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

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# Dedication

This dissertation is lowingly dedicated to

Mama and Papa

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

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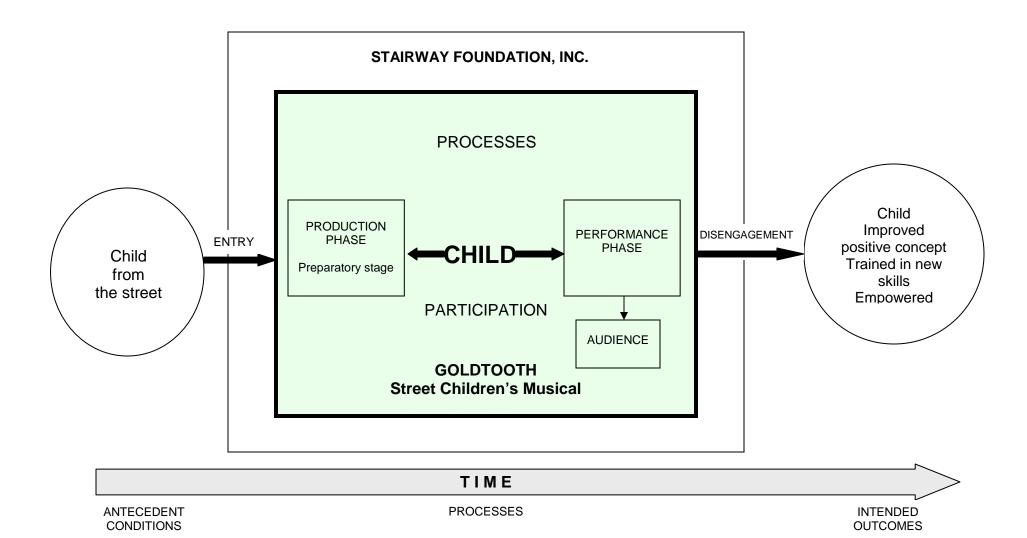
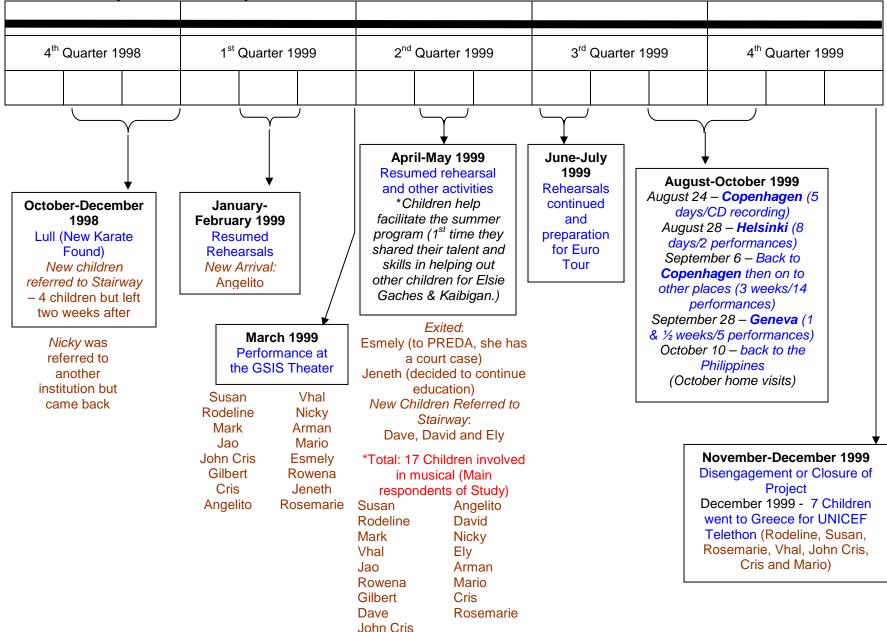
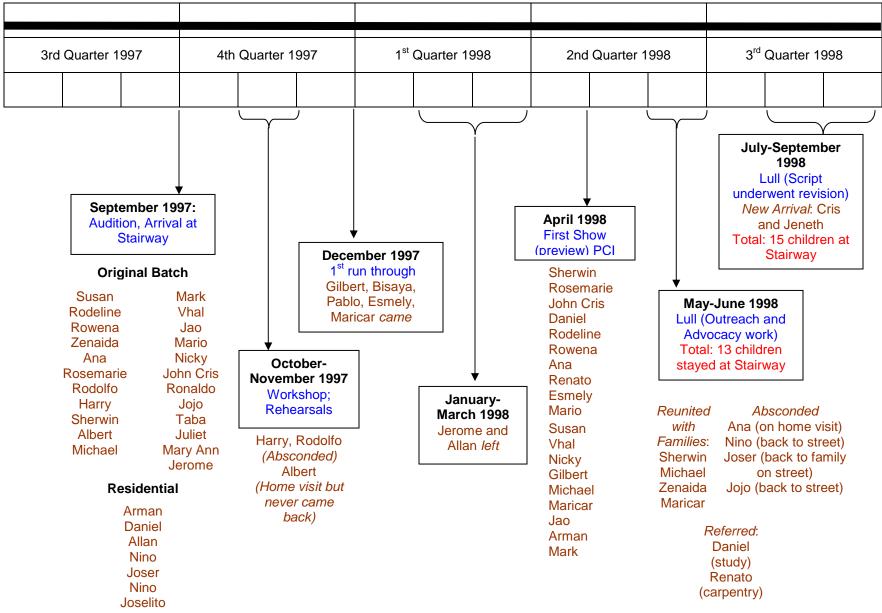


Figure 1: Study Framework for the Analysis of Center-Based Street Children's Theatrical Intervention Project







#### TIMELINE: "Goldtooth" The Street Children's

# **Present Status of Children/Youth Respondents:** Upon completion of Study (June 2000 - May 2001)

Studying	Working	Neither working Nor studying	Returned to Streets
Rosemarie John Cris Gilbert Rodeline Dave Ely Mario (stopped and will work)	Angelito Vhal David Jao Cris (own business) Arman (stopped studying and now working)	Susan (plans to go back to school) Rowena (returned to family then was sited briefly in the streets; plans to get married)	Mark Nicky

# **Present Status of Children/Youth Respondents:** Upon completion of Study (June 2000 - May 2001)

Studying	Working	Not working yet but planned to go to school	Returned to Streets
Rosemarie	Angelito	Susan	Mark
John	Vhal		Nicky
Cris	David		Rowena (may have
Gilbert	Jao		returned to family)
Rodeline	Cris (own business)		
Dave	Arman (stopped		
Ely	studying and now		
Mario (stopped and will work)	working)		

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### Chapter 1 Introduction

#### Just Because I'm a Street Girl

l have something to say, But I'm a street girl and nobody cares. I have a point to make, But nobody listens

If a child lives with hostility, She learns to fight. If a child lives with encouragement, She learns confidence. If a child lives with praise and friendship, She learns to find love in the world.

But I look around and ask myself "Where is my helper?" Just because I'm a street girl nobody cares.

l beseech you be merciful to street children And come to their aid. They need food clothing and education, But most of all they need love.

Children are the pride of Africa

-Poem by Anne, a street girl from Kenya-

The words, written by Anne, convey the sentiments of a street girl from Kenya, Africa -- a country so geographically and culturally distant from the Philippines. Yet Anne echoes the silent voices of one of the most marginalized groups in our society – the street children. *Batang lansangan*, as they are called, are a common sight in the streets of Manila. We encounter many of them as they

knock at car doors or clean jeepney windows. We see them as they weave through the maze of traffic while selling *sampaguitas*, newspapers and candies or at times, even themselves. These are the children who have made the street



Street children in Manila [photos by Ding Panganiban and Ajs Nielsen]

as their homes. These children chose to spend their lives in the streets to live or to earn a living. Though estimates vary depending on the source, it is believed that there are almost one and a half million of them in the Philippines and approximately 50,000-100,000 in Metro Manila alone (*Philippine Star* 1996 cited in Taa 2000; De Guzman 1992; Childhope-Asia 1989).<sup>1</sup>

This present project is about street children and for street children. It was a conference in late 1995 that initially fueled my interest in this topic. Attended by representatives of artists and theater workers in Southeast Asia, the conference centered its discussion on the theme, "The Role of Drama in Community

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> One of the reports on street children featured in a *Philippine Star* Editorial (Sept. 26, 1996) shows that there are about 223,600 street children nationwide. About 107,000 in Metro Manila alone, of which the biggest concentration is in Quezon City (about 25,000) followed by Manila (21,585). A much more recent article (See *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, Sept, 17, 2000 p. D4-5) cites a De La Salle University study on street children places at 50,000 the number of street children in Metro Manila although DSWD estimates the number to run as high as 200,000.

Development".<sup>2</sup> The choice of the Philippines as venue for the conference may have been fitting, as it has been the seat of many pioneering efforts in promoting the use of theater beyond its entertainment value. Many cultural groups and theater organizations have figured prominently, not only locally but also internationally, in the effort of promoting theater for development and social transformation (See for instance Van Erven 1992; Lumbera 1987). On this occasion, one of the speakers invited was Bing Baguiorro, a person who has spent 18 years working for the cause of street children as a street educator and founder of the Children's Laboratory for Drama and Education (Children's Lab), a theater group that is aimed at giving street children an alternative education through the creative methodologies of drama and performance. Bing spoke about his long experience working with street children. What was impressed on my mind as he spoke were the stories of great abuse on and deprivation of the street children. Yet he also talked of these children's triumph and celebration in overcoming the odds through the efforts of various groups to help them, one of which is his own organization, the Children's Lab. He underscored the role of the performance arts, of drama and theater in the welfare programs initiated by these organizations to bring about change in the lives of the street children.

The Children's Lab is not a single case of a theater group that initiated a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> This conference was sponsored by Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organization Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts (SEAMEO-SPAFA) with the Department of Speech Communication and Theater Arts of the University of the Philippines as co-host. This was held in Manila in Dec. 1995.

theatrical approach to bring change to the lives of street children. In fact, other theater groups like Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) have long been collaborating with child welfare institutions and organizations like Bahay Tuluyan and ECPAT (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking). Bahay Tuluyan, for instance, has a Theatre Arts Group as one of the major components in their program while ECPAT provides annual camps for children who are victims of prostitution (most of whom are street children) that include theater and other creative workshops as part of the activity. In the course of my tentative exploration into this topic, I came to know about Stairway Foundation Inc.'s theater project with street children, the work which would now become the case for this present study. And just very recently, I came across another group, Teatro Palaboy, which as its name implies is a theater group composed of street children (See Sunday Inquirer January 28, 2001). Formed five years ago by a former documentary film director, Dodos de la Cruz, Teatro Palaboy is an offshoot of Dodos' work with street children.<sup>3</sup>

Curiously, not much has been written about the work of theater groups or of organizations working with street children on their work using theater to help street children. The few that can be found are mostly short feature articles in popular magazines and newspapers.<sup>4</sup> Hardly, it seems, have much effort been

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The group is based at Fr. O'Brien Angels' Home Foundation Inc., Children's Shelter and its sister institution, Big Boy Angels' Home -- childcare institutions that cater to abandoned street children which Dodos and friends established in 1996.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Except for Fajardo's (1980) M.A. thesis on the use of theater for institutionalized adolescents, I

done towards an in depth examination of this phenomenon in this country which has been acknowledged as a source of inspiration if not of information on the work of this kind. The value of the (creative) approaches in helping street children begs for a serious exploration. This present study, steered by the above concerns, attempts to examine the responses and experiences of street children and youth involved in a creative endeavor, in particular, the use of performance arts such as theater in transforming lives.

But before detailing the issues which is the object of this present investigation, a brief historical background on the phenomenon of street children is necessary in order to put the problem in perspective.

#### THE STREET CHILDREN PHENOMENON IN THE PHILIPPINES

In the Philippines as in many parts of the third world, the 70s and 80s saw the emergence of the street children phenomenon. It was largely ignored and unacknowledged even while it started to rear its ugly head. A 1968 edition of *Asia Magazine* did feature an article on street children in the Philippines; however, it was only in the late 80s and the start of the 90s that the subject became a national concern. The beginning of the formal and official Philippine response to the emerging social problem was a serious effort to look at the situations of street children in a UNICEF funded research called the *Situation of Children in Ten (10)* 

have not come across any recent scholarly work on this subject.

*Cities in the Philippines*. This study done in 1988 gave birth to a partnership between government (GOs), non-government organizations (NGOs) and UNICEF which came to be known as the National Project on Street Children (NPSC). Through the NPSC, further studies and many concerted efforts to address street children's needs were launched (Baguiorro 1999).

In many of the studies on street children several reasons were cited to have spawned this phenomenon. Foremost is economic, i. e. the widespread poverty in the rural areas resulted in massive urban migration whereby thousands of families from the country's depressed areas come to the cities to improve financial opportunities. But living in the cities resulted in even greater deprivation instead of the promised better life so much so that these families who have migrated to the center were forced to put their own children to work or live on the streets where they have to learn to fend for themselves. Related to this is the socio-cultural dimension where the low regard of women and children in a patriarchal structure of traditional Filipino family contributes to some exploitation of the children (Marcelino, *et al* 2000; Torres 1996; DSWD, *et al* 1988). Still some individual factors such as breakdown of the family and domestic violence add to the creation and growing number of street children (Marcelino *et al* 2000; Taa 2000; Banaag 1997; Lamberte 1996; Childhope-Asia 1995; DSWD, *et al* 1988).

#### DANGEROUS LIFE IN THE STREET

Who are the street children? Most definitions of street children would describe them as "children of urban poor between the ages of 5-18 years, coming from large families, many of whom migrated from rural areas. They are a most vulnerable, exploited group. Confronting serious risks and choos[ing] their lifestyle as a way of survival...The street happens to be one location where increasing numbers of children converge and congregate." (UNICEF & ILO/IPEC 1994, 22 cited in Miller 1996, 3).

This definition of course begs for clarification as studies also show that there are indeed different categories of street children. Accordingly, the street children in the Philippines are categorized as *children in the streets* which refers to children who spend their time in the streets but have families to go home to; *children of the streets* which refer to those who spend time on the streets but have very little or infrequent contact with their families and the *completely abandoned and neglected children* who work or live on the streets entirely on their own (Marcelino, *et al* 2000; National Council for Social Development 1996; Childhope-Asia 1989).

But whatever their categories, studies on street children reveal the common dangers and hazards that they are exposed to. For they are not the privileged and sheltered children who are as one journalist wrote, "nightly tucked in with goodnight kisses and air-conditioned bed time stories" (*Bangkok Post* 

May 18, 1997). They are children who are forced to struggle and to survive on their own.

They are not children portrayed in many instances as sweet and innocent creatures, protected from outside world in the havens of their homes by doting parents who do everything for them. They are children who learned to fend of themselves in the harsh environs of the cities, and who have joined the working world of adults to meet their families' basic needs (Torres 1996, ix).

Numerous studies on street children reveal that their situation is rather distressing. Because of the exigencies of survival, many have been forced to leave home and quit school. Most are malnourished and placed in forms of livelihood that either led to their exploitation or exposed them to dangers (Taa 2000; Lamberte 1996; Torres 1996; DSWD *et al* 1988; ICHI Report 1986).

Urban conditions are particularly hostile to children and youth. Owing to the nature of their work and the conditions of street life, children and the youth face a variety of hazards -- harassment, brutality, susceptibility to disease, and initiation to dangerous acts. In fact, most victims of child abuse are street children. In her study on child abuse in the Philippines, Pacquing-Nadera reports that 35% of the victims of child abuse "were either street kids, working, prostitutes, runaway, neglected, abandoned, or in conflict with the law" (See *Philippine Daily Inquirer* February 20, 2000). The dangers are much more alarming for many street children since they are basically unprotected and unsupervised. Many of the studies on street children found that because of these abuses and deprivation, many of the children in the street have to face serious

psychological and social problems. The conditions on the street breed a poor image of self, a crisis in identity and the feeling of helplessness to change their situation. For instance, in one of the studies on the street children's selfperception, Bautista (1995) found that street children manifested a feeling of lack of acceptance or belonging and care. In addition, there seems to be an explicit wish "to go back to their families... and [the children hope] that there will be a good Samaritan who would adopt them. Others openly showed their hurt of the maltreatment they suffered from their parents " (55). In another study, Lamberte (1996) finds that the street children exhibit 'deviant' behavior. Many of them engage in gambling, indulge in sexual activity and use prohibited drugs.

A study done by U.P. - PGH on sexually abused children (which comprise about 2-3% of the estimated 50,000 to 100,000 street children in Metro Manila) found that there are long-term consequences to their condition such as poor selfesteem, depression and suicidal behavior, substance abuse, borderlike personality disorder and disturbance in sexual behavior and gender roles (*Philippine Star* Sept. 26, 1996). In a similar article on child abuse (whether sexual or otherwise), the children are described to "have all the negative attitude towards life, anger and hopelessness, distorted values and beliefs" (*Chronicle* Vol. 33, No. 1630). Moreover, they feel the rejection of the society that views them 'as nuisance makers', 'criminals' or 'deviants'.

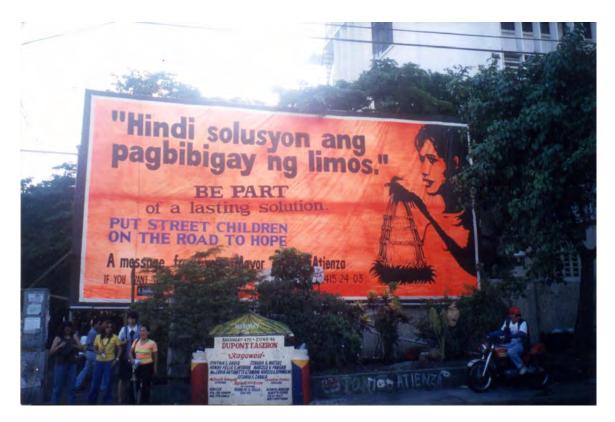
In essence, the public conception of street children according to Peter Copping, the executive director of Street Kids International,<sup>5</sup> invites either sympathy or disdain. Copping points out that because these minors who live on the street are "without adult supervision or support and because they lack homes and guardians" and most of all, "they operate outside structures organized by adults, they are regarded as dispossessed or marginalized on one hand, and renegade (or rogue) on the other". The combination of many factors, therefore, contributes to the marginalization of street children. To quote Copping again:

It is the combination of poverty (which varies in degree) and neglect and abuse (which also vary in degree) that appears to place children at highest risk. Poverty forces them to join the adult world of money, where they must participate with a fundamentally unequal status. Neglect and abuse weaken their sense of themselves, their own worth and their capacity to assert and defend their own needs and interests. These children are most vulnerable to all kinds of economic, emotional and sexual exploitation. The sources of exploitation are as varied as the contacts of the children: clients, employers, other children, teachers, police and their own friends and family (http://www.streetkids.org/youth.html).

#### **REACHING OUT**

Because of the high risk and vulnerability of street children to threats on their well being many groups have thus responded to their plight. Perhaps, even

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Street Kids International (SKI) is a Canadian-based NGO founded in 1988 "as a voluntary response to the world-wide phenomenon of children and youth living and working on the streets". SKI works in association with a variety of street-serving agencies in developing countries, primarily in the training of street workers and the development of programs that address the economic needs of street children and youth.



"Put Street Children on the Road of Hope" – a billboard message of Manila Mayor Lito Atienza discouraging alms-giving to street children

as early as in the 70s when the phenomenon was largely unacknowledged, there already might have been efforts from good-hearted citizens and (mostly religious) organizations to reach out and extend the hand to help street children and youth. But it was through the founding of NPSC, that the work became more organized and concerted and brought to a national and official level rather than being carried out as isolated local endeavors. International agencies such as UNICEF, the local social welfare ministries or departments and a number of NGOs formulated programs to help in weaning the children out of the streets and to give them the protection and care they need. Many of the projects provide the street children access to basic services, facilitate the children's reunion with their families, extend health, education and work opportunities to them and their families. These agencies assume a collective responsibility in protecting the children. Approaches include street-based, center-based and community-based projects (DSWD, et al 1988). The street-based projects reach out to children in the street or places of work. Through these projects, street educators conduct informal dialogues with children and get to know them. The center-based endeavors on the other hand, involve projects such as putting up a "home" where abandoned and homeless children can find help. These are either drop-in centers or temporary shelters that offer long lasting services like sending children to school, developing skills and preparing them for gainful occupation. The third approach is the community-based projects that are preventive, which try to address the problems where these start--the family and community of the child. The components of the project include advocacy/social mobilization and networking, human resource development, direct services/program development, monitoring and others.

Of the latest count, there are about 350 government (GOs) and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) in the Philippines that are working for the welfare of street children (Banaag 1997). Each of these GOs and NGOs has their

own approaches in meeting the needs of the street children. From recovery to rehabilitation, these organizations seek to intervene by giving alternative support system, moral and spiritual development as well as psychosocial interventions.

This study, in particular, focuses on a center-based project. As said earlier, center-based projects provide "home" where mostly abandoned and homeless children can find help. These institutions or centers provide alternative support and rehabilitation programs for their clients. Considering that most of the street children suffer from emotional and psychological and behavioral problems, programs designed are mostly of therapeutic and transformative value - that is, they are aimed to help in the street children's healing, boost their self-esteem or self-confidence and modify their behavior (Marcelino, *et al* 2000).

One such organizations that this present study focused on is Stairway Foundation Incorporated (Stairway) based in Bo. Aninuan, Puerto Galera in the island of Mindoro. In 1997, Stairway launched a unique project to help street children and youth using theater as a core strategy. "Goldtooth", a street children's musical was created for the purpose of helping in the development of the street children and youth who participated in the project. Essentially this research looks into this particular center-based project that showcases a theater production created, produced and performed for and by street children. The study thus seeks to capture the street children and youth's involvement and to document their experiences in a creative endeavor meant for their rehabilitation and recovery as well as an advocacy for their cause.

How does theater enable a marginalized group such as the street children shape the content and structure of their present and perhaps, even their future lives? Will their participation in an artistic endeavor such as theater transform their lives and give them the 'power' to negotiate a sense of who they are, realize their capabilities and to make the 'right' choices to live productive lives? Will the theater activity help in the personal growth of the street children and youth who participated in it? How and to what extent is their participation in the theatrical activity support or even advance their cause? This study is aimed at finding some answers to these questions.

#### "GOLDTOOTH"

The focus of this inquiry is "Goldtooth", a street children's musical, a project aimed at helping street children. It was created and produced by Stairway Foundation Inc., a non- stock, non-profit, non-government childcare center which runs a rehabilitation and recovery program for street children of Metro Manila. Monica Jorgensen, a dancer and performance artist who is also the program coordinator of Stairway, envisioned the project to get the street children out of the streets and facilitate their rehabilitation and reintegration in society. With her husband Lars Jorgensen, Stairway's executive director, and with the help of other artist-volunteers, they launched the project in 1997, which became the core strategy of their work with street children. It consists of three interrelated programs: recovery/rehabilitation, reintegration, and advocacy. In September

1997, they took in children and youth from the streets of Manila to be part of the musical "Goldtooth" upon referral by different drop-in centers and street children organizations. The musical became the core element in the rehabilitation process of these street children and youth.

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study, as indicated in the foregoing, is interested in exploring the response and experience of street children who were part of the theater project. It attempts to determine theater's efficacy as an alternative strategy to help street children in their recovery and development. Theatrical intervention is seen here as a communicative strategy for personal and consequently, social development. It is premised on the belief that theater and performance is an empowering strategy for creative self-expression and a stronger connection to the self. In the process of establishing the efficacy of theater as an alternative strategy, this research also attempts to explore how theater and performance is used as strategy for rehabilitation and recovery. This dissertation expands its exploration to determine how and to what extent theater as a strategy for rehabilitation and recovery can also empower street children to rise above their marginalized condition. This is the problem on which is centered my continuing quest to explore the potential of theater/performing arts beyond entertainment.

The overall objective of this study is to examine the processes and outcomes of a theater project based in a center for street children. I hope to be

able to address an important research need in this area. There is the need for evaluation of the efficacy of care-related projects such as this one that uses theater for intervention work with street children.

The theater project covered in this study is the musical "Goldtooth" created and produced by Stairway Foundation Inc., a center involved in the rehabilitation and development of street children in the Philippines.

#### OBJECTIVES

To accomplish the general objective of the study, the following specific objectives are to be fulfilled:

- To characterize the street children and youth participants before the theater project;
- To describe the processes and activities undertaken in the theater project;
- To analyze the elements of the production including the text of the musical;
- To determine the street children and youth participants' response to the theater project and explore the extent (if any) of their transformative experience;
- To determine the viewing audience's response to the theater project;

With these objectives, it is hoped that this will be able to assess the efficacy of theater in relation to the personal transformation or changes in the participants and consequently, social change specifically on how it may have advanced the cause of street children.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There have already been theater/performance projects done for street children by various childcare institutions and theater organizations. PETA, Children's Lab and Teatro Palaboy for many years have been involved in this kind of work here in the Philippines. However, there is a lack of systematic study on this kind of approaches in relation to child welfare work. There is a dearth of studies that attempt to examine the specific processes of a childcare centerbased theater project and their impact upon those who participated in it. This paper is, in so far as I know, the first to attempt to document the process of theatrical (performance) arts activity in a center that caters to the rehabilitation and development of street children. There is neglect among theater/cultural groups and even institutions in the aspect of research and documentation of their work with street children. Many of the work of PETA (with Bahay Tuluyan and ECPAT), Children's Lab, Teatro Palaboy and similar organizations have remained undocumented and unevaluated. It is generally assumed that the projects were effective or helpful but there has been no systematic attempt towards documenting these efforts. Thus, the problem of documenting the project

and its processes can also be addressed in this study. These projects are of vital importance as so much money and effort have been poured into them. Documentation of such projects is necessary for it may serve as basis for program reviews and planning for future actions.

While the primary purpose of this research is pragmatic, this can also have theoretical implications. At the same time that the study hopes to add to the knowledge of the range and depth of the use of theater and performance arts in a therapeutic and development context, it also hopes to expand our understanding of theater and performance as a mode and process of communication.

But most of all, this study will provide empirical evidence for the use of creative approaches in helping those who are in problematic situation. Hopefully, this paper will contribute significant information and insight towards the possibilities of theater (performance) program in dealing with other oppressed and marginalized, i.e., the old and the disabled, groups and others who are in difficult circumstances such as women or children in prison. As it is also an evaluation of a project for street children in a childcare institution, it will hopefully be a source of information for government and other agencies for policy formulation especially in the aspect of tapping creative resources as an approach to helping street children as well as others who are in need of help.

#### **Chapter 2**

#### **Review of Related Literature**

What the child likes most is the theatre, that is to say, the transformation of actuality as given from without, into something that he himself creates.

Evreinov, *The Theatre in Life* (Cited in Jones 1996, 167)

The review focuses mainly on researches that provide a background on the issue specific to theater or performance arts as intervention. Accompanying the background are a number of researches showing the use of creative approaches such as theater and performance in relation to identity and empowerment as well as the use of arts in problematic situations. Also included are studies on theater as communication strategy.

#### THEATER ARTS AS INTERVENTION

The phenomenon of street children is a complex problem that engendered varied approaches as means of interventions. Indeed, there are many efforts from various GOs and NGOs that try to address the problem. From the rescue of the children from the street to interventions that will insure their safety and well being, many agencies have committed much of their resources to meet the needs of these children. Aside from providing the basic needs, and providing a home life, centers are engaged in various activities that provide a comprehensive rehabilitation program for the street children to prepare them for reintegration with their families or with the society. Activities are aimed toward academic, cultural and creative development and personal growth of the children. This present study examines in particular a theatrical intervention for street children who are based in a childcare center. Why theater?

While theater has been, in most cases, experienced mainly as entertainment, it has also been used quite effectively for other purposes such as a strategy for education and learning and even as a form of therapy that can bring about personal change and development. Moreover, theater has been acknowledged as an instrument for social transformation. Since theater is an "embodiment and harmonious blending of many arts and the many branches of science and human knowledge" (Achacoso 1991), it is argued that it will bring out the creativity and talents of children who are in difficult circumstances such as the street children.

In many childcare institutions, the use of creative arts as intervention is rather popular. Such as in New Beginnings -- a residential rehabilitation center that cares for sexually abused children -- children are engaged in visual arts activity. Here "art becomes a healing for children in crisis." Like visual arts, theater and performance arts have also been appropriated in welfare related work. A newspaper article describes, for instance, a theater intervention among children of *desaparacidos* – people who have disappeared from the face of the earth (De la Cruz, *Philippine Daily Inquirer* Feb.20, 2000). Theater is used as a

therapeutic experience for the children to attain relief from trauma and emotional tensions in their lives caused by the loss of their parents. One hundred children formed a theater group which they called SAD (Samahan ng Anak ng mga Desaparacidos). Through plays, song, dance and other activities, the children are helped to deal with their loss. In the same article, a clinical psychologist, Dr. Edwin Decenteceo who is the consultant to the group explains how theater contributes to healing of the children by allowing them to deal with their loss. Attesting to the three levels in which theater contributes to the healing of these children by allowing the to the healing of these children, he explains:

On the first level, theater helps because the participants, in a sharing session talk about what happened to their parents before mounting the play...this sharing gives a chance for children to vent their emotions, realize they have a common experience...On the second level, theater lends some structures of their confused lives because theater is discipline. There are rehearsals and schedules to follow and give the children direction. Finally, theater gives the children a sense of accomplishment, a feeling that they have achieved something positive to offset the sense of loss (*Philippine Daily Inquirer* Feb.20, 2000).

The experience of the children with lost parents is so similar to the many street children's experience. The latter have very little connection if no contact at all with their families. Like the children of the *desaparacidos*, many street children have also to deal with the loss of parental support. Theater may well be an effective way to help street children to overcome the trauma in their lives and facilitate change, as it has done with the children of *desaparacidos*.

To facilitate a better understanding in the application of a creative medium for purposes that are therapeutic or of healing, I have drawn ideas from dramatherapy. Dramatherapy is in a sense involvement in drama or theater with expressed intention of healing. Jones (1996) traces the emergence of dramatherapy in the symbolic interactionism and dramaturgical thinking in social psychology. The emphasis is on interaction as opposed to the analysis in terms of "psycholobiological entity consisting of conscious and unconscious elements." Individuality is understood as a social, not psychological phenomenon. He cites the writings of Mead (1934) as having advocated the view that it is only through interaction that we learn to identify, to recognize and value objects. Jones, like many other proponents of dramatherapy, believes that within drama and theater there is potential for healing. Drama or theater, for instance, facilitates change as it has the potential "to reflect and transform life experiences to enable clients to express and work through problems they are encountering or maintain clients' well being and health " (Jones 1996, 6). Those working with street children believe that that theater is a "therapeutic community" which encourages the children to come out of their shell and acquire new skills and confidence to improve themselves.

The use of theater for development and social transformation is certainly not a new idea. In fact, in the 60s and the 70s, many theater groups have emerged to give voice to marginalized groups. These groups made effective use of theater to expose the ills of the society as well as promote people's own ideas

for a better society. For example, people's theater movement (or otherwise known as popular theater) was an attempt to appropriate theater for members of a particular community on issues that concern them. As Kidd & Rashid (1984) write,

Rural peasants, native communities, urban workers and slum dwellers reappropriated theater which had been monopolized by the middle classes, and began to create their own forms of theatre closely linked to popular education, organizing and struggle (Cited in Cloutier 1997, 34),

In the Philippines, as in the other developing countries, theater is regarded as one of the most attractive forms of communication. Bodily re-enacting problems or issues, such as better health or agricultural practices or finding ways of overcoming exploitative injustices, offers a much higher degree of personal involvement and participation than other forms of communication. Theater is considered a very powerful medium of expression because it so actively involves a wide range of the physical, emotional and the imaginative capacities of the human personality (Srampickal & White 1988). In his book detailing his experience of people's theater in India, Srampickal (1994) considers the possibilities of theater as follows:

- It can help initiate an action-reflection-action process which can lead to change
- It can illuminate issues in a simple, direct and challenging way

 If it grows out of a community it can reflect the community with a degree of accuracy. This helps the people to identify with the issues presented (Srampickal 1994, 21).

The late 19th and 20th century also saw the emergence and flowering of drama and theater in education especially in Britain. Theater in education basically started as an approach to teaching dramatic literature. Teacher-practitioners asserted the fact that literature was better understood through enactment rather than formal learning (Jones 1996). Drama/theater thus was given wider significance in the education of the child. Slade's (1954) work on Child Drama includes the following benefits for the child: emotional and physical control, confidence, ability to observe, tolerate and consider others. In addition, Heathcote (1989) contends that drama is a way of enabling the child to develop insight and understanding. Through drama, the child will not only learn to discover his/her world but also develop personal capabilities.

In the Philippines, PETA's pioneering effort in popularizing the use of theater for education and advocacy inspired many other groups to pursue the same path. Children's Lab's theater efforts, for instance, centered on promoting social issues through theater, as well as promoting alternative learning techniques not found in a traditional school system. One of its projects was to establish the Paaralang Pantao, in the Payatas dumpsite. This non-formal school has provided educational opportunities to children of scavengers and who are also scavengers themselves. What is unique about this school is that it is focused on experiential learning and use drama in education as core methodology.

Theater is also seen as a powerful means for raising consciousness. Augusto Boal who was much influenced by the people's education methods of Paulo Freire developed what is known as theater of the oppressed (Boal 1979). Freire, in his approach to literacy and other basic education strongly attacked the conception of education as passing on knowledge in an indoctrinating fashion. His approach is to have the students themselves define the key words and themes of literacy education from their lower-status perspective. Boal, as inspired by Freire, encouraged the participation of people in their own development through theater. As such, in a participatory manner through theater, those in marginalized conditions are provided with tools to explore aspects of their social reality. The heart of the educational process (in theater) was "creating within a small group a space of freedom and mutual respect--so that the people could 'raise to conscious cultural expression' the group's real perception of the causes of their problems and gain confidence to reject false explanation of poverty and kept them in servile subordination" (Srampickal and White1988, 4). Similarly, Brecht asserts that what is essential for theater is that it ought to be a realistic portrayal of current reality (Cloutier 1997, 57) and that it must communicate insights into that reality (Epskamp 1989, 47 cited by Cloutier 1997, 57).

Testimonies from volunteers and childcare workers attest to the fact that many of the street children are artistically gifted. That arts such as the performing

arts "can help console the street children's hunger for love and their suffering" (*Bangkok Post*, October 13, 1998). A social worker working with *Ahon Bata* – a street children rescue and rehabilitation program of DSWD testifies to the fact that street children loves to perform.

Karamihan sa kanila mahilig sa song, dance and drama. Mahilig sa arts, sa music...pag narinig na nila ang kanta, naku alam na. Kakantahin na 'yan at magpeperform na... may mga bata na magdrama na 'yan sa harap ko. Mag Robin Padilla na 'yan...[Many of them loves singing, dancing and acting. They love the arts, music...once they hear a song, they learn it quickly. Very soon you'd hear them singing it and then they'd perform...some of the children would be acting in front of me. They would act out as Robin Padilla...] (Interview with Amor Anastacio, social worker on June 18, 2000)

Dance, music and acting have become so much a part of the street children's self-expression. Perhaps, a theatrical approach in intervention may facilitate in healing and recovery of the street children so that they can be reintegrated into society. Moreover, it can serve as a means of empowering them by providing them a venue to express themselves and to be trained to take responsibilities for their lives. Theater may also be a powerful way of reaching out to others so they may be informed of the plight and concerns of the street children.

To survey the landscape and assess what has already been done so far, on the issues discussed above, I chose to highlight some of the studies closely related to the present exploration. Following are some studies that illustrate how theater and performance functions in different situations relating to aspects of identity formation, empowerment, healing, and as communication media.

# THEATER/PERFORMANCE FOR IDENTITY AND EMPOWERMENT

Moorehead's (1995) research examines the efficacy of a Reader's theater production using Lebanese American literature to deepen the understanding of, and appreciation for, the Lebanese American community. Her research established the need for and significance of an investigation of the Arab American community through the performance of its literature and provided a framework from which to investigate other cultural groups. A similar study of Ridenour (1995) explores the empowering capacity of Chicana feminist literature through a postmodern Reader's Theater production. In using the medium of performance to stage the poetry, prose and drama of Chicanas, Mexican American women can expose their oppression and simultaneously offer empowerment strategies towards liberation. Here the literature not only becomes a means to share and understand Chicana reality; it articulates an emerging feminist consciousness for social justice. Reader's Theater, when coupled with postmodern aesthetics interrogates the historic cultural and patriarchal projections of female roles. The study staged a compilation of works by twelve nationally recognized Chicana artists. The performance illustrates the collision of Chicana feminist ideologies with a socially prescribed definition of womanhood. In hearing "her" words, the Chicana is empowered to challenge confining cultural customs. Through performance, the Chicana can project her authentic self; she can find a source of power through her own identity.

Welker (1995) on the other hand, examines the Beauty Pageant as a performative statement in the case of gender identity. The "Miss Apple Festival Pageant" was the object of her investigation. This festival is a community celebration in which social relations, gender identity, and political power are manifestly presented. The study illustrates how the beauty contest as a performative statement about the social order of a small town (Murphysboro, Illinois) in the United States, enables the people of that town to construct and proclaim their identity. It is an event symbolically created through communication among the constituting community members. Through an interpretive analysis of their performances on stage and off, the researcher unearths a cultural insider's perspective. This dissertation shows that while (on the surface) the pageant may seem to function merely as a social function or a form of popular entertainment, it becomes a regulatory institution through which the few control the behavior of many. The research uses the ethnographic methodology as it illustrates how the pageant articulates and reifies community power relations. This study provides an alternative re-visioning of the pageant to re-construct its meaning and to build a new vision of community identity.

## THEATER/PERFORMANCE AS A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Rafael (1993), in her study comparing the communication strategies used by two organizations promoting information about AIDS -- Reach Out and Remedios AIDS information Center -- found that Remedios AIDS Information Center was more creative in that it allowed the use of arts, specifically the theater arts in their campaigns.

The experience of Mda (1993) details how theater is used in Southern Africa as development communication to address issues of underdevelopment. This book is very helpful in conceptualizing theater in terms of development communication at the same time that it tries to marry the idea of theater and communication. Very similar to Srampickal's (1994) book, which features the experience of the people's theater in India, Mda's study goes beyond with just a descriptive account of the experiences of a theater group based in Lesotho, Africa. Mda made theoretical explorations in regard to reconceptualizing the notion of theater in relation to communication. Illustrated through an ethnographic account of the work of the Maratholi Traveling Theater, Mda proposed a theatrical model of communication. Srampickal's study, on the other hand, is basically descriptive as it details various street play groups and their contribution to development endeavors in India.

Silvaraj's (1995) study compares the relative effectiveness of two modes: live and video presentation of a street play in increasing knowledge and attitude about HIV/AIDS for the rural folks of Tamil Nadu in India. The study is an action research project in the course of which the researcher developed, wrote, produced and directed both the live and video versions of a street play. Though he found that the video form of street play is the more viable form for this particular communication strategy because of the less complicated preparation

and execution required at a relatively lower cost, it was the flexibility of the live performance and its greater appeal to the audience which made the live form of street play a more attractive medium. The study provides evidence that street play, as a communication medium and a strategy to prevent HIV/AIDS is well accepted and effective.

## THEATER/PERFORMANCE IN PROBLEMATIC SITUATION

This present study draws inspiration from four researches done in Canada, the United States and Peru regarding the use of the performing arts for intervention in problematic situation. Strikingly similar to this present exploration is Cloutier's (1997) dissertation which employed the pedagogy of popular theater to engage in a long-term participatory action research project with a small group of Edmonton's (Canada) former street youth. He spent seven years facilitating popular theater programs in Edmonton's inner city. Through the use of popular theater, the youth in his study were able to understand and take self-empowering steps to transform their lives characterized by lack of formal education homelessness, substance abuse, physical violence and a strong undercurrent structural violence. Through the popular theater process, most of the youth in his study began to take responsibility for and give direction to their lives. Over time, in the duration of his project, adaptive behaviors such as substance abuse, violence and other values of street culture were shaved away by the youth participants' most of whom belong to the First Nations people of Canada. Cloutier

himself was a former street child who triumphed over all the odds and decided to dedicate his life in serving the marginalized youth. To an extent, Cloutier's study is a testimony of the power of theater to transform lives. He underscores the value and the need for a long-term popular theater projects and education programs that are sensitive to the needs of inner city youth.

The study of Spangler (1993) demonstrates that the important elements in the prevention of self-destructive behavior such as skill building, modeling, foresight, positive esteem, healthy choices, weighing consequences and peer leadership can be effectively presented and taught to adolescents through theater arts with a theater group whose aim is directive peer communication. In a similar study, Frehner (1996) investigates the effectiveness of a drama therapy program for adolescents. Using qualitative methods as well as psychometric tests, he determines the effectiveness of the Acting Out drama therapy program in terms of how this program can aid the personal growth and identity formation of adolescents. This study proves that this kind of strategy is a powerful means to address highly difficult issues with a problematic population. It shows that dramatherapy does provide a variety of therapeutic and powerful developmental experiences to teenagers with widely differing problems.

The book of Alva and Basili-Dominguez (1990) tells the story of the inception and work through to performance of an 'opera' or musical stage production by children and youth in Lima, Peru. The children and youth aged 12 to 20 relate their experiences as they work, spend time on the streets, use drugs

and even telling their experiences in terrorism. The project looks at the power of participation through a musical theater in the way that it reproduces the human condition as enacted by children and the youth. It serves as a very good example of the use of small drama events that developed into a major theatrical experience that maps social circumstances and retells information from research and other sources. This book provides interesting implications for the use of drama techniques and role play as a strategy for data collection as well as to achieve a sense of well being, identity and empowerment of children and youth at risk.

Kistenberg (1992), on the other hand, assesses the efficacy of performance as a means of social change that have arisen out of the AIDS crisis. Working from a cultural studies perspective, she attempts to delineate both the possibilities and limitations for this perspective of social change. By comparing the various forms these performances have taken, she offers an explanation as to how these forms inhibit or enhance the ability of a performance to challenge the dominant discourse on AIDS crisis. She also provides a context for understanding of the AIDS performances by addressing the issues specifically related to using arts as a means of intervention, including the relationship of culture and society, and the politics of textuality. Kistenberg examined three forms of performances -- play (or conventional theatre), performance art, and demonstrations – which she considers as "representative of the performances that expands the notion of the

performance event". These include plays by William Hoffman (*As Is*) and Larry Kramer (*The Normal Heart*) which represent the traditional theatre form, performance art by Karen Finley (*We Keep Our Victims Ready*) and Tim Miller (*Stretch Marks*) which exemplify performances based on avant-garde experiments that challenge the traditional form, and the Names Project (the AIDS Memorial Quilt) and two demonstrations by ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power). She concludes the discussion by explaining why performance is emerging as an important political tool in the contemporary or "postmodern" world.

There are very few researches to be found that concern themselves with the use of creative approaches in the Philippines. Certainly, there are a number of groups that may have in one way or another used creative approaches as therapy, education or as communication strategy but many of these efforts, it seems, have not been documented or subjected to a scholarly inquiry. Out of the three discussed here, two studies are on theater and one is on poetry writing.

Fajardo (1980) examines the effect of theater arts program on the selfesteem of a group of Filipino institutionalized adolescents. Involving 71 adolescents who were residing in a welfare institution, Fajardo's study tested the application of a theater arts program to determine the effect on the respondents' self-esteem. Her study showed that the nine-week theater arts program was effective in increasing self-esteem. The program was instrumental in bringing about positive change in the confidence and self-worth of the participants.

Moreover, the study showed that participants had more meaningful experiences than non-participants. She concluded that theater is an effective medium in educating children.

Achacoso (1991) studied the feasibility for a theater arts program as alternative education for the urban poor children of one barangay in Metro Manila. The result of the survey was favorable to the creation of a Theater Arts Program. Out of 100 respondents, an overwhelming majority (87%) showed interest to join such a program. The parents as well were very supportive. This research, however, formed just the baseline data for a possible program and did not include the implementation of the program.

Though not necessarily theater but a creative approach just the same, Vim Nadera's (1996) study on the use of poetry for healing, is included in this review. Vim who is a poet and performance artist applied his art for cancer victims. He explored the use of poetry as a therapy in a mutual support group of cancer patients under treatment in Metro Manila. Eleven (11) cancer patients were part of a pre-experimental study in a one group pre-test post-test design. The patients underwent 6 poetry sessions, which involved poetry writing, recitation, interpretation and discussion. The results show that there is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores in the physiological component of the Quality of Life Instrument (QOLI). However, there is significant improvement in the psychological component. This study shows the potential of creative intervention even in what seems to be a hopeless situation. While for most of the

patients, the creative therapy may not prolong the deterioration of their bodies, it certainly gave them "a new lease" in life with improved psychological state and allowed them to recognize their feelings towards the disease.

What has been reviewed above are some of the existing knowledge in this area of research. In these studies, ideas were sought to serve as a guide to reach a conceptual and methodological path. Some of these studies certainly served as an inspiration at the same time these also brought to the surface what appears to be a pressing need for more studies in the Philippines on the use of creative approaches in the face of problematic situations. Many groups in this country have used theater in their work with marginalized sectors such as sexually abused children or children of desaparacidos or with street children and claimed to its efficacy. (See for instance an article on Teatro Palaboy on Sunday Inquirer Magazine Jan. 28, 2001). But only through an in-depth and systematic research can these claims be validated. It is hoped that this study shall serve as one small but nonetheless crucial step towards filling the spaces in framing theater as a communicative strategy for intervention -- as a means for those who engaged in the process to achieve a sense of well-being, identity and empowerment.

## **Chapter 3**

# Study Framework

Yes, it's very much about using drama and theatre to encourage creativity, a spontaneous energy, but also to enable us to look at areas of importance and help us to sort out who we are, where we are, perhaps even why we are, and enable us to use all of that growth, all of that learning, all of that knowledge to develop forward as human beings, and as human beings to share with each other and work co-operatively, as opposed to being individualistic and being competitive and closing ourselves off.

> Gordon Wiseman<sup>1</sup> (Jennings, *et al* 1994, 169)

# THEORETICAL BASES/ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study attempts to examine performing arts, specifically theater in the context of welfare work with street children, communication and development. It seeks to capture the street children and youth's theater experience while they were in a center engaged in their rehabilitation. I wish to work within the framework of reception analysis as an approach *that seeks to achieve a greater insight to and understanding of the effects of communication by giving equal consideration to the text and the receivers*. In this study the text pertains to the theater performance while the receivers are not so much those who view the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> According to Sue Jennings (1994), Gordon Wiseman was a pioneer in both Theater-in-Education and Dramatherapy. He is a freelance dramatherapist, who works in hospitals, schools and theater companies. He is also a consultant to South Manchester College in U.K. for a new dramatherapy training programme in the northwest, as well as a tutor and advisor to the Institute of Dramatherapy.

performance production (although to an extent this was also covered by this study) but more importantly the street children and youth who were part of the whole process as both creators and recipients of the text (or message) of the communicative act that is theater. Reception analysis also seeks to examine the text and receivers both interplay between as societal/cultural and psychological/individual processes. The defining yardstick of this research is the intentional use of theater to bring about personal change, in view of the fact that the theater activity was aimed at the rehabilitation of street children and youth. Further, since the theater project which the street children were a part of was also a communication strategy to advance the cause of street children to negotiate their position in society, therefore, this study goes beyond just the personal but it is also social. It attempts to examine the possibilities (and limitations) of a theatrical intervention for street children and youth as experienced by two 'audiences/receivers'- that of the street children who were target recipients of the benefits of the theater project and that of the audience who viewed the theater production. This study seeks to unfold a multi-layered account -- that of the creation or production of the communication text/message (pertaining to the organization who produced the theater project), the reception of the street children respondents who were also part of the creation as well as intended recipients and beneficiaries of the project and the reception of the people who viewed the performance. On the whole therefore, this study seeks to capture the relationship between production and reception of "Goldtooth", a

musical theater positioned within the context of rehabilitation and recovery of street children, as well as of a campaign for children's rights and the cause of street children.

To capture such a complex experience of theater and performance, the theoretical orientation of this study is decidedly eclectic as it was necessary to source from several strands of thoughts some analytical tools to help me in dissecting, understanding and explaining the phenomenon of a theater *for*, *o*f and *by* street children. The various disciplines girding the study are communication, development and popular communication, performance studies, psychology and dramatherapy.

This present study examines theater as both a process and a product of communication. In theorizing about communication, many views have come to the fore depending on individual scholars' inclinations. But in most cases, communication is largely defined as *a process of expression, interaction and influence* (Berger & Chaffee 1987). This present study sees theater primarily in this light but it likewise attempts to see this form according to perspectives beyond what this first viewpoint represents.

McQuail (1994) argues that the very notion of mass communication and now also less massified media, theater being one of these, may intervene or mediate between certain 'realities'. These mediations maybe viewed in different ways such as media being *windows* that enable us to see our immediate surroundings, as *interpreters* that helped us make sense of experience, as

platforms of careers that convey information, or a form of interactive communication and even mirrors that reflect ourselves back to us. Media is thus sought out by institutional advocates as channels for reaching the general public (or chosen groups). Following this view, we see theater here as a medium or mode of communication in which the goals and aims of an institution for the welfare of street children were interwoven with the performance itself. The foremost aim is for change in an individual level - that is rehabilitation and recovery and eventually reintegration of street children into family and society. And also on the societal level for as the children participate in the performance project; this in turn becomes both a medium and a process for their own as well as the (viewing) audiences' conscientization. That is, for the street children participants, it is to increase awareness of their condition so they will be capable of changing it. And for the audience, it is to become aware of the plight of street children. While a transmission view and a deterministic perspective may explain the impact of a theatrical intervention on the street children and youth, this is far too limiting.

