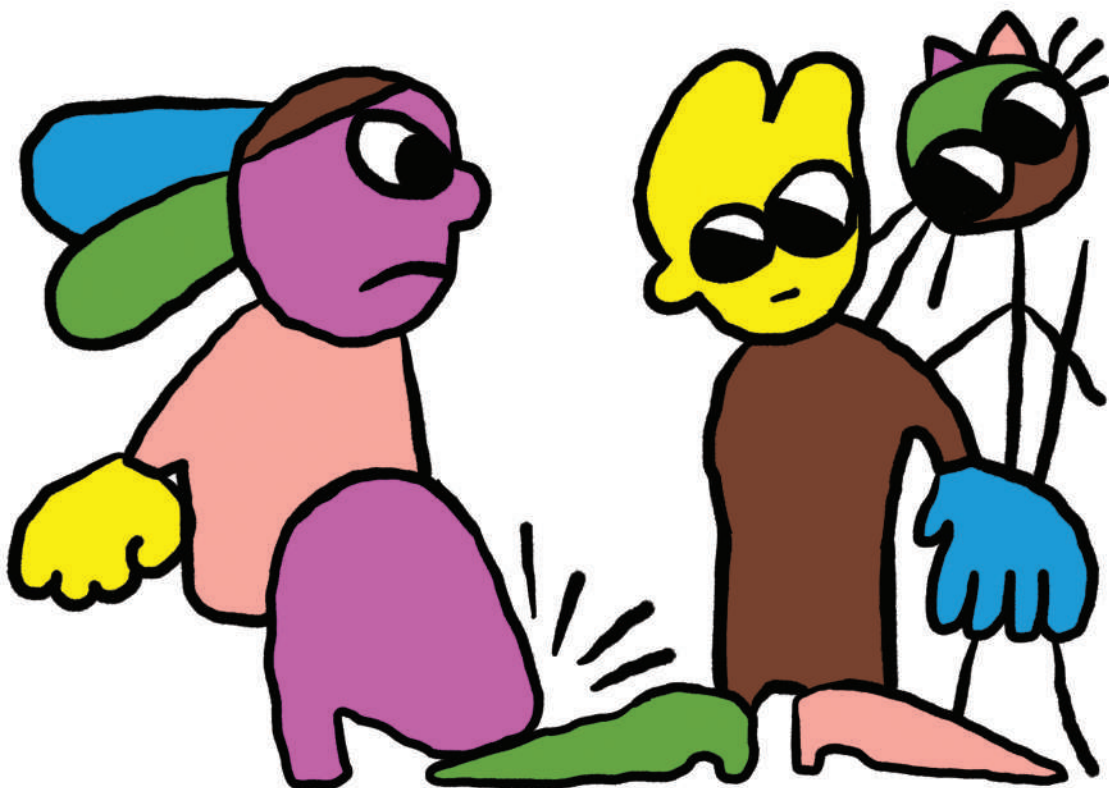


ANDREEA LOREDANA - TUDORACHE

Forum and Image Theatre Manual

Second edition



2025



**Forum and Image
Theatre Manual**

Second edition

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Views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them”

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Note *In writing this manual, no generative AI have been used. Various tools have been used for proofreading and/or for some of the translated versions.*



A.R.T. Fusion Association
2025

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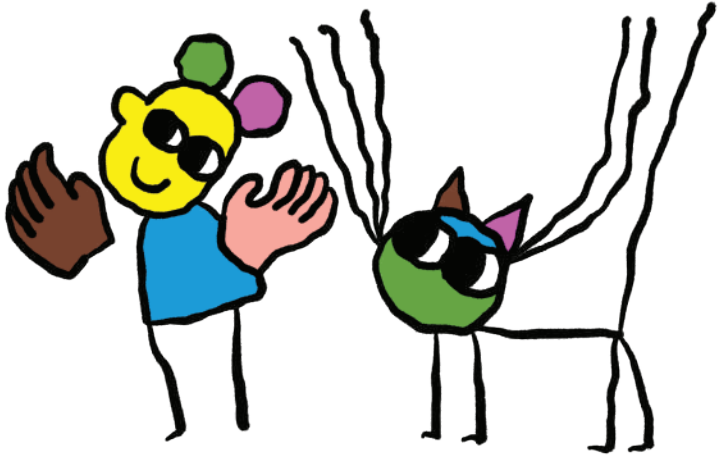
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*What can we do now
in order to be able
to do tomorrow
what we are unable
to do today?*

Paulo Freire

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Introduction

*Reflections on the first version
and the need for a second edition*

In 2013, I wrote the first edition of the Image and Forum Theatre Manual. It was also my first serious and somewhat technical writing for practitioners in a particular field, and I was very proud of it!

This manual can be found here:

<https://artfusion.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Methods-for-Social-Change-Image-and-Forum-Theatre-2014.pdf>

I wanted something I had missed in my work, something that could support my own efforts and those of the new Facilitators and Jokers in the field.

I would have benefited when I started my own journey with Theatre of the Oppressed methods to have something like that manual, that could guide me step-by-step: a manual to show me the path from “point zero” to the point of Joking an actual performance with a real audience. **There wasn't anything like that available at that time.** Yes, there were lots of theatre toolkits, manuals, and books with different theoretical insights, exercises, and often insufficiently elaborated, incomplete explanations of each part of the process. I could gather some bits to help with my work, but I will have to fill in many gaps.

Many practitioners have it clear in their minds and in their actual practice, but don't put it in writing, ready to be used by other practitioners at different points in their journeys. This is the case for many powerful methods that many dedicated souls use in their work.

Our participants and colleagues kept asking us for written support to accompany them in their work with the Theatre of the Oppressed, as live human support is limited and hard to provide.

That first edition of the manual has reached hundreds of people worldwide, directly from my hands. I am sure thousands got in contact and used part of it, as many of my colleagues have also used and shared it in their Theatre of the Oppressed projects and not only. The manual was and still is free to download online, and we printed many hard copies that I kept taking with me to different locations around the world.

The feedback received showed that it was helpful, and my original purpose, to fill a gap, was achieved. People call it the "yellow bible" and that always touched my heart.

While working directly with the manual, we noticed some shortcomings in how the material was organized, presented, and structured. I remember how often I heard– this could have been better like this or like that; or this is missing or this is extra, etc. As its core, it was fulfilling its aim, and it could still do that despite its shortcomings.

But then, about 10 years later, I thought it could be beneficial, if we had the opportunity, to do a refresh/upgrade and elaborate a second edition. We got the chance, with a project that received funding in 2023, and this manual is the result of that.

I have asked our colleagues who are currently or have worked with the manual, as well as the larger Theatre of the Oppressed community, for insights on how they assess the first manual, what should stay the same, and what should be changed or added. I was grateful to receive inputs from a variety of sources.

For some points, there were contradictions, as expected, in the suggestions collected

- Leave it as curriculum vs. Make it modular
- Put all the theory in a separate chapter vs. Put the needed theory inside the sessions where will be used
- Shorter sessions vs. Longer ones
- Complete new exercises/game vs. Leave the initial exercises/game
- Detailed examples of Forum Theatre vs. Brief examples
- Etc.

But for some points, there were some clear trends which I tried to capture in this second version.

I had to do some of my own critical reflection on this material, how it was used, how it can be used, and to ensure that more and more people can use it more easily in their journey with Theatre of the Oppressed.

People have different preferences and learning styles, but I hope this edition will meet most practitioners' needs, especially beginners, who are the core of the efforts behind this manual.



Introduction

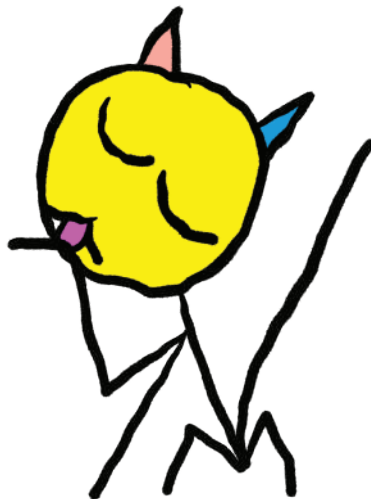
What Is This Manual about?

What you will find in this manual:

- **A clear overview of what the Theatre of the Oppressed** is and the methods included in this umbrella term.
- **A detailed curriculum** to guide you from the first step to the actual performance with an audience, evaluation and impact assessment in working with Forum and Image Theatre.
- **All the details needed of all the theoretical concepts**, method guidelines and instructions for anyone who wants to work with these methods and apply them in their own context.
- **Extensive explanations on the Joker role**, guidelines, challenges and recommendations.
- **Concrete examples of Forum and Image Theatre scenarios** to use as a reference for when developing your own plays and images.
- **Reflections and insights gathered from extensive practice** on how certain phases of the process look in reality.

What elements are specific to this version as compared to the version published in 2013:

- Additional theoretical guidance and input on certain stages and steps of the process.
- Additional details on Joker role: tips, tricks, challenges, Co-Jokering, etc.
- Examples of different games and exercises that can be used for warming up the audience.
- More details and information on the Image Theatre method, with more examples and variations on how to use it.
- More details on the evaluation and impact assessment of such processes.
- More reflection from practice - reflections on various exercises or parts of the process, or generally on working with these methods in multiple contexts.



What you will not find in this manual:

- **Video tutorials on how to do specific exercises**, Joking or structuring performances. The information is delivered exclusively in a written narrative version.
- **Interactive digital manual** – maybe in the future could be elaborated with different funds mobilized – for the moment, it remains a pretty PDF version, free to download or as a hard-copy manual.
- **Introduction of various topics, terms, and concepts relevant to various current themes related to oppression in our lives.** The manual remains a technical manual, aiming to support multiple practitioners working in various parts of the world, across different groups and topics, which change and acquire new nuances, angles, and focuses over time. Other material exists to cover that.
- **Bibliography or other resources** – we have removed this section entirely. We do not want to list materials you have to pay for to access. Manuals or toolkits that could complement someone's journey are often not available on any websites we can suggest. Additionally, this manual is meant to be a stand-alone material. If you want to find other materials, you can find many on your own, but you don't need any to work with this material.
- **List of consultants to be contacted in case you need support.** We included such a list in the first edition, but we noticed that some of those people are no longer working with Theatre of the Oppressed, and we want this material to remain relevant even years later. We have decided not to include any list in this edition. Feel free to contact us if you have any specific needs in this sense, and we could assess, on a case-by-case basis, to whom to refer you, if that is an option from our side.

This Manual is for you if you are:

- **A Theatre of the Oppressed practitioner or enthusiast** - it can enrich your own toolbox, expand your understanding of Forum and Image Theatre, advance your competencies in working with these methods and facilitate learning processes using them, and inspire you.
- **A beginner in working with the Forum and Image Theatre methods** – it provides you with a concrete hands-on manual to guide you in your journey, to fill in the gaps in your understanding of how these methods are applied, to sharpen your facilitation skills, and to contribute to making you a more independent and confident practitioner.
- **A person who is interested in working with these methods** - provides you with a complete understanding of how we work with the methods, written with sufficient and simple details and packed with a full curriculum designed to support primarily beginners in this field.
- **A curious person** who may be inspired to explore these methods more, to start working with them, but, as a warning, this is not a novel; it is pretty technical material.

This Manual is NOT for you if:

- **You have an aversion or strong dislike to very structured processes** – the approach and the material unfolding in the following pages present a very structured approach, with strict rules to be followed to ensure a more substantial impact in the communities where these methods are applied.

You intent to use this methods for raising awareness on issues that are faced by certain people, to other people, who don't face those issues – these methods are aiming at empowering individuals who are facing in their day to day life situations of oppressions, they are involved and affected negatively; they will not work, with the approach and structure presented here for raising awareness, other methods are more suitable for that.

You desire to approach systemic oppression or inner oppression as your main core point of action – other methods are more suitable for that, respectively, Legislative Theatre and Rainbow of Desire. In the chapter that provides an overview of the Theatre of the Oppressed techniques, you can find details on these methods and where to find materials to work with them. To a certain extent, every problem in our society has some layer of systemic or inner oppression, but no method can tackle all of them at once. Image and Forum Theatre, as presented in this manual, focus on the oppression between individuals and aim to empower people to handle the situations they face day by day differently. Not all societal problems can be addressed with these methods, and we have included concrete guidelines on which situations and issues are suitable for them.

You have a strong empathetical approach to oppressors in our society, and you always look for explanations, reasons, justifications for why oppressors act in certain way and how they could be reason with and persuaded to act differently; with such kind of mind-set, you will have a hard time working with this methods, in which the primary focus is on the oppressed people and their allies and what they can do and change in their actions when facing the oppression; it is Theatre of the Oppressed and not Theatre of the Oppressors; there is no reason to justify power abuse and if an oppressor could undergo different processes to become better people, this is not the method for that.



We are very excited for this edition to get into the hands or in front of the eyes of as many suitable people as possible. By making it free and available in multiple languages, we hope it will make a difference and leave a strong mark on all the groups and communities where it will be used.

I am always open to receiving feedback, comments, criticism, impressions and general reflections from the people who will be working and using parts of this manual. **Please do so!**

Enjoy the reading,
Andreea-Loredana Tudorache

Fair Game:

Theatre of the Oppressed for Youth Empowerment

Project Overview

This project focused on building the capacity of youth workers to use and incorporate in their programs Theatre of the Oppressed methodology (*Forum Theatre to work on empowerment and activation of young people, and Legislative Theatre to work on policies and advocacy*) and had the following flow, over a span of 2 years: Empower and Activate, Engage and Advocate.

The project aimed to enhance equity, social cohesion and active citizenship by building the capacity of youth civil society organizations to use the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology for a holistic approach towards the social inclusion process, targeting especially vulnerable youth.

A.R.T. Fusion Association (Romania) developed and implemented this project together with its partners from Italy, Portugal, Palestine, Morocco and Lebanon. The project was implemented from early 2024 till the end of 2025.

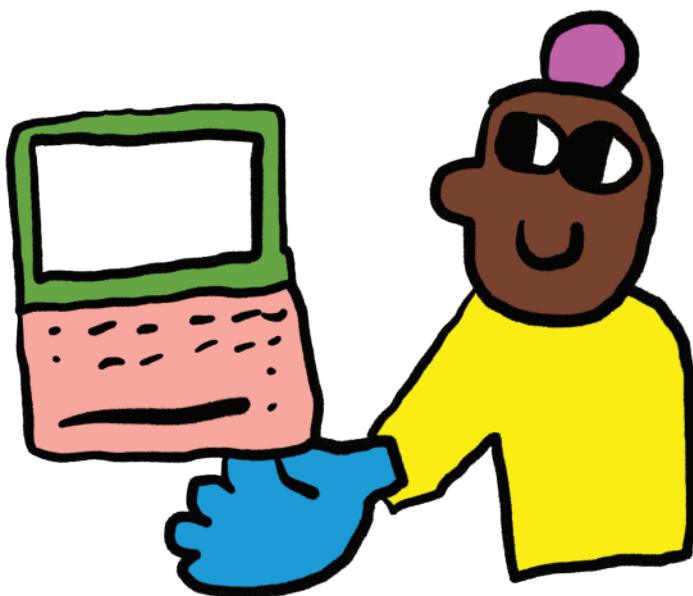
The project achieved the following objectives:

To support 1500 young people from all partner countries at risk of social exclusion to be empowered and develop adequate competencies to better handle and overcome challenges in their lives.

- **To engage in an in-depth consultation process with at least 2100 vulnerable** young people and prioritize specific policy actions relevant to their lives.
- **To influence policy reform** at the local and regional levels concerning vulnerable youth groups through a consolidated advocacy process.

The main target groups of the project were:

- **45 Professional working with young people at risk or vulnerable.** Youth workers needed to develop practical competencies for addressing these issues in their work. They were trained as multipliers and were supported in using the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology in their local communities.
- **3600 Vulnerable young people who are oppressed and at risk of social exclusion** in their societies due to the high levels of ignorance, discrimination and intolerance. They took part in the local activities and became empowered to combat discrimination and intolerance in their day-to-day life.
- **6 Civil Society organizations** which increased their capacity in working with the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology for preventing and combating discrimination and fostering social inclusion in an integrated manner.
- **Public institutions targeted during the Advocacy process.** Specifically, in this part of the process, the project partners have used the Legislative Theatre methodology.



The main project results, the research conducted, the Forum and Legislative Theatre scenarios, stories from the performances and the audience, the Youth Manifesto based on the consultations done in 6 countries, the translated manuals and all the inspiration collected in the 2-year project can be discovered and explored on the project website:

<https://fairgame-project.eu/>

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 socio-political context of those days (the post-colonial era and an authoritarian military junta regime) significantly influenced the development of these concepts, approaches, and methodologies.

In the 1960s, Augusto Boal experimented with Theatre to give voice to the oppressed and empower them to fight the oppression in their lives. At first, he was active in Brazil, but was forced to leave the country. He continued to work with these methods in other South American countries and later predominantly in Europe. During his lifetime, he came into contact with many theatre practitioners, as well as others interested in working with Theatre for social change, and he trained and worked with them in various countries around the world. The initially developed methods were transformed, and new ones emerged. The people with whom he got in touch continued working with these methods in their communities, adapting and adjusting them to their own contexts.

From the '60s to the present time, the methods included under the umbrella of Theatre of the Oppressed have probably reached more than 100 countries. In fact, it is difficult to monitor this aspect because there is no coordinated monitoring system that can track all practitioners worldwide.

Due to various factors, the methods were transformed, upgraded, adjusted, adapted, and changed.

At the moment, there is no set of concrete, specific criteria to define or standardize this methodology.

The richer arsenal of approaches and the complete freedom to work with these methods allowed beginners and experienced practitioners to work in various settings, community types, and beneficiary groups, leading to varying levels of impact. The downside of this “freedom” also leads to practices which could be categorized as potentially dangerous, for the team or the audience, for their emotional and, sometimes, physical wellbeing, regarding the message that they send (sometimes reinforcing oppression or promoting violence) and doing more harm than good.

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

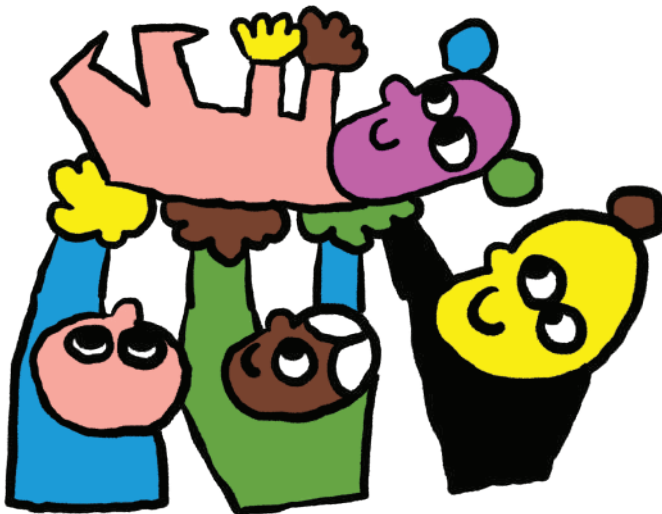
Although the methodology was initially developed as a community-based approach to intervention and empowerment, these days you will find various forms of Theatre of the Oppressed used in workshops or training courses, as a tool for introducing or debating specific topics, or as a method of teambuilding in the corporate sector.

We make these mentions to be aware of them when referring to or exploring Theatre of the Oppressed in this educational material and in other contexts.

Main features of Theatre of the Oppressed Methodology

(which should not be confused with criteria for defining Theatre of the Oppressed, since they do not exist):

- **It is an interactive type of Theatre** – the audience engages actively, they can participate in the process, and in some of the methods, they become “spect-actors”;
- **It tackles real-life oppression** in its various forms (the discussion of this topic is vast, as oppression can often be interpreted in endless ways and applied to almost all areas of life).
- **It aims to bring about change** regarding the specific oppression tackled, primarily by empowering the oppressed and those around them.



Main types of methods included under the 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 the Theatre of the Oppressed methods. In a Forum Theatre performance, we often see a depicted real-life case (which reflects a concrete situation of oppression), in which the audience is invited to actively participate by coming on the stage to propose solutions to the examples of oppression presented. Based on the audience's proposals, ideas, and interventions, a discussion (forum) is held.

In the long term, it aims at the audience applying the proposed solutions in their real life (if the depicted topic is relevant for them, which should be the case).

The process is facilitated and moderated by a Joker, who makes the connection between the stage (actors) and the audience.

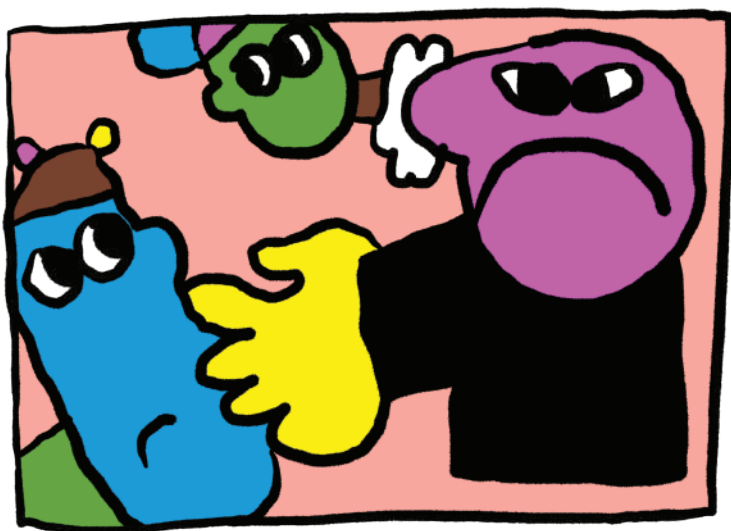
Being so popular, it is also used in a wide range of ways. We have developed a very detailed manual on how to use this method based on our experience. This edition of the manual, published in 2013, can be found here:

<https://en.artfusion.ro/resources/> and <http://toolbox.salto-youth.net/1503>.

What you are reading at the moment is the second edition of this manual, improved based on the insights and feedback from 12 years of practical use in the field by different practitioners. It is available, in addition to English, in Arabic, Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian.

Image Theatre

- The main characteristic of this method is that it uses body statues/postures (images) to depict aspects of oppression in certain forms. This technique can be used as a supporting exercise in the process of developing the other methods (Forum, Legislative, Newspaper Theatre, and Rainbow of Desire) or as a separate method in interaction with the audience.
- Working with images also leads to a variety of approaches, as it is very easy and leaves ample room for creativity and imagination.
- In the manual you are reading now, we have included a solid section on Image Theatre, along with three detailed approaches to working with the method.



Newspaper Theatre

- As with Image Theatre, it can be used as a technique (exercise) for the development of other methods, or as an independent method.
- The main characteristic is that the core sources of information (later used in the process) are newspapers or other media (articles, advertisements, etc.). These can serve as inspiration or as the primary material for the artistic outcome.
- Among its aims is the stimulation of critical thinking and critical consumption of media content to push engagement and interest towards the issues raised through the performance (linked to oppression).
- Newspaper Theatre is loosely shaped and implemented based on how newspapers inspire the team. It can also use black humour and irony to trigger deeper reflection and debate on various topics.
- We have developed a very detailed manual on how to work with this method based on our experiences, which can be found at this link: <https://en.artfusion.ro/resources>. This manual is available in English, as well as Greek, Norwegian, Hungarian, Polish, Portuguese, and Romanian.



Legislative Theatre

- It addresses examples of oppression supported or carried out by state institutions, for which attitudinal changes are insufficient to overcome the oppression; the system needs to change (laws, procedures, regulations, etc.).
- It often follows the same structure as Forum Theatre but aims to extract ideas from the audience to draft proposals for a law or changes to a law at the local, regional, or national level.
- This process is preferable to be organized in partnership with the institutions responsible for advancing the proposed drafts (municipalities, local councils, schools, parliaments, etc.). The organizing teams follow up on advocacy work and ensure the proposals reach the responsible institutions and are taken into consideration.
- We have developed a very detailed manual on how to work with this method based on our experience, which can be found at this link: <https://en.artfusion.ro/resources/>. This manual is available in English and in Greek, Polish, Hungarian, Portuguese, and Romanian.



Invisible Theatre

It is implemented in public places (streets, cafes, restaurants, shops, etc.) and it is based on an initially planned scenario, which is then changed by the people from the public space. The initial scenario includes and anticipates engagement of the audience – the public present at the location of the performance.

The action looks natural, and passers-by should not realize that this was, in fact, directed beforehand. They should believe this is a real-life situation.

It can address examples of oppression occurring in public places, but usually nobody intervenes (and in this way they are prompted to do so), or oppression on a larger scale, present within society (to open a debate in this regard).

It is one of the riskier methods, and additional precautions are needed for its implementation. Also, it is one of the most misused and misunderstood methods from the whole arsenal.

We have developed a very detailed manual on how to work with this method based on our experience, available at this link:

<https://en.artfusion.ro/resources/>.



Rainbow of Desire

- This method primarily addresses inner oppression stemming from past events and relationships.
- It uses a therapeutic approach and does not require exposure to an audience. It is designed mainly for a personal inner process within a trustworthy group, which encourages group members to empower themselves (by reducing or eliminating inner oppression) through various exercises (mainly based on Image Theatre techniques).
- Given the highly personal nature of this technique, it should be used with extreme care by professionals who 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 multiple institutions, organizations, theatre groups, etc.) aiming to train different professionals in Theatre of the Oppressed methods (to introduce these methods or to build their capacity to apply them in their communities).

This methodology is not standardized through any coordinated system, meaning none of the available educational options in the field has more authority than the others.

Forum Theatre

Introduction

Forum Theatre is the most popular form of Theatre of the Oppressed worldwide. Due to this high level of popularity, very often Forum Theatre practitioners use the terminology of Theatre of the Oppressed as having the same meaning as Forum Theatre, when, in fact, Theatre of the Oppressed is an umbrella term covering several methods, and Forum Theatre is one of them.

It is also the method with the highest diversity in how it is structured or what rules are used in its process around the world. This happens due to its extensive history and ramifications across countries and continents, as well as a lack of an initial, specific, concrete methodology being elaborated and recorded.

Augusto Boal didn't leave written step-by-step instructions for working with any of his methods. You cannot use any of his publications to guide your entire journey as a Joker/Facilitator of a process from step zero to completion. You may identify some methodological instructions scattered across his publications, but they are insufficient to provide a clear, coherent path for a beginner to follow.

We also know that he was consistently open to new ideas and approaches, changing the way he was working at different times, with various audiences, which also led to the development of different streams of Theatre of the Oppressed. People who have worked with him or with others, who have worked with him, have different stories about how the process was organized and/or facilitated. People made this method their own; hence, the high variety in working approaches.

We acknowledge the importance of being flexible, of adjusting to a specific context, and of improving an approach based on concrete experience. It is also essential to recognize that practitioners around the world use the term Forum Theatre to refer to very different things, even if, at its core, they all tackle some form of oppression (*which, unfortunately, not all do*).

We have been working with Forum Theatre since 2004. Over the years, we have adjusted the method originally transferred to us based on our experience in Romania and internationally (in Europe, Africa, and Asia). This transformation always aimed to maximize the method's impact and to make it easier for future colleagues to learn and become independent Forum Theatre practitioners.

In this chapter, we want to introduce Forum Theatre as we use it and train our new colleagues, or Jokers, around the world. We applied this approach in our national and international projects, reaching out to more than 20000 people since 2004.

For people familiar with Forum Theatre from before: You might discover a (very) different version of Forum Theatre than the one you know, and, of course, you may or may not agree with it as a working approach.

We hope more and more practitioners will use our approach, and that's why we created this very detailed methodological toolkit.

Forum Theatre

Key Defining Aspects

Before we go into details, we want to list below what makes a play and a process with an audience, Forum Theatre, in our approach. In the following pages, we will elaborate on how we operate with some fundamental concepts and apply methodological specific rules and procedures.

The Source used to develop a Forum Theatre Play.

■ We always use one real-life case as the primary source for developing the play. We chose stories that are more common and widespread in the community/target group. We aim for situations that are easily recognizable and relatable to the potential audience.

■ The example can be of a team member, collected from the community or groups to whom we will go with our play; or it may be taken from published articles or documented personal stories of a specific oppression.

■ We do not invent, use rumours, or make assumptions when building our play. Any main-scenario elements are based on what we know to be reality.

■ We do not combine several real stories into one to put on stage. The new combined version will never happen in reality, and we want to show a real story (from beginning to the end), not a story with combined elements of different real stories.

■ We chose stories or parts of stories that clearly exemplify and focus on only one specific type of oppression, not more than one.

Structure of the play

■ The play itself lasts 12 to 15 minutes and includes 3 to 4 scenes.

■ A specific location and time define one scene; if any of these two variables change, then we have another scene.

■ The scenes present the situation in a chronological order and have a growing tension in relation to the oppression exposed.





■ The play includes several types of characters with specific Theatre of the Oppressed technical names: one clear oppressed, one clear main oppressor, each of them could have allies (1 or 2) and 1 or 2 neutral characters. One actor has only one role in the entire play.

■ There is a relationship between the Oppressed and the Oppressor – we explore concrete situations of oppression between individuals (at home, school, work, neighbourhood, etc.).






■ The play is performed in a very realistic and concrete way – we do not use abstract or metaphorical elements, and, generally, we avoid using any technological or digital elements.

■ The play has a negative ending, suggesting that the oppressed person's future will take a negative turn – this future is implicit, not explicitly shown on stage.

The audience and space

-  The play is shown to an audience that is connected to the problem - they are affected by the oppression directly or indirectly, as the oppressed, allies, or neutrals in similar situations.
-  We prefer to keep the audience to a maximum of 50 people and use spaces with no external noise or disruptions.
-  The entire process takes 1.5 to 2 hours; therefore, dedicated spaces for this process are preferred.
-  We do not do Forum Theatre in public spaces in urban settings with high traffic, heavy pedestrian movement, and noise.

The process with the audience

-  The process is facilitated by the Joker, who links the play and the audience. The actors do not interact directly with the audience.
-  The play is shown for the first time (10-15 minutes) so the audience can see exactly what happens and how the story ends.
-  There is a discussion with the audience about the play (*details about this in the Joker section*).
-  The play is shown for the second time. This time, the audience is invited to stop the performance and propose changes to make the story's ending different.
-  The audience members can propose ideas to reduce or address the oppression depicted on stage by replacing actors on stage and showing a different way to handle a specific situation.

- The audience members can replace any actor except the oppressor.
- After each proposal from the audience, there is a discussion with the audience to analyse the proposal (how realistic it is and what it changes) and to make a decision.
- The audience decides whether to keep the change, which means the actor will continue to act as suggested by the audience member or not. The actors improvise based on their own roles on how to continue the play.
- The process continues until the audience is satisfied with the end result of the new situation based on their changes.

The key points presented so far were meant to give a general picture of this method. In the following pages, we detail and expand on the specific steps, rules, and explanations for each part of the process to support anyone wanting to work with this method.



Forum Theatre

Core Concepts: Power and Oppression

Power

To understand oppression, we need to understand power. They are linked concepts; oppression needs the concept of “power” to have a meaning. Deconstructing the concept of power into digestible elements often takes a philosophical path, which can create confusion. Nevertheless, this exercise is necessary for a group of practitioners to exchange views, dig deeper, and, ultimately, operate with these concepts more confidently.

Power exists in physical body/actions, mind, language (volume, tone, words, etc.), symbols and meanings (money, status, roles, media, etc.), spirituality, politics, decisions, relations, attitudes, objects (guns, possessions, etc.), nature, groups, privilege, etc.


Power in itself does not have a positive or a negative value, but rather the way it is used (or not used) may have negative or positive consequences.


Oppression

A simple definition of oppression, in general, is *abuse of power*. Oppression, defined in this way, can apply to various dimensions of life and society and can be more concrete or more abstract: people, the system, political parties or the government, authorities, religion or religious figures, etc. could be the oppressors.

In Forum Theatre, we focus on very specific and concrete forms of oppression, in which the oppressor is portrayed by a concrete person with a direct connection to the oppressed person. We do not operate with abstract or hidden forms of oppression (those that are not explicit). In Forum Theatre, we work with the concrete reality as it takes shape in our day-to-day lives. We focus on examples of oppression closest to our realities, which are part of our lives, to trigger change from there. The “system” could be oppressing, but who represents the system? Which concrete person is abusing their power?

We can always find a real person when we zoom in on the manifestations of a specific problem of oppression.

 **The Oppressor in Forum Theatre has to be a real person** – not the system, institutions, the society, mentalities, norms, etc.

 **The Oppressed in Forum Theatre has to be a real person** - not an animal, element of nature, society, people in general, etc.

Situations of Oppression in Forum Theatre

In a situation of oppression, we have a real person who has more power in a specific situation (*physical, psychological, social, mental, institutional, etc.*) and who is abusing this power, exercising pressures of different kinds against another person (*with less power than they have*). **The Oppressed person feels powerless**, as well as mentally or physically abused.






In any situation, we have other people involved, directly or indirectly (friends, relatives, colleagues, passers-by, etc.), and in Forum Theatre, we divide them based on how they explicitly position themselves toward the main oppression. In this way, we have allies of the Oppressed, allies of the Oppressor and Neutrals.

We will explain and elaborate more on these roles in the next chapter, Step by Step Methodological Guidelines.

All the people involved in the situation have some level of power. To reduce oppression in the situation, there is a need to balance power distribution.

A Forum Theatre process aims to empower the Oppressed, their allies and neutral people – to trigger attitudinal change of the individuals involved in a situation of oppression.

Critical Questions

-  How do we identify oppression when it happens far away from us?
-  What is the reference point we can use to decide if somebody is oppressed or not?
-  Who decides if somebody is oppressed?
-  How do we know for sure that a person feels powerless and abused?
-  Based on what information do we decide whether some people are victims of oppression?

It is essential to reflect on these points and to be careful when we point fingers and decide to intervene in somebody else's community and life. In our approach, we focus on the oppression around us, from our lives or communities, on which no one except us is to say we are oppressed or not.

Forum Theatre

Step-by-Step Methodological Guidelines

Before embarking on the actual process, it is essential to answer several questions. **These questions represent, in fact**, variables which will influence the size of the team, the time needed to advance in the process and also the type of process that can be organized (*e.g. from a very low budget, simple to a more elaborate, residential process*):

Who is the team of actors?

- They can be people who have been affected by the chosen type of oppression or are deeply motivated to make a change regarding this topic.
- They may or may not have previous experience with this process.
- They may have different interests and motivations to join the group (some for the topic, some for the Theatre, some for the people, etc.).
- It is essential to align team members' expectations from the beginning and to avoid later misunderstandings, tensions, and drop-offs.

We generally prioritize working with non-professional actors

for two main reasons we faced in our experience:

- **While acting, professional actors can be *very good*** in an impressive way and could inhibit the audience from coming on the stage. Audience members could feel more relaxed and more willing to go on stage when the people on stage are like them in what matters their acting experience.

The professional actors often prioritize the artistic and acting aspects of the Forum Theatre play, which shapes their expectations for how the actors should perform their parts and for elements related to scenography, locations, sounds, lighting, etc. Their expectations can put pressure on the process, delay decisions and create frustrations. Often in Forum Theatre, we will sacrifice artistic perfection for performances that are clearer, more straightforward, and down-to-earth.

We also prefer to work with volunteers and not paid team members. We realized early in our experience that the most committed groups were those motivated by the topic or the process, not by the financial gain expected from it. If we had a budget, a bonus was provided at the end of the process. We always try to cover any associated expenses (travel, food, materials) so our team members do not have to pay out of their own funds to take part in this process.

The volunteering culture varies across the world, and we know that some of our partners in other countries have often told us that they had to provide financial incentives to their actor groups to ensure participation. Their members would not have been involved “for free” in the process.

What are the budget and the scope of the project?

This may influence the time commitment required from the team and the number of people needed, as we may have one performance in one school or a travelling performance in various cities and locations. If there is a budget to cover food expenses or travel costs, it can also influence the level of involvement of some of the team members, etc.

What are the specific social problems tackled and the purpose of the Forum Theatre initiative?






Is there a topic given by the project structure or organization, or can the team choose any topic they wish? Who are the people for whom a change is intended – are they already given or does the team have to choose?

Methodological Guidelines

We structured the development of a Forum Theatre process into distinct phases, as explained below. Each phase depends on the previous one, and each of them is important for a successful process.

Below you find a short overview; in the following pages, we elaborate, adding all the important details and the necessary theory.

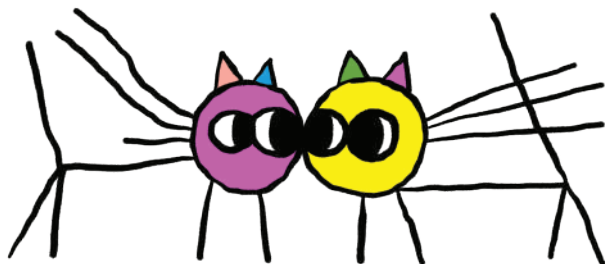
The Process Phases *(short list)*

-  Group Bonding
- Preparatory Exercises 
-  Forum Theatre Play Development
- Forum Theatre Performance With an Audience 
-  Evaluation and Follow-up

The Process Phases

*(expanded and with
all details included)*

In the detailed curriculum part of this manual, you will find activities and exercises designed to work with a group throughout all these phases.



Introduction and Group Bonding

This phase is focused on the team of actors, providing space, time, and specific exercises to support them in exploring their group dynamics, getting to know each other, building trust and connections, etc. It's a critical phase to lay the foundation for the team that will engage in a pretty intensive process to develop a Forum Theatre play and perform it for various audiences. A solid, healthy team increases commitment, involvement, and dedication for the subsequent phases of the process.

In this phase, we concentrate on implementing different activities and exercises such as:

- Getting to know each other;
- General energizing games and ice breakers, etc.;
- Getting to know the process, projects, timelines, and related details;
- Team and trust-building exercises;
- Introducing the Forum Theatre method and Theatre of the Oppressed in general (*if needed*).

Preparatory Exercises

This phase of the process aims to prepare the group for acting in general and for operating with the core concepts in Forum Theatre, namely power and oppression. In this phase, the group experiences different types of preparatory activities such as:

- General acting warm-ups, games and exercises working on attention, coordination, focus, space, body, movements, expressing emotions, rhythm, voice, imagination, creativity, improvisation, etc.
- Specific exercises aiming to explore the core concepts in Forum Theatre: power exercises, understanding oppression, image exercises, image theatre, etc.

Forum Theatre Play Development

In this part of the process, the team would be sharing, communicating and making many decisions together. We often recommend, and firmly insist, that the group take these decisions by consensus to ensure engagement and motivation. Group members should share ownership of the outcomes of their discussions, regardless of their previous experience with Theatre or Forum Theatre. There is NO director of the acting process. All team members are expected to contribute to shaping the final play with ideas, feedback, and opinions.

The steps necessary to develop the play:

1. Sharing/Collecting concrete real-life stories reflecting the oppression.
2. Choosing the story that will be transferred to a Forum Theatre format.
3. Transferring the story to the Forum Theatre format.
4. Role distribution.
5. Getting into the roles – improvising the scenes.
6. Rehearsals.





Step 1

Sharing/Collecting concrete, real-life stories reflecting the oppression

The exact type of oppression may already be given to the group because of how the project is designed/structured/funded (*e.g. bullying, mobbing, violence in romantic relationships, discrimination, cyberbullying, peer pressure, etc.*). In this case, the team members share concrete situations and examples that illustrate the oppression.

If the oppression is not already assigned to the group, the team must first decide which type of oppression they wish to work on. In this discussion, they need to consider their audience (known or potential) and decide which concrete oppressions may be more relevant or need to be addressed with that specific audience. Only after deciding on which concrete oppression they want to work with can they proceed to share concrete stories or examples.

Group members (*the future actors*) can share:

-  Stories that happened or are currently happening to them
-  Stories that happened or are currently happening to people they knew/know closely (friends, colleagues, beneficiaries in the projects they managed, etc.)
-  Stories collected from people affected by the chosen oppression. If possible and appropriate, team members can conduct discussions, focus groups, and interviews to collect such stories.
-  Stories they have read about, that have been covered in different articles or reports from other organizations. If this option is chosen, it is essential to select stories of “regular” people rather than situations involving personalities, VIPs, actors, or other figures in movies, etc., which may be deemed less relatable.

All the stories of oppression shared should be situations known to the team members. No guessing, assumptions, suppositions, rumours, gossips, etc. should be used and presented as a story to be added to the pool of stories. This is a crucial part of the process – only real stories are collected, situations that we know have happened and how they happened. We cannot imagine how oppression happens – we need to know how it happens for real.

Very important as well is to focus on stories in which children are not the main characters, either as oppressed or allies. Children (*up to 12-14 years*), due to their age and life circumstances, have little to no power to influence the situations they find themselves in. Therefore, even if the stories may include children, as affected as well by the respective oppression, they shouldn't be the main characters. We will show only stories in which the people involved have enough agency and power to do something about the situation they find themselves in.

Older children and teenagers, depending on their situations, could have some level of power, and those stories in which we consider that there is something they could do should be used. We have worked a lot with different situations of oppressions happening in high schools (bullying, sexual harassment, toxic relationships, etc.)

In this step, no decision is taken; it is only a collection of as many stories as possible.







It is important not to evaluate the story proposals along the way (*e.g. this seems to be perfect for forum theatre, this is not, etc.*) to ensure all team members feel heard, valued, and to foster a process of deep listening rather than one of critical assessment. Once the team decides they have enough stories collected (*each team member should share at least one*), they may move to the second step. We usually allow at least 2-3 hours for this part of the process, with a group of 6-8 people.

Step 2

Choosing the story that will be transferred into a Forum Theatre format

The team analyses and processes the pool of stories collected in the previous step. In this process, they use various criteria to select ONE story for further development into a Forum Theatre play. The team has to do their best to be objective in this process and not to choose stories purely for subjective reasons. Subjectivity can cloud their reasoning when they don't want to be critical of a story proposed by their team members or when they're excessively positive about stories with which they have a strong personal attachment. It is essential to maintain a high level of objectivity in this step to choose a "good" story, ensuring an easier, smoother process later on.

The main criteria to be used for analysis and choosing a suitable Forum Theatre story:

-  The story clearly exposes a situation of oppression between individuals.
-  In the story, there is a direct relationship and interaction between the oppressed and the oppressor.
-  There are more details about the story and the individuals involved at various times throughout the history of the oppression.
-  There is a clear potential for various Forum Theatre Characters in the people involved in the original story.
-  The situation takes place over a period of time; there is a progression and not a one-time situation.
-  It is a common and prevalent situation in society or for the target group/community.

- The story is relevant to the type of oppression given or chosen.
- It offers enough potential for change in terms of power dynamics, imbalance and abuse.
- If the story is personal to a team member, the level of readiness for this individual to work on this story in this process is considered.
- It seems easier to be transferred to a Forum Theatre format.

Considering all these criteria, the team must analyse the proposals, create shortlists, and discuss again until only one story is chosen as the main, core story to be transferred to a Forum Theatre format.

If needed in the process, some of these criteria may be more important than others and influence the final decision more.

Those criteria are:

- It is a common and prevalent situation in society, or for the target group/community.
- There are more details about the story and the individuals involved at various times throughout the history of the oppression.
- The situation takes place over a period of time; there is a progression and not a one-time situation.

If the story belongs to a team member, that individual must be ready to work on it and also able to detach from it. In the next step, the story will undergo changes and adjustments to be transferred into a Forum Theatre format. In this way, the story belongs to everybody in the group.

Step 3

Transferring the story to the Forum Theatre format

The chosen story, preferably meeting all the criteria mentioned, must now be transferred to a Forum Theatre scenario. In this process, several technical guidelines will support the team's decision-making.

As is often the case, long, complex stories of oppression have to be told in a play lasting 12-15 minutes. Therefore, several simplifications and changes must be made, but nothing that will change the core or main features of the real story.

First, we need to list the potential characters from the story to ensure we include all the necessary Forum Theatre characters in the play. We need one main person as the Oppressed and one main person as the Oppressor. Who are they from the story chosen? Next, using the information from the story, list who can be allies and neutrals (*e.g., X's sibling, colleague, boss, teacher, etc.*).

You need to balance the distribution of the characters between different types of allies and neutrals. Ideally, it should be a perfect balance, either one ally for each and neutral or two. Avoid situations in which you have three allies on one side and only one on the other. This indicates a mistake in the play's construction. If the power distribution is so imbalanced, the audience may react as follows.

■ If there is too much power on the Oppressor side, they might not see any potential change from the Oppressed side, from how you constructed the play. They may suggest stronger external interventions to address the situation, because the people directly involved don't have enough power compared to the oppressive forces (the oppressor and many allies).

If there is too much power on the Oppressed side, the audience may not see a need to intervene, since the Oppressed seems to have already enough power and can resolve the situation without the audience's help.

Mark the characters which could have a different gender from the original story without changing the core of the story.

This is one of the changes that may be needed to the original story to accommodate the gender distribution of the team of actors (*for the role distribution step, which is the next one*). You do not decide now which gender the Character should have or who on the team should play it. Leave these decisions for the next step.

A Forum Theatre play should have a length of 10-15 minutes maximum, but it is better to limit it to 12 minutes. It includes 3-4 scenes which reveal different moments from the story in a chronological order. A scene is defined as an action taking place at a specific time and location. When the time or the location changes, we have a different scene.

From the original story, identify 3-4 key moments that show how the oppression evolved and how each Character was involved in it.

The play can show events that happened over weeks/months/years in reality. The team needs to decide which information to reveal to the audience so they can understand what happens in the story and which possibilities for change are present.

As the play is short, additional information from the story that is redundant to the core message, doesn't offer further insights into the oppressive situation, or is just fun elements, shouldn't be included.

More cuts and reductions of material from the initial proposed scenes occur later, during improvisations. The improvisation part helps give life to the story and, in this way, shows precisely what is essential to keep and what is not.

At this stage, you don't need to elaborate on all the details of what happens in each scene; it is essential to agree on who appears in each scene, where it takes place, and what the main aspects that need to happen, be discussed or made sure to be clarified to the audience through the scene.

The following graphic helps ensure that the progression of oppression is adequately exposed in the Forum Theatre play.

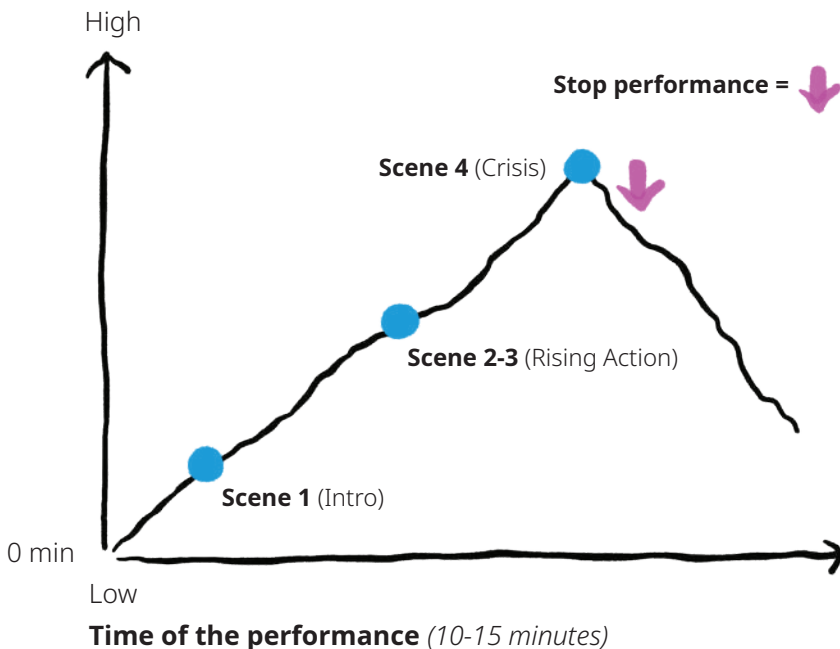
The horizontal axis is TIME,

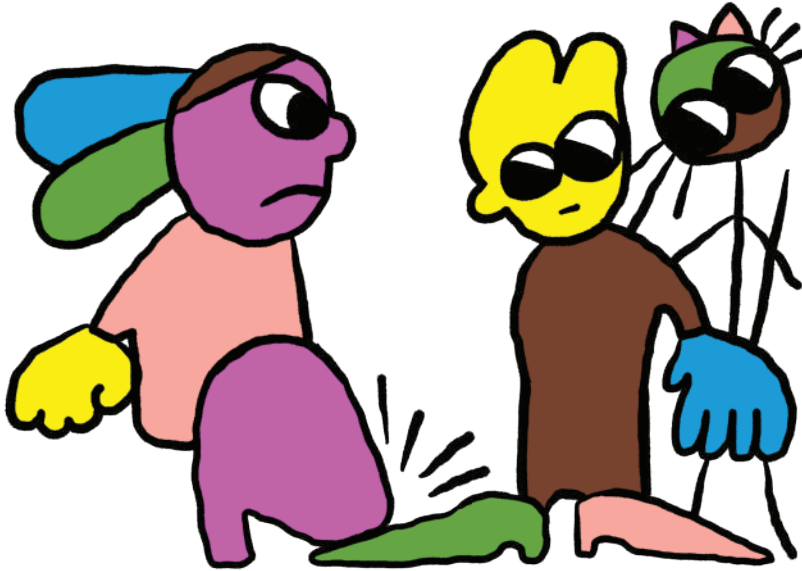
the duration of the performance, not the duration of the oppression.

The vertical axis is the TENSION on stage,

reflected in the intensity of the oppression and in how it manifests.

Forum Theatre Play
Timeline and Tension on the Stage





The structure of the scenario following this graphic is as follows:

Scene 1

INTRODUCTION

Through this scene, the audience should understand what the story is about, become familiar with some of the characters, their relationships, and the context, and begin to see a potential problem developing between some of the characters. This scene should contain enough space for the audience to come and make changes, and not be empty in this sense. If it doesn't provide enough information about the oppression, the audience might not feel the need to make any changes. We want each scene to give such options to the audience. It is a scene with a lower level of tension; nevertheless, it must have some degree of tension to stimulate the audience to come on stage and make changes. Too little tension will indicate there is no need to intervene at all.

