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Our Home, Our Stage: Living through in Maesot

WHAT THEATRE DOES- World Congress 26, IFTR 06.-10.07.2026

Working Group Performance and Migration

Accompanying Documentary Film:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4JSYrnJ2e4>

Introduction

In late January 2026, we staged our performance “Our Home, Our Stage” for one-hundred kids at Mudita International School in Maesot. The children were truly moved, well entertained by co-director C Thu Aung (CC), who interacted with the children before the play. The performance was enacted by Burmese young activists who had to escape from military persecution in Myanmar after the military coup in 01. February 2021 and the subsequent reign of terror. Mudita is a migrant school that is sponsored by donors in Germany, France, Spain and Switzerland, and that provides free schooling to children who come as refugees with their families. The play was developed in context of full civil war in Myanmar, especially in the ethnic borderlands of Myanmar, but also in the Burmese heartland.

The Junta and the Burmese militia have kidnapped teenagers from the street in a push of forced conscript to the front in the ongoing war. The Burmese army has torched whole villages and killed innocent civilians to destroy sanctuaries for the rebellion. Our play has covered the insecurity, the fear, the loss of home and siblings, the catastrophic economic situation, the dangerous journey to Thailand, and the refugee activism in exile.

The performance at Mudita was our second engaged performance of ethnographic theatre (Cohen-Cruz 2010, Saldana 2016), following a first performance for family and friends at “Joy house”, a Burmese community Center in the Bordertown of Maesot in the end of January 2025 that was also very warmly received and a mock performance for the camera at the end of the second workshop when we decided to shoot a documentary film on the play with filmmaker Moe. The performance at Mudita was following creative workshops with students from Mudita and Prem international schools. Our second performance was received with much enthusiasm, but also with emotions. When Wei-Zin mimed a migrant who lost her home and siblings, some of the girls in the audience started to sob, and many girls cried in the end after we were singing a revolutionary song, holding hands.

The audiences might have realized that they may not be able to return to their home in Myanmar soon again. Yet, the play was a moment of reflection in a life of struggle to

survive, and busy learning schedule, with little time to pause. The play triggered nostalgic memories of the old home, ultimately lost, and made the girls reflect about their life at Mudita. Although the girls disappeared in shame, for crying, their more mature friends and the female teachers came to their rescue and comfort, buying ice-cream, and they smiled again a little.

Background Info

Living through in Mae Sot was a constant topic of the discussions in and around the rehearsals and in the lunch and coffee breaks. Participants shared news on events, jobs and food, to support each other. Also, many lived in fear of being stopped by the Thai police and extorted for money. The changing political and more vulnerable situation of migrants in Maesot in summer 2026 had repercussions on the second workshop, together with heavy Monsoon rain. Participants did not show up as regular as during the first workshop. But when it came to the performance for the camera at the end of the second workshop, everybody was there again.

That is why the travel to Joy house was often the only travel in the day. Joy house was an excellent choice for conducting the workshops and the rehearsals. I knew the filmmaker and artist Jeanne Marie Hallacy from my ethnographic research on refugee activism and on mental health networks in Maesot. Jeanne is one of the founders of Joy House. Joy House is a Burmese community center that offers unique learning experiences and free courses in a wide range of courses- from choir to painting, Burmese dance, violin and martial arts.

Joy House understands itself as an open house that promotes inter-cultural encounter and dialogue. There is no course fee, and no less than fifty teachers and artists from Myanmar are employed as volunteers with a small wage to offer an amazing program. After consulting with the managing board of Joy House, I was invited as a guest lecturer for a workshop of ten days. Twenty people, many of them regular visitors at Joy House, followed my announcement in the social media and registered. The participants originated from a new wave of well-educated, middle-class refugee-migrants who fled from political persecution after the military coup now five years ago, often hailing from the capital Yangon, and all regions of Myanmar, to Maesot. None of the refugees claimed asylum or were recognized as refugees by the UNHCR but stayed with temporary residence documents precariously in Mae Sot.

