



10 Million Trees

*EDEN Engagement: Budapest
Seed City Curriculum
Dóra Halas*

MAY 2022



ABOUT

Three-time Grammy Award winning opera superstar Joyce DiDonato has created the global tour of EDEN, her major concert hall performance about environmentalism. Her personal commitment and partnership with ITAC has launched a re-imagining of the impact of a concert experience through teaching artist-led workshops in every city. The International Teaching Artists Collaborative (ITAC) is the world-wide network of artists who work in community and educational settings, who have the skills to bring change to communities. Together ITAC and EDEN Engagement will pilot a new approach to prove that touring can be a legitimate and powerful tool for change in communities.

Cities on the tour are designated either "Root Cities" or "Seed Cities". Seed Cities are a 1-4 day(s) event that engages the youth with one of three specific environmental issues; Urban Gardens, Urban Trees, Food Choices:

- Urban Gardens: They are youth-friendly. Among many social benefits, they bring these environmental benefits: reduce carbon use (reduced food transport); reduce water runoff; help pollinators; plants absorb CO2 and pollutants and produce oxygen; health benefits in the food and the community building (reduced stress and blood pressure).
- Urban Trees: Trees are omnipresent and overlooked in cities—kid friendly. They can plant them, and the EDEN performance encourages that. Trees are powerful answers to heat mitigation (reduce temperatures by 8 to 10 degrees and need for air conditioning), carbon and pollution sequestration and oxygen production, water flow pollution reduction, biodiversity, and food insecurity. Health benefits include healthier air, psychological benefits, lowering blood pressure and stress.
- Food Choices: Scientists have proven that small choices make a big difference. Because many foods with a high health burden, including processed meats or red meats, also have high environmental costs, switching out 10 percent of a person's daily caloric intake can cut a person's food-based environmental footprint by over 30 percent. Between growing it, packaging it, moving it around, cooking it, and often wasting it, food production makes up about one-fifth to one-third of all annual greenhouse gas emissions globally. Eat less red and processed meats, eat more veggies and fruits, reduce food waste, and if you have a way...compost.

Teaching Artist: Dóra Halas, DLA

Participants: Members of the Vajda Péter Primary School Choir

Workshop length: 4 x 60 min.

Dates: Tuesday 31 May 2022, 11 AM and 2 PM

Thursday 2 June 2022, 11:55 AM and 2 PM

Topic: URBAN TREES

In cooperation with the Hungarian civilian group "10 Million Trees": <https://10milliofa.hu>



WORKSHOP 1

ICE-BREAKER / 15 min.

No introduction or explanation before the first task! That will come afterwards.

Two possibilities, depending on what the group feels like at first glance:

1. FLI FLA FLÓ – call and response song, with which I can expand the use of their voices, starting from normal all the way to extended vocal techniques (throat voice, nasal, mouth covered by hand, whisper, etc.) and also experiment with their way of singing based on imaginary situations and emotions (e.g. soldiers marching, walking in a desert being very thirsty, having fear, etc.). First I give them ideas, then once they know the lines, I ask them to be the caller, perhaps in pairs, and try to express different situations with their voices.

Relating to the topic: change of voice from city pollution, depression, heat

2. IMPROVISED CONDUCTING GAME – without explaining anything I ask them to try and sing or use their voice and body to make sounds based on my way of conducting. I do not conduct in a traditional way, but try to show different signs, which they can interpret in their own way. I can also sometimes give them specific notes or sounds to take from me, but then I continue with hand gestures. (See Soundpainting by Walter Thompson). If they are open to this game, I can ask a few of the students to be the conductor.

Relating to the topic: using gestures imitating trees, wind and air as a way of conducting

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION / 5 min.

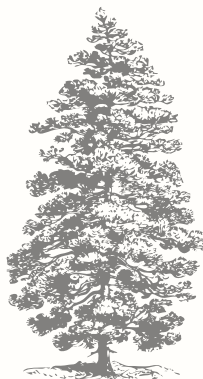
I introduce myself and explain shortly what the EDEN project is, how Joyce DiDonato uses “seed cities” to bring about change in communities.

WARM-UP / 15 min.

I will briefly present the topic of “Urban Trees”.

For warm-up, we play the game of “Rhythmic Artificial Gap”:

I present two words of a certain topic (e.g. hamburger/salad or cat/dog) and everyone has to decide very quickly which word they can relate to more. The decision or the reason behind it is completely subjective and free. If they relate to the first word, they have to make a certain sound that I specify for them, and another sound goes with the second choice. The sounds must be made after one another, in the framework of a rhythmic pattern: we take up a tempo with our feet, the words are said in the tempo, then 2 beats of rest, and then the sound for the first word comes, followed by the sound for the second word. It takes a little practice (a few rounds), but then it will be clear.



