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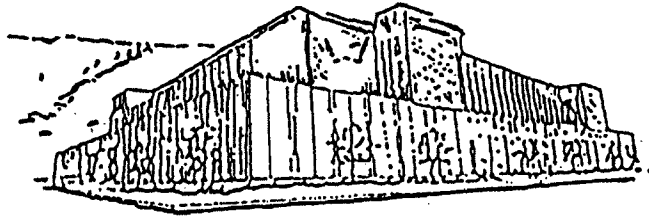
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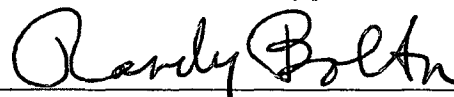
By

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B.A. in Theatre, Nebraska Wesleyan University, 1991

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts
University of Montana
1998

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In 1992 I was a graduate student in theatre at the University of Montana in Missoula. During that year I became familiar with the work of a Brazilian theatre director, Augusto Boal. In the 1950's Boal taught theatre to oppressed workers and peasants in small villages in Peru, and he wrote about his experiences in a number of books, including *Theatre for the Oppressed*. As I learned more about Boal and his interactive theatre techniques I began to think about how I might apply them in my own work as a teacher and theatre artist.

It wasn't until I toured with Missoula Children's Theatre that I began to understand how theatre can help young people. Missoula Children's Theatre helped me make a connection between Boal's techniques and young people. Touring with this company put me in direct contact with thousands of children and young adults. Week after week I witnessed and was a part of the tremendous impact theatre had on young people. Beyond creating a sense of self and confidence, theatre seemed indeed a tool with which many of these young people could communicate and express themselves.

The notion of helping youth use theatre as a tool led me to CLIMB (Creative Learning Ideas For Mind and Body) Theatre in St. Paul, Minnesota. There I used many of Boal's techniques in classrooms of young people ages five to eighteen years. By teaching role-playing and helping students act out

solutions to given problems, I helped young people address the issues of violence, peer pressure, and social awareness.

After leaving CLIMB Theatre I looked for opportunities to implement what I had learned from my practical experiences and academic studies. I wanted to form a youth theatre troupe whose goal would be to cultivate a better understanding of self-worth and confidence in students, empowering them to become more involved in social change in their homes, schools, and communities.

My youth theatre would use ideas from the four categories or stages of Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* to create classroom exercises and scene work.

The four stages include (Boal 1979):

- Knowing the Body
- Making The Body Expressive
- The Theatre As Language
- Theatre as Discourse

As in Boal's work, these four stages of theatre would lead to better understanding of self, expression, and self-confidence. Young people would discuss difficult issues, problems and then improvise and rehearse solutions. By learning to improvise in class, students would become empowered to tackle difficult issues *outside* of class. They would discover that they *do* have a voice and they *do* hold solutions to their problems.

My proposed youth theatre would also share the young actor's original scene work with an audience. The audience would be able to interact with the actors, offer suggestions, and even change the direction of the play. By allowing the audience to change the direction of the performance, the troupe would empower others to make change. Both actors and audiences alike would benefit from this form of interactive theatre.

My wish to direct a youth theatre came true when I accepted a job as drama coordinator for the YMCA's middle school troupe *Acting for a Change* at C.S. Porter Middle School in Missoula, Montana. As drama coordinator I was able to design a course, teach classes, and direct final performances for a group of "high risk" middle school students.

I write this paper to suggest a theatre curriculum to educators. The curriculum I suggest benefits both student and educator: students get problem-solving tools, and educators will derive satisfaction from using theatre techniques to empower young people.

The paper chronicles my journey from my discovery of Augusto Boal's ideas to my own application of his ideas with *Acting for a Change*. To understand Boal's techniques, one needs to understand Boal; therefore, Chapter II describes Boal, his personal history, and some of his techniques.

Chapter III describes my own experiences as I toured with youth theatre companies and began to connect the idea of Boal's techniques to youth theatre.

Chapter IV outlines the structure of the teen theatre troupe I directed, *Acting for a Change*. I first describe the existing structure, and then I detail the ideas that I added to it, including my version of Boal's four stages of theatre.

As the semester progressed, specific issues arose as *Acting for a Change* prepared for a public performance. The issues of process vs. presentation are discussed in Chapter V.

Boal's work moved one step closer to therapy when he brought his work to Europe and the U.S. In Chapter VI, I discuss how I avoided playing the role of therapist in *Acting for a Change*.

Chapter VII provides a synthesis of my experience with *Acting for a Change*. I include what the students gained, what I gained, and specific challenges I faced. I have changed the names of my students to maintain their confidentiality.

Finally, with permission from my students, I have included appendices of several original pieces from their semester performance. The pieces arose from improvised scene work and class discussions.

The impact of this curriculum on my students was significant. They began to understand the connection between their voices within and outside of the classroom. As a result they became more engaged in the arts and society in general.

CHAPTER II: WHO IS AUGUSTO BOAL AND WHAT ARE HIS TECHNIQUES?

Augusto Boal was a champion to the oppressed workers in Peru, and he used theatre as a vehicle for political activism creating a portfolio of techniques he referred to as Theatre of the Oppressed. In this chapter, I outline a few of the major ideas that drove me to apply his work to youth theatre. I also provide a political context for Boal and his work toward creating Theatre of the Oppressed.

The Joker System and Simultaneous Dramaturgy

Brazil experienced a military coup in 1964, followed by another in 1968 (Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz 1994). At that time, Boal was working to foster democracy through theatrical work and political activism. He was seeking sociodramatic means of challenging the harsh conditions of the dictatorship. While touring with the Arena Theatre players performing in northern Brazil for peasants and workers, Boal recognized that their play was more propaganda than revolution (Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz 1994). The middle-class actors were prescribing behavior for situations that they had not experienced.

While director of the Arena Theatre in Sao Paulo, Brazil between 1968 and 1971, Boal developed the Joker System and Simultaneous Dramaturgy. The form was characterized by the mixing of fact and fiction, the shifting of roles during the play so that all actors played all characters, the separation of actor and character using Brechtian techniques, and the introduction of the joker figure, both as a narrator who addressed the audience directly and as a “wild card” actor who jumped in and out of any role in the play(Boal 1979).

In shows dealing with the oppression of the underclass the joker stopped the stage action and asked the audience members if they agreed with it. The audience voiced new directions in which the play could move. In other words, at the moment when the scene reached a crisis, the spectators verbally offered alternative solutions which the actors enacted on the spot. Thus the audience wrote and the actors performed “simultaneously.” Boal named this theatre Simultaneous Dramaturgy. Using the joker and Simultaneous Dramaturgy gave audiences the opportunity to voice their ideas for social change in the theatre setting of the Arena Theatre.

Forum Theatre

Forum Theatre was a Theatre of the Oppressed technique that began with the enactment of a scene in which the performers tried unsuccessfully to

overcome an oppression relevant to that particular audience. Again the joker addressed the audience, but this time he invited the spectators *to replace* the performers at any point in the scene if they could imagine an alternative ending leading to a solution. Based on the audience's ideas, the performers did the scene numerous times with different interventions. Thus the performers and the audience engaged in a dialogue about the oppression, examined the alternatives, and created a "rehearsal" for real situations (Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz 1994).

In 1971, having continued to work in opposition to the military regime, Boal was arrested at the Arena Theatre in Sao Paulo, Brazil. He was jailed and tortured. After three months he was released with the warning that if his political actions resumed, he would not survive a second arrest. He moved to Argentina where he resided until 1976 (Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz 1994).

Image Theatre

Between 1971 and 1976 Boal further developed the techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed. Invited to participate in a national literacy campaign in Peru in 1973 (ALFIN project), he developed Image Theatre, a technique that focuses on physical expression over the spoken word (Boal 1979).

Image Theatre employs a series of theatre exercises that combine to form the body into an expressive tool used to represent, non-verbally, a wide

repertoire of feelings, ideas, and attitudes. Beginning with a selected theme, participants “sculpt” images onto their own and others’ bodies. These frozen images are then “dynamized,” or brought to life, through a sequence of movement-based and interactive exercises .

Invisible Theatre

In Argentina, once again forbidden to partake in activist theatre under an increasingly repressive regime, Boal devised Invisible Theatre as a way to continue stimulating debate on current political issues. Staged in public spaces and masquerading as real life, actors “performed” rehearsed scenes that uncovered social injustices, drawing the attention of passersby and leading to impassioned discussions(Boal 1979).

The Rest of Boal’s Story

Eventually Boal was unable to work in any context because of severely prohibitive military rule. He retreated from theatrical activities and wrote three books: *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1974), *Latin American Techniques of Popular Theatre* (1975), and *Two Hundred Exercises and Games for Actors and Non Actors* (1975). From 1976 to 1986 Boal was once again exiled--this time to Europe.

As a result of the workshops he conducted and the international availability of *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal's reputation expanded throughout the world. In 1978 and 1979 he conducted a series of Theatre of the Oppressed workshops in France inciting the creation of the Parisian Center for Theatre of the Oppressed (Schutzman and Cohen Cruz 1994).

In the 1980's, Boal traveled throughout Europe, Canada, and the USA. The westerners he worked with were rather bourgeois compared to his Latin American students. Many of their "oppressions" were more internal than external; and though Boal found them petty at first, he began to realize the depth of pain internal oppression produced.

He coined the term "Cop-in-the-Head." He explained that some people had "cops in their heads" or fears that persisted after the oppressor no longer had "real" power over them. He saw this work as bordering on psychology but still firmly rooted in the realm of theatre. Boal's 1995 book, *Rainbow of Desire* describes how he applied Theatre of the Oppressed techniques to internal oppressors.

In 1986 after favorable changes in the Brazilian government, Boal accepted an invitation to return to develop a theatre program designed to reach poor school children. Today Boal remains based in Brazil traveling extensively to give workshops throughout Latin America, Africa, Europe, and North America (Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz 1994).

The Effectiveness of Theatre of the Oppressed

In 1992, Augusto Boal was elected to be a vereador, a position that is similar to a city councilor, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Heritage 1994). His campaign slogan was “Have the courage to be happy!” which appealed to the seventy percent of the population who lived in poverty. From a field of one-thousand candidates, Boal was elected along with forty-one other vereadores, to take office for four years (Heritage 1994). Each vereador employed a staff of up to thirty workers. Boal’s team included theatrical members (five full-time and ten part-time “jokers”). His jokers were comprised of teachers, AIDS activists, environmentalists, street children, and unionized bank employees.

