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## Re–Create the ARTitude through Forum Theatre!

Our society is made out of people that we meet everyday, in different situations: in the street, at work, in their families, in a couple or among friends. Each of us is playing different roles in different situations. We are in the same time adults, children, husbands or wives, somebody's boss or employee, drivers or pedestrians, neighbours, clients, etc. Playing these roles, playing these parts everyday makes us interact with other people. And there is a permanent dialogues coming out of our interactions. This dialogue brings everybody in a dynamic communication process. But most of the times, the dialogue becomes a monologue. Starting from this moment conflicts and oppression appear. Once the oppression is present among us, we are not able to explore our needs and the others' in a creative, constructive and objective manner. We can be very subjective while analyzing different solutions to different oppressive situations we're dealing with; or we realize that we don't know how to react to different situations.

That is why theatre appeared, as a social intervention tool that helps people to stimulate their creativity and thinking, trust and local identity that enables people to be more involved in their community. Theatre becomes a tool that transforms our monologues into a permanent dialogue. Augusto Boal (father of the *Theatre of the Oppressed*) said: '*While some are playing theatre, we are the theatre*'.

Forum Theatre was created to help us to play a proactive role in our daily life and in our community, whether it's about involving local authorities or searching for new solutions among the members of the community.

This guide offers you the theoretical part of the FT method and also some practical examples took from different implemented projects. The guide represents an alternative to the materials existing in Romania so far. The authors offer information, indications, examples and guidelines for those who wish to implement a F.T. project. Working with this method brings you to the



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conclusion that you can never say that everything is predictable. This guide is for both the ones who never worked before with F.T. and the ones who already know something about this method.

The 'Re-Create the Artitude through Forum Theatre' project was initiated in March 2007 by the A.R.T. Fusion Association, in partnership with the New Horizons Foundation and the National Council against Discrimination (NCAD) – and it was the first step in creating this guide. With the financial help of the National Cultural Fond Administration and the New Horizons Foundation with its I.M.P.A.C.T. clubs, the project reached a national level. There were presented F.T. plays in Bucharest, Iasi, Timisoara, Constanta, Slobozia, Drobeta Turnu-Severin, Lupeni, Petrosani and Sibiu.

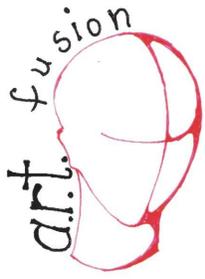
The project was born from the need of raising the awareness of the F.T. as a social intervention tool among NGOs, public institutions and community workers. With the support of the NCAD there was identified the main problem in our communities – discrimination of all kinds (gender, race, religion, disabilities, HIV/AIDS).

During this project took place different activities:

- a F.T. training in Bucharest (March 2007);
- 'Re-Create the Artitude through Forum Theatre' festival in Constanta (May 2007);
- 'Are you a by-stander? Take ARTitude' festival in Bucharest (May 2007);
- 11 FT plays with over 50 representations at a local level;
- a FT camp in Sibiu, in partnership with the European House of Art;
- a training for 22 teachers from School no. 2, Lugoj, aiming an optional course of FT for the students;
- creating a web site: [www.teatruforum.ro](http://www.teatruforum.ro) – for promoting FT in Romania and the Romanian FT Network;

By the time the project ended, in October 2007, the FT guide appeared and some organizations that are using FT as a tool were given counselling regarding their work in this field.

There were estimated around 10,000 direct beneficiaries and 20, 000 indirect ones, people who had contact with FT, who attended the representations or who shared their experience.



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This guide contains testimonies of the FT facilitators, actors, project coordinators and volunteers who were part of the project.

The structure of the guide helps the reader to go through all the basic steps of the FT: from the Theatre of the Oppressed to the FT; identifying the problem in a community; creating a team for the project; structure of the 'script'; the Forum part; information regarding the Joker; the impact of the play on the team; impressions – of the volunteers and of the public; information regarding planning and organizing a FT event, including PR; and challenges offered by FT.

We hope that after reading this guide you will reach our conclusion – that FT is not work method, a tool to change the community, but also an educational experience for every actor or spectator, on or outside the stage.





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## Chapter 1 – Introduction in Forum Theatre

### Theatre of the Oppressed

- Augusto Boal –father of the Theatre of the Oppressed
- Paulo Freire – a source of inspiration for Boal, who shares the same believes
- Theatre of the Oppressed – the ‘liberating’ theatre

### Boal –father of the Theatre of the Oppressed

Augusto Boal – initiator of the TOTO, theatre director, theoretician, writer and teacher; he was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1931. He begins his studies in chemistry, but he gives up this subject and gets involved in theatre. In 1972 he becomes the director of the Arena Theatre, Sao Paulo. Starting from experiments where the public could express their opinion on the play, he goes further on, with deeper research and new types of theatre. The same year, influenced by his co-national Paulo Freire, he publishes ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’, a first step in informal education through theatre. Due to the controversies brought by his book, Boal got himself arrested and expelled. He lives for a while in Argentina and Peru, and then he moves to Paris, where he creates the TOTO Centre. He starts to improve and develop his skills and techniques, adapting everything to the European society, so much different than the Latin-American one. He contacts people from different social categories, working with professionals and non-professional actors. All these lead him to new theatre techniques: Forum Theatre, Invisible Theatre and Image Theatre.



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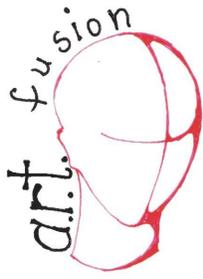
He gets back to Rio de Janeiro after the military dictatorship disappears and he creates another TOTO Centre. As a local councillor in Rio he has the opportunity to develop a new form of theatre – Legislative Theatre. He never ceases to meditate upon theatre and his personal motivation for using it. He creates<sup>1</sup> and investigates new methods, close to psycho–therapy and politics.

During his activity, he publishes a number of books he participates to trainings and workshops. We can read about ‘TOTO’, ‘Games for Actors and Non–Actors’, ‘Wishes Rainbow’, ‘Legislative Theatre’, ‘Hamlet and the Baker’s Son’, ‘My Life in Theatre and Politics’.

Nowadays, his methods are used in over 70 countries. Part of his books is: *“Theatre of the Oppressed”*, *“Games for actors and non-actors”*, *“Rainbow of wishes”*, *“Hamlet and the baker’s son”*, *“Legislative Theatre”*, *“My life in theatre and politics”*.

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<sup>1</sup> Augusto Boal, *“Games for actors and non-actors / Theater of the Oppressed in Practice”*, Concept Foundation, Bucharest, 2005



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### PAOLO FREIRE – a source of inspiration for Boal

Paolo Freire was a real source of inspiration for Boal, sharing the same believes as him. They both wanted to change reality by involving the oppressed people in their own liberation process. They both emphasized the importance of experience education and problem solving thinking.

A great role in Freire's techniques had the awareness concept. Boal's book, '*TOTO*', is a tribute to Paolo Freire who published '*The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*'. They are both Brazilians, they both spent time in prison because of their principles and believes they have never stopped fighting for. And they both tried to improve the social condition of their co-nationals.

During the ceremony where they have been rewarded with the *Doctor Honoris Causa in Social Science* (Nebraska University, Omaha), Augusto Boal said: '*We've learnt to learn with Paolo Freire...For me to exist, Paolo Freire needed to exist.*'<sup>2</sup>

TOTO has been used for more than 40 years as a method of social intervention, through artistic activities (in general) and theatre (in particular). Augusto Boal describes TOTO as a tree with strong roods, deep into a fertile soil, with plenty of branches ready to flourish.

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<sup>2</sup> Romanian Association for Communitarian Development: "*Forum Theatre Step by Step*", pg.9, Bucharest



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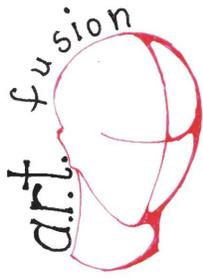
## Chapter 1 – Introduction in Forum Theatre

### Theatre of the Oppressed – a liberating theatre

TOTO appeared as a moral and political answer to the Latin American repression, during which thousands of people were killed, exiled or pushed away. Even if in Europe there is a different situation, there is the need of a liberating theatre. Oppression exists around us, under different shapes. This is the main reason why TOTO appeared.

It has no standard formula; there is no list of solutions to everyday situations. TOTO is a continuous research to daily reality and the methods used by TOTO are more subtle and sophisticated. It is flexible; it can be adapted to every region or country, depending on the characteristics of the people and the different kinds of oppression.

TOTO appeared as a process of people adapting to problems; it developed and got specialized on different directions. That is why TOTO has complex and different forms that need to be approached differently.



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## Chapter 1 – Introduction in Forum Theatre

### What is FT and why do we use it?

#### FT- a social intervention tool

It sounds simple, doesn't it? It is a short sentence with deep meaning.

FT may look, at first sight, a simple form of theatre. But is not just any kind of theatre, it is *forum*. This means that the play itself offers the public the chance to change ideas and opinions.

How can we put into practice such an idea?

When you go to a theatre play you do it because you like the subject, the settings, and the actors. And you know exactly what you have to do: you buy a ticket, you get ready for the big event and once you find yourself in the theatre room you sit down quietly in a comfortable chair, waiting for the show the actors prepared for you.

But what if, at some point, you would stand up and go on the stage and become an actor? Moreover, instead of playing what is written in the script, you change the situations you don't agree with, you talk to the other characters, create new situations, bring up new points of view and get to another end.

Sounds incredible, doesn't it? It is like you would leave reality and you would go after Alice in Wonderland. Incredible as it may sound, such thing really exists and it is put into practice through Forum Theatre.

The principle is simple – why does theatre need to keep the clear distinction between actor and spectator when it can do more? And that is when spectators become actors and the fantasy on the stage meets reality. This way, theatre gets off the stage, among the spectators; it mingles with their lives and creates a new 'product', with an unknown ending.

Everyday reality without the light of idealism has its own plot, beauty and complexity. A piece of reality is brought up on the stage to be watched, appreciated and transformed by the people who are actually living it – the public.



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FT focuses on moments and situations people live everyday without paying special attention to them. Theatre offers the participants the possibility to watch the end from the outside, as a hidden witness who watches the tragic situation, who understands where ignorance, prejudice and discrimination are leading to. This time they can say ‘STOP! I didn’t like that. If somebody had said something it wouldn’t have ended like that. If only we can turn back time...’

But we can turn back time because we are on the theatre whelm. The play starts again, scene by scene, offering the public the chance to become actors and to re-do the play, bringing new attitudes and dialogues to improve what is wrong.

FT wishes to be as close as its people as possible, that is why it does not need a theatre room. It does not even need professional actors. Only a small group of very motivated people, a minimal setting (a market place, a park, a classroom) and basic FT knowledge – these are the basic needed to create a FT play. Everything else is improvisation.

There is no better way to talk about reality than talking to a public that interferes in a situation, the way they feel and understand, or even the way they have lived it. It is clear, simple and natural.

Most of all, FT is a social intervention tool. It offers the public the unique chance to do and undo a real situation, to change the end and the whole play from the very beginning, to observe what happens after each intervention. A FT play is like a laboratory where everyday life experiences are re-produced and the learning experience is oriented towards a positive ending. We all like ‘Happy Endings’ but we all have the feeling that life and faith are to blame for our tragic stories. So all we have to do is go with the flow and follow the given path. The truth is that everybody makes his own luck, that we all have different options to choose from, that the path we are following is the one we chose. It is our responsibility to create our own ‘Happy End’. But we can transform somebody’s tragic end in a happier one. Each of us can bring a small contribution to change somebody’s desperate situation. And FT offers us this possibility!



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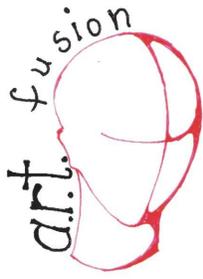
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As you can see, FT is a form of theatre that looks upon everyday life and it tries to offer 'credible' solutions. Being aware of our social problems, FT set its targets: social inclusion, equality and cooperation.

The dramatic situation is presented in 10–21 minutes and then discussed with the public. The best ideas and solutions always come after the desperate situation has ended. But we don't have the possibility to stop our real life whenever a problem occurs, make the right decision and then act the right way. FT proves itself to be a good rehearsal for everybody's real life.



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## Chapter 2 – Forum Theatre Step by Step

### Forum Theatre Step by Step

#### 1. Forming the work group and identifying the target group

These two steps can be tackled in whichever order best suits the project we are currently working on.

