

<b>Name of presenter</b>	Eva Neubauer / Astrid Kainzbauer / Frank Brück
<b>Workshop Title</b>	<b>Cultural Improvisation Workshop</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	Role play, practical exercises and discussions

Transition is a difficult process and takes time to complete. Feelings of discontent, impatience, anger, sadness and incompetence may occur when a person tries to adapt to a new culture which is very different from the culture of origin. Transition processes are typically characterized by a high level of uncertainty. Uncertainty makes people feel physical and emotional discomfort. Dealing with rapidly changing environments requires a great deal of improvisation skills. In a situation where the old behavioural patterns are no more applicable and before the new patterns are learned and established improvisation is the only way to get on. The aim of this workshop is to emphasise the importance of competencies linked to improvisation and how to apply them in intercultural settings.

*“In fact we are all just acting constantly anyway?”*

The workshop venue is theatre stage and training room at the same time. The synergy of the improvisational and the cultural approach leads to a new way of learning. The participants first act and improvise and then reflect and discuss their experiences. How did they feel? Was this experience linked to other situations in real life? What were the personal benefits of the different activities? What relevance does this have for intercultural encounters? What effects does this have on the participants' intercultural competencies?

#### EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING:

Experiential learning activities appeal to the participants' physical, kinesthetic intelligence and result in intensive, accelerated learning. Experiential learning also strengthens the brain by building new pathways and increasing connections between previous experiences in different areas. Activities usually begin in confusion, continue in excitement, and end in elation. During the debriefing, the players share a variety of insights. More than 50% of the workshop will be spent “on stage”. Participants will try out different role play activities used in improvisation theatre. Eva Neubauer, being an experienced actress will facilitate these activities. During the debriefing session (about 30 % discussion and 20 % input), Astrid Kainzbauer and Frank Brück (experienced intercultural trainers) will help participants to identify the cultural implications of their performance. Different cultural dimensions and concepts will be elaborated in this process.

#### BENEFITS

The participants in this workshop will have the chance to experience different improvisational techniques which lead to the development of certain skills crucial for successful intercultural interactions:

#### OBJECTIVES:

The main objective is to introduce participants to a variety of improvisation techniques which are designed to develop skills relevant in intercultural settings. The

unique combination of practical theatre work and cultural awareness training allows the participants to enter into a new world of experiences. Participants will refine their perception abilities and learn how to listen and observe carefully in stressful situations. This is important since subtle details can have tremendous impacts on the development of intercultural relationships. They will increase awareness of their own emotions and learn how to recognise the feelings of others. This should help to further develop empathy – one of the most important competencies in intercultural settings. A lot of attention will be put on improving communication skills (both verbal and non-verbal). Ambiguity is a major ingredient of intercultural conflict and causes stress. By applying different improvisation techniques the participants will learn how to successfully deal with ambiguous situations and how to better cope with stress.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

A great advantage of the cultural improvisation approach is the fact that it is generally suitable for all audiences - no matter what professional and social background the participants may have. Students, business people, educators and trainers will find this workshop useful for their personal and professional development. The playful way of learning will also stimulate interest in advancing further into the field of intercultural relations.

## BENEFITS FOR THE PRESENTERS

To offer this workshop in a SIETAR conference setting provides the chance to explore further possibilities of applying this innovative approach in different intercultural training settings. The feedback of the participating, experienced interculturalists should help to identify new fields of application and to further improve the cultural learning outcomes.

## THE PRESENTERS

Eva Neubauer

Actress and voice therapist; member of the improvisation theatre Groups U.R.Theater and English Lovers (performing at the Vienna SIETAR Congress 2002); several appearances on stage, in TV and cinema; presently member of the ensemble of the Vienna Josefstadt Theatre.

Astrid Kainzbauer

Intercultural trainer and researcher at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration; special fields of interest: intercultural learning and cultural comparison by using the cultural standard method.

Frank Brück

Intercultural trainer and researcher at the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration; special fields of interest: cultural comparison by using photography and the cultural standard method.