



CAP

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INTRODUCTION

How to describe this edition for the CAP theatre Journal? If the articles were people they would be most aptly described as a motley bunch. More to the point, we have tried to share two things: the first, some of our practical experience growing out of dramatic activities and assessment of these in the first year of the popular theatre course and secondly, a number of theoretical ideas concerning such terms as 'cultural worker', as well as a look at different popular theatre traditions from other countries.

We hope that people will use sections of this journal as one would a source book. It contains guidelines for drama facilitators, guidelines on how to make a play from scratch, practical directions on how to make strip paper mache heads or masks, and how to make simple instruments and more.

We aim at bringing out this journal once a year and welcome responses, comments and contributions.

Certainly we, the tutors at CAP, enjoyed our 'pilot' year very much despite the sometimes crushing momentum of the work and our students have nearly all returned with enthusiasm and renewed energy. This year all students initiate cultural projects in their organisations and communities and we will visit them to monitor their progress. Hopefully next year's journal will mainly be composed of their experiences in the field.

May this journal in some small way contribute to a flowering of cultural activity outside the dominant structures of our society. May we also go forth in the nineties with a broader vision, go beyond the boundaries which have been set for us and which we ourselves have set. May we be equal to the task of developing new challenging forms. May we take inspiration from Albie Sachs's contention that, "The power of art lies in its capacity to expose contradictions and reveal hidden tensions."

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The
CAP
Popular Theatre
Course

The preparation of a new full-time theatre training course at CAP, needed to take into account two things in particular:

1. the previous two year ('84-'85) community theatre course at CAP and
2. the prevailing conditions and needs within the progressive cultural movement.

Previous Course

The general feeling at CAP about the '84-'85 community theatre course, was that it had failed to advance grassroots community theatre as two years later, none of the course graduates was actually involved in such theatre. Some were working in commercial theatres or for TV2 and 3, others were trying to make their mark on the international theatre scene while most were not engaged in any theatrical activity at all.

While billed as a community theatre course, in terms of actual results, the course turned out to be largely a training ground for black professional performers who did not have access to other more formal training.

Reasons

1. CAP did not have an overall educational, political or cultural vision to guide the development of its various projects. Such projects were left to develop by themselves i.e. according to the desires of the project co-ordinators and teachers, with CAP providing little more than the administrative and financial backup.

The legacy of apartheid society and education means that most of those skilled in the arts come from the white, privileged sectors of our society and with regard to theatre, the experience, education, aesthetic tastes, values and involvements of such skilled people have an overwhelming bias towards commercial or establishment theatre.

CAP was dependent on such people to design, co-ordinate and teach the theatre course so that whether consciously or unconsciously, they imparted commercial theatre values and aspirations to the trainees, most concretely manifested in their organising work for some of the trainees in the Nico and the Baxter afterwards.

2. To qualify for a place on the course, students needed little more than some degree of talent and they had to come from "disadvantaged" communities. Their commitment to community theatre and to using their skills within their communities afterwards were not issues in their selection at all.

3. The course itself did not encourage the development of critical skills or critical thought with regard to theatre on the part of the trainees - the theatrical content, values, educational methodology simply reflected and thus reproduced within the students, the hegemonic view of theatre.

4. On completion of their training, the graduates needed work. However, there were no existing material resources in the communities from which they came, to support their theatrical work on a full-time basis. There was no theatre tradition, no regular paying audiences, no theatre venues and neither did the graduates have the skills necessary to create, organise and develop the material base to support their work. They had only been equipped with performance skills, not organisational skills. They were thus forced to sell their labour to the commercial theatres.

5. With the political situation deteriorating dramatically in 1985, it became increasingly fashionable for liberal commercial theatres to host "black" plays and to have black performers on their stages. There being so few trained black performers, some CAP graduates were more than useful resources.

6. At that time, the arts were not being developed within or taken seriously by the community organisations which comprised the broad democratic movement. These organisations had other priorities and did not see the need or have the energy and time to help develop cultural work in the communities where they existed. Course graduates could thus not rely on (if they were aware of) community organisations to provide them with or to support their work.

7. There appeared to be a complete lack of strategy to ensure the development of grassroots community theatre on the part of CAP. To develop community theatre seemed to simply mean to train a few black performers and then hope that somehow, someday, they would do theatrical work among oppressed communities.

Prevailing Conditions.

Over the last few years, as political resistance and repression have intensified, two things have happened in the cultural sphere:

a) there has been a spontaneous upsurge in cultural activity within oppressed communities as they have sought to explore and communicate their struggles, their anger, their hopes and

b) as the states of emergency have curbed "traditional" forms of progressive political activity eg. mass meetings, media and campaigns, community organisations have used "culture" or the arts more and more as a means of gathering people, communicating political themes, boosting the morale of activists and maintaining some kind of organisational profile.

The arts have acquired much more respect and there is now a greater commitment to its development within the broad democratic movement than a few years ago. But while there has been much cultural energy and activity over the last while, what has become clear is a host of deficiencies within the progressive cultural movement. These include:

1. A desperate lack of human resources and this is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the critical lack of leadership.