Scenes 2/3

RISING ACTION

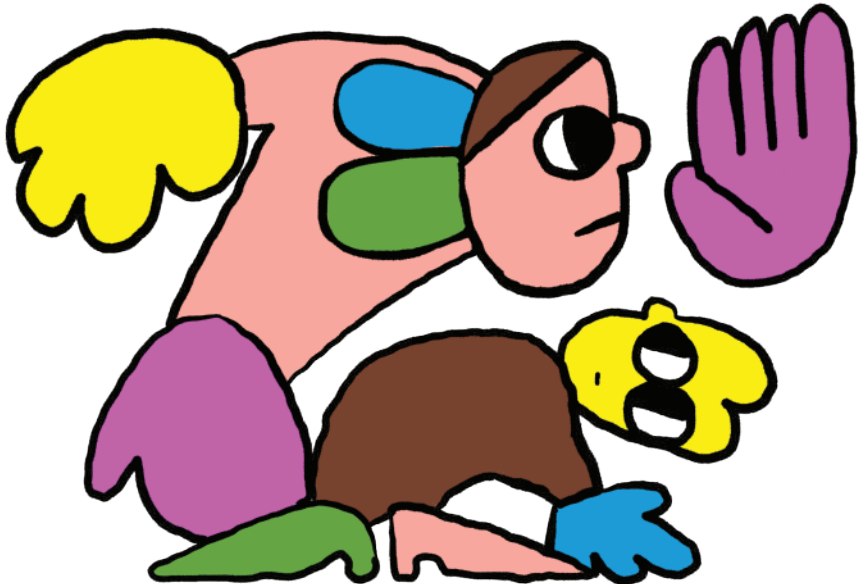
Through these scenes, we expose the progression of oppression and the tension associated with it from the perspective of the audience. The audience gets to know the situation better, the characters, and the relationship between them, and they see how the oppression grows in intensity, especially in the direct interaction between the oppressed and the oppressor. The tension reflected on the stage has to come from the oppression experienced by our main oppressed person and not by associated/proxy negative actions or behaviours of other characters, not in relation to the main oppression exposed. For example, if two allies are arguing about something unrelated to the oppressed person's situation, it does not contribute to the growing tension we aim for on stage. The growing tension comes exclusively from the oppression experienced by the main oppressed from the main oppressor.

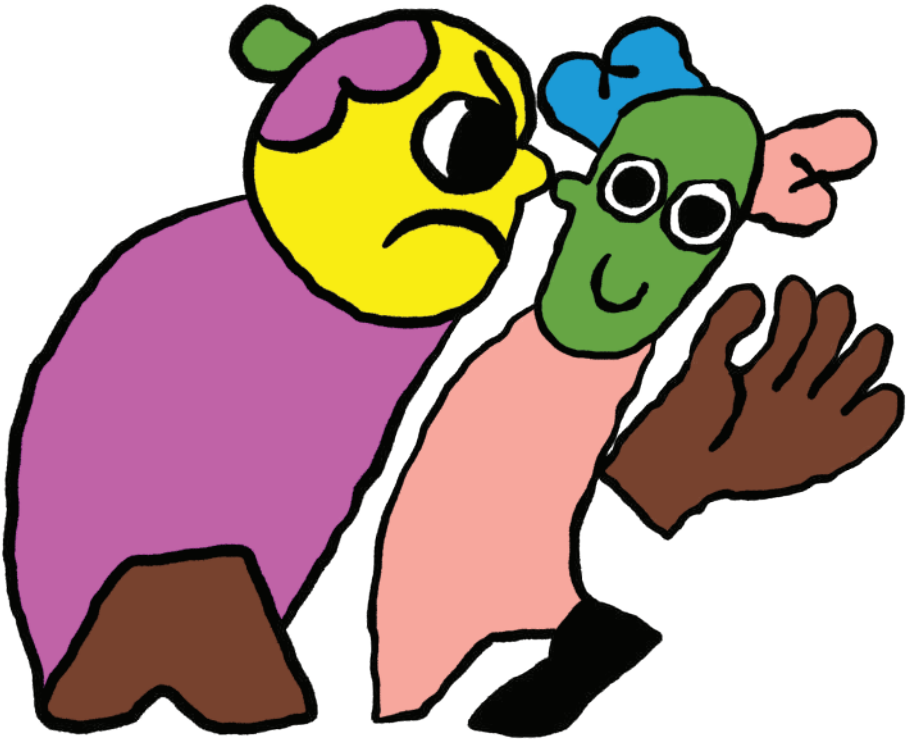


Scene 4

CRISIS

This is the last scene in which the audience witnesses the highest peak of the oppression and tension level, the biggest power imbalances; they see an oppressed who has used the last drop of their power and how this makes the oppressed take a wrong decision for their future. Immediately after the decision is made, the performance stops. The decision made by the oppressed must be clearly stated so the audience fully understands it. We stop the performance when it is still high in tension because we want to keep the audience with the urge to do something. By stopping the play at this moment, we increase the chances for the audience to have a stronger desire to do something for the oppressed and to prevent them from reaching that crisis point again.





Very Important!
**The Oppressed still needs to have
some power in our play!**

■ Oppression in real life can reach a level where the oppressed person can be at the end of their power, not having the capacity/power to fight for themselves and show total submission in front of the oppressor.

■ If it has reached this stage, it may be too late for the oppressed to change their own lives; most likely, outside intervention will be necessary.

- In more extreme cases, the oppressor kills the oppressed, or the oppressed commits suicide.
- If we show this in the play, we will expose a dramatic, sad story that is finished; it will not invite somebody to change, as it has already finished.
- **When we construct a Forum Theatre play, it is essential to choose stories in which it is not yet too late to make a change** (*including from the oppressed side*), OR to use parts of the story until a moment in which it is not too late (*if in real life the story leads to a much more dramatic ending*).
- That's also why we do not show stories of children (up to 12-14 years old) as the main characters.

The Wrong Decision

- This is a critical technical concept in building a Forum Theatre scenario.
- We have been using the term *wrong decision* for a long time already. It could be debated that this implies some moral judgement, of blame or putting guilt on the oppressed for the situation they find themselves in, although that is not what this refers to.
- **It is the decision the oppressed person takes as a result of the highest level of oppression they are experiencing, a decision that has negative consequences on their life afterwards.**
- The performance ends immediately after a *wrong decision* is made, and the potential negative consequences of that decision are clear.
- We do not show the negative ramifications of the *wrong decision* made by the oppressed and have another scene which shows what happens after (*e.g. running away from home, stopping looking for a job, giving up school, stealing something, etc.*).

■ If you add a scene after the **CRISIS** and the decision is made, it will be a scene with low tension, we will lose the urge from the audience to do something, we will show a sad story that ended, and they will remain with the feeling that it's over, it's too late.

■ There is no need to show what happens after the decision is stated, because, if the decision is indeed *wrong* and the scenario clear, the audience can imagine what happens next and they will know it will be bad; if it is only in their minds, we can still change it, because we stopped the time exactly there; if we show it, it happened, is too late.

■ **The fact that the oppressed person can make a decision is connected with the fact that they still have some power, as we mentioned before.**

■ It is crucial for the oppressed to be able to make another decision in the same situation. If we show a decision taken, which is the only decision this person can take, it doesn't show agency and power left. This is important to be thought through and adequately designed in the scenario.

The decision needs to be clearly and explicitly stated by the oppressed

If, in the CRISIS scene, the oppressor is very dominating, shouting, threatening, cursing, forcing, aggressing, etc., and the oppressed doesn't reply verbally, is silent, it can lead to a variety of interpretations from the audience.

■ The oppressed may reply or could make a good decision, as we don't know what they think or plan to do.

■ The oppressed will make *the wrong decision*.

■ The oppressed could be strong in relation to the oppressor and resist the oppression.

■ It is too late – the oppressed give in (see the previous points raised).

This interpretation process that could happen in the audience's minds if the position of the oppressed, after the highest point of the oppression, is not clear to them, could make it more challenging to motivate them later to come on the stage and make changes, as some of the audience members might think it is not needed. It will be harder to reach an agreement with the audience about the play's ending, what could happen after, and the necessity of intervening to prevent something they may not agree is negative for the oppressed.

When the decision is clearly stated and there is no doubt, we focus on how to intervene or what to change so the oppressed doesn't make the same decision again.

Although we show only 3 or 4 moments from a longer story on the stage, **we may provide information about what happens in between these moments.**

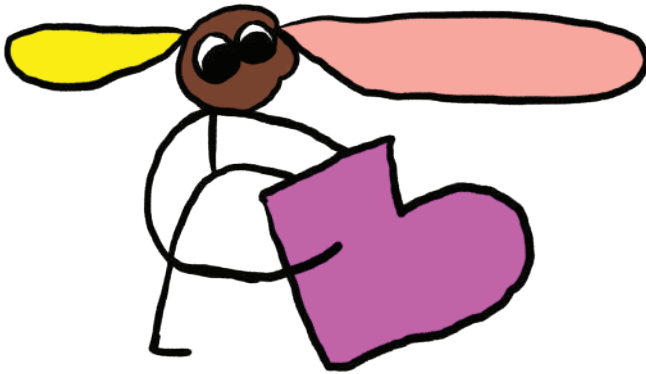
- **Through the discussions between characters in a particular scene**, we may refer to events that happened in last weeks, months, that couldn't be shown on the stage (e.g. let me tell you what happened last week.; meanwhile I lost my job; he did this or that in the previous weeks, I went to X place and I found out this, etc.)
- **Talking about different people who are not part of the characters** shown in the play, but exposing in this way more details on various relationships or information relevant to the main situation of oppression.
- **Talking on the phone with fictional characters who do not appear in our play** to introduce more information relevant to what happened between scenes or to the current story; the primary purpose is to provide this information to the audience so they can better grasp the story's developments.

Step 4

Role distribution

- In this step, team members volunteer for the specific roles they want in the play.** This is an initial distribution; as it often happens, once the play starts to be improvised, changes may occur in some roles based on the actors themselves or on the group's decision for a stronger play.
- It is essential not to assign roles to others,** no matter the reasons. Personal projections, assumptions and issues related to how people look physically should be kept out of this step. Power is expressed in multiple ways, and how people look is never a sufficient indicator of power relations. If that is the case, even our society will be different.
- If group members are okay with playing any roles,** and based on the gender dynamics reflected or needed in the play, the distribution can be made. If there are specific preferences and even more people wish to play the same role, more time should be allocated for discussions.
- If there are roles nobody wants to play,** it may be necessary to check whether the group is generally ready to act; they may need more preparatory exercises and a better understanding of how Forum Theatre works. No roles can be imposed, and if needed, the group spends more time discussing the reasons or doing more exercises to feel more ready to act.
- If gender doesn't affect how a person's specific position on oppression is reflected,** it can be bent to accommodate actors' genders in the play. (*men play men roles, women play women roles, non-binary people play non-binary people, trans people play trans people roles*). If in the real story we have a sister who is an ally, she could become a brother in the actual play, if the gender doesn't affect this person's allyship status. Reflect critically on such roles and explore the known information from the real story, if it exists. For example, is the sister an ally because she is also a woman or only because she is a sister?

- Whenever possible and needed, explore what changes need to be done from the real story to accommodate the actors' group's specificities, BUT, without changing the core aspects of the story and without bringing in potential problems that didn't exist previously, in the real story, but could be interpreted as such by the audience.
- One actor plays only one role in the play. One person cannot be a mother in one scene and a friend in another scene. You need as many roles in your play as many actors you have in your group. The Joker is only Joker; it doesn't have any acting role in the play.



Step 5
Getting Into the Roles
Improvising the Scenes

In this step, specific exercises for getting into the role and improvisations are conducted, and, gradually, scene by scene, the play is improvised, with continuous trials, discussions, feedback, and a co-created approach to the final play.

All team members engage in the process, providing input on how certain scenes or roles should be performed to achieve a clearer, more realistic, and more coherent purpose.

Nobody is the director of the process; no one imposes or makes decisions for the team. The group members make all decisions with consensus.

Important Scenography Details

■ All the props used on the stage need to be tangible objects and not imaginary ones, as they will contribute to the sense of reality that the audience will get out of our performance - plates, mugs, glasses, mobile phones, papers, books, pens – anything that is needed for specific actions has to be a real object.



■ Clothing should be chosen to reflect the Character, their personality, age, context, etc. As we did lots of performances without having much access to a variety of clothes, we can say it doesn't make a massive difference in how the play is understood, but whenever possible, try to incorporate clothing elements which help the actor as well, to enter more into the role and embody it more easily. Try to use at least different clothes from the ones the actors own, so they feel they are dressing up as somebody else.

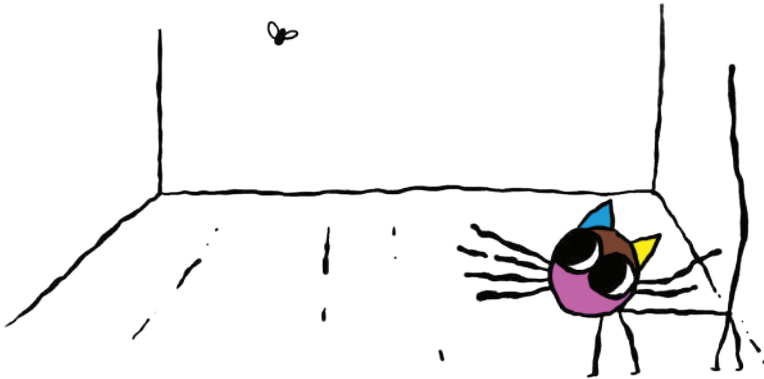
■ **Forum Theatre is usually performed in unconventional spaces** within communities, and it is helpful to work on plays that require minimal furniture. The emphasis in such performances is on the dialogue between characters, not on the décor, props, or settings, which should be as simple as possible. Most of the time, two chairs are sufficient – they can represent an office, a bench in a park, a living room, a kitchen, a front door sitting area, an area in a bus, etc. The Joker will say at the beginning of the scene, where it happens, and this is enough for the audience.

■ **Joker supports the performance.** Joker announces where each scene is taking place and when. Additionally, Joker informs the audience how much time has passed between scenes, keeping the audience focused and leaving little room for guessing or imagination.

■ **The simplicity of the props and décor is also required to keep the stage from needing many modifications from scene to scene.** Ideally, no makeover should be required between scenes, or a minimal one that could be done by the actors in the previous scene, connecting it to their own actions. For example: the mother talks with the family and at the same time is cleaning and rearranging the chairs; at the end of the class, the teacher asks the students to put away the chairs, while going out of the bar, the friends take away their drinks to move to the outdoor terrace, etc.

■ **Sometimes we have scenes that, for greater realism, require stage changes between scenes,** preferably not by the actors but by the Joker and other volunteers. Actors should remain in the audience perception only as the people involved in the story they are portraying, as close to reality as possible, and having them assume non-role duties could affect audience perception by reminding them that they are (just) playing a role.

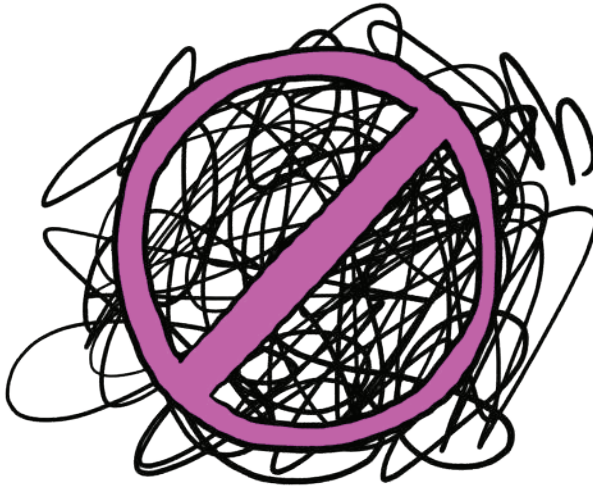
The stage needs to be empty between the scenes for a smoother transition to the next moment and location in the story. It is important for the actors to come on the stage with a reason and to get off the stage with a reason. They don't come on stage with the aim of being on stage, but they have a reason that brings them to that specific space: from the break to the classroom, from outside to inside the house, to a meeting place with a friend, etc.



While the actors enter the stage, through their behaviour and talking, the audience should be able to understand where they are, where they are coming from and why they are there.

You need to avoid actions like coming on stage, sitting on a chair and only then starting the scene. The same applies to finishing the scene. The scene doesn't end on stage, and then the actors – oops – they get off the stage suddenly. They need a reason to go, so the action runs smoothly and realistically. The actors need to provide the information-reason for going out of the scene before they get off the stage. It cannot be a reason only in their minds. For example: mother tells the family that dinner is ready, and they all go to another room to eat; class ends, and the students go out on their break; somebody is calling the person involved in the discussion, and they have to go to another room or see someone else, etc.

- **We do not show physical violence on stage.** We can suggest that this type of violence does happen in our story (*showing bruises, talking about it happening, etc.*), but we do not show it explicitly. The main reason is that it can scare or shock the audience, inhibiting them from coming on stage to intervene out of fear of physical violence.

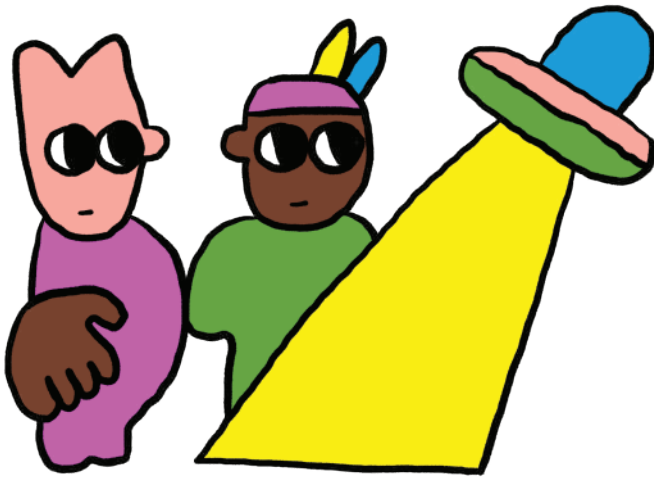


- This also includes not showing violence supposedly happening behind the stage (*with sounds and/or shadows*), even though we are all witnessing it. Also, miming or showing it in slow motion is not allowed. This will also look unrealistic and may look like we are ridiculing violence, as in real life, violence is not mimed or happening in slow motion.

We repeat!

**We don't need to show violence
to convey to the audience that
physical violence is happening in the story.**

When it comes to technical elements, such as different lighting for different actors or scenes, music, microphones, etc., we keep it as simple and realistic as possible. In reality, there is no special light coming on you when you make a serious decision for your life, there is no music in the background when you go out with your boyfriend, you don't talk with people with microphones around, etc., so we strive to show reality as it is. We know this contributes to a stronger impression of realism among the audience, who at times recognize what we show them: this is precisely how it happens in reality; I saw this exactly like this! Etc.



The use of a microphone is, of course, something that, if you perform in a noisy public space for a big crowd, is often needed, but if your conditions allow, do not use it.

Work more on the actors' voices so they can project more clearly.

The actors need to maintain a constant awareness of the audience. What is the audience getting out of our story so far? The audience doesn't know all the details the team has discussed about the topic presented; they see only extracts, but these extracts need to make sense and give a coherent meaning.

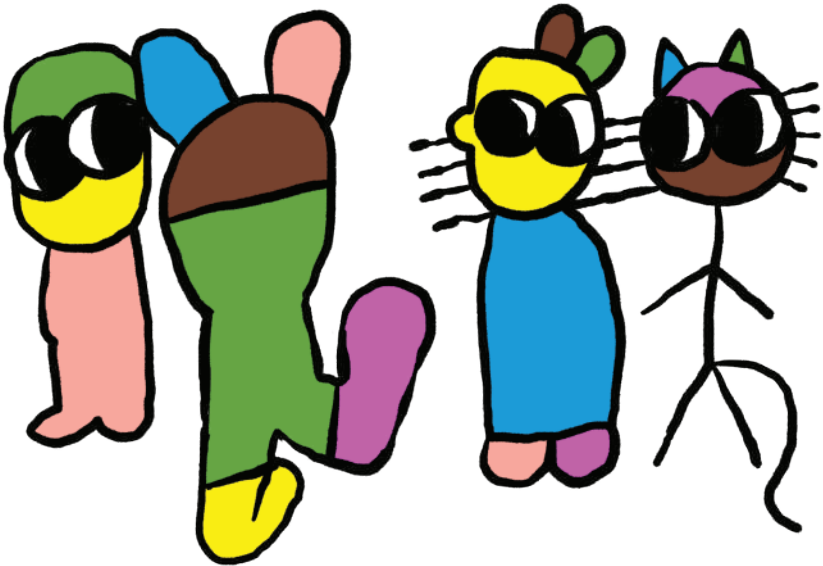
■ The actors constantly need to pay attention to:

■ **How loudly they talk, how they place themselves on the stage, not to turn their backs to the audience at any time** when they speak, and to also make their colleagues not do so. If one actor forgets they are with the back, another actor can move in the space to force the mistaken actor to change posture as well.

■ **What information they make sure they provide on the stage, to improvise if needed:** for example if they realize their colleagues are talking too low to help them speak more loudly so then the audience will also hear better: “What did you say, I didn’t hear you, could you please talk more loudly” and the audience will think it is part of the script. If they notice their colleague has forgotten to say critical information that had to be told in the scene, they can improvise and ask something to their fellow actor to make them reveal the information needed.

■ **The actors need to be aware of their multiple roles on the stage** – the role of the Character in the story, the Forum Theatre Team member, Audience Helper, to help the audience to understand as accurate as possible the action from the stage, and of course the actor’s own self and ego, which at times needs to be kept under control during the performance (*this will be elaborated later in the manual*). If an actor is only focused on their own role in the play, without paying attention to their colleagues and how they act or to how the audience perceives their play, more mistakes could happen, less clear information may pass to the audience, which can lead to a misunderstanding at the end of the performances, which will affect the rest of the process.

■ **Leave space for changes.** While you are improvising the play and getting closer to the final version, check if your characters are somehow incomplete. They need to be incomplete, so the audience comes on stage and completes their actions, decisions, words, etc., in a particular situation. If a character is already doing everything possible in a specific situation, the audience will not feel the need to intervene, as there is nothing more to be done.



■ It is essential to be careful, also not to show complete characters and still, the oppression to be at a very high level. In this case, we have a mistake in the scenario's construction and the design of the characters. If strong, complete characters that do all the right things cannot resist and change their situation of oppression, they still fail, then we are showing a tragic play, and this is not something that empowers and motivates.

Step 6

Rehearsals

- In this step, the team conducts several rehearsals, combined with additional exercises to support their acting, until they are ready to take the play to a specific audience.
- Before going to a real audience, the team needs some preparation. This preparation includes:
 - Understanding the process with the audience and their role and responsibilities in each step of it.
 - Brainstorming on the potential interventions from the audience.
 - Rehearsals with interventions are conducted with different team members to help actors develop their improvisation skills for their specific roles.
 - To discuss the Oppressor Syndrome, this sometimes takes over the person playing the oppressor, and it is essential to identify ways to keep it under control.
 - Conducting specific exercises to develop the focus of the team members in connection with fast reactions, helping each other, supporting the process with the audience, etc.
 - Discuss roles and division on the spot during the performance for any administrative tasks that may be needed (taking photos, attendance lists, collecting information for the evaluation, managing the welcome area in the space, etc.).

Forum Theatre Performance with the Audience

This part of the process refers to the actual direct interaction with the audience, after the play was developed, rehearsed, and the team prepared. For this phase, additional logistical and communication arrangements need to be put in place, including informing audience members in advance, booking a room, organizing refreshments, coordinating with additional team members or partners on-site, and confirming the event location, etc.

We will not enter into this additional set of tasks, as this falls more into management and organization competencies, which some team members will use to make the event logistically possible, based on the specificities of their context and budget available.

We will highlight several aspects important from the Forum Theatre team's (actors and Joker) perspective.

The audience has free access to the performance; we do not ask for money from the audience members, as this restricts their possibility to participate and reduces the impact of our process.

The entire process takes 1.5 to 2 hours, depending on the audience's engagement level. We do not speed up the process by approaching it superficially; it takes this time because it is an intense, deep process with high participation from various individuals. The event's duration should be communicated to potential audience members and/or the event's hosts.

It is recommended to keep the audience to fewer than 50 to ensure higher-quality discussions and member engagement.

The audience needs to be informed whether photographs or video will be recorded and whether they are okay with that. It would be better to have a consent form for this part of the process, as in many countries, this is also a legal issue.

The step-by-step process for the audience is extensively elaborated in the Joker Role Chapter, with all the necessary details.

Below, we will enumerate the main aspects to ensure the flow is understood, as well as the specific rules we operate under.

Introduction from the Joker.

The play is performed for the first time.

Joker leads a discussion with the audience about the problem, the characters, and their connection to reality, asks for more examples, and explores ideas of change.

Joker explains the change process and the rules to the audience:

Clap whenever they want to make a change/ intervention. The scene will freeze, and they can go on the stage and replace one actor. When they have finished with their idea, they clap, the scene freezes again, and they come out from the stage.

They can change all characters except the oppressor.

Only one person from the audience can be on the stage at one time. They can change only one person at a time.

They cannot show physical violence on the stage.

They should not present magic solutions that are impossible in reality.

We don't go back in time – any change should be proposed when they think is needed.

Joker conducts games to warm up the audience for the process.

The play is starting again.

■ **The audience is clapping and making interventions, and the Joker manages** them until the oppression is reduced and the oppressed Character no longer makes the *wrong* decision.

■ **There is a protocol to be followed for each proposal from the audience.** Only after this protocol is followed are more interventions allowed from the audience. The protocol:

- 1. The person who made a change explains to the audience, after making their change, what their intention was and what they think they have achieved.
- 2. The audience is then asked to comment on their thoughts on the proposal, the changes it made, and its realism.
- 3. After different audience members explain their points of view, a vote is taken: should the change made by the audience be kept?
- 4. If the majority of the audience members vote yes, the play continues and the change is kept.
- 5. If the majority says no, the play continues as initially.

■ **Joker does a summary of the process** and the ideas proposed by the audience.

■ **Joker asks the audience what they will transfer** to their lives from this process.

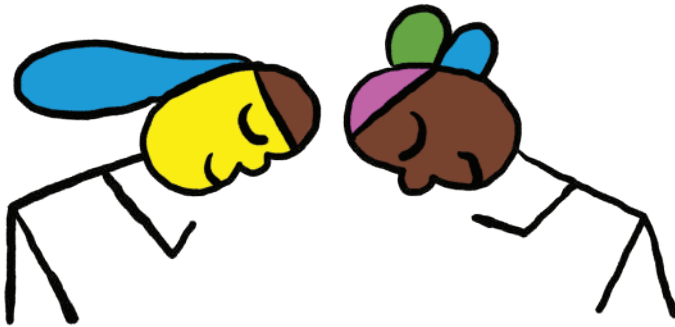
Based on the answers provided, the Joker is concluding the process.

■ **Closure** – informing the audience of the fact that it is the end and what happens next (if anything)

The Joker must remain neutral, only asking questions and never sharing their own opinions. They should also not value some opinions more than others. More details on the code of conduct expected from the Joker are in the Joker chapter.

The actors on stage improvise in response to audience changes. Their improvisation should naturally flow from the role they are playing; it should reflect realistic reactions to whatever changes the audience members bring. That's why each actor needs to be genuinely in their Character to improvise naturally as that specific person in that particular situation.

The actors do not interact with the audience; only the Joker speaks to them. The only space and context in which actors and audience members interact is during the play, when they make interventions.



We do not close the process without having a satisfying ending for the audience. The audience needs to be satisfied with the progress they have made in reducing oppression and preventing the oppressed person from making the wrong decision.



Suppose the audience remains dissatisfied despite interventions and changes, either because the oppression is still extreme or because the situation is almost impossible to overcome (*due to mistakes in story selection or scenario development*). In that case, it will demotivate them and make them feel even more powerless.

It is crucial to avoid this from happening.


Evaluation and Follow-up


This last part of the process takes place after the performance has ended. Generally, this phase is about analysing what happened, collecting data and evidence (quantitative and qualitative), and, based on these data, deciding on the subsequent actions or steps to be taken.

It starts immediately after the performance(s) finish. It includes various actions aimed at assessing how the Forum Theatre process has left a mark on.

-  The audience members
-  The actors

For each of these groups, different tools can be used to measure the

-  Immediate impact, exploring how they feel and think about the issues touched on in the process as soon as they leave the performance

-  Long-term impact, exploring the extent to which their participation in the process had a mark on their life, weeks, months after the performance ended.

The actors should also have a debriefing meeting to reflect on their process, give each other feedback on what happened, analyse the data collected on the immediate and long-term impact, and decide what to do next: do they continue to work together? Do they continue with the same play for new audiences? Do they create a new play on a different topic? Etc.

More details and tools on this specific part of the process are elaborated in the particular chapter, Evaluation and Impact Assessment.

Forum Theatre

Concrete Examples

Are we breaking up?

Play by A.R.T. Fusion, Romania



This play follows the story of a young couple who have been in a romantic relationship for a few years. Even though they are still in high school, he has been introduced to her family, who have accepted him as their own. The play surprises the young couple in different ways and settings: from fights at school to his visit to her parents, he is always controlling, expressing himself violently and committing social, verbal and emotional violence.

Characters:

The oppressed: Lili (*the young girl - the girlfriend*);

The Oppressor: Andrei (*the young boy - the boyfriend*);

Neutral character: Ioana (*sister of Lili*);

Ally of the oppressed: Ilinca (*a friend*);

Ally of the Oppressor: Elena (*mother of Lili*);

Ally of the Oppressor: Denisa (*a common friend of the couple*).

Scene 1

*during a break in high school,
11th grade*

Characters

Lili, Ilinca, Andrei

In the schoolyard, Lili and Ilinca are talking about Lili's relationship with Andrei. Lili mentions that they got back together after their last fight and claims that things are alright now, while Ilinca, in a subtle way, suggests that she should no longer tolerate his behaviour. Their conversation is interrupted by Andrei himself, who comes in and starts commenting on Lili's outfit, calling it inappropriate for her to wear a short skirt at school and suggesting that she is dressed like that to be noticed by other boys. After he shames her, he takes her home to change her clothes.

Scene 2

*after a few months,
in Lili's home*

Characters

Lili, Andrei, Elena & Ioana

Elena and Ioana enter the stage and talk about Lili and Andrei, mentioning that they are expected to join. Ioana is very preoccupied with her work and her own life/relationship. The couple joins Lili's family, and they are agitated. Elena hugs her daughter's boyfriend, and she asks him what her daughter has done this time to upset him and why he hasn't come to their house lately. She mentioned that both she and her husband missed him and that he is always welcome, even if he breaks up with Lili. As tension rises between the young couple, Lili's mother insists that he should not forget about them even when they fight, and he says that he indeed feels at home with them and that they have also become family for him.

Elena notices that Lili is very opinionated and tries to teach her that she should work hard in order to keep a man like him and that she should always listen to him. Even though she says she wants the freedom to decide for herself, her mother continues to encourage her to be more obedient. Elena and Ioana exit the stage to prepare a meal. After they leave, Lili and Andrei start fighting. He claims that she embarrassed him in front of her family, that her mother is right to love him and that she needs to grow up to be worthy of him.

Scene 3

*after a few months,
in Ilinca's home*

Characters

Lili, Andrei, Ilinca & Denisa

Lili and Denisa go to Ilinca's place for a girls' night. They start sharing about Ilinca's latest date, about Lili's upcoming 18-year-old birthday party, and the atmosphere is pleasant until Andrei shows up angry and starts screaming that Lili hasn't replied to his calls and text messages. After he starts humiliating her, Lili mentions that her phone battery died and doesn't notice that he called. He claims he was terrified and worried about her, which is why he got so upset. Lili asks to see his phone to see how many times he called her, and then he gets furious and says she is not supposed to touch/look at his phone under any circumstances. Ilinca tries to defend her, but he tells her to stay out of it, while Denisa agrees that she could have called him to let him know she is ok, because he really looks worried. Embarrassed, Lili apologises to the girls for the situation and tells her boyfriend to talk about it privately. The girls are also exiting the stage, in an attempt to listen to their conversation.

Scene 4

*after a month,
at Lili's 18th birthday party*

Characters

Lili, Andrei, Ilinca & Denisa

Lili enters the stage upset after she sees a conversation on Andrei's phone with another girl. She says that the phone was already unblocked on the table, and she took a quick look. Andrei and Denisa enter the stage. He was furious that she looked at his phone. Denisa agrees that it was wrong of her to invade his privacy. The young couple starts fighting again, the two girls leave them to it, and after Andrei is very close to physically assaulting Lili, she tells him that she doesn't want to do this anymore and that she can't continue this relationship.

He says he is acting this way because he loves her and is just trying to take care of her. After saying this, he gives her an ultimatum: either she changes for her own good and the sake of the relationship, and everything will be fine, or she will be alone because no one else will accept or love her.

She says that she agrees to stay with him and to try to work things out.

Reflections from the practice

This play was performed 6 times for a total number of 250 students from different high schools in Bucharest, Romania.

The audience approached the situation differently each time. Ultimately, they all lead to Lili deciding to break up with Andrei, as the most satisfying outcome for all the audiences.

To get to that point, the majority of the youth changed Lili's Mother and friend before changing Lili herself to be more assertive in her relationship with her boyfriend. Very few audiences changed Lili from the first scenes; they started with the other people in her life, to give her more power.

The sister was also changed at times, but not as much as Lili's friend, mother and herself. The changes suggested for the mother were to show more interest and concern for her own daughter, or to put less pressure on her to decide whom to date, both of which contributed to empowering Lili. Her friend, Ilinca, could be more vocal, more assertive and involved in signalling to her friend all the red flags and unacceptable behaviour of Andrei, all of which contributed to Lili acknowledging the negative behaviour she is being exposed to and that Andrei is not changing; he will not act better. She shouldn't accept such controlling and abusive behaviour.

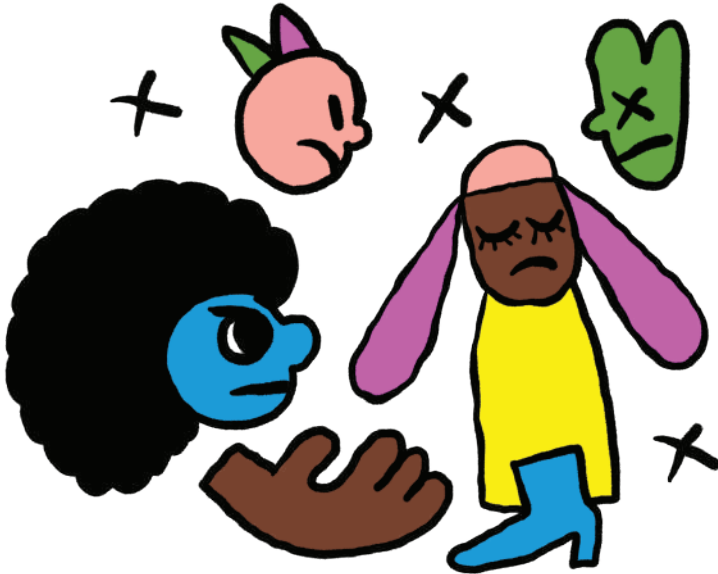
Generally, the audiences were talking extensively about toxic behaviours in different relationships, pointing out things which they know are not ok, but they are considered normal around them and how hard it is to de-normalise abusive behaviours.

This was a very relevant topic for young people experiencing their first relationships in a country where no subject is discussed in schools or in society at large about healthy relationships and boundaries, how to stand up for yourself when boundaries are not respected, and, generally fostering self-esteem and love.

There were a few instances when we had more boys in the audience than girls, which affected some girls' involvement in the conversations. When we work with schools and teachers to provide access to their classes, it is hard to separate the pupils, as no alternative activity is provided. This particular topic, of toxic and abusive relationships, is prevalent among young people, and to some extent, normalised among the youth generation, as reflected in many attitudes supporting the oppression. It is essential to strive to provide a safe environment so that young girls, in particular, can reflect on and discuss such relationships and what to do at different stages. More attention should be paid to anticipating the presence of oppressors in the audience and to reducing their influence in the process. What exactly can be done depends on the case and context, and each team can devise alternative plans.

Tacos the explorer

Play by Giosef Torino, Italy



This play follows a group of young students at school; some of them are bullying a classmate of Latin origin, creating tension in the classroom and making the young student's life miserable.

Characters:

The Oppressor: Filippo, *a 16-year-old boy student.*

The oppressed: Camila, *a 16-year-old student of Mexican origin.*

Ally of the Oppressor: Sofia, *a 16-year-old girl student.*

Ally of the oppressed: Sara, *a 16-year-old girl student.*

Neutral character: Giulia, *a 16-year-old girl student.*

Neutral character: la Molinetti, *the history teacher.*

Scene 1

in Class

Characters

La Molinetti, Filippo, Sofia, Camila, Sara and Giulia

The teacher starts the lesson with her 16-year-old students. A group of young students in a class: Filippo and Sofia are sitting in the back, talking to each other and making a lot of noise as the teacher explains the lesson. Camila, the student sitting in front of Filippo and Sofia, is annoyed by them and their sounds and can't focus on the class. Sara and Giulia, sitting in the front seats, are also annoyed but still more focused on the teacher. Camila turns to Filippo and Sofia and says, "calate que no capisco". And here the teacher turns and asks Filippo if he knows when the Americas were discovered. He says the wrong answer, and Camila says the correct one. Here, Filippo comments, "Tacos the explorer has just arrived" The teacher pronounces Camila's name wrongly ", Camilla" Camila corrects her angrily. Filippo and Sofia laugh at Camila because Filippo pushes her from behind when the teacher turns to write on the whiteboard again.

Scene 2

in the corridor on the break between classes

(same day)

Characters

Filippo, Sofia, Camila, Sara and Giulia

The students are in the corridor outside the classroom during their break. While sitting on the ground doodling, Camila is approached by Sara and Giulia, who ask her to study together for tomorrow's lesson. Camila asks them if they should do it later cause now she is occupied with something else. Sara and Giulia agree, walk away, leaving Camila alone. Filippo and Sofia walk towards Camila.

Filippo is making fun of her because she is sitting on the ground with Sofia, and he tells Sofia to check what he is going to do. Filippo walks towards Camila, steals her notebook, and starts commenting on how she is different, dirty, short and cannot even write in Italian, so he doesn't understand what she has written. Sofia is laughing at his comments. Filippo throws away Camila's notebook, continues commenting, and Sofia laughs with him. Upset, Camila goes to get her notebook and is approached by Sara, who asks if she is ok. She says yes and leaves.

Scene 3

At the Bar in the school

(a week after)

Characters

Filippo, Sofia, Camila, Sara and Giulia

Camila, Sara and Giulia are checking their homework together, being happy about the results and commenting that it has been good to do it together. Camila appears to be very nervous and checks the door often while they talk.

Sara notices that and asks Camila what's going on, if it is related to the situation with Filippo and Sofia. Camila says yes; she is tired and mentioned that it is getting worse. Also, other students are calling her "short and dirty." Filippo is always bothering her, and she doesn't know what to do anymore. Giulia tries to be supportive, saying she understands that they are assholes and don't deserve her attention, and she invites her to do their homework at hers later and talk some more. Sara says she should not mind them; she will join them later at home to work and talk. Sofia comes in, followed by Filippo.. Camila packs everything very quickly and goes away without even saying bye to Sara and Giulia.

Scene 4

in class

(2 weeks after)

Characters

La Molinetti, Filippo, Sofia, Camila, Sara and Giulia

Students are back in class with their teacher; they are taking an exam, and time is running out. Sofia is unsure of her answers and is trying to force Camila to give them to her, but Camila acts as if she hasn't heard. Filippo tells Sofia he will take revenge on these dirty Tacos for her. The teacher asks them to deliver their papers, and they get up to do so. Filippo takes Camila's pencil case, empties it of pencils, and throws it violently on the ground. Camila stays in fear in her seat with the exam paper. Sofia delivers her exam paper and, on her way out, she kicks Camila's pencil case and laughs. Camila collects her pens and puts them back in the pencil case with the support of Sara and Giulia. Frustrated, angry, and tired of the bullying, Camila starts talking to herself: "I can't take it anymore with these bullies. I'm gonna leave this place." Sara expresses her regret and leaves because she is late for the bus. Camila delivers her paper, and the teacher tells her not to think about these things-"they happen to everyone"-and she goes away. Filippo and Sofia return because Sofia believes she has lost her headphones. Filippo suggests Camila stole them, takes her backpack, and starts emptying it on the ground while accusing her of being a thief. Sofia says, "That ah sorry they are in my pocket." They start laughing as usual, saying, "That will teach her to help more next exams," then they leave.

Sad and upset, Camila nervously packs her things quickly, saying out loud, "*This is shit. I am so tired...I don't want to come back to this school ever again...*"

Reflections from the practice

This play was performed 9 times for a total number of 262 students from different high schools in Torino, Italy. In many of these high schools, there are students with a migrant background.

The audience approached the situation differently each time. Ultimately, they led Camila to no longer wish to abandon the school, thanks to the support system provided by the teacher and other colleagues.

The play exposed strong power dynamics on the Oppressor's side, with the oppressed person having only one ally and many neutrals involved, which reflects reality, but at the same time, it influenced the audience's decisions about interventions.

In the majority of performances, the audience made changes at early stages to the teacher, who has a lot of power in the school system, and in such situations, to actually use that power for the better interest of the students. The teacher was initially neutral and, in this way, became an ally of Camilla, giving her more power later in the story.

One character, who was frequently changed by almost all audiences, was Sofia, the ally of the Oppressor. She was changed more often than Sara, who was Camila's friend. There were many options proposed for Sofia, which the audience validated as realistic and changing for the better. She mainly decided not to care so much about bothering Camilla or engaging in such aggressive behaviour towards her, which also demotivated the Oppressor from continuing. Sofia's changes were mainly to keep the oppression on lower levels, still bearable by the oppressed.

There were also some changes for Sara to be more active and involved in Camilla's situation, and to foster their relationship further. Occasionally, Giulia, the other neutral colleague, was also made more interested in the situation, but she was the least changed.

Ultimately, Camilla was also changed to embody the power she gained from the changes in the people around her, to engage in new relationships, and to appeal more to the teacher in case of trouble.

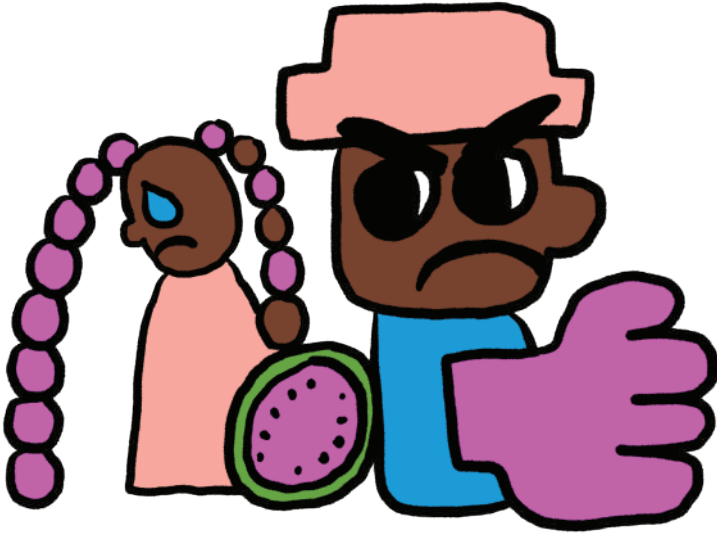
Generally, this play offered a space to discuss bullying, safe spaces in schools and the roles each person plays in how young people feel at school. Turin has a high migrant population, which is reflected in social structures and dynamics in schools and communities. In a country where there is a growing rise of xenophobic and anti-migration attitudes and feelings, this is a very relevant and needed topic to be explored with young people.

Young people and educators involved in the process shared how important it is to take action sooner, before it's too late, to try to be a better person, and how even small actions can make a difference, to speak out and to foster friendships to help you cope with already challenging times.



“Under the Same Roof”

Play by ADWAR – Palestine



The play addresses emotional and physical abuse within a family in an Arab community. It explores the struggles of a young girl, Fatima, who is trapped by oppressive familial and societal expectations. Her father, Ahmed, uses authoritarian control, believing he must impose strict discipline over his daughter’s life. Fatima feels isolated, suffocated, and rejected by the very people she should be able to trust.

Characters:

Ahmed (*Father*) – Oppressor

Fatima (*Daughter*) – Oppressed

Sami (*Brother*) – Ally of the Oppressor

Rana (*Mother*) – Ally of the Oppressor

Zahra (*Best Friend*) – Ally of the Oppressed

Maysa (*Sister*) – Neutral

Scene 1

During dinner in the family dining room, Fatima excitedly announces her acceptance to a prestigious university abroad, hoping for support and encouragement. Instead, her father, Ahmed, reacts with immediate anger, asserting that it's inappropriate for a young woman from their family to study so far from home. He demands that she abandon her dreams and focus on marriage and supporting the family. Sami, her brother, nods in agreement, reinforcing their father's oppressive views. Rana, Fatima's mother, chimes in, emphasising the importance of reputation and tradition. Fatima looks to her sister Maysa for support, but Maysa remains silent, sipping her water, leaving Fatima feeling even more isolated.

Scene 2

Later that night, Fatima retreats to her bedroom, overwhelmed and in tears as she speaks on the phone with her best friend Zahra. She expresses her feelings of suffocation and despair, how her father's anger has stifled her dreams and ambitions of studying abroad at the university she got accepted into. Fatima yearns for freedom, hoping to carve out a life for herself rather than live under the constraints imposed by her family. Zahra listens closely, understanding Fatima's struggles and empathising with her, offering a comforting presence as Fatima works through her challenging emotions.

Scene 3

Two weeks later, Fatima is on the phone with a male professor at the university she was accepted into when her father walks in and overhears. His face darkens with fury as he accuses her of bringing shame to the family. Her father berates Fatima for speaking to a man, threatening to prevent her from attending the university altogether. Rana stands by her husband, reminding Fatima that she needs to respect their traditions and responsibilities, while Sami mutters that Fatima is being unreasonable. Fatima tries to explain herself, her voice shaking with frustration, but they cut her off, silencing her. Maysa watches silently, caught in the tension, and Ahmed, unwavering, warns Fatima that if she persists, her dreams will be crushed.

Feeling defeated, Fatima reluctantly agrees to give up her aspirations, resigning herself to a future dictated by her family's oppressive expectations.

Reflections from the practice

This play was performed 4 times for a total of 252 students from different universities in Hebron, Palestine. 85% of the audience members were young women.

The audience approached the situation differently each time. Ultimately, they all enabled Fatima to pursue her dream of studying abroad.

The play exposed a power dynamics heavy and strong on the oppressor side, as the main oppression was happening inside the family, and in the family, there was no ally for the oppressed; she was alone in the confrontation with the Oppressor, her ally was outside of the family, which influenced the decisions of interventions from the audience.

The ally of the oppressed, outside the family, had little power over family dynamics, and she was changed only once across all the performances.

The audience focused heavily on balancing, as realistically as possible, the power dynamics within the family. Because Fatima didn't have allies in the family, the focus on the audience was on the other members, to change their attitudes in order for Fatima to get more power herself.

In 2 of the performances, Fatima wasn't changed at all; the changes were primarily made to the brother, then the mother and sister. All these changes led the father to accept and to support Fatima's wishes. In the other two performances, the focus on Mother, Brother, and sisters remained, but an external uncle was also included, and Fatima was changed towards the end to embody the power she gained from her family members' changing attitudes.

Family structures in a conservative Arab society, such as that in Hebron, are complex. Young girls who have aspirations that challenge the standard norms or expectations for girls in such a society are facing oppression and a lack of support.








The audience members, related to the story depicted, are themselves facing various clashes between their dreams and their families' expectations. They talked about fostering honest communication with family members, prioritising their well-being over societal expectations, and nurturing strong friendships to support them in hard times. Through this process, the young girls found a support system, even in the fact that they all shared, validated their dreams and aspirations, and found strength in knowing they are not alone. Of course, family structure, cultural norms and religious influences heavily affect how much power a young girl has. Still, these are changing, and the **girls who attended our performances left more motivated not to give up their dreams.**

Forum Theatre

Curriculum

In the following pages, you will find a detailed curriculum, with all the activities described in detail to facilitate the process of a group from point zero until the process of performing for an audience.

Many factors influence the concrete process a group needs to go through to develop a Forum Theatre Play and be ready to perform it:

-  Whether the group members know each other or not from before;
-  Whether they have previous experience with Forum Theatre or not;
-  Whether the topic of the play is already known or the group needs to make their own analysis/research on the target community and its needs;
-  Whether the group members are experiencing the problem they will work with or not;
-  The time available for the preparation process;
-  The age of the participants;
-  The size of the group.

This specific curriculum is designed for new Forum Theatre facilitators or those who are not yet fully independent in developing Forum Theatre performances with different groups.

Its proposed structure has the following assumptions about the group and process:

- The group doesn't know each other.
- The group members are new to the field of Forum Theatre.
- They will choose the topic by themselves.
- There is no time pressure for the group to work out the play.
- The age group is from 15-17 years old, with no upper limit.

The activities included in the curriculum could be used with other groups at different levels in their work with this method. For some parts of the process, less time may be required, and more for others; a lot is left to your own judgment and assessment, depending on the circumstances you face as a facilitator. A more experienced facilitator will be able to adjust, adapt, and respond to emerging needs.

Most working sessions have a proposed duration of 1.5 to 2 hours and are grouped into larger categories to better understand the flow and the rationale for this order. The suggested times are indicative only, as the size of the group and other factors can affect the actual time required for specific exercises. The mentioned time is based on some generalisation from our different experiences with various groups.

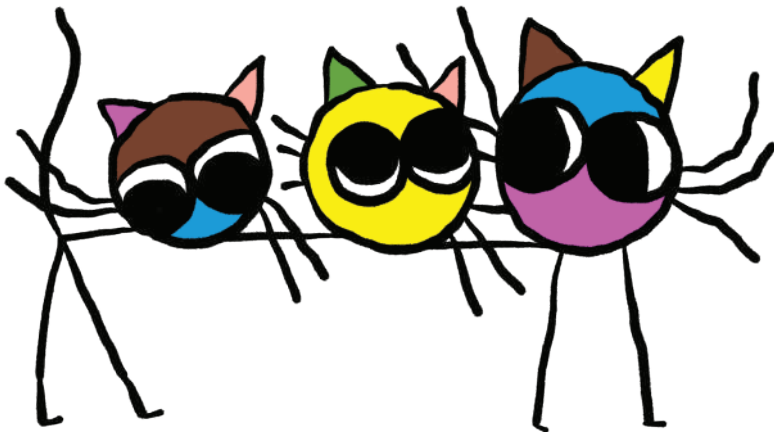
In the previous edition of this manual, each session lasted 3 hours. In practice, this proved more challenging to implement, especially if you have regular meetings with a group and not an intensive day-long process. It will be easier now to use the proposed activities in any process.

There are 14 sessions grouped in 6 units. The entire curriculum can be implemented in a 3 to 4-day intensive workshop following the proposed order, or through weekly meetings. Each of these options has advantages and disadvantages, and we leave it to the possibilities, wishes and needs of each group to use the most appropriate approach for them.

Depending on the group dynamic, you may need to work more than the number of sessions suggested in this curriculum at a particular stage. It is essential to pay attention to the dynamic and group needs to assess the pace of the process. Any facilitator of this process needs to be flexible and ready to adapt this curriculum as needed.

Recommended requirements for the facilitator

- To have been part of a Forum Theatre group previously, as an actor, and to have experienced the process and the method directly.
- To have been previously in the role of a Joker of Image or Forum Theatre, preferably using the structure introduced in this manual.
- If the facilitator doesn't have experience with the Forum Theatre method, they must stay in touch with an experienced Forum Theatre practitioner for advice and support throughout the process.
- Previous experience in facilitating learning processes is helping.