Therefore, I shall expand the notion of communication through James Carey's conception of communication. Carey (1986) argues for a ritual view of communication as opposed to a transmission view of communication. In a ritual definition, he asserts that communication

is linked to term such as "sharing," " participation," "association," "fellowship," and the "possession of common faith"... A ritual view of communication is directed not towards the extension of messages in space but toward the

maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs (Carey 1989, 18)

As opposed to a mere transmission view of communication, the ritual view sees the highest manifestation of communication in the construction of maintenance of an ordered, meaningful, cultural world. Carey explains further that in the use of this theoretical frame, this will not necessarily exclude the idea of transmission, effects and attitude change. As he contends, "that one cannot understand the processes aright except as they are cast within an essentially ritualistic view" (19). Carey thus defines communication as " a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed" (Carey 1989, 18).

Alongside Carey's notion, this study utilizes Hall's (1973) idea of the active consumption of 'audience' as well as the production of textual organization of media sounds and images. His encoding/decoding model sought to successfully combine semiotic and sociological concerns – connecting up approaches to the study of meaning construction with perspectives on cultural power and social relations. I take Hall's perspective that in studying production-audience relation, the communicative process has to be taken as a whole at the moment the program is created on the one hand and at the moment of audience perception on the other. While Hall's view is with reference to watching television, in this study it is applied to theater as another form of cultural experience. I shall, therefore, analyze the theater event from the moment of creation of the theater production up to the moment of the audiences' reception of the theater

performance. As such, I sought to examine the mode of engagement of the street children and youth participants with theater as well as of their audience(s).

Let me now situate this present study in the context of theater intervention. There are two levels of intervention that will be discussed here: the social and the individual.

At the social level theater is framed within the perspective of development communication and also popular media. In the previous chapter, it was explained that theater has become very popular among the marginalized groups. Studies in development communication and also 'popular' communication allow us to understand the 'power' of performance, specifically theater as a powerful tool for empowerment for those without power. According to Kidd (1992), performing arts such as drama and theater, in their role as popular communication, serve as media which can be controlled by the popular classes and used to serve their interests. These media draw from the creative resources of the community. In the 1970s, for instance, a large number of performance groups appeared that dealt with issues specific to the marginalized segments of society. The worker's theater is an example of this kind of groups (See for instance, Chua's 1998 extensive study on worker's theater in the Philippines). Performances such as these are examples of experiments that give voice to marginalized groups and make them aware of their situation so that they can be capable of changing it. Boal's theater of the oppressed and the *teatro ng manggagawa* or worker's theater comes to mind in that it uses as performers 'ordinary people' as opposed

to actors. Here, performances provide a voice to those who are silenced such as the working class or other marginalized group. The goal of these performances is to make these people aware of the conditions so that they will be able to change them (Prentki & Selman 2000; Chua 1998; Cloutier 1997; Mda 1993; Kistenberg 1992; Kidd 1992, 1982). Within the concept of development and popular communication, performance is utilized as the media to initiate and advance the process of development. Further, as Kidd (1992) contends in the context of conscientization or psycho-social learning, the performing arts such as theater serve two roles:

- a) a psychological one of building participants identity and self-confidence, through the process of participation, self expression, and interaction;
- b) an analytical one in which participants develop critical class consciousness through a process of questioning everyday understanding, ruling class myths, rationalizations, etc. controlling consciousness, including the myth that the world cannot be transformed (Kidd 1992, 111).

On the individual or personal level, how theater is used for healing is also explored in this paper. The theater project which is "Goldtooth", the musical was designed by Stairway to aim specifically at the recovery and rehabilitation of the street children and youth based in their center. Rehabilitation assumes that the purpose is of therapeutic value, of healing. To better understand theater in relation to healing, I shall appropriate some concepts from the field of dramatherapy as well. Dramatherapy is described as " the intentional use of creative drama toward the psychotherapeutic goals of symptoms relief, emotional and physical integration, and personal growth" (Johnson 1984, 105). Irwin also defines this kind of therapy in "terms of change and relationship" within the planned application of drama/theater technique "to aid in the remediation, rehabilitation or personal and social adjustment and a specific form of intervention to bring about intraphysic, interpersonal or behavioral changes" (Irwin 1979, 23 cited in Jones 1984, 5).

This has special import to this paper. In the context of dramatherapy, this present study seeks to foreground the therapeutic or 'healing' aspect rather than the aesthetic or theatricality of performance. I wish to ground my discussion on theater utilized within a clear framework of a therapeutic or healing relationship and not necessarily ground the discussion as an artistic inquiry. The premise as argued by Jones (1996) is

<u>not</u> that all art is therapy. It does not preclude art made primarily for creative, political or financial purposes. It does not seek to pathologize artist or artist activity. It does, however, recognize that artistic processes and products have healing potentials (Jones 1996, 6).

He identified the key areas that define efficacy in theatrical intervention. I shall take these into consideration as points for analysis of the data on this present study. The key areas are:

- The process of entry and playing of character;
- The process of entry into a theatrical/dramatic world and state;

- Theatrical/dramatic communication;
- The relationship between the theatre frame and the life frame

(According to Jones these refer to the differences and similarities or parallels between an event in someone's life outside of dramatherapy and an event taking place or being represented within the parameters of the dramatherapy session)

#### • The performance process

(This will include identification of play, casting, rehearsal, performance, repetition of performance and ending of performance)

• The audience and the process of witnessing in theater

It is the primary objective of this study to explore the ways in which engagement in the dramatic/theatrical activity connects to healing, and creation of well being of the street children and youth who participated in the theater activity. Studies have shown that street children's subculture includes an aesthetic character where dance, music and acting has become so much part of their self-expression. Thus, the theatrical approach may well be a powerfully creative means for healing and recovery of the street children as it involves a wide range of the physical, emotional and imaginative capacities of the human personality. This research asserts that theatrical or performance art can be an effective strategy for change and transformation of children who are in difficult circumstances. As the street children gets involved in performance activities they assume a new and active and creative role which will inevitably affect the way they perceive themselves. This new perception will affect their behavior towards others and perhaps how they make decisions for their lives.

Combs and Snygg (1959) who have contributed much to the development of self-concept suggest that to be able to understand behavior, one must observe it from the standpoint of the individual himself. Sullivan (1952) discussed the self as being made of reflected appraisals. To him the earliest experiences, which influence the development of the self-concept, are experiences with the significant other in life. He further explains that the attitudes and feelings of the significant people are communicated to the child first through empathy, but the child will soon be able to perceive and recognize what is taking pace in his/her relationship with others. The most clearly developed self-theory is that of Carl Rogers (1954) which is based on his pioneering research in the nature of therapeutic process. Roger's approach views the individual as having one basic striving --to maintain and actualize self. This is phenomenological in character and emphasizes that the individual always reacts to situations in terms of his own unique perceptions of himself and of his world. The self is the unifying and directing force in all behavior and man's potential for self-growth and fulfillment. Considering thus, the child's perception of him/herself can therefore be assessed in terms of factors such as self-esteem and identity. This study works on the assumption based on the Roger's and others theory of personality, which asserts that the individual evaluates every experience in relation to his self-concept. This

perception of self in turn influences both the person's perception of the world and his/her behavior. Earlier studies on self-esteem showed its link to the concept of personality change and integration (Maslow 1970; Branden 1969; Ziller, *et al* 1969). As Fajardo (1980) explains in Branden's (1969) perspective: "[The] release and awareness of self are starting points and preconditions for goal directed actions". Fajardo (1980) thus argues that a theater program "maybe a venue to initiate self-discovery and self understanding as well as generate interpersonal skills that are necessary for goal-seeking in life (27).

Performance in theater may serve as a means not only of healing but also of empowering the street children by providing a space for expression and negotiation. As advocated by Papa *et al* (2000), empowerment is viewed as a communicative process. As such the authors argue that human interaction is necessary for empowerment to occur. Further as Albrecht (1988) concludes: "This [empowerment] is fundamentally an interactional process, where a sense of personal control results from believing it is one's communication behavior that can produce desired impact on others"(cited in Papa *et al*, 92). Following this view, this study looks at theater as the interactional process on which allows the street children participants to gain control of their lives by being able to make choices made available to them. A more substantial definition came from Bystydzjenski (1992). She asserts that empowerment is:

a process by which oppressed persons gain control over their lives by taking part with others in development of activities and structure that allow people increased

involvement in matters which affect them directly. In its course people become enabled to govern themselves (Cited in Orendain 1998, 32).

The case in this study is the use of theater/performing arts as a tool to empower,' it is a communication strategy that will enable an oppressed group such as the street children "to shape the content and structure of their lives". In their participation in this artistic endeavor, the street children are being given the 'power' to make choices. By studying the process, activities, and perceived response of the children to the theater activity based in a childcare center, this study may show the role of the theater project in the empowerment of the street children. Figure 1 presents a framework that guided the research in terms of the relationships of the variables and concepts explored in the study.

In exploring performance as a mode of communication in relation to change and transformation, I wish to also draw some insights from performance anthropologists like Victor Turner and Richard Schechner to understand the elements that may contribute to the transformation and change that happens in a performance act. Turner who developed the theory of performance suggests that performance is a "kind of meta-theatre". It is "a dramaturgical language about language of ordinary playing and status maintenance which constitutes communication in the quotidian social process " (*Anthropology*, 76 cited by Kistenberg 1992, 90). Performance anthropologists like Turner view performance as "constitutive of other forms and functions of communication" (Kistenberg 1992, 90). Performances according to Turner "are not simple reflectors of culture or

even changing culture but may themselves active agencies of change representing the eye by which culture sees itself and drawing board on which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting designs for living" (*Anthropology*, 24 cited by Kistenberg 1992, 91). In Turner's view, rituals such as carnivals, festivals, theater and other cultural performances, do not simply restate or mirror underlying social structure and social divisions but express "hypothesis, possibilities rather than fact, add suppositions, desires (Turner 1984, 19-41). Further, Turner argues that, "performance is both reflective and reflexive act. It not only responds to the culture, but also has the potential to produce, resist, change the culture in which the performance occurs" (Kistenberg 1992, 91). As Pioquinto (1996) explains from Turner's perspective

[I]n these specially marked mode of actions, the act of communicating, as well as the images and symbols that a society wants to communicate are put on display, objectified, lifted out to a degree from its contextual surroundings and opened to scrutiny by an audience. This act of communication involves a framing process that erects both spatial and temporal boundaries (Pioquinto 1996, 21)

Two concepts that might be useful in analyzing the communicative character of performance is the concept of liminality. Turner draws the concept of liminality from Van Gennep's studies on rites of passage as a movement from one basic state (individual) or (collective) to another. Turner's formula includes an initial phase that separates the rite from daily life: a second phase known as "liminality" or "betwixt-and between" involving a suspension of normal

psychological and social roles and rules; and a final phase of reintegration into normal life (Pioquinto 1993, 21-22).

Schechner further argues that the strength and efficacy of performance lies in its duplicity, the liminality inherent in the performance act. As Schechner explains, during performance the actor,

Performs in the field between negative and double negative. A field of limitless potential. Free as it is from both the person (not) and the person impersonated (not not). All effective performances share this not-not quality: Olivier is not Hamlet, but also he is not not Hamlet. (*Between Theatre and Anthropology*, 123 cited in Kistenberg 1992, 93)

Schechner and Turner's view is helpful to analyze and understand the dynamics of the performance of the street children as actors vis-à-vis their own 'real' selves in a musical play that seeks to re-tell their own lives. Moreover, it is helpful in scrutinizing the relationship of these street-children (actors) to the audience subjected as they are to the gaze of the audience.

Helpful, too, particularly in the analysis of audience response is the work of folklorist Richard Bauman who placed emphasis on the study of actual behavior and social interaction of participants in a performance occasion. His work has been influential in the study of performance as a mode of expression and communication. Especially significant in this present study is Bauman's notion of "communicative competence" is which as Bauman contends is the power of the performer "to elicit the participative attention and energy of his audience" (Bauman 1984 cited in Pioquinto 1993, 25-26). In particular, this notion elucidates the interrelating concepts of power, prestige and control of performers in relation to their audience. These theoretical work and studies on performance by Turner, Schechner and Bauman were tapped to assist in probing the (potential) role of theater in personal and in social transformation.

With analytical tools extracted from different but interrelated disciplines of communication, theater, performance studies, psychology and dramatherapy, I hope to capture the dynamics and circumstance of the experience of the street children as they participate in a theater project meant for their rehabilitation and for the advancement of their cause.

## Chapter 4

## Methodology

Like a rite of passage, fieldwork is said to play a role in "consciousness raising" by extending one's view of the world and challenging one's assumptions about the nature of things (Howard & Mc Kim 1963, 59). Through ethnographic research, the fieldworker gains an appreciation of the diversity and complexity of the human social condition and, at the same time, of the ultimate unity of human-kind.

Jonathan Okamura (Bautista & Go, 1985,115)

The study is qualitative, using ethnography to obtain data that hopes to capture the lived experience of street children and youth who are based in a childcare institution and who participated in Stairway's "Goldtooth" musical theater. In this chapter the details of the procedure in conducting the research are laid out.

## THE STUDY SITE(S)

### Stairway at Puerto Galera

As an ethnographic study, this research tracked the lives of the main respondents as they moved through the phases of the study. The beginning of the fieldwork was done at Stairway Foundation's street children's facility located in Barrio Aninuan, Puerto Galera in Oriental Mindoro. Puerto Galera is located on the northern shores of Mindoro Island, some 130 km south of Manila and 14



Figure 2 Map of the Philippines. With Puerto Galera in Mindoro Island [inset] where Stairway Foundation Inc. is located

nautical miles from Batangas City and is about one hour ride by fast boat from the Batangas city port. It is one of the more popular tourist areas in the Philippines, known for its beautiful beaches and resorts. Stairway is located eight kilometers east of the town of Puerto Galera. From the town proper, it takes about 20 minutes on a jeepney to reach the facility. Built on the foothills of Mt. Malasimbo, the facility is quite idyllic with mountains surrounding it; and the beaches, which Puerto Galera is quite known for, are just a few meters away. The facility includes cottages which serve as the dormitory for girls; a stage where rehearsals and performances and other activities are held; and the upper portion of the stage used as sleeping quarters for the boys. The facility also has a kitchen, an office and a library. Recently, they built an additional building that serves as a dormitory for boys. The house of Lars and Monica is also inside the facility. The social worker has her own cottage while the three other cottages house the volunteers of the center which at the time of study included two artistvolunteers, Ysagani Ibarra who played the only adult lead role of the play and a music-therapist from South Africa who came much later who occupied one of the cottages that used to house the education coordinator, Maricel and her family. Maricel was transferred to Manila to handle the Stairway office there.

#### Three Countries in Europe

Other sites for the study include Denmark, Finland and Switzerland, where the "Goldtooth" production was brought for the international tour. In Denmark, the group performed in Copenhagen, the capital of the country and then traveled to

other cities of Vejle, Aalborg, Viborg, Aarhus and up to the northern most point of the country which is the town of Skagen. In Finland, the performances were held in Helsinki. The last stop of the European tour was Geneva, Switzerland where the group performed at the United Nations Palais and in Meyrin, one of Geneva's satellite cities.

#### Back to Stairway, the Street and Other Places

Upon the group's return to the Philippines, I went back to Stairway to continue the fieldwork. By this time the project had ended and many of the respondents have left the facility. I went on to trace the respondents' whereabouts which include places where they live such as their homes or dormitory or even a jail, in the case of one respondent <sup>1</sup> and where they are working, such as a canteen in a market place<sup>2</sup>, or the offices of Childhope and Medicine Sans Frontiere (MSF) – childcare institutions where three of the main respondents were employed.<sup>3</sup> To help understand the 'world' of street children, I also went to some of the areas of Metro Manila were the respondents had claimed to have frequented at that time that they were in the streets, and where even now many street children congregate. These areas include Luneta, the plaza in front of Malate church, part of Roxas Boulevard, U.N. Avenue, Cubao

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In March 2000, Ely, one of the respondents who had already returned to his family figured in a fight with the barangay tanod. He was arrested and incarcerated in the Antipolo city jail. Together with the social worker of Stairway, I went to help arrange for his release.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> In Jan. 2000, I found Rowena working in a canteen in the town market of Sta. Maria, Bulacan.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> At the time of interview in late Dec.1995, Angelito or Jhong and Nicky were working with MSF-Switzerland. Nicky left the organization later the following year (2000). Jao was employed in Childhope as a street educator but has also left the organization.

and Katipunan Road. I spent a few weeks to observe, interact, and just get exposed to the culture that shaped the lives of my main respondents. I visited institutions such as Childhope, MSF and ERDA whose work include serving the needs of street children to either gather information on street children or try to understand the dynamics of child welfare work.

## WHY STAIRWAY?

The choice of the case for this study might be called providential. It took quite a circuitous route. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, it was as early as 1995 that I was strongly inclined to do research on the topic on creative approaches to helping children in difficult circumstances even before I was to start my doctoral studies. After that conference where for the first time I heard about creative work with street children. I was able to maintain contact and eventually develop a close friendship with Bing Baguiorro. I would meet him again in 1997 for a video documentary project, which I did for one of my doctoral courses. In this video, I documented the use of creative methodologies for research on street children. Bing was one of my informants. I was still bent on pursuing the topic on the use of theater for street children that when we were asked to submit a possible research proposal for a dissertation in one of the research courses, I decided to finally put down on paper what has always been in my mind and heart. Thinking of what organization or a theater/cultural group I could possibly study in case I would ever pursue the research, I first thought of

Children's Lab. Then I also considered PETA. I even contemplated of doing a Southeast Asian slant in my study of theater or cultural groups that use theater for their work with children in difficult circumstances.<sup>4</sup> Eventually, however, I heeded the advice of my theater critic friend who recommended "Goldtooth" -- a street children's musical, a production starred by street children and produced by Stairway Foundation, Inc. one of the street children organizations in the Philippines. My search (and rightly so) will have to begin and did begin in the Philippines.

Indeed, finding a case to study was not easy. Theater is such a transient experience it can sometimes be difficult to study especially if the intention is to examine its processes and not just the product. Once the production and performance are over it is difficult to reconstruct events for purposes of empirical

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> In 1996, there was a call for proposals by the Southeast Asian Research Program (SEASREP) for funding for PhD students who wish to do their dissertation on Southeast Asia. SEASREP would give a grant which will allow the researcher to do preliminary investigation on his/her topic. I applied for this grant and decided to expand my proposal which would include a sampling of theater work for street children in three countries -- Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia. I was granted the funding and went to the three countries for a preliminary investigation in January to March 1999. Indeed, I found a lot of theater/cultural groups and also childcare organizations that are doing a good job of using creative approaches in their work with children in difficult circumstances. But the magnitude of what I planned to do dawned on me. It was too big a problem. At this time the period of my grant was about to end and was up for review for its possible continuation of funding for a full-blown research. Because the problem was too big for me to handle, I decided to revise my proposal to concentrate my study in one country, which is Thailand. There I found a theater group which has an ongoing theater project among the hill tribe children in northern part of the country who are susceptible to trafficking for prostitution. They were not quite street children yet, but still children in difficult circumstances. And precisely the theater project was meant to prevent them from becoming one. However, when I came back from my trip from the three countries, a theater critic-friend mentioned a performance that he saw and reviewed. This was "Goldtooth" - the street children's musical. He suggested that "Goldtooth" would be the perfect case for my study. I was convinced yet reluctant to make a final decision because of my pending proposal with SEASREP. I will have to decide on my final choice once I will hear from the funding agency. SEASREP turned down the request for grant for lack of funds. The Thailand project was not meant for me, not yet anyway. This event finally prompted my decision that it will be the "Goldtooth" project of Stairway Foundation Inc., which will be the case for my study.

research. Moreover, a theatrical production in the nature of my research (that is, theater involving street children) is not something that can be commonly found among the theater circuit, as this is not mounted and performed on a regular basis with a scheduled season. Thus, it was important for the purpose of my present study that the theater project will not have ended or closed yet to allow me to still observe the processes. Timing, thus, was of utmost consideration in this study. A set of criteria thus informed my final choice and these are: 1) that it has a starting or has an ongoing theater work with street children 2) that there is accessibility to the setting or site of the study and 3) that there is accessibility to the 'actors and actions' which include respondents and informants who are willing to be observed and willing to talk and share information. "Goldtooth", the street children's musical project of Stairway fitted perfectly to the criteria and my research goals. But this was not the end of the search. It was important for me to have a background check on the organization before finally considering it. I have been informed of fly-by-night childcare operations or institutions with questionable reputations. My first apprehension was why the facility of Stairway is located in Puerto Galera, in the island of Mindoro, a place reputed for its beauty, less known for street children congregating in the locale, but especially known as a haven of prostitution being a tourist area.<sup>5</sup> Again, I contacted Bing

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Indeed, there had been cases of pedophilia in Puerto Galera. In a study of Duque (1994) on sex trafficking in the Philippines, she cited DSWD's 1993 report on sexually exploited children which revealed that most of the cases of pedophilia in the Philippines were concentrated in two popular tourist destinations: Puerto Galera, in Oriental Mindoro and Pagsanjan in Laguna. Because of the reputation of the place, this may have triggered this particular incident in Stairway. In the early days of Stairway's operation and while they were still in the process of securing a permit from

Baguiorro and through his network of people working in street-serving organizations including DSWD and UNICEF we were able to get information of Stairway's track record and standing as a childcare institution. The background check proved positive. I had found my case, finally.

# THE PROCESS OF ENTERING THE SITE(S)

The study period covered approximately one year from July 1999 to June 2000 – from the time when I first came to Stairway until my last in-depth interview and observation in the same field site.<sup>6</sup>

The initial contact with Stairway was made through its Media bureau located in Makati, an office that the organization temporarily maintained on the duration of the theater project.<sup>7</sup> This is where I first contacted Lars Jorgensen by phone to get an appointment so I could personally explain to him the research project. In June 1999, I met Lars in that office and obtained initial permission for me to study their work with the street children, specifically the "Goldtooth" project. He suggested that I should visit the facility to meet the street children-participants

DSWD to operate as a long term stay facility, police authorities raided the place but found them "clean" with no evidence that their facility was ever engaged in illegal acts of trafficking children for prostitution. Monica and Lars believed that they being foreigners made them the most likely suspects. It was also possible that some members of the community turned against them (by giving false report to the authorities) for openly raising issues against pedophilia, the very act they were accused of committing.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Although in the months following my last field-visit to Stairway, I continue to get updates of the respondents' whereabouts and status from the organization itself and also from other people who are in contact with them.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> This office was closed in March 2000 as it was only a temporary office to handle press relations and communications during the time that "Goldtooth" was on tour.

of the project and seek their cooperation for the study. Since the idea for the "Goldtooth" project came from his wife Monica who is also the co-coordinator of the project and the writer and director of "Goldtooth", it was also important that I get her permission. In July of 1999, I visited their facility and right there and then I was given the permission to pursue my study. On that same afternoon of my



The researcher on her first visit at Stairway with the kids and Merlin Julie, a music-therapist and volunteer at the facility

arrival at Stairway, Monica granted me the first in-depth interview explaining how the whole theater project began. Even as I was interviewing Monica, the children kept on coming up to the house. So before a formal introduction was to be made later in that afternoon, I was actually able to meet most of the 17 children who participated in the theater project. Later that afternoon, too, I was able to observe the rehearsals, the music and voice workshops and a first glimpse of their life in the facility. At the time of my entry to the site, the project had already been going on for almost one year and 10 months. In fact, I came in at the time that the group was already busy preparing for the trip to Europe. Two typhoons that had visited the country one after another during that week that I was at Stairway left me stranded in Puerto Galera as there were no boats available to ply the rough seas between Puerto Galera and Batangas. That allowed me a few more days to get to know the children more, and for them to get to know me. It also allowed me to conduct more interviews and observations. Ysagani Ibarra, the artistvolunteer who also played the lead role of Goldtooth granted me the second interview. The first child-respondent who granted me an interview was Rowena.<sup>8</sup> It was an interview but it was also a sharing of her life. Our session lasted for almost three hours. For that week that I was there, I was able to conduct four indepth interviews including one with Ate Baby, the housemother of Stairway, conducted aboard a boat she and I took as I was returning to Manila.

On August 22, 1999, I joined Stairway and the cast of "Goldtooth" in the trip to Denmark, Finland, and Switzerland for the international tour -- a trip that lasted approximately for two months and two weeks. As a participant-observer, my role was that of a documentarist of the group. I took photos and videos of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> This was an unsolicited session; I thought I would postpone my interviews with the children until we can get more familiar with each other and I can win their trust. But Rowena came to me the second afternoon of my stay as I was just relaxing on the porch of Lars and Monica's house. *Gusto mong malaman ang istorya ko 'Te?* [Do you want to know my story, 'Te?], was how she indicated her desire to share her story. She just wanted to talk with someone. I asked her if I can tape our conversation and explained to her about the research. She was excited and readily agreed.

every event or relevant activity. At the same time, I help out as a production assistant -- buying make- up or getting additional costumes or props or even pacifying strained nerves or emotions among the children. The trip forged my connection with Stairway and the children and youth participants. The more than two months that we were together, I gained acceptance from the children. I became part of the Stairway family. Upon coming back from the trip abroad, I went to the street for observations (or one might call it immersion) to have a sense of the setting from which the children have come from before they came to the facility. As mentioned earlier, I went to places like Malate Church Plaza, Roxas Boulevard, U.N Avenue, Luneta and others which are known street children territories to allow me to visualize the world which the street childrenrespondents used to inhabit. I also joined a street mission of MSF, which was conducted along the stretch of Roxas Boulevard to observe two of the street children/youth-respondents who after the "Goldtooth" project ended worked as street educators with the said organization. I went back to the facility in Puerto Galera and conducted additional fieldwork in January, February, March, May and June 2000 observing the life after "Goldtooth" of the children and youth who remained in the facility. In between my trips to Puerto Galera, I sought out the respondents who have left Stairway in places where I could find them -- in their homes; place of work; and even a jail, in the case of one respondent.

Let me recount an example of the process of entering the (other) sites. In April 2000, I received information that Ely, one of the respondents who has since

returned to his family was in jail. The social worker of Stairway, Amihan Bajade (Ate Amy) was tasked to check on Ely's case and possibly arrange for his release. Since I also needed to contact Ely, I decided to go with Ate Amy to Antipolo City jail. But first we needed to see Ely's mother to get the details of Ely's case. I accompanied Ate Amy to Peace Village, a squatters' relocation area. Most of the residents there come from the squatters of Manila and Quezon City. Peace Village is about a one-hour and a half trip by FX (group taxi) from Cubao, Quezon City to Cogeo-Padilla. From Padilla we took a tricycle ride to Peace Village which is located on the hillsides of Antipolo. Under the heat of a noonday sun we climbed the hill and found the house of Ely and his parents – his mother and stepfather. Their home is about 4x5 meter structure of used wood and rusty old zinc metal roofing. The walls are a combination of scrap wood and other materials such as plastic and old sheets of metal. There are no rooms, only a space where they sleep, cook and eat. In this community, many homes are similar to Ely's where several thousand families live. Narrow spaces and pathways separate the houses from each other. And like most of the families there, they have no electrical supply and even have to buy water for drinking. In this home, Ely's mother, Mely, warmly welcomed us and shared stories about Ely, his childhood, his growing years and his present predicament. She begged for Stairway to help Ely.

On April 14, 2000, two days after the meeting with Ely's mother, Ate Amy and I together with Mely, visited the Antipolo City jail. We were there to visit him

and arrange for his release. We had to pay for the visit *tong* or grease money to the *mayores* of the prison. One visit cost at least 40 pesos. Non-payment will result in the physical abuse of the inmate. *Bubugbugin kami* [They beat us], Ely says. Amidst the crowd composed of visitors and inmates, there in the receiving area of the Antipolo city jail, a place which looks more like a market place, I interviewed Ely.<sup>9</sup>

There were other places where I had sought out my respondents; each time was a different experience, a different kind of adventure.

In my attempt to enter their world and capture their experience(s), the sites were varied as were the methods used.

### PARTNERS IN RESEARCH

#### The Main Respondents

The street children who were part of the "Goldtooth" project are the main respondents of the study. There were 17 children and youth with ages ranging from 14 to 21 (at that time of my entry to the site) who participated in the "Goldtooth" project until it ended. The identities of the children and youth were not masked or concealed in consideration of the fact that their identities were already disclosed in Stairway's information materials such as programs, annual reports, press releases and other materials related to the production that identified them by their names and faces. (See Appendix D for the press releases

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> A few weeks after our visit Ely was released; he returned to his home at Peace Village.

and news articles, and Appendix E for sample of the programs). Also, in the height of the promotion of the musical in 1998 and again in 1999, some of the children were interviewed on television (in the Philippines and in Europe)<sup>10</sup> where they were seen and identified with their own names or nicknames. There were also articles in the newspapers that showed not only their faces but their names or nicknames, as well. Performance programs and Stairway's newsletters contain snippets of their stories with their names and pictures in it. Moreover, compact discs or CDs of the "Goldtooth" musical sold to the public contain a coverbrochure showing their names and pictures. The media exposure plus the fact that theater/performance is such a public experience has rendered moot the aspect of confidentiality of respondents in this research. Further, there was clear willingness of the children themselves to disclose their identities.<sup>11</sup> In fact they seemed to be genuinely pleased to see themselves being written about.<sup>12</sup> But still in respect to certain ethical considerations in research involving children no family names of the children respondents are mentioned in this study.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> The children were featured in programs aired on major channels in the Philippines such as GMA7, RPN 9, and PTV 4. In Denmark, Finland and Switzerland, they were likewise interviewed for the major channels and these interviews were aired on prime time news.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> One of the respondents did ask me if his family name would be mentioned in the write-up. He was given assurance that their family names will not be revealed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> In May 2001, a draft of the paper was shown to some of the respondents who seemed very pleased and proud that their stories and experiences were written about. One of the female respondents even looked for her story (her life story was <u>not</u> one of those featured in the illustrative accounts found in Chapter 5). This is a significant development since during the course of the fieldwork she was the one who was most reluctant to grant me an intensive interview. I respected her decision and never conducted an intensive interview with her. It was only much later that she opened up a little and I had a chance to have some *kuwentuhan* sessions with her.

### Key Informants

The administrators and staff of Stairway which include Lars Jorgensen, the executive director and Monica Ray Jorgensen, the program coordinator and the writer-director of the production, the housemother, the social worker, volunteers and other staff of the center served as key informants for the study. These are the people who were in one way or another connected with the project or considered as the adult leaders in the project. Their selection was based on their knowledgeability of the project from its inception until its conclusion.

As response of the audience was also a major aspect in this study, individuals or groups of people who were able to view the performance were randomly selected for interviews or to participate in 'theater talks'. <sup>13</sup> Other key informants include individuals who have the expertise on issues and concerns regarding street children and who are connected with child welfare work (i.e. street educators, social workers and officers of child serving NGOs).

## DATA GATHERING METHODS

The research used ethnography and included various methods attendant to ethnographic research such as participant-observation, informal and intensive

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Since I came into the project at that time that it was set to go on tour to Europe, I was only able to gather data from those who watched the performances in Europe. I managed to do retrospective interviews with a few street children who watched the show while it was shown in Manila. The rest of the data on the audience were taken from reviews, newspapers and magazine articles and write-ups on the theater production. In the case of an audience composed of students from International school, their writing assignment was a source of data.

interviews, including life story interviews, 'theater talk', document analysis and others.

For the main respondents, the life story interview was used. A life story is what a person chooses to tell about the life she/he lived as completely as possible what is remembered of it, and what the teller wants others to know of it usually as guided interviews by another (Denzin 1989; Bertaux 1981). For the key informants who include the executive director of the organization, the director of the production, the social worker, the volunteers, the housemother and other people with close involvement with the children and the project, intensive interviews were conducted. Throughout the duration of the study, I carried out informal and unstructured interviews with the main respondents as well as with key informants. At times, rich data were gathered during *kuwentuhan* sessions over dinner at Stairway or on long trips on airplanes or buses during the European tour.

As a participant observer, I also employed *pakikilahok* as I participated in many of their activities. These enabled me to observe the theater process as well as the behavior of the main respondents at close range. In addition, written documents such as brochures, annual reports, program proposals, manuscripts, production program notes, newspaper accounts and many others were collected and studied. Personal files of the children were examined with permission of the

organization.<sup>14</sup> Also, the personal journals written by the children themselves, which record their lives and experiences in the past as well as during their stay in the facility, were examined with the children's permission.<sup>15</sup> Other materials such as videos taken to document the children's lives when they first came to the facility were also looked into. I also took extensive videos of the performances and other activities as a participant-observer who served as a documentarist to the group on the duration of the international tour.

The role of the audience and their response were also an important data in this research. 'Theater talks' was used to find out "what the spectator of a theatrical presentation feels and thinks" (Sauter 1989). This has been widely used by theater scholars in Nordic countries in the area of audience-reception research in theater. This 'theater talks' are similar if not a cross of the focus group discussion (FGD) or of 'ginabayang talakayan'. 'Theater Talks', thus is a method for studying the reaction of a theatrical audience. Sauter (1989) describes the activity as:

Basically this means that a group about seven people visit a performance together and sit down the same evening to talk about their individual experiences...it is important for us to compose homogeneous groups, so that each one is consisted of participants who knew each other quite well beforehand. This was accomplished by engaging people from same places of work, e.g.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Recognizing the fact that street children may have the tendency to exaggerate or not tell the whole truth of their stories, it was important to double check the truthfulness of the data by seeking corroboration from the personal files of the children. The management, with the guidance of the social worker, allowed me to look into the files of the children.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> As part of their activity and learning exercise in Stairway, the children were instructed and trained to keep their own journals.

hospitals, schools, companies, civil authorities etc. After the performance the groups gathered in preferably private places and settled around a cup of tea or whatever drinking habits a group had developed. Every group is accompanied by a group leader...The idea was that the leaders stimulate a conversation between participants without engaging in it more than necessary (137-138).

I conducted most of the theater talks (except one) with some members of the audience in some of the performances in Europe.<sup>16</sup> Where 'theater talks' were not possible, interviews were done immediately after the performance also with randomly selected viewers of the musical. These 'talks' and interviews were video-taped supplemented with audio-tape. All these methods allowed me to observe and capture the phenomenon as much as possible and provided me with enough material from which to draw conclusions.

### DATA GATHERING INSTRUMENTS

Interviews for both the life story and intensive interviews did not follow a specific structure or flow. It was largely directed through the natural flow of interaction between the child/informant and me as the interviewer. In fact, the interviews took a semblance of conversation or plain *kuwentuhan*. For sure, questions that address certain aspects and issues that I believe were pertinent to the study guided the interviews. For the main respondents, it contains, for instance, inquiries covering general demographic information, events in family

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> In Helsinki, I requested a Swedish lady, Ingrid Rosell Monianaro who has extensive experience with child welfare work and a friend of Stairway to conduct the first 'theater talk'.

and relationships, reasons for leaving home and going to the streets, life in the streets, life at Stairway, involvement and experiences with the theater project, impact of the theater experience in their lives, self-description as well as their dreams, aspirations and plans for the future. (See Appendix B-3 for a sample interview transcripts). The intensive interviews with informants include inquiries pertaining to information about the "Goldtooth" project as well as experiences with the children respondents and other observations they have made about the project and the children. All the interviews with the children and youth respondents were done in *Tagalog*, the language which they (and I) can speak. On the other hand, interviews with informants were conducted either in English or Tagalog depending on which language the informant feel most comfortable speaking in. For the 'theater talks', the discussions were guided with questions that pertain to the impact of the performance in general, what they learned, feel and think about the experience of watching the musical. All 'theater talks' were conducted in English although participants of the 'talks' may speak in another language but consequently translated by a participant or a designated interpreter.<sup>17</sup> Instead of a 'theater talk', a focus group discussion was conducted with one group of street children from Kaibigan Foundation who were able to watch the show. <sup>18</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> In Geneva, some of the participants in the 'theater talk' were reluctant to speak in English so one of the staff of Paidos (the organization which hosted Stairway) served as interpreter during the 'talk.'

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> These children watched 'Goldtooth' a year before, thus FDG was used instead of 'theater talk'.

Audio and video recordings were done for the interviews with the consent of the child or of the informant.<sup>19</sup> Video recordings captured the performances of "Goldtooth" as well as the other relevant activities of the children. Journals and diaries were kept throughout the study, to monitor the activities, to record interactions and behavior of the children and youth respondents as well as to document important events, etc. In other words "thick description" of the phenomenon was conducted.

### DATA PROCESSING

The main data constituting the study were the testimonies of the street children participants' as well as of the key informants. Thus complete verbatim transcriptions of the interviews and theater talks were made. For the verbatim transcription, transcribers were hired to process the raw data, after which, I went through each of the transcriptions and edited them to correct errors and gaps. For the background stories of the children, it was also important to double-check the 'truthfulness' or consistency of the data by seeking corroboration from the personal files of the children. The interview and theater talk data together with extract from field observation notes were coded and analyzed to discover what themes, categories, or patterns would emerge. To supplement the accounts, documentary data, pictures and video documentation were used in the process

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> The child or youth and even an informant could request for the recording to be stopped at anytime during the interview if there are sensitive portions which he/she did not wish to be recorded. In one incident, one of the respondents started to cry during the interview. I decided to stop the recording and allow him to continue with his sharing while I took written notes instead.

of analysis. The complexity of the phenomenon prompted an eclectic approach in which the analysis of the data were framed and explicated. Discussions were highlighted with actual statements, stories and accounts of the children's experience on the streets, in the center and on stage.

The last but most important phase in the processing of data is to return it to the source – my partners in research. This is to validate the accounts and facts and to check for accuracy and most of all, to seek corroboration from "the people with whom one has talked to and whom one has observed" (Miles & Huberman 1984, 242). After the analysis and write up, I fed the paper back to my respondents and 'lead<sup>20</sup> informants. This stage of the research is what Brofenbrenner (1976) calls as "phenomenological validity," and Guba (1981) terms as a device for "confirmability of findings (Miles & Huberman 1984).<sup>21</sup>

In presenting the analysis, I was guided by what Jones (1996) identified as the key areas that define efficacy in theatrical intervention (see Chapter 3). An adapted version of Jones' key areas, thus, constitute the sequence of analysis of my data:

- The process of entry into the theater project
- The process of entry into a theatrical world and state
- Theatrical/dramatic communication

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> This means Lars and Monica Jorgensen who were in the forefront of the work on "Goldtooth".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> On May 2001 before completing the final draft I was able to show to seven of the main respondents the accounts written about them to check for accuracy and discrepancy of data as well as corroboration and evaluation of the major findings. A copy of the draft was also brought to Stairway for Monica and Lars Jorgensen to examine for the same reasons as cited above.

- The relationship between the theatre frame and the life frame
- The performance process and the children-participants' response
- The audience and their response in witnessing the theater performance

### THE RESEARCHER

As a teacher of performance related subjects and a theater and performance enthusiast and practitioner my interest has always been to explore the possibilities of theater and performance arts beyond the concept of entertainment. This is a continuing quest on my part starting with my M.A. thesis which examines the use of performative arts in the classroom as a pedagogical strategy. This time, as I worked on my PhD, I decided that my dissertation would look into the use of theater in the context of healing, rehabilitation and empowerment of street children. I had no prior work or project with street children. My work is mostly university based with few projects that I do outside of the academe.

Perhaps, the closest connection I have to this present exploration would be some of the performance projects that I did with my students in oral interpretation courses. As part of their final course requirements, my students at one time performed among children with cancer. Or at another time, my students did a program in Boy's Town, a welfare community. I came into this project with very little knowledge on street children or child welfare work. In fact, when I first came to know about this topic, the circumstance of which I already explained in an earlier chapter, the concern was not so much on the street children but because of my curiosity in seeing theater in other contexts.

In the beginning of the research, I remember calling one agency to inquire on the names of organizations working with street children. I explained to the person on the other side of the line what I intended to do. He then asked for my background, which upon hearing replied: "You want to do research on street children and you don't even know anything about it?" Much as it may have sounded as a personal affront, I took it as a challenge for the comment was not without basis. Indeed, it is not easy to go into a world so different from what one has known. The theater, which I had been trained in and have been exposed to, is one that does not involve a responsibility for lives and the future.

Attending a summer workshop with PETA many years back would perhaps be the only credential I had to venture in a theater research involving 'oppressed' groups. I had to confront my own fears as well as my own inadequacies. My knowledge on street children and solidarity with people in childcare work such as Monica and Lars and others like them grew eventually in the course of my research. In doing this study, somehow my life would become entangled with the lives of these street children. For in the course of the research, I inevitably had to listen to the travails of their lives and even their ongoing struggles. At once I had to be a counselor, an *Ate* or big sister even as I had to get used to my role as researcher. This relationship that I forged with my research partners has continued even after the study was completed.

There were certain dilemmas that I, as a researcher, had to face in conducting this study with my respondents who are children and youth. Much of these had to do with the fact that I had to intrude upon their personal lives. As they shared the stories of their past struggles and abuse that would consequently be found and read here in this paper, I became concerned with the possibility of exploitation or misuse or unexpected impact on their lives in the future.

I take comfort in the fact that the children and youth respondents of this research participated in a stage performance, which is public and they having decided to participate in such act had bravely faced the risk of exposure. In that act, they came out and named their pain, their experiences and their victimization.

Still I need to be constantly aware of what will be the consequence of my scholarship in the lives of the children and youth participants in the future even as I endeavor to (re)tell their stories. I am genuinely concerned of my ethical responsibility as I used their stories for this study. My respondents and partners in this research trusted me with their stories, and they can be assured that these were handled with utmost care, respect and honesty.

In doing this study, it took me out of my comfort zones and in the process of listening and learning about the "other", I took a *dark pilgrimage into awareness*. Their stories which are (re)told in the subsequent chapters shook my middle–class consciousness but they also allowed me to see in concrete terms that there is hope and triumph beyond suffering and oppression. Even as I

am frustrated that many lacked the opportunities for a better life, I celebrate the children and youth's courage for their stories give us hope that even in the face of adversity we can overcome the destructive forces that still continue to plague not only our country but other parts of the world as well. For despite the gains of more than two decades of work with street children, hundreds more are added to the streets everyday -- the problem not totally eradicated. This convinced me even more that the study has to be done as venue to allow the stories of these children to be shared. And for the artists who found satisfaction to employ art in the service of change, this study serves as a testimony of that commitment.

Perhaps, this is my effort to connect the academe, my world, with the 'real' world as I explore the possibilities of my chosen field (communication and theater/performance arts) in socially relevant concerns.

# **Chapter 5**

## From the Streets to Stairway

There has been one thread along the way that has been an ongoing aspect of this journey: an attempt to find a process that unites personal growth with artistic growth, life and art, one aspect feeding off the other and continuously coming together in new ways.

Halprin 1973 (cited in Mitchell 1994, 41)

This chapter lays out the stories in the making of Stairway's theater project, "Goldtooth", the street children's musical. Described here are the circumstances that engendered the theater project, tracing it from its conception, through the creation to the beginnings of children and youth's involvement in the project. From the story of how 'Goldtooth" was conceived and created to the stories of the street children prior to their participation in the theater project, this account maps out the beginning of the street children's journey from the street to the stage.

## STAIRWAY AND "GOLDTOOTH"

#### Stairway's Story

Stairway Foundation Incorporated (or Stairway for short), the producer of "Goldtooth", traces its history starting as a camp for street children until it became a full-fledged organization that serves the needs of street children. Then called Stairway - A Resort for Children or SARC, it was envisioned as an alternative

place for street children. Founded a by a foreign couple in 1992, the camp



Stairway Foundation at Puerto Galera in Oriental Mindoro

eventually evolved into a non-stock, non-profit, non-government childcare center whose mandate includes a recovery and rehabilitation program for street children from Metro Manila.

Late 1988, Monica Ray, an American and Lars Jorgensen who is Danish came to the Philippines for a vacation. They were at that time taking time off from their teaching jobs in Taiwan. As typical tourists, they stayed within the vicinity of Ermita's tourist district in the heart of Manila and there they had their first





Monica Ray and Lars Jorgensen, founders of Stairway Foundation

encounter with street children. Monica remembers losing all the coins in her pocket as she gave them all away to the children begging in the streets of Manila. This encounter sowed the first seed of what is to become the Stairway Foundation Inc. Witnessing the deprivation and suffering of the street children placed a strong desire in Monica and Lars to find a way to help them. But it was not until they came to Puerto Galera, a popular tourist destination, that somehow the seed had grown into a more concrete plan to help street children. It was there that they had the initial contact with child welfare organizations which at that time had brought their wards to Puerto Galera for their annual camp for street children. This initial link with organizations serving street children not only gave impetus for Lars and Monica to envision a place where street children from Metro Manila could have a holiday away from the big city, but also made them begin what would develop into a fruitful partnership with other organizations in the work with street children. But they first needed to raise the money to build the facility. They went back to their respective countries – Lars to Denmark and Monica to the United States. In 1990, after working for about two years, Lars and Monica came back to the Philippines and to Puerto Galera. They settled in barangay Aninuan -- a quiet and less developed part of Puerto Galera-- after negotiating the lease of a piece of land from one of the residents there. Between 1990-1992, they built the needed facilities in the one-hectare land using their own funds, building the structures for the facility which included their own home and the cottages that will house the guests and clients who will come to the facility. Eventually, this facility also witnessed their formal contract as a couple as they got wed on its grounds on Christmas Day of the year 1991. SARC was meant initially for a short-stay resort or a camp where street children organizations in Metro Manila can bring their street children on a holiday. In this camp, child welfare organizations may avail themselves of activities for street children for the welfare of their wards.

After about two years, the camp evolved into a long-stay residential facility for children. It started with the building of a reception home -- a place which would be the first step before a child gets to be accepted on a long-term stay -then it became also a residential center for long stay residents. Six street children who were recommended by drop-in centers from Manila became its first clients even as the resort continued its services of hosting camps for street children who

were based in other street children organizations in Manila.<sup>1</sup> In 1992, Lars began to set up the structures to create a foundation so they can seek donations to support their work. In 1993, they started Stairway-Denmark which became the sister organization of what would become Stairway Foundation Incorporated in the Philippines. It was also at this time that the organization sought and eventually secured the support of DANIDA (Danish International Development Assistance), an agency of the Danish government that offers assistance to development organizations. Since then, DANIDA has become the biggest and the main sponsor of their work with street children aside from other corporate and individual donors. After gaining DANIDA's support and permission from DSWD to operate as a long-term stay facility, SARC became officially known as Stairway Foundation, Inc.

Ever since, Stairway's vision has been to provide innovative programs that emphasize the use of art and nature as healing tools for rehabilitation and recovery of street children. For the ten years of their work with street children, they have offered a wide range of arts-based activities. In 1997, guided by this vision, the organization created and produced the project, "Goldtooth", a street children's musical. This would become the core strategy of their work with street children.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Some of their partner organizations include Kaibigan, Childhope, Tanglaw ng Kabataan (now Tulay ng Kabataan) and Virlanie.

#### The Making of "Goldtooth", a Street Children's Musical

The idea for the musical "Goldtooth" came from Monica who is a dancer and performing artist. In partnership with her husband she serves as the program coordinator of Stairway. It is her belief that street children need more than just food, clothing and shelter but also "need to be challenged and stimulated in ways that will allow them to grow, to develop self esteem and gain confidence." Monica believes that this can happen via creative expression and a nurturing environment that allow the street children opportunities to transform their lives. "Goldtooth" musical thus was envisioned as a way to help disadvantaged children realize their potentials. The musical was not an original story but was inspired by a 27- minute animated video with the same title, which was created by Street Kids International (SKI) which as earlier mentioned, is a Canadian NGO that also serves the interest of street children. Over the years, Stairway has been using SKI's educational materials including this video for many of their sessions, workshops and training with street children.

The creation of "Goldtooth", the musical was itself a dramatic story. In 1995, when Monica was nine months pregnant with their first (and so far the only) child Zachary, she contracted an ailment called Guillain Barre' Syndrome<sup>2</sup> which left her completely paralyzed from head to toe. Monica was brought to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> According to Dr. Nick Silverstein, a medical doctor connected with MSF, Guillain Barre' Syndrome is an affliction of unknown causes which appears to be a post-infection immune mediated damage to the spinal nerves, which ranges from mild weakness of the feet to total paralysis. This paralysis lasts from a few days to several months and which patients will usually gain 80% up to full recovery over a period.

Manila and placed in an intensive care unit of a hospital where she stayed for seven weeks. After seven weeks her condition stabilized. Although still completely paralyzed, she was brought to Denmark and placed in an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) where she stayed for about three months. It was in these months at the ICU, with only her eyes capable of movement that she conceived the musical version of the video-cartoon. Despite her paralysis, her brain was very active and as part of her "mental exercise", she slowly developed the script of the musical in her mind and eventually writing the *libretto* -- the words of the songs using an "eye language" that she developed to communicate with her family who took care of her in the hospital.<sup>3</sup> Eventually, she was placed in a rehabilitation hospital to continue her recovery. And as she was able to move again and continued to recover she also completed the script of the full-length musical. Meanwhile, their work with street children at Stairway continued with Lars shuttling back and forth between Denmark and the Philippines. Their long-stay clients were taken care of by a social worker and housemother who continued to run the facility. Monica was still confined to a wheel chair (with the upper half of her body already recovering from paralysis) when she returned to the Philippines and to Stairway after almost a year of physical rehabilitation in Denmark. Upon her return, she asked Rollie Maligad, a musician friend who was a member of the now-defunct alternative band Cocojam to put music to her words. Rollie has had

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The 'eye language' consists of blinks that correspond to every letter in the alpabet. Monica wrote the script of the musical by conveying to Lars or any member of her family every letter of the word through these eye blinks.

previous collaboration with Stairway in some of their artistic activities;<sup>4</sup> and Rollie's wife, Maricel, also works as an educational coordinator of Stairway. In August 1997, the musical was completed. And Monica walked again. This new lease in life renewed and increased Monica's enthusiasm to find even more creative ways with which to realize their work with street children. Convinced that theater will be a powerful strategy that will help street children, Monica and Lars, together with their artist friends<sup>5</sup> finalized the plan to stage the musical.

