

Theatre of the Oppressed: active enquiry An interdisciplinary dialogue CARN Sunday 21st May 2017





This workshop brought together practitioners from research, theatre, community work, critical pedagogy and professional development to enquire into the use of Theatre of the Oppressed in the current socio-political context.





The scene was set by a performance of *The Fairground* by theatre company Active Inquiry. A Forum process allowed us all to experiment with becoming 'spect-actors' to explore the social justice issues addressed in the play.

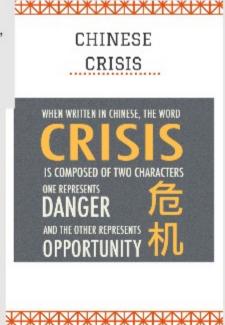


After lunch, a short film and talk by Andy Stafford and Sally Keys illustrated some of the current work of the Lawnmowers theatre company.



Linking first with others with interest in research, community work, theatre or professional development, we created images of the ideal use of participatory theatre and its opposite.

We then went on to pose questions about Theatre of the Oppressed in four categories: WHO WHAT WHERE WHY The questions were explored in groups, using various techniques from the repertoire of Theatre of the Oppressed and bearing in mind Boal's idea of *Chinese Crisis* - the tension between threat and opportunity.



Some of the questions we explored in groups and through drama... What about

empathy?

If we use ToTO for therapy are we just avoiding the structural issues?

WHY?

How do we

stop the value

driven process

being hijacked?

What is the role of play in ToTO?

Why not?

Is it encouraging the audience to take action or open its mind?

Do we need to do more of this in the streets?

How to bring forum theatre into primary schools?

WHERE?

our creative

work?

effectively with Where are other community the most workers? effective sites for

How do we

adapt ToTO to

our own

context

authentically?

How can we

connect more

we get ToTO? resources for

Site Where can specific?

> Public spaces...public performances... e.g. politicicans on the way to Parliament?

people to involve in the change work of resistant - either end of spectrum of power Inbalance - how does that change?

If the most important

Should we be using 'real' actors in Theatre of the Oppressed?

Who is it for? People who are oppressed or people who are in authority?

> Who hears and sees the work and can they make change?

What is the benefit for How do we larger resource this communities? work but stay autonomous?

If you don't stand up for something, you'll fall for anything?

How do

we foster

critical

reflection?

Who

holds the

power?

How do we engage people

who do not want

to perform- do

we miss ideas

and solutions?

What responsibility do we have as practitioners once folk leave the theatre?

> found to help spect-actors symbolise systemic change not just individual response?

How can we be open but also create a safe environment?

How can we the room and who oppressed should be? oppressor?

Who is in

Whose voice gets used and who uses it?

tell who's

or

WHO?

Who are

we not

including?

everyone get involved at the same level?

Can

Who has directly influenced policy making in the UK?

What is

our real

purpose?

If we only ever change the rotagonist in forum

theatre, doesn't that

make it their

responsibility, even their fault?

How do you

do theatre

with shy

people?



appeal to an

intended

audience?

What are the

ethical

problems with

this work?

Is direction

oppression

or

education?

Can we use ToTO as a debate and dialogue technique?

If the state funds us to do this work can we work against the

WHAT?

state with it?

Is there a lack of How do we criticism of ToTO invite collective and if so why? change not just Constructive individual? criticism could help it stay alive.

Does ToTO lose its power if we use it too much?

Where should the

techniques and ideas develop now- in which direction and

with what adaptations

and changes?

How do we manage the tension between raising individual awareness and focusing on the need to build connections to address structural issues?

Can it transcend

language

barriers and work

with international

groups?

Can a way be

How can

theatre affect

oppressors?

What other art forms can we use - music?



How can the spaces for Theatre of the Oppressed be made more democratic and impactful? Do we take the theatre to the places of power or bring the powerful to the theatre spaces?



What next? Who takes responsibility for action after the event? How can we take responsibility for developing the theory and practice of Theatre of the Oppressed?



In the cycle of oppressed and oppressor, how do we balance the need to acknowledge difference, and different claims of oppression, with the need for consensus and co-operation for change?

it was good to get so many folk working on similar stuff in the room together

excellent convections achieved between people.

great opportunity to explore the possibilities of Theatre of the Oppressed

very powerful and moving

a valuable opportunity to pick things apart

e let

a really stimulating and constructive day

Really keen to explore how this work fits into the (health) policymaking agenda

lets make use of the potential from this kind of event by moving to a more active use of media to support personal, community and societal engagement with the ideas and themes raised.

Thanks to everyone who participated, shared their experiences and brought their minds and their bodies to exploring the questions together.

How can we take these questions forwards & explore them further?

