

WORCATION

The idea, the history and the people

Worcation – that means creative international work in a historical place – the prisoner of war camp Stalag VIII A. There is so much to do from digging and sweeping through cleaning up to welding and bending and at the same time contemplating! But there is also a lot of fun – chilling out, having barbecues, swimming and exploring the magnificent region.

All this and a lot more is what Worcation has to offer. Every year Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen Assoc. invites youth from Europe: Italy, France, Ukraine, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany and Poland to participate.

In the beginning of Worcation a group of 25 young people come together in the twin city of Görlitz-Zgorzelec on the German-Polish border. After two weeks of this experience, they feel that they have changed. One gets closer to people from other countries, speaks foreign languages and discusses the history.

The participants, aged between 16 and 26, learn about tolerance and confidence in one another and working as a team. Moreover, they get to know Stalag VIII A and its history from different perspectives. Together they proactively learn a better understanding.



The project revolves around a place, which has been almost forgotten for decades – the German POW camp Stalag VIII A in former Görlitz (now Zgorzelec). Approximately 120.000 soldiers from all over Europe spend years of captivity and used as forced labourers by the Germans during the Second World War in Stalag VIII A. On January 15th 1941 one of the most outstanding musical masterpieces of 20th century had been performed in one of the barracks - “Quartet for the End of Time” composed by Olivier Messiaen a French composer and soldier, who had been held as a prisoner of war in Stalag VIII A between 1940 and 1941.

Today more and more interested people from the region and all over Europe are visiting the Memorial Stalag VIII A. Whether it is the POW’s relatives, students, artists, musicians, scientists and citizens



– all of them are visiting this place to discover its history and commemorate its victims. Additionally, they are coming to learn, get inspired and gain experience, for both the present and the future, by coming together with other people. The opening of the European Centre Memory, Education, Culture – Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen in 2015 marks the institutional establishment of this place for the intensive international, experimental and state-of-the-art educational work.



Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen Assoc. organizes Worcation since 2008. Their context and initial point includes the former war camp Stalag VIII A, the music and creativity of Messiaen. Since 2006 the Association has been trying

to bring back the memory of the history of Stalag VIII A and many personal stories connected to this place. The association's main focus lays on working with young people.



The first days of the exchange are marked by getting to know the place of remembrance and learning about the main subject of the youth exchange, which changes every year. The topics range from flight, migration and human rights to diversity and freedom -

all topics are set in a democracy building context and relate to the present and the future, embedded into a historical framework. After the introductory sessions, the young people choose to participate in one of three workshops.

Archaeological workshop



Participants of the archeological workshop team up with experienced archaeologists to work on the grounds of the former prisoner of war camp. Countless artefacts and parts of the camp's structure have been uncovered which contributed enormously to the recreation of everyday life in the camp giving clues to the harsh reality.

During the workshop the group learns how to get to the bottom of historical issues and to interpret their findings with the help of other sources such as photos, documents and statements.



Theatre workshop



A creative view on dramatic historical events sheds some light on the fact that our humanity is in grave danger whenever faced with inhumane political ideas.

One of the creative workshops that has been firmly established over the years is the theatre workshop. Under the guidance of experi-

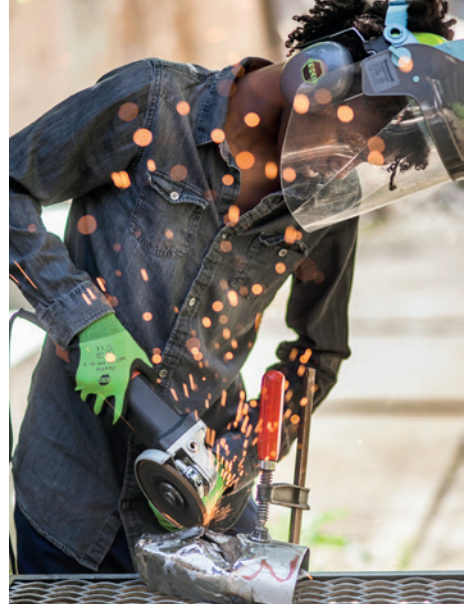


enced staff, the young people work on a performance that combines historical, current and future elements. Using theatre pedagogy methods, the participants deal with artefacts, the personal fates of individual prisoners of war and with the history of the place and the region.