#### "Goldtooth", the Heart of Stairway's Recovery and Rehabilitation Program

Clearly, Stairway's objective in staging "Goldtooth" was to make it a part of the rehabilitation and recovery process of street children and youth and to involve them in advocacy and preventive outreach work. It became the heart of Stairway's program with three interrelated purposes: rehabilitation/recovery, advocacy and outreach. As Lars explains,

As it [the musical] developed I found more and more qualities in working into that project...one of the qualities is that the investment that you make in the project is worth it. It has three phases. Phase one is recovery and rehabilitation of the child, so you are at the level of the individual child. The next phase is the advocacy. So you move from the interest of the individual child out to the interest

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Some of the artistic collaboration include concerts for the benefit of the street children; a show to help eartquake victims in Mindoro in 1991.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Other than Rollie Maligad, Stairway has collaborated with several artists in their work with street children. One of these artists is Ysagani Ibarra who is a theater actor and singer. He has volunteered his talents to Stairway in many occasions and eventually he became their arts consultant and worked with the "Goldtooth" project with Lars and Monica.

of all the kids on the street, not only in the Philippines but also actually worldwide. And from there you narrow back again to the interest of the kids of the streets here in Manila. The last phase is the outreach phase. So you can do that as an educational tool for other street children that are still out there in the streets (Interview with Lars Jorgensen Feb. 1, 2000).

From audition, casting to its staging, the musical was itself part of the whole process of recovery and rehabilitation. It was expected that through this process, it will equip the street children and youth with personal skills to lead them back to their families and to the mainstream society as productive and self-reliant citizens. In the proposal to their sponsors, Stairway's "Goldtooth", musical was aimed to

- Employ the visual and performance arts as a means of therapy and advocacy,
- Use a child to child approach in informing street kids of the dangers of their situation on the streets
- Take the musical to affected areas in the Philippines and other countries in order to highlight a global problem and reach as many children at risk as possible.
- Raise funds for the continuity of its existing and future programs
- Follow up the rehabilitation program with skills training and formal education

#### The Audition

In September 1997, Lars, Monica and Ysagani Ibarra, the artist-volunteer, coordinated with street children organizations and drop-in centers in Metro Manila to 'recruit' the cast for the musical. About forty street children auditioned for the musical in Manila. They came even while most of them were still high on drugs or groggy from lack of sleep. *May nakatulog pa sa ilalim ng mesa habang nag-audition*, [Some even slept under the table during the audition] as Ysagani recalls. The selection process was in fact the most difficult aspect of this theater project, according to Monica. She explains,

Many of the children who showed up for the auditions had high expectations of new experiences and challenges ahead of them. We inevitably contemplated if we had the right to turn a child away destroying his hope for a new chance. We had to make many things into consideration like, who are the ones who really need to get out of Manila, even though they cannot sing nor dance? Would it be fair to turn down those who can sing and dance? What if we take down more kids than we need? Would it work out? What are the alternatives for those kids who do not pass the auditions? Would they want to stay in the drop-in centers, or would they go back to the streets? How will the children handle being rejected? How will the ones who pass the auditions feel about leaving their family, friends or barkadas? (*Stairway Newsletter* 1998)

For the street children who auditioned, it was an adventure of sorts. They did not have an idea how this would eventually affect their lives. They only knew that it

might be a way for them to get out of the street. As Rosemarie, one of the street children respondents, recalls,

Una, diba nasa street kami, naqve-vendor ako, tapos may friends ako na kilala, tapos may mga tao sabi nila magpapa-audition daw tungkol sa musical. Sinama ako ng mga kaibigan ko, sumama ako, noong una ayoko pa, e. Kasi sabi ko, 'Anlayo naman sa Mindoro!' Sabi nila, 'Kahit na, keysa dito naman tayo -nakikipag-habulan sa mga pulis, kinukuha pa ang mga paninda natin.' Pumayag na ako. Tapos nag-audition sila sa Manila, akala ko hindi ako mapipili. Dasal kami ng dasal ng mga kaibigan ko, kasi parang nagdesisiyon na kami na lumayo sa kalye. Yun, tapos dininig ng Diyos yung dasal namin na kami ang napili. [First, we were on the street, I was a vendor, then there were friends I knew, then there were people who said they were auditioning [us] for a musical. My friends took me along, I went with them. At first, I didn"t want to go; I said. 'Mindoro is too far!' they said, 'but still! Rather than stay here and be chased by cops who steal our merchandise.' so I agreed. Then they held the audition in Manila, I thought I wasn"t gonna make it. My friends and I kept praying and praying because we've decided to stay away from the streets. So there. Then God listened to our prayer to be chosen.]

There was, in fact, little basis for Rosemarie's fear of not passing the audition. She would have passed it because unlike the conventional theater situation, the criteria for this audition were not really based on the level of ability or talent of the child. As Ysagani explains,

The criteria was [sic] not whether they can sing or act. The first criteria is: "Does this kid need to be taken out of Manila?' And put in a surrounding like this

[referring to Stairway] and put through therapy that involves the disciplines of art specifically a musical theater...and perhaps something to do that they will not feel bored. Even if the child is out of tune but because he needs it, we take him in...that is the priority (Interview with Ysagani Ibarra July 22, 1999).

Nicky recalls that day of audition when they were "rounded up" by Kuya Noel, a street educator of Tanglaw ng Kabataan Foundation (now Tulay ng Kabataan), a partner organization of Stairway who helped in the recruitment of the street children together with Kuya Lars And Ate Monica (Jorgensen).

Kasi kilala nila ako tapos alam din nilang magaling akong sumayaw tapos, siguro kaya nila ako pinuntahan dun sa Thunder kasi alam din nila na maraming nagsasayaw doon. Tapos yun, sinabihan kami kung gusto naming sumali sa ganito na mag audition para nga sa "Goldtooth" musical. Yun nga yung programa ng Stairway. Tapos binigyan nila kami ng meeting place tapos kinaumagahan sinundo nila kami tapos dinala nila kami sa Balik-Balik sa Rotonda tapos doon kami ng audition. Mga 20 children kami na street kids tapos nag-audition kami, isa-isa, pinakanta kami, pinasayaw, ini isa-isa yung mga talents namin. Pagkatapos pinili, isa ako sa mga napili tapos dalawa rin sa barkada ko... si Jao nga at saka si Mark [Because they knew me and also knew that I can dance well, perhaps that is why they went to see me at thunder, since they also knew that many go there to dance. And then they asked us if we wanted to audition for "Goldtooth" musical. That was the program of stairway. Then they gave us the meeting place and the following day, they picked us up and took us to balik-balik at the rotunda, which was where the audition was held. We were 20 street-kids who auditioned. One by one, they asked us to sing, to dance; they tested each talent at a time. Then they chose among us. I was one of those who got chosen, two of my friends were chosen as well...like I said, Jao and Mark.]

Participating in the audition for Vhal started as a 'trip lang', it was like a game but it came to be a momentous decision for him. He has already spent many years of his life on the street. He needed change.

Noong una parang naglalaro lang kami, e. Gusto naming pumunta sa Puerto, parang trip lang namin pumuntang Puerto. Kasi mga kasamahan namin pumunta na dito, e. Dati sa foundation sila, tapos bago sila mag-bakasyon, dinadala sila dito sa Puerto. E, kami hindi pa nakapunta, so sige, subukan. Pero sabi ni Kuya Noel hindi kayo basta-basta makapunta doon, kung hindi kayo desidido sa sarili niyo. Kailangan may desisyon kayo, pero hindi lang magdesisyon kayo, dapat pagalingin ninyo pa ang mga sarili niyo, kasi dadaan pa kayo sa audition, e. Nag-isip kami noong gabi, kasi gabi noong sinabi sa amin, e. Ipi-pick up rin namin kayo. Nung kinabukasan, nag-try talaga kami makapasok sa audition. Tapos inilatag sa amin ang proposal ng musical. Sabi nila: 'ang musical na ito, hindi lang sa sarili niyo, kundi sa ibang mga bata pa na darating. Kayo rin kung maayos kayo dito, hindi lang sa musical, sa pagpapatakbo sa sarili niyo sa loob ng foundation, pag matino kayo, maaring papupuntahan nito sarili niyo din ang ibi-build up dito. Bago yung ibang mga bata kayo muna ang una naming bigyan ng importansya.' Parang inspirado na kami, nun, inspiration na pala namin yun. Baka ito na ang chance-ganoon. [At first, it was like we were just playing. We wanted to go to puerto, we just felt like it since some of us have already come here [Puerto]. They used to be at the foundation, then before they vacationed, they were brought here at Puerto. Well, we haven't been here at that time, so sure, let's try it. But Kuya Noel said we couldn't go just like that, not if we weren't sure of ourselves. You have to be decided about it, but that's not enough: you have to train yourselves since you're gonna pass through an audition. We thought about it that night (they told us about it at night). They were gonna pick

us up. The following day, we really tried to go to the audition. Then they laid down the musical's proposal. They said: 'this musical is not just for you but also for other kids who are coming. If you do well here, not just in the musical but also in the way you conduct yourselves in the foundation, if you're good, this could lead to the build-up of your persons. Over the other kids, we would prioritize you.' it was like we were inspired; it turns out that that was our inspiration. It was possibly our chance—there.]

For Vhal and many of his peers, it was a chance that they took. Vhal passed the audition. Out of those who auditioned, 25 made it and 16 decided to come to Stairway and joined the musical, Rosemarie, Nicky and Vhal included. They were now to embark on a new life far away from the streets and fulfill their new role as actors for "Goldtooth". Some of the street children who were long-stay residents of Stairway eventually joined the musical. They were 25 of them in the original cast. Eventually, some of them left to go back to the streets while others were reunited with their families. There were those who transferred to other child welfare organizations to pursue other interests. For those who left, they were replaced as new children and youth were brought to Stairway. Seventeen of them stayed with the project until its closure.

For almost three years, Stairway's work with these street children and youth was carried out through the musical production. And as was envisioned, the musical sought to reproduce the many stories found in the lives of street children and youth. As Monica asserts, ""Goldtooth" was a realistic display of the street children's lives in the street, for the musical captured the roles that the 17

street children and youth are playing, for they actually had that role in their life." What were the 'roles' of the 17 main respondents in their real lives? Who were they? What happened in their lives that led them to this journey from the street to the stage?

## STORIES FROM THE STREETS

In Stairway, they called themselves TASK – talented and ambitious street kids. But in the streets where they came from, most people would certainly not have seen them as talented and ambitious. Back there in the streets, most people in society would have viewed them with indifference or with disdain if not downright hostility. *Tuwing manlilimos ako, yong mga taong hinihingan namin ng pera parang nandidiri sa amin, para kaming may sakit na nakakahawa,* [Each time we begged, the people we begged money from seemed to find us repulsive, as though we had some contagious disease] as one street child reveals.<sup>6</sup> Or worst, consider them subhuman as another street child discloses, *Nilalait ka, ang tingin sa 'yo parang isang hayop.* [You get verbally maltreated, you're regarded as an animal] The 17 respondents of this study are but representatives of what one writer called as the "mute and nameless" multitude that roam in many urban centers.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> This starement and the one in the next sentence were uttered by some of the street children I had informal interviews or *kuwentuhan* with during my immersion in the streets in the course of my fieldwork.

What have been the lives of the street children and youth respondents before they came to the street? What brought them to the street? What happened to them while they were on the street? How long did they stay on the street?

The following overview and illustrative stories delineate the themes of the lived experience of the children and youth who were the "Goldtooth" Kids -- the main respondents of this study.

#### The "Goldtooth" Kids: A Brief Demographic Overview

By the time they came to Stairway, the 17 main respondents of the study were not quite children anymore. In fact, most of them were already teen-agers who had spent much of their childhood on the streets. Their ages at the time of entry to the center were between 12 -19 years old. Arman first came to Stairway when he was only 12 years old, as one of the very first batch of street children who were part of Stairway's residential program at the time that it was just starting as a residential center. Arman left Stairway and went back to the streets of Manila. He was apprehended for vagrancy and was placed in a youth home.<sup>7</sup> After reviewing his case, the judge recommended that he be returned to Stairway to continue his rehabilitation program. Arman returned to Stairway, preferring it to the "life of hell' in jail. By this time, the work on the theater project has started. He

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Youth homes serve as jail for youth offenders. Since the Philippines is a signatory to the UN Convention of Children's Rights, local governments have responded to the call for special jails for youth offenders. These youth homes are usually under the auspices of the local governments.

decided to join "Goldtooth". Like Arman, many of the respondents were in fact "hardcore' street children and youth. <sup>8</sup> They have been living in the streets for sometime and had very little or no contact with their family. For many of them, their entire young life has been spent going in and out of other childcare institutions. The oldest among them, Cris, was almost 20 when he first came to Stairway. He belonged to the later batch of children and youth who came to the facility. Cris was a client of another childcare institution that recommended an alternative place for him in order to recover from trauma caused by drug overdose. He has spent most of his entire life in the streets starting, when he was only about five or six years old.

Of the 17 respondents, there were only four girls and the rest were boys. This seems to be consistent with the findings of many studies that there are more male street children than females (DSWD 1988; Lamberte 1996; Torres 1997; Taa 2000). At the start of the theater project, there were three other girls but they left the center either to go back to the street or they got transferred to other institutions.<sup>9</sup> Rodeline and Susan who were out of school at that time that they joined "Goldtooth" through the encouragement of their former choirmaster Ysagani Ibarra, who once worked with Kaibigan, a childcare institution as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Street children are considered 'hardcore' when they have stayed in the streets for many years starting when they were very young. They have either very little contact with their families or are totally abandoned. They have also the tendency of 'center-hopping' -- that is, transfer from one childcare center to another.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> The first batch of girls includes Zenaida, Maricar and Ana but they eventually left Stairway.

NAME	SEX	AGE OF ENTRY AT STAIRWAY	EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	LENGTH OF TIME ON THE STREET	BIRTH ORDER & NO. OF CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY	AGE AT THE TIME OF INTER- VIEW
1. Jao	М	16	2 <sup>nd</sup> yr. H.S.	2 yrs.	1/4	18
2. Cris	М	19	1 <sup>st</sup> year H.S.	12 yrs.	1/3	22
3. Rosemarie	F	15	Grade 6	13 mos.	7/7	18
4. Vhal	М	17	2 <sup>nd</sup> year H.S.	6 yrs.	2/6	19
5. Mario	М	14	Grade 3	7 yrs.	1/1	16
6. David	М	17	2 <sup>nd</sup> year H.S.	3 yrs.	3/8	18
7. Mark	М	18	Grade 6	3 yrs.	1/3	20
8. Arman	М	12	Grade 4	4 yrs.	1/7	16
9. Dave	М	15	2 <sup>nd</sup> year H.S.	1 yr.	3/3	16
10. John Chris	М	15	Grade 3	4 yrs.	5/5	17
11. Rodeline	F	18	H.S. graduate	3 yrs.	5/5	21
12. Rowena	F	15	Grade 3	5 yrs.	4/6	17
13. Gilbert	М	16	Grade 5	5 yrs.	2/6	17
14. Susan	F	17	1st year college	3 yrs.	1/2	19
15. Nicky	М	17	2 <sup>nd</sup> year H.S.	8 yrs.	twin	19
16. Angelito	М	17	2 <sup>nd</sup> year H.S	1 yr.	1/4	19
17. Ely	М	16	Grade 6	6 yrs.	1/1	17

# Table 1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

conductor of their street children's choir. Rodeline and Susan used to be under the care of Kaibigan. Rowena came from another childcare institution, which had almost given up on her. In the hope that the theater experience will make a difference in her life, she was transferred to Stairway. Rosemarie, on the other hand, joined her other street friends to audition for the musical through the assistance of Tanglaw ng Kabataan, a drop-in center for street children.

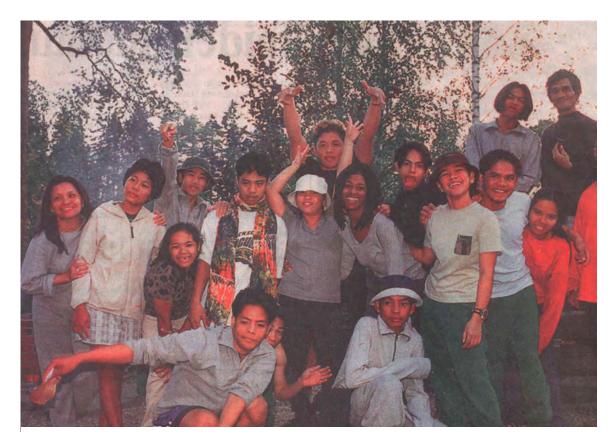
Contrary to the general perception that street children had no chance to go to school, all of the respondents were able to attend some school, with the lowest educational attainment being Grade 2 and the highest being first year in college. Seven among them were already in high school but chose to drop out. Those who had been able to continue up to high school were able to do so through the help of other institutions. Many of them have been taken care of by other welfare organizations before coming to Stairway. Rodeline and Susan who, as earlier said, were from Kaibigan, got help from this organization that assists street and urban poor children in getting an education. Both of these girls finished high school education. In fact, Susan had started her studies in college but she also chose to drop out after a while. Nicky was helped by Tanglaw ng Kabataan, a drop-in center for street children and was already in second year high school when he decided to quit school. This was also true of Cris who, supported by Childhope, was able to finish first year high school.

Not many of them come from large families. David has seven other brothers and sisters while Rosemarie and Arman are six in their brood. Most of the respondents have on the average four or five siblings. Nicky has a twin brother and Ely is an only child. More than half of the 17 respondents come from broken homes where their parents separated as a result of marital trouble. Consequently, they were under the care of their stepparents or were brought up by other relatives. John Chris was brought up by his stepmother and the mother of his stepmother. Jao lived with his mother and her partner when his parents separated because his father got jailed for drug dealing. Mark's grandparents took care of him when his parents separated, although he went back to the family when his father took a new wife. Rowena grew up with her mother and stepfather

but because of maltreatment she decided to leave and stay with her grandmother. Similarly, Angelito or Jhong lived with his maternal grandparents who took the responsibility of taking care of him when his parents separated when he was only four years old. His mother, with her new partner, got him and his siblings back eventually. As seen in other studies, family dislocation is a fairly common background from which most street children came.

Some respondents were orphaned at an early age due to the death of one of the parents. Mario's mother died when he was very young, which was the very reason that brought him out on the streets, for his father with him in tow left their hometown to live and scavenge in the streets in Quezon City. Gilbert's mother died at the time he was under the care of Stairway. Of the 17, only Dave and Arman can claim to have an intact nuclear family with both parents still living together in the same home.

Many reasons have been cited that made the children decide to leave their home and to choose the street from which to seek relief and freedom. On the average, most of the respondents lived on the street for about five years. But Mario and even Cris have spent half, if not almost all of their lives in the street. They started life in the streets young. And as in many studies on street children, their stories bare the familiar themes of neglect, homelessness, abuse, drugs, prostitution and violence. Their stories will reveal the reasons for which they went to the streets and their ways of surviving the perilous space with which they were forced to inhabit.



The TASK (Talented, Ambitious Street Kids) poses with the researcher, the director, the social worker and the musician

# Coming into and Surviving the

### Street's Perilous Space

Homelessness. Families in difficult circumstances where many of the street children came from cannot provide adequately for the basic needs such as food clothing and shelter for their children. While there are those who can still provide a home in the crowded and filthy slums, there are also those who have made the public areas a place which they call home. In the streets of Manila, for instance, we entire families living can see on

#### Mario – The Flutist

The haunting melody of Mario's flute opens one of the most tragic scenes in "Goldtooth". In the same way, Mario's life has been haunted by tragic events. He was 15 years old when he came to Stairway but he has lived on the streets nearly half of his life. His mother was very sickly and unable to take care of her children. She gave Mario's brother up to her relatives for adoption when the boy was still a baby while Mario suffered neolect because of his mother's illness. Eventually Marios' mother died of leukemia when he was only 6 years old. Shortly thereafter they also lost their home in a fire. Without a home. Mario's father with Mario in tow decided to leave the province to try his luck in Manila. They ended up on the street. What they call their home are the pavements or sidewalks of Katipunan in Quezon City where they eat and sleep. His father is a scavenger and Mario helps his father in scavenging which they sell to junkshops. Mario's father spends his meager earnings on Ginebra, a popular intoxicating drink. Mario recalls that his father was always drunk. He could not remember a day when he was sober. When drunk, his father would beat him. He thinks that his father blames him for the death of his mother.

pushcarts, under the highways and skyways, in bus stops, in the sidewalks or in the parks. The children growing up without homes are perhaps the most pathetic of them all. Mario lived practically on the streets with his father whose main occupation, if one can call it that, is to scavenge in the streets of the Katipunan area, in Quezon City. Both father and son lived off the garbage of a middle class neighborhood while Mario augmented his father's income by begging and selling in that street as well. Susan's early childhood was literally spent on the streets.

# Mario – The Flutist (continued)

The relationship became so strained that Mario decided to live separately from his father though Mario occasionally visits him. Mario became a street vendor. He sold rugs, newspapers and *sampaguita*. When his sales is not so good and there is not enough money to buy food, he usually look for leftover food in the garbage dump, especially the garbage thrown by the various food chains in Cubao area. Or sometimes he asked for leftovers from restaurants. As he grew older on the street, he fetch taxis for people, occasionally begged but also learned to rob and steal.

He has witnessed a lot of violence in the street. He recalls that he got caught for sniffing solvent. He recalls the brutality he suffered from the police authorities. Binugbog ako. Tapos isang araw, sinakay kami ng mga kasama ko sa jeep at dinala doon sa may Antipolo. Nakapiring pa nga kami. 'Yon dinala kami sa may lugar na liblib at walang katao-tao. Huwag daw namino alisin 'vono nakapirino sa amin at babarilin nila kami. Basta iniwanan na nila kami doon. Minsan naman, pinapalinis nila ako sa presinto noong nadakip ako. [] was beaten up, then one day, my companions and I were made to ride a jeep and were taken to antipolo. we were even blind-folded. we were brought to a place that was remote and desolate, they told us not to take our blind-folds off or else they would shoot us. they simply abandoned us there. another time they caught me, they ordered me to clean up the precinct.]

# Mario – The Flutist (continued)

While in the street, Mario had been in the care of several childcare institutions in Metro Manila such as Bahay-Tuluyan, Kuya drop-in center, Tanglaw ng Kabataan and Silong Tanglaw. But he never stayed in those agencies for long. His peers influenced him to go back to the streets. He finds the streets attractive despite its dangers.

He had a lot of dreams when he was on the street, *Totoo, bawat bata may pangarap. Halimbawa, ako nasa kalye...Ang pangarap ko, maka-alis muna sa kalye. Unang pangarap yon. Unang wish yon. Pangalawang wish, makapag-aral, ganoon. Pangatlo, marating na yung gusto kong marating. Parang ako, ang pangarap ko noon, kwan...talagang iniisip ko lang, hindi ko sinasabi*. [It's true, every child has a dream. for example, I was on the street, and my dream was to leave that place. that was my first dream, my first wish. the second wish was to study. third, to reach what I wanted to reach. like me, my dream then, uh...i really was just thinking about it, I wasn't telling anyone.] Yet, he found that in the street, dreams would remain unfulfilled.

One time he met a street educator who convinced him to stay in a center--Tanglaw ng Kabataan. He stayed for almost a year and was enrolled in a formal school. But later he left again and dropped out of school. In the streets of Cubao, Mario was found by a social worker and he was convinced to audition for "Goldtooth". He passed it and came to Stairway.

Her mother, a vendor selling cigarettes and other stuff in the streets of Malate brought her along with her brother because there was no place that their mother could safely leave them. Eventually they built a 'home' on the side of the street of Mabini, in the heart of the tourist district of Manila. *May kubo kami sa may Mabini.* [We had a hut at Mabini]. This kind of displacement is fairly common among street children. For those who have been 'fortunate' to have a home, this home is usually located in the slums. It is no wonder that they would rather choose to live in the wide and spacious street than in their cramped houses. Because David's 4x5 meter home in a crowded tenement housing could hardly accommodate David and his family, they take turns in sleeping inside the house. When it is not his turn yet to claim the limited space for the night, he sleeps outside in a parked jeepney or truck. Such a situation has driven David and many like him to the streets.

Severe Poverty. Economic hardships is one of the major reasons for children to go to the street. For many of the urban poor there is a high percentage of unemployment. In one of the recent studies of Torres (1996) on street children, she found that as many as 45% families of some cities including Metro Manila were found to be unemployed or underemployed. The earnings of the families are therefore not enough for the whole brood to survive. Hence, the children are driven to the streets to help contribute to the family income. This was proven true in the stories shared by many of the respondents. Their deprivation and a sense of obligation to their families have forced them into the streets where they could eke out a living. In the case of Rodeline, her parents' separation caused a disruption in her life. She was quite happy and content to stay with her grandmother in Cebu but was forced to leave her grandmother when her mother brought Rodeline to Manila to live with her and the former's new husband. Instead of comfort, Rodeline had to face financial challenges. A grade IV student

#### **Rodeline - The Dreamer**

Unlike the other street kids she was with in Stairway, Rodeline did not live an impoverished life. In fact, her life was quite comfortable; a little underprivileged maybe, but still not poor enough to be called impoverished. Her being on the streets was a product of her being a dreamer.

Rodeline even tells of having lived like a little princess while she was still in Cebu with her grandparents. Her circumstances changed drastically when she came to Manila to live with her mother. Money was tigh and despite that she was only a grade IV student then, Rodeline felt the need to work in order to help out. At nine, she took the initiative of selling flowers, crackers, peanuts and chewing our on the streets. She did this for three years. In her journal she wrote, Since a very young age, I was physically, emotionally and psychologically abused by my mother and her live-in partner. Almost daily I would be beaten or burned for anything. I was never allowed to defend myself. She worked very hard everyday. In the mornings she would cook and take care of her siblings, did the cleaning and washing. In the afternoons, she would attend school. In the evenings, she would sell crackers and peanuts in the streets to help support her family.

#### Rodeline - The Dreamer (continued)

When she was to enter high school, her mother could not finance her studies. She became a scholar of Kaibigan, another foundation, and was able to finish the four years necessary for a diploma. Rodeline remembers when her mother used to beat her, which forced her to run away from home, and stayed in the street for several days. She tried running away many times but she would always come back because she wanted to continue her education. When she was in high school, her stepfather who is a drug addict and jobless attempted to touch her private parts when her mother was not around. Her mother knew of this abuse but did not do anything. Eventually, she stayed in the residential home of Kaibigan to avoid the oppressive situation of her family. In Kaibigan, she got involved in the choral group and this developed her talent in singing. When she finished high school, she had to return to her family. She found work in one of the more exclusive beauty parlors in Metro Manila. Even while working in the beauty parlor, which normally kept her from her home as late as midnight, she also had to take care of a younger sibling who was only in the first grade at that time.

then, Rodeline felt the need to work in order to augment the family income. She was only nine years old when she took the initiative of working in the streets. She vividly remembers her young life. *Talagang nagtratrabaho ako araw-araw. Sa umaga, inaalagan ko ang mga kapatid ko. Naglilinis ako...naglalaba. Sa hapon, nag-aaral ako at sa gabi nagtitinda ako ng crackers, candies at saka peanuts para tulungan ang pamilya ko.* [I worked hard everyday. In the mornings, I would take care of my siblings. I cleaned up...washed clothes. in the afternoons, I

studied and at night, I sold crackers, candies and peanuts to help support my family]

Similarly, because of Ely's desire to help her mother and stepfather, he was prompted to work at an early age. Ely's mother is a laundry woman while his stepfather works as carpenter who could not get a job on a regular basis. They earned just barely enough for their daily basic sustenance. Despite the

economic difficulty, Ely continued to go to school. At a very young age he tried to help his mother earn money. He sold candies and newspapers during weekends. From his earnings he took care of his needs in school even paying for his school fees. When he was older he sold fish in the neighborhood. It was a great sacrifice on his part as he woke up very early in the morning and bought fresh fish to sell to the neighborhood. He understood his parents' economic difficulty and he tried his very best to help out. Ely and Rodeline are just but a few examples of

#### Rodeline - The Dreamer (continued)

Rodeline did not stop searching for opportunities for a better life. She was always a dreamer. She felt that there was no place for her to grow, working at the Salon. But then, feel ko, there's no space for me to grow there, you know, pampa-beauty lang. [But then, I felt that there was no space for me to grow there, you know, it was all simply about prettifying.] She then applied for a job at a fast food chain where she was accepted and was asked to begin working. On what was supposed to be her first day with the fastfood chain, she learned that there was an audition for a play in Stairway. *Kuya Ysagani* [lbarra] was one of my former music teachers, when I was a choir member in Kaibigan. I was in the choir before and he was my former teacher. He asked me if I wanted to join the musical. And he told me everything about it and gave me the project proposal. And then, I showed it to my mother and then she said, "try it", When I heard of the audition for "Goldtooth". I pleaded with my mother to allow me this chance. literally bought my freedom [from my mother] for five thousand pesos. Rodeline went for the audition and made it to Stairway. This was the major, if not the most dramatic turning point in her life.

children who, because of grinding poverty took it upon themselves to help out their families and as a consequence found themselves on the streets.

Socio-cultural Vacuum. Many street children and youth come from families who are usually poor migrants from rural areas. Mired by poverty in their towns and provinces, their families brought them to the big city such as Manila in the hope that they would have better life, only to realize later that the realities are harsher as they encounter the inhospitable life in the big cities. Such was the experience of Arman. When he was young, his parents left him with his grandfather in the province to be taken care of. At the age of seven, his parents took him to Manila - a decision which Arman resented. He says, Dahil yung magulang ko kinuha ako... hindi ko sila kilala. E, di umalis ako dahil hindi ko pa sila kilala, hindi ko alam na magulang ko pala sila... akala ko ibang tao sila sa pananaw ko dahil bigla lang nila ako kinuha sa probinsiya. [My parents took me...] didn't know them. And so I left them, I didn't know that they were my parents. I thought that they weren't family since they simply took me from the province.] At that time, his mother was a seamstress and his father, a former supervisor who was now jobless. Although their intentions were sincere, it was difficult for Arman to learn how to love them. Despite his young age, he harbored an indifferent feeling towards the couple. It was hard for him to adjust to the idea of living in the city with parents he hardly knew. In an attempt to give meaning to this confusion, Arman took to the streets. There he found friendship, fun and freedom to do what he wants.

In the case of John Chris, the uncertainties were triggered by a very itinerant life. The son of a soldier, John Chris remembers moving from one place to another, never taking root. His real mother and father separated when still a baby. His father he was eventually remarried and with his new wife, took custody of John Chris. When John Chris' father was assigned to Cebu, the rest of the family moved to his father's hometown in Negros and then later transferred to Manila. In Manila, John Chris' exposure to life in the through streets was his grandmother whom he accompanied to sell fish in the market place. The lure of the street was too strong because he felt unhappy at home due to a strained relationship with his stepmother. His world was too cramped living with his stepmother,

### John Chris – The Guitarist

John Chris is a quiet boy who hardly speaks much. But he lets the guitar express for him. He loves to play the drums, too. The musical instruments are perhaps his way of venting unexpressed emotions-emotions which through the years of his life at home and later in the streets, he held at bay.

John Chris' father, a soldier, met his mother in Bacolod. They married and stayed in Mindanao where John Chris' father was stationed at that time. But their partnership did not last long as they eventually separated when John Chris was still a baby. His father had an affair with a woman who would become John Chris' stepmother. Meanwhile, John Chris' mother was also involved with another man. Upon his parents' separation, John Chris was at first placed under the custody of his mother. But his mother was too busy with her life and was unable to provide the care and attention that her child needed. John Chris suffered neglect in his young life.

As a soldier, John Chris' father was always away and unable to look after the condition of his child who was neglected by his ex-wife. John Chris father's partner took pity on him and brought him to live in her house. Eventually John Cris' father married his partner and John Chris came under the legal custody of his stepmother.

Because his father was a soldier, they kept on moving wherever his father was stationed. When John Chris' father was stationed in Cebu, his stepmother brought the family to Manila. John Chris never felt his father and real mother loved him. Now, living with his stepmother, stepbrothers and stepsisters, he felt even more alienated and rebellious. He often misbehaved that led to beatings and scoldings. Resentful and feeling unwanted he would often run away to the streets.

two stepbrothers and two stepsisters. He felt the confusion in his home where he claims that he would witness a lot of shouting and fighting. His relationship with the familv extremely was dysfunctional. He remembers that he would always get scolded and beaten. He claims that his stepmother would tie him up and beat him whenever he has done something wrong. He, however, accepted that he had been naughty. Refusing to help in the household chores, he would rather stay in the street than at home. When scolded, he would often run away. One day, his father scolded him for smoking. As a punishment, his father forced him to smoke one pack of cigarettes. He decided to leave home. He was only 13 years old when he left. He did not want to go back home anymore.

Arman and John Chris are but

# John Chris – The Guitarist (continued)

At one time, John Chris was brought to Baquio to stay with the relatives just to get him away from the lure of the streets. In Baquio, he was enrolled in a local school but he stopped schooling after a while. He was brought back to Manila. Later, the responsibility to look after John Chris fell on his grandmother -- the mother of his stepmother. Ironically, John Chris' first exposure to the street and to other street children was brought about when he used to accompany his grandmother who works as a helper selling fish in the market in Cubao. There, John Chris met many children who sniffed rugby. With that early exposure to solvent users, John Chris learned quickly how to use drugs like rugby or solvent, marijuana and shabu when finally he decided to leave his home to live in the streets. In the streets, he usually sniffed solvent in the morning and worked in the night as an FX barker. When he ran out of money he would go to a oarbage dump and look for leftover food. As he stayed longer in the streets he learned to ask food from small restaurants in the sidewalk. Later, John Chris got involved in snatching and gang wars. He was even drawn into into sex-work, an episode in his life which he refused to elaborate.

He came first to Stairway when one of his friends, a street child also invited him to come to Puerto Galera. Daniel, a street child who brought John Chris to Stairway was telling him that he had visited a place in Mindoro that previous summer and the place was very beautiful. Daniel told John Chris that the latter would love the place. Agreeing to come with his friend Daniel, John Chris came to Puerto Galera where he met the people of Stairway Foundation. He wanted to stay. Stairway did not turn John Chris away and he was allowed to stay in the program. Though his arrival in Stairway was unexpected, he became part of the "Goldtooth" musical. two examples of the dilemmas that children face in the void caused by lack of family support and other social factors.

Parental Neglect and Abuse. The theme of abuse and neglect resonate in the stories of the children and youth. As what has been seen in many studies on street children, many of the respondents in this study felt neglected by their families that they chose to live the harsh life on the streets rather than be at home yet where they were deprived of their parents' love and attention. In Lamberte's (1994) study, she finds that the major reason why children are forced out into the street is lack of attention from their family. This was true of many of the children-respondents' case. Stories of violence, drunkenness, lack of love and other kinds of abuses feature prominently in the narratives of the family life of the street children and youth in this study. For instance, Rowena remembers being beaten with a 2x2 wood piece whenever she refused to do house chores. Binubugbog ako ng stepfather ko... lagi akong may kurot sa singit... ganito kalaking kahoy [pointing at a 2X2 wood that forms the frame of a window in Lars and Monica's house]. Yung matigas, yung ginagamit sa bahay talaga. Yan ang pinapalo sa akin, yung ganoon o...ganyan... Pinapalo sa puwit ko yan... kung hindi naman sa puwit... sa dito ko [pointing to her thigh area] kahit saan... sa kamay. Siyempre tatakbo ako. Siyempre hindi ko maiwasan. [My stepfather beat me up. He pinched me at the crotch. A wooden club this huge. [pointing at a 2X2 wood that forms the frame of a window in Lars and Monica's house] the hard kind, the kind used for houses. that's what he used to beat me, that one

or....that...he hit my butt with that. If not my butt, then right here [pointing to her thigh area], anywhere here.my hands. Of course I would try to run away. of course I couldn't escape it totally.] Aside from physical abuse, sexual abuse of female children is also quite rampant and is one of the reasons why they leave home. However, not one of the female respondents indicated that they were victims of incest except for one of the girls who revealed that her stepfather who is into drugs attempted to touch her private parts prompting her to finally decide

#### Nicky - "The Lost Twin"

I don't know where I came from or who my biological parents are. I was abandoned as a baby. Someone found me in a garbage dump and gave me to a family. I lived with that family for nearly 9 years, but I ran away. I felt unloved by my foster mother. Those were Nicky's words in his journal. Such confusion of identity reveals an underlying pain of someone who never felt he belonged to a family. It was a confusing story of how he came to be.

Ang story ko kasi... mahaba kasi ang story ko, Ang story ko... yung ang mommy ko nanganak ng twins, kambal, tagisang katulong siya, tag-isang maid. Tapos yung isang maid ninakaw yung isang kambal, tapos ngayon naghanap sila, daddy ko naghanap din, tapos may nakita silang bata na – dati diba uso yung bentahan ng bata—sa Angeles. Kinuha yun tapos, kasi ang lakas ng lukso ng dugo ng Daddy, ako daw yun, kaya kinuha niya ko. Pero yung Mommy ko hindi siya convinced sa akin na ako yung anak niya. Kasi nga Nanay nga naman.

[Here's my story. My mom had twins and each one had a maid. One of the maids stole one of the twins. They searched for that child, my daddy did too, and they found one – see, selling children was rampant then – in Angeles. They took that child, daddy intuitively thought that I was his child, and they took me. But my mommy was never convinced that I was her child. Well, you know how mothers are.] to leave their home.

Nicky's story, on the other hand, is almost stranger than fiction. But it also points to the same parental neglect and abuse that is quite a common experience among street children. Nicky was a 'lost' twin yet when he was found, the woman whom he considered as his mother never quite accepted him. His story: *Ang story ko... yung ang mommy ko nanganak ng twins, kambal, tag-isang katulong sila, tag-isang maid. Tapos yung isang maid ninakaw yung isang kambal, tapos ngayon naghanap sila,* 

# Nicky - "The Lost Twin" (continued)

And so it goes, he felt that his 'mother' never really loved him because she did accept that he was her lost son. So Nicky grew up resenting the treatment of the woman she called Mommy. Although his Daddy loves him, he felt he did not belong. His 'mother' would beat him. Nicky was transferred to his grandmother's care to avoid his mother's negative treatment. But his grandmother cannot discipline him and just let him wander. So he would run away time and again. He preferred to live on the streets and in the marketplace in Angeles City. He was in the streets when Mount Pinatubo erupted. When there was a massive evacuation to Manila, he joined the evacuees and found himself in Cubao. There were people who offered to and did adopt him. He remembered living with at least ten families. But he would run away time and again. In the streets he survived by begging. But as he grew older, he survived as a hawker and as a call boy. / would pretend to be call boy and go with gay men to hotel rooms, there I would hold them up,"he writes in his journal. He was with a gang and then got also involved in snatching. Then he got caught into drugs. He tried rugby, solvent and then 'gluestick'. He has experienced all kinds of brutality from other street children and from the police.

daddy ko naghanap din, tapos may nakita silang bata na – dati diba uso yung bentahan ng bata -- sa Angeles. Kinuha yun tapos, kasi ang lakas ng lukso ng dugo ng Daddy, ako daw yun, kaya kinuha niya ako. Pero yung Mommy ko hindi siya convinced sa akin na ako yung anak niya. Kasi nga Nanay nga naman. [Here's my story. My mommy had twins and each one had a maid. One of the maids stole one of the twins. They searched for that child, my daddy did too, and they found one - see, selling children was rampant then – in angeles. They took that child, daddy intuitively thought that I was his child, and they took

me. But my mommy was never convinced that I was her child. Well, you know how mothers are.] His mother, not being convinced that Nicky was her son never treated him as one. He felt unloved. Nicky grew up resenting the treatment of the woman he called Mommy. Although his Daddy loves him, he felt he did not belong, so he left.

#### Nicky - "The Lost Twin" (continued)

But he loves dancing. He taught himself by picking up some dance steps and movements from television. One day he met a street educator and he was taken to a center for street children. He was placed back in school. At that time he only finished Grade 3 but he passed an acceleration exam which promoted him to second year high school. But school soon bored him. He longed for excitement and adventure. He wanted to dance. He heard about the auditions for "Goldtooth". He tried out and passed it. He came to Stairway but was not able to adjust to the routine. So he left the program and went back to the streets in Manila. He found his friends again in Cubao. He sought out his gang the OTB (Original Thunder Boys); this gang works as jeepney barkers in the day and do hold ups at night. His gang became involved in a gang war that resulted in the death of one of the members of the rival gang. Because of the heat of the incident the gang decided to split up. Fearful for his life and safety Nicky sought help from Tanglaw ng Kabataan and there he decided he would return to Stairway. He did and he was accepted back. He was given another chance.

He went back to the streets three or more times but each time he longed for his life at Stairway and the excitement of being part of "Goldtooth". He told himself thet he needed to change. *Sinabi ko pagbalik ko magbabago na ako.* He came back to Stairway. This time he stayed.

In Nicky's case, it is not the material deprivation but the emotional need that drove him out of his home. He longed for the love of a mother. Most of the other children-respondents experienced similar stories of ill treatment and lack of caring ironically from their own home and parents who are expected to protect them and to give them affection. This lack of love, attention and sympathy from the family led many of

them to seek for it it elsewhere, usually finding it among their peers in the streets who provide them with fun and company and perhaps, even a pseudo-family. As they come in contact with other children in the streets, they are drawn into activities that expose them to further abuse – of violence, of drugs and of crime. This lack of healthy socialization at home during the children's formative years caused their estrangement from the mainstream of life – a disturbing cycle of alienation and exclusion.

# Table 2

Incidents of Abuse in Childhood					
Name	Sexual	Physical	Psychological	Substance	Age <sup>*</sup>
<ol> <li>Jao</li> <li>Cris</li> <li>Rosemarie</li> <li>Vhal</li> <li>Mario</li> <li>David</li> <li>David</li> <li>Mark</li> <li>Arman</li> <li>Dave</li> <li>John Chris</li> <li>Rowena</li> <li>Gilbert</li> <li>Susan</li> <li>Nicky</li> <li>Angelito</li> </ol>	No Yes Yes No No Yes No Attempted Yes Attempted Yes No No Implied No	Yes Yes No Yes Yes No Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes	Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes	Yes Yes No Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes No Yes Yes No Yes Yes Yes	9-16 6-19 9 14-17 5-14 N.D. 15-18 9-12 14 9-12 14 9-14 11-13 11-15 10-14 6-8 7- 15 6-15
17. Ely	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	12-16

\* The ages are approximate period when these abuses occurred N.D. means no data available

# Negative Experience with Others.

Sometimes the abuse and cruelty were not inflicted by their own families but by other people. Rosemarie's negative experience in the hands of a friend of the family drove her to the streets. A friend of her father raped her. Writing in her journal, she recalls the painful past: Not only two weeks after my father's death, a friend of my father raped me. I was only 9 years old. I was too ashamed and afraid to tell my mother, for he threatened to kill my family if and me if I said anything, I ran away with only 500 pesos in my pocket. In the streets, Rosemarie decided to earn money as a vendor to survive. With the 500 she has in her pocket, she kept the 200 for food and

### Rosemarie - The 'Lola'

Rosemarie now 18 is in third year high school at Puerto Galera Academy. When you see her now, you see a very energetic, hard-working and always gracious young lady with a ready smile. Behind the charming demeanor is a story of a survivor, a child who became an adult too soon.

She was born in Samar but because of poverty her family came to the big city to look for better opportunities. The family settled in Cavite. Rosemarie was the youngest of a brood of seven, with four brothers and two sisters. Her mother only finished Grade I and with no other skill, became a vendor. As a vendor she was able to support the needs of her family. But her earnings were not enough to really give them a comfortable life. Her brothers never finished high school. Another brother just completed Grade 3. Her older sister was helped by some relatives and remained in the province where she was sent to school and was able to graduate in College and became a teacher later on.

The poor economic situation of the family forced Rosemarie to work as a maid in her aunt's house while she was not in school. She was able to save some money at a very young age. She put it in a plastic bag and hid it under their little house. One day her brother used the car of his aunt without permission and crashed it. The aunt was so angry and told her that her family had to pay for the damage. Rosemarie with her kind heart was forced to dig the money she buried and gave it to her aunt. She felt so bad about the situation and questioned why the fault of her brother had to be placed on her shoulder.

the remaining 300, she invested on candies and cigarettes. She earned good money. *I could make between 700-1,000 pesos in the evening.* She works in the evening and never sleeps. The abuse inflicted upon her by her father's friend left

# Rosemarie - The 'Lola' (continued)

Rosemarie was studying in elementary school. One day, she ran away. No one in the family knew until much later the reason why she left. In her journal she recalls the painful past: Not only two weeks after my father's death, a friend of my father raped me. I was only nine years old. Too ashamed and afraid to tell my mother for he threatened to kill my family if and me I said anything. I ran away with only 500 pesos in my pocket. In the streets, I asked them questions like "where do you sleep" "How do you eat?" I asked myself, "Why am I here?' I was thinking, "What will I do for food?" I remembered the five hundred pesos in my pocket. I put two hundred pesos away for my food and I used the remaining 300 to buy candies and cigarettes. I could make between 700-1.000 pesos in the evening. When morning comes, I would spend 80 pesos to sleep in the cinema. I never watched the movies. I only slept. After a few months of surviving in the streets I met a social worker a she took me to a childcare center. She took me back home, where I enrolled in school. One day when I was coming home from school, I saw the person who raped me riding on a motorcycle. He drove up to me and snatched me up from where I was standing and v but I was so disturbed. I usually just suddenly crv which makes my teacher wonder.

her terrified of the night. A movie house becomes her sleeping quarters when the morning comes when she would rest her tired body. After a few months of surviving in the streets Rosemarie met a social worker who took her to a childcare center. She was taken back to her home. She went back to school. One day when she was coming home from school, the person who once raped her once again took her and raped her again. Disturbed and humiliated by this incident. she was never able to concentate in her studies. Parang nahiya ako. Di ko kayang iharap and

sarili ko, [i felt so ashamed. I couldn't face myself] she says. Rosemarie quit school and she went back to the streets where she found a safer haven than her own community.

Girls are often vulnerable to sexual assault perpetrated by adults and Rosemarie is but one of the many victims of this kind of abuse.

# Rosemarie - The 'Lola' (continued)

Terrified and humiliated, Rosemarie ran away once again. She quit school. *Parang nahiya ako. Di ko kayang iharap and sarili ko.* [I felt so ashamed. I couldn't face myself] Back on the streets in Manila, she worked as a vendor again selling cigarettes and candies. She never did drugs because she knew it was not good for her brain and her body. She was called 'Lola' by the other street children because she seemed more serious and wiser than her age. And she extended her hand to help the other street children even with her meager earnings. She would buy them food and clothing or would warn them when the police would come. She spent about three years on the streets and found street life very difficult. Although at times, she enjoyed it as well.

Sa totoo, mahirap ang buhay sa lansangan, mahirap. Ikaw lang mag-isa. Wala yung pamilya mo. Kasi nandiyan yung mga pulis, mga batang nagdo-droga, mga Sputnik, yung may mga gang-gang, nagrarambulan sa gitna ng kalye. Siyempre madadamay ka pag tumakbo ka doon, huhulihin sila. Maski wala kang kasalanan,hinuhuli nila, e. Ako nga nadamay ako, hindi naman ako nagra-rugby.

Mahirap din na masaya. Masaya yung magkakaroon sila ng happenings, wala silang ginagawang masama, yung masaya na nakakakita sila ng malls.

# Rosemarie - The 'Lola' (continued)

Tumutulong sila sa mga bata, magtatawag ng jeep, bibigyan sila ng pagkain, ganoon. Yung masama naman yung mga taong hihikayatin ang mga maliliit, bibigyan ng drugs, tapos siyempre pag high ka na, wala ka ng alam, e.

[Truth is, life in the streets is tough. You're on your own. Your family isn't there. The cops are there, the kids on drugs, the Sputnik, guys who belong to gangs, they have rumbles in the middle of the street. Of course you'll get implicated should you flee during a rumble, the police will arrest you. Even if you innocent, they would arrest you. They once arrested me, even though I wasn't doing rugby.

It's tough yet fun. It's fun when they host happenings, they aren't doing anything bad,fun when they see malls. They would help kids, would halt jeeps, they'd receive food. The bad ones, on the other hand, would lure the little ones, they would give them drugs, and of course, once you're high on drugs, you're completely unconscious.]

She never learned to steal or do drugs. She in fact tried to protect the other children from being apprehended by the police. She had experienced being detained herself during a police round up of street children. She was 16 when she auditioned for "Goldtooth". She passed it and came to live in Stairway to be one of the cast of "Goldtooth".

