

Martin Ellrodt Interview

Country	Austria
Partner	P6 Brunnenpassage/Caritas
Storyteller/Interviewee	Martin Ellrodt, Nürnberg (Germany)
<p style="text-align: center;">Interviewee Background <i>Include website if possible</i></p>	<p>Martin Ellrodt was born in 1966 and has been working for a couple of years as an actor and pupeteer before he discovered storytelling as his real vocation in 1991. The Celtic bards serve him as example: seven years they learned how to make people laugh by playing the harp, seven years they learned how to make them cry, and another seven years they learned how to lull them to sleep. He thinks a storyteller should be able to do likewise.</p> <p>Meanwhile the following activities and topics have been covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telling stories from oral tradition (myths, folktales, legends). • Re-telling world literature (Shakespeare, Cervantes, Ovid). • Performing in three languages: German, English and Spanish, also at festivals in Croatia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Hong Kong, Senegal, Egypt, Belarus, Canada, Israel... • Teaching storytelling at universities all over Germany. • Planning and organizing festivals and long-term storytelling projects as "ZauberWort", "1001 nights of storytelling", "Haus der Geschichten". • Running the internet site www.erzaehlen.de as a platform for the storytelling community in German speaking lands. <p>www.ellrodt.de</p>

Responses to Main Questions:

1. **Have you, as a storyteller, ever led/helped lead an adult training program?**
 - a. **What was the aim/target of this training?**

One of the adults training I regularly do is for students of social work. Studying at the Nürnberg University, part of their formation is any kind of creative activity. They can choose among several subjects and one of this is storytelling. The target of the training is the use of Storytelling in the social work.

Sometimes they even get feedback from people after they have finished their studies and have started to work. They come back to me by mailing me or writing me what they do with storytelling. There are varied possibilities in a wide range of social work where they use story telling.

- b. **What were the strengths and weaknesses of the program?**

One of the weaknesses is the limited time. Most of the organizers, universities and all different of kinds of institutions, do not want that story telling issue going longer than two and a half days maximum. The usual range is a weekend workshop (two and a half days). Also at university where mostly the courses are running for one semester, they put together the

Martin Ellrodt Interview

storytelling course as a block seminar. So it's again a weekend seminar from Friday to Sunday afternoon.

One of the strengths is that story telling seems to be a low keys issue. After certain difficulties at the beginning, most adults get on to it very easily and enjoy doing it.

c. In what ways do you think your approach as a storyteller differs from that of an adult trainer without a storytelling background?

There are no adults trainers without the story telling background that teach exactly the same thing I teach, obviously. But I do imagine that what we do as story tellers in adult trainings in comparison with adults trainers who teach anything without the story telling background is, that we open up another mood, another kind of thinking, another way to cope with creativity. Stories can open up other channels of perception, so the participants get another view towards the issue.

d. How is storytelling used differently in an adult training program than in a classroom with a younger public?

For me it doesn't make any difference. I even use the same exercises with an adults audience same as with children in my story telling workshops.

Of course, children do have a lot less of problems with answering or standing up to the challenge and to the task. In general they have lot less problems with their own creativity and just pour out what goes through their heads whereas adults tend to be very self-conscious. Adults often block their own ideas and their own images because they think it's not appropriate, it's not good enough.

2. In what kind of adult training programs would you consider storytelling to be a good pedagogical tool? What needs could storytelling respond to and how (ex. to promote intercultural dialogue/inclusion)? How would you structure such a training?

These questions do not exactly match my profile, because I do not use story telling as a tool in my adults training but it's the activity itself and I am promoting.

Anyway in my naive prospective towards the question, I would say that story telling can be a good, very worthy pedagogical tool in all kind of adult training programs. I don't see any exclusion. It's such an important part of human communication. Everybody is telling at least, I don't know... 17 stories a day. I guess, there are hardly any adult trainers who do not use even unconsciously story telling as a tool. They all tell stories from time to time and if just to make clear a certain point or to highlight something or to talk about experience. At the moment they tell about their experience they're telling stories. For me it's a question of in which degree you use it consciously. But I'm sure all of them use story telling.

Storytelling is a need in itself. Stories are the way we experience the world and we organize our biography. We are a story that is being told in life, while life is going on. Story telling is responding to a very basic need for experiencing the world and trying to make an evaluation of what is being experienced. It helps, because you compare it to other stories you have experienced. There are narrative structures all over the field. Looking at the question "What needs could storytelling respond to and how » - again I would say: I can't imagine a single topic or field where story telling could not be used.

Martin Ellrodt Interview

Perhaps very theoretical mathematics or physics is an exception. If you have got a highly abstract issues, story telling is not the most appropriate thing, but that is not the majority of adult training programs.

3. In your opinion, in which contexts should storytelling be promoted as an educational tool? What steps are necessary to succeed in promoting storytelling as an educational tool?

It should be promoted as an educational tool in all contexts, where it is about soft skills like leadership, human resources, communication skills, conflict resolving skills and mediating competences. In all fields where human communication is involved, storytelling should be promoted very decidedly as an educational tool.

Storytelling helps shaping human relations and organizing and understanding experiences.

You can never be sure about necessary steps in order to succeed. You never know before if something succeeds or not. In any case, in Germany it's important to liberate storytelling from the cliché of being specialized former education. We all use storytelling in our day by day communication it's nothing which is only restricted to children. It's the general fight of orality against literacy. Literacy try to put orality in a black light, that it's not serious or intellectual.

4. Do you know of any resources (books, websites, etc.) that focus on the use of storytelling as a pedagogical tool in adult education?

Learning Through Storytelling in Higher Education: Using Reflection & Experience to Improve Learning: Using Reflection and Experience to Improve Learning

Janice McDrury (Autor), Maxine Alterio (Autor)

Other Relevant Questions/Comments: