

Birgit Fritz

InExActArt

The Autopoietic Theatre of Augusto Boal

A Handbook of Theatre of the Oppressed Practice

Translated by Lana Sendzimir and Ralph Yarrow

For my family, and all those who count me as part of theirs.

Birgit Fritz

InExActArt

The Autopoietic Theatre of Augusto Boal

A Handbook of Theatre of the Oppressed Practice

Translated by Lana Sendzimir and Ralph Yarrow

ibidem-Verlag
Stuttgart

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Translated from the German Original:

Fritz, Birgit: *InExActArt* - Ein Handbuch zur Praxis des Theaters der Unterdrückten. *ibidem*-Verlag, Stuttgart 2011. ISBN 978-3-8382-0223-5

∞

Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem, säurefreiem Papier
Printed on acid-free paper

ISBN-13: 978-3-8382-0423-9

© *ibidem*-Verlag
Stuttgart 2012

Alle Rechte vorbehalten

Das Werk einschließlich aller seiner Teile ist urheberrechtlich geschützt. Jede Verwertung außerhalb der engen Grenzen des Urheberrechtsgesetzes ist ohne Zustimmung des Verlages unzulässig und strafbar. Dies gilt insbesondere für Vervielfältigungen, Übersetzungen, Mikroverfilmungen und elektronische Speicherformen sowie die Einspeicherung und Verarbeitung in elektronischen Systemen.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronical, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the publisher. Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

Printed in Germany

Translators' Preface

When Birgit Fritz first told me she was writing a book, she looked like someone who had just discovered that they could fly. It was a beautiful gift to the world that needed to burst out of her, and the excitement was contagious! I was even more touched when she asked me to read the first draft. In a wonderful combination of circumstances, the weekend on which she gave me the manuscript to read, she had also invited me as a guest on a *Theatre of the Oppressed* seminar she was teaching at the university. So in opportune moments and during the breaks I would retreat to a corner to continue reading. It was the ultimate encounter of her work: to read about the history, the ethics and principles, the meaning of this kind of work, its global and political relevance, and then to watch and sense the depth and transformation taking place around and inside of me as the workshop progressed. This is a book to experience, to take and cook with, to challenge and embrace, fall down and get up again, it is work and play, and a journey that goes much further than the last page. For myself, as a younger practitioner gathering experience, it is an invaluable resource to continually return to and be inspired by. Thank you Birgit!

Lana Sendzimir

What struck me most about this book when Birgit asked me to write a Foreword for the German original was its humanity and its wisdom. It speaks in the voice of someone who knows what they are doing because they have been doing it with care, love, precision and understanding. It is more than a book of exercises, it is a book which shares with us the reasons why we might want to do them and teach them to others, and offers us the chance to do them in full awareness of how and why they are working. It's an interactive and dynamic map of how to negotiate the business of becoming more human, which means relating to yourself and to others, becoming what you are and taking the responsibility of acting, in all senses of the word, in consequence.

This is a book which needs to be available to the English-speaking community of theatre activists and practitioners, and to those who want to know why theatre activism and practice is useful and timely. It offers clear signposts on the way to helping people to develop the sensitivity, flexibility, alertness and courage to intervene ethically and responsibly in the world. It is both accessible and inspiring. We hope that this translation will help more people make use of it.

Ralph Yarrow

Translators' note

In the German original, whenever appropriate, Birgit Fritz consistently employs grammatical forms which can refer to either gender and thus signals that the persons referred to may belong to either. In English this is unfortunately less easy. We attempt to embrace the principle by using 's/he' and other appropriate pronominal forms; there is no way however to do this with some nouns, except by invoking clumsy terms like 'Jokeress' or 'Spectactress'. The whole text should however, as far as possible, be read in the light of the above principle.

There are several sections which were originally in English, for the most part translated from other languages by other hands or transcribed by Birgit Fritz. We have amended and reworked these where necessary in order to ensure that they fully convey the original writer's or speaker's intentions.

These passages are:

Part B 1: Julian Boal: Notes on Oppression.