Methodological aspects

- The activities suggested are primarily based on non-formal education principles and experiential learning.
- They aim to be highly participatory, active and to provide a space for participants to reflect and extract learning outcomes from their own experience.
- They also make use of previous life events and learning outcomes that people are bringing into the process.
- They will often challenge participants outside their comfort zone to expand it and prepare them for later stages of the process, as well as for performing for an unknown audience who will interact with them.
- The process is intense and personal, especially when the time comes for working with various social problems, often personal or from their own realities.
- The entire process often changes the attitudes of those involved and has a profound personal impact.
- In each session, there is space allocated for processing/debriefing, with guiding questions included, to help participants maximise their own learning and assimilate the changes at a personal level.

The activities presented here were used in practice over the last years by us with various groups in different countries across the world. They were often inspired by or drawn from multiple methodological books, adapted and changed over time, or adopted from other practitioners who shared some of their toolbox activities.

The selection here includes activities that received positive feedback and had a substantial impact, regardless of the type of group or country where they were used. Nevertheless, any facilitator needs to assess in advance whether a specific activity is appropriate for the group they are working with. For some of the activities mentioned, we have included more insights and reflections from the practice.

For the majority of units or sessions, we have provided additional examples of activities that could be conducted with similar aims to those included in the actual curriculum. These could be used instead of, or in addition to, the ones detailed, if you want to go deeper into the process. The additional examples are presented briefly and are not as detailed as those in the curriculum. **The extra examples are aimed more at experienced facilitators who want to try new things,** and we believe the level of detail provided is sufficient for them. For the rest, if the additional examples are not clear enough, resume using only the ones included in the curriculum.

We are not aware if there is any copyright for any of the activities by the initial/original authors. We support the free sharing of such tools and methods, as it increases the capacity of Theatre of the Oppressed or Forum Theatre practitioners to be independent facilitators and to contribute to more meaningful, positive changes in their societies and communities.

The structure of the curriculum is as follows:

96	UNIT 1 Group Bonding (3 sessions)	
Session 1	<i>Introductions and Getting to Know Each Other (1.5 h)</i>	102
Session 2	<i>Team-Building (1.5 h)</i>	109
Session 3	<i>Introduction to the Forum Theatre Method (1-2 h)</i>	116
123	UNIT 2 Preparatory Exercises (4 sessions)	
Session 4	<i>General Preparatory Exercises (warm-up, space exploration and spatial awareness, focus and attention, coordination, group awareness, flexibility, rhythm, voice) (1.5 h)</i>	127
Session 5	<i>General Preparatory Exercises (expressions, emotions, body work) (2 h)</i>	140
Session 6	<i>Specific Forum Theatre Preparatory Exercises – Focus Power (1.5 h)</i>	158
Session 7	<i>Specific Forum Theatre Exercises – Focus Oppression (1.5 h)</i>	174
183	UNIT 3 Real-Life Stories of Oppression (2 sessions)	
Session 8	<i>Examples of oppressions – Choosing the Oppression (2 h)</i>	185
Session 9	<i>Sharing and Choosing the Main Story (2-3 h)</i>	193
199	UNIT 4 Forum Theatre Play Scenario (1 session)	
Session 10	<i>Transferring the story into a Forum Theatre Scenario (1.5 h)</i>	200
205	UNIT 5 Bringing the Scenario to Life (3 sessions)	
Session 11	<i>Improvisation exercises and First trials (2 h)</i>	207
Session 12	<i>Getting Into Roles – Finalising the Scenario (2.5 h)</i>	220
Session 13	<i>Rehearsals (3 h)</i>	231
235	UNIT 6 Preparing the Team for the Performance (1 session)	
Session 14	<i>Preparation of the team (3 h)</i>	237

102**Session 1**

1. **Intro** – 5 min 102
2. **Shaking Hands** – 5 min 102
3. **Cross the Line** – 25 min 103
4. **3 truths and One lie** – 30 min 105
5. **Project Introduction** – 25 min 106
6. **Closing of the Meeting** – 5 min 107

109**Session 2**

1. **Intro** – 5 min 109
2. **Blind Counting** – 30 min 109
3. **Blind Square** – 50 min 112
4. **Closing of the Meeting** – 5 min 114

116**Session 3**

1. **Intro** – 5 min 117
2. **Carousel** – 15 min 117
3. **Forum Theatre Introduction** – 30-90 min 119
4. **Forum Theatre Development Process** – 10 min 121
5. **Closing of the Meeting** – 5 min

127**Session 4**

1. **Intro** – 5 min 127
2. **Pass the beat** – 10 min 127
3. **Electric current** – 5-7 min 129
4. **Space** – 15-20 min 130
5. **Back dancing** – 10 min 132
6. **Blind Shake** – 10 min 133
7. **Samurai** – 10 min 134
8. **Magnet** – 10 min 136
9. **Closing of the Meeting** – 5 min 137

1. Intro – 5 min	140
2. Trust Dancing – 25 min	140
3. Mirrors – 10 min	143
4. Bears and princesses – 10-15 min	144
5. Hey you – 10 min	146
6. 1,2,3 - 4,5,6 – 15 min	147
7. Exaggeration Circle – 10-15 min	148
8. Statues and Emotions – 10 min	150
9. Museum of Emotions – 20 min	151
10. Closing of the Meeting – 5 min	153

1. Intro – 5 min	159
2. Apple in the Tree – 10 min	159
3. Stop and Action – 10 min	161
4. Circle of Statues – 20 min	162
5. Power and More Power – 50 min	165
6. Closing of the Meeting – 5 min	168

1. Intro – 5 min	174
2. Changing Statues – 20 min	174
3. Power and Oppression – 50 min	177
4. Introduction of the Homework – 10 min	179
5. Closing of the Meeting – 5 min	179

1. Intro – 5 min	185
2. Talk and Listening – 15 min	185
3. Balance Statues – 20 min	186
4. Homework Analysis – 60 min	189
5. Introduction of the Homework – 5 min	192
6. Closing of the Meeting – 5 min	192

193**Session 9**

1. **Intro** – 5 min 193
2. **Run and Project** – 10 min 193
3. **Steps in Forum Theatre** – 20 min 194
4. **Sharing Real Examples** – 60-90 min 195
5. **Group Shower** – 20 min 196
6. **Choosing the Story** – 20 min 197
7. **Closing of the Meeting** – 5 min 198

200**Session 10**

1. **Intro** – 5 min 200
2. **Dance and Freeze** – 5-10 min 200
3. **Random Image** – 20 min 201
4. **Drafting the Forum Theatre Scenario** – 50-60 min 202
5. **Closing of the Meeting** – 5 min 204

207**Session 11**

1. **Intro** – 5 min 207
2. **Imaginary Balls** – 10 min 207
3. **Forum Theatre Story Line Review** – 10-15 min 208
4. **Hey** – 5-10 min 209
5. **Emotion Bus** – 20 min 210
6. **Role Division** – 10 min 213
7. **First Contact with the Roles** – 15 min 214
8. **First Improvisations** – 30-40 min 215
9. **Closing of the Meeting** – 5 min 216

220**Session 12**

- | | |
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| 1. Intro - 5 min | 221 |
| 2. AEIOU - 10 min | 221 |
| 3. Market Time - 15 min | 222 |
| 4. Complete up to 3 and as a Group - 20 min | 223 |
| 5. Scene-Images - Warming-up - 30 min | 225 |
| 6. Hot seat - 30 min | 226 |
| 7. Rehearsal of the Final Scenario - 40-50 min | 228 |
| 8. Closing of the Meeting - 5 min | 228 |

231**Session 13**

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Intro - 5 min | 231 |
| 2. Music and Action - 15 min | 231 |
| 3. Rehearsals - Stop and Think - 40 min | 232 |
| 4. More Rehearsals - 50-60 min | 233 |
| 5. Different Kinds of Rehearsals - 40-50 min | 233 |
| 6. Closing of the Meeting - 5 min | 234 |

237**Session 14**

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Intro - 5 min | 237 |
| 2. Push not to Win - 20 min | 237 |
| 3. Come with me! NO! - 30 min | 239 |
| 4. Brainstorming Potential Interventions - 20 min | 240 |
| 5. Oppressed-Oppressor Adjusting to Changes - 30 min | 241 |
| 6. Briefing on the Process of Forum Theatre with Audience - 20 min | 242 |
| 7. Open Space Session - 30 min | 244 |
| 8. Closing of the Meeting - 5 min | 244 |

UNIT 1

Group Bonding

*Introduction,
Getting to Know Each Other
and Team-Building*

Key Considerations

A Forum Theatre play requires a minimum of 5 characters (1 oppressor, 1 oppressed, 1 ally oppressed, 1 ally oppressor and 1 neutral) up to a maximum of 8, if we add another ally to each character and another neutral. It is therefore essential to have these aspects in mind when you select or form your initial Forum Theatre group.

You could initially start working with a group of more than 8 people.

■ And later, have doubles for some roles in case you perform more than once.

■ You may develop two completely different Forum Theatre plays by working with them step by step, but they will create different scenarios and plays.

■ As often happens, especially if your process lasts longer (weeks or months), some people drop out for various reasons. In that case, having a larger group ensures there are enough people for the actual performances.

■ With more than eight people involved, decision-making will be more complex, and more time will be needed across different phases.

Other aspects that you need to consider from the beginning:

- We do not work with the travesty theatre approach** – meaning that people do not play roles of the opposite sex!
- We do not have multiple roles for the same person**, such as having a person play the mother in one scene and the teacher in another.
- In Forum Theatre, we aim to develop a play as close to reality as possible and as concrete and explicit as we can.** In fact, one person has only one position in the story we want to reflect (e.g., she is the mother and a woman).

This phase of the process lays the foundation for the next steps in Forum Theatre development, as with any group or educational process on any topic. You may find many additional examples of activities you can use for this phase, beyond those mentioned in our curriculum, in a wide array of free educational materials available online.

Although you can find many examples of team-building activities, they also have different aims and focuses in relation to the various dynamics of a group – competition, collaboration, communication, decision-making, coordination, leadership, group feeling and awareness, frustration management, etc.

To support the Forum Theatre development process, you need to choose activities which support the group to work on their

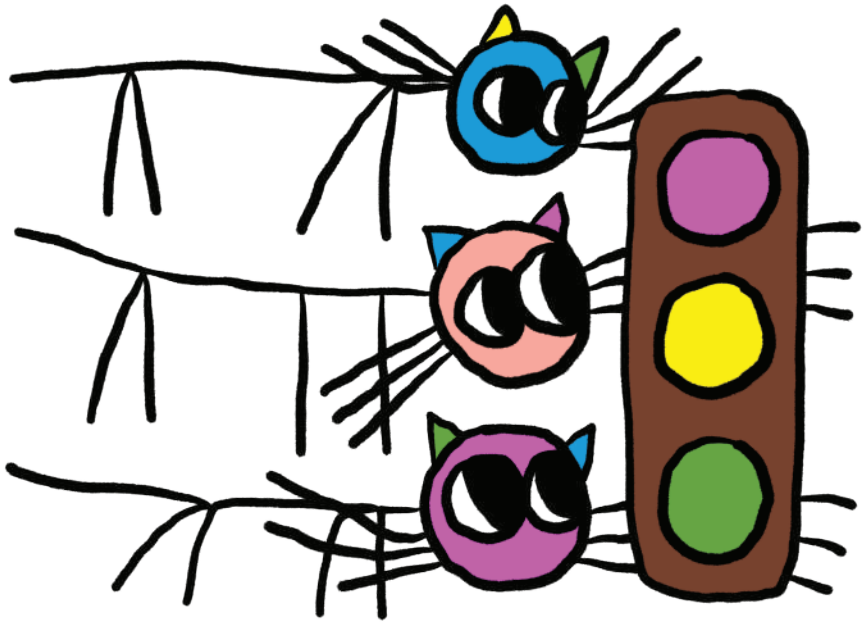
- Collaboration**
- Communication**
- Group awareness and the feeling of the group**
- Inclusive and consensus decision-making**

In Forum Theatre

- We don't have directors or scriptwriters.
- Each member is equally important and valuable.
- Everybody's ideas are included in the final shape of the play, regardless of each member's background or experience.
- Each Forum Theatre process belongs to each member of the group.
- There shouldn't be any assigned leader who gives directions on task execution.

In many team-building activities, groups often feel that the key to success is having a leader. You need to set the right tone for the group, encourage members to reflect on their team dynamics, and foster a sense of shared ownership of the process and outcomes so that everyone feels included.

Even the role of the facilitator should not be perceived as one of a leader, either by you, the facilitator or by the group. Your role is to set up a process structure, propose a specific flow and content to be discussed and agreed upon at different stages by the group members. You might give specific instructions and input on how the method works and its framework, but the actual content of the play comes from the group members. **This aspect increases participants' motivation, sense of ownership, and dedication** in later stages of the process.



Perspectives on Group Rules or Code of Conduct Agreements

In the next unit, no special time is allocated to setting up the group's rules. This is a debatable aspect, which we leave to your own judgment on whether to pursue further.

There are educational practitioners who, in group workshops, especially when they are longer, set up rules for the working process together with the participants. These rules usually aim at concrete aspects related to punctuality, mobile phones on silent mode, talking in turns, etc., or at more vague/subjective ones such as respect, don't judge, don't make assumptions, etc.

Sometimes they also agree on a kind of "funny" punishment system for people who break the rules: giving candies to everybody, singing something, etc., or there is no "punishment" system and the rules are left for the groups to observe as they wish.

In our practice, we stopped setting up such “rules” for multiple reasons:

- Often, these rules are **not decided by genuine consensus**; some people might not agree with specific suggested rules, but are supposed to follow them anyway.
- **Listing rules at very early stages of a group process**, before the group is yet bonded, leads to less honesty from everyone. There are fewer chances for a rule to be challenged or opposed, as not everyone is yet ready to disagree vocally with a proposal or with other people.
- **The more subjective suggestions** (e.g., respect) are harder to quantify in terms of very concrete behaviours that everyone agrees on.
- **Some people hate rules by default** and might act in a rebellious way to make a point or statement.
- **Any idea of a punishment in a learning context**, especially a participatory one, could create inhibition, frustration, go against flexibility and understanding, and affect the overall group process.
- **If there are no *punishments***, some group members may lose **motivation** to actually observe the rules if they notice that when other people “break” them, nothing happens.
- **Whenever we had a set of rules stated, the rules weren’t actually followed** by all group members, which created more reasons for discussion in later stages of the process. **They never actually helped the process.**

We prefer to create an open atmosphere based on each member’s motivation and personal responsibility, fostering a positive spirit and smooth working conditions.

If at any point problems arise in the process, they can be openly discussed in the group, and it can be decided together where to go next, without putting them in a “rule” frame that could actually harm more than benefit.

It is essential to have good observation and to address in real time any disturbing issues that affect the group, such as people talking on their phones during the sessions, people smoking if you do outdoor activities, and some others being disturbed by it, people expressing offensive or perceived as offensive things to each other, etc.

We noticed that sometimes, individuals who are very accustomed to the *rules practice*, when these are not being discussed, tend to blame all the challenges or difficulties that the group has on the fact that these rules haven't been set, to prevent any problems from happening. We know that with those rules or without, those challenges will happen anyway.

Because of that, we started providing space to collect a set of recommendations, rather than rules, for a safe, brave and inclusive group process.

The recommendations usually include concrete or abstract ideas, but there is no system to ensure they are actually put into practice. This satisfies the individuals who have this need, and it can always serve as a reminder to the group of their own recommendations for the process. This can be used as an alternative if considered necessary.

This specific Unit includes 3 sessions:

1. Introductions and getting to know each other *(1.5 hours)*
2. Teambuilding *(1.5 hours)*
3. Introducing Theatre of the Oppressed and Forum Theatre *(1-2 hours) (if needed)*

Session 1

Introductions and getting to know each other

(1.5 hours)

1. **Intro** – 5 min

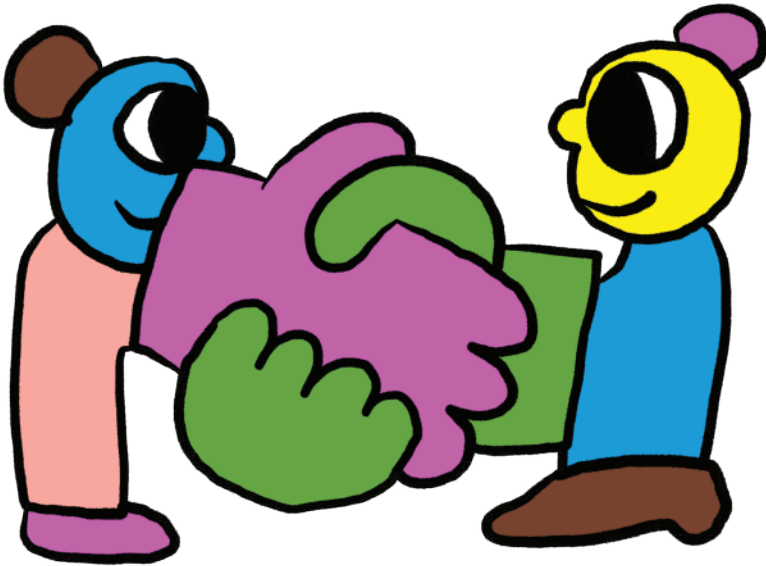
Welcome your group; briefly explain why you are here and what will happen in this session. Introduce yourself and who you are in this context. At the beginning, you want to provide a space for each of them to get to know one another better, and then you will go into the details of the project that brought all of you together a bit later in the session.

2. **Shaking Hands** – 5 min

Aims: to stimulate the participants to get in direct contact with one another; to create first contacts in the group.

Details and description of the activity

- Each participant must shake hands with everyone in the group.
- When they do that, they have to say their name and one more thing about themselves of their choice (*e.g., where they come from, their profession, what they are studying, their hobby or passion, why they are here, etc.*).
- The trick is that once they have met a person and shaken their hand, they cannot remove their hand until they do not connect with the other hand in another shake with another person- only then can they release the first person from the shake.
- They continue until they have met every person in the group.







3. Cross the Line - 25 min




Aims: to support the participants in knowing each other better; to have a better perspective of the group diversity; to push participants to open up in the group;

Details and description of the activity




- Ask the group to write on two different papers: one thing about themselves that they believe they have in common with everyone in the group, and one aspect that makes them unique.
- It has to be something that is not easily perceived at first glance (*e.g. I speak five languages, I have travelled on three continents, I want to change the world, I am bisexual, etc.*) and that they feel comfortable sharing with others.
- They don't have to write their name on the papers, and once they are ready, you collect all their papers.
- Ask the group to stand in a line, facing you, and imagine a line in front of their legs.

-  Say to them, "Cross the line if you...." and mention one of the things participants have written on the papers.
-  Participants, who feel it fits them, regardless of whether they wrote it, take a step forward. They look at who crosses the line with them – who didn't and they go back in line.
-  You continue by reading all the papers collected from the participants and do not repeat the ones that may be similar.
-  **At the end, ask participants if they have any additional proposals for crossing the line, as a last opportunity to check with the group.**

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

-  What impressions/reflections do you have from this activity?
-  What did you notice? What are your main observations about the group?
-  How do you feel in the group after the activity?

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

-  **You can prepare additional sentences** that could be used for the project-related purpose (e.g., "I have experience in Forum Theatre," "I have never been a volunteer before," etc.) or for deeper aspects for the group to explore (e.g., "I am religious," "I don't believe in monogamy," etc.).
-  **If you have a bigger group than 15-20 people**, it can get tiring to do all the crossing for more than 30-40 sentences. Consider, in this case or in general, doing a sitting exercise: participants sit on chairs, and have to stand up if a specific sentence applies to them.
-  **Another exercise that touches on similar aspects** is to have participants sit in the chairs. One chair is missing in the circle, and one participant is standing in the middle. They have to share something about themselves (*e.g., something they like, did, wish, experience, believe in, etc.*), and if anyone else shares these aspects, they have to change their chair. The person in the middle can find an empty seat and other person will be in the middle.

4. 3 truths and One Lie – 30 min

Aims: to facilitate a deeper and more personal getting to know process in the group; to encourage the participants to interact personally with everybody in the group; to stimulate participants to share personal things from their lives.

Details and description of the activity

- Instruct the group that they will now get to know each other more personally.
- Each person is invited to reflect on four aspects they want to share about themselves. They can be related to what they like to do, what they did, their dreams, something amazing they did in their life, something special and surprising, etc. – they have to choose something they are willing to share with others.
- You should also provide an example to set the tone for the kinds of things people are encouraged to share, preferably something more personal and more profound.
- They should be written on paper divided into four squares/areas.
- Out of these four aspects, one thing must be actually a lie, which shouldn't be something obvious that is a lie (*e.g. I am an alien, I won 1 million euros in the lottery, etc.*).
- After everybody prepared their own papers with their own name on them, each participant has to interact with each other, one-to-one, and try to guess which aspects written on the papers are correct and which are lies.
- The aspects people mentioned often foster deeper communication and contribute to a generally positive atmosphere in the group, as everyone has the chance to talk one-to-one with others.
- Depending on the size of your group, the activity can last until everyone has spoken to everyone, or for a specific duration you set.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

- How easy was it to find lies in other people's charts?
- What about people discovering your own lie?
- What impressions have you collected from interacting with each other?
- What did you notice? What are your main observations?
- What stuck with you?
- What do you find interesting about other people?
- How do you feel in the group after the activity?

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

- You can provide participants with a set of candies/small chocolates/dry fruits and give an **extra flavour of competition to the game**. Each participant can have the same number of items, and once they interact, if they guess correctly from the first which one is the lie, they can take a candy from the other person. The same applies in return if the other person also guesses from the first try.
- For a group of 5-8 people**, you may discuss each person's chart with the entire group; one person presents, and everyone in the group can make guesses and motivate their guesses; after everyone has made their guesses, the person reveals which was the lie.

5. Project Introduction – Expectations/Contributions – 25 min

- Depending on the project or initiative in which this Forum Theatre group is involved, you need to provide the group with relevant information. They have to know...
- Why and for what this project/initiative is (*the reasons, the objectives*)
- The timeline of activities
- What is their role in the project
- What is expected from them

It is essential to emphasise that the process is designed as a pack and that everybody should be present at all meetings and sessions. If they cannot commit fully, it is better to assess and reconsider at this stage. Of course, exceptions are made for urgent situations and other isolated circumstances. Still, the group needs to understand precisely what kind of commitment is expected of them overall.

Clarify any potential questions or misunderstandings.

Ask the group about their perspective on the project:

What are their main expectations from their involvement?

How can they contribute to make this project impactful?

What are their main concerns about the process and project?

Use small papers or post-its to write these aspects, anonymously or not, and then collect them so the whole group can read and have a picture of the group's expectations, contributions, and concerns.

Address any specific concerns raised by the group to ensure no strong negative feelings remain.

6. Closing of the Meeting – 5 min

Conclude the meeting, thank everyone, and include details about the next meeting: where, when, and what will happen next, as well as any last questions or remarks.

Session 1

Additional Recommendations and Reflections from Practice

Alternative activities that may be used for similar aims, either instead of the ones proposed or additional, if you want to allocate more time to this phase:

- Walk and talk in outdoor spaces:** provide different prompts or questions which pairs or trios can use for getting to know each other; ask the pairs to switch from time to time and talk with different people.
- Pair introductions:** in pairs, participants interview each other and, afterwards, introduce their partner to the group. You may give specific information to be interviewed about, or leave it to the group to explore their curiosity about each other as they wish. In this interviewing phase, they may also find something unusual they have in common and report it back to the group.
- Ask to break the ice:** give participants several cards with interesting questions (3-4 each) and ask them to go around and choose a question from someone else to answer; each time, interact with another person.
- Questions and statistics:** ask participants to think about one question to ask everyone in the group. Collect everyone's answers, which they have to present graphically to the others afterwards.
- Name games:** If the groups you are working with are larger, you will need to do more activities to help the groups remember each other's names. Examples: each person may say their name to the group and make gesture/body movement and everybody else has to repeat (name and gesture); each person has a name tag only with the spaces for the letters of their name and then they go shopping for letters to fill-up their name by interacting with other people who have similar letters – they have to buy their letters by telling interesting things about themselves to the others.

Session 2

Teambuilding

(1.5 hours)

1. **Intro** – 5 min

Welcome your group; brief them on this session's process and purpose; check if they have any announcements or anything to share with the group; you may also start every meeting with a check-in, where each person shares how they feel at the beginning of the meeting. If this becomes a regular practice, it will probably take more than 5 minutes – you should allocate at least 10-15 minutes.

2. **Blind counting** – 30 min

Aims: to stimulate connection in the group; to explore deeper layers of a group dynamic; to develop a group feeling; to stimulate group awareness.

Details and description of the activity:

Inform the group about the task they have to complete.

They have to count to 20 (or 15 if there are fewer than 10 people in the group) in a consecutive order, without repeating one number and without two people saying the same number at the same time. Set the final goal number to be more than the number of people in the group by at least 3-4 numbers (not less and not the same as the number of people).

If any mistake happens, then the counting has to start again from number 1.

The entire task has to be completed with their eyes closed, and no time is allocated for advance discussion or strategizing.

- Once the instructions are clear, ask the group to close their eyes and to start counting whenever they are ready.
- If the group asks questions about potential strategies or whether they are allowed this or that, explain that everything they need to know has already been covered, and they can start at any time.
- Depending on the group, it will take different amounts of time to reach the goal. In case the group reach the goal too fast, you can tell them that the number given is just the minimum and they can continue until they make a mistake, to see how far they can get.

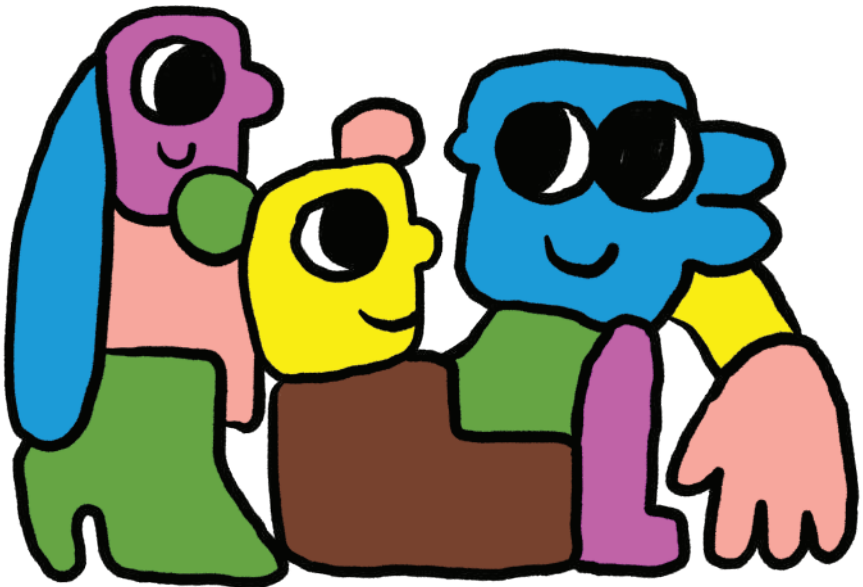
Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

- What kind of feelings did you experience during the counting, and why? Make a round so everyone shares how they felt.
- How did you deal with the feelings you experienced? (*ask this if many strong negative emotions are mentioned*)
- How did you manage to get to this result?
- What did you observe in the process?
- Did everybody say a number? *If there are people who didn't say a number, ask why they haven't.*
- What were the key elements for reaching your goal in this exercise?
- What helped you in the process, even if you didn't strategize in advance?
- What can you associate with this exercise from real life and group dynamics?
- What can you use from this exercise in your group process?

At the end mention that, in Forum Theatre, because there is a lot of unknown, especially when the audience changes the story, the team needs to be able to feel each other and the right moment when to intervene and how; they need to develop alternative ways to communicate on the spot – when there is no time to discuss and decide what to do.

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations











- Most of the times the group experience high level of frustration during this exercise and it offers a great deal of material to reflect on and discuss on how they deal with such feelings; often group members want to give up, cheat, push for a strategy or breaking of the rules, and, all these could be connected with real life and the process of Forum Theatre.
- Some groups tend to focus the conversation on the limitations imposed, such as eyes closed, not being able to talk and strategize, rather than looking deeper into their actual process and how they managed to achieve the results. You need to keep the conversation focused and support the group in exploring more group dynamics in situations where they cannot communicate and decide together.







3. **Blind square** – 50 min

Aims: to stimulate the group to reflect on their communication and the decision-making process; on how they position themselves in relation to the process versus results in a group; on their own role and contribution in a group process; to motivate the participants to foster more inclusive group processes;

Details and description of the activity:

-  The participants to stand in the circle.
-  Hand them one rope that each member of the group must hold, and in this way, the rope forms a circle inside the circle of people.
-  The rope is tied.
-  The group has to complete a task with their eyes closed, but they can talk to each other during the activity. Use blindfolds if available.
-  During the task, everyone must be in contact with the rope.
-  After the process has been explained and participants have their eyes closed, give the first task: “make this rope have the shape of a perfect square”.
-  Please make sure the participants keep their eyes closed at all times and that there is no cheating, in case no blindfolds are available.
-  No time limit is given, but if they take too long, you can introduce one later.
-  Remind the group that they need to be sure they have a perfect square before they can open their eyes.
-  Double-check with them if they are sure several times before allowing them to open their eyes and see their result.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

-  How did you feel in the activity?
-  What happened?
-  How did you arrive at this result?
-  What were the key aspects that helped you in the process?

- What were the main difficulties that you encountered in this task?
- How did you decide on a specific strategy?
- Did you make sure everybody was involved and included in the decisions?
- Why? How? What could have been done differently?
- What can you take from this discussion to help you work better as a group from now on, so everyone feels included?

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

- Often, participants tend to use the cliché words** without actually reflecting on the activity itself and what happened: “it was teamwork”, “we all cooperated”, “leadership”...etc. This is why, as a facilitator, it is essential to push the group tendency. If this is happening, go beyond the superficial layer and ask precise questions: Did everybody know what was happening the whole time? Is there anyone with a different perspective on the exercise? Etc.
- You can provide as well your observations from the activity**, in case they don't come from the group: “You say you all agreed with that idea but you never asked the group if they agree or not”, “You say you have cooperated and communicated well but very often many people were talking at the same time” and challenge the group to take responsibility for what happened, own it and reflect more critically on how they can do things differently in the future.
- If you have time at the end, do another task** so they can put into practice what they said they should do differently to achieve a better outcome. After that, they return to a circle position, close their eyes, and the second task is given: “make now a perfect triangle” a “star with five corners” or any other shape that is challenging enough.
- If the group does very fast the first shape** (the square), you should definitely give the second and third if necessary. The group often struggles with the second task.

If you do more than one task, continue the debriefing of the activity using some of the questions mentioned during the debriefing. Focus the conversation on what the main differences were in their processes, whether they put into practice the things they said they would do differently and continue the reflection process on it – why some of the things couldn't be put into practice, etc.

You may write a specific list of things they want to pay more attention to or do differently to improve the group process, and place it on a large sheet of paper to serve as a reminder for the group during other sessions.

This exercise works well with a group of up to 15 people. If you have a bigger group, divide them into two groups. Have the first shape in separate groups, then have the debriefing separately. After they list what they should do differently next, gather the groups together and have them work on the next task as an entire group. Then the final debriefing focused on what happened in this version, what they put into practice and didn't and what they can take for their future work.

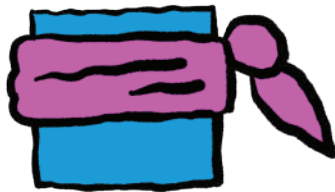
4. **Closing of the Meeting** – 5 min

Conclude the meeting, thank everyone, and include details about the next meeting: where, when, and what will happen next, as well as any last questions or remarks.

Session 2

Additional Recommendations and Reflections from Practice

- We have used the Blind Square exercise a lot with very different groups from diverse backgrounds, and it always works.** It is such a simple but powerful exercise. It reveals so much to the group, about dominant personalities, inclusion, decision-making process, assumptions, passivity, etc. If you can do only one teambuilding exercise, you should definitely choose this one.
- Another activity with the same goals as the Blind Counting exercise is called **4 UP**. In this activity the group is seated and their task is to be at all times 4 people standing; each person shouldn't be staying standing more than 10-15 seconds and then they will need to seat down; somebody from the group needs to stand up then to fill up the place (to always have 4 people standing); the process goes the same, no strategizing or discussion in advance. After 10-15 minutes, you can continue with the discussion, which should be adapted.
- This session aims to work on group dynamics before we embark on preparatory exercises specific** on Theatre and Theatre of the Oppressed, which are often very engaging, fun, using lots of body movements, etc. **Very often, right before the group needs to start working on the actual Play development; there might be a need to do another group building activity,** focused on communication and decision making. You need to assess on the spot if the group needs this.



Session 3

Introduction to the Forum Theatre

(1-2 hours)

The assumption made in developing this curriculum was that the group was new to Forum Theatre or had prior contact, but with a different approach.

An overview of this method has to be introduced to the group before they start working on a Forum Theatre Play.

People usually understand Forum Theatre entirely only when they see it in practice. Even if you provide lots of details and explanations before they see it in real life, it often just leaves people more confused than when they know just a little bit.

In this session, we propose three alternative approaches to introducing the method to the group so they can get a sense of what they are embarking on.

Sometimes, some group members have been in the audience for Forum Theatre performances, or have worked with other organisations using the method. In those cases, this session should provide the same basis for the whole group, for the totally new people to have an idea of what the method is about and for the others to actually have the idea of how the technique will be approached in this particular process, as they might have a different experience with the method.





1. **Intro** – 5 min

Welcome your group; brief them on this session's process and purpose; group checking.

2. **Carousel** – 15 min

Aims: to stimulate participants to know each other better; to create a warm and friendly atmosphere for the day.

Details and description of the activity:

-  Participants stand in 2 circles – one inner, one outer. Each person faces another person from the other circle.
-  Provide various topics/subjects for one-on-one discussions between the person in the inner circle and the person from the outside; everybody will talk in pairs, in parallel.

- After the time allocated for one discussion, usually 3-5 minutes, finishes, asks the outer circle to move to the right or to the left 1 or two steps. You can play with this movement of the circles – the result has to be that for a new topic of discussion, there will be new pairs all the time.
- The topics of discussion should help the group discuss deeper things about themselves with each other, and they should be adapted to the context and background of your group.

Suggestions for discussions/topics

- What is the most exciting thing that happened to you from our last meeting?
- How long was your longest romantic relationship?
- What are you most proud of in your life?
- Share one funny /strange story from your life
- Say something you don't like about yourself
- What is your opinion about religions in general? Are you religious?
- What behaviours of other people really annoy you?

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

- Alternatively, for a more dynamic version, ask the group to walk in the space/dance (if you can, play some music), and when you announce or the music stops, they need to find one person, and then you suggest the first question/topic to be discussed

3. Forum Theatre introduction – 30-90 min

Aim: to familiarise the participants with the Forum Theatre method
– its main outline, aim and structure

Details and description of the activity:

Option 1 - *has the highest chances of a good understanding*

- Show your group one Forum Theatre performance. You can use this option if you are in contact with a group that has made a Forum Theatre play or a group of Forum Theatre volunteers that could improvise rapidly a play you have developed in the past.
- The process will follow all steps exactly as it would with a real audience.
- Explain to your group that the best way to introduce the method is through a real-life experience so that they will be the audience for one such performance.
- If, at that time, your organisation is performing a Forum Theatre play in the community, you may invite the group to attend. In this session, you can discuss their experience as audience members, part of the process.

Option 2 - with the possibility of some confusion in the group, but it will get clear over time. Do not panic if your group is not fully clear on the method; everyone becomes fully clear when they see it in practice.

- You briefly introduce the background of the Theatre of the Oppressed umbrella of methods, in simple terms: where it started, why, which methods are included in the umbrella, and the differences between them, etc. You can use the chapter about Theatre of the Oppressed for this.

For this part, if you have people in the group with some experience or interest in improvisation, you may use simultaneous dramaturgy. You share the story of the origin of Theatre of the Oppressed, and volunteers from the group come on the stage and act out what you are telling them verbally, to offer an acting perspective of the things you say; they don't use words, only movements, and the words are being said only by you. This presentation is more engaging.

You show them a movie, or movies, depending on what material you have/find that could fit your group. It is preferred to use movies by practitioners you are familiar with, as they are more recent and clearer in their message.

In 2014, we published a video (23 minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTbdnd02WrY>,
which explains the method and shows different Forum Theatre processes from 6 countries (Romania, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Tanzania, Ghana, and Uganda). Although it is not a recent movie, it is still valuable and suitable for introducing the method.

Another movie we produced and published in 2013 has English subtitles and explains the method, while also showing how it was used in a project in the youth penitentiary system in Romania. It can also be a good didactic material.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ke29gb1WwV8&t=4s> (12 minutes)

Suppose you have movies from your own performances. In that case, you can show those, but bear in mind that showing 1.5 hours of video material from a performance and the entire process will not have the same effect as being in the audience, because it is not participatory. They will not experience the actual process. You could show parts of the movie and provide verbal explanations for the ones you will not show.

Option 3 – with the highest possibility of confusion, but that can still be manageable in time.

If you don't have the option to show video material and you don't have a group that could present a performance, you can use this approach.

- Use a flipchart or a digital presentation for your introduction. Try to send a simple, attractive and clear message to your group. Bear in mind that excessive detail in this format won't help you.
- Please focus on the main elements you want them to take away from your presentation: the main aim and features of this methodology, the structure, and the process of Forum Theatre.
- It will be perfect to provide a concrete example, preferably from your work, or make it interactive with them; ask them about a specific social problem from their community, extract the main characters from it and explain how it can be exposed in a Forum Theatre format; add explanations about what is happening in the interaction with the audience.
- Let them know that the whole process will be fully clear only after they either attend an audience or do it themselves; this presentation aims to give them an overview of what the result could be.

For any option used, allocate enough space for their questions and ensure you have a clear impression of their understanding of the method after your introduction.

You need to check whether they misunderstood any aspects, so you could ask them some questions to verify.

4. Forum Theatre Development Process – *Remarks* – 10 min

Aim: to introduce to the group the main aspects of the Forum Theatre process.

Details and description of the activity:

- To achieve the performance and impact outlined in the previous part, several steps need to be pursued, along with specific features that will be incorporated into the process. It is essential to underline the following:

- The preparatory phase includes various games and exercises aimed at preparing them for acting in general, particularly in the context of Forum Theatre.
- This phase will be very active and experiential, and no theory will be provided in advance; instead, theoretical aspects will be discussed and clarified after participants have experienced various activities/exercises.
- Each meeting will generally include different games that target the dynamics necessary for them to work together and with the method.
- The process aims to be inclusive and for each member to feel equally valuable; the decisions are made by consensus.
- Feel free to add any other information that you think is relevant and should be included in this part.

Session 3

Additional Recommendations and Reflections from Practice

- Depending on which option you will use to introduce the Forum Theatre method, you may still have time in this session for some exercises (from the next unit). We have listed them separately because they are a new unit, and very often people start with a new session.
- Another option we used for introducing the Forum Theatre to groups we knew had some contact with it, to varying degrees, was to ask them to write on a separate sheet what they think Forum Theatre is, what is happening in this method, or what they generally know about it. We analyse these papers with the entire group and clarify, as needed, what is correct and what is not.

UNIT 2

Preparatory Exercises

Key Considerations

The preparatory process includes various types of exercises that help group members' work on dynamics for themselves, for the group process, and for learning about the Forum Theatre method.

With different groups, some exercises take less or more time than estimated in the curriculum. Be ready with a plan B in case you need to do more or less, and how you will compensate for it.

Many of these activities are also found in other types of theatre or drama groups. In the Forum Theatre process, the focus is not on developing high theatrical skills; therefore, the time allocated for such preparation may be shorter than that of professional groups. In Forum Theatre groups, the aim is to establish a strong foundation for acting and to follow up with specific Theatre of the Oppressed and Forum Theatre activities.

As this curriculum is addressed to beginners, for more experienced Forum Theatre groups, different activities can be implemented at this stage to sharpen those "acting" or "theatre" areas that were not as well developed in the early stages of their training.

Advanced theatre skills are not required to work with Forum Theatre!

The essential categories of preparatory general exercises that you should have in mind while working with a beginner group are the following: coordination, focus, concentration, space, speed, body, relaxing, rhythm, trust, synchronisation, emotions, expression, gestures, statues, imagination, creativity, expanding personal limits, improvisation, getting into the role, and voice.



More exercises, for improvisation and getting into roles, will be implemented when the development of the Forum Theatre Play takes place.

After the general preparatory activities, specific exercises using statues and images will be used to explore the key concepts in Theatre of the Oppressed: Power and Oppression.

When people are new to the theatre field, it takes some time to loosen up, as they may be afraid to do something embarrassing, be shy, second-guess their actions, or worry too much about what others think of them.

You need to provide a space where, however people complete an exercise, there is no judgement, corrections, or controlling. Even more, be encouraging and validating to reduce the self-consciousness some people carry.

Generally, it is essential to invite the group before starting the exercises to:

-  Go with the flow
-  Not to think in advance about the reasons for doing specific exercises
-  To focus more on themselves and not on others

Do not tell the groups you are working with why you are doing a particular activity or what its purpose is.

Their experiences serve as references for the participants; each gets something, and you know the group's bigger purpose. Through the discussion we will have after the exercises, the group will extract their gains at the individual and group level. They are the judge of what they gained.



- **By telling participants in advance what it is about**, participants may think about it and internally expect or behave in a particular manner, rather than just being in the process.
- **Telling them afterwards** goes against the principles of non-formal education, because they should identify their own learning or discoveries, and they may or may not match what you expected.
- **Confirming what they say is irrelevant to the process** (*we did it precisely for this reason*), and it borders on bragging/condescension. Telling them what they should have learned but they didn't is more like imposing (*this was the actual reason why we did it*).

Observe the group and how they act and react in specific exercises. You need to be there to provide support and protection in exercises in which they are with their eyes closed or being unusual in the working space.

Some individuals can also misbehave, especially during the eyes-closed exercise, and you need to be attentive to intervene and/or address specific issues during or after the exercise. The information you collect from this observation can help you decide which exercises may be more suitable in the following sessions.

This Specific Unit includes 4 sessions:

4. General Preparatory Exercises

(warm-up, space exploration and spatial awareness, focus and attention, coordination, group awareness, flexibility, rhythm, voice) ~ 1.5 hours

5. General Preparatory Exercises

(expressions, emotions, body work) ~ 2 hours

6. Specific Forum Theatre Preparatory Exercises –

Focus Power ~ 1.5 hours

7. Specific Forum Theatre Preparatory Exercises –

Focus Oppression 1.5 hours

Session 4

General Preparatory Exercises

(warm-up, space exploration and spatial awareness, focus and attention, coordination, group awareness, flexibility, rhythm, voice)

(~ 1.5 hours)

For this session, the discussion will be held at the end, not after each activity!





1. **Intro** – 5 min

Welcome your group; brief them on this session's process and purpose; group checking.

2. **Pass the Beat** – 10 min

Aims: develops group coordination, attention and focus, warms up the group.

Details and description of the activity:

-  The group stands in a circle. This exercise is done in silence and emphasises eye contact.
-  "A beat" represents a clap. Two people look into each other's eyes, and each person should clap their own hands at the same time as the other person, so we hear only one clap and not two different ones.
-  You start passing the beat to the person on your right. That person passes it to the person in the next, and so on, until it is back to you. This first round is more of a trial round until the participants get in the mood.
-  Starting with the second round, invite the group to keep the same rhythm and play with it – to become faster or slower.

- You continue by adding more beats, and you invite the group to try to synchronise with the rhythm that is naturally developing in the circle.
- Stop the exercise after 10 minutes or when you feel the group loses motivation.

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations






- For an advanced level, ask the group to pass the beat to anybody in the circle. In this case, everyone has to pay attention to everyone, especially if you introduce more beats on the way.
- Another advanced level is to invite the group to walk in the space and to pass the beat as they walk around.




3. The Electric Current – 5-7 minutes

Aims: develops group coordination, attention and focus, warms up the group.

Details and description of the activity:

-  The group stands in a circle.
-  Explain that an electric current will be travelling among us, from person to person, and it will start from you. Two hand gestures/signs will be used to express how we are *“receiving the current”* and how we are *“sending the current”*.
-  Create your own signs, nothing complicated with the main idea to make a loud sound and to show with your body that you are electrocuted – before you send it to somebody else in the group.
-  Eye contact is required between the giver and receiver to be clear who the target is and to be ready to receive it.
-  You can introduce more electric currents and remind the group to keep the focus on the other people, to be ready to receive a current at any time. The group tends to follow the currents rather than look at the other people.

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

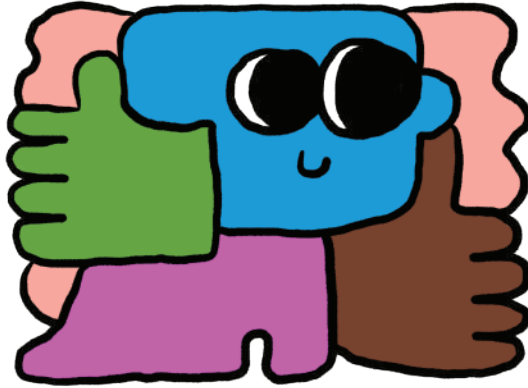
-  This is an activity in which participants can be silly and take it to what level they want when they receive or give the current; you should encourage this, and you should also try to be a bit more exaggerated in your movements, as this sends the message to the others of what kind of mood is expected in the exercise.

4. Space Exercises – 15-20 minutes

Aims: to stimulate reflection on feelings within the group and space; to explore different spaces in different ways and speeds; to increase flexibility and group awareness level.

Details and description of the activity:

- Invite participants to walk in silence through the space where you are working, and along the way give them various prompts, tasks, or questions to reflect on.
- Leave at least 10-15 seconds between your new instructions. Adjust the instructions and timing based on how you observe the group and their engagement in the tasks.
- Explore the space in silence; go to parts of it you haven't yet explored; observe new elements or aspects you didn't notice before. Do not interact with the others – explore alone and focus on yourself.
- Use a different route all the time, and be mindful of the routes you take.
- Use circular movements, which create an invisible number 8 through your movement instead of going around in circles (*which is usually the tendency of people*), which makes the invisible number 0.
- How do you feel in this space? How do you feel in various places of this space? What changes in your feelings when you move around? (*you don't expect answers to these questions*)
- Walk towards your favourite place in this room/space and spend a few seconds there. Walk now towards the place you dislike the most and spend a few seconds there.
- Pay attention to the other people in this space. Make eye contact with the people you meet and smile at each other. Reflect on how you feel in their presence in this specific space. Walk around using weird ways of walking, anything you find that is an unusual way of walking.



- Walk backwards for a while. Alternate between forward and backwards while walking to experience the difference and make it easier to shift between directions.
- Ask the group: How do you feel? How easy is it for you? How much are you still able to focus on the group, or are you more focused on yourself? *(you don't expect answers to these questions)*
- Introduce different imaginary settings for exploring the space and leave the group at least 1 minute to experience that imaginary space *(e.g. to imagine they are on a hot floor; in a forest; in a market, on a train; underwater; on top of the mountain; on another planet; that they are in the middle of the storm; they are in a soup or some other food dish; trapped in a box; in a room full of mosquitoes;)*
- If the group seems energetic, invite them to walk around at different speeds, coded with numbers (1, 2, 3 and 4). 1- Slow motion; 2 - regular walk; 3 - hurry; 4 - super hurry but not running. All the numbers represent different walking speeds; they shouldn't run. Alternate between these numbers. You can say at some point: 0 – they stop, and then ask them to make a circle to explain the next activity.






Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

- Instead of numbers, you can use colour code, or you can use your imagination to use different prompts.



5. Back Dancing – 10 min

Aims: Develops group cohesion, synchronisation and rhythm; facilitates close physical contact between the participants; expands participants' personal limits

Details and description of the activity:

-  The group stands in a circle.
-  Ask the participants to look in the middle of the circle, and after you count to 3, they have to look at only one person in the group. If the person returns the look, both participants become a pair for the next part of the exercise and leave the circle. The game continues until everybody has a pair. If you have an uneven number of people, one group can be of 3 people.
-  The pairs have to stay back-to-back while they dance. You will announce different dance styles, and the pairs have to find their own rhythm, movements, and synchronisation. There will be no music; the pairs have to imagine.
-  After every two styles, ask them to find another person to dance with.
-  Based on how much fun they are having and how relaxed the group is, you can adjust the time given for each dance. Suggested styles for dancing: Disco-Pop, Salsa, Waltz, Hip-Hop, Free-Style, Contemporary, Some ethnic dance (*if relevant to your group*), Bollywood dance, Hard Rock, etc.











Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

-  This exercise proved quite challenging for some pairs/people who may feel uncomfortable doing it. Keep an eye on the group, and if they don't look relaxed enough, you can make shorter rounds and change the pairs more often.
-  As a lighter alternative, you may put music in the background, change the songs and styles from time to time, and let the pairs dance as they wish, without a specific style, just following the music.



6. **Blind Shake** – 10 min

Aims: Develops coordination in different spaces and trust among other people; supports a stronger connection among group members.

Details and description of the activity:

-  Ask the last pairs in the dancing exercise to stay in the same pairs at the start of the next activity (they will change pairs during the exercise).
-  The activity goes like this:
 -  2 people shake hands and then freeze their handshake;
 -  They close their eyes
 -  They “un-shake” their original handshake but keep the hand in the same position as it was in the original handshake; they don’t leave the hand down.
 -  They take three steps backwards.
 -  They check with each other if they are ready.
 -  Then they take three steps forward, aiming to return to the original position and reproduce the handshake.
-  Demonstrates how the exercise goes and then all the participants replicate in their pairs; they will change pairs on the way and repeat with other partners as well.
-  The first few times, participants usually find themselves in different positions from the initial ones. Still, they learn how to assess the space and their own coordination with eyes closed.


Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

-  Pay attention to the pairs, to be safe, but also if anybody is trying to behave inappropriately. We had cases in which men were taking advantage of being with eyes close to touch “accidentally” the breasts of different women, when they were trying to reproduce the handshake.
-  You may ask the pairs to stay in two parallel lines so they all spatially do this exercise parallel to each other, and then you move one line (one person from one end goes to the other end) and create easier and faster new pairs.

7. Samurai – 10 min

Aims: to warm up the voice, to energise and activate the bodies of participants, to stimulate the use of the diaphragm, which is better for projecting a more powerful voice (*generally, the letter H always engages the diaphragm while being pronounced, making this exercise a good exercise before going on stage*).

Details and description of the activity:

-  The group stands in a circle.
-  Inform the group that in this activity, they will all play samurai who are constantly attacking one another, attempting to kill each other.
-  Every samurai has a sword, represented by both of their palms touching, symbolising the sword.
-  There is a sequence that everyone must follow.
 -  When someone wants to attack another person, they first prepare by raising the sword firmly above their head and saying very loudly, “HA”.
 -  Then they choose their “victim” and very firmly direct their sword towards the selected person, and at the same time have to say very loudly, “HE”.
 -  The person targeted also raises the sword to defend and prepare for attack, and says loudly, “HA”.
 -  At this moment, the persons standing on the right and on the left of the person that was attacked will both attempt to cut this person by going with their sword to the attacked person’s belly, both of them at the same time and saying very loudly “HE”.
 -  The samurai in the middle (the target of the attack) bends a bit to avoid the attack. Immediately after, attacks someone in the group, with the explanations given before, and the process repeats.
-  The process goes on steadily, fast and loud.
-  It goes without saying that no one gets physically hurt in this exercise. In this version, HA and HE are used – you can also use just one, like HA.

