

Tellers Without Borders Conference Report

Words in a Treasure Chest

5 – 7 October 2018 in Sarajevo

By Martin Manasse, storyteller, U.K.

Tellers Without Borders is a network of professional and amateur storytellers who have joined together to offer healing through storytelling. The initiative was founded by storyteller Micaela Sauber who has since been joined by storytellers working across borders in Europe and the Middle East to reach listeners in need of stories of reassurance.

“We tell stories to people in war zones and in peaceful areas, for comfort, healing and encouragement of spirit.”

The 2018 Conference was preceded and followed by tours for delegates in Sarajevo and the area around and including Mostar and we learned much about the war in the 1990s, the local history and strong spirit of the people who took great pride in their ability to live in peace together regardless of ethnicity or faith. All is not yet restored in terms of this unity but the desire to recreate it is strong.

Mostly we were led by the indefatigable Micaela but on other occasions she found us excellent and very informative local guides. We were given wonderful hospitality, transported around the stunningly beautiful countryside by a superb team of drivers and we learned a lot about the horrors of the conflict and wonders that the area had to offer.

Conference

In the Conference itself, we were treated to a fascinatingly varied programme of informative talks, workshops and round table sessions. I, like every other delegate, was only able to attend one of the workshops but mine was outstanding and I learned from my colleagues that they had excellent experiences too. The descriptions of the workshops and round table sessions in the programme are appended below. The attendance was splendid. We were around 60 delegates from 20 countries, mostly from Europe.

We were greeted on **Friday** evening by a delightful performance by a children’s choir before being welcomed by Maria Serrano and given a resume of what lay before us.

Ivanir Sibylla Hasson then lead us through a joyful warm up before we heard an introductory address from Micaela and Amela Sehalic our Bosnian host and leader of her educational initiative DUGA (Rainbow).

After supper we were treated to a feast of stories from Emina Kamber, Gauri Raje, Ivanir, Maria, and Alexander Mackenzie.

On **Saturday**, the plenary session prior to the workshops was a fascinating talk from Dr. Martin Straube about trauma, its impact on the human constitution and health, and how storytelling with a focus on dealing with trauma could be relevant for children and young people. The ways in which trauma can successively inhibit or even “paralyse” and can then be undone gradually through use of story provided us with valuable information about our art.

Between the two Saturday workshop sessions Alexander Mackenzie introduced us to his book

“Humbert Bear Likes to doze” which he designed and wrote for children in hospices and which is given to them free of charge. It has been such a success that it is currently available in several languages and more translations are on the way. There is a Kickstarter funding programme which may be accessed online to raise money for the production costs.

There was also the first of the round table session of which details are appended below.

After the final workshop sessions, we enjoyed supper and a feast of stories from a variety of our delegates. A highly convivial and enjoyable evening.

Sunday started with a presentation “Teaching Stories from the Oriental Sufi Tradition” by Dorothee Greve and Ifor Rhys. This was about the nature of stories that teach in the Sufi tradition and how that differs from other traditions.

There followed the second round table session (see below) and then the closing circle for summaries, feedback thanks to the organisers and, in particular, an ovation for Micaela followed by a closing group song.

I look forward in great anticipation to the next meeting in two years’ time, always assuming that, at my great age, I live that long

Martin Manasse

October 2018

Appendix. Workshops

On Saturday, 6th October, there will be two workshop periods 11:30-13:30 and 18:00-19:30. Participants can choose between the following four workshops.

The Chance of Posttraumatic Growth

The impact of traumatic experiences to the human constitution and health:

<http://www.tellers-without-borders.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Kinder1-300x225.png> *Storytelling in emergency pedagogy for children and youth with focus on dealing with trauma.*

In recent years the matter of trauma caused by war and migration has engaged many therapists, psychologists, art therapists and pedagogues, and moved them to take action for people who need help in turning post traumatic stress into post traumatic growth. Storytelling encompasses a variety of possibilities and can also enable us to intensively work and share experiences with people in need. Through an aesthetic-artistic approach, storytelling holds an integrative potential and, thanks to the healing and intercultural nature of stories, it can open hearts and facilitate a genuine dialogue.

