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AUTHOR Srikandath, Sivaram
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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to develop a theoretical framework to better understand the role of people's theater in bringing about social change. First, the paper provides a historical perspective on how people's theater evolved in Europe and the United States. The paper then investigates the rise of people's theater in such Latin American countries as Nicaragua and Mexico, and in the Asian nations of the Philippines and India. A theoretical framework for the role of people's theater in social change is developed in the paper, using A. Gramsci's idea of subalternity, P. Freire's concept of "conscientization", J. L. Moreno's notion of "socio-drama," and A. Boal's concept of "poetics of the oppressed." The paper provides theoretical signposts to serve at nodal points for further scholarly discussion and study on people's theater. Three tables are included; 31 references are attached. (Author/PRA)

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SOCIAL CHANGE VIA PEOPLE'S THEATER

by

Sivaram Srikandath

School of Telecommunications

Ohio University

Athens, Oh 45701

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ABSTRACT

The present paper attempts to develop a theoretical framework to help us better understand the role of people's theater in bringing about social change. A historical perspective on how people's theater evolved in Europe and the U.S. is provided. We then investigate the rise of people's theater in such Latin American countries as Nicaragua and Mexico, and in the Asian nations of Phillipines and India. A theoretical framework for the role of people's theater in social change is developed using Gramsci's idea of subalternity; Friere's concept of "conscientization"; Moreno's notion of "socio-drama", and Boal's concept of "poetics of the oppressed".

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SOCIAL CHANGE VIA PEOPLE'S THEATER

In the past few decades, people's theater has become an important vehicle of social change. People's theater refers to theater that functions in a non elitist mode, articulating the concerns and needs of the masses. A variety of terms have been used to denote people's theater. It is often called radical theater, in the sense that it challenges the existing structures of society. It is also described as proletarian theater, political theater, popular theater, and street theater. These synonyms help us understand people's theater as a movement that is grounded in popular participation. It is social and political in nature, addressing itself to existential realities, and pro-actively advocating change. Thus, it "investigates the dynamics of social change and transformation, and explores the politics of possibility" (Murdock, 1980). Table 1 describes the characteristics of people's theater.

The important role of people's theater in the new political liberation movements of Latin America and Asia has caught the attention of several scholars (Kidd, 1980; Martin, 1987; Van Erwen, 1988: Cozzi, 1990). However, the scholarly research is largely limited to providing descriptive narratives of successful people's theater movements around the world. Some knowledge has been gained about the political, social and cultural factors which make people's theater " an unprecedented social and artistic force" (Van Erwen, 1987a). While this knowledge helps in defining the genre of people's theater, it lacks a theoretical basis. Thus,

we are severely limited in our understanding of how people's theater affects social change.

The present paper attempts to develop a theoretical framework to better understand the role of people's theater in bringing about social change. We draw upon Gramsci's (1971) ideas on subalternity, Friere's (1970a) concept of "conscientization", Moreno's (1964) idea of socio-drama, and Boal's (1985) ideas about the "poetics of the oppressed". We trace the history of radical theater in Europe and the U.S. ; review experiences in Latin America and Asia; and then discuss the ideas of Gramsci, Friere, Moreno and Boal. Our purpose here is not to critique the previous scholarship on people's theater, or to formulate a new theory of radical theater and social change; but to provide certain theoretical signposts that can serve as nodal points for further scholarly discussion and serve as the basis for theory building.

HOW HAS PEOPLE'S THEATER EVOLVED

The late Sixties provided the setting for people's theater to emerge as an important social phenomenon in Western Europe and the United States. Tumultous changes were taking place in Western industrialized societies. Student agitations were sweeping across U.S. campuses and paralyzing Western European capitals. The growing Civil Rights Movement and the protests against the Vietnam war further contributed to this climate of change. These turbulent events of the Sixties led to greater political

awareness in society, especially among artists who began questioning the "uncontested structures" of society (Van Erwen, 1988). Singers and theater groups took to the streets in the U.S. and Western Europe, voicing popular concerns and provided the impetus for the use of popular art forms to question established social norms.

