

Claus Schrowange

Art and Conscientization

Forum Theatre in Uganda, Rwanda, DR Congo,
and South Sudan

BERLINER SCHRIFTEN ZUM THEATER DER UNTERDRÜCKTEN

Herausgegeben von Harald Hahn

ISSN 1863-2106

- 3 *Till Baumann*
Von der Politisierung des Theaters zur Theatralisierung der Politik
Theater der Unterdrückten im Rio de Janeiro der 90er Jahre
Zweite, überarbeitete Auflage
ISBN 3-89821-486-9
- 4 *Jens Clausen, Harald Hahn, Markus Runge (Hrsg.)*
Das Kieztheater
Forum und Kommunikation für den Stadtteil
ISBN 978-3-89821-985-3
- 5 *Hjalmar Jorge Joffre-Eichhorn*
Wenn die Burka plötzlich fliegt
Einblicke in die Arbeit mit dem Theater der Unterdrückten in Afghanistan
Zweite, überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage
ISBN 978-3-8382-0472-7
- 6 *Birgit Fritz*
Von Revolution zu Autopoiese: Auf den Spuren Augusto Boals
ins 21. Jahrhundert
Das Theater der Unterdrückten im Kontext von Friedensarbeit und
einer Ästhetik der Wahrnehmung
ISBN 978-3-8382-0553-3
- 7 *Linda Ebbers*
Darstellende Kunst und zivile Konfliktbearbeitung
Das Theater der Unterdrückten als kreative Methode der Konflikttransformation
ISBN 978-3-8382-0566-3
- 8 *Claus Schrowange*
Art and Conscientization
Forum Theatre in Uganda, Rwanda, DR Congo, and South Sudan
ISBN 978-3-8382-0797-1

Der Reihenherausgeber:

Harald Hahn (Jg. 1966) wohnt in Berlin und ist freiberuflicher Radio- und Theatermacher mit Schwerpunkt "Theater der Unterdrückten", er nimmt außerdem Lehraufträge an Universitäten und Fachhochschulen wahr. Der Herausgeber steht darüber hinaus auf der Bühne mit dem Gesangsprojekt HERZKASPER.

Kontakt: www.harald-hahn.de

Claus Schrowange

ART AND CONSCIENTIZATION

Forum Theatre in Uganda, Rwanda, DR Congo,
and South Sudan

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>.

This book is an expanded version of the article “Forum theatre for peace—Experiences in Uganda, Rwanda, DR Congo and South Sudan”, published by The Civil Peace Service Network (CPS) in “Theatre for Peace—CPS work in Cameroon, DR Congo, Nepal, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Uganda”, Bafoussam, Berlin 2014. The publication was supported by Brot für die Welt—Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (Bread for the World—Church Development Service) and financed through the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation (BMZ).

Cover picture: © Eberhard Weible. Reprint with kind permission.

∞

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

ISSN: 1863-2106

ISBN-13: 978-3-8382-0797-1

© *ibidem*-Verlag
Stuttgart 2015

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 the EU

Foreword

It has been nine years since the start of the book series *Berlin Papers on the Theatre of the Oppressed* with Anne Dirnstorfer's publication on Forum Theatre in Nepal, and it is with great pleasure that I introduce the first English-language volume, Claus Schrowange's *Art and Conscientization—Forum Theatre in Uganda, Rwanda, DR Congo, and South Sudan*. Since the practice of Forum Theatre (and the scope of the series) is an international one, I hope this book can find readers around the world more easily than books in my native German.

Claus Schrowange will take you on an interesting journey to Uganda and South Sudan, presenting the Forum Theatre style of Rafiki Theatre, and to Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo with Badilika Theatre. He describes his approach and methods, his experiences with the trauma-healing effect of theatre, and concludes with his views on the opportunities and limitations of Forum Theatre in peace work.

I would like to thank Claus for all the hard work of updating an essay he wrote for Christiane Kayser and turning it into a book—I know theatre makers are always busy, but he took the time, and now we can all gain insight into his experiences and hopefully integrate some parts into our own work and projects. The world in its current state can certainly use all of our efforts.

Berlin

August, 2015

Harald Hahn

www.harald-hahn.de

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	9
1. Introduction.....	11
2. Why theatre and what is “Forum Theatre”?	15
3. The way we do Forum Theatre.....	21
3.1 The framework	21
3.2 Stage scenery and costumes.....	22
3.3 The Forum Theatre play	24
3.4 The moderation process	45
3.5 Forum Theatre as action research.....	51
4. Touring with Badilika in DR Congo and Rwanda	53
5. Trauma-healing through theatre	79
6. Conclusion	85
Appendix A.....	89
Myth Busting Through Forum Theatre in South Sudan.....	89
Appendix B.....	95
Sharing Magic Moments	95
Appendix C	99
Photo Speak	99
Appendix D.....	125
Maps.....	125
Theatre Literature	131

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank the actors of the participatory theatre troupes I have worked with in Uganda, South Sudan, Rwanda, and DR Congo. Without their readiness to explore the power of theatre for peace, this book wouldn't have been possible.

I am grateful to Gabor Csetneki for teaching me his alternative approach to theatre.

Thank you Harald Hahn for introducing me to Forum Theatre and encouraging me to write this book, and for your trust and believe, that it will add value to the "world of theatre practitioners".

I want to thank Christiane Kayser for motivating me to finally start writing about my experiences, and for publishing an article in her *Building peace* series.

I wish to thank all organizations that have supported my work in Africa, especially the United Evangelical Mission, Bread for the World, the German Association for Development Cooperation (AGEH), and the German International Cooperation (GIZ).

A special thanks goes to Uli Thum, who invited me to South Sudan to share my experiences and to form a theatre troupe.

