations of the end piece, the group of participants had facilitated to navigate their way through exercises, stimulus and technique to create and generate material in both English and their native languages. This material was then rehearsed and developed to create the final piece of performance.

## The Impact of Covid-19

The project was initially started in February 2020. We were well underway with the work when the lockdown came into place in March 2020, making it impossible to continue with the project in its original form - participants met weekly to create work in a close contact environment.

In early August 2020, the researchers and lead artist made the decision to re-adapt the project in response to the pandemic. At that point, the lead artist Angela Main had already been working throughout the pandemic on a socially engaged project that took place entirely over zoom sessions.

Zoom platform had influenced an exploration into new ways of working with consideration to developing material for groups of people to create. Additionally, the researchers and artist were interested in the way performances/institutions had been operating online during the crisis. Thus, the project was adapted to online settings and resumed in late August 2020.

After the decision was made to resume the project in August 2020, only three out of seven participants returned to work on the project. This delayed the project slightly but allowed us to welcome two new people to the project. New participants not only integrated extremely well, but also brought new energy into the project.

## Final performance production and delivery

The final piece of the project constitutes a short film. Each participant developed and produced their mini film. Next, the mini films were edited into one short film. The participants decided on the content and sequence of the final film. The short film was created in response to the Covid-19 pandemic that interrupted the work of the group and made both the physical contact as well as the final live performance on stage impossible.

Angela Main worked with all the participants in group sessions as well as held individual sessions in order to support and guide the participants during the process of facilitating and producing the individual mini films.

The premiere took place during the online conference 'Art in Language Education: research, creativity and practice in the multilingual world' on 14th November 2020 with participation of the project performers/devisers and an introductory talk by Angela Margaret Main.

After the premiere, the short film is available on a website <https://artandlanguagelearning.wordpress.com/> to document the project and the ordinary lives of five extraordinary people and their response to and commentary on the world during the pandemic.

## Angela Margaret Main- Workshop Leading Artist and Facilitator

Angela is a performative and live based artist with extensive experience of working with diverse public and facilitating workshops.



Situated loosely in a land based/water based - performative arts practice, Angela's work looks to engage with ideas of embodiment and liveliness - as potential frameworks to provoke an exploration within the natural watery environment - inclusive of pressing issues.

Many of Angela's works attempt to negotiate itself in a place that is fraught of watery and tidal synchronicities, they grapple with a metaphorical abstract of a durational and performative journey, concerned with space, time and embodiment. Surfacing, somewhere between endurance and ethical concern, her work, often, floats in a cave that is bestowed to a language of a phenomenological nature. Close calling echoes of feminist discourse and practice provide powerful undercurrents that support her work, specifically that of hydrofeminist thinking (Astrida Neimanis) and ideas of trans-corporeality (Stacy Alaimo), in relation to thinking about being with the other. Both poetic and brave in response, Angela strives to produce work with a resonant, penetrable and honest voice, that attempts to facilitate a meaningful connection between the performer, the site and the witness.

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Portfolio: <https://angela-margaret-main-live-artist.wordpress.com>

## Janusz Artecki - Performer & Deviser

Janusz, originally from Poland, came to Scotland over 8 years ago to start a job.



He started learning English in Poland, but after coming to Scotland he found that his skills were very limited. Therefore, he started to study English language (ESOL) at the college, first part time, then full time. Then, he continued his studies at the college at a higher level. He retired two years ago.

In his free time, Janusz participates in English language classes, including Language Cafe, Open Book. Additionally, in his spare time he also reads books and surfs the Internet.

He was interested in the MDT project because it was a good opportunity to him to improve language skills, experience something new, and to take on a new challenge.

## Angela Calderon- Performer & Deviser



Angela is Colombian & European, a mum, a wife, a worker and also a global trotter.

She likes interacting with people and different cultures; therefore, she loves learning languages. She currently speaks Spanish and English fluently and has a good level of understanding of French, Italian and Catalanian.

She joined this theatre group because she likes acting. She chose her name for this performance as Multicolor because this pandemic has allowed her to see more colours in her life and on nature.

In the short film, Angela performs as Mrs Multicolour who lives in the flat number 5.

## Díala Díaz Lau-Performer & Deviser

Díala comes from Spain, Madrid. She has been in Aberdeen since 2018 where she lives with her family.



She holds a bachelor's degree in Business and Administration which she obtained in 2002. She worked as a teacher of Math and Principles of Economics for 9 years at the University Carlos III in Madrid. Currently, she is studying English at the North East Scotland College in Aberdeen.

In the short film, Díala performs as Elena who lives in the flat number 2b.



## Arantxa García de Sola - Performer & Deviser



Arantxa describes herself as a Spanish immigrant who is still fighting with the pidginization and the acquisition of her host country language.

She is a linguist specialising in teaching Spanish as a foreign language and a postgraduate researcher at the Universidad de Alcalá.

Arantxa is working on the study of the inherited languages, and, specifically on the transmission and preservation of Spanish among the second generation of Spanish migrants.

Besides, she is a member of her university's team working on two major linguistic corpuses of contemporary Spanish, Corpes XXI and PRESEEA.

In the short film, Arantxa as Mrs Pérez lives in the flat number 1a

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More information about her work:

<https://www.facebook.com/Comosedeciaenespanol/>

## Ngan Nguyen- Performer & Deviser

Ngan Nguyen is a Vietnamese author. She earned a master's degree in Creative Writing at the University of Aberdeen.



In the short film, Ngan lives in the flat number 4

# Marta Nitecka Barche, University of Aberdeen-Project Researcher

Marta is a PhD student at the University of Aberdeen. In her doctoral research, she explores creativity-based second language acquisition for adults. She approaches language learning as a complex, dynamic, and creative process. Marta has incorporated open-ended questionnaires, interviews, and visual interviewing techniques in her research.

Before starting her PhD, Marta completed the MSc TESOL programme at the University of Aberdeen. Her dissertation explored the flipped classroom as a teaching technique in the context of adult ESOL learners.

Marta holds also an MA in English and Literature in a World Context (University of Aberdeen). In her dissertation, she focused on the concept of activism (art as a form of activism) in contemporary performance arts.

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## Dobrochna Futro, University of Glasgow-Project Researcher

Dobrochna is a PhD student at the University of Glasgow. She explores in her research the possibility to use insights gained from researching how contemporary art engages with multilingualism to design new approaches to language learning in a multilingual context.

As part of her doctoral work, she is developing a portfolio of art-based resources for teaching L3 Polish in Scottish primary schools. Dobrochna is also involved in organising several events exploring the relationship of art practice and language learning.

Before she started her PhD, she completed an MA in Polish Philology at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland and an MA in History of Art at UCL, UK. She has a professional background in the visual art sector.

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