List of words to start with (warm-up):

- dog / cat
- maths / arts
- morning / evening
- car / bicycle
- black / white
- popcorn / sunflower seed
- Star Wars / Harry Potter
- ball games / water sports
- sadness / anger
- being scared for a long time / being suddenly frightened

List of words related to the topic of "Urban Trees":

- fall of leaves / blossoming
- willow tree / pine tree
- park / buildings
- city / countryside
- vehicles / animals

We then make couples and ask each group to write down 2-3 pairs of words like these in connection with "Urban Trees" – without any judgement, just brainstorming on the topic, making free associations.

KEY QUESTION / 5 min.

What difference does the presence of trees make in a city?

MAIN ACTIVITY – PHASE 1 / 20 min.

For this phase I use a game called "Atmospheres", which we need to build up from a simple form. In this game everyone has a specific number of breaths and holds one long note for each breath. Everyone can decide when to start the next breath and on which note to sing it. In this we get improvised clusters of notes.

The next task is to collect different styles or ways of singing a long note (e.g. cat sound, creaking door, glass sound, etc.). We make a list of the ideas, then choose 3 or 4 of the best, roll a dice for each, and finally present the "piece" in this way.

The last task is to do the same, but in relation to the topic: collect sounds connected with trees in general that can be sung on a sustained note, then make a presentation of only these "tree sounds".



WORKSHOP 2

WARM-UP FOR SINGING AND BREATHING / 10 min.

Breathing and body movement exercises including Qi Gong exercises.

Each exercise will use trees and nature as an associative imagery.

MAIN ACTIVITY – PHASE 2 / 20 min.

Members of Class 5.z will present their “Atmospheres” to the rest of the choir.

Some of the members of Class 8.z will be asked to join groups of the presenters and follow their instructions, a few of them however will be secretly asked to think of a song (possibly Hungarian folk song) that has lyrics related to trees or forests. Towards the end of the “Atmospheres” presentation, this small group will be signalled to start their song very quietly – as the other sounds disappear, this will be the only melody left there.

NEW MATERIAL / 20 min.

We will learn a new song of South African origin: Ewe Thina.

It's a 4-part song and easy, repetitive text.

We will also add some body percussion.

The reason for learning this song is to use it in the last session as raw material for making up new text for it relating to the topic of “Urban Trees”.

RHYTHM STATUE / 10 min.

In this game we use rhythm to manifest the two notions of cities and trees.

The students are split into 2 groups according to these two notions.

One person stands in the middle and begins a repetitive movement with repetitive sound. One by one each student joins in with different rhythm, sound and movement (but the same tempo) – as if part of a machine, joining their parts together.

By a given signal (a loud whistle), only the city sounds continue, the rest are silent. Then they join back in and again there will be a signal, this time for only the trees to continue. We finish off with the sound of trees in the air alone.



WORKSHOP 3

WARM-UP / 10 min.

Breathing and body movement exercises including Qi Gong exercises.
Each exercise involves imagery of trees, forest or nature.

MAIN ACTIVITY – PHASE 3 / 20 min.

Storytelling: some students will be the storytellers, taking over from each other after one or two sentences. The rest of the students are in small groups (3–4 people) and have to illustrate the details of the story with sound (and possible movement). The storytellers need to think of actions that can be illustrated by sounds.

The general topic is walking through the city, the different landscapes of a city.

DISCUSSION – PHASE 3 / 20 min.

Before we start the discussion, we do 3 minutes of complete silence, listening to all the sounds around us. The task is to collect in your mind as many different sounds that you hear as possible.

In the meantime, I reveal some questions on the board:

- What do you personally like about the city?
- Is there anything that bothers you about the city?
- If you were the mayor, what would be the ONE thing you would change about your city?
- What benefits do trees bring to the city?
- Why do we need those benefits?

After the silence, students in pairs can choose one question as their favourite and 2 additional ones, and discuss them briefly.

We then collect all the answers on the board (or on paper).

CLOSING ACTIVITY / 10 min.

- Rehearsal of the song learnt the day before (Ewe thina) together with the body percussion.



WORKSHOP 4

WARM-UP / 5 min.

A quick set of exercises to loosen up the whole group for the session.

MAIN ACTIVITY – PHASE 4 / 20 min.

Improvising and text writing for the song Ewe thina.

First we experiment with singing only the bottom 3 parts and allowing small groups to improvise melodies on top without any lyrics.