During the workshop, emotions and awareness of one's own body are to be awakened. At the end of the exchange, the young people present their play in front of invited guests.

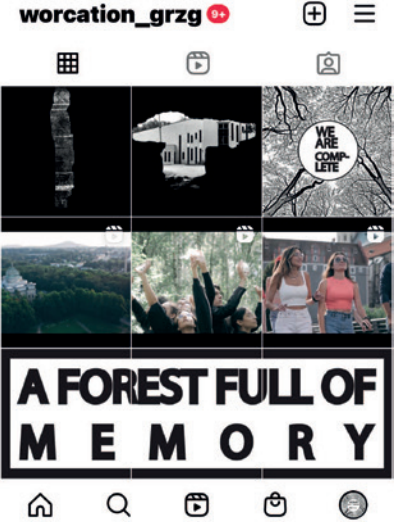
Remembrance does not have to take the form of a one minute's silence, but can commemorate days gone by through expressions of creativity and imagination.

Over the years, the workshops have always changed. Just like our participants, who come together



from different countries, we want to keep our content and offer as diverse as possible. We have sung, played instruments or drawn. We have modelled, we have danced and we have rapped. The results have been breathtaking every year and at the end of the youth exchange, the participants not only took home many experiences, but also learned important values for living in a multicultural community.

Just take a look



Watch our art film





All participants are accommodated in a hostel in Görlitz. The group has the whole building for its sole usage and therefore can evolve very freely. One of the most important parts of Worcation is “self-organizing” which means the group has to cook, wash, clean and organize their evenings amongst themselves. The hostel is located in the middle of the old town of Görlitz which means all the interesting places are in a walkable distance and you can easily cross the border to the Polish part of the twin city: Zgorzelec.

The workshops take place on the grounds of the memorial site Stalag VIII A. In 2015 the European Centre Memory, Education, Culture – Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen has been opened there. The participants start their exchange at the memorial site and learn all about Stalag’s history and its POWs. For the next two weeks all the workshops will take place mostly at the European Centre, which offers the group all the space, technical support and surroundings they need.



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After the workshops the participants come back to their hostel. The programme is also accompanied by cultural evenings, a city game, daily group sessions, evaluations, language animations, energizing games as well as a free evening programme.



On the few days free of being in the workshops the group starts to get to know the so called Euroregion. During a trip to Dresden or Wrocław, the participants experience an educational programme, which is adapted to the theme of the year.

But there are also many leisure activities and opportunities to spend a nice and relaxing afternoon or evening in the twin city. We organise barbecues together with the young people, have picnics, sunbathe on the beach (there is a fantastic lake in Görlitz) or go on trips in a region where you can visit 3 countries in just 1 hour.





The project's final phase starts with the preparation of the final presentation at the Memorial Site Stalag VIII A.

Together as a group the participants show their results and share their experiences with the public. Supporters, friends and local officials come together at end of this two weeks to commemorate the many thousand victims of Stalag VIII A.

During this time young people from different countries and cultural background got to know and

respect each other. The participants have learned more about a not very common historical topic and realized that their own lives and the lives of their families are connected to the past.

Coming together, trying to understand the stories of those who have been held captive in this camp can teach the participants to respect each other as well as different cultures and languages and enables them to not only to work together on this project but in building a stronger European bond which they are part of.

PUBLISHED BY:

Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V.

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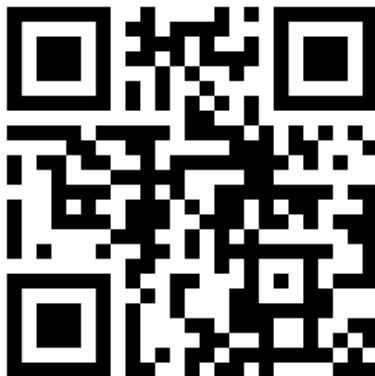
Meetingpoint Memory Messiaen e.V

GRAPHIC DESIGN



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