Again the legacy of apartheid society and education is such that it is the more privileged who have artistic skills but who because of their class position, sorely lack in their understanding and experience of and their commitment to working class politics. On the other hand, cultural workers from working class backgrounds may have organisational and political experience but they desperately lack artistic skills and cultural theory. There is thus a critical shortage of people who have integrated proficient technical skills in an art discipline with cultural and political theory and organisational experience and who are thus able to debate, plan, strategise and provide practical and theoretical leadership within the progressive cultural movement. This means that there is a desperate lack of skilled human resources who can teach skills to others in a progressive way, who can run cultural theory workshops, who can experiment with and produce new, exciting aesthetic products and who can organise, administer and develop the infrastructure necessary to create and sustain progressive cultural work.

2. There is a desperate need for skills to be disseminated as broadly as

possible. All over the country, people are beginning to dabble in the arts as a means of self and group expression but they have little more than an innate desire or raw talent and limited exposure to the arts - besides through the mass media - to work from.

3. A third need is for new aesthetic forms, new aesthetic models, new aesthetic tastes and values, new models for critiquing art, new forms of audience-performer, audience-artist relationships. There is too much commitment to content and too little commitment to form - "as long as the message is okay, the form does not matter" is an all too common naive belief within progressive circles. There is not enough knowledge of the traditions of the arts and too little technical skill at grassroots level and within the progressive movement for aesthetic forms to improve.

4. Fourthly, there is a desperate lack of material resources to sustain cultural work in deprived communities. There is a gross shortage of venues to display and perform cultural work. There are very few training facilities in the townships and few schools have the arts either as a formal subject or as an extramural activity. There is a gross

lack of equipment and a dire shortage of funds. There are potential audiences but the lack of a tradition of going to the theatre or galleries - besides the fact that many in such communities do not have the financial means to pay ticket prices - means that it is highly improbable that such communities can support the full-time cultural workers that it produces.

5. Fifthly, the organisational infrastructure necessary to create, sustain and develop cultural work does not exist in the townships or exists in a highly inadequate form. The primary constituency or membership of recently formed progressive cultural organisations are those from privileged classes; there is much, much work that still needs to be done in developing organisation and networks that will facilitate the development of grassroots cultural activity.

6. A sixth problem is the need for indigenous cultural theory - although it must be informed by international theory - to emerge and to inform cultural praxis within our local conditions. Related to this is the need to develop the critical, questioning faculties of cultural workers as the present, all too common tendency is to

CAP FESTIVAL
BUILDING A NATIONAL CULTURE

FOR FACEWORK
FOR PUPPETS
CHILDREN
ARTISTS
EXHIBITION
TEA
PUGS
MEDIAS

PAISLEE 5:30PM OPENING EXHIBITION AT CAP
SAT 12DEC 9:00PM THEATRE ROAD SHOW
SUN 13DEC 7:30PM PEOPLE'S FIGHTING SONGS - CAP CHAPEL ST
MON 14DEC 2:00PM CHILDREN'S THEATRE ROAD SHOW PT
5:30 PM SEAMARK BUILDING A NATIONAL CULTURE
TUE 15DEC 8:00PM THEATRE ROAD SHOW
WED 16DEC 2:00PM CHILDREN'S THEATRE ROADSHOW
5:30PM SEAMARK FOCUS ON YOUTH ARTS-CAPTEL ST
THUR 17DEC 8:00PM THEATRE ROAD SHOW
FRI 18DEC 2:00PM CHILDREN'S THEATRE ROAD SHOW
SAT 19DEC 8:00PM SEAMARK FOCUS ON MUSIC 8PM THEATRE AT 9PM
SUN 20DEC 8:00PM SEAMARK FOCUS ON THEATRE 8PM THEATRE
MON 21DEC 8:00PM CHANGING THEATRE AND PERFORMING CULTURE
TUE 22DEC 8:00PM CULTURAL PRIORITIES 8PM THEATRE-CHAPEL ST
WED 23DEC 8:00PM CULTURE OF THE FUTURE 8PM SEAMARK
THUR 24DEC 8:00PM THEATRE ROAD SHOW CAP CHAPEL ST

CAP BANDS

CHAPEL ST
R5
SUN 10 DEC
WINSTON MANKUNU
WORKFORCE AARDVARK
SONS OF SELAISIE
FEEDBACK
3pm

CAP Festival posters, December 1989.

uncritically follow "the line" or simply do - without too much prior thought being given to the doing.

7. A final need is to attempt to correct the historical imbalances in the distribution of skills between rich and poor, male and female, white and black, urban and rural - thus laying the basis for a much fairer contribution to the development of national cultural forms than would presently be the case.

To meet these needs, particularly as they apply to community theatre, one first needs a vision, then a strategy to pursue that vision and finally the development of various programmes as components of that strategy.