While people's theater gained importance in the late 1960's, its roots can be traced back to the eighteenth century. Denis Diderot, a French essayist, philosopher and playwright; and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, another French political and educational philosopher, were convinced that people's theater had a social and educational function to fulfil (Van Erwen, 1988). Diderot and Rousseau profoundly influenced the proletarian leaders of the French Revolution, who were one of the first to successfully utilize people's theater for politcal and social change. They believed that people's theater could help in the process of society's development and help in forming a national identity. The use of popular theater in France provided the intellectual foundation upon which the people's theater movement of the ninetheenth and twentieth centuries was constructed. Maurice Pottecher, a French playwright, and his *Theatre du People;* the Germans Otto Brahm and and Bruno Wille with their working class companies, the *Freie Buhne* and *Freie Volksbuhne*; Erwin Piscator and his *Proletarisches Theater* all experimented with theater to raise political consciousness and focus on contemporary issues (Van Erwen, 1988).

In the U.K. and the U.S., proletarian theater began flourishing in the 1920's and the 1930's. In Manchester and Birmingham, the cradles of the Industrial Revolution, the *Worker's Theater Movement* dealt with specific

workers' problems and used agitprop (a term denoting the use of films, plays and other works of art to spread ideology through art and propaganda) in the form of sketches, cabaret, and revue to create a theater of the street (Samuel, 1980; Van Erwen, 1988). In the U.S., people's theater gained momentum with the *Worker's Laboratory Theater* and the *Prolet Buhne*, which in turn, were strongly influenced by previous European workers' theater groups. The *Worker's Laboratory Theater* and *Prolet Buhne* were examples of theater groups using laborers as actors and focusing on class struggle, rallies, and political demonstrations. Such efforts culminated in the *Federal Theater Project*, which was a unique experiment using thousands of unemployed actors and theatrical workers during the Depression to establish a national popuar theater. Influenced by the social conditions of the 1920s and th 1930s, especially by the ravages of the Depression, people's theater in the U.S depicted socio-economic struggles, dealing with such topics as hope and despair, life and death, faith and disillusionment, man and masses, and revolt and reconstruction (Smiley, 1972). People's theater emerged as a vehicle to depict class struggle: a cultural means to upset the bourgeois hegemony (Van Erwen, 1988).

PEOPLE'S THEATER FOR POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The fundamental premise of the people's theater movement is the belief that all theater is political. According to Augusto Boal, "all theater is necessarily political, because all of the activities of man are

political and theater is one of them " (Boal, 1979, p. ix). Or as Samuel says, "theater, as the most public of arts, is second cousin to politics, and even when the relationship is a forbidden one ..... there is a two-way relationship between them" (Samuel, 1985). A similar view is expressed by the Russian writer Alexander Herzen: "The theater is a political parliament, where, as in the highest instance, all the most vital problems of the age are being discussed" (cited in Davidow, 1977, p.15). The notion that art should do more than merely entertain goes back several centuries to the Greeks, where the poet Aristophanes thought that the role of the dramatsist was not merely to offer pleasure but also to teach morality and politics (Boal, 1979). Thus, people's theater assumes a political agenda, often serving as a vehicle for bringing about social change.

Social change is conceptualized here as being much more than an increase in a nation's GNP or per capita income. Rather, it is viewed as a process which raises the people's standards of living, quality of life; enhances their dignity, and provides them a greater control over their environment (Goulet, 1972; Colletta, 1980). Keeping this broad definition of "social change" in mind, artists and community organizers in various countries have used theater to raise the consciousness of the masses (Van Erwen, 1987a).

PEOPLE'S THEATER IN LATIN AMERICA

Nicaragua is one Latin American country where the people's theater movement has gained enough prominence to be incorporated into official governmental plans for socio-economic development. Nicaragua's

Community Theater Movement originated as a subversive, insurrectionist theater group which worked to dislodge the Somoza regime with help from the *Sandinista Liberation Front.* According to Alan Bolt, one of the founders of the Community Theater, a "Nicaraguan Theoretical Proposition on Theater" was developed, which intergrated popular tradition, theater, music and dance in search of political and social change (Ruf, 1987).

When Somoza was dislodged and the Sandinista government came to power, Nicaragua's theater movement gained legitimacy The focus of the theater movement shifted away from the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship to one of facilitating socio-economic change. *The Community Theater Movement* in Nicaragua works with the Organization of Rural Cultural Activity to reach the Nicaraguan poor. *Nixtayolero* and *Teyocoyani* are two theater companies which conduct social and cultural research in the rural countryside, creating their own compositions. The two companies do not just spread social messages in a didactic manner; but they are co-operative ventures aimed at community building. Sets for the theater are created locally, and the costumes are all sewn by the company members. This reduces the dichotomy between art form and real life.

