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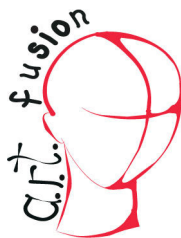


METHODS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE
Image and Forum Theatre

2013
Bucharest
Romania

„Act For What You
Believe“

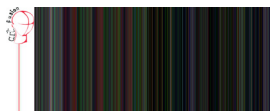
METHODS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE
- IMAGE AND FORUM THEATRE -



-2013-

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The opinions expressed in this material belong to its authors and do not reflect the position of the European Commission.



This educational material was developed and edited by **Andreea-Loredana Tudorache**, founder member of **A.R.T. Fusion Association** (Romania) based on the field experience of **A.R.T. Fusion in Theatre of the Oppressed** projects (with focus on **Forum and Image Theatre**) and on their partners in “**Act for What You Believe**” project: **Kuku** (Slovenia), **Ideas Factory** (Bulgaria), **Hopespring** (Ghana), **TAYCO** - Tanzania Youth Cultural Organization, **Youth Plus Policy Network** (Uganda)

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IMAGE THEATRE



THE

OPPRESSION



What is Forum Theatre



THE OPPRESSED

THE BAD DECISION



THE JOKER



THE

SPECTATOR



THE OPPRESSOR



INTRODUCTION

The toolkit that awaits the reader after the introduction part is in fact an ambitious initiative. It is based on years of experience of the A.R.T. Fusion Association (Romania) in working with Theatre of the Oppressed methods but inspired by the first Africa-Europe youth cooperation project focused on Forum Theatre: “Act for What You Believe” (details about the project will follow as well).

The reality is that in the world there are a huge number of practitioners in the Theatre of the Oppressed field (as it will be highlighted in the specific chapter) and maybe even a higher number of various institutions, organization representatives or individual activists that will desire to work with the methods. What are missing from this huge invisible network are standardization and a common methodological approach that could be easily shared and introduced to the newcomers in the field. As by “wireless phone”, these methods have been transferred, replicated, adjusted and adapted in multiple ways everywhere in the world in the last 30 years.

In every capacity building project (focused on Forum or Image Theatre) implemented by A.R.T. Fusion we were confronted with requests (based on genuine needs) for more specific guidelines and tools that could give more support for becoming Independent Multipliers.

Based on these aspects in this manual the reader will get to know in details the following:

- **Description of Forum Theatre and Image Theatre Methodology** as it was developed and applied in the last years by A.R.T. Fusion groups (small warning in this regard: it may certainly differ from how other practitioners use it)
- **Concrete examples** of FT and IT (for a deeper understanding of what the methodology looks like in practice)
- **Detailed Curricula** for working with Forum and Image Theatre (with specific instructions for beginners in the field)
- **Detailed guidelines for the role of Joker**
- **Contact details of experienced multipliers** from Europe and Africa that can provide free consultation in working with these methods for beginners.

This represents an ambitious initiative not only because it is first of this kind that will be freely shared with anybody interested but also because it includes considerations related to different cultures where the methods could be used. The inspiration for this product came from an intercontinental project that provided a reasonable amount of reflections related to what can work or not in very different cultural settings.

Who are the persons that this toolkit is addressed to?

- **Practitioners in Theatre of the Oppressed field** (to enrich their toolbox, to diversify their understanding of these methods, to deepen their methodological competencies, to get inspired);
- **Beginners in the field** (to have a concrete hands-on manual that could guide them in their work, to fill the gaps in their understanding and approach, to sharpen their facilitation skills, to contribute to their independence as users);
- **People interested to work with these methods** (it will provide an almost complete

understanding of how the authors work with the methods, a detailed curricula designed to help newcomers to the field as well and free consultation opportunity)

- **Curious people** (it might inspire them to start working with these methods BUT a mention needs to be made: this is not a novel, it is quite a technical material- not quite a before naptime reading option)

The readers are invited and encouraged to share their views, opinions, feedback, comments, criticism, etc. after exploring everything that this toolkit includes and we thank you in advance for taking the time to do that.

