

Early School Leaving. Who? Why? So then...

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The structure of a Forum Play:

- A scene with an unsolved problem is played once.
- Then the Joker asks the audience "What you have seen can be real? "How to solve it?"
- The scene starts again and each spect-actor can say <stop> and replace the oppressed person, trying his/her own solution.
- The other characters react in a realistic way.
- The joker accepts every intervention, sometimes questioning the ones that seem magic or risky.
- The debate goes on with no judgement.
- This format can be varied in different ways: more than one scene, chain of oppressions, more topics in a session and only one chosen, etc..
- It seems to us useful to suggest following some simple stage during the session, by suiting this to the real context:

Introduction

Warming up

Presentation of the scenes

Interventions from the audience

Closing.

1. Introduction

- **Objective:** to get in touch with the audience, you have to become reliable for the audience, to explain the context.
- **Contents:** the joker can explain who he/she is, what is Forum-Theatre, why this session was organised, something about the contents of the play, some anecdote about other Forums, etc. He/She can also ask simple questions to the audience.
- **Main tools:** verbal communication, humour, information.
- **Main tips:** be energetic and active, observe the public's reactions, and create suspense and curiosity.

Simple questions in a rough order of difficulty: how are you? Do you like drama? Do you know Forum-

Theatre? What do you imagine it is? Do you know this topic? Have you lived the same oppression or do you know any? The length of this part depends on the Joker's perception: if the audience interacts easily he/she can proceed, otherwise it could be better to use more time to warm up verbally.

2. Warming up

- **Objective:** to warm up the audience and prepare them to be more active, to slightly transform a mass of people in a group/community.
- **Contents:** the joker proposes some activities to activate the audience.
- **Main tools:** questions/answers, simple games, music, dance...
- **Main tips:** we can use verbal games like questions answered by raising the hand or standing up; games like circle and cross (see page 102); depending on the audience and cultural habits you can use more complex games, image-theatre, music, dance, etc.

It is important to be sensitive and to choose the level and cultural element that is appropriate to the session and the audience. Sometimes it is also useful to invite spectators to come onto the stage, like a transgression of the classical ritual of theatre and a symbolic way to tell what you expect from them. The length of this phase also depends upon the Joker's perception. The audience should be active enough and the atmosphere warm enough.

3. Presentation of the scenes

- **Objective:** to show clearly to the audience the oppression you want to discuss.
- **Contents:** the scenes that were prepared are shown to the audience from the beginning to the end as in a normal theatre play.
- **Main tools:** observation (the joker observes the audience and tries to perceive its mood and in which points of the play it reacts the most).
- **Main tips:** the Joker tends to forget his/her task here and watches the performance; in this way he/she loses important information.

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4. Interventions from the audience

- **Objective:** to debate the issue in an active way, facilitating the spect-actors' interventions and deepening research for solutions.
- **Contents:** interventions from the audience and the strategies they are carrying on. Emotions activated in the scene. The movements of the characters onto the stage.
- **Main tools:** observation, questioning skill, strategic thinking.
- **Main tips:** there are many ways to manage this crucial and complex phase, as many as there are many Jokers. Here we propose a simple way that can be enriched alongside the experience.

Simple structure to manage interventions:

- The Joker explains the rules of Forum-Theatre and the fact that we are free to intervene and have different opinions.
- Then he/she proposes to re-start from the beginning and invite the audience to say <Stop!> when something is oppressive, unfair, problematic, or when the protagonist suffers from an injustice, or other similar expressions suitable to the context.
- If the audience doesn't stop after the first crucial point in the scene, he/she stops and asks the audience about what is happening, if the situation is good or not, etc.