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

For more advanced groups, you can use the order HA, HE, HI, HO, HU – for example: person attacking raising the sword HA- the neighbours attacking HE, the samurai attacking somebody HI, the victim preparing for attack HO, the neighbours HU, the attacking one HA ...and so on...- everyone has to remember the order and to continue to do the exercise – in this version the work with the voice is much broadened.













An alternative is to use elimination; when you add the elimination element, group members become much more attentive and focused because they don't want to get eliminated. At the same time, for half of the exercise, many people will not actually be part of it and will not benefit from it.



8. Magnets – 10 min








Aims: Develops focus in the group and spatial coordination; facilitates easier contact among participants.

Details and description of the activity:

-  Divide the group into pairs, and if necessary, one group can be of 3 people.
-  Explain that each person represents a magnet with different polarisation values. Magnets attract or repel each other, depending on their polarities.
-  Each person must remember who is in their magnet pair.
-  All participants walk freely around the space, and from time to time, you say out loud the polarisation values:
 -  ATTRACTION – when they hear this, each person has to immediately, as magnets do, run to their paired magnet and continue walking around the space as a duo.
 -  REJECTION – when they hear this, they have to run from each other extremely fast, as magnets do, and then walk around the space, individually, keeping themselves far from their magnet pair.
-  Play with the two values (Attraction and Rejection) several times.
-  Move on to the next level. Each pair represents one magnet, and they have to find another magnet (made of 2 people) to couple with. Now there will be 4 people connected in a 2-by-2 pattern.
-  The group continues to walk around the space individually, but must remember who all their magnet partners are.
-  Now you use different polarisation values: Attraction, Rejection, Double Attraction or Double Rejection (*for the big magnets*).
-  At this level, depending on your signal, participants either gather or reject small or large magnets.
-  You may have one last level, with the whole group coming together as a Total Attraction/Total Rejection at the end of the activity.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions *(at the end of the entire session)*

Usually, this first session of games and exercises is fun, active and very engaging. It is important now to help the group reflect on their experience and to understand how it helped them and supported their process:

-  How do you feel now at the end of all the exercises we did?
-  How do you feel in the group after all these exercises?
-  What activity was most challenging and why?
-  What activity was easy for you and why?
-  What did you gain from this session at the personal level?
-  What do you think the group gained from this session?
-  Is there anything the group needs to pay closer attention to or be more careful about in future sessions?

9. Closing of the Meeting – 5 min

Conclude the meeting, thank everyone, and include details about the next meeting: where, when, and what will happen next, as well as any last questions or remarks.

Session 4

Additional Recommendations and Reflections from Practice

The set of exercises included here is generally well-received by the groups we worked with. Some exercises were favoured more than others, but all the ones mentioned here were highlighted at some point by some people as a highlight of their session. They all contribute to a general feeling of playfulness, connection to the group and a high level of comfort in the team. We had groups call this session more of a team-building experience than the previous ones, based on their overall feeling in the group afterwards.

Samurai is one of the most well-known exercises internationally, and it is much loved, but people are also very attached to the way they have learned it. You may notice some resistance if your approach is different.

Ideas for alternative exercises that could be done in this session:

Zip-Zap-Zup

The group is standing in circle and they pass different gestures associated with a sound in the circle; Zip is associated by the left hand pointed to the right side and is indicating going to the right; Zap is associated by the right hand pointed to the left side and the direction is going to the left; Participants can use any of these two sounds + gesture to change the direction; Zup is associated with both hands indicating somebody in another place in the circle - This person has to continue in any direction they want (Zip or Zap) or with a Zup. The actual sounds or gestures can be modified as desired, and additional gestures and sounds can be added (*e.g., for jumping one person in the circle, for mixing everyone in the group, for changing places with another person, etc.*).

1-2-3 with gestures

In pairs, participants count alternately 1,2,3 –one person says 1, the other says 2, the first one 3 and the other one 1 and so on. After 20-30 seconds, they have to decide on a hand/leg movement to use instead of number 1. They continue counting as a pair, and for number 1, they use the movement decided. After some time, they have to find another movement for number 2 and practice like that for a while, and then they will do it for number 3 as well. They will have to count after that without using any numbers but only gestures/movements. A variation is that they should use sounds as well as movement, and the final version is them counting with their eyes closed, just by listening to the sounds.

Defend the target

In groups of 4, one person is outside and the other 3 are holding hands as a circle; the person outside has to say who their target is, and their mission is to touch their target on the shoulder; the mission of the 3 people holding hands is not to let the outside person touch their target. Once the outside touches their target, another person goes out. This exercise is very dynamic and energetic.

Count as a group

Ask the group to start counting, one by one. At specific numbers, you give different tasks, whenever it is 3 or a multiple of 3 jump, whenever it is a number divided by 5 change places with somebody else, if there is a number including 9 be silent and the next person continues, etc. You can make it as complicated as you think the group can handle. You can also count backwards with the same rules or different ones.

Session 5

General Preparatory Exercises

*(expressing various emotions, body and facial expressions,
working with emotions, working with bodies
and postures, general trust building)*

(~2 hours)

1. **Intro** – 5 min

Welcome your group; brief them on this session's process and purpose; group checking

2. **Trust Dancing** – 25 min

Aims: to develop trust among group members, support the participants to expand their personal limits.

Details and description of the activity:

Explain that in this exercise, at various times, they will have eyes closed, which may push their limits a bit, but we are in a safe environment. Encourage everybody to take care of each other during this activity.

Divide the group into pairs, either randomly or have people choose their own partners.

In each pair, they should decide who is person A and who is person B.

Person A will be with their eyes closed or blindfolded, with their palm open in the air. The other person, B, puts their own index finger on the other person's index finger, and this will be the only contact between the pair.

They are not allowed to talk during the exercise.

- Turn on the music. You should use slow, calm, melodic music, not something very jumpy and active.
- Person B has to lead the other person around the space; they can either dance with Person A or guide them.
- Stop the music after 1-2 minutes. A continues to keep their eyes closed, and the B-s go to another A in the room. They need to remain silent so the A-s do not know who their new partners are.
- The activity continues, and the new pairs are allocated the same amount of time for their dance/walk.
- Another change is made, so in the end, person A will have had 3 B persons as partners.
- After the last round, A-s opens their eyes and sees who their third partner was.
- The roles switch, and now the B have the eyes closed, and the A will be leading- and the activity continues the same way. Change the song for the second round.



Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

- How did you feel during the exercise with your eyes closed?
- What was the most challenging aspect?
- What made you feel safe?
- What made you feel unsafe, if it was the case?
- How did the change of partners influence how you felt in the exercise? How was it to dance with somebody you didn't who is it?
- How did you feel as a person who needs to lead? What was challenging in this role? What was easy?
- Which of the two roles did you prefer and why?
- With what from real life can you associate the experience you had in this activity?
- How can this exercise help your group work/dynamic?






Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

- The exercise can also work without music, but it has a lower impact, as the music helps the group relax, provides the pairs with a rhythm for moving, and makes it easier.
- Some participants do not take it seriously;** they will laugh, make dangerous moves toward their partners, or try to disrupt others. You need to intervene directly and remind them to be silent and to take care of the others.
- Some people feel awkward and uncomfortable,** either because they think they don't provide a good experience when they are leading, or because they don't behave as they "should" when they have their eyes closed. Having a dim light in the room may support more such people, as darkness reduces self-consciousness a bit more.



3. Mirrors – 10 min

Aims: Encourages groups to use their bodies in different expressive ways, to expand their creativity, and to work on coordination and synchronization among group members.

Details and description of the activity:

-  Divide the groups into new pairs.
-  In these pairs, they will mirror each other. One person has to do some movements, slow, focused more on expressions, various gestures and mimics. The other person must copy in real time, as accurately as possible.
-  They switch roles after 5 minutes, upon your signal. The exercise takes place in silence.
-  Emphasize not to use sudden movements, as the “mirror” will not be able to keep up in real time.
-  You may put some music in the background to create a reflective atmosphere.

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

-  Another level involves the entire group standing in a circle. One volunteer goes in the middle, and now each person in the circle is a mirror of the person in the middle, depending on the angle they are facing. For the person in the middle, it will be an intense sensation to have so many mirrors reflecting them. In this version, it will be more challenging for the people standing behind the volunteer. Ask the person in the middle not to stay on one side all the time, but to move. Ask several volunteers to join one by one.
-  A variation of the previous level is to have everyone stand in a single line, with one volunteer in front of them, and have them mirror the volunteer’s movements. It will be much easier now to mirror for everyone.

4. Bears and Princesses – 10-15 min

Aims: Prepares the group to express different emotions; warms up the body and the voice; relaxes the group members through acting and silliness; and also develops focus and concentration.

Depending on the country you do this exercise in, adjust the roles more appropriately, perhaps based on the folklore background of the people you are working with.

This exercise needs to be explained very carefully at the beginning, so it can have a proper start-up; it is challenging to clarify after you start.

Details and description of the activity:

- Divide the group into pairs, with each pair holding each other by the arm. They represent a tree while they are standing like that.
- Ask for two volunteers to help you explain the exercise.
- The exercise takes place in a magic forest, where magical trees stand randomly throughout the space.
- It would be good to demonstrate how the game goes in slow motion and to stop at times to explain why it is like that.
- One person is the bear, who needs to make sounds and gestures to appear fearsome. The other person is an innocent princess who also needs to make sounds and gestures in line with her role.



- The bear runs after the princess in the forest, and the princess tries to escape from the bear. There are two options for what can happen next:
 - The bear touches the princess on the shoulder – if this happens, because we are in a magic forest, they switch roles, and the princess suddenly becomes a bear, and the bear becomes a princess who tries now to escape from the bear
 - The princess escapes the bear by attaching herself to one of the trees/pairs that are standing in the circle. She needs to take one person from any pair standing in the space by the arm. She is safe now, BUT the other person from the pair (not the one she attached herself to) becomes the angry bear, and the previous bear suddenly becomes a princess who needs to escape from this new bear.
- There will always be a bear running after a princess, following the “rules” explained previously.
- Stop the exercise after 10-15 minutes, or keep it as long as the group seems to be having a lot of fun.












Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

- Usually, people get confused about role-switching when the bear touches the princess and about role division when the princess attaches herself to a pair.
- We usually ask the pairs to randomly place themselves in the space, like in a real forest, but it also works very well if the pairs stand in a circle.
- For an advanced group or at later stages in the process, you can give different emotions/moods for the bear or princess and change them during the exercises- drunk, crying, desperate, crazy, diplomatic, polite, friendly, robot, alien bear/princess, etc.
- We always work in pairs, but if necessary, one pair can be a trio, and the middle person is held by each arm, and the position of people will change when people are attached to their “tree”.




5. Hey You - Who Me? – 10 min

Aims: develops different emotional expressions, dealing with various emotional accusations and responses; warm up the voice

Details and description of the activity:

-  The group stands in a circle, close together.
-  Start by pointing at somebody in the group and saying to this person
 -  It's YOU!
 -  Then the whole group has to speak as one: Hey YOU! Very loudly, pointing at that person.
 -  The accused person replies: WHO? ME?
 -  The whole group, still pointing at that person, says, YES YOU!
 -  The person replies: NO, NOT ME!
 -  The whole group is still pointing: THEN WHO?
 -  It's....YOU and the accused is pointing at somebody else in the group and then the whole group pointing at that person: HEY YOU! And the sequence continues as explained.
-  Allow time for everybody to be pointed at.
-  People could respond to the accusation in different ways, using different emotions: very innocent, angry, upset, etc. Mention this at the beginning or during the exercise, or leave it for the group to develop naturally – pay attention to the group.

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

-  This exercise can also be used to discuss responsibility, how often people do not take responsibility for what is happening in their communities, and how they always blame others.
-  Some participants will try to sabotage and say, Yes, it is they who did whatever we are accusing them of.
-  If they do it very late in the game, you can use the momentum to close the exercise. If they do it at the beginning, explain the process again and emphasize that they must follow it adequately.

6.1,2,3 - 4,5,6 – 15 min

Aims: to explore a variety of emotions and feelings while interacting with other people; to support the acting process and get into different roles; to foster connections between group members; to stimulate reflections on expressing emotions that aren't felt personally at the moment;

Details and description of the activity:

- Divide the participants into two groups, with each group standing in a line facing the other. Each person has to have a corresponding person facing them in the other group. The people lined up stay a few steps apart.
- In this exercise, they will have small conversations with the person in front of them.
- Instruct one line of people to use just the following words: 1, 2, 3 (nothing else in terms of spoken language) – just these three words. The second line must use only these words: 4, 5, 6, and nothing else.
- The process goes like this: you will give an emotion, a feeling, a mood, a situation and the people in the two lines, take a few steps, come in the middle closer to each other and have a small conversation using the words given but expressing the emotion provided and then they go back in line. When they are back in line, they shouldn't have the given emotion anymore.
- Demonstrate with another volunteer the expected duration of the discussion, which should be relatively short.
- Suggestions for emotions, feelings, moods that could be used in the activity: long lost friends, snobs, shy, rude, arrogant, annoyed, sad, angry, bored, extremely polite, scared, shocked, desperate, old enemy, suspicious, flirting, funeral, as if the other person is your idol, jealousy, giggling, proud, in a big hurry, after a break-up, excited, very tired, in love, using a powerful accent, etc.

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

Either as an alternative version or something you could do during the original version, you may ask people to walk freely through the space, with half using 1, 2, 3 and the other half using 4, 5, 6. When you signal an emotion, they can talk to anybody. This version offers the possibility of different kinds of interactions, including with other people, not just the same partner. In the free walking version, you may also tell everyone to use any number up to 10.

You may change partners during the activity to explore this communication in different partner configurations.

Generally, groups love this exercise; they have fun and easy-going explorations of different emotions.

7. Exaggeration Circle – 10-15 min

Aims: to explore different emotional expressions using mimics and body gestures; to develop observation and analytical skills; to develop the ability to read emotional cues from other people's expressions.

Details and description of the activity:

The group can be sitting or standing.

Anybody in the group can start by showing an emotion, using facial mimics, looks, etc., to their neighbour on the right.

You can make a round of just copying the emotion that was expressed exactly. This round is for warming up and also to show that it will be very hard to copy exactly.

Instruct the group that the task is now: after a person shows an emotion to the next person, that person has to copy it for the next person, but this time make it a little bit more intense.

One by one, the emotion should grow in intensity until it reaches the highest level back to the original person.

- Remind the group to amplify it just a little bit, and if the group is small, you can do two rounds to see how much it can grow.
- Any volunteer can start by showing an emotion.
- If there are no volunteers, you could show the first example to set the right tone for the types of emotions that are appropriate to use.
- After each round, ask one volunteer to suggest an emotion.
- Make sure people actually start by showing emotions, not gestures (like touching their face, putting their tongue out, etc.), so you can stop one round if it is not an emotion. Later in the progression of the emotion, body gestures can be added to show the amplifications, but the starting point is a facial expression.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

- What did you notice in the exercise?
- What kind of storylines did we develop as a group?
- How did the emotions change if they changed on the way?
- How easy was it for you to read the emotion expressed by your colleague?
- What about adding a bit of intensity, but not too much? How was that for you?
- Were there any emotions easier to read and express?









Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

- Sometimes it takes a few rounds of reminders for the group to progress slowly, as groups tend to grow the emotions very much from one person to another, as that is the easiest thing to do.
- You should insist on a slow progression and ask the group to try slower, lower growth all the time. There is value in expressing nuances and degrees of emotions, and it will be beneficial later.
- You may do a couple of rounds of de-escalation. To start with a very exaggerated emotion and ask the group to lower it to a minimum.

8. Statues and Emotions – 10 min

Aims: to work with body postures and express different emotions by using their bodies; to develop observation and analytical skills; to develop reading emotional cues from other people's expressions and body postures; to stimulate reflections on similarities in expressing the same emotions.

Details and description of the activity:

-  Ask the group to count 1,2,1,2,... – so each person is either 1 or 2.
-  They have to walk around the space in silence, and at some moment, you say out loud one number (either 1 or 2) and an emotion/feeling/mood.
-  All the people with that number have to freeze into a statue that expresses that specific emotion, wherever they are at the moment.
-  The other half of the group finds themselves in a spontaneous museum and are invited to observe the “pieces” of that thematic museum. This museum is open for a maximum of 20-30 seconds.
-  Encourage them to take a look and observe all the statues. Make sure to inform them not to touch or interact with the statues. On this rule, you need to insist, as often, group members get carried away and have too much fun, touching the statues or trying to make them laugh.
-  Inform them that this museum is closed; they can walk around again and continue by saying a number and an emotion.
-  Try to do at least three rounds for each number group.
-  Suggestions for emotions that could be used: sad, happy, proud, afraid, frustrated, dreamer, troubled, powerful, powerless, etc.



9. Museum of Emotions – 20 min










Aims: support the group to express more complex feelings and situations; stimulate the group to investigate their own feelings; develop skills in using the body to express emotions; develop analytical capacity; prepare the group for deeper discussion of social issues.

Details and description of the activity:







Ask group 1 from the previous exercise to go outside and wait until the group inside is ready. They will visit a museum, observe the statues, and determine the museum's theme. They are not allowed to touch the statues, interact with them, or disturb them – their only task is to observe.

The group inside have to be statues in the museum with the following theme: Aggressor - the person committing the aggression. They think individually, and once they decide what kind of aggressor they want to show, they can practice the posture anywhere in the working space.

Inform them that they have to stay in that position for a longer time, so they should choose one that allows that.

-  Once they are ready, invite the outside group inside to visit.
-  Guide the visitors in their exploration
 -  Make sure you observe each statue.
 -  Try to feel the atmosphere in this museum.
 -  How do you feel in this museum?
 -  What are the similarities in the museum? ...
 -  You can also go from statue to statue (if you have a small group) to check with the group what they see: What is this person doing? Where are they? Why do you think they are doing this?
-  Check all the statues quickly, and then ask them at the end to tell you what the theme of this museum is based on how they analysed, experienced, and observed the statues and the atmosphere created. Then the statues can come back to life.
-  If some statues were really confusing, you could ask the people to explain their concept. If the central theme is not clear, you can also spend some more time for the statues to explain what their vision was for the statue.
-  Then the group that was statues go out and the process is repeated. For the second round, the theme given to the statues is “Victim of aggression” which could be expressed based on their experience as museum visitors or not.
-  Repeat the exploration process as in the first round, and then follow with a brief discussion.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

-  How easy was it to decide what statue you wanted to express?
-  Based on what did you choose?
-  How easy was it to understand what the statues expressed?
-  What were the main aspects that made it easier for you?
-  What was hard or challenging in this process?
-  Do you have any other comments/reflections from this exercise?

Final Session Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

- Ask the group to sit and make a clear transition from the previous exercise to this final debriefing.
- Explain that you want to know their views on this session based on their experience. You can do a small recap together with them on the activities you have done in the session, and then follow up with the next questions.
 - How do you feel now at the end of today's session?
 - What are the main aspects that we worked on today?
 - What activity was most challenging and why?
 - What was easy for you?
 - How easy is it for you to express emotions that you do not feel?
 - What can make it easier for you?
 - How is it for you to use your body to express certain feelings or situations?
 - What did you gain from this session at the individual level?
 - What about at the group level?
 - In what way did the session prepare you for later stages in the process?

10. **Closing of the Meeting** – 5 min

Conclude the meeting, thank everyone, and include details about the next meeting: where, when, and what will happen next, as well as any last questions or remarks.

Session 5

Additional Recommendations and Reflections from Practice

From the set of exercises included in this session, we must highlight

- **Bear and Princesses** is very popular, well-known, and enjoyed by groups around the world in whatever variations.
- **1,2,3 - 4,5,6** is exceptionally well received; people have so much fun with it, they go with the flow, and sometimes it's hard to take them out of some intense interactions.
- **Hey You** gets a lot of praise as well, but this exercise becomes a memory milestone for the group, as it sticks in their minds, and whenever later someone says "Hey You" they all continue the story as in the exercise.
- Some groups really appreciate **Trust Dancing** because it is a different type of activity from the others and helps the group explore a different energy and be silent for quite some time, to connect with their thoughts and feelings.



Ideas for alternative exercises that could be done in this session:

Walk, stretch and connect

Participants walk around the space; at your signal, they have to stop, stretch as much as they can and make as many connections with other people in the room; go around, and while they stay as a statue, ask them to give a title to the image they have created spontaneously. You may continue by providing a specific emotion/feeling/mood that they must reflect in how they connect with other people.

Change emotions

Participants stay in 2 lines, each person has a partner on the other line facing them; give a different emotion to be acted out by each of the lines; at your signal the pairs start walking towards each other expressing with their body and facial expression the given emotion; when they reach each other they have to face each other and turn and go backwards towards the opposite side from where they started (so they can still face each other) but after their meeting they act out as the emotion of the other person – they change their emotions after they met. All pairs do this exercise at the same time, but it also has value to go couple by couple after they warmed up, to practice acting with an audience. You can use the opposite set of emotions, such as love/hate, sad/happy, courageous/afraid, suspicious/trustful, powerful/powerless, angry/at peace, etc., or you can have random emotions given.

Emotions on papers

Place on the floor in a circle, big papers with different emotions written on them: ANGER, SURPRISE, HAPPINESS, AFRAID, LOVE, BRAVE, DISGUST, PEACE, and SADNESS. Participants walk around the papers in a circle. When you clap, they have to stop and make an image showing what is written on the paper close to where they stopped.

After a few rounds like that, when you clap, chose one person from a group where more people showed an image of the same emotion; ask this person to pick statues from around the circle, silently and create a story with their bodies in the middle of the circle; after the story of images was made, ask the others to unfreeze and to observe and provide opinions on the image shown and to give a title to it.

Good morning/evening with different emotions

At the beginning of your session, participants go around the room saying good morning/evening to the people they meet with different emotions signalled by you.

Simple song with different emotions

There are many silly songs, with words that nobody knows their meaning, children songs, etc. that are being used for this exercise; we mention it because it is simple and is working to activate the bodies and emotions of a group; you should sing the song, line by line so the people can repeat after you; every time you do it using different emotions which also use your body to express them, and the group will copy what you do; it is depending entirely on you to offer a rich, active and mobilizing experience. We can mention some examples for songs we have gathered in time (I have a little house...; JJ Kolesa; Lingu Lingu...), maybe they ring a bell with you, but the song itself is irrelevant; you can use any children's song appropriate for your group, or one with invented words that have some melodic flow.

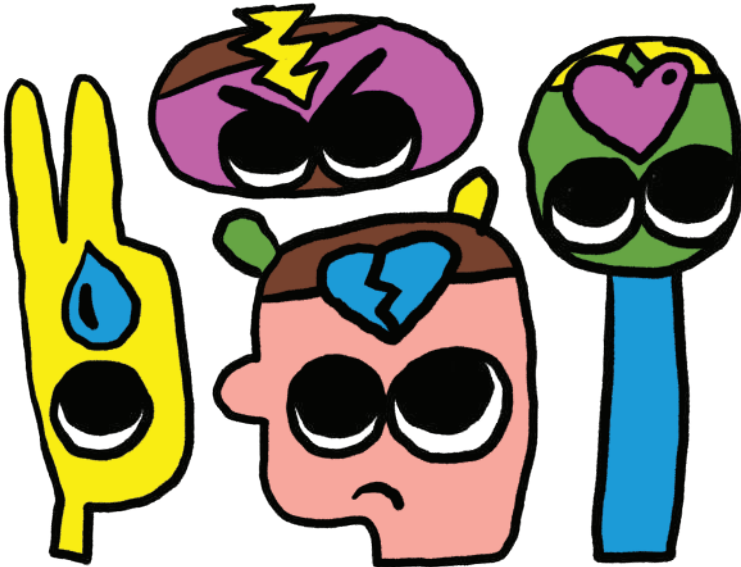
I will leave you! Please don't leave me

Participants are divided in pairs; each pair one person will say "I will leave you!" and the other will say "Please don't leave me!"; they can only say these words, anything else is up to them but they are not allow to use physical force or restrictions; they may move in the space as well; all pairs do the exercise at the same time.

Five minutes is sufficient for the exercise, as emotions can reach high intensity quite quickly. Conduct a discussion after this.

The Magic Letter

In the middle of the circle place one folded paper (nothing is written on it but if you need to open to know is blank); ask participants to go one by one, to open the letter, to contemplate its content and have an emotional reaction to it; they shouldn't talk or comment verbally on what is written on the paper; each participant repeats the process.



Emotions on the foreheads

Write a variety of emotions on sticky papers; place them on the foreheads of half of the participants, who don't know what emotions you put on them; the other half walks around the space and when they face a person with an emotion written on it, they have to RE-ACT to it either as an image or with body movements; they should go around all the people that have emotions and react to them; after 5-7 minutes stop the exercise; ask the people with emotions to share how they felt and also what they think was written on their papers; repeat the process for the second half and have a final discussion at the end.

Session 6

Power and Oppression Concepts

Focus Power

(~1,5 hours)

With this session, the work starts to focus more on Theatre of the Oppressed specific exercises and address the concepts of power, oppression and provide a solid understanding of these concepts to the participants, as they are the key concepts to be used in Forum Theatre.

At the same time, we still included some exercises from the general preparation as the sessions combine various elements.

You need to be very clear on what Oppression is and its relation to Power to help the participants understand them as well.

As they are abstract concepts, it is very easy to deviate and make them so relative as to apply to everything. That's why, in these sessions, there is enough time for participants to express their views on the concepts, as well as for the facilitator to provide a clear definition of the concepts.

If you facilitate this session, read the previous chapter on Power and Oppression (Core Concepts) to be very clear on the definitions, examples, potential participant questions, and to be prepared to clarify these concepts and ensure a coherent understanding.







1. **Intro** – 5 min

Welcome your group; brief them on this session's process and purpose; group checking.

2. **The Apple in the Tree** - 10 min

Aims: to physically stretch the participants, to work on their imagination and capacity of projecting themselves into another reality, to encourage them to zoom in on things and not to rush; to warm up the group for the day.

Details and description of the activity:

-  Ask the participants to walk around the space in silence.
-  Introduce the group to another setting, an imaginary location. You will guide them in a space and tell them that they are free to explore this imaginary land as they feel like, based on the indications provided. Tell them that whenever you clap, they need to stop, freeze:
 -  Imagine you are now walking in a green field, there is fresh air and a blue sky, and you see a forest and you go closer to it, it looks so big with giant trees, as you come closer you realize it is in fact an orchard with all kinds of fruit trees; All your favourite fruits are here and they smell so good, you are enjoying their smell, their colour and you walk around more to see what other wonders are in this orchard;
 -  At some point, you observe a giant 100-year-old apple tree (**or some other common fruit tree for the location you are working in*) and it is full of fruit; the branches are almost breaking from the amount of fruit on them.

They are all so big, and very ripe; immediately you feel attracted to the tree and you get closer, but first you take your time and observe it, how many fruits you see in it, what colours, what flavours they send around; at one point you look up – In this moment CLAP and the participants freeze.

While they are statues, explain that to reach that apple, they will go step by step, and a CLAP will guide each step.

Take a moment and look at that apple (while still in the statue), they have an appetite for it, but now they are stuck in observation, they can't wait to grab it.

CLAP - they can stretch their arm and do their best to hold the apple, to stretch really hard, and almost to grab the apple and freeze in that position. They are so close, very soon they will have the chance to take their first bite from the apple, they feel its texture – it is just the way they like it;

CLAP, they can grab the apple and take it down, but not yet eat from it, and freeze; now the apple is in their hands, in front of them, is it the way they have imagined? Look at the whole fruit, smell it, analyse its texture, and get ready to take the first bite.

CLAP, they can finally bite from their chosen fruit, enjoy it, and hopefully it is as they want it and imagine it.

Repeat the exercise. They go back into the same forest, and now they can do their own imaginary journey (you will not guide them in the forest). You only signal via claps what they need to do specifically, all at the same time.









When they hear the first clap, they have to look up and freeze.

For each of the next claps, the following will happen: stretch their arm, grab the fruit, eat the fruit and throw the leftovers. You can repeat it faster and faster.


3. Stop and Action – 10 min

Aims: to develop group focus, awareness and connection; to stimulate creativity and imagination, to warm-up and energize the group;

Details and description of the activity:

-  Instruct the group to walk around, relax and observe the space a little bit.
-  When you stop, tell everyone to stop and continue:
 -  Now we all stop. If anybody starts walking, we all have to start walking. During this time, when anybody stops, we all have to stop. When we stop, if someone starts walking, we all start walking. Do this several times.
 -  At one point, when everyone stops, tell the group that walking is now replaced by an action that requires moving in space, and it can be anything that involves legs, hands, or sounds (e.g., dancing, jumping, clapping).
 -  When one person starts an action, we all copy and do the same, and anyone can stop at any time. When one person stops, we all stop until another person suggests another action.
 -  There is no talking; people don't announce the group they stopped or that they are doing an action. The group needs to observe each other carefully.
-  When the group is performing one action, no other action should be suggested. The group must stop completely before another action is proposed. Stop and Action!
-  You stop the exercises after 10 minutes or when you see the group no longer suggest anything.

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

-  Observe who is proposing suggestions and how often; if needed, remind the group to leave space for people who haven't yet suggested any ideas.

For the option walk and stop, a more complex alternative is for the group to stop or walk when the group is ready, not when different individuals impose their speed and flow. It isn't easy, as they cannot talk, and it is hard to feel the group's needs, but you can give the challenge to a group that has already worked together. Discuss after you do this version.

4. **Circle of Statues** – 20 min

Aims: to use bodies to express various concepts; to stimulate imagination; to warm up the bodies.

Details and description of the activity:

In this activity, participants will use their bodies to express certain concepts.

They have very little time to think about them, so they should use their first ideas that come to mind when you mention the word.

Some of the concepts are more concrete, others are more abstract.

The participants stand with their backs to the circle. You say a word aloud, count to 5, and at 5, everybody has to turn to the circle and show the body posture representing their first idea of the given word.

After each round, the participants stay in their statues and, at the same time, look around to see how the others have expressed the same concept.

You could ask additional questions about unclear postures that are very abstract; participants can also ask specific statue questions.

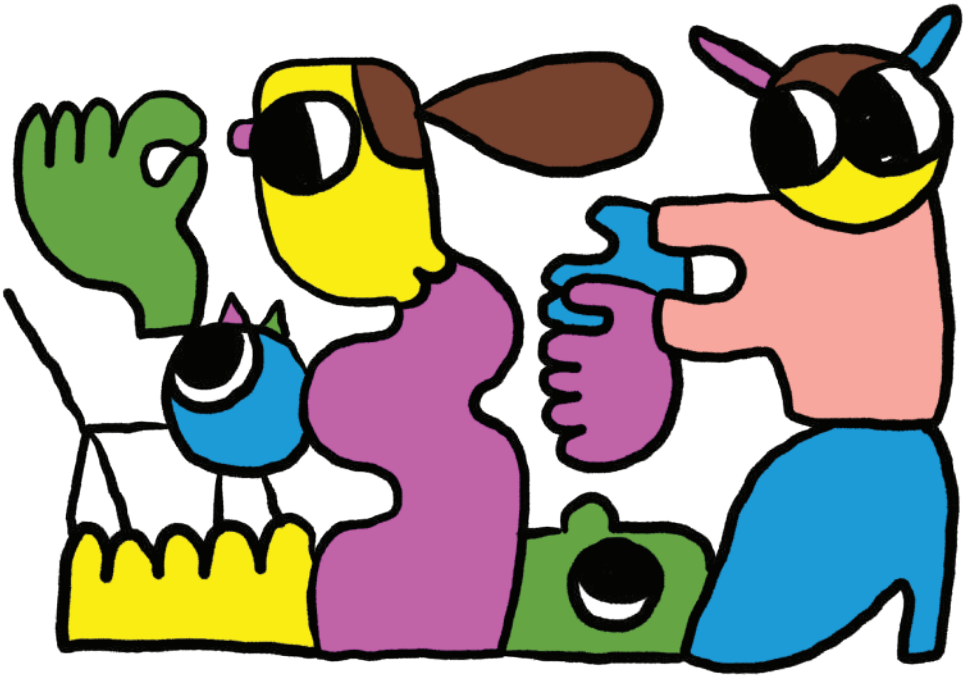
For each Word, keep the analysis under 1 minute to explore more concepts and have some discussion afterwards.

Around 10 words should be sufficient.

Suggested words that you could use: mother, father, worker, teacher, young person, boss, woman, man, cool person, loser, immigrant, patriot, husband, wife, teenager, love, abuse, power, powerless, hope, etc.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

- How did you feel during the exercise? What made you feel that way?
- How easy was it for you to find the posture you wanted to show?
- What word was most challenging for you?
- Which word had the most significant amount of similarities (in the group's images) and which didn't? Why is that so?
If you had more time, would you show a different image?
- Give examples.
- What other observations do you have from the activity?
- How can this exercise help us in our Forum Theatre work?



Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

You can use this activity to discuss stereotypes and prejudices, clarify them, and reflect on how they will play a role in your process with the method and the audience. In this case, you should use explicit words describing groups (religious, ethnic, nationalities, different gender identities, sexual orientations, etc.) and then have a discussion starting from their similarities on certain words, where these similarities come from, why there are those similarities, and clarify the concepts of stereotypes. In this version, there can be stronger reactions from group members if they are bothered by some of the group postures, which they may find offensive, but, at the same time, reflect existing stereotypes in our society.















Another option is to give participants more time to reflect on the image they want to convey. In this case, it will be intentional and not necessary, the first idea they had in their mind. In this case, you can proceed like this: when they are with their backs to the circle, they turn to the circle when they are ready, without showing their posture; we wait for everyone to turn, and you signal for them to show their postures at the same time.

You can also work further in relation to some of the words you are working with. After they show their postures, ask the statues that are most similar to each other to come together and form groups. Give them a few minutes in these groups, and have them think about words they want to associate with their posture; it could be the same word per group, or each statue a different word. After the time allocated, groups come back, you repeat the prompt word, they show their statues at the same time, and then you go group by group and listen to the words. This adds nuance to the posture work and emphasizes the similarities and differences between groups and within each group. The discussion should be tailored to explore the specific dynamics of this version.

5. Power and More Power – 50 min

Aims: to stimulate the concept of power; to expand participants' understanding of power and its dimensions; to raise analysis, observation and critical thinking skills; to increase physical endurance for staying in statues; to clarify the concept of oppression, to identify different types of oppression, to clarify the kind of oppressions relevant for Forum Theatre;

Details and description of the activity:

-  In this activity, we will explore the concept of Power, a core concept in Forum Theatre.
-  Place three objects on the floor, in front of the group: a chair, a marker, and tape.
-  Invite participants to look at the three objects and arrange them so that, in their view, the marker has the most power.
-  They can come one by one and modify the objects' configuration.
-  After one person makes a configuration, ask the rest of the people, the audience, to reflect and to express their opinion:
 -  Who thinks the marker has the most power? Why?
 -  Who thinks the chair has the most power? Why?
 -  Who thinks the tape has the most power? Why?
-  The primary purpose of this process is to provide space for different ideas and perspectives to be shared and, generally, to stimulate analytical thinking in the group. There will be no collective agreement on the power distribution.
-  Invite 3-4 people to propose ideas and discuss them one by one.
-  Move on to the second stage of the exercise.
-  Invite one volunteer to come on the stage and show Power using their body.
-  The volunteer has to remain in a statue while the group analyses, with your guidance, whether it has power and how they decided that.
-  Invite 2-3 people to show individual postures, and you will discuss them one by one.

Move to the third stage of the exercise.

While you have one volunteer on the stage, invite another participant to join the person already sitting in the statue. This second person must adopt a posture that conveys more power than the one already exhibited on stage. The two postures are now analysed as a single collective image. The second person may attach physically to the first, or not. Invite the group to analyse the image:

Who has more power in this image? Raise your hand if this person has more? Raise your hand if you think this one? (*You indicate which ones you are referring to.*) Why? What are your reasons?

Invite a third person to come and add themselves to the image, in a way that shows more power, and continue the analysis as explained.

From this point on, you have several options, depending on how you assess the process on the spot with the group or your preferred approach. The main purpose at this stage is to explore different forms of power and to provide the group with space to share their interpretations of specific postures.



The options we suggest:

- You keep working with three people on the stage. After the third one comes, you analyse, send the first person back into the audience, or the first two, and ask the group again to volunteer to add new postures to the image left on the stage. To come up with ideas for more power than the previous ones.
- After a few rounds of changing people in the statues, keep everyone on stage and invite someone new to volunteer to show MORE POWER. The remaining audience comments on what they see and how the image is evolving, with many additional statues now being added. Continue until the last person is coming in the image. This approach is suitable for exploring as many options as possible for types of power and what it means to have more power.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

- What types of power did you observe in the activity?
- What are your impressions of what it means to have more power based on what you observed in the activity?
- What does it mean for you personally to have more power?
- How is this reflected in reality? Give examples.
- Is having power something bad or good? Based on what?
- What is your understanding of the concept of oppression? How do you use it if you use it?
- What is the connection between power and oppression?
(Whether the group mentions it at this stage or not, you need to clarify for the whole group the meaning of the concept in the context of Forum Theatre as abuse of power- see again the explanations at the beginning of the manual)
- Based on this definition, which will be the central reference point in our work with Forum Theatre, could you give examples of oppression?

- Sometimes the examples mentioned are not about oppression; ask those people to break down the example and say precisely who or what abuses power against whom? It is essential to stimulate the group to think more concretely.
- There will probably be mentioned abstract and concrete types of oppression.
- **There are many ways of abusing power /oppressions, and we can identify them in many life dimensions in our society,** such as (*give some of their own examples*). Forum Theatre is a method that focuses on very concrete, real forms of oppression, where there is a relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. Of course, there are also more abstract examples related to media, systems, religion, norms, etc., which also expose the oppression of the people. Still, with this method, we will focus on the types of oppression that are very close to our realities, at home, at work, at school, in our neighbourhoods, at the hospital, etc.
- Can you give more examples of these forms of oppression, clearly state the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed, and explain how the power is abused?
- At the end of the discussion, repeat the main aspects touched upon – defining the oppression, what types of oppression are explored in Forum Theatre, and inform the group that all these aspects will be followed up on in the next steps in the process.

6. Closing of the Meeting – 5 min

Conclude the meeting, thank everyone, and include details about the next meeting: where, when, and what will happen next, as well as any last questions or remarks.

Session 6

Additional Recommendations and Reflections from Practice

From our practice, regarding the activities or discussions raised in this session, we have the following main reflections:

The Power and More Power exercise never reveals the same issues, ideas, or process; we have conducted it in almost every group to which we have introduced Forum Theatre and the audience's imagination or interpretations of what is being portrayed are always different. That is the immense beauty of it. At times, we thought there were some "classic" postures related to guns/arms, muscles, puppet masters, religion/spirituality, education, media, etc., that appeared more often, but then we still had groups in which such images did not appear. The exercise is simple, and you, as facilitator, have zero influence on what groups will show, and whatever they show you just need to support the group to observe, discuss and analyse – it is a good practice for being a Joker with the audience as well.

The discussion about Power can be difficult for beginner facilitators to manage because it is very abstract. People end up saying very random or unusual things because they see power in so many different ways, and the discussion goes all over the place. You, as the facilitator, have to follow and understand what they say, keep track of it, summarise for everyone, and smoothly move the conversation to Power in the context of Forum Theatre. **Many of my colleagues told me they found this the most challenging part as facilitators in this process**, because it is very unpredictable what the group will say, how they see things, and how they react to what other people say. Yes, it is one of the most difficult discussions, and you do get better with practice and in time; even if you fail, failing in this context means people will be (very) confused at the end of the discussion; you will have more sessions with these people, and you will clarify better with the help of other exercises.

Ideas for alternative exercises that could be done in this session:

Sculpting Power

In pairs, one person is the sculptor and the other is the model; The sculptor has to make an image of power, in however way they understand it using the body of their model; they may place it wherever they want in the working space and they can use also the elevation options from the space (chairs, tables, stairs, etc.) but no props in the hands of the model; they also have to think about a word that the statues says on repeat mode if somebody is close to them; After the statues are ready, the sculptors go around and observe the other statues and when they go closer they hear the word. The process repeats after the pairs switch roles. Conduct a final discussion.

Colombian Hypnosis (*variation*)

This is one of the most famous exercises that Augusto Boal popularised in his work. It is also one of the most common, found in almost any toolbox of theatre exercises, especially in connection with Theatre of the Oppressed. Here, we want to mention a different, lesser-known variant.

In pairs, one person is the hypnotizer, who uses their palm to hypnotize the other person, who constantly looks at the palm and follows it, leaving a gap of about 10 cm between the palm and their face at all times. Leave the pairs to work on the exercise for a while, and observe the postures they assume. When you CLAP, they freeze. Ask questions for reflection, such as What is happening in your image? Who are you? What is the relationship between you? Why is this happening? What title will you give to this image? Unfreeze the pairs and let them continue from where they left off. After a few rounds of CLAP, FREEZE, THINK and UNFREEZE/CONTINUE, you CLAP and choose some of the pairs that are in a more unusual/interesting posture; ask the other pairs to come and comment on the postures of the selected pairs, using similar questions mentioned before. Repeat the process by switching the roles. Conduct a discussion at the end.

Status Levels

Randomly give numbers, from 1 to 5, to the people standing in a circle. Each number represents a status level: 1 is the lowest and 5 is the highest, as it is in society. Randomly point to people in the circle to get activated; they have to act out the status given to them, moving but without words. They may choose a specific type of person, job, position in society, workplace, family, public space, school, etc., that they associate with that number. Don't activate everyone at once; allow those who are not activated to observe, but in a span of 2 minutes, activate everyone. The people acting out their status are not interacting with each other for a few minutes; they only act out their status. At your sign, ask them to interact with each other and if they want to use words, to use only "olalala" or any other invented word you wish to use. After a few more minutes, close the exercise. Ask the group to walk around in circular movements and, whenever they meet another person, share a dominant feeling or thought from the exercise. Form groups of 4-5 people and ask them to make a collective image that represents power based on the exercise, their impressions and the words they heard from each other in the last round. Each group shows their picture, and then you finalise with a debriefing.



Teacher-Student Dialogue

In this exercise, there is a specific sequence between 2 people that includes dialogue or behaviour to be reproduced exactly as described below by any two volunteers, and it is acted out in front of the audience (the other participants). The two volunteers will be either the student or the teacher, and each will receive a different status level, which will indicate how they should behave or how they should engage in the prescribed dialogue.

The status is given randomly by you; they know only what each of them got. After the dialogue is complete, you ask the audience to comment, share their observations, and guess the status given to them. You can provide High Status or Low Status, and play around with how they are distributed across different rounds. If you want, you can also use a more varied status scale, from 1 to 5, to explore more nuances and minor differences between levels.

You can also try a few rounds without a given status and let the audience guess based on how they read the volunteers' actions and dialogue.

The Dialogue:

Student - Knocks on the door

Teacher - *Come in!*

Student - Enters

Teacher - *Sit!*

Student - Sits

Teacher - Gives a paper to the student (empty)

Student - Looks at the paper and says:

"I didn't expect that you would notice this"

Teacher - *I cannot keep you in this school any longer.*

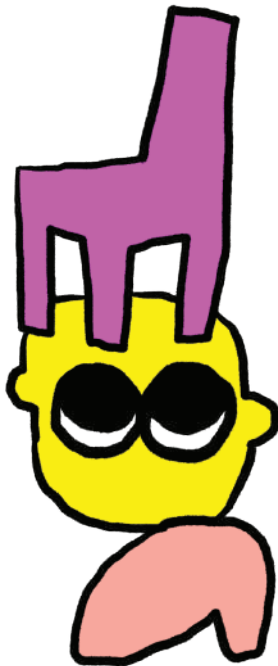
Student - *Can you give me another chance?*

Teacher - *Impossible!*

Student - *I would have left your school anyway.*

Objects and Power

This is a more dynamic exercise to activate the group's imagination before exploring the concept of power through their own bodies. Use more types of objects/furniture: 1 table, 2-3 chairs, a mug, a book, a pot, a lamp, etc. You should aim for a maximum of 6-8 different objects placed in the middle of the room. Ask the group to walk around and while the walk they can modify the position of the objects as they wish; there is no purpose given; after maxim a minute, CLAP and ask the group to point their finger to the object they think it has the most power in that installation; you may verbalize some trends in how people voted and ask a several people to explain why they voted how they voted; make sure you check for each object if it got any votes and invite those people to share; repeat several times the process. Conduct a final discussion.



Session 7

Power and Oppression Concepts

Focus Oppression

(~1,5 hours)

1. **Intro** – 5 min

Welcome your group; brief them on this session's process and purpose; group checking

2. **Changing Statues** – 20 min

Aims: to explore the concept of oppression; to reflect on different reactions towards oppression; to stimulate imagination; to warm up the body; to work with body postures to represent situations of oppression.

Details and description of the activity:

Divide the participants into groups of 3. If necessary, one group can be made of 4 people.

Demonstrate the exercise with three volunteers. In each group, they decide on the order they will have in this activity (1, 2, 3).

Ask one volunteer to come on the stage and make a still posture, a statue, related to Oppression. The second volunteer observes the posture and attaches themselves to the image, with another posture-statue in any way they want to complete it. The third person observes the image created by the two people and also attaches themselves to it. The general topic is always Oppression. After all three people are in the image, the first person unfreezes and observes the image created by the other 2, completing it with their posture; then the second person unfreezes, observes, and completes it; and so on.

- The dynamic continues in the same way.
- The exercise takes place in complete silence; it is good to play some slow music in the background. Participants need to use their own interpretations of a particular image to decide how they want to position themselves. They will not explain what they meant by specific postures.
- Ask the groups to disperse throughout the available space so they have sufficient area to work.
- Allow about 10-12 minutes for their group work.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

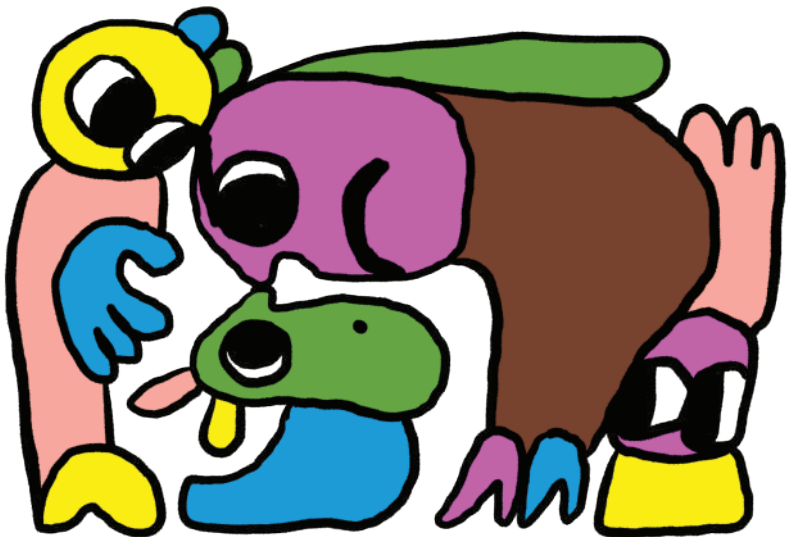
- How did you feel in this exercise?
- What did you observe in terms of the type of oppressions that appeared in your process?
- Did you see any dominant patterns or topics repeating?
- What did you observe regarding your own positioning during the exercise?
- How were you deciding what posture to take? Did you notice taking a similar type of action in the images?
- Have you been oppressor in the images you created? How did that feel?
- What about the oppressed?
- Are there other observations or reflections you want to share from this process?

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

- After the discussion, you can **extend the activity by sending participants back to the same groups** and asking them to think of an example of oppression they want to illustrate, as an image featuring three people. They shouldn't explain or talk too much in their group. It will be best if each person shows their colleagues what posture they should adopt; they will copy the example, and the person who has the idea for the image should also position themselves in the image.

At the same time, they should think about a title for this image. From each group, the same number of images showing different examples of oppression will result as the number of people in that group. Allow 10 minutes for this. After that, each group will show the images they created one by one. Ask the audience to close their eyes before each image is displayed. Ask the audience what they see, keywords and impressions and then ask the team to share their title. After all images have been shown, ask about their main observations, patterns observed, types of oppressions, etc.

■ **Another extension of the exercise** is to have each group perform on the stage for the others in a moving type of action. They will do the task given, but on the stage and in a linear form as much as possible; they start from one side of the stage and, when they have to complete images, they position themselves towards the other side of the stage and also try to choose postures open to the audience. The group enters from one side of the stage and gradually exits from the other side. In this case, everyone is observing the types of Oppression displayed and how the dynamics are changing.



3. Power and Oppression – 50 min

Aims: to understand the difference between having power and oppressing; to interiorize a deeper understanding of the power and oppression concepts; to understand the importance of these concepts in the context of Forum Theatre work; to develop critical thinking.

Details and description of the activity:

- Invite two volunteers to come on the stage to exemplify the exercise. Invite them to take a position towards each other and eventually freeze in a specific posture. Each person has to believe their final posture shows more power than the other person. Ask the rest of the participants, the audience, to look at the two statues:
 - What do you think is the relation between the two?
 - Where are they?
 - Who has more power? Why? (ask them to vote on who they think has more power)
 - Is the person voted by the group to have more power, oppressing the other person? If yes – why; if not - why? Connect their answers with the definition of oppression clarified before.
- In case they don't see oppression in the initial image, ask the group to replace the person who has more power and to show oppression, also as a statue. Continue the discussion :
 - Who has more power?
 - How is the power distributed in this specific situation?
 - Do you see oppression?
- You may also ask the group to replace the person with less power, to show they are oppressed, and then discuss with the group using similar questions.
- Divide the participants into pairs. Each pair has to decide on a specific relationship they have (*e.g., colleagues at a particular workplace, in school, teacher-student, siblings, parent-kids, partners in a romantic relationship, etc.*). It is preferred that you do not give too many examples and leave the group to decide freely.

One by one, each pair comes on the stage. Each person in the pair receives randomly a card with a number, from 1 to 10, where 1 represents very little power and 10 a lot of power, the two extremes in what matters, the power level. Only they know what number they have received. They need to position themselves as a statue that reflects the number they have received. Once they have frozen in their final positions, we remind the group of their relations and ask the audience:

What do you see here?

What are the power dynamics in this image?

Who seems to have more power and why?

What level of power do you think they have?

Do you see oppression? Why?

If they don't see oppression, as a volunteer to replace the person with more power and to show oppression.

Ask the pairs to reveal the numbers they have received at the end. Continue pair by pair, following the same process.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

What impressions/reflections do you have after you saw all these examples of power dynamics and oppressions? How clear is the difference between having more power and oppressing for you? Can you give some more examples?






Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

Use numbers 1-5 to explore a narrower range of power levels.

4. Introduction of Homework – 10 min

Aims: to develop the interest of the participants in exploring and analysing social issues and problems in their communities; to develop their critical eyes in terms of spotting cases of oppression around them.

