



*WATER AND
WORLD
COMMUNITIES*

*A Climate Collective Legacy Activity,
Contributed by Barry Stewart Mann,
USA*



ABOUT

The ITAC Climate Collective is a group of Teaching Artists from all over the world who have gathered monthly online to exchange ideas, practice and advocacy opportunities in the Arts and Climate space. The group was developed after an unprecedented response to our ITAC IMPACT: Climate open call - we received more than 100 applications in just 2 weeks. It became clear that there was a hunger within our network for a platform dedicated to Arts and Climate where Teaching Artists can connect and share. The group seeks to connect and amplify the visibility and impact of Teaching Artists' powerful responses to the climate crisis.

PURPOSE

The Climate Collective fosters connectedness, visibility, and impact for Teaching Artists' contributions to the climate crisis response. That distinctive contribution is the capacity to creatively engage directly in communities, schools and institutions to change beliefs and behaviors about the climate, and to document the impact of the work.

VISION

The Climate Collective envisions a vigorous, positive global response to the climate crisis in which the skills of creative engagement are widely recognized and tapped.

MISSION

The Mission of the Climate Collective is to use international demonstration projects, model projects, an online curriculum, and an activist group of Teaching Artist leaders to advocate, educate, and activate the impact that teaching artists can bring to climate crisis response, and to leverage the effectiveness and impact of member projects into increased funding and engagement opportunities as member projects.

Each month the group alternates between Professional Development meetings with guest speakers and knowledge exchange and Climate Cafes which are primarily art making and practice sharing focused.

The Climate Collective came to an end in December 2023 and, as a legacy project, the group shared their favourite arts and climate activities. We have the pleasure of outlining the following and hope it will inspire other Teaching Artists to engage in similar work in their own communities.

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Teaching Artists: Barry Stewart Mann

Country: Atlanta, USA

Climate Collective Session you were inspired by?: Patricia Cruz | 31.03.23 | Climate education and youth

Length: 1 hour to 1 and a half hours

Participants: Can work with students/campers from ages 10 through adult

Environmental Focus:

