

From Street to Stage Theater as a Communicative Strategy for Recovery, Rehabilitation and Empowerment of Center-Based Street Children

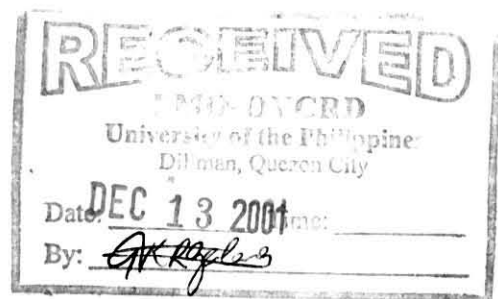
(The Case of Stairway's "Goldtooth")

A Dissertation
Presented to

The College of Mass Communication
University of the Philippines

In partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Communication

By
Irvingrancia
BELEN D. CALINGACION
November 2001



APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation entitled, ***FROM STREET TO STAGE: THEATER AS A COMMUNICATIVE STRATEGY FOR RECOVERY, REHABILITATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF CENTER-BASED STREET CHILDREN (THE CASE OF STAIRWAY'S "GOLDTOOTH")***, prepared and submitted by **BELEN D. CALINGACION** in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communication, is hereby accepted.



ELENA E. PERNIA, Ph.D.

Adviser



GRACE J. ALFONSO, Ph. D.

Reader-Critic



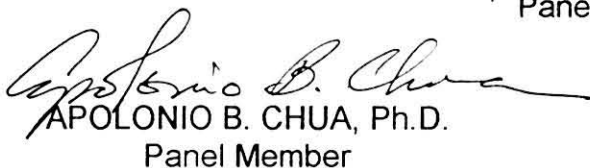
ALELI A. QUIRANTE, Ph.D.

Panel Member



GRACE A. DALISAY, Ph.D.

Panel Member



APOLONIO B. CHUA, Ph.D.

Panel Member

Accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communication.

12 - 10 - 01

Date



ELLEN V. PAGLINAUAN

Dean

BELEN DIVINAGRACIA CALINGACION

A Profile

Belen was born in Dumaguete City on January 12, 1959. She finished her elementary education at Magsaysay Memorial School and her secondary education at Silliman University High School.

She completed her Bachelor of Arts in Speech and Theater Arts from Silliman University with honors and taught there for four years. She came to the University of the Philippines for her M.A. in Speech Communication and completed it in 1989. While pursuing graduate studies, she joined the Department of Speech Communication and Theater Arts (DSCTA) of the U.P., College of Arts and Letters as an Instructor and has been connected with the Department for the past 16 years where she is currently an Associate Professor. She is a member of local and international organizations including the Speech Communication Association of the Philippines (SCOP), the Philippine Association of Speech Communication Educators (PASCEP) where she is the Vice-Director and the Performance Studies International (PSi). She served as a Communications Consultant to a private company in 1989-1990, and also conducted workshops and served as a resource person/speaker in communication and performance with various private and government institutions.

She has also presented papers and given lectures in local and international conferences and training. Some of the papers and lectures she has presented are the following:

"From Street To Stage: A Study on the Use of Theater (Performance) Arts for Healing, Empowerment and Advocacy of Center-Based Street Children," Performance Studies International Conference in University of Mainz, in Mainz, Germany on March 28- April 1, 2001 and the International World Forum for Child Welfare -- *Children's First Conference* in Sydney, Australia on August 9 -11, 2000.

"Researching on Street Children and Performance: Reflections on the Socio-Cultural Situation in The Philippines," October 17-28, 1999 in Clayton College and State University, Georgia Perimeter College, Fort Valley State University, Kennesaw State University, North Georgia College and State University, in the state of Georgia, USA

"From the University to the Community: The U.P. Mobile Theatre as Model for Popularising Theatre," FIRT/IFTR (International Federation of Theater Research XIII World Congress on the theme *Theatre and Theatre Research: Exploring the Limits*, University of Kent, Canterbury, United Kingdom on July 6-12, 1998.

"A Cross-Cultural Study of Filipino and Indonesian Interpersonal Communicative Style," International Conference on Southeast Asia in the 20th Century, University of the Philippines on January 28-30, 1998.

"(En)placing the Spirit in the Study of Traditional Theater Performance: The Case of the Comedia," International Conference on Theater in Southeast Asia, Hanoi, Vietnam on December 25-28, 1996.