**Drugs as (Street)Culture.** It is perceived that many street children are drug and other addictive-substance users. This observation is corroborated by a number of studies (Carandang 1998; Cloutier 1997; Lamberte 1996). From rugby to shabu, cough medicines to cocaine, street children consume these substances to temporarily forget hunger, the harsh realities of abuse and an overwhelming

sense of hopelessness. Even more serious is the fact that the children are not only substance users, but many of them, in fact, eventually become drug dealers. Cloutier (1998) in a study that bears a very strong resemblance to this present initiative, describes the drug culture that shaped the lives of the youth in the street. He says that:

Street culture is defined by several dominant themes such a substance abuse, prostitution, criminal activity and violence. These themes lead the youth down to a one-way street that provides a temporary escape from a life of abuse and violence but leads to desperation. The abuse of drugs and alcohol are a norm in street culture. These addictions are punctuated with violence and quite dominate the activities of one's life. Small time drug deals and petty crime generate the revenue to pay the high costs of addiction. Addiction takes a personal and social toll. The societal toll is incalculable. Addiction saps one's morale and focus initiative on personally and socially destructive behaviours; addictions and the attendant activities of the addicted are scarred by random and relentless acts of violence (156-157).

I quoted John Cloutier at length to show the similarity of experience with the participants of his study with my own respondents, separate as they are by geographical distance and culture.

All of the male respondents and one of the girls admitted to drug use while on the streets. Rowena used drugs so as not to feel hunger and possibly to numb her senses so as to forget the use and abuse of her body. Cris had trauma that left him paralyzed because of drug overdose. Drug pushers not only victimized

# Vhal – The Poet

Vhal is the poet in "Goldtooth" who recites in vivid detail the effect of drugs on street kids. The script put words to his mouth yet every word is familiar to Vhal for he lived those experiences on the street where he stayed for almost six years. He writes in his journal: *Ako si Vhal isa sa mga batang lansangan na may malawak na karanasan sa kalye. Kung hindi mag droga at pagkatapos gumagawa ng hindi kanais nais na bagay tulad ng mga gulo o illegal na bagay. Halos nalulong na ko sa bisyo kaya halos masira na rin ang buhay ko.[I am Vhal, one of the streetkids who have had extensive experiences in the streets. Nothing but do drugs and then do something frowned upon such as causing a rumpus or doing something illegal. I was almost consumed by the vice such that my life was nearly ruined.]* 

Vhal is second to the youngest of the family. They originally came from Bacolod. His father worked as a fisherman in a big fishing company and his wife took care of the home. But his father had another woman and started neglecting his family. Sometimes he would not come home for weeks and practically neglecting his responsibilities. Vhal witnessed the daily quarrels of his parents. Because of his father's neglect, Vhal's mother took in another live-in partner. Vhal was only about six years old at that time. He came to live with his grandmother who took care of him. Meanwhile, his older brother became a working student and was able to finish college and got a job.

He was about 10 years old when his brother got them from the province to live in Manila. He and his siblings came to live with their aunt in Manila because his brother was assigned as a provincial correspondent for a tabloid in llocos. However, he felt uncomfortable living with his aunt because it was a big family. He felt that they have added to the already cramp existence of his aunt's family. Meanwhile his brother did not show up for about three months. So his older sister decided that they would just move to his father's house who at this time has also moved to Bulacan with his new family. Vhal decide not to go to his father. He stayed in Manila where he studied 1<sup>st</sup> year high school. The following year he came to live with his father in Bulacan and continued his studies there. In school, he got involved in activism. He became a member of the League of Filipino Students (LFS). In one of the demonstrations he joined, the authorities caught him for carrving subversive materials.

#### Vhal – The Poet (continued)

Later on, he also joined Kadena. Because of his involvement in activism, he was kicked out from his school. Although his brother tried to mediate in his behalf, he was not accepted in that school anymore.

His brother was able to buy a small house in Project 2 in Quezon City which he renovated and transformed into four rooms to be rented out. Vhal, together with his sister who used to live with his mother and other siblings were reunited and lived in this house. It was his brother's desire for them to be together. It was at this time that Vhal started going out with neighbors. He had a *barkada* which included the son of a doctor and a barrio captain of the baranggay. That was the start of his introduction to the street and the dark world of drugs and other illegal activities. It began when he became a "carrier" to a prostitution den. He would bring women to Starlight , a club house in Cubao. He became an *utus-utusan* or a 'side-kick' to a man who is a known pimp and drug pusher in that area.

When his brother found out about his activities, he was brought to Pangasinan where his brother now settled with his wife. In the province Vhal did not have a good relationship with his sister-in-law. He left his brother's house and went to live with his father in Bulacan. He did not feel comfortable there because he did not have any friend and had no one to talk to. He decided to leave his father and went back to Cubao. He went back to work with the drug pusher and became the latter's courier. He travelled many places to procure drugs. His brother finally found him and brought him back.

Back in their place, Vhal did not have the money so he decided to go back to his 'boss' and protecor. He was tasked to procure marijuana from Sagada and bring it to Kamuning. One time the authorities caught him for carrying 2 kilos of marijuana. He was only 14 at that time when he got arrested. He was placed in a rehabilitation center in Taguig. In the rehabilitation center, Vhal also got involved in other 'illegal' activities. He was allowed to help in the kitchen because he loves to cook. In the kitchen he would steal supplies for the residents of the rehabilitation center. He would get toothpaste, which he would sell to the other residents who will take it in lieu of drugs. Angelito and Vhal, eventually they also became instruments to victimize others as they worked as drug couriers. Vhal traveled many places to procure drugs. One time the authorities caught him for carrying two kilos of marijuana. He was only 14 when he got arrested for drug dealing.

Angelito's father was a drug user and eventually Angelito followed his father's vice. Angelito's father became irresponsible and neglected his responsibilities as a husband and father. Angelito was four years old when his mother and father separated. His mother eventually found a new partner. Meanwhile, his father who got deep into drugs and robbery also got involved in a killing incident. He was convicted and was imprisoned for six years. Angelito learned to use drugs at a very young age because the men in his community were mostly drug addicts. *[Sa amin] maraming nalulong sa bawal na gamot...* 

Vhal – The Poet (continued)

He was caught and referred to the other compound which is equivalent to a maximum security prison or *bartolina*. He absconded that night. He went home to their place but his brother was so angry with him. His brother did not want to have to do anything with him anymore. Vhal decided to go back to the streets.

He stayed in Cubao for about a year, then in Q-Mart and the Farmer's. He became a tong collector under the protection of a police captain. This policeman urged Vhal to push drugs. Vhal would sell drugs to FX drivers. One day his protector asked him to stay in his protector's house in asubdivison in Quezon City. He thought it would be good because he can live in a nice house. He found himself working as *taga-bantay* or caretaker of a house that is a base for a hold-up gang. Fearing for his life, he left without permission and went back to Cubao. His protector swore him into silence and in return for his loyalty he was given a huge parking lot to 'manage' and he worked there as a park boy.

It was at this time that Kuya Noel, a social worker was recruiting street kids to audition for "Goldtooth". Together with his *barkada* who were members of the Thunderboys, he auditioned and passed. He came to Stairway and found another life so different from where he came from. *Parang panaginip ang nangyari sa akin dati.* (What happened to me before was like a dream).

Sa lugar namin hindi maganda, sari-saring tao ang nandoon - may mga magnanakaw, mga mamatay-tao... Wala, wala, kang makikitang matino sa lugar namin. [Where I'm from, many people were led to illegal drugs....my place isn't wonderful, all sorts of people live there—thieves, murderers.... You can't find decent people where I live.] He started using illegal substances at the age of nine and this eventually resulted in his loss of interest with his studies that he dropped out of school. Similarly, Jao's early exposure to drugs was through his father who was a drug dealer and who eventually got convicted and jailed for the crime. Whether from within their own close circle of family or from peers, the street children and youth have learned to face and survive street life through drugs – an

adaptive behavior in a culture fraught with threat, hunger and want.

Involvement in Prostitution. Poverty and want means a continued struggle for survival of the street children. It means working and accepting any kind of job that will allow them to stay alive even for a meager return. And these may mean any kind of work. There might be 'legitimate' ways of "earning a living" which the street children and youth would be

#### Mark: The Matinee Idol

Mark is tall and good-looking. He could have been a matinee-idol. In fact, it was his dream to become a movie star. He also wanted to be a dancer or a basketball player. In a sense, he fulfilled his dreams, for he was a dancer when he was on the streets. He was part of the Original Thunderboys. This is a street gang which hangsout at Thunder Disco in Cubao.

Mark's father was security guard and his mother a fish vendor. He was the eldest in the family but his father had other families. In fact, he claims that there just might be 17 children sired by his father with different women. His parents separated while he was still a young boy. His father had a new family. Although he tried to live with his father at one time with his "new" family, they always seem to clash. Mark's relationship with his stepmother was no better. Although his father sent him to school, he lost his interest and preferred to go back to the streets, instead. engaged in, such as begging, vending, scavenging, cleaning, etc. But there are also illegitimate activities that many of these street children are involved in such as thievery (snatching, pick pocketing, hold-up) and prostitution. Many street

children and youth find the easy way out to earn money, by selling themselves. They are either lured into prostitution by abusive adults who prev upon their helplessness or by their peers who are already into sex for sale activity. Though there is no clear estimate as to how many street children and youth are engaged in sex for sale, it is believed that this is quite rampant among them. One of the youth male respondents was one of those who engaged in prostitution at that time that he was on the streets. He was lured into it because this was the easiest way to earn a lot of money and quickly. He became a dancer in a gay club and his costumers often used him.

In the streets, many children and youth are drawn into sex-work because it

#### Mark: The Matinee Idol (continued)

In his journal he writes, When I was born, my mother did not want to share me with my father. He stole me from her. As I was growing up, he would tell me that she was dead. My father's new wife, my stepmother, was very abusive. She would beat me with a lead pipe and wooden sticks. She told me to leave. I was 15 years old when I ran away from home. I learned how to scavenge on the streets.

He left home when he was 15 and was 'adopted' by an old lady in the street. He later realized that this lady was a drug pusher and she taught him how to deal in drugs. One day, he was told to bring a "gift' to a person without realizing (not until later) that he was already serving as a courier. The old lady was arrested but Mark was able to get away. At 15, Mark was already initiated to all kinds of vices - smoking, drinking hard liquor and drugs. And he was also lured into the world of prostitution. So nagkaedad na ako, hanggang sa meron akong nabarkadang ano...pahiramin na lang daw ako ng magandang damit niya. Tapos madali lang raw kitain ..yung pera...yong - [mag] callboy. Tapos may kumuha na sa akin. [I came of age, and befriended a (callboy)...he said he would lend me nice clothes, that it was easy to earn money as a callboy. Then someone hired me.) It was easy money. He eventually became a dancer in a gay club where his costumers often used him. He left the club and joined some street dancers and many times he would get in trouble with the police. They sometimes beat and *torture me.* he recalls.

One day a street educator told him about the "Goldtooth" audition. He tried out and passed it. He thought this was the chance for him to become an actor. He decided to come to Stairway. is the quickest way to earn big amount of money. In the case of another child, he escaped from an oppressive home atmosphere and was lured into sex work through the instigation of his friends. But he did not stay at it very long for he did not want that life.

This was also true for one the young male respondent who did sex for sale to be able to earn quick money. Child prostitution is quite rampant among street youth although girls are more likely to engage in it than boys. Rowena started very young. She was engaged in sex work at the age of 11 and even became a sex slave of a drug pusher. She was lured by her other street friends to the 'profession". Her becoming a sex slave to a drug pusher was also one of the most tragic incidents in her life. A man volunteered to help her when she was very sick and unable to take care of herself while in the street. She was taken to his house and after she was well, she became the man's toy to satisfy his sexual desires. Literally trapped and imprisoned, she became a sex object of a man as old as her father. Unable to escape, she remained a prisoner in the man's house for months until the daughter of the man helped her escape. She went back to the streets and not being able to escape her fate, again went back to prostitution. Indeed, these stories of abuse of children by adults are but few examples of how the street can destroy the lives and future of the children and youth who are lured into a job that not only would endanger their physical but also their emotional well-being.

The Gang as a Way of Life. One common characteristic of street culture is joining gangs. Most street children joined gangs for protection and sense of security as well as to bully other street children. In a sense gangs give them a sense of power in a hazardous environment. Even female street children are involved in gangs such as Rowena was. She was a member of the Sputnik gang based in Luneta. She relates: Noong nakita nila na matapang ako, balak nila ako gawing leader. Pinag-isipan ko muna. Hindi naman na pinag-isipan, parang nag ayaw-ayaw ako muna. Nakaupo yan yung Sputnik. Andami nga e. Diba ang lawak ng Luneta...doon kami sa dulo. Sa may kalabaw, doon kami. Di kami doon natutulog, doon lang kita-kita namin. Doon kami sa likod, sa may palaruan...ibig sabihin ng Bahala [gang], bahala ka na kung mamatay ka o mabuhay ka. Sputnik naman yung Sumpang Pamatay Huling Tagumpay. Hinahangad ang tagumpay kumbaga sila ang naghahari. Nagbubuo ang gang para maprotektahan ang grupo. Kung mag-iisa ka lang, kunwari may magagalit, hindi alam kung sinong papanihikan? [When they saw that I was tough, they wanted me to be a gang-leader. I thought aboout it first. Not that I thought about it, I just pretended to. The Sputnik would site there. They were many. You know how vast Luneta is...we were there at the far end. We were at the back, near the playground....Bahala (gang) means it's up to you whether you die or live. Sputnik, on the other hand, means 'sworn to kill, bound to triumph in the end.' They want victory as though they were rulers. Gangs form to protect its members. If you're gonna be on your own, when someone is angered, who would you run to?] She

#### Angelito: Broken Dreams Under the Bridge

Angelito or Jhong is 19 now and is working as a street educator with Medicins sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders) or MSF, an international organization that also attends to the need of street children. Angelito himself could not imagine that he would be on the streets now, not as someone who needed help but as someone who is giving help. To many of the street children who he is currently helping, he is Kuya Jhong who brings cheers, stories and sometimes relief from physical discomfort as he helps treat their scabies or wounds.

Angelito's story starts from under the bridge where he lived with his family somewhere in Quirino Avenue a large highway in the heart of Manila. He is the eldest among three children and was named after his father. His family was at first living in relative peace but this was shattered when his father began to use prohibited drugs. He became irresponsible and neglected his responsibilities as a husband and father. Frustrated by her husband's vices. Angelito's mother initiated the separation. He was only four years old when his mother and father separated. His mother eventually found a new partner. Meanwhile, his father who got deep into drugs and robbery also got involved in a killing incident. He was convicted and was imprisoned for six years. Angelito describes his life: Nakatira kami sa ilalim ng tulay, diyan sa may Quirino Avenue malapit sa Philippine Columbian, sa may squatters area. Magulo ang lugar naming, may mga magnanakaw, mamatay tao. Basta, wala talagang matino doon. Kaya ang mga bata doon lumaki na walang nakikitang maganda. [We lived under the bridge, at Quirino Avenue near Philippines Columbian, at the squatter's area. Our place was chaotic, there were thieves, murderers. The point is, nobody there was decent. Which is why children there grow up without seeing anything good.) Growing up in that environment had exposed Angelito to destructive vices even at an early age.

even relates that the street children gangs have their own respective territories. Kasi yung bumabagsak sa Luneta, Sputnik ang bagsak. Doon naman sa Cubao, Bahala ang bagsak. Those (children) who comes to Luneta they join the Sputnik. In Cubao, they join up with Bahala]. There are other kinds of gangs as well; Nicky, Mark and Jao were members of a gang of dancers who hung out in a disco place in Cubao. Their gang was called Original Thunderboys (OTB). Their dance gang allowed them artistic expression as well as comradeship. As Jao puts it, masaya, nakakaenganyo. [It was fun, enticing.]

Angelito's involvement with gangs was both tragic and triumphant. It got him involved in drugs and

alcohol but it also paved the way for change in his life. In his journal he discloses: My parents separated and my mother found a new partner. This man I never liked, so I would find solace on the streets with my barkada. It was there where I was persuaded to leave home and to live on the streets. On the streets I did drugs. First, cigarettes, then gin, marijuana, then shabu which is highly addictive. It gave me a feeling of being powerful and in control. I was hooked on shabu for nearly seven years. One day, he and his gang was involved in a riot,

# Angelito: Broken Dreams Under the Bridge (continued)

After his parents' separation, he was taken by his maternal grandparents, and grew up under their care. His grandmother pampered him. He has two halfbrothers and a sister with his mother's common law husband. Angelito never liked his mother's partner so he would find solace on the streets with his barkada. It was there where he was slowly persuaded to leave home and to live on the streets. At a young age he learned to engage in bad vices. He started using addictive substances at the age of nine. This eventually resulted to a loss of interest in his studies that he dropped out of school. He felt that his life was already complete with his friends.

His barkada influenced him to take drugs. In his journal he writes: *On the streets I did drugs. First, cigarettes, then* gin, marijuana, then shabu which is highly addictive. It gave me a feeling of being powerful and in control. I was hooked on shabu for nearly seven years

which resulted in the killing of his best friend. This was a traumatic incident for Angelito and which had a great impact on him. He experienced hallucinations and fear. *Noong namatay ang kaibigan ko, natakot ako. Doon ko naisipan na dapat na akong magbago*. [*W*hen my friend died, I got scared. At that point I began to think that I should change.] He sought help and after a brief stint with other childcare institutions he was eventually brought to Stairway. Gangs ensure the street children and youth's survival in a harsh environment. It gives them protection as well as comradeship. It offers excitement and even served as a substitute family. At times, gangs give them status or identity or even a code of 'honor' – rules which unlike those of conventional society the youth can conform

# Angelito: Broken Dreams Under the Bridge (continued)

By the time he was 16, he already had three different live-in partners and was an active member of a street gang. One day, he and his gang figured in a riot, which resulted in the killing of his best friend. *Napaaway kami ng barkada ko. Di ko nalaman napatay na pala ang kaibigan ko.* [My peer group ended up in a brawl. I didn't know that my friend had been killed.] This was a traumatic incident to Angelito. He was able to escape unharmed but this event had a great impact on him. He experienced hallucinations and fear. He sought help from a social worker of Childhope. He was eventually referred to Pangarap Shelter, a drop in center, for rehabilitation. He stayed there for about six months. But he left and returned home. He recalls: *Six months ako sa Pangarap tapos medyo nagloko ako doon. Ayaw ko na doon. Bale bumalik ako sa amin, 1997...mga ganoon... tapos pagbalik ko sa amin, mga 1997, mga December iyon, e. At pasko muna at saka Bagong Taon. Tapos nagkaroon ng problema sa amin. Napalayas kaming magkakapatid, bale iyong sumunod sa akin—Carlo ang pangalan. Tapos dinala siya sa Angel's Home, tapos ako dalawang araw na ako doon sa Childhope. Pero wala pa ring nakikitang foundation. Tapos naisipan nila doon sa Stairway.* [I stayed in Pangarap for six month and fooled around there. I don't like it there anymore. I returned home, 1997...thereabouts...then when I returned home, about 1997, It was December. Christmas came, then the New Year. Something went awry there. My brother and I were sent away, the brother who came after me—his name is Carlo. He was taken to Angel's home, Then I was at Childhope for two days. But no foundation was in sight. Then they considered Stairway.]

He was asked whether he would like to go to Stairway which is a partner organization of Childhope. He said yes for he felt he had nowhere else to go. *Dho. Sabi ko, "D gusto mo ba doon?" Sige punta na rin ako, wala na nga eh. Wala na ngang mapupuntahan. Pumayag na rin ako.* [Yes, I said. "So, do you want to go there? Sure, I might as well go, there were no alternatives. There was nowhere else to go. I finally agreed.]

Angelito came to Stairway and joined "Goldtooth" a few weeks before the first performance in Manila. This experience proved to be a major turning point of his life.

with. But many times, gangs put the children's lives in danger due to violence that breaks out because of their intense rivalry. Yet it is a risk that Rowena, Angelito and many of the other youngsters had (or even forced) to take for it offers a space where rules and norms which the children and young people themselves define.

# Violence in Everyday (Street)Life

Because of drugs and gangs, violence most likely erupts and is therefore almost a natural occurrence in the everyday life of the street children. It is something that they have learned to live with. Cloutier (1997) describes the violence in the streets:

The violence comes in many forms. There is the ever-present structural violence just below the surface. Physical violence is a constant: pimps employ violence to keep the girls in line. Violence often flare up on the street over territory or other conflicts such as drug rip offs (thefts from other dealers and costumers) which can bring retribution that often results to injury and sometimes death (157).

Cris, for instance, was almost killed. He was stabbed because he just happened to be in the 'wrong' territory. He relates: Muntik na akong mapatay...Basta sinaksak ako ng ano, yong isang ganyan na balisong. [I almost got killed...I was stabbed with that kind of pocket knife.]. In the wide spaces of the streets, children and youth define their territory which they guard jealously. Because Cris wandered into the 'wrong' territory, he suffered violence. Yet all he wanted was to look for his friend who happens to belong to another group. He went to this place to spend the night with his 'new' friend but one of the street children who were high in drugs had a 'trip' and turned violent. Ito yong ano yong sabug naman siya noon, sabug-na-sabug tapos napagtripan ako. May hinahanap akong isang tao nga dahil magpapasama nga ako. Iyon, yong ano iyong pinagtripan niya ako kasi walang tao doon sa bakanteng lote. Buti dala ko yong bag ko, yong knapsack ko. Pinagsaksak niya ako naisangga ko yong ano ko knapsack tapos hanggang sa may dumating na isa inawat siya. [There was this one who was high on drugs, and who picked on me. I was looking for someone because I was asking to be accompanied. I was picked on because there was

nobody else in the vacant lot. It was a good thing that I had my bag, my knapsack. He started stabbing me but I shielded myself with my knapsack until someone came along and calmed him down.]

Cris thinks that the violence one experience in the street is more than doubled if not tripled. Life in the street according to him is hard, mahirap. Mahirap siya. Kung sa ano kung isang bahay sa mav nagbugbug na may ginugulping bata dito tatlo [ang bubugbog], minsan doble-doble pa .Ang maggugulpi sa'yo. Doble, doble pa dahil kasi kung sa bahay isa lang ang kalaban mo, sa kalye milyon ang kalaban mo, libu. Hindi lang pulis hindi lang basta kung ano-ano diyan. [...hard. It's hard. If in the house, there's one abuser. here there are three. sometimes even more. If in the house, you have only one enemy,

#### Cris Cris' Dark Journey

Cris or Christopher takes his name from Christ. He was born on Christmas day, 1978. Three years later his father died. His mother remarried. She later worked overseas and the stepfather got the responsibility to look after him and his siblings.

Living with his stepfather, he recounts: Yong ano, halimbawa vono sivempre pao bata pao napagalitan ka. hindi mo maintindihan, tapos yong papaluin, na pinapalo ako na hindi ko naman alam kung bakit, hindi pa naman ako marunono maotanono noon. Hindi pa ako marunono umunawa, hindi ko alam kung bakit ako pinapalo noon. Basta alam ko, wala akong kasalanan, kung may nagawa man ako yong... ano... isang kamalian lang. Pero part na pag pinalo ako wala naman akong alam na kasalanan pala. [For instance, when you, a kid, get reprimanded, you don't understand why, then you get punished, I would get punished without knowing why. I didn't know how to interrocate then. I didn't know how to comprehend, I didn't know why I was being punished then. All I knew was that I was innocent. If I wasn't completely so, it was just one wrong thing that I committed. But when I was punished, I didn't know of anything wrong that I did.] This intimation of tyranny at a very young age pushed Cris to distance himself from his stepfather. His first hideaway was a church, where he would sleep at the foot of a Virgin Mary statue -- an image of a child protected by the tenderness of his mother, like the Christ child himself. By the age of seven, he was wandering in Luneta where he met other street children who would become his friends and gang. A year later, as with most of the children staying in the park, he became dependent on solvents.

here you have a million enemies, a thousand. Not just the cops or what...] He

feels that violence is everywhere not only in the hands of other street children but with authorities, as well.

Cris' Dark Journey (continued)

A time came when the money he got from begging was not enough for his needs. He resorted to the practice he calls " pamamantig", or stealing money from those who are sleeping. Cris recalls: *Yang ana yang manguha ng pera bulsa ng may bulsa sa mga natutulog. Sa Luneta yang mga natutulog doon, tinuruan ako na ano manguha mg pera sa bulsa ng may bulsa.* [That's when you steal money from the pocket of someone sleeping. In Luneta (park), the people who sleep there, they taught me to take money from people's pockets.]

Like any other gang member, Cris had a number of traumatic experiences in the streets. One, in fact almost took his life: *"Yong nabugbog ako. Do 'yon yong, yong ano yong muntik na akong mapatay. Basta sinaksak ako ng ano yong isang ganyan na balisong.* [I was beaten up. I nearly got killed. I was stabbed with that kind of pocket knife.]

Cris describes his life in the street as very dangerous and difficult. He said that if his life with his family was difficult more so in the street where there were more enemies like the police and other street people. *Doble, doble pa dahil kung sa bahay isa lang ang kalaban mo, sa kalye milyon and kalaban mo. Hindi lang pulis hindi lang basta kung ano ano diyan.* [It's doubly difficult since if in the house, you have only one enemy, here you have a million enemies. Not just the cops or what.]

For Mario life in the street is both happy and bad. Masaya at masama. Pag umaga, pag nagkikitakita kami ng barkada, masaya. Pero andvan na sinabi paq ang nq Presidenteng hulihin lahat ng bata, ayan na ang masama. Dahil kasi pag nahuli ka ng pulis, papatayin ka. Oo, isa-salvage, ganoon. Tapos yung iba naman, mga babae, parang ginagawa nilang [laruan], yun, dun sa loob ng presinto. [Happy and terrible. In the mornings, when my peer group meets, it's happy. But come the time when the president orders all the kids arrested, that's when things go bad. Because

when the cops catch you, they'd kill you. Yes, you'd get 'salvaged.' as for the others, the girls, they'd treat them like toys, there inside the precinct.] Mario experienced violence from people who are supposed to protect him – the police authorities. When he got caught sniffing solvent he got beaten in the precinct and

was even thrown in an uninhabited area in Antipolo. *Binugbog ako. Tapos isang araw, sinakay kami ng mga kasama ko sa jeep at dinala doon sa may Antipolo. Nakapiring pa nga kami. 'Yon dinala kami sa may lugar na liblib at walang katao-tao. Huwag daw naming alisin 'yong nakapiring sa amin at babarilin nila kami. Basta iniwanan na nila kami doon.* [I was beaten up. Then one day, my companions and I were made to ride a jeep and were taken to Antipolo. We were even blindfolded. We were brought to a place that was remote and desolate. They told us not to take our blindfolds off or else they would shoot us. They simply abandoned us there.]

Cris' Dark Journey (continued)

Cris was out in the streets for many years. When he was fifteen years old, he joined a syndicate that was involved in drugs and prostitution. He has gone deeper in the dark world of the streets. But one day he decided to leave. In his journal he recounts the experience: *One day, I left the syndicate and a street educator introduced me to Childhope, where I became a Junior Health Worker. I had a very strong desire to be able to help other street children who were in my position. The job as Junior Health Worker was to administer first aid. to get them to a safe shelter and to coordinate with the police and Social Worker in helping to get the kids off of the streets. But as much as I tried to focus on helping others, I could not help myself. My problems remained and I would lose myself in a bottle of rugby or solvent. I sniffed so much solvent that I became paralyzed and had to be hospitalized. When I was released from the hospital, Childhope referred me to Stairway Foundation to fully recuperate.* 

Cris involvement in the "Goldtooth" musical production was unexpected. He was referred to Stairway to regain his health, to experience an environment far from the streets and its dark corners. At that time the musical needed more cast members and the opportunity was offered to him. He took it and this gave him a new lease in life.

Nicky and his OTB gang featured in a gang war with an opponent gang because of territorial dispute. The opponent gang encroached upon their territory and violence flared up which resulted in the death of a member of the opponent gang. Ely's gang became so notorious in their place that fighting was almost a daily occurrence in his life. In the street, violence comes in many forms. It can be inflicted by the street children' own peers through gang wars and other conflicts. But, at times, violence is also meted out by policemen -- persons of authority who are supposed to protect them. In the street, thus, the children were less likely to get protection and were vulnerable to physical and emotional harm. These stories and many other similar to theses define the lives and culture of children on the streets

#### The Street and its Impact on the Children and Youth

Hardened to Inhumanity. The violence, drugs, prostitution and other experiences in the street as revealed by the foregoing stories, have greatly affected the way they look at themselves and their future. For many of them, there is not much to hope for. And while they, too, dream on the street, they are less likely believe that their dreams would be fulfilled: Imposible... imposible talaga. [Impossible, really impossible] as Rowena says. Some of the children would even say that they did not dream at all, as Dave declares: Wala akong pangarap. Basta kasama ko lang yung kabarkada ko, ayos na ako. [I have no dreams. So long as I'm with my peers, then I'm alright]. Others thought that they could never get out of the destructive grip of the streets. Hanggang kalve lang kami. [The streets are as far we can go] as one of them will say. Or another saying, Siguro hindi na ako magbabago, hanggang dito na lang ako [I'll probably never change, this is as far as I can go] -- statement that discloses a sense of hopelessness. At a young age they have learned to survive in the harshest of

environments. With every passing year spent in the streets they had also become hardened to inhumanity – to the atrocities that they saw and experienced in their everyday existence. They have lived life toughened in order to survive. Vhal for instance, claimed that he never learned to cry on the street. *Sa langsangan pag umiyak ka, patay kang talaga!, wala kang masasandalan doon. Pag umiyak ka wala kang kaibigan doon. Tingin sa iyo dati duwag ka,e, pag umiyak ka. Tibayan na loob dati, kahit anong sakit ng loob mo, pakita mo pa rin tumatawa ka. Kailangang matapang ka.* [On the street, cry and you're dead! You have nobody to lean on there. If you cry, you won't have friends. People would think you a weakling. Steele yourself, whatever the pain, make it look that you can laugh about it. You gotta be strong.] In the street they are vulnerable yet resilient. But they are also toughened with the necessity of survival.

Loss of Self-worth. In an earlier chapter, studies on street children have shown that street children have low self-esteem. This is again revealed in the testimonies of the children respondents. Repeatedly they would say words such as *basura lang kami, putik,* or *galing lansangan*. [We're rubbish, mud, or from the streets] These labels borne out of society's disdain have resulted to a loss of trust to their own capacities and talents. Indeed, as Rizzini (1996) asserts, the societal reactions to street children are mostly of fear, condemnation, repression, exploitation and violence against them that makes it impossible for them to retain a healthy self-concept. The children's low opinion of themselves are bared in the following extracts:

...[I]sa lang kaming streetchildren [sic], tapos wala kaming sapat na kaalaman, di ba? Hindi tulad ng ibang may pinag-aralan, may mga natapos. [We're just streetchildren, we have no sufficient education, right? Unlike others who do, who finished schooling.] (Dave, 15 yrs. old)

Basta sumali lang ako, wala pa naman akong karanasan noon eh. Di ko nga alam yang mga musical na yan. Tsaka gitara, wala akong alam dyan! Lahat yan, mga sport. Wala akong alam! [I simply joined, I was inexperienced then. I didn't even know what a musical was. And the guitar, I didn't know anything about that! All those, those sports. I know nothing!] (John Chris, 15 years old)

Noon sa lansangan [iniisip ko ako'y] masamang-masama! [On the street I thought I was rotten to the core!] (Gilbert, 16 years old)

Ang buhay lansangan mas mababa doon... kumbaga pwede kang patayin diyan. Kung anong gustong gawin ng matataas na tao, magagawa sa iyo dahil isa ka lang batang lansangan. [Life is cheaper on the streets...as though you can get killed there. Whatever powerful people fancy, they can do to you because you're just a streetkid] (Rowena, 16 years old)

With almost all of them coming from dysfunctional families and forced by necessity to scavenge, to beg, to steal or to sell everything from flowers to their own bodies – it is no wonder that they generally have a low regard of their own selves. As Copping (1998) contends, "All forms of abuse lead to low self-esteem and undermine constructive self-assertion" (12). This self-devaluation, in turn, tends to expose them to further risks as they are an easy prey for manipulation

by adults and peers (e.g. to lure them into drugs, prostitution or criminality) -- a vicious cycle that could (and in fact had) lead them to self-destruction.

#### A Need for Innovative Intervention

With the challenge posed by the foregoing factors, Stairway's mandate as a childcare institution was to search for more effective and innovative approaches to be able to break the contact between the child and the negative influences of the street environment. Into this milieu came the help offered by Stairway through the theater project "Goldtooth". This was meant to provide alternative for the children's lives. The institution was convinced that theater might provide "a foothold on the slippery slope" that which many of them had lived. As a performance artist Monica believes in theater to achieve change in the lives of the children. She asserts:

All children need something more than just food, clothing, and shelter. They need to be loved, challenged and stimulated, in ways that will allow them to grow, to develop self-esteem and gain confidence. When these character traits are nurtured, developed and strengthened, the children can then realize their abilities, hopes and dreams. Realization can happen via creative expression, a proper environment and opportunities. And what better way to help disadvantaged children to realize their potentials, than to challenge them with producing a musical about their own lives? This was the challenge for the twenty-five children who passed the auditions for "Goldtooth" last September 1997. The process of rehabilitation was done in the context of their lives and realities, using methods and materials, which they could relate to, such as: video, dance, drama, music, sports and arts and crafts. Through active participation

and routine practice, they developed skills, values and discipline. Participation was deepened, goals were achieved, and motivation was enhanced. They were transformed on the stage. (*Stairway Newsletter* 1998)

Through the development and the actual performance of the musical, it was aimed to initiate changes in the life of the street children and youth participants. That as their lives on the street are performed on stage, they, too, will be transformed with the power of performance through theater. The musical embodies their lives. Their stories made manifest through the musical which in turn will be used as a vehicle for education, awareness, advocacy for their cause.

## Chapter 6

### The Text, The Stage and the Lives of the Street Children

Life is sacred. Life is art. Life is sacred art. The art of sacred living means being a holy actor, acting from the soul rather than from the ego. The soul is out of space and time and hence always available, an everpresent potential of our being. It is up to each of us to celebrate and to actualize our being.... The soul is our artistic self, our capacity of transforming every dimension of our lives into art and theater.

Roth 1989, 147 (Cited in Mitchell 1994, 41)

This chapter describes in detail the processes that went into the making of "Goldtooth", a street children's musical production. The first section contains an examination of the text as well as the elements of performance to see how the themes in the stories were encoded and enacted in the production of the musical. The second section discusses the stages in the making of theater production, from rehearsals to performance to its closure.

The work of theater is not a single and simple process. It comprises many processes that bring the work from the material to the moment of performance. "Goldtooth" the musical was created and produced within the context of the work of Stairway's rehabilitation program with street children. The challenge was enormous, as it requires taking responsibility of lives and future of the street children and youth participants. Unlike conventional theater productions, the "Goldtooth" musical was not created mainly for an audience that will eventually pay to watch it but more for the participants whose transformation is expected to take place in the process of making the production. The work was a long process because every phase is intended to be an enabling experience instrumental for the development of the children and youth who took part in it. From the moment of audition, the initial stages of rehabilitation work began.<sup>1</sup> At the moment of entry into the facility of Stairway in Puerto Galera and on the stage where the work will unfold, the decision has been made. Each child was made to understand that s/he has made the first step.

# "Goldtooth", the Musical

The text of the musical uncovers themes that were actually played out in the lives of the street children and youth who became now the musical's performers. The aim of the whole production is to capture and illustrate in full, onstage, the children's lives and their roles while they were still in the street. Thus, the play is seen as text that may be subjected to an analysis which addresses the concomitant issues of reception and effect.

# The Synopsis<sup>2</sup>

"Goldtooth", as earlier mentioned, is an adaptation of the animated video produced by Street Kids International (Please See Appendix A-2 for the SKI article on the making of the video project and Appendix A-3 for the script of the original cartoon video). It is a product of research of actual stories in the street

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Interview with Monica Jorgensen on July 22, 1999 at the Stairway facility in Puerto Galera.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> This synopsis was taken from the program of the musical.

which specifically focused on the drug culture. It also includes themes of police brutality, prostitution and violence – themes which have become so familiar to the children who themselves lived these experiences on the streets.

The story of the musical is about two siblings, Karate and Nina who live and work on the streets. As orphans they survive by eking out a living by stringing and selling *sampaguitas*. However, Karate likes to play and have a good time sniffing glue and getting high with her friends. Nina does her best to turn Karate away from a life of drugs away from Goldtooth, a drug pusher, pimp and victimizer of street children. Nina offers Karate a job to help her sell *sampaguitas*. One day, caught unaware while playing, Goldtooth steals the garlands of *sampaguitas* that Karate is supposed to sell in the market place. Frightened and ashamed to go home empty handed, she sniffs glue given to her by Goldtooth. Ensnared in his web, Karate heads on to a dangerous path of crime and substance abuse until one day she is caught and thrown into detention.

Desperately looking for Karate, Nina goes to Goldtooth for help. His price for helping Karate has fatal consequences for Nina. She becomes a prostitute. Disgraced and humiliated, she turns to drugs. Released from detention, Karate finds Nina high on drugs and with a customer. In a showdown between Goldtooth and the sisters, Nina is killed. Nina's death



Karate and Nina the lead characters in the musical

opens the eyes of Karate and the other exploited children to who Goldtooth really is. In a redemptive act, the children collectively rise against Goldtooth to save themselves from destruction.

## **Playing Own Lives**

Goldtooth is the name of the lead character of the musical and Ysagani Ibarra, the only professional and adult artist in the cast, plays this role. The musical tells of Goldtooth's exploits as he victimizes the street children. As the program describes:

Goldtooth is not a fictional character. He exists in the everyday realities of million of street kids all over the world. He can be found in every street corner, and every alleyway. Goldtooth is a ruthless exploiter of children. He's a pimp and a pusher, who preys on their innocence and vulnerability to make money. Easy money. His money. Making easy money can be anything from selling drugs to selling the body of the child. (Program Notes)



Ysagani Ibarra, the only professional actor in the cast plays Goldtooth

In the fictional world, Goldtooth is the modern day Fagan in "Oliver" or The Engineer in "Ms Saigon". Personifying wickedness and the worst of man, Goldtooth torments and oppresses the children on the streets as he lures them into the destructive world of drugs and prostitution. In the real world, Goldtooth is a character that the children and youth participants encountered in their everyday life as he represents the exploitative adults who victimized them. Goldtooth is the police officer who recruited Vhal to procure and sell drugs. He is Angelito's father, who is a drug pusher and a murderer. Goldtooth is the pimp and drug lord who lured Rowena at such a young age into a life of prostitution -- the man who offered care and protection but in turn abused her. And for Rosemarie, "Goldtooth" is the face of the friend of her father who sexually molested her.

The play opens with a darkened stage. As the music starts, photos can be seen flashed on the wall of the set showing street children in many parts of the world. A black and white photo of a child sniffing glue is shown whose glazed eyes stares blankly from the walls of the set. There were other photos of children showing life on the streets including some which show the brutality they have experienced (i.e. such as a child with his eyes gouged or a street child murdered and his lifeless body lying on a pavement). As the voice over says, "An estimated



A scene in "Goldtooth". children sniffing solvents.

100 million children are living in the streets worldwide. A silent majority that needs to be heard," followed by the word "Help" the music crescendos to a scream. The lights slowly goes up and there on the garbage heap are children sniffing, lying on a cartful of garbage. Other street kids come in selling and begging on the streets. As they enter, they sing:

**Batang Maynila** 

Ano ang ginawa sa iyo Batang Maynila Saan ang tungo mo?

Sa kalye at lansangan Lagi kang nakatambay Ang diwa mo'y lumalakbay

Sa isang sulok ng isip Mga limot na pangarap Ang lungsod na malupit Sa iyo'y nanggigipit.

[Child of Manila What was done to you Child of Manila Where are you going to?

On the street and in the sun You stand by continually Your spirit on a journey

In the corner of your mind Dreams forgotten The harsh city Putting you on the straits]

This makes a familiar scene to the children and the lyrics of the song generate the very questions they ask while they were still on the streets. Many of them would reveal in the course of the interviews that they had dreams while still in the streets, but they did not know if they have a chance to fulfill them. *Hanggang*  pangarap ka lang sa kalye. [In the streets, dreaming is all that we can do]. The street is excluded from the structures of society and does not allow these children and youth opportunities for advancement instead expose them to threats on their physical and emotional being.

In one of the most vivid scenes in the play, Goldtooth displays a young prostitute as an example to lure Nina into prostitution, as he sings:

In a dress like this, you can't miss, the tricks that you'll turn burn baby burn Make money and earn

The guys will want All that you flaunt You got what they need Believe me baby, believe me Make money and earn

In a dress like this The money you make With a twist and a shake Like bees into honey And you into money Make money and earn In a dress like this

In this scene, one of the girls played the role of a young prostitute, a role which she has lived in the harsh life of the streets. Victimized by abusive adult, the exploitation she experienced on the streets is dramatized on stage -- a merging of the real and fictional reality. There were other roles and scenes in the play that was played out in the



"Goldtooth" dramatizes the sexual exploitation of street children

lives of these children and youth actors. Mark took on multiple roles of prostitute, pimp, and as a tourist-client who abuses Nina. These roles were evocative of his lived experience on the streets. He has seen his peers being sold for sex and he was pushed into the "profession" because it was the only way he thought that will let him survive the deprivation he experienced in his life.

Or take for instance Jojo, a character with streaked orange hair and playful, happy-go-lucky disposition. According to Jao, most of the boys wanted to play the role of Karate. But he only wanted to play one role - that is Jojo. When asked why, he replied

- Jao : That's me. I like Jojo.
- BDC: Why do you think Jojo was you?
- Jao: Jojo was so cool.
- BDC: And you're cool.
- Jao : Yes. That's me.
- BDC: Ano pa si Jojo?
- Jao : Very loving. That's what I like. Na, I'm very stupid.
- BDC: Okay, iyon si Jojo. In Jojo nakikita mo si Jao. [Okay, that's Jojo. In Jojo you see Jao.]
- Jao : That's Jao before.



Jao as Jojo in "Goldtooth"

For Jao, Jojo reflects the nature of his usual self. As with the other children and youth participants, "Goldtooth" accurately depicted their situation and their struggles while still on the streets – reliving the past in the dramatic moment. Cris played multiple roles which he believes were the very roles he played or had been acquainted with in real life. Cris who at a young age experienced being victimized by a pedophile, now on stage, becomes the pedophile who sells the bodies of innocent children. In a moment of reflection, Cris even mused on his role as being symbolic of how his life had turned from purity or innocence to something he considers as 'dirty'. *Tapos pangalawa doon yong role ko na ganon nga iyong malinis tapos naging marumi.* [Second to that is my role of someone clean who became dirty]. In this conversation, Cris contemplates on the many roles he has taken in life and enacted on stage:

- BDC: Oo, so, babalikan natin yong pagsali mo doon sa "Goldtooth" sa Stairway, so napunta ka doon ah ano pa, ano pa sa palagay mo maganda ba yong experience mo doon sa Goldtooth doon sa programa? [Yes, so, let's go back to your joining Stairway's "Goldtooth." So you went there, uh, what else, what do you think, was your experience with Goldtooth, with the program, good?
- Cris: Oo maganda rin sa akin.[Yes, it was good for me.]
- BDC: Bakit siya maganda?[Why was it good?]
- Cris: Dahil kasi una doon yong naipakita ko yong sarili ko kung ano ako noon. Dahil kasi yong sa tatlong part na nilabasan ko noon naranasan ko. [Because first of all, I was able to show what I was like back then. Because the three parts I played were from my experience.]
- BDC: Anong parte na yon?[Which part is that?]
- Cris: Kung paano yong pinidophilya. As in gumanap akong phidophile. Ako yong pinidophilya noon, ako yong naabuso. Tapos pangalawa doon yong role ko na ganon nga iyong malinis tapos naging marumi. Naranasan ko pa lalo na iyong pagtatrabaho, iyong parang...
  [What it's like to be a pedophile victim. I played that part. I was the victim, I was the one abused. Then the second is the role of someone clean who became dirty. I further experienced that working, the one like...]

- BDC: Prostitute?
- Cris: Parang Metro Aide.[Like a Metro Aide]
- BDC: Ah iyong Metro Aide.
- Cris: Oo [Yes]

BDC: Ah—ah yong Metro Aide, iyong paglilinis.[Ah—ah, the Metro Aide, the cleaning.]

- Cris: Naranasan ko yong magtrabaho din.[I experienced working, too]
- BDC: Sa kalye. Yong pangatlo? [On the street. And the third?]
- Cris: Yong pangatlo na naging role ko doon yun yong napasama ako. Yong sinama ako ng kaibigan ko na mag-ano sa club, trabaho. [The third role I played was when I turned bad. When went with my friend to work in the club.]
- BDC: Parang prostitute? [As a prostitute?]
- Cris: Yong dancer [The dancer]
- BDC: Ah---nag-dancer ka. [Ah—you were a dancer.]
- Cris: Naranasan ko talaga pero hindi naman as in na talagang sumayaw ako ng todo-todo na katulad nong ano ng ginawa ko doon sa ano sa Goldtooth. Yun, yong ano yong siguro ano lang 1 to 2 times lang na gumawa ako noon.
  [I really experienced that but not like the real dancing that I did in
  - Goldtooth. That one, maybe I just did once or twice.]
- BDC: Anong klaseng dancing ito? [What sort of dancing was that?]
- Cris: Yong mga ano macho dancer young dancer. [Macho dancing]
- BDC: Ah—Oo yong nakahubad ganoon [Ah—right, the kind where you're naked]
- Cris: Hindi may bikini. [No I wore a bikini]

Arman, too, feels that scenes were so real to him. Scene ko rin talaga 'yun

e, yun talaga ang ginagawa ko sa kalye...Yung nagra-rugby at saka yung beggar—yung namamalimos. Parang bumalik yung nakaraan. Pag-inaarte ko yun. [That was my life in that scene, that's what I did on the streets...Doing rugby and begging. It's as if I was reliving the past when I act onstage.] In an accurate portrayal of the issues that many of these children and youth participants once faced in the streets, the roles of the musical allows the participants to reflect upon their past.

Perhaps one of the most poignant characters of the play is the Poet. Reminiscent of a Grecian chorus, the Poet recites poetry that concludes every act of the musical and weaves the play from one act to another. Vhal, who played the Poet, recites the poems complete (as one columnist wrote) with his Bisaya accent. The accent did not diminish the poignancy of that particular moment of the play but rather imbued it with texture and depth. As Vhal recites:

#### Intact

My brain was intact But that was way back when I can't remember When it beginned It used to be not long ago But I've lost my sense of time My brain's turned to play-do So, you're guess is as good as mine.

It used to be that I think that I was But I can't remember because... Something's happened and I don't know what Thing's just seem so cluttered up

When I come down, life's big mess A lot of confusion and unpleasant violence But a long sniff of the glue in the bottle To fry up the mind, to be a throttle

I don't care cause anything's better than here What's a little brain lost, if you can be freer? To forget about problems, no cares about the world It's all worth the trip and the lasting The after effects of a deep fried brain May not be a pretty sight, But I'll do it again and again Til' I achieved what I think is glory and prescience Brain dead fully unconscious. That's my friend



The Poet

For Vhal this poetry represented something very real to his experience. Though put into words in a language that he does not fully speak, he describes the contradiction of drug use -- destroying the brain yet also giving a "high" that liberates and numbs pain. The damage that drugs do to the brain described in intense details in Vhal's thickly accented speech rendered a more realistic touch to Monica's (who wrote the musical) polished

language. Vhal's rendition of the poetry was also coming to terms with his social reality, his experience with drugs. In the streets, he has lived that life. Every line of the poetry a testimonial lament of one whose life was once destroyed by drugs. "Goldtooth" displayed the insidious world of drugs where Vhal and the other respondents lived once and where many of his peers who remain in the streets still inhabit. In an essay he wrote, Vhal describes his world in the streets vividly:

Ako si Vhal . . . isa sa mga batang may malawakang karanasan sa kalye . Halos araw-araw walang ginagawa kung hindi magdroga at pagkapatapos gumawa ng hindi kanais-nais na bagay, tulad ng gulo o illegal na bagay. Halos nalulong na ako sa bisyo kaya nasira na rin ang buhay ko. Dahil siguro sa kahirapan ng buhay kaya ako nagpunta sa kalye para hanapin ang mundo ko...Pero mali ako dahil magulo talaga. Ang buhay sa lansangan, may oras na nag-aaway, hulihin ng pulis na walang kadahilanan. Natutulog na walang tulugan, kumain sa hindi tamang oras at parang basura na kung tingnan. [I am Vhal, one of the children who have a full experience of the street. Almost daily, I do nothing but do drugs and do frowned-upon things, like fighting or illegal things. I was almost consumed by vice and so my life was ruined. Perhaps because of the harshness of living that I took to the streets to find my world...But I was wrong since it was really chaotic. Life on the streets, there are times when there are fights, the police arrests you for no reason, sleeping nowhere, never eating at the proper time and looking like trash.]

The roles enacted on stage were their lived experience. But even as they lived those roles, the stage demands a degree of refinement and polish. And like any process of creation, this will not be complete without the process of preparing for their role, rehearsing and the fusing together of the elements of production. In making the performance, the children and the youth became the co-creators with the director. Their input was valuable as they were the ones who lived and embodied the characters of the play in their lives. But still, in doing this project, there are certain requirements because in this new space the rules are different. The children and youth, thus, had to undergo intensive training in various areas of theater and production. This was part of the process. Every stage is a step towards achieving the goals of change and transformation. The process of making the performance was long and even painful for many of them.

### THE PERFORMANCE IN THE MAKING

"Love accepts you for all that you are; pity feels sorry for you and sees you for what you are not. Pity starts with what is missing. Love first asks what strength do we have to work with." Monica recites this poem to the performers before the show as they congregate in front of a mirror. Then they would be told to look at themselves and to remember their lives before the auditions and before coming to Stairway. And on that note, everyone embraces and takes his place on stage. The music starts and the lights go up onto a street scene of a group of boys lining up against a wall sniffing glue... the show had begun (Stairway Newsletter 1998).

