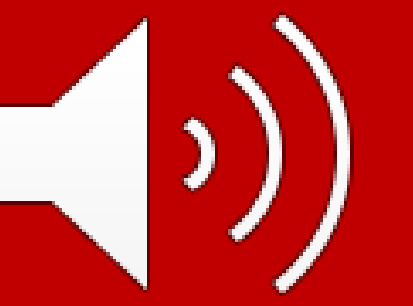


# Heartbeat - Creating Recovery Project: theatre as a tool for the inclusion of autistic people during the COVID-19 pandemic

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## INTRODUCTION



During the COVID-19 pandemic in Peru, autistic people had to stay at home for a long period of time, and the scarce offer of health, education and recreation services for them was reduced.

The Hunter Heartbeat Method, developed by Kelly Hunter, director of Flute Theater (UK), uses Shakespeare's plays to provide a ludic theatrical experience that is tailored to the characteristics of autistic people and makes them the protagonists of the play. Due to the pandemic, the method was adapted to the virtual space using Zoom.

The Heartbeat Project brings together universities and theatre companies from Peru (Teatro La Plaza) and the UK (Flute Theatre) to investigate the transference of this innovative virtual theatre method to Peru, and assess its benefits and potential future implementation.

## METHODS

**Design:** Case study with qualitative methods, during 2021

**Phases:** 1. Transference of the methodology, adaptation of "The Tempest" (W. Shakespeare) and one hour theatre performances with autistic people. 2. Evaluation and data collection. 3. Dissemination activities

**Data Collection:** Observations, interviews, focus groups

**Participants:**

- 6 autistic people & 9 family members
- 18 members of theatre companies
- 20 observers (artists, activists and stakeholders from educational, cultural and health institutions)

## RESULTS



**Benefits for autistic people:**

- An opportunity to play and have fun
- Promotes emotional well-being
- Stimulates communication and relationships w/others
- Fosters self-esteem: they are the centre of the performance
- Stimulates cognitive, affective and motor skills
- Promotes inclusion: a theatre for and with autistic people



**Benefits for families:**

- Welcoming space for encounter and inclusion
- Share and know their sons and daughters better through fun activities
- Learn and use the drama games of the play at home



**Future transfer of the method:**

Observers considered relevant and feasible to transfer the method to schools, health centres, universities, artistic organizations and civil associations.

← Challenges

Strategies →

- Need public and private support
- Funding
- Scarcity of human resources
- Access to technology
- Articulation between public entities
- Optimization of resources to reach more autistic people
- Involving community theatre groups

## CONCLUSION

The Heartbeat Project was seen as beneficial for autistic people, their families and the community. It also showed the feasibility in transferring and using the Hunter Heartbeat virtual theatre method in Peru.

There is great interest from Government and civil society stakeholders to continue and expand the project beyond artistic spaces

**Watch a video of the project!**  
<https://vimeo.com/618965372/d755efe39f>

This e-Poster is based on a study by:  
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