Vision

Given the needs, the vision has to be broad and ambitious. The vision then, is simply to develop theatre at a grassroots level within oppressed and exploited communities so that within ten to fifteen years time, the theatrical awareness and aesthetic consciousness of such communities would be raised to such an extent that their need for theatre would be as common a need as say, their need for food. Audiences would be developed which would be regular and help to support the theatrical work of full-time and part-time theatre practitioners, they would have their own theatre spaces, the level of theatrical skill within the broader community would be significantly higher than the present level thus necessitating longer, more in-depth training courses, there would be a range of independent theatre groups whose work would mutually challenge each other to improve aesthetic standards, drama would be more widespread in schools as a formal subject or as an extramural activity. The organisational infrastructure to support and develop cultural work will exist. In other words, theatre would become as part of the lives and needs of ordinary working class people as it presently is for the more privileged classes.

Strategy

But if this is the vision, what kind of strategy is necessary to realise it? These things do not just happen and while in some countries the state provides funds for the development of neighbourhood cultural centres and to support the work of cultural workers, that is certainly not the case here where even bourgeois artists are engaged in ongoing battles with the state for funds to support the arts.

Our strategy then, is to pursue the vision which has to do with the raising of the quality of life and the social development of deprived communities through links with community organisations which exist primarily for the purpose of transforming our society into one which is more just. By community organisations I mean both local organisations and national structures such as the UDF and National Forum, COSATU and NACTU. From now on, I will refer to these as the broad democratic movement.

Why this particular strategy?

First, the basic values required for the development of new cultural forms are to be found more in the broad democratic movement than in the existing order.

Second, such organisations have the experience, organisational infrastructure and manpower which could assist the growth of grassroots cultural organisations.

Third, it is within such organisations that much cultural activity has occurred over the last while and this needs to be harnessed for long term cultural gains.

Fourth, precisely because of this energy, it is possible to recruit from within these organisations so that graduates would have an organisational base to return to and which could assist their cultural work.

Fifth, the broad democratic movement has access to much funding and other resources which could contribute significantly to the development of the material base to support cultural work within oppressed communities. What is needed are skilled and particularly competent cultural workers to agitate for and effectively employ these resources.

Sixth, the broad democratic movement provides the most immediate and natural audience for progressive, grassroots cultural work.

Finally, most of the major cultural organisations working within oppressed communities have formal or informal links with the broad democratic movement and it makes sense to cooperate with them if the vision for theatre is to be realised.

It needs to be pointed out that this is not necessarily a permanent strategy. It is one born out of present conditions. Given all the needs and deficiencies listed earlier, the strategy recognises that within the present conditions,

close links with the broad democratic movement would best advance the development of cultural work and theatre in particular among oppressed communities. Perhaps in four to five years time when cultural organisations have developed sufficiently and there is a more widespread aesthetic consciousness, the strategy may change so that recruitment and work is done more directly through cultural organisations which would have developed greater independence and legitimacy.

So we have a vision and we have a medium term strategy. Now we need programmes to give effect to that strategy. The primary focus of these programmes initially would be to disseminate theatrical skills and to generate an interest in theatre for the purpose of developing audiences and performers.

Programmes

Four programmes which were identified as being crucial were:

1. A children's theatre programme - to develop an interest in theatre at an early age through theatre games, basic skills learning and developing a children's theatre tradition i.e. performing children's theatre productions during their school holidays.
 2. A high schools theatre programme - to work alongside high schools groups on a weekly basis teaching them how to create and present plays and hosting schools theatre festivals.
 3. A community organisations' theatre programme - training theatre groups within such organisations to do their own plays as opposed to them commissioning specialist groups to do plays for them and
 4. The development of independent adult theatre groups which will have the time, energy, skills and resources to create and present plays and help develop a theatre tradition within oppressed communities.
- However, it is impossible to begin to do all of this because of the desperate shortage of suitably skilled human resources to develop, coordinate and teach on these programmes. Which is where the full-time course for cultural workers specialising in popular theatre comes in. Crucial to the development of these programmes and thus to the realisation of the vision, is the training of a layer of leadership in popular theatre; people who are adequately skilled to initiate and develop these skills dissemination programmes.

Terms

At this point, it is necessary to clarify some of the terms which I have been using.

Popular theatre is simply theatre of the people, by the people, for the people with "the people" understood to be the masses of ordinary workers, peasants and the unemployed.

It is of the people in that it deals with the everyday concerns of ordinary people such as housing, unemployment, low wages, etc. It is by the people in that those who create and perform such theatre derive from the very communities affected by those issues addressed by the theatre. And it is for the people in the sense that its language and symbols are accessible to ordinary people and there is little or no charge so that it reaches a wide audience.

What is a cultural worker? There is much debate about this at the moment but for our purposes, a cultural worker is someone - irrespective of their skill or function, who is engaged in artistic or cultural production. In other words, cultural workers may be those who create or produce art, those who teach and/or are learning art and those who administer and organise artistic events and cultural organisations.

Needs

What kinds of cultural workers one hopes to produce through training courses for cultural workers depends on the needs which they will be required to fulfill on completion of their training. In summary then, the CAP Popular Training Course intends responding to the following needs

- the need for leadership in popular theatre
- the need for skills to be disseminated broadly
- the need for new aesthetics
- the need for material resources
- the need for grassroots organisational structures
- the need for theory and critical debate and

- the need to correct historical imbalances in the distribution of skills.