It may be the case that we are trying to discover and help solve certain issues in a community. In this situation, we would have to choose people who could help us accomplish this project, people who are attuned to the realities of this community. From such a group, a facilitator can easily collect ideas and information that, when put in practice through a Forum Theatre play, would speak out to the members of the community which we are addressing.

An alternative to this approach is to form a team that would be trained regarding the FT method and would then have to mould their acting on different situations, as the projects move between different issues and different target groups.

Of course, it seems easy, sometimes, to just list the problems that the world we are living in is facing, to collect opinions about who the affected persons are, how they are dealing with it, where this is happening, and so on. Even though, on an intuitive level, it is simple to identify the problem, the difficulties usually arise from the details surrounding it:

- How serious the problem is
- Whom it is affecting the bigger picture
- In which way it is affecting the above-identified people
- What are the differences between the various social groups affected by this problem
- Etc...

An important issue that the facilitator could face when identifying the problem (especially if they are lacking objective research methods or scientific documents backing this up) is **generalization**. When we are working with a few (isolated) cases or the painful testimonies of several people, the tendency arises to generalize that experience to all those who are in similar situations, or to all those who occupy the same geographical space.

After these two steps are complete, we should have a group of people that are oriented towards the same goal, and the goal (and perhaps even some of the solutions) has already been



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identified. It is the role of the facilitator to help the working group assimilate the goal, the identified social issue. This can be done through numerous non-formal methods that, since they are extremely versatile, can be molded to fit any necessity.

The process of **assimilation** is extremely important for two reasons. Firstly because it is the principal basis of team cohesion. Should it be absent in places, it is certain that those will be the cases when dysfunctions of team working will arise. Secondly, information assimilation implies a process of cognitive symbolism taking place within each individual in the group. If the situation they are working with is something they have never encountered before, they will need to ask themselves key questions, like:

- How would I react if this happened to me?
- Do I know anyone who has gone through this experience?
- What did that person do? / What would I have done to help that person?
- Would the situation bother me enough to spur me into action?
- Is there a logical solution to the situation? Am I approaching it from a point of view that is too subjective?

**Answering these questions within the group** can, more often than not, provide a common point of view with which the whole team can identify, therefore leading to further cohesion.

An added bonus is that, when cognitive symbols have been decanted through each group member's personal perceptions, they usually come out completely bereft of subjectivism. We therefore have our issue, clear to all and ready to be worked on.

### **2. Establishing the global situation, identifying the characters and working on the script.**

As we can see from the leaflet that presents the general principles of Forum Theatre, there must be a certain relationship between the characters:

- **Oppression** – between Oppressed and Oppressor
- **Support** – between each main character and their respective Allies.

More often than not, the simplest process is to identify one of the catalyst forces – the Oppressor or the Oppressed. These characters will be representative of their community and will, in fact, be a collage of traits, beliefs and practices that are manifested by the community in general, when addressing the issue we are trying to solve.



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In such cases, the Oppressed and the Oppressor will be stereotypical, though this should not be perceived as a problem. Since they are simply “visual aids” to help the public identify (with) the situation, these characters will always be the most obvious in their behavior.

As we were discussing above, when the issue is identified through empirical methods, the Oppressor and the Oppressed will represent hear-say cases, stories that “happened to our friends” or just a combination of everyone’s cognitive symbols regarding the social issue we are working to solve

The Allies’ situation derives from context. In order to help the public understand the validity of the Oppressed claim and the gravity of the Oppressor’s behavior, both sides will be aided by secondary characters that add color and credibility to the play. If it has been researched, for example, that the most effective way of communicating with our target group is by using humor in our play, then the Allies will be the ones used for comic relief.

The work group can identify with the characters by using **role play**, **word association games**, **mime exercises**, or whatever other non-formal education method may appeal to the facilitator. Whereas this can be a rather dynamic activity, involving lots of moving around and being mostly based on spontaneous creativity, establishing the script is a more static and intellectual activity, having as best suited method the **brainstorming**. A FT play lasts no longer than 20 minutes, this leaving us with the possibility to have 4, maximum 5 scenes per play. These scenes, while built in the way best understandable by the target group, must be in chronological order, to allow the play to be acted out again and to make the course of change evident to the audience. Another important aspect about the script of a FT play is its **form and contents**. Since this is improvisational theatre, the script is more of a set of guidelines, of general situations to be tackled in each scene. To these, we may add certain key lines that help the development of the story / characters. Other than this, the play should be of free improvisation, since some of the best lines appear after the non-actors have become familiar with their characters through several rehearsing sessions.



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As long as the team has not deviated from the initial purpose, we should, by now, have a cast of around 7 characters and a 4-to-5-scene script, ready to be acted out.

### 3. Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse

This phase is particularly important to the process of developing a FT play. It can be likened to the glue, or cement, that will keep the performance together. This is the step where the non-actors “click” with each-other:

- Learning each-other’s way of **moving about stage**
- Learning each-other’s **mannerisms and favored ways of reacting**
- Learning to complement each-other’s **lines and/or presence** on the scene
- Becoming accustomed to each-other’s **assumed way of embodying his/her character**.

Another “**click**” that must take place in this stage is that between **actors** and the **Joker** (*see Leaflet 1 for information*). It is ideal that, throughout rehearsals, the team will perform several mock-interventions, so that they can be better prepared to understand the way their audience will react to the method.

These relations (between non-actors, between non-actors and Joker, and between team and audience) are essential to the development of the play and, in the end, to the success of the method. The facilitator of the Forum Theatre method should regard this step as an opportunity to further advance the team-building process, since the work group is likely to go through a new process of configuring itself at this moment in time.

### 4. The performance and the conclusions

The most important and interesting stage of the FT method is probably the performance. This is the moment that reflects the work of the whole team, the end result of all the preparations. It is essential that the performance (through the non-actors and Joker) can mould itself around the audience’s reactions. There are always cases when something has gone awry while documenting the target group. Or the audience is constituted by the target group, but they



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prove remarkably resistant to change. This is the moment when all previous plans should be cast aside and the Joker's abilities to motivate the public come into play.

This is also the moment when the connection and the tacit communication between the non-actors are tested to their limits. If a recalcitrant audience member replaces a character only to make the situation worse (wittingly or unwittingly), it is the role of the non-actors left on stage to steer the development in a good direction and extract whatever good points they can from a bad intervention.

As a last resort, the team can completely reconfigure the performance by using alternative Forum Theatre exercises aimed at the audience

In theory, we should have safely passed the "performance" stage and moved on to drawing conclusions together with the members of the audience. This happens in two different ways, which can be regarded as complementary if the circumstances permit this.

- By public debate (lead by the Joker). This is step implies that, after the performance is over, the Joker discusses the suggested changes with the audience. This discussion should benefit from a certain atmosphere, which should motivate most audience members to state their opinions, their own contributions to the situation, and perhaps even the application that the public can think of, in their own daily lives
- Implicitly, by recapping all the changes proposed throughout the performance. This is a sort of monologue held by the Joker, so as to help sediment the solutions in the mind of the participants to the play. This depends to a certain extent on the Joker's ability to make a clear, logical presentation that will be easily assimilated by the public.

We have finally passed the most difficult step, that of performing in front of an audience. Now we should be ready to draw conclusions.



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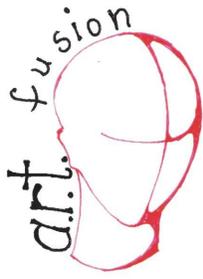
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### 5. Analysis and final evaluation

This is the last stage of the Forum Theatre method, and should by no means be overlooked. The team should be involved in this discussion which is lead by the facilitator and/or Joker, and relies heavily on feedback.

Forum Theatre performances can bring important revelations to the non-actors. It is important to discuss how everyone perceived the team dynamics, the solutions to possible unexpected situations, and means for improvement. There will always be situations when different sides of the non-actors' personalities are brought out by their interaction with the spect-actors, and it is important for them to be ready for anything, to be willing to accept any new information they receive about themselves and the others.



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### How Do We Identify the Problem?

Our experience taught us that there are few ways to identify the community problem:

- Observation of the community;
- Analyzing the actors' problems;
- Consulting the authorities;
- Discussions with members of the community;
- Questionnaires.

The Forum Theatre play starts from the need of a change. There will always be people who will ask for a change and for action.

We hear it all the time: 'I'm not ok; people are not treating me right; I'm in an awful situation and sometimes I don't know how to deal with it. But what can I do about it? It's not in my power.'

How can we tell what is the real problem? Starting from our personal needs we can ask ourselves which ones are important also for our community, which ones are social and which can be solved through FT.

#### **OBSERVATION**

This is the first step the group should take. If you look around and pay attention to the rest of the people you see things you have not considered that important at the beginning. You see details you have not noticed before; you understand situations better than before. In order to understand you have to listen, to pay attention to different situations, to think of you present life experience.

The second step is sharing with the others the observation you have made. When you find people who reached the same conclusions it means that you have found a common ground – a community problem.



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If you are not the only one who noticed something wrong then there is definitely a problem that might be serious enough to affect some members of the community. From this point on, the problem of the group of actors can be considered a local problem.

A simple way to identify a local problem is to have a brainstorming meeting with the actors who are willing to implement a FT project in their community. Each of them is different; they have different life experience and different social backgrounds. If the majority agrees upon a situation then that situation must be taken into consideration.

This approach might seem superficial. Just to make sure of our analyze, we can use other methods: asking the local authorities; consulting the existing documentation on that issue (history of the problem, different attitudes towards it; any past solutions regarding the problem; what where the methods used before and their efficiency); asking people from the community (the more, the better; or, if there are only a few, then ask for a lot of details).

**Asking common** people in the street leads you to different, spontaneous answers (they have different ages, they might be part of the target group or not). This way we can find out about more about the situation we are interested in, from people who have lived it or from their friends or outsiders. A **questionnaire** makes this method easier and faster (the same number of questions asked to a bigger number of people, in a shorter period of time).

**Local authorities** have their own vision on the community's dynamics. They are not supposed to miss any problem. There are certain programs for certain problems, but due to the lack of time and financial support some issues have remained unsolved. The co-operation with local authorities is always encouraged: the action group and the public institutions have the same purpose – social intervention and community change. These local institutions are a reach source of information. They have access to the kind of resources the team cannot reach. This is how local authorities can support a Forum Theatre project in their community.

Any of these methods represent a starting point for your project research. For a better image of the problem we recommend you to use more than one method presented above. The theoretical information you find in documents can successfully be combined with the practical information



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you find while talking to people, asking for more details. You can check the information given by the local authorities by going directly to the people involved. The group's observation can have a scientific support through a questionnaire.

Once the problems have been identified, a major decision must be taken: which one can be solved through FT; which is an actual one and it can be played by the actors in a clear manner.

In order to be approached through Forum Theatre the problem must:

- be actual and important;
- involve an oppression situation;
- be part of the daily life;
- be hanged significantly by the community members' interventions;
- Be approached by non-professional actors.

When we identify a situation that has these characteristics we can say that we have found a serious problem that needs to be solved through FT. It is a lot of work involved and yes, it is true that there is the possibility that the problem might not be solved this way. In fact, if the problem has a big impact on the community then only one attempt of FT is not enough to make things right. A real social change takes a lot of time and work. What FT does is to offer another point of view on the present situation, a sort of a window towards another kind of future; FT only points out the problem; it raises the community awareness and tries to diminish the negative impact of the problem. FT is a tool, just like a medicine that makes you better from the first dose, but it does not cure without a long term treatment.



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### The Team: Forming, Meetings, Rehearsals...and More

This chapter is dedicated to the study of the teams involved in Forum Theatre projects so far. Based on our experience, we try to offer you some guidelines to form a motivated a Forum Theatre oriented team. A very important piece of advice: do whatever it takes to have an united team. This will help you to go over every unpredictable and unpleasant moments; otherwise you risk to serious obstacles during the most simple activities.

When we are talking about a team we are thinking about:

- choosing the members of the team;
- the values of the group;
- the group's needs;
- recommendations;
- meetings: learning through games and exercises;
- the facilitator's responsibilities;
- when we can say we have a FT team?

#### Choosing the Team Members

Once we have identified the problem in the community and we decided to use FT as a social tool, it is time to focus our attention to the team that will create the FT play and performance. In the past 3 years we have had 2 volunteers' recruitment campaigns – to find the volunteers who have become members of the FT teams. The selection criteria were: a strong motivation to be involved in the community; willingness to change; time availability; acting skills. Most of the volunteers showed a great interest in developing their improvisation skills to create reality-based characters, to try to change a situation through acting.