People were actively seeking for jobs in NGO ´s, foundations, independent media, and in schools, but were also using help from siblings. Burmese migrants however skillfully built their own networks and civil society organizations, cafes, hospitals, schools, and churches and they moved within this little Burma in Maesot in their own language. They organized public lectures, art exhibitions, and mental health counselling for their own community. In this way, the learning center at Joy House is an open house by and for the community, where visitors and participants feel at ease and comfort. The many trainings

organized by Burmese community leaders empower a community that is affected by constant threat of arrest and deportation.

The Play

The play grew from three workshops on the project of Theatre dreams: Performing arts and Storytelling for Peace- and Changemakers that I was conducting in January 2025, August 2025 and January 2026 with twenty motivated people from Myanmar at Joy house. Joy House was the ideal choice for a learning and rehearsal experience and workshop. For this project, I was invited by Joy House, a community center from Burmese activists for Burmese migrants and refugees and religious communities in the border town of Mae Sot in Northwestern Thailand. In this unique house, courses are offered by Burmese artists and teachers who are themselves refugees and find work and dignity at Joy house, for the Burmese migrant community, taking a rest after going through traumatic experiences of transition and loss. Joy house provides a safe space for the Burmese migrant community to have a great time and to develop skills in arts and music, Yoga and martial arts, in Thai and English. In providing the cultural resources for wellness, wellbeing and creativity, Joy House has become a central place for reunion, community-building, for mental health support and stress relief. In addition to participating in courses, traumatized migrants and refugees can also benefit from professional counseling. Therapists from Myanmar who participated in the Civil Disobedience movement and are currently living in Mae Sot also use the rooms at Joy House for community counseling.

Twenty people, from seventeen to 20+ (with some exceptions of participants of 40+) came to meet me before the new year 2025, eager to explore theatre. At that time, we were very far from imagining a performance. The players were all amateur actors, and it was their first exposure to theatre. Only one of the participants, C Aung Thung (CC), received training by a Rumanian coach specializing in the Theatre of the Oppressed in a private school in Yangoon (that has unfortunately dissolved) and used to perform in public parks. CC quickly joined me in teaching warming up and basic exercises of bodily expression before entering the first human sculpture and image activating each other and speaking about associations of home. CC is now co-directing the performance and rehearsals before we play.

Biographical theatre inspired by Maïke Plath (2009) was used to frame the workshop: Biographical theatre transforms memories, stories, emotions, life experiences, and imagination into performance. Through movement, storytelling, writing, images, music, and other creative tools, participants explored how personal stories become artistic expression. We followed Plath's advice that private intimate knowledge should not be put on stage. I let the participants decide about the contents played on stage and provided the aesthetical tools to change and alienate images in a way that they cannot be led back to the original sender.

In addition, I used Boal on Theatre of the Oppressed/ Rainbow of Desire (2021), Grotowski on poor theatre, Barba on theatre anthropology, Stanislavski on imagination (Hentschel), and Volxtheater with x (Grässlin/ Zielke 2023). I explained that I did not come with a fixed script, but that I am interested in the stories of the participants themselves, relating to the theme of home and friendship. The open, inclusive approach of Matthias Grässlin does not give any prescriptions but is fully concentrated on the creativity of the participants. While improtheatre is based on the playful creativity of the participants, the integrative approach of Grässlin and Zielke is based on principles of inclusion, dignity, absolute tolerance, care, and non-discrimination. For theatre anthropology, we were interested, in the memory of emotions, the environment and the social experiences of the character and how the emotional memory is manifested in the body movement (Schechner 1990).