The course aims to address these needs by training a popular theatre leadership; a vanguard in popular theatre if you like. It seeks to correct the historical imbalances by stipulating that there must be at least an equal number of men and women on the course; there must be 2-4 trainees from rural areas and of course most will be drawn from black working class communities.

Course Content

To equip the trainees with the skills and knowledge necessary to be able to meet the other needs, the course content is divided into four categories:

1. To meet the need for new aesthetics, there is the category for theatre skills, playbuilding and general arts skills. Trainees will be taught skills in improvisation, in movement, in how to create a play, puppet-making and costume design. They will also acquire basic skills in visual art, music, creative writing, performance poetry and media so that they can draw on these in forging an interdisciplinary form of popular theatre. Discussions will be held around Western, Eastern and African theatre traditions and around international models of popular theatre so that trainees have a great theoretical knowledge on which to draw. And they will implement their theatrical skills by actually creating and performing six productions spread throughout the year.

2. To respond to the need for skills to be disseminated trainees will be taught how to plan, prepare and run a variety of skills training workshops for children, high school students and community organisations. As part of their training, they will actually be required to prepare and run workshops for such groups either as one-off events or as regular, weekly workshops eg. with a children's group on a Saturday morning or a high school's group during the week.

3. The course links the need for material resources with the need for organisational structures. While the course cannot provide the material resources necessary to support the trainees work after graduation, they can be taught the organisational and administrative skills necessary to obtain, develop and look after such resources. So trainees will be taught how to chair meetings, how to take minutes, how to write reports, how to prepare budgets and keep books. Thus trainees will have performance skills as well as skills to build and sustain the organisational infrastructure they need to support their cultural work.

4. Finally the need to develop indigenous theory to inform the development of popular theatre locally would be facilitated by weekly cultural studies discussions, workshops on social analysis, research

projects and the production of a half-yearly Theatre Journal which the trainees will be encouraged to make contributions to. The development of critical skills will also be imperative - not to follow this or that ideological tendency but to be open, self-confident in debating, questioning and critical. Other course content elements which cut across or supplement the above four categories are:

- educational skills such as reading, writing and research skills
- group building skills such as group dynamics, leadership and conflict resolution
- monthly educational tours eg to attend court proceedings and visit factories
- monthly discussions about international issues - learning about central America, Asia, the Middle East, Southern Africa - to develop an international consciousness and to overcome the parochialism so common among South African progressives.

Length of course

Once course content had been decided upon, it needed to be structured into a ten month course. There was certainly enough content under these categories that would fill a 2-3 year course. So why a one-year course?

To train a popular theatre vanguard would take a minimum of one year and even then, that would be pushing it. In other words, precisely because of what skills and knowledge need to be acquired, it could not be less than a one-year course.

So why not two or three years?

Firstly because the need and demand for skills is so great at the moment and the level of skill is at such a relative low that we need to have reasonably skilled people in the field as soon as possible. It is true that by the end of the year the trainees may not have all the technical skills necessary to stage a professional production of Hamlet, but then again they are not being trained to dither in "to be's or not to be's". They will have sufficient popular theatre skills to be able to create popular theatre, to be good disseminators of skills to children, students and community groups, to be organisers of grassroots cultural organisations and to be able to debate and think critically.



Secondly, the course is an experiment in integrated, non-formal adult education in popular theatre. None of us who will be teaching the course has any experience of such a course so that it would be foolhardy to commit ourselves to a two year course at this stage. The first course will be a pilot course on the basis of which we will determine the desirability, length and nature of the next course.

Course structure

Now, back to the structure of the course. As pointed out earlier, the strategy to pursue the vision of the popular theatre programme as a whole is to forge links with the broad democratic movement. As such, the major component of the course - the theatre skills, playbuilding and general arts skills component - is structured around five dates in the year which are important on the political calendar of progressive organisations. These dates are 1 May - Workers Day, 1 June - International Childrens Day, 16 June - National Youth Day, 9 August - International Women's Day and 12 October - International Day of Solidarity with Prisoners of Apartheid.

Besides providing suitable themes for popular theatre pieces, these dates are sufficiently widely spread to allow adequate time for preparation in terms of research, choosing a specific theme, creating a piece through improvisation and then rehearsing it to an acceptable standard, making costumes and props for it and preparing and distributing media to advertise it. From experience we also know that plays are always required around these dates so that we will always be assured of audiences. In this way, the popular theatre vision is pursued through links with the broad democratic movement.

METHODOLOGY

In terms of methodology, the students would be divided into 2 or 3 companies depending on the eventual number of students and full-time staff with each company having an average of 5 members. Each company will do its own research and produce its own play so that around each date, 2 or 3 plays will be produced.

The rationale behind this approach is as follows:

1. A small group/company approach enhances maximum participation by all of its members.
2. Besides being involved in the actual play creation and performance, each company member will have a specific organisational or creative portfolio that would be essential in the

kind of theatre groups that they will eventually be part of.