"Integrating Visual Arts and the Performing Arts in the Secondary Arts Curriculum," SEAMEO-SPAFA Teachers Training on Curriculum Development for Art Education in Southeast Asian Secondary Schools, Rajaphat Institute, Changmai, Thailand on May 6, 1996.

Her love of theater and performance started with training in theater in Silliman University where she did some acting and technical/production work in her student days. She also directed plays as a young instructor. She would attend summer theater training with Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) which instilled in her the awareness on the use of theater for social concerns. She eventually extended her work beyond the academe when she took on some community theater projects in her province. To get more training in theater, she took courses in theater while doing her M.A. in Speech Communication in U.P., and occasionally acted in *Dulaang U.P.* productions. She would also take on some directing jobs for other schools and organizations. But her interest shifted to research in theater and performance and she is especially concerned with looking at theater and performance in other contexts. It was this interest that prompted her to explore the possibilities of pedagogical utilization of performance techniques for her M.A. thesis. She founded *U.P. Kathalad*, a literary performing group to promote the use of performative activities in many different contexts using diverse materials (such as poetry or prose or 'life' stories, etc.) for educational, social and artistic purposes. This is the same curiosity that prompted her to pursue her doctoral studies in communication by combining it with her interest in theater. This doctoral dissertation on theatrical intervention for street children is a continuation of her quest to examine theater and performance in socially relevant contexts. At present, she is working on creative projects with street children and other marginalized communities.

Acknowledgments

A project of this magnitude could not have been completed without the cooperation, guidance, help, support, encouragement and prayers of so many people. They were always there with me to make sure I would make it through the long and sometimes difficult journey towards the finish line. My deepest gratitude and sincere appreciation to the following:

Bing Baguiorro -- a person of unwavering commitment to help street children -- for inspiring me to pursue this topic. His work of more than twenty years with street kids is a testament of that dedication. I will forever be grateful to him for increasing my awareness of this problem and introducing me the world of street children.

Lars and Monica Jorgensen, founders of Stairway Foundation, Inc., for allowing me to study their work with street children. Truly, they are so admirable for their selflessness and devotion to the cause of the 'endangered' children. Their friendship and hospitality as well as their openness and warmth made the fieldwork such a pleasurable experience.

The very talented Stairway kids who were my partners in this research: Angelito, Dave, Rosemarie, Rowena, Susan, Rodeline, Mark, John Cris, Mario, Cris, Gilbert, David, Ely, Arman, Nicky, Vhal, and Jao. They have shared their stories even when the memories were painful. I will always remember their courage, their laughter and their singing.

Dr. Elena E. Pernia, my adviser, whose guidance and direction kept me on track throughout this long journey. From the outset of the study, she shared her precious time, her expertise, and her ideas. A beautiful person inside and out, she is an inspiring mentor whose intelligence and scholarship I truly respect.

Dr. Grace Alfonso, my critic-reader, for her informed criticism, and thought provoking comments. Her dynamic presence was always a source of inspiration and motivation as well.

The other members of my dissertation panel: Dr. Aleli Quirante for her helpful comments, gentle prodding and morale boosting; Dr. Grace Dalisay, with whom I spent days of exchange and consultation, for providing me with insightful ideas, her gentle presence calmed my strained nerves and; Dr. Apolonio Chua for all the support, inputs and the sharing of his experience with people's theater. Together they steered me through some of the confusing moments in the making of the dissertation. Their belief in this project kept me motivated.

The staff of Stairway, Eleonor, Ate Baby, volunteers like Kuya Merlin, Kuya Julius and Ysagani Ibarra who shared their experiences and gave me assistance during my fieldwork. I especially want to thank Ate Amy (Amihan Bajade), a petite lady with a big heart and enormous courage. She was Stairway's social worker at that time that I was doing my study. She helped me sift through the stories of the children so I could make sense of all the numerous details. She was also my companion in some of the trips to other research sites and assisted in transcribing and encoding data.

The wonderful people who helped me put together the dissertation: Prof. Rosella 'Bambi' Moya and Bona Elisa Resurrecion who despite their very busy schedule found time to proofread my paper; Ms. Jaylyn Saure and Karen Abaya who spent late nights with me to do the lay-out of the paper; my best-friend Mimi Sarreal and her company ADC Miles for the computer, scanner and printer we used and the office we camped out during long nights of labor to bring the paper into its final form.