The jokers would canvas local neighborhoods and use Forum Theatre to work with the residents on pressing issues and concerns. Then the jokers would compile the results of the Forum Theatres. They would return to Boal and report to him the results. With results in hand, Boal focused on the issues that had been raised by the people. He called this political and theatrical method “Legislative Theatre.”

Boal created the Center for the Theatre of the Oppressed in Rio. (Patterson 1994). He encouraged the jokers to perform their Forum Theatre at the Center. The public was invited to take part in the presentations. During each performance the cast would write a letter to the mayor (played by an

actor on stage) recommending solutions to the problems that had been the topic of the Forum Theatre. After the theatre event was over, Boal would construct an actual letter to the Mayor recommending the solutions that the people had voiced in the Forum Theatre.

In all, Boal's company proposed about fifty laws, all of which were grassroots. Many were about protecting elderly people, children, disabled people, and witnesses to crimes (to put an end to impunity, one of the scourges of Brazilian society), and many were measures against racism and other forms of discrimination. Thirteen of them actually became laws (Boal 1994).

Though Boal and his legislative theatre strove for social change and government reform, they did not change the world overnight. In 1993 the Seventh International Festival of the Theatre of the Oppressed in Rio de Janeiro, coincided with one of the most concentrated and horrific massacres of street children at the Church of Candelaria (Patterson 1994). Eight children were shot by members of the Military Police. As one observer recalled, the blood-stained pavement was only a few meters from the doors of the Festival and the impact on all the participants was profound. One audience member recalled:

Despite the power of the indictment offered by Theatre of the Oppressed enactment, I think that all present at the Festival knew the severe limitations of our contribution. The murdering of children was but one

of the intractable, systemic problems that no mere theatre image could eradicate or perhaps even affect. I believe most of us at the Festival did not romanticize our effectiveness. Yet there remained, and for me remains, a belief—as Boal himself contends—that for there to be truly transformative macro-revolutions there will first need to be truly transformative micro-revolutions within individuals and communities. It is here that Theatre of the Oppressed has a role to play (Patterson 1993: 4).

Monologue vs. Dialogue

Creating a Theatre of the Oppressed was Boal's attempt to take theatre from the "monologue" of traditional performance into a dialogue between audience and stage. Boal experimented with many kinds of interactive theatre. His explorations were based on the assumption that dialogue is a common, healthy dynamic between all humans; that all human beings desire and are capable of dialogue; and that when a dialogue becomes a monologue, oppression ensues. Boal's form of theatre then becomes an extraordinary tool for transforming monologue to dialogue. "While some people make theatre," says Boal, "we all *are* theatre" (Patterson 1995: 1).

From working with the oppressed workers and peasants in the small villages of Latin America in the 1960's, as chronicled in

Theatre of the Oppressed, to developing the psychotherapeutic techniques designed in the 1990's, as explained in *Rainbow of Desire*, Boal has directed, taught, and worked with people of all ages and walks of life. His goals of discovering tools for overcoming physical and emotional oppression and taking control of one's life have remained a constant in his approach to working with people.

CHAPTER III: DISCOVERING THE NEED FOR A YOUTH THEATRE BASED ON BOAL'S TECHNIQUES

After graduate school I spent two years traveling first with Missoula Children's Theatre and later with CLIMB theatre. Through my intense experiences with these youth theatre's I discovered my need to implement Boal's techniques with young people. This chapter recounts those experiences.

Missoula Children's Theatre

Over twenty-five years old, Missoula Children's Theatre is the largest touring children's theatre program in the United States, visiting over seven hundred-fifty communities in forty-nine states, four provinces of Canada, and three other countries. It's mission is to build life skills in children through the performing arts. The theatre sends teams of two staff directors into communities where they spend one week developing and producing a full-scale musical with fifty to sixty local children as cast members.

While touring with Missoula Children's Theatre, I began to understand how Boal's approach and techniques would be useful for theatre work with

young people. With auditions on Monday and the two-hour musical theatre performance on Saturday, we spent each week in a harried five-day rehearsal period with a lot of kids. Performing our show from major cities, Indian reservations, suburbs, and small towns, we met and worked with thousands of young people of different ages (four years to nineteen years) and from various walks of life.

The week that really crystallized the idea that I wanted to create a theatre troupe based on Boal's ideas began in a small town on tour. My co-director and I were doing a show in central Washington. During the week the same teacher approached us several times wanting to know if one of the seventh grade girls, "Sharon," was causing any problems. Once the teacher even offered to remove her from the building! We were stunned. Sharon was a serious, quiet girl who rarely spoke and never smiled. Though she was timid about dancing and projecting her lines, she accomplished both tasks. We eventually learned that Sharon came from a "difficult" home life. Her father had been abusive. One day, after a terrible fight, the mother had stabbed and killed her husband in the kitchen right in front of the kids. Though the girl had not demonstrated any violent behavior to us, she had many problems in school. Her brother had joined a local gang and quit school.

As I learned of Sharon's life, I don't know what surprised me more-- the teacher's detached way of relating the story or the terrible life which had been given to Sharon. Would she ever find the tools to achieve things in her life?

On show day no family member came to see Sharon perform. Her brother did try to get in, but he showed up in gang clothing and brought members of his gang with him to the theatre. When he tried to get backstage and wish Sharon luck, a well meaning teacher discovered the group and kicked them out.

After the play was over and we were loading the truck, I found Sharon standing out by the curb shivering in the cool winter night. She appeared to have been crying. I asked her where her jacket was and what she was doing outside. She looked me straight in the eyes and said solemnly, "I'm waiting for my father to pick me up."

Remembering the truth about Sharon's father made something inside of me freeze. I was overcome with the desire to give her something, anything. I wanted to hold her, to take her away from the town, her family and her life. I wanted to give her something more than mere sympathy.

My experience with Sharon was not a terribly unique one. Throughout my tour travels I worked with many young people who struggled with anger, depression, peer pressure, drugs, and deep emotions stemming from families that had been broken by divorce, abuse, and poverty.

I also observed the joy that theatre brought to many young people. In the course of one week, the kids had to focus, pull together, and work very hard for the final show. They achieved success not in the perfection of their performance but in their ability to perform, to cover their mistakes, and to

keep smiling.

My favorite weeks were when we cast an individual for whom a teacher expressed concern. At the end of the performance, a parent or teacher would stand wide-mouthed, expressing awe and exclaiming, "I didn't know that she was capable of such great things!" The student who walked away believing that he or she was capable of achieving "great things" gained self-confidence and hope, useful tools for life.

CLIMB Theatre

CLIMB theatre in St. Paul, Minnesota is a twenty-five-year-old touring children's theatre company whose mission is to engage students in problem solving difficult issues through participation in the performing arts. The theatre sends actor/educators into regional schools where they perform and teach issue-orientated classes.

When I began working with youth-at-risk and delinquent youth at CLIMB Theatre in St. Paul, I further discovered the power of drama. CLIMB sent teams into school systems across Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa.

As CLIMB actor/educators, we used role-playing and "acting out " techniques to reach students and teach them how to deal with peer pressure, family problems, and violence in schools. We worked with all ages and skill levels. In schools dealing with racial tension, we encouraged students to

discuss their anger, frustrations, and prejudices and then we led them into scene work and role-playing. Students verbalized their problems and acted out solutions.

One week elementary-aged students discussed violence on the playground. We set up a scene where I tried to pick a fight with one of the kids. A student practiced responding to my jeers and taunts, trying aggressive, passive, and assertive behaviors to avoid a fight. For example, I once did this exercise with a fourth grade boy, "Jake" who was notorious for picking fights on the playground. After establishing that I would be acting (and not sincerely looking for a fight), we continued. I stood facing Jake and began to insult him. I made fun of his height, his hair color, and his name. Jake took my insults for a few moments then brought his fist up, getting ready to punch me. We stopped the exercise and explained to him and the class that this was aggressive behavior. We encouraged him to handle this problem assertively. I continued to verbally pick at him. He kept his fist at his side this time, but instead of addressing me he stared at the ground and refused to speak. We stopped the exercise again, this time pointing out that this was passive behavior. We began the exercise again. By this time the class was rallying in full support of Jake. "You can do it!" they cried. "Don't fight, don't do it!" This final time, Jake looked me in the eyes and expressed his frustration with my taunts by stating, "I really don't understand why you are calling me these name. I don't like it. I want you to stop it." When I continued taunting him

anyway, he continued. "I'm not going to let you pull me into a fight. I know that's really what you want and I'm not going to give in this time." He refused to let me lead him into a fight. He did not raise his fists. I finally gave up. As I walked away, the class burst into applause for Jake's assertive but peaceful behavior.

The classroom exercise helped students make different choices and see different consequences when standing up to a school yard bully. Any potential bullies that were in class witnessed the class support for the student who was trying to avoid fighting.

As I saw first hand, the benefits of theatre work with youth are great. Students are empowered by voicing their ideas and having them heard. They experiment with different choices and consequences in a safe environment. Ultimately these activities can lead to self-confidence and self-esteem outside the classroom.

Certainly, the need for more interactive youth theatre not only exists but is growing. The recent outbreak of shooting deaths in the schools is a strong indicator. I believe the answer to dealing with such tragedies lies in helping students develop tools to cope with the pressures and fears. Young people need to feel like they play an active role in their lives. And theatre is a powerful tool with which to begin empowering them.

CHAPTER IV: CREATING THE STRUCTURE OF *ACTING FOR A CHANGE*

When I was hired as drama coordinator for the youth theatre troupe- *Acting for a Change*, I got my chance to create a youth theatre troupe based on Boal's techniques. As *Acting for a Change* had been formed the previous year, I would need to adapt Boal's techniques to the existing structure. This chapter describes the existing structure of *Acting for a Change*. I will then describe some of Boal's techniques of that I used and how I implemented them.

The Need for *Acting for a Change* at C.S. Porter

Though Missoula, Montana does not have an "inner city" with high levels of gang violence, the community has seen a rise of youth problems. A recent study by the Missoula County Health Department found that seventy-two percent of thirteen-year-olds had used alcohol, compared to the thirty-five percent average of thirteen-year-olds who have used alcohol nationwide (Mathews 1998).

Many of the students at C.S. Porter are designated as "high risk." Twenty-three percent of the students live below the poverty line. Many come from families that move often; C.S. Porter experienced a sixty-five percent rate of

student turnover every year. Many of the C.S. Porter students come from dysfunctional and abusive families (Mathews 1998).

