



Theatre of the Oppressed

Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) describes theatrical forms that the Brazilian theater practitioner Augusto Boal first elaborated in the 1970s, initially in Brazil and later in Europe. Boal was influenced by the work of the educator and theorist Paulo Freire, who wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Boal's techniques use theater as means of promoting social and political change. In TO, the audience becomes active, such that as "spect-actors" they explore, show, analyze and transform the reality in which they are living.

Boal is an avid supporter of utilizing interactive techniques, especially in the context of theater. The creation of the Theatre of the Oppressed is largely based on the idea of dialogue and interaction between audience and performer. Much of Augusto Boal's theatrical process requires a neutral party to be at the center of proceedings. This individual is usually called the "facilitator". In Boal's literature this role is referred to as the "joker," in reference to the neutrality of the Joker card in a deck of playing cards.

Spect-actor is a term created by Boal to describe those engaged in Forum theatre. It refers to the dual role of those involved in the process as both spectator and actor, as they both observe and create dramatic meaning and action in any performance.

(Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theatre_of_the_Oppressed, 1/7/2017)

Voices of Now



Voices of Now (VON) is a program that devises autobiographical plays with ensembles of middle-school, high-school and adult artists. VON plays are fast-paced, collaboratively written, physical theater pieces that pose challenging social questions relevant to the artists and their communities. The plays investigate those questions through poetry, movement and the recounting of the artists' personal stories.

Originally created to work with one local middle school, the program has expanded to serve hundreds of students in the DC Metro area and beyond. One of the primary goals of the program is to create positive change within the artists' communities by engaging in dialogue centered on young people's daily experiences of their world.

In 2012 Voices of Now went international, growing from a program devoted to D.C.-area residents to one that works with communities around the world. Through four partnerships with the U.S. Department of State, Arena Stage has sent teaching artists from the Community Engagement department to India (Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, New Delhi and Patna); Zagreb, Croatia; and Lima, Peru.

In September 2015, Arena Stage sent three Voices of Now teaching artists back to Zagreb, Croatia to work with artists from Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Albania, marking the theater's fifth international Voices of Now partnership with the U.S. Department of State.

Voices of Now, Washington, DC

The Arena Stage & The Wendt Center for Loss and Healing

<https://youtu.be/KjG251UUFKw>

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