The Department of Speech Communication and Theater Arts, my home unit: Prof. Amiel Leonardia, the chairman of the department for his support and kind understanding; my colleagues for providing me with lots of encouragement and cheers; the administrative staff -- Eva, Lem and Joel who were always ready to lend a hand whenever I need it.

The University of the Philippines for giving me a Local Faculty Fellowship so I can take a break from my teaching duties to fully devote my time on the research and for the dissertation grant; the Office of the Vice President for Research and Development (OVCRD) as well as the Philippine Social Science Council – Research Award Program (PSSC-RAP) for giving additional grants to help defray the cost of this study. Without the grants that I have received, it would have not been possible to finish this project.

MSF-Switzerland, ERDA, Childhope, Kaibigan, and other child welfare organizations which provided invaluable information about street children greatly eased the burden of research.

My classmates at the College of Mass Communication: Joy, Eloi, Father Charles, Paz, Divine, Armi, Cecile, May, Mark, Ning-ning, and others for all the fun and laughter we shared even in times of stress. They truly made my doctoral studies a memorable one.

Ate Luming of the CMC Graduate Studies, for her prodding, constant reminders and the assistance she has given me throughout the duration of my graduate studies.

Esther Jo Pinzon, Teresita Abe and my brother-in-law Roger for their help in transcribing the tapes and encoding the data.

Mark Gaba for doing the English translation of some of the Tagalog texts.

Nonoy and Bianca Dadivas for helping me put together a video-documentary of the research and my dear friend Atty. Rowena Gonzales for the brilliant ideas she contributed in making the video-documentary.

My dear friends in church, Socky, Jane, Ate Annie, the other members of the Workers for Christ, Pastor Jun and Ate Ann, Pastor Abe and Sitsit and especially Emily, a very dear friend and sister in Christ for storming the gates of heaven with their prayers on my behalf and nourishing my spirit.

My housemates, Xandra, Charlie, Mila and Luz for all their prayers and encouragement. They had been very understanding of the clutter I made at home in the name of academic advancement. And to my friends Gerry, Kiko and Ate Trining for providing laughter and cheers plus occasional treats.

My family -- my Mama, Papa, my sisters Manang Ninfa and Mervin, my brother Nico and my brothers-in-law Roger and Jojo and my two nieces Iris and Ina -- for their love and for being always there for me.

Not everyone nor everything can be accounted for in writing; but indeed there were so many other people in Mindoro, in the streets of Manila, in Denmark, Finland and Switzerland who offered hospitality, friendship and assistance during my fieldwork and through the months that I labored to complete this dissertation. I thank all of you.

Above all, I thank God and my Lord Jesus for sustaining me through all the difficult and trying times. This work is a testament of His unfailing love and infinite grace. *To him be the Glory !*

BELEN D. CALINGACION

Dedication

This dissertation is lovingly dedicated to

Mama and Papa

*who believe that education is the best legacy they can
bequeath to their children.*

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is threefold: first, to explore the use of theater as a strategy for the welfare of street children; secondly, it attempts to evaluate a project and; thirdly, it examines the efficacy of theater as a vehicle for personal and, consequently, for social change. This study, thus, describes a theatrical intervention aimed as a creative strategy to help in the rehabilitation and recovery of street children. In addition, it explored in a sense how the children were empowered through their participation, which is a process of performance, as well as a way through which their cause will be promoted.

The case of the study is an organization named Stairway Foundation Inc. (SFI), a center for street children based in Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro, in the Philippines. Its program features the use of theater/performing arts as the strategy for the rehabilitation of the street children. In particular, this study focused on "Goldtooth," a musical about street children performed by street children. The work began in 1997, where children were freshly 'recruited' from the streets or referred by other childcare centers, auditioned and trained and became the 'stars' of the musical. The process of theater in the making of "Goldtooth" became the framework in the attempt of SFI to help, motivate and transform the lives of street children.

Varied methodologies were employed in this mainly qualitative study: participant observation, in-depth and informal interviews, 'theater talks,' journals and document analysis. In this ethnographic account, the children's voices were heard as they shared the experience in assessing a project of

which they were the beneficiaries. The stories of the seventeen respondents in the study, in their journey from the street to the stage are living testimonies of embodied and enacted lives.

