

## Workshop S4: A taste of Theatre of the Oppressed methodologies

Theatre of the Oppressed was developed in Brazil in 1971 by Augusto Boal. Nowadays, groups practicing Theatre of the Oppressed are present in all the continents.

As it is said in the Declaration of Principles of the International Theatre of the Oppressed Organisation (ITO): "The basic aim of the Theatre of the Oppressed is to humanize humanity. The Theatre of the Oppressed is a system of exercises, games and techniques based on the Essential Theatre, to help men and women to develop what they have inside themselves: theatre." The Theatre of the Oppressed tries to activate people in a humanistic endeavour expressed by its very name: theatre of, by, and for the oppressed. It follows a system that enables people to act in the fiction of theatre to become protagonists, i.e. acting subjects, of their own lives. In this workshop, the participants will have the opportunity to experiment with exercises and games, and will learn about concrete good practices using Theatre of the Oppressed methodologies. The official language of the workshop will be English with the possibility to express and communicate in French, Spanish and Portuguese. More general information on [www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/](http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org/)

Laura de Witte, Theatre of the Oppressed trainer and activist, Portugal/France

### Minutes by Laura de Witte

Five hours were too short to learn in practice what is behind the words of Augusto Boal, but it was enough to give the taste and motivate the participants in looking afterwards how they could use the methodologies in their local realities.

We started building the group by learning names, using all parts of the body, miming animals, feelings, sensations, fight, love, sport, games... The group discovered how their bodies are "mechanized" and oppressed by the habits, the daily life, the routine, the work, the culture...

Slowly we passed to exercise also the imagination, transforming objects into another ones, doing statues, creating collective images, miming social roles and the relationships between them... and the group began to confront themselves on stereotypes, oppressions, power games, confrontations...

Before going deeper in the techniques and after explaining the second part of the session, a short moment was given for participants to share about concrete and practical experiences and practices and to answer questions and doubts. *Can I give a special issue to my group for creating a theatre play or all the stories should come from them? Can I use puppets to do a forum theatre session? Is it not dangerous and risky to ask to people to tell about their stories of oppression? What is my legitimacy, like educator, to ask them to tell real and oppressive stories?*

After a long exercise based on improvisation (2 persons in a certain context with a certain relationship should relate to each other their respective – and problematic – secrets) which was also a good way to see which issues were more important for the participants, we went through the process of creation of short theatre plays based on real case stories coming from the group. The participants were divided in two groups: each group would be actors and espec-actors, creating a play and participating in the other one.

Each play was played by the protagonists of the original real story and presented to the other group. A mini forum with the public helped the actors to find some concrete solutions or alternatives.

*Story 1: A woman is in the subway, full of passengers. Two persons start to harrass her and nobody react. She feels really bad and doesn't know what to do. What can we do to change the situation?*

*Story 2: A couple of girls (lesbians) are taking a drink in a bar. Two neo-nazi youth arrive and start to insult them. The other clients don't react. The couple decides to leave the place. What can we do to change the situation?*