It has been eight months since they arrived at Stairway, before they had this moment when finally, they are onstage performing for a huge crowd. They are in a different world, no longer in their own territory. For months, they underwent many activities that will prepare them for what the children considered as the 'biggest' performance of their lives. They had training which covered the basic aspects of theater arts such as speech training, dance and movement, stage make-up, props, costume, lights and stage design. Monica describes the nature of their activities:

Despite the strong focus in theatre, the daily program also consisted of other activities important to help nurture the inner spirit and develop well-rounded individuals. The activities included relaxation and auto-suggestion exercises, personality development, literacy and numeracy skills, health and hygiene, child rights, drug prevention, values formation, environmental awareness, current

events, sports and recreation. Meditation, self-reflection and affirmation, visualization and auto-suggestion is practiced on a daily basis in order to develop inner peace and harmony (*Stairway Newsletter 1998*).

The children who used to live without schedule, now have to follow a full schedule of activities and workshops for the development of their skills as actors in the play. Almost everyday they rehearsed, choreographed, developed their voices, participated in creative workshops, and learned theatre crafts. It became a ritual to begin the day with a personal affirmation as Monica explains further,

The process of developing the musical started by rising up early in the morning and gathering on the beach to meditate, to stretch the limbs and to shout out "I am so beautiful" "You are so beautiful" "I love you" and "I love me" in unison, and then to embrace one another. Facing the newly risen sun, the children ended the morning salutations by reciting the poem "Sikat ng Araw" (Rays of the Sun). They developed their inner spirit and learned to relax and breathe, to believe in themselves, to love and respect one another and to see the world with new eyes (Interview with Monica Jorgensen July 22, 1999).

This was done everyday. Their lives were filled with activities all contributing towards their development. Included in these activities are personality development programs, counseling and bonding sessions, and the arts and crafts workshops which along with the rehearsals helped create a foundation from which it was hoped the children would develop discipline, perseverance, responsibility and cooperation. As one child describes his experience:

Para sa akin mahirap siya dahil biro mo pitong buwan yata naming pinagpraktisan ah. Masaya na mahirap diba? Halos araw-araw puro practice kami: sayaw ng sayaw, kanta ng kanta. Tapos kailangan ka gumawa ng mga activities mo, unang-una kinatamaran ko yun. Ayaw ko gawin yun, laging akong nasa labas ng beach. Parang tamad akong gawin yun. Nung tumagal, parang na-realize ko na para sa akin yung ginagawa ko. [To me, it was difficult since—imagine that—we were rehearsing it for seven months. Happy and tough, right? Almost everyday, all we did was practice: we danced and danced, kept singing and singing. Then you had to develop your own activities, I was too lazy to do that. I didn't want to do that, I was always out at the beach. It was like I didn't feel energized to do that. Later on, I realized that what I was doing was for myself.]

The work on the theater project came in three stages: the preparatory phase which involves workshops and the rehearsals and other activities, then the performance(s) or showing, and finally the disengagement or closure of the project.

### Stage 1: The Preparatory Phase

**The Workshop(s).** Soliman Cruz, a theater practitioner with an extensive experience in theater and working with children conducted the first theater workshop for the freshly recruited street children. This was about a month after the children first arrived at Stairway. The intention of the workshop was to give the children an initial exposure to theater and its required skills. Back in the streets, some of them 'performed' – they were performers. Some of the boys had

experience as a macho dancer. Mark, Nicky and Jao were members of a gang of dancers. But the demands of the site where they used to perform were different. In this new space the rules are different and another dimension of performance would be expected. Mark describes, for instance, that the rules were strict: *Oo. Yung unang nagturo sa amin si Kuya Sol? Striktuhan talaga siya sa amin. Yung pala sa theater, ginagalang ka, parang hindi kayo magkakilala. Wala kang kakilala doon* [Yes. The one who taught us—Kuya Sol? He was really strict with us. Apparently in the theater, you're respected, it's like you don't know each other. You don't know anybody there]. Perhaps, what Mark meant was that the work demands discipline and taking on personal responsibility. The initial workshop was to get a 'taste' of things for once they started with the rehearsals, there would be expectations—scheduled working hours, exercises on focusing and concentration.

The first day of the workshop was spent listening to their stories. Questions like why did they go to the street? What were the circumstances of their going to the streets? What were their experiences in the streets, in their homes and with their families were posed to allow the participants to share something about themselves. The stories were shared in brief but this activity was not so much as to relive the images of their previous life, rather it was for the group to get to know each other. These stories later on would become the themes in their showcase. The initial process was likened to group dynamics with concentration on self-expression. As Ate Amy explains: *Puro sharing of* 

experiences kasi [ang mga bata] puro pagtingin sa buhay ay pangit, ibig sabihin lahat ng negative experiences nila parang wala silang makukuhang maganda. [It was all about sharing experiences since the kids saw life as entirely horrible, which means that they weren't gaining anything good out of their negative experiences.]

The workshop progressed to different exercises which would build trust, respect and cooperation. This was not easy for the youth and children. One of the most difficult parts of being in the streets, as admitted by many of the children respondents, is that they did not learn to trust anyone. Life on the street taught them not to trust easily. *Sa lansangan hindi ka magtitiwala ng basta-basta*, [On the street, you don't trust people easily] one of the respondents would say. The workshop tried, but not without difficulty, to create an atmosphere of trust and respect and to forge a sense of unity and purpose among the children. Other exercises in the workshop would cover basics of body movement and acting. It also encouraged the idea of working together as group.

The workshop culminated with the mounting of a showcase. For many of them, this was the first of the many other moments of triumph on stage. Finally, they had the chance to perform to an audience compose of staff and guests of the center – people who truly recognized and appreciated their talent. In the showcase, the children demonstrated their abilities in dancing and acting in the short, dramatic and creative movement pieces.

There were other workshops. Ysagani Ibarra, was the first music trainer and voice coach. Music and singing are major elements in the production --"Goldtooth" being a musical play. Of the children, only Susan and Rodeline had previous training in voice and music.<sup>3</sup> In Stairway, Ysagani trained the children's voices during the first months of the production. There were other activities that trained them to feel not only the notes but also the beat and rhythm of the music.<sup>4</sup> They had training in dance and body movement to prepare their bodies for the choreographic requirements of the musical. And as they got deeper into the production, the children reached other levels in their development, wherein, they were ready to explore areas hidden deep within themselves. As Monica says:

We could employ exercises and activities that dealt with deep emotions and traumatic experiences. After the activities the children were encouraged to utilize their experiences onstage to recreate and create their own world. Dance movements, blocking, lines, costumes, make-up and set designs were inspired from their experiences. This stage of development revealed the genuineness of the play. The children had transcended their stage characters. They became them (*Stairway Newsletter 1998*).

The entire preparatory phase took many months of work and included not only the basics of acting and movement and music but even things that are basic as cleanliness and personal hygiene. It was also aimed to change the way the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Susan and Rodeline were members of the choir in Kaibigan Foundation. Susan in fact nearly made it to *Ms. Saigon.* She passed the audition but was too young to join the production.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> This information was taken from a video that documented the children's first months in Stairway.

children look at the traumatic or bad experiences in the past. Ate Amy further describes the preparatory activities:

Ibig sabihin yung first months namin puro self-expression, puro pag-change ng tingin nila, ng concept nila, bago sila pumunta sa stage. Mahirap ipapa-act mo sila, tapos hindi pa naman nila kaya pa kahit sa pag-aalaga ng sarili...mangamoy 'yon, diba? Ang dami mo pang dapat baguhin bago umakyat sa stage. [This means that in the first months, it was all about self-expression, all about changing their outlook, their concept, before they went onstage. It's hard to make them act when they are not yet ready, even in taking care of themselves...they would 'smell,' wouldn't they? There are many things you have to change before going onstage.]

And as their voice and body were prepared for life on and offstage, they reached the next step of the preparation which is the rehearsals.

**Rehearsals.** The rehearsal process was never forced among the children. Monica as a director of the play describes her style:

The idea is that I was already there. And whoever would join me will just come. And then one kid will come and then another. Before you knew it, all of them are already there. It was interesting because it is not like 'Okey it's time for rehearsals'. That's not it at all. They were not forced (Interview with Monica July 22, 1999).

Many months were spent for rehearsals before the musical could take shape.

Some of the children would complain of the tedious work required of them.

Mahirap lang doon sa Goldtooth iyong mga parang mga practice lang—parang hindi ko lang alam, pag practice lang kasi, at saka iyong mga schedule, hindi mo

mababantayan kailangan mong magpractice. Nakakatamad na, lagi na lang akong nagpa-practice. Magagaling naman kami, naiisip ko...Laging paulit-ulit parang nakakaasar yong paulit-ulit, ganoon. [The hard part of Goldtooth was the rehearsals---I don't know, when you're just practicing, and those schedules, you can't monitor the progress, you have to practice. It was drudgery, all I did was rehearse. To my mind, we were good anyway....We kept going through the routines, the repetitions were annoying.]

There were complaints, and they are allowed to complain; they were free to express themselves. *Sa Stairway ina-allow kaming magsalita*.[ At Stairway, we were allowed to speak up]. Not used as they were to observing schedules, they sometimes grumbled and get resentful. In the streets they ate, worked and

### A Rehearsal Episode

It was July 23, 1999, the second day of my entry into the site and into the lives of the children. This is the usual afternoon rehearsal. They have a regular routine now. These will be a few weeks before they will leave for Europe. Mark complained about the tempo of the songs, they felt it was too fast. The new volunteer Merlin, a musical therapist had been working with them the past months and had worked 'wonders' with their voices. But then Mark mumbled. Monica admonished him to speak out and told them that they have to openly voice their opinion. In Stairway, they are always encouraged to speak out, as I observed. The children complained in chorus, *'Pabalik-balik na ng ilang beses'*. [We're just repeating things many times] The opening song has been rehearsed many times. Monica asked, 'Why do you think the song has to be repeated again and again?" One boy mimicked what Monica said in a mocking manner. I felt they were bored. Monica asked, 'who wants to do it again?' Who does not want to do it again? The she said let us relax a little bit. Merlin, the musical therapist spoke out: 'We have been working for 2 years and you are all getting tired. I know that you rehearsed many times. But the musical you did before was old. You are 'new' people. To become really good you have to do it a hundred times. Every time I play a chord, I do it differently. I will challenge you as well if you cannot practice 10 more times...then iter's pack up and go. Ten more times with a smile'. Merlin posed a challenge to the youngsters.

They did it literally. The children were smiling as they repeated and repeated 10 times . I saw the intense concentration of the group. They became more focused and energetic. By the fourth time the nuance of the role came out where before they seem to be doing it mechanically.

played anytime as they pleased. No schedules governed their lives. Sa lansangan ang buhay namin kain, tulog, magdelihensya. [On the streets, our life

was eat, sleep, eke out a living] And now in Stairway, as they struggled with shaping the play so did they struggle with re-shaping their lives in a new environment with new rules. And as said earlier, some of them would opt to go back to the streets. No one was forced to remain if he or she did not want to be a part of the play anymore. They were free to go anytime. That was the instruction. They only needed to ask permission.

The Disclosure. The children and youth who worked on playing the roles about themselves and their struggles on the streets would have to face time and time again the painful memories regenerated from the deeper recesses of their memory and consciousness. Monica observed, for instance, that there came a point in the

#### A Rehearsal Episode (continued)

On the fifth time one of the children already shouted "No. 5!" in anticipation of Monica's call. The energy level was still high but the details of the character were not that sharp anymore. By the sixth repetition, Monica shouted: Performance level! The stage was charged with the children's energy. Indeed, a performance level. Repeat No.7! No 8! This time the banging of the sets from backstage can be heard. Nagdadabog na. [Tantrums], I thought. There were grumblings at the backstage. But by the time they went out for the scene they were smiling...No.9 ! and then 91/2 ! Mark complained "Wala na ang boses naming...o, sige na, para matapos na rin." [Our voices are gone....fine!...just to get it over with] But then they failed to deliver-- they missed the cue. They all shouted in chorus "Repeat!' Monica called out No.10! The sets from the backstage echoed loudly with their banging. But they went out to play the scene just the same...singing: Batang Maynila, anong ginawa sa'yo?. Batang Maynila sana ang tungo mo?[Child of Manila, what was done to you? Child of Manila, where are you going to?]

rehearsals when the children began to disclose a bit about their life in the streets. "On the stage while rehearsing they just talk to you they would open up." The rehearsals became the site for disclosure as time and again in the moments of a scene they were confronted with their pasts. In the safe environment of the



Earlier rehearsals of "Goldtooth" in 1998



Rehearsals of "Goldtooth" in 1999

dramatic world, the children and youth felt comfortable to express even the most painful experiences. They had to begin to deal with very personal issues such as physical and sexual abuse, addiction, deprivation and prostitution.

But while struggling to be actors in the story that recounted the lives they left behind, they too, had to struggle with their behavior, as changes were forthcoming. This was the objective of the whole project. However, the trouble with drugs taking did not go away quickly. There were some incidents when some of the children were caught sniffing solvents again. There were also occasions where some of the children and youth were caught stealing. These maladaptive behaviors learned in the streets were not quickly shaved away. But these were dealt with accordingly. The work was slow but everyday was a step towards the goal of achieving change and transformation.

As they rehearsed for the play, they also practiced for the life they would be expected to live once they leave the center. This rehearsal for the play is also a rehearsal for life as they are taught skills and discipline that will enable them to cope with society's demands and expectations once they will be reintegrated to their families and to the society. 'Clean and responsible lifestyle and no drugs', these are the expectations. This conversation with the social worker, Ate Amy, reflects the expectations and challenges of the center:

Amy: At first the child was very lazy, very disrespectful, in a way that he will always answer back. Physically, he was so dirty. He did not brush his teeth, he did not take a bath. He smelled really bad. What I did was, I had to pour water just to let him take a bath. And I had to force him to brush his teeth by telling him, he cannot watch the movie tonight if he not will brush his teeth. Then, slowly and slowly, like everyday you have to remind him, "You have to brush your

teeth, it really smells bad." Then, slowly and slowly, he brushed his teeth. Then, when he started to like girls, he learned to make himself "pogi." Also, he complained a lot. He does not like it when you ask him to do something, he will always complain. If he is asked to wash the plates, he will make noise: "blah blah blah blah."

BDC: That means, he does not want to work...Hindi kusang loob.a yung pagta-trabaho.

Amy: Yes, it's always like that. I think for more than a year.

BDC: Very resistant sa pagtrabaho.

Amy: Yeah. Especially, that work for these children, I think, is equated with punishment. It's like every time you make a mistake, the punishment is work. So, for them, work is punishment.

BDC: Where is this happening, in his home or in the street? Amy: Within the home. They don't really have a home because the father lives in the street. Like what I said, the father is a scavenger so, he has to go with him. Like, he cannot eat without helping [his father]. He is forced to work to survive.

#### BDC: So punishment ang work?

Amy: Yeah, so they seem to have that attitude when they arrive in Stairway. Then, you have to change it to let them realize the value of work. So, as a social worker, I have to show them that work is good; you don't have to feel bad doing something. So, I always work with them, I always show them the initiative. I say, "come on let's clean" and we just sing and dance doing it. So, slowly and slowly, they learn to like it -- clean their bodies and their surroundings, which is very good.

The rehearsals continued at the same time that additional workshops were held on other aspects of the production. Other collaborating artists came to help with the conduct of training in stage design, props making and even preparing and making of their own costumes.

On December 30, 1997, the first run-through was held with invited guests,

friends and people around the community as audience. Though this run-through covered only Acts I and II the experience proved to be a shining moment for the children. They had for the first time witnessed the completion of the many months of work. Finally, they saw and felt the musical not as fragments of scenes but as a whole production. Like their once broken lives, it had slowly been rebuilt and put together towards wholeness.

**Exploring the Depths through Psychodrama.** After the first run-through, the director felt that there was a need to go deeper. The acting was still 'raw' and at the surface level. Monica felt that they have to transcend the initial fears of confronting their past to become 'more real'. It is expected that the children would reach other levels in their development. They were ready to explore areas hidden deep within themselves. At this time, Monica and the staff of Stairway felt that they could employ exercises and activities that dealt with deep emotions and traumatic experiences. They employed techniques in drama therapy such as psychodrama. The social worker's report describes the exercise:

In January 1998, after the first run-through, the director realized that the performance of the children lacked energy and commitment. She decided to use the techniques of drama therapy, wherein the children had to draw out their painful or traumatic experiences and reenact them. This proved to be potent tool for bringing out their anger and guilt of whatever feeling they have bottled up inside themselves. For the first day, they were asked to act it out and on the second day they were asked to confront the people who had hurt or abused them. The activity gave a lot of significant information about each child's level of disturbance much of which did not come out during their interviews or counseling sessions. It also helped the social worker in the intervention process. And also, during the first year of the musical, we had this psychodrama because these kids, they have a lot of pains. The psychodrama is like a therapy in social work and psychology whereby you will give a situation to the child but the situation is

their own experience. Like, "try to recall an experience where you're still young, that somebody beat you" or you encounter a person with whom you are very angry. So, they will have to act that in stage, like it's happening to them at that time. This was conducted by Ate Monica with me and Ate Maricel. So, they did that. Really, it was very good because it was a way of releasing the pent-up emotions. All those (bad), negative experiences they had. So, they cried and then I know, from the psychodrama that "wow this child has gone through much." They were really crying. They were cursing. And then, after that, we ask them to confront their past, "what if you are given the chance to confront the person who maltreated you or abused you? What are you going to say?" And they did it. I think, for me, that activity helped them to release some of their negative emotions, which is very helpful. And then they realized that these people cannot hurt them anymore.

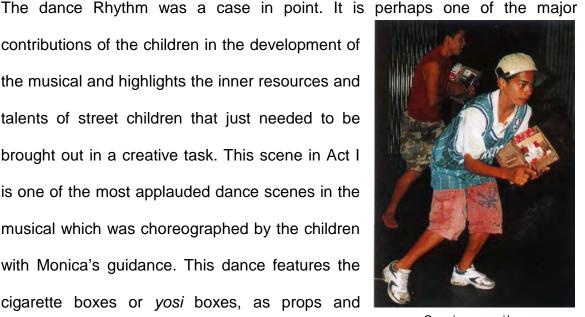
The activities like workshops, psychodrama and rehearsals have ingrained in the children the discipline and focus required of theater. It is expected that these will contribute to the healing of the children. This phase of the project constitutes an ongoing process of their 'healing' and transformation at two levels (See Dr. Edwin Decenteceo's descriptions of the levels in Chapter 2). The first level is the act of sharing which allows the children to vent their emotions and to realize the commonality of their experience. And at the second level, theater as a discipline lends some structure to their lives with the rehearsals and schedules that they have to follow.

But the development of the production was plagued with the unpredictability of the children. Barely a month after the original 17 or so freshly recruited children and youth arrived at Stairway, and even before they could start the rehearsals, two of the children left without permission. In the duration of the production work some would leave and be replaced by new arrivals. But this was something 'normal' and expected. Children leaving and coming were part of the realities of childcare work. This could happen in any childcare center. Some of the children eventually realized that theater was not for them. Stairway allowed them to decide for themselves whether to stay or go. A few decided to go back to the streets. For those who stayed, the journey towards change carried on. Against the backdrop of the leaving and coming of the children the work continued as part of the whole rehabilitation process. As preparation intensified for the performance in Manila the changes in casting continued for by the end of March, "Goldtooth" lost again two of its cast members. But others came and replaced them like Angelito. He recalls that moment when arrived at Stairway:

Una, pagdating ko doon, medyo, boring, tapos 'yon nakilala ko sila. Tapos pinapanood ko sila pag nagpa-praktis sila. Medyo ilang pa nga ako na sumama. Ang mga ginagawa sila doon minsan nakakatawa...Malapit na noon yong palabas sa Maynila. Mga three weeks na lang yata. Ayon napasali na rin ako. Nagustuhan ko na. [At first, when I got there, it was kinda boring, then I met them. Then I watched them as they rehearsed. I felt a little awkward to be joining them. Sometimes what they did there was funny...The opening date for Manila was nearing then. It was just a matter of three weeks, I think. I ended up joining them too. I developed a liking to it.]

**Creating Theater Together.** Central to the development of the musical are the cultural and artistic elements introduced by the youngsters, as a result of their growing pride in themselves and personal awareness of their talent and abilities.

contributions of the children in the development of the musical and highlights the inner resources and talents of street children that just needed to be brought out in a creative task. This scene in Act I is one of the most applauded dance scenes in the musical which was choreographed by the children with Monica's guidance. This dance features the cigarette boxes or yosi boxes, as props and rhythmic instruments that go with the music as they are tapped and banged on. This is a very



Carrying a yosi box in the Cigarette Dance scene in "Goldtooth"

common piece of 'prop' in the everyday life of street children (and street adults) most of whom are eking out a living on the streets by selling cigarettes and candies. The rhythmic tapping and clicking of the yosi boxes, manifested the culture of the street vendors who clicked and tapped as they call on customers to buy their cigarettes or candies. It also manifested the artistic expression of youngsters featuring an object common in their real lives. As Monica says, "They love to dance like Michael Jackson". But perhaps, it does not even have to take a Michael Jackson to inspire them to dance. They love dancing. Some of them like Jao, Mark and Nicky belonged to a gang of dancers while in the streets.

The production of "Goldtooth" was a collaborative creation coming not just from the director's idea for Monica never experienced life in the street. The children lived it. As director tasked to map out and block every scene of the play she sought the children and youth participants' knowledge of how it was to live life on the streets and how they react in certain situations. Ate Amy the social worker, a witness to the process of production observes:

"Goldtooth" was created not just from the director's idea. It also came from the children. The director doesn't know the life of a street child. She does not know because she's an American. But she was asking, 'How do you react if a situation like this in the street happens: if there's a gang war, if a pimp will come to you, how are you going to react?' So, it's like that. So, they [the children] share. And then Monica says, 'Okay, do that'.

In effect the children were directing themselves and Monica served as guide. In fact, one thing that children were very proud of was that they felt that that they really had some ownership of the production as co-creators of the play. This is especially true with Jao who was designated as an assistant director to Monica. He relates:

[G]usto kong susubukan and then nag-request ako na bigyan nila ako ng trabaho na hindi ako mawoworied talaga. So ginawa akong, ano, assistant ni Ate Monica. Kung anong gagawin kunyari...Kung baga yong paano mag-arte ang isang 'yong kunyari like si Mario. Gusto ni Ate na gagawin ay ganito. Ang gagawin ni Mario ay ako munang gagawa para gagawin in Mario. Bale ako yong stunt man n'ya. [I

wanted to try it and then I asked to be given a job where I wouldn't be too worried, which was when they made me Ate Monica's assistant. Whatever is to be done, for instance, how to act, like, for example, Mario. Ate wants it to be done a certain way. What Mario would do, I will do first so that Mario could do it. I was the stunt man.]

Jao felt good about the theater experience. The children's contribution went beyond just acting out the different roles but in the making of the production, as well. Many of their ideas were integrated into the production.

A case in point is the "Batang Maynila" scene where the children made a major contribution. In effect, the direction of the scene was guided by the children's knowledge of life in the streets. This opening scene of the musical, "Batang Maynila" depicts a typical market place where many street children usually congregate. An American, Monica recognized her limited knowledge and exposure to a typical market scene in the Philippines. She sought the children's advice on how to block the scene. Again Ate Amy relates what she observed in the process of directing that particular scene:

[In] "Batang Maynila", the scene is in the market. Of course, Ate Monica, she knows that it's very noisy but she doesn't know how it really is. . . .Yeah, the materials that they are going to use. Like, are they going to use a cariton? She knows about the materials or the props of a janitor but what is *tambo*? Yeah, I think "Batang Maynila" because it is a big scene. There's a janitor, everybody's there: janitor, vendor, cigarette vendor, drug addicts. This is the opening scene, yeah. Yes, yes. She will ask, "What is more in the street?" Oo. [Kung] sino yung mga tao? Anong ginagawa? [Who are the people? What are they doing?]

The lived experience on the streets now enacted on stage became an important element that contributed in creating the 'realness' of the scene.

One of the serious concerns for scholars who study theater for development purposes is the concern for feelings of ownership by the children participants in the process, or in popular theater terms as owning the means of production. The methodology and form of theater of the "Goldtooth" project was to a certain extent an imposition of the agency -- the center of power -- as some form of treatment for the children participants' rehabilitation and recovery. But in making the production, the inclusion of the children and youth in the process allowed them to participate in their own development and to a degree could claim to have some ownership in the project. They became informative partners in the project as their voices were heard as the real source of knowledge on the life in the streets. While the musical was indeed planned out for them, yet, during the process of rehearsals and the making of the production, the children contributed in the development of the play itself. The children and youth were not mere actors but in a sense were also co-directors of the play. In effect, Monica as the director became the facilitator in the theater process and with the children's active participation, they were able to name their pain, identify their inner conflicts and reflect on their lives towards transformation and change.

**Transformed and Transforming.** The musical was not only transforming lives but was also transformed in the process of rehearsal and performance. Monica's adaptation of the animated video (See Appendix A-3 for the original script of the

animated video) into a musical did not deviate much from the cartoon video. The earlier version of the musical thus had the same characters as the cartoon video. But the musical was transformed in the process of making it true to the children's experiences (See Appendix A-1 for the script of the musical). Whereas the original script has Karate working in a bakeshop, this time, Nina and Karate were made to sell *sampaguitas* in the musical play, in order to depict the common experience of street children further, the major adult characters of the play, and highlight the roles of the children further, the major adult characters of the play, Mr. and Mrs. Baker were taken out. Nina was given a larger role and in her, the responsibility of saving her sister Karate. In effect the musical version now placed the burden of transformation not on adults but on the children themselves. This is significant because this change may also be indicative of the center's desire for the children to play a larger role in their own development.

As the play adapted to the changes in casting and the changes in the lives of the children, some of the characters in the musical were removed. One of the major changes was in casting. After the first major performance, Sherwin, the boy who played Karate decided to leave Stairway. He did not want to play Karate



Sherwin, the boy who first played the role of Karate in a scene with Ysagani Ibarra

anymore because he wanted to go back home to his family in the province. To Monica, getting a replacement for Sherwin seemed like a series of experiments of finding someone with a natural fit to the character. After a series of different Karates, a new Karate was found in Rodeline. From that of a young boy now transformed into a tomboyish girl, Karate is recreated in Rodeline. Gifted with a powerful voice and powerful stage presence, Rodeline was a good choice for the role of Karate. She could (and did) carry the performance through. Rodeline considered it her pride and joy to be able to play the lead role. *Tuwang-tuwa ako, biro mo ako yong magplay ng Karate*. [I was overjoyed, imagine that, I was gonna play Karate], From being a member of the chorus and dancer she was now going to play one of the two lead roles for children in the play. For Rodeline, it was an achievement and an acknowledgement of her talent that also signified the transformation in her own life from the street to the stage.



Rodeline, the "new" Karate

Furthermore, the transformation of the play through its production and performance was symbolic of the very transformation expected and happening in the lives of the other children participants. Conveying a clear message that they 'could make it if they try,' the children in the dramatic moment took control of their lives. So when in the play, they confronted Goldtooth as 'bad man'; and as Goldtooth turned into a cockroach which the children collectively exterminated, it signified the empowerment of the children. They realized that they could destroy this man who destroyed their lives. Through the transformative power of theater, they can now confront all the evils that once led them to destruction; and that in the end they would triumph. The play ends in a hopeful note as the children sing "Can you feel a Brand New Day".

Can you feel a brand new day When things start to look your way

Can you feel brand new day Tomorrow seems brighter Your feelings are much lighter It's good to feel free...



The kids singing "Brand New Day"

#### Stage 2: The Performance(s)

In Makati. The culmination of any theater work is the moment of performance. On April 26,1998, "Goldtooth", was finally staged for the first time in Metro Manila at the Francisco Santiago Hall, PCI Bank in Makati. There were two shows in Makati, one for the children and youth from Stairway's partner organizations. The second show was for the invited guests from government embassies, NGOs, corporations and the media. Monica recalling that moment of performance of the children says:

The children performed like they had never performed before. They were able to captivate the audience into their special world, displaying quality, intensity and professionalism in their presentation. It was magic. (*Stairway Newsletter 1998*)

Indeed, it can be considered a no mean feat for these children who used to roam the streets, ignored and detested by most of the public to become the objects of adulation and admiration from the audience. The media including the major television networks and newspapers covered the event. For the children and youth, this was the moment they finally felt they had achieved something in life. *Biro mo dati lang kaming street children tapos ngayon pinapanood na nila, pinalakpakan* [Imagine that, we were just street children and now they watched and applaud us]. Angelito's remarks displayed the growing pride in the children and the awareness of their capabilities. The first public performance in the center of commerce and economic dominance of the country was a testing ground for the children and youth and marked their coming out into a privileged space where once they were excluded. The street children and youth in the moment of performance created a new reality for themselves and displayed to the audience their newfound pride and courage.



Performance at PCIBank in 1998

**Back to Stairway**. After the performance in PCI Bank Auditorium, the children went back to Stairway. But the center had no definite schedule for the next performances. Part of the plan was to bring the show abroad for an international tour but the process of making contacts and networking with organizations was long and tedious. Meanwhile, the children would have to continue with their other activities in the center while waiting for the potential sponsors to respond to their plans. This was also the time that the script underwent some transformation (discussed earlier in this chapter) which is "to further develop and polish it in order to provide an entertaining and thought provoking show" (*Stairway Newsletter* 1998). This was also a period of flux --

uncertainties brought about by forces beyond the center's control. Ten of the original cast members decided to leave for various reasons. As mentioned earlier, one of them was Sherwin who played the major role of Karate. He wanted to go home to the province to help his blind father to farm. Some other children were reunited with their families while others absconded. Joser, one of the original cast members left without permission. The center was later informed that Joser went home to his family.<sup>5</sup> There were other children who went back to the streets while some children were referred to other agencies. For instance, one child, Daniel decided to continue his education and was placed in Kaibigan while Renato who was more interested in learning carpentry rather than theater, was transferred to another childcare center. Thirteen children stayed in the center and this meant, too, that they would need more children for the different roles in the musical. They had to 'recruit' additional cast members. Eventually other children would come.

Between July to September 1998, the children embarked on a new phase of their life. The theater project was on its hiatus, a temporary pause of activity as the center consolidated its network locally and internationally. Instead of rehearsals, the children were now trained as peer educators. They attended seminars and discussion groups as well as participated in outreach work. A resource person from Street Kids International, Canada, the organization that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Joser's family lives in the street. In one of my street immersion and exposure activity with Ate Amy the social worker, we met Joser sitting on the concrete benches at Roxas Blvd. together with other street families. This was over a year since he left Stairway.

created the original animated video material of "Goldtooth", visited Stairway and conducted a workshop. This was a significant event because the workshop focused on using "Goldtooth" as a tool for awareness and rehabilitation. This work made them understand the importance of the musical and how to use it efficiently to reach out to other street children. There will be other workshops that provide the children not only with specific skills but also knowledge of various issues affecting their lives such as children's rights, reproductive health, and commercial exploitation of children.

It was this time that two youths who were referred by two childcare organizations arrived in Stairway. This included Cris who came to Stairway to recuperate from paralysis due to effects of a drug overdose. The opportunity opened up for him to be part of the musical because new cast members were needed. *Nangangailangan sila ng cast, sumali na rin ako*. [They needed cast-members, I joined in]. With the arrival of new cast members, the director reworked on the casting as the script of the musical also underwent major changes. During this period some of the children did experience some discouragement. They were not sure whether the musical would continue as the lull in the theater activities seemed long. They missed the rehearsals that filled their daily schedule in the center. The daily creative activities were crucial to the children and youth's development because they gave them a sense of purpose. It also provided stimulation to facilitate learning and enhancing their talents and skills.



The children and youth attending workshops as part of their activities in Stairway

The resumption of rehearsals by the following year brought back the excitement of the children. After months of networking and consolidation Stairway was finally able to secure commitments from sponsors for the performances in Manila and abroad. The children and youth once again needed to prepare their voice and bodies for the demands of the musical that would be shown not only in Manila but in other countries as well.

The year 1999 proved to be the most exciting and fruitful year for the children and youth. After a few months of hiatus and then return to rehearsals, they went back onstage.

**Back to the Stage in Manila.** On March 7, 1999 "Goldtooth" was brought back to Metro Manila and performed at GSIS Theater. As part of the advocacy program of Stairway the musical was aimed to expose to different audiences the plight of underprivileged children and get to mobilize public support in their behalf. It demonstrated theater's potential power to change lives to an audience compose of government officials, heads and directors of agencies and policy makers at the same time that it dramatized the need to make changes in the social and economic structures that caused much of the children and youth's oppression. One of the shows was for the street children who came from different childcare centers who were invited to witness their peers perform in a musical. To this audience, the play represented the life they were all too familiar with.

On April 30, 1999, 'Goldtooth" was invited to perform for the delegates of a convention sponsored by the Asian Development Bank delegates at EDSA

Shangri-la. This performance was an opportunity for the center to bring to the attention of the national government and to members of the wealthy organizations such as ADB about the street children problem in the country and the work being done for them.

After the ADB performance, "Goldtooth" lost again two of the cast members. One of the girls was referred to PREDA, a foundation that specializes in helping sexually abused girls. Stairway realized that the girl needed more help than what the center could offer. There are other programs that can help her other than the theater project. Another girl wanted to continue her education. Three more youths came to Stairway and replaced those who left: Dave, David and Ely came to join the production.

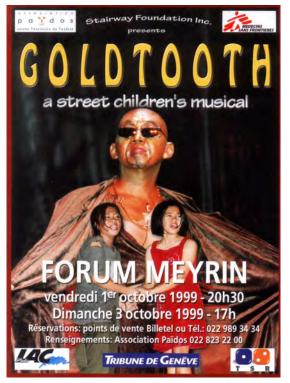
There was rejoicing when the cast of "Goldtooth" was invited to perform in the World Forum of Child's Welfare in Finland and also in the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention of the Rights of the Child in Geneva, Switzerland. The children had to continue with their preparation. In July 1999 Merlin Julie, a music teacher/therapist arrived in Stairway as a volunteer. He gave further vocal training to the children. Rehearsals, music and dance practice continued regularly filling the children's lives with activities.

This stage of the production brought anxieties but also a sense of anticipation and excitement as the children and youth prepared to face an international audience.



Program covers of "Goldtooth" Top: Peacock Theater at Linnemaki at Helsinki, Finland Bottom: Denmark performances

Performance in Other Countries. On August 24, 1999 Stairway flew to Copenhagen, Denmark. A total of thirty people formed the group, which includes the children, the staff, volunteers and the band members. A three-day CD recording of the songs in the musical was done in Denmark from August 25-27, 1999. On August 28, 1999 the troupe flew to Helsinki, Finland to perform for the delegates in the World Forum on Children's Rights and Welfare. Two performances shown in Finland's were Peacock Theatre at Linnemaki, an amusement park in the heart of Helsinki. An excerpt of the play was performed at the Finland's State Department through an invitation by the Prime Minister of Finland. From Finland, the "Goldtooth" cast with the Stairway staff flew back to Denmark on September 6, 1999 for the performance tour of the country. The musical was shown in five different places in Denmark. A total of sixteen performances were done in Denmark -- four performances in Tivoli in Copenhagen, four in Vejle, two in Viborg, and three in Aarhus and Aalborg.



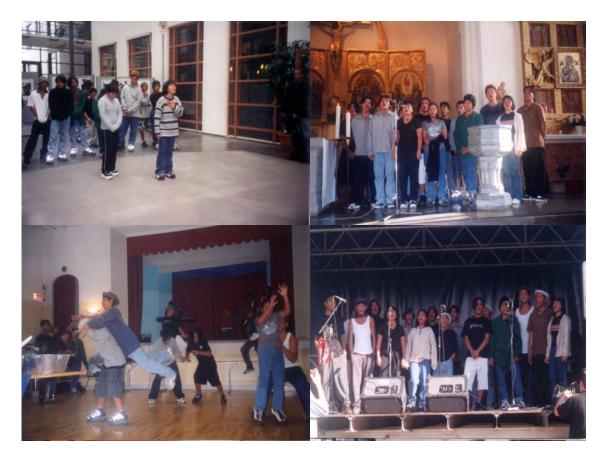
Poster of "Goldtooth" announcing performance at Forum Meyrin, Geneva, Switzerland On September 28, 1999 the cast and staff flew to Geneva, Switzerland for another series of performances. This particular leg of the tour was a milestone for the children who was able to perform at the United Nation Palais for the delegates of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention of the Rights of the Child. There were also five performances at Theatre Meyrin in Geneva, Switzerland.

An estimated twelve thousand people were able to watch the musical in

these three countries. For many of the children and youth respondents, the trip to Europe was something that they could have not imagined would ever happen to them. *Di tulad namin na pagala-gala lang, sino bang mage-expect ng ganoon. Ngayon naniniwala na ako na pwede pala makarating sa ganoong sitwasyon...Pwedeng mangyari. Walang imposible pala* [We were just loitering in the streets, who would ever expect (that we can go abroad)? Now, I believe that we can achieve that situation. It can happen. Nothing is impossible]. On October 11, 1999, the group returned to the Philippines after a triumphant European tour. Newspaper accounts would hail the European tour as a success. But this return marked also the end of the "Goldtooth" project.



"Goldtooth" European Tour: Denmark, Finland and Switzerland



The kids performing in other sites: From Top: Finland's State Department; Second: Church in Copenhagen; Third: Performance with Filipino Community in Copenhagen; Fourth: Sunday Fair in Copenhagen

#### Stage 3: The Disengagement

In dramatherapy, this has a specific meaning. This means moving out of the client from direct involvement with the dramatic material (Jones, 1988). I appropriate this term to describe the stage of closure or termination of the project. It was a forced disengagement as there was a bigger vision of bringing it to South America and perhaps other places. There was also a plan to have more performances for street children audience in Manila and other parts of the country. But by the time the children returned to the Philippines, many of them left to go back to their families. Some others wanted to work.

Also the project was due for termination from its sponsors. Projects are temporary which depends on the availability of funds and sponsor. The project was planned for two years but it has gone even longer than expected. It was time for the children and youth to decide what they want for their future. Another level of decision has to be made not to play on stage but to play in the larger arena of life.

Yet, it was a painful decision for Monica and Lars to discontinue the "Goldtooth" project. But certain circumstances precipitated the decision that the theater project had to close. They were afraid that the project would be compromised once they concentrate more on promoting the product rather than on the process. There were already conflicting 'messages' coming from other adults who were part of the production. They cannot risk jeopardizing the work

and the gains of more than two years of work. The project had to be terminated. In a candid assessment of the experience Lars discloses:

The weakness comes in when you have people in the group from the time that you commit yourself to those people that you would depend upon to do great things such as going on a tour to Europe...by giving your word that you would be able to present something of high quality and you can rely on us. So you commit yourself, you commit yourself in behalf of everybody. Of course, this is after consulting with everybody, if everybody's interested in the process you're working on but if you have people in the group that are less committed maybe, and start their own personal agendas within the teamwork...lt's very hard to exclude people like a week before you're going to leave for Europe, for example. It's very hard -- you can easily be taken a little bit hostage into that --because you have given your word. You will have to compromise a little bit there and then you'll have to finish what you're doing, reevaluate what you did, you put it up on the scale and weigh was it worth it or was is not worth it. And I certainly say it was worth it and the problems we had were minor. But it doesn't mean that I will do the same thing and do accept the same problems. Now, I have seen what happened, and in the next process, if they do it again, I should have learned or I should learn from the first experience so we could avoid the same problems again, right? (Interview on February 1, 2000 at Stairway in Puerto Galera).

The more than two years of work in the Goldtooth" project starting from the 'recruitment' of the children and youth from the streets until their triumphed in the international stage finally came to a close. It had to end like the play has to have an ending. The last lines of the chorus 'Let's try to make life better...let's

try to do what's right, can you feel a brand new day...today!" reverberates in the halls and the auditoriums' where the children performed amidst the clapping and standing ovation accorded to the children performers.

Were their lives truly 'better'? The next chapter attempts to examine the reception of the children of their theatrical experience, in order to bring out a full assessment of whether or not, and if ever, how the children's lives are now truly better.

# **Chapter 7**

# Theater, Performance, Communication and the Welfare of the (Street) Children

I have in mind the instinct of transformation, the instinct of opposing from without images arbitrarily created from within, the instinct of transmuting appearances found in nature into something else, an instinct which clearly reveals its essential character in the conception of what I call theatricality.

Evreinov, *The Theatre of Life* (Cited in Jones 1996)

There are two parts in this chapter. The first part examines participants' reception of their engagement with the "Goldtooth" while the second part inquires into the audience(s)' reception as part of the communicative act that is the theater performance. The discussion is framed within the notion that the theater project was both a process and a product of communication.

The discussion on the first section concentrates on the street children respondent's reception of their theatrical experience with the musical "Goldtooth". It is akin to the interpretation or making sense of their experience. This is framed within the context of welfare work, the intention of which was for the street children and youth participants' recovery and rehabilitation. And in mitigating the children and youth's situation, this can lead towards empowerment. Literature on child welfare sees intervention as aiming for the normal functioning and rehabilitation of the child and perhaps with the ultimate purpose of reintegration with his/her family or to society (Marcelino, *et al* 2000). As seen in their stories,

the children participants suffer as many of their peers' alienation from their families and communities because of the stigma placed on these children by the community and society. Thus, the children are taught skills needed for coping and primarily for their reintegration and normal functioning. The childcare centers' fundamental role is meeting the psychosocial needs of the children "focusing on their inner realities and environment and social context "(Marcelino et al 2000, p. 69). The goals include 1) rehabilitation; 2) behavioral modification; 3) coping; 4) healing; 5) enabling; and 6) empowerment (Ibid). While it is true that some of those who made the decision of coming to childcare centers would only want to get free food and a place to stay, some do genuinely expect changes in their lives. Many of the children and youth respondents who came to Stairway to be part of the musical did expect changes or pagbabago. Gusto ko na ring magbago [I eventually wanted to change], was the common response among them when asked why they came to join the musical. Stairway, as other childcare centers are expected to provide the means to initiate these changes through the use of various strategies. This was done through theater, in the case of Stairway's 'Goldtooth' project. As Monica puts it:

The production was the framework. It contains all the elements to instigate the changes behavior and attitudinal changes and outlook in life...just the idea that dancing and music and all these demands discipline. Theater demands dedication, it demands focus, it demands creativity, demands participation, it demands group work and facilitation. All of those things that you would do under

the traditional ways like 'okey, let's set the table and eat and this is how you eat your food'....we are doing it via the arts. (Interview July 22, 1999).

In communication terms, "Goldtooth" project was conceived, created as a medium, the message, the strategy, to which the center encodes the possibilities and potentials (or expected changes) in the lives of street children. Communication is thus located in the theater as a process and the product through which the children participated as co-creators and recipients of the intervention. Through the process of theater, these children made sense of their experiences.

# THEATER, PERFORMANCE AND THE CHILDREN

This section elucidates the street children-respondents' reception of their participation in "Goldtooth", the musical. In what ways has the theater project impacted upon the street children and youth participants? The question put forward to street children and youth participants' is how the theater project has helped them. *Paano nakatulong and teatro sa inyo?* The question clearly pertains to the bigger picture of whether the whole theater project has benefited the street children recipients. Given that the ultimate goal of most if not all of childcare institutions is to change behavior, it is reasonable to expect that evaluating the success of the theater project hinged upon this criterion. However, there will be other outcomes of their engagement with the theater. In the discussion that

follows, I shall attempt to show how the children and youth perceived their experience with "Goldtooth". At the same time, the adult leaders' and people who had close involvement with the children will provide some form of validation of the children's perception of their experiences.

## Taking the "Street" out of Streetchildren

The first aim of the project was recovery. It was aimed to provide a chance for some of the street children to get out of the streets. The theater project hoped to break the contact between the child and the negative influences of the street environment. The children and youth respondents' experience as revealed through their interviews and the record of the institution showed that the theater project did allow a successful recovery from the streets. The street children and youth participants of "Goltdtooth" who were used to going back to the streets time and time again, managed to stay on for almost two and a half years at the center. While it is true that on the duration of the project, there were those who absconded and decided to go back to the lure of the streets of Manila, many opted to stay. Within the two-year duration of the project, some children and youth have come and gone. Those who went decided that the program was not for them. There were cases, for instance, in which the children and youth decided that they wanted to go to school or go back to their parents. Still, some went back to the streets. The 17 respondents of this research stayed on until the end of the project, although at some point about three of them did have a record

of absconding or escaping from Stairway. One of them is Nicky who went back to the streets about three times until he finally decided that the best thing that could have happened to him was to be part of "Goldtooth". Had he stayed in the streets he might have been killed. *Mapapatay ako* [I will get killed], he confesses. The danger in Nicky's life was real. He had enemies, as he was involved in a gang war that caused the death of one of the members of an opponent gang. Stairway and the stage became his refuge. Arman left Stairway after a misdemeanor and went back to the street. While back on the street he was apprehended for vagrancy and was placed in a youth jail. Through the judge's recommendation, Arman was brought back to Stairway to continue with his rehabilitation program.

Rowena cannot remember how many times she escaped. But she always decided to go back to Stairway. It is clear that throughout the duration of the project the respondents of this study stayed on perhaps realizing that their life in the center was a better choice than the uncertainties in the streets.

Taken against the backdrop of the experience of these children, this development is in fact quite remarkable. As said in an earlier chapter, many of them have been in and out of various institutions. This problem of "center-hopping" remains a serious concern for care giving institutions. Children tend to hop from one center to another to scout "which is the best facilities " (Marcelino, *et al*, p. 78). That these largely hardcore group of street children stayed in one facility for two and a half years can well be an affirmation that there was something in the facility that made them stay. It is also a fact that there are street

children who fear being institutionalized, having been used to "freedom in the streets". Their stories would reveal that theater was an important factor in their stay. Mark at the beginning felt really bored. *Nakakaboring talaga* sa *umpisa*, [It really bored me at the start], he says. In the first few days at Stairway he wanted to leave and go back to Manila. But he stayed. He began to appreciate the fact that he learned so much.

Marami akong natutuhan lalo na sa pag-arte. . . .. Kasi sa umpisa yun, e. Akala nila ganito-ganito lang e. Ganoon din siguro ako, naboboring din ako sa umpisa. Akala ko nandidito ka para kakain, matulog.....Umpisa lang yun, pero pag matagal na matututunan lahat ng di mo natututunan sa dito mo matututunan. [I learned a lot, especially in acting...that's right at the start. They think it's simple. I was probably like that too, I was bored at the start. I thought I was here to eat, to sleep...that's just at the start, but later on, you'll learn everything that you don't learn that you will learn here.]

Mark who has been in and out of other childcare institutions experienced a more liberating experience in Stairway and with the theater activity and the stage because he loves to dance. He, in fact, compared the other childcare institutions as jails. *Parang preso kaya natakot ang mga bata*.[Like prisons, which is why some kids get scared] While this sentiment may not in any way be true for all other childcare institutions, certainly it can be said that theater allowed them an experience that they found unique. Kakakaiba talaga [It's really unique], as Vhal puts it.

Jao thought that his stay at Stairway would only be temporary, Akala ko three months camping lang, pero tumagal ako ng dalawang taon. [I thought it was just three months camping but I stayed on for two years]. He too felt bored at the beginning and wanted to go back to the streets but later on he made a decision to stay. Parang nagbago ako. Ewan ko anong nangyari sa ihip ng hangin dahil nagbago ako. Parang may nag-transform sa katawan ko...nagtransform ng panibago. [It seems that I am changing. I don't know how it happened but I think I changed. It seems that something transformed in my body...transformed into something new.] Jao attributed his participation in the theater project to this transformation. He was interested in performance. He felt that this was an opportunity for him to make a difference in his life. Kung may mga opportunity na ganito at hindi ko ginrab, saan ako pulutin? Baka sa sementeryo or sa kulungan. [If there were opportunities like this one that I failed to grab, where will I end up? Maybe in the cemetery or in jail.]

Though the theater process took a long time, this allowed the children and youth participants to work on their confusion and struggles even as it seemed, especially at the beginning, that the pull of the streets was so strong. They rose to the challenge of physically separating from the street and to be in an environment that provided them with the tools to develop and grow and strengthen their capacity to function upon their return to the society.

## The Stage as 'New' Space

The notion of separation from the street is not only physical but also in terms of what I believe is a symbolic separation. Perception of society in general of street children is negative. That "[d]espite gains in advocacy and service delivery of GO's and NGO's for street children, however, most people see street children only as dirty, hungry, vagrants, deviants, drug users, glue sniffers, pickpockets and eyesores who should be rounded up and hidden in sight"

## An Incident at GSIS

On one of the shows of "Goldtooth" at GSIS Auditorium one child recalls an incident which dramatizes the kind of attitude that outside community and society has on street children. Just before the start of the show the director told the cast members to loiter outside and around the vicinity of the auditorium. They were told to watch the people coming into the auditorium and 'act out' what most street children do on the streets - beg, sell and sniff as part of the directorial strategy to create "a sincere reflection and image among the people coming in to see the performance of the realities of the streets". The children-performers were now dressed in their 'street' costumes...madumi, madungis. [dirty, filthy] And their make-up added to the filthy look. Mario, Arman and John Chris went into the lobby of the auditorium and they were basically ignored by the people coming in to see the show. *Hindi kami pinansin ng mga* tao [The people ignored us], Mario recalls. Then a policeman coming into the auditorium with his family in tow. They came to see the show. Mario approached the policeman and extended his hand as if to beq. With his other hand, he held a plastic bag close to his nose as if he is sniffing solvent. The policeman snarled at him, "Hay! bakit kayo nandito ha? [Hey! What are you doing here] ", at the same time that he placed his hand on his gun holster. Parang hinawakan niya yong kanyang baril. Natakot kami, tumakbo kami papunta sa loob. Together with John Chris and Arman, they ran into the auditorium. When the show opened, Mario saw the policeman staring at him with unbelieving eyes upon seeing him onstage as part of the cast. *Titig ng titig sa* akin, parang napahiya, as Mario remarks.