To combat such statistics, C.S. Porter offers many community outreach programs that take place at the school. *Acting for a Change* was formed as a method to reach many of these “high risk” students.

Existing Structure of *Acting for a Change*

The C.S. Porter project, *Acting for a Change* was an after-school project for youth in grades six to eight. It met after school three times per week for an hour and one-half. Previously, the group had done a lot of drama games and theatre sports. Though they had performed an original student show, the group had been relatively unstructured.

Though the number of students varied all semester, the troupe had a core of seven students. Class began with a physical/vocal warm up followed by check-in and discussion. It ended with scene work and more discussion. Physical warm-ups were used to get the students on their feet and engaging in activities that used their bodies and voices. Warm-ups were a great method for “breaking the ice” and getting the students to begin interacting with each other. During check-in, students sat in a circle and took turns saying how they were feeling. I encouraged them to explore different feeling words in their process of understanding and identifying their own feelings. After check-in I

asked the group for a list of topics and issues they would like to explore, and each class I focused a discussion on a topic from the list, which included peer pressure, values, body image, drugs and alcohol, choices, obstacles, and consequences. After discussion, I divided the students into small groups assigning each group to use the discussion topic or topics in a scene. At the end of class, the groups came together and performed the scenes for each other. At the end of each group's performance the spectators discussed the scenes.

Boal's Four Stages of Theatre and Corresponding "Acting for a Change" Techniques

Though he would go on to implement many techniques, Boal's four stages of theatre became the backbone of his work. They also became the backbone of *Acting for a Change*. The Four Stages of Theatre are (1) Knowing the Body, (2) Making the Body Expressive, (3) Theatre as Language, and (4) Theatre as Discourse (Boal 1979). In the following sections I describe Boal's stages, the techniques of each stage and how I used them in *Acting for a Change*.

First Stage: Knowing the Body

In *Theatre for the Oppressed* and later in *Games for Actors and Non-*

In *Theatre for the Oppressed* and later in *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, Boal discussed several exercises that were designed to "undo" the muscular structure of the participants. The goal of these exercises was not to weaken or destroy muscles, but to make participants conscious of them. Participants saw and felt how their bodies were governed by their lifestyles. For instance, the muscular structure of a secretary was different than that of a fireman. Both alienate certain muscles in accordance with their respective types of work. These games heightened the senses and de-mechanized the body, coaxing participants out of habitual behavior as a prelude to moving beyond habitual thinking and habitual patterns of interacting. Participants became actively engaged with each other, developing relationships and trust.

Though Boal listed over two hundred games and exercises in *Games For Actors and Non-Actors*, I was able to incorporate many of these exercises into *Acting for a Change*. Here I discuss three of the troupe's favorites, slow-motion, mirror exercises and music and movement.

Slow Motion

Boal's slow-motion race. Boal used slow-motion race to get participants to slow down and focus on balance and muscle movement. He invited the participants to run a race with the aim of losing. By moving slowly, a runner's center of gravity was dislocated with each movement so he had to assume a new muscular structure to help him keep his balance. The runner could never

interrupt the motion or stand still (Boal 1979).

Acting for a Change's slow-motion baseball. In *Acting for a Change*, I used Boal's slow-motion race to play slow-motion baseball. The pitcher and the batter made slow muscular movements. A row of cheerleaders and spectators cheered in slow motion. The outfielders made deliberate slow-motion dives for the invisible ball.

It took a few minutes of practice for the students to stay slow. But they enjoyed the experience a lot more when they found the slow motion. They enjoyed the big physical movements that they made reacting to the game and each other. The students admitted they had not given much thought to their body motions at a baseball game before this exercise.

Mirror Exercises

Boal's techniques. Boal used mirror exercises to aid the art of "seeing." He lined up two rows of participants, each looking into the eyes of another. He dubbed those in row A the "subjects" and those in row B the "images." He instructed each subject to make a series of movements and expression, and he had each image copy her subject right down to the smallest detail(Boal 1992).

Acting for a Change techniques. I discovered these exercises were an excellent tool for teaching concentration and focus. First two people, then four, then a group mirror can be put together. The object was for the "mirror" to reflect the face and body motions by the "leader." The leader moved very

slowly stretching her muscles. Her goal was to create physical choices that the mirror could easily copy. By moving slowly and deliberately, the mirror and the leader must focus on each other's movements. After doing this exercise only a few times I saw an increase in the students' focus. They carried this focus with them to the stage. On other occasions, if I noticed that concentration on stage was lacking, I would stop the rehearsal and have the students do the mirror exercises. The students agreed it helped them focus their energies.

Music and Movement

Boal's techniques. Boal used music and movement to aid the act of "listening to what we hear" (Boal 1992: 100). In this particular exercise a group of actors vocalized a particular sound (an animal, leaves on the road, a factory) while another group does movement corresponding to the sounds--in some way visualizing them.

Acting for a Change Technique. *Acting for a Change* did a variation of this exercise using music. I played a piece of classical music for the students. The students identified a person or character with the music then proceeded to walk across the room as the character would walk. The music changed and the students made new physical choices by becoming different characters. By using their bodies to express different characters, students began connecting with using their bodies as tools to express thoughts and feelings. The

characters the students created ranged from elderly women and body builders to birds, elephants, and fellow classmates. I discovered that running this exercise several times in class was more effective. The first time through the shy students did not engage much. By the third time they realized the exercise was more fun than frightening.

Second Stage: Making the Body Expressive

The second stage developed the expressive ability of the body. In our culture we express almost everything through words. In this stage, Boal created a series of games that help participants use their bodies for self-expression.

Charades

Boal's techniques. Boal described charades as a way to create images with the body. In Boal's version of charades the participants received slips of paper containing the name of an animal. The participants simultaneously moved through the group and searched for the other individual who had the same animal as they did. The only way they could communicate was by making the sounds and movements characteristic of their animal (Boal 1979).

Acting for a Change Techniques. I built on Boal's charades by designing two exercises, described below.

Who am I/ Where am I? The student received two cards--a location card and an occupation card. She used physical movement to help the audience guess where she was and who she was. For example, Mary drew "the beach" on her location card. Next she drew "dentist" on her occupation card. Throughout the scene she proceeded to drill and pull teeth while surf boarding. Mary had to concentrate very carefully on her actions before the other students guessed. The exercise was fun for everyone, and Mary experienced new physical ways of moving, as she had never before mimicked a surfing dentist.

Nursery Rhymes. The class selected a nursery rhyme. Then each student picked a card displaying the name of a theatre genre (opera, western, drama, sitcom, children theatre, or musical). The students then performed the nursery rhyme by using physical and vocal choices from the genres they picked. For instance, students sang the nursery rhyme "Humpty Dumpty" operetta style, acting like large women with low vibratos. Next, one student performed it as a dramatic Shakespearean soliloquy, standing poised in presentational style, wringing his hands and strutting heavily across the room like Hamlet, hanging his head in depression. By watching different physical choices that student actors made, the other students saw that the more committed their physical actions and expressions, the more clear their communication.

Storytelling

Boal's techniques. Boal also used storytelling. An actor recounted an experience of any kind, as long as it was something that really happened to him; his fellow troupe members then illustrated his story. The storyteller did not intervene or make corrections during the exercise. At the end all the participants discussed the differences between the original story and the acted version.. The storyteller thus compared his reactions with those of his fellow students (Boal 1992).

Acting for a Change techniques. *Acting for a Change* had a lot of success with storytelling. This was perhaps one of my favorite activities. I constantly marveled at the stories the students told and the emotions they were willing to share. Two ways I used storytelling in *Acting for a Change* follow.

A story. One of the students, "Meg" told a dramatic story of watching her father beat her younger sister. Meg's mother was holding her down, keeping her from trying to rescue her sister. The mother was afraid that if she let Meg go, the father would beat both of her daughters. Meg went on to tell how the father was sent away and her parents divorced. In time, Meg developed a renewed relationship with her father. She forgave him for his years of abuse and accepted that he had changed.

The troupe chose to enact this scene for a performance while wearing plaster masks that they had made. With one member of the troupe drumming a rhythm that slowly increased in volume, the masked troupe reenacted the scene in slow motion while the girl told her story (Appendix D). The scene was very moving, and the troupe later discussed their feelings about being a part of a scene which recreated such difficult memories. Many had enjoyed the experience. Others found the heavy emotions frightening. All the students offered support to Meg. She was a survivor and they respected that.

The poem. Another student, “Lynn” produced a poem she had written on a night she had been depressed and suicidal. While she read the poem the troupe slowly acted out the “feeling” words: grief, desire, destruction, etc. When she finished, the troupe discussed the experience. Many of the students confessed relating to the poem identifying with the feelings of alienation and loneliness (See Appendix B).

Third Stage: Theatre as Language

In Theatre as Language, Boal began to direct theater as language that is living and present, not as a finished product displaying images from the past.

The two preceding stages were preparatory, centering around the work of the participants with their own bodies. This stage focused on a theme and furthers the transition from passivity to action (Boal 1979).

In this section I discuss how Boal implemented Theatre as Language in his workshops. I will then relate how I used his techniques in *Acting for a Change*. The Theatre as Language stage is divided into three parts, each one representing a different degree of spectator participation in a performance. The three degrees of this stage are Simultaneous Dramaturgy, Image Theatre, and Forum Theatre (Boal 1979).

Simultaneous Dramaturgy

Boal's techniques. Boal defined Simultaneous Dramaturgy as "the first invitation made to the spectator to intervene without necessitating his physical presence on the stage" (Boal 1979: 132). A scene was performed in front of an audience. The actors developed the scene to where the main problem reached a crisis and needed a solution. The spectators then suggested different solutions to solve the problem. The actors acted out the solutions and the consequences that followed.

As an example of Simultaneous Dramaturgy, Boal recounted a scene in which a wife discovered that her husband was having an affair. At the point of crisis the women in the audience entered into a lively exchange of views. The actors acted out their many suggested solutions -- from the wife crying a

lot and leaving home to the wife beating her husband out of anger. The audience witnessed results of several choices.