For example, one member will be the treasurer: Each company will be given a budget of say, R75 for its production. The treasurer would have to draw up a budget as to how this money will be used and s/he will be entirely responsible for the distribution and recording of the expenditure which will be checked at the end of the production by the staff facilitator of that company. Another member may have the responsibility of recording the creative process both to encourage documentation for its own sake and to provide written material from which others on or outside of the course may learn. Another member will be responsible for the production of media to advertise the play while another may be in charge of costume and prop design.

By being engaged in at least five productions through the year, each trainee will have the opportunity to experience each of the 5 major organisational and creative portfolios.

3. The small company approach also allows for aesthetic experimentation and group research into the history of various theatrical traditions.

Very few of the students would have any idea about theatre elsewhere and while it is important for them to learn about it theoretically, it will make much more sense if they had some practical experience of it. Each company will be encouraged to research and use a particular style from the western, eastern or African tradition for their particular play. So for example, one company may do a May Day play in the style of Commedia Dell'Arte - a popular theatre style in Italy in the seventeenth century while another company may do their play in the style of the Blue Blouse, a popular theatre movement in the Soviet Union in the first part of this century.

By having 3 plays in 3 different styles into which may be infused indigenous cultural elements, aesthetic experimentation takes place, aesthetic consciousness is increased within the trainees and the audience is educated and so will come to expect and hopefully demand more aesthetically in the future.



COMMUNITY ARTS PROJECT



OPENING FRI 1 DEC
CAP CHAPEL ST
CLOSING 9 DEC 8

The learning process is intended to be as integrated as possible. Trainees will not just learn theory and different skills separately from each other, but rather they will integrate their organisational, creative and educational skills and their theoretical knowledge in each piece that they will produce.

The training in skills dissemination will similarly occur around these five dates. While the trainees will really be learning skills to apply on completion of the course they will learn and apply these skills through practical experience by actually preparing and leading workshops for children, high school students and community organisations.

TION
FORE DAWN



COMMUNITY ARTS PROJECT

89-530PM
WOODSTOCK
9 PH. 453689

on the day.

To celebrate 16 June, there will be a week long skills training winter school for high school students during their vacation which starts just before 16 June. This will culminate in a mini-festival of the work created by the students. In the second half of the year, trainees will be required to work once a week with either a school, children or community theatre group in preparing plays for an end-of-year CAP festival and so gain experience in working with such groups.

Organisational and administrative skills such as how to chair meetings, minute-taking and reporting, simple bookkeeping and preparing budgets will be taught within the first two months of the course so that by the time trainees are divided into companies, they will have the basic skills necessary to assume one of the organisational portfolios. Trainees will also practice their chairing and minute-taking skills by chairing weekly seminars and recording the discussions. Furthermore, each trainee will be required to sit on at least one subcommittee in each semester to help organise a CAP event such as a film festival, a weekend conference etc. In this way, they will gain practical organisational experience.

Finally, education in cultural theory and the development of critical skills will be facilitated through weekly discussions, research projects and in the general way in which trainees will be encouraged to question and voice opinions throughout the course.

Miscellaneous

1. The first half of the year will be quite intensive with trainees spending much time learning basic skills and working in small groups under close staff supervision. In the second half of the year, trainees will be encouraged to work much more on their own and in groups working on projects, implementing and practising the skills they learned in the first half of the year. The year ends with a popular theatre festival mostly featuring the works which the trainees themselves would have created during the second half of the year.

2. The course will be governed by the working principles listed in the Course Brochure. During the first week, a contract will be negotiated between staff and trainees which will cover disciplinary procedures and demands,

questions of accountability, ways of addressing grievances, issues related to bursaries, accommodation, etc. About two hours of each day in the first week will be spent debating and clarifying the contract so that by the Friday, trainees and staff will be able to sign the contract which then binds them in terms of course management and responsibility. However, this will be a preliminary contract as staff will certainly be at an advantage at that stage, having been around longer. After trainees have been there for 6 weeks and have had time to experience CAP and the course, modifications may be made to the contract after which it becomes final. In this way, staff and trainees will come to know exactly what responsibilities each has and what expectations can be made of each other.

3. An evaluation period will be held every Friday.

Then the course will be assessed on a regular basis, to give feedback to staff and trainees, to address any grievances and to generally deal with any issue relevant to the group as a whole. While we may have an idea now of how the course should run, regular evaluation sessions will enable us to know where the trainees are at and what adaptations need to be made to the course.

4. Trainees will be strongly encouraged to experiment and come up with new forms and aesthetic products. Regular open sessions will be held eg. once every three or four weeks, when trainees will be able to present their original works and get feedback from others.

Once the major structural components of the course had been established, i.e. the 5 dates and the end-of-year festival around which the playbuilding and teaching categories would be structured and once it had been established what would happen on a regular monthly basis eg. educational tours, focuses on international issues, open creative sessions etc., once what would be necessary to happen regularly, on a weekly basis had been determined eg. dance daily, one two hour seminar on theatre, one two-and-a-half hour cultural studies session and one two hour improvisation session, it then became a matter of filling in the blank spaces with all the other course content.

Which content was placed where depended on which skills and what knowledge the trainees needed to have by a certain time in order for them to begin working on their plays or to be able to run workshops.