Part B 6: Interview with Sanjoy Ganguly. Transcribed by Birgit Fritz

Part D 3: Serando Camara Baldé: Guinean Women. Translated from the Portuguese by Birgit Fritz

Part D 4: Bárbara Santos: *Theatre of the Oppressed in Private Enterprise: Incompatibilities*. Translated from the Portuguese by Carolina Echeverria

Part D 5: Interview with Hector Aristizábal. Transcribed by Birgit Fritz

Appendix 1: The Story of Nebuyenga. Original text provided by Hector Aristizábal

Appendix 2: The Story of the Half-Boy. Original text provided by Hector Aristizábal

‘Birgit, you were a real shit the whole time today! And I swear to you I haven’t learnt so much in the last seven years in this school as I did today.’ Katharina, a pupil in 7th grade at the high school, stood before me.

That year I was teaching Spanish and Performing Arts and we had just experienced a *Forum Theatre* workshop with a visiting trainer, in the course of which I had landed up in the role of the oppressor and my pupils had been playing against me for a whole afternoon.

As Katharina began to speak I began to get nervous and thought: ‘Now that doesn’t sound like a good start.’ Firstly we weren’t on familiar terms and then there was the stuff about being a shit. When she’d finished I had goosebumps on my arms.

It was this direct unmediated level of experience which interested me above all.

That day was the beginning of my life with *Theatre of the Oppressed*.

Thanks, Katharina!

Contents

FOREWORD	17
MY LIFE IN THE THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED	21
APOLOGETICA	23
A HANDBOOK FOR WHOM?	25
INTRODUCTION: THE RELATIONSHIP SHOP	29
1. GUIDELINES	29
2. RULES	31
3. A COMMENT	32
4. A RULE	32
5. ATTITUDE OR THE ROLE OF HEART AND MIND	32
6. THE WORKING PRINCIPLE: ACTION – REFLECTION – ACTION – REFLECTION	33
7. ON LANGUAGE	33
8. ABOUT THE GAMES AND THE METHODS	35
9. ON LEARNING AND LEADING	39
A. BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS	41
1. Starting Point	45
People 2 people	46
1 2 3 – Bradford – counting to three – with a partner	48
Walk! Stand still! Say your name! Jump!	49
Excursus: The Small-Group Reflection	50
2. Sensitisation Games	52
Capoeira – exercise for pairs	52
Gravity – exercise for pairs	53
3. Trust Exercises	54
Joe Egg	55
Flying	55
	11

The King/Queen	56
Colombian Hypnosis – exercise for pairs	57
4. Exercises with closed eyes	61
Feel what you touch – exercise for pairs	62
121212 or Penguin Family – a favourite game!	63
The Vampire of Strasbourg	64
5. Name Games	65
Name/No Name	65
Ball Throwing	66
Name and Image	66
Name and Image – exercise for pairs	67
Name and Vegetable	67
Name Whisper – exercise for pairs	68
Leader and Liar – Who’s lying here?	69
Concentration Circle: Favourite foods, Car brands and YOU!	70
6. Action Games, to make people laugh and take away the fear of making ‘mistakes’	71
Godzilla, or ‘Can I please take your place?’	71
Rain, House, Person	73
The Princess and the Bear	74
Irish Couples – exercise for pairs	76
West Side Story – exercise involving two groups	76
7. The Path to <i>Image Theatre</i>	78
Exclusion/Inclusion	79
Centre of the Universe	80
Mirroring	81
The Image of the Hour	82
Playing with Balloon Puppets – exercise for pairs	84
8. Introduction to the Methods of <i>Image Theatre</i>	85
Images/Building Statues	88
The Statue Dialogue or Move by Move	89
The Communal Image: from the real to the ideal image	90
The Image Machine	91
Images of the Future – in small groups	94
Excursus: Working with stories in the way Hector Aristizábal does	94
The Three Breaths	96
9. Conclusion Part A	96
Closing Reflections	96
The Domino Dance	97
10. Summary: Themes Part A	98