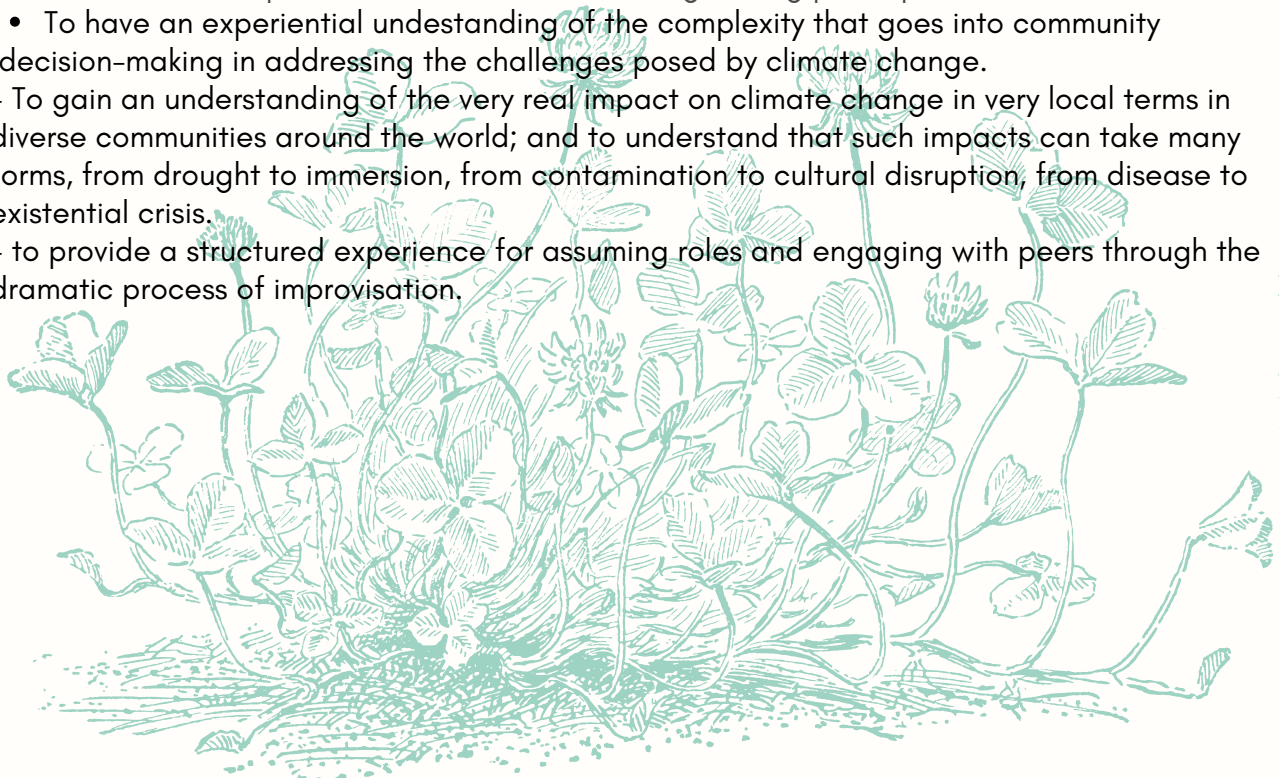
Art Forms: Drama

Materials Needed: Research information about communities around the world (those provided with this submission, or similar)

Guiding Question(s): How are communities affected by climate change? How do changes in sea level, rainfall, and water supplies, as well as increasing pollution, affect communities? How can communities address these challenges? How can we imagine and explore these issues through dramatic improvisation?

Goals: This workshop aims to activate the following among participants:

- To have an experiential understanding of the complexity that goes into community decision-making in addressing the challenges posed by climate change.
- To gain an understanding of the very real impact on climate change in very local terms in diverse communities around the world; and to understand that such impacts can take many forms, from drought to immersion, from contamination to cultural disruption, from disease to existential crisis.
- to provide a structured experience for assuming roles and engaging with peers through the dramatic process of improvisation.



THE ACTIVITY

[All of the following could be variable depending on the size and age of the group.]

Step 1

- Begin with a theatre game to warm up the group. It can be a game of TA's choice. A recommendation: a simple word-passing activity, in which the group stands in a circle, and passes relevant words (e.g., 'sea level rise,' 'pollution,' 'extreme weather'); words are introduced one at a time, and the group develops a gesture to go with each; they can be introduced cumulatively - as many as the group can handle. This type of activity is designed to develop ensemble and put participants in the mind-set of the content to be introduced.

Step 2

- Share information about how small communities around the world are being affected by, and responding to, the water issues attributed, at least in part, to climate change. It can be the information in the document attached with this submission (with time those situations may have evolved, so they may stand as representative of issues in many other communities); or similar information researched and compiled by the teaching artist. There should be a variety of water issues represented, that might range from land loss due to sea level rise, drought due to reduced precipitation, water shortages due to overtaxing of waterways, groundwater pollution, flooding, and more.

Step 3

- Depending on the size and age of the participants, either choose one community to focus on as a group, or assign smaller groups to each of the communities under focus.
- Brainstorm types or categories of community members, such as elders, healers/doctors, spiritual leaders, merchants/businesspeople, farmers/fishers, youth/students, artists (of all types).
- Assign roles to participants (if working as a large group, there might be smaller groups of elders, merchants, etc.; if working in smaller groups, each participant might have a distinct role.
- Have participants review the materials with roles in mind, thinking about how their particular character is impacted by the water issue in their community.

Step 4

- Discuss Improvisation: a form of unscripted drama, in which participants engage in role, accept premises and information as they are established, listen and respond realistically taking turns speaking (but allowing both overlapping conversation and gaps in conversation as they might naturally occur), and making interesting choices to incorporate details into the scene and develop realistic conflict.