For example, 4 weeks prior to May Day, we will run a skills training weekend for workers in trade unions to train them in how to create and perform a play. They will then have enough time to implement these skills in their union to produce a play for May Day with the continued assistance of one or two of the trainees. The trainees themselves would have gone through similar workshops beforehand so that they would have the basic skills to run these skills training workshops.

Later, they will learn how to run workshops for children after which they will run regular Saturday morning drama classes for children in the month of May in preparation for ICD where they will also present children's theatre productions as well as run workshops

Trainees are recruited mainly from community organisations, they must be reasonably mature (preferably between the ages of 23 and 35), they should have a standard eight minimum education so that they can cope with the academic demands of the course and they would be selected through an audition-interview.

The purpose of the course is to train a popular theatre vanguard so the entrance qualifications are quite high. By the end of the course, besides having acquired all the theoretical and teaching skills, we would like to see the trainees as having developed into critical, self-confident, disciplined and committed popular theatre activists who are able to take initiative.

Some final miscellaneous points about the course:

1. There will not be any examinations although the performance, commitment and discipline of trainees will be regularly assessed by the staff. Each staff member will be assigned as tutor to 5/6 trainees and will be responsible for "pastoring" the trainees in terms of their work, fears, needs and so on. In the middle of the year, trainees will be thoroughly assessed and some could be asked to leave if necessary. Reports will be forwarded to the organisations which mandate particular trainees.

All trainees who complete the course will be given a certificate saying that they have done the course as well as a testimonial.

2. Trainees will be required to work under CAP supervision for a year on completion of the course. This is to ensure that trainees implement their skills in the community. It does not mean that CAP will employ them although we will assist in helping them find employment. We plan to liaise with various organisations through the course of the year and hope to establish opportunities for graduates to work alongside these organisations for at least a year. What would be even better, is if graduates could create employment for themselves by working within their respective organisations or forming popular theatre companies.

Conclusion

The primary aim of the full-time course for cultural workers specialising in Community Theatre is to train a popular theatre vanguard with sufficient skills to be able to respond to the needs for leadership, skills dissemination, material resources, organisational structures and cultural theory within communities struggling for social transformation and development. Accordingly, course content will

include theatre and general arts skills and cultural studies. The course will be structured around five important dates in the progressive calendar and the primary educational method will be an integrative, small group learning method.

All of this may sound incredibly ambitious and given its organisational and regional context, perhaps it is. But if it comes together, even in a modified form, it could be quite an exciting intervention into the progressive cultural arena.



TOWARDS DEFINING

A

CULTURAL WORKER

Introduction

Within the progressive cultural movement, participants identify themselves as "cultural workers." There is the Cultural Workers Congress which seeks to "UNITE all cultural workers", the Congress of South African Writers (COSAW) aims "to mobilise all writers as cultural workers" and "according to CAP's 1987 Mission Statement, it seeks to "train cultural workers."

But when we talk of organising cultural workers, who are we talking about? And when we talk of training cultural workers, what kinds of people are we aiming to train?

While we are still in the very initial stage of developing indigenous progressive cultural theory and while it is important that we avoid setting up straightjacket definitions at this point in time, it is equally important that to inform our cultural praxis, we need to make some sense of the terms which we use. Vagueness and confusion are not known to enhance struggle.

This article does not intend to give the definitive line on what a cultural worker is, it is rather written particularly from a CAP Theatre Project perspective as we attempt to gain clarity about what our training programmes should include and produce. The article draws on the (scant) writings and discussions on the subject within the broader cultural arena and is at best a contribution to what must be an ongoing debate about the definition, role and status of "the cultural worker."

ORIGINS OF THE TERM "CULTURAL WORKER"

Very limited research into the origins of the term "cultural worker" has produced nothing about when, where, how and by whom the term was first used. What can be speculated though, as Rushdy does in *Akal*, (Vol 1 No 1) is that the term probably had its origin in Marxist thought.

Rushdy: Perhaps the term (cultural) "worker" is a symbol of identification with the working class and the working class movement both which are historically associated with socialism.

The point to be noted from the above is that "cultural worker" is not synonymous with the working class i.e. to be labelled a cultural worker does not mean that one's class position is by definition working class. It is probably true though that the term was originated by progressive, socialist intellectuals or progressive "artists"

whose objective class position was bourgeois or petit bourgeois but who wished to reject the term "artist" with all its negative connotations and identify themselves rather with the struggle of the working class towards socialism. As such they would have identified themselves or located themselves and their cultural work within the working class movement which Rushdy defines as a socialist movement which includes the working class and its petit-bourgeois allies.

As a symbolic term, "cultural worker" is then probably similar to the way some socialist academics have defined themselves as "intellectual workers" rather than as academics or simply as "intellectuals" both of which have, like "artist", negative elitist connotations. However such academics use the label "intellectual worker" in more than a symbolic way to locate themselves within the working class movement for they argue that their theorising, debating, writing and teaching must be taken seriously AS WORK although they concede that the nature of their work is different to that of the manual labour of the factory machinist, the miner and the domestic worker.

