

Unlocking Art

A Glimpse into Performing Arts (Theatre) Workshop to Save Wildlife

Introduction

The performing arts (theatre) workshop under 'Art for Conservation' (A4C), organized by the Zoo Outreach Organisation, took place in Coimbatore from 29 April to 1 May 2024. The workshop was designed by Mrs. Priyanka Iyer, a wildlife researcher and conservationist.

Mr. Dharanidharan, an actor and founder of Uruveli, a theatre company in Coimbatore, guided the participants in unleashing the creative potential of aspiring actors, nature enthusiasts, and conservationists. This event attracted a diverse group of participants eager to explore new dimensions of performance art with the common goal of protecting nature.

Objectives

The workshop aimed to refine participants' acting techniques through a series of innovative exercises and group activities. By focusing on improvisation and character development, the session sought to enhance each actor's versatility and confidence on stage.

1. Workshop Activities

Participants engaged in a variety of activities, including spontaneous improvisation exercises, character-building workshops, and scene study sessions. Each activity was designed to push boundaries and encourage participants to think outside the box.



Skit rehearsal related to human-leopard interaction with students from Kannuru-Government Higher Primary School



Discussion with students from Kannuru-Government Higher Primary School after the rehearsal.

2. Guide

Dharanidharan's expertise in theatre provided invaluable insights and inspiration to the attendees. His energy is unmatched and magnetic, drawing even introverted individuals to perform their best. I recall him emphasizing, "There are no boundaries in theatre".

3. My Experience

I left the workshop with a renewed sense of enthusiasm and a toolkit of new techniques. The improvisation exercises were particularly eye-opening, helping me further step out of my comfort zone and approach acting with a fresh perspective.

4. Activities Conducted at Government Schools of Hanur Taluk, Chamarajanagar District, Karnataka

A total of 73 students participated in the training program from three Government Higher Primary Schools (Kempaihanahatti, Ramapura, and Kannuru). We selected 47 students to train further and upgrade their basic skills to the next level. We made 30 visits to these schools and chose 12 students from Government Higher Primary School, Kannuru, to participate in the final event in Coimbatore.

These training programs have proven to be an excellent platform for wildlife education through skit performances.

Summary

Overall, the performing arts (theatre) workshop proved to be a dynamic and enriching experience for all involved. The creative energy and growth witnessed during this workshop will undoubtedly leave a lasting impression on the participants.



Discussions with school teachers and principal of Ramapura-Government Higher Primary School.



Skit performance related to human-leopard interaction from students of Ramapura-Government Higher Primary School.

The teachers and students were delighted to learn, understand, and appreciate a new concept of performance art aimed at protecting wildlife. We are awestruck by the impact this training program had on young minds and teachers. We are optimistic that this training can influence people's attitudes, and we plan to extend it further by conducting street plays in nearby villages of Kannuru, which are close to forest fringes.

Thank You Note

I would like to thank Dr. Sanjay Gubbi, programme head, Holématti Nature Foundation (HNF), Dr. Sanjay Molur, executive director, Zoo Outreach Organisation, and Mrs Priyanka Iyer for giving us this wonderful opportunity to be a part of the theatre workshop and to advance it. I also thank my colleague Mr. Abhishek, nature educator, for collating the school data and pictures for the article.

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Participants explaining their wildlife journey.



Participants rehearsing a scene study during the workshop.