While selecting the teams we have come upon 2 situations. The first one – a team who was supposed to create a FT play on community problems and whose members were not part of the target group ( projects like obtaining ID's for Roma people). The second one (and the most representative for the Theatre of the Oppressed) – the team had as members direct beneficiaries of the project.



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That is why most of our FT plays were based on youth problems: creating your identity and an image of yourself; discrimination; youth ideals; the conflict between generations.

The members of the team are more motivated if the problem they are trying to solve is also theirs'. Our pilot project, 'Re-Create the Artitude' 2006, was a success from this point of view. The team members, as members of their community also, identified the problem by relating it to their own life experience; so they brought up on stage pieces of their lives.

They had such a strong motivation that most of the 20 volunteers decided to remain active all year long, creating new plays and giving 100% of their energy.

The present FT team was formed during this pilot project, after attending a training course in October 2006. After we have made the announcement, we selected young students of 18-16 years old, attracted by whatever is new, interested in changes and working with people. They came from different backgrounds, different schools, but what brought them together was the will to 'take artitude' and to help the others around them to do the same thing. They wanted to show the world how to behave in social oppression situations.

The way our team evolved and its impact on the target groups is another living proof that Forum Theatre actually works!

### Values of the Group

Any group needs to go through different stages of evolution, no matter the number of the members:

1. Forming – the new/future members of the group are gathered together;
2. Storming – conflicts appear;
3. Norming – the team members set up their own rules and values;
4. Performing – the group reaches the highest point of performance;
5. Transforming/ Adjourning – the group is transformed or dissolved.



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If the members of the group are satisfied with their results and if they have the chance to work in other projects, they will continue to develop as a team and step into another stage. But if ending the project brings down the team it will also bring a break up among the members of the group.

In our experience, once we gathered the future members of the team we organized a 2 days Forum Theatre workshop. During this workshop the new formed team went through a series of non-formal education activities, presenting the 'oppression' concept and how can we fight against it; what is Forum Theatre and its educational purpose; everybody's role in the team; the changes they can bring in their community. By the end of the workshop, every participant was able to identify and present an oppression situation and act it in a FT play.

These are the basic steps that we have to have in mind while forming a FT team. It is very important to focus on the group's rules and values, the coordinator's expectations, working schedule and the group's behavior.

Once the team understood their potential impact on the community and the message they send, working meetings can start.

### Group's Needs

A very important step in creating a team is finding out what is motivating for its members and their needs: what they want and what they can achieve by being part of FT group.

Usually, each member wants to achieve a personal development; team work skills; communication and negotiation skills. And everybody wants to contribute to a significant change in their community.

A.R.T. Fusion Association experienced different projects, working with youth of 12–15, 15–18, 20–28 years old. Every young person has a strong motivation while working in a FT project,



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especially the 20-28 year old. They also find strong motivation in getting over obstacles and not letting themselves down by failures.

In order to implement a FT project in a certain community the team needs to be united and ready for that specific project.

In the beginning they will have a personal motivation, but as time goes by and the project develops, their motivation will have a social level – what they will give to that community. Success is when the target group starts bringing up on stage solutions to their problems and when they are willing to act them not only on stage, but also in their real life.

There are different techniques used to attract people in a FT project. The selection process is also a natural selection one. There are a lot of curious people in the first two sessions, but there are only few who understand what is all about and even fewer who will end up as volunteers in a project.

But there will also be a lot of beneficiaries, spectators involved in an experience learning process. It is a natural process and the facilitator should not be worried about the people who are leaving after a while – the right people would stay up to the end.

### Recommendations

The Joker has a very important role in the team making process. S/he has to gather team members and to set up a good communication system (or to improve the existing one). S/he has to keep the team together even when there are volunteers quitting or newcomers.

A.R.T. Fusion experienced 3 kinds of teams.

1. Young people of 20–23 who did not know each other before. For 6 weeks they worked to build a strong team, to identify the problem and their impact on the community and to create a FT play. They worked around 7 hours each week (40–45h in total).



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2. Young people of 16–19 who knew each other. They did not spend a lot of time on team building because they already had good dynamics. They knew from the beginning the target group and the community. Working 5 days in a row, they have managed to analyze the community, to identify the problem and to create the FT play (including advertising the event).
3. Team members who have worked together before, in other projects. They already had great dynamics. They were actually asked by a certain community to play for them – knowing the problem and the public. This time, in only one day, they have managed to create a FT play. The representation was part of a bigger event based on a well known and important problem for the public across the country.

The public already knew the problem and the topic of the play but the presentation method was new for them. The main purpose of the play was to make the spectators understand that they need to act in order to find solutions for that problem and not to remain indifferent.

Working with different kinds of team we discovered that there are certain aspects that need special attention when creating a team. Here are some of the aspects:

- Have enough members in the team so you can replace the missing ones (from different reasons);
- Have an (almost) equal number of both, male and female members – you can choose the characters easier;
- Pay attention to every conflict that may occur inside the group or if there are volunteers who bring inside the group their personal problems; find a creative way to explore and solve these conflicts;
- Try to identify the informal leaders within the group – see if they motivate or frustrate the group;
- Ask for feedback after each activity;
- Give the volunteers the chance to come up with new ideas and coordinate different activities;
- Let the group decide on certain situations.



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Selecting members for a FT group can be an easy process, or, sometimes, on the contrary. It all depends on the way the facilitator discovers members' needs, on how s/he finds a proper way to motivate them and to create a bonding among the members of the group. If the facilitator finds a good way to cover all these aspects then the project can be successful for both, the beneficiaries and the team members.



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### Meetings

Once we have a FT group, we also have a location, we already know our needs, our target public and their problem – so all we have to do is to start working!

Working meetings can take place up to several times a week, depending on the members' availability. In our experience we have learnt that 2, maximum 3 meetings a week is the best choice. More than 3 meetings can overwhelm the group and they will not find any pleasure in meeting again and again. Having a group of 10–15 volunteers lead to a 3 – 3 ½ h meeting.

It is better to have up to 2 facilitators or a team's coordinator who can take care of the meeting location, schedule, who sets the objectives of the meeting and the exercises that need to be done during that meeting. We have worked with 2 facilitators, sometimes even 3, dividing our time and energy resources.

The Joker needs a special attention. S/he needs to attend EVERY meeting. The Joker is the person who keeps a permanent contact with the public, who leads the public to the key and subtle moments of the play. That is why s/he needs to see how the play and the team evolve, which are the moments to be emphasized and which are the bad moments. The Joker has to be in permanent contact with the FT group.

Each working session must have a clear structure – and the most appropriate one for the team. The best thing to do is for the facilitator to set up the educational objectives of the meeting, depending on the group's needs.

There is a large number of exercises that the team need to go through. There are physical but also sensorial exercises; individual, in pairs or group exercises; improvisation or statues exercises. The best part of an exercise is the debriefing part – reflection upon the past activity. All these kind of activities help the team members to overcome fears and inhibitions, to overcome their limits and to feel comfortable with themselves and with the others.

The facilitator needs to supervise the group and he has to make a dynamic and homogenous group. It is easier for such a group to identify their needs and interests, to explore the community and identify problems.



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If there are certain differences within the group there is also the chance to find difficulties in finding a common ground or exploring a certain theme (that sometimes might not be representative for the community).

The exercises, games and different activities are an essential component in implementing a FT project. Why do we use them? Is there something to gain out of them?

There are so many positive aspects in these games.

- They are icebreakers – they remove the communication barriers between the members of the group;
- They teach communication, co-operation and trust through experimenting them;
- They stimulate the creative problem solving thinking;
- They are a bounding element for the team;
- They create a fun, enthusiastic and challenging atmosphere inside the group;
- They stimulate creativity;
- They make the group more dynamic;
- They increase the group's motivation.

The following paragraphs are for those of you who would like to become facilitators. The importance of the facilitator is obvious, especially in the beginning of the project.

The facilitator has to be careful and to create a certain time and place for the team to meet, so that everybody feels safe and feels that his/her own participation is valued and respected. The facilitator needs to create the kind of environment where people trust each other and where the group works as a dynamic and creative body.

Paolo Freire said: 'The process in which a person communicates with another is perceived as an act of reinforcing the community and building social capital'. Augusto Boal, inspired by this quote, challenged people to work with each other, creating a certain level of trust through FT. Trust is the essential element that unites a FT group: during working sessions and not only. The facilitator has certain responsibilities in order to create a trustworthy climate. S/he has to make the members of the team to be involved in all the activities because it is in their best interest; nobody is forced to play; everybody decides for himself and everybody knows his limits. The facilitator needs not only to gain the members' trust but also to bring trust among them.



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T.S. Elliot once wrote: 'I had the experience but I have lost its meaning'. Another responsibility of the facilitator is to help the group to find a meaning in each activity. This is the purpose of an activity – to reveal a hidden meaning, a metaphor. Most of the times games are considered to be the purpose themselves – to have fun! But games are not a 'purpose', they are a 'way' to the purpose. They are considered to be purpose only fun and ice breaking games. If you want to discover all the positive aspects of a game you have to develop the group's ability to find out the meaning of every activity. We can say that reflecting about the past activity is probably more important as the activity itself, but the significance cannot come out of nothing.

If you want to obtain a certain goal you have to plan thoroughly the activity and its steps, to combine your initial plan with observations made 'on the way' – this way you can come up with a new, improved plan. You can find out the meaning of the activities by asking questions but always keep in mind the educational experience of the members. Do NOT tell them the meaning, let them find it out! This is what we call the group's reflection process. The facilitating skills, also known as analyze or debriefing, is probably the most important and difficult ability that a Theatre of the Oppressed facilitator needs to develop.

Working sessions need to be planned so that each member of the team develops himself constantly. As a facilitator you need to observe their behavior during key moments. You need to identify the reasons why they behave in a certain manner. Do not ask them to remain quiet and focused. If they lose focus during an activity it might be because they did not understand the rules of that activity; or they might laugh because they are nervous. You have to make sure that every participant has the chance to share his/her impressions after each session. These kinds of discussions give them the chance to express themselves, to share their personal experience during the activities. This way they will develop at personal and social level.

Think to the analyze as going fishing. You are in a boat, on a lake. The lake represents the group's experience. Your job, as a facilitator, is to find some problems in the lake and catch them; so that the group has to learn something out of them. Start with a big fishing pole – throw it and see if there's anything coming out of the water. If you see a 'vibration' then throws fishing net. Throw another bite in the same direction and probably there's going to be more



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there. The secret of a good analyze is to be able to interpret the vibrations' – Earl Davis. Boal wanted to prove the same thing. Through a FT play we create vibrations, small waves, but we give the fishing pole to the public, to catch as many fish as possible, to feed their problems with concrete solutions, whether if it is now or later.



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### Rehearsals– Location and Meetings

The location where rehearsals take place is very important. It is not necessarily a theatre studio or a stage.

We used to have our rehearsals in a theatre room, on a stage, in an apartment, in a military tent, on the beach, in a classroom or outside, in a park or forest. Each of these places can be used efficiently if the team is united and ready for new challenges. It is recommended to have rehearsals in at least 2 different places so that the actors can be prepared for any kind of 'stage' (always have in mind that FT is played in unconventional places). Choosing the rehearsals place depends on the type of activities you (as a facilitator) choose for that meeting. It is also recommended, if possible, to have a fix place for the team, to build a certain dynamics and to raise the feeling of 'belonging to a place'.



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### **When Do We Have a Forum Theatre Group?**

When people attend the meetings with pleasure and enthusiasm, when they are able to take things seriously; when they know what FT means; when they are able to work by themselves; when they take initiative and all they need is a new project – and they will come up with new ideas about how and when. That is when we can say that we have a good Forum Theatre group!

We can say that also when the facilitator's presence is more and more optional, because everybody knows their job and they are also involved at the decision making level. At this level, the team not only takes into consideration the play and the possible interventions, but also the location and the characteristics of the target group. At this level we can say that we have a mature group that has a holistic view on the project.



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### **When can we say that we have a Forum Theatre team?**

When people enjoy coming to the working sessions, when they approach each task seriously, when they have mastered the Forum Theatre method and are working without needing close guidance.

When they have initiative and we only have to present the project for them to begin bringing ideas about how the problem would be best brought out through a FT play, only then can we say we have a functional Forum Theatre team.

We can tell the team is functioning as it should when the intervention of the facilitator is required less and less and the method is assimilated by the group members; when their involvement is manifested both at a dramatic and a decisional level. Only by reaching this level will the team members act keeping in mind not only the aspect of the play and the possible interventions, but also the location, time, characteristics of the target group.

