

| PEOPLE

Petit Theatre: We are not Teachers but Explorers



Members form a "moving castle" to explore their body movements. The three-person castle grows bigger as more people join. This activity trains students to find conceivable ways to move their bodies through space.

Fully immersed in her performance, Jasmine sits upright, her legs crossed, and calmly gives orders, perfectly capturing the essence of her character. "You were portraying everything so well that you became the character! It was as if you have been a CEO before!" After Jasmine finished her performance, she was showered with praises and compliments by her instructors Hsi-Han Chen, Tzu-Yao Lin, and Chia-Ling Chien. Chen, Lin, and Chien are three of the five founding members of Petit Theatre, a theatre workshop that hosts creative drama courses at NTU.

Feeling lost? Join NTU's first drama-based communication course

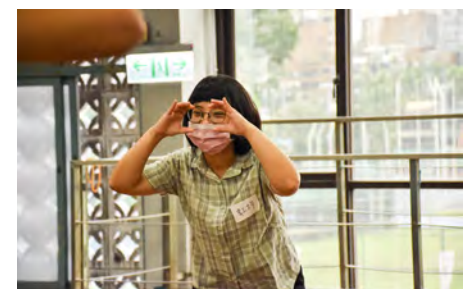
Chen remarked, "Compared to the rigid routine in high school, we enjoy a lot more freedom in college. Yet after entering NTU, I was mostly overwhelmed by a feeling of loss and confusion." She soon discovered that she was not the only one who felt this way and that many students on campus shared the same struggle. Although students are given many options upon entering college, most of them do not know how to choose or make decisions. "That strong feeling of being lost, unsure, and confused is what eventually evolved into Petit Theatre."

In 2020, COVID-19 engulfed the world, and the chaos and impact of the outbreak led to unprecedented fear among people. At the same time, this fear drove people to press the pause button in their lives and take time to understand themselves better. It was during this time that Chen and Lin established Petit Theatre, with the mission to help people to explore their hidden talents and traits and thus discover their position and value in society.

Petit Theatre came into existence with perfect timing, offering people a chance to reflect on themselves during the COVID restrictions. However, it was not smooth sailing at first. The first two years were incredibly challenging for the team due to the high member turnover rate. Watching members come and go was not easy, but Chen and Lin dealt with such tensions and



The moving castle formed by the three students exploring the space in front of a bigger castle formed by a larger group.



Participant Hung-Chun Lai learns how to better use her body language to express herself in a group.

frustrations with what they knew best—creative drama. They developed a creative facilitation activity within their team, leading members in exercises that helped guide their emotions and feelings safely and responsively. Through such activities, members explored their inner thoughts and reflections while also practicing listening to each other's voices and body movements. The experiment of communicating and exploring through drama began with the core members of Petit Theatre, and this tradition continues. All the instructors working at the Theatre just lead and inspire students through their own personal experience of the activities.

In November 2022, with the support of NTU D-school and the NTU Leadership Program, Petit Theatre expanded its secret teambuilding activity into a three-week teambuilding creative workshop open to all NTU students. By sharing their communication experience, members hope to benefit people who wish to build team consensus and cultivate successful teamwork.

“Show, don't tell” is the key to building common good

The course covers seven themes, including mood, spatial relations, imagination, observation, understanding and cooperation, impromptu, and drama creation. Through the different activities and games performed under the guidance of the instructors, students explore themselves and their relationships within the team and society and connect their understanding with lived experience.

“I tend to be quiet in a group, and rarely speak,” said Yun-Ci You, one of the students who attended the course. “However, the improvisation exercises we did in class truly helped me to react intuitively, and I learned things about myself that I was never aware of before,” she added. As she recalled her time with Petit Theatre she smiled and asserted, “I’m amazed by how good the instructors are at leading and guiding us in thinking. I was able to associate these activities to real life and my interpersonal skills are now greatly improved.”

The three-week journey is a meaningful time for both students and instructors at Petit Theatre. Students enjoy learning surprising elements of themselves in a fun and creative manner that differs dramatically from traditional pedagogy. “We think of ourselves not as instructors, but as explorers helping one another on this journey of self-discovery,” declared one member of Petit Theatre.



Students posting their feedback on a mirror to exchange ideas.



Tzu-Yao Lin (middle) and Chia-Ling Chien (second from the left) sit in groups with the students to discuss their performance.

National Taiwan University

+886-2-3366-2577

No.1, Sec. 4, Roosevelt Road Taipei, 10617 Taiwan

ntuhighlights.ntu.edu.tw