The Medu Art Ensemble, a Botswana cultural organisation which included Botswana, Zimbabweans and South Africans, used the term "cultural worker" in the same way as some academics use the term "intellectual worker" i.e. as more than a symbolic identification with the working class and as an argument for their work to be taken seriously AS work rather than as some kind of esoteric indulgence. They write: We do not use the term "cultural workers" in some kind of attempt to fool the masses that by calling ourselves "workers" politically animated writers and performers of a more privileged class become unproblematically joined to the people again.... Rather, we believe it to be an accurate description: we work in the field of culture. It is time to rid ourselves of the elitist concept of the artist creating great works of inspired genius in some isolated garret, probably under the influence. Cultural work requires skill and technique and equipment and a lot of hard work - as does carpentry or motor mechanics"

At this point one may speculate that the term cultural worker arose out of three main reasons.

a) as a rejection of the term artist which reflected and was too bound up with the hegemony (i.e. the dominance of the intellectual beliefs, moral values, aesthetic tastes and ideology) of the ruling class.

The dominant notions of the "artist" include elitism (i.e. the artist as a special person), individualism, (both elitism and individualism give the artist the right to tantrums and prima donna-ness), inspired by a universal, eternal spirit of truth and beauty, technically highly skilled (i.e. having the economic and social means to acquire such skills) and having the status of observer of reality rather than of participant within.

"Cultural worker" on the other hand removes artistic activity from its elitist pedestal and defines it as work while not ignoring the need for skill and technique or the subjective, subconscious psychological processes of creativity (which those identifying themselves as artists might term "inspiration"). "Cultural worker" also identifies the individual engaged in artistic activity with a broader movement (most notably towards socialist transformation) and this removes his/her observer status.

Through such identification, the individual engaged in the arts is encouraged towards a more collective participation with others in the broader social process and in artistic work rather than to pursue selfish individualist notions of the artist, although cultural workers are not by definition only those individuals who work collectively in artistic production and dissemination.

"Artist" also refers specifically to the talented or skilled individual who creates "great works of inspired genius" or who performs with recognisable skill and technique. It is this artist who is elevated to elitist status while those working in other fields to bring the work of the artist to an audience eg. stage managers, lighting technicians, administrators, etc are mostly forgotten, having to be content with the "lesser mortal" status that the dominant notion of the artist confers on them by implication. Furthermore, the traditional artist is one who specialises in one particular art discipline such as music or theatre or visual art.

In their dialogue in *AKAL*, Rushdy and Donald reject this kind of

specialisation and division of labour in artistic production and dissemination as a reflection of the capitalist mode of production and insist rather that in this respect "..... the struggle of the cultural worker and the industrial worker is one and the same. And this would imply that we need to combine our disciplines and energies to take effective control in all spheres of our lives."

In this context, the term "cultural worker" would embrace all those working in the field of culture or arts, including those who produce, those who perform, stage managers, programme designers, ticket sellers and so on. In this way, "cultural worker" demystifies the special, elitist status of the creator and performer and recognises the important contribution of others upon whom the creator/performer is dependent while again not necessarily denying the objective skill, technique and creativity of the creator/performer.

The generality of the term "cultural worker" also works against the notion of the artist as one who specialises in one particular art discipline. It includes those who may specialise in one particular discipline, those who acquire basic skills in a range of disciplines and who seek to work in an interdisciplinary manner as well as those who do not have skills (received through training in any form) but who work in a specific discipline or in an inter-disciplinary way through a more organic process from the basis of raw talent, energy, experience or cultural tradition.

Finally, "cultural worker" allows one to conceive of people engaged in the arts not as a creator or a performer or an organiser or an administrator or a backstage-hand, but as people who have two or more of such skills. In other words, a cultural worker can be conceived of as someone who has the creative skills to produce cultural work, the organisational and administrative skills to create and sustain the material base to support his/her cultural work, the technical skills to produce the cultural work in its entirety as well as the political and critical skills to inform his/her cultural praxis.

Thus is it possible to conceive of a cultural worker who has acquired and integrated all the skills necessary to potentially own and control the means of artistic production and dissemination.

The second and third possible reasons for the origin of the term "cultural worker" are

b) as a symbolic identification of progressive members of the privileged classes engaged in the arts with the struggle of the working class for socialism and

c) to reflect the demand by progressives engaged in the arts for their cultural work to be taken seriously; and to be recognised as significant work in its own right and on its own terms. From our own experience, this demand may be directed more at other forces with the progressive movement as those engaged in the arts struggle to assert themselves within this movement, than to the broader society.

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF A CULTURAL WORKER

While it may be helpful to speculate on the origins of the term, it is important that we do not seek to pigeon-hole our organically-unfolding cultural praxis into theoretical concepts and definitions which arose in and were suitable to conditions which were different from ours. Words and terms do not have an absolute meaning for all time, they are given new meaning or emphasis by those who use them in an attempt to make sense of and interpret their own conditions and to inform their struggle to transform those conditions.

Besides, while speculating on the origins of the term may help us understand why it came about, it does not necessarily help us to wholly understand what it means. What it may mean is dependent more on the meaning that we give it within our experience than on its original meaning.