(Marcelino et al, 2000, 32). An illustration of the society's attitude towards street

children is seen in this above incident that happened during a performance at the

GSIS Auditorium, which demonstrates quite dramatically the alienation suffered by the street children in the society.

Had Mario been just one of the street children roaming in the street and not part of the production, he did not belong to that auditorium. As a street child, he would have deserved a less humane treatment from the policeman and like his peers in the streets, deserved to be rounded up and apprehended. But as performers in "Goldtooth", they had become "actors", "talented street kids", and "young artists". The stage transformed the realities of the street children and youth who are largely ignored and stigmatized as deviants. Through performance, the children transcended the negative view of people on them. Take for instance the comments of people who watched the show.

I admire the performance of these young artists. They really gave the impression that they were living the various scenes. I came across other experiences, but I have never witnessed such powerful representations of the lives of these unfortunate children. Without doubt, the actors will be able to understand better their peers and become instrument in helping street victims (FR. Tritz of ERDA Foundation, Founder and President).

The project mobilized professional artists and technical people to support the featured former street children, a unique aspect of the musicale, who appeared as actors, dancers. Surprisingly, the actors were talented (Rolando de la Cruz, columnist and also a playwright-director, in *Steps, Bulletin Today*, March 1999).

Now they are not just street kids, they are also "actors" or "young artists" They are viewed in a different light as children with talent, with potential. In fact, the idea of being 'professional' came out in the comments of some who have watched them:

I think it was very, very professionally done despite what they have gone through before. They became part of the production (Helen 16 years old, Korean-Danish girl).

I was surprised that these were street children who are acting in this way....I was impressed with everything, the way the children performed (A Filipino professional in Geneva).

The above statements while positive and heartwarming obviously betrayed the negative perception of the society in general, that as street children they cannot and not expected to be 'professional' in the way they performed. That as long as they remained in the street they were never thought to have talent and abilities. And yet, studies show that like many young people, many street children dance and sing. The testimony of social workers and street educators attest to the rich artistic and creative abilities of street children. They have enormous inner resources, talent and creativity. Nicky, Jao and Mario were members of a gang of dancers. But their stage was the street or the back lot of a disco in Cubao and these spaces do not count. And though the street as according to a street child "never rejects children and always remains their best friend" (UNESCO/ICBB

1995, 41), the same street is the society's source of negative perception of children and their non-acceptance for the street is excluded in the structures of the society. Their performance in "Goldtooth" gave legitimacy to their talents. That they gained the recognition of the hundreds who watched the show might be proof that they have succeeded in transcending the 'street' and the damaging negative values branded on the children who inhabit this. Now no longer just street children but talented (former) street kids.

### On Stage the Healing Rests

There had been claims also that their experience had therapeutic value or healing. The power of theater to heal has had substantial proof in literature. (See, for instance, Jones 1996; Jennings *et al*, 1994; Irwin 1979). In fact, a whole new field of dramatherapy had been developed in the past 20 years or so that uses this power. Rehabilitation, which is the other objective of the theater project rests on the assumption that some physical and psychological changes will take place on the children participants. This being an ethnographic study, however, I did not rely on tested psychological instruments to measure these changes. The data on these changes are from the children's own perception. Indeed, in the discussion that will follow, this 'healing' has been perceived in many ways.

**Coming out Clean**. Of the 17 kids, about 13 of them had been involved in drug use and in fact were long time drug or solvent users. Angelito was not only a drug user but also sold drugs. This was true also of Vhal who was not only a drug

user but also a courier for drug pushers at the time each stayed in the streets. When they came to the center, they had to go through some kind of detoxification process for the first few months. Strict agreements concerning the use of drugs and alcohol were observed. Drugs had no place in Stairway. The facility offered the children an opportunity to acquire experience of living in the 'clean' environment. But the youngsters did not go through process of what they termed in clinical psychology as 'internal stage' where they were isolated and set apart to rediscover their inner selves (as in the case of most residential centers for addicts) rather, they were immediately involved in the arts activities upon their arrival at Stairway. It is premised that their "deeper involvement in the arts would help to nurture the inner spirit, thus stimulating the process of learning" (Stairway Annual Report 1999). For many of them, thus, the theater activities replaced the "high" that they experienced in drugs. Some of the children considered theater as therapy as they acknowledged that healing had occurred. For example, Cris who was for a long time addicted to drugs believed that the theater project helped him recover from potentially debilitating physical condition. In July 1998, a childcare institution referred Cris to Stairway. He was paralyzed because of the trauma caused by drug overdose. The healthy environment and the theater activities that allowed him to express himself contributed to his quick recovery. According to studies on drug addiction, drug addicts have missed important experiences in their lives towards becoming young adults. Thus a center is expected provide the activities which will help to fill the lack of social and relational skills, interest, hobbies and cultural baggage, learning, etc. (Verhofstadt-Deneve 2000). Stairway did this through the "Goldtooth" project.

One respondent claims that his participation in theater changed much of his behavior. Yung pag-drugs ko, bale natigilan ko na. Tapos 'yong pagnanakaw, dati kong gawain, nagbago na ako. [My taking drugs, I've stopped it. Even stealing which I used to do. I have changed. Another participant sees his experience as a blueprint through which he can envision his future. For Vhal, theater is a 'model' on which he sets his aspirations. He felt that theater allowed him and others like him to succeed despite the fact that society considered them as lost and hopeless. And through performance, other people are able to witness their growth and development

Sa akin, parang nagiging modelo ko lang yun, na para makita ng mga tao na kahit galing kami sa lansangan sa isang sistema, at least nakikita nila kami. Nakikitang nilang nago-grow kami, napapakinggan kami, at nakikita nila ang pagde-develop naming sa sarili. [To me, it was like my model, to make people see that even though we're from the streets and of a system, they can at least see us. They can see that we grow. We are listened to, and they can see our self-development.]

**Finding Identity**. Most publications regarding street children agree that many of the street children who are either addicts or had experienced sexual abuse have a truly negative self-image. The feelings of rejection and not being appreciated are quite rampant among them. This low self-image also relates to the trauma that they have experienced. This was the case of one of the respondents who

was considered 'serious and urgent' by the psychologist who handled her case. Abused sexually by an exploitative adult, Rowena was highly confused and extremely unstable and had problems with her identity. A psychologist describes her situation:

So you can imagine the difficulty that happened in her home and she kept on escaping and going back to the street and prostitution. This kid tends to lose her identity completely. But this is a way of survival also after being placed into this situation of being a prostitute. Because it's too much confusion, so much traumatic experience, they have really no choice, no other choice than adjust to the situation which in turn caused so many behavioral problems...They don't know anymore how to communicate, to relate to people in other ways, other than violence or in a sexual way. There is no verbal interaction. It's a body contact, either violence or sexual...she stayed very long in the street, and with a prostitution organization, things like that. That was very difficult ... She didn't follow any rules, [she was] very difficult, very provocative. I was asked to give her psychological assessment and to give her some interview. I made an evaluation and I was really alarmed by her psychological state. Because in terms of identity, things are getting so much confused that after a while, she has a hard time relating to her external reality. [It is] like borderline tendency. It was difficult for her to establish her whole identity, to relate. So I assessed that this one is an emergency case -- that I think to stay in Manila, in this environment, I mean, was too difficult for her. She always goes back to the streets.

But the child is very talented and had a lot of potential. She needed a venue to express herself. The childcare institution which had been helping her for two years with not much of success, decided that she will be better off in another

facility. Upon hearing of the "Goldtooth" project of Stairway, she was transferred to Stairway to join the musical.

[S]o finally there was Stairway project of "Goldtooth". When I heard that they want to include [her], I think it was a great idea. Even [if] I already imagine[d] all the difficulty. She really needed to find a way to express her trauma/situation. To express and to reenact the experience in a play in a symbolical manner and to be able to have a happy ending...I mean that will make a difference between her life on stage and also to give her possibilities. (A.D., psychologist)

In a psychological point of view, theater is symbolic and things expressed in a symbolic way creates some distance. In effect, theater is an art of playing and therefore "not reality". It is therefore helpful for people with traumatic experience. Theater enables them to express their situation. This statement on the psychological process that happens while participating in theater is related to the claim of performance theorists such as Schechner -- that efficacy of theater is hinged upon the "not-not" quality of performance (See Chapter 3). In effect the theater allows a space in which the children confront traumatic issues in their lives because while they play themselves, they are also not them.

The psychologist further explains that theater is particularly adapted to the situation of street children because of the use of many kinds of artistic media. She argues that the symbolic expressions found in theater "are very positive and very therapeutic." Drama/theater is especially good for these children because when they were in the streets they are used to expressing themselves through their bodies.

In the streets you seldom talk, if you want to solve problems you seldom talk, you act...either you escape, you fight or steal. It's really through the body. In drama, they are doing it in the same way, their way of expressing themselves. [It is just like] the way they learned it in the streets. [It is as if] they are going back to it. Okay, you express yourself through your body. 'Its okay, but now we will start from here and we'll do something symbolic or constructive base on the way you express yourself.' So they also express themselves through their body but with words also and then ...I think they slowly become adjusted, [this is] very good for these kids with this kind of trauma (A. D., psychologist).

I quoted the psychologist at length as a backdrop to being able to appreciate the rather remarkable change in Rowena, which was not achieved during the long years that she was in another institution. The musical enabled her "to express her trauma" and to reenact the experience in a play through a symbolic manner with possibilities of a "happy ending." <sup>2</sup> As Rowena says, *Doon ko nakita yung sarili ko na lalo akong gumaling sa pag-aarte. Yung talent ko lalong tumaas.* [That is when I saw myself that my talent in acting has become even better. My talent was enhanced even more]. Through enactment she discovered herself and saw what she is capable of achieving. The stage allowed the child to see her potential and the prospects of what might be in the future which otherwise would have not emerged. Perhaps, this is what Turner says about performance being a "drawing board on which creative actors sketch out

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> These were parts of the comments of the psychologist pointing to the change in Rowena.

what they believe to be more apt or interesting designs for living" (*Anthropology*, 24).

Bringing Out Internal Conflict. Many of the testimonies claim the therapeutic value of expressing many of their hidden angers and resentments because of the abuses that they have suffered. According to Rosemarie, Napalabas ang galit mo pagdating sa entablado. Hirap ng balikan, aminin mo talaga kung ano ang ginawa sa yo. [Your anger is released once you're onstage. It's difficult to return to, you have to confess what was done to you.] Rosemarie who suffered sexual abuse when she was very young found her experience in theater as a way of bringing out her internal conflict. Theater brought out the pains yet it allowed her to confront herself. Similarly, the stage is a space where traumatic experience can be confronted. The enactment and physicalization allows for what they term in therapy as projection. This is a process by which "clients projects aspects of themselves or their experience into theatrical or dramatic material or into enactment, and thereby externalize inner conflicts" (Jones 1996, 199). А comment of one of the respondents on her experience may illustrate this process:

Pag nasa stage kami, hindi mo makikilang kami, Halimbawa gaya ko, sarili ko may limitasyon. Hangga't suot ko yang damit ko, yan ang role na ginagampanan ko. Halimbawa, suot ko yang [costume ng] sampaguita girl na yan. Kumbaga, hindi ko sinasama doon ang pagkatao ko. Kapag suot ko yung damit na yun, ako pa rin yun. Nasa stage naman ako, feeling ko, ako yung artista na ano na umaarte ng..."Sampaguita kayo diyan!" Kumbaga ba hindi mo nakikita ang tunay

mong anyo. Yung anyo na ginagampanan ko, yun ang anyo ko. [When we're onstage, you won't recognize us... Take me as an example; I have limitations. As long as I'm wearing those clothes, that's the role that I'm playing. For instance, I'm wearing that sampaguita girl (costume). It's like I'm not integrating my personality to that role... While I'm wearing those clothes, that's still me. I'm on stage anyway, I feel that I'm the artist that says.. "Sampaguita for sale!" It's as if you don't see your true self. Yet I am the part that I am playing.]

In theater, as an actor takes on a role, he/she involves the self and projects the self into the role. They stop being themselves and yet remain themselves (Ibid). In theater and dramatherapy this process of taking a role is called dramatic projection by which children project aspects of themselves or their experience into enactment and thereby externalize the conflicts. Jones (1996) explains further that this relationship between the inner state of the child and the external dramatic form is established and developed through the action. The dramatic expression thus "enables change through the creation of perspective along with the opportunity of exploration. And insight and enactment." (Ibid,101). As in other creative acts, in theater and performance, conflict is re-experienced, resolved and integrated (Dalley 1984).

**Enhancing Self- Worth.** One of the problems cited regarding street children and youth is their very low self-esteem. In many studies on street children, they have been found to have low self-esteem (Taa 2000; Cloutier 1997; Lamberte 1996; Carandang, 1995). Perhaps, the strongest positive impact of the theater

program on the street children is the enhancement of self-esteem. Theater allows them to feel good about themselves. As one of the children participants says:

Kasi kung programa ka lang na magpapakain ka lang sa bata, magapatulog, walang improvement, e. Tapos ang mga bata, lumalaki pang tamad, e. Pag may ganitong mga programa, hindi lang musical, may programa pa na maaring ilabas ang talento ng mga bata, makapagpahayag sila ng sarili nila, ganoon. At least nade-develop pa sila, nacha-challenge pa sila, paano sila makipagsalamuha sa mga tao, paano sila makipag-harap. At least maipagmamalaki sila ng pamilya nila pag nagkita sila. [if the program were just about feeding the children, letting them sleep, there would be no improvement. Plus, children grow up to be lazy. When there are programs like this, not just musicals, there are still more programs that should show the talents of the children, to reveal themselves, like that. At least they get developed, they get challenged, how to deal with people, how to face them. At east their families can be proud of them when they see them.]

This is very true with Angelito. From a drug addict and pusher, he has since joined MSF-Switzerland as a street educator.<sup>2</sup> In a recent interview, he was proud of the fact that his family now looks at him with admiration. *Talagang pinagmamalaki na nila ako*. [They're really proud of me now] He has become the role model in the family. Likewise, Rodeline who had the privilege of playing the lead role of Karate in the musical feels that theater allowed her to develop self-confidence. She says, *Sa theater na-develop and self-confidence ko. Sino namang mag-akala na dati rati, isa lang akong nagtitinda sa kalye, ngayon ay* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> MSF or Medicins Sans Frontiere is a prestigious international organization that also carries out projects with street children.

nasa stage na ako tinitingnan ng mga tao. [It was in the theater where I developed my self-confidence. Who would've thought that I who used to be a street-vendor, am now onstage, watched by an audience.]

The street children and youth's participation in the theater program gave them confidence and belief in their abilities. Fajardo's (1988) study also found positive effects of a theater arts program on the self-esteem of institutionalized adolescents. In the performing process, self-image of participants is expanded through the dramatic activity. Explaining how this occurs, Emunah and Johnson (1983) argue that performance elicits and makes visible the strength of the actors.

They are having an impact on the audience; they are actors, not victims. They are receiving a lot of attention in a constructive and approved way. The response and applause is a new experience, and is far greater than anything they have experienced before. This impact on the self-image is powerful. The reaction is one of exhilaration, pride, and affirmation of identity. (Cited in Frehner 1996, 54).

New aspects of self are thus elicited that enabled the participants to see their worth and importance and consequently brought about positive change in them.

"Balik-tanaw": Developing ability of reflection. It is said that theater is a mirror of ones lives. "Goldtooth" reflects the children and youth's lived experience in the streets and at the same time the theater process also develops their ability of reflection. Mario believes that theater enabled him to reflect on his life. He says:

Ang nasa teatro kasi, lahat ng... yung sa teatro, kung anong naranasan mo sa kalye, ipapakita mo sa teatro. Pag nagawa mo yon, ipapalabas. Yung kagaya ng "Goldtooth", yung mga gawain namin sa kalye. Halimbawa ako, nagru-rugby ako sa kalye, yan ang gagawin ko sa stage pero hindi siya totoo. Parang kwan lang siya, yung arte at nangyayari talaga sa yo? At maganda yon, dahil nag-reflect sa buhay namin. [Being in the theater, all of...in the theater, what you've experienced on the streets, you can show in theater. If you achieve that, it would be shown. In the case of "Goldtooth," what we did on the streets. For instance, I did rugby on the streets—that's what I do onstage but it's make-believe. It's like, what you're acting and what's really happening to you? And that's good, because it reflected our lives.]

Mario further explains that since theater is reflective of his previous life in the streets, he vowed not to return to that life again. *Arte lang to. Hindi ko na babalikan 'yon*, [This is just play-acting. I'm not going back to it], he says. He claims that theater helped him understand what happened to his life then and even understanding what is happening to the children who are still on the streets. Similarly, Cris believes that theater allows conversation with oneself in order for him to confront the painful past.

Ang teatro ay magbigay aral din...mag-balik tanaw. Para sa kanila 'yong nakaraan pwede nilang pwedeng maibalik doon sa pamamagitan ng drama --- katulad ng ginawa ng "Goldtooth" kasi yon yong ginawa, pagkakaano ko doon mabalik-tanaw yon eh. Nakakatulong ba yon pag-balik-tanaw mo kasi of course, masakit yon,Oo, masakit yon eh....Nakaka-unti-unti hindi naman kasi bigla unti-unti katulad nong ginawa sa akin ng Stairway unti-unti di ba yong mga

napakaraming problema may katulad ng nangyaring problema yon yong pauntiunti yong kausap ng pag-pagkausap sa sarili. Ibinibigay na rin nila yung nangyari sa kanila sa drama. [Theater taught lessons as well...a reminiscence. For them, they can bring back the past using drama – such as what was done in "Goldtooth," it was a looking-back. The act helps because it hurts. It's done bit by bit, not in one shot, like what happened to me at Stairway—bit by bit. The many problems are similar to what happened before. Self-reflection is done slowly. They're finally releasing their experiences through drama.]

How could something that has caused pain help the children? According to a psychologist, the theater as a symbolic mode allows emotional distance. Since the street children are just 'playing' roles, they feel that it is not reality and that is why it helps them express their situation. Street children tend to suppress their negative thoughts. The traumatic feelings they have integrated which they don't know how to deal with because they were so strong, they are now able to confront through performance. Theater offers them a less painful manner in which to tackle the issues of their lives.

But even if the act of confronting the past issues of their lives onstage is painful, some of them feel that it is worth the suffering because it is also for their benefit. Rosemarie felt that it is part of the whole *pagda-drama* or participation in the theater process. The process enabled her and her peers to realize that they were not alone in their suffering.

Maski yung ibang part doon, pagsali sa buhay. Yung iba, maski masakit yung nangyari sa kanila, bahala na. 'Kaya ko naman tong tiisin, drama lang naman to'.

Ganoon ang iniisip nila. Iniisip nila na 'bahala na, para din naman ito sa amin, e'. Naisip namin na di lang naman ako ang may ganitong pangyayari, marami iba. Kaya nagiging movements ng mga bata namag-react ng ganoon. [Even some of the parts there, some, even though the experience is painful, it's okay. 'I can bear this, it's just drama.' that's what they suppose. They think, 'whatever, this is for us anyway.' we realized that our experiences aren't unique, there are many like us. Which is why the kids tend to react that way.]

Awareness and Self-Discovery. In this theater project, the children and youth participants discovered the extent of their talents and capabilities. They who were previously ignored, are now looked upon with admiration. For many of them, this is something that they considered as their best experience in life. As Rowena says:

Pinakamaganda experience ko kung paano kami iyakan ng mga tao. Kung paano umiyak yung mga audience...kung paano kami tingnan ng matataas na tao. Biro mo, matataas na tao napaiyak namin, napahanga namin. Na dati kami sisiw lang sa kanila... Yun ang isa sa pinaka-good experience sa buhay ko. [My best experience is when people are moved to tears, how the audience cries...how well-heeled people look at us. Imagine that, we made them cry, we impressed them. Whereas before we were just nothing to them...that's the best experience of my life.]

As streetchildren, many of them considered themselves as 'basura' (garbage), or '*putik*' (mud), or '*walang kwenta*' (good-for-nothing); theater was a chance for them to re-invent their realities to rise above their situation. It allowed

them the opportunity to achieve something valuable, a chance for them to feel that they, too, have something to contribute to the society, which once viewed them with derision. Cris was so proud of the fact that now he is idolized by some of his friends, when at one time he was treated like dirt.

Oo dahil doon kinilala ako. Maraming tumulad sa akin at saka yong bumisita ako sa isang foundation narinig ko sa isang bata na ano "Cris idol kita, hinahangaan kita." Narinig ko talaga sa bibig niya mismo niya dahil ang mga kasama ko mga social workers, mga graduate samantalang ako non-graduate ako. Bakit ako napasama doon? Kaya noon parang nanlawak yong isip ko, na ano ako. Pumapalakpak talagang taynga ko dahil kasi sinabi niya ang galing galing mo idol kita. Isa lang siya sa nagsabi noon. Ang nakapakinig lima o anim ang nakapakinig sa nagsabi. Sabi ko kaya mo din yon—kaya mo yan... [My person was recognized there. Many emulated me, and when I once visited a foundation, I heard a kid say "Cris, you're my idol, I'm your fan.' I really heard it from his mouth. I was with social workers, they are graduates whereas I was a nongraduate. How did I get there? It was then that my mind expanded, I was overjoyed since he told me that I was very good, 'you're my idol.' he's just one of many. Five or six people heard what he said. I told him 'you can do it too—you can...]

Recognition of their abilities and potential is very important to building their self-esteem. Theater provides a means through which they feel they have the power to make their dreams come true. The children's engagement with the medium of theater through the performance process enabled them to experience their own creativity. This creativity allows change to occur, as the children are able to deal with their problems. They feel creatively engaged with finding a

solution or experiencing new alternatives. This study seems to corroborate Spangler's (1993) findings which demonstrates that there are important elements in the prevention of self-destructive behavior (i.e. skill building, modeling, foresight, positive esteem, healthy choices and weighing consequences) that can be effectively presented and taught to adolescents through theater arts.

## **Giving Voice and Possibilities**

**Giving Voice**. The stage allows this marginalized children and youth group to break their silence, to have a voice in a society where they have been excluded and ignored. Arman literary claims that theater helped him to learn to speak out. Natutulungan akong magsalita...Natututo ako sa "Goldtooth." Theater to Arman was a medium through which he was able to express himself. Through theater, the children and youth's stories of victimization are told in person and out into the public. Whereas before they had not been listened to outside of their own peers in the streets, onstage they feel that the whole world has finally given them the attention. Dollar and Zimmers (1998) study on the street youth in the USA showed that street youth's voices are muted in the conventional status quo. The authors suggest that the youth should explore a creative communicative scene in which they can articulate their complaints as well as their aspirations. Perhaps, in this light, theater is the creative communication scene which street children can utilize to have a voice in the society. On stage the children are given attention and privilege -- a sharp contrast to their previous life where they were mostly ignored. As actors/performers, they have the power to hold the audience – a communicative power that will make the dominant group in the society pay attention and listen to their plight (Bauman 1984). As clear illustration of this power, I would like to quote a comment from a theater practitioner who works with the First Nations youth in Canada. Wildcat, the director, in an interview about his work with this marginalized group, describes this unique 'power' of theater:

I say to the young people who show up' "What happens after the play you can't control but during the play you can control it". And people are so conditioned to sit down and listen at theater, I tell the young people, "this is one of the few times that five hundred White people are going to shut up and listen to you. So use it!' (Cited in Prentki & Selman, 2000, 19).

The same can be said of the street children and youth in this study who in their marginalized existence do not have a voice in the mainstream society. It is a fact that many are still generally indifferent to their plight. They would not have had the chance to be listened to nor get the attention from the public. In the minds of the street children and youth, they know that people do not believe in them and their capabilities. As Vhal puts it, *Hindi ka paniwalaan ng mga tao dahil galing ka lang sa lansangan*. [People will not believe you since you're just from the streets]. Theater accords them credibility. Vhal describes his experience of being listened to as *'malaking bagay'*, something he is so proud of :

Naku, malaking bagay sa akin, Ate. Unang-una, noong una na wala pa ako sa ganitong stage, hindi ka papaniwalaan ng mga tao dahil galing ka lang sa lansangan, mababa lang, parang bale wala ka sa kanila. Ngayon, nakikita ka nila dahil sa programa; nakikisalamuha ka sa mga malaking tao. Pwede kang pakinggan, at saka nakikita nila na may malayo ka rin palang nararating kahit na nanggaling ka sa lansangan at mga biktima ng karahasan -- parang ganoon...Papakinggan nila kayo. Tapos andoon yung sitwasyon na nakikita nila sa amin na kailangan nilang makipagtulungan na mabigyan pa kami ng sapat na inspirasyon at dedikasyon sa buhay, para tuloy-tuloy ang pag-unlad. Hindi lang sa amin, pati rin sa ibang bata na naghihirap. [It's a huge thing, Ate. First of all, when I wasn't on this kind of stage yet, people wouldn't believe you because you're just from the street, a lowly thing, you mean nothing to them. Now they can see you because of the program; you deal with powerful people. You can be listened to, and they see that you can go far even though you're just from the streets and are victims of harshness -- like that...they will listen to you. And there's the situation where they see that they need to help out to give us sufficient inspiration and dedication to life, so that progress can continue. Not just for us, also for other children who are suffering.]

**A Call for Hope.** For many of them who feel that there is no hope for their lives, participating in a theater project was something that gave them hope to go beyond. Theater, in Boal's term, gave people the 'aesthetic space' to express their desire for change. Theater also develops in the children and youth discipline, perseverance, responsibility and cooperation which theater demands. Working with a group towards one goal, and having their individual

responsibilities in the production, gives the children a sense of confidence and achievement. *Nabigyan kami ng pag-asa*, [We were given hope] as one of the respondents say. Dr. Edwin Decenteceo describes this as the third level at which theater contributes to the healing and rehabilitation process, when children feel that they have achieved something (See Chapter 2).

A comment from Nicola, a medical practitioner and head of a childcare institution based in Geneva further supports this finding:

They [the children] were really participating in a project where the different ideas they were expressing could help people to understand better the situation of also their own lives. So they were really becoming active children here in Goldtooth...they were becoming actors, they were having social role to play. This was really very incredible because the moment they realized that their own words were really important, they started to have interest in what their lives were. ... I think an experience like this, it's really giving them the possibility to be recognized as people as everyone [because in the streets]—they were not. Because really what you can find in the streets is, that, if you speak really with street kids, he devalues himself very much, the street child doesn't think he has rights. It is in this moment he starts to be recognized; it is in this moment he's understanding he has rights and I think with "Goldtooth," all these children are starting to understand their rights and their capacity, their ability (Interview with Dr. Nicola on September 1999 in Geneva).

Though every scene, movement and song of the children and youth in the play is a lamentation of their scarred lives, it is also a call for hope that the society through their performance will recognize them as human beings with talent and capabilities.

**Shared Reality: "Karamay".** The children and youth's testimonies also reveal that theater enabled them to create a sense of community where they share the reality of their past. In this community, they have people around them with whom they can rely on for support. This is exemplified by Vhal's statement:

Malaki, ate. Unang-una, dito sa Stairway, sa musical na ito, nagiging mature na Dito ko nadisiplina ang sarili ko, dito ko natutunan ang isipan ko, e. magpahalaga sa sarili, dito ko nakikita ang iba-ibang angulo ng problem—huwag sana namin takasan. Kumbaga makipagtulungan pa kami. Dati hindi ko nakikita yun dahil wala akong karamay, kaya nga ako umalis sa amin dahil wala naman akong makausap, walang nagsasabi sa akin, wala akong makita kundi puro problema. Ngayon sa stage na ito, dito madami kang karamay. May problema ka man, maliit or malaki, meron kang masadandalan. At least natuto ka, may katulong ka pa. Patuloy na yung mind mo....tumutulong na yung mind mo magogrow, lumalaki. Kung anong problema na darating sa iyo, macha-challenge ka. [It's huge, Ate. First of all, here at Stairway, in this musical, I became more mature. This is where I disciplined myself, where I learned to value myself, where I saw the various angles of a problem—I hope we don't become escapist about it. We should help out. I didn't used to see that since I had nobody to depend on. That's why I left my house; I had no one to talk to, nobody told me anything, I saw nothing but problems. Here on this stage, you have many people to depend on. If you have a problem, big or small, you have someone to lean on. You learned, you even lent a hand. Your mind operates...your mind helps you grow. The problems you are to face challenge you.]

Theater as group endeavor demands cooperation. One has to work together to achieve a goal. The (theater) group "is experienced as both a substitute family and as a work group which strives for a specific goal as well" (Emunah & Johnson 1983 cited in Frehner 1996, 38). In psychology, they call this commonality of experience. According to Herman (1992) traumatic events destroy the sustaining bonds between individual and community. Those who survived learn that their sense of worth, of humanity, depends upon feeling of connection with others. The solidarity of a group provides the strongest protection against terror and despair. That is why in the streets they joined gangs to connect to a group. In theater, the support of their co-participants enables them to feel that sense of security and support. Herman explains further:

The group provides the possibility not only of mutually rewarding relationship but also of collective empowerment. Group members approach one another as peers and equals. Though each are suffering and in need of help, each has something to contribute (207).

In communication terms, this is called homophily, a sharing of similar experience for mutually productive relationship. Theater as a group endeavor is a collective empowerment that even in their suffering, together they can have an important contribution to make the project a success.

Turner (1984) argues that performance is not only reflective but also a reflexive act. That it does not only restate or mirror life but also expresses "hypothesis, suppositions and desires" – possibilities that may contribute to the transformation of children and youth. In the process of communication through

theater, it enabled the realities of the street children to be 'repaired and transformed' Carey (1987). This transformation includes the ability for a muted and marginalized group such as the street children and youth to be given voice with which to speak out their concerns (and consequently listened to), a site to express hope as well as to build and strengthen their own community in a shared world which is not destructive but supportive of their aspirations for *pagbabago*, for change in order to have a better life from what they had previously known.

The various ways in which the children perceived the impact of the musical in their lives is not an isolated process. This was also achieved by the presence of the audience who witnessed the performance. Brook (1988) sees the audience as giving theater its fundamental meaning (Cited in Jones 1996, 109). The children's experience in "Goldtooth" is inextricably related to the audience(s)' reception of their performance.

## "GOLDTOOTH", THE CHILDREN AND THE AUDIENCE

The act of communication that is theater is not complete without considering the viewing audience(s)' response. Part of the experience of the children and youth are the people who came to see the show and who clapped, whistled, laughed, cried and gave them standing ovations in every performance. The reaction of the spectators connects the 'actors' to a larger community and diminishes their feeling of isolation (Emunah & Johnson 1983).

This section lays out the interrelationship of the children, the musical and the viewing audience. It attempts to examine the viewers' reception of the production. How did the audience receive the performance? The discussion that follows attempts to show the audiences' engagement as spectators of "Goldtooth", the street children's musical.

## The Audience(s)

The audiences of "Goldtooth" can be classified into street children and non-street children. It can be classified further as a local and an international audience. Further still, within this audience(s) you have the youth and the adults. In these different audience(s) there were certain responses expected. At this juncture, it is important to review the aims of Stairway in staging the musical (See Chapter 5). Other than the process of rehabilitation and recovery, they wanted the production to serve as an advocacy for children's rights. However, it is not within the purview of this research to determine the success of that advocacy -how and to what extent the advocacy was accomplished. (Perhaps, that will be a subject of another paper). What I wish to highlight in this present study are the responses of the audience as part of the dynamics of the process of theater that contribute to the transformation of the children, and perhaps, indirectly, this will show the viewing audience's own transformation as part of the theatrical communicative interaction. Within the context of Stairway's goals in producing the musical, there are certain expectations of the audience who would come and watch the play. The expectations obviously include for the viewers to be aware of the plight of the street children; and secondly that they will be moved to support the work. For the street children viewers, the musical was meant to reach them with the ultimate goal that the children 'actors' through the musical, will be the teachers and educators in their own "community". The nature of the work itself paved the opportunity for the musical to be shown in other places – in the international arena.



Streetchildren watching "Goldtooth" performance at GSIS Theater



Audience(s) of "Goldtooth" in Europe

There were two major invitations, one from the United Nations in Geneva and the other from World Forum for Children in Helsinki. These two organizations concerned with children's welfare and issues would welcome the opportunity to show to the delegates that indeed, street children can triumph over all the odds. It makes for a good promotion for child welfare work. And because Lars is a Danish national, and DANIDA being their major supporter, it was inevitable that the international tour would include his country, Denmark. With these varied purposes and varied audiences, there were also wide-ranging responses.

## Awareness and Empathy with the Plight of the Street Children

Many of those who saw the musical expressed that they never knew the gravity of the problem not until confronted with the reality presented on stage. One of these performances was held at a five star hotel for the finance ministers, bankers, and government officials during the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Asian Development Bank (ADB).<sup>2</sup> About 1,500 bank governors, finance ministers from different countries, ambassadors and government officials were in attendance. The occasion was a conference addressing the issue of poverty in the region. This was a brave initiative on their part to bring this musical to this venue, a place were the street children would never have been welcomed, let alone allowed to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> It was the performance in this annual meeting of ADB that paved the way for Stairway to bring the musical to Helsinki, Finland and brought to the audience of no less than the Secretary of State for a special performance. One of the guests, in this annual meeting was then the Finance Minister of Finland who eventually became the Secretary of State. The group was invited to give a special performance at Finland's State Building.

hobnob with the upper echelons of society, if not of the musical. For once, the street children turned performers were given special attention as 'stars' of the musical and were treated with some degree of respect and admiration.

In advancing the cause in behalf of disadvantaged children, there is, of course, a big significance in presenting before this audience, as they were composed of finance ministers and bankers and even government officials who have the very powers within society to create policies to alleviate conditions such as poverty, which is a factor attributed to have spawned the problem of street children. But whether there were concrete steps taken after, as an immediate result of watching the performance, is not possible to determine. Yet, the presentation may have sparked some reflection and debate on the issue of poverty and the condition of millions of street children especially in Asia. A senior ADB officer wrote to Stairway Foundation after he watched the show

I just want to tell you how much I appreciated your initiative and efforts to have the Annual Meeting open with the street performance. I thought it was an ideal way to remind the delegates what the ultimate purpose of this institution is. I was very moved and grateful that this organization was willing to take the risk of a potentially controversial opening. It was certainly the highlight of the meeting for me.

That the play gained sympathy for the cause of these street children, is undeniable. A statement of a member of an audience tells us how he gained a better understanding of the condition of the street children.

Hearing the stories of street children and watching "Goldtooth" made me realize how lucky I am, I have never been threatened by drugs, have never been beaten, never had to sleep on the streets and sell cigarettes and candy to generate the family income. Now when I see the a child on the streets selling *sampaguitas* or asking for money, I won't be able to just ignore the faces peering into the car window...(High School Student from International School).

Many of the other viewers especially in countries were the problem of street children is not rampant, were emotionally stirred by the musical. The ability of theater to become personal and intimate draws immediate response from the audience.

I cried, I did not want to cry. But I realized that there were children who live like that and that there are still many others like them out there (A school teacher in Denmark).

While many of the audience's members who participated in the "theater talks", especially in Europe, claimed that they have knowledge of the plight of street children provided by media such as the television and newspapers, the audience attest to the power of theater that allow them to gain a clear understanding and awareness which was strongly demonstrated in one of the "theater talks":

Boris: I realized it is hard life, that it is so real. Now we are able to see it – it's for real Anette: We didn't know that it was so tough

BDC: So you didn't know that it was a tough life?

Anette: No..The play somehow made it really real.

Boris: Yes. It was very impressive to see. It was in fact very touching.

BDC: Why was it touching?

Boris: I guess, to see it was very real...

The different audiences' receptions of the performance seem to center on their affective reaction of seeing real street children performing play. The theatrical codes that showed the realities of the lives of the street children and youth and enacted by themselves were indeed powerful. As one audience member who is a college student said, "It is a good way to express reality because it shows something hard but with fantasy, with creativity with something that would give hope." One young medical student even watched the play three times. He had knowledge about street children as he at one time worked as a volunteer working with street children in one of the Latin American countries. Yet, he believes the reality of what he saw increased his awareness. "I saw that was worse than what we [could] see". Inquired why it was worse than what he saw in the real world, he replies:

I found out their [way] of living. I thought there was just one or two and now I found out there are so many living in that situation.

The power of the street children performing the roles, I believe, contributed to this 'realness'. The stage becomes as Turner argues, the liminal zones in which the audience and the performer met in the moment of

performance and where the audience lived for a moment the realities of the street children.

And for the street children viewers, they too, had come in contact with the world that they used to inhabit or still inhabited, through the musical. And while they, too, live that world, the play invokes a sense of reflection and critical awareness of the problem. As one of them says:

Dito naipalabas ang katotohanan sa kalye. At dito ko nakita na ganito pala ang nangyari sa lansangan...nagiging drug addict kami. Dito malalaman ng batang lansangan kung ano ang patutunguhan nila.<sup>4</sup> [The truth about the streets was revealed here. And this is where I saw what took place on the streets....we become drug addicts. This is where the street kid can know what he's headed for.]

## Calls For Support

As for media and theater practitioners who watched the show, they joined the call for support in behalf of the street children. This may be indicative of how the performance succeeded in advancing the cause of street children. A newspaper account shows one of these responses.

Stairways' musicale is not only commendable but also deserving of support from the national government, especially from the DSWD and the department of Education and Culture and Sports through the technical and financial support as well as endorsements...The musicale should be watched by everyone especially school children. It is a must see that is an alternative to some highly

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> This extract was taken from a focus group discussion done at UPIS on April 2000 with eight children from Kaibigan who were able to watch the show at GSIS.

commercialized and unaesthetic stage plays peddled around as curricular projects (e.g. *Florante at Laura, Ibong Adarna* and the like) by some theater companies victimizing children and parents in collusion with unscrupulous teachers and principals (Rolando de la Cruz, in *Steps* March (1999)

Some of the audience members in the "theater talks" did express their desire to help the cause. A seventeen-year-old student even said that she would not marry until she could support at least one street child. There would be other members of the audience who expressed their support for the work on behalf of street children. Every performance is an attempt to reach the hearts and minds of the privileged group in a call to support the cause of the underprivileged.

## The Children as Mediators of Their Cause

The children promoting their own cause through theater while powerful is, in fact, also problematic. There are concerns about voyeurism, that while the musical highlighted the hardships that street children suffer, the children's lives are put on display for the entire world to see. While there might be some truth to these concerns there is equally a strong argument for having the street children act in a musical about them. Lars puts it this way:

With the advocacy it's also important...is that if you want to talk about children's rights it's always important that you are all the time, you are kind of... all your efforts must take the starting point in the child so that you don't create that distance from yourself, you don't become too intellectual in your approach but you are all the time in touch with the reality. And once you have the children to be

the mediators of the reality that they have now left behind, then you can be quite sure that you're not going to lose touch with the reality that they actually try to mediate.

The children themselves felt proud of their role in mediating for their own cause as seen in Rodeline's statement:

Well, when I get to visit some schools, di ba, after they've seen the show, like one of them, in Denmark, di ba, one of the students was in the musical before, di ba. I won't mention his name na lang. He's in the musical before, during 1998, at PCI, the preview. And then, when he saw it again in Aalborg, he said it improved a lot...So, I think that was one of impacts 'coz we got to touch them more. Make them see the reality more by acting, singing, and dancing. And then, but some of the kids can't really absorb it, eh, kasi they thought it was just fictional. They see it on television, they thought it was just, you know, yung baka gawa-gawa lang. And they didn't know it was awful, di ba, the situation. So, it took them time to believe...they can't really believe that it's happening really. They don't [sic] believe it. ... Yung pinakaimportante, well, one was that, I get to emerge deeper into the situation and the issues about street children. And then, secondly, I was one of the tools to raise awareness, to reach out and reach those people who haven't known about the issue. And then, I was one of the tools to make them open their eyes and maybe make them act as soon as possible.

For the children being the source and co-creators of the theater project is in fact an advantage to the audience who has the following reaction:

Very moving! Best thing about it was that the players (singers, dancers and actors, actresses, were all street children! And they performed beautifully. The show proved the point – ordinary street children can be motivated to surpass

themselves (Armando Baltazar, President, Manila Chamber Orchestra Foundation).

The transformative capacity of theater as medium makes these marginalized children agents for their own cause.

The foregoing responses of the audience testify to the theater's power in creating awareness on the gravity of the problem of street children. This message became even more powerful when the children themselves brought it to the audience's consciousness through their embodied performance. Fr. Tritz who himself is very much involved in the work of street children expressed the same expectations that Stairway had of their work in "Goldtooth" when he considers the musical as an "advocacy tool to reach out to people and achieve greater understanding and solidarity for the situation of street kids everywhere." As Zenaida Amador, a noted theater director-actor, in her column, argues:

[T]here is nothing like theater to dramatize the problem of street children which, once again, proves that theatre is a potent force in the spread of ideas and awakening people to the different aspects of the human condition. (*Bulletin Today*, March 1999).

# Theater and Performance: A Communicative Site Where the Self and Other Meets

The first section of this chapter highlighted the reception of the children in their participation in the musical "Goldtooth". The claims of changes and transformation in their psychological and social sense were

attributed to their participation in theater. This healing according to Boal, "lies within the dynamics of seeing and being seen, in the recognition of the self and the other, and the subsequent expression of desire for change" (Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz 1994, 93). As the children and youth audienced their own selves in performance, they recognized their capabilities and became their own agents in creating a new reality for themselves. As Gilbert says, *Sa teatro matulungan kang makapag-isip kung ano ang tama o mali*. [In theater you can be helped in deciding what is right or wrong]. Participation in theater allows the street children to question and resist the myth about them and showed that they have the capacity to transform and be transformed. Through the theater process the children and youth can harness their potentials so that they can take action to liberate themselves from a life of marginalization.

In the second section, the viewing audiences' voices were heard in regard to their experience in watching the musical. They, too, testified to the power of theater in creating awareness which caused them to reflect on the problem on street children. In the process of thinking and reflecting it is hoped that they would take steps in supporting the cause in behalf of the marginalized sectors of society such as the street children. And they, the audience will also take action to fight against this situation.

But most of all, theater is a site that created a dialogue between marginalized children and the privileged section of our society. As a

medium of exchange and a process, "performance draws us to the margins, the borders between Self and Others" (Conquergood 1988, 202). As a site of exchange, performance is the key to understanding "how the deeply different can be deeply known without becoming any less different" (Geertz 1983, 48, cited in Conquergood 1988, 202). The value of the exchange is not so much on the objects but the relationships that are produced (Conquergood 1988, 202). And this relationship between the children and their audience, I believe, is encapsulated through the words of Rosemarie, the child-performer and Bjorn Holsmsten,<sup>5</sup> one among the audience who viewed the performance. For Rosemarie theater is effective because of the people who were awakened or *nagising* to the realities and the plight of street children.

Sa akin, epektibo yung drama at saka yung Goldtooth kasi, maraming taong nagising kahit mayaman sila. Nalaman nila kung anong nangyari sa mga batang lansangan, hindi tulad noon hindi nila nalalaman, maski na mayaman ka pinandidirian mo pa rin ang mga taong malilit... Ngayon na-realize nila hindi pala lahat ng tao madumi, na meron ding mga taong pwedeng magbago. Nalaman nila, 'na maski pala mayaman ako kailangan ko rin palang madama yun'. [To me, drama is effective. Goldtooth awakened many people, even though they were wealthy. They saw what happens to street-kids, unlike before when they didn't know. Even though you're rich, you find lowly people repulsive...now they realized that not all people are dirty, that there are human beings capable of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Bjorn Holmsten is a Danish actor and director who at one time was a volunteer in Stairway.

change. They realized that, 'even though I'm wealthy, I also need to experience that.']

For Bjorn, it is when one witnesses the moment of transformation:

Honestly, the first evening, I was not able to watch the first half of the show 'cause I was crying. "Cause suddenly, I saw on stage people I've taken out of Manila and I have taken them to Stairway... and many of them were high on drugs and everything. And suddenly they were standing there...normal, happy people. So I was crying. Now I've seen it four times. As a director, I would love to direct and change some of the directions to make it better but it doesn't matter. The message you get to the audience is what is important. There were people who came to me who saw the performance. They were crying. The message is clear and it is a good performance.

## **Chapter 8**

## Conclusion

Had I been deceiving myself about the potential of theatre? Was I caught up in some mythical notion of what theatre had once meant to certain people in certain places? Maybe. Perhaps I still am. Nevertheless, I cannot let go of the idea that theatre is the most human of art forms, starting as it does with the body of the actors, offers a space in which life can be tried out, rehearsed, without the damaging consequences that such experiments might have if tried 'for real'.

Tim Prentki (Prentki & Selman 2000, 1)

The purpose of this paper is threefold: first, it is to explore the use of theater as a strategy for the welfare of street children; second, it attempts to evaluate the project and thirdly, it attempts to examine 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 in the theatrical activity which is seen as communicative strategy utilized to improve their wellbeing as well as a way through which their cause will be promoted.

In 1997, Stairway Foundation Inc. (SFI), a center for street children based in Puerto Galera in the island of Mindoro, in the Philippines, created and produced the musical, "Goldtooth", a production that began with children and youth freshly 'recruited' from the streets or referred by other childcare institutions, auditioned and trained to become the 'stars' of this musical. The process of theater in the making of "Goldtooth" became the framework for the center's attempt to help, motivate and transform the lives of the street children.as well as an advocacy for their cause.

In this ethnographic account, the children and youth's voices were heard as they shared the experience in assessing a project which they were themselves the beneficiaries. The story of the 17 respondents in the study, are living testimonies of embodied and enacted lives from the real world of the streets to the world of the stage through "Goldtooth" -- a musical that captures the stories of children and youth from the streets. The study charted the youngsters' journey from the street to the stage.

In this concluding chapter, I will explore the relationship of theater to rehabilitation work, and empowerment of street children as well as the role of theater in advancing the cause of street children, to delineate the possibilities and limitations in this kind of approach.

## Theater and Rehabilitation

There were certain assumptions in this study, foremost of which is that the participants -- the children and youth from the streets -- profited from their experience in the theater program. Although a large number of literature in dramatherapy points to the therapeutic value of theater, there still remains the difficulty of assessing its outcomes especially if no medical or psychological measures were used such as in the case of this study. Still this research seems

to have demonstrated how theater contributed to the process of rehabilitation of the street children and youth who participated in it. This paper assumes that the perception of the children of this 'healing' has been the obvious albeit immediate physical and behavioral change they experience in the course of their participation in the theater activity. All of the respondents clearly attested to the positive impact that the theatrical intervention project had on them. Specific testimonies points, for instance, to some changes such as finding identity, internal conflict resolution and gaining self-confidence. The issue of finding one's identity for instance rests on the claim that performance training basically requires the performer to undergo a process of self-discovery. Hindman (1976 cited in Fajardo 1980) argues that training in theater starts with the need to understand the self of the performer.

The embodiment and physicalization are also reputed to be a part of the performer' development, as physicalization helps in the search for connection and release between the body and feelings. Hindman in his explanation of the development potential of theater thus elaborates:

Developmental theater is therapeutic; it expands our boundaries, extends our options, presents us with new choices in our behavior and in our work...The act of performance –including all the labor to prepare for it –celebrates the human potential of the performer and the audience. (Hindman 1976, 78 cited in Fajardo 1980, 4)

In theater we see ourselves "writ large" and Wilshire (1982, 5) considers this fundamental to the way we see and comprehends ourselves; "to come to see oneself is to effect change in one self in the very act of seeing "(Cited in Jones 1996, 100). I think this is exemplified by Gilbert, one of the respondents, who says that theater was an awakening moment for him:

Bale kaya nakatulong sa akin (ang teatro) para magising din ako. Parang nakapag-iisip ako. Ganito pala ang ginagawa namin sa lansangan, na di pala maganda. Tapos nakakasira pa sa amin, tapos marami kaming tao na na-perwisyo. [That is how theater helps us because it awakened us. And it made me think. We see that what we did in the streets is not good. It destroyed us and also caused disturbance to many people.

Through creative engagement the children and youth participants are also enabled to experience their own creativity and in the process explore a new self.

#### Theater and Empowerment

The power of theater gave the children and youth tools which allowed them to explore and analyze their condition. As it affirmed their experience, the street children and youth realized that they were not alone in their suffering, and given the tools they can break the cycle of desperation that they were trapped in. The activity empowered the children and youth to assume responsibility for the choices they made in their lives. As a communicative strategy, theater enabled the youngsters to gain awareness and shed critical light on their experiences. In the process, it provides them with the means to overcome the limits of their environment. Drama and theater is an embodiment of what they can become as it allows them to dream or imagine what they can be. As Rodeline explains,

In theater, you get into, well, like what we had is that, we came from that character before. Like, most of us aside from scavengers and drug addicts. Well, I was a flower seller in the streets but then, they get to have the chance to be in themselves on the stage, their past lives on the stage. And then after that, after the show, they can take it off. They can wear it off. Then, be the different, the new kid or child when they come out of there... you know, go down from the stage. They can be, well, they can wear their old selves, *di ba*, when they're on the stage. But then, after that, after the show it's finished, - that part of their life is finished. Its just on the stage, its not really them anymore. When they come down from the stage, it's a new them, it's a new you. You're not your own self anymore. So, I think that was the advantage of it.