When these behaviors and ideas are noticed to have surfaced along with them will surface the group's maturity and its holistic vision of the project.



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### The Forum Theatre Script

Another thing we can say about FT is that it allows you one of the most flexible ‘mise en scene’. A FT play can be adapted to the public due to its script. Still, there are certain coordinates that the facilitator needs to follow:

- The script presents dramatic and directing rules;
- It does not present anything about the second part of the play – the forum part, which has a different set of rules.

We will try to present a scheme of a Ft play and a script model, in order to make thing easier and clearer.

A Forum Theatre Play means:

1. Establishing the parts/role before the representation (casting);
2. Assuming the role exercises;
3. Forum part with improvisation exercises;
4. Debates;
5. Interventions from the public.

This method has its own set of rules. These rules can be modified and adjusted according to the Ft group. But once they have been set up, they must be followed. It is very important for the group to know the rules so that they behave accordingly. After deciding upon the rule there can be debates on the topic and upon possible solutions. A special attention needs to be paid to drama and directing aspects of a FT play.

### Drama

1. Style. A FT play can have any kind of style: realistic, symbolic, expressionist, except surreal or irrational. The purpose of a play is to have a debate based on real situations.
2. Text. Each character needs to have specific lines so that the public can easily identify him/her.



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solutions. The main character needs to have at least 1 error (from a personal, social or political point of view) so that the public starts the debate part. This error has to be presented in a direct manner and repeatedly – to be obvious for the public.



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### DIRECTING

1. Actors' play – must represent the characters' goal, activity, social role, profession. It is very important for the characters to perform on stage using theatre rules, to interact and to interpret different situations. Forum Theatre is the connection between artistic play and discussion. Without the play the spectator could participate to the debate by simply sitting on a chair.
2. Each scene has to be representative and very expressive. Usually, the public has to identify each scene.
3. Each character needs a special item that makes him easy to identify at first sight. So the costumes must be easy to handle, even by the spect-actors.

Once you have the story, with its scenes and characters, you need to set up some rules, especially for the second representation, where the spectators replace the characters. One of the basic rules of the Forum part is that the oppressor cannot be replaced. This helps us to keep the plot on the same level and to make the spectators think of different solutions. There is also a deeper reason why the oppressor cannot be replaced: the goal is to bring up on stage real situations and to encourage the public to find out a way to respond to the existing negative part they face. One of the FT mottos is 'the change starts from yourself'. Replacing the oppressor means eliminating the negative aspects from the very beginning, not adapting to a certain situation.



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### The Representation – Act in 2 Parts

The actual show is an artistic and intellectual act between actors and spectators. We need to have in mind some steps in order to have a meaningful representation:

1. The first part of the representation is a conventional play, an image that needs to be shown to a public;
2. The audience is asked if they agree with the solutions proposed by the character. Of course, the answer is negative. Then they find out that they will watch the play for the second time, exactly from the beginning. Only that this time the public is challenged to step up on stage and try to change the ending by replacing characters. The real actors try to keep the play unchanged and the spect-actors try to change it. The message beyond the action is easy to understand: the actors represent a certain view on the world, so they try to keep their opinions and their reality. The spect-actors need to bring a better solution, another point of view, to change the reality.

The play needs a climax in order to get the spirits agitated. In real life, if someone does not act to a certain situation trying to change it, then everything remains the same. On the stage, if nobody interferes to change the course of action, then everything is in vain. The public is the one who establish how much they want to change the situation. The Joker does not bring any personal interpretation to this decision, but s/he will discuss about it at the end of the play.

3. Spectators will be informed from the beginning that they will have the opportunity to replace the main character or other characters with weaker personality. All they have to do is to step closer to the stage, clap once and say 'STOP'. At this moment, the actors 'freeze' and the spect-actor sais where from s/he wants to begin the intervention (a line, a moment, a movement). The actors will re-play the scene with the spect-actor replacing one of the characters. There is the possibility that beyond changing lines and attitudes, the spect-actor brings a whole new character on the stage. The actors have to be prepared for such situations
4. The actor who has been replaced does not disappear. S/he will stay there, near the spect-actor, to help and encourage him.
5. The actors on the stage do not help the spect-actor and play along his wish. On the contrary, they need to bring new arguments and obstacles fro the new comer,



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6. Keeping the situation as real as possible. Just like in everyday life – a change from bad to better takes a lot of time. It is a game between the characters: the new comers want to bring a solution, the real actors are hard to convince and they both fight for their opinion.
7. If the spect-actor gives up, the only thing that remains to do is to step out of the scene/stage. But this means that the play finishes just like the first time. Another spect-actor can clap and say 'STOP' and try another approach. So a new solution is brought up on stage and everything can be changed.

From this moment here there are 2 ways to continue the forum part. A.R.T. Fusion usually chooses on of the followings:

- a. After every intervention the Joker asks for a validation from the public. The public is the one who decides if the intervention was realistic or not; if it is a long or short term strategy, etc.

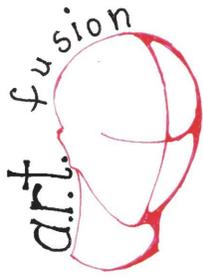
If the public gives the OK, a part of the new attitude is kept by the replaced character; the scene starts again with the real actor but with the new attitude. Then all the characters need to adapt themselves to the new character.

If the public is not OK with the solution or if they consider it is not a realistic one, the Joker invites another person from the public to bring a new idea and new arguments. The situation changes until they reach a positive change or until the public decides that there are no more solutions for that problem.

After this step the play goes on until there is another solution coming from the public.

If there are no interventions the Joker can stop the play in a key moment and ask the public to change the existing situation.

Once the play goes towards the end the performance can skip the last scene. Analyzing the result they reached together, the Joker talks to the public about what happened and how they came up with this new situation. The second way to continue the forum part after the first intervention can go like this:



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- b. At some point, one of the spectators wins in front of the oppressor. The actors must take things easier and give up, step by step, one at the time or all together. Then the spectators are asked to replace any actor, to show other kinds of oppression that have not been shown in the play. This time the game is between the main character (actor or spect-actor) and the oppressor. Spectators now discuss different ways to combat the oppression. Each actor who stepped out of his character tries to encourage his replacer.

One of the people involved in the performance becomes a Joker, a leader. That person needs to explain the rules of the play, to correct the errors, to encourage the actors and spectators to make a change and avoid ending the play the same way.

Once the forum part ends, the Joker will propose to build a 'Future Action Plan'. Depending on the situation, the public can perform, can act this plan or not.

The forum part can last from 45 minutes up to couple of hours. You have the possibility to choose whether you tell the public or not how much time they will spend there.



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### A Forum Theatre Script Model

We will try to present in the following pages the script of a FT play: ‘A Color/less Life’, presented by one of the I.M.P.A.C.T. Youth Initiative Clubs (of the New Horizons Foundation), during the ‘Re–Create the ARTitude through Forum Theatre’ campaign. While reading the script you can notice the basic steps they followed when writing it.

#### A Color/Less Life

Characters:

1. The oppressed – Simina – a Roma teenager discriminated by her classmates (because of her race); first year of high school.
2. The oppressor – Damian – Simina’s classmate.
3. Allies of the Oppressor – Angela.
4. Allies of the Oppressed – Maria, Simina’s deskmate.
5. Neutrals – Mr. Stanescu, head of the class; the school’s doctor; Ada and Alexandra, classmates.

SCENE 1:

Simina goes to high school for registration, with her mother. She meets Damian, son of an important enterprise director, and her future classmate. Damian pushes her away. The teacher from the Registration Desk, Mr. Stanescu, shows some sort of discontent and prejudice towards Simina’s race. Mr. Stanescu is a Sports teacher and her future head of the class.

SCENE 2:

In the classroom with Mr. Stanescu, during an introduction class. Damian is late but the teacher welcomes him in. Simina is late, too, but the teacher starts to bring arguments against her inappropriate behavior. When she wants to take a seat she notices that the only free place is right next to Damian. He refuses to let her sit next to him, talking to her in a very bad manner. Meanwhile, 2 of their classmates notice the conflict. Angela, one of the classmates, likes Damian; Maria, the other, makes Angela to move next to Damian and she invites Simina to sit next to her.



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During the break, at the toilet: Angela pushes Simina aside, but Maria steps in and calms things down. Everybody is heading towards the Gym class where they will play basketball. Neither one of the teams' captains (Damian and Angela) wants to have Simina in their team.

### SCENE 3:

Inside the medical room: Everybody needs to pass a medical check. While they were waiting for their turn in Damian pushes Simina again. The doctor does not interfere between the 2 of them. When Simina's turn comes the doctor acts normal until she sees Simina's skin. At that point she feels a sort of rejection towards her but even if she does not touch the girl, she still speaks nice to her. Simina tries to friend in her doctor. When she finally finds the right moment to tell the doctor her problems with her classmates Mr. Stanescu steps in.

### SCENE 4:

On their way home, Maria listens to Simina's problems and tries to give her some advice. But back home her mother does not show any interest regarding her school issues. Her mother, with an old fashion mentality, thinks that she does not need school to live a better life next to her family. Even more, she talks Simina in to accept her situation and to give up school – it has always been the same for *them!* After all the happenings, Simina decides to give up school.



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### Forum Moment / the Joker

Everything you have read in this guide so far is to prepare you for the performance itself. Every step – forming the team; rehearsals; meetings with the Joker/facilitator/project coordinator – is part of the ‘behind the scene’. What matters is everything that happens after these steps! And the result is measured by the impact brought by the FT play among the public. What they see, they feel and they experience is what the team have worked for; it is the result of a series of workshops and trainings, research and rehearsals.

This chapter is dedicated to the moment of the representation and to the Joker, the most important person during the representation.

That is why we will try to offer you as much practical and relevant information about what being a Joker means. At the end we will see what happens to the public and what the process that leads to their change is.

In this chapter you will find out more about:

- Getting ready for the performance;
- The Joker’s attitude;
- What a Joker should not do;
- FT learning process.

The performance day is the most tensioned but also full of energy day, both, for the actors and the joker. The team goes from one extreme to another; from fear to courage; from conflicts to total relaxation.

It is recommended for the Joker to have some activities with his/her group:

- Go through the aims of the play; the reason they are doing it;
- Imagine possible interventions from the public; how would they react?
- Energizing games, songs, hugs;
- Encouraging;
- Preparing the debriefing structure – questions and challenges for and from the Joker;
- Informing the team on the Joker’s intentions;
- Preparing the stage and the whole place;



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- Rehearsing scenes entrances and exits.

As a FT group we went through situations where we had the feeling that nobody would show up to our play; or that we will not be able to offer a good performance. But most of the cases the audience and their interventions motivated our team, so we were able to offer 100%.

The Joker's state of mind is very important. His encouragements mean a lot for the team. In our case, the facilitator or the project coordinator is also the Joker.

There were also situations when the joker was down, both physically and mentally. Surprisingly, every member of the team help the Joker and his evolution during the play and the final results were impressive. We can see that the Joker is not the only one responsible for the team's motivation and high energy. Having moral support from both sides shows a lot of maturity inside the group and that the care about each other.

For example, during the 'Fan Fest' Festival ('Hay Fest') we were supposed to perform our play during a rainy day. At the representation we had 15 people in a 200 people tent – a very desolating image! Instead of giving up, our team went outside and gathered more people. It is true, we started 30 minutes later, but we had a tent full of people and the forum part only lasted for 1h and 30minutes!

Most of the participants had a strong motivation: they attended another of our plays a day before – 'Cat dai pentru 307? (How much would you pay for 307?)'. They enjoyed that play and this time they were ready to get up on stage.

At the beginning of our first representation during the festival the Joker asked the public if they have ever heard of Forum Theatre before. There were only 2 persons out of 180 who said 'yes'. The next representations there were about 20 people who raised their hands. Obviously the method had drawn their attention.



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### Forum

The moment of truth: the public stares at the actors, waiting for the show. The actors are already on stage; there is a lot of noise; it is time for the Joker to have a very energetic entrance!! Each Joker has his/her own style of communicating with the public.

Maria Neagu, one of our Jokers wants to share her experience on stage:

'I will divide the Joker's part into several parts':

#### **1. Introducing Forum Theatre to the public**

- Welcoming the public;
  - Introducing myself and my part in the following performance;
  - A short presentation of Forum Theatre – what does it mean and what are my expectations regarding the public (to be active, to pay attention to the play; to look at the play as a creative exercise, not an artistic one);
  - Explaining the types of characters: oppressor – oppressed; allies of the oppressor and of the oppressed; neutrals;
  - Ask the public to watch the play carefully – so they will be able to identify each character and later on, replace one of them;
  - If there are people among the public who know about this method they are encouraged to participate and to become spect-actors;
  - A short energizing game before the performance: clapping and applauds usually;
  - It is very important to explain them that after the 15–20 minutes play there will be a Forum part: the moment when they will go up on stage, with the actors, as a team, and they will help the main character to change his/her decision.
  - Before the play – a small check: if they have any questions and if they are ready
- 'I usually ask them these questions very fast and I'm not waiting for a response more than 3 seconds. And most of the times I ask them to raise their hands'.