The way in which the theater is conducted reinforces the lack of separation between art and life and forges a link between the artists and the spectator. Often, there is no closure to the dramatic plot, no facile conclusions, and no neat denouement devices. Instead, there is an attempt to shift the locus of resolution of the dramatic tension to the spectators themselves. In a 1986 *Teyocoyani* theater production, *Juan Y Su Mundo* (Juan and his World), the plot centers around *campesinos* (farmers) struggling to cope with the realities of poverty. The scenes were created

from the real-life experiences of the people, who continually made compromises to survive. Juan, as the protagonist, is shown as the representative of a workers' co-operative who finally sells the co-operative to the staff of a local bank for U.S. dollars, and then runs away with the money. An articualtion of local concerns about greed and insecurity forces the spectators to re-evluate their own situations and start searching for real-life solutions (Martin, 1987).

Nicaragua's *Comunity Theater Movement* is more than an artistic movement. It trains and supports the rural population in the development of a critical conscience, and helps them acquire applied skills which will facilitate in finding solutions to daily problems. Theater is used indigenously and is situated firmly within the cultural context of the community. The dramatic inputs come from within, not from the outside.

Another successful case of people's theater in Latin America occurred in Mexico with the *Instituto Mexicana para el Desarrollo Comunitario* (IMDEC), a non-government organization which promotes popular education and community development in Mexico. IMDEC helps mobilize the urban-poor workers living in Mexico's *barrios*, or slums (Nunez and Nunez, 1980).

IMDEC is best known for its work in the Santa Cecilia colony, an urban *barrio* in Guadalajara, inhabited by rural migrants. IMDEC's plays center around the victimization and insecurities of rural families, that are forced by economic pressures to migrate to city slums. IMDEC plays a key role in mobilizing community efforts to achieve certain ends. When IMDEC received an invitation to stage a play during the Holy Week, (representing the second time that Christ fell on his way to Calvary), the group portrayed Christ in the image of the oppressed down-trodden, who falls

time and again under the weight of injustice and oppression. A society's current injustices were, thus, addressed via an age-old story. IMDEC's successful theater experiences during Holy Week encouraged them to create plays for other annual events which focused on socio-economic development themes. Much like Nicaragua's *Community Theater Movement,* IMDEC emphasizes the use of people's theater which is shaped by local rituals and traditions. A higher degree of audience participation and identification with the theatrical form, makes for easier message assimilation.

PEOPLE'S THEATER IN ASIA

In recent years, nowhere has the power of people's theater been so dramatically and decisively felt, as in the Philippines, where the theater of "liberation" contributed to the overthrow of the Marcos regime. People's theater provided the vehicle by which the Filipino people could express aspirations and break through the "culture of silence" that had pevailed under the Marcos rule (Horfilla, cited by Van Erwen, 1987b).

The significant presence in the Filipino arena is the People's Theater Network, an extensive and very well organized grass-roots movement under the aegis of the *Philippines Educational Theater Association,* (PETA), that was aimed specifically at building a counter-culture for liberation. PETA worked with a very definite political and social agenda. As part of its training programs, PETA has created a new breed of performing artist, the ATOR, Actor - Trainer - Organizer - Researcher.

(Van Erwen, 1987c). Theater's role as poliical activist is self-evident in the ATOR conceptualization . PETA's creation of people's theater is guided by the Orientation-Artistic-Organization concept (O-A-O) which is summarized in Table 2.

The objective of PETA is to create a mass theater movement that would mobilize mass support and popular opinion on issues that concern the people. Thus, today, the *People's Theater Network* in the Philippines acts as a hub for over 300 regional and local groups, constituting a vital social and cultural force. PETA's efforts instill a sense of confidence among the community members in their own abilities, often leading to direct social action. Alan Glinoga, an official connected with PETA, describes an experience that resulted in direct spontaneous action against the Marcos government. "In one such workshop, one group started painting banners and murals. Another group composed political marching songs; a third group improvised some comic skits, and after a day's preparation, they all walked out in unison and picketed seventy government offices for an entire week" (Van Erwen, 1987c, p.134).