Enjoy the reading,

Andreea-Loredana Tudorache
A.R.T. Fusion Romania



A.R.T. Fusion Association created the “Act for what you believe” project as an answer to the needs of civil society representatives across Europe and Africa. They are dealing with diverse social problems and need competencies in new alternative methods for improving the situation of young people facing these various problems.

(The project took place between December 2012 and December 2013)

AWB was developed as a capacity building project and youth workers coming from the NGOs (partners in the project) from Romania, Bulgaria, Ghana, Slovenia, Tanzania and Uganda developed practical competencies in working with Image and Forum Theatre for dealing more efficiently with social problems, conflicts and oppression from their community.

The main goal of the project was to increase the capacity of various youth organizations to raise the participation and involvement of young people in social processes and change.

The project achieved the following objectives:

- ❑ To develop and improve skills in non-formal education in general, and in particular in Theatre of the Oppressed methods for youth workers from Europe and Africa;
- ❑ To develop a network of Forum Theatre multipliers in various regions of Europe and Africa;
- ❑ To develop pro-active attitudes among the partner NGO members and also among the beneficiaries of the partners;
- ❑ To gain awareness of similarities and differences in social problems and kinds of oppression in different European and African countries;
- ❑ To develop a sense of common responsibility for the future of their local communities as well as the whole global community.

The project beneficiaries took part in a long term training course focused on developing practical working competencies in working with forum and image theatre methods. The training approach was designed as follows:

- 1) An initial training for developing basic competencies in forum theatre method (took place in South Africa- May 2013),
- 2) A practice phase in each of the partner countries (Romania, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Ghana (joined the project later), Tanzania, Uganda) where the multipliers prepared and implemented forum theatre initiatives for more than 700 young people in each community. The topics tackled were: school bullying; discrimination of HIV infected persons, gender discrimination, child labour, peer pressure, family psychological violence, sexual harassment, and gentrification. Some of these performances (and the public reactions and interventions) are described in the Forum Theatre examples chapter for a better understanding of the methodology.
- 3) The practice phase was followed by a second training (in Romania- September 2013), for evaluating the practice phase and for developing advanced skills as multipliers in Image and Forum Theatre. The main aim of the training was to complete the set of competencies of the beneficiaries to become independent users of these methods. The training focused on

sharing practices, feedback, upgrading skills in facilitation and jokering (as a crucial role in this methodology)

- 4) A final evaluation meeting was organized in Tanzania in order to evaluate and assess the impact of the whole project and to plan how the network can continue to work in a coordinated manner from now on.
- 5) Each partner also disseminated in their communities (among other organizations and interested people) the project results (including the movie and the toolkit) to increase the interest in their civil society toward this methodology.

THE MAIN PROJECT RESULTS INCLUDED:

A network of Forum Theatre multipliers active in Africa and Europe;

More than 700 direct beneficiaries of the local projects, which we empowered and motivated to make a change in their lives (in connection with the social issues relevant for them);
A resource movie based on the project development and experience (available online on <http://www.youtube.com/user/artfusiontv>);

This manual (which you are reading at the moment) represents a tool that could be used by any person interested to work with Forum or Image Theatre provides specific guidelines in this sense.

THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED METHODOLOGY

– BRIEF OVERVIEW

THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED is a type of theatre methodology developed by Augusto Boal (1931 – 2009) in the 1960s inspired by the critical pedagogy and pedagogy of the oppressed concepts of Paulo Freire (1921 – 1997). Both of them were based in Brazil at the time and the social-political context of those days (post-colonialist era and authoritarian military junta regime) significantly influenced the development of these concepts, approaches and methodology. In the resource chapter of this material you can find references for the titles of the most relevant works of these authors which you can purchase (also online) or freely download (some of them) in order to read in detail the ideas and the original thoughts regarding the concept of oppression, pedagogy of oppression, critical pedagogy and theatre of the oppressed.

