

Street Theatre Performance
Monitoring & Mentoring
[01-05-2005 to 04-05-2005]

REPORT



Culture and Communication
&
School of Media Studies
Loyola College, Chennai 600 034

Monitoring and Mentoring

[01.05.05 – 04.05.05]

After the training programme conducted by Culture and Communication and the School of Media Studies, the resource team went to observe how the different troupes were faring in their respective districts. The team consisted of Prof S Rajanayagam, Prof R Kaleeswaran, Prof Subramani, Prof Chinnappan, Mr Adaikalaraj and Mr Jonathan Ambrose. The field visit commenced on 01.05.05 in Madurai as per the already agreed-upon schedule.

Madurai [01/05]



The group from Madurai comprised of three men, three women and a Taval Player. The team performed in Periyar Bus Stand not bothering about the scorching mid-day sun, with no slippers to protect their feet.

The overall performance was very good, though there was a little confusion in using the exact lines from the script. There was a problem with voice modulation and the use of space. Mr. Ajay Patel provided them with a small sound amplification system and tested if it helped them. Though the equipment certainly amplified the voice [which was very

useful in a crowded place such as a bus stand], but the performer using the equipment was very conscious of it and it was found to be a hindrance to effective performance.

Immediately after the performance, suggestions for improvement were given to them then and there. The team had not yet purchased the 'singi' and 'silambu sticks'. They were also advised to use masks in the performance.

Even though the crowd was less, it consisted of a significant number of target group members. It was noteworthy that none of the sheets listing the approved doctors in that locality was thrown away [which is the fate of any other handbill / bit-notice distributed to the public].

Dindigul

The performance did not happen at the stipulated time and therefore the field observation of their performance was not possible.

Coimbatore [02/05]

At Coimbatore the street play performance was held in Sengi Palayam Railway gate and a busy shopping area in Sengi Palayam highway. Two members of this team were new; they didn't undergo the training programme at Loyola College. One was their Tavail Player and the other was their Parai Player.



Of the two places the performance at ‘mulambur’ railway gate was attended by many members of the target group, while the second one drew a huge audience mostly consisting of the general public.

The team leader gave a flawless performance. Mr. Manikaraj who was the Kattiangkaran gave a stupendous performance that was very much appreciated. The new lady artiste Shanthi had a loud voice. The man who played ‘raja’ in the play was wearing a mask, but he was wearing it throughout leading to difficulty in voice clarity. The Taval Beat did not go well with the song. They did not use ‘singi’ and the ‘silambu sticks’.

On the whole, the performance at both the spots were good but the one at the Sengi Palayam Railway gate did not have a sense of completion. Probably because not much attention was paid by the organizers in choosing the right spot and appropriate time for the performance. As a result, the performers were tired and low-spirited after the first performance. However, they all bounced back rejuvenated once they saw the overwhelming reception in the second spot. Suggestions were given as to rectify the faults observed.

Erode [03/05]

The performance was held at the VOC lorry ground. The choice of the venue was appreciable as it contained a good number of the target group members.



Of the four people who were given training only two turned up. They had brought four new people who were not trained in Street Plays or Body Language. Their performance was mediocre. Even the group leader Mr Prabu Doss and Ms Nadhia [who had undergone our training] did not perform to the extent they were capable of. They had not used the props to the right extent. They kept giving wrong information about the STI.

The team had taken much efforts to arrange for a Maruti Omni, a sound system and a Tabla. While the sound system was of some help to reach out to the dispersed audience, it amounted to a hindrance in the final analysis.

While the choice of the area was very appropriate, the timing and the exact spot of the performance were not properly chosen. It was a hot mid-day, and there was no shade in the spot of performance for the audience to gather. As a consequence, the audience members were forced to stay under the thatched roofs in front of their respective offices scattered throughout the area and quite many of them preferred to sit in their lorries.

The team members were instructed to rectify their faults and it was insisted that they use only well trained performers.

Namakkal [03/05]

This team performed near an auto stand at Rasipuram town. In this team a lady artist did not turn up. They had brought a new member named Chinnathambi. The beat of the tavil player did not match with the song. So Mr. Kaleeswaran jumped in to teach him on the spot even while he was playing for the performance. The new participant also performed well.



Though it was initially doubted as to whether there will be a big turn out to watch the performance as the performance went on a big crowd assembled to watch. Even this group had not used 'singi' and 'silambu sticks'.

Only a few minor faults were observed and ways to rectify such faults were given.

Salem [03/05]

The performance here was held as one of the many items of the big function to felicitate the team that had come walking from Delhi creating awareness about AIDS.



Since the performance was held on the stage before a passive audience, the performance, though spectacular, was not as effective as it would have been in the street. The team performed 'Kutti Raja' with apt costumes, and the performance was widely appreciated. However, the context and the ambience were such that there was no scope for audience participation and feedback.

Since the team members had taken part in a long procession before the performance they looked tired.

Dharmapuri [04/05]

The performance was held at 10 AM in the premises of the district Government Hospital. It was presided over by the District Joint Director for Health Mr Subramainam, in the presence of Central Government's Field Publicity officer Mr. Moorthy. The performance was well organized with proper costumes and appropriate music. This was well received by the audience.



The programme was a success because of: (1) the excellent performance of the artistes, both individually and collectively, (2) the right choice of the venue and the spot, (3) the appropriate timing, and (4) the whole-hearted cooperation of the hospital officials.

Vellore [04/05]

The performance was held in front of the Vellore Fort near the Corporation Office. The band of musicians made a brilliant performance with their 'Tavil' and 'parrai'. Their beats attracted the entire area. A new lady performer had joined the group. The performers who were already trained gave a flawless performance.

The crowd that gathered disturbed the traffic in the main road and the police intervention caused a bit of a tension, which was soon deftly resolved by the PSI.



The performance was based entirely on the script and the message reached the audience with clarity and focus. The way the group collected feedback from the audience is worth mentioning.

General Observation and Suggestions

1. The script was not read and interiorised completely.
2. The performers seemed to be in a hurry to bring the performance to an end.
3. The groups had not made effective use of the properties.
4. The performance was found to be good where there was a sizable audience.
5. The performers tended to get dejected if the crowd was thin.
6. The performers from Namakkal and Coimbatore found it difficult to sing in accordance with the Tavil beat.
7. The Team from Erode was yet to realize the importance of the training.
8. The new members in the teams without professional training have to make serious efforts.
9. The teams should rehearse at least one hour a day.
10. The teams must understand the importance of going as a procession before commencing the play.
11. The teams should learn to perform without depending on the script.

12. The teams can have folk performances like 'Kollattam', 'Kummi', and 'Oillattam' before the start of the play.
13. The teams should not have any other role after the street play is over.
14. The teams must practice along with the Tavil players.
15. Since the audience members are all around the performers, the actors must turn towards all the sides so that no part of the audience is excluded.
16. The teams must use creative and appropriate techniques to collect the audience in the selected venues.
17. The performers must be loud enough to attract the audience's attention.
18. The performers must drink warm water to protect their voice.
19. The performers must take adequate rest.
20. The performers must stick to the lines in the script.
21. The performers must start and end the performance with the prelude and the conclusion given in the script.
22. The acting space in the venue must be expanded while performing the play.



Resource Team

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