Doctor Straube and Micaela Sauber are both also engaged in manifold activities with worldwide projects of Friends of Waldorf education section and emergency pedagogy.

<http://www.tellers-without-borders.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Micaela-2.png> **Held by Micaela Sauber and Martin Straube.**

Micaela Sauber was born 1945 in the last days of the second world war. Micaela has been a professional storyteller since the 1990s, after theological studies, curative education and journalism. She initiated the network *Tellers without Borders* (international) and *Erzähler ohne Grenzen* (German speaking area), keeps threads together and is also the head of the board of the German legal association *Erzähler ohne Grenzen e.V.*. Some of her key experiences as a storyteller and teacher for storytelling were in Bosnia during and after war, Dubrovnik/Croatia after siege, Palestine/Gaza strip and Westbank, North Iraq, Libanon. During the last three years with doctors of medicine and therapists in Germany she studied about trauma, its origin and healing and connects this to her storytelling skills. As a storyteller Micaela is travelling with emergency pedagogy to countries in crisis, giving workshops about storytelling. Friends of Waldorf education who have developed

effective missions in emergency and trauma pedagogy worldwide since 2006, are her main cooperation partners. She runs a course with Britta Wilmsmeier for those storytellers wishing to work with refugees called 'Storytelling Here and Now'.

<http://www.tellers-without-borders.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/BILD-Martin-300x300.png>

Martin Straube is a medical anthroposophic doctor (GAÄD), lecturer and consultant for medicinal, pedagogical and art topics. He offers training for pharmacists, doctors, homeopathic practitioners, midwives and works for companies, schools, kindergartens and training institutions. Recently he founded the [International Institute for Emergency and Trauma GmbH](#).

Previous experience: School doctor for Waldorf schools, Ruhr region; lecturer at the Ita Wegman vocational college, Wuppertal; lecturer at the Institute for Homeopathy, Witten. Currently I have a practice in Hamburg and have given around 200 lectures on medical, pedagogical and art topics. In recent years my wife and I (she more frequently than me) have travelled to conflict and crisis areas around the world to work with traumatised children.

Storytelling and Personal Objects

<http://www.tellers-without-borders.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/BILD-Workshop-Ivanir-300x201.png>

We will explore storytelling from the relation to personal objects. We often think of personal objects as something we need, or something we acquire for aesthetics, necessity or fun. But the personal objects are companions to our emotions, they serve to express dynamic processes within us, among and between us and our surroundings. The objects are part of our biography. Personal objects may be lost, but even lost objects have strength and power, and as they are remembered, they carry stories with them, these stories can still be told and listened to. Personal objects, whether they are lost or still belonging to the owner, contain memories and legacy. They are connected to deep feelings. These stories can go all the way into the core of man. This work has been used as part of language training in work with refugees.

<http://www.tellers-without-borders.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/BILD-Ivanir.png>

Held by Ivanir Sibylla Hasson, who is a professional performing artist for 30 years. The last 7 years she has been working with asylum seekers in reception centers all over Norway with both storytelling, clowning and circus schools. Since 2005 she has been deepening her work in the field of Storytelling as a Healing Art. She has been holding workshops with Healing Storytelling in Norway, Iceland, Denmark, Estonia and Finland. She is the leader of the Healing story alliance, [Nordic ALBA](#) Norway since 2010 arranging two international Symposiums: 'Storytelling as a Healing Art: The Way Of The Heart 2012', and 'Stories in The Wild 2016'. She is also a member of the European Storytelling Peace Council and Tellers without Borders (International).