As it was mentioned, in the 1960s Augusto Boal experimented with theatre in order to give voice to the oppressed, to empower them to fight the oppression in their life. He was active at first in Brazil then he was forced to leave the country and he continued to work with the methods predominantly in Europe. During his lifetime he got in contact with many theatre practitioners as well as other people interested in working with theatre for social change and he trained and worked together with them in various countries in the world. During this time the initial methods developed, were transformed and new methods emerged as well. The people that he got in touch with continued to work with the methods in their communities, adapting and adjusting them to their own contexts.

It is estimated that from the '60s to today the methods included under the umbrella of theatre of the oppressed have probably reached more than 100 countries although in fact it is difficult to monitor this aspect because there is no coordinated monitoring system that can track down all the practitioners around the world. Due to various factors that pushed the methods to be transformed, upgraded, adjusted, adapted, changed, etc. at the moment there is no set of concrete and specific criteria that could attempt to define or standardize this methodology. The richer arsenal of approaches and the complete freedom in terms of working with these methods allowed the beginners and experienced practitioners to work in various settings, types of communities and beneficiaries which lead to different levels of impact. The down side of this “freedom” also lead to practices which could be categorized as potentially dangerous, for the team or public, for their emotional and sometimes physical wellbeing, regarding the message that they sent across (sometimes reinforcing oppression or promoting violence) and doing more harm than good.

Very often the practitioners in the field use the same terminology (which is often taken for granted) but refer to different things and there is no concrete reference point to be used.

Although the methodology was developed initially as a community based approach (for community intervention and empowerment) in these days you will find types of theatre of the oppressed being used in workshops or training courses (as a tool for debating on specific topics or to introduce them), or as a method of teambuilding in the corporation sector.

We make these mentions in order to be aware of them while referring or exploring Theatre of the Oppressed, in this education material and also in other contexts.

MAIN FEATURES OF THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED METHODOLOGY

(*note-should not be confused with criteria for defining TO-which doesn't exist)

- **Is an interactive type of theatre** – the public will be engaged actively and can participate in the process and become “spect-actors”;
- **Tackles real life oppression** in its various forms (the discussion here could be vast as very often oppression can be interpreted in endless ways and can be applied to almost all areas of life) ;
- **Aims to bring along a change** in relation with the specific oppression approached – mostly by empowering the oppressed and people around.

Main types of methods included under Theatre of the Oppressed umbrella (the description provided here is simplified and for sure will not provide enough understanding regarding the methods but rather give a basic idea):

FORUM THEATRE



- It is one of the most popular types of TO. Often in a Forum theatre performance we see a real life case depicted (which reflects a situation of oppression) and in which the public is invited to participate actively by coming on the stage to propose solutions to the exposed examples of oppression. Based on the proposals, ideas, interventions of the public, a discussion (forum) will take place with the public;
- In the long term it aims that the public will apply the proposed solutions in their real life (if the topic depicted is relevant for them);
- The process is facilitated, moderated by a Joker who makes the connection between the stage (actors) and the public;
- Being so popular, it is also one method that is being applied in an extremely large number of approaches. In the Forum Theatre section of this toolkit you will find one approach of working with the method described in detail.

LEGISLATIVE THEATRE

- It often follows the same structure as Forum Theatre but aims to extract ideas from the public in order to draft proposals for a law or changes in a law (at local, regional or national level);
- These events can be organized in partnership with the institutions which are responsible with taking the proposed drafts further (municipalities, local councils, schools, parliaments, etc.) or not. In the latter option the organizers follow the steps for the proposal to reach the responsible institutions.
- There is no guarantee that the ideas of the citizens will actually make it into the final version of the law.



