

Tintti Karppinen

DRAMA GAMES FOR COOPERATION

Abstract of a workshop

First, briefly about my philosophical principles in playing and games and why they are so important for drama (and life!). Examples from my experiences on how to use games with all age groups from little children to adults to create an open atmosphere for drama. There are so many children and adults, who cannot play any more in the original meaning, but take all games as a real fight where the winning is much more important than the social event and communication. Two simple examples: When one should throw a dice, instead of throwing, he manipulates it. Or in blind games, one tries to see through scarf instead of enjoying playing the role of a blind person.

The great motivation for participants to play is to have fun. How big a part of all funny situations in children's books, cartoons and movies are actually based on rejoicing in other people's misfortune? In drama games we can learn that to enjoy in playing doesn't mean that some other player(s) in the group must fail and/or suffer.

Games should also teach children self-discipline and responsibility for their actions. The teacher's role is not that an inspector.

The idea(1) is that everyone participates on his/her own decision, not because of the leader's observation.

Special focus will be placed on the concept of competition and how to avoid the negative elements and influences of it. We try some games, where winning is based on good or bad luck and it is at least as much fun to loose! And some other games, where somebody is wrong or loses, but not because of his/her abilities.

Too many of the old games teach us only that it is more important to be better, stronger, quicker, and/or cleverer than the others. But instead of that, more thinking, games should teach us that it is fun to play (and work) together, it is nice when nobody is left out, differences of all kinds - in characters, fantasy, solutions, ideas etc - are interesting, desirable and enrich co-operation.

Some of the games will show the participants, how difficult it is to obey the rules of the game. Even as adults, players cannot remember simple rules like "don't run and don't go backwards"! It's good to

experience as grown-up persons, how totally and quickly we can forget our plans and decisions, if our concentration and attention is diverted by another idea.

I'll also show to the participants a game board called Käpylä-peli, which I have invented and published. The idea of it is to teach the players their home area; it's streets, buildings, social life, culture and history. The important feature of that game is that the players - no matter how old they are - never want to win! They just enjoy playing together, which is much more fun than winning and getting out. That game is very easy to adapt everywhere and with all age groups - I have got about twenty, and there are many more, adaptations all over the world made from that original idea.

KAPYLA-PELI - NEIGHBOURHOOD GAME BOARD

by Tintti Karppinen

Background - what and why

When I moved 1978 with my family to the region, where I had lived from 5 to 23 years of age, I wanted our children to learn both the history of that part of Helsinki and especially, where all the important places like library, schools, playgrounds, shops etc. are. So I took a cartoon and the map in our telephone directory and began to draw a game board = **map on the cartoon**.

On the game board I drew all the streets, schools, shops, banks, post-office, restaurants, pubs, laundries, scout clubs, the hospital, old people's homes, the library, kindergartens, play grounds etc. and some private houses as examples. Then I made **starter cards** that told, where the player must start and where to try to go on the map. An example of starter cards is like this:

You are at the public health centre. After a long examination the doctor has got the right diagnosis: You have a travelling fever. You must go to the police station to get your identification for a passport.

The **streets and paths** on the game board map are **divided in squares** and the player can go as many steps (squares) as the **dice** allows. If the player gets number 1 and happens then to stand on the tram stop, (s)he can go along the tram track as long as (s)he will. (The real tram coming to our suburb is number 1)

I also made some **number squares** and these numbers correspond to the real street numbers of the buildings in that place. For example, 7 is the address number of the fire station in Kullervonkatu (=Kullervo street). If the player stops there, (s)he must visit the fire station first before going further.

On the streets and paths I also made some **red squares**. If the player stops on red, (s)he must take a red card, which gives directions to make the journey slower or quicker. Some examples of the activities written on the red cards:

You forgot to return the books to the library. Go there as soon as possible and then you can continue your journey.

You got fed up with this game and stand for one turn, moping where you are.

You forgot your key at home. Go there and get it. If your home is outside the game board map, you will get an extra turn instead!

You dropped an empty candy box on the pavement. Be ashamed and go four steps back to pick it up.

With this red card you'll get excused any red card task (only once).

You have moved forward so quickly that you need a refreshing swim in the nearby open air pool.

I made about 50 different red cards and 30 number square tasks according to the address where the player stops.

Why it was to be published

On the same night as I created the game, we played it with lots of fun. Every time thereafter, when we played, we added more details, red cards and number squares with tasks. Later I was very surprised when our neighbours were so fascinated with the game that they sat evening after evening around our kitchen table and played with us. I had made the game with the idea of teaching our children where they live, but grown-ups were as eager to play as the children. The neighbours and my school mates who didn't live any more in Kapyla, asked me to make them game boards of their own, so that they could play at home with their families and friends.

Some years later I decided to print the game. Just before Christmas 1983 it was in the local shops.

Responses and reactions

Our Kapyla-journal made an interview with me when the game board was ready. It was a very positive and praising article and of course, therefore a good advertisement for the game. I got many responses in the streets and also by phone from people who had bought it and enjoyed playing it with their children and friends.