As an educator she works intuitively and is very keen to capture the energy that arises here and now. Her has a long experience as a teacher in Norway's smallest circus, [Cirkus Sibylla](#). She uses means as play, dance and singing as a part of the work.

Stories of the Stranger and Self : The Place of Witnessing in Storytelling

In this workshop we will look at the place and meaning of witnessing in storytelling. What is the relationship between the self and story? In a world where there is so much conflict and dislocation, where does witnessing in a story happen? How can the storyteller be a witness and teller at the same time? This is a workshop for exploration and reflection. Everyone is welcome, with or without the experience of storytelling.

<http://www.tellers-without-borders.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/BILD-Gauri.png>

Held by Gauri Raje, who is an anthropologist and storyteller and works in the UK and India with adults and vulnerable groups especially asylum-seekers, refugees and migrant groups. She performs regularly in the U.K, India and Europe. Her performance projects include directing 'East of the Sun, West of the Moon' a collection of stories for adults from around the world translated and told in 3 different Indian languages, 'Badlands', a storytelling of folk stories of the land and rivers of central India and 'Tales of Exile and Sanctuary', stories from around the world exploring themes of exile. She ran an Arts Council funded biographical storytelling evening series in Birmingham (UK) for migrants called 'Long Journey Home: True Life Migrant Tales' in 2016. She is currently working with biographical and traditional stories of South Asian migrants to the West of Scotland with AwazFM, a South Asian radio station in Glasgow. She is a member of the Tellers without Borders (international)

Core group. LinkedIn: Gauri Raje, Facebook: Silent Sounds (@gaurirajestorytelling)

Regeneration

<http://www.tellers-without-borders.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/BILD-Regeneration-maria-200x300.png> Connecting traditional tales and our own stories, we will work with strengthening the storyteller. We are living challenging times when more and more people “burn out” and use up their resources. What happens when we give too much? Which are the stories that can help us go from unsustainable or barely sustainable to regenerating? How can activists remain truly connected to their hearts and inner forces? This is a workshop working with intentions and setting boundaries, a workshop about balancing giving and receiving.

The workshop is suited both for beginners and experienced storytellers. We will explore, improvise and share experiences.

The workshop will be held in English (and Spanish if required).

<http://www.tellers-without-borders.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/BILD-Maria.png> Held by **Maria Serrano**, who is a multilingual professional storyteller from Finland and Spain. She is chairperson of ALBASuomiFinland (in the Nordic Alliance for Healing Storytelling) and an active member of Tellers Without Border’s (international) core group. She performs in Swedish, Spanish and English. Her repertoire includes traditional-, true-life- and improvised stories, the latter at which she’s particularly comfortable and adept. As a storyteller she has mainly trained in South Africa with the International School of Storytelling. She performs in a variety of settings -from schools and libraries to stages and streets, in several countries. Because of her background she has a passion for creating spaces where different cultures can meet. María was born in 1967 to a Spanish photographer and a Swedish-speaking actress from Finland. Reared in Spain and Finland, she also travelled all over Europe (East and West) and North Africa as a child. She grew up among the community of Chilean refugees and is currently working with newly arrived refugees in her community in Finland. María has also worked extensively as a conference interpreter and trained as a class teacher. She is married and a mother of four.

Round Table Talks

Over the course of the conference two round table talks will be hosted. Each time a group of experts will open a conversation around a specific topic. Afterwards the audience is very welcome to take part in these conversations.

