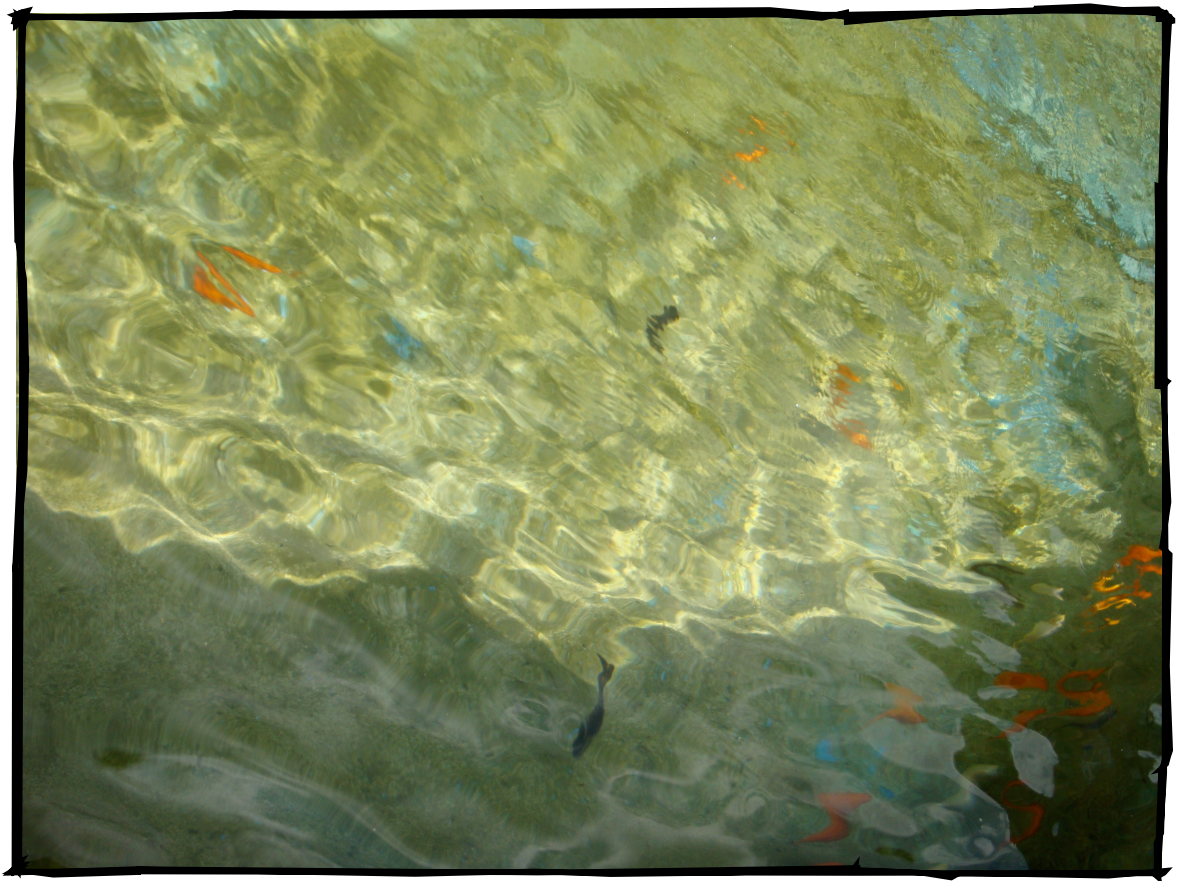


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# Summer School

Clairefontaine , 2011

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# Summer School Summary

July 23rd - 31st 2011

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## How it all started

I have joined Pirates (Pirate Productions) in 2004 and participated in “Showtime”, musical medley prepared for the group’s 25th anniversary. This was a sing and dance show. Even though I was dancing since I was teenager and preformed many times on stage, this was the first time that I danced in a service of character and not only of choreography and sung on stage.



*Only sunny day*

I very much enjoyed this and in the next years I participated in three different musicals and become more and more fascinated by theatre. I have heard of Summer School and in 2011 I have finally managed to put aside one week of holidays in order to go there .