These stories would reflect many painful narratives from current Myanmar. The scenes were thus built from the stories and knowledge of the participants and subsequently shared and reconstructed and changed in a memorial collage. The participants become the players of their own story and destiny, however varied and distanced by aesthetical means of movement, gestures and bodily expressions. As Hinz (2014) explains, this participatory approach allows for the democratization of knowledge at the grassroots and can be expressed with the means of body and theatrical play which allows for a degree of visibility and affection that is not possible in an academic text. This form of theatre can also be called *people's theatre* as it belongs to the participants. It is based on research, or better, self-reflection, personal memory, and cultural resources and is played by migrant activists and not by professional actors. It is thus an improvised, experimental theatre based on vernacular knowledge and resources rather than drama. For the people's theatre approach it is not only important that we draw on the resources of the participants, but we decided from the start to conduct the performance in the vernacular Burmese language for the simple reason that participants feel natural and at ease in their own language. Also, we have shown the performance so far only to Burmese-speaking audiences as we wanted to keep the public performance for friends and relatives. For the second performance, we reached out to a Burmese audience at Mudita migrant schools, but this is very much considered our turf as well. We might perform for the International Conference on Myanmar/ Burma Studies in Chiang Mai in August for a Burmese and international Burmese-literate audience. This would be a major step for the team and a major challenge, too. Emotions must be expressed even stronger and spectacular to reach a broad audience. Until now, the performance has been very soft-spoken and poetic.

While the performance is complete, the script is still flexible and can be modified or adjusted if needed. Together, these stories formed the basis for a new, collectivized story expressed through theatrical means. Biographical theatre offers a space where personal memories can be transformed into collective memory, and where individual stories can become a starting point for reflecting on the society we live in (Plath 2009).

Theatre then becomes a medium through which personal memories can be transformed into collective action and social reflection.

Moving beyond the question of “who am I”, we begin to ask, “Who are we?”, our work thus led the focus towards ordinary people, whose stories and memories are equally valuable. By exploring biographies, we discovered shared connections, shared hopes, dreams, and social experiences. Following the work of Boal, we want to give voice to the voiceless and to center the lives and life struggles of a marginalized, largely invisible group. We also avoided the term refugee, since we found it depersonalizing, and stigmatizing. Instead, individual characters and their individual stories came to center stage. In the current atmosphere of the rise of Thai nationalism, refugee was often associated with burden or danger, and we did not see any reason to call ourselves a migrant or refugee theatre.



Nonetheless, I provided the frame, methodologies, and techniques and kept a leadership role. I constantly guided the participants by setting up the frame, structure, timetable and by leading the exercises for indulging into the spirit of performing arts. I explained that the players are owners of their script and their performance and that I was their facilitator. That approach was very well taken and contributed to a spirit of trust and solidarity. This approach requires an open approach for the needs and resources of the players, active and intense listening by the facilitator to all players, and support in the sequence of exercises and for scene-building. It is from there that the

facilitator proposed to structure the play into three connected parts that include the time sequence of the life trajectory of the participants: old home, the journey and transition from Myanmar to Thailand, to living in exile and new engagement and activism.

I proposed home as a theme to guide our performance and home turned out to be a topic that was speaking meaningfully and compellingly to people who had a strong emotional relationship with home. The topic of home also allowed to make political statements without touching sensitive political topics that could endanger the participants in Thailand. Home also turned out to be a silent topic that was elegant to use to avoid violence on the stage. Violence was strictly avoided as I was very concerned about triggering traumata from the violence experienced in Myanmar. As the example of the performance at Mudita shows, traumata were never far away and I also one or two incidences, where actors were crying during the rehearsals or asked not to participate in a scene or exercise for personal reasons. From the beginning, the playing ground was promoted as a safe space in which it is possible to share life stories and experiences without the story or experience leaving the room. Moreover, actors were encouraged to interrupt and leave when needed, with the invitation to return.

After the first modules on a choreography of “dancing into your life”, and the first basic imagination exercises, a writing and idea lab was initiated in which the participants wrote down their stories and memories on colorful cards and paper that they associated with their home of birth in Myanmar, their childhood, and their homecomings. The favorite meal of my grandmother at the open fire and the smell of the plants, trees and flowers in the garden were sensual associations with home and belonging.