In early 1986, when the agitations against President Marcos were on the rise, political theater groups performed topical plays almost on a daily basis. The spirit of commitment of radical theater activists to the objective of speaking up for the common man's interests is brought out by the fact that on February 27, 1987, just days after the rebellion against Marcos succeeded, PETA staged an updated version of its immensely popular rock musical, *"Nukleyar"* which warned people aginst becoming euphoric and complacent about the rebellion; and urged greater political responsibility (Van Erwen, 1987b).

As with the case of Alan Bolt and his *Community Theater Movement* in

Nicaragua, there is a strong emphasis on indigenous forms of expression. There is a concerted attempt to rejuvenate and recuperate the dramatic and musical tools of the Filipino heritage. "Aping of foreign melodies is discouraged, and colonial tendencies in expression are sifted out, for one of the significant objectives is to rekindle in the community an appreciation and love for the local culture" (Labad, cited by Van Erwen, 1987b, p.59). Thus, radical theater in the Philippines is not only a theater of liberation, but also strives to throw off the colonial past and rediscover Philippines' ethnic cultural heritage.

India is another Asian country where radical theater has rapidly gained ground. However, unlike in the Philippines, the Indian theater movement is not tightly organized in a regional or national theater network. People's theater in India functions largely as a clandestine operation existing marginally in the large slums of the cities and in the impoverished rural areas. Several highly politicized, people's theater groups operate within a framework of Marxist rhetoric.

In Kerala, a southern Indian state which has had a Marxist government in power on several occasions, people's theater has had notable successes in organizing itself to address contemporary social issues. Van Erwen (1987a) cites the example of a group called People's Cultural Forum (PCF), which specializes in hit-and-run street plays . One PCF play was a satire on the official corruption in a local hospital, which was staged in front of the hopsital. Folwiing the theater performance, actors and spectators stormed the hospital, dragging out the doctors who refused to treat the patients without bribes, and put them on public trial. While the actors were arrested by the local police, the incident received so much publicity that corruption in Kerala's public hospitals was

temporarily reduced. Another notable success of PCF was the play "Nattugadiga", a play based on rituals used by tribal people in northern Kerala to eradicate epidemics. This play traced the evolution o exploitatative power in the tribal community, and encouraged tribals to overthrow these structures. The actors were picked from the tribal community to boost credibility. The play was banned by the government; the actors were arrested and tortured; but not before the play had served its purpose (Personal communication with Menon, 1989).

Another use of radical theater in Kerala has been for social and developmental purposes. *The Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad* (The Kerala Science and Literary Guild) is an organization composed of academics, scientists, and men of letters. The KSSP organizes an annual Science and Culture fair which travels from one venue to another popularizing science, fighting social evils (like dowry, caste system etc.), and supporting environmental causes. In the recent past, the KSSP was very successful in mobilizing public opinion against the Silent Valley Hydro-Electric Project in northern Kerala, which would have involved the destruction of vast areas of environmentally and ecologically sensitive and crucial forests (Personal communication with Menon, 1989).

A group that has worked more within the mainstream is the Delhi-based mime group *Jagran.* The group started off on its present path of mixing entertainment with a social purpose when, in 1967, its founder Aloke Roy was asked by government officials to help with the family planning campaign (Kidd, 1980). Roy turned to mime, a bold, non-verbal style which could appeal to everyone. "Mime is a recognition of our own dilemmas. When foolishness is held up to laughter, a common sense wins and the message is unmistakable." (Roy, cited by Kidd, 1980, p.431). Also,

pantomime offers several advantages in India, a country with 15 official languages, 210 recognized dialects and 90 different ethno-linguistic regions. It is a technique that can potentially transcend language barriers (Singhal, 1990). To this natural and innate recognition of the rhetorical powers of entertainment, Roy added a quasi-political and fully social objective.. Thus, *Jagran's* role is to "raise awareness, to make people conscious of (1) obstacles to their development, (2) services provided by the government, (3) their responsibilties to the community, and (4) their rights as citizens." (Kidd, 1980, p.435). The symbols, gestures and movements in *Jagran's* mime repertoire synchronize with the problems of the people in the urban slums (Bakshi, 1989).