The study reveals and confirms once more previous studies on the vulnerability of children and youth to abuse and neglect, some experience that most street children and youth face in their everyday realities. These are the recurrent themes of disempowerment: poverty, family neglect, drug use, and others. In assessing the theatrical intervention they were a part of, the children and youth attest to the empowerment of theater that allows them to 'retell' their stories and 're-live' their lives on the streets and in the process they were able to identify issues that impeded their development, to bring out internal conflict, to increase awareness of their capabilities, and to achieve a sense of well-being and a recognition of their self-worth. The children and youth participants indicate that the performance of their lived experiences in the streets through the "Goldtooth" musical was an empowering event as they helped create, shape and 'audience' their own stories. Theater as a communicative strategy allowed experiments with positive roles in a supportive environment where the children and youth received acknowledgment for their talents, learned communication skills, and experienced a sense of accomplishment and purpose.

Over the length of this project, some of the street children respondents claim to have recovered from potentially destructive behaviors such as drug addiction and tendency for violence. Through their participation in the theater process, they were placed in a productive environment that helped break the destructive ties to the streets and allowed positive values of trust and respect

to be nurtured as well as developed their abilities. The process also helped in building a trajectory for the children's lives with a positive sense of a future. The fact that many of the respondents have gone back to school or have gotten their own jobs seems to be an indication of this success.

This study provides interesting implications for the use of theatrical or drama techniques as communicative strategies for empowerment of children and youth at risk. The findings of this study indicate that the use of theater enhanced the children's ability to express themselves, thus, providing them the confidence to overcome communication barriers with the more privileged group of society which normally does not give street children due attention. Most of all, it allows them to have a space to communicate, to dialogue with the privileged and the people in the center, providing the children a 'new' space to negotiate their position in the society.

For the audience(s), it certainly increased their awareness of the plight of the street children and enabled them to think and reflect on the problem. As a site of exchange, performance became the key to understanding the "other." This increased awareness and understanding hopefully will lead to concrete actions in support of the cause of street children. For the street children viewers, the play invokes a sense of reflection and critical awareness of their problem that enabled them to see that there is a future beyond the streets.

While this study highlights the potential of theatrical intervention in welfare work, it also points to the need for diversity of strategies. The complexity of welfare work requires multi-varied approaches, which are designed based on the nuances of the needs of children. Better matching of problems with the services is crucial in insuring better outcomes. It is hoped

that more projects and programs will be viable and workable that will allow genuine and culturally sensitive participation of the disadvantaged children and youth.

Many intervention programs do need to be evaluated to find out what they have accomplished. This paper shows that it is possible to assess creative strategies employed by welfare institutions though it requires more refining of the instruments.

In the future, more collaboration of scholars in different disciplines is needed to conduct further studies on this very rich research field.

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	1
	Background of the Study	1
	Street Children Phenomenon in the Philippines	5
	Dangerous Life in the Street	7
	Reaching Out	10
	“Goldtooth”	14
	Statement of the Problem	15
	Objectives	16
	Significance of the Study	17
II.	Review of Related Literature	19
	Theater Arts as Intervention	19
	Theater/Performance for Identity and Empowerment	27
	Theater/Performance as a Communication Strategy	28
	Theater/Performance in Problematic Situation	30
III.	Study Framework	36
	Theoretical Bases and Assumptions of the Study	36
IV.	Methodology	52
	The Study Site(s)	52
	<i>Stairway at Puerto Galera</i>	52
	<i>Three Countries in Europe</i>	54
	<i>Back to Stairway, the Street and other Places</i>	55

Why Stairway?	56
Process of Entering the Site(s)	59
Partners in Research	64
<i>The Main Respondents</i>	64
<i>Key Informants</i>	65
Data Gathering Methods	66
Data Gathering Instruments	69
Data Processing	71
The Researcher	73
 V. From the Streets to Stairway	 77
Stairway and "Goldtooth"	77
<i>Stairway's Story</i>	77
<i>The Making of "Goldtooth",</i> <i>a Street Children's Musical</i>	82
<i>"Goldtooth", the Heart of Stairway's Recovery</i> <i>and Rehabilitation Program</i>	84
<i>The Audition</i>	86
Stories from the Streets	91
<i>The "Goldtooth Kids":</i>	
<i>A Brief Demographic Overview</i>	92
<i>Coming Into and Surviving the</i> <i>Street's Perilous Space</i>	98
Homelessness	98
Severe Poverty	100
Socio-cultural Vacuum	103
Parental Neglect and Abuse	106
Negative Experience with Others	111
Drugs as (Street) Culture	113
Involvement in Prostitution	117
The Gang as A Way of Life	120