Then taking a look at the board (or paper) where we collected the answers to the previous questions, we try to collectively change the text and write a new melody with new lyrics on the topic of “Urban trees” or “Protecting our environment”.

DISCUSSION / 20 min.

A representative of the civilian group “10 Million Trees” will probably come for a short educational talk with the students to share their experiences and the possibilities of planting trees in Hungary.

SUMMARY PRESENTATION / 15 min.

We collect all the activities we worked with in the 4 sessions and put them together as a kind of “mini concert” in the following way:

1. Rhythm statue
2. Storytelling
3. Atmospheres (+ folk song from the day before)
 - Ewe thina with new lyrics and body percussion

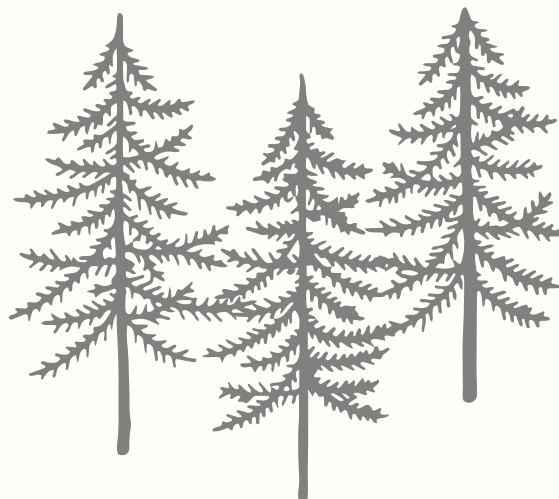
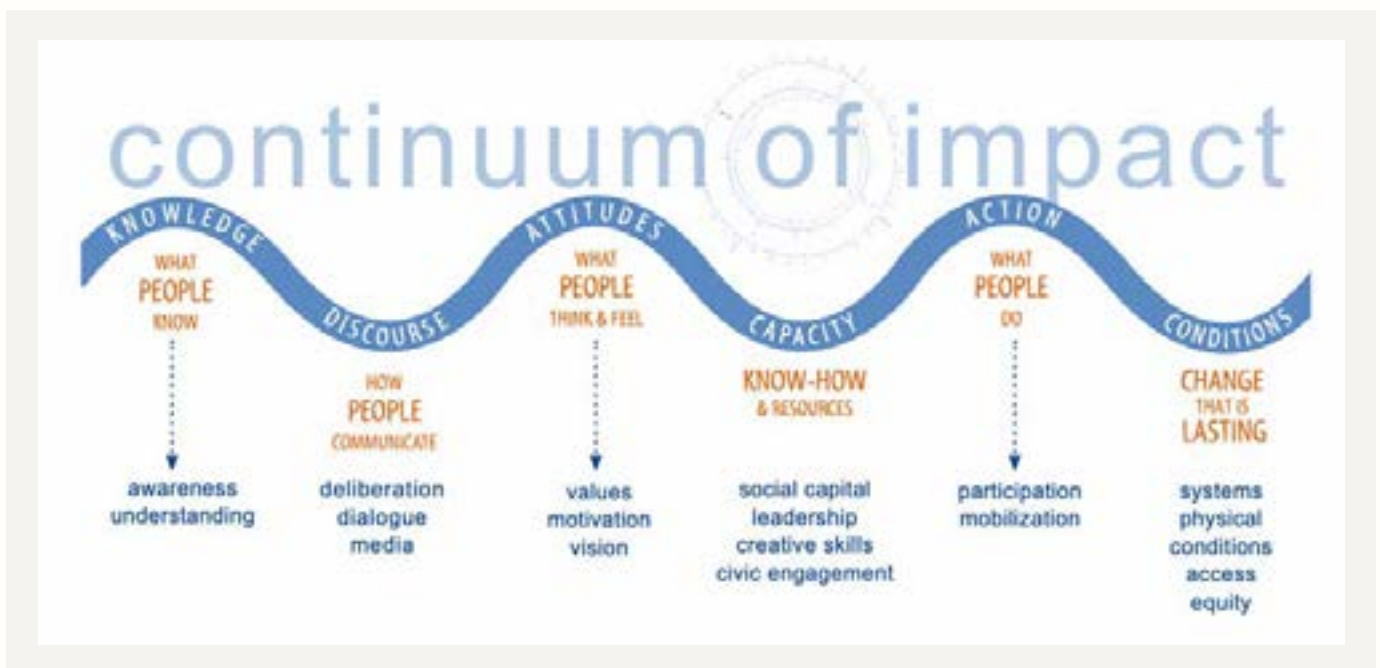




IMPACT & EVALUATION

The goal of this effort is to learn about the impact that the activities have on participants. We are especially curious to learn if there is any evidence that they have the impulse to take action and/or feel they can make a difference—this is the high goal of the arts-for-climate field, and we believe teaching artists have a particularly strong contribution to the field.