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### 2. The performance

The next step is the performance: the public watches a 15 minutes play. For a better understanding the Joker can announce each scene.

‘But I usually do this only when it’s absolutely necessary’.

The Joker needs a strategic place on the stage in order to observe the audience during the play: ‘This way I know their reactions, which were the moments they enjoyed the most, which spectator looks more interested in the play; who doesn’t pay any attention to the play... These kind of details are very important because that is how I know who is suit for an intervention and who needs more encouragement to go up on stage’.

There will always be people in the public who talk to each other or who have spontaneous reactions during the play. There is a strong chance for them to become spet-actors. They are the kind of people who have their own opinions and attitudes towards what they’ve seen. If they refuse to go up on stage, even if they are asked to do it, the Joker can ask for their opinion in a nicer way: ‘I’ve seen your reaction during the play. That is good. But what do you think about...?’

‘If I notice that in between scenes the public was enthusiast but in doubts when it comes to applauding the performance I am the one who starts the applauses. This is also the moment when the public move their attention on the Joker – so the actors can get ready for the next scene.’

‘It is very important that the public’s reactions are true and natural. Sometimes they might not feel comfortable clapping. There are also situations when the Joker shouldn’t insist on this issue – my main job is to have a nice relationship with the public and to make them feel comfortable and ready for interventions’.



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### 3. Forum

The Joker should follow few steps after the play. S/he must encourage the public to be active.

How? 'Here are few things that I usually do with the public:

-If I 'feel' they enjoyed the play I ask them to give a round of applauses for the actors – as many as possible. Meanwhile, I step towards the middle of the stage to make myself more visible and to encourage them.

-I ask the actors to come back on the stage, one by one;

-for each of the character I ask the public to identify the name of the character, the type (oppressor, oppressed, etc) and some more details.

If there were any confusion about the characters or the play this is the moment to clear them out – so that during the forum part everybody shares the same 'knowledge'.

Other questions I ask:

- What did you notice during the play?
- What is the story?
- What is the real problem brought up on stage?
- What are the causes of the problem?
- Who is the victim?
- Is that the only way the play can end?
- Can you do something about the end? Can you bring other solutions?

Or another approach:

- Do you recognize this character as someone from your daily life?
- Can you see this character as a person you already know – a friend, a relative, your boss, anybody?

After 3–4 seconds I ask them: 'Please, raise your hands if you recognize this character'

Every time we speak about the oppressor, every person from the public recognizes that character. It is the same for the main character. In my opinion, this is the moment the Forum part starts; the moment when the public identify the characters and themselves. This is a very important step to start the interventions.



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Referring to the main character I never forget to ask about his/her decision at the end of the play; about how this decision will influence his/her life; if the public agrees to this decision; if they can find a better solution.

Then I challenge them:

‘Raise your hands if you think you can find another solution. Good!’ After this short intervention I ask them to find the purpose of a FT play. ‘Why do we want him (the main character) to make other choice?’. And the public will answer. Once everybody understood what FT is all about we can say that the play was a success.

After everybody knows the types of characters from the play I explain them the Forum rules:

‘We will re-act each scene. When you feel like you want to replace any of the characters (except the oppressor), please, clap your hands once and say STOP. The actors will freeze on the stage and you, from the public, will step in front of everybody. You will introduce yourself because we like to know who we are working with. You step on the stage and act your idea. We are not allowed to use any kind of violence. When you consider your intervention is enough, please, clap again’.

I usually ask the public to be very careful to each intervention because they will discuss each of them. As a Joker you have to keep one thing in mind: the interventions are meant to reach our goal.

‘We are allowed to have only one intervention on the stage. These must be realistic, appropriate to the character and to keep a certain track of time during the play. Is everything clear for you? Ok! Applause! And stop!...Name – Intervention – Discussion – Do not replace the oppressor!’

‘Let’s warm up! – and this is the moment when I usually play a small energizing game with the public’.

Last encouragements and forum:

‘We hope that you will come up here on stage, with us, to help the main character to find other solutions for his problem. It’s not that hard and I bet everybody has some ideas that should be taken into consideration. Any question? If not, good luck then!’



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### Scene 1!

What I have presented here is what I usually do with my public, as a Joker. Of course, there are also different ways. Every Joker should have his personal approach!

After a spect-actor had finished his intervention the Joker needs to discuss with the public if the solution is realistic, if it suits the context of the scene or the character. If the public says no, then we have to make them explain why and then thank the spect-actor for his courage and intervention. Another person from the public should be encouraged to find another solution. If the public agrees on this one (more or less) then the real actor will come back on stage and keep the new attitude (or part of it).

After each intervention the Joker can ask:

- What happened different this time?
- What is new in the character's attitude?
- How is the situation any better than before?
- What did the spec-actor do different?
- Does his intervention have any impact?
- Can this happen in real life?



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### 4. The end + Conclusions

After the form part ends (after the public proposed new solutions, they acted them, then discussed and agreed on things and situations) it is time for the final conclusions. The Joker will challenge the public to find out by themselves the moral of the play. Usually, the Joker can:

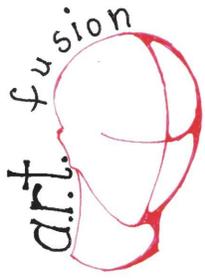
- Challenge the public with final conclusions;
- Guide the public – how they can put their ideas into practice;
- Call the actors back on stage to congratulate the public for their interventions.

There can be situations when the public can be really enthusiastic and they want more interventions. Not being able to finish the play when planned can be a problem. If the schedule does not allow for extra time, the Joker can suggest the public to have a discussion about other solutions that can be played on stage. To put an end to the whole performance the Joker can suggest a small game or can ask the public how they would re-act in their real life.

The end of the play does not mean the end of the FT process. After the show is over for the public it is time to have a talk with the team – their impressions and conclusions. It is the coordinator's/facilitator's/Joker's job to organize a good communication process. S/he needs to have a feedback, to go into details about what happened, about the team's work, about their feelings, new knowledge and personal development.

This is one of the most important steps in the team's evolution. The success or the failure of a FT play is the result of long hours of work. All the effort invested in a FT project becomes a representation performed and adapted to the public's interventions. That is why good communication, close and sincere relationships among the actors, Joker and the project coordinator are vital for a flexible attitude during the play.

Being engaged in a forum project it means being ready for the unpredictable. There will always be situations we have to deal with. To understand why things went a certain way, what actually happened on stage and what were the causes of certain happenings means to develop a structured action plan for future projects.



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Because we consider that one of the most important persons in FT is the Joker<sup>3</sup> (because s/he is the link between the actors and the public) we insist in having a list of how a Joker should be on stage:

- Charismatic;
- Trustworthy;
- Make the public feel comfortable: adequate image and language;
- Smile a lot – especially when needed;
- Always have eye contact with the public;
- Ask ‘open’ questions;
- Ask one question at a time, in a logic way;
- Listen everybody’s opinion;
- Make the public express themselves by asking appropriate questions;
- Answer all the questions – and sincerely;
- Speak rarely;
- Care about what happens on the stage (empathy);
- Be able to communicate with the actors non-verbally;
- Be able to read the public’s and the actors’ body language;
- Be able to debrief the happenings;
- Make the public feel safe and comfortable;
- Encourage the participate the shy persons to participate, so that they can see their personal contribution in the whole FT process;
- Be able to take all the good parts from each intervention;
- Ask the public to make a summary about what they have understood.

A Joker should NOT:

- Attack the spectators’ personal values;
- Compare spectators one with another;

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<sup>3</sup> ACT, *Learn and Teach: Theatre, HIV and AIDS, Toolkit for Youth in Africa*, UNESCO – CCIVS project, pg. 42-43



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- Use pressure as a persuasion tool, but challenge by choice;
- Lose patience;
- Push people too far;
- Get engaged in a never ending discussion with the public;
- Allow competitive fun (when not needed), competitive or unproductive discussions.





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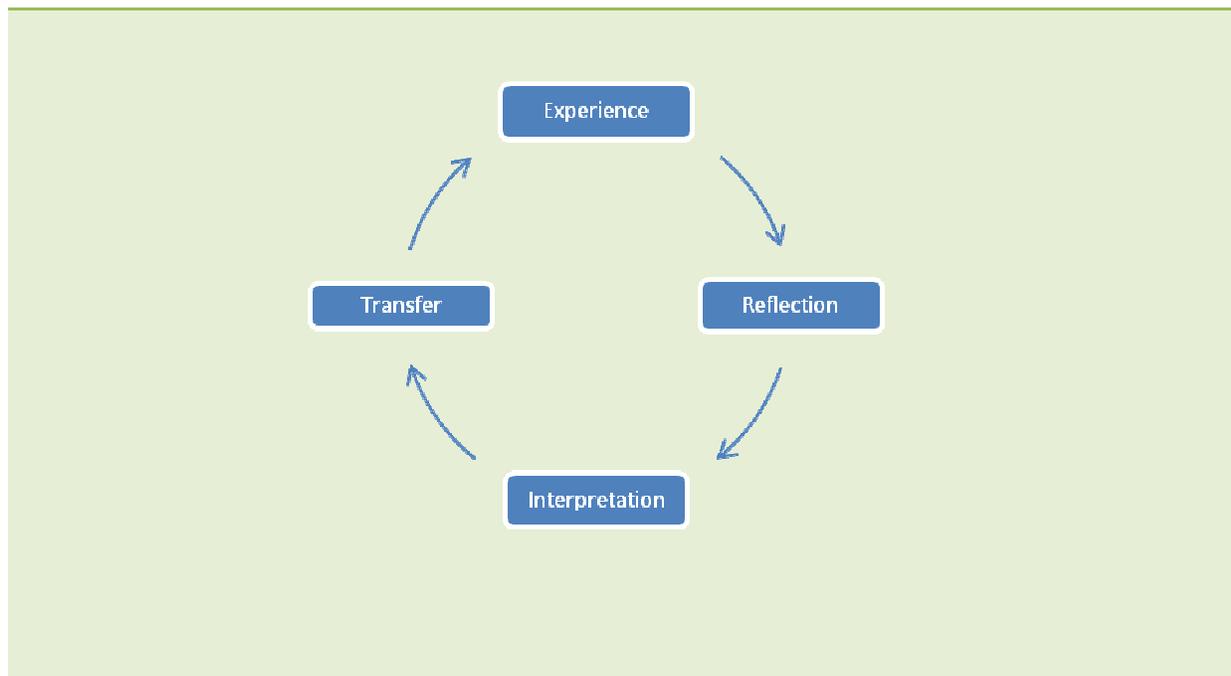
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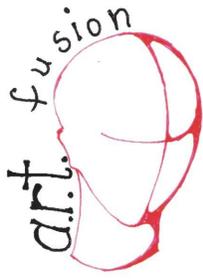
## Chapter 2 – Forum Theatre Step by Step

### The Learning Process in Forum Theatre

Forum Theatre is an experience learning process itself. During the forum part we can facilitate the public's learning process by asking them questions that lead them to the meaning of the play. This activity is called *spectators' reflection process*. For the Joker, this facilitation process, known as debriefing, is one of the most difficult but important ability that s/he should have.

Experience learning through FT can easily be reproduced schematically. The participants live the experience, they go up on stage with solutions or they watch another person doing this thing; they think about certain scenes; they give a certain meaning to these actions and they try to transfer them in their daily lives. They all go through the experience learning process described below:





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### The Impact on the Team

- What are the positive effects?
- What happens with the Joker?
- When do negative effects appear?

The group is more united and in a good mood after they reached a success. FT always has a positive effect on the team because it allows the participants to be involved in a changing making project. This way they can improve their spontaneity, creativity and acting skills.

Moreover, for a single play they need to use their body and their thinking to improvise and to research. The actors must become the characters they play – they have to know who they are, where they are coming from and where are they heading to, they must know what kind of relationships they have with the other characters.

Since the characters follow a certain path, the group can try different human patterns. Some one can try to be the oppressed and then switch; main character and then the second one.; they can try to be allies or neutrals – enlarging this way their human interaction in a creative way that life does not offer you.