Violence in Everyday (Street) Life	123
<i>The Street and Its Impact on the</i>	
<i>Children and Youth</i>	128
Hardened to Inhumanity	129
Loss of Self-Worth	129
<i>A Need for Innovative Intervention</i>	131
 VI. The Text, The Stage and the Lives	
of Street Children	133
"Goldtooth", The Musical	134
<i>The Synopsis</i>	134
<i>Playing Own Lives</i>	136
The Performance in the Making	146
<i>Stage 1: The Preparatory Phase</i>	148
The Workshops(s)	148
Rehearsals	152
The Disclosure	154
Exploring the Depths	
through Psychodrama	159
Creating Theater Together	162
Transformed and Transforming	165
<i>Stage 2: Performance(s)</i>	169
In Makati	169
Back to the Stairway	170
Back to Stage in Manila	174
Performance in Other Countries	176
<i>Stage 3: Disengagement</i>	180
 VII. Theater, Performance, Communication	
and the Welfare of the (Street) Children	183

Theater, Performance and the Children	185
<i>Taking the "Street" out of the Street Children</i>	186
<i>The Stage as "New" Space</i>	190
<i>On Stage the Healing Rests</i>	193
Coming out Clean	193
Finding Identity	195
Bringing Out Internal Conflict	199
Enhancing Self-Worth	200
"Balik-tanaw": Developing Ability of Reflection	202
Awareness and Self-Discovery	205
<i>Giving Voice and Possibilities</i>	207
Giving Voice	207
Call for Hope	209
Shared Reality: "Karamay"	211
"Goldtooth," The Children and the Audience	213
<i>The Audience(s)</i>	214
<i>Awareness an Empathy with the Plight of the Street Children</i>	217
<i>Calls for Support</i>	221
<i>The Children as Mediators</i>	222
<i>Theater and Performance: The Site of where the Self and Other Meets</i>	224
III. Conclusion	225
<i>Theater and Rehabilitation</i>	229
<i>Theater and Empowerment</i>	231
<i>Paradoxes and Contradictions of Theater</i>	233
<i>(Mis)Measuring Success</i>	237
<i>Triumphs, Failures and the Challenge Continues</i>	242

	<i>Reflections: Issues and Lessons in Theater And Welfare Work</i>	249
IX.	Implications an Recommendations	254
	<i>Implications for Theory</i>	255
	<i>Implications for Research</i>	257
	<i>Implications for Child Welfare Practice</i>	259
	Bibliography	266
	Appendices	
	Appendix A-1 – “Goldtooth” Musical Script (June 1999)	
	Appendix A-2 – Making of “Goldtooth”	
	Appendix A-3 – Original Script of “Goldtooth” (Cartoon Video)	
	Appendix B-1a – Guide Questions for Interviews (Street Children)	
	Appendix B-1b – Guide Questions for Interviews (Key Informants)	
	Appendix B-2a – Guide Questions for ‘Theater Talk’ / Focus Discussion (Fellow Street Children)	
	Appendix B-2b – Guide Questions for ‘Theater Talk” / Focus Discussion (Audience-at-Large)	
	Appendix B-3 – Sample Transcript of Interview (Respondent)	
	Appendix C – Stories of the Children	
	Appendix D-1 – Newspaper Clippings (International)	
	Appendix D-2 – Newspaper Clippings (Local)	
	Appendix E – Sample Programs of “Goldtooth”	
	Appendix F – More pictures of TASK	

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1	Study Framework for the Analysis of Center-Based Street Children's Theatrical Intervention Project	48
Figure 2	Map of the Philippines. With Puerto Galera in Mindoro Island where Stairway Foundation Inc. is located	53
Figure 3	Timeline of the "Goldtooth" Project	238
Table 1	Demographic Profile of Respondents	94
Table 2	Incidents of Child Abuse	110
Table 3	Summary of the Present Status of Respondents	239