One of the first reactions in the street from an unknown family was: "Oh, thank you so much for the Kapyla game. We didn't know that there is a magician is cave*) in our forest. After we finished the game, the whole family walked there and we found it!" A retired lorry driver told me that unknown people have started to talk with him, when he is walking with his dog. There is a number square (26) on his home street with the following task: "You meet Nisse Gronroos walking with his dog and you stop for one turn

to admire the beautiful dog.” A 92 year old man told me that because of his stroke, he had forgotten almost all important family things like where the bank and shops are. His grandchildren gave him the Kapyla-game and when they played it together, he recalled them little by little.

Empty red cards are also included in the printed version, because I wanted people to make their own tasks, too, such as visiting their grand parents or school mates.

I heard that some youngsters, who are emotionally handicapped and live in a nearby Children’s Home just outside the map area, had drawn themselves the addition to the game board so that their home is also on the map. They had also made tasks to the empty red cards like: ”You must visit 5 such places , which have changed since Tintti published Kapyla-game -83” (Some shops have changed owner and name, the pharmacy has changed place etc.).

Game for collaboration

But absolutely the most important thing for me within the game is something I didn’t expect at all:

CHILDREN DON’T WANT TO WIN, when they play it. They find it much more fascinating to be with each other, to play together, than to get out of the game - even as a winner! When I think of all the games and plays for and with children, where the only idea is to get more than the others get, or to be faster than the others, or to kill other players, or shoot all kind of enemies or destroy civilisations or planets or whatsoever, I am really happy, when I see them co-operate, enjoy each other’s company and invent together funny tasks in their own environment!

If a player happens to come to the same square as another player, they ”stick by their mouths” for one turn, because they talk with each other - like people do here in the streets. We don’t eat each other in reality, so we don’t do it in the game either.

Other environmental game boards

Today I have over 30 different neighbourhood - and there are much more in Finland and else where! - game boards made after the model of my Kapyla-game board. When I have given lectures to teachers, parents, kindergarten teachers, social workers etc, I have shown this game board and told them how to make it. The easy adapting of the idea anywhere is so nice, because the material needed is not difficult to get. I’d like to quote The Beatles: ”**All you need is love**” towards your home district and then some **cartoon, pieces of paper, pen, lineal, some knowledge of the streets and buildings and other infra structure, imagination and sense of humour...**

The goal

At the end of the rules there is a the most important one: "Remember that this is a game, so have fun instead of quarrelling. This is the rule to follow after the game as well."

I think that in real life we should also follow more the rules of games and plays, instead of quarrelling and fighting. For me, the philosophy of playing games means that a person voluntarily accepts the rules, and takes care of him/herself in how to follow them.

*) In a little forest there is a hole or pit, which in Finnish is called Hiidenkirnu. The origin of it is from the ice period, thousands of years ago, and it was made by water power with a stone in the rock. It is about 5 meters deep and the diameter is about 2 meters. Placed on the upper left corner of the game board, just under the printing year 1983 and my name.

Tintti Karppinen

ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF ARTS EDUCATION

In the western world education and school systems, the arts have mostly been taken as an extra entertainment or oil to make the wheels of engineers go around. The division among subjects - and as a result, the appreciation of the remarks in reports - has been for years in two: the important ones like mathematics, languages, history etc. and the less important like music, art - and drama, theatre and dancing, if they exist at all in the curriculum!

But if we look at any child and its development all over the world, we see him/her playing, using elements of arts: imagination, singing, dancing, creating toys from all possible materials, drawing on all surfaces, using fictions in role plays with other children, sharing ideas, emotions, thoughts and things in the most natural way.

All mothers sing lullabies to their babies, teach them rhymes and poems and tell them stories.

Every child is an artist by nature. We cannot think of the development of a child without different forms of arts. One of the happy things in my work as a drama teacher is that with a little scratch we can also much later always find that playing child inside every young person and adult at any age.

On the other hand, we cannot think of a human being without the ability to express her/his feelings, emotions and thoughts in some way or other - if there are no possibilities, (s)he suffers and becomes ill.

The only way to be able to evaluate knowledge, to give meaning for our existence and to handle all the most important but non-measurable elements of life - such as love, fear, friendship, desire, dreams - is through arts.

I have worked, for example, in prison with men who have been there for a long time. Drama exercises with many kind of improvisations were one of the most effective ways to build their self-confidence and social skills so that later on they can manage in their every day life in freedom.

The arts are also by nature focused on differences and different ways to experience this world and its phenomenon, and therefor arts education is one of the best forms also for peace education.

In international drama congresses I have held workshops for children from different cultural backgrounds, who can improvise and play roles in total understanding and enjoy collaboration with new people, who they have never before met and with whom they have no language in common!

Drama as a teaching method is a very co-operative form. It is like playing in an orchestra. One of the most used techniques in drama and theatre education is improvisation, and in that children, youngsters and adults really play together with the best possible sensitivity and consideration of each other. To be in a role is also a very safe way to express all kind of feelings, thoughts and emotions and to learn about the reactions of other people, because all happens in a fiction.

The founder of Amnesty International has said: “ I disagree 100 % with you, but I’ll do all I can so that you can express your opinion freely.”

The arts education is the best possible way to give tools for children and youngsters, as well as adults, to express their different ideas, feelings and opinions.