



Autumn in Bursa

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An impulsive response to a notice in TYA News resulted in my flying off to Turkey to deliver a workshop at the 15th International Bursa Theatre Festival for Children and Young People. Bursa is one of the largest cities in Turkey, thriving and bustling with a very rich heritage.

The festival runs over six days and I arrived on Friday evening, my workshop scheduled for Saturday afternoon, the final day of the festival. Companies come from across Europe as well as Turkey. It is incredibly well organised and the hospitality faultless, with a warm welcome, accommodation and meals and transport all provided.

Each day different theatre companies perform in different theatre venues across town and in the evening there is a 'salon' in the hotel (for the participating companies) in which the pieces are discussed. Interpreters make this accessible to everyone and it's great to be part of a community of theatre professionals from different cultures, sharing thoughts and ideas.

The spirit of the festival is to engage young people in aesthetic life that not only enriches their imaginations but also allows to them to engage in different ways of thinking and find new meaning and value in their lives. The two

pieces I saw were incredibly different – a teenage piece, ‘Clyde and Bonnie’ from Switzerland and a children’s piece, ‘Who Stole our Melody’ by the Turkish company Theater Tempo.

Challenge

This made me reflect on my own practice, the kind of work I’m interested in and why. As Associate Director at the Half Moon Young People’s Theatre I’ve been afforded wonderful opportunities to work with and develop new writing as well as developing my own style and approach in directing new work for young audiences. This was the premise of my workshop, ‘Approaches to New Writing and Directing New Work’ which I led for twenty theatre professionals. They varied from performers to theatre directors, university professors as well as a sprinkling of university students. I had an interpreter – would meaning be lost? But I needn’t have worried, yes things did take a bit longer, yes sometimes I had to re-phrase things, but it was invigorating to be working with a group of people with whom I could not take meaning for granted or make any assumptions! This meant that the responses to the exercises I set reflected the cultures and understandings from which they came. It was refreshing and thought provoking, I had to adjust and find my way through new territory. I gained a lot from this experience and it was enriching to look at theatre for young people from a ‘different lens’. Like the best professionals the participants were very generous in their responses and I wished I had been able to be there for longer. It’s a vibrant festival and theatre has the power to unite and inform and provoke, so let’s have more international conversations!

Bursa Festival is organised by ASSITEJ Turkey.