

A week in Clairefontaine

Creative Community is Contagious

I realise the title contains slightly smug alliteration, but it is a true sentiment and comes close to describing the feeling of LEATS summer school for me. Of course a week at Clairefontaine is so much more than that one sentence, but when asked to put thoughts to paper, I can only come up with descriptive words and phrases and type them over and over again.

Nothing I write can truly encapsulate the entire experience, but I shall make a vague attempt:

I had been told by trusted folk that a week at theatre summer school would be a wonderful experience and that I should take the leap and go up to Luxembourg ...or was it Belgium It would take courage; I thought.

It would take courage to spend a full 7 days with mostly extroverted strangers who may be well...strange.

The first day I am quite nervous, but 15 minutes in I realise that these strangers are friendly and yes a bit strange...but also kind and open and supportive and warm and they are keen to laugh and grow. And they want you to come along for the ride. These are my kind of people.

The goal of the week is to learn about performing, writing, directing, singing, acting and being...well...Human. My fellow students are keen and they inspire me to do the same. They inspire me to want to use all of the colours in the crayon box.

The tutors are carefully selected to teach the courses and the choice of these courses is laid out before you and explained on the first day. It is difficult to choose a course in 'Skills' and a course in 'Theme'. I am told I will get a taste of all courses in various Swap and Share sessions throughout the week, but I am greedy and want to clone myself multiple times and take each course.

Once we make our selections, we are given our courses and soon it is time for a meal and you chat with people from all over who have various points of view and different experiences and you find yourself listening, sharing and laughing.

I begin to understand that I am not only going to learn from the tutors who are in professional theatre, but I'm also going to learn from my fellow students.

I drink it all up like a thirsty sponge.

As the week goes on, people in each class begin to open up.

As the week goes on, you see people take courageous steps to overcome their own obstacles and grow. As the week goes on, we are all learning to say YES.

We students may fall in one attempt or other, but there is always a net of support to hold us up and I become a willing piece of that support net. Our work is based on process and not performance and everyone is there to learn. *Process not Performance*. It is the unspoken

mantra of summer school, but it is a strong feeling that flows like noble blood through the body of our learning.

I continue to push myself. Navigating my learning. Shedding my skin.

I find that at times I am passionately serious (much to my own amusement) while other times a situation is so funny in class that we are all reduced to giggling fits with tears rolling down our faces. Mutual and full bodied laughter and genuine comradery.

I am beginning to love every single soul in this building.

Our singing class sings a song from the 60s rock musical **HAIR** called "Aquarius".

Harmony and understanding

Sympathy and trust abounding

No more falsehoods or derisions

Golden living dreams of visions

Mystic crystal revelation

And the mind's true liberation...Aquarius

We have great fun singing this song and trying to understand those harmonies.

Some days we are more successful than others.

As we dress up as hippies from the 1960s and strut about spouting lingo of the period to feel closer to the song, I realise that the lyrics are true to our genuine experience of summer school.

As students we reveal ourselves through song, movement and acting.

As cliché as it may seem, we come to a form of mindful liberation.

This is one of the biggest reasons why students return to summer school again and again.

It is the opportunity to leave work, family and the technology of the "modern world" behind for 7 days and create a tribe of openness and learning.

They say that Creativity is Intelligence having fun.

I am ready for next summer already.