B. FORUM THEATRE	99
1. What is Oppression?	99
Julian Boal – Notes on Oppression	102
Theatre of Human Rights	110
Becoming the author of our own story – Scripting the Play instead of Playing the Script	111
2. Summoning up content	113
Good Cop/Bad Cop – exercise for three people	114
The two revelations of Saint Theresa – exercise for pairs	114
Status exercise 1 – 7	116
The ABC exercise	117
Images of Oppression	118
3. One of the many ways to <i>Forum Theatre</i>	119
Excursus: Making images from fairy-tales	120
The path to <i>Forum Theatre</i> in ten steps – small group work	121
Step 1 – Choosing the Subject	121
Step 2 – The Other’s Associations	122
Step 3 – The Image Series/Story	123
Step 4 – The Slow Motion Silent Movie	123
Step 5 – Stop and Think – The inner Monologue	123
Step 6 – The text – The most important arguments – The main motivation – The protagonist’s desire	124
Step 7 – Everyone plays every part once	124
Step 8 – An ABC of Rehearsal Techniques	125
Exploring the Characters	126
a) Stop and Think – The Most Important One	126
b) Analytical Rehearsal of Emotions	126
c) Analytical Rehearsal of Style	127
d) The Hannover Variation	127
e) Animals	127
To improve expressivity	128
a) The Ceremony	128
b) The Silent Movie	128
c) The Reconstruction of the Crime	128
d) Rashomon	129
e) Somatic Study	129
Dramatising the Scene	130
a) I don’t believe you!	130
b) Secret	130
c) What???	130
d) Far away	130
e) Long Beach Telegram	131
Step 9 – The Dramaturgy of <i>Forum Theatre</i>	132
The Scenes	134
Alternative: ‘Blind’ Forum or ‘blank’ Forum	135
It’s too late!	135

Step 10 – Forum – That’s What It’s About!	136
The rules of the game	136
4. Joking the <i>Forum Theatre</i> play	138
The Bridges – a game to demonstrate the role of the Joker	139
To warm up the audience or not?	141
On the content of the play	142
How do we deal with it if someone proposes a solution which involves violence?	145
What do we do if someone wants to replace the antagonist/the oppressor in the scene?	145
5. The Joker – Kuringa!	148
The Community Joker	149
The Multiplying Joker	149
The Assistant Joker	151
6. <i>Forum Theatre</i> in connection with Direct Action	151
Interview with Sanjoy Ganguly	152
Summary: Themes Part B	165
C. THE INVISIBLE TOUCH OR TOUCHING THE INVISIBLE	167
1. The Look and its Absence	170
Dancing back to back, ‘reading’ faces – exercise for pairs	170
Recognising Hands	172
Leading someone by a thread	172
The Glass Cobra or the Indian version of it: Unions	174
Seeing and Allowing Yourself To Be Seen – a very challenging exercise in pairs	177
2. The Voice	178
Making Sounds – a few starting points	179
You!	180
Hey, you there!	180
Sounding	182
Step 1 – Doing nothing with our eyes open	182
Step 2 – Feeling the vibration	182
Step 3 – Opening our mouths	183
Step 4 – The Sound Journey	183
Step 5 – Reflection	186
Sun – Moon	186
3. Working with objects	187
The Human Reflection in the Garbage	187
Step 1 – Balancing	188
Step 2 – Images from the Objects	188
The importance of objects for performance	189

4. Further exercises	190
The Identity Game	190
Polarisations	192
Communicating the human in human beings	197
Journey to Now	198
The Seven Loving Touches	200
5. The Aesthetics of the Oppressed	203
The Word	203
Identity Clarification	203
Poems	204
Texts – Describing Events	204
The Image	205
The Photograph	205
Reshaping the Shape	205
Sculpture and Painting	206
The Sound	206
A Challenge – Making strengths visible	210
Step 1 – Active Listening	210
Step 2 – Appreciating through symbol transference	211
Summary: Themes Part C	211
D. ORIENTATION: THE HORIZON OF PERSPECTIVES	213
1. Considerations on Transculturalism	214
2. The wider context of the international TO community	217
2009: A turning point	220
3. The Situation of Women	223
Human rights are women’s rights – Background	224
Your Profit is Our Hunger	224
The endeavour to establish a women’s network within the international <i>Theatre of the Oppressed</i> community	228
Talk is good, action is better! – Spaces of women’s experience in the 21 st -Century	232
The <i>Madalena</i> Laboratories	234
Serando Camara Baldé – Guinean Women	238
4. A question of position: the age of globalisation	242
Bárbara Santos – <i>Theatre of the Oppressed</i> work in private enterprise – incompatibilities	245
5. ArtACTivism – Collective and personal trauma, violence, healing and hope	253
BatzART!	255
Interview with Hector Aristizábal	259