We used all kind of materials and objects, especially houseware, tableware, music, photos, paintings, food, stuffed animals and other memories from childhood for our first scene on the old, original home. In it, the conversations around the eating table, the joking and friendly disputes between family members contributed to an authentic, recognizable image of home. On the first day of practicing, we found each other into a human sculpture, closing our eyes. After opening our eyes, we expressed our feelings of home, activating the next person to express her association with home and its meaning. “For me, home means a place without fear.”

We integrated this very first scene into our play as a starting scene. The second part centered around the talisman. The talisman was the precious, indispensable object that cannot be given away. Among the objects chosen were a necklace with a Buddhist image, a dairy book, a guitar, stuffed animal, a painting of prison and incarceration, and many other items. The talisman was first introduced by the players, wearing their emotional masks, before playing out the talisman stories in scenes. The third part focused on the theme of living in exile. It showed the difficult first time in getting used to life in Thailand, also includes refugee activism and public spheres. After the water festival, in which all players dance on stage, and invite the audiences, the play ends with

the players singing the revolutionary song, wearing one more time their emotional masks.

During the second workshop, we started with Forum theatre and theatre of the oppressed: we played a scene at the Police Station. A girl was caught without driving license and escorted to the police station. There, the police officer approaches the young girl with malicious intention. In a repetition of the same scene, we changed by bringing in a Thai person who recognizes the person in custody and superficially flirts with the police officer to bail her friend out.

Also, in the second round of workshops, a prison cell was added. In the prison scene, there is a story about a prison guard and a female young prisoner. In the first scene, the young prisoner is punished for misbehavior by withdrawing the food ration. In the second scene, the scene is transformed to the advantage of the young prisoner. Based on a real story, the prison guard develops solidarity for the young prisoner as he sees her clean heart and innocence. He provides extra food and utensils for the young artist to practice in the prison cell. Doing so, he risks his own life. The prison cell was widely debated by a political prisoner. He has only encountered the prison guard from the first scene. Although I have discussed the intention to bring about social change in theatre, we decided not to perform the prison cell yet. The fear that the scene could be misunderstood, was too great.

Community Theatre in Thailand

Community Theatre has been established as alternative and niche around the world, involving underprivileged communities in socially engaged theatre (van Erven 2001). There is a vibrant, slightly underfunded community theatre scene in Thailand. The international theatre group *Makhampom* at Makhampom Art Space in Chiang Dao actively engages communities in Chiang Dao and environments in Northern Thailand, while its director, actor and dancer Thanupon Yindee (Golf) has a close relationship and social network with the community theatre and the gay scene in Chiang Mai. Golf is a queer artist, interested in queer futures and gender equality. He has worked on community theatre to raise awareness of children's rights, to address stateless and ethnic minority rights in Northern Thailand.

In Bangkok, Sornchai Chatwiriychai (Sonny) has established *Malongduu* theatre, the first Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) group in Thailand. In 2025, Sonny was awarded the justice price for constantly engaging with marginalized groups and issues of discrimination in Thai society. Sonny has directed many forum theatre productions like the legislative theatre production with players from Myanmar "Can you sing the national anthem", as well as productions against gender and disability discrimination. Core member Songsiri Putthongchai has directed a legislative theatre production with her students at Thammasat University against discrimination of homeless people for

different stakeholders. Her students at Thammasat University participate enthusiastically in her course on “participatory theatre for action research”.

Although some of the community theatres in Bangkok and Chiang Mai have engaged with migrant communities in Mae Sot, theatre has not yet been offered at Joy House and very sporadically otherwise. The plan is to introduce regular theatre workshops at Mudita International School.

