



Section A: Augusto Boal

Born in Brazil to Portuguese parents, Augusto Boal qualified as a chemical engineer before studying drama at Columbia University (New York). He worked with the Arena Theatre of São Paulo from 1956, making theatre in factories and on the streets. Following imprisonment and torture by the dictatorship in 1971, he was exiled to Argentina. Here and in Peru he developed his concept of Theatre of the Oppressed until 1976, when the political climate forced a move to Europe.

Boal returned to Brazil in 1986, later serving as an MP when he invented 'legislative theatre'. Theatre of the Oppressed is now a world-wide movement (www.theatreoftheoppressed.org) with centres in dozens of countries. Augusto Boal was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2008 and received the title of "World Theatre Ambassador" from UNESCO in 2009.

Section B: Context and Glossary

Glossary

Flashbacks and Flash Forwards

Participants improvise events that take place before or after a specific moment in time enabling the exploration of characters' motivations and the consequences of their actions.

Forum Theatre

Spect-actors take part in an improvised drama to explore alternative approaches to a situation in which a character is being oppressed.

Image Theatre

The creation of physical images in response to a given theme such as bullying. Participants sculpt their own or each others' bodies to express attitudes and emotions. These images are then placed together and 'dynamised' or brought to life.

Joker

A neutral facilitator who enables communication between the spect-actors and the audience through questioning and discussion. The Joker should encourage fairness without commenting on the action or making any intervention.

Spec-tactor

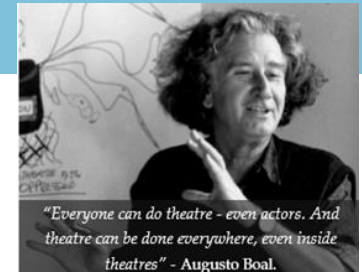
In *Forum Theatre* the audience do not have a passive role; they take an active part in the drama. Spect-actors are invited to intervene in the performance by calling for it to stop and taking over the role of a character. Spect-actors and actors have equal status.

Still Images and Freeze-Frames

Still images or freeze-frames are physical shapes created by individuals or groups using their bodies.

Thought Tracking

Students speak aloud the thoughts of their character in a still image. This is usually done by tapping them on the shoulder.



Boal in Context

Through a desire to bring about change under an oppressive regime, Augusto Boal arguably created some of the most radical yet accessible theatre techniques of the past 100 years. After experimenting with agit-prop (propaganda) theatre, he drew upon fellow Brazilian Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed to create theatre with, rather than for audiences. Central to the philosophy of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) is the concept that the audience know as much as the performers, and have just as much right to express their beliefs. Boal's theories and their highly practical applications are used every day by theatre companies, children, students and the homeless, for political change, for education and therapy in schools, theatres and on the streets.



Section C: Theatre Forms

Theatre of the Oppressed (Pluto, 1979) redefined theatre as a popular means of interactive expression and a tool for social change. Forum Theatre is a means to this end, breaking down the boundary between performers and audience. A play outlining a form of oppression is performed twice. Members of the audience, or 'spect-actors', are invited to spontaneously stop the action and show how the protagonist could behave differently, enabling alternative outcomes. A Joker facilitates these interventions, enabling the creation of a dialogue on stage where the performance itself becomes a dynamic forum for debate. Invisible Theatre scenes are performed interactively in public places without the prior knowledge of the audience, raising awareness about social issues by staging exaggerated versions of normal behaviour. Members of the public are encouraged to express their own opinions through interaction with each other and (unwittingly) with the performers. The covert approach was invented by Boal as a means of avoiding arrest. Image theatre, now a widely-used drama technique, involves participants in rapidly sculpting their own or others' bodies to express feelings, attitudes and experiences. These frozen images are dynamised - brought to life - in the investigation of oppression, enabling participants to express concerns and desires. The Rainbow of Desire (Routledge, 1995) outlines Boal's therapeutic use of Image Theatre to deal with internalised oppression. More recently, Legislative Theatre was invented as a way of using theatre to make laws.

Bibliography

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