6. Beginning at the end	269
The nucleus – the theatre group	269
ATG-Halle – an unusual example of an experimental European theatre group	271
ATG's aesthetic and activism	272
Group atmospherics and international networking – external contacts	276
Leadership, democracy and organisational issues	277
Impact on personal life	278
The group and the individual	278
Transcultural Work – Building the Bridge to Jana Sanskriti	280
The meaning of the Indian experience for theatre aesthetics	283
Further considerations for working with theatre groups – a few useful questions to ask	284
On plays	284
On the work of actors as (Art)activists	285
On work in the Group	286
Summary: Themes Part D	286
APPENDIX 1 – A STORY ON THE THEME OF COLLECTIVE ANXIETY AND COURAGE	287
APPENDIX 2 – STORY ON THE THEME OF INITIATION INTO SOCIETY AND INTO ONE'S OWN LIFE	289
APPENDIX 3 – INTERNATIONAL THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED ORGANISATION (ITO) – DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES	291
APPENDIX 4 – THE STORIES OF VIRGÍLIO AND THE FAT LADY	295
BIBLIOGRAPHY	302
WEBSITES OF THE <i>THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED</i>	306
CREDITS FOR IMAGES AND PHOTOGRAPHS	308
GLOSSARY	309
INFORMATION ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE BOOK	310
THANKS	313
FORMATTING AND GRAPHICS	315

Foreword

We live in a world in which information abounds. We may often wish we could do something to intervene in the situations we hear about. Yet we also often feel powerless: even in 'developed' countries we seem to be suffering from a 'democratic deficit', in spite of political and social systems which claim to afford participation.

At the same time, in recent decades, people across the world have been discovering a way of engaging with their own situation and empowering themselves. *Theatre of the Oppressed* is not an entertainment product but a participatory process which offers people the possibility not simply of receiving information, nor even just of being invited to view different perspectives and possible responses, but of identifying situations and issues, articulating them themselves in the form of short plays, and creating a structure in which an active dialogue between players and spectators is instigated in order to open up further avenues of response. So this is not a passive situation in which a kind of resigned empathy is generated, but an interactive mode of behaviour which stimulates evaluation, critical thinking and imaginative response, and materialises all of this directly for participants by assisting them to embody as well as verbalise the situation, the actors and agents within it, and the potential outcomes.

In the past decade, at least three books (in English) have described the range of practices which can be called 'applied theatre', theatre of the oppressed, theatre of or for development, activist or issue-based theatre, and these build on several decades of work and many reports by practitioners across the globe, not least the pioneering work of Augusto Boal in South America.

This book, written by an experienced practitioner and trainer, offers some glimpses of that work and of the principles underlying it in the form of a short

essay by Julian Boal, Augusto's son, on the definition of oppression, and an interview with Sanjoy Ganguly, Artistic Director of the largest and longest-established group working in India, who sees this form of theatre as a politics of relationship leading to a form of practical democracy giving participants a say in shaping their own reality and the contexts in which they live. Its final section also provides examples from practice across the world and shows why and how people are using the processes of theatre to express, assess and respond to the underlying causes of oppression, repression, exclusion and disempowerment, by learning, as Ganguly puts it, to 'script' their own plays and undertake, in Boal's terms, a 'rehearsal of revolution'.

Part 3 contains further developmental strategies for groups: a rich collection of activities to underpin and strengthen individual confidence, group security and mutual understanding, as used by a selection of international practitioners; Part 4 introduces the transcultural dimension of *Theatre of the Oppressed*, exemplifying some instances of its use in Brazil, Germany and elsewhere, and including further reflective essays by practitioners. This section not only gives a picture of some of the ways practitioners work and why they do it, it also opens a window on ongoing debates among the international community of those who engage in this form of theatre, and it foregrounds some challenging questions, in particular about the functioning of all-women groups and the need to interrogate the politics of each and every application across the globe.