CC from our team has started community theatre with his friends and has founded the Humanity Development Center Myanmar to enhance capacity of youth along the border by training in basic performance art, funded by private humanitarian foundations and donors in Maesot. His training is called aptly “The Silent Scream”. His team has already trained three batches.

What Theatre does

The experience of acting was perceived by the participants as liberating and healing. As one participant expressed, it is as they were able to express feelings deeply present but repressed in the subconsciousness, that are not allowed to leave in the everyday. Expressing emotions of joy and loss, pain and sorrow, laughing, cohesion, a feeling of warmth and togetherness resulted in consolidation and stress relief. That was the case throughout the workshop, as we worked together every day and shared meals together. We have kept a wonderful atmosphere characterized by solidarity, and mutual respect. The participants did not know each other before the workshops, and except of C Thu Aung had no performing experiences, but increasingly stuck together as a community of “fate”. Acting was also experienced as healing, as it permitted a joyful and fun experience beyond the everyday. All the participants were very motivated and did not miss a single day of the rehearsals during the first workshop. The weather was also very nice and sunny, with some clouds and a fresh breeze.

While the play had no therapeutic ambition, the practicing in their own view bolstered the participants’ self-confidence, their resilience and their mental health. Alexander also organized a workshop on performing arts and mental health with Rise foundation in Mae Sot, that was very well received by new and old participants. For this workshop, we used images of emotions, and later added paper masks that the participants painted with emotions.

I reproduced the safe space that Joy house constituted for the Burmese community in a hostile environment and explained that all emotions have a place and that all emotions can be expressed in the safe space. I assured everybody from the beginning that we use the biographical material to build something new. The new story was a collective and fictive story, not the individual story anymore. The fictive story was nevertheless related to the everyday life of the participants, without exposing intimate details. However, when some of the participants decided to display individual stories, such as the painting of a fiancé from prison, I did not intervention. However, the aesthetical method of distancing

(see Plath 2009) was used to modify the character as well as the script and give them a fictitious character.

Another aspect that protected the participants was the framing of the performance to a theme. The theme on the meaning of home provided a neutral ground for storytelling and a refreshing focus to tell stories creatively. The theme of home also avoided a political exposure of the ensemble in public space, avoiding explicit political topics to protect the participants and Joy House from censorship or harassment. The aesthetic character of the play and the aesthetic tools of the performance contributed to the space of imagination and interpretation. Everyday methods of learning gave special attention to the fragile status of migrants in Thailand. When we sang a revolutionary song at Mudita hand in hand, we probably crossed the limit. In Mae Sot, it is always possible that the police would raid or possibly close Mudita school or, for that instance, Joy House for Myanmar “propaganda”.

The participants discovered the magic of theatre for themselves and founded their own community theatre group- the fireflies and organized their own performance at a space for Myanmar youth on the “sham elections” and continued political persecution in Myanmar. They have thus established community theatre in Mae Sot. Participants were increasingly interested in using theatre for political statements, but also had to navigate their precarious livelihood. As a next step, I was thinking to introduce a new play on the social meaning of revolution in the Myanmar democracy movement, imagining peaceful means to contribute to the revolution, like music or poetry slam.



Playing

The workshop on Performing Arts and Storytelling for Peace- and Changemakers started on 08.01.2025.

Day 1

My first task was to introduce the participants to theatre. After a short presentation of my plan and my aims for the course, we therefore started with warming up exercises.

First, I wanted to create a warm atmosphere and open the group.

We started with some name memory games, in which the participants presented themselves with a gesture. Then, everybody repeated the name and the gesture. We also used the gesture to greet each other.

We also used a ball to play with and to remember the names.

After this, we played the energy game of Hep and hop, with some variations.

After this, I played a song on Mother Earth for first movement of our bodies. We engaged in a dance and small choreography to dedicate ourselves to mother earth.

The writing lab

Then, the first part of the workshop started. I encouraged the participants to begin a writing lab and to write their associations with home. I explained that the meaning of the exercise was to prepare the impro performance and to develop the first scenes from the story.