Saturday, 6th October 16-17.30

Ethics in Critical Time : Stories needed for encouragement and hope

This is a unique opportunity for storytellers from around Europe to listen to the stories of people from Sarajevo, who through their knowledge and love made and continue to make changes in times of crisis, horror and evil. The conversation will be hosted by **Micaela Sauber** and joined by the following experts:

<http://www.tellers-without-borders.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/BILD-Alma.png> **Alma Karic** will open the conference with her children choir “Suncocreti”. She was born in Tuzla in 1978, where she started her music education. Later she graduated from Department of Orchestra and Choir Conducting at Sarajevo Music Academy, in 2001. She is an active music teacher and conductor in Primary Music and ballet school “Novo Sarajevo” since 2000, where she established various forms of children choirs and orchestras (guitar ensemble, accordion orchestra, a non-standard orchestra and a chamber orchestra) with whom she entered many regional competitions and some international ones , too. With these ensembles she entered seven competitions and won 16 awards in total, with nine of them being first prizes, one special prize (100 points) and even one Grand Prix of the category of children choirs (International Choir Championship”Lege Artis”). She is Artistic Director of Superar in BiH, an association that works on providing training in music and dance, and offers access to the positive effects of the performing arts to ALL CHILDREN free of charge.

<http://www.tellers-without-borders.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/BILD-Dizdar.png> **Dr.**

Gorcin Dizdar is Head of Fondacija Mak Dizdar for Bosnian culture. He was born in Sarajevo in 1984. He attended primary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Germany, and completed his secondary school education in the UK. In 2003, he was awarded the Oxford Student Scholarship, which enabled him to study Philosophy and German at the University of Oxford, where he achieved the highest results of his year at the final examination. After initially returning to Sarajevo in 2007, in 2009 he started first an MA, and later a PhD in Humanities at York University in Toronto, Canada, where he was awarded the Canada Vanier Graduate Scholarship, one of the most prestigious postgraduate scholarships awarded by the Canadian Government. After completing his PhD in 2016, he returned to Sarajevo, working as the director of the Mak Dizdar Foundation and teaching at the International University of Sarajevo. His essays were published in Bosnian, Canadian and German journals, while his lyrical essay *The Stones of the Ancestors* was included in the selection *Best Canadian Essays 2013*.

<http://www.tellers-without-borders.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/BILD-Alen-300x300.png>**Alen Kristić** is an author and theologian. He was born in 1977 in Sarajevo, a Masters degree in Theology, founder and editor of the international theological periodical *Concilium* for Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. He also edits *Status*, a magazine based in Mostar focusing on political culture and social issues, as well as the periodical *Bobovac*, based in Vareš. Amongst the main concerns of his academic work are religions' potential for peace, the formation of the religious from the remains of socialism, the role of women in the religious sphere and liberation theology. Alen Kristić has published many academic books and translated from German and English to Bosnian language. Amongst these translations are *Ethics* (Dietrich Bonhoeffer) and *Gnosis und Christentum* (Christoph Marksches).

http://www.tellers-without-borders.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Jovan_Divjak_0043-2-1.jpg**Jovan Divjak** was a member of the elite troops that established Yugoslavia, serving under its first president, Josip Broz Tito. He served in the Yugoslav National Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina and played an important part in the defense of B-H during the aggression aimed against it. He has received many domestic and international awards for his humane and humanitarian work during and after the war, as well as the highest French medal of the Legion of Honor. In 1994, along with 57 citizens (intellectuals, artists, theatre and literary workers, soldiers, police officers and others), Jovan Divjak participated in establishing the Foundation/ Association "Building B-H Through Education" (*Obrazovanje gradi BiH*) and served as its Executive Director. In twenty-four years, the Association has given out about 6,500 grants to pupils and students – victims of war, disabled and talented children, those of the Roma national minority, and the socially disadvantaged. He is the author of numerous reviews and forewords to specialist and fiction literature, eg. "Ratovi u Hrvatskoj i Bosni i Hercegovini 1991.-1995." (*The Wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina 1991-1995*, 2000); separately: "Agresija na BiH" (*Aggression on B-H*, 2004); "Sarajevo, mon amour" (2004 in French, and 2007 in Italian); "Očekujući istinu i pravdu – Bečki dnevnik" (*Expecting Truth and Justice – The Vienna diary*, 2012). He also starred in several films: *Sarajevo my love* (documentary, 2013), *Venuto al mondo* (feature film, 2012), *Bosnia* (documentary, 2005), and *Bosnia* (documentary, 1995). He participated in various activities in the non-governmental sector, both in B-H and abroad, as well as many international conferences held in B-H.