However, this is essentially a practical manual, which in the first two sections takes potential trainers and participants through a training method, providing full and clear details of a careful selection of games and exercises which can develop the necessary skills in performers and the necessary techniques for encouraging audiences to play as well. Exercises are throughout set in the context of the aims they are targeting, and this balanced alternation of practice and principle means that it is always possible to see what should be done at each stage of development and why, and also to understand what kinds of re-

response participants may have and how to engage productively with that. Birgit Fritz's experience, sensitivity and clear-sightedness are visible here and make the selection and sequence of exercises accessible and inspiring. So this is a book to use and to live and grow with. Like many of the compilations of theatre games now available (beginning with Keith Johnstone and Clive Barker in the 1960s), this book sets out to suggest and stimulate rather than to require slavish reproduction, and it is by being so clear about purpose that it opens up the space for each user to make the kinds of subtle adaptations which working with different groups in different contexts always demands.

This book will enable you to rationalise what you want to do, and to do it effectively and economically. It takes you through a journey which opens up and sensitises participants – using the 'classic' structure of warm-up, releasing creativity and working together in pairs and small groups to develop interactive response and creative imagination. It then lays out with admirable explicitness precisely how that journey can lead, firstly, to the development of sequences and structures which are key to creating pieces of *Forum Theatre*; and then secondly to the kinds of stimulation, engagement and coaching ('joking') which invite and enable the direct participation of audience members in proposing and reworking possible alternative outcomes to the problem situations addressed in such plays.

As I write this, another 'Handbook' has just arrived on my desk, also detailing stages and strategies in training and developing a company to do *Forum Theatre*, drawing on experience in western India (this one will be published in English and Gujarati initially). The time is ripe. The world needs practical and cost-effective methods of reconfiguring the lives of individuals and their investment in the structures of society. Here is one way to go about it.

Ralph Yarrow

My Life in the Theatre of the Oppressed

From 1994 to 2000: Teacher for Performing Arts and Languages in a school in Austria

2001: Co-Founder of the *Forum Theatre* Group *Spielerai* for Amnesty International, Vienna

2002: Co-directing *Der Tanz im Narrenturm* (The Dance in the Tower of Fools) with Florian Jung

2002-2004: Theatre trainer for the *Inter>face* Project for the Young Peoples' Intercultural Theatre Group, sponsored by the Vienna Integration Trust

2003: Founder of the Vienna *Theatre of the Oppressed* Organisation *TO Vienna*.

The activity of *TO Vienna* falls into four important phases:

1. Work in collaboration with the Vienna Gebietsbetreuung¹ (2003-2005)
2. Transcultural theatre work with Twin Vision Performance Group (2005-2006)
3. 'Working with Boal' (2006-2008)
4. International networking and multiplication of groups (2006-2011)

In the summer of 2011 *TO Vienna* passes into other hands and new directions open up.

From 2003: Director of Basic Training in the Theatre Methodology of Augusto Boal in an institute of higher education in Vienna

.....

¹ Service division of the City of Vienna with responsibility for housing, infrastructure and community life.

From 2004: Visiting Tutor at Vienna University for transcultural theatre, as well as at the Department of African Studies and for the International Development Project; Tutor for integrative theatre work using Boal, in the context of the MA in Latin American Studies and of Peace Studies in Innsbruck, as well as of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme for the plenum academy², Vienna.

Currently: Freelance theatre-worker, Feldenkrais practitioner and writer.

My work in connection with the *Theatre of the Oppressed* has led beyond Austria to the Basque country, Venezuela, Wales, Portugal, Brazil, the Navajo Nation (USA), India, Croatia, Germany, Slovenia, Kyrgyzstan, and back to my own roots in the dual-language province of Kärnten (Carinthia)/Koroška.

Main emphasis: Transcultural work and research-oriented learning.

.....
2 www.plenum.at