This includes the memories of home and what was attached to home, especially the sensual parts, like the smell of the house, the communal cooking, and the love. The participants presented their small writing sketches and poetry or images, and gave beautiful stories about childhood memories, stories of loss and pain, stories of cooking and of the heart. Some stories were heartbreaking. The husband of one of the participants was in jail and painted an image, with his hand reaching out of the prison cell. The son of one of the participants was also in jail for his protest the military oppression. M. also decided to play her case in the talisman part.

The sketches from the writing lab were then presented on a table and performed on day 2. I started the Forum- and Impro-theatre on a topic like children playground to create human statues and configurations. From there, we finally created a human statue configuration on the meaning of home, using the narratives of home that we collected in the poetry-slam/ writing lab. The human statue looked beautiful. The participants would activate the statues and say one sentence about the meaning of home.

Day 2, 09.01.2025

On day 2, we started with warming up exercises, dancing, and exercises from Forum-theatre on guidance and loss of self-control, first by hand in front of the face, then, driving first with open eyes, and then with closed eyes, struggling for orientation.

We again reviewed the poetry slam stories on the meaning of home from the first day. We continued by preparing small scenes on the stories in groups of four people. I was carefully coaching the groups preparing the scenes. The room was divided into stage and audience and the audience called the actors on the stage. Then, the actors performed the scenes. After applause, the actors received feedback from the audience and from the regisseur. At the end of the day, I asked the participants to bring a talisman. The talisman is a precious object that provided protection and warmth during the uncertain transition to a new home. On that day, we decided that our play would be entitled "our home, our place". The title demonstrated the associations the participants had with their home, but also the claim to their homes and to their visibility in public space. Joy house stands for a public space to be used for creative activities and personal development.

Day 3, 10.01.2025

On day 3, we started with the ritual, warming-up exercises, moving exercises, and then imagined ourselves to become an animal. The animals were then played out and recognized by the audience.

We then started a new chapter, by presenting our talismans to each other. This took some time. After explaining the story and life of the talisman, we had third party playing the story of the talisman on the stage. This worked quite well.

Day 4, 11.01.2025

On day 4, we started with ritual, warming up, and dancing, followed by the play of strong emotions, like greed and disgust.

This was followed by playing scenes of the talisman in small groups of two, three and four persons. We put a strong focus on the talisman, its life and story, putting the object into the center of the play and rehearsals, and the participants responded by for example opening a box and thereby activating it. The story of the talisman was developed in the small groups until perfection.

Day 5, 12.01.2025

On day 5, we started with ritual, warming-up, and dancing, and with song-singing, starting with John Lennon's Imagine. Traditional and modern songs have been sung.

We started with a new chapter, the new home. We started by sketching paintings on paper of the new home and the dream home, reflecting the aspirations for a future. The new dream home was presented by the artists for the audience. As this exercise involved documentation as well as imagination, the painting was preferred to the poetry slam. We reflected together on the hurdles of new life in Mae Sot, Thailand, on the harassment of Burmese migrants by the Thai police, but also on the many good projects initiated by Joy house and many other NGO's and local organizations.

Day 6, 13.01.2025

On day 6, after ritual and moving, including some exercises on energy and resonance, we have prepared the scenes on the new home, including instruments like guitar, singing and dance. We learned to balance play and music by additional exercises on scene building. The feedback was so positive that we decided to form the performance as a musical. That meant that we integrated instruments (guitar), singing and dancing into the design of the scenes.

Day 7, 14.01.2025

On day 7, after ritual and moving, we reflected on the structure of the play and the order of sequences, whereby the participants helped to establish a good structure and timetable. After this, we put all the scenes from day 1 to day 7 together. We structured the performance into 3 parts. The first part is on the meaning of home, following an opening scene structured as a human statue. The second part is on the talisman, putting the object to the center of attention. The third part is on the new home, including the community-center of Joy house.