Acting for a Change techniques. In this same manner *Acting for a Change* performed problems. One week we were discussing violence in schools. A scene unfolded as the group portrayed "bullies" picking on one student, "Marlene." The bullies ganged up on Marlene, threatening her, trying to push her into a corner. When Marlene was completely cornered, the scene reached its point of crisis and the students enacted the following suggestions:

- (1) Marlene tried using verbally threatening language to prove that she was not afraid. However, when the actor began to speak in an offensive way, the group attacked. The threatening words incited violence.
- (2) Marlene tried to run away. However, when she tried to avert the group, they followed her, cornered her, and began tackling her. Though walking away from a fight had always been the recommended solution from students' parents, the scene implied that it was not always a solution that led to positive results.
- (3) Marlene went looking for a teacher. But when she found one, she was so agitated and frustrated that she could not communicate

what was happening to her. The teacher misinterpreted her action to be offensive and hostile, and the teacher was unhelpful. In one scene, the teacher sent Marlene to detention for her attitude! In another scene, Marlene tried to be assertive and ask the teacher for help. The teacher responded by reprimanding the bullies. However, in the end, the bullies' desire to pick on Marlene increased.

- (4) Marlene tried calmly talking to the group. She asked them why they were picking on her. This seemed to deter (if not surprise) the group for a bit. She asserted her feelings; she did not like being pushed around. The students agreed that assertive behavior was more effective than either passive or aggressive behavior.
- (5) Finally, the students turned their attention toward the bullies. They suggested that the bullies examine how much power each was giving to the "lead bully." The students noted that, by giving the leader power, the bullies were taking away power from themselves. Their solution was to have the group turn on the leader and question her motives. During the re-enactment, the leader backed off and the scene ended with the members of the group feeling like they had gained some power.

More interesting, the students asked to do the scene again. This time they added extra characters in the hallway. These extras witnessed the bullying. In the solution scene the witnesses did not remain silent: They stepped in and spoke up for the girl. This last scenario sparked much discussion. The class talked about violence in their school and the role they all played in the problem-- whether they were being bullied, doing the bullying, or doing the silent witnessing. The idea that they had the power to change such threatening problems was extremely empowering to them.

Image Theatre

Boal's techniques. Boal's second degree of Theatre as Language is "Image Theatre." Once again the actors created a scene on an issue that concerned everyone. However, this scene had no verbal language. It was created with body movement and non verbal communication. One of the actors was elected to be the "sculptor." Boal asked the sculptor to express her views. She then used other members of the group to "sculpt" an image that reflected her opinion. Slowly molding actors as if they were made of clay, she determined the position of each body down to the most minute details of their facial expressions. She was not allowed to speak. After organizing the statues she entered into a discussion with the others in order to get the reactions to her sculpted opinion. The actors and audience tried to reach a consensus, and

when they did, the sculpted image of consensus was referred to as the *actual image* of the issue. Next, the sculptor sculpted the actors into her *ideal image*, or the way she wished the issue existed. Finally, the sculptor created the *transitional image*. This was the most important image. This was the bridge between the two worlds. Boal called this scene "the change, the transformation, or the revolution" (Boal 1979: 135).

Boal recalled his experience with Image Theatre in a small village in Peru. He asked a young woman to sculpt her image of village life. The young woman sculpted the participants into a recent event. The leader of the peasant rebellion had been captured by government landlords and publicly castrated.

The woman's *actual image* showed a man pushed down on the ground with his hands tied behind his back. Around him stood the faces of dominance and oppression. Men stood in aggressive positions with "air" guns. Other sculpted female figures in the scene were kneeling in prayer; others were held in restraining positions by government landlords and military police. Boal remembers:

This was the image that person had of her village. A terrible, pessimistic, defeatist image, but a true reflection of something that had actually taken place (Boal 1979: 131).

When the woman was asked to show her *ideal image*, she modified the "statues" and regrouped them as people working in peace and loving each other. Then she had to sculpt the third and most important image, the *transitional image*. How does one, starting with the actual image, arrive at the ideal image? How to bring about the change or the transformation? The group had many ideas. Some of the women discussed changing the image of the kneeling woman. Many felt that the kneeling woman should remain in position, unchanged. They did not see a woman as potential for revolutionary change. Yet other women felt the kneeling woman was the first sculpture that needed to change. They saw themselves in that image and realized they played a part in social change.

Acting for a Change techniques. *Acting for a Change* also used Image Theatre as a tool. We used percussive instruments to assist in the transformational moments between images.

Once the class was discussing the issue of teen smoking. The group discussed many opinions about the subject. Some members of the group were smokers; some were not. I asked the group to demonstrate the *actual image* of smoking at C.S. Porter Middle School. The group sculpted themselves into an image of students huddled together in separate groups smoking. Interestingly, one student was sculpted in such a manner that his body was covering or hiding his smoking friend from an on-looking teacher. In the other group, one friend was sculpted into the image of lighting his friend's cigarette.

I then asked the group to create the *ideal image*. It showed the sculpted image of the same students talking, laughing, playing ball, and connecting physically. None of the sculpted individuals were smoking.

I then asked them to create the *transitional image*. One group sculpted the images of stomping out butts. The other group sculpted two girls holding their hands up to protest a friend's cigarette. My favorite image was a sculpted "human toilet." Friends formed around another friend coaxing the friend to throw the cigarettes into the sculpted toilet in front of her.

The common factor in each sculpted scene was the power that friends and peers had on each other. The students discussed how powerfully they affected each other. They had the power to encourage their friends to quit smoking. They also played a role in covering up for their friends. The students discovered that they held the power to create the transition between the actual and the ideal images.

Forum Theatre

Boal's techniques. The third degree of Theatre as Language is "Forum Theatre." This is the last degree where the audience had to intervene decisively in the dramatic action and change it. The procedure was as follows: First Boal asked the participants to tell a story containing a social problem and a difficult situation. The actors performed a scene and portrayed a solution to

the problem. When the scene was finished the actors asked the audience if they agreed with the scene's solution. The actors explained that the scene would be performed once more, but that any audience member could replace any actor and lead the action in another direction. The displaced actor stepped aside but remained ready to resume action the moment the participant considered her own intervention to be finished. The other actors had to face the newly created situation, responding instantly to all the possibilities that it presented (Boal 1979).

When Boal first used this degree of theatre in a village of Peru the results were quite effective. As Boal remembered, an eighteen-year-old man worked in the city of Chimbote, one of the world's most important fishing ports. His boss was a ruthless exploiter who forced his employees to work from eight o'clock in the morning to eight o'clock at night--or *vice versa*. Thus the problem was how to combat this inhuman exploitation (Boal 1979).

In Boal's group, each member proposed different solutions: working extra slow, breaking the equipment, and forming a union, for example. Discussion continued. The participants did not always agree on the solutions presented; regardless, new ideas and solutions were played out, creating an audience of direct participants or "spect-actors". Boal said of Forum Theatre, "Maybe the theater is itself in not revolutionary, but these theatrical forms are without a doubt a rehearsal of revolution" (1979: 141). The spect-actor practices a real act even though he does it within a theatrical setting. Forum

Theatre evokes in him a desire to practice in reality the act he has rehearsed in the theater. The practice of these theatrical forms creates a sort of uneasy sense of incompleteness that seeks out fulfillment through real action (Boal 1979).

Acting for a Change techniques. *Acting for a Change* experienced much success with Forum Theatre. On one occasion, the group discussed teachers' treatment of them. In a previous discussion, the students had discussed "cliques." They felt the students in their school were divided by economic classes. They also expressed frustration that the students who came from low-income households were treated differently than students from more affluent families. They discussed classroom and hallway experiences when problems ensued between themselves and other students.

Teacher and Student Example. The students created a scene in which a group of students was arguing in a classroom. A teacher overheard the noise and investigated. When the teacher asked one of the poorer students what the commotion was all about, "John" stood up aggressively and acted defensively. The teacher, threatened by John's aggressive behavior, suspended him. Though John had not started the fight, his aggression toward the teacher had resulted in negative consequences. The troupe noted that it was the student's behavior and not his social status that offended the teacher.

The scene was played again, but this time, John tried to explain to the teacher what happened. But instead of calmly facing the teacher and explaining the nature of the fight, John began to whine and complain. The teacher became impatient with him. Again, the teacher was unable to hear John's voice because of the manner in which he communicated.

The discussion became more focused. How do students communicate with their teachers, parents, and other figures of authority? The students realized that they often sabotaged their chances of being heard just by the method in which they communicated. The idea unfolded that they did not have to be "victims." They could uncover better and stronger methods of communicating their needs to their teachers, parents, and peers. Because they felt they were being treated unfairly, they reacted aggressively and immaturely, thus, ensuring that they were not heard or given a fair hearing.

The students went through the scene again. This time they focused not on lamenting the injustice of their situation but on the conscious and unconscious signals they emitted.

Gameshow Example. We also used Forum Theatre in other scene work. We created a gameshow that we called "Truth and Consequences." It had three contestants, one host, and the "behind the curtain" players. The game worked as follows: the contestant was shown a scene by the players. The scene dealt with an issue such as teen drinking or violence in the school. As the host, I asked the first contestant if he agreed with the solution portrayed by the

curtain players. If he didn't, he could join the players and try a different solution. After the new scene was performed, he had to announce the consequence of his solution. A second contestant also worked over the scene.

This gameshow led to lively discussions and productive scene work. Through it all, the students practiced the idea that they were responsible for making changes in their social and private lives. Many times the oppression they believed they experienced resulted from the solutions they chose to execute in response to their problems.

The Fourth Stage: Theatre as Discourse

Boal described this stage of theatre as an “exciting forum for revolutionary theatre” (1979: 142). Though the ultimate goal in *Theatre of the Oppressed* was to create an unfinished form of theatre where the audience engaged in a discussion with the actors, challenging the status quo and feeling the freedom of effecting change, Boal described the Methods of Discourse as another method of breaking down conventional social barriers. Though Boal suggested several forms of Theatre as Discourse, *Acting for a Change* experienced two--Newspaper Theatre and Fighting the Repression.

Newspaper Theatre

Boal's techniques. The nucleus group of the Arena Theatre of Sao Paulo, under Boal's direction, initially developed the concept of Newspaper Theatre. It consisted of several simple techniques for transforming daily news items, or any other non-dramatic material into theatrical performances. One technique was improvisation. Actors improvised the news on stage, exploiting all its variants and possibilities (Boal 1979).

Acting for a Change Techniques. *Acting for a Change* used this method twice. The first time, I read an article to the group about the number of mountain lions that had been killed recently in our area. The wild cats wandered down from the hills, and local landowners shot them. The students broke into groups to portray the story that the newspaper did not report. Three groups produced very different but poignant scenes.