Thus, *Jagran* addresses itself to issues that have a great relevance to life in the slums, like family planning; bank loans; nutritition and health and hygiene etc. A sample of the themes addressed by Jagran and their respective dramatizations are provided in Table 3. In *Jagran's* plays, the didactic messages are cloaked in the exaggerated gestures and farcial elements of mime that overcome barriers of language and illiteracy. As Roy states, it is meaningless to speak to the average illiterate man of alarming growth rates in population of 2.5 percent a year. The message should be delivered in a manner he can understand. (Bakshi, 1989).

The above examples of people's theater in action serves to illustrate the approaches followed by practitioners of the art in using it for political and social ends. It is quite evident that radical theater is highly politicized, and serves largely to voice the concerns of the disenfranchised and the oppressed classes. We now attempt to develop a theoretical framework to better understand the role of people's theater in fostering social change.

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR PEOPLE'S THEATER

While people's theater has flourished for the past several decades, its creation has not been based on any theoretical framework. In recent years, there has been some effort to place people's theater in a more organized matrix of change and development (Van Erwen, 1988; Kidd and Colletta, 1980) and to develop guidelines for successfully implementing people's theater presentations. While such attempts provide useful perspectives for practitioners, they fall short of articulating a theoretical framework which scholars can employ to understand the workings of the people's theater movement. Here, an attempt is made to examine several theoretical concepts which will shed light on the process of people's theater movement. The caveat should be noted that this is not an attempt to formulate a new theory of social change through people's theater; rather it is an attempt to identify certain theoretical nodal points which can serve to anchor further scholarly discussion on the subject.

Gramsci and the notion of Subalternity

Gramsci's formulation of the concept of subalternity (Gramsci, 1971), and its subsequent interpretations by Chakravorty Spivak (1988) and Guha (1988) provide a useful starting point. For Gramsci, history and class are interlinked dimensions; one necessitates the existence of the other. Thus, the essence of history is the dialectical interplay between the classes. Society is a structure of hierarchically superimposed

classes that are differentiated on the basis of their position and function in the productive organization. Within such a structure, one particular social group is able to rise to the position of the ruling class by exercising a form of command based on the consent of the subordinate classes. This is the famous Gramscian notion of hegemony with its implicit trajectories of ideology, power and subordination.

The subalterns are the oppressed classes in society. According to Gramsci (1971), subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up. The meaning of the term 'subaltern', as given in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, is a person of inferior rank. This Gramscian notion of subalternity has been extended by Guha (1988) and Chakravorty Spivak (1988, 1990) to denote the general attribute of subordination in post-colonial societies, "whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way" (Guha, 1988, p. 35). Thus, subalternity is a space that is far displaced from the organized structures of society; it addresses "something beyond the margin of organizability that begins to construct itself" (Chakravorty Spivak, 1990; p.90). The subaltern space is a space that is so displaced from the mainstream "that to have it speak is like Godot arriving on a bus" (Chakravorty Spivak, 1990; p.91).

People's theater attempts to create a discursive space wherein the subaltern classes can articulate, or at least, begin to try to articulate, their own concerns, in their own voices. This is a very political statement. Through people's theater, the subaltern classes have a real opportunity to move away from merely being, what Chakravorty Spivak calls "the constituency of political change", to being the articulators of social and political change. It moves the rhetoric of change from arcane

discussions of theory into the genuine arena of practice. Accordingly we suggest proposition #1 as follows:

Proposition #1 : People's theater creates discursive spaces in which the non-elite, disenfranchised subaltern classes can be met on their own terms.

Friere's Conscientization

Paolo Friere and his concept of "conscientization" has influenced practitioners of people's theater in various ways. Conscientization refers to the process of breaking the "culture of silence" which characterizes several underdeveloped countries. In the culture of silence, existence means merely living. The masses are "mute" and merely carry out orders that stem from above. They are "prohibited from creatively taking part in the transformations of their societies and are therefore prohibited from being" (Friere, 1970b, p.213). Conscientization refers to the process in which men, not as recipients, but as knowing subjects achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-economic reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality. Thus, it is a political, social and educational process.