THE ACTIVITY CONTINUED...

Step 5

- Conduct a meet-n-greet, allowing participants to move through the space meeting each other, discussing where they live, what they do, and what is happening in their community. If using multiple communities, for this exercise it is fine to allow them to mix (e.g., a character from India meeting a character from The Gambia). Participants can make up names, adapt their own names, or simply not use names at all.

Step 6

- Introduce the main improvisation: tell participants they will be in community meetings. As a government or NGO official, introduce the improvisational premise, that the community is being awarded a certain amount of money (e.g., \$100,000) to address its water issue. At the community meeting, the stakeholders must propose and discuss ways to use the funds. (These might include such ideas as digging wells, building bridges, moving the community, educational initiatives, providing water filtration technologies, and more. Participants may come up with very creative ideas and solutions - all should be on the table.)
- Provide a certain amount of time in which the community members must come to a final decision (e.g. 15 minutes). If working as a single group, facilitate the meeting in the role of the official. If working in smaller groups, move from group to group monitoring their discussion and facilitating as needed. Bring the improvisational community meetings to a close, and come to final decisions.

Step 7

- Possibly, have each participant write, in the voice of their character, a journal entry, social media post, newspaper op-ed, monologue, or other writing sample describing the community meeting and expressing how they felt about its outcome.
- If working in smaller groups, have each group share their decision.

Reflection

- How did your group function as a community? How would you describe the discussions and deliberations? Was everyone satisfied with the final decision? Why or why not? How did the different stakeholders approach and address the issue in different ways? How does this activity relate to your community, or communities with which you are familiar? How is the water supply in those communities being affected by climate change? What can you and your community do to help both protect waterways and ensure clean water supplies for the community's needs? As actors, how were you able to explore these issues through improvisation? How did you feel playing a character in a community with a serious water challenge?

How will you measure impact?

- Reflective discussion about how climate change is creating water issues in small communities around the world, and about the complexity of addressing them

Give it a try!

ABOUT THE TEACHING ARTIST

BARRY STEWART MANN



Barry Stewart Mann, MFA, is a professional actor, storyteller and arts educator based in Atlanta. He is a graduate of Harvard University and holds an M.F.A. in Theatre from the University of San Diego. As an actor, Barry has performed across the United States, including theatres San Diego, Miami, New York, Arkansas, Washington, DC, and Atlanta. Barry has told tales to thousands in festivals, libraries, schools, camps, and beyond; was featured at the II Festival Internacional de Cuentacuentos in Santo Domingo, DR; was named the 1999 National Storyteller of the Year; was a regular contributor to the Public Radio program Recess!; and has been on storytelling tours to schools in Colombia, Chile and Argentina with Dream On Productions, a company based in Buenos Aires. Barry has been on the faculty of Lesley University's M.Ed. Program in Integrated Teaching through the Arts since 2008, teaching courses in "Drama and Critical Literacy" and "Cultural History Through Storytelling." Barry is a roster performer and teaching artist with Fulton County Schools' Teaching Museum, the Alliance Theatre, Georgia Wolf Trap, Georgia Council for the Arts, the RiverCenter for the Performing Arts, and ArtsNow Learning, and worked in the past with the Atlanta Partnership for Arts in Learning, Young Audiences, California Playwrights Project, and San Diego Institute for Arts Education. He has taught and led workshops in story and drama integration at numerous colleges and universities, including Georgia State, University of Florida, Utah State, Boise State, Middle Georgia State, Dalton State, and Young Harris. He is a proud member of the National Storytelling Network, the Southern Order of Storytellers, and Actors Equity Association. In early 2020, Barry was approved to join the roster of the Fulbright Specialist Program, a program of the U.S. State Department that supports residencies by American 'specialists' at universities around the world. He has been delighting audiences and inspiring students for nearly four decades, and brings a vibrant honesty and caring playfulness to his performances, workshops, classes, and scripts.