Details and description of the activity:

-  Invite participants to take these discussions further back to their lives and homes. They will have homework until the next session. The task given is to observe the reality around them (*at home, at work, at school, in the neighbourhood, etc.*) and to take notes of their observations, preferably written as they will be used in the next session on:
-  How is power distributed around you, in various relationships you can observe, including your own relations - family, working, colleagues, neighbours, etc.? What criteria or factors are you using for making those observations?
-  What kinds of oppression exist around you? In which context and type of relations, and how do you know that it is oppression? It may include examples of oppression in which you are involved, either as oppressors or as the oppressed.
-  Select the strongest and most important examples of oppression that you observed in your community and analyse how the power is distributed between the oppressor, the oppressed and other people around that specific situation.
-  Ideally, allocate about 1 week for participants to work on their homework; send them reminders and motivation during this time.

5. Closing of the Meeting – 5 min

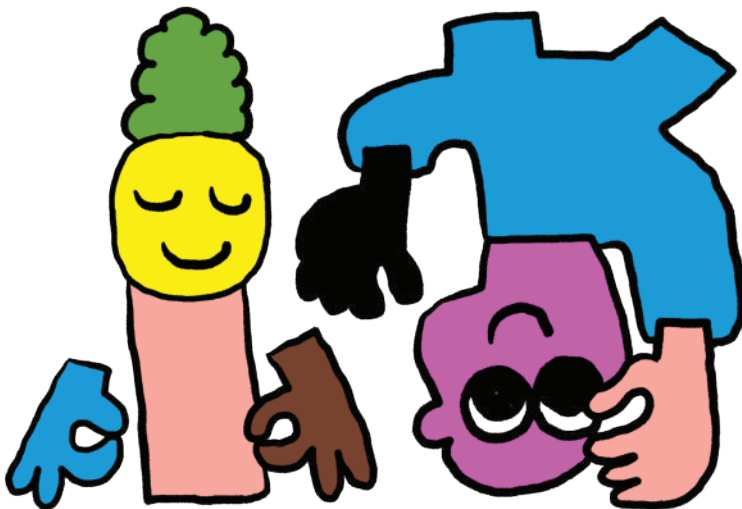
Conclude the meeting, thank everyone, and include details about the next meeting: where, when, and what will happen next, as well as any last questions or remarks.

Session 7

Additional Recommendations and Reflections from Practice

This session is critical, as it clarifies any issues that may have remained confusing during the previous session on power. The activities included here help you always to point out where there is a power imbalance, if they also see oppression, to explore reasons for it and to keep the focus on concrete situations of oppression.

It is not the most physically active session, as it aims to provoke a deeper thought process and analytical exploration of oppression. Some participants don't enjoy this as much, and you will notice that not everyone is equally involved in the analytical process. However, it is beneficial for them as well, as in this session, the entire group will have the same reference for what they mean when they say 'oppression'. In any group, there will be people who prefer more active exercises and those who enjoy reflective and analytical ones – you need to include a good balance of both.



Ideas for alternative exercises/activities that could be done in this session:

Power Levels and Oppression

Participants are divided into groups of 5. In each group, they receive a number from 1 to 5 – 1 means the lowest level of power and 5 means the highest. They are given a specific location/context, and based on the number they received, they have to mime and act without words in relation to the others, in a way that showcases their level of power. The audience observes and tries to identify which person has what number and why. Ask them whether they notice any oppression, and why.

The contexts given could be: family, school, prison, office, factory, public transportation, public space, hospital, etc. You may add an element of STOP and THINK by pausing the action at times and asking some actors what they think at that moment.

Complete the Image

Divide the participants in 2 groups; for the first rounds, one group is the audience and the other are the actors; one actor starts by making a statue related to oppression; the other actors, whoever wants attaches themselves to the statue to complete in any way the meaning; there is no talking and everyone is free to add themselves to the image or not. The actors should be aware of the audience and expand the image in a way that is visible to the audience; once everyone who wants to complete the image does, discuss with the audience their observations of the image: What do you see? How do you see power dynamics present here? What oppressions are reflected here? What reactions to oppressions do you see? What title will you give to this image? Repeat the process about 3-4 times for each group. As an additional part of the process, you may ask the audience to reproduce the image that the people did on the stage, so the actors could also witness what they have created in the bodies of other people.

Oppression in One Image

In pairs, one person is the sculptor and the other is the model. The sculptor has to make use of the model, which is the other person, as well as any props needed and all the space around (including outdoors, corridors, toilets, kitchen, closets, etc.), to imagine a situation of oppression. They have only one person to show, but in their situation, more people could be present; we don't see them, but we can imagine them from what the sculptor shows us. They also have to think about a way to dynamise their image when the audience is looking at it, and about a sentence and a repeated movement the statue can do in its specific location. After all sculptors have placed their models, instruct them on the sentence and movements to be performed, and arrange their space accordingly, we will go around as a group. At each model, upon the sculptor's signal, the model will be activated. Ask the audience to share impressions and reactions from witnessing the image. Repeat the process with the models, not being sculptors. Conduct a final discussion with the group. This may be a very powerful activity; use it only if you consider the group is ready for it.



UNIT 3

Real-Life Stories of Oppression

Key Considerations

This unit aims to valorise the observations people made from their community, to zoom in on examples of oppression and into the structure of oppression in Forum Theatre.

The exercises included here aim to develop the group’s capacity to work more easily with various forms of oppression and to deepen their understanding of how oppression is approached in the Forum Theatre Methodology.

This unit also aims to clarify the topic and main story to be used for the final play. These activities could be used without this purpose, but for practice and deepening the understanding of oppression in our communities. The sessions outlined here describe an elaborated process for groups that don’t have any prescribed topic or group they have to deliver a performance for. This case may not be so typical; nevertheless, we decided to describe the process with this assumption in mind, and if a topic/group is already prescribed, it will be very easy to adjust.

We often work with Forum Theatre groups that gather around a specific topic from the beginning, or they have their own preferred topic they wish to work on. There are situations when you have to work on a particular subject (for various reasons), which will be imposed on the group. **In that case, you have to adjust some activities in this unit, especially those in Session 8.** When the topic is given, discussions and decisions take less time, but the group may feel less motivated to work on the given theme.

If not the topic, if something is “imposed” from outside, is the audience, the people you will be showing your performances to. If a specific group is selected, such as youth, students, high school students, teachers, parents’ associations, seniors, etc., this will be an essential criterion when choosing the main type of oppression.

For Session 9, depending on how the process of sharing personal stories goes, allow more time for sharing and for creating a safer space that fosters deep sharing.

This Specific Unit includes 2 sessions:

8. Examples of oppressions – **Choosing the Oppression** (~2 hours)
9. Sharing and Choosing the Main Story (2-3 hours)

Session 8

Examples of Oppressions Choosing the Oppression

(~2 hours)







1. **Intro** – 5 min

Welcome your group; brief them on this session's process and purpose; group checking.

2. **Talk and Listen** – 15 min

Aims: to increase the active listening competencies of the group; to make the group aware of the conditions needed for effective communication; to make the participants take responsibility in terms of constructive communication in the group.

Details and description of the activity:

-  Instruct the participants to take a moment and think about something they would like to talk about with the others; it can be some story of what happened to them on the way here, a book they have read, etc. – anything they want.
-  After they think the group is divided into pairs.
-  Their task is to share their story or what they want to talk about with the other person, and they must do so simultaneously.
-  They also have to remember as much as possible from what the other person is telling them. They do that for about 2-3 minutes.
-  Make sure everybody respects the rule of talking at the same time.
-  Then the exercise can be stopped, and we proceed to the debriefing.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

- How was it for you to talk and to listen at the same time?
- What was the most frustrating aspect of it?
- How much did you manage to remember from the story of the other person?
- What other impressions do you have from the activity that you would like to share with the group?
- Can you make associations between what happened in this exercise and reality?
- Can you give some examples?
- How can our group's communication be improved?
- What should you do differently from now on? What should you do the same?

3. Balance Statues – 20 min









Aims: to reflect on what balance means in general and its connection with the power distribution; to develop analytical skills to identify ways of balancing certain situations; to prepare the group for intensive and deep discussions by activating their group awareness and attention to the group's needs.

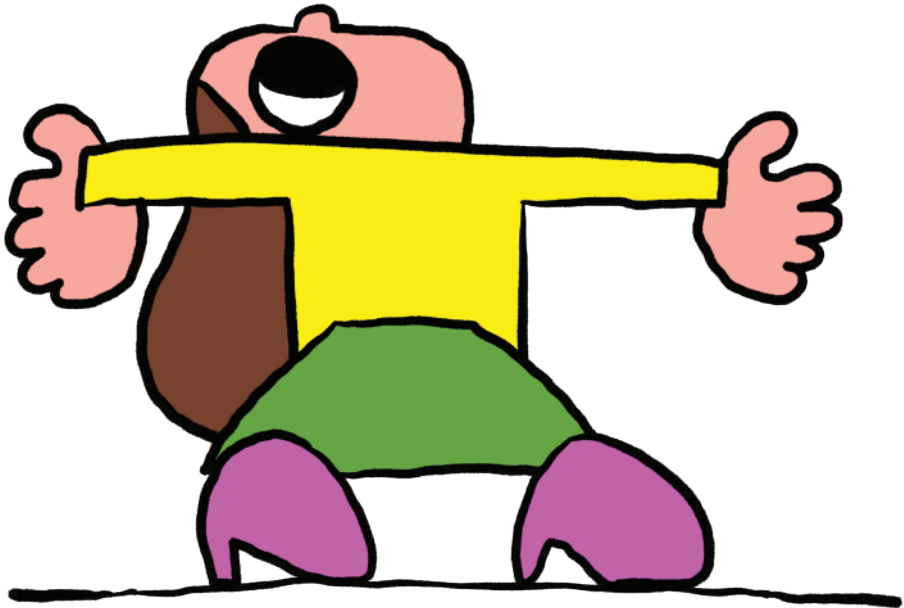
Details and description of the activity:

- Inform participants that they will explore balance and what it means to them.
- Start the exercise with participants divided into pairs, gradually increasing group size until the entire group is involved simultaneously.
- The exercise focuses on body postures and personal reflection, and no talking is allowed during the exercises.
- The pairs have to place themselves in various positions (for a couple of minutes) in which they find a balancing point. This point could be leaning on their back, holding hands, standing back-to-back, etc.

- Encourage the pairs to work in different positions and postures, and to identify the points at which they are in balance.
- After a couple of minutes, the pairs become trios, randomly divided. When they are 3, one person starts by taking a specific posture, and the second person analyses it and tries to identify how to attach to balance the posture the first person has created. The same things are done afterwards by the third person. Then another member starts, and they continue the exercise. They are encouraged to try as many options as possible.
- They can also work out some of the positions tried previously in pairs, and then the third person has to analyse where and how they can balance the image.
- Allocated around 5 minutes for working in trios before the group grows again.
- The same procedure applies. Starting with one person, and then the second person observes and tries to balance, and so on. All the time, a new person starts up by making a posture.
- It is essential to tell the group not to rush into the exercise, but to observe as thoroughly as possible the bodies and postures in front of them and to be sure why they chose a specific posture to balance it.
- Every time a new person decides to attach themselves to the picture, they should look at the picture as a whole and focus not just on the first person, but on all the people, how balanced they are, and whether they need any support.
- It would be helpful to do the exercise with the whole group. The algorithm for increasing the number of people per group will depend on the total number of people in your group.
- For example, if you have 6-7 people you can have three groups, two and then 1 group – for a bigger group it will be of course a little bit different – maybe you start with 10 groups, then 8 then 5, then 2, then 1 – make sure you have a smooth growth and that the groups will mix often – all the time new people in the group.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

-  Being a silent activity, many impressions and personal reflections will gather. This discussion aims to help participants understand what balance means, its connection to power, and its relevance in Forum Theatre and in their group process.
-  How did you feel during the activity?
-  What was easy in this exercise for you?
-  What was a more challenging aspect for you?
-  How difficult was it to find the balancing points when the group was bigger?
-  How can you connect this exercise with the power relations/distribution?
-  How can we find balance in our work as a team?
-  What are your main learning points that could be used further in our work as a team?



4. Homework Analysis – 50 min

Aims: to explore the materials that the participants collected from observing the reality around them, to deepen the understanding of oppression and its link with power, and to lay the foundation for the next step in choosing a subject for the Forum Theatre performance.

Details and description of the activity:

-  Ask the group about their homework:
 -  How many of you actually did your homework?
 -  How much time did you spend on it in a day?
 -  Which dimension of life were you able to explore and observe more?
 -  How much did your observations include you as part of the relations you observed?
 -  If you collected all the observations you made in a book, what title would you give it?
-  They will initially share their findings in smaller groups and then in the bigger ones.
-  Encourage participants to share as much as they feel comfortable. Invite the group to raise awareness and attention on fostering a trusting and supportive environment.
-  Divide participants into groups of 2-3 people, and in these groups, they share the following:
 -  The prominent examples of power-imbalanced relations that they have observed.
 -  The most important examples of oppression they identified. They should also mention if, in their opinion, they are also more common types of oppression or more isolated cases- to give a mark from 1 to 10, 1 is a very isolated case, 10 is a prevalent type of oppression.
-  Encourage them to ask each other questions and to challenge each other on how they define certain situations as oppression or power imbalance.

- Each group must take notes on the examples shared, including keywords.
- Allocate approximately 20 minutes to this part of the activity.
- The small groups gather together and share their examples.
- Write on a big piece of paper in 3 columns their answers (examples of power imbalance, examples of oppression, and another column for the number from 1 to 10 for the prevalence of the situation of oppression). Include a 4th column, which will be used later in the discussion.
- Invite the other groups to comment on the examples provided or to ask more questions if needed to understand what was meant entirely.
- After all the groups point out all their examples, ask:
 - What are your main impressions while looking at these examples?
 - How do you feel when you look at them?
 - Are there other examples of concrete oppression that you didn't observe in your community but exist in our society? (If the group mentions new types of oppression, add them on the list from the second column.)
 - In which contexts do you observe more examples of oppression (family, school, work, etc.)?
 - Who are the oppressed most often?
 - What about the oppressors?
 - Which examples of power imbalance also lead to oppression, from what you observed and from the examples you mentioned? Which types of oppression affect the most significant number of people in our society?
- Starting from this reality, "diagnosis", they have to narrow down and focus on the areas of oppression which they consider as being the most important to tackle.
- Explain that the Forum Theatre method should be used to address the situation of oppression between individuals, to make a social change by empowering people affected directly or indirectly by oppression.

- There are many problems in society, but we need to focus on those that are more prevalent, affect a large number of people, and are urgent.
- Ask them to reflect individually, analyse the examples of oppression mentioned, and mark the 3 most important examples of oppression, using the criteria already mentioned that should be addressed by Forum Theatre in this group.
- They come to the flipchart and mark in the 4th column on the line corresponding to the oppression they choose.
- Based on the “voting”, the group can see which examples of oppression received the most votes.
- Ask the group to share comments on their voting and results.
- If there are people who consider that none of them should be in this top 3 and that other topics are more relevant, provide space for them to share.
- This voting was done to see the group’s perspective, but only now can they explain why they voted the way they did.
- Encourage the group to share their views. Everybody in the group should feel free to express, nobody should impose their opinions and based on the arguments they present, the decision will be taken as a group, by consensus.
- Facilitate a discussion with input from everyone in the group
 - Looking at the number column, which one is the most prevalent in society?
 - Which oppressions should be dealt with more urgently?
 - Which types of groups are mostly affected by these oppressions?
 - Which topic would you personally like to work on in this process?
 - Taking everything into consideration, what are your concrete suggestions?
 - Which main topic of oppression should we prioritise as a Forum Theatre Group? Why?
- Agree with the group on one main Oppression topic to be explored in this process.

5. Introduction of the Homework – 5 min

- Introduce the homework as an invitation to collect concrete examples related to the chosen type of oppression.
- The research could involve writing down stories they have witnessed themselves or witnessed from people around them, and they are already aware of.
- If the topic is far from their lives, they should come into contact with people who have experienced or are currently experiencing this type of oppression and collect concrete examples from them.
- Additionally, different written documentation on the specific type of problem affecting the chosen group can also be consulted, as it may contain concrete stories of people and how they are experiencing the particular oppression.

6. Closing of the Meeting – 5 min

Conclude the meeting, thank everyone, and include details about the next meeting: where, when, and what will happen next, as well as any last questions or remarks.

Session 9

Sharing and Choosing the Main Story

(2-3 hours)

This session is mainly discussion-based and needs careful guidance and facilitation to have a healthy consensus among the team members. If needed during the process, the list developed in the Teambuilding session can be used to remind the group.

Your aim, as the facilitator, is to make the group have ownership of the process, and you shouldn't impose anything. Indeed, you need to introduce specific information about the Forum Theatre structure and process that the group needs to use in their discussions and decisions.

1. **Intro** – 5 min

Welcome your group; brief them on this session's process and purpose; group checking.

2. **Run and Project** – 10 min

Aims: to energize the group, to help the group focus and coordinate.

Details and description of the activity:

Invite the group to walk around the space using a faster speed. If the space allows it, they can run from one side to the other.

At some point, give the prompt: Corner projection, ceiling projection, floor projection, mirror projection, etc.

The prompts depend on how your space is constructed – it can be various walls within the space or areas.

- When hearing the prompt, they have to stop and project as a statue in the direction you mention.
- It can be whatever they wish – pointing at that space, looking at it, staring at it, having a reaction to it, etc. - they don't have to overthink it, just do it. They stay like that for a couple of seconds, and then you signal to run again, and another kind of projection is mentioned.
- After a few rounds, you can indicate other types of projections: Forest Projection, Happiness Projection, Power Projection, Sky Projection, etc., which can be interpreted as they wish.
- This exercise is not about reproducing the words but about exploring various reactions to it or letting the imagination free.
- It happens very quickly, for only a couple of seconds, and people will run between projections.
- Continue until the group is energised enough and not overtired.

3. Steps in Forum Theatre – 10 min

Aims: to introduce/remind the Steps for developing a Forum Theatre play; to help the group understand where they are in the process at the moment









Details and description of the activity:

- Explain why you are introducing these Steps at this stage.
- Link to what has already happened in the process, and explain what will happen today and in the following sessions.
- Depending on what was previously discussed with the group when the Forum Theatre method was introduced, this part of the sessions can be a reminder or a first-time introduction.
- Use the steps presented in the description of the method earlier in the manual (see Step by Step Methodological Guidelines chapter)
- The presentation should be interactive and help participants understand why they have done what they have so far and what lies ahead.
- Clarify any potential questions.



4. Sharing Real Examples of Oppression – 60-90 min

Aims: to share real-life examples of this kind of oppression, to foster group trust and emotional support.

Details and description of the activity:

-  This session focuses on sharing concrete, real-life stories that reflect the oppression chosen in the previous stage.
-  Based on the homework participants had to do, their own reflection process, and the life experiences they share, participants tell stories.
-  It is preferred to share stories they know personally and to give specific details about who was oppressed, the oppressor, allies, neutrals, and what happened in the story, if the story has an end so far.
-  Take notes and invite everyone to share at least one story.
-  This step has to be done exclusively without thinking about the next steps in the process in order to foster a space for sharing and listening. Don't allow comments or evaluations of the story; just questions to better understand.
-  The group needs to share real stories, not invented ones, and you should remind them of this. You can also check this by asking people who are sharing a specific story.
-  Remind the group to share only what they are comfortable sharing with others and not to push themselves beyond what they can handle emotionally.
-  Continue until there are no more stories shared.

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

-  The process described here is suitable for groups of up to 8 people.
-  If you have big groups, such as 15-20 participants, you need to adjust based on your context. If not all 20 people will develop a play on the same topic, the participants can be divided into smaller groups and follow the steps separately.

Suppose you have to develop the same play with the entire group. Start in smaller groups for the free sharing and collection. In the same groups, they should shortlist 2-3 examples that meet the criteria for the types of stories that are good for Forum Theatre and that they are willing to work with. These examples will later be shared with the rest of the groups, and the main one will then be collectively selected from the short list.

5. Group Shower – 20 min

Aim: to increase the level of trust between group members, to strengthen the connection between the participants, and to support the processing of the emotional impact of the sharing process.

Details and description of the activity:

Explain the motivation for doing this activity.

Ask them to stay in two lines facing each other, close together, leaving enough space for one person to pass between the lines, forming a corridor.

Put on some calm music in the background.

One by one, the participants will walk between these lines of people with their eyes closed. They have to walk slowly, slowly between the lines. The whole exercise is done in silence.

The people on both sides have to give the person walking a kind of “warm” shower – by gently touching them, massaging their arms, back, and legs, removing bad energy, etc.

The group aims to cleanse the person of stress, bad energy, and tension; however, they interpret this and can put it into practice, BUT they have to be responsible in how they act towards each other and be kind.

The person will walk through this shower and, at the end, join one of the lines and contribute to the others’ showers.

You send people to walk through the human corridor after the previous person has already taken some steps forward.

It is essential for the walking person not to open their eyes and to take in the experience as it comes.

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

Assess the situation and context to determine whether this activity is suitable to propose to the group.

In very connected groups, they experience deep emotional processes; this shower becomes very intense, with a lot of crying and hugs.

It may not be easy to do the next step after this. You may decide to take the next step to the next session.

6. Choosing the Story – 20 min

Once all the stories are collected, the group reviews and analyses them. Provide a summary of the stories gathered to refresh everyone's memory.

Introduce the criteria for choosing a good story for Forum Theatre. The list is detailed in the Step-by-Step Methodological Guidelines Chapter.

Based on the criteria, the proposed stories will be narrowed down to a few.

The discussion continues to choose the one considered most suitable for transfer to the Forum Theatre play.






The main criteria should serve as a reference when the group deviates or loses focus.

If the discussion gets stuck, people have strong positions, and they seem to be more focused on winning the argument than on the well-being of the group, and/or advancing in the process, you can ask the group at that moment to close their eyes and provide some reflection guidelines (*without sharing their answers*).


Take a couple of deep breaths.

What is your role in this process?

What role would you like to have?

-  How are you contributing to the group work at the moment?
 -  How can you make the process continue more constructively?
 -  How can you help other people feel included?
 -  What do you want to do differently from now on?
-  The discussion continues until one Real story is chosen to be the basis for the Forum Theatre play.

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

-  This session is slightly longer than 2 hours. Its duration depends on how much the sharing process takes. It is better to assess on the spot whether the decision on the story should be taken in this session. If the group is exhausted, mentally and emotionally drained, it is better to move the decision to the next session.

7. Closing of the Meeting - 5 min

Conclude the meeting, thank everyone, and include details about the next meeting: where, when, and what will happen next, as well as any last questions or remarks.

UNIT 4

Forum Theatre Play Scenario

Key Considerations

You need to revisit and be very confident about all the specific technical details of a Forum Theatre scenario and requirements. They are all detailed in the Step-by-step methodological guidelines chapter.

Your adequate understanding and operating capacity with all the concepts and the theory related to this step will ensure that the participants will also be clear on what they need to do, and ultimately have a good scenario developed.

You only need to develop a draft scenario with key aspects in this unit, not a very elaborate or detailed one. This draft scenario will be expanded and fine-tuned after the improvisations start.

As you know more technically, in the group, your advice is more powerful and potentially influential, which may take away from the process of ownership of the group. You need to be mindful of this and refrain from providing exact content for each scene in the scenario; your inputs should always be more feedback-oriented, focusing on the method's technicalities.

This Specific Unit includes 1 session:

10. Transferring the story into a Forum Theatre Scenario (*1.5 hours*)

Session 10

Transferring the Story into a Forum Theatre Scenario

(~1.5 hours)

1. **Intro** – 5 min

Welcome your group; brief them on this session's process and purpose; group checking.

2. **Dance and Freeze** – 5-10 min

Aims: to warm-up the group and energize; to foster group connection

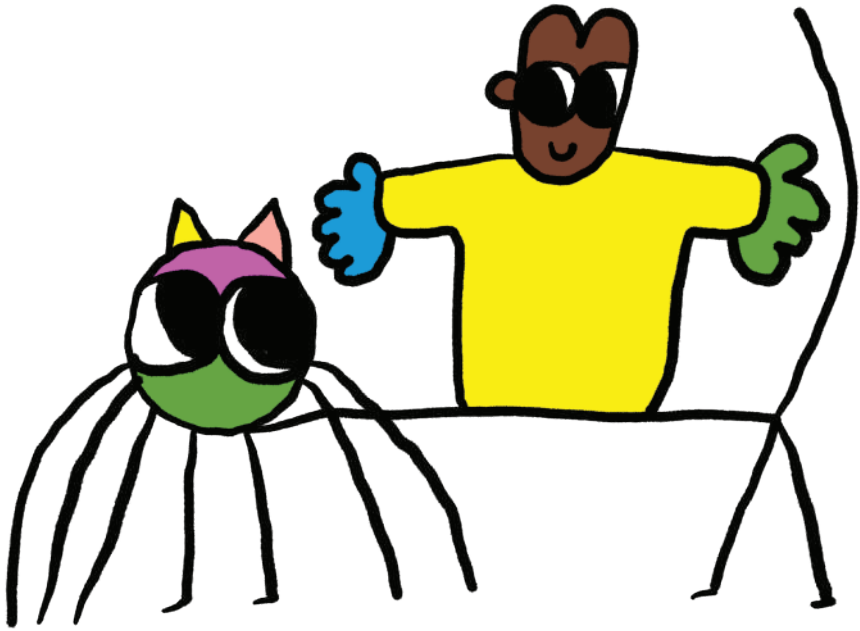
Details and description of the activity:

Half of the group is spread in the space in a random posture. In the background, there is some energising dancing music.

The other half of the group has to dance between the human statues. At any time, they may touch any of the statues on the shoulder. In that moment, they will be frozen in a posture, and the statue will come to life and start dancing in the space.

The process continues with dancers alternating between being a statue and a dancer.

Remind the group to be mindful of the people frozen and to balance the time they spend dancing and being a statue, so others can also be dancers.



3. **Random Image** – 20 min

Aims: to stimulate imagination, to start creating storylines, to practice and exercise body postures, to explore situations of oppression.

Details and description of the activity:

- The group is standing in a circle.
- One by one, each person is invited into the circle to create an image. No topic, no prompt is given. Each person comes, makes a random image, and then goes back. No questions or comments are made.
- Complete two rounds like this.
- From the 3rd round onward, after one person comes on stage, a second person must go and complete the first image shown. No topic, no prompt is given. After the second person completes, the first person goes out, and the next person comes in. We always create images of 2 people.

- After one round of duos, we continue with trios.
- This time, 3 by 3, the people will make an image. One person comes, then the second, the third and then all 3 go back, and then the next 3 repeat the process.
- If the group is not divided by 3, the last people in the circle will be supported by the people following them to complete the task.
- Starting with images made by 3 people, ask the group what they think is happening in the pictures they see, to see a story in the image.
- Take several comments for each image, then move on to the next group.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

- How did you find this activity?
- What did you notice or observe in the process?
- Did you see any patterns or themes appearing in the images?
- What do you think about the multiple stories you could see in the images?
- What does this tell us?

4. Drafting the Forum Theatre Scenario – 50-60 min

Aims: to transfer the chosen story in the format of Forum Theatre; to develop the draft script.

Details and description of the activity:

- Introduce the main features of a Forum Theatre Play, what needs to be included, what a scene is, how the growing tension has to be shown on the stage, and about the ending of the play, etc.
- **All the information needed for this part is detailed and explained in the Step-by-Step Methodological Guidelines.**

- Clarify all questions, and then facilitate the group discussion to decide on the main characters and the storylines depicted in 3-4 scenes.
- You start with the characters listing, which needs to match the Forum Theatre structure: 1 Oppressed, 1 Oppressors, 1-2 Allies on each side, 1-2 Neutrals. These numbers depend on the number of people in your group and their engagement plan, if there is already a plan to have doubles for one role (*when you have more performances*)
- **Do not distribute roles at this stage.** That is the next step after you have clarified the storyline. It is essential to keep these steps separate, and participants should not be influenced in their decision-making about the scenes by the role they know they will have.
- After listing the characters, 3-4 key moments from the story need to be chosen, following the structure of Forum Theatre.
- Use large papers in the process to make the decision and the progression of the work visible.
- At this stage, the group doesn't discuss all the details of each scene, but instead points out the key idea of the scene (where, who will be there, and the main action happening)
- Assumptions will play a role in the process. We have to imagine conversations that we don't know happened exactly like that, but, realistically, they could have.
- The critical aspect here is not to be accurate about the exact conversation, locations, and timing of specific actions, but to convey the high realism that they could have happened in other forms. These scenes show a sample of moments from a much longer, more complex story, but they inform the audience about how the oppression was progressing. The audience will be able to fill in the gaps themselves, using their own reality as a reference.
- It is also essential to make the group aware that they all need to guard reality and the story they chose to work with. They can make some modifications and adjustments to be transferred into Forum Theatre, but they shouldn't alter the core aspects of the story.

- Remind the group from time to time about this, as they often get distracted or too eager to make changes, even if they're not necessary to the original story.
- Observe the dynamic of the group; include everybody's opinions and ideas. If it is hard to make decisions, if they are rushed, or if there are many compromises, suggest a break.
- It is not crucial to have the whole storyline now, as there is no pressure in that sense. Sometimes they can agree on the first two scenes but not on the last ones, and it is better in this case to continue with improvisations and, based on them, see how the storyline can progress from the already agreed scenes, which can be decided while improvising.
- Even the decisions taken so far in this session can be revised at the next meeting, after they have had some distance, reflected more, etc.
- Until the next meeting, they can also think about the roles they are willing to try out in the play, as this will be decided then.

5. Closing of the Meeting – 5 min

Conclude the meeting, thank everyone, and include details about the next meeting: where, when, and what will happen next, as well as any last questions or remarks.

UNIT 5

Bringing the Scenario to Life

Key Considerations

There is no written script on how we work with Forum Theatre.

The actors will improvise the scenes based on the key aspects of their roles and their interactions with other characters. There will be specific exercises to support getting into the roles and also building clearer relationships with the other characters. The scenes, while rehearsed, may include different lines, but the core main ones will be the same. After more rehearsals, the actors begin using the same set of lines naturally.

Forum Theatre characters are considered incomplete to provide space for the audience to come, change them, and complete them. Remind the group of this and use it in your feedback process for their acting.

During the development process, you may ask all actors to try out all roles, even if they initially chose a specific one. This will offer a complete picture of the story, and when they implement it for the audience, they will be much faster able to adjust, help each other and help the audience.

There is a tendency, once you have the draft scenario, to move directly to trials and rehearsals whenever a group meets. It may seem practical and faster to do this, but for the group's overall process and energy, we want to emphasise always doing some games and exercises to warm up, reconnect the group, have fun, and enjoy.

They are essential, they give something to the group, which the part of rehearsing doesn't. At least 1-2 games to begin a session; they will also help with better rehearsals. We have included examples in our session proposals, but we know that, in practice, at this point in the process, many practitioners no longer follow these sessions fully.

We want to highlight again the importance of games, to keep them continually and never sacrifice them, even if your "efficiency" brain tells you that – it is wrong.

This Specific Unit includes 3 sessions:

11. Improvisation Exercises and First trials (*2 hours*)
12. Getting Into Roles – **Finalising the Scenario** (*2.5 hours*)
13. Rehearsals (*~3 hours*)

Session 11

Improvisation Exercises and First trials

(2 hours)

1. **Intro** – 5 min

Welcome your group; brief them on this session's process and purpose; group checking.

2. **Imaginary Balls** – 10 min

Aims: to stimulate the group's imagination and creativity; to increase the focus and concentration in the group;

Details and description of the activity:

- Inform the participants that they will be playing with imaginary balls in this activity.
- They have to decide which ball they want to play with: big, small, hard, soft, jumpy, lumpy, etc.
- During the activity, they will have to play with the chosen ball and make a sound associated with it. E.g., somebody decides to play with an imaginary ping-pong ball, and while they play with it, they make a continuous sound, "splash-splash".
- The participants decide on their ball, how to play with it, and how to make the sound. Each person practices for a while and gets used to their ball.

- After the practice phase, each participant moves around the room while continuing to play with their ball. When they meet another person, they have to exchange balls and the sounds associated with their balls.
- They continue to do that and change whenever they meet another person.
- Signal at some point to stop making the sound, but continue playing with their balls and keep exchanging.
- After a few minutes, ask them to try to recover their original ball from the people who have it.

3. **Forum Theatre Story Line Review** – 10-15 min

Aims: to revise the draft storyline from the previous session; to update based on recent reflections and thought-through process; to have the final agreement on the structure of the scenario;





Details and description of the activity:

- Refresh the group on the outcomes of the last session and the current status of the scenario.
- Invite them to share their reflections and thoughts after the break, and ask whether they have any suggestions for changing, adding, or removing any proposals made in the last session.
- Double-check with the group the timeline of the scenes in relation to the Forum Theatre structure, the appearance of all characters, the selection of moments from the real story, and the information to be given to the audience in each scene. This scenario will serve as a reference for further steps in the process.

4. **Hey!** – 5-10 min

Aims: to warm the voice and diaphragm of the participants, to support the participants in developing a variety of ways to express different emotions.

Details and description of the activity:

-  The participants stand in a circle.
-  One by one, they have to verbalise the one sound/word, which is the same for everyone. Every time they have to do it with a different intonation, emotion and body language.
-  Use one sound/word for a complete round and then change it. You may use the following options: Hey, Hai, Hopa, Hi, Hoo, etc.
-  The letter H is produced with the diaphragm, and if participants use it more when talking, their voices will be louder.

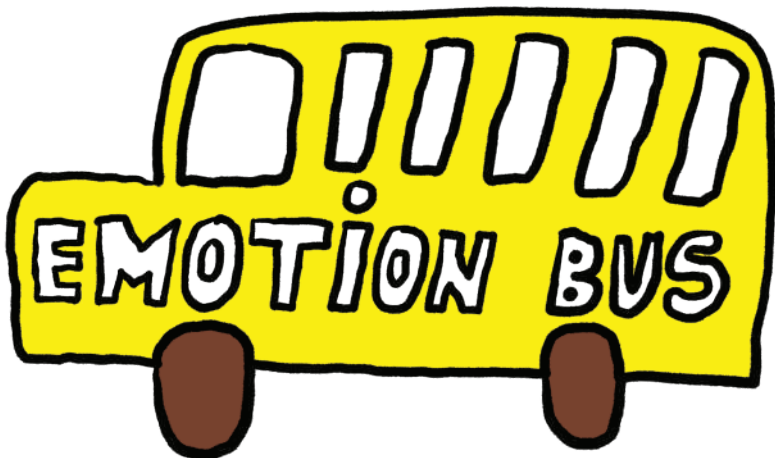


5. Emotion Bus – 15-20 min

Aims: to warm up the group, to develop participants' capacity to express various emotions, to prepare for acting different roles, and to stimulate imagination and creativity.

Details and description of the activity:

- Arrange the space to mirror a bus. The chair in front is for the driver; behind it, several chairs are arranged to resemble a bus.
- Explain to the group that they are going for a ride on a special bus.
- This bus travels wherever the passengers want to go. The bus stops for anyone who wants to get on. Whoever wants to get on the bus signals to the driver and goes in.
- The special feature of this bus is that people become contaminated by the emotions of those who get on.
- Every passenger comes with a specific, distinguishable emotion, which must be visible in how they act, talk, gesticulate, etc. Once they step on the bus, everyone already there suddenly becomes contaminated by the newcomer's emotion.



- Everyone on the bus starts manifesting, showing, and acting according to the emotion until the next passenger comes in with a new emotion.
- Passengers and the driver can get off the bus at any time, and there is no minimum or maximum number of people required on the bus at any given time. Anyone can ride the bus multiple times.
- Remind them that only on the bus do they have to express a specific emotion, once they get off, they don't need to show those emotions.
- Clarify any potential questions and invite a volunteer to be the driver. The driver gets on the bus with a specific emotion of their choice, and then pretends to drive around.
- Whenever someone wishes to get on the bus, they signal to the driver. The driver and the passengers can also talk to each other, not just express various emotions nonverbally.
- The exercise goes on as long as the group seems to be enjoying it, keeps bringing new emotions and the majority of participants try and are still willing to be passengers.
- Encourage participants to board the bus if you notice lower participation.
- At the end, the group can be asked to share a few impressions from the exercise and how it can help them in their work in Forum Theatre.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

- How did you feel in the exercise?
- How do you feel in this moment?
- How was it to change and alternate between different emotions?
- Which ones were the most difficult? Why?
- Which ones were easier? Why?
- What do you want to keep with you from this exercise that could help you in the process of acting out a Forum Theatre play?

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations









You may skip the chairs and adapt it to a walking bus. Everyone is standing, and the driver is miming using a steering wheel. They travel through space and among the people. This alternative can get chaotic, and it can be difficult to see changes in emotions as clearly and quickly as in the original option.

Another alternative is more structured and easier to apply to groups that don't have many ideas for different emotions on their own. This version could be called a TAXI, not a bus, as it is limited to 4 or 5 people: 1 driver, a passenger in front, and 2 or 3 passengers in back. Set the chairs to match this arrangement. Prepare sticky papers with a variety of emotions in random order. You stick the emotion on the chest of the people before they get into the taxi. The taxi driver goes first and, once in the imaginary taxi, starts expressing the emotion received. The first passenger comes in with a new emotion, and the driver is also infected. The rest of the passengers come in, and as they bring in a new emotion, the entire taxi is infected by it. Allow 1-2 minutes for each emotion to be experienced. After the last passenger entered the taxi, and they all experienced the emotion given, signal to this person to get out of the taxi. Once this person is out, they all have to return to the emotion of the previous person who came in the taxi. At your signal, this person goes out, and the passengers experience again the previous one. This continues under your control until the drive is alone and eventually goes out. In this version, having the emotions stick to the chest helps identify which emotions they need to express in the second part of the exercise.

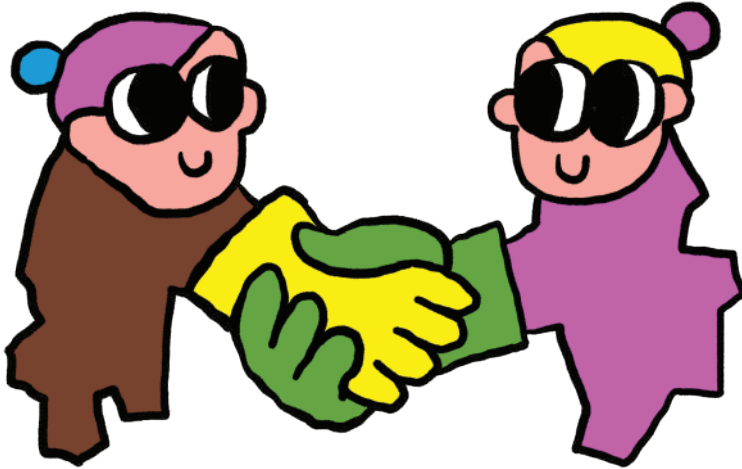
6. Role Division – 10-15 min

Aims - to make the initial role division in the team.

Details and description of the activity:

-  Introduce this part of the process and the step that needs to be done now.
-  Remind the group about what roles we have in our scenario and that we need to do the initial role distribution. We say 'initial' because it may happen after we start improvising, to make changes if some people are not ready to take a specific role or struggle to act it out adequately.
-  Ask the group whether they have considered the roles they would be willing or interested in playing in the Forum Theatre play. Remind the group to reflect only on their own role interests and not to suggest or propose any specific role to another team member. Be very strict on this matter.
-  Ask the group to say which roles they would like to try out first. Go person by person; each expresses their wishes.
-  If two people want the same role, you need to discuss it more as a group, explore their reasons for trying out that role, and consider whether they have other options that are equally important, etc.
-  Suppose neither one is willing to make a compromise after hearing each other's arguments. In that case, you may decide to give priority for the first trial of the role to the person who hasn't done Forum Theatre before or any theatre.
-  If this is not the case, you may ask the other group member to decide by doing a blind vote. All participants have their eyes closed, and you ask them to raise their hands when you indicate a specific person in a particular role. In this way, the group decides and, by not knowing how the votes were divided, we avoid potential tensions.
-  If needed, if the group or you don't want to do the blind vote, then give more time for discussion until a conclusion is reached.

Write the roles and the final proposals on a paper/board so they are visible to the entire group. You may also add the roles for which more people show interest (as a second or third option), as this information may be needed later on in the process.



7. First Contact with the Roles – 15 min

Aims: to prepare the participants to act out the chosen roles; to get warmed up for acting.

Details and description of the activity:

Invite the group to walk around the space. You will guide them to reflect, think and get more into their character:

- Think about your role.....Who are you? What is your name?
- How old are you?
- Where do you live? With whom do you live?
- What kind of person are you?
- What is your motto in life?
- How would you describe yourself in one word?

- What do you like to do?
- Who are your friends?
- Who are your enemies?
- What are your dreams?
- What is your primary source of happiness at the moment?
- What are your main problems at the moment?
- ... you could continue by adding some questions related to the play's topic...What is your opinion about....? What do you think about...?.....Add any other questions that could be helpful for the group.
- Allow enough time for the people to reflect on each question.
- After you have asked all your questions, tell the group that when they hear a clap, they have to find another person and talk with that person about themselves, as their roles.
- Clap, wait a couple of minutes, then clap again. Make enough rounds so that everybody talks with everybody.

8. First Improvisations – 30-40 min

Aims: to act out the first scenes from the scenario; to get a deeper understanding of how the scenario is unfolding in acting

Details and description of the activity:

- After the last clap, from the previous activity, ask the characters who appear in scene 1 to remain, and the others will observe them, from the same side, like an audience.
- These characters improvise the first scene without any planning, directly with the first improvisation of dialogue. It is essential to do it quickly after the last activity, when the group is warmed up, and to continue with the energy of improvising freely. At this stage, it doesn't matter the props, entry or exit cues, etc. What is essential is to build dialogues – the rest of the details come into place more easily later.

- After the first trial, invite the group to comment on how it went, how realistic it looked, whether enough information was presented in the scene, and how it could be made clearer and more realistic.
- Encourage everyone to share ideas and thoughts. The details of the Forum Theatre script are based on the group's feedback, ideas and suggestions.
- Repeat the first scene based on the comments provided and revise it again.
- Depending on the time left in the session, try out the other scenes briefly, repeating a similar collective process. It is better to try out faster, discuss less, and act out more. 2-3 trials for scenes should be sufficient for the First Improvisations. Don't try to make a single scene perfect; it is better to briefly try out all of them until the end of the session.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

- How did you feel about acting out your roles?
- What came easily?
- What was challenging?
- What do you want to work more on or pay more attention to for the next rehearsals?

9. Closing of the Meeting – 5 min

Conclude the meeting, thank everyone, and include details about the next meeting: where, when, and what will happen next, as well as any last questions or remarks.

Session 11

Additional Recommendations and Reflections from Practice

In practice, we noticed that this session represents a significant “milestone” which marks the passing from general games and exercises, which are all fun and engaging but don’t demand anything ultimately from any group member, to the phase where they actually realise they have to act out a role, an actual role.

We often experienced some unusual energy in the group, some seriousness, some focus, some fear in the air. It takes some time for them to really get warmed up and thoroughly enjoy this new phase of the process. From now on, they will carry that role in the back of their mind; it is their task until the end.

This is normal; don’t get scared when you notice this. This is a transition, and what helps is to play games to make the group have fun and loosen up. Gradually, they will feel entirely comfortable with this new phase.

Ideas for alternative exercises that could be done in this session:

Translating from Giberish

The participants are divided into groups of 3. In each group, one person is talking only in Giberish language (using random words with no meaning), this person can understand the language you are working with but cannot express themselves in it; another person will be a translator, who will translate what the person talks in Giberish; the third person will be an interviewer asking questions to the foreign person. You can provide a different context for each group: a visitor from another planet to planet Earth; a researcher looking for a cure for broken heartedness; an influencer with many followers who posts about rotten food; etc. It should be a more unusual, quirky context to provide more entertainment for the audience.

Each group comes to the front of the audience, one by one. The interviewer asks questions, the foreigner responds, and the translator translates. Allow about 5 minutes for each group.

Talking Hands

Divide the group into pairs. In this pair, one person will speak and keep their hands at the back of their body. The other person is somehow hugging them from the back, and their own hands are visible in front of the other person's body. Basically, one person speaks while the other person uses their hands or arms. The hands are gesticulating, so the words have to match the gestures, or vice versa: the hands should match what the words say. It is more fun when the hands have their own agenda, and the words have to be found to make sense of it. Pairs will come to the front one by one and have about 5 minutes to deliver a speech to the audience.

Associations

Individually, the participants go around the space and at each step they do, they should say one word; every second word should be an association of the first word.

Move to the second level, and they do this in pairs, without moving this time, one person says a word, the other one continues with immediate association; you can gradually increase until you have two groups, doing the exercises for the others.

Storytellers and Actors

Divide the group into two. One group will start developing a story collectively. One person says a sentence, the other continues and so on. The other group will act out what the storyteller says; they will mime and try to reproduce, in real time, the story developed by the other group.

Random situations/objects

Write on separate papers, different examples of specific contexts from people's lives (public bathroom, pet shop, cinema, at the beach, in a flight, etc.) and random objects (knife, money, bottle, drugs, TV, etc.). There should be two different boxes/bags (one for contexts and one for objects). Ask 2-3 volunteers to come on stage. They pick one context in which they find themselves. They freely improvise something in the given context. At your signal, ask them to select an object from the list; they have to introduce that object in the conversation, in a natural way. After a few minutes, ask someone else to come and pick another context; at this moment, have the previous people adjust to the new context as naturally as possible. People may leave the stage, but they should do so naturally as part of their improvisation, and others can join. Judge on the spot how often you should change the context or ask people to take different objects from the bag.

Just Improvise

Tell participants that they will improvise being part of a random place or situation; after you provide the context/situation each of them they should decide who they want to be in that specific situation; they should say it out loud, so if other people wish they can make connections with each other; after each person announces who they want to be, mark in the room where the specific situation takes places and tell them they have 15 minutes to Just Improvise. The context could be: on a cruise that got lost at sea; in an elevator that got stuck between floors; in a hotel lobby during an electricity blackout; in a public plaza during the country's national day; etc.

Session 12

Getting Into Roles Finalising the Scenario

(2,5 hours)

In this session, the group follows up on the aspects tackled in the last session, continues with improvisations, gets into character exercises, and builds up the final play. The session aims to finalise the Forum Theatre play.

In this session, some roles may change based on the actors' feelings, acting, and improvisation.

There are two possibilities in this sense

The actors themselves communicate to the group that they don't want to pursue that specific role (for various reasons)

The team considers that one actor, based on their improvisation, is not contributing to a strong enough oppression in the play.

For the first case, the team needs to discuss again, check which roles people expressed interest in during the last discussion on this topic, and adjust the distribution accordingly.

The second case should be assessed after we have already conducted exercises to support them in getting into their roles. If some roles come across as too powerful (for an oppressor), or, not powerful enough (for an oppressed), then something should be done. It often happens that a team continues with relatively weak performance because they don't want to hurt team members' feelings. This can lead to a low impact on the audience, and the group needs to understand that the work they do is meant to make a change among the audience members. There is space for this discussion planned in the format of this session.







1. Intro – 5 min

Welcome your group; brief them on this session's process and purpose; group checking.

2. AEIOU - 10 min

Aims: to warm up the voice of the actors; to help the participants control their breathing; to encourage participants to speak louder

Details and description of the activity:

-  The participants are lined up facing you.
-  In this exercise, you will use the following vowels: A, E, I, O, and U.
-  Ask the participants to say continuously one letter while you indicate the volume.
-  You walk from one side of the line to the other and make stops on the way. When you get closer to any section of the line, the people who are the closest to you have to say that letter more and louder, but not shouting. When you create distance from certain sections of the line, they should say it at lower and lower levels.
-  You are a human volume marker for the group – close to them, they need to increase their volume; farther from them, they need to decrease their volume.
-  One by one, try each letter.



3. Market Time – 15 min

Aims: to prepare the group for acting, to stimulate imagination and creativity, and to encourage participants to speak louder.

Details and description of the activity:

- Inform the participants that they will become sellers in a street market. They should imagine a specific market where they want to sell, decide what kind of product they want to commercialise, and where they want to place their stall. The product they want to sell may be something that exists in real life or not, something abstract or concrete, etc. There are no limitations in this sense, as they will not use any real props in this process; it will be based solely on their voices, acting, and words.
- Invite them to the chosen location for their stalls and ask them to stay as a frozen statue, reflecting on their task as market sellers. Each seller needs to be activated by you before they can start their job.
- Touch the shoulders of several sellers.
- Once touched, a seller can move, talk, and promote their stall and products as best they can.
- If a seller is touched a second time, they freeze again.
- The sellers may choose to move from their stand and promote their products throughout the space, or stay in one fixed location at all times. They have to do their best to promote them.
- Some sellers interact intensively with other sellers, while others treat the exercise exclusively as an individual process.
- Make sure all the participants are activated at least 2-3 times during the exercise.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

- How did you feel in the exercise?
- How easy was it for you to be a seller?
- What did you enjoy about it?
- What surprised you during the activity?
- What can you use from this exercise for your role?

4. Complete up to 3 and as a Group – 20 min

Aims - to develop the creativity and imagination, to encourage participants' exposure and expression for an audience, to connect the group, to energize and warm up the group

Details and description of the activity:

- The group is standing in a circle.
- You demonstrate the exercise with the help of 3 volunteers.
- One person comes in the middle of the circle and makes a statue representing, for example, a tree, and says out loud: ***"I am a tree"***, and then freezes in a tree posture.
- The second volunteer comes and attaches themselves to the tree statue and says, ***"I am an apple in the tree"***, and then freezes in a posture trying to reproduce that idea.
- The third person does the same, could say, ***"I am the worm in the apple"*** and freezes in a relevant posture. The third person can decide to connect with either the first statue or the second, depending on their idea.
- At this moment, the first person, in our example, is the tree, says: ***"I am a tree and I take with me the"*** they have to choose between the other two statues and name who they chose....e.g. ***I take with me the apple"*** and they go back to the circle.
- The person remaining repeats what they represent: ***"I am a worm"***... and then anyone in the circle can continue following the process demonstrated.

- They are free to make any connections with the images from the circle, abstract or concrete.
- Encourage everyone to participate, and remind those who didn't come regularly.
- After several rounds with the "Complete Up to 3" version, expand the exercise. Inform the group that, from now on, the image can continue to be built until no one in the group has any more ideas to add.
- When the image is completed, the initial person has to say who will stay behind. This time, they don't indicate who they take with them, as the list is longer – they now indicate who they leave behind, and the process repeats.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

- Do you have any impressions or reflections on how this exercise went?
- How did you feel during the activity?
- What type of images were more stimulating for you to complete?