The first representation depends on the actors' role playing. They are in control. The second representation, the one involving the spect-actors bringing new attitudes, can be full of surprises.

The group of actors must become a team – from the very start, when choosing the theme to the end of the project. The play is born and it grows up with everybody's help; the dialogues between the characters appears by improvisation – the non-professional actors can act in a natural way only if they communicate and if they get along with each other.

Trusting, motivating and understanding each other are more powerful when the play is successful, when it has a good impact and it leads to a change.

In the same time the team gets more experience and each individual develops himself. Having a minimum TF experience is very useful for future representations but also for real life.



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## Chapter 2 – Forum Theatre Step by Step

Improvising during certain moments, being someone else (a character), interacting with other people – all these are meant to make a change and lead to experience learning (learning about communication and flexibility when it comes to people and social situations).

In other words, FT offers the team the chance to experience, to be creative and spontaneous, to learn about teamwork, to be flexible and to improve their communication skills, to be open to new situations and to look upon problem from different angles; to have fun and to make a difference in the society in the same time.

Changing mentality regarding oppression or discrimination is more obvious inside the team – the members are part of the changing process. Researches on the topic, preparing, trainings to feel and understand the situation ‘from the inside’, the performance in front of the public, interacting with people on the stage and approaching new interventions to make the situation better – these are the stages that the team must go through in order to understand the situation present. Once they have experienced FT they are more responsible – they are responsible for the people they are asking a change from. All these steps bring each member of the team to a higher level of consciousness – they will understand and treat the problem in a different way; they will see how does this problem affects the society.

The Joker is a particular character who must be discussed separately. S/he is the one who makes the connection between the actors and the public. S/he must take into consideration the two different views on the topic (the public’s and the play) and must find the common ground. His attitude has to make the public stand up and go on stage and perform. S/he the one who communicates directly with the public and for this reason s/he must be very careful about the message s/he transmits and the way s/he does it. If s/he uses yes/no questions, if s/he is angry about something or aggressive, tired or bored; if s/he does not have the ability to appreciate someone’s intervention or to stop a violent intervention. That is why the Joker’s learning experience is various. S/he has to improve his communication skills, intuition, attention, empathy and spontaneity; s/he learns how to deal with stressful situations wearing a smile on his face; s/he learns how to focus his attention on more than one thing at the time and be anchored in the present situation; s/he learns how to anticipate the public’s expectations



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## Chapter 2 – Forum Theatre Step by Step

and how to stimulate them; s/he becomes a better mediator. But in the end, all these hard tasks bring a lot of satisfaction for the Joker.

Of course, FT does not have a positive effect all the times. There are also situations when the process or the results of a play bring down the team or prevents it from evolution.

If the group does not have a good leader to guide them along the forming process and the representation, the group can disintegrate.

If the actors are not paying attention one to the other the dialogue might lack the sense of unity.

If the play did not reach the wanted success, or if the actors were not natural on stage (they could not keep up with each other), or if the Joker could not connect the public with the actors, then the team can suffer a breakdown.

If there are few interventions or if the public is not ‘noisy’ then the group becomes nervous.

If there is a lot of work with few breaks to reflect upon the characters or the representation, the members of the group get tired and lose focus.

Forum Theatre is a process where all these elements must be combined in such a way that the team is willing to offer 100% of their effort. Each individual desires to be part of the team and the whole group will act as one!



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## Chapter 3 – Management and Public Relations in FT

### Management and Public Relations in Forum Theatre

Maybe you ask yourself why we need to promote Forum Theatre. Being a participative art method most of us do not think of FT as a social intervention tool, but only as art. It is not that we do not think that art does not need promotion; but it is that we consider that the same type of promotion does not fit FT.

So, why do we need to promote Forum Theatre? The answer is very simple – because it is a new method, unknown in our country. So there is a high risk that people get it wrong.

The team's job is mainly to create a play, including improvisation exercises, rehearsals and performance. The organizing and promoting aspects of the project are the coordinator's responsibilities. These aspects are left aside by the rest of the group.

But there is a different reality – these organizing aspects are vital for the success of a FT play and for the whole FT project.

There are situations that might lead the team to a disaster: the representation day was not planned appropriately; the event had not an appropriate publicity among the target group; there are not enough spectators or there are spectators expecting a classic theatre play; or the public is not content with the non-professional actors.

We are not trying to write a set of rules that will definitely guarantee the success of the Forum Theatre PR and Marketing process. But we will share our experience in this field. FT, as a flexible method, offers you many ways to do PR and Marketing. In the following pages we will try to describe briefly one of the possible approaches.

It is very important to plan ahead the steps you are going to follow, as a long term strategy.

This strategy should include:

- Planning the activities;
- Setting the date;
- Location;
- Promotion;
- Mass-media;
- Involving the team in transmitting the message.



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### Planning the Activities

This is a very important step in project management: time and resources, the exact dates of happenings; how many people are going to be involved in the event (including target group and authorities); the presence of the mass media during the day of the event.

The project coordinator needs to make sure that the activities are planned in a realistic view, by confronting the real situation in the community with what it is said in the project. There might be situations when the things on the paper are not the same with the reality. For example, when you start your project based on theoretical information the reality might surprise you. Checking the existing information is safe for both your project and your team.

Based on our experience we wanted to have a social intervention for a certain target group, but not in one community only. We could not create one play only that could have been adapted to all the communities. Even in the case where the play suited more communities we had to do certain changes to adapt it to local characteristics. Most of the times, the social intervention plan needs a personal approach – and for this we need real facts took out from that specific place.

### Setting the Performance Date

Setting the date is crucial, especially if the project runs in a city with lots of social, cultural and artistic events, like big cities.

Our festival, 'Are you a bystander? Take ARTitude!', was in May, when there are a lot of other social events. On the 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> of the month there were not major events on the same topic, so we had a good public at 'Motoare' (our location for the event, up on the roof of the National Theatre).



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It is highly recommended to check the date (period of time) and see if the target group is available. For example, during the summer most of the students leave the big cities, so you will not have a successful play for/with them as a target group.

In rural communities it is also important to check if the public is available. It is difficult to have an audience during harvesting or in the winter time. They are out on the field, working; or you cannot find the most suitable location. In most of the Romanian villages there are no buildings for social events, or they are in a very bad shape; or people are not used to attend to this kind of events. They would probably send their children to watch a nice performance while they will carry on with their daily chores. A good time for FT plays is during spring or summer, in the center of the village, at school or near the village hall. When you chose the period of the year you also have to take into consideration the month or the week. Each community has its own customs and traditions.

#### Location

The location must be adequate to the problem you present and to the target group.

For our pilot project we chose well known clubs from Bucharest (Club A, B52), where most of the young people who formed our target group are spending their free time (family against youngsters' dreams; bribing different people to obtain you right to live in a students hostel).

During 'Re-Create the ARTitude through Forum Theatre' 2007 we performed most of our plays in classrooms, mostly because a big part of the team members were high school students. In villages we performed at the cultural house or outside, in the open.

Another important thing that needs to be checked when choosing the location is the acoustics and the visibility of the place. Try, if possible, not to use microphones, lights or other technical



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equipment used in classic theatre. They create an artificial feeling and put up barriers between the public and the stage. You need to make sure the public has visual access to what happens on stage – but do that using different methods. If parts of the public cannot see or hear properly they will not get involved in the forum part; some of them might even regret coming to your event, saying that they have lost their time.

If you choose to play outside you need to take into consideration the weather conditions.

### Promotion

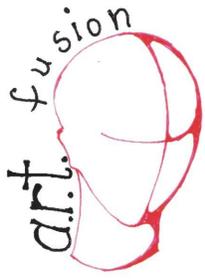
Promoting the event can be made in different ways, some of them known by most of you – posters, leaflets, flyers, brochures, presentations, press release, conferences (if possible), and door-to-door (in smaller communities). In the promoting materials you need to write clear information about the method, project, date and location.

The promoting materials must:

- Be written in such a way that the public understands (depending on the level of education);
- Be attractive;
- Convince the future audience to attend the event.

In other words, they must look well and make the people come to your performance.

Depending on how big is the project and its location you can choose the press release. These usually reach other kind of groups, other than the interested ones only. The advantage of this method is that it offers new collaboration opportunities with people, organizations or companies that might be interested in what they have found out about you. Massive promotion happens also on-line, on different sites or groups of discussion. This is happening in big cities



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and ART Fusion used this method last year for the FT plays. We call this ‘viral promotion’ because it is contagious, from one individual to another. Internet allows this rapid spreading through e-mail or other web communication. Think of how many ‘forwards’ you get from you friends or other sites. If you have a short presentation movie of your event, organization, campaign or project, you can upload it on very well known sites (youtube.com; google.com). Promoting the event includes also contacting the community leaders or institutions involved in the project. They will not only be informed about the vent, but they have to be part of the event. In our Roma communities we noticed that involving the authorities gives the members of the community the feeling of safety and comfort. As the Joker is the link between the actors and the public, local authorities are the link between the target group and the Forum Theatre group. The public becomes more receptive and involved in the play if they feel they have the approval of the authorities.

#### Mass-Media

When do we go to Mass-Media? There are certain projects that need intense media promotion. These are the campaigns (such as ‘Are you a bystander? Take ARTitude!’), bigger projects that involve the society on the long run. In these cases you would better sign partnerships with powerful publications on the market that can support your cause. If you have a good promotion campaign then the number of your audience will increase and your project will be successful. The contact with the Media must be permanent and it requires overviews of the information published in the written media, TV or radio. Depending on each reporter’s needs to have an attractive article there might appear some ‘errors’ – in the meaning of your message. This is not general, but there were cases when we realized that the Forum Theatre method had been misunderstood because of the media.



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## Chapter 3 – Management and Public Relations in FT

### Involving the Team in Transmitting the Message

What we wanted to say in the previous paragraphs is that the project needs a PR coordinator responsible for the promoting instruments (creation and distribution of the information). This person has to pay attention to every stage of the promotion part.

Try not to use a 'handy man', especially when it comes to PR. There are more chances of success when you have a specialist in your organizations, one person who is dealing only with the PR part.

Making yourself visible, heard and known by the public is vital to have a real impact on the society. We are aware of the fact that there are a lot of FT projects around the country, but without proper promotion they will end up being anonymous and their results cannot be used as models for other organizations interested in this method.

Involving the team in transmitting the message makes the actions more real for them. The team members can be involved in spreading flyers, putting up posters, interviews, questionnaires. They will feel that they have taken part in every stage of the project. And sometimes the future spectators have a first informal contact with the ones they will see later on, on the stage. Forum Theatre means destroying the barriers between the actors and the public and these kinds of activities are another step to do so.

The '*Re-Create the ARTitude through Forum Theatre*' projects deals with this component of the Forum Theatre. We check 'the public's pulse' with questionnaires right after the performance. This way we find out their reactions and impressions, their emotions and points of view, especially when it comes to shy people who did not want to step up on stage. The team members have the chance to interact with the target public, to observe them as audience but also as individuals and they also find out if they have managed to reach their goal: to plant the seed of change inside the community.



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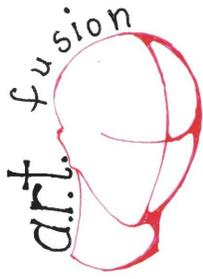
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At the end of this chapter we strongly advise you to pay attention to all the aspects concerning the presentation of Forum Theatre Method, whether if it is about promoting the event or the event itself. We consider that it is our duty to make sure the team works as one, that the target group understands what they have seen and that they will get involved in the ‘change’ afterwards.

And the best promotion methods and whatever makes your project successful depend on the particularities of each community.



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## Chapter 4 – Our experience

### Study Cases

There is no other better way to explain the FT method than the real examples. Because FT is a practical method you cannot just learn it by theory. Although it might seem simple, when you start working with FT you understand that the theoretical information only is not enough. We would like to share with you some Forum Theatre plays to serve you as examples for your future projects.

All we did so far in this guide was to present you some strategies about how to build a team, how to write the script of a FT play, how to promote the event; some advice for the Joker, how s/he should behave during the performance. Now we are going to give you some examples of FT plays to use them as models for your own and to remind you some of the challenges you will meet while working with FT.

A.R.T. Fusion Association – *The Man with the Dream; How much would you pay for 307?*

New Horizons Foundation – *Together? Make a difference!*

### The Man with the Dream

It was played for the first time during Fan Fest in 2006, but with another title: ‘I make comments, so I exist!’. It was created by the same group who had performed during the festival. We will present you the same play but performed during our pilot project, ‘Re–Create the ARTitude’, October–December, 2006

Theme: fight for your own dreams.

