

Newspaper Theatre

A system of techniques devised to give the audience a way to transform daily news articles or any non-dramatic pieces to theatrical scene. Newspaper Theatre represents the first attempt that was made to create the Theatre of the Oppressed, by giving the audience the means of production rather than the finished artistic product. They are devised to help anyone to make a theatrical scene using a piece of news from a newspaper, or from any other written material, like reports of an political meeting, texts from the Bible, from the Constitution of a country, the Declaration of Human Rights, etc. The strategies are as follows:

- *Simple Reading*: news item read, detached from the context of the newspaper (which makes it false or controversial). The news is read without any further comments.
- *Crossed Reading*: two news item are read in alternating form, complementing or contrasting each other in a new dimension. News from different articles are read. They contradict each other and disagree on the topic.
- *Added Reading*: information generally omitted by the ruling class are added to the news. Similar to the added reading the news are completed. This time with commercial and advertisement of politicians in the election campaign
- *Rhythmical Reading*: article is read to a rhythm (musical), so it acts as a critical "filter" of the news, revealing the true content initially concealed in the newspaper. By reading a text in a rhythmical way different associations are created. For example: Read a political speech with the rhythm of a march, a tango or a waltz.
- *Text Outside of the Context*: actors mimic the actions as the news is being read. One hears the news and watches its visual complement. By creating a big gap between content (text) and presentation the news are caricatured. For example: A speech of the Secretary of Commerce about the serious situation the country is facing. The actor is sitting at a table with a lot of food on it.
- *Improvisation*: news is improvised on stage to exploit all its variants and possibilities. As an alternative to the mimed reading the scene is acted.
- *Historical*: data recurred from historical moments, events in other countries, or in social systems are added to the news. The news are related to similar historical events. The idea is to think about the historic alternatives in order to learn from them. Using oral history, written history, economy books.
- *Reinforcement*: article is read accompanied by songs, slides, or publicity materials.
- *Concretion of the Abstract*: abstract content in news is made concrete on stage, i.e. hunger, unemployment, etc. Usually the news happens on TV, which means its' far away from us. This technique wants to specify it through the senses of the public. Make the problem concrete and real. (We can eat dinner while watching bombs drop!)
- *Parallel Action*: The news is now acted out by actors not just through improvisation, but also with actors showing through their bodies with words, sounds, movements etc to show the subjective perspective.

NEWSPAPER THEATRE

1. SIMPLE READING: Read it "clearly and sincerely—without comment or commentary." Remove from loaded frame of news layout.

2. COMPLEMENTARY READING: Read it, adding what's missing. (Boal example: "Paraguayan steaks are the best in the world [but they are not the best for the Paraguayan people . . .]")

3. CROSSED READING: Weave 2 or more texts. Reveal contradictions, connections, questions, differences in ideology, etc.

4. RHYTHMICAL READING: Apply specific music or poetry rhythm. Emphasize, highlight, or make the familiar strange.

5. THE REINFORCED READING: Add text to expose how power reinforces official ideas. (Boal example: Hunger, unemployment "reinforced" w/ "My Brazil I love you" anthem.)

See Augusto Boal, "The fourth category of popular theatre: Newspaper Theatre." In *Legislative Theatre*. Trans. Adrian Jackson. Routledge, 1998. 243-246. Any questions or comments about these paraphrased descriptions can be sent to Kelly Howe (kellybhowe@gmail.com).

6. THE PARALLEL ACTION: Mime actions that complement the news item. Critique, show what's hidden, etc.

7. THE HISTORICAL READING: Connect news with another historical moment. Or compare different places in same moment.

8. IMPROVISATION: Embody the news content. For audience or just for group process.

9. THE CONCRETION OF ABSTRACTION: Make real or concrete news that's often received as "just info" (due to euphemism, repetition, distance). *Re-sensitize* us to actual consequences.

10. TEXT OUT OF CONTEXT Present news in a context,

format, or tone different from usual or expected one. (Boal example: report of deaths in style of gossip column, describing clothes, etc.)

11. INSERTION INTO ACTUAL CONTEXT. Put deceptively -framed info in true context so you can analyze its real social causes.

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ADDITIONAL TECHNIQUES CREATED BY GTO MONTEVIDEO + MST'S CULTURAL REPRESENTATIVES IN 2016*

- "Removing the adjectives from a news story to try to read only its essence."
- "Searching various news stories about the same topic for repeated statements or ideas to demonstrate how information is biased."
- "Re-reading; first reading the news story as is, then reading it 'as it should be' according to the group's critical lens."
- "Using social media to our benefit, filming the scene when it is publicly performed and uploading it to social media. This means recognizing the existence of social media that can be used to support the internationalization of the struggle, but also keeping in mind that we have to be extremely critical so as not to concentrate only on a simple 'Like' or to believe that the revolution can be brought about by 'tweeting.'"
- "Developing a platform of action in which the same Newspaper Theatre scene is performed at the same time in different parts of a city."

*Described by Sabrina Speranza in her essay on Newspaper Theatre in *The Routledge Companion to Theatre of the Oppressed* (2019). Trans. M. Zimmerman.

SOME ADDITIONAL TECHNIQUES/VARIATIONS WE PROPOSE:

- **Insertion Into Actual Context—Follow the Fucking Money (FFM) Variation.** Could also be thought of as a variation on Augusto Boal's Crossed Reading. Weave info about the financial interests, roots of the news source, & its leaders w/ the text of the article itself. In other words, follow the fucking money.
- **Cue Cards (Live or Filmed).** Sentence by sentence, put the text of an article on old-fashioned cue cards like the ones used by late-night talk show hosts in monologues. Present the text silently, card by card, without additional commentary. Present live or in a short filmed version you release online.
- "Inside" and "Outside." Interweave—with text from the article—info about the same theme/event **published in periodicals from countries other than that of the original article. Interrogate the collaboration of journalism in the project of nat'**