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

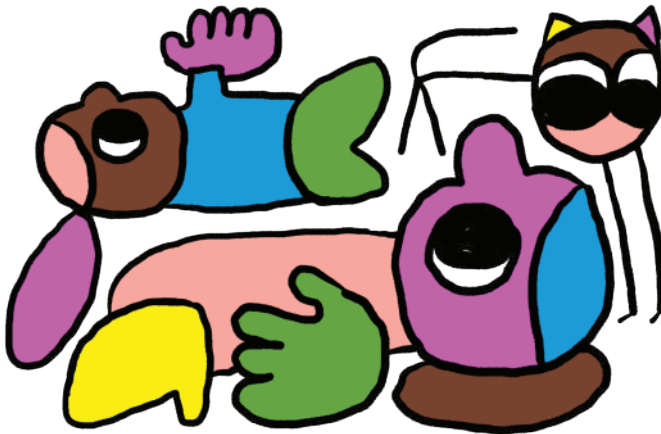
- A variant of this activity is good for stimulating the group's imagination. Ask one person to assume a posture and say what it is. The other people should come and take the same posture, but say they are something else, and still make sense with the chosen posture. We want to explore as many different associations starting from the same posture. The same could be done for the word itself, the same word, but different postures to be shown all the time.

5. Scene-Images - Warming-up – 30 min

Aims: to refresh the main actions in each scene; to warm up for more in-depth rehearsals and getting into roles

Details and description of the activity:

- Tell the group you will do a brief activity to warm up and refresh the scenes already tried out in the last session.
- Ask the people involved in the first scene to come on stage and create an image. An image that will encapsulate the essence of that particular scene.
- They start by staying in individual postures that reflect the character's main emotional experience in that scene. Then slowly move in relation to each other, emphasising the relationship between them.
- In the final image, activate the scene and ask them to start talking to each other; they may move their bodies or stay as statues, depending on what feels easier and more natural to them.
- These dialogues may include elements mentioned in earlier trials of their scenes, as well as new elements that could be kept.
- After one scene, ask the group to point out which part of their dialogue should be kept for future trials and also any other impressions related to that scene, presented in this way.
- Work each scene in the same way.



6. Hot Seat – 40 min

Aims: to support the actors to get into their roles better, to develop their characters more deeply, and to prepare the actors for the rehearsal of their Forum Theatre play.

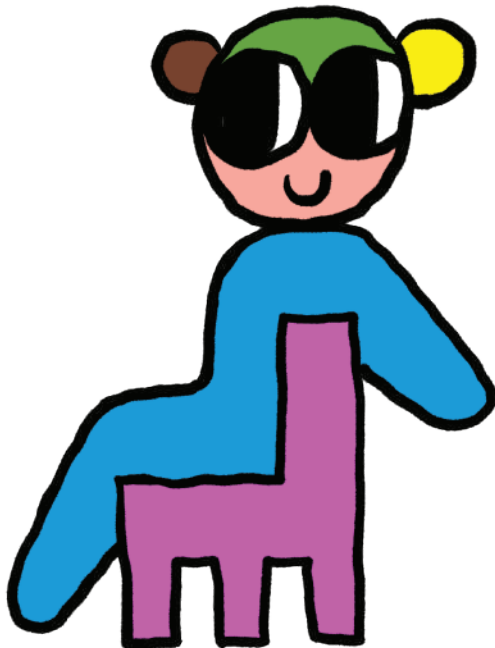
Details and description of the activity:

- Each participant, in their role, sits on an empty chair in the middle of the room, facing all the other team members.
- The team members, as the audience of the person in the chair, should ask the character questions. They ask as team members and not in their roles in the play.
- They should ask general questions about their lives, as well as very important questions about the people and issues in the story. Questions that explore reasons, agenda, motivations, interests, likes and dislikes, position towards different scenarios (*what if...*), etc.
- The person from the chair must answer all of them honestly, as their character will answer truthfully. It's like a dialogue with their own conscience; they cannot lie to themselves.
- This exercise is recommended primarily for the oppressed and the oppressor, and for any other character who feels the need to get deeper in the role.
- After each round of questions, the group shares their feedback related to how they assess each role and how much power is expressed by the specific person in those roles.
- This exercise usually helps the group see if the initial oppressor/ oppressed is not strong enough /too strong.
- If needed, ask if anybody would like to go on the hot seat to show another option for a specific role.
- When the group has witnessed two versions of the same character, they discuss what to do next, depending on how much time remains in rehearsals.

- If the need to redistribute roles arises, remind the group that they are creating this play with an aim for a specific audience, and ultimately, the purpose is to deliver a powerful play to them, so it is more important to ensure the play gets there.
- If the roles are partially redistributed, it would be helpful to do a “hot seat” before the start of the following rehearsals.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

- How did you feel being on the hot set?
- How difficult was it to answer the questions?
- Which questions were more difficult?
- Which ones were easier?
- How did you feel about asking questions?
- What did you discover about your character?
- Is there anything surprising about your character?
- How do you feel the exercise helps you?



7. Rehearsal of the final scenario – 40-50 min

Aims: to act out the entire scenario; this will become the base for the future rehearsals.

Details and description of the activity:

- Building on the previous exercise, ask the actors to set and prepare for acting out the entire play, scene by scene.
- Remind them of what was done in the last rehearsals and how they will proceed now.
- The process of rehearsals, with feedback and comments from the entire team, continues as implemented in the last session.
- Push the group to act more and to give more to-the-point comments.

8. Closing of the Meeting – 5 min

Conclude the meeting, thank everyone, and include details about the next meeting: where, when, and what will happen next, as well as any last questions or remarks.

Session 12

Additional Recommendations and Reflections from Practice

“Hot seat” is an excellent exercise. Going through this activity has saved so many theatre plays and groups. Sometimes it is not needed; the actors are very quickly improvising to a high level of the desired oppression expressed on stage. But when the actors are stuck, they don't find dialogue; it seems harder to talk as the character; they use more silence and cut conversations short, which indicates a need for deeper contact and exploration with their character. After just 10-15 minutes, the same person will act so differently, and most importantly, will feel differently in their role. This should be your first go-to activity when you need to help the group get into their roles.

Ideas for alternative exercises that could be done in this session:

Angels and Demons aims to provide actors with more ideas and thoughts for their roles. The participants stand in 2 lines facing each other– the angels are in one line, in the other one are the demons. One by one, the actors walk in between these lines. They walk in character and listen. The people will talk in their ears telling them why they should do a specific action or not, or that they should do something or not...it very much depends on their role and the story, and their ideas, suggestions are connected to the story; The Angel will try to give good advice, positive while the Demons do the opposite; they can also use each other's arguments to provide more arguments on any of the sides.

For example: Angel: „Go and talk with your husband, tell him you want to take a job, etc.”... The Demon will say: „Don't you dare confront your husband, don't you know what he is capable of? Do you really want to take that risk? You'd better focus on your children”. The actors do not reply; they listen to it until they finish walking in line. One by one, the actors who feel this exercise may help them will walk between the lines and listen.

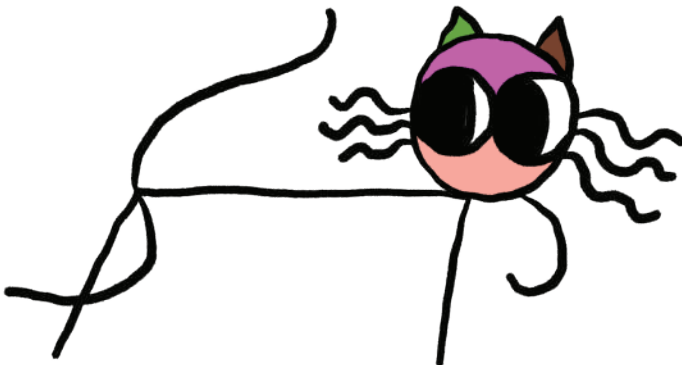
It would be helpful to ask the group at the end of the exercise how much the exercise helped them get into their roles.

Roles Catwalk

Ask the actors to prepare for a show; they need to showcase their role in a catwalk; they should emphasise through clothing, different items, accessories, etc. the personality of that specific role with its key defining aspects; they should write a little text about them, which you will read; one by one the actors will come and embody their roles with all the defining aspects as decided by each actor; on the improvised catwalk, you read the text like in a real fashion show and the other actors are the audience and will be clapping; repeat the process for all the roles.

Museum of Roles

In fact is a museum of statues that become alive; the actors chose a space in the working area which is suitable as a good space for their role; they should take a posture that defines their role; at your signal ask the roles to come back to life and to start talking, moving, acting as their role – free improvisation; they should all stay in their delimited area, like in a museum; this exercise is not about practicing with an audience, but only for them individually; if you do have a bigger group, and people that are not part of the actors teams is good to have some audience going around witnessing this alive museum.



Session 13

Rehearsals

(~3 hours)





1. **Intro** – 5 min

Welcome your group; brief them on this session's process and purpose; group checking.

2. **Music and action** - 15 min

Aims: to warm-up and energize the group, to prepare them for the day, to create an atmosphere of wellbeing and general positivity.

Details and description of the activity:

-  Play music, invite the group to dance, and let them do whatever they want. The music should be more active and dynamic.
-  When the music stops, they have to freeze and listen to your instructions, which is a task given.
-  After each task, the music plays again, and the process repeats.
-  Suggestions for the tasks: go to at least three people and tell them something nice about themselves; gather in groups according to the colour of your socks, look at somebody and recognize a long lost friend, shout very loudly – “Today is a fantastic day”, go to everybody in the group and say: “Thank you”; go to one person and tell them something that you have never told somebody in the group so far; hug individually at least four people; go to everybody and tell them how much you are looking forward to today, etc.

3. Rehearsals – Stop and Think – 40 min

Aims: to help the participants understand the role they have more deeply; to get more relaxed and comfortable in playing another role, and to understand the connections between the characters in the story more deeply;

Details and description of the activity:

- Inform the group that they will rehearse the play from the beginning.
- When you clap, they have to freeze in whatever position they're in at that moment.
- They have to stay in statues until they hear another clap (at which moment they continue from where they left off).
- While they are statues, you may touch any actor on the shoulder, and at that moment the actor must say what they are thinking in that specific moment, as their role/character.
- If you touch the same person a second time, they stop talking.
- It would be good to stop 2-3 times in one scene, at different action moments and at each stop to touch every actor on the stage.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions





- How do you feel the exercise helped you in acting out your role?
- What other impressions and reflections do you have from listening to the thoughts of the other characters?



4. **More Rehearsals** – 50-60 min

Aims: to practice more the play from beginning to the end; to work more on the scenography elements of the play;






Details and description of the activity:

-  Continue to rehearse the entire play, using the correct props
-  Work more on the entries and exits from the scenes
-  Check with the group how they feel about specific scenes, and if some need more work, focus on them.
-  Depending on the progress achieved, you can assess whether the group needs more work on improvisation, on character building, on developing the script if it is not yet a final version on which everybody agrees, or on rehearsals.

5. **Different Kind of Rehearsals** – 40-50 min

Aims: to develop acting and improvising skills, to increase the ease of rehearsing in different circumstances; to develop flexibility and spontaneity; to relax and warm up the group.

Details and description of the activity:

-  The group has to rehearse the play again, with different variations.
-  The play's structure and key lines don't change in any of these variations, but the speed, style, order, and so on do.
-  Find below a couple of options that can be used in this activity. Use as many options as you can for the time left, but do not rush the process.
 -  Rehearse different genres: drama, horror, comedy, action, soap opera, musical, fantasy, SF, etc.
 -  Rehearse as if some actors are invisible and not on stage, but the action and dialogue must happen exactly as initially planned;

the actors discuss with the missing person and reply to the words they imagine have been said.

- Rehearse from end to beginning; from high tension to low tension;
- Rehearse at a very high speed, and nothing can be left out of the play, or at a very low speed;
- Rehearse without words, doing all the body movement and gestures but not using any words;
- Rehearse with mixed roles – asking some actors to play other roles. This variation helps reduce the feeling of possession that some actors develop for their roles.

6. Closing of the Meeting – 5 min

Conclude the meeting, thank everyone, and include details about the next meeting: where, when, and what will happen next, as well as any last questions or remarks.

UNIT 6

Preparing the Team for the Performance

Key Considerations

This unit is essential for a beginner Forum Theatre group because it provides a space to work on elements necessary for participants going in front of an audience for the first time. The unit will touch on various elements:

Power in relation to the audience.

The feeling of possession that the participants have for their roles.

Preparation for the interventions and all the processes with the audience.

Very often, beginner Forum Theatre actors fall into one of two traps when they are on stage:

They want to help the audience too much. When somebody intervenes, they immediately change their reaction in an unrealistic way to make the person from the audience feel that they won; This is not helpful because the audience will discuss and assess as unrealistic the reaction of the other people involved –in this case, our actors.

They hold on too tightly to their roles, even though the power relations have obviously changed, while their reactions are unrealistic.

This is often the case with the oppressor, when they suffer from what we call the **“Oppressor syndrome”**. The audience does not change the Oppressor, and this aspect contributes to the development of this syndrome.

Also, in the overall situation, the oppressor has the most power, and they are abusing it; once people around them gain more power, the fear of losing it rises in the actor who wants to hold on to it even more.

The “oppressor syndrome” is quite dangerous if it is not adequately addressed because it can lead to the audience leaving our performance feeling hopeless, because nothing they tried balanced the power relations, and nothing changed. This is part of the Joker’s task, but also part of the actors’ preparation to prevent such a situation.

Another delicate aspect concerns the discussion of potential interventions. It is helpful to do it, to have an idea of what solutions the audience can propose, BUT some groups tend to prepare mentally in advance for how to react to specific interventions too well, and that will not be realistic; the spontaneous improvisation on the spot very often is much more natural and realistic, as actors do not overthink what to do. A Forum Theatre group can never anticipate everything the audience can come up with as solutions, so during this preparation for interventions, they should keep this in mind.

This Specific Unit includes 1 session:

14. Preparation of the team (~3 hours)

Session 14

Preparing the Team for the Performance

(~3 hours)






1. **Intro** – 5 min

Welcome your group; brief them on this session's process and purpose; group checking.

2. **Push Not to Win** – 20 min

Aims: to make the participants reflect on how they use their power in a way in which they are not dominating but not submissive either, to encourage them to reflect on how they feel in such situations, to understand where the balance point is for them personally, and to discuss the power of the audience versus the power of the actors.

Details and description of the activity:

-  Divide the participants into pairs
-  A line, or demarcation line, is marked on the floor, and each member of the pair must stand on one side of it.
-  The participants face each other and touch their palms (in a vertical position). Their task is to push but not to win. This is the same task for everybody. The line between them is the criterion for winning; winning, in this case, means crossing the line.
-  The pairs are not allowed to talk to each other during the exercises; any questions will be clarified before the exercise starts.
-  Remind them during the exercises that they have to push, but not to win, especially when you notice the pairs not really moving at all. They cannot be still; it is not a frozen exercise.

- At some point during the exercise, ask participants to close their eyes and continue.
- Allocate about 5 minutes for this exercise.
- Ensure you allow enough time for everyone to get into the exercise more deeply - the first minutes can be treated as a funny exercise. Still, as time passes, they come to understand it and have more profound reflections.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions




- How did you feel during the activity?
- Did anybody win during the exercise? How did you manage that? How did you approach the task? You had to push, but not to win... did this mean you had to lose? What did winning mean for you?
- Did you feel the other person was winning? How was it for you?
- Did you identify a point where you both pushed, but nobody was winning or losing? How did you understand that you are at this point?
- Please think about this in connection with the process involving the audience – they will come into our play and change our story – they will push us, and we will push them back (because of our roles) – what correlations can you make from this exercise and the process of interaction with the audience?
- How can you be constantly aware of the point at which both of you are pushing, neither winning over the audience nor losing either?









3. **Come with me! No!** – 30 min

Aims: to stimulate the participants to reflect on their own approach to winning over somebody and also on their feelings if they fail to do so, to encourage the participants to be honest with themselves and identify the inner answers/reactions to specific situations, to reflect individually on what makes them give in/what never makes them give in; to work with the “Oppressor Syndrome” or other possessive tendencies.

Details and description of the activity:

-  Each participant has a pair.
-  During the exercise, one person will repeatedly invite the other person, “Come with me!”, until the other person accepts. The other person has to say NO as long as possible. Nothing else!
-  Allocate 5 minutes per round; during this time, participants must continuously perform the assigned task. After 5 minutes, the roles switch for another 5 minutes.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

-  How did you feel when you asked the question? How did you feel replying to it?
-  How fast did you give in? What made you say YES?
-  What made you say NO until the end?
-  If you did say NO at the end of the exercise, was there any moment when you felt like saying YES but didn't want to, so you kept saying NO? At what moment did this happen? Why did you keep saying NO even though you felt like saying YES inside?
-  When the audience comes on stage and makes changes, they very often go against our initial plan, our initial wishes, and ideas for what should happen in that specific situation. How can you remain connected to what you feel inside as a radar of what is a natural signal of how the power relations change, and not to impose your own ego or projections on it?
-  How can we control our actor's Ego in relation to the audience?

4. **Brainstorming Potential Interventions** – 20 min

Aim: to reflect in advance on the potential changes proposed by the audience, to list all the ideas the team has, and to become aware of the fact that the audience will surprise the team and come up with ideas that were never considered.

Details and description of the activity:

- Invite the group to brainstorm potential solutions that the audience can come up with.
- Take it scene by scene and think about what proposals the audience may make, for which roles, and what concrete ideas.
- If there is any scene in which they realise no change is possible, it means the scenario was constructed incorrectly.
- If you realise that one scene might be “empty” of changes, you should make modifications – either removing it if you have sufficient material, or changing its concept.
- Remind the group that this exercise aims to give them an idea of potential interventions, but they cannot anticipate all of them. They should accept that and be ready to deal with the unknown.
- After the first scene, there is no certainty about what the next scene will look like; the whole story might change based on audience discussions.
- For example, even if the original second scene shows a situation at school between students, if in the first scene the audience decides that it is realistic for the mother to talk with the teacher about her daughter’s situation personally, then this scene will be created. It wasn’t initially planned by the team, but that doesn’t mean it can’t happen in reality. So a new scene will be shown, with new possibilities for how the story could change and take new directions.

5. Oppressed-Opressor Adjusting to Changes – 30 min

Aims: to develop the key actors', oppressor and oppressed, capacity for adjusting to changes

Details and description of the activity:

- All the participants stand in 2 lines facing each other.
- The oppressor and the oppressed are one step ahead of the line, facing each other. The group chooses a moment from the story in which they interact.
- They talk, as in the original play. The lines behind the actors have one aim – to help the person in front of them gain more power, regardless of whether that person is the oppressor or the oppressed.
- The process is similar to the one on stage with the audience, but it happens continuously. The oppressed and the oppressor interact, as in the moment chosen to work with. If someone from the back line feels they do not express enough power, they clap, replace the person, and continue the dialogue.
- The original actors can return to play their roles again.
- It should continue until the oppressed is no longer oppressed and has enough power over the oppressor.
- Ask the questions below before continuing to another part of the performance.
- The exercise can continue, working on other key moments from the performance as well.

Debriefing / Suggestions for Questions

- What arguments were stronger? Which ones were more realistic?
- Question for oppressed: How did you feel acting with the new ideas proposed?
- Question for oppressor: How did you feel when the oppressed had more and more power? How much power did you still feel you had in that interaction?

Recommendations for Using the Activity / Adaptations

It is a valuable exercise for preparing the group for interventions and also for preparing the oppressor to work with his oppressor syndrome tendency.

6. Briefing on the Process of Forum Theatre with Audience – 20 min

Aims: to introduce and clarify the process of implementation of Forum Theatre to the group, to have a clear perspective of their role and the main guidelines that need to be followed.

Details and description of the activity:

Explain, step by step, the process for the audience and how it will be managed, and the roles of the Joker and the actors.

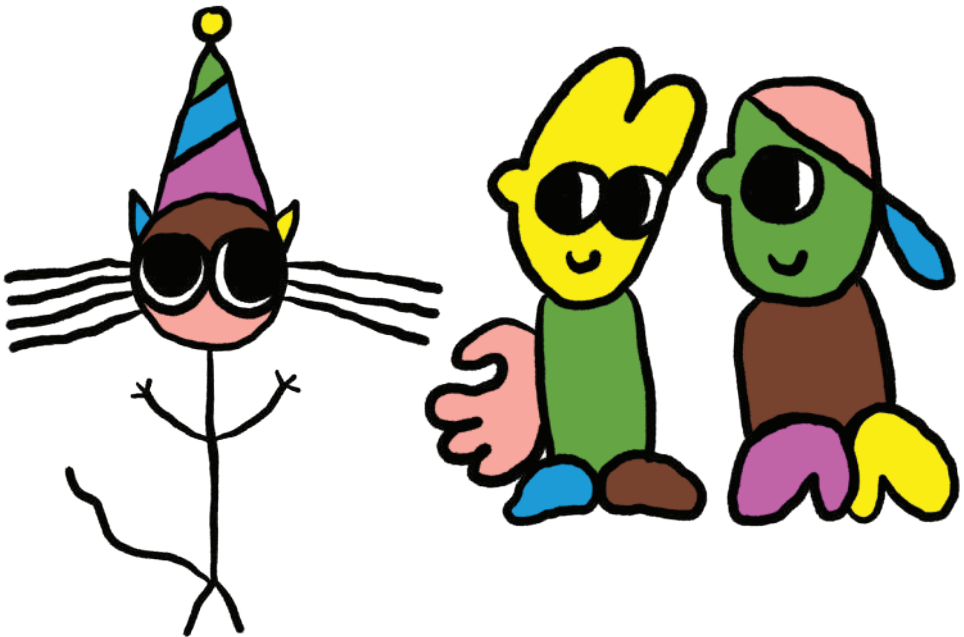
Besides the technical aspects of the process, which need to be clearly introduced and explained, it is essential to emphasise the following:

During the introduction of the characters, the actors do not smile, talk to the audience, or make gestures to them; they have to stay as much as possible in character.

The team needs to be silent and not to talk backstage while the Joker is talking with the audience; it will disrupt the discussion, can show disrespect and lack of interest for the points raised by the target group- the audience; they will miss the conclusion drawn with the audience – what is happening next, what change is kept, etc.

The audience will talk a lot and the discussion may go in many directions - **for the team it is essential to follow and listen to the Joker,** who draws conclusions throughout, which also aims to calibrate the team: to know what change was kept, what happens next – if there is a new scene, or the same, or the next, etc.




- The oppressor and the Joker need to agree on a sign that the Joker will make for the oppressor in case the oppressor becomes possessed by the role and deliberately refuses to reduce power at all. This sign can signal to the oppressor that they may have gone too far.
- The actors need to pay close attention to how an audience member shows an intervention/change, as later they might have to continue acting that way, and it is essential to keep the change proposed by the audience, not exaggerate it by the actor.
- **Actors need to help the audience:** allowing space for them to talk, asking them 2 times to repeat if they understand they are talking too low, moving on the stage so the audience member doesn't stay with their back to the audience.






7. Open Space Session - 30 min

Aim: to address the team's needs before they perform for the first time.

Details and description of the activity:

-  Decide with the group what they need before they have their first performance.
-  Do they need more rehearsals, more preparation for interventions, more voice or stage exercises, more work on emotions or getting into character, etc.?
-  What to include in this session depends strictly on the group's needs, and you can also repeat some of the previous activities if you are not ready with new ones right away.

Recommendations

-  Before reaching the real audience for the first time, it would be helpful, especially for a beginner group, to have a rehearsal with the audience.
-  This audience can be made up of friends, colleagues, relatives, etc., with whom they will feel less stressed. This rehearsal with the audience aims to practice interventions and to have a clear understanding of how the process goes with the audience.
-  It can be organised more informally in the space usually used for rehearsals, with a small audience of 10-15 people.

8. Closing of the Meeting - 5 min

Conclude the meeting, thank everyone and include details about the performance, where it will take place, from what time, when they are expected to come, and what will happen next – if they have any last questions or remarks.

Joker Role

Introduction

In the Joker section, we want to focus on the role of the Joker and provide specific guidance and structure to help any person in the position of the Joker in a Forum or Image Theatre Play.

Joker




- It is the name of the person who serves as the intermediary between the audience and the play (performed by actors).
- Doesn't have any acting role in the play.
- Is the host and overseer of the process.
- Has a crucial role in achieving the objectives of any Theatre of the Oppressed methods.

Joker Term Meaning



There are different explanations for why such a term is used for this specific role in Theatre of the Oppressed. Of course, in various languages, the term is different, adjusted, or differently framed to make it easier for practitioners to use in their own context, but the term 'Joker' is (still) very widely used across the world.

The term Joker comes along with several symbolist explanations that illustrate key aspects of this role in Theatre of the Oppressed:

Joker is the Fool Card from the Tarot deck.

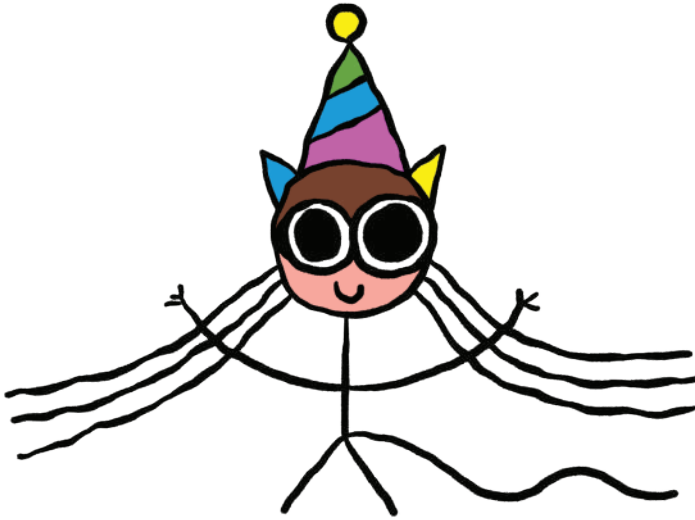
-  The conventional explanations say that The Fool signifies the flesh and the sensitive life. It may also be a warning that **a significant change is coming**.
-  Another interpretation of the card is **taking action in circumstances where the outcome is unknown**, confronting one's fears, taking risks, and so on.
-  The Fool is known to represent **new beginnings, the start of a journey or new phase in life**, innocence, enthusiasm, awe, wonder, bravery, optimism, self-confidence and occasionally as throwing caution to the wind.

Joker is *the neutral card* from the standard playing card deck







-  The number 0 is a perfect symbol in this case, as it can become anything when it reaches its destination, in the sense of 'Joker's wild'. **Zero plus anything equals the same thing.**
-  Zero is nothing, a lack of hard substance, and as such, it may reflect a non-issue.

A less symbolist term that can be used is 'facilitator' or 'moderator', which may help avoid misunderstandings, as the word 'Joker' could be perceived as a person who makes jokes, is funny, or entertains an audience, etc.

Nevertheless, **this term and its meaning are primarily relevant for internal purposes of a Theatre of the Oppressed team**, for understanding each person's role in the process; it doesn't have to be used for external communication or explanations with non-practitioners (simplified terms could be used in those contexts).



Joker's Role in Forum Theatre Processes

-  To get involved in the preparation of the play, they often conduct games and exercises with the actors and facilitate the creation of the play and its rehearsals.
-  To guide the audience step by step from the beginning to the end of a Forum Theatre Performance.
-  To ensure a safe, relaxed, constructive and productive atmosphere for audience members.
-  To stimulate exchange of diverse points of view and opinions.
-  To handle possible clashes or tensions between audience members.
-  To support the evaluation process after the play is finished, by motivating and explaining the specific tasks and procedures to the audience.

There is considerable pressure on the Joker to ensure the process achieves its aim. Many things could go wrong, and a lot of it is in the power of the Joker to prevent or handle them. **It is a role which should be embraced with care and responsibility.**

Joker Key Features

These aspects are rarely innate to a person; they are trained and developed over time, through experience (in Theatre of the Oppressed, but also in other aspects of life), intention, and effort.

Neutrality

The Joker asks questions, challenges assumptions and thinking patterns, and stimulates alternative solutions and paths for exploring a problem, BUT they never express their own opinion on the discussed issues. This feature is essential for ensuring a rich exchange of views and ideas among audience members, without being influenced by the Joker's judgment.

Focus

The Joker needs to keep the audience's attention and to follow the structure of the process, not to digress and get lost in the maze of views expressed by the audience. They need to be the clear, lucid "landmark" for everyone involved and to ensure they go through all stages of the process within the given time (there is often a limited time provided for a play).

Composure




The Joker maintains calm and self-control, no matter what the audience members say, do, or declare. This includes a calm attitude towards verbalised statements (rational level) and towards expressed emotions (emotional level). The Joker needs to be able to detach from their own views and feelings, hold the space for the audience to express and manifest fully, and support them in reflecting, processing their own reactions, and advancing to the subsequent phases of the process.

Each Theatre of the Oppressed method requires a specific type of Jokering process, as their objectives and structures differ. The Joker follows a different structure in a Legislative or a Newspaper Theatre performance. In our other manuals, which tackle the different methods, we have included detailed guidelines specific to Jokering on those methods, and we will not include them here.

The structure we propose is meant to be used by Jokers to ensure a smooth, logical process with their audience in a Forum Theatre process.

This structure has proved to be successful, clear and coherent, and also an easy-to-use approach for any Joker to manage the process with the audience. It can be used while working with Forum Theatre or Image Theatre, but we will include tailored recommendations in the Image Theatre Chapter.

Important

-  This structure doesn't refer to how well a scenario was developed or structured as a Forum Theatre play.
-  The work of a Joker is heavily influenced by the performance (its structure and the acting) that they present to the audience.
-  If a play is not relevant to the audience or has significant technical mistakes (see the chapter on how to develop the performance), the Joker and the structure of the Jokering could help, but they cannot work miracles.

We elaborate more on these aspects in the sub-chapter: Joker - Challenges.

Joker Role

Structure: Step-by-Step Short Version

1. Introduction from the Joker – concise, to prepare the audience, doesn't provide many details.

The forum theatre play is performed for the first time.

2. The Problem – The Joker conducts a discussion with the audience about the problem(s) they observed in the play, the connections with their reality; the audience members provide more examples. Joker decides with the audience on only one main problem covered in the performance, if there are different opinions in the audience.

3. The Characters – The Joker continues the discussion and, in this stage, zooms in on the characters present in the performance, what their role is, what is happening with them in the story, whether they can do something differently, and the connection with the reality of the audience.

4. Change-making Process – The Joker explains the process of making the changes in the performance, the rules to be followed, motivates the audience to make changes, and warms up the audience.

The play is performed a second time – audience members propose changes and come on stage to show their ideas by replacing different actors according to the rules stated at step 4.

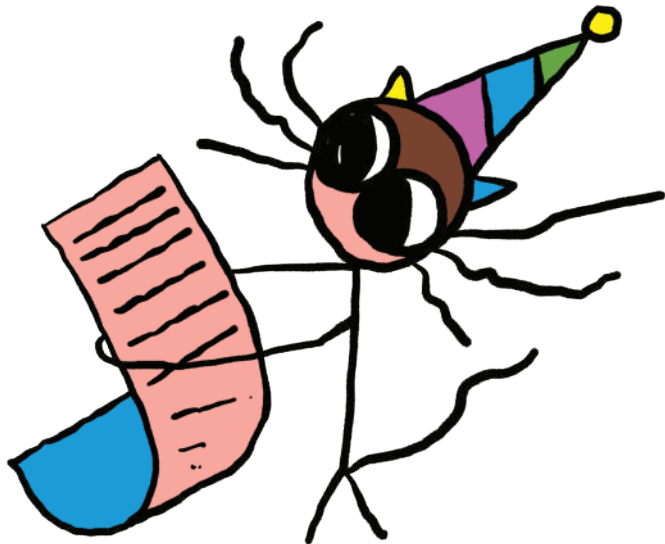
5. **Management of Interventions** – The Joker discusses with the audience about each intervention before moving to a new one; each change proposed is analysed in-depth, the audience decides whether to keep a change or not - the process continues until the oppression is reduced to a satisfying level for the audience, and the oppressed makes a different decision.

6. **Summary** – The Joker summarises the discussions and decisions made; what problem was addressed, the connections with the audience's reality, what solutions have been proposed and what decisions have been made.

7. **Transfer** – The Joker invites the audience to reflect on how and what they can take further back to their realities from this process

8. **Conclusion** – The Joker draws a short conclusion based on insights shared in the transfer phase and the overall theme.

9. **Closure** – The event is closed, and the audience is invited to the next steps and activities (if they are)



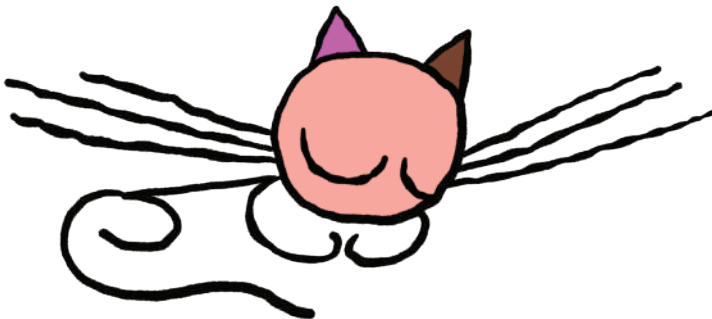
Joker Role

Structure: Step-by-Step Expanded Version

We have included below a set of suggested texts and questions that can be used by any Joker working with Forum Theatre. In the Image Theatre chapter, you can find the specific text to be used, tailored and adjusted to the Image Theatre method process.

The suggested text is helpful for beginner Jokers or those still building their confidence, strength, and own style. The number of questions depends mainly on the diversity of the audience's opinions and points of view, and to some extent on the time available for the entire process. The Joker needs to have a time perspective for the event and structure it so that all steps are covered before the event closes.

Below are examples of questions or specific text to use for each phase of the process. These are rather generic; we invite you to develop your own style and approach to facilitating a discussion on a specific topic, which often requires questions tailored to the issues the play addresses. (e.g., not to mention the word "problem" anymore, but specifically the problem the audience identified in the play; when referring to the "wrong decision", actually to mention it and not name it "decision", etc.)



1. Introduction from the Joker

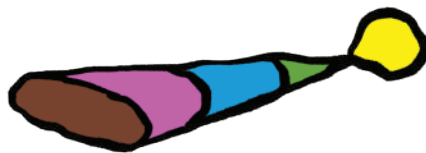
Proposed text:

"Hello, thank you very much for being here with us! We are a team of volunteers, who are not professional actors, that prepared a performance (give a name if you have a title for it) tackling a social issue/situation (NOTE: don't mention the issue - because this will influence the audience), inspired from reality, maybe it is also in your reality, which we want to introduce and to discuss with you. After the short play, I will come back and we will discuss your observations about the performance. As I have said, the volunteers are not professional actors, so I want to invite you to encourage them with a strong round of applause."

As an option, ask the audience a few questions about the issues addressed in the performance to help them feel more connected to the process. Ask questions inspired by aspects of the story, but be careful not to ask ones that would actually reveal the problem, as this would influence the audience. Examples: *"Who here has been a volunteer?"; "Who here is in love, or was in love at some point in your life?"; "Who here had a dream that came true?";* etc.

After you ask the questions, connect the play with the questions: *"This is the story of a person who is in love – let's see what happened to them – please give a round of applause as they are not professional actors and need some encouragement from us."*

Next: The play is performed for the first time.



Until this moment, no actors are on the stage – the Joker discusses alone with the audience. After the claps, you start the play.

During the play, the Joker usually informs the audience about the following:

Where is the scene taking place and when (*e.g. in front of the school before the classes, at Maria's house after school finishes, at Ian's office, etc.*).

How much time has passed in between the scenes (*e.g. after 3 weeks, after 1 year, etc.*).

2. The Problem

Proposed text:

"Now that you have seen our performance, let's discuss it more."

Optional:

"For one minute talk with the person on your right or left about the performance and what happened in it." –

After 2-3 minutes, continue with the entire audience.

- *What happened in this story?*

- *Did you observe any problems?*

- *What is the main problem, according to you, and why?*

- *Are there other opinions in this regard?*

- I see that some of you think the main problem reflected here is...and others that it is... Are there other opinions as well? To advance our discussion, I want to see how you think about it. Please raise a hand who considers that this performance is mainly about... and who thinks it's about... As more of you think it is... If it's okay with the others to view this story from this angle, we will continue in this direction so we can all use the same reference point in our discussions.

- *Is this story or problem real? Where do you think it is happening?*

- Does it happen in your community or around you as well? Could you give some examples?

- How did this problem end in our example? Do you think this type of situation always has to end this way?

- Can this be changed?

At this moment, we want to hear the audience members say YES, without any explanations or examples– we do not go into details.

3. The Characters

Proposed text:

“Let’s have a closer look at this story and analyse what is happening with the main people involved in it. You said we have an example of (the problem) here. Who is the person mainly affected by this problem?”

If the play is clear and well-constructed, the audience will mention the oppressed person as you have assigned the roles in the performance. If they say more than one person, repeat the question: *“Who do you think is most affected by the problem? Who suffers the most?”*

Invite the person playing the oppressed person onstage, and ask the audience to applaud again for them. Don’t mention to the audience they are oppressed – in the eyes of the audience they can be named the victim or the person suffering in this situation.

One by one, by making the connection between the characters, invite the actors on stage and for each of them ask the audience to applaud.

“Who is the person making the victim suffer or make that decision? to identify the oppressor from the audience perspective.

“Who supports or is on the side of ...?”

“Who else is in the story and what is their position towards this topic?”

When inviting the actors on stage:

- Position the actors in the way the audience perceives them: Oppressed side and Oppressor side, with the Joker standing between these sides.
- Whenever an Ally is mentioned, this person has to go to the side they are an Ally for.
- The neutral characters position themselves in the same line but at some distance from the rest.

At the end, the audience will see all the characters, their positions in the story, and the relations between them. Having this perspective helps the audience to identify potential solutions to the problem by making visual connections between the people involved.

For each character, ask the audience several questions.

Questions to be asked about the Oppressed Person:

- What can you say about this person?*
- What are they doing in the story?*
- What do we know about this person from the play?*
- Do you know people like them in your reality?*
- What is the last thing we know about them from the play? What does this person do/decide/plan at the end?*

The last two questions are asked only for the oppressed character. They aim to emphasise and make it clear to the audience the “wrong” decision that was made by the oppressed.

- Can they do something different so this story doesn't end the way it does?*

We only want to hear the audience say YES. Do not go into details—they will expand their ideas in the intervention phase.

Questions to be asked about the other characters (*except Oppressor*)

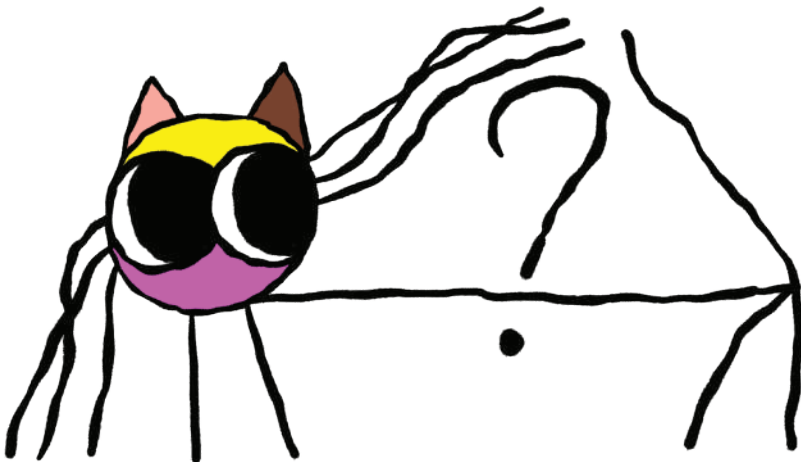
- What can you say about this person?*
- What are they doing in the story?*
- What do we know about this person from the play?*
- Do you know people like them in your reality?*
- Can they do something different so this story doesn't end the way it does?*

We only want to hear the audience say YES. Do not go into details—they will expand their ideas in the intervention phase.

Questions to be asked about the Oppressor

- What can you say about this person?*
- What are they doing in the story?*
- What do we know about this person from the play?*
- Do you know people like them in your reality?*

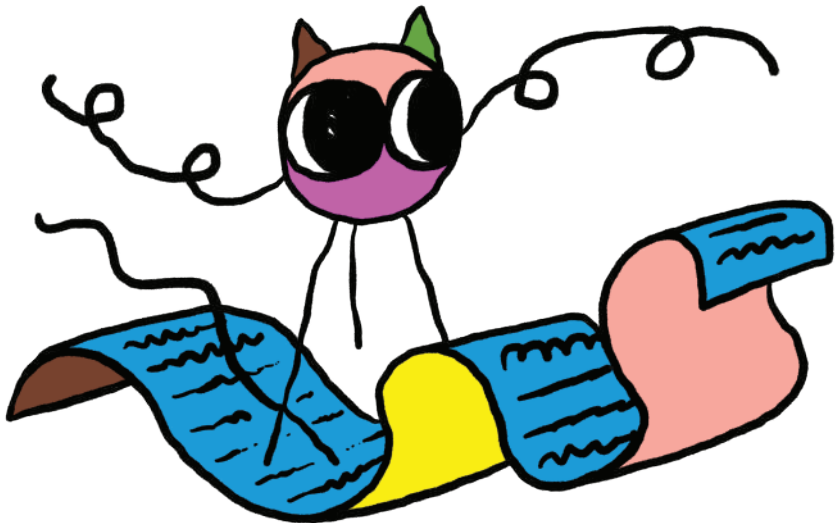
After you finish with all the characters, ask the audience to give them another round of applause and send them off the stage.



4. Change-making Process

Proposed text:

Up to now, we have been discussing a specific story that reflects a problem present also in your community. Our team decided to present this situation to you to explore together how it can be changed (if it can), especially since, as you also mentioned, many people face it. We have asked you to think about whether this can change and whether the people involved in the story can do something different to make it change. You have answered positively to these aspects. Now you have the chance actually to show how these situations can be changed. We do not want to talk about making changes – we want to show them. The power is in your hands. We will show the performance again from the beginning, and you already know how it ends. Whenever you consider that somebody involved in the situation can do something different, make a different decision, have a different attitude, you can come on stage and show it. The story will change and have a different ending only if you show all the ideas that you have when you told us that, this situation can be changed.



There are some rules that we follow to ensure your ideas can be processed more effectively:

- ***If you want to make a change – CLAP one time*** – at any moment when the people on the stage do not act as you think they should. The scene will freeze, and you can come in and replace one person, showing what they could do differently. You come and make a change for that specific moment – once you have finished your intervention, CLAP again, the stage will freeze, and you go back to the audience area.
- ***You can change ... (and mention their name/role in the story) – The only person you cannot change is ... (mention the name of the Oppressor).*** Of course, we wish that these kinds of people acted differently and didn't cause such situations, but they do exist in reality. It is not realistic to change them and make them into good people – we want to encourage you to find alternatives that people can use when confronted with such people or situations.
- ***No physical violence on stage*** - We don't encourage physical violence as a solution, even if you might disagree with this. In this process, you are invited to think about alternative solutions that do not involve physical violence!
- ***No magic on stage*** – we welcome realistic solutions; not that, for example, the victim wins the lottery and moves to another part of the world and doesn't have this problem anymore. Propose ideas that could be applied by similar people in similar situations.
- ***Only one person from the audience is on stage at a time*** – if you have another idea, you can show it after the person on stage finishes with their idea.
- ***Whenever you feel something can be done – clap*** – we do not go back in time, so take advantage of the moment where the change is needed!

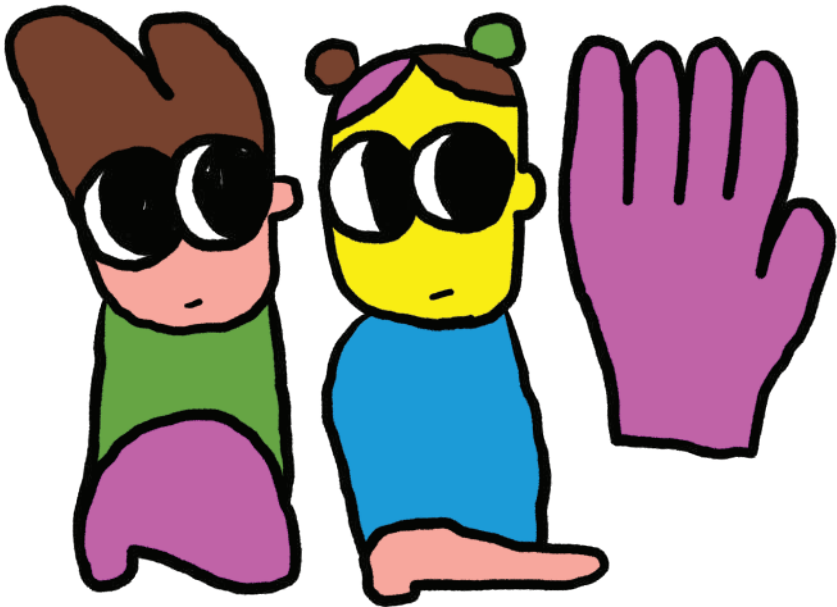
"If you don't like what's happening in this story – change it! If you don't change it, it will continue the same way."

Warming up the audience

(we included more examples of exercises or games that can be used in this step in the Games for Audience Chapter):

"Let's warm our hands, as you will use them for stopping the action in our play. I invite you to clap continuously and to change the speed of clapping based on the indicator I show to you, from faster to slower and so on."

The play is performed a second time, and audience members will stop it and propose changes.



5. Management of Interventions




Usually, the first intervention is critical because it breaks the ice. After the first, the change process becomes clearer for most of the audience members, and they gather courage and more ideas to come on stage.

You need to observe the audience to see if they are about to intervene and who claps first. If nobody is clapping, the Joker can clap – so the scene freezes and asks the audience:

“Do you think something can be done in this part of the story? Who can do something different? You mentioned earlier that these people can do something different? Here as well or not? Do you want to show it?” – Often, the people from the audience answer yes, and in this way, they feel more encouraged to come on stage.

You can also have a volunteer (undercover) in the audience who can help with a small intervention to break the ice – and then leave the process in the audience’s hands.









Before the person from the audience goes on stage, the Joker asks

-  Their name
-  Which character do they wish to change
-  From which specific moment of the discussion (*it happens that they wanted to intervene a few moments before, but by the time they clapped, the action had moved a bit*)




After each audience intervention, the Joker must follow a “protocol” to process each idea.

If other people want to make changes at this moment (or while the audience member is on stage), remind them they can share their ideas after we discuss this one now.

The “Protocol” of discussion for each intervention:

-  Asks the person who intervened: “What was your intention and what do you think you managed to achieve?”
-  After their answer, ask for another round of applause and send them back to the audience area.
-  Then asks the rest of the audience:
 -  What do you think? What did it change? Any other opinions?
 -  How realistic is it? Can it happen in reality, given what we know about the people involved in this situation? Is it possible for that person ...(say the role or their name) to act in this way?
 -  How many of you agree with this? (raise hands)
 -  If you don’t agree, why don’t you agree?
 -  Should we keep this change to see what happens next, or try a new alternative? Let’s vote!

Depending on the audience’s vote, one of the following can happen:

-  They vote to keep the change made – therefore, the actor who was replaced will continue to act as suggested by the audience;
-  They vote that the change was not realistic and/or didn’t improve the situation. The play continues in the same way as initially until the subsequent intervention.
-  An audience member has another idea for showing a change for the same character (for the exact moment/point of the action), and they are allowed to show it. In this situation, the two proposed alternatives are compared, and one will be selected to be kept.

If the audience members take too long on stage, repeating the arguments, the Joker can clap to freeze the scene and ask the audience member if they still want to continue or if they have finished what was on their mind.

After each decision made with the audience, the process continues in one of the following ways, depending on the situation:

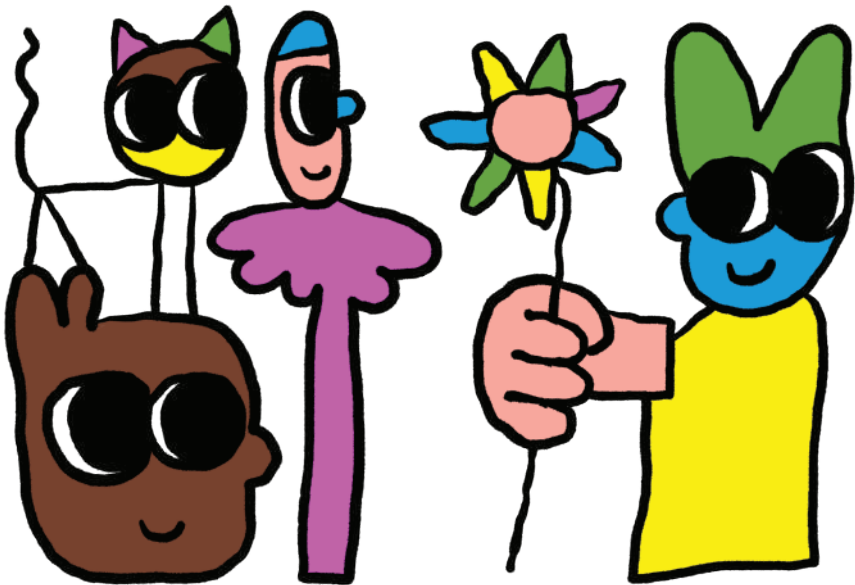
- **The performance continues as planned.** The changed actor is now acting as suggested by the audience member. At any time in the scene, the audience CLAPs and makes additional changes.
- **In case a few changes are made in one scene, or when the audience changes the same character many times, you can ask:** *“In this specific situation or moment of the story, who else can do something different?”* The audience will mention a few ideas. Encourage them to come on the stage and show their ideas.
- **When some changes approved by the audience clearly “cancel” the possibility of the initially planned scenes happening,** you need to consult the audience about what can happen next. *“Now that this person is like this (...), what do you think will happen next? Where is the next moment in the story?”* Discuss and decide with the audience which next scene is the most realistic, probable, and necessary for the purpose of the process. (to prevent the oppressed from taking the “wrong” decision and to reduce the oppression level)

Example: In a play about bullying, in the initial performance, the oppressed don't share their struggles at school with their parents (who have a neutral role). The audience decides to change the student and have them share their experience of bullying with their parents. After this change, the Joker discussed with the audience about what would happen next. The audience agreed that the parent would go to the school and consult with the teacher/director, and a new scene was created in this way.

In rarer circumstances – especially if the play has some construction problems (*not exploring enough different roles in a specific situation - e.g. a play on domestic violence includes only family members roles without showing anything from the out-of-family life of the oppressed*) or is performed in front of the wrong audience (*e.g. a bullying play only with pupils roles played for a crowd made of teachers and parents*), you can encourage the audience to think about the power and the role of other people connected to the situation:

- *Who else can do something in this kind of situation?*
- *Is there anyone who didn't appear on stage but who we know is connected to this story in some way and can influence it?*
- *How can that person do something?*

If these new people are mentioned, they need to be acted out by the people who proposed them.



6. Summary

Proposed text:

"We talked today about..., we presented an example inspired by real life, you said it also happens in your communities, and we tried to explore possibilities of approaching such problems. You mentioned that in such situations, person X can do this..., person Y can do this..... etc."

The list of changes proposed can be drafted with the help of the audience members: "How did we change the story today? Who did you change and how? Let's list today's outcomes ..."

7. Transfer

Proposed text:

"These situations occur in your community, as you mentioned before; you or people around you are being confronted with such problems. Based on our discussions and the proposals you have made, what are you going to use in your community? What can you apply there? What do you take with you from this meeting?"