The action takes place in Bucharest.

Characters: – the oppressed – Ana, last year of college;

- The oppressor – Aunt Marinescu, age 50, head of a real estate agency;
- Allies of the oppressed – mother and her formal teacher;
- Allies of the oppressor – Gabi, her brother;
- Neutrals – Olga, Ana’s classmate; Rares, a friend who is very interested in his job as an artist.



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### Scene 1: Ana, Olga and Rares

Ana and Rares are going to the Unirii subway station, waiting for Olga to show up. She finally appears, saying an ironic ‘hey’ to Rares; then she starts talking to Ana about how she has decided to leave the country and that she’d like to take Ana with her. Then Ana starts talking about her dream: to organize an artistic even, an underground festival. But Olga doesn’t understand and she asks Ana to reconsider her offer. Rares , though, is very enthusiastic about Ana’s idea and they both start thin king about how the festival should look like.

### Scene 2: Gabi, Mom and Aunt Marinescu

Gabi is singing while decorating his shop that he will open soon. Mom appears in a corner of the shop, proudly watching her son. While Mom was telling Gabi how sorry she feels that Ana is not there to help them (because she’s always away with solving things for her festival), Aunt Marinescu appears. She’s asking about Ana and she starts bringing arguments against her behavior, telling her sister that she has to be stricter with her daughter. Otherwise she will take her niece to be a secretary in her company, quitting the ‘silly things’ she’s doing.

### Scene 3: Mom, the teacher, aunt Marinescu, Ana – at home

Ana’s mother is talking to her ex teacher. Meanwhile aunt Marinescu arrives home, telling Ana’s mother that she has fixed the problem with Ana’s job. Mom is a bit confused and doesn’t know what to say about Ana’s new job. Ana finally arrives home. Her aunt starts talking to Ana, blaming for her irresponsible behavior regarding the festival. Mom is getting sick when she hears the discussion between the 2 of them and aunt Mrinescu is blaming Ana for her mother’s health condition.

### Scene 4: Gabi, Rares, Ana – in Gabi’s IT shop, after 2 months

Rares went to Gabi’s IT shop to buy something for his computer. While they were talking about different things they reached the ‘Ana subject’. Gabi asks Rares to talk to Ana about her, getting a job, about the fact that their mother is sick and how he owns this business that one day will flourish. Ana comes in the shop and she sais that is better to be near her sick mother, that it’s better to become a secretary in her aunt’s company – it is better like this because anyways, her dreams will never come true. Ana looks like she had given up all her dreams



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## Chapter 4 - Our experience

regarding the festival; and Rares, lost in technological details, does nothing to encourage her to follow her dreams.

### **Observations:**

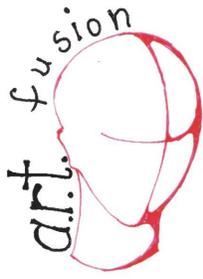
During our first performance in Club B52 there were approx. 230 spectators who had a very good reaction to the message we wanted to transmit. Most interventions focused on Olga and Ana's mother; then on Gabi, Rares and the teacher.

Replacing Olga meant that she would help Ana with the festival until she will leave the country; when the mother was replaced, the new mom couldn't be influenced by her sister and she paid more attention to her children's needs; and Gabi became less selfish and started to take into consideration his sister's dreams.

There was a case when one of the girls from the public did not understand our message properly and she thought that she was supposed to perform another show in front of the public; so she went up on stage, replacing the mother, and started to encourage Gabi with his work.

During our second representation, this time in Club A, the public preferred to discuss the problem more than going on stage and replacing characters. There was a girl who had a memorable intervention, replacing Rares and telling Ana: 'Close your eyes and dream...or open your eyes and dream!'

The third representation, in Club B52 again, was not that successful. The public already knew the play, so there were not that many people interested in it. This experience brought the team down for a while but after a discussion we pointed out what we should and should not have done, so that our future experiences should be more successful.



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### How Much Would You Pay for 307?

This play was created and performed during our pilot project in 2006. We had the chance to perform it twice, in Bucharest (in clubs) and at the FanFest Festival in 2007. Our target group for this play is made out of students, especially the ones who live in a dormitory. We are happy to say that the play had a huge success and we believe that it was because the script followed every step of the FT method.

The theme of the play is getting a place to live in a students' dormitory by paying a bribe to someone and all the compromises that one has to make for this issue.

The action takes place in Bucharest.

Characters: – the oppressed – Mihai, 1<sup>st</sup> year student, coming from another town.

- The oppressor – Luci Feratu – who had finished college long time ago and he has no right to live in a students' dormitory anymore;
- Allies of the oppressor – Cerasela, Luci's girlfriend and the Mrs. Aglaie, the caretaker, who has been working there for 20 years;
- Allies of the oppressed – Monica, she studies the same thing as Mihai does; a good friend of Mihai and his aunt, a lady who lives in Bucharest.
- Neutrals – Mrs. Tanta, the caretaker; another guy in the dormitory; Radu, Mihai's roommate.

Scene 1:

The caretaker sweeps the floors and talks to Luci, who's looking for Mrs. Aglaie. Luci is talking in the caretaker to tell him what rooms are available for that year, establishing also the prices for these rooms. He goes to his room where Cerasela appears in, telling him about a new loser, a potential 'buyer' of one of the rooms. That is how Mihai gets acquainted with Luci, the one that he can counts on for any kind of business.

Scene 2: in Mihai's room:

Radu is playing on his computer continuously; Monica is asking Mihai if she can have her birthday party in his room. In comes Luci, who tells them that they can do nothing without him



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- So he starts planning everything without allowing them to say their opinion. Mihai feels bad in front of Monica but says nothing, being afraid that Luci will kick him out of the room.

### Scene 3:

Monica's birthday party is going as planned by Luci, who invites some of his friends – so the party is a total mess. Somebody is complaining about the noise; Monica is upset with Mihai and in the morning Luci appears, complaining about his missing phone. He blames Mihai for the incident, telling him that it is his room where everything happened. Luci is asking Mihai to pay him 20 million lei in two weeks, without paying attention to Monica's requests.

### Scene 4:

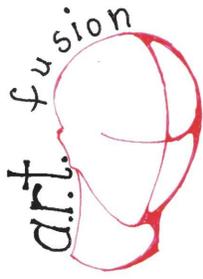
Luci and Cerasela, in the left side of the stage; Mihai, in front of the scene; Monica and Mihai's aunt, sitting on two chairs, in the back of the stage. Cerasela is talking to Luci and they're both waiting for Mihai to pay the 20 million lei. Mihai is calling his aunt, thinking of paying her a visit to still all her savings. Then he talks to Monica who's trying to make him reconsider his actions, but she gives up and tells him that she doesn't want to see him anymore.

### Observations:

Every time we performed this play the public understood the topic very well (due to the fact that the plot was very obvious). The solutions suggested by the public involved replacing allies of the oppressed and of the oppressor, and they brought arguments in Mihai's favor, eliminating the conflict.

Nobody wanted to replace Mrs. Aglaie, because there is this popular belief that they can't replace people who are doing the job for many years (especially if they have this kind of jobs). The play registered a success also during the performance at FanFest in 2007. The public's interventions were very realistic because they often found themselves in Mihai's situation.

The following FT plays we will present in our guide focus more on the team's experience and the outcome and not on detailing the scenes. These plays were created by the I.M.P.A.C.T. Clubs of the New Horizons Foundation, whose members are high school students.



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### Together

The main idea of the play is based on a true story. The children's experiences from the club inspired and helped us in identifying the problem and searching for as many solutions as possible.

Characters: – the oppressor – Rosca, jr.

- Ally of the oppressor – Gogu;
- The oppressed – Alex;
- Ally of the oppressed – Alex's Mom;
- Neutrals – Tuca, Dr. Rosca.

Description of the play:

The play starts with the 4 classmates (and friends) – Alex, Rosca, Gogu, Tuca – at school, during their 13.00 break. Rosca suggests that they should skip classes; Gogu and Tuga agree with him, but Alex disagrees, saying that he needs to go to the doctor for the medical check and afterwards he has history extra classes (for his Police Academy exam). Rosca promises Alex that he will ask his Dad (who is a Doctor) to run his medical check for free. The first scene ends with Rosca, Tuca and Gogu leaving.

In the second scene, Rosca's Dad calls Alex's Mom, asking her to stop by the hospital to talk about her son's analyzes. Alex's Mom goes to the doctor and Rosca, stays near the door, eavesdropping. The doctor gives Alex's Mom the terrible news – that Alex is HIV positive. She gets scared and she runs home. Rosca breaks in his Dad's office and makes him tell the truth about Alex's condition, breaking his confidentiality right.

The third scene takes place at Alex's place where he gets the results and he decides to drop the Police Academy.

The fourth scene takes place at the bar. Rosca tells everyone that Alex has AIDS and misleads everybody about the way HIV spreads. Alex comes in the bar and notices the others' behavior towards him.



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In the fifth scene Tuca tells Alex why everybody avoids him and that Rosca is to blame for that. Alex goes home very disappointed.

The last scene takes place in Alex's home where he talks with his mother about the situation he's in. It all ends with his decision: to drop the Police academy and his friends.

### **Performances:**

During the performances there were approx. 40–50 spectators. There was a representation in Constanta and three more in Timisoara. The public was very different from one representation to another. One group of spectators was made up only by I.M.P.A.C.T. Club members; the others were high school students and young people mainly. But all the groups were very active during the forum part.

### **How did the public react?**

Surprisingly, the 'rebel' teenagers were very open and receptive to the play, giving very original and realistic answers. There were more people willing to replace characters than we expected. Each representation brought a lot of surprises from the public.

### **What went wrong? What went right?**

The weaker points of the actors and the Joker were because they were scared and nervous. They will learn to put behind these kind of emotions in time, practicing more. Regarding the pluses of the team we can mention: the actors were spontaneous; they adapted perfectly the new situations; they were open and they encouraged the public to have good interventions. The Joker improved his skills and developed new abilities – offered by the public he interacted with.

### **Something remarkable:**

A young man from the public introduced a whole new scene to the play, leading to another solution of the problem.

### **Something to learn from us:**

- Do not get scared of the stage; we know it is hard to control this feeling, but it is good to accept it and go up on that stage. It will go away!



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- Be open to the public and encourage them as much as you can!
- Be yourself and be open to every new feeling someone from the public offers you: this way you can understand it and control your own reactions. You can never anticipate the public's interventions! You have to know that if the play is good then the public will want more. The play is MADE for the public. In other words: give the public what they want to see, or tell them the things their way! This means to get to know the public, which is very important for every member of the team!

### Make a Difference!

By I.M.P.A.C.T. New Generation

To choose this topic (religious discrimination) we had a long brainstorming together and analyzed each discrimination situation. We all agreed that a FT play with this topic (Religious discrimination) would be the most appropriate in our case, especially because there are a lot of young people who found themselves in this situations.

Characters:

- The oppressor – the oppressed classmate;
- Ally of the oppressor – another classmate who becomes a second oppressor;
- The oppressed – a teenage girl who moves with her mother in a far away town, 'at the end of the world'. Because of her bad financial condition she has to move to another school, where her religion is different than her new classmates'. All these are the motives her classmates are pushing her away for.
- Ally of the oppressed – one of her classmates; he is the only one who defends her;
- Mom – was at first seen as an ally, but she becomes a sort of oppressor;
- Neutrals – the sports teacher and another classmate.



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### **Description of the play:**

The main character is a teenager, her Dad has died and her Mom decided to move in a smaller town because of the financial difficulties. In this new town she goes to a school where she doesn't fit in because of her religion that makes her look different than the others. She doesn't have a good relationship with her mother either, because she is pressed to find a job for a living and she doesn't have enough time to talk to her daughter about her school problems.

### **Performances:**

The play had four performances. At the first one there were around 35 spectators who became very active in solving the problem. At the second representation there were at first around 50 students and 4 teachers, but by the end of the play only 20 students and 1 teacher remained. The third and the fourth representation went normally.

How did the public react?

They participated and got involved in solving the problem. Most of the spectators said they were familiar with this kind of discrimination, but the topic was new for some of them.

### **What went wrong and what went right?**

The greatest challenge for the actors was to be flexible and learn to adapt the play to the public's choices. The oppressor had the hardest role in the play, because it was difficult for him to accept the change. And for the Joker, the hardest thing is to learn how to handle things with the public.

### **Something to learn from us:**

- Leave away your inhibitions;
- Don't get scared if the public rises and leaves the room;
- Get ready to be surprised!