- (1) The first group acted out the story of a young mother and child who were home alone. An aggressive lion entered the yard, threatening their lives. The mother called 9-1-1. Fearing for her life and the life of her child, she shot the lion. This scene was about self defense.

- (2) In the second scene a hunter saw the lion and immediately wanted to kill the animal for sport. Though the animal posed no

threat, he killed it and kicked it around the floor. When a reporter showed up, the man lied saying his life had been endangered and he had been forced to kill it.

- (3) The third group performed their scene as a sitcom. The students over-acted, played for laughs, took double-takes at the lion, made large prat falls, and in the end, cooked the pretend lion in a pie. The classroom audience had a hearty laugh. Because the scene trivialized the death of the lion, we felt de-sensitized to it. Somehow the death of the lion hadn't been the issue. As I reread the article they realized it had less of an impact on them. They admitted that upon reviewing the article they kept thinking about the funny portrayal they had just watched.

After creating the scenes, the students discussed how newspaper articles and the media can contain hidden bias.

Another time I read an article to the class about the recent growth of our community. The article was a positive one, describing new businesses being built and economic conditions improving. Though the students agreed that new businesses meant new jobs for their parents, they insisted that the paper did not represent the whole view. Almost every student had a story about how they lost playing space reserved for forts and clubhouses due to the

rapid expansion of the city.

What followed was an exciting scene about a group of young people who were pushed out of their clubhouse or "fort" by construction workers. The workers came to clear the land in preparation for a new fast food chain. The students protested against the workers by blocking their fort with their bodies. Then the rich landowner arrived and wanted to know why construction had stopped. The owner tried to threaten the students, then bribe them, and finally, he promised to move their fort to the "stinky" side of the river, unharmed. In the end the fort was demolished by a bulldozer. The students were angry as this was not the first time they had lost a fort to landowners. The scene ended with the students banding together to alert all young people (through the Internet) to get together to stop corporate injustice.

Encouraging the students to examine the news more closely led to productive scene work that explored students' responses to issues that they had little power over. Through the use of Theatre as Discourse, students discovered they did have the power to stand up and voice their concerns about issues that were important to them.

Breaking the Repression

Boal's techniques. Boal used *Breaking the Repression* with the underclass workers and peasants in South America. In *Theatre of the Oppressed*, *Breaking the Repression* consisted of a participant remembering a

particular moment when he felt especially repressed, accepted that repression, and acted contrary to his own desires. The storyteller chose other participants to play roles in the reconstruction of the incident. After receiving information and directions from the storyteller, everyone acted out the incident just as it had happened, recreating the same circumstances and the original feelings.

In a second re-enactment, the storyteller refuted repression, fighting to impose his will, his ideas, and his wishes. This second re-enactment gave the storyteller a chance to succeed at what he had not been able to in reality. Healing occurred when the student took the new skills outside the classroom and implemented them in real life (Boal 1979).

Acting for a Change techniques. One of the more moving experiences in teen theatre occurred on a day we were working with *Breaking the Repression*. I asked “Curt,” a seventh grade boy, to create a scene when he felt repressed. Curt lived in a household with a violent and abusive stepfather. Several times his mother had come to school with black eyes and puffy lips. Though the authorities were constantly alerted, Curt's mother chose to stay with her husband. Curt often took out his anger on other students and teachers.

The first scene where Curt demonstrated repression in his household was divided into three parts. The first part showed Curt's mother playing with Curt as a young child. Curt's father entered. Curt's mother told him that she

was pregnant again. Curt's father became angry and struck his mother, pushing young Curt to the floor before leaving the family.

The second scene depicted Curt as he is today. His little brother sat on the floor playing. His mother sat on the couch folding clothes. Curt entered to tell his mother he was going out. She asked if he had his homework done. Though Curt said he had finished his work, his mother doubted him and slapped him, exclaiming, "You don't have the right to leave whenever you feel like it." Curt grew angry and kicked his little brother. Curt's new stepfather heard the baby crying and entered the room to punish Curt. Curt ran away in anger, stopping after a while to punch a wall and break his hand.

The harsh scene of Curt's home life was staggering and bleak. I asked Curt to redo the scene--this time breaking the repression.

In his second version, the father still beat the wife and the wife still slapped Curt. These events were beyond Curt's control. But Curt changed what he could--instead of kicking his brother, Curt reached down and held him.

When asked to explain, Curt spoke solemnly, "The repression and violence must end with me. When I take out my anger on my teachers, my brother, and my friends, I continue the violence."

That one person could understand so much about the senseless chain of abuse in his life was astounding to the rest of us. But understanding and achieving are not necessarily the same thing. By practicing solutions and ideas

in class, Curt may begin exercising healthy solutions outside of class.

CHAPTER V: CREATING THE PERFORMANCE

At the end of the semester *Acting for a Change* had a public performance. The performance consisted of scene work and improvisations that the troupe had developed in class. In this chapter I discuss the issues that arose regarding process vs. presentation and how I addressed them. I also discuss the two levels at which I incorporated audience participation. These levels include what the group accomplished this year and goals toward which they will strive. Finally I will describe the show that the students created and performed.

Process vs. Presentation

Boal believed that the empowering ideas that the participants took from his workshops were more important than a polished, structured play performed for a silent audience, and I tend to agree with him. His public performances were workshops that engaged the audience with Forum Theatre techniques. However, though the *Acting for a Change* theatre group was committed to the idea of sharing their scene work with an audience, they voted for a traditional performance, where the audience watched and did not intervene. They hoped to stimulate ideas and thinking by performing their issue-oriented material for their school and for the public and then engage in

an audience at the end of the show. And like most actors, they wanted to show off their work. They viewed the semester of scene work as rehearsal, and they needed it to culminate into a performance.

The troupe's desire to perform challenged my thinking as drama coordinator/group facilitator. In the classroom the *process* had been the focus, and I grew accustomed to my role as group facilitator. My goal had been to get the students up on their feet and brainstorming ideas, voicing their opinions, and exploring solutions. As the director for a *presentation* I had to incorporate my voice into the scenes. I needed to develop simple blocking (movement on stage), teach the "actors" voice projection, and remind them to stay committed to individual moments in the dramatic action.

My solution was to work on basic theatre skills separately from the scene work. As we did warm-ups and exercises we discussed and rehearsed theatre techniques. After a while the group instinctively began to incorporate basic theatre techniques (i.e. not talking with a back to the audience) into the scene work.

A second problem arose: The principal of the middle school tried to censor the show. During rehearsals, the students had free rein to express themselves in any manner. They only had a couple of guidelines in creating their scene work. First, all violence had to be justified (consequences to the violence had to be shown), and second, language had to be "school appropriate" (no swearing). However, before the scheduled performance at

the middle school the principal requested a copy of the script. After reading it she changed a couple of lines in the show. She explained that she did not feel the humor had been appropriate. She also expressed concern about the theme of the show being too emotionally “heavy.”

I tried desperately to change her mind. In the end she let the emotionally heavy material go, but she insisted on changing the inappropriate humor. The troupe members were quite indignant but they learned a real life lesson -- that censorship in theatre and life occurs, whether from producers, theatre owners or principals.

Two Levels of Connecting to an Audience

Boal moved through two different levels of connecting to an audience. First he tried to involve the audience on an emotional level. Second, he tried to involve the audience physically, transforming them into spect-actors. Although, I also wanted to transform the audiences for the troupe’s show into spect-actors, I realized that, because my troupe was younger than Boal’s company, I would have to move about the process at a slower pace. In creating the performance for *Acting for a Change*, I decided to follow Boal’s example and involve the audience on two levels, both emotionally and directly. But for direct audience involvement, I moved slowly, creating two steps and taking them one at a time.

First Level of Audience Involvement.

Emotional Connection

Boal's technique: nationalizing the classics. In 1956 Boal dedicated the Arena Theatre to producing shows with issues that directly pertained to Brazilians (Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz 1994). He redeveloped many of the classic plays so that they targeted Brazilian themes and concerns. Audiences empathized more with the action performed on stage and left the theatre talking about the issues that had been raised. He nationalized classics such as *Tartuffe* by Moliere, *Mandragola* by Machiavelli, and *The Inspector General* by Gogol by redeveloping their themes so that they better applied to Brazilians. For instance, the Arena Theatre's version of *Mandragola* was performed not in its original state as an academic work, but as a play that encouraged the underclasses to take political action against the regime.(Boal 1979).

Acting for a Change technique: updating a fairy tale. *Acting for a Change* had their own version of “nationalizing a classic.” The troupe rewrote a fairy tale by carefully reconstructing the plot and characters. Fairy tales were the universal pieces of literature with which the students all had exposure, on which they held opinions, and on which they could hold in-depth discussions. The troupe hoped to reach peer audiences by performing familiar material with a new twist.

In early discussions, I asked the group their opinions of fairy tales. Some

of them said they enjoyed them as children and saw no harm in them. Many remembered some of the story morals. Some students felt the stories communicated negative connotations of women, children, and men. They began to ask questions like, Why do only the beautiful princesses get the man? Why do they have to be beautiful? Why are the children always being portrayed as victims? Why are the men always princes? Why can't princes and princesses be farmers, merchants, or t.v. repairers?

Thus began the creation of the rewritten version of *The Frog Prince* (Appendix A). The group discussed the aspects of the fairy tale that bothered them most. By improvising scenes they created a new version of the *Frog Prince*. In the students' version, princesses lamented over thin magazine models, made good on their promises to frogs, convinced their father to listen to them, and dreamt of having careers.

They divided the *Frog Prince* performance into two sections. The first time the group performed the fairy tale the way it was written. After they finished, they sat down and discussed their feelings about the fairy tale. Then they agreed to perform it a second time--this time the way it "should have been written."

Second Level of Audience Participation: Direct Intervention

As I described before, Boal first tried to connect with audiences emotionally, by nationalizing the classics, and he later employed Simultaneous Dramaturgy and Forum Theatre techniques to involve the audience directly. *Acting for a Change* tried to connect with audiences emotionally by revising fairy tales. Since *Acting for a Change* members were not yet ready to perform Forum Theatre publicly, I helped them develop a question-answer session for their performances. We have also planned a further step toward more audience participation.

Direct Intervention: Step 1. *Acting for a Change* performed for two different audiences. The first show was performed at the middle school in front of the student body and teachers. The second show was performed at a local theatre in front of family, friends and the general public.

After the performances, the students encouraged the audience to respond. They asked the audience members what they liked, what they were uncomfortable with, and what they would have done differently in the scene work. The cast sat on stage and took questions and comments from the audience.