Optional activity: Instead of asking the entire audience to share their ideas, you can divide the audience into smaller groups (2 to 3 people) to share what ideas they have for transferring in their lives from the performance. Give them about 5-10 minutes, then have each group share some of their ideas.

8. Conclusion

Proposed text

“Based on everything you have mentioned, we can conclude that it is important to pay attention to oppression around us and to intervene before it is too late. Every action matters.”

The conclusion has to be tailored to the specificities of the topic, the discussions, and the ideas mentioned in the Transfer phase. Sometimes, during the transfer step, some answers are more general and motivational, and those could be given back to the audience as a final conclusion.

9. Closure

Proposed text:

“Thank you so much for taking part in this process, for your active involvement, ideas, thoughts and commitment. (...continue based on your case... we listed a few options):

- We invite you to provide us with short feedback on what we have done here today so we can improve the experience of future audiences. (...elaborate on the exact procedure you plan to use).

- We hope to see you again on future occasions. If you would like us to keep you updated on our events, please let us know your contact details.

- We are going to spend some time now, informally, in the next room; you are invited to join us.

- We continue today with another event (...provide details) ...and you are invited to join as well.”

Joker Role

Steps Rationale

The order of these steps is critical. Each of these steps builds on the “achievements” of the previous steps. If a Joker jumps any of them, or doesn’t cover them adequately, the rest of the process will be affected, sometimes in irreversible ways.

Below, we explain the rationale of each step and what the consequences are if one step is not covered adequately or if any of them are skipped.

Step 1 – Introduction

It has to be short, maximum 2-3 minutes, aiming only to incite curiosity and set the mood for the rest of the process. If the introduction takes more time, including unnecessary information (such as the history of Theatre of the Oppressed and its various methods, the history of the group, their working process, etc.) or information that should be given later (such as what will happen after the performance) it becomes like a little lecture which may bore the audience, demotivate them or decrease their enthusiasm. Keep it short, focus on the key aspects, and start the performance as soon as possible – the real experience for the audience begins with it.

We have to mention that the actors are non-professional actors to reduce the level of expectations towards the acting part, which may not be up to professional standards. Additionally, we convey the idea that our actors are like our audience, and later, when we invite them on stage, it reduces the pressure they might feel about coming on stage.

- **The Forum Theatre rules make sense after the audience has seen the performance and taken part in the follow-up discussion.** If you explain all the rules and steps of the process in extensive detail, the audience members get confused because they are overloaded with information, which doesn't make much sense without seeing the play first. This can be a difficult start that can influence the mood and overall atmosphere for the rest of the process.

Very important to be included and never to be forgotten:

- The actors are not-professional
- It is inspired by reality to focus the audience's attention on real life rather than fiction.
- It has a short duration, and after the performance, you come back to talk to them, so they don't rush to leave.
- Ask for applause before the play – to encourage the actors and set the theatre mood.

Step 2 - The Problem

- **This has to be the first part of the discussion** to lay the foundation for the process adequately. We cannot discuss individuals or changes before we have an agreement on what the problem at hand is.
- **The audience must agree on the central problem addressed in the performance.** This main problem has to be framed in concrete terms linked to a type of oppression between individuals. Vague issues such as loneliness, ignorance, apathy, etc., are not suitable. You need to ask more questions about what happened during the actual performance and to collect more concrete examples of the main problem.

■ **When the audience mentions multiple main problems,** you need to decide, with them, which is the main one based on the majority. If you don't make this decision before moving to the next step, there will be significant confusion throughout the rest of the process. For some audience members, the problem they are working on is one; for others, another. This would reflect in how they vote, the arguments they give, and the ideas they propose. It will make it challenging to have a common goal with the audience, as a single common reference point (the problem) is missing.

■ **Once the main problem is agreed on, you need to make the connection with the reality of the audience.** You ask the audience whether this problem exists in their lives and communities, and, if so, to share a few examples of others who have experienced similar situations and what happened to them. The connection to reality increases the likelihood of greater audience involvement. People tend to engage more with issues that are real and close to their own lives. If this connection is not done, the process becomes more artificial, a rational exercise and leads to some disengagement from the audience.

Very important to be included and never to be forgotten:

- The framing of the problem in a concrete form of oppression between individuals
- One main problem to be agreed upon by the audience
- Connect the problem to the audience's reality – ask for other examples.
- Ask whether the problem can be changed – to start the process of changing the problem at hand.

Step 3 - The Characters

Step 2 is to set the general framing of the main problem being addressed. In Step 3, we continue the analysis of the problem through a concrete example – the one exposed in the performance.

It is logical to focus on the specific story revealed and the people involved. If the audience doesn't have the chance to reflect specifically on the story and its main actors, it will be harder for them to identify solutions and propose them on the stage.

The audience needs a clear mapping of who is who in the story – this information is required during the phase of making changes and interventions. Without this step, the audience would decode some of the characters differently. Some may see one character as an ally, some as neutral; they may even disagree on who is the main oppressed, etc. They need to agree on each character in the story. If the audience has different opinions, ask them to vote. There shouldn't be any confusion left in the audience.

The analysis process of each character includes several points which are essential for the next phases of the process:

Check what the audience knows about that specific character.

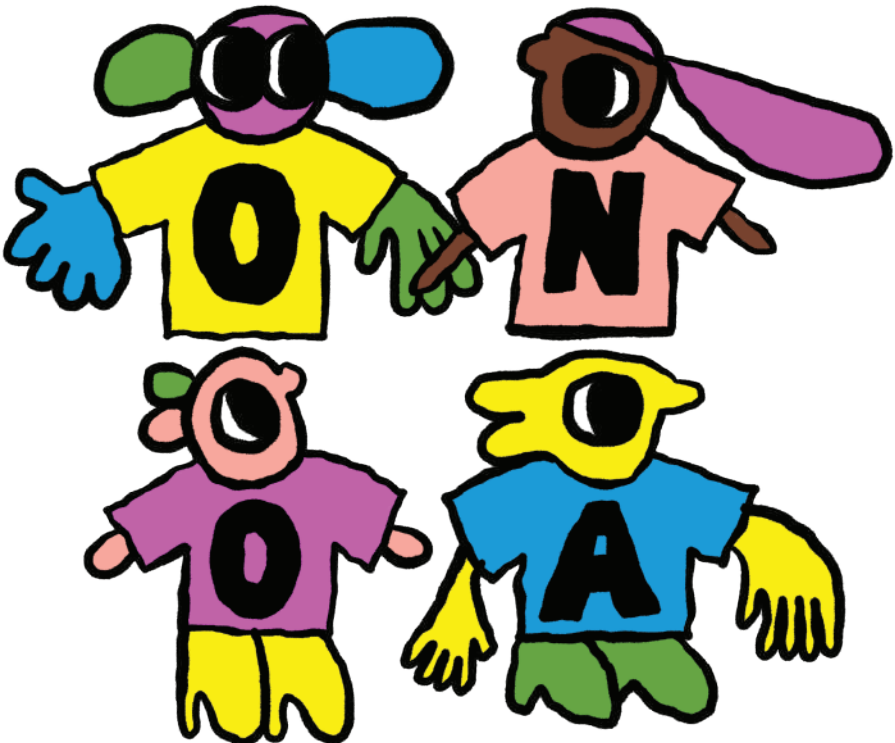
This ensures the same level of information on what happened in each scene. It happens that some audience members pay more attention than others, and some capture more details from some scenes, while others do from others. By collecting all the facts about each character, we ensure the information is shared with the entire audience, which will be needed to make changes or analyse them in the following steps.

Check if the audience knows people like the characters in real life. Connecting with reality, as mentioned in step 2, contributes to greater engagement in the process among audience members.

- Ask if those characters can do something different in the same situation. This continues the question of whether the problem can be changed (see step 2) by opening the thinking process on the possibilities of changes that exist in each character (except the oppressor)

Very important to be included and never to be forgotten:

- Decide with the audience on each character and their role (oppressed, oppressor, allies, neutral)
- Ask for each character what information is known from the performances
- Ask if the audience knows people like them and if they can do something different

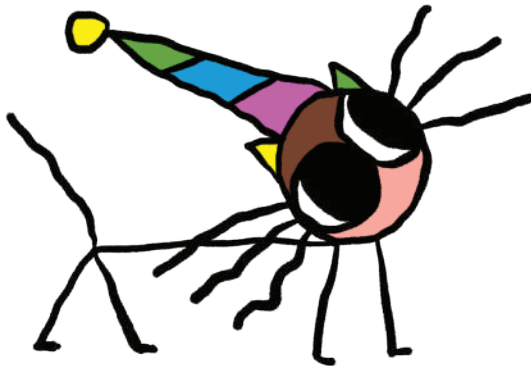


Step 4 - The Change-Making Process

- The rules and the process for making changes have to be introduced in an obvious, straightforward way** to ensure everyone in the audience understands fully what will happen and how.
- If this step is rushed or not explained in enough detail**, it could confuse audience members; they may not know how to come on stage, who to change, how long they can stay there, etc. This makes it harder for the Joker to motivate them to come on stage in the next step.
- Include a warm-up for the audience**, as it helps them better prepare to come on stage.
- Without something more playful, if the audience doesn't know each other from before, there can be some reluctance to go on the stage. A warm-up with the audience will never have a negative outcome, so make sure to include it every time.

Very important to be included and never to be forgotten:

- To explain ALL the rules for making changes in a clear and simple way
- Warm-up of the audience
- A reminder of our purpose and the power they have as the audience



Step 5 – Management of Interventions

- **This part of the process is most at risk of becoming chaotic**, going in multiple directions, losing focus, and becoming confusing. The proposed structure helps keep track of the discussion, maintain focus, and sustain flow.
- **If you don't discuss each intervention one by one** and instead allow any willing audience members to make changes, it would create chaos and confusion. The audience will not know in which direction they are heading or how they are heading there.
- **The person proposing a change must have the first opportunity to explain their** initial intention and what they think they achieved. This information is essential to be shared with the rest of the audience before they start analysing the change. As they have been on stage, directly interacting with the actors, they have first-hand impressions of the actual situation. They should be the first to share their impressions because of that.

Very important to be included and never to be forgotten:

- Discuss first with the audience member **AFTER** they have done their intervention, then ask the other audience members what they observed (from outside).
- Applaud all the people who are going on stage. Validation and recognition for their decision to act motivates and encourages others to follow suit.
- Decide with the audience what happens next, if the change is kept and how the story goes on.
- After all decisions have been made with the audience, clearly communicate to the actors what happens next – where the next scene takes place, who is there and what changes should be reflected in the next acting part.

Step 6 – Summary

The summary after a long and deep discussion helps the audience synthesise the experience. It makes it easier mentally to think about the transfer – removing this step will consequently make it harder to think about transfer.

Step 7 – Transfer

It is a crucial step for the audience to mentally connect all these discussion outcomes with their own reality. This is the moment when, before they return to their day-to-day lives, the audience reflects on what they can use and where they want to do so.

Providing time and space for reflection on the personal transfer would ensure a more substantial impact on our audience than assuming and hoping the audience would do this on their own.

Step 8 – Conclusion

This is a small step aimed at bringing the process to a close. In the transfer phase, many ideas and thoughts have been shared. In this step, you ensure a smooth transition to the last step, which would otherwise come abruptly.

Step 9 – Closure

This part of the process brings the process to an end. It makes clear to the audience that it is the end and what happens next (if anything).

Joker Role

Recommendations and Advice

Follow the structure

Many problems experienced by Jokers stem from their failure to follow the proposed structure, intentionally or not. Write down the steps, have notes handy, use any technique that could help you to keep track of the process, etc. – do not underestimate the importance of following these steps adequately. We say this from extensive experience.

Do not abuse the voting system without balancing it with explaining arguments and points of view. Allow adequate time for the audience members to explain their points of view or to collect opinions from more people before voting.

Never decide by voting without providing space for different opinions and arguments to be shared.

Foster a safe environment

You need to strive to make the audience feel safe to be open, to talk about their lives and their views on different people, their actions and their impact on their lives.

Pay attention to the reaction of different audience members and how they handle what happens. If they get emotional after witnessing the performance, give them a few minutes to talk about how they feel and why (*preferably in smaller groups*) before you move on to discuss the problem, characters, etc.

■ If you are a beginner, we recommend avoiding very sensitive topics for your audience. The audience may react strongly, which could be too much for a first-time Joker to handle.

Do your best to be Neutral

■ You need to consciously and intentionally strive to be as neutral as possible. A joker with an obvious bias, own agenda, pushy in a specific direction, etc., can be one of the biggest problems in the process. This is one of the biggest issues that Jokers struggle with.

■ It can be challenging, especially when you are personally concerned and interested in the topic tackled in the performance.

■ Be open to critical feedback and reflect on what can trigger your neutrality, why, and what measures you can take to address it.

■ If the audience doesn't see the main problem as you planned with your team, or they don't recognise the roles as you intended, you need to go with the process as the audience perceives the play. Do not tell them what it is actually about, as this leads to a process in which there are right or wrong answers, and the audience is there just as a helper/aide.



Use the Right Questions

- Write down the questions you plan to use for each of the process steps. Make sure you predominantly use OPEN questions, which favour more ideas and explanations. The richness and power of the Forum Theatre process come from the discussion that the audience has.
- Whenever you use Closed questions (e.g. *Do you agree with ...*), follow up with open questions. More people can say YES or NO, but their reasons may differ, and the Forum Theatre should provide space to hear different opinions, arguments, reasons, etc.
- The questions have to be neutral, not leading towards an expected answer (e.g. *you all agree with this right?*) or including your own opinion or evaluation of a specific action (e.g. *Do you also think it is a good idea? etc.*)
- If people do not respond to your questions, rephrase them, simplify them. Do not move to the next question without getting answers for the previous one – the audience will not know for which question you want answers.
- Intentionally involve people who talk less by asking other opinions from people that didn't shared so far, and give priority to them to speak or come on the stage. This would encourage others to participate in the process.
- Avoid using questions such as *"Do you all agree?"*; *"Do you all see this person as oppressed?"*; Etc. without checking by raising hands. Do not assume that non-verbal nodding/approval from some people reflects everyone's opinion. Never assume what the entire audience thinks without asking them to raise hands/vote on a specific proposal/idea.

Use the Right Words

- The terminology used should always be as simple and straightforward as possible to avoid misunderstandings.
- Try, as a Joker, to put yourself in the shoes of the audience and to make it as easy for them to follow the process as possible.
- It is preferable not to use terms such as 'oppression,' 'oppressed,' 'oppressor,' etc., as these are abstract and likely unfamiliar to most audience members. It would add a mental task to operate with a new concept and to follow the process at the same time.
- Use better the concrete manifestations of the specific oppression you are addressing in your play: bullying, discrimination, domestic violence, etc., rather than introducing a new concept and risking confusion among audience members.

Be patient and calm

- Don't panic if people don't respond to your questions right away, don't clap to make changes, raise hands, etc. Silent times are often a sign that people are thinking about what to say and getting the courage to say it. Look around and read people's facial expressions – they are thinking about the answer, looking confused about what you asked or seem to be in a different mindset.
- Don't get overexcited when many people have many opinions and ideas. Do not let everybody talk and come on stage when they want.
- Don't lose control of the process. If you don't let the audience be super free, it doesn't mean they will not share or want to be part of the process anymore.

Help the audience

- Repeat often what audience members say to make sure everybody knows what others have said, and it also helps keep the audience's focus.
- Summarise often, especially when discussions go on for a long time and take many directions.

Interrupting audience members when needed is essential!

- When a member of the audience starts explaining what they plan to do in the scene, interrupt and encourage them to show their idea rather than talk about it.
- It is imperative to be very strict about this and to set the right tone.
- Once you allow some people to talk extensively about their ideas, it encourages more and more audience members to do the same and not come on stage.
- When people take up too much space, repeat themselves excessively, talk without giving others a turn, interrupt others, etc., you need to intervene, because if you don't, they will monopolise and demotivate others from talking.
- When people respond to your questions but answer something that doesn't seem to be an answer to your question, they say unrelated things – you have to stop them as well and remind them what the question you are asking is.
- If you let everyone say whatever they want (related or unrelated), it is a sure recipe for confusion and a chaotic process.

Do not praise solutions proposed or the ideas verbalised

- Avoid giving value comments to what the audience says or does (*e.g. Wonderful! Perfect Idea! Etc.*)
- Even if this is encouraging, it gives the impression that there are right or wrong solutions or ideas.
- The same applies to the audience members. You need to encourage them to analyse the proposed idea/intervention and its potential impact on the situation, rather than judge the acting part of minor details unrelated to the main idea of the change.
- Allowing personal or unrelated judgments can create an atmosphere in which other audience members would be reluctant to come on stage.

Be natural

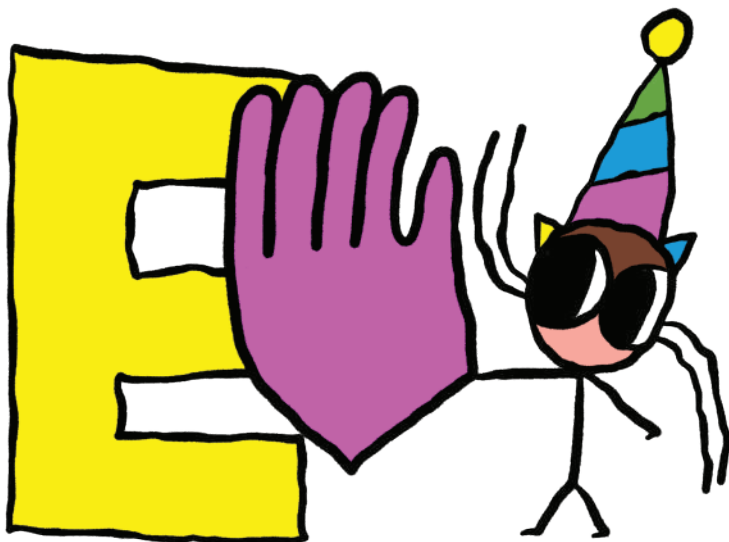
- Don't force yourself to be somebody in particular.
- The audience can feel your energy, and they are usually more cooperative and open when you are relaxed and natural.

Trust the method and the process

- Each audience has its own pace; some are very eager and committed from the first minutes, while others warm up to the process more slowly.
- The method works because it is emotionally and mentally engaging, stimulating and relevant. Remind yourself that not everyone or every group has to behave the same.

Be aware of your Ego!

- Your Ego can manifest differently in this process. If you have a strong desire to be perfect, flawless, to have all the right questions and/or answers, to be perceived as funny or charismatic, to be popular, etc., it may raise issues if this clashes with some of the principles of the Forum Theatre process.
- If your Ego becomes more important than the aim for which you are having this role, it may negatively affect the outcomes. For example, wanting too much to be liked or popular may prevent you from interrupting people when needed; or when “you have to be right all the time” may prevent you from correcting yourself if you have made a mistake, accepting you have made a mistake and blaming external factors for what is happening, etc.
- Your Ego may be the one that could make you lose neutrality, become aggressive, rush the process, etc.



Joker Role

Challenges

Many challenges Jokers face are due to mistakes made during the process of preparing/designing the play. Even the most skilled and experienced Jokers have a hard time Joking a play that is too complex, confusing, or not relevant to the audience.

It is essential to allocate sufficient attention, dedication and critical thought for

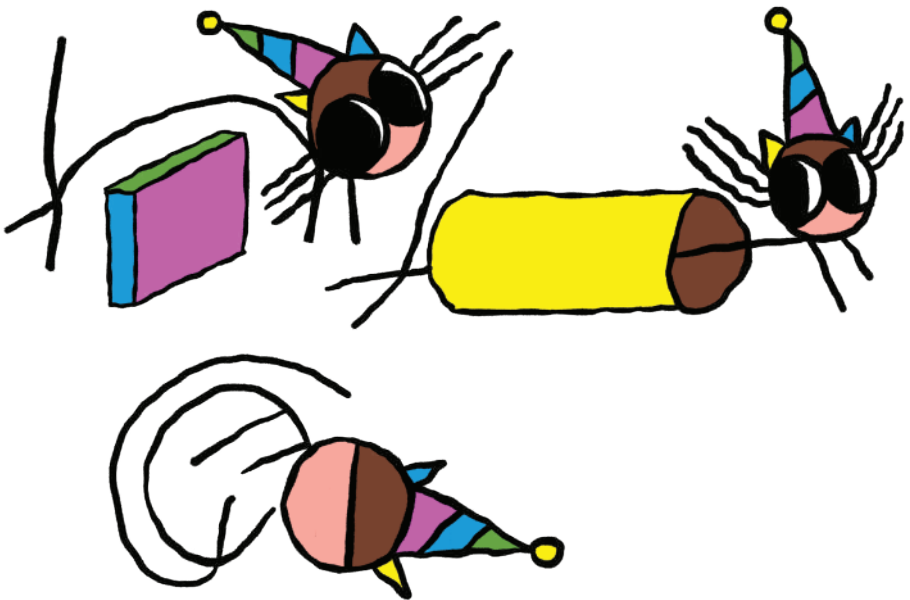
- All the steps and rules required in the creation of the play;
- Identifying the right audience;
- Testing the play before going to the audience;
- Team preparation, as a group not ready or sufficiently prepared to face an audience, will create difficulties for the whole process;
- Risk assessment and designing plan B (and C);
- Joker's personal preparation (planning the questions, the warm-ups, etc.)
- Logistical preparations (an unsuitable location or space for the performance will majorly affect how the performance goes);

Any of these aspects, delivered superficially or incorrectly, may create difficulties for the Joker, which could have been handled only previously and not during the play.

Generally, for any challenge, a Joker face, as a rule of thumb, first reflects on whether all these aspects were delivered as expected before identifying causes that emerged during performance.

Next, we list a series of common challenges Jokers encounter in their practice, indicate their potential causes and strategies to handle them on the spot.

Some of the challenges mentioned below are common to Jokers working with other Theatre of the Oppressed methods as well.



Joker's Nightmares

We detail below three main categories of challenges that pose the most common problems for Jokers. We called them “nightmares” – nobody wants to have them, but sometimes we still have them.

For each category, we detail the reasons for that challenge to occur, what Jokers can do wrong and a list of tips to be applied by a Joker in handling those specific types of challenges.

- Time Management Issues
- Management of Audience Participation Issues
- Managing conflict issues

Time Management Issues – When Jokers complain and talk about insufficient time to go through all the phases of the process.

The first remark we have on this aspect is that time is not guilty of anything. If anybody is guilty, it is the Joker and how they made use of the available time!



Managing time can be difficult for various reasons:

- Members of the audience are active, involved, have many ideas (sometimes unrelated) and explain them in a detailed manner.
- Discussions are complex, the terminology is new, many questions arise (about the discussed issues or the Forum Theatre process), and you cannot move to the next step in discussions without a solid understanding of the audience.
- Underestimation of the time needed for different aspects of the process and realising it requires more time on the spot (which might not be available if you have a room booked for a specific amount of time).
- Optimistic assumptions about the audience, their knowledge and level of grasp on this type of event, and discussions which prove wrong and the Joker wasn't prepared for that.
- Unexpected issues arise during the performance (e.g., disturbances from external events or unrelated parties, conflicts, etc.), which affect the planned time.
- Lack of coordination between jokers and actors, which led to the play and interventions on the stage taking more time than planned.

What can the Joker do wrong?

- They don't follow time; they let themselves go with the flow and realise that time is almost out when it is already too late.
- They get overly enthusiastic about anyone who wants to talk or intervene (because of their fear that the audience will not participate), and lose control of the time frame – they allow everyone to speak as much as they wish and when they want.

- They are afraid to stop and interrupt people talking, not to prevent them from speaking again. Or the opposite: they get aggressive with the audience, and this indeed prevents people from further engagement, slowing down the process as well.
- They don't frame people's interventions more firmly (*e.g., to insist on brief interventions, not to repeat other people's points of view, or to comment on the point*) and their number (*e.g., to limit the number of interventions/answers at different stages of discussion*).
- They don't control the process with the actors as firmly when actors take longer than they should to act or repeat scenes.
- They take their own explanations of the process and rules for granted as easy to understand, and they end up talking more, repeating in clearer, simpler terms. For the same reason, they rush with the explanations, only to later realise the audience didn't understand everything they had to do.
- If things go differently than planned, they panic, get agitated and nervous, and rush, jump phases, or improvise actions, which don't help them in the long run. Their stress also stresses out the audience, leading to discomfort and awkward reactions.



Tips for Jokers experiencing Time Management Nightmares

- **Fully accept and embrace the fact that what happens during the time you have is your responsibility and within your power to control.** If you start pointing fingers at other people (actors, audience, etc.) or at other aspects (weather, rooms, noise, etc.), it won't help you manage time better. In fact, it is proportional. The more you point fingers at other aspects, the higher the probability that you will fail to manage your time adequately. You are the host and manager of the process, and everything you do determines how it goes. Your actions frame and influence others' behaviour.
- **Be constantly aware of the time.** You don't need to stress about it, but you need to be conscious. You may use a clock in the room, a wrist-watch, a phone, or a colleague signalling from the audience – for any method you use, try to check subtly, and don't give the impression to the audience that you are in a hurry or stressed out. With experience, so too comes a better sense of how time passes. Nevertheless, a Joker must monitor time objectively and ensure that all stages of the process are adequately implemented.
- **Use the structure to help you manage time.** Less structured processes are more likely to be more challenging to manage. That's why we have designed structures to help Jokers and practitioners achieve the aims of the Theatre of the Oppressed. The structure is there to help you; use it with confidence and make any adjustments, bearing in mind the consequences on the overall time.
- **Prioritise group process over individual ones.** There are always people in the audience who exhibit behaviours that can take up time in a non-constructive way, such as dominating conversations and demanding constant space.

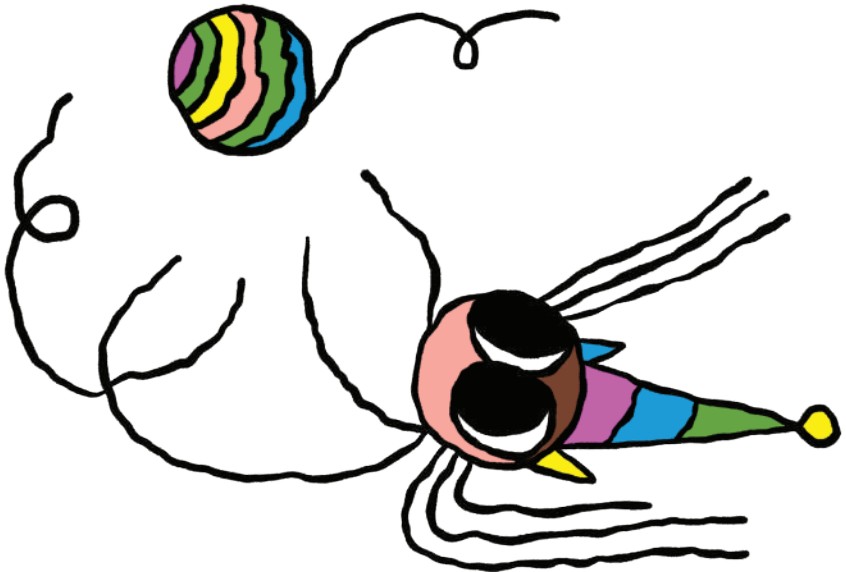
Jokers who wish to stimulate participation and be welcoming and accommodating to everyone often fall into a trap of providing all the space demanded by these people, at the detriment of the group. If you cater more to these people's needs, you are losing the others and also control of the group. As a Joker, you need to keep an eye on the whole group and their well-being, and if required, **do interrupt, do stop people, do remind them of exactly what the questions were, do ask other people for input, do not give space to the same people, etc.** Of course, all these actions can be done in a gentle and reasonable manner, so that even people who needed attention but didn't get it will not feel offended by your interruption. It is also helpful to make everyone aware of the group and how their actions can affect others and the process. The same goes for dealing with "disobedient" actors. Their needs shouldn't overpower the process's needs for the audience.

Keep track of the discussed points. You need to protect the flow of the discussions and make people answer to the raised questions. It happens that either people misunderstand your question or they really want to say something (unrelated). They start sharing (and taking up time) things that don't support the discussion, which distracts the group and, if allowed, encourages others to do the same. As a Joker, you need to repeat the question and clearly emphasise what answers you are looking for. Stop people from commenting on unrelated topics; mention that this isn't the time or place for those issues, and remind the group to stay focused. The audience members can go on as much as you let them. If they go off the track, it is your responsibility to bring them back fast.

Prioritise the crucial aspects of the process. If you need to speed up, skip or rush some part of the process, make sure you save the most significant aspects. Yes, all elements are essential and support each other, but at the same time, if you realise you don't have any more time for all of them, it is better to make wise adjustments.

- You could speed up the collection of opinions as bullet points instead of elaborated points of view, limit the number of interventions for each scene, focus only on the most relevant scenes, insist on addition to the conversation (and not repeat already mentioned points) and summarise the discussion points often. You need sufficient time to reach the end of the process – to achieve a “positive outcome” such as reduced oppression or a better outcome for the oppressed person.

■ **Take it easy.** Often, Jokers put so much pressure on themselves, expect to manage the process perfectly, and, as a result, act stiff, nervous, emotional, and like a “ticking bomb” – meaning that when something goes unplanned (which almost always happens), they will crack and act inadequately. The simplest thing a Joker can do seems to be the hardest – to expect things to go wrong and to deal with them one at a time. Be honest with the audience, consult with them on the best reactions in case something external affects the whole process, explain that the process might need more time and that they could help as well, etc.



Management of Audience Participation Issues

- when Jokers complain that audience members don't engage, they engage in the process too much, or they engage "*wrongly*".

The first remark we have about this aspect is that the audience does what they know/want to do, unless Joker guides them onto a desired path.

Managing audience participation can be difficult for various reasons:

- The audience is composed mainly of people who are not relevant to the topic or issues raised by the performance.
- The play and/or the process are confusing, vague and not relevant to their profile and experiences.
- The play may be emotionally too strong and shock the audience.
- The composition of the audience might limit participation by some members if there are people in the room with power or tense (problematic) relations with others.
- Participants are shy and don't feel comfortable talking in front of strangers, and especially acting in front of them. Or, on the other hand, they feel very relaxed, enjoy the process, have many ideas, and are super excited to make changes, debate proposals, and engage in critical conversations.
- Some audience members have experience in similar processes and proceed through the steps proposed by the Joker at a faster pace than other members of the audience.
- Some audience members are familiar with the audience group, actors, or the team; they take friendly liberties and are more at ease acting and intervening in the process.
- Some participants show a different understanding of the rules and steps explained by the Joker and come on stage to replace people who cannot be replaced, when others are on stage, or to show magic ideas, etc.

What can the Joker do wrong?

- When people don't talk, the Joker panics and either victimises themselves or tries to emotionally manipulate the audience to get engaged.
- They allow audience members to talk about their ideas instead of showing them on the stage, which demotivates other people from coming on the stage (especially if it happens at the beginning of the process).
- They push for a rational conversation when the audience needs to process their emotions (especially after a very emotional play).
- They are not assertive with over-participative audience members and make passive-aggressive or aggressive remarks to discourage their participation.
- They are influenced by audience members used to the process and its faster pace, and continue the process at their own rhythm, leaving the others (often the majority) behind.
- When participants intervene outside of the introduced framework, the Joker either directly invalidates their intervention, which generally demotivates the audience from participation, or lets it happen without any remark, which encourages others to contribute with unrelated ideas.
- The Joker directly explains the performance's message when the audience is confused or cannot extract the exact meaning of what the team intended; the Joker becomes a preacher and lecturer, in contrast to facilitators who only ask questions.

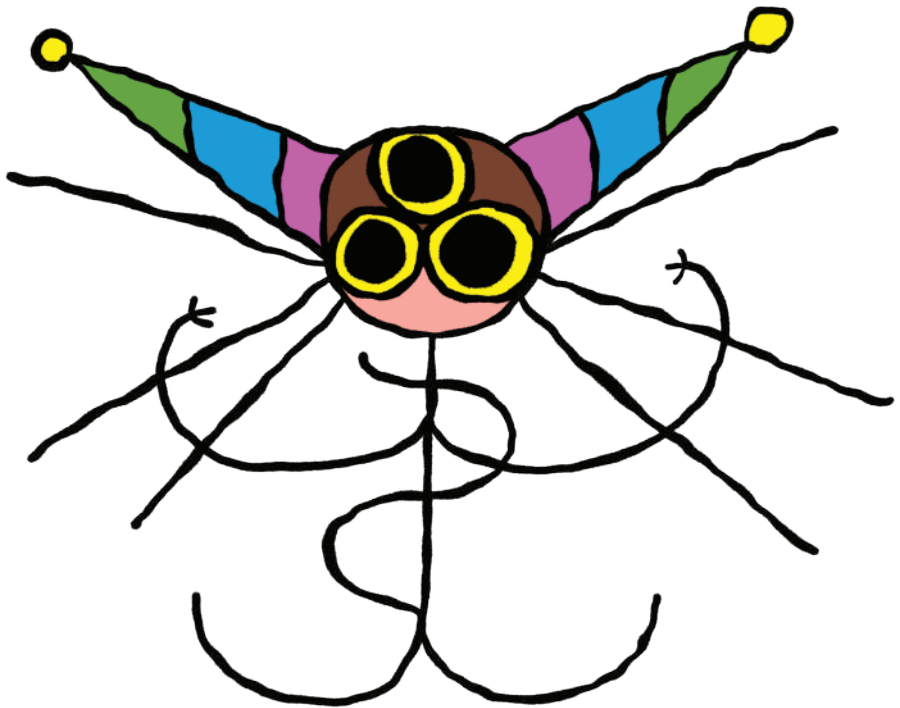
Tips for Jokers experiencing Audience Participation Nightmares

Go as fast as the slowest person in the room. People have different rhythms, experiences and styles; some are more reflective, while others are more impulsive and active. Our speed should be adapted to those who need a slower pace, as with a slower pace, you keep everyone on board (even if some people might feel it dull or slow, they will still be able to follow), while with a faster pace, you definitely lose people. This should be reflected in the language used, with simple, easy terms and concepts, and in constantly checking to ensure everyone is on the same level regarding the progress of events.

Activate your emotions radar. It is essential to sense if a group needs more time to process their emotions from watching a strong play before continuing to decode it rationally. If their feelings are very strong after watching the play, they need a space to process their reactions. If they cannot do that, some of them will be lost for the subsequent phases of the process. You may ask them to say how they feel (in one word or another method) and what makes them feel that way, which they can share in pairs or trios, and then, in the big group, share some final thoughts from the small groups (optional). If some people turn off completely, they may even leave the event – and that’s ok; we cannot know the life stories people bring to our events and what sensitive buttons we trigger. To process emotions is essential, but it’s not our primary focus. We should provide a minimum space to vent strong emotions, but after acknowledging the emotional impact and trigger, we still need to continue with our Forum Theatre Process.

Focus on the people who are not engaging. It is easy to get “distracted” by people who engage, talk, and participate, as they require your attention, feedback, and coordination.

And while your attention and energy go into managing the “active” people, you lose sight of those who don’t engage. You need to develop a third-eye vision and, in parallel with supervising the active/visible participants, check on those not engaging. Make eye contact with them, see their reactions and behaviour. Regularly ask for new input from people who didn’t participate or haven’t expressed themselves so far; ask for a show of hands on who agrees or disagrees with the previous comment; ask for justifications of their positions; invite new people on stage, etc. Give them attention, show that you see them; that you care whether they are on board, and that you want everyone on board. Don’t assume that whoever wants to talk will; some people need space and peace to do so, so ensure you create an accommodating environment for everyone.



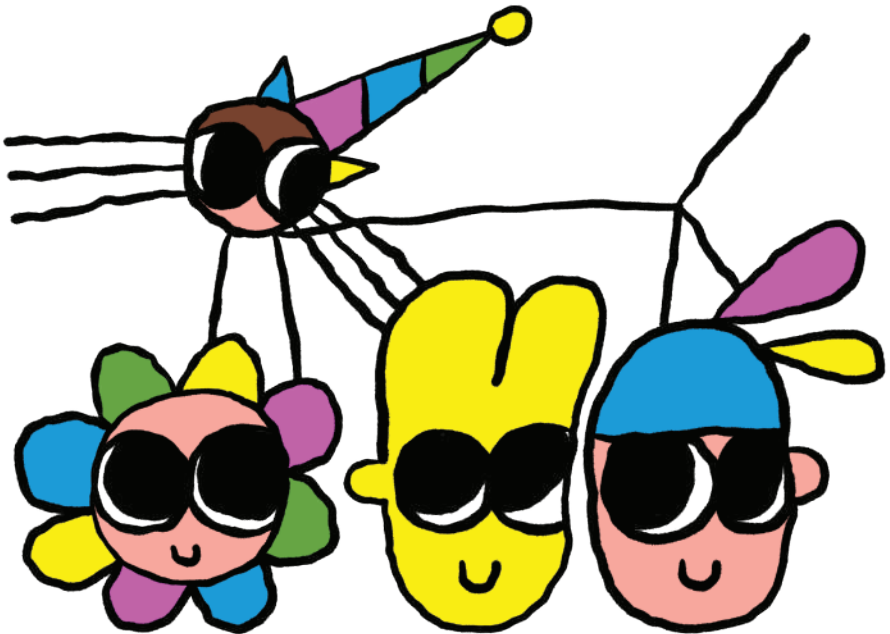
Adapt your style to the audience. Open questions favour more audience input, and close questions discourage broad sharing. Therefore, if your audience is not very talkative, it might be because your questions don't stimulate them – use fewer yes/no questions and more open questions (what, why, how, who), which favour more sharing. Do the opposite when audiences are overly participative and talkative. Warm-up games can help defrost a stiff audience, and you should always be ready to do one or more during the process if you think they will help. Some people need to play a little bit to shift their energy and activate their brains and motivation. On the other hand, some people don't need to be overly stimulated by games; in fact, it can disrupt the process.

Work WITH the audience, not FOR the audience. Use the group's diverse experiences, styles, and understanding of Forum Theatre to help you manage issues with audience members who misunderstand or make “wrong” interventions. Ask the audience to give opinions or answers to raised questions or to out-of-place interventions. If comments and reminders about the rules come from other audience members, they might be more readily embraced, reduce the Joker's authority perception, and also provide validation to attentive and active participants.

Be assertive. Be honest, frank and direct with the audience. If their participation (either low or high) is becoming really problematic, you have tried different methods and approaches, and it is still hard, be blunt with the audience. Explain that this is not going anywhere good; you need their cooperation to move forward, and it will be helpful if they can share how they are in the process, what can be changed to accommodate them better, how they can participate more effectively, or what's on their mind. To deny or pretend nothing “wrong” is going on and to drag out a difficult process is not constructive at all; it mainly feeds a hurt Joker's ego that doesn't want to accept defeat.

Sometimes, when Jokers try too hard to “play a role”, people who like games and tricks get activated and try to see how much they can push a person. Being natural and assertive will turn off such people, as it takes away whatever fun they were having with their behaviour.







— **Personalize.** If you have the misfortune to joker a play which is vague, confusing or not relatable to the audience, you need to invest more time to a discussion on how what they see on the stage is related to their personal life. Grab any connections they make and stimulate the audience to elaborate further on this idea and share personal stories and experiences. If the play is poorly constructed, but you manage to extract some personal connection, you still have a chance to conduct a reasonable process. Even if their connections are not what you intended to discuss, you should go ahead with what they see. Forcing a topic on them will be counter-productive and disengage them.



Managing conflict issues –

When Jokers complain, audience members or actors engage in conflict with each other (or with the Joker) and disrupt the process.

Managing conflicts can be difficult for various reasons:

-  They are usually unexpected and surprising for many of the involved parties, as this type of process assumes we all want to work together for the greater good.
-  It is rather complicated to identify precisely when a heated debate turned into a fight and an open-sight conflict, or when a rational conversation turned into personal attacks.
-  If the play touches on a hot/sensitive issue and society is in a rather polarised moment, it can easily become tense among the audience.
-  Often, it is due to prior experience between the involved parties that surfaces during the Forum Theatre process.
-  Some people have a clear agenda to create conflict with anyone, or somebody in particular, present at the event.
-  Big egos of Actors or even the Joker; they lose their composure and engage in personal debates with the audience or with each other, or they disagree about the following actions in the process and try to impose their vision.

What can the Joker do wrong?

- The Joker underestimates the potential for heated debates to escalate into conflicts; they don't sense when the discussion becomes too personal for the involved parties.
- They exhibit personal attachment or bias toward the topic (*through the way they ask questions, raise issues, make comments, etc.*), which triggers reactions from the audience who feel unfairly treated.
- They don't have a complex understanding of the narratives and public debates surrounding the play's topics in the broader society, and they unintentionally push the wrong buttons.
- They don't have a plan for dealing with such a situation, so they end up improvising poorly on the spot.
- They give the spotlight to the incident, which is becoming bigger, and involved people might enjoy, the focus of the audience is shifted, and the process is compromised.
- They get drawn into personal attacks or audience comments and become defensive or even aggressive toward audience members.

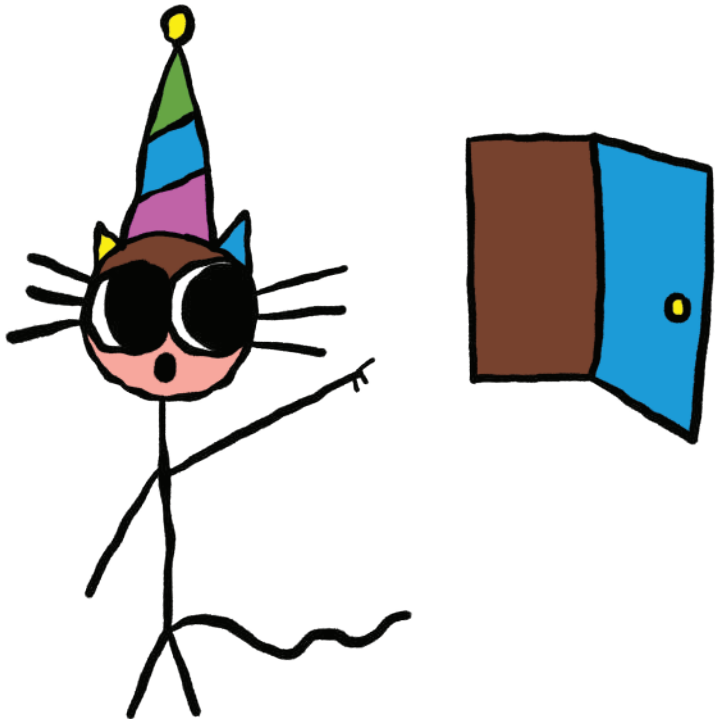


Tips for Jokers experiencing Conflicts Nightmare

Keep your objectivity alert. This is part of the neutrality feature of the Joker's role, but it's tested to the limit when opposing views are exchanged and the Joker needs to hold back their own. This means not only direct verbal expression, but also, and sometimes even more critical, the indirect ones – the jokes, passive-aggressive comments, the subtle remarks, nodding to opinions they agree with, etc. – the second category can be more annoying or enraging than plain embracement of certain views. A Joker should maintain neutrality and remain alert to objectivity throughout the process, and pay attention to their non-verbal and passive reactions. If asked, the Joker shouldn't take sides, and they should remind the audience that there is space for constructive exchange of diverse opinions, and they just facilitate it.

Refocus the audience. When a conversation among the same people dominates the discussion, it is time to remind the audience of the purpose of our event and how we can make it more constructive. Don't allow extensive ping-pong debates between the same people to monopolise the discussion. In this way, even if the people engaged in the debate don't cooperate, other people from the audience might support you and ask them to cool down. In extreme cases, if they still refuse to cooperate and don't show signs of cooperation, it is ok to ask them to leave the room. Don't put in extensive effort to reason with them, as this takes time, focus, and energy away from what you should really be doing with the rest of the audience. When audience members pick on you as the Joker, you shouldn't enter personal exchanges/debates with anyone in particular; always push the discussion to the topic and the different phases of the process. If you made a mistake or out-of-place comments, jokes or remarks, apologise and kindly ask the audience to move on to other topics.

Don't be afraid of extreme measures. If some people cross the line in a very extreme manner: physical violence, insults, explicit hate speech, racist, homophobic, sexist, xenophobic remarks, etc., don't shy away from extreme measures – ask the concerned person to leave the room. It is neither the place nor the purpose of this event to change people's minds or opinions. Engaging in discussions on this matter will distract the audience, and they won't be productive anyway. If someone holds such an opinion, it is unlikely to change easily during a heated exchange with strangers.



Joker Role

Co-Joking

When we talk about the Joker, we often have in mind one person having this role in the process. There are times when several people can facilitate the development of the play, but in the process with the audience, it is one person.

In our experience, most of my colleagues and I predominantly work with one Joker per performance, who oversees the process from step 1 to step 9 (*described previously*). This is our first recommendation. Choose to be a Solo Joker. Much more rarely, we had situations when two people shared this role.

We analyse these options below and include a few recommendations on how the Co-Joking approach could be used more effectively.

Solo Joker – Positive Aspects

■ During the performance, many decisions need to be made on the spot. A solo Joker, having full ownership and control of the process, could more easily use all the data and observations made on the process, along with their own intuition, to make the best decision.

■ The Joker has greater freedom and autonomy to decide on the best course of action at various stages of the process. Additionally, with complete focus on what is happening, it is easier to keep track of what has been done, what remains, and how to proceed next.

- In terms of competence development, Solo Joking experience is ensuring greater impact in this regard. When one person has to handle this entire process from step 1 to 9, pay constant attention to actors and audience, manage discussions, and handle any unforeseen events, they will be active and develop a diverse set of skills at a rather intensive pace.
- Jokers become more confident, resilient and versatile from more solo experience.

Solo Joker – Negative Aspects

- Being fully responsible for all the aspects mentioned previously can be demanding and exhausting. For beginners and/or those with less experience handling similar processes (e.g., facilitating group discussions), it can be challenging.
- If a major situation arises and only one person has to deal with it, it could lead to additional problems with adequately following the structure.
- **If the process reaches a point where the Joker doesn't know what to do next, there is no one to consult, which may lead to less inspired or suitable decisions.**

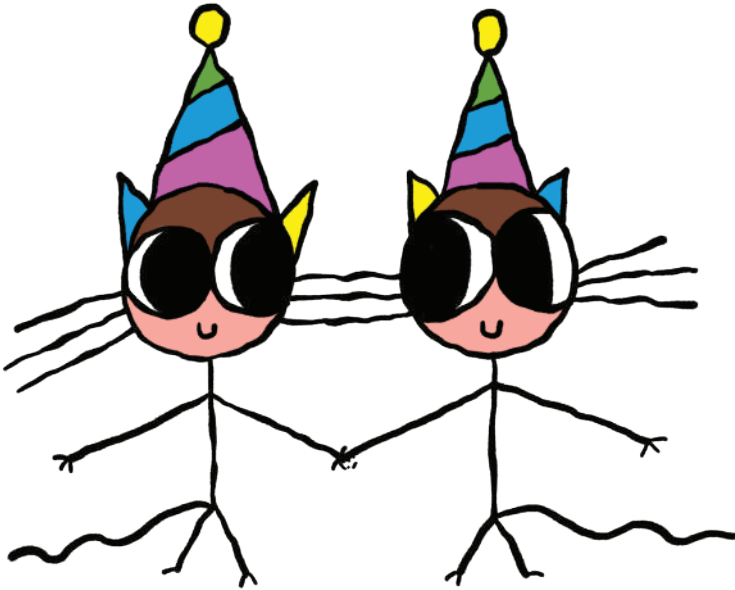
Co-Joking – Positive Aspects

- It can be the answer for some of the Negative points mentioned at the Solo Joker.
- Sharing tasks and responsibilities can increase the likelihood that all steps will be done adequately if each Joker has less to focus on. Overall, it will be a less demanding and pressuring process.

- Jokers can consult along the way and draw on more perspectives before making a specific decision.
- Suppose an unexpected issue arises along the way (with the actors, the audience, or external factors). In that case, one of the Jokers can address it, while the other continues the process with the audience.
- Two Jokers bring different energy, styles and personalities at play, and audience members respond differently to different people. In this way, they reach out and may involve various types of people.
- The Jokers can complement each other if any of them makes a mistake (forgets to ask a specific question, jumps a step, misses a part of the protocol, etc.).

Co-Joking – Negative Aspects

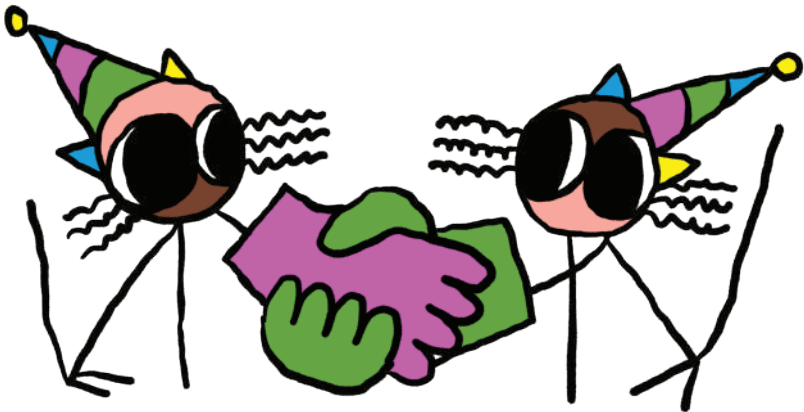
- The aspects mentioned in the Positive side are almost entirely dependent on the dynamics between the Jokers, which is determined by their previous common history and experience in working with different people.
- One Joker can dominate and take unilateral decisions on the way, leading to frustrations and tensions which may emerge during the performance or in the team dynamics.
- It can also lead to disagreements, aggressive or passive-aggressive communication between jokers, confusion among the actors and multiple negative consequences for the audience and the Theatre process.
- Because of shared control of the process, there is no complete control or overview of the process, as each Joker relies on the other Joker for a part of the process.



Co-Joking – Recommendations

- Choose this option only if the Solo Joking is not a viable option for whatever reason.
- Avoid doing this for the first time as a Joker. It may seem easier to start with Co-Joking, but in reality, Co-Joking fails much more often than Solo Joking. Co-Joking depends on more factors to be successful than Solo Joking.
- Try to work with people you know from before; you have already worked with them previously, and you already have a good communication process.
- Plan in detail before the performance how you will divide the roles: who takes which steps from the structure? Who asks which questions? Who handles other elements from the process? etc.

- Agree in advance on how you plan to proceed in situations where you need to consult; want to signal something to each other, etc.
- List potential problems that could appear during the process and devise a plan of action points and division of roles in case they happen.
- Communicate assertively with each other. Be honest and share what you are good at, what you struggle with, what you prefer to do, what you don't, what frustrates you, what you need from the other people, etc.
- Be aware of your Ego and how it can affect your cooperation with another person.
- Do not use an "improvisation" approach, in the sense of not taking decisions in advance on how you want to divide specific roles, and leave it for the moment and the "feeling" you will have on the spot. This could very well be the recipe for disaster. This is guaranteed if you didn't work together previously, and you are confident that, on the spot, you will feel each other and make the best decisions.
- Give each other honest, constructive feedback after you finish one Jokinging process together.**



Games for Audience

Examples

We list below some examples of games or exercises a Joker can use to warm up the audience before they are invited on stage, replace actors, and change the scenarios.