We ended with an ice-breaking game on the monster that wants to eat the participants.

Day 08, 15.01.2025

On day 8, after warming up exercises, we played all scenes for final rehearsal from the beginning until the end. It turned out to be a wonderful performance. We ended with a ritual and went for dinner in a cozy Burmese restaurant.

Day 09, 16.01.2025

On day 9, we performed the play perfectly, although we needed more time than expected. We needed approx. 1 hour and 30 minutes, with many breaks, while we needed only 45 minutes for the final rehearsal. The audience made up of families and friends was very happy and enjoyed the play greatly. We got fantastic feedback from the actors as well as from the audiences, including teachers and some NGO from the “Thriving” Shin Tan Yar network.

The performance on the last day was recorded and the recording was edited.

Second round of workshop in Maesot from 21-30.07.2025

I prepared the second workshop by contacting the group in social media and received an enthusiastic response. From the 20 participants, only 10 remained, but we had 2 additional participants, and thus had 12 players for the second performance. On the one hand, we would take up the rehearsals from last time. We agreed that we need a compression of the scenes by integrating some scenes and to create play of no more than 30 minutes. We agreed to perform for teenagers at Mudita School on the invitation of its headmaster, Markus Meier.

In addition to the previous workshop, we added Forum-theatre as in the first workshop we only touched on epic theatre and political statements. We decided to introduce the topic of democracy and hold a writing-lab on the hopes that participants associated with democracy. Forum-theatre was introduced to articulate the voices of the subaltern and bring them to the front stage. After some warming up exercises and games, we re-introduced the human statue and the possibility to form the human statue by changing its position and gesture.

Second, the biggest move and daring step taken forward was the introduction of masks and their integration into the performance. For this new adventure, I brought white standard paper masks with me and Joy House provided acrylic colors. While the Rohingya participants used orange-colored masks to represent the despised Burma army in their play “I am Rohingya. A Genocide in four acts”, we moved one step further by asking the participants to create an individual mask, created along their own imagination. After completing the beautifully crafted masks, the actors moved within their new masks, learning to play with masks and to adjust their movements accordingly.

Day 1, 21.07.2025

We learned about the theatre of the Oppressed and the Rainbow of Desire. We started with some warming up exercises and games, repeating some of the exercises on control, domination and resistance. We also repeated some of the exercises playing with closed eyes. After the exercises, we played epic statements on the worries and hopes that participants associated with the revolution.

Day 2, 22.07.2025

After playing some easy scenes, we played a scene at the police station. The harassment of Thai people by the Thai police in Maesot is commonplace. I introduced that we may ask the audience for solutions for a case of sexual harassment. The participants came up with a scene in which the visitor flatters the police officer in charge, while saving the victim from possible violence while in another scene the visitor recognizes the assistant from school days and solidarizes with her to assist the victim again. The aim of the scene was to overcome the oppression taking place and to initiate a change of the power relations. We integrated this scene into part three of the performance on life in exile. The participants discussed the scene and its transformations wildly, contributing to a lively discussion.

Day 3, 23.0.2025

After some warming up and moving, we played another scene of the Forum-theatre, the prison scene. The prisoner is taken into the cell by the prison guard. After a while, the guard comes into a conversation with the female prisoner, exposing some sympathies for her. While the beginning shows a standard oppressive situation, the scene is now open for transformation. The guard is changing perspective, telling the prisoner about his ill wife and his miserable life, making the guard more human. The prison scene and its utopian transformation was contested among the participants. Especially one participant who used to be a political prisoner, objected against the humanization of the prison guard. The young actors who played the scene on the other hand enjoyed the turn of the scene. We did not integrate the scene into the play because the topic was too sensitive for the participants. However, the scene was a good illustration of Boal's approach and was accepted as such after I explained the utopian potential of theatre and the fact that I had a real example of a prison guard who provided working tools and additional food to an artist in Insein prison.