For Friere, the crux of the problem is an acceptance, or recognition of the fact that human beings are conscious entities, or "existent subjects" who are capable of questioning their own conditions so that they can reflect upon their situations, begin to question it, and then move to action (Friere, 1970a). He calls the mode of consciousness that

characterizes dependent societies and dependent classes of people as "semi-intransitive". Such a consciousness does not enable the dominated classes to develop "structural perception". Thus, people in the dominated classes, within the mode of "semi-intransitive" consciousness cannot see many of the challenges of reality, or sees them in a distorted manner; often accepting their situations in life in a fatalistic manner. They lack the critical ability to think for themselves. The process of conscientization helps them to break out of the "culture of silence". In this new phase of consciousness, whih Friere calls "naive intransitivity", silence is not seen as an unalterable fact; but as as the result of an existential reality, that can and must be changed (Friere, 1970a).

And this is precisely what the radical theater protagonists set out do. Their efforts are guided towards creating a new consciousness; a new dialectic aimed at objectifying reality rather than fatalistically accepting it. It is the imposition of a new order; or rather it is the attempt at creating the climate for making choices about a new order. Bolt say in his Manifesto to the Community Theater Movement that CTM's performances were posing problems through theater and music in order to stimulate local organization and the development of a critical conscience among audience members (Martin, 1987). Roy of *Jagran* calls this a process of awareness leading to organization and politicization where people are made aware of the possibility of change. A new consciousness itself may bring about change (Roy cited by Kidd, 1980). This is the sme position espoused by Brecht, who has a conception of people who are capable of directing the course of development for common benefit. "We have in mind a people that are making history and altering the world. We have in mind a fighting people...." (Brecht, 1964, p.108). Accordingly, we

suggest proposition #2 as follows:

Proposition #2: While creating discursive spaces, people's theater also aids the process of conscientization of the subaltern classes.

Moreno's Socio-Drama

Another theoretical concept that has some relevance to people's theater, especially in the creation of an applied dialectic of change, is Moreno's concept of socio-drama. Socio-drama is derived from Moreno's concept of psycho-drama. Psycho-drama is an extension of the clinical interview process in psychotherapy. It is an acting out of the problems of the individual in a controlled setting involving dramatic situations and role playing (Moreno, 1964). Thus, drama is used puposefully as a means of restructuring and reordering of situations.

Socio-drama difers from psycho-drama in that it does not deal with the personal problems of the individuals. Instead, it deals with societal problems. Socio-drama concerns itself with the protagonist's attitudes towards "symbolic or stereotyped representatives of groups that bring forth emotion-laden responses from him" (Greenberg, 1974). A situation is created wherein societal problems are worked out, using actors' emotions and insights.

In creating the concept of socio-drama, Moreno has re-worked the Aristotlean concept of catharsis, focusing on the cathartic effect on the protagonist-actors rather than just on the spectators. "It (the

psycho-drama) produces a healing effect - not in the spectator (secondary catharsis) but in the producer -actors who produce the drama, and at the same time, liberate themselves from it." (Moreno, 1972; p. 139). Moreno contends that drama represents an ideal medium to foster such catharsis among actors and spectators.

Such catharsis also helps the subaltern classes to gain self-confidence via role playing. People's theater workshops help prepare individuals to confront unjust landlords and government officials. Through PETA's efforts in the Philippines, the shy and submissive Filipino peasants acquired confidence by rehearsing public speeches and official complaints, which they usually would not have had the courage to deliver (Van Erwen, 1987b). Accordingly, we suggest proposition #3 as follows:

Proposition #3: People's theater creates a therapeutic healing effect through catharsis and role playing.

Boal's Poetics of the Oppressed

Augusto Boal's concept of the "poetics of the oppressed" is useful in explaining how the phenomenon of people's theater operates (Boal, 1985). The main features of Boal's conceptualization are as follows:

* The principal objective is to change the people - spectators who are considered passive beings in theatrical phenomenon, are transformed into subjects, or actors; who as protagonists transform the dramatic content

into action.

* All truly revolutionary theatrical groups should transfer to the people the means of production so that the people themselves may utilize the theater.

* Thus, the "poetics of the oppressed" restores the spectator as a principal player - an actor on an equal footing with those generally accepted as actors. The spectators are urged to become part of the action by suggesting solutions and exploring alternatives.