Some Jokers do some exercises before the audience sees the play for the first time, and then again after the discussion on the play. It depends on the time you have available for the entire process and how much the audience needs.

Do at least one game to add a bit of playfulness or break the ice with the audience. It will help to increase willingness to come on stage afterwards.


Get to Know Your Neighbours


■ Invite the audience to introduce themselves to the people sitting near them. You may choose a specific issue to share, from funny to more serious: their name; why they are here; what they ate last; what their occupation is; the last dream they remember; where they want to travel in the world, etc.

■ It doesn't really matter what they talk about – the idea is to break the ice, ease the atmosphere, and relax the audience before sharing personal opinions, life stories, and working together on solutions or a specific problem.


 An alternative is to ask the audience to introduce themselves to at least five people they don't know.


Share Your Views


 Place different notes with questions (related to the play) around the chairs and invite the audience to use them for short discussions.

 You can use the same list at each spot, and the audience can choose which questions to discuss, or you can post a single question at each chair.

Choose and copy

 3 or 4 actors or team members are standing on the stage. Ask the audience to mentally choose one of those people and repeat everything they do.

 The music starts, and the people on stage dance differently from one another; their movements should use all body parts and be fun and diverse. Each audience member follows the movements of their chosen person and copies them.

 You may use dance moves or other physical movements in the space, with or without music in the background, as the purpose is to be physically active, loosen up, and have a little bit of fun.

Clap-Clap-Clap

- Use different clapping styles to create playful moments with the audience.
- Some options are: everyone claps at the same time, so you hear only one clap; constant clapping and alternation of the speed and volume; inviting the audience members to clap with each other - to clap each hand with the hand of another neighbour, etc.



Counting

- Ask the audience to start counting in the order they are sitting in the room. At every specific number of your choice (e.g. multiple of 3, or any number that is even, etc.), instead of the number, they should make a sound or an action (e.g. jumping, shouting, blurb sounds, etc.).
- You can agree with the audience on a realistic objective - to count to 100 or less without making a mistake, depending on how many people are in the room and whether they are into the exercise or not.

Attention and Focus

- Invite the audience to engage in mind exercises to warm up their lateral thinking, cognitive activity, and focus and attention for the process.
- These small activities are often fun, engaging, and stimulating, even if they can also be frustrating for more competitive people who fail at them.
- Some of these examples can be organised with the entire audience at the same time, or you ask them to group in pairs or trios:
 - Catch the finger of a neighbour with your palm at the same time as you need to save your finger (from the other hand) from being caught by another person;
 - Make shapes in the air with the hands at the same time, with one hand a square and with the other hand a circle (switch shapes between hands);
 - Name the days of the week (or the months of the year) backwards and/or in alphabetical order;
 - Look around and, within two minutes, find five red things that fit in your pockets and five blue objects that are too big to fit.
 - Name two or more objects for every letter in your first name;
 - Name the objects around and, after a while, use different real words to name the objects and never say the exact object name.
 - Associations - one person says a word, another continues with another word they associate with the one just said, and so on.



Change chairs

- Invite the audience to play a chair-changing game: when you say different features (*related to eye colour, specific clothing, ages, experiences, etc.*), if anyone in the audience has that feature, they have to stand up and change the chair with another person.
- Ask the audience members to suggest features for the exercise.

Duels

- Suggest that the audience play “Rock-Paper-Scissors” with their neighbour; the winner continues to play against someone who won in another duel until there is a final champion. The people losing in their 1-on-1 duels can become supporters for the people still competing and cheer as loudly as possible.
- A duel can be organised by dividing the audience into two groups based on where they are seated (left/right; up/down), and each group sings a song and dances in what they assume is more daring for the other group. They alternate a few times – there can be a jury from the group of volunteers, to stimulate the competitive atmosphere.

Invented songs and choreographies

- Many energisers or childhood games use different songs with invented words, melodies, and simple choreography; they can be used with the audience because they are simple, easy, and, in some cases, hilarious.

Image Theatre

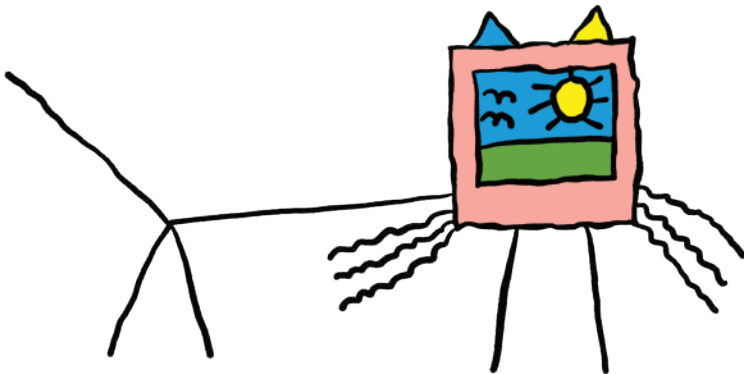
Overview

Image Theatre is one of the methods of the Theatre of the Oppressed, based on body postures and statues to depict oppression or aspects related to it.

It is widely used as a supporting technique in the development process of other methods within the Theatre of the Oppressed (Forum Theatre, Legislative Theatre, Newspaper Theatre, Rainbow of Desire, etc.). We can confidently say that predominantly, Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners use it more as a support technique.

It can also be used as a stand-alone method for the same purpose as Forum Theatre (*or other Theatre of the Oppressed techniques*).

There is a high degree of diversity in how Image Theatre is used as a stand-alone method, because working with images and visual elements offers greater versatility in adapting and applying it to different contexts.



The advantages of using Image Theatre

- It requires much less preparation time than Forum Theatre.** You can prepare and be ready to perform in about 3 hours with a beginner group.
- It also requires less time to present to an audience than Forum Theatre.** With the audience, you can finish the entire process in about 30-50 minutes. Of course, you can extend and go deeper in specific discussions, but with Forum Theatre, you cannot go through all the steps in so little time.
- Even if a shorter time is needed, it still has a very powerful impact.** The audience responds very well and is strongly impacted. It is an empowering method. The rapport between the time and efforts invested versus the outcomes and results is highly beneficial.
- It is a silent theatre – actors do not need to speak on stage or to the audience.** This provides more opportunities to involve or work with people in this process. For the same reason, it is also easier for the audience to get involved and propose ideas.
- It can include more abstract or aesthetic elements related to oppression.** The focus is on the visual aspects – we can include more elements in the props or other materials to support better the oppression we want to show.
- It allows us to explore concrete problems more generically.** Because the characters in Image theatre are less developed, as we cannot show much complexity in body posture, this allows the Joker to use the characters and the image more generically, connected to broader possibilities of real people or actors from society.

■ **It is suitable for one-off oppressive situations** that occur primarily in public places (e.g., transport, streets, bars, airports, border control, etc.), which are not suitable for Forum Theatre, where we look at stories between individuals who know each other and where there is a progression of oppression.

The disadvantages of using Image Theatre

■ **The actors in Image Theatre stand for long periods as statues,** which is quite physically demanding. Often, actors do not enjoy working with this method as much as with methods that involve movement and talking.

■ **The story and characters are more superficially developed** – there is no background story and history of the oppression included in the image. On the one hand, this offers multiple options for what to focus on with the audience; on the other hand, it doesn't lead to a deeper exploration of the individuals involved in situations of oppression.

■ **The lack of talking and movement** leads to less information reaching the audience and more assumptions being made. The audience will have different assumptions, and this will influence the focus of the conversations. It also presents a higher risk that the audience will not see in the image what the team originally planned.




■ **You cannot expose complexity or nuanced situations.** You are limited to showing something simpler, more general, and easier for the audience to recognise.

Image Theatre



Variations

The Variations presented below are based on our work and direct, first-hand experience. They don't represent all the ways in which Image Theatre is being used in the field.

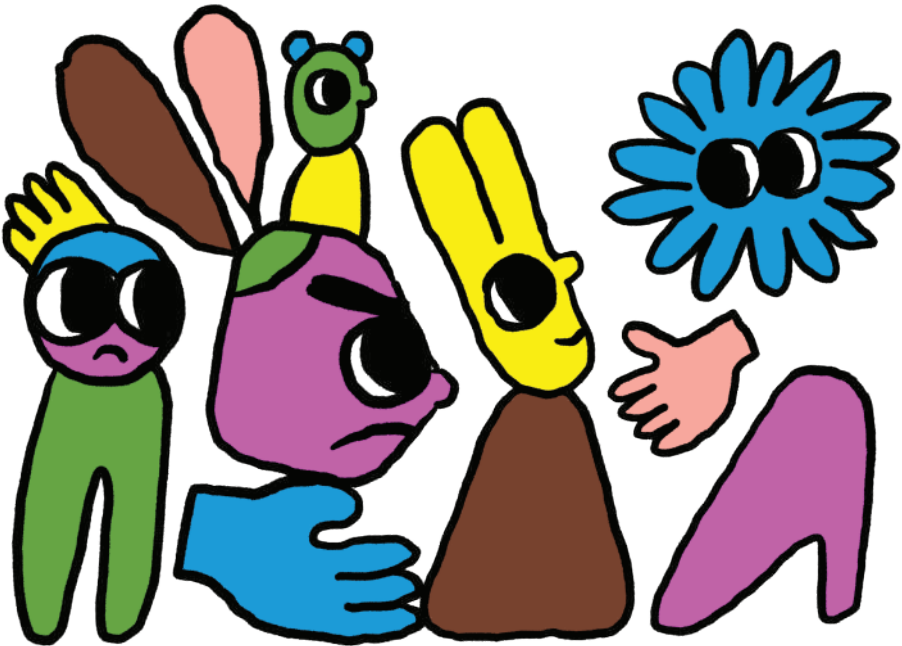
The Variations included in this chapter are:

-  **The Classic Version** is by far the most used one for us; that's why we call it the Classic one.
-  **Classic Version with Sound**
-  **Story in 3-4 Images**

The Classic Version Characteristics and Guidelines

-  **If in Forum Theatre we depict a concrete manifestation of oppression** and we show its progress, how the power relations are changing and how it leads to power abuse, in the **Classic Image Theatre** we show a picture or "snapshot" from this process.
-  **The chosen moment should reflect a high level of oppression between individuals.** The selected moment is transferred to a Human Statues Installation format. The characters and their relationships mirror the structure of a Forum Theatre play.

- 5 to 8 actors are needed for the following roles: Oppressed, Oppressor, 1-2 allies on each side, 1-2 neutrals.
- The moment selected must be a real-life example, collected from actors or from stories of people affected by the chosen problem. It cannot be an invented situation. It has to be a real moment, a situation that could be witnessed in real life.
- Suitable stories that could be transferred more easily to an Image Theatre format are familiar to more people, and with people involved who could be associated with a precise distribution of potential roles.



The actors will depict in a specific body posture - a statue, the particular role in the chosen situation. The actors position themselves in relation to each other in a way that looks like a real-life moment that just froze. It has to clearly show what the Oppression or the problem is, who is the Oppressed (only one), who is the Oppressor (only one), and what is the attitude/involvement of the others in relation to the oppression (1-2 allies for each of them and 1-2 neutrals).

The actors' postures reflect emotions, reactions, and attitudes in the moment. This means the actors have to be very expressive to clearly convey the role in the situation. The actors also use clothes, accessories, props, and other items to help them embrace the specific character they are portraying. This aspect also helps the audience.

The actors will remain still, without changing posture, for a long time; therefore, they should choose postures that can be comfortably maintained for a long time. Postures in which they have to keep their hands, leg in the air or their body is bent in an unnatural posture have to be reconsidered if they could be replaced by a similar suitable for role posture that is more natural for the body.

When, for some roles, it is necessary to have a hand or leg in the air (to show violence, point fingers/directions, etc.) during the performance, these actors can switch the hand/leg. They do that without affecting the other elements of their posture, such as facial expressions.

Actors may add relevant information through the objects they are carrying: school books, class catalogue, medical diagnosis in their hand, court order/decision, bus ticket, money, phone filming the actual action, phone showing specific content related to the Image, etc. All these items support the audience's understanding of the image's decoding.

- In many cases, **the location where the situation takes place** is clear from how actors are dressed and the objects in their hands. When that is not the case, the area should be signalled clearly whenever possible. This can be a simple paper poster with the name of the place (park, bus stop, school, etc.) or a more complex arrangement of furniture and various objects.
- **The actors in the scene position themselves** so they are visible to the audience. None of them should stand with their backs to the audience.
- **The image's composition should be simple and straightforward, conveying the main message quickly to the audience.** Whenever possible, test the image with one or two people who are not part of the group. They could provide relevant feedback on clarity, simplicity, and recognition of a real problem.

Classic Version with Sound Characteristics

- In the Classic Version, we do not work with words or sounds at all. We keep the entire process on visual interpretation of a static non-verbal Image.
- **In this variation, you add keywords or sentences said by each person in the story.** When the Image is shown to the audience, each character, in a set order, verbalises their key sentence while standing still in their posture.

- **These sentences define the specific role the person has;** they can reflect their feelings, thoughts, or decisions in that moment, or thoughts about another person in the situation: e.g., *"You look like an idiot!"*; *"I don't feel safe coming to school!"*; *"I pity her!"*; *"He is so funny and cool!"*; *"I want to be like them!"*; *"I don't care about any of this!"* And they clarify for the audience who is who and provide more information.
- **This variation conveys the message more quickly to the audience, as fewer assumptions are made.** It takes away from the audience their own process of analysing, decoding, and interpreting from different angles and perspectives. Still, it speeds up the process by quickly focusing on the problem at hand.
- **In the Joking part** (*see the next chapter*), when this variation is used, the proposed changes from the audience's side include a suggested body posture for the chosen character and a key sentence. Different audience members could also indicate the sentence after the body posture is changed. In this way, more ideas could be explored from the same posture suggested. The Joker has to decide on the approach they want to use and how to modify their structure accordingly.

Story in 3-4 Images Characteristics

- In the Classic Version, we chose one moment from a larger process or from a one-time type of oppression that becomes ONE Image and is later used for the entire process.
- **In this variation, use a story similar to that for the Forum Theatre method,** unfolding over a more extended period and featuring a progression of oppression, etc. It can also be a Forum Theatre scenario that, for various reasons, cannot be shown as a Forum but only as an Image.

- **The stock story taken from reality should be divided into 3-4 key moments with some level of oppression** that grows from scene to scene. Oppressed and Oppressor should appear in each scene. Their allies and neutrals appear in some images as the story requires.
- **If there is an existing Forum Theatre scenario** for each scene of the play, a core Image is created that captures the essence and dynamics of all the people involved in that scene.
- **Oppressed and Oppressor appear in each image**, even though in Forum Theatre, we do not have this condition. Because in this case, we have only Images, it is better to see the evolution of the oppression between the two people.
- **The Images are shown to the audience one by one.** The Joker asks the audience to close their eyes before showing them the next Image done by the volunteers.
- **In the Jokering part** (*see the next chapter*), when this variation is used, the process follows more the Forum Theatre one. Changes are made based on suggested body postures and, with the audience, decide whether to keep or not. More decisions need to be made with the audience on the way in to see how the following images would look.
- **A variation on Jokering for Story in 3-4 Images**, is not to keep changes and to do collective brainstorming in each of the key moments chosen from the story.

Image Theatre

Jokering

We elaborate below on the specific Joker steps and proposed text to use when working with the Classic Version of Image Theatre. If you want to work with any of the variations presented, adapt and adjust the Joker part accordingly.

1. Introduction from the Joker

Proposed text:

"Hello, thank you very much for being here with us! We are a committed group who are not professional actors, who prepared an Image Theatre Performance addressing a social issue inspired by reality, maybe it is also in your reality, which we want to introduce and discuss with you. We will discuss your observations about the performance. Our team members are not professional actors, so I want to invite you to encourage them with a strong round of applause. For our team to show you the Image, we kindly ask you to close your eyes so they can do the final preparation."

Next:

**The audience closes their eyes,
and the actors take their positions
and create the Image.**

Until this moment, no actors are on the stage – the Joker discusses alone with the audience. Ask the audience to open their eyes when the Image is ready.

2. The Problem

Proposed text:

"We invite you to look at the Image created by our actors. You can come closer to analyse each character on the stage and to collect more information about what is revealed in this image from all points of view. While doing so, please do not touch the statues and do not interact with them. Try to understand what happens on the stage, what the situation depicts, and who the people involved are. Once you have collected all the information from the Image, return to your seat. We will continue our discussion after everyone is seated."

Ask the audience after the audience returns to their seats:

- *What do you think is depicted in this Image?*
- *Did you observe any problem?*
- *What is the main problem, according to you, and why?*
- *Are there other opinions in this regard?*

- I see that some of you think the main problem reflected here is ... and others that it is ... Are there other opinions as well? To advance our discussion, I want to see how you think about it. Please raise a hand who considers that this Image is mainly about ... and who thinks it's about ... As more of you think it is ... If it's okay with the others to view this story from this angle, we will continue in this direction so we can all use the same reference point in our discussions.

- *Is this story or problem real? Where do you think it is happening?*
- *Does it happen in your community or around you as well? Could you give some examples?*
- *Can something be done to change such situations?*

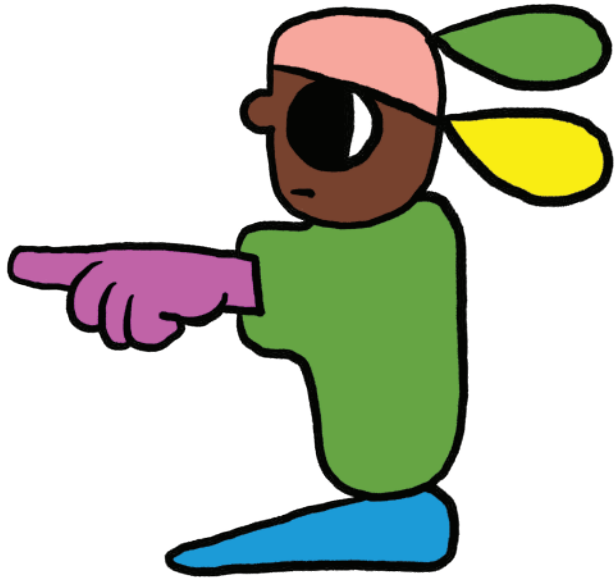
At this moment, we want to hear the audience members say YES, without any explanations or examples– we do not go into details.

3. The Characters

Proposed text:

“Let’s have a closer look at this story. Who are these people, and what is happening to them? Who is the person mainly affected by the problem depicted?”

If the Image is clear and well-constructed, the audience will mention the oppressed person as you have assigned the roles in the performance.



If they mention more than one person, repeat the question:

*“Who do you think is most affected by the problem?
Who suffers the most? Why do you think so?”*

If needed, decide with the audience, by voting, who the main oppressed person is.

One by one, by making the connection between the characters, analyse each of the people portrayed in the Image.

“Who is the person making the victim suffer?

“Who supports or is on the side of?”


“What about this person - what is their position towards what is happening?”


For each character, ask the audience several questions.

 *What can you say about this person?*

 *What are they doing in the situation?*

 *What can you tell about this person?*

 *Do you know people like them in your reality?*

 *Can they do something different in this situation?* – This question is not asked about the oppressor.

We only want to hear the audience say YES.

Do not go into details – they will expand their ideas in the intervention phase.



4. Change-making Process

Proposed text:

“This Image shows a real problem present also in your community. You have said this problem can change, and that the people involved in the story can do something different to change it. Now you have the chance to elaborate on how these situations can be changed. We do not want to talk about making changes – we want to show them. The story can change only if you join this collective brainstorming process and propose ideas which will reduce the problem we see on the stage. The power is in your hands.”

There are some rules that we follow to ensure your ideas can be processed more effectively:

- If you want to make a change – raise your hand.

- The way you show your change is as follows: you come on stage and choose the actor for whom you want to suggest a new attitude/action for this specific moment. You use your body to indicate another posture that reflects your idea of change. The original actor will copy your posture after you show it to them.

- You can change ... (and mention their role in the story) – The only person you cannot change is ... (mention the role of the Oppressor). Of course, we wish that these kinds of people acted differently and didn't cause such situations, but they do exist in reality. It is not realistic to change them and make them into good people – we want to encourage you to find alternatives that people can use when confronted with such people or situations.

- No physical violence on stage - We don't encourage physical violence as a solution, even if you might disagree with this. In this process, you are invited to think about alternative solutions that do not involve physical violence!

- **No magic on stage** – we welcome realistic solutions, not something improbable in this situation for these people.

- **Only one person from the audience is on stage at a time** – if you have another idea, you can show it after the person on stage finishes with their idea.

5. Management of Interventions

“Is there any person who has an idea?”

Who could do something different in this situation?

Generally, in the Image Theatre process, because the audience’s involvement on stage is less demanding, people are more willing to volunteer and come on stage.

Before the person from the audience goes on stage, the Joker asks

■ Their name

■ Which character do they wish to change

Remind them what they need to do, and ask them also to check that the final changed posture of the actor reflects what they had in mind.

After each audience intervention, the Joker must follow a “protocol” to process each idea.

The “Protocol” of discussion for each intervention:

■ Asks the person who intervened: *“What was your intention and what do you think you managed to achieve? What do you think could happen if the scene came to life in this moment?”* After their answer, ask for another round of applause and send them back to the audience area.

Then asks the rest of the audience:

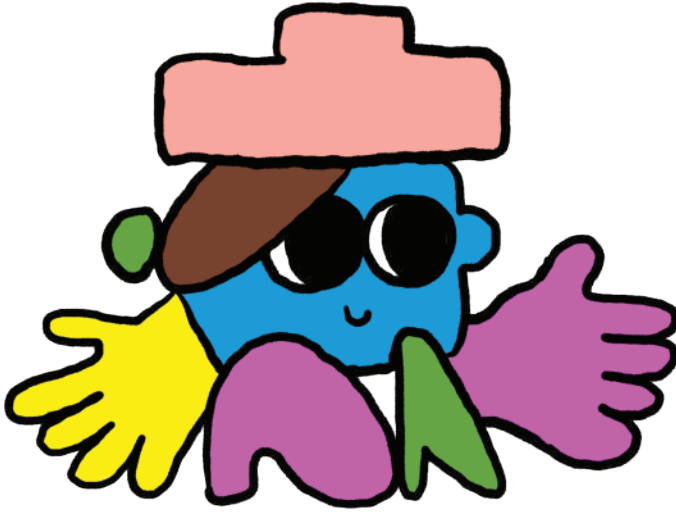
- *What do you think? What did it change? Any other opinions?*
- *What could happen if the scene comes to life/unfreezes in this moment? How will the people involved react?*
- *How realistic is it? Can it happen in reality, given what we know or assume about the people involved in this situation? Is it possible for that person ... (say the role or their name) to act in this way?*
- *How many of you agree with this? (raise hands)*
- *If you don't agree, why don't you agree?*
- *Should we keep this change to see what happens next, or try a new alternative? Let's vote!*

Depending on the audience's vote, one of the following can happen:

- They vote to keep the change made** – therefore, the actor who was replaced will continue to stay in the posture suggested by the audience;
- They voted that the change was not realistic and/or didn't improve the situation.** The actor returns to the same posture as before the change.
- An audience member has another idea for showing a change** for the same character, and they are allowed to show it. In this situation, the two proposed alternatives are compared, and one will be selected to be kept.

After each decision made with the audience, the process continues, and the audience progressively makes changes to the image. The process continues until the audience feels there are no more changes to be made or is satisfied with the final outcome. If the audience keeps changing the same characters, you can ask: *"In this specific situation or moment of the story, who else can do something different?"*

The audience can propose a new character if they think that person could realistically appear in that situation. In that case, they will have to remain on the stage while the audience discusses these proposals.



Alternative approach for Management of Interventions:

- In this version, the changes are not kept, and after each change, the actors return to the original posture. With this approach, the audience engages in extensive collective brainstorming of multiple options for changes to each character.
- The advantage of this version is that you explore more solutions for more characters.
- The disadvantage is that you cannot explore what happens after a single change or how a change leads to further changes. You will also not see the final “positive” ending, as we do not keep any change.

Depending on the topic, audience and how the discussion goes, you may use this alternative instead of the previous one.

Before moving to the next step, thank the actors for their efforts and release them from their postures. Do not keep them for the next steps, as the Image is no longer needed – no further work will be done on it. It is hard enough for them, so the sooner you can release them, the better.

6. Summary

Proposed text:

“We talked today about..., we presented an example inspired by real life, you said it also happens in your communities, and we tried to explore possibilities of approaching such problems. You mentioned that in such situations, person X can do this..., person Y can do this.... etc.”

The list of changes proposed can be drafted with the help of the audience members: “How did we change the story today? Who did you change and how? Let’s list today’s outcomes ...”

7. Transfer

Proposed text:

“These situations occur in your community, as you mentioned before; you or people around you are being confronted with such problems. Based on our discussions and the proposals you have made, what are you going to use in your community? What can you apply there? What do you take with you from this meeting?”

8. Conclusion

Proposed text

“Based on everything you have mentioned, we can conclude that it is important to pay attention to oppression around us and to intervene before it is too late. Every action matters.”

The conclusion has to be tailored to the specificities of the topic, the discussions, and the ideas mentioned in the Transfer phase. Sometimes, during the transfer step, some answers are more general and motivational, and those could be given back to the audience as a final conclusion.

9. Closure

Proposed text:

“Thank you so much for taking part in this process, for your active involvement, ideas, thoughts and commitment. (...continue based on your case)

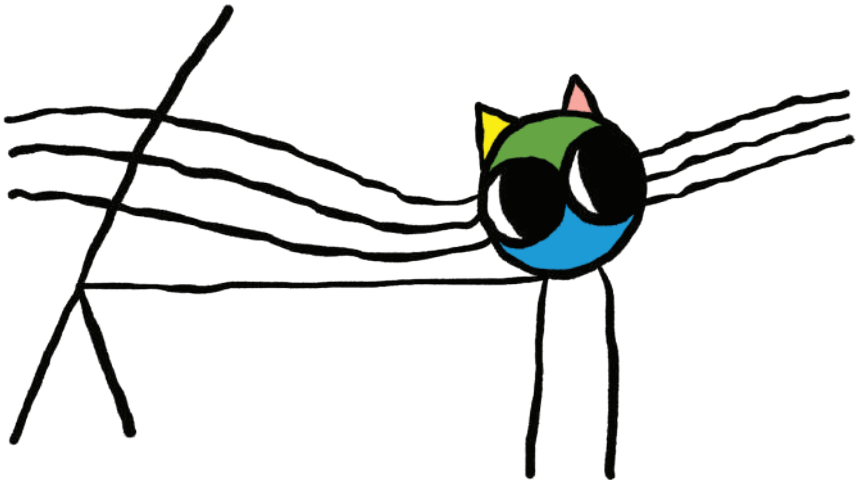


Image Theatre

Examples

We present below 3 Image Theatre examples we have used in recent years. We have chosen examples which have been used in international groups and across countries (mainly in the European context). For each Image, we have the photo of the actual Image, a narrative description of the image and some reflections from practice.

Sexual Harassment in Public Transportation



This Image portrays a situation of oppression in a bus.
Some passengers are standing, some are sitting down.

The division of roles is as follows:

Oppressed – the woman who is being touched without consent

Oppressor – the man who is touching the woman

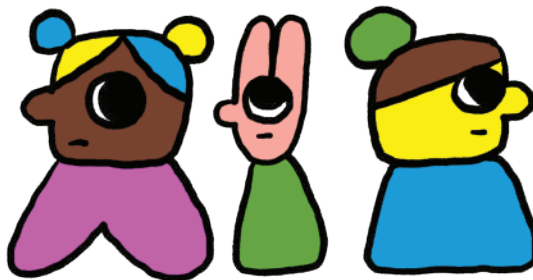
Ally of the oppressed – the woman facing the Oppressed, being worried and showing empathy

Ally of the oppressor – the man sitting on the side, taking video of the oppressor's actions

Neutrals – the two women in the back, witnessing the situation but taking no stand on the harassment.

This topic was illustrated in many different types of Images in our practice, showing similar situations across various forms of public transportation. There was variation in how exactly it was put on stage, but the core was the same. All our audiences have related to the situation and shared their own experiences.

What came across as very prevalent is the presence of a large number of neutrals in such situations: people who don't take any stand, but they could. Many oppressors act like that because they face little challenge or reaction; they are very aware of the power they have in these situations.



The changes proposed and discussed included:

Changing the neutrals, which generally bothered our audience members a lot, as in reality; these particular people are also not doing much. By taking an attitude, intervening, and showing solidarity, they could empower the oppressed person and reduce the likelihood that Oppressors feel entitled to behave that way

Changing the ally of the oppressed, to show more than empathy, to actually speak up and together with the oppressed, to be numerically more than the oppressor.

Changes on the Oppressed were generally controversial, as very often issues such as personal safety, fear, potential negative consequences, etc., were brought into discussions when proposals of stronger reactions from the oppressed were suggested. Different societal contexts influence the likelihood that a specific behaviour will provoke a violent response. The discussion on the oppressed options oscillated between moving away from the oppression and confronting the oppressor firmly. All the suggested options trigger heated discussions.

Generally, these images and similar ones lead to rich and fruitful conversations related to public safety, harassment, sexism, solidarity and reasons why people intervene or not in such situations. There was a lot of frustration associated with the neutral people and the lack of action from people who witnessed this. Nevertheless, audience members got motivated to speak up and be different from the people in the Image, next time they will witness or experience similar situations, as they knew they would again.

Bullying



This Image portrays a situation of oppression in a high school. All the people involved are students.

The division of roles is as follows:

Oppressed – the boy sitting on the chair, being bullied

Oppressor – the boy standing behind the oppressed and bullying him

Ally of the oppressed – the college sitting in the right of the oppressed, showing empathy and concern

Ally of the oppressor – the girl standing, pointing a finger at the bully and laughing

Neutral – the girl, reading the book, who doesn't get involved

We have worked on the topic of bullying for many years, with Image and with Forum Theatre, with national and international groups. We never had a group that didn't recognise this problem or who didn't have stories of bullying currently happening in their lives, schools or when they were in school.

Bullying, unfortunately, is still a very prevalent type of oppression, which takes new forms as well, with cyberbullying becoming more and more present.

We sometimes include teachers and/or parents in the stories we show, depending on the groups we are working with. In this particular image, the focus is on the students and the dynamics between them. The structure of our audiences (adults in different capacities in schools, parents, students, etc.) influenced the focus of discussions, solutions, and, most importantly, the actions they can take as a result of this process.

The changes proposed and discussed included:

- Changing the ally of the oppressed and the neutral;** rarely is the oppressed changed first in such situations, but with more attitudes from the other colleagues who decide to stand up and face the oppressor, also the oppressed is gaining more power and subsequently is also changed.
- Changes in the ally of the oppressor** have often been suggested and validated as realistic, so that they may decide not to engage in such behaviours, which will lead the Oppressor not to be so strong anymore.
- Often as well, the teachers are brought into the conversations** and what they could and should do in such situations. Even if the image doesn't include one, they are always mentioned and sometimes suggested by the audience to be added to the Image. The roles of teachers, councillors and other key people in schools have also been brought into the discussion.

Unequal Treatment of Workers



This Image portrays a situation of workplace oppression.

Except for the boss, everyone is an office worker (as signalled by the labels on their clothes).

The division of roles is as follows:

Oppressed – the women behind the Office, overworked and being handed even more work

Oppressor – the boss, handing more work to the oppressed women

Ally of the oppressed – the other colleague, a woman who shows concern for the oppressed

Ally of the oppressor – the colleague standing on the left, enjoying the fact that the oppressed is getting even more work

Neutral – the other office colleague, who is having a coffee.

This Image, although simplified, exposes the reality in many workplaces, especially for young people and women in certain contexts. There is an unfair division of work among people at the same level; some workers are being burned out and overworked, while others have much less to do.

This Image spurred discussions on job precarity, insecurity, mental health, wellbeing, solidarity between colleagues, standing up when being mistreated, etc.

The solutions included discussing the situation directly with the boss, setting limits on what is acceptable, fostering transparency in the workplace, colleagues signalling that something is not ok in how the workplace is conducted, unionising and protecting workers' rights, mass strikes, or pursuing legal measures. Although a simple image, it sparked discussions of micro actions at the workplace and larger ones in society.

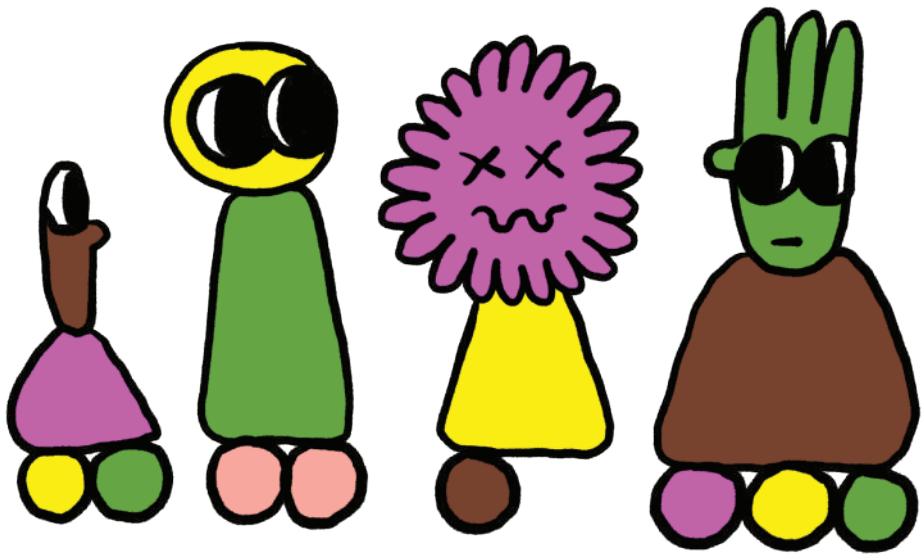


Image Theatre

Workshops Structures

We are often requested to deliver workshops in various contexts with different groups and time frames, utilising Theatre of the Oppressed methods.

On the one hand, this is good, as it shows that these methods are appreciated and that different societal actors see the benefits of using them, working with them, and facilitating access for various people.

On the other hand, we often get invitations to do something short, either within another event or specifically with a chosen target group. For people who don't know how these methods work, they often underestimate what is needed and expect to have a deep, meaningful, and empowering process in a short time. They usually want us to do Forum Theatre, from scratch, in several hours. Forum Theatre, being more popular, is what people know more about, and this is what they want. They know the name, but they don't know what it really takes and demands from the actors and the audience in the process.

**For obvious reasons,
we do not develop
a Forum Theatre process
in short times.**

We offer, in exchange, to work with the Image Theatre method to ensure impact and a high-quality process.

We have included below the structures of 3 and 6 hour workshop proposals. The exercises are detailed in the Curriculum Section of this manual. The assumptions are that the group doesn't know each other from before.

The flow of these workshops is as follows:

- Warming up the group
- Exercises for expressing emotions
- Exercises to work with body postures
- Power and Oppression exercises (*for the more extended version*)
- Image Theatre Introduction and Preparation
- Image Theatre with an audience

Structure of a 3-hour Image Theatre workshop

Add one break as you find suitable

- **Introduction** (explain the context, overview of process, etc.) – 10 min
- **Getting to know each other** (Carousel or 3 truths/1 lie) – 15 min
- **Preparatory exercises** - 50 min
 - Pass the beat - 10 min
 - Space exercises - 10 min
 - Blind shake - 10 min
 - 1, 2, 3 - 4, 5, 6 - 10 min
 - Statues and Emotions - 10 min
- **Image Theatre Introduction** (*key concepts, structure*) – 10 min
- **Images of Oppression Preparation**
(groups of a maximum of eight people prepare an Image of a situation of oppression inspired by their reality; the facilitator guides and supports them to develop a good image) – 20 min
- **Image Theatre with the Audience**
(the images prepared are shown to the other groups, the facilitator is the Joker) – 60 min
- **Final Debriefing** – about the entire experience and main takeaway – 15 min

Structure of a 6-hour Image Theatre workshop

Add breaks as you find suitable

 **Introduction** (explain the context, overview of process, etc.) – 10 min

 **Getting to know each other** – 20 min

Shaking Hands

3 truths/1 lie

 **Preparatory exercises** - 100 min

Pass the beat - 10 min

Space exercises - 10 min

Blind shake - 10 min

1,2,3 - 4,5,6 - 15 min

Statues and emotions - 10 min

Museum of emotions - 20 min

Stop and Action - 10 min

Bears and Princes - 15 min

 **Power and Oppression Exercises** – 80 min

Circle of Statues - 20 min

Power and more power - 40 min

What is oppression? – Discussion - 20 min


 **Image Theatre Introduction** (*key concepts, structure*) – 10 min

 **Images of Oppression Preparation**

(groups of a maximum of eight people prepare an Image of a situation of oppression inspired by their reality; the facilitator guides and supports them to develop a good image) – 30 min

 **Image Theatre with the Audience**

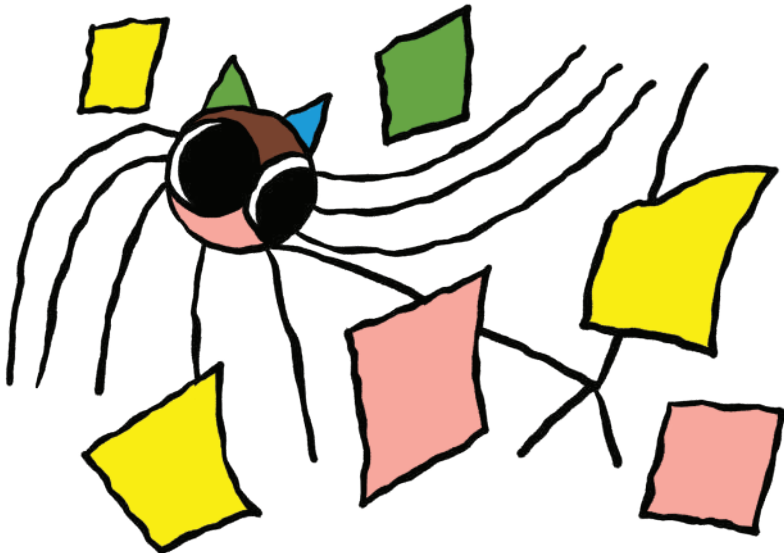
(the images prepared are shown to the other groups, the facilitator is the Joker) – 90 min

 **Final Debriefing** – about the entire experience and main takeaway – 20 min

As with anything we do in our work, no matter the methods we use, it is essential to know whether and how we have achieved our objectives.

The primary focus of too many practitioners is on implementing the Forum or Image Theatre play, losing sight of the planning and measurement of the actual impact on the audience. If we assume we have an impact, without measuring it with the best possible tools, we are not accountable for our efforts.

Practitioners who plan serious evaluation and impact assessment processes are perceived as more responsible, taken seriously by potential partners and authorities, and receive more credit and validation for the work and results they achieve.



For the evaluation process to be delivered, it must be carefully planned as part of the entire Forum/Image Theatre process so that the team can prepare and apply the most appropriate tools.

To draft and develop an evaluation plan, you need to analyse different dimensions and compare them in relation to the desired purpose of your Theatre Process: to empower people affected by a specific type of oppression.

If the aim is not clearly framed, we cannot assess what we did or be critical of our results – we may easily conclude that anything we achieve is ok, as there is no reference to compare it with.

Reflections on this process

- **So many practitioners are skipping this step**, underestimating it, or not giving it sufficient attention, and this is truly a major downside in our field. In our work, we always talk about the importance of this part of the process. We tried to motivate more people in the field to pay closer attention, yet too few actually measure their impact.
- **Different skills, more from the management area**, are needed for this part of the process, which are quite different from those required to develop a play or perform it for various audiences. This may explain the lower interest in this phase among Theatre of the Oppressed groups.
- **To conduct this process adequately, you depend on additional factors**, such as time, people, and partners' willingness and availability to provide feedback and details on the impact, etc. These are beyond our control and also contribute to lower field data collection.

The two dimensions we need to look into in this process are:

The Achieved Results and Impact **The Process to Get to Those Results**

Quantitative Results

- Number of actors
- Number of jokers
- Number of other volunteers involved
- Number plays
- Number of performances
- Number of audience members/Average audience number per performance
- Age group distributions among the audience
- Gender distribution (for each performance)
- Number of specific marginalised groups in the audience (if relevant to be measured)
- Number of partners (e.g. other institutions, entities that supported the process)
- Number of interventions on the stage
- Audience participation rate
- Number of ideas/action points mentioned in the transfer phase
- Duration of the process to develop the play
- Duration of the performance/Average per performance
- Number of scenes modified through interventions
- Geographic reach (number of locations/urban/rural)
- Number of follow-up meetings
- Etc.

Qualitative Results - Immediate

- The type of interventions/solutions suggested by the audience
- The emotional response of the audience to the performance
- The arguments the audience uses to assess solutions (e.g., the level of critical thinking exhibited).
- The type of ideas suggested in the transfer phase
- The level of engagement and energy during the performance
- The immediate feeling of empowerment
- The motivation level to put into practice the ideas
- Other impacts experienced by the audience members
- The effect experienced by the actors
- Etc.



Long-term results (*quantitative and qualitative*)

The long term can be measured at different stages: after 3 months, 6 months, 1 year, and beyond. These are some of the indicators to be used in the process:

- Number of actors/jokers that continue to be part of the team
- Number of volunteers who remain involved
- Number of plays performed as a result of the first one (plus audiences reached consequently)
- Number of new projects/initiatives developed as a result of this process
- Number of institutions requesting future Forum Theatre work
- Number of spin-off groups as a result of this process
- Funding/resources attracted because of this project's long-term visibility
- Response rate from audience members for any long-term assessment process
- Interest rate for the specific topic approached in play, as a result of their involvement in the performance
- Involvement with the topic of the play, as a result of their participation in the play
- Number of people reporting behavioural change as a consequence of this process
- Subjective rate of impact felt by the people involved (in different capacities) on the long term
- Number of occasions in which the audience members/actors/volunteers have intervened and applied learning from the Forum Theatre process
- Any attitudinal shifts reported in relation to oppression and power dynamics in general
- Personal success stories shared of standing up against oppression in general (personally or for others), which they connect with their involvement in this process.

The Process to achieve the Results

In this aspect, two types of processes need to be assessed. One is internal and the other is external. We list below the aspects to be analysed and evaluated:

- **Internal team process:** positive, negative points, conflicts, management, challenges, strategies to overcome obstacles, feedback, etc.
- **External process in cooperating with partners:** positive and negative points, conflicts, management, power dynamics, challenges, strategies to overcome obstacles, feedback, etc.

Methods to Measure Results or Process

For each of the indicators and aspects mentioned previously (at the Results or Process), different tools and methods can be used to gather data and qualitative information, and to assess and interpret them to measure the change made.

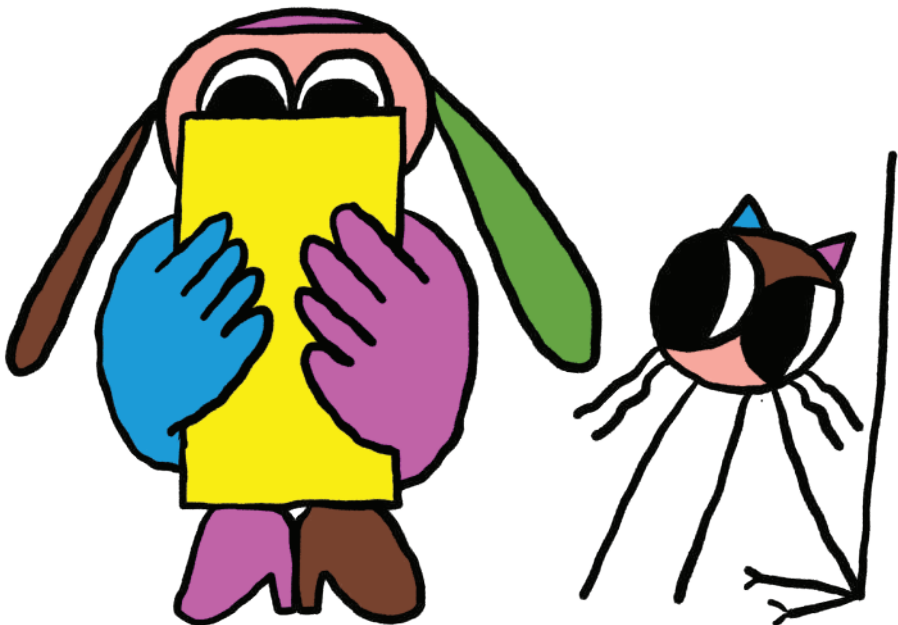
Some of the possible methods depend on the specific context in which practitioners are operating, so each team should explore and choose/design the most suitable and adequate methods.

Next, we list a series of tools that can be used to assess the impact of this type of work, and we advise using as many as possible and compiling their findings into a single set of conclusions.



Quantitative Results – *Examples of tools to collect data*

- **Observation tools** – you can find an example on the next page: an observation sheet that can help you track quantitative, and some qualitative data during the performance. The example can be modified and tailored to each team's specific needs and desires.
- **Quantitative data tracking tools** (attendance lists, sign-up forms, contracts signed, recording number of interventions, plays, performances, partners, follow-ups, etc.)
- **Feedback forms and questionnaires** – written forms or made digitally with quantitative and qualitative questions to be answered by actors, audience members, partners, etc. You can also use visual paper boards where attendees can add their marks, views, and reflections after the performance.



Observation Sheet

Location

Date

Name of the play

Main topic addressed in the play

- how long (in minutes/hours) was the performance together with the discussions and interventions?
- number of people in the audience
- number of people in the audience belonging to the oppressed group
- number of people who left during the performance
- number of women:
- number of men:
- number of other gender:
- age group(s) – approximate percentage distribution:
- assess the overall level of interest and active participation of the audience during the play (high, medium, low)
- number of people that went on stage to make interventions
- approximate number of people actively involved in the discussions during the forum

- List of interventions (scene and the role changed + key points of the change)
 -
 -
- ideas from the audience mentioned in the Transfer Phase
 -
 -
 -
- Other comments/observations:

Team Process and Impact on the Team

Throughout the working process, the team should have regular meetings to assess their own process, reflect on its impact on them, exchange feedback, identify challenges, brainstorm strategies, and make changes to foster more constructive and productive teamwork. An external person can facilitate these meetings, or they can switch roles to empower group members to take more responsibility.

Ask team members to keep reflective diaries of their involvement in the process, which can provide insights when we invite them to look back and assess it from various perspectives.

A critical discussion takes place immediately after the performance. The purposes of this meeting are:

- to process the feelings of the actors from their performance;
- to list each actor's perspective on the process with the audience;
- to give feedback to each other;
- to explore the challenges and how they were dealt with;
- to identify the strong and weak points in the scenario and in the overall process with the audience;
- to make decisions regarding changes which should be made if implemented again.

Assessment of the Impact on the Audience – *examples*

■ If audience members are using mobile devices connected to the internet, you can use an online tool to collect their fresh impressions and thoughts from the Forum/Image Theatre Process. You can write the specific link/code they can use in a visible place and kindly ask them to use it before leaving the premises. The survey should be short to combine quantitative and qualitative marks.

■ Team members and other volunteers after the performances can go to the audience and interact with audience members, asking them directly how they feel about it, how relevant this process was for them, what they want to do next, etc.

■ Large pieces of paper/boards can be placed outside the venue, and audience members can write on them when they leave the performance. Questions should be specifically related to the play's topic and shouldn't exceed 3-4!

■ The same questions as before, along with others related to the issue, could be compiled into a short evaluation form. The Joker could mention at the end of the event that some volunteers will approach them to ask a few questions and invite them to support the initiative.

■ The same evaluation form mentioned earlier can already be placed on each person's seat, and they can individually fill it and hand it in to the team at the end of the performance. The Joker should mention it and encourage the people to do so.

Examples: What will you do the next time you are involved in a similar situation in your community? With what feelings or thoughts do you leave this event? What is the first thing you want to do in relation to this problem? What do you think is the most essential solution that should be implemented? What should the community do about it? What do you think the authorities should do?

Ideas for longer-term evaluation with audience members

- You can set up a dedicated online platform for follow-up after the performance, where those who want to be involved or informed can join/sign up. Post the exact location of this medium in a visible place and invite people to join. The activity on this medium can provide information on the long-term impact.
- You can collect contact details (during the performance) and after some time contact some of the spectators (via e-mail or phone) and invite them to some follow-up meetings (online or offline) to discuss the problems, the changes in their life and in their community (if the play was shown in controllable community – school, village, work place, etc.) – or to ask them directly via mail or phone (post performance impact evaluation).
- Check with people who regularly interact with audience members what they observe as changes related to the specific issues raised in the performance, as a result of their participation in this process.



Creative Tools

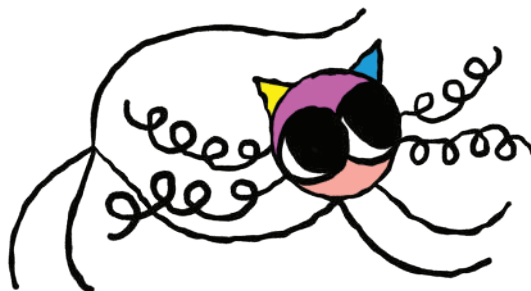
Depending on your context and the type of events/groups you will work with, you may use more creative kinds of tools or activities to collect data or impressions of the people involved.

Statues – after a particular discussion or performance, you can also ask the actors to create images of their experience of the process or of their feelings after the event (alone or with others). You may also ask the same of the audience if you consider it an adequate invitation for them.

Drawing – participants could draw or paint immediately after or during the long-term assessment meetings, illustrating their journeys in the performances or afterwards.

Pictures – you can use different photos, images, pictures with abstract content or very concrete depictions of reality, and ask the participants to choose the ones that reflect their process, learning, insights, etc.

Metaphors – the people involved can choose objects that represent something significant from this process, or use other types of metaphors from society (a natural event, seasons, a fruit, an animal, etc.) that can be used to illustrate parts of their process.



Final Remarks

While writing this manual, I reflected on my journey with Theatre of the Oppressed methods. How and why I started, why I continued, and why I continue working with them.

When I wrote about a specific exercise, activity, or piece of theory, people and groups with whom I discussed, facilitated, or worked over the years came to mind. **Powerful memories!** So many people are not currently in my life, but they hold a special place in my heart because I met them through Forum Theatre. I am so grateful for all the experiences I had in working with Forum Theatre.

**I always said and keep saying,
Forum Theatre was my first love in what matters,
a method, and no method after that took the first place.**

From 2004 to now, I have witnessed the power of these methods so many times, and I have never felt I had enough. Working with Forum Theatre is such a rich, intense and revealing process, about me, about people, about society, about life, etc.

Writing this second edition gave me even more motivation and strength to keep going. I need to hand this manual to hundreds of people myself, as I did with the first edition.

I want more people to feel what I feel when I work with these methods, to be inspired by this material, to try it out, and to feel confident when working with Forum Theatre. I want people to do right, with the help of this manual. I want to meet people years later who will tell me how this material changed their lives and the lives of the people they worked with.

I believe in this work, in this method, and in how this material will make a difference!

Andreea-Loredana Tudorache



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