IMAGE THEATRE

- The main characteristic of this method is that it works with body statues/postures (images) to depict aspects related to oppression in certain forms. This technique can be used as a supporting exercise in the process of development of the other methods (Forum, Legislative, Newspaper, Rainbow of Desire) or as a separate method in interaction with the public.
- Working with images also leads to a variety of approaches as it is very easy and leaves a lot of space for creativity and imagination.
- In the Image Theatre section in this toolkit you will find one approach of working with the method described in detail.

NEWSPAPER THEATRE

- The same as image theatre, it can be used as a technique –exercise for the development process of the other methods or as an independent method.
- The main characteristics are that a core source of information (which later will be used in its process) are newspapers. These can be used as inspiration or providing the main material for the outcome.
- It can aim to open a debate about the media as an oppressor (or source of manipulation) or to tackle the examples of oppression included in newspapers.
- Newspaper theatre can take diverse forms: it can be a performance, it can be exhibitions, dynamic installations etc. (it's quite open in this sense based on how the newspapers inspire the working team).

INVISIBLE THEATRE

- It is implemented in public places (usually streets, but not only) and it's based on a planned initial scenario which then is changed by the people from the public space (the initial scenario can have included in the planned part how to naturally engage the public);
- The action looks natural and passers-by shouldn't realize this in fact was directed before. According to them they truly believe this is a real life situation;
- It can tackle examples of oppression that are happening in public places (but usually nobody intervenes- and in this way they are stimulated to do so) or oppression on a bigger scale from the society (in order to open a debate in this regard);
- This method has the highest level of risks for the team as the unpredictable factor is huge and therefore the preparation process is crucial;
- Some groups decide to inform the public in the end that it was a directed performance, others do not.

RAINBOW OF DESIRE

- This method mainly tackles the inner oppression which exists within us from various past events and relationships;
- It has a therapeutic approach and it does not aim to be exposed to the public. It is designed mainly for a personal inner process within a trustworthy group which through different exercises (mainly based on image theatre techniques) will lead the group members to empower themselves (by reducing or eliminating the inner oppression);
- Among all the methods developed by Augusto Boal, this is the most developed methodologically – as there is a manual which specific guidelines;
- Bearing in mind the extremely personal approach of this technique it should be used with extreme care and by professionals that can handle strong emotional processes within a group.

Around the world there are various formal and non-formal educational programs (of various lengths (delivered by various institutions, organizations, theatre groups, etc.) aiming to train different professionals in TO methods (to introduce these methods or to build the capacity to apply them in their communities). This methodology is not standardized or safe guard through

any coordinated system and this means that none of these available options (of education in the field) have more authority than the others. There is also the option (which many professionals pursue) to try out working with some of these techniques without participating in an educational program, and even this specific educational material will provide guidance to such individuals.

FORUM THEATRE METHOD

– PRESENTATION

Forum Theatre is the most popular form of Theatre of the Oppressed worldwide and also the oldest, as it was the first one to be experimented by Augusto Boal. Due to this popularity, very often Forum Theatre practitioners use the terminology of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) as having the same meaning as Forum Theatre when in fact TO is just an umbrella of methods and Forum Theatre is one of them.



At the same time it is also probably the method that has the highest diversity in terms of how it is structured or what rules are used in its implementation phase due to its large history and ramifications around the world and also due to the lack of an initial specific methodology.

Therefore the practitioners who picked it up filled the gaps while working with the method. While we acknowledge the importance of being flexible, adjusting to a specific context and upgrading based on the concrete experience it is important to be aware that what we call Forum Theatre around the world might refer to very different things (even if at its core, hopefully, it tackles oppression of some sort).

In A.R.T. Fusion Association we have been working with Forum Theatre from 2004 and in all these years we have transformed the method that was originally transferred to us, based on our experience in Romania and abroad (on 3 continents). The transformation aimed always to maximize the impact among the public and to make it easier for the volunteers to learn and become independent Forum Theatre practitioners.