The student audiences at the middle school responded in a variety of ways. Some enjoyed it, some asked questions about the content of the show. Many wanted to know who wrote the show. The *Acting for a Change* cast enjoyed the chance to share their process with their student audiences.

Adult audiences asked questions about the emotional content of the show. A common question was, “What was the hardest scene to perform?” The cast admitted the more serious scenes to be more challenging.

Audience response was very valuable in the process of creating and performing the show. Aside from allowing the cast to learn and grow from the ideas from their audiences, it also gave the audiences a chance to discuss ideas and solutions to topics. The cast discussed that it was harder encouraging response from their peers than their parents. They were less confident about facing their peers and discussing their work.

As the teen theatre group was still growing in their improvisational skills and confidence, we chose to work towards the second level gradually.

After the production of the teen theatre performance, the troupe began to discuss a second step of direct audience involvement. After much discussion the group decided they would like to perform another version of their production implementing techniques of Simultaneous Dramaturgy and Forum Theatre. The second step would be to perform the show again, but this time allowing the audience to participate by suggesting changes and new plot directions.

Direct Intervention: Step 2. The group excitedly spoke of creating a youth improvisational troupe. This troupe would travel with a specific fairy tale to youth groups and schools. The troupe would perform the fairy tale for other young people. The first version would be the traditional version. Then

the troupe would stop their performance and ask a series of important questions to their young audience: Did they like the choices that were being made? What are other choices that could be made? How could a fairytale contain more positive messages? What are some of those messages?

The group understood that their improvisational skills would really be put to use. Our goal would be to rehearse as many plausible beginnings, middles, and ends that the troupe could fathom.

One of my ideas was to create a lot of individual "choice" signs. Each sign would have written on it a different idea for beginnings, middles, and possible ends to the tales. When performing for younger groups the troupe would stop the action and a joker would ask the audience, by holding up the choice cards, where they wanted the action to go next.

Choice cards would also create a safety zone for young or shy audiences and those new to interactive theatre. With practice the choice cards could eventually be eliminated. Ultimately, the goal would be for the troupe to improvise any suggestion, no matter how challenging.

The choice signs along with various props and costume pieces would be kept in a trunk. At each performance, the costumes would hang on a coat tree on stage and the props would be stored but displayed in the trunk. As the audience changed the plot and theme of the play, characters could choose different costumes and props from the trunk.

During this stage of the performance the audience would become spectators. By encouraging audiences to be participants in rewriting "classics" such as fairy tales, even young audiences would begin learning cause and effect. They would begin exercising their rights to become involved in aspects of their lives. By discussing issues, voicing their need for change, and becoming a part of that change in the theatre, young audience members would prepare themselves to make the same choices outside the theatre.

Description of *Acting for a Change* Performance

The outline of the final December performance that *Acting for a Change* developed looked like this (see Appendix for scripts):

- I. The Entrance.
- II. The Frog Prince.
- III. A Poetry Interpretation.
- IV. Newspaper Theatre.
- V. Image Theatre - statues with drumming.
- VI. Telling a Personal Story - a dramatic interpretation.
- VII. Audience response.

The stage was set to look like "Grandmother's attic." It was filled with

old trunks full of costumes, boxes of props, old chairs, and coat trees. The show proceeded as follows: A group of friends have been playing hide-and-seek at grandma's on a rainy day. They wander into the attic and discover a book of fairy tales. After discussing their views on fairy tales the friends decide to act out *The Frog Prince* (Appendix A). The Frog Prince is performed once through as written. Then the friends get the idea to act it out again, but this time as they would have written it.

After they finish the lights go out suddenly with the storm. When the lights come back on the cast is wearing white plaster masks. The one member that is not wearing a mask sits on a stool and recites a poem she wrote called *That Feeling* (Appendix B). The masked troupe members act out the poem as it is being spoken (See pages 28-29 for a description of this technique).

The lights go out again with a clap of thunder, and when they come back on the stage is set for *Newspaper Theatre*. (Appendix C). Reading a newspaper article like the host of Masterpiece Theatre (dramatically, with a British accent), the cast then acts out their version of the article.

When Newspaper theatre is finished, two of the cast members pick up drums and "drum the others" into taking their place on stage as statues. Using the drums and calling out "The Actual Image" and "The Ideal Image" and then "The Bridge Between" the troupe performed Image Theatre demonstrating their views of the smoking problem at their middle school (See page 35 for a description of this technique).

The final scene brings one cast member, Meg, out to center stage. She tells a personal story of a terrible day she witnessed her father beating her sister. Behind her, the troupe wears the masks again, creating a dramatic interpretation of her story.

When the story is finished the friends notice the rain has stopped. The troupe gathers around Meg hugging her and thanking her for her story. As the song “Brand New Day” by Van Morrison plays in the background, the friends slowly begin cleaning up the attic, packing the costumes and props back into the trunk. When they finish cleaning the attic, they leave one by one. After they have gone, the lights slowly fade in the attic.

CHAPTER VI: THERAPY VS. THEATRE

An important issue that arose when working with theatre that evoked emotional stories from actors was the issue of therapy vs. theatre. The actors performed scenes that were about *their* fears, hopes, and concerns. The scenes recreated moments of their lives. Performing such personalized scene work created emotional obstacles for both actor and director. How firmly should a director push an actor to commit to material that they are still struggling with emotionally? The issue became one of therapy vs. theatre. The scenes were important, but not at the risk of mentally pushing student actors where they were not ready to go.

At times, the lines that divide therapy and Theatre of the Oppressed do overlap. An example of this overlap would be in the techniques of role-playing and acting out. The difference between therapy and Theatre of the Oppressed is that in therapy the *individual* works on solutions to personal issues. In Theatre of the Oppressed, *a group* agrees on a shared issue and works *together* to create solutions for social change. However, in Theatre of the Oppressed the actors' emotional issues often become intertwined with social issues. Some of these emotional issues require intervention from a professional psychologist or therapist. Thus as facilitator for *Acting for a Change*, I worked to ensure that I would not be placing myself in the role of therapist.

I faced this issue with *Acting for a Change* when one of my students, Meg wanted to perform the piece about watching her father beat her sister (Appendix B).

The process of developing the piece ended up being somewhat difficult for Meg. A shy girl, she pulled into herself more as she tried to read it. She rushed through her delivery of the story, and often laughed in the middle of it.

My quandary with this was great. Did I push Meg to commit to the piece for the good of the theatrical presentation? What if I pushed her emotionally over the edge? Was she emotionally prepared to be "pushed" to deal with all of this? I am not a therapist, and I felt worried that I would cross a line between director and therapist.

In this chapter I discuss how Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed techniques expanded as he worked with Westerners and what techniques he developed. I include discussions of other Theatre of the Oppressed facilitators on how to address theatre vs. therapy workshops. Finally, I discuss the steps I took with *Acting for a Change* to ensure that I would never be placed in the role of therapist. I will also relate how I handled Meg's situation with her personal story.

Boal's Techniques with Cop in the Head

Was Theatre of the Oppressed theatre, therapy, psychodrama, sociodrama, or political theatre? In the beginning when Boal worked extensively with Brazilian people in a totalitarian society his theatre was about revolution, oppression, and politics. The word "oppression" was clearly understood.

But when Boal later worked with the more bourgeois westerners in Europe and the United States, "oppression" took on a whole new meaning. Participants brought themes of alienation, loneliness and depression into his workshops. At first frustrated by such seemingly insignificant hardships, Boal later realized the depth of pain these oppressions produced. He came to conceptualize them as responses to internalized "cops" related to but different from the external ones and requiring a unique approach (Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz 1994).

The word "oppression" thus expanded to include societal values, and moral dictates pronounced by family, peers, teachers, politicians and the media. Through Theatre of the Oppressed practices, these persistent, intangible voices were physicalized, animated, and addressed as real, oppressing forces. By the early 1980's the techniques were part of the Theatre of the Oppressed repertoire; they are described in *Rainbow of Desire* (Boal 1995). Though this book deals primarily with techniques for therapy groups,

With the number of Theatre of the Oppressed workshops being conducted, the line between Theatre of the Oppressed and therapy grows increasingly thinner--though it does still exist. Mady Schutzman, a theatre artist/writer with training in psychodrama, and a practitioner of Theatre of the Oppressed, addressed the issue of theatre vs. therapy in workshops:

I don't think Boal tries to set up any situation where he is going to play therapist. He distinguishes between individual therapeutic issues and those appropriate to Theatre of the Oppressed. I think he would say he is trying to illuminate collective issues even when working through personal or collective blocks, but that if you feel the issue itself is personal or therapeutic, then you have to deal with it elsewhere (Schutzman 1994: 91).

Designing a Theatre of the Oppressed Workshop

Treading so closely to therapy, much care must be taken when arranging a Theatre of the Oppressed workshop. Several Theatre of the Oppressed professionals suggested three main guidelines in the article "Canadian Roundtable"(Schutzman 1994).

First a group should be ready and willing to receive a Theatre of the Oppressed workshop. If a facilitator takes a group by surprise the group often

feels defensive and unwilling to work. Thus its members might refer to the Theatre of the Oppressed exercises as being “oppressive” You cannot force individuals to participate. Joan Chandler and Mady Schutzman, two Theatre of the Oppressed facilitators, recall being called into a behavior adjustment class in a school to help students’ self-esteem:

It was a complete misassignment for us. These kids didn't even know we were coming and they didn't want to be there. When they don't want to be there, when there is nothing at stake, nothing they want to change at all, then all we're doing is imposing. So we said no, we won't do this, and renegotiated to get another group (Schutzman 1994: 200).

Schutzman goes on to add:

The very basis of Theatre of the Oppressed is that the population we are working with leads, they provide the stories, they have the lived experiences. We come in as facilitators with a body of techniques to use at the appropriate moment. Our strengths, supposedly, include knowing how to use what when (Schutzman 1994: 205).

Second, a group needs to share an issue. Although a facilitator may organize a certain population and suggest an issue to work on, the group itself gets the final say on what the issue will be. Play therapist and general

manager of the Mixed Company Theatre in Ontario, Joan Chandler, recalls an experience when her troupe went in to work with the Huron Employment Liaison Program, a group that retrain people who are labeled as "severely employed disadvantaged"-- people who haven't had jobs for a long time, can't hold onto them because of a physical or mental disability, or due to a stigma attached to them living in a small community. Chandler remembered that the focus of the workshop surprised the organizers.