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### **Their Impressions**

Right after the show

We have tried so far to make you familiar with the Forum Theatre method, not only sharing theoretical information but also sharing some of our experience. We did so because we believe that there is not just one way to approach FT: each group has its own way and style.

A.R.T. Fusion Association has started with Forum Theatre from the very beginning. Because we believe in this social intervention tool and because we used it successfully, we engaged ourselves in a bigger mission: to spread it and use it at a national level. Now there are more people, organizations and institutions who believe in us and our mission and who support us. The National Cultural Funds Administration supports the initiative.

The National Council against Discrimination, as a partner, supported a lot of our actions during the 'festival "Are you a by stander? Take Artitude!"

The New Horizons Foundation offered a lot of financial and human resources for spreading FT knowledge around the country. Most of the FT plays performed during our campaign were created and performed by the children members of the I.M.P.A.C.T. Clubs; the FT festival in Constanta was only for the I.M.P.A.C.T. Clubs who presented their FT plays.

During our campaign there were also other people, organizations and initiative groups involved in our action. Thank to them we were able to have 2 more trainings on FT: one in Sibiu and one in Lugoj. It is encouraging to know that there are initiative groups who prove that the FT method is a tool to improve the Romanian society.

Forum Theatre means to be close to people, to try to understand their problems, challenges and wishes.

We consider that their opinions are the real tool that measures the change we want to bring in their lives.

This last chapter is dedicated to ideas, opinions and impressions of our beneficiaries: volunteers and members of the communities we have performed for.



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Here is what our volunteers have told us about the way they feel the A.R.T. Fusion experience: Andreea Lipan – 22 years old; A.R.T. Fusion volunteer since October 2006; she studies Architecture.

*Well, what can I say – ever since I became an A.R.T. Fusion member I had only interesting experiences...creating a theatre play, seeing how a festival is made, international trainings, getting involved in national issues (Rosia Montana). Now I am more confident, more courageous and I have more initiative. I don't know my personal contribution to changing youth's attitudes and their personal development, but I like to be optimistic and to believe that I'm going to live in a better Romania, the Romania we all worked to create!*

Cristina Comerzan – A.R.T. Fusion volunteer since May 2005 – psychologist

*I owe this to Andreea who is an explorer, just like I am. That's how I've met you – Carmen, Maria and Denisa; not just anyhow, but through FT. I don't know exactly which play it was, I know it was the one were Andreea was playing 'Margareta' (and you call her like that ever since), but after this play you have come together as A.R.T. Fusion. Then I've participated at a FT training where I finally understood Augusto Boal's concept by experiencing it on my own, by participating in team building exercises, creating a FT play and performing in that play. I enjoyed the improvisation part and the exercises.*

*Hehe...and it was the time when I got my nickname: 'Base', from Basescu, the character I interpreted.*

*Then I took a brake (because of my job and other things) but as soon I got away from my job in a Bank I had the chance to get involved again in your projects – that after a while became my projects also:*

*'Are you a stander by? Take ARTitude!'; 'Ker Vareso!' – That's how I named our pilot project for fighting against Roma discrimination; 'Sibiu – European Cultural City'; 'FanFest'.*

*I enjoyed the whole process – forming the team, creating the plays, performing them in front of the public and with the public, with the Joker's help. I feel like I grew up during this process.*

*Sometimes I expressed this feeling in words, other times it was just inside of me – I could feel how everything inside of me is changing and rearranging*



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*I'm more courageous, more confident and wiser than few months ago.*

*I'm not that scared of Roma people, Jokers or strangers.*

Eugen But – A.R.T. Fusion volunteer since October 2006; he studies Sociology.

*First time when I got in A.R.T. Fusion everything seemed familiar for me – I had similar experiences. But what I liked the most was FanFest 2006 – my first play with you is the pillar of my relationship with A.R.T. Fusion. My first performance, in 'How much would you pay for 307?' is my greatest experience in this association, next to the Roma project.*

As we have said we like to check the target group right after the performance, to see if we have reached our purpose, to notice our strengths and weaknesses. To make sure we cover all these aspects, based on the structure of the play and on the characteristics of that community we usually create a questionnaire. There are at least 20 different spectators who will answer the same number of questions.

During 'Re–Create the ARTitude through Forum Theatre' we applied this kind of questionnaire after each performance.

We offer you the opinion of couple of hundreds participants (from Bucharest, Iasi, Timisoara, Jiu Valley, Slobozia and Drobeta Turnu Severin) on our FT performances.

To make it easier to understand we have chosen to put their answers in such a manner similar to the questionnaire they have answered to. Their answers are in percentage. We consider that the results you will see speak for themselves.



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Number	Affirmations	%
1.	The theatre play reflected a real, common situation.	83
2.	The characters were credible, realistic.	75
3.	The public got involved in finding new solutions.	62
4.	The Joker was a good mediator.	76
5.	I was positively impressed by the way the subject was presented.	75
6.	The public's interventions were realistic.	69
7.	I will definitely attend another Forum Theatre play.	76
8.	I liked the Joker.	72
9.	The actors were flexible; they adapted themselves to the new situations.	79
10.	The spectators paid attention to the entire play.	66
11.	The Joker encouraged the public to speak their minds and express themselves freely.	78
12.	The solutions bought up by the public can be applied in real life.	69
13.	Next time when I will find myself in an oppression situation I will take attitude.	72
14.	I see discrimination everyday around me.	72
15.	I found myself in the oppressed situation.	40
16.	The Joker drawn good conclusions after each intervention.	74
17.	Somebody close to me finds himself/herself in an oppression situation.	49
18.	The play offered me another perspective on the problem.	69
19.	The Joker explained the rules of the FT plays in a clear manner.	82
20.	I consider it was a new and original play.	76
21.	The Joker was able to entertain the public.	73
22.	I liked the atmosphere.	69
23.	I feel like something I have changed after this play.	63

24. How did you find out about this play?



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## Chapter 4 - Our experience

from	%
Friends/colleagues	22
School	18
Teachers	17
Promo Materials	16
I.M.P.A.C.T. Cubs	4
By mistake	1
FT people	1

25. In your opinion, which type of discrimination is the most spread in our country?

Type of discrimination	%
Race	27
Ethnic	12
Financial status	8
Religion	6
Any types	4
HIV/AIDS and other diseases	3
Disabilities	1
Gender	1
Personal beliefs	1

26. Did you have any interventions during the play (questions, remarks)?

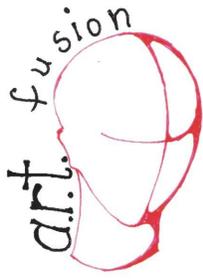
27. Did you replace any of the characters?

Most of the people who did not have any kind of intervention motivated their reaction by fear of the stage or because they were shy (11%).

28. Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation, where you have reacted like one of the characters? (Yes - 48%).

29. Which one (of the characters)?

Character	%
The oppressed	40%



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Ally of the oppressed	31%
The oppressor	6%

30. Would you react the same way now? (NO - 76%)

31. Did the play you have just seen influenced your decision? (Yes - 57%).

32. Do you feel any personal change after watching this play? (Yes - 55%).

33. How?

31% said that they feel their attitude towards a similar situation has changed.



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## Chapter 5 – Challenges in Forum Theatre

### Challenges

Forum Theatre is a complex process you will learn and develop in time. There will always be questions and challenges because of the unpredictable character of the method. Because we would like to make your job easier we have tried to answer some of these questions. We have started from theory but what matters the most is the experience we have gained along the years.

As we have mentioned we do not try to find an unique implementation model for FT. We cannot say what is wrong and what is right in FT. We have noticed that everything adapts changes the way, according to what happens, to the public and to the team.

In this chapter we will try to analyze the challenges we have met so far, the way we see them after 3 years of experience and 63 performances. We hope that our experience and the solutions we have found to some of our problems are going to be useful for future FT users from Romania. But this does not mean that you have not find yourself in similar situations or that you have not found the appropriate solutions for your own team.

We will try to talk about:

- Team's challenges;
- Joker's challenges;
- Actors' challenges during the performance;
- Other challenges.

#### Team's Challenges

During our working meetings we had different kind of challenges:

- The different number of boys and girls – we have always had more girls than boys. So we found ourselves in the situation of looking for boys for our projects;
- Actors who were not motivated – it happens when the activities have no purpose, when the coordinator is not enthusiastic and involved and what s/he is doing. The same attitude is reflected on the volunteers' work and they will eventually give up.
- Volunteers who are willing to get involved in a project but they cannot find the time to work because they are involved in something else;



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## Chapter 5 – Challenges in Forum Theatre

- Holidays – most of the volunteers are away for the holidays. Try to plan ahead the activities during this period.
- Performing the same play in the same location for several times – they might feel it as routine, which is very dangerous when it comes to the public and the spontaneity in their dialogues. You can either approach the play differently (try some theatre exercises) or leave a longer period of time between the performances. Of course, it depends on the team's motivation and their dynamics.

### Joker's Challenge

- Working with a public who does not show any kind of interest in what they are watching – this is a Joker's greatest fear: that the public will not understand or will not be interested in the play. This unfortunate experience might be avoided if the documentation period before the play takes a longer time, if it is made through various methods so that you will get to know your future public. But the Joker is the one who has to entertain the public, who has to ask for interventions, who can rely on the actors' performance. In a special situation, the Joker can change the approach several times during the performance – the actors have to be very careful and receptive to his demands and to the public's reactions. It is recommended to have in your team at least one person with more experience and more performances, so that s/he can encourage the others in the group.
- A Joker with less experience – this can happen, although it is not recommended. There are different reasons, especially the number of performances: you will get experience in time! In this case the Joker has to be in good terms with the rest of the team and to be self confident.

The people with more experience in the team can make him/her see what went wrong and how s/he could have reacted. You can read more about the Joker's attitude in the 'Forum Moment'.

- The violent interventions of the public – there were some cases when people from the public had a violent intervention on the stage. It is the Joker's job to explain once again that FT does not agree with violence. One of the solutions in these cases is for the Joker to ask ahead the potential spect-actor about his intended intervention (if the Joker notices any kind of violence) and then to ask the public if they agree with that intervention.



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- Other situations: a very shy Joker or one who speaks too loud, so that the public would feel threatened by; a noisy public; spectators who want to ruin the play just for their fun; drunk people, etc. We have to be prepared for each of these situations – as actors or as Jokers.

### Actor's Challenges

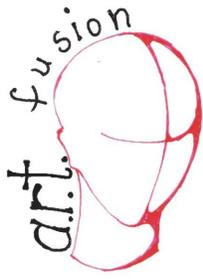
We often found ourselves in funny situations on the stage, such as:

- Men who replaced female characters just for fun;
- Girls who had interventions just to impress an actor (a boy);
- Spectators who do not want to finish their intervention and they want to perform during the entire play;

The Joker has to be prepared for each of these situations; s/he must find immediate solutions and work with the actors so that the rest of the public will not feel the problem.

### Other Challenges

- Not having a special place for rehearsals – it is very important to have a special place for rehearsal, especially for the team's construction; from the first training there are exercises that make the members of the team feel comfortable with a certain place, make them feel like they belong there. Without this kind of place the team will not be that united and motivated;
- Having the experience non-conventional place for performance – because it is about social theatre, the performances can take place in different locations, usually where the target group is: school, town hall, clubs, etc. Sometimes the place where the performance takes place can be inappropriate because it does not allow the public to interact with the actors: on the field, facing the sun, small places, bad acoustics, bad ventilation. That is why we recommend you to choose your performing place taking into consideration all these aspects. When you perform in such a place is good to have several hours before the play to accommodate with the environment.
- The project coordinator – s/he is the one who should have the most consistent experience when it comes to FT (at least 6 months). There will never be a team with no



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- conflicts (\* conflicts bring the team to evolution), perfectly equilibrated and with people perfectly trained on what they are doing. There will always be different attitudes,
- Different ways of reacting to situations, multiple points of view – all these can lead to a very good outcome or to a total failure. It all depends on the way the coordinator behaves and integrates him self in the situation. The coordinator’s job is reflected in the team’s attitude: if you have an unfitted coordinator during a project, who is not able to leave behind conflicts and appreciate each member’s effort in the team, then the team will always be agitated or distracted. A good coordinator is the one who knows how to motivate his colleagues to come to rehearsals, to be involved in what they are doing and to feel good after each experience.

There are different challenges of different sorts, depending on the context and on the team. Learning through experience and the theoretical information are the best methods of understanding Forum Theatre.

We would like to hear about your experience on [www.teatruforum.ro](http://www.teatruforum.ro)