In this chapter we want to introduce Forum Theatre as we use it, as we train our multipliers and how it has been used in all our projects with more than 5000 beneficiaries along the years. From the beginning we want to warn the readers who are familiar with Forum Theatre that in the following pages they might discover details and aspects of Forum Theatre that they might not agree with, or are (very) different from what they know. They might call it the A.R.T. Fusion approach or just another Forum Theatre approach. We certainly desire more and more practitioners to use it, that's why we created this very specific methodological toolkit.

DEFINING OPPRESSION AND FORUM THEATRE (IN THIS APPROACH)

First of all we define oppression as power abuse and *in Forum Theatre we focus on very concrete examples of oppression which happen between people that have a sort of relation in a certain situation* (colleagues, neighbours, relatives, in-laws, friends, etc.). We do not work with abstract forms of oppression or hidden oppression (that is not explicit) as we choose to depict aspects of reality that happen in front of our eyes (or of our target group's) and change is needed.

A real life case is used for the Forum Theatre play- so the main source of information is reality, either of the team members (if they are faced with that specific problem) or from discussions with people who experience that specific oppression. We do not invent, use rumours or our own assumptions. The play is focused on only one specific example of oppression (not more), it has only one oppressed character, only one oppressor, (there is a relation between them), each of them has 1-2 allies/supporters on their side and there are also 1-2 neutral people in the story. It has a length of between 12 to 15 minutes, 3-4 scenes and shows the process of oppression and how it increases in intensity.

The play has a negative ending (the oppressed makes a wrong decision).

The play is showed to a public who is connected to the problem (they are victims of it, or are connected in some way to the problem – as allies of the victims or oppressors, or they are neutrals).

The performance is showed the first time so the public gets to understand what is happening and what the end of the story is. The performance *will be shown a second time* (after a discussion with the public takes place) and this second time *the public is invited to make changes* so the ending of the story will be different. The public will have to come with ideas to reduce or to solve the oppression depicted on stage (by balancing the power relations among the people involved in that specific situation). In the next chapter you can read more concrete examples of Forum Theatre from 5 countries and how the public intervened to change the story end.

The process with the public is managed by a Joker who facilitates the discussions with the public and stimulates them to reflect on and critically analyse the proposals for change, how realistic they are and also how they can transfer them to reality. Forum Theatre is a very powerful tool for empowerment on different levels in a community as it brings attitudinal changes among the public members and also among the team members.

METHODOLOGICAL, TECHNICAL ASPECTS AND RULES USED IN FORUM THEATRE

It is preferable to work with non-actors (as actors in our experience end up focusing on the artistic part of the work and not on the social change part) but nobody is excluded from the process;

Team members should be volunteers that are genuinely interested in making a change in society with their involvement in the Forum Theatre project;

The scenes are shown in chronological order;
If there is a different time or different location/setting then it is a different scene. We do not show 2 scenes in parallel;

We do not show psychical violence on stage – we can suggest it (that it is happening in that specific context) but we do not show it explicitly – because it can actually be reinforced as acceptable behaviour, it can scare or shock public members (as it can be too strong for them, it can inhibit them from coming on stage, being afraid to face physical violence)

One actor has one role – we do not use anyone two times (same person having multiple roles) ;

We do not use the travesty approach – one person playing a different gender role (unless we do have a performance about this aspect);
If possible we do not use microphones – to keep the play as simple as possible and also because in reality people do not talk into microphones among themselves (but if we have a large crowd in the public of course it will be needed)

We do not use music or special lights (this doesn't happen in reality either);
The public has free access to the performance - we do not ask for money from the public as this will restrict their access and therefore reduce the impact;

Usually the process takes 1.5 hours – even 2 hours, depending on how many solutions the public proposes. We do not speed the process by approaching it superficially – it takes so long as it goes more deeply into the issue and it contributes to a longer-term impact on the public.

It is better to not have more then 50-60 people in the public as then the discussions with such large crowds will be less deep than with a smaller public.

The public needs to be informed if photographs are taken or video is shot and if they ok with that or not.



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