The organizers thought it would be about unemployment issues and it turned out that it was about the relationship between poverty and family violence, not unemployment per se. As youngsters they had all been subject to some kind of abuse which had an impact on their ability to become employed-- to be "useful citizens" within that community (Schutzman 1994: 201).

***Acting for a Change* Techniques**

Before designing *Acting for a Change*, I made arrangements for the school counselor and a psychologist to be readily available. In discussions with the teen theatre group I explained that if any of them displayed behavior that suggested that they would do harm to themselves or others, I must contact the counselor. I also made it clear that these professionals were always available

counselor. I also made it clear that these professionals were always available for them to work on personal issues.

One example is when *Acting for a Change* dealt with the issue of suicide. Before class began I invited a child psychologist and the school counselor to be a part of that day's discussion. Despite their presence, after class ended, one student confided in me that she had been contemplating suicide. I convinced the student to talk with the counselor and I alerted the counselor immediately of my conversation with the girl.

I used similar methods in resolving the situation with Meg. In a private conversation I explained that, as facilitator, I wanted her to work on issues that were important and meaningful to her. I wanted her to take the time and care she needed. However, as director, I needed her to emotionally commit to the pain of her story. I told her my concern about pushing her emotionally too hard.

To my surprise, Meg informed me that she really wanted to continue with the piece. She told me she had been nervous about reading the story in front of her peers, but that she had done it, and that she felt committed to continuing. I explained that I wanted stronger emotional commitment from the scene. She enthusiastically agreed.

If Meg had decided not to do the piece I would have respected that. I also would have encouraged her to talk with the school counselor to discuss any further emotional issues she had on this subject.

No director should put themselves in the role of therapist. When directors and facilitators are leading Theatre of the Oppressed workshops they should take the mandatory precautions in setting up a system of counselors and psychologists who would be accessible to the participants.

CHAPTER VII: SYNTHESIS

In summary, I developed *Acting for a Change* youth theatre based on the techniques of Augusto Boal's *Theatre for the Oppressed*. The goal of this troupe was to help students develop self-worth and confidence, and to empower them to become more involved in social change in their homes, schools, communities, and selves.

What the Students Gained

The first thing the students gained was a sense of peer support. The troupe became supportive and encouraging of each other. The troupe became a safe place to discuss problems, fears, and concerns without judgment.

Second, the troupe members gained self-confidence. They began to trust their ideas and take more risks in scene work. One troupe member exclaimed, "I feel like I really came out of my shell this year. I really feel like I have ideas that are worthy of expressing!"

Before the troupe performed their show in front of the middle school student body, they were nervous and unconfident about performing in front of their peers. But when show day arrived they turned their nervous energy into supporting each other. The show went great, and I noticed a surge in confidence amongst them. They actually wanted to travel to other schools and

perform. A troupe member triumphantly exclaimed “I knew we could do it!”

I believe the students also gained tools for creating social change. After we did the exercise in Image Theatre where the students expressed their opinion of smoking at C.S. Porter, the students began to discover how much, as peers, they influence each other. Several weeks after this exercise, one troupe member admitted that she was trying to quit smoking. Her fellow troupe member interjected, “ I just realized how much I was covering for her. I wanted to help her to quit. I am encouraging her to quit instead of remaining silent when she smokes!” The girls arranged a support system between them.

Though it was a small step in social change, the students realized that creating large changes in society often begins with making small changes in their personal relationships. And they discovered that they possessed the power to make those changes.

I also witnessed individual development within the members of the troupe. Meg, who wrote the story about her father, grew more self confident each day. When the semester started, she was too shy to perform in front of the class. She whispered her lines and giggled nervously. After working so hard on her scenes, she grew more confident. She projected her lines and became focused on stage. She even helped others on stage by explaining stage directions and blocking techniques.

Lynn, who wrote the poem *That Feeling* (Appendix B) experienced incredible growth. When the semester first started she was rowdy and

unfocused. She often disrupted others' scene work by talking and laughing during their performances. But throughout the semester she began to change. As others began to relate to her poem and appreciate her work, she began to listen to them more. She contributed more to conversations. But most of all, she became the most supportive member of the group. She offered advice, hugs, and quiet reassurance to anyone who was near. After I encouraged her writing skills, she blossomed. She shared with me more poetry and short stories. Lynn became a strong backbone to the troupe.

Curt, who voiced his ideas on Breaking the Repression in his abusive household, struggled to change himself personally. More than once, he talked out of turn, made fun of others, and got out of control. As he experienced success with *Acting for a Change*, he tried to modify his behavior. When he would speak out of turn or say something cruel to a troupe member, he would put his head down, clench his fists, and freeze. He would then look up and say, "I'm sorry." He began doing this without my guidance. He struggled in being a focused scene partner. But when he realized he was a good actor and the others respected him, he worked harder at listening on stage.

What I Gained as Drama Coordinator

I learned several things while teaching Theatre of the Oppressed techniques with *Acting for a Change*. First, I learned that scene work must not

just portray the students as victims.

Theatre of the Oppressed is not "victim theatre." When dealing with the teen theatre group I would listen to their frustrations with families, school, and peers. Many times they felt victimized, so our task was to create scenes in which they examined their behavior and rehearsed different ways of relating to the people around them. By discovering new and better communication techniques they began to understand that many times their personal "oppressions" were self-induced.

For example, when the troupe played the Choices and Consequences game show, they discovered the connection between the way they express themselves to teachers and the manner in which the teachers communicate to them.

Other times the students *had* been victims of abuse (Curt and Meg for example). In these cases Theatre of the Oppressed techniques helped them to move beyond that repression or abuse, and to a place of healing.

A second lesson I learned as a Theatre of the Oppressed facilitator was learning to keep my own issues and personal interpretation separate from my students' scene work. There were times when a scene would not go as far as I wanted or in the direction I was hoping. For instance, I personally have plenty of issues with certain fairy tales, so I had to be careful not to impress my thinking onto my students when we reconstructed the Frog Prince. I often had to remind myself that although a scene was not going in the direction that I

wanted it to go, the class was still gaining something positive. They were processing through issues and finding solutions on their own.

Boal experienced a similar lesson on removing his personal interpretation from workshops. One of the more moving stories I read was a story he wrote about working with an unwieldy group of eighty street children in Brazil. By using the format of Forum Theatre, the students created a family scene. Odd, that these children lived on the streets and had no families. The family in the scene involved a drunken father, a housewife, a drug-addict brother, a religious-fanatic brother and a street hustler daughter. This picture of "family" was agreed upon overwhelmingly by the group of students. When asked to define the word "family," the youth spoke: Violence! Family and violence mean the same thing (Boal 1994: 82)!

The Forum Theatre began with the students taking over the roles of the "family characters" in the play. With each intervention, Boal asked what special contribution each character made. Discussion ensued. Some felt that the religious brother offered the most by offering advice and getting the family to talk to each other. Others said the drug-addict brother contributed the most because in the scene he made the religious brother talk to his relatives instead of to God. On and on the discussions flowed. Then a girl came up and made her intervention. Boal remembers,

She took her drug addict brother by the hand, danced with him, ran, made a clown of herself, twirled around and did somersaults. She wasn't saying anything, and for me, she didn't offer any new solution. In fact, I even thought she might be mocking the entire session with all these grand and comic gestures. I tried to object but the audience resolutely protested against my protest. I asked them what they thought was the new contribution of this intervention that I had been unable to appreciate. One girl explained plainly to me what I had been looking at without really seeing.

"She made her brother smile"

It was so little. And yet, for them, it was so much (Boal 1989: 83).

By removing his personal interpretation, Boal was brought to a deeper understanding of the students with whom he was working.

The final thing I feel I gained was the professional satisfaction of creating an experience for youth that offered them an outlet of self-expression. I enjoyed offering the troupe tools for expression and problem solving. I admit I enjoyed watching them work. It was especially gratifying when they discovered new things about themselves. For instance, when Lynn read her poem, *That Feeling*, she learned she was not the only one who had felt alienation and despair. Another example is when the group discovered

how strongly they affected each other as peers. The day they did the Image Theatre and the sculptures, they discovered how strongly *they* influenced each other in regard to encouraging or discouraging their friends from smoking. I was fulfilled by offering them a technique in which they could learn more about themselves.

Challenges

The first challenge for me with *Acting for a Change* was with student attendance. We met three days per week after school. Students would be absent for many reasons including illness, detention, suspension, family problems, peer problems, academic failings, and other commitments. It was impossible to carry scene work from one day to the next. All scene work had to be discussed, rehearsed, and performed by the end of class. It was too risky to assume they would all be present the next day.

I handled this problem by repeatedly speaking to the cast about the necessity of their attendance. I spoke to the principal about helping to encourage attendance. I spoke to parents about instilling commitment in their children. Though I spoke to many different people, it seemed to make little difference.

This is an issue with which I continue to struggle. Because I believe that the encouragement to stay involved with activities must come from home, I

intend to create more “parent nights,” (where the families are invited to see the troupe perform), newsletters, and positive updates to parents. My hope is that if I involve the parents more in seeing the positive result that *Acting for a Change* is having on their child, they may encourage their child to attend regularly.

The aspect of facilitating that frustrated me the most was when a student would drop out due to events they could not control. Curt, who created the scene on stopping the chain of violence with himself, never got to express that idea in front of an audience. His stepfather took him out of school early for summer vacation. I tried to talk to Curt’s mother, stepfather, and finally the school counselor on the importance of Curt’s work. The counselor told me, “Curt’s mother sees and hears very little positive about her son. I doubt that she will support you.” And so it was. It was a devastating blow to me both personally and professionally.

Another troupe member dropped out when she was sexually assaulted by a male friend. At first I didn’t know why she quit coming to class. When I found out, I was stunned. It was very hard for me to not get involved personally. I cared for the girl a great deal.

It was hard at times for me to remember that my job was not to play “fixer” in my student’s lives. When Meg brought me her personal story of watching her father beat her sister, I went through a range of emotions-- shock, sadness, anger, and an urge to fix her life.

When Meg initially began having problems with the piece I questioned whether she should perform it. When Meg made the decision to go ahead, I realized that it was my discomfort with this issue that had influenced me. It was Meg who had brought the piece to class and asked that we work on it. She made the choice to come and open up this issue. I was the one who assumed she would not be able to handle the process of preparing the scene. I became lost in the need to be the "fixer" of her life.