I am grateful to Rev. Joshua Lusenge Kasereka, coordinator of APRED-RGL, for giving me space and time to explore the use of participatory theatre in peace work in Rwanda and DR Congo.

Finally, I would like to express heartfelt gratitude to my wife Sophie and my sons Mano and Lou, for living with my passion for theatre. This book is dedicated to you.

August, 2015

Claus Schrowange

1. Introduction

In 2009 I attended the World Forum Theatre festival in Graz. Forum theatre troupes from Asia, Europe and South America were presenting their work. Workshops during the day, performances in the evening. Three performances touched me especially. Actors from the London-based group Cardboard Citizens created an emotional link with the audience¹ by just being themselves. The actors were homeless people, playing their real life experiences on the streets of London. Through the authenticity of their way of acting they became believable. The audience felt with them and for them. This immediately broke the barrier between spectators and actors.

The second group which left a lasting impression was Jana Sanskriti from India. Their style of forum theatre includes dance, movement, images and a lot of symbols that leave a space for personal interpretation and imagination, and are both artistic and educational. Jana Sanskriti is working mainly on Gender-Based Violence in India.

Finally, there was TO-Tehran, a University-affiliated Iranian theatre group, using forum theatre against oppressive systems. With simple black T-shirts and with just a few symbolic items, they were acting injustice and abuse of power in a serious as well as an absurd manner, speaking out the truth while making the audience simultaneously laugh and reflect on the issues presented.

What was missing in Graz was a group from Africa. This fact and the visually powerful impact of some performances motivated me to integrate forum theatre in my practice and explore its opportunities for peace work.

My theatre background is more or less an alternative one. I was trained by Gabor Csetneki, a Hungarian theatre director, who has an actor-centered approach, where theatre becomes a discovery and expression of “body, heart and soul”, rather than the classical approach where actors repeat some sen-

¹ ‘Spect-actors’, as Augusto Boal, the founder of forum theatre, calls them.

tences others have written.² I also had the chance to meet and be trained by Keith Johnstone, the inventor of improvisation theatre. Harald Hahn—a German TO-practitioner—introduced me to Augusto Boal’s methods.

I started in November 2009 to work for EAIGCM³ in Kampala, Uganda. It was a contract within the framework of the Civil Peace Service⁴. In January 2010 I gathered 12 students and young graduates of Music, Dance & Drama from Makerere University, Kampala, all of them hungry to apply what they had studied. Rafiki Theatre was born. During the next four years we explored the possibilities of participatory theatre for the promotion of peace, human rights and sustainable development. We developed our own style—an emotional and provocative, authentic and believable way of acting; integrating music, dance, movements, images, and symbols.

Productions on various topics were designed, and then more than a hundred performances were given in Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, and South Sudan. Seven forum theatre troupes in Uganda and one in South Sudan⁵ were trained by Rafiki. We developed plays with them and supervised their work. We participated in festivals and larger campaigns, did street theatre as well as indoor performances. Rafiki Theatre did forum theatre with illiterate people in the remotest places as well as with the intellectual city elite. The style we developed became known and experiences were shared at universities and during various workshops.

2013 I left Uganda for Rwanda, where I started as UEM⁶ Co-worker for APRED-RGL⁷, a regional peace initiative hosted by protestant churches from

² Gabor Csetneki has shared some thoughts in Appendix B.

³ East African Institute of Governance and Conflict Management, Kampala

⁴ <http://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/en>

⁵ Hussein Maddan, the current director of Rafiki Theatre, has put some of his experiences in an article, see Appendix A.

⁶ United Evangelical Mission, an international organization of 34 protestant churches from 3 continents.

Rwanda, DR Congo and Burundi. APRED-RGL is building local capacities for peace and promoting reconciliation in the African Great Lakes region, a region that has been plagued by decades of instability and armed conflicts, leaving behind humanitarian crisis, poverty, and deep-rooted hatred against the perceived “enemy”.

In August 2013 I found myself in Goma, DR Congo, in a not yet completed, dusty small building of the CBCA⁸, together with the youth group “*Jeunesse en Action*”. We did a forum theatre workshop while 7 grenades were exploding, one less than a kilometer away as the crow flies. The local people were blaming Rwandans for being behind the attack. The atmosphere was tense. Despite this we decided to continue, developed a short play and integrated the fears of our workshop participants into some of the scenes. Finally we performed to 200 people in a CBCA church. The play was about the hatred of the people of Goma for the people of Rwanda. I saw that the “Rafiki style” could add value to the program of APRED-RGL.

Together with the Rwandan youth center “*Vision Jeunesse Nouvelle*” we formed Badilika (“Change”), a Rwandan-Congolese Forum Theatre troupe. Badilika works on the prejudices, stereotypes, myths and rumors that divide the people in Africa’s Great Lakes region. After some performances in the border towns of Gisenyi and Goma we toured around for 6 weeks in 2014, entering into conflict-affected communities in Rwanda and DR Congo. 59 performances were done, reaching out to more than 6000 people.

In this book I propose to describe the forum theatre approach developed by Rafiki Theatre in Uganda and South Sudan, and the experiences of Badilika with this approach in Rwanda and the DRC. I will conclude with a chapter

⁷ APRED-RGL was founded in 2008 by three member churches of the United Evangelical Mission. For more info: www.apred-rgl.org

⁸ Communauté Baptiste au Centre de l’Afrique (CBCA) is one of the three churches that founded APRED-RGL. It is mainly active in the Kivu-Region in DR Congo. The other member churches of APRED-RGL are the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda, the Anglican Church of Rwanda and since 2013 the Union of Baptist Churches of Burundi.

about the trauma-healing effect of theatre and some remarks about the opportunities and limitations of forum theatre in peace work.