During the EDEN project, teaching artists were encouraged to use the Continuum of Impact Guide as a model when thinking about impact and assessment in their workshops.



REFLECTIONS FROM THE TEACHING ARTISTS

In what ways did you observe change in your participants understanding and engagement of the environmental issue you chose?

"They gained quite a lot of knowledge concerning tree planting – it was nice to see the conversation evolving from this topic."

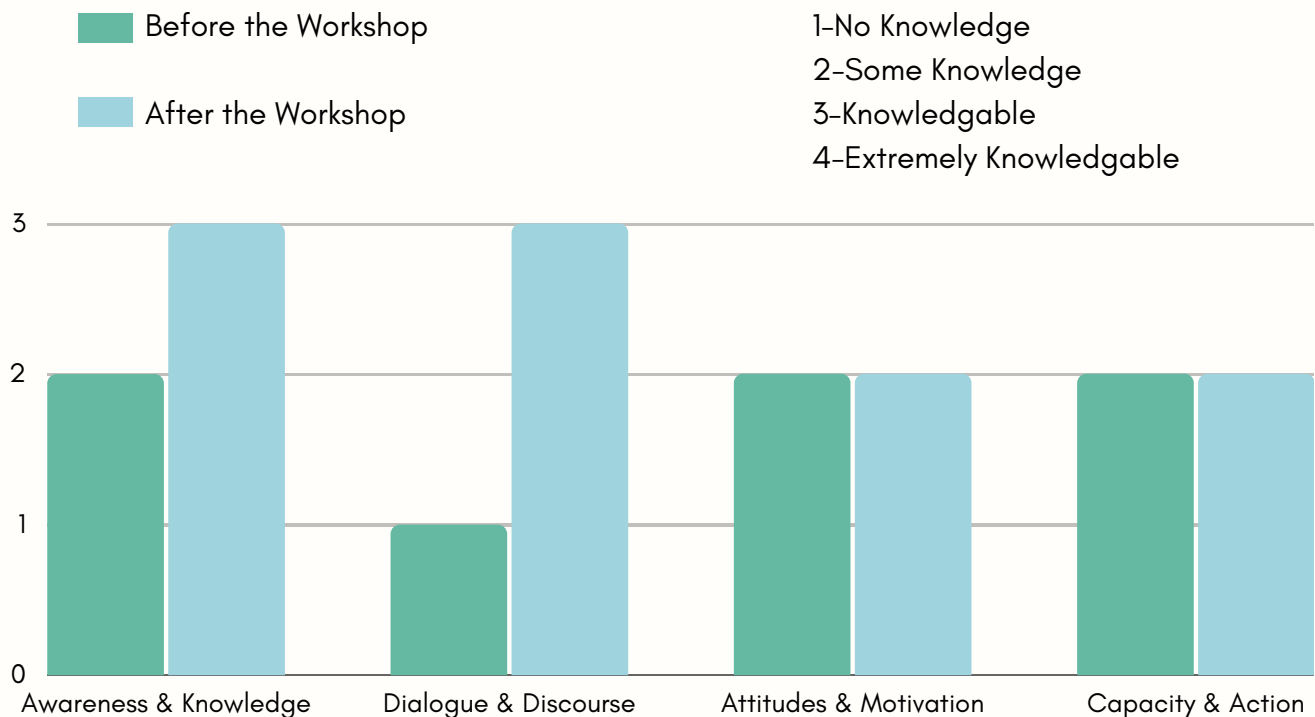
What challenges did you face in creating and facilitating your workshop?