Day 4, 24.07.2025

On day 4, We returned to our performance on the meaning of home, integrating the masks in a pre-scene, introducing the masks and the talisman one by one, producing another powerful image. After that, we combined three individual scenes of part two on the talisman into one scene, in which the participants presented their talisman to each other.

Day 5, 25.07.2025

On day 5, I organized and crafted a special day for some old and some new participants in collaboration with the Rise Foundation as part of the Shin Tan Yar network on the topic of drama and healing. We had an amazing day. The aim of the day was to initiate a travel to the inner self and to develop one's wonderful and miraculous resources and talents to the full.

The participants were introduced step by step to bodily expression, imagination, and to expression of emotions, such as happiness, joy, excitement, sadness, grief, etc. After some easy human statues ("I am a tree"), and configurations, like the machine, we had an extensive writing lab on the notion of friendship and qualities the participants associate with it. We presented the ideas about and expectations on friendship and developed the first sketches from there. After a human statue, in which everybody expressed their personal understanding of friendship, we had lunch, with lots of good vibes. After lunch, we played the scenes, building creatively on our material and discussion on friendship. Finally, we used the individual masks, so nicely painted, to play extended scenes on friendship. Before playing, the participants had sufficient time to prepare and discuss the scenes.

For concluding, we made ourselves comfortable on mats and I started a travel to the inner self, speaking about the day we shared, about our thoughts, diving into our childhood, and back to our current state, seeking calmness and peace of mind, and developing our resources to the full.

This special day also marked the start of a documentary film project on my workshop and project on *ethnodrama* or ethnography, drama and storytelling. For this purpose, I requested help from a professional filmmaker, Moe. I was very happy to have him and to work with him. Beforehand, I discussed the aims of the film with the team: I suggested that we can submit the documentary film of 30 minutes to film festivals and to open it for interested audiences, especially for the Burmese Diaspora. The participants were very keen on the film and excited about the perspective to share their performance with transnational Myanmar audiences. From 25-29.08.2025, Moe and his team (Sound and Light) filmed our rehearsals and our performance on 29.08.

Day 6, 26.07.2025 and Day 7, 27.07.2025

In the weekend, after moving, warming-up and some games, we engaged in rehearsals on part two about talisman and the third part about living in exile. We discussed about integrating the new scenes and decided to take in the scene at the Thai police station, even it was sensitive. We decided against integrating the prison scene as it was too emotional for some of the participants who were also affected. We agreed that we are moving on a thin line about what can be said in public, depending on the audience.

We have not yet played in public space, but we are looking forward to the performance at Mudita migrant school. We have visited the school with three participants of our team and planned workshop with the kids (10-12 years old), and a performance for the

teenagers and young adults (13-18 years old). However, we were forced to postpone the show due to heavy rain and flooding at the school.

Day 28.07.2025

On Monday, we had a general rehearsal for the performance at Mudita. We played and performed all day from 10-17.00. It was not easy to get the whole team together this time, but we managed to have everybody on board for Monday and Tuesday. The general rehearsal went very well. Before playing, we reviewed the structure of the play on Saturday and Sunday, and the discussion continued in the social media in our telegram group until Sunday night.

Everybody was very focused, and we introduced beautiful decoration and props, also for the colors of the film. We introduced black clothes and light, with additional lamps and microphones, but dropped the idea of a curtain, as the curtain must be upheld by hands, requiring additional advice for opening and closing.

29.07.2025

The performance had to be postponed due to heavy rains and flooding at the school. Nevertheless, we decided to play the performance for the camera and the video that Moe and his team directed. Everybody was very focused on the performance and the participants brought beautiful clothes and costumes. We played for roughly 1 hour, without curtain. As we had no audience this time, we sometimes repeated the scenes and introduced the masks in the part 2 on talismans and for the masquerade with revolutionary song.

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