

My beloved French writer Bernard-Marie Koltès said once in an interview that when you're young you HAVE TO travel, that it should be obligatory. Not to enjoy expensive hotels, but to learn: learn how different faces look like, how different languages sound like, how different people can see the world. To be aware that the world doesn't end in your social bubble.

For me, if there's any point in international residencies and workshops, it is –besides the good energy which can lead you to open a new file from time to time– this opportunity to be in a different environment from that of daily life.

And so it was in 2012 in Barcelona during Simon Stephens's workshop.

We were all young, we were all speaking broken English and we desperately wanted to learn –without any irony or distance, we really wanted to get to know this famous guy from the UK whose plays we had seen in our countries. Would he be the stereotypical cold British guy? Well, he wasn't.

Simon Stephens is a great group leader. He has charisma –a feature which makes people listen to you, which helps you make people really interested in the subject you want to explore with them. I remember when Simon shared with us his interest in marvellous Caryl Churchill's play *Far away*. I still have his face in my mind, saying: "guys, I really love this play, look how great it is, what a structure, can you hear the melody of it?". Stephens also has this talent to analyse reality and art instantly: something happens or something is being written and he is able to look at it from the angle you would never do it. A fresh, witty, intelligent look. It's a great talent, to look at reality from this child-like attitude. I believe it was the most important thing I learned in a room during the workshop: be in the moment, talk to anybody as if they were the most precious people for us and encourage them to do art. When I lead any workshop now, I try to use this tool.

Sala Beckett has changed its location and it has also developed since I was there six years ago. When I was there in October 2017 I wanted to steal this great building and take it with me to Warsaw. After my visit in summer 2018, when I had a chance to meet people attending this year's Simon's workshop, I also wanted to put them all in a plane and take them with me. The international group reminded me of how nice it is to be young, writing, in Barcelona in July. How nice it is to feel being befriended with someone from France, someone from Turkey, someone from Canada. Not a long time ago I read a new play written by an author who was a participant in my year's workshop and I was like: "Is this the beautiful girl who was so angry about her level of English that she threw out a pen onto the wall? And now she's writing! And now she lives in Australia!". Why not to have a reading of her play in my theatre in Warsaw? That's how connections grow: because you were once in your young years invited to Sala Beckett.

And what I envy from Barcelona is this great place where you can meet, work and discuss contemporary writing which is Sala Beckett. You can meet people who really crave to work and to make their writing better, and as I spoke to them they feel like they have a place to go. They have a list of workshops during the year and special summer time and they can choose: do I want to develop my monologues? Or maybe humour? Or the power of character?

Just go there and have a lunch during l'Obrador d'Estiu. Look at people's smiling faces and you'd never say workshops are something stupid: if you're a bit talented, open-minded and somehow hard-working, they can only help you. Sala Beckett gives you the opportunity: you can stay at home, solely writing your Nobel plays, but you can also enjoy a time shared with other people. There is a choice and that's great.

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Anna Wakulik va participar al taller internacional el 2012.