In their participation in the production, the street children and youth realized that the story was about them yet they were also given a chance to change and re-create their own reality. They learned the values of trust, respect, cooperation and non-violence. This was a stark contrast to the lives and culture that they had before, a culture in which they did not trust anyone; a culture of abuse; lack of respect; and violence. It also gave them the voice to articulate their aspirations. These young people have become empowered to actively participate in the creation of their own 'new' history. As one UNICEF officer who saw the play comments,

I think the ability of the young people to get onstage for an audience and then receive applause in a sense is empowerment. It is a chance or an opportunity to

be successful in something. Have a sense of achievement and empowerment which otherwise they may unable to do so.... The ability to make themselves feel special and to take that feeling in other areas of their lives.

## The Paradoxes and Contradictions of Theater

Certainly, the children and youth participants of the "Goldtooth" musical had testified to the positive impact of the theater project on them. The performances, for one, take much courage and make them admirable. While at one time they were "dregs" of the society, now they are admired, respected and "cool". But Emunah and Johnson (1983), in their study of the therapeutic advantage of a performing drama group found that joining theater groups evokes intense feelings of both excitement and anxiety. They argue that excitement centers on the privilege of being admitted to a special group. But anxiety also results from doubts of one's ability to perform the task and be positively received by the future audience. This was especially true of the street children and youth who were part of the project.

The performance gave them an all time "high" during which they felt that everybody liked and appreciated them. The 'star syndrome' set in. Theater can and does promote wrong notions of the star complex. It becomes extremely difficult to go down and to look back in one's former state. As Ate Amy, the social worker describes:

It is a good feeling to be proud of oneself. But to act like a star means that they do not want to work anymore. They do not want to do the dishes because they are stars (Interview Jan. 22, 2000).

Emunah and Johnson (1983) explain that these contradictions in the 'power' of performance stem from the collision of the new image and the old one. The new image of self, will sometimes collide with their old beliefs about self. The performance, as it creates a 'new' identity or image, a false conception of the children's self is also created at the same time. Post performance depression, an experience common to all actors might ensue. The empty stage without the vitality and life of the performance becomes the symbol of the empty self again. Indeed, this was true for some of the children and youth participants. At the close of performance in Europe, there was the feeling of insecurity. Many of them expressed the feeling of apprehension regarding where they will go next. Or what is in store for them after all the fame and the glory.

In fact some of them expressed that theater is temporary, *panandalian lang*, or that it is just *patikim*, tasting. For someone like Mark, for instance, who dreams to be an actor, "Goldtooth", was just 'tasting, '*Parang pinatikman lang pero wala na*'. [It was like a taste-test, but there's nothing left] Another child thinks that perhaps education is a better option than theater.

Mas maganda ang pag-aaral. Ang drama, panandalian lang yan, e. Ang pagaaral pangmatagalan dahil habangbuhay mo yan dadalhin eh.. Yun...Pero maganda rin ang drama kasi diyan nailalabas mo ang talent mo. Nailalabas mo

kung anong meron ka. Pero mas makahulugan sa akin ang pag-aaral talaga. Ngayon andito ako tumutulong mapag-aral sa mga kapatid ko. [Education is better. drama is temporary. Education is for the long haul because you'll have it for the rest of your life. But drama is also good because you showed your talent there. You showed what you're made of. But education is really more meaningful to me. I am now helping support the education of my siblings.]

Theater's therapeutic aims can be seen in the lives of the street children and youth participants. It has restored much of their confidence and self esteem which was somehow lost in the streets. The stage is a space within which they can confront the pains in their lives. It definitely can serve as a form of emotional and mental expression of oneself – what they cannot express directly is expressed through the play. Above all, it "offers a space in which life can be tried out, rehearsed, without the damaging consequences that such experiments might have if tried 'for real'." (Prentki and Selman, 2000, 1)

But theater as a group endeavor also becomes vulnerable to the presence of conflicting messages because of 'wrong' role models within a theater production which in turn may also greatly affect the behavior of the children and youth. For example, some of the musicians in the production were reported to take drugs and alcohol. This can hinder the goal to help the children and youth change since consistent role modeling is needed for them to stay on the desired path for their development. One may attribute a seeming 'failure' in the program if judged by its premature closure. *Parang naudlot*, [It's like it was nipped in the bud] according to Maricel.<sup>1</sup> The production was envisioned to go places such as the U.S.A and even South America. While in Geneva, Stairway had already been making initial talks with another international organization regarding the possibility of bringing the production to Brazil and some other places in South America. There was even the vision of going Broadway.<sup>2</sup> But by the time the group returned to the Philippines, there was already an indication that all was not well. Some aspects of the whole experience may have had some adverse impact on the children and youth. The production had to come to a close.

A case in point is Nicky. After the European tour, he was excited to move on with his life and accepted a job with MSF-Switzerland as street advocate. He performed well at the beginning and then slowly he slid back once again to his former lifestyle of drugs and alcohol. When confronted as to why he backslided, he said that he missed the performance. He missed the fun and the high that it offered to him. He is back to his old dependence on shabu.

John Cloutier, in his theater work with inner city kids (North America's equivalent of our street children and youth) expressed that working with the inner city kids "[this practice] has led to insights, breakthroughs, frustrations and disappointments." Therefore, cases of non-success will have to be expected.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> This was expressed in a conversation with her on February, 2001 at the Batasang Pambansa Building in Quezon City during a conference we both attended. Maricel as mentioned earlier, is the former educational coordinator of Stairway. She is now connected with another institution.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> This was a dream which Monica expressed in an interview on July 22, 1999.

Emunah and Johnson (1983) suggest that successful performance also builds contradiction for this might also lead to a "dim awareness of one's flaws and shortcomings" (Cited in Frehner 1996, 54). Consequently, it might lead some participants to discontinue the program in order not to contaminate the strongly positive experience. The same authors suggest that the experiences need to be processed and talk about extensively to achieve integration. This, the Stairway staff did extensively but still, it worked with some and failed in others.<sup>3</sup> Some did choose to go back to the streets or return to their old vices like Mark and Nicky. But others stayed in the path towards reintegration into the society as responsible and empowered youth. (See the Timeline of the "Goldtooth" Project which shows the progression of the project from its inception until closure. It also shows specific events and the movement of participants into and out of the project. In Table 3, a summary of the present status of the respondents of the study is shown).

## (Mis)Measuring Success

How does one determine the success of a project? Can it simply be determined by the changes of the street children and the transformation of their lives from depravity to decency, from what seemed to be a hopeless existence to a life of hope?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> I have witnessed the many talk sessions that Monica, Lars, Amy and Merlin spent with the children and youth in trying to work out the confusion brought by the theater experiences.

# Table 3

# Present Status of Children/Youth Respondents: Upon completion of Study (June 2000 - May 2001)

Studying	Working	Neither working Nor studying	Returned to Streets
Rosemarie John Cris Gilbert Rodeline Dave Ely	Angelito Vhal David Jao Cris (own business) Mario (stopped studying and now working) Arman (stopped studying and now working)	Susan (plans to go back to school) Rowena (returned to family then was sighted briefly in the streets; plans to get married)	Mark Nicky

Measuring success is a very contentious issue especially for theater which hopes to achieve non-theatrical ends. Certainly, there are certain aspects in theater that will remain immeasurable or difficult to measure. In social welfare literature, it is clear that the measure of success is hinged upon (re) integration into the mainstream community life. This is the ultimate goal of any childcare institution. Childhope Asia (1995) suggest that indicators of integration into mainstream society or community life are 1) formal education; 2) employment; and 3) normal life. Given this measure of success, it can be said that "Goldtooth" project achieved what it has set out to do. Out of the 17 respondents of the study 6 are now in formal education. Five of them are gainfully employed. But the indication of what is 'normal' is also problematic as this means returning to the families. But many families cannot provide adequately for the children and may in fact cause them to the streets or return to the center. This was the case of Mario, who decided to return to Stairway. After the "Goldtooth" project, Mario was reunited with his close relatives in the province but after a few months he left after experiencing abuse from his own relatives. *Pinagbubuhat ako ng mabibigat na kaban ng palay. Tapos mag-aaral pa ako. Pagdating ko sa gabi wala ng pagkain.* [They made me carry heavy sacks of rice. I was studying at that time. when I get home, there wasn't any food.]<sup>4</sup> Mario returned to Stairway.

Two contrasting examples illustrate this concept of success (or failure). Angelito is now working as a street educator with MSF-Switzerland. He has been considered a model staff and had been a source on inspiration by the children he is now helping. Mark, on the other hand, decided to go back to the streets and returned to his old profession – selling his body. When asked why he returned to his old profession, he says, *Ako lang kasi and natulungan ng Stairway, gusto ko* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> On May 13, 2001, I had the chance of meeting four of my child-respondents at Ninoy Aquino Stadium. They attended an athletic meet for street children which Stairway participated. I had the chance to do an interview with Mario.

namang tumulong sa aking pamilya. [It was only me who was helped by Stairway, I want to help my family in turn.]

Nicky is another non-success story. Rowena was at one time sighted in one of the main avenues in downtown Manila. Rowena returned to her family briefly but because of economic difficulties Rowena went to get a job to support her siblings. She left the job and was reported to have returned to the streets. Whether the pull of the streets was so strong or she was just searching for her friends there, I am unable to determine. There was a possibility that she has returned back to its clutches.<sup>5</sup>

In the final analysis, perhaps the ultimate decision about what to do with their lives still rests on the child or youth him/herself. This was clearly expressed by Jao when I asked him to assess the strength and weakness of the project. He says:

Nasa bata na ang weakness. Kasi minsan, sa bata na talaga uuwi 'yon. Dahil there are a lot of approaches na, a lot of interventions. Nasa bata na kung walang nangyari. Nasa bata na talaga 'yon. [The weakness is in the child. At times it will really come from the child. Because there are a lot of approaches, a lot of interventions. It is in the child if nothing happens. It is in the child.]

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> It was reported by street children advocates that they have seen Rowena at times in one of the streets in Manila where she used to hang out. It was later reported that she has plans to get married or has gotten 'married.'

## Triumphs, Failures and Challenges

Overcoming the forces that once brought the children to the streets is not easy. Much of these forces are in fact structural. To an extent the street children are victims of inequality in wealth and opportunities in our society. It is therefore not surprising that despite making great advancement in their life, after their participation in the theater project, some are still pulled back to the streets and the vices that at one time led them to destruction. The journey from the streets to the stage and on to the future was not as easy for some of them. However, in their moments of failure there are also triumphs.

On April 23, 2001, about one year and six months after the participants of this study ended their program at Stairway, Ate Amy the social worker called me up.<sup>6</sup> Ate Amy and I had maintained a close connection all this time. It was a personal call but this, as with all the calls, also became an update of what is happening to the 'Goldtooth kids'. Her news was both good and bad. Arman who has gone back to his family got involved in a case of stealing a bicycle. He was charged but eventually released for lack of evidence. Ely was in a fight again and she feared he might be going back to jail. These setbacks, though disappointing, are to be expected. Being back in the society does not mean that the children's struggles in life would cease. Some will make it successfully, others not so. But

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Amy has since resigned from Stairway to move to another care giving institution, MSF – Belgium which is based in Manila. She was in Stairway for two and a half years. But she has maintained close contact with Stairway and occasionally does some social work duties for them (i.e. following up children now based in Manila or nearby provinces or preparing identity papers for the present wards of the facility).

there are good news as well. Dave is doing well with his studies. When he was in his third year high school, he was consistently top three among the students in a public high school in Quezon City.<sup>7</sup> He wrote for the high school paper and was recognized as a star player in the school's volleyball team. Gilbert and Rosemarie, too, are both in high school in Puerto Galera. Both are working as Junior Staff of Stairway, getting their own salary as well as educational scholarships from the institution. John Chris, at 18, finally graduated from elementary school. Rodeline is doing very well in her studies at the Philippine Women's University. She recently traveled to Hawaii to speak in behalf of street children in a forum with Asian Development Bank.<sup>8</sup>

Vhal's return to society was marked with a lot of setbacks. He went back briefly into drug use and drug pushing even as Stairway was giving him the opportunity to study. But this time he has overcome the initial bumpy journey. Now, he is an assistant manager cum cook in a canteen in Alabang and sells CDs and fruits during lean hours. Cris is doing well with his businesss – a food stall in Sta. Ana. *Naku yan si Cris, yayaman na talaga 'yan.* [Oh that Cris, he will really become rich], Ate Amy says. And as for Angelito or Jhong, he continued his impressive work record with MSF-Switzerland. Well admired by his coworkers, he has become a role model and inspiration for the street children he is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> He has since transferred to another school in Mindoro where he is in fourth year high school.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Rodeline's education is sponsored by an Asian Development Bank executive.

now helping. *Si Jhong mas malaki pa ang sweldo sa akin* [Jhong even receives higher salary than I do], Ate Amy says not with envy but with pride.

Nothing has been heard of Nicky. In November 2000, after leaving MSF-Switzerland, he was brought back to Stairway to help him recover once more from his drug dependence. After one month in Stairway, MSF was prepared to take him back and even offered to pay for his education in a Fine Arts School since Nicky has a talent in drawing. Stairway gave Nicky money to pay the down payment on a decent housing in Manila. He got the money and he left. The latest news on Mark is that he is still on the streets.

On May 13, 2001, I met six of my respondents and research partners at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium. Together with the 'new' batch of children of Stairway, the "Goldtooth Kids" came to accompany the 'new' wards as well as participate in an athletic meet for street children and youth. They are now the *kuyas* or big brothers to the new batch of street children in Stairway. Mario proudly announced that he is going to have a job at Puerto Galera. *Magtatrabaho na akong disc jockey sa disco* [I will be working as a disc jockey in a disco], he beams with excitement. Gilbert feels accomplished now that he is about to finish high school. *Gusto kong mag-business ng hardware* [I want to have my own business, like a hardware], he reveals. John Chris will continue to be in high school and when asked how he is, he replies, *Mabuti naman, 'Te* [I'm fine]. He certainly looks well and fit. Dave reveals that he has received many offers for an athletic scholarship

when he enters college.<sup>9</sup> Jao came with Susan and their one year old little boy Launcelot.<sup>10</sup> When asked if she is happy being a mother and partner to Jao, she says, *nadiyan na 'yan 'Te* [It's already there], a response that showed acceptance of the choice she made. Jao and Susan have had some difficulties but they are trying very hard to make their life together work. Jao is driving a pedicab while Susan is taking care of the baby. But Susan plans to return to school. She showed me the brochures of two information technology schools and asked my advice to help her decide the best course for her.

Meanwhile, Stairway is continuing its work with street children. A new batch came in March 2000 and is on its way to completing the program. Like many other childcare centers, the challenge continues, and the work as well. As long as there are still street children, the work goes on and the challenge to search for ways in helping the children also continues.

In terms of numbers, the level of success of Stairway's "Goldtooth' project is not at all bad considering that the success rate in street work, according to a long time street educator, is only 50%.<sup>11</sup> Most of the children and youth participants were successfully taken off the street. For about two and a half years escaped to the streets time and time again. In the duration of the project, of their

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Dave recently took an admission test in one of the leading universities in Manila.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Susan and Jao had been living together. Susan was discovered pregnant with Jao as the father at the close of the European tour in Oct. 1999. While relationships with the children in Stairway are not encouraged and in fact, there are explicit rules regarding this, the children would eventually grow up and make their choices. Certainly, some of them choose to fall in love with their fellow wards, as in the case of Jao and Susan.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Interview with Noel, a street educator with Childhope on April 2000.

lives they remained in the facility; whereas, before, they would have however, most of them stayed. And up to this time, Stairway remains the home to some of them: Rosemarie, Gilbert, John Chris, who are now going to school in Puerto Galera; and Mario who has since returned to the facility after the experience of maltreatment from his relatives and Dave who decided to continue his studies in Mindoro after a year of stay with his parents in Quezon City.

Through the respondents' own voices, they have testified as to how their participation in the musical "Goldtooth" has helped them greatly. In all their interviews, they bore witness to the benefits they reaped from the project. For them it was a profitable and unforgettable experience. It is clear that theater for the street children as seen in their participation in the "Goldtooth" project was a powerful strategy that enabled them to work through the traumatic experiences of their lives and help in their development. Training in the theater is seen as developing human potential with the view to achieve the greater maturity and enhancement of the street children's self-esteem. It also developed the atmosphere of discipline and control. This is a dramatic development since most street children and youth are accustomed to their 'free' lifestyle without the constraints of the rules of structure. They play by their own rules. They find it difficult to accept constraints other than those imposed by their peer groups. Most street children have lived day to day, if not from moment to moment. But in taking part in theater they are able to make necessary effort to rid themselves of destructive habits such as idleness or drug abuse.

Moreover, theater through their performance gave them empowerment as they participated in dialogic engagements with their own selves as well as the audience. Through this, it enabled the children and youth to identify the causes that locked them in a marginalized position. By mediating their own cause through theater it destroyed the myths about them and in the process create a new history for themselves.

But change and transformation is, in fact, a long process and one that is expected not to produce immediate results. It is a slow progress towards children's development. What is paramount is the children's self-respect and sense of their worth (Cloutier 1997, 45), and this, theater allowed to develop in the children and youth.

The following comment, I guess, captures the truth in welfare work, that indeed, "there are no miraculous recipes for helping young people to escape the streets' tentacular grip" (UNESCO/ICCB, 47). But the fact that the children were provided alternatives and opportunities is success itself. The question on success (and failure) will always be a source of debate and contention. A childcare institution in Cote de Avoire, Africa simply rejects that question (UNESCO/ICBB). They prefer to think in terms of successive stages reached in the process of reinsertion into the society. Hence, if the participation in "Goldtooth" musical was a step in the process, it is certainly a huge step for many of the children-respondents. "And each successfully mastered step will add another facet to an emerging self which is both constructed and in creation, and at the same time found and discovered " (Frehner 1996, 303).

For Angelito who has had a successful turnaround in his life, theater helped the children and youth participants:

Para sa akin malaking bagay ang naitulong sa teatro. Kaya maganda ang nagawa ng Stairway sa mga bata, kasi nahuhubog ang mga talento nila sa singing at sa acting. [To me, theater helped a lot. Stairway did good to the kids; their talents in singing and acting were honed.]

The creative strategies though powerful may also have its limitations. But there is a need continue the use of these strategies for personal and more importantly, for social change. For as Bert Sulat Jr., rightly asserts:

Stairway' young players may never regain the innocence they have lost, but at least sense has been restored to their existence. And with "Goldtooth", all of the street kids as well as their mentors and guardians, should be able to help their less fortunate peers know what it's like to feel a brand-new day.

This study once more exposed a culture that is potentially destructive. But through theater, the children and youth were allowed to participate in their development and in the process "understand their oppression and take action to liberate themselves from marginalization" (Cloutier 1997, 188). This study shows that while the forces that trapped the street children and youth may be difficult to resist, they can be overcome. There are various strategies that many childcare centers have and could use for the benefit of their clients. One of them is theater. In Stairway, they had "Goldtooth" the musical, which points out the sad plight of street children. Yet it also portrays hope and optimism. "We can make it if we try", states one of the songs that the children sang in the musical. The play through its development and performance was a powerful testament of the performers themselves who were given the opportunity to make it off the streets and make something of their lives. The theater project has led the street children and youth to a journey from the cruelty and depravity of the street to the triumphed on the stage. Hopefully, these good feelings will continue to be translated in their lives as they go on to build a brighter future for themselves. As Monica, poignantly puts it,

Developing this musical was far from merely a matter of training and rehearsals on stage. It was more like climbing a steep, rocky mountain and during the climb, sometimes finding crystals and on rare occasions-diamonds. I found a diamond. Rough as it may be, it is perfect in all of its form. (*Stairway Newsletter* 1998)

### **Reflections: Issues and Lessons of Theater and Welfare Work**

The study highlights the efficacy of the children and youth as their own agents to create a new reality for themselves. Yet the use of theater remains contentious in relation to welfare practices in general. What lessons can be learned from the "Goldtooth" project? What constitute a successful and viable program? Theater is extremely varied in its approaches and forms, what would be the form that would be appropriate and engenders maximum development?

Recommendations in regard to interventions for street children emphasize the importance on drawing on their strengths and resources. Theatrical intervention in particular lends well to child-initiated self-help approaches. It is fun, exciting and also encourages a sense of cooperation among them. However, in using theater as intervention there also certain considerations in regard to what would be the best form of theater that could engender maximum development for children and youth. Mda (1993) argues that success in theatrical intervention also come with the form or methodologies of theater being used. That "plays that evinced efficacy were those that concentrated not only on the artistic product but also on the process of analysis" (Ibid, 178). For instance, a theater project with a ready-made script for the production engenders less participation of the people (or in this case, the children) and consequently leads to less conscientization or awareness of the issues. As a predetermined product it is vulnerable to perpetuating adult dominance and may even expose the young participants to further exploitation. Institutions or centers that plan to use theater as intervention, must therefore take into consideration the process. The "Goldtooth" project did allow some collective effort of ideas through the process of making the production but there might be a need to increase children's participation by allowing them to make more decisions in regard to the whole project starting from its inception (i.e. perhaps, allowing the children to develop their own script for performance) and through the development of the project. As Conquergood asserts,

The backstage processes of researching and developing culturally appropriate materials along with the participatory involvement for the people are experiential processual dimensions as significant as any explicit 'message' communicated in play. For theater to work effectively as a tool for critical awareness and empowerment for oppressed peoples it must be rooted in and begin with their cultural strengths. The critical /political component of theater meant for development enacts itself in the process of developing the performance as much as, if not more than, in the final presentation to an audience (Conquergood 1987, 181).

Another issue is that, there also remains a danger that the theater project may create false expectations from the children and youth. If these expectations will not be met through infrastructures created for them, this may lead to further frustrations -- making them taste the possibilities but not providing them the chance to use the [theater] skills (i.e. such as acting, dancing, production, etc.) that they have learned. <sup>12</sup>

Further, because of the nature of theater itself, possible conflict may stem from conflicting objectives in regard to its use as intervention. In the case of "Goldtooth," for instance, there were two potentially conflicting objectives of the theater project. One is to use as rehabilitation and empowerment and the other,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> At least two respondents expressed in their interviews that the project allowed them to 'taste' theater or *tikim lang* but they felt they were not provided the opportunity to work in theater after "Goldtooth" closed. Stairway did offer support for any of the respondents to pursue their interest on an individual basis. Also they may choose to apply these skills in other aspects of their lives, not necessarily in theater work. But there are those who really want to be involved in theater and it will not be easy for them to join other theater groups. One possibility is to put up a resident theater company that will be based in the institution. This is also the plan of Teatro Palaboy, a street children's theater group. (See *Sunday Inquirer* January 28, 2001)

to raise funds for the center to continue their work with street children. The first objective implicates the importance of the process while the second objective emphasizes the product. While both process and product of theater do constitute supportive elements in the development of the children and youth participants, it might also seriously compromise the project because this might expose the children and youth to further exploitation. Emphasis on the product creates a situation that within the context of supposedly rehabilitation and empowerment, the child is also exposed to the danger of being commodified, subject to market forces to be bargained where his/her situation becomes a selling point.<sup>13</sup>

The above concern also relates directly to the funding requirements of social work. Doing welfare work does not come cheap. It cannot be denied that the altruistic goals of welfare work may sometimes be compromised by its financial need. Most welfare institutions in the country are dependent on foreign or international donors. The reality of welfare work in the Philippines is that 70% of the work is supported by international funders.<sup>14</sup> Only a small amount comes from private and individual contributions sourced locally. This may perpetuate dependency and even compromise the liberating quality of theater. There is fear

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> A performance scholar did express concern that the use of popular musical genre for "Goldtooth" may contain the same coercive and paternalistic notions found in mainstream theater. A member of the audience also felt that the play should have been in Tagalog/Filipino instead of English, which is the language of the street children. Using a language of the dominant and educated elite might negate the purpose of making the children' and youth's voices be heard in an authentic or genuine manner.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> This information was shared by a lady who has extensive experience in welfare work and heads one of the NGOs in the country.

that its "subversive edge' or its empowering character will become seriously compromised as a result of this dependency.

On the other hand, the very nature of welfare work can never be reduced to pennies and cents for to do so would demean the very people – the children – the institutions are trying to endow a greater sense of empowerment, self-respect and humanity. Still, institutions and childcare centers may well be extra cautious with the possible exploitation of the children in their care. Creating a balance with the pragmatic and the altruistic needs of these institutions is admittedly difficult.

This points to the sustainability of projects – a persistent concern of most welfare institutions. It is for this and numerous other reasons, that literature in welfare work suggests that "palliative" approaches should increasingly be abandoned in favor of preventive approaches. This point will be discussed further in the last chapter. But we certainly should not fail to appreciate the work that many of these welfare institution like Stairway have done on behalf of the disadvantaged children and youth. But 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.

# **Chapter 9**

# **Implications and Recommendations**

# Childhood Lost

l am moved, not by pity, not by shame or guilt l am moved simply by your joy

"Khalil Gibran" echoes in my mind as I watch you play your roles; Your children are not yours You can give them your love But not your thoughts. They live in the world of tomorrow, Which you may not visit Not even in your dreams

What world will you see, what challenges will you face?

We, are your shapers, models, teachers, and we have much to learn

Excerpt from the Poem of Johannes Ignacio<sup>1</sup>

I started this paper with a poem by a street child, I chose to end this with a poem by a man involved in childcare work. His poem echoes the challenge in welfare work – that they, the welfare practitioners, who are the shapers, models and teachers, have also recognized that there is much to learn in the field.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> A lawyer, Atty. Ignacio is a children's rights advocate and Chairman of the Board of Stairway Foundation Inc.- Philippines.

Working with children who are at risk like the street children poses a continuous challenge. For it is a path littered with failures and frustrations yet also finding some triumphant moments where one can celebrate with those who have hurdled its difficult twists and turns.

On the basis of the study's findings certain implications can be made.

## Implications for Theory

Miljeteig (2000) argues that we will "not see a genuine child rights approach emerge until working children and youth are allowed to influence policies and programmes through an active participation and partnership, and until we have fully realized the important resource they represent" (303). Further, Miljeteig raises the challenge that there is a need to establish a 'culture of listening' to children (319). Perhaps, children's participation through theater is one strategy to promote the childrens' voice movement with its power to attract the adult's ears.

The need to establish a dialogue with children and the youth was also put forward – a communicative site based on respect. As earlier explicated, theater through performance lends itself to develop communicative competence according to Bauman. This form bestows the children and youth a degree of competence in which during performance, the attention of the audience (especially the adults) was focused on them. On stage, the children gained the audience's full attention. This paper extends Bauman's concept of 'communicative competence' of the street children and youth in a theater

performance setting. That is, theater allows the children and youth to discuss problems through a non-threatening means with the larger community. The study indicates 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.

Perhaps, this also revitalizes the children and youth's form of cultural expression. As said, the street children and youth have a strong aesthetic expression. This is their strength. Perhaps, this is their resistance and response to the adversity that they constantly face while on the streets. This aesthetic expression of dance music and acting when honed in a positive and supportive environment of childcare centers consequently develop the confidence of the child. The children's aesthetic abilities are allowed full expression through performance by participating in a theater production.

The stage offers an alternative communicative site. We Filipinos do not confront problems directly. We tend to be indirect. Theater may well be an indirect way for confronting serious issues such as that of street children. Performance through theater and other means can serve as children's natural venue of expression which at the same time engage the "other" in a dialogue that is mutually beneficial.

### Implications for Research

This present study has implications for research. This study may be a test case in the recent movement to make researches involving children and young people child-oriented. In this project the 'beneficiaries ' themselves of the intervention were sought to provide the bulk of the data. I have directly tried to seek the information from the children and youth and use their actual testimonies in evaluating a theatrical intervention meant for their welfare. Perhaps in the future, more researches will be done that allows the voices of children to be heard.

But listening to children's voices especially in research may not be easy because of the cultural factor that has remained entrenched in our society where children has much less power than adults and thus viewed 'less than adults'. But to make the strategies work this has to be seriously considered by child studies researchers. As Mason (2000) asserts:

Research and theory in new childhood studies can contribute the directional signposts required for developing new child protection strategies based on respect for children as "beings". However, research also informs us that the implementation of strategies which further children's interest is only likely to succeed if we adults are willing to, or forced, to take children seriously by transferring power to them as a significant group in our society – a group which, like other groups, speak with diversity of voices. (38-39).

Clearly, one of the major objectives of this paper is to evaluate a creative center-based project. To a certain extent this proved to be tenable. However, there are still some limitations in the present study, and it is always difficult to assess changes, especially when one considers theater which is a rather complex process. This concern was also expressed by Marcelino and others (2000) in their review of intervention strategies with abused children. Research of this kind requires collaboration with other scholars and experts in order to give an objective and thorough assessment of welfare-related projects. Tim Prentki and Jan Selman who are both practitioners of theater for development, expressed this same concern in their latest book on popular theater:

I think the future work for popular theater is certainly multi-disciplinary; maybe it always was but even more so in the future and, as you say, the ability to make alliances, form partnerships with areas that have cognate but thus far distinct expertise. If we're going to punch our weight within institutions of higher education, that will only happen as part of a regional conglomerate of like-minded areas and what those areas are is by no means the same in every institution because a lot of it is a question of like-minded people getting together. In some places they may prove to be geographers, somewhere else anthropologists, somewhere else economists; so there isn't a blueprint but there is definitely a need to locate the work with this related discourses (Prentki & Selman 2000,198)

In the future, I hope to collaborate with other scholars in different disciplines to conduct further studies on related topics. Potential areas of research would be applying and evaluating creative work for other marginalized

groups such as the handicapped and children in prison. But there is also a need to improve the rigor of an evaluative and assessment study such as this, which may opt for a combination of qualitative and quantitative procedures. Perhaps, in a future research, field experiment may actually be conducted in which a whole theatrical (or any creative) program will be observed from its pre-intervention until post-intervention phase -- including a longitudinal post-intervention assessment.

Since this is a case study involving children based in only one childcare organization, the results may not be generalizable to a larger population. Comparative or multiple case studies of similar organizations and their wards may be conducted in the future to see a larger picture of the use of creative approaches in welfare work.

#### Implications for Child Welfare Practice

The result of this research points to what may be obvious that one project or program cannot a center make. Indeed, there is not one way -- not one strategy to improve the life of children and youth at risk such as the street children and youth participants in this study. For sure, there are no built-in guarantees that theater techniques or programs will on their own produce miracles. Additionally, not all children may be inclined to theatrical or performance related strategies. This points, thus, to a need for diversity of strategies. Programs may well require multi-varied approaches and designed based on the nuances of the needs of children. In other words, better matching of problems with the services is crucial in insuring better outcomes. While this need

is recognized, it might also be necessary to consolidate the effort and resources of already heavily burdened childcare organizations. These organizations can decide on 'specialized' programs such that those street children more inclined to the arts (i.e. theater, music or dance) can go to institutions which can offer them such a program. This will, of course, require strong cooperation and collaboration between childcare organizations.

Recent work in child welfare seems to have recognized that interventions should include a wide range of development and poverty alleviation programs. For example, there is now a family intervention program so that the children and youth who are returned to their family will not "fall" back into the streets again if their families fail to give them the required support. More than fifty percent of children who are returned to their families would suffer the same abuse or deprivation that would led them back to the streets. Families who are already stressed cannot cope with another mouth to feed. On the other hand, the children feel the guilt of not being able to provide for their siblings or help their parents. While the children who are supported by childcare organizations can go to school and get allowance, the family needs money for food. This major cause of failure, I believe has already been addressed in the latest programs for DSWD which provides support for the family.<sup>3</sup> In fact, recent literature in the field insists more

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> In May 2000, the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) launched a project with Street and Urban Working Children Project (SUWCP), an Australian government assisted special program which aims to rehabilitate street children and urban working children and improve the quality of life of their families. This is a food-for-work project that provides rice assistance to children and their families as well as school supplies and education for the children and adult literacy for the parents. (See *Manila Bulletin* March 29, 2000.)

and more on "community development" and participatory strategies that foster active collaboration and initiative among families and communities.

The problem of dependency is something that plagued childcare practice. The children and youth cannot live forever in childcare institutions. But to return them to families that are not being able to cope with the needs of the children and youth means that there is a greater possibility of backsliding that will negate everything that these institutions have invested on the child or youth in their quest to restore them as empowered and responsible individuals in the society. Most likely, these children or youth would keep coming back to their host institution either to live or get support, thus, becoming a vicious cycle of dependency.

The catchwords in development in the past decade have been the term participatory and holistic. The likelihood of success is higher when stakeholders themselves actively participate in their own development and programs designed that acknowledge the realities of the participants. "Partial treatment" might fail to deal with the real issues and only perpetuates the problem. This is the same observation made by Cloutier (1997) in his study of a theater program for inner city kids in Canada. He maintains that:

Programs intended to address the needs of the inner city youth need to be participatory long term, ongoing and flexible enough to respond to their needs. The programs should be structured in such a way that the developmental needs identified by the youth can be responded to as they are identified. If programs

should be structured in such a way that they acknowledge and respect the dayto-day reality of the youth, then progress will be possible (Cloutier 1997, 190).

The children's participation into their own development is perhaps the single advantage of a theatrical strategy. But there is a growing concern in regard to intervention practices. In a recent book that reviews the scholarship and work on child abuse, the researchers assert that:

Interventions are at a groping stage (*pakapa-kapa*). The organizations and agencies are still experimenting at the most effective methods. This is a necessary "first step" in developing a framework or method. However, there is a need to make theory and practice meet. With proper documentation, impact evaluation, needs assessment, a local methodology could be developed (Marcelino *et al* 2000, 92).

This observation remains true, even for the work of Stairway Foundation, which continues to seek ways to be effective in its work with street children. While this could be taken as a challenge to the creativity, resourcefulness and initiative of organizations and institutions, this might be a cause of perennial experimentation that turns the children into guinea pigs, and thus perpetuating their exploitation.

Mda (1988) reiterates that intervention programs need to be evaluated to find out what they have accomplished. This paper hopes to contribute to the information needed in assessing the work of childcare institutions. I hope that there will be more attempts to evaluate projects of this kind.

There is another issue which surfaced in relation to childcare practice. This pertains to the criticism of center-based programs in general. It has been

observed that centers are very expensive to run as they provide the basic needs of children under their care (Moselina 1990 cited in Marcelino, *et al* 2000). However, according to Moselina (1990), they reach and serve only a meager part of the total target population. Center-based work only addresses approximately 5% of the clientele since not all children respond to institutional care. If centers are expensive to run, having a theater production such as "Goldtooth" is an even more expensive endeavor. The dramatic rise in the expenses of Stairway during the "Goldtooth" project shows that mounting a theater production does cost money. In the 1999 annual report of Stairway, it showed a rise of almost four times compared to their previous expenses. Was it worth it? Should the expense stop practitioners from venturing into creative territories? Should center-based projects then be abolished?

In an interview with Lars, he definitely thinks it is all worth it. He says, "If you can turn around seventeen kids like that, then it's worth it; if we had to pay twice, we would still do that." (Interview with Lars on February 1, 2000).

Sharing the same optimism of center-based theater project is Bjorn Holmsten, a theater director and actor from Denmark who once worked as a volunteer in Stairway.

If you can help just one kid, it is useful. And here's [sic] 17 kids. It is useful isn't it? Even if three or five of them are going back to the streets, you still have the others. And they will probably help others. I think it works. You tell me in two year's time but I think it works. At least they have a lot of good experiences. And

then they found out that there is a life outside of the streets (Interview in Denmark Sept. 1999).

Still, any childcare institution should well be able to make their projects sustainable so as not to perpetuate dependency. This study indicates that theater is certainly not a panacea or a magic potion to solve all problems for the street children but perhaps only one of the possibilities which child welfare practitioners can make use of. But each attempt at artistic intervention has the potential to assist us in the "long revolution" of personal and consequently of social change (Kirstenberg 1992, 281).

To end, I hope that this study can contribute in expanding the body of knowledge related to impact assessment of programs especially those that made use of creative strategies. Like Cloutier I, too, hope that this study will inspire others -- educators, policy makers, and cultural workers and artists -- "to undertake projects intend to slow the waste of human potential and social resources that goes on day after day in our [inner] cities and in other parts of the world " (Cloutier 1997, 199). As we are expecting the government to identify the underlying causes that spawn the phenomenon of street children as well as combat the problem, we, educators and scholars need to respond to the challenge by investing our time and expertise so that we can turn out studies and researches that would help guide our policymakers. It requires our willingness to take action and get directly involved in socially relevant projects. As academics, we can either to be more sensitive to society's needs and concerns especially

that of street children and other marginalized groups, or in our apathy we become an accomplice to their exploitation that will condemn future generations of children to repeating cycles of poverty, neglect and abuse. Appendix C Stories of the Children and Youth Respondents Many regard Rowena as terrific actress gifted with a powerful presence onstage. She understands her roles well and she delivers in performance. Knowing what she's been through in her young life, it's no wonder why.

Rowena's real father was killed after her mother left him to live with another man. He was allegedly salvaged because of dispute over a tricycle he was supposed to use to find his wife. She spends her childhood with her mother and her mother's partner who always mauled her. She narrates: *Binubugbog ako ng stepfather ko... lagi akong may kurot sa singit... Pinapalo ako ng ganito kalaking kahoy (pointing at a 2X2 wood that forms the frame of a window). Yung matigas, yung ginagamit sa bahay talaga. Yan ang pinapalo sa akin, yung ganoon o...ganyan... Pinapalo sa puwit ko yan... kung hindi naman sa puwit... sa dito ko (pointing to her thigh area) kahit saan... sa kamay. Siyempre tatakbo ako. Siyempre hindi ko maiwasan.* [My stepfather beat me up. He pinched me at the crotch. A wooden club this huge. [pointing at a 2X2 wood that forms the frame of a window in Lars and Monica's house] the hard kind, the kind used for houses -that's what he used to beat me, that one or....that...he hit my butt with that. If not my butt, then right here [pointing to her thigh area], anywhere here...my hands. Of course I would try to run away. of course I couldn't escape it totally.]

At 6, she lived with her grandmother and tried going to school. She entered Grade I. Unfortunately, she was only able to finish Grade 3. A hidden trauma seemed to haunt her and made her restless. She resisted the routine of school, and the disappointed grandmother did not let her get away with it. She was subjected to beatings just like what her mother did to her.

It was through the radio that Rowena learned of a place called Manila. Whenever she listened, she always heard news about it and this slowly made her interested. She decided to steal money from their neighborhood store and came to Manila all by herself. She was only 11 years old when she left home.

Rowena was taken into RAC (Reception Action Center) right after she disembarked from the bus in Manila. A social worker from this government agency could have seen her wandering alone so she was taken into custody. Rowena found it very hard to live in the strict regiment of the agency, so when a number of kids planned to escape, she took the first opportunity to escape with them.

She ended up in Luneta. A fighter and survivor, Rowena eventually became the female leader of the Sigue-sigue gang. *Isang babae, sinampal ako, sinuntok ko siya sa mukha. Noong nakita nila na matapang ako, balak nila ako gawing lider. Pinap-isipan ko muna.*[One girl spanked me, I hit her in the face. When they saw

me that I was not a coward, they wanted to make me their leader. I had to think about it first.]

Like any other young person involved in gangs, Rowena eventually learned how to be dependent on shabu and solvents. These made her anesthetized to hunger and pain of the streets.

It was when she was once very sick that something really strange happened to her. A man volunteered to take care of her, and took her to his house. When she got well, the man made Rowena his sex slave. She couldn't leave the man's house because it was guarded by a number of men with guns. Rowena simply had to oblige. Whenever she had to go out of the house, she was always guarded by one of the men. Rowena would be imprisoned in that house for months.

The man had a daughter the same age as Rowena and in the first few weeks of her stay this daughter was a little "jealous" of her. Little did she know that much later, it was the daughter that will save her from clutches of her abuser. The daughter partly out of pity and partly out of embarrassment from the neighbors, devised a plan where she will take Rowena to the mall, and from here she can escape. Rowena was very fortunate that the daughter's plan worked, and Rowena finally was able to return to Luneta.

In Luneta she continued with her lifestyle -- drugs, stealing and loitering around. It was also here that she suffered one more molestation. While sleeping, three men abducted her and raped her. Afterwards she was returned back to Luneta. At that time, she never even realized what had happened to her as she was so much under the influence of drugs. This incident hardened Rowena. These abuses also lead her to further abuses as she engaged in sex work with the instigation of some of her female friends.

She continued to struggle in the street until she was found by a social worker and was brought to a childcare center near Luneta. She decided to stay in the agency because she heard a lot about this place from her friends in the street and from the children in RAC when she was jailed there. She studied photography while under the program but she got bored and was longing the life in the street where she is free to do anything that pleases her. She left the agency after one week and went back to Luneta, hanging in the usual territory with gang friends. She went back to her old habits like: sniffing, begging and fighting. At this time Rowena starts to have boyfriends in the street. She feels good of having someone caring her and someone to care. She even claims to have many boyfriends at the same time.

The street educator of the childcare found her in her usual hang out and she was brought back into the institution. One summer, together with other street children she was sent to Stairway at Puerto Galera to attend a summer camp. When they went back to Manila, Rowena left the center. She missed her life in the street. She was in and out of the childcare center many times.

She heard about Stairway's "Goldtooth" musical production through the childcare center. Because they felt that it would be the best thing for her, the center paved the way for Rowena to be part of the musical She auditioned and was chosen as one of the cast. "Goldtooth' opened another chapter in Rowena's life.

# Jao – The Cool One

Jao plays Jojo, a cool, happy-go-lucky street child in "Goldtooth". He chose the role when most have chosen to play Karate, the lead character in the musical. Jao sees Jojo as himself. *That's me. I like Jojo. Jojo was so cool. Very loving and very stupid. That's what I'm like. I'm very stupid.* Jao was 14 years old when he came to Stairway to be part of "Goldtooth". He was on the street for almost 6 years.

Jao is the oldest of the children and he has two younger sisters and one stepbrother. His father was a dope dealer who got caught and was jailed. His mother lived with another man while his father was in jail. Jao's family was very poor. The mother works as *jueteng* collector in the squatters' area where they reside. Ironically, his aunts and uncles were middle class professionals who live in nice houses. But his father was the 'blacksheep' in the family who was practically an outcast of the clan. They lived in the hovel at the back of the beautiful home of their richer relatives.

Jao was driven to the streets because of poverty and poor relationship with his parents. When he was second year high school he stopped going to school. He got bored staying at home and doing nothing. The cramped space of the dump they called home also triggered his desire to have more freedom. He saw some children in the street hanging in a disco pub that seems to be happy. Jao likes dancing and the group children dancing in a disco pub called Thunder draw him to the streets.

On the streets he found a lot of friends and this provided him a lot enjoyment, which he could not find at home. He loves to dance and one of the things he enjoyed most is street dancing. He became one of the Original Thunderboys, a street dancing gang whose members hang around the vicinity of Thunder Disco in Cubao. He claims he liked the streets because he found his personal freedom there.

He learned to take drugs, mostly solvent but also tried marijuana and shabu. To survive the street, he learned to engage in criminal or illegal activities such as *panghohold-up* (hold-up) and even prostitution or *pamamakla*. Nanghohold-up na rin kami...yang trabaho namin manghold-up. Sa umaga, I used to be a park boy sa FX. Sa hapon manghohold-up na kami o kaya magpupunta sa sinehan maghahanap ng bakla. [We engaged in hold-up... that's our job, hold-up. In the morning, I am an FX park boy. In the afternoon, we hold-up people or we will go to movie houses to look for gays].

Jao used to go to drop-in centers like Alay Pag-asa. In fact, he said that most street kids come to drop-in centers to get free food. Sometimes he and his *barkada* would steal clothes, briefs and pants of other kids who are in the

centers. But he never stayed in any children's institution wanting the freedom that the street can offer. He loves dancing and he has a chance to dance every night with his gang for free, outside of the disco place,

He has been also under the residential program of Tanglaw ng Kabataan for street children. He met Kuya Noel, a street educator of Tanglaw who helped him to get off from the street. In Tanglaw, Kuya Noel taught the children the dangers of street life. Soon the street educator became their friend and someone they could trust. But unable to cope with the life in the institution, Jao kept going back to the streets.

One day, Kuya Noel came to their hang-out at Thunder Disco. Noel told them that there was an audition for a musical. This musical, Noel said will give them opportunities for the future. They were asked to try out. Jao together with his friends auditioned. He remembers that he was sleeping during the audition because he was high on drugs. He passed the audition and was brought to Stairway together with some of his gang mates.

He came to Stairway not expecting to stay there for so long. He thought, he would only be staying for 3 months. *Trip lang. Expected ko doon ay three months camping.* [It was just a 'trip'. I expected to stay for three months]. But he stayed on for two and a half years and enjoying being Jojo in "Goldtooth."

## Dave's Story

Dave lives in a squatters' area with his parents. The financial difficulty of the family and the poor interpersonal relationship with his parents pushed him to leave home and stay in the street. In his interview he said, *Malungkot sa bahay.Lagi na lang nag-aaway ang Mama at Papa ko dahil sa pera at kaming mga bata ang laging napagbuntungan. Trese lang ako 'nong umalis ako dahil lagi akong pinapalo* [I had a very sad home life. My parents were always quarrelling about financial matters and they would take it out on the kids. I ran away from home when I was thirteen because of all the beatings.]

He stayed in Quezon City Memorial Circle where he met a group of gays and they became his friends. These friends introduced him how to use illegal substance like, marijuana, shabu, and rugby. Eventually he also got involved in illegal activities such as snatching and hold-ups. He was even involved in gang wars.

Dave faced many difficulties while living in the street. He also missed his mother. There was never enough food or money to buy food in the street. He finds it more difficult especially during the rainy season when it is damp and cold and he has no roof over his head and no blanket to protect him from the cold. His life in the street was meaningless. He had no clear direction in life. All that is important to him is that he could eat, and be with his friends and just to survive day to day. He says in his interview, *Dati wala pa akong naisip na pangarap. Basta kasama ko lang ang barkada ko. Basta ayos na ang buhay ko*.[In the streets, I don't dream. As long as I am with my friends, I feel that my life is okay].

Dave did not stay very long in the streets. A street educator of Kabalikat Center found Dave hanging out at Quezon Memorial Circle. The street educator convinced him to visit the center and be one of the street motivators. He became an active advocate for other street children in the center in his new role as peer motivator. He went back to the street and talked to the street children about safe sex and AIDS prevention. He attended seminars on peer motivation and work as peer motivator for three months.

When Stairway held an audition for the "Goldtooth" musical, he was encouraged by the social worker of Kabalikat to audition. He passed the audition and was sent to Stairway for the rehearsals. In Stairway, he learned to have ambitions and to think of his future. He realized that he has a lot of potential. It was here that he discovered his talent in dancing, singing and painting and in sports.

## Gilbert's Story

Gilbert's family came from Daraga, Albay. His father was a farmer but after eight years of hard life the family transferred to Manila to seek greener pastures. In Manila, Gilbert's father got a job as a fish vendor and the while Gilbert's mother helped him in the fish stall. The parents were able to sufficiently provide the needs in the family of seven children. But an unfortunate event happened to Gilbert's mother. On the day that she is supposed to deliver her baby, she suffered complication and was in a critical condition. The baby died and she became mentally disturbed and also went blind. The event caused much trauma to everyone in the family.

This situation plunged his family into a lot of confusion and it became very difficult for Gilbert. His father resorted to drinking because of the family problems. He also became impatient and irritable and was unable to care for the children. Gilbert took the responsibility of caring for his younger siblings and also his mother who needed special care. Eventually, Gilbert and his siblings had to stop going to school, as there was not enough money to support their education. The pressure in the family made his father short tempered. Gilbert remembers that he and his siblings would be beaten whenever they are hardheaded and naughty.

Though not the eldest in the family, Gilbert was given lot of responsibilities. Aside from taking care of his younger siblings and mother and doing the household chores, he has to wake up very early to sell fish in the market. With not much opportunities to earn enough for his family and in order to lessen the burden with a mentally sick wife, Gilbert's father decided to send his wife and youngest child back to Albay under the care of relatives. Gilbert and the rest of the children stayed with their father in Manila.

With this difficult role of taking care of his younger siblings, Gilbert was resentful. This resentment made him disobey his father which resulted to beatings. He became fearful whenever his father is around. To avoid the oppressive situation is his home he decided to leave with his brother Daniel. Gilbert left home when he was 13 years old. He slept inside parked jeepneys. In the streets, he begged and learned to sniff solvent or rugby. Soon Gilbert learned to steal and used shabu. To satisfy his craving for shabu he got involved in snatching jewelry and wallet from other people. Whenever he is hungry, he stole food from food stalls when he gets the chance.

One day, a woman found Gilbert and his brother in the streets. Sympathetic of their plight, she brought them to her house. It was there that she asked whether they wanted to stay in a childcare center so they will be taken care of. Gilbert agreed to be placed in a childcare center and so he his brother Daniel were brought to Tanglaw ng Kabataan (Tanglaw). Under the program of Tanglaw,

Gilbert enrolled in a formal school. After one month, he quit and left the center and went back to the streets.

Gilbert returned to his old habits of sniffing rugby until he met an accident. He was hit by a car that led to his confinement in a hospital. He was later transferred to the residential home of Tanglaw. When he got well, he continued with his education for a while but then he left the center again after a few days. He felt much discouragement and thought that his life would never improved. He felt this feeling of hopelessness with the kind of life he has in the street. In his interview he said: *Siguro hindi na ako magbabago, hanggang dito na lang ako*. [Maybe, my life will have no chance of changing anymore. I will be like this forever.] He also remembers that in the street he feels he is such a bad boy. He had no sense of right and wrong. What is important to him is just to survive. When tired of the streets, he would go back to the center and then leave again.