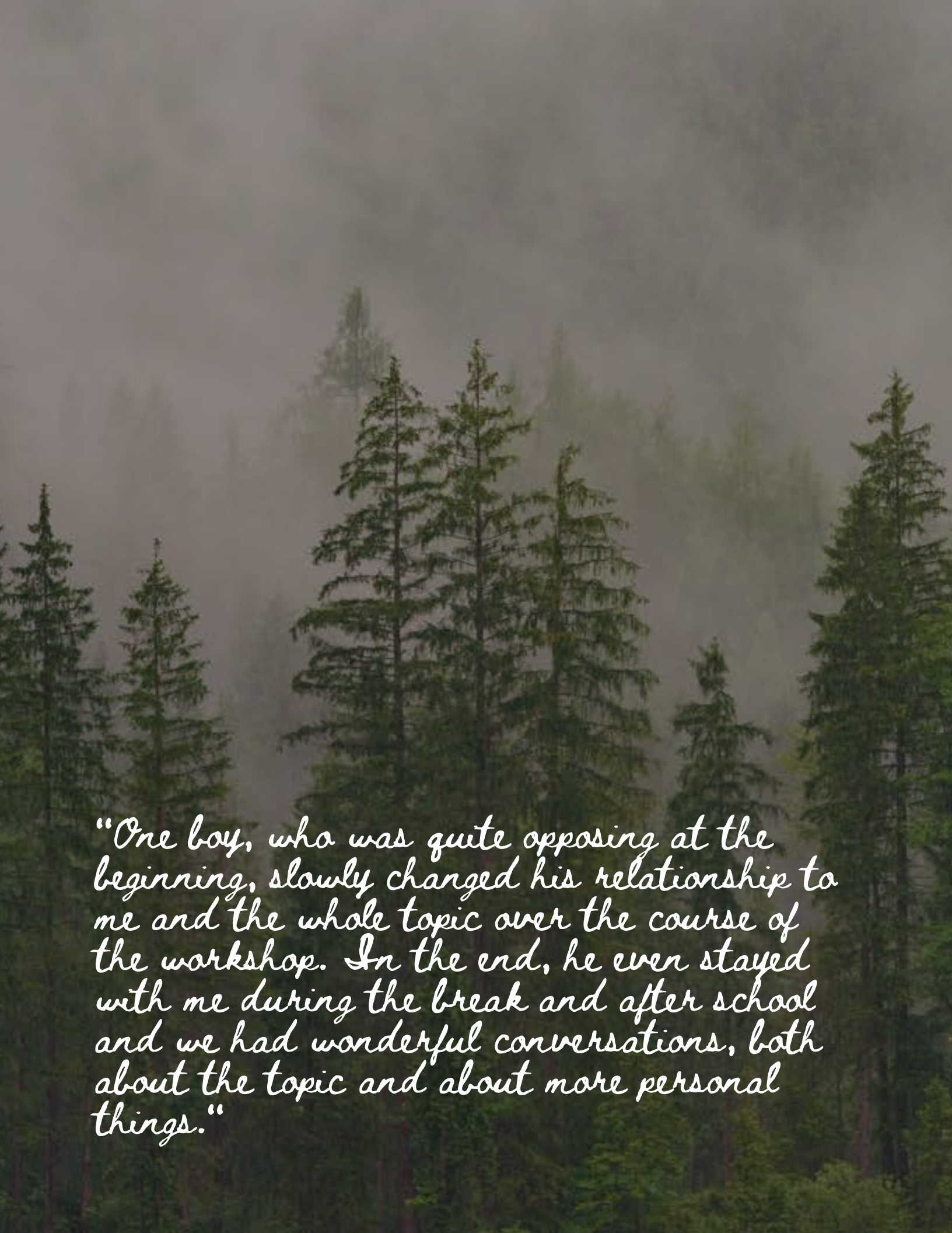
"The older age group was hard to tackle, they were not so interested in new methods – in fact, they were so not used to alternative communication in school that they were a bit dumbfounded. I would have needed more time with them."

Did your EDEN experience expand your work or skills as a teaching artist in any specific ways?

"It made me more conscious of this specific environmental issue and I plan to work together with this tree-planting association in the future."

We tasked each teaching artist with evaluating their students based on the Continuum of Impact Guide. They rated their students on a scale from 1 (no knowledge of the subject) to 4 (extremely knowledgeable about the subject). The following graph reflects Dee & Joanna's observations of their students.



A misty forest scene with tall evergreen trees. The background is a soft, greyish-white mist that fills the upper half of the image. Several tall, dark green evergreen trees are visible, their branches and needles clearly defined against the mist. The trees are scattered across the frame, with some in the foreground and others further back, creating a sense of depth. The overall atmosphere is calm and serene.

"One boy, who was quite opposing at the beginning, slowly changed his relationship to me and the whole topic over the course of the workshop. In the end, he even stayed with me during the break and after school and we had wonderful conversations, both about the topic and about more personal things."

ABOUT THE TEACHING ARTIST



DÓRA HALAS

Dóra Halas is a choral conductor, music pedagogist, director and collective composer, who works with ensembles ranging from amateur to professional. Her aim is to make performers into creators by embracing their input through methods of collective brainstorming, improvisation and construction – under the term Collective Choral Composing (KOMP). She holds a doctorate degree with a thesis on Choral Improvisation. Together with costume designer Fruzsina Nagy, she established a new genre called Catwalk Concerts: a performative form in-between vocal music, theatre and fashion shows. Her most successful group is Soharóza, an innovative Hungarian vocal collective.



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