Dzevad Sabanagic is a Violinist who gave many free string quartet concerts during the war for the people of Sarajevo.

Sunday 7th October 11.30-13.00

Education

about Stories, Storytelling and the Digital World in the Life of Children

Emerging tasks and questions for a healthy growth of children. What is the role of storytelling in this process?

Impact of digital devices and television in early childhood will be in the focus of experts in medicine, pedagogy, ethics and storytelling. Scientists are warning that the use of digital devices in early childhood has a destructive impact on brain development. It causes addiction, fear and dumpness of cognition abilities and even autism or autistic tendencies. To become a master of the digital devices is a task for older schoolchildren who have developed well and healthy in their early childhood.

This talk will give latest neuro scientific researches' information as well as pedagogical and medical observations and experiences. Storytelling for and with children attracts and strenghtens attention,

supports independent fantasy as well as exploration of life and world. The conversation will be hosted by **Micaela Sauber** and joined by the **following experts**:
Alen Kristic is an author and theologian (*his profile see above*).

<http://www.tellers-without-borders.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/BILD-Martin-300x300.png>**Martin Straube** is a medical anthroposophic doctor (GAÄD), lecturer and consultant for medicinal, pedagogical and art topics. He offers training for pharmacists, doctors, homeopathic practitioners, midwives and works for companies, schools, kindergartens and training institutions. Recently he founded the [International Institute for Emergency and Trauma GmbH](#). Previous experience: School doctor for Waldorf schools, Ruhr region; lecturer at the Ita Wegman vocational college, Wuppertal; lecturer at the Institute for Homeopathy, Witten. Currently I have a practice in Hamburg and have given around 200 lectures on medical, pedagogical and art topics. In recent years my wife and I (she more frequently than me) have travelled to conflict and crisis areas around the world to work with traumatised children.

<http://www.tellers-without-borders.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/BILD-Minka-300x300.jpeg>**Minka Görzel-Straube** is a trauma pedagogue and teacher. She has been a Rudolf-Steiner-pedagogue for over 20 years. Today she is trained as a trauma pedagogue and alternative psychotherapist, and has worked multiple times with [Friends of Waldorf Education](#) (in Gaza, Kyrgystan, Japan, Libanon, Philippines, Irak, Bosnia and Greece). Trauma pedagogy is her central concern. She led diverse assignments in Irak, became the pedagogical director there and is in charge of the cooperation with the University of Dohuk. Further she is founding member of the [International Institute for Emergency and Trauma Pedagogy](#).

<http://www.tellers-without-borders.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/BILDElma.png>**Elma Selmanagić Lizde** was born in 1975 and lives in Sarajevo. A certain period of life and part of education she has spent in Slovenia and Canada. She received her PhD in Pedagogical Sciences at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Sarajevo at the Department of Pedagogy, in the segment of researching of processes that take place within the family as a system, and particularly of its individual members; especially brothers and sisters. The focus on lifelong learning and the desire to improve both professional and family life has led her to attaining the role of a family psychotherapist. She is continuously in the process of learning and undertaking psychotherapy supervision of her work. Elma is also member of the Association for Systemic Practice and Therapy BiH as well as a member of the European Association for Family Therapy (EFTA). She is the author of several professional and scientific articles in the field of family pedagogy. She also published the book about relationship between siblings named „Odnos brace i sestara kroz intraobiteljsku dinamiku“. She is a daughter, sister, aunt, daughter in law, cousin, friend, neighbor, wife and mother of a daughter and a son. The roles listed are a part of Elma's unbreakable identity, strongly pervaded with family relationships and the values of the parental role in the life of every individual opting for that step. She is employed at the University of Sarajevo – Faculty of Educational Sciences.