Artistic Director of Ontario's Mixed Company, Simon Malbogat voiced his sentiment (Schutzman 1994: 220),

If the participants are there and they want to be there, then you are not acting as a fixer. For me, that means we are respecting and honoring the participant--they are opening and closing, doing what is best for themselves. I think Boal is working that way too.

The second challenge that *Acting for a Change* had to face was performing in front of its school. As the facilitator I was concerned about the behavior of the student audience. All of the students at the school were brought in to see the show, many against their will. I expected that there would be a rowdy, noisy crowd for the troupe to perform for, and I was right. Deciding to perform at C.S. Porter was difficult. On one hand, the students at the middle school could benefit from the *Acting for a Change's* performance.

They might have seen an issue performed that they would want to talk about further in the response section of the performance. On the other hand, several students showed up at the performance with the goal of disrupting the entire show by talking throughout, moving around, and even heckling the cast. The teachers made mild attempts to contain these students with little success. I was very worried about the effect the audience was having on the troupe. However, after the show, the cast embraced the idea that they had survived the performance.

I do believe many students enjoyed watching the performance. Many of them had questions and constructive comments for the cast during the response. Several students congratulated the cast on a show well done. Others wanted to talk about some of the issues that had been raised in the show. I also believe that most of the students who enjoyed the show were able to see the negative impact the rowdy, vocal students were making during the show. They saw their peers acting out issues on stage with which they could relate to, despite the interruptions from several audience members. Several students came up to me after the show and asked me for information about joining *Acting for a Change*.

Joan Chandler, a Theatre of the Oppressed facilitator, remembered a time when the workshop she was leading was not going as planned,

We took this show out on the road and went to one particularly violent school where there's a tremendous amount of racial difficulty. And there was one group in the audience oppressing the rest of the audience--they would come up and make negative interventions that didn't provide any workable solution. But, these interventions were valuable because the kids performing got to see how violent a mind set those other kids had and how tragic that was (Schutzman 1994: 210).

Even though the scenes were not matching Chandler's definition of constructive, she felt the audience was still learning a valuable lesson. Like Chandler, my hope is that the students in the audience who were trying to enjoy the performance at C.S. Porter came to similar conclusions about the group of students who were disrupting the *Acting for a Change* show.

Conclusion

Using Theatre of The Oppressed techniques, students are able to create scene work that reflects the world. Such reflection helps them understand themselves better. They are able to discuss and act out solutions to problems when they feel oppressed or victimized. The students feel empowered. They *do*

have a voice in the world. By rehearsing that voice in scene work in the classroom, they acquire a useful tool for exercising their voices outside of the classroom.

Believing that they can and will make a difference in their lives, empowers youth to make a greater difference in communities, nations, countries, and the world. Using theatre as a powerful interactive tool can help eliminate the oppressions of the world--poverty, abuse, injustice, sickness, and chemical abuse--one child at a time.

Appendices

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Appendix A

The Frog Prince

(The way it should have been written)

Narrator: Once there was not one princess, not two princesses, but three princesses! One day these three princesses were walking along looking at their favorite magazine.

#1: I wish I was as thin as she is!

#2 Look how skinny she is!

#3 I'm almost as thin as she is!

All: We need to go on a diet!

Narrator: In their moment of judging their own bodies by the impossible body images the media puts out, the three princesses began to sob and wail in despair.

Girls: waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah.

Narrator: As the girls continued to wail in despair...

Ashleen: Hey, wait a minute. This is an awful weak female image we're portraying. I think we need to know the REAL feelings of a princess.

Narrator: Ladies and Gentlemen..."The inner Monologue of a Princess."

Ashleen: So, you really want to know what its like being a princess? It's not all it's cracked up to be. Do you think we like wearing dresses all the time? Do you think we like being proper all the time? Well we don't. Why are we always the one that has to go down? Why are we always the victims? We want to be treated like everyone else. We want to be able to travel and work. Well, if you never knew the way a princess really feels, now you do.

Narrator: O.K., thanks Ashleen. So instead of reading their favorite magazine the girls were reading the answers on the Super 8 question ball.

#1: Who is the nicest boy in school?

Narrator: To which of course it answered...Marcus!

Girls: Marcus!

#2: Who is the smartest boy in school?

Narrator: To which of course it answered...Marcus!

Girls: Marcus!

#3 O.K., who is the strangest creature I know?

Narrator: To which it of course answered...Hey, wait a minute!

All: (laughing) MARCUS!

Narrator: No, not Marcus...for the strangest creature the young princesses would know were the two frogs that lived at the bottom of the pond. For at this point, the girls were laughing so hard, they accidentally dropped the ball into the water.

Girls: OOOOOOOOPS!

Frog 1: Hey look at this!

Frog2: Cool! Now we can predict the future!

Frog 1: Hey neat, but, maybe we should try and find out who this super 8 ball belongs to and return them.

Frog 2: No way, Finders Keepers, Losers Weepers! (Frogs begin to argue over ball)

Narrator: This looks like a job for the (ta da) PEER MEDIATOR!

(Girls sigh) (Frogs laugh in disbelief)

Narrator: All right you two, what's going on? Where did you find this? Who do you think should keep it? Why do you think it should be given away? (etc.)

Princesses: It belonged to us!

Frogs: We'll now, it belongs to US! (argument)

Narrator: QUIET!!! Suddenly the mediator has a great idea! There is a way to settle this. The ball first belonged to the princesses right? But the frogs are the ones who brought it back from the bottom of the pond right? Perhaps the frogs would accept a payment of some form in exchange for retrieving the

ball?

1: We've got it! Why don't we give you our money for our weekly pizza?

2: Yeah! Our Domino's pizza!

3: What a great idea!

Frog 1: O.K., O.K.!

Frog 2: Hey, forget the money... just want the pizza!

Frog 1: yum, yum, yum!

Princesses: Lets go!

Narrator: Meanwhile, back at the castle the king and queen were waiting and looking for their daughters.

K: Hmmmm, I wonder where those girls could be?

Q: I don't know, but its almost time to order the royal pizza!

K: Oh girls?

Q: Girls?

Narrator: Meanwhile, at the castle doors the two frogs had arrived to collect their pizza money.

(Frogs knock loudly at the door)

K: Now who could that be? Abu? Abu? Answer the door!

(Abu the servant answers the door) Abu: Yes?

Frogs: We're here to collect our money!

(A general commotion ensues. Abu does not want to let them in.)

K: What is going on out there?

Q: I don't know, but make it stop!

K: Abu, Abu...What is going on?

Frog 1: The princesses promised us their pizza money for retrieving their ball!

Frog 2: And we're here to collect it!

King: What? Nonsense. Where are those girls? GIIIIIRRRLLLLSSSS!!!

Q: Oh girls? Get out here!

(Princesses enter.)

King: These frogs say they are here to collect pizza money that you promised them. Is that true?

(Princesses agree that it is true and try to explain. But, father interrupts them.)

K: This is nonsense. You are not giving your pizza money to anyone. Let's face it. It's not really yours to give. It's mine. Well, actually it's money that actually belongs to the people of the kingdom. But, I cheated them out of it...so ha ha. Anyway, you're not giving this money away to anyone.

#1: But that's not fair. We made a promise to them!

#2: Really! Why won't you even listen to us!

#3 You're our father. You're supposed to support us. You're supposed to be on OUR side.

(Everyone begins to talk at once.)

Q: (finally exasperated) ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT, give the frogs the pizza money!

K: Abu, please escort the frogs OUT!

(frogs exit)

#1 Wow. What was great. But, now I am really hungry.

#2 Me too. Gosh, what to eat?

#3: Pizza does sound kind of good.

K: Well, I am sorry girls. But, the royal pizza money is gone. I'm afraid if you want more money, you're going to have to go out and get jobs.

Narrator: Which, actually is what the princesses really wanted to do anyway.

Princesses exit with lines like: Good, I want to be an artist, a business woman, a teacher...etc.)

Frog 1: Hey, but what about the frogs. Don't they turn into anything?

Narrator: Yeah, sure. But, these frogs don't turn into princes. Instead they turn in to...farmers!

Group responses:

A grocer

a butcher

a businessman

an athlete

a fireman

a carpenter

a teacher.

Wally: Actually I want to turn into a big overweight plumber. SO that way, when I bend over everyone can see my...

Narrator: I guess this would be an appropriate time to say...THE END!

Appendix B

That Feeling - by Lynn

'Twas night when it came
That feeling, overwhelming.
One of sorrow, grief, desire
and destruction.

I'm not sure yet,
what to call this feeling
this thing that fills me
with depression.

It makes me love
all that I hate
yet hate all that I love.

I cannot stand
this dreadful thing.
It makes my head start spinning.

When will it stop?
Who can tell?

I guess I'll just have to keep on living.

Appendix C

Newspaper Theatre

Wally: Hello. Welcome to another episode of NEWSPAPER THEATRE. In the continuing belief that the media only represents one given side of any issue at one time, we continue the drama today.

Today's headlines read:

In the continuing expansion of Missoula and surrounding areas, Mayor Mike Kadas at a recent city council meeting was pleased to announce that another food chain is coming to Missoula.

Ground Breaking for the Small Burger hamburger chain is scheduled to start today. Mike Kadas expressed his excitement for the restaurant and the new jobs it will create.

It was the council's fervent hope that a strip mall complex be raised near the Small Burger restaurant.

The financial outlook for both mall and restaurant is very favorable.

Hmmmmmm. And now the OTHER side of the story. Please enjoy this episode of NEWSPAPER THEATRE.

Students improvise a scene about construction workers trying to tear down their fort so that they may clear the land to build a Small Burger restaurant.

Appendix D

Meg's Story

“No, stop, you’re hurting her!” I screamed as my dad beat my sister with a leather belt soaked in water.

“No, get back here!” My mom grabbed me and held me back. She knew if she let me go then he would hurt me too.

That night I laid on my bed thinking, wondering why he would spank her like that for reasons I didn’t understand.

My life went on like that for another year or so and then my mom and dad got divorced. It was about four or five years that I didn’t see my dad.

When I did see him again, I was really uncomfortable. It was hard for me to trust him. But, after a couple of months of seeing him, talking to him, going out to eat and stuff, I felt comfortable and could be around him easier. After a while, I realized how he had changed, too.

I realized that he had changed both physically and mentally. He had gotten a lot of help by going to counseling and taking pills so he would not be so abusive and get angry so easily.

And now, when I see him, I remember how he used to be and I’m glad that I’m seeing him again and that we’ve both changed so we can live better together.

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