And then, for the second time, Gilbert was hit by a car. This incident happened when he was high on rugby. The social worker of Tanglaw decided to bring him back to Albay to stay with his mother and youngest sibling. By bringing him to the province, it would prevent Gilbert from going back to the streets.

His father, however, failed to send regular support for him, his mother and sibling in the province. Due to financial difficulty, Gilbert decided to go back to Manila. He went back to Tanglaw and requested the social worker to help him so he could continue his education. The center felt that Gilbert would be better off learning skills rather than go into formal education, his request was turned down. Instead, he was placed in a training workshop where he learned carpentry.

During the Christmas vacation in 1997, Gilbert decided to visit his brother in Mindoro, who after being placed in Tanglaw was later transferred to Stairway Foundation. Daniel at that time was placed under the program of Stairway. It was during his vacation in Stairway that Gilbert heard about the "Goldtooth," musical production. He became very interested in the musical which resulted in a dilemma – he could not decide whether he will go back to Manila and continue his carpentry training or be part of the musical. Gilbert was advised to go back to Tanglaw to think about his final decision. With the assurance that he was welcome to come back to Stairway if he decided to become part of the musical, Gilbert left for Manila. He sought counseling from one of the staff members of Tanglaw to help him make the decision. After two weeks Gilbert showed up at Stairway. He has finally decided to be part of "Goldtooth". He thought that this was finally his chance to make his life better.

### Susan's Story\*

Susan was exposed in the street life at a very young age. She has been a street child since she was 6 years old. Susan's parents are separated. Two of her siblings died because of premature births. Her parents frequently fought because of her father's extramarital affairs. Susan saw a lot of violence when her father beat up her mother. There was a lot of shouting at home and eventually the father left. That was the last time Susan ever saw her father. Since then Susan's mother supported her two children. She supported her children by selling cigarette and fruits in Ermita. She brought with her the children while she is selling since they were too young to be left alone and there was no one to look after them.

Eventually, she found a place for them in a squatters' area. This arrangement exposed Susan to different kinds of people in the street and the harsh life. People like: drug addicts, drunkards, gamblers and many foreigners. It was a common scene to see fighting and people high on drugs. Although scared, she pretended to be brave in the event of street fights or when approached by people high in drugs or alcohol.

One day, Susan and her mother met a person who told them about Kaibigan Outreach Foundation, an institution helping urban poor and street children. Susan and her mother were introduced to the center. At seven year old and still working in the streets, Susan was able to go to school with Kaibigan's help. She continued to sell fruits in the streets to help her mother meet their daily needs. She would also helped out at home.

When she was ten years old, her mother met a young man named Reynaldo S who later became his stepfather and moved in with them. The relationship of Susan's mother and Reynaldo was also not smooth as they frequently fought over Reynaldo's addiction with solvent. Moreover, Susan finds it awkward to have a stepfather who is almost half the age of her mother. Susan did not like their relationship since the very beginning which contributed to straining her relationship with her mother, a situation she found unbearable. She decided to moved out of their house and transferred to Kaibigan Foundation which became her home.

In the center Susan learned many things. She learned to cook, draw and develop her voice. She becomes the choirmaster in the center and learned to play musical instruments. She's also gifted with a beautiful voice. And she became a member of Kaibigan choir. She even had a chance to audition for *Ms*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>\*</sup> The story of Susan is based from Dr. Cornelio Banaag, Jr.'s book *RESILIENCY Stories Found in Philippine Streets* and few conversations with Susan. During the time of data gathering, Susan refused to be interviewed. Some information was shared by Susan's mother when the researcher met her in Manila on May 2001.

Saigon and she passed but was unable to join the production because she was too young to play the role of Ms. Saigon. Singing became a big part in Susan's life.

While staying in Kaibigan, Susan regularly visited her mother in the squatters' area. Her mother still lived with Reynaldo, and this situation upset Susan. Reynaldo is still involved in drugs. Susan considered her mother's relationship with Reynaldo her biggest problem. She even wished that the relationship would end. She tried to ask her relatives to convince her mother to leave Reynaldo but to no avail. When her mother is short of money she would get money from Susan. But, the situation of Susan's family did not stop her to perform well in school. She was a constant honor student when she was in elementary grades and consistently in top in high school. She concentrated in her studies and was awarded several times as most behave. She did her task in the center and has good relationship with the other children.

Aside from the desire of Susan to end the relationship of her mother with Reynaldo, she was also silently longing to see her father whom she did not see for a very long time. She heard that her father had a new family.

Susan first heard of "Goldtooth" musical play from their music teacher Mr. Ysagani Ibarra. At this time, she has started with her college education but decided to stop schooling because of financial problems. She was encouraged to audition and was chosen. She was given the lead role of Nina in the musical. "Goldtooth" brought Susan from Kaibigan to Stairway.

### Ely, The Fish Vendor

Ely arrived in Stairway Foundation just a few months before the European tour. He was one the new member of the cast of the musical. Ely just came from a juvenile jail when he came to Stairway. He was referred by a social worker from a Youth Home, a juvenile delinquent prison.

Ely's parents originally came from Bacolod. Her mother married when she was only fifteen years old. From Bacolod the mother decided to leave her drunkard and physically abusive husband. She brought Ely with her who was then only three years old.

The mother with her child came to Manila and ended up in a squatter's area. By then, Ely's mother found another partner and they stayed together as couple. The mother works as a laundry woman and his partner works as carpenter. They earned just barely enough for their food. Despite the economic difficulties, Ely went to school in a public elementary school near the squatter's area.

At a very young age he tried to help his mother earn money. *Maliit pa ako naghahap buhay na ako. Naghahanap ako ng bakal-bakal binebenta ko, plastic...*[Since I was a little boy, I already tried to earn money. I would look for scrap metal or used plastic to sell]. He also sold candies and newspapers during weekends. When he got older he sold fish in the neighborhood. Ely supported himself in school. He used his own money to buy his school needs and pay his school fees. He understands their economic difficulty and he helped to augment the family needs at such an early age. Ely was able to support his own personal needs and even helped his mother and stepfather by giving them money from his own meager earnings.

With the growing economic difficulty of the family, Ely decided to live in the house of his fish-selling partner for convenience. He wakes up very early in the morning with his partner to buy fresh fish which they sell in the neighborhood. Ely sells fish before he goes to school. As a result he got tired and sleepy when he is in his classes. He was getting low grades and had many absences, but still he persisted and decided to stay in school.

When Ely was about to finish his elementary education, he got involved with a gang who were also drug users. *Napasama ako sa barkada*.[I joined a gang]. These new peers influenced him to use prohibited drugs and to drink alcohol. Aside from drinking and drug using, they go out a lot in the night to dance. They hopped from one disco house to another where Ely learned to dance and enjoy night outs. Soon his group got involved in a gang war. The gang is quite notorious and known in the neighborhood. They hang out in the street almost every night and spawned many enemies. So fighting became part of their daily

life. The gang even got involved in theft. Eventually Ely stopped his studies. To support himself, he continued to sell fish.

An unexpected event happened to Ely one day. One morning, he went to his usual routine of selling fish. He took a little break and went to a *sari-sari* store to buy cigarettes. A policeman approached Ely and saw that he was carrying a knife. The policeman questioned him and Ely tried to explain that he is a fish vendor and the knife he was carrying is what he uses in cleaning the fish. The policeman did not believe him and brought him to a jail for minors. He was brought to a Youth Home, a juvenile delinquent prison charged for illegal possession of weapon.

Inside the minor's prison, Ely experience the difficulties of living with real criminals. He was so afraid that he tried to be very submissive and good to his jail mates. Used to fighting in the streets, now in jail, he never fought back when somebody hit or challenges him to a fight. There were times that he has to bear the pain of being hit by his co- inmates. The place smells bad and water is very scarce. Taking a bath is a rarity and the heat in the crowded jail made life there so miserable. Ely became so thin and pale. He missed his mother and longed to be with her. Waiting was an agonizing experience. The case filed against him moved very slowly.

After many months of languishing in jail, Ely was released. He was found innocent. While Ely was in jail he promised himself that he would be a good boy. He planned to continue his education but financially he just could not afford it. Ely did not have an idea on how to continue his studies. He sought help from the social worker who handled his case while he was in jail and whom he became friends with. The social worker thought of Stairway as the best place for Ely. He knew that Ely could dance and at that time Stairway was 'recruiting' new children and youth to be part of the "Goldtooth" musical. The social worker felt that Stairway might be able to help Ely get educational assistance.

Ely's referral to Stairway was processed by the social worker. Before a decision was even made to accept him, as his case was still being evaluated, Ely arrived in Stairway with the social worker. Stairway decided to accept him since he was already there and sending him back to Manila would not seem right. His coming to Stairway indicated his desire for change. *Gusto ko na ring matulungan ako*. [I want to be helped]. 'Goldtooth' created a new chapter in his life.

### ARMAN - "The Impossible Boy"

Arman first sat foot in Manila when he was just about seven years old. He had been living with his grandfather in the province when his parents decided to take him to the city. At that time, his mother was a seamstress and his father, an out of job supervisor.

Although their intentions were sincere, it was difficult for Arman to learn how to love them. Despite his young age, he harbored an indifferent feeling towards the couple. He says in an interview: Dahil yung magulang ko kinuha ako... hindi ko sila kilala. E di umalis ako dahil hindi ko pa sila kilala, hindi ko alam na magulang ko pala sila... akala ko ibang tao sila sa pananaw ko dahil bigla lang nila ako kinuha sa probinsiya. [Because my parents got me...but I never knew them. I did not even know that they were my parents, so I left because...They seem like strangers, not my family. They got me from the province].

Arman suffered maltreatment. With a father who is jobless, he had to live in a home where his parents are always quarrelling. Unable to forge a bond with the parents he felt alienated to, Arman took the streets, in an attempt to give meaning to this confusion. There, he found friends his age who had similar problems. He roamed the streets freely with his friends. Not long after, Cubao became his second home, where confusion is personified in the sleepless pace of the streets.

To sustain themselves, Arman and his friends initially resorted to begging for alms. Since they were incapable of substantially fulfilling their needs, most of them eventually depended on solvents, one of the most known forms of which is rugby. Rugby made his sense numbed from the callings of appetite. It did not take too before this dependency became a full blown addiction. The money he gets from begging barely enabled him to buy his solvents, Arman began stealing from sidewalk vendors in the area he often wanders in. Most of the time, he stole from the fruit vendors, whose wares are often stacked in carts parked in busy streets, where it would be easy to get away with a theft.

His father found him in Cubao and brought him home. For a short period of time he stayed with his family. His parents gave him the responsibility to look after his younger brothers and sisters while the parents were out. Arman got bored and decided to go back to the streets. When he went back to the street his younger brother came with him. He said that he tried to convince his brother to go home but the latter did not listen. Eventually, his brother also became a street child and lost contact with him. His parents blamed him for their missing son. This is one of the reasons why Arman and his parents were not able to form a loving relationship. Arman had been taken by a number of institutions before he finally ended up in Stairway. He came to Stairway in 1994, as one of the early batch of residential children. He was considered one of the most difficult cases at that time. He cannot read nor write. He was first taught how to read and write in Stairway through informal classes. He was called "impossible" because he had no patience and his attention span was very short. He usually walked out of sessions when he could not understand the lessons. Many times he has disrupted class sessions because he would turn violent and destroy things. It is said that he has destroyed a lot of pencils and tore a lot pad of papers before he learned to read and write. Very aggressive and hot-tempered, he would curse anyone that he got in conflict with. He would cry or curse endlessly when he gets frustrated. With a tendency for violence, he would always challenge his opponents to a physical fight.

Stairway eventually sent him to a local school where he was able to finish Grade III.

Yet Arman is hardworking and very organized, the positive traits that Arman himself did not seem to recognize at that time. In 1998, Arman got himself into trouble. A new child arrived in Stairway for placement in the center's rehabilitation program. He and Arman became close friends. Arman got involved in a stealing case together with his new buddy and two other children. Arman left Stairway and went back to the streets and back to his old habits. He was apprehended by a policeman in one of Cubao's streets for vagrancy. For months he languished in a juvenile delinquent prison. The judge handling his case recommended that he be returned to Stairway for further rehabilitation. Back at Stairway, he decided to join "Goldtooth" because he wanted to change. *Gusto ko ng mabago ang sarili ko* [I want to change].

# Appendix D

Appendix D-1 –	Newspaper Clippings (International)
Appendix D-2 –	Newspaper Clippings (Local)

APPENDIX D-1 Newspaper Clippings (International)



Newspaper articlein Helsinki: Helsingin Sanomat, Keskiviikkona, page D9, dated 1 September 1999

### Det Sker/Kultur

redag den 3. september 199

# Tidligere gadebørn i Glassalen

### TEATER

Af GORM GROVE

Musicalen "Goldtooth" foregår i Manilas slumkvarterer, hvor flere end 100.000 gadebørn tilbringer livet på gaden. Forestillingen har premiere i Glassalen i Tivoli i aften og skal herefter opføres rundt om i landet. Det særlige ved denne grumme historie om livet som gadebarn er, at den opføres af gadebørn eller rettere tidligere gadebørn – som spiller sig selv.

14 MORGENAVISE Jyllands-Poste

Når de ikke længere er gadebørn skyldes det Stairway Foundation, som siden 1994 har spillet en væsentlig rolle i behandlingen af hårdt belastede gadebørn.

Det er danskeren Lars C. Jørgensen og hans ameri-kanskfødte koreografhustru, Monica Ray, der står bag. Støttet af Danida har de

grundlagt Stairway Foun-dation, et nonprofit kriseog rehabiliteringscenter for gadebørn.

Et program med vægt på

ge mulighed for at bearbej-de traumatiske oplevelser og lægge gadens negative indflydelse bag sig.

### Autentisk teater

Det er netop det, der er det helt unikke ved "Goldtooth", at det er deres egen historie, de unge amatører på scenen synger og fortæller om.

»Det er en meget vedkommende og stærkt bevægende forestilling. Det er autentisk teater, og bør-

de musiske fag giver de un- nene søger ikke medynk, men appellerer til vores medmenneskelighed," siger advokat Jens Gehl, der er med i Stairway Støttegruppen sammen med bl. a. Lone Hertz, Ole Vig Jensen, Jens Hillingsø og Peter A. G. Nielsen fra Gnags.

»Jeg er med i dette her, fordi musik interesserer mig. Jeg mødte Lars C. og Monica på Filippinerne og faldt for deres projekt. Noget af det, som musik og teater kan, er at fortælle sådan en historie. Det er min

måde at drive pædagogik på nu, efter at jeg har fundet ud af, at det for mig ikke længere duer at sige min mening i sang,« siger Peter A. G. Nielsen



De medvirkende i forestillingen "Goldtooth" er alle tidligere gadebørn, der har fået en ny chance i tilværelsen.

Newspaper articlein Denmark: Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten, page 14, dated 3 September 1999

Helsingin Sanomat, torstaina 2.

# Katulapsi auttaa kaltaisiaan

"En usko, että rikkaat ihmiset kuuntelevat, jos köyhä ja likainen lapsi kertoo tarinansa. Siksi me olemme täällä ja esitämme musikaalin katulasten elämästä. Ha-luamme kertoa lapsista, jotka ovat vielä kadulla", Anglelito

*lsip*, 17, sanoo. Kultahammas-musikaalissa hän esittää tanssijaa, liimanhais-

tajaa, rikasta miestä ja juoppoa. Isip on parinkymmenen muun filippiiniläisen katulapsen kanssa kiertueella Euroopassa. Suomes-ta he jatkavat Tanskaan ja Sveit-siin, jossa he esiintyvät YK:ssa

sini, jossa ne esinityvar T.S.sa Iasten oikeuksien päivänä. Hankkeen takana on Stairvay Foundation -niminen järjestö, jo-ka kauniilla Mindoran saarella kuntouttaa katulapsia ja opettaa heille arjen vastuuta, käsityötäi-toja ja musiikkia sekä valmistaa heitä roimimaan kohulottavareit heitä toimimaan kohtalotovereit-tensa auttamiseksi.

lsip tuli Mindoralle puoli vuot-ta sitten. Hän on oppinut valmis-tamaan kivikoruja, ja hän saa tunteja kosketinsoittimien, huilun ja kitaran soitossa. Kitaraa hän tosin osasi jo soittaa.

Hän ei ole varma, mutta hä-nestä tuntuu, että joskus kauan sitten, ennen kuin he asuivat Pa-co Manilassa sillan alla, koko perhe eli isoisä opetti hänelle ki-taransoittoa. Tai sitten se on vain kuvitelma.

#### Poika karkasi kadulle sillan alta

Anglelito Isipin kotisillan alla Paco Manilassa asuu pari tuhatta ihmistä. Puolet heistä on elänyt siellä jo pitkään, uusia tulokkaita sietia jo pitkään, uusia tuliokkaitä virtaa maaseudulta. Kodit ovat hökkeleitä, ja sadeaikana on siir-ryttävä muualle, kun joen vesi nousee. Yläpuolella jyrisee lii-kenne yötä päivää. Poika kävi kuitenkin koulua.

Poika kavi kuitenkin koulua. Koulun jälkeen hän myi savuk-keita ja sanomalehtiä puolille öin, ja äiti kauppasi karkkeja ja kananmunia – niin saatiin rahat. Isip piti koulusta. Mutta läksyjä

hän ehti tehdä vasta yöllä. Isäpuoli tuli perheeseen. Isipin ollessa 14-vuotias, eikä hän tullut toimeen isäpuolen kanssa. Kou-lussakaan hän ei jaksanut enää keskittyä vaan nukahteli tunneil-

Ystävä Jay Jay alkoi houkutel-la häntä kadulle, "rahaa teke-mään". Niin he lähtivät.

"Pengoimme ruokaa roskiksis-ta. Varastimme kaupoista vaatteita ja kelloja ja myimme niitä. Nukuimme kadulla; se on vaaral-lista, poliisi potkii ja rikkaat ih-

miset hätyyttävät pois. Jay Jay haisteli kenkäliimaa, joka vie nälän ja kylmän, mutta minä en voinut. Kun meitä oli useampia, piiritimme joskus jonkun rikkaan ihmisen ja kiristimme häneltä rahaa." "Välillä tapeltiin toisten je

gien kansa pulloilla ja veitsillä. On kyllä parempi juosta pakoon kuin tapella!" "Kaduilla on liigoja, jotka ostavat lapsia seksibisnekseen. Jot-kut kaverini myivät itseään saa-dakseen rahaa. Onnetonta elä-mää "

mää

Elämän oli muututtava

'Kerran istuin yöllä yksin sillalla. Jotakin tapahtui minulle. Aloin taas muistaa elämääni, koulua, pyrkimyksiäni. En tiedä,

koulua, pyrkimyksian. En tieda, miksi ajattelin niin, mutta tajusin, että jotakin on tapahduttava. Mi-nun on muutettava elämäni", Anglelito lsip kertoo. Seuraavana päivänä hän meni

katulapsille tarkoitettuun suojaan. Ei sekään mikään paratiisi ollut: täynnä hulluja, kiusaavia ja metelöiviä lapsia sekä aikuisia, joista jotkut ovat hyviä, jotkut eivät.

Hän vritti houkutella sinne vstäviäänkin, mutta nämä eivät ha-lunneet. Kadulla on vapaa!

Isip itsekin karkaili suojasta öisin, mutta palasi aina takaisin. Hän oppi valmistamaan kynttilöitä, joita myytiin kirkossa, ja sai vähän omaa rahaa. Kuri oli kova, sunnuntait olivat vapaat. Niin kuhui vuosi

#### Maailma on kaunis

Sen jälkeen hän eli puolisen vuotta toisessa katulasten kes-kuksessa. Siellä opetettiin raa-mattua. "Hyviä asioita. Esimerkiksi ... jos joku kadottaa itsen-sä, hän löytää itsensä. Ensin ka-dotin itseni, mutta nyt löydän. Olen löytänyt elämän merkityk-

"On hienoa elää tässä isossa maailmassa, koska on monia iha-nia asioita, esimerkiksi puut. Miten ne kasvavat, miten linnut lentävät. Ja ihmiset ovat kuten minä, samanarvoisia kaikki. Olen elossa, koska minulla on tehtävä"

sa, koska minula on tentava , Anglelito Isip sanoo. Hän haluaisi opiskella lääkä-riksi tai lakimieheksi, "pelastaak-seen elämää". Musikaalikitertu-een jälkeen hän haluaisi mennä telleriin tentilisenen tention. takaisin tavalliseen valtion kou-luun yläasteelle, ja hän toivoo voivansa jatkaa sieltä lukioon.

"Ihmiset ovat kuin puu. Kun tulee talvi, lehdet putoavat. Kun aurinko, uudet lehdet puhkeavat. Asiat muuttuvat. Emme tiedä. mitä meille tapahtuu. Mutta mitä tahansa tapahtuu, älä unohda hymyillä ja uskoa, että parempi tuvaisuus on odottamassa." KATRI SIMONEN

Kultahammas katulasten musikaali Filippiineiltä esitetään 4. ja 5. syyskuuta kello 18 Lin-nanmäen Peacock-teatterissa.

Newspaper articlein Helsinki: Helsingin Sanomat Torstaina page 2

Anglelito Isip tuli kavereineen Suomeen kertomaan kotimaansa Filippiinien katulasten elämästä.





Newspaper articlein Helsinki: Keski Uusimaa Lauantaina, page 8, dated 4 September 1999



Newspaper articlein Helsinki: Ihmiset Glamour, page 35, dated 6 September 1999

Side 7

Viborg

# **Skoleelever grebet** af gadebørns liv

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Sektion 2 Lordag 18. september 1999



Newspaper article in Viborg, Denmark: Lordag, page 7, dated 18 September 1999

Musical Stiffictule Inponerede og chokerede

TEATER: Tidligere gadebørn spiller rockmusical om deres liv Af Mette Lauth

god rockmusik og flotte dan-seoptrin, er indholdet langt

17 tidligere gadebørn fra hovedstaden Manila på Filip-

pinerne gæster Århus mandag og tirsdag. Sammen med den

fra muntert.

værelse, hvor seksuelle over-greb, vold og misbrug er en fast del af hverdagen, og snifning af lim er en hjælp til at bære sulten, smerterne og ensomheden. De medvirkende i stykket ARHUS: Det er barske billehar alle fået hjælp til at komme væk fra gaden. De bor på Stairway-hjemmet på en ø fem timers rejse syd for Mader, der møder skoleeleverne fra 7.-9. klasse ved forestillingen Goldtooth i Musikhuset. Foto af børn der ligger skudt og er mishandlet, bliver kastet nila. Stedet bliver drevet af danskeren Lars C. Jørgensen og hans amerikansk fødte hustru Monica med støtte fra op på kulisserne af rustet bøl-geblik, og selv om resten af forestillingen er pakket ind i

way Danmark. Chokerende

På Stairway-hjemmet lægges der vægt på kreative fag som teater, dans og musik, der hjælper gadebørnene til at be-

Danida og foreningen Stair-

voksne skuespiller Ysagani Ybarra opfører de musicalen

Goldtooth, som er bygget på de unges egne erfaringer fra livet på gaden. Det er en til-

arbejde deres traumatiske op-

levelser og få ny selvtillid. Musicalen Goldtooth er også en del af denne bearbejdning, men stykket er langt mere end terapi på scenen. De unge skuespillere imponerede de indbudte skoleele-ver med deres flotte præstationer, men indholdet rystede

 De spillede rigtig godt, men det var også ret choke-rende. Jeg var ikke klar over, at de havde det så slemt, og at så mange tog stoffer, siger 13-årige Jacob Andersen fra 7.c på Mølleskolen i Ry. Hans klassekammerater giver ham ret.

- Det er vildt, at der er så stor forskel på deres liv og vo-res. Nogen gange føler jeg mig lidt alene, men tænk så på, hvordan de må have det uden familie og på gaden. Jeg kan slet ikke rigtigt forestille mig det, siger Julie Rasmussen, 12 år.

Man kommer til at tænke på, hvor godt vi har det her, siger Beth Apollo, 12 år.

De tre rystede skolelever har alle fået lyst til at gøre noget for gadebørnene, og for-Beth Apollo.

REN HUPPELD

Pigen Karate på flugt gennem Manilas gader Skuespillerinden er 19-årige Susan, der også i det virkelige liv har prøvet den hårde tilværelse som gadebarn.

slagene går fra at putte mere Danmark siden 24. august for både skoleelever og senere toj i tojcontainerne til at gå

Stairway-projektet har været i havn og Veile. I går spillede de

med en afstikker til Finland. ved en åben forestilling, og i hjem og opfordre forældrene Den første uge brugte de på at formiddag får endnu flere til at give et bidrag til gade- indspille den cd, der sælges skoleelever chancen, før turved koncerterne, og siden har neen fortsætter til Aalborg og De tidligere gadebørn fra de opført musicalen i Køben- derfra videre ud i Europa.

"Man kommer til at tænke på, hvor godt vi har det her."

Newspaper article in Aarhus, Denmark dated 21 September 1999



musicalen sammen med deres 7. klasse, - Man kommer til

at tænke på, hvor godt vi har det her, siger Beth Apollo.





Newspaper article in Denmark: ND Midt-Vest Avis, side 14, dated 22 September 1999

### **GENÈVE-VALAIS**



On ne choisit pas les trottoirs de Manille, chantait déjà Maxime Leforestier, dans les années 70-80. Cela reste vrai à notre époque. Pourtant, il n'y a pas de fatalité et rien ne sert de donner dans le misérabilisme. C'est ce message que la vingtaine d'ex-enfants des rues accueillis par l'association Païdos' est venu porter à Genève avec le spectacle de «Coldtouth» (voir ci-dessous).

de «Goldtooth» (voir ci-dessous). Fraîchement débarqués des Philippines le matin même, il fallu les tirer – avec regret – de leur profond sommeil (à cause du décalage horaire) afin de pouvoir les interviewer. De nature très pudique, ils parlent difficilement de leur vie passée. Pourtant, petit à petit, leur curiosité se réveille, les langues se délient, et tous voudraient être interviewés et à leur tour poser des questions. De leur passé, ils ne diront pas grand-cho se, quoique quelques changements à peine perceptibles dans l'expression de leurs visages nous donnent la mesure du poids qu'ils ont encore sur le cœur.

Mais l'important n'est pas de ressasser le passé, si terrible soitil, dit Rose-Marie, incroyable petit bout de femme de 18 ans qui en paraît 14. Suite à des problèmes familiaux dont elle préfère ne pas parler, elle décida à l'âge de treize ans de partir vivre dans la rue. Depuis, c'est peu dire que la rue est devenue sa seule vraie famille et ses compagnons ses «frères» et ses «sœurs». Ellemême continue à se faire appeler «Lola» – c'est-à-dire grand-mère

- car déjà à cet âge, elle consacrait toutes ses forces à aider ses frères des autres rues, en leur fournissant nourriture et vêtements. En travaillant dur, elle parvenait en effet à amasser un revenu deux fois supérieur à celui d'un professeur d'université et dix fois celui d'un Philippin moyen. Trois ans plus tard, Rose-Marie

a trouvé le courage de quitter ce qui était toute sa vie en faisant la connaissance de l'association «Stairways» initiatrice du projet «Goldtooth». En se lancant dans cette aventure théâtrale, de nouveaux horizons se sont ouverts à elle. Elle se sent aujourd'hui véritablement dans une phase dynamique, même si elle peine encore à se projeter dans le long terme, concept qui n'a pas cours dans la rue. Dans l'immédiat, ce qui compte c'est que la pièce soit un succès et qu'elle puisse être vue par un maximum de gens. Ensuite, elle ne sait pas três bien: son rêve serait de retourner à l'école mais aussi de devenir éducatrice de rue, ce qu'au fond elle a toujours été. Une chose est sûre, jamais elle n'abandonnera «ses enfants»

Pour Christopher, avec ses vingt ans et son visage d'angemalgré une balafre au coin de la bouche – «Goldtooth» représente aussi un grand tournant. Longtemps relégué au rôle de victime de la violence – policière en particulier – il considère sa participation dans la pièce comme un défi personnel. C'est à ce prix qu'il compte retrouver sa fierté et la confiance en luimême. En même temps, il est extrémement conscient de l'importance du message délivré par la pièce pour sensibiliser l'opinion sur le droit des enfants. Plus tard, il voudrait être avocat, informaticien, ou…, éducateur de rue.

<sup>1</sup>Association s'occupant notamment de monter des spectacles avec des enfants défavorisés.

# «Godtooth», un opéra rock

Sous la forme d'une pièce musicale haute en couleur, en musique rock et chansons poignantes, «Goldtooth» nous emmène dans l'univers bigarré des enfants des rues de Manille, fait de truands, de flics haineux, de faim, de peur, mais aussi de solidarité et de tendresse infinie. Quant au personnage principal, il incarne le rôle du maquereau, reconnaissable à sa dent en or (d'où son nom). Après avoir reçu un accueil inespéré aux Philippines et une tournée en Norvège et en Finlande, la pièce sera jouée ce soir au Palais des nations devant une assemblée composée de représentants d'organisations internationales et de personnalités genevoises. Deux représentations publiques auront lieu au Forum de Meyrin, le 1° octobre à 20h 30 et le 3 à 17 h. HCo

Réservations: Billetel ou = 022/98934 34. Prix: 30 fr., 15 fr.

Newspaper article in Geneva: Geneve-Valais Le Courrier, page 5, dated 30 September 1999

# «Goldtooth» ou la revanche des enfants des rues

LE COURRIER

**OPÉRA-ROCK** • Rencontre avec d'ex-enfants des rues devenus acteurs de leur propre vie grâce à la scène.



Rose-Marie ne veut pas ressasser son passé. Ce qui compte, pour cette ex-enfant des rues, c'est que «Goldtooth» soit un succès.

APPENDIX D-2 Newspaper Clippings (Local)



STREETKIDS NO MORE ... (L-R) Romeo Madrid and Mario ONSTAGE ... Isagani Ibarra with the streetkids. **Fulgencio** 

# Let's hear it from the streetkids

In a theatrical expose, former street children from Stairway Foundation, in collaboration with professional artists and musicians, presents "Goldtooth, A Street Children's Musical," on March 21 and 28 at the teatro ng GSIS.

This musical illustrates the horror of the street sub-culture - children who are tricked into prostitution, got high on solvent, those who commit crime, and children who lose their lives in street battles.

"I am very proud to be part of this campaign for children's rights and welfare," commented Lars Jorgensen, director of the Stairway project.

A street child in our society is a person without a voice, without representation. Someone to be ignored. And yet most of the 100 million street children worldwide are young people who have suffered extreme neglect and abuse.

"The magnitude and the urgency of this problem does not only pose a threat towards human dignity, but also to the safety of our streets and our cities. Through the musical performance, the Stairway Foundation children call on our consciences, our values, our dignity as human beings to end the complacency towards this social issue. We need increased collaboration and action to eliminate this problem," Lars adds.

But the musical talks of hope. When the children become aware of their manipulative 'minder' Goldtooth they sing out in unison "we can make it if we try" - a powerful testament to the performers themselves, all of whom have made it. Made it off the streets.

The children cast have been residents of the Stairway Foundation in Mindoro where, as part of their rehabilitation program, they have been actively involved in a wide range of creative arts-based activities.

The musical was written and directed by Monica Ray Jorgensen, inspired by a video cartoon produced by Street Kids International. Developing the performance has been a close collaboration between the children and the director.

"We found that the children identified themselves with the characters in the video cartoon "Goldtooth" and we were able to get them to talk about their experiences," said Monica Ray Jorgensen.

"Gaining an understanding of the manipulation they had experienced at the hands of numerous evil Goldtooth's, these children were able to release much of the shame, grief and fear that they have lived with. This powerful catharsis, in conjunction with many of the activities our program at Stairway offers, has enabled these children to rebuild their self-worth and self-esteem, both vital ingredients to see them through life," Monica explains.

The musical has been launched to mark the 10th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and is scheduled to be presented in Europe for the third quarter culminating in performances to coincide with the World Forum for Children's Welfare in Helsinki, Finland in September, 1999.

For inquiries, call the Media Bureau, Stairway Foundation at tel. 897-7676.



**RODELYN PEJINO**, former streetki acts on stage. 1 1448

Manila Bulletin, page C-1, dated 18 March 1999



# 17 street kids end world musical tour in triumph

### BY MICHAEL LIM UBAC

iy iz

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16

THEY used to rule the streets. Now

they want to rule the global stage. Seventeen teenagers who used to wander the streets of Metro Manila arrived Monday from a European tour aimed at gathering support for street children across the globe.

During the three-nation swing, which included Finland, Denmark and Switzerland, they staged the "Goldtooth, a street children musical" which depicts the plight of street children in the Philipping. x children in the Philippines. And who would ever imagine that

these kids could perform before foreign lands and in renowned places such as the United Nations Convention Center in Geneva, Switzerland? Not even the teenagers themselves.

"I never imagined myself as a stage actress, much more an artist who can perform before an international audience," said Susan Serafico, 19, who played Nina, the lead performer in the 22

"It's really unthinkable and unexpected. The experience gave us valuable lessons in life, and I think my self-estnern was boosted by the brin" by the trip

said Rowena Y. Reyes, 15, who played the role of a hooker.

For 15-year-old Arman Serafin, it's like an unforgettable dream trip. "It's my first time to ride in an airplane, and my first time to go out of the country. It's also my first appearance before a foreign audience," he happily recounted.

For Christopher Cabayan, 20, Jong Isip, 18, David Dacula, 16, and Jao Gutierrez, 18, the European tour helped them to realize that even exploited children like them could serve as effective advocates for the protection of children around the world. Even Roly Maligad, who wrote the

Even Roly Maligad, who wrote the musical scoring for the play, said that performing at the UN Convention Center, the very spot where world leaders converge and discuss global

issues, was overwhelming. Maligad is the band leader of Cocojam which provided the play's musical scoring. The musical's title was taken from

a cartoon character who epitomized all evil deeds. Goldtooth is portrayed as a. ruthless exploiter of children, a pimp and a pusher, who preys on their innecentor and villnericity to make

money. The musical recounts the plight of two street children, Karate and her sister of Goldtooth. The death of Nina serves as the musical climax which eventually opened the eyes of Karate and the other exploited children to strive to change.

The whole cast departed for Denmark on Aug. 23. They were led by Lars Jorgensen, project director of the Stairway Foundation, which runs a facility in Puerto Galera for the rehabilitation of children.

The musical is a project of the Stairway Foundation Inc. but the European tour was funded by European schools and groups concerned with the protection of the children.

The British Airways did not sponsor the tour as what was indicated in the photo caption last Tuesday.

After filming the musical in Denmark, the cast proceeded to Helsinki, Finland, and performed at the World Forum for Children's Justice and

Welfare held from Aug. 30 to Sept. 1. From Sept. 7 to 28, they were asked to perform at the educational and cultural institutions around major cities in Denmark

Philippine Daily Inquirer, page 17, dated 19 October 1999

# A musical on street children by street children

FORMER street children from Stairway Foundation, in collaboration with professional artists and musicians, give life to the reality of living on the streets in a new musical," Goldtooth, A Street Children's Musical."

To be staged for four days only at the Teatro ng GSIS, this musical illustrates the horror of the street subculture: children tricked into prostitution by the evil element in society; children getting high on solvent to escape the pain of their lives; children using crime to afford the basics of life; children becoming victims to prostitution; even children losing their lives in the struggle on the streets.

This musical is a dramatic portrayal of a massive social problem. "I am very proud to be part of this campaign for children's rights and welfare," says Lars Jorgensen, director of the Stairway Project. "Through the musical, the Stairway Foundation children call on us to end the complacency towards this social issue."

The musical was written and directed by Monica Ray Jorgensen, inspired by a video cartoon produced by Street Kids International. Developing the performance has been a close collaboration between the children and the director.

The musical also marks the 10th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and is due to be toured in Europe for the third quarter, culminating in performances to coincide with the World Forum for Children's Welfare in Helsinki, Finland in September.



SCENE from "Goldtooth"

Funding from the rour is expected to come from corporations, government and funding agencies, private donors and funding vour readers. Plus, nor only will the Stairway kids get to see more of have been tweaked into doo-wop mode, while the rest, including the ballads, maintain their original form. Particularly unchanged is the cheery *Can Yun Feld* a *Brand New Day*, the musical's end song mostly snappy sound- and lyric-wise, such as *In a Drew like Take, Giue Snifting Bluch*, and the Maligad-penned Tagalog *Lansungun*. A couple of other numbers which always manages to compel specta-tors to stand up and clap along. Even better, *Guldtwib* should find its the world, they will be vital to postshow awareness talks for their various viewers, mism that beats corrupt escapism anytime Stairway's young players may never regain the innocence they have lost, but at its final run at the CCP Complex's Teatro abroad later this year as Stairway, divulges Lars, is "collaborating with the Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedleast sense has been restored to their existence. And with Goldtwith (which has ng GSIS today, 2 pm and 7:30 pm), all of arguably the best track from the 1998 show: *Gidtuatb'*, *Out There*, a cautionary ullaby with an unforgettable "Be-ware, be-ware my boy, be-ware" refrain, and whose lulling melody can only faintly be Maligad and his mates in Cocojam - are Simply put, Goldtooth the knntrubidat can never top the high that Guldtoutb the musical has to offer: reality-based optiheard on some of the new show's instru-Still, the surviving ditties – mostly blues and rock-oriented music by Rolly way to the rest of the country and even less-fortunate peers know what it's like 1 feel a brand-new day. the S-kids, as well as their mentors and guardians, should be able to help their including those locales' own lost boys ish embassies in [touring] Goldtooth. overtures. and girls. mental

preview performance last year would still find its latest version laudable. The program may seem threadbare, but then we're not talking just off-Breadway hete... it's off-Reperfory Philippines, even. There's this additional actor who Tropical Depression) and as the singing hermit in Bulwagang Gantimpala's *llong Adumt*. Ybarra is the sole professional thespian in the cast – that is, not counting Serafico. a Paco. Manila, urban-poor gal who had done school plays and, if not for ego sense of the word, among the Goldwoth talents. In fact, many of the kids Still, there are no stars, in the inflatedthe initial libretto. But you might gasp, as I did, at the disappearance of what is worth of detail (along with the delaying 15-minute recess) has been snipped from who plays Karate (previously essayed by a boy, who recently bade Stairway bye-bye to be reunited with his parents in of a callboy customer and simply gay kid. Audiences at past performances should heave a sigh of relief as some 30 minutes' Jesusa Serafico, who portrays Nina. Viewers also cannot miss Vhal Gonzales who, as The Poet, spouts piercing monologues replete with an authentic play two or more roles, and most readily known for writing the tunes Biyubeng Langit (popularized by Lolita Carbon) and Bilog nu Nannan ang Buwan (a hit for Dejino and Serafico approached certain assist in any technical work, such as disassembling sets. At the end of last Sunday's performance, Ybarra himself Lars says joined Stairway just eight months ago, and assumes the dual roles Ysagani Ybarra, the musical's coartistic Samar, Leyte), and the adorable Maria audience members to place garlands of particularly the feisty Rodeline Dejino, Binitys accent. And there's no escaping asked everyone to applaud the show's several gold-hearted sponsors while her young age, nearly got cast in Missi director who plays Goldtooth. Best Anyone who caught Goldtooth's gratitude. Saugo

printing, as well as being tour guides to Puerto guests. And with *Gubath*, which had a sponsorship- and publicity-seeking preview last April, the Stairway kids have added "performer" to their résumés. narrative progresses in roughly an hour and a half through about 20 songs, all but two of which are entirely in English, and climaxes in how the kids extract sister Nina, who, despite their resistance, fall prey to Goldtooth's false charms. The An adaptation of a 27-minute ani-mated video by the Canada-based Street rugby supplier and shameless pimp simply known as Goldtooth – the shady sort of character Lou Reed talked about developing Guldtoutb have been based on in The Velvet Underground's Waiting for tomboyish Karate and her conscientious Goldtooth from their lives. "[Goldtootb's] theatrical influences are "alented, Ambitious Street Kids-"with the Mun. Serving as protagonists are the craftsmaking activities such as greeting card- and jewelry-making and T-shirt parentless youngsters who resort to street-hawking, snatching, prostitution, drug addiction, or all of the above. The emotions and growing capabilities in expression as a result of hard work and not particularly from Greek theater or Junu Christ Superstar," says Lars Jorgensen, Stairway colounder and Monica's Danish husband, alluding to "temptation girls" here, a *Pilate Sang* sounding number there). "It was all inspired by working with these young people" - collectively known as Task, i their musical's immediately discernible Kids International, Goldtooth tells of a a firsthand experience of what they portray. The collaborative efforts beindividuals and members of a group." The group does have its standouts. number of impoverished, apparently predecessors (hints: a trio of masked instead of backbreaking or immoral labor, the Stairway kids tackle personal development in the cast as only adult they ever see is a sinister tween the director and the cast on east sense has been restored to their existence.

instead of just being away from mean streets and living on Easy Street, the kids stay positively busy. "Other than free room and board, the kids have to work for what they want," relates Washington, DC, native and *Goldwoth* director-chief librettist Monica Ray Jorgensen. But never regain the innocence they have lost, but at Puerto Galera. Since its inception in 1993, Stairway has taken care of children who used to live on the edge in Cubao escapism anytime. Stairway's young players may selling cigarettes and wimputitut, if not their very bodies, while their lazier peers IT'S a familiar sight: kids who should be slouch in dingy corners sniffing solvent. This while better-off people, including this observer, look on. What unfolded here, however, was a simulated version of that embarrassing Manila reality. It's all part of Goldtwith: A Streetchildren's Musical, a show that aims Indows to their own real pasts. This is a project of Stairway Foundaand other Metro Manila hotspots. Amid What's more, Stairway's wards learn offer: reality-based optimism that beats corrupt kids who act, dance and sing are former streetchildren, and their roles are surroundings, Stairway employs art to rehabilitate the kids. In short, Stairway Simply put, Goldtooth the kontrabida can never problem. What gives the musical more in school are out in the streets instead, dramatic muscle is the fact that the 16 the Oriental Mindoro resort's natural top the high that Goldtooth the musical has to to dramatize this gritty scenario and stress the urgency of addressing the one crucial value: responsibility. So nongovernment institution based in BY BERT B. SULAT JR. tion. Inc., a nonstock, nonprofit, aims to take the "street" out of streetkids." Like theater Smells GOLDTOOTH eam

Appendix E Sample Programs of 'Goldtooth'



I anledning af 10-året for FNs 'Konventionen om Barnets Rettigheder' præsenterer Stairway Foundation Inc. musicalen 'Goldtooth'.

Goldtooth, som er skabt af Monica Ray Jørgensen og Rolly Madigan, er inspireret af den canadiske tegnefilm af samme navn.

Danmarksturneen gennemføres i samarbejde med foreningen Stairway Danmark, Amtscenteret for undervisning i KBH's amt og Stairway Støttegruppen bestående af:

### **Skuespiller Lone Hertz**

Filminstruktør Katrine Nyholm

Fhv. undervisningsminister Ole Vig Jensen

Musiker Peter A.G. Nielsen

Læge Jens Hillingsø

Advokat Jens Gehl

For yderligere information og materiale til undervisningsbrug henvises til Internet website:

acudk.dk/goldtooth.htm

Projektkoordinator: Anita Wales





# handling

#### I. akt

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..........

'Goldtooth' foregår i Manilas slumkvarterer; hvor mere end 100.000 gadebørn tilbringer livet på gaden. De to søstre Karate og Nina har ingen forældre. De lever fra hånden til munden ved at sælge kranse af sampaguitas - Filippinernes nationalblomst og ironisk nok symbolet på uskyld.

En dag ser Nina, at Karate sidder og sniffer rugby. Hun bliver vred på Karate. Men så dukker den farlige Goldtooth op. Han er pusher og sælger stoffer til gadebørnene. Han spørger, hvorfor Karate ikke bare må have det sjovt. Nina gør, hvad hun kan for at få Karate til at tjene penge ved at sælge blomsterkranse, men Karate vil meget hellere lege med sine venner, der lever af at tjene *easy money*.

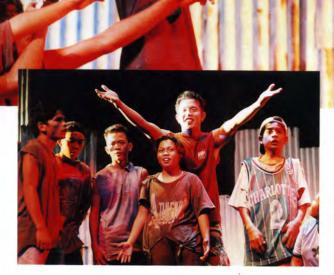
Goldtooth prøver også at lokke Nina til at iføre sig en fin rød kjole, så hun kan tjene hurtige penge ved prostitution. Men Nina bliver vred og smider kjolen i hovedet på ham. Da hun kommer hjem igen forklarer hun Karate, at hvis hun blot kunne gennemskue, hvad Goldtooth i virkeligheden er, så ville han miste magten over hende. Det forstår Karate tilsyneladende, og hun går atter ud for at sælge blomsterkranse.

#### 2.akt

På gaden møder Karate sine gamle venner, der spiller bold. For at være med i legen hænger hun et øjeblik sine kranse på en lygtepæl. Men Goldtooth står på lur og får et af børnene til at stjæle blomsterne - hendes eneste indtægtskilde. Skamfuld og bange for at komme tomhændet hjem, vælger hun at flygte fra virkeligheden og sniffer den lim, Goldtooth tilbyder hende. Hun begynder at sniffe og bliver hurtigt afhængig. Fanget ind i hans net af forbrydelse og afhængighed, glemmer hun alt om at tjene penge på ærlig vis.

Sample program of 'Goldtooth', page 2





#### 3.akt

En dag kommer Karate i fængsel, og Nina er desperat, fordi hun ikke kan finde sin søster. Hun ser ingen anden udvej end at opsøge Goldtooth for at bede om hjælp. Men han er nådesløs, og hans pris for at hjælpe får fatale konsekvenser for Nina. Hun bliver prostitueret. Nedværdiget og ydmyget begynder også hun at sniffe, så da Karate kommer ud af fængslet, finder hun Nina på stoffer og sammen med en kunde. I et dramatisk opgør mellem Goldtooth og søstrene bliver Nina dræbt, og ved hendes begravelse samles alle børnene, Her synger de en filippinsk børnesang, om en lille laset dukke, der er helt alene i verden.

Da Goldtooth viser sig, modstår Karate og de andre børn hans tilbud om stoffer og rugby. De får endelig øjnene op for både hvem og hvad Goldtooth i virkeligheden er, og ved at stå sammen lykkes det dem endelig at ophæve hans magt over dem.

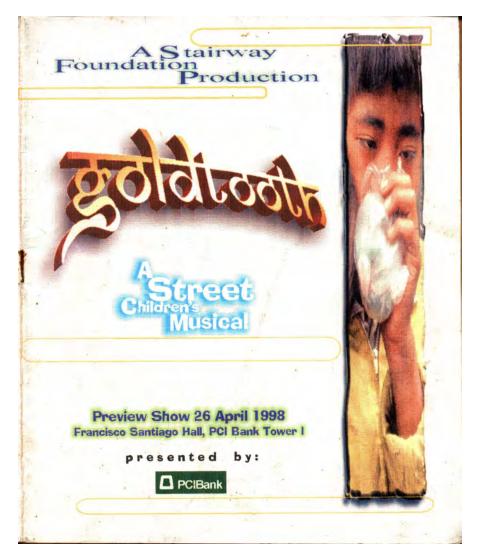
3



### GOLDTOOTH

Goldtooth er ikke kun en fiktiv person. Han er alfons og pusher og udnytter gadebørns sårbarhed til at tjene penge til sig selv. Typer som ham eksisterer og er en trussel for millioner af gadebøm verden over. Han står på gadehjørner eller holder til i smalle sidegader. Han går ikke af vejen for noget.

Goldtooth søger altid først at vinde gadebørnenes tillid. Det starter i det små. Han forærer dem piller, opløsningsmidler eller lim til at sniffe, så de glemmer deres udsigtsløse hverdag. Men så snart de har vænnet sig til disse stoffer, udvikler der sig et afhængighedsforhold mellem ham og børnene. Nu er stofferne ikke længere gratis, og nu kan Goldtooth få gadebørnene til at prostituere sig, stjæle eller lave røveriske overfald for at få flere og stærkere stoffer.



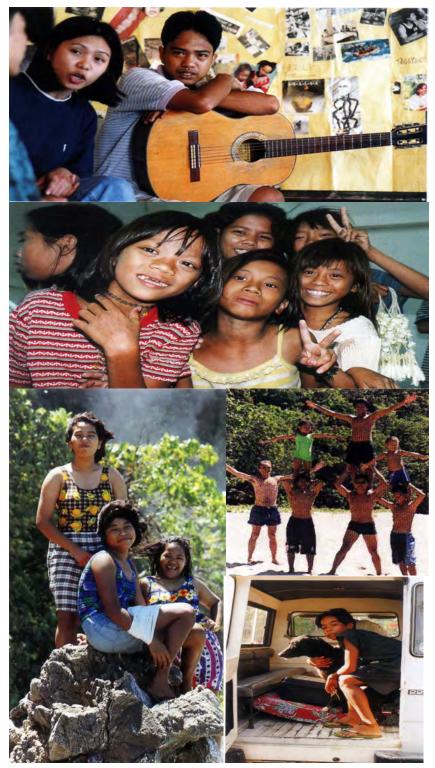
Cover of the program of "Goldtooth" - 1<sup>st</sup> performance in Makati

Sample program of 'Goldtooth', page 6

APPENDIX F More pictures of TASK (Lived experiences)



Life in Stairway



Life in Stairway [photos courtesy of Stairway Foundation, Inc.]



The T.A.S.K. going to Europe Top: Posing at Holiday Inn, Manila; Middle: Preparing passports at NAIA; Bottom: Aboard British Airways

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