- When a spect-actor says something like a solution <The protagonist should do...> the Joker invites this person to come and practice his/her idea onto the stage. The Joker does not force but invite and help to overcome shyness.
- The Joker asks the spect-actor onto the stage who he/she wants to replace and from which moment of the plot.
- The scene restarts from this moment and all characters in the scene react to the new action, realistically.
- When the situation is repetitive, if nothing new happens or if the Joker feels is too heavy for the spect-actor, he/she stops the scene.
- The Joker asks the spect-actor something related to his/her intervention (was it as you thought? Do you feel it was successful? How was emotionally? Do you think Oppressor changed, maybe a little inside? Etc.), then thanks him/her and sends him/her back to the audience.
- The Joker asks the audience whether this strategy has changed anything or not. If the answer is negative asks for a second alternative. If it is positive he/she tries to investigate more (risks and consequences, positive results, etc.), then ask for an alternative.
- The Joker proceeds in this way until the end, never judging the intervention but questioning.

In case of a block in the audience, one option is to re-start from a certain point of the plot and ask for a stop or to do it him/herself.

The play revolves around the story of:

The Antagonist:

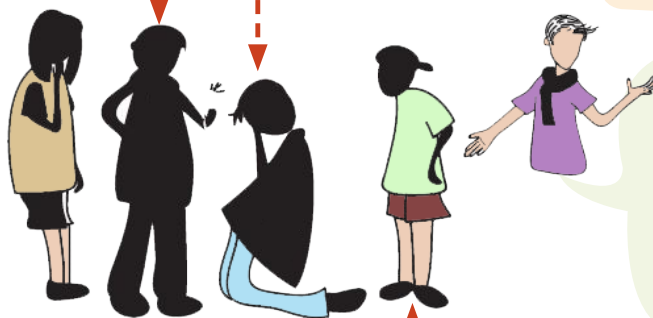
The one who oppresses the protagonist.

The Protagonist:

The one who is oppressed.

The Bystanders:

Those who witness this oppression and are at a position to prevent it from happening.



In a form like forum theatre, where there is so much interaction between different sets of people, don't you surely see the need for a facilitator? A person who breaks the ice between the actors and the spectators.

Once the forum begins, the joker encourages, invites, regulates, appreciates, explains, concludes and at times even translates the interventions of a spectator.

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5. Closing

- **Objective:** to ritualize the end, to summarise the result; to stimulate extrapolation.
- **Contents:** the strategies tried in theatre and the ones not tried.
- **Main tools:** verbal communication, ritual games.
- **Main tips:** we think that here the Joker could put evidence to the work done in the session by the audience, summarizing the main strategies and underlining the missing points. Finally it is helpful to strengthen the community atmosphere and the extrapolation, if the Joker proposes a simple game like "The rain": the Joker proposes a sequence of gesture that look like rain and the audience do them together (clapping softly some fingers, then the hands, beating by hands his/her chest, beating his/her thighs, stepping loud on the place, popping his/her own tongue...).

Bibliography:

Artemiszió Foundation,
Elan Interculturel,
Giolli società cooperativa sociale,
La Xixa Teatre, STOP-KLATKA:

- *Research Report. Examining early school leaving factors in five European contexts.*
- *Early School Leaving And Forum-Theatre (summarising the 5 pilot projects in 5 secondary schools).*
- *Comparative Assessment Report. Examining Forum Theatre impact as a tool against early school leaving in five European contexts.*



Footnotes:

1 Terminology is not neutral: "conscientization" is an invented word, created by Brazilian Educator and Philosopher Paulo Freire (1921-1997), putting together two Portuguese words, one meaning "consciousness" and the latter "action"; his pedagogy aims at not only creating more awareness in pupils but also pushing them to act in their life to change the world where they live. In his vision, pupils and educator walk together to deepen their knowledge about the world, learning one from the other.

2 Metaxis is a Greek word used by Boal to counter-act the concept of catharsis. Metaxis means that we, by doing drama, belong to two worlds, the one of theatre, fiction, and the one of reality. If the scene is able to put oneself in a true image of reality, what we do on stage against the image of reality, thanks to metaxis, is a rehearsal for real action in the world.