## What is it about

Summer School is obviously not a school with a program that leads to a degree. It is a week long (very long week!) workshop. It is a meeting place for theatre enthusiasts. It is also a get together of old friends that come to Summer School again and again. New theatre enthusiasts and friends are very welcome.

Every year there is a different theme, or red-line. The theme of 2011 was “Making sense out of nonsense”. The course leaders are planning the activities around the theme. Some people come to Summer School since its beginnings on regular basis and therefore it is necessary to vary the program. No two years are the same.

On the first day participants can get a taste of how the courses are going to be. There are two groups of four courses and one needs to choose one course in each group. I have chosen a singing course based on the fact that I was feeling very happy after that particular “taster”. My other course was called “Comedy Toolbox “. It was my second choice in this group, but with the hindsight I think that this was certainly as good, if not better, for me as my original choice.

In my opinion schedule is very well balanced, without being repetitive or predictable.

Every day starts with my favorite, the morning warm up. All students participate in it and it is led by different course leader every day. It lasts half an hour and consists of games, physical or other exercises of various degrees of ridicule. Playing and laughing is an excellent way to start the day.

After that one goes to one or the other chosen course. By the end of the week one gets to do equal number of sessions of both courses.

There is also an additional shorter course, called “Student Project” in which one gets to direct or act, according to one's choice.

## **What where doing**

### **Singing with Graeme de Fesne**

Our main challenge was singing the Queen's “Bohemian Rhapsody” in four parts. The other bigger project was the song “Awakening” from Gilbert & Sullivan musical “The Sorcerer”. In between we have done various other short songs, many tongue twisters, canon singing, vocalizing (goes well with making sense out of nonsense: sh! aah!, overlapping whistles, boom ch, boom boom ch etc). We have invented lyrics in English for one song and then “translated” it in gibberish. We aimed to put the action into our singing in relation with the lyrics or the situation.

We have laughed a lot about the things that cannot be explained.

## **“Comedy toolbox “with Peta Lilly**

In this course we have analyzed various comedy material chosen by Peta and explored potential sources of comedy material in everyday life. We have used material coming from everyday situations, our weaknesses, preferences in order to perform and also to write comedy material. We have used simple combination of words to make up funny and improbable stories. We have tried only to lie when answering a question, or only to speak about here and now, which both proved to be very difficult.

We have tried to establish how many times a group of intelligent, motivated and somewhat tired people can fail while playing a fairly simple game called “Who killed King John?” (many, many times).

## **What was in it for me**

Before I went to “Summer School” I already I knew that I do not know anything about acting and theatre, or in best case very little. This was only confirmed in “Summer School”.

I am aware of the fact that acting is a skill and that even the most talented actor can improve using some tools. This is what Summer School is giving to its participants- various tools and guidelines on how to perform.

I have learned, in courses I have done and from demonstrations of what other groups were doing, that there are numerous techniques one can use. Many of the techniques are indirectly leading to the goal of improving one's acting skills and one needs to have patience to go through various stages of preparation .

It was challenging, fun and exhausting.

It opened some new doors for me and I will certainly go there again.

## **What they do not tell you**

If you take non-vegetarian option you will be served a meat dish every day. I am not a vegetarian, but next time I would go for vegetarian option and swap with a meat eater once or twice.

Bathrooms are outside the rooms, so take a bathrobe.

Toilets in dormitories are common, for men and women. It is a retirement home for priests,therefor no need for ladies toilets in dormitories. Not as problematic as it sounds.

There is a small (ca. 50x50 cm) non-transparent glass window in each bedroom door. With people coming back from the bar later than you and turning the light on in hallway, there is some potential for disturbing ones sleep if one is a bit sensitive sleeper . Experiences Summer School goers came armed with newspapers and taped it to the window.

Pillows are very , very thin. If you do not like your pillow thin, than bring one with you. It sounds neurotic, but I have seen more than one person leaving the premises on the last day with a pillow under their arms.