Thus, Boal suggests that the spectators should take on a dynamic role in providing direction and momentum to the dramatic action, which in turn, is merely a means to a social and political end. The spectator, "in short, trains himself for real action. In this case, perhaps, the theater is not revolutionary in itself, but it is merely a rehearsal for revolution" (Boal, 1985; p.122). Van Erwen (1987c) relates Boals's concepts to the Filipino experience with people's theater where the spectator became the creative agent of his own play, and by extension, the controller of his own destiny. Accordingly, we suggest proposition#4 as follows:

Proposition #4: By enjoining the spectator as part of the action, people's theater encourages the subaltern classes to take control of their own destinies.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to formulate a theoretical framework to explain the manner in which radical theater, or people's theater can bring about social change. During the last two decades, people's theater has become a strong artistic, social and political force, not only in the industrialized countries of the Western hemisphere, but especially so in the emerging societies of the Third World. It is in these societies, as witnessed by the examples studied of Latin America and Asia, that the power of people's theater in fostering structural change has been most keenly felt.

The Gramscian idea of subalternity; and particularly its later textural enrichments by Guha and Chakravorty Spivak, provide a very useful context within which to situate the praxis of people's theater. Gramsci's notion of hegemony, and the implications that it carries in terms of hierarchically superimposed classes has great relevance to the post-imperialist, post-colonial states of the Third World. In many of these countries, de-colonization has not led to the anticipated emanicipation of the subaltern classes. The place of the colonial masters has very often been taken by an emergent neo-colonial class that exercises power through similar ideological apparatuses. Thus, the subaltern classes remain marginalized, and their status of subordination continues to be legitimized.

Given the above political and social context, people's theater constitutes itself as a suitable arena for the subaltern classes to articulate their concerns, and more importantly, start organizing

themselves. People's theater works through the dialectic of what can be termed as the "rhetoric of change". Borrowing from Friere, the objective of the people's theater movement is to create a critical conscience among the masses - to conscientize and politicize the people so that they begin to objectify their situations in life; start questioning their oppressed existence; and are goaded into action. Using Moreno's concept of socio-drama, the actors are provided with a cathartic experience, that goes beyond the cerebral and emotional. By focusing on societal issues, people's theater forces the actors to interrogate the underlying causes of their oppressed existence, and explore alternative solutions. Boal's concept of the "poetics of the oppressed" takes us to the next stage, where, people's theater involves the actors and the audience in a co-operative effort of using the theatrical medium as a rehearsal for the anticipated social revolution. By transferring the means of production to the people themselves, people's theater engages in confidence building of the subaltern classes and encourages them to take charge of their own destinies. As adult literacy programs, and literacy campaigns in general, begin to succeed in the developing societies of the Third World; and as revolutionary communication technology makes information more readily accessible to the formerly disenfranchised sectors of the socio-cultural polity; the world will see major changes in political and social arenas. The theoretical formulation provided in this paper can serve as a starting point in explaining and understanding the collective social and cultural action that is aimed at structural change.

Table:1 Characteristics of People's Theater

Characteristics	Description
People's theater is popular.	* People's theater is comprehensible to the individual and the society. It is rooted in tradition and forms of popular expresion and it adopts and strengthens progressive viewpoints.
People's theater is realistic.	* People's theater presents existing realities it raises awareness of suffering and exploitation and it highlights the social causes of problems.
People's theater is critical.	* People's theater tries to create a critical consciousness among the people. The causes of society's problems are identified and alternative solutions provided.
People's theater is free.	* People's theater should be open to continual changes, and should act as a free and critical agent of change.

Source: Based on Nunez and Nunez (1980).

Table 2: PETA'S O-A-O Concept of Creating People's Theater

Concept	Description
Orientation	* In Orientation, people's theater wopuld direct itself towards a liberating society and in fostering a nationalist culture grounded in the people's struggle for liberation.
Artistic	* People's theater would artistically strive to develop people's aesthetics based on their living conditions.
Organization	* In terms of organization, people's theater encourages community building values that highly participatory.

Source: Based on Van Erwen (1987c).

Table 3: A Sample of themes addressed by JAGRAN, and their dramatizations

Themes	Dramatizations
Family Planning	* A man with a pregnant wife and nine children tries to get on a crowded bus. After missing several buses, one driver allows a few of the children to get in; leaving the others stranded.
Food Hygiene	* Two wrestlers eat some food before their match; one a banana and the other exposed food. The former wins.
Nutrition	* A child whose diet is lacking in green leafy vegetables is attacked by the Malnutrition Monster and becomes anaemic. Later on, he starts eating vegetables, and successfully resists the monster's attack

Source: Based on Kidd (1980).

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