With the arts increasing in importance as a site of struggle over the last few years and with the consequent development of numerous cultural organisations, recent debates about the cultural worker have centred around the issue of who was being organised; who were being addressed as cultural workers.

While the term may have been coined with the emphasis on "worker," local debates have started with the word "cultural" i.e. what do we mean by culture?

In his dialogue with Donald, Rushdy

rejects the Oxford Dictionary's definition of culture as "... improvement by mental or physical training; intellectual development, particular form, stage or type of intellectual development or civilisation..." as very narrow and elitist and opts instead for a broader definition of culture as a way of life or as "the livelihood of a people, the highest expression of which would be when they take control of their own lives.."

By implication of this definition of culture and as Rushdy later asserts in response to a question from Donald, everyone - including "the worker, artist, scientist, academic, teacher and student" - is a cultural worker. However, while the logical and stated implication of this definition is that everyone is a cultural worker, much of the rest of the dialogue speaks of cultural workers primarily as those who are engaged in the arts. While one concedes that the dialogue form may not be wholly conducive to coherence and incisive analysis, the dialogue is highly unsatisfactory in defining a



cultural worker as it starts with a broad definition of culture as the basis for defining a cultural worker but then proceeds to talk about the cultural worker as one engaged primarily in the arts.

The Cultural Workers Congress on the other hand, provides an interesting counterpoint to this by specifically addressing itself to and organising those engaged specifically in the arts while its launching slogan taken from Cabral was "Every act of struggle is an act of culture". Here too, culture is regarded as a way of life rather than as the arts.

To begin a definition of a cultural worker from the definition of culture it is important to bear mind that there are two main stands of thought with regard to culture.

These are culture as a way of life and culture as the arts. In the broad, culture as a way of life sense, culture exists on two levels - an abstract level and a concrete level. At an abstract level, culture refers to the ideas, moral values, ideology, ideals and aesthetic tastes which emerge out of and/or

which guide a particular community as they attempt to make meaning of or come to terms with or reshape their material reality. This reality is shaped by climatic and geographical conditions as well as by human made economic, political and social structures.

On a concrete, visible level, culture also refers to the expression of these ideas, values, beliefs, ideals and aesthetic tastes in the lifestyles of the community's members, their social patterns of behaviour, their organisational structures, religious rituals, symbols, educational system, art forms and so on.

The abstract and the concrete exist in a dialectical relationship with each other with each constantly informing, challenging, reshaping and giving rise to the other as the community engages its material conditions.

In the more narrow sense, culture refers specifically to the arts-music poetry, visual art, theatre, dance, literature, etc- which a particular community uses to explore, interpret, reflect, challenge, reinforce,

communicate and celebrate its existence. The arts are both an expression of and contribute to the broader culture of the community.

While the latter, more narrow definition of culture as the arts may be inherited from the dominant, ruling class elitist notions of what culture is, it should not be rejected simply on these grounds. Rather we must accept that this inherited definition has currency among progressive forces but we must infuse it with new meaning so that when we talk of culture as the arts within the progressive movement, we speak not of the arts in the elitist "artist" sense but in the "cultural worker" sense - however we come to define that term.

To reject the definition of culture as the arts is to open the way to confusion as occurs in the AKAL dialogue where the broad definition of culture proves to be a totally unsatisfactory and unviable premise for talking about a cultural worker who historically, presently and even in the dialogue itself is referred to primarily as one who is engaged in the arts.

Ideally of course, it would be preferable to have one definition of culture i.e. the broad definition in which the arts are but one (albeit significant) component and then to have a new, more general (than "artist") yet specifically arts related term such as "arts worker" or "aesthetic worker" to refer to those engaged in the arts. However, if one starts with the term "cultural worker" as history now obliges us to, then I would argue for the co-existence of both the broad "way of life" and "arts" definitions of culture.

Insofar as we seek to start with the definition of culture to help us define a cultural worker, we need to accept the reality of and the need for both definitions and be careful to ensure that we explain which definition we are using in each particular context that the term "culture" is used.

The approach thus far in defining a cultural worker, has taken a more academic route in trying to determine what the term "culture" means. As I have tried to argue, unless one accepts two co-existing "broad" and "narrow" definitions of culture and unless one chooses the "narrow" definition as a basis for defining a cultural worker, then there will always be confusion and vagueness about what a cultural worker is thus limiting the organising potential of whoever are nebulously defined as cultural workers.

A different approach to gaining some clarity about the term would be to look

Final scene of the CAP play, Turning Tables.



at the context and the needs which gave rise to the present currency of the term and then to give the term some definition according to those needs and context.

The term "cultural worker" has gained prominence particularly in the last few years as the arts have been explored as a site of struggle in the face of severe repression which has curbed most other "traditional" forms of political expression. Starting out (in recent times) as a strategic means of political expression, the arts have begun to develop enough credibility for itself within the progressive movement as a strategic weapon for it to now be recognised as a significant site of struggle in its own right.

With this development, has come the need (and with international groups desiring to enforce the cultural boycott has come the pressure) to organise progressives engaged in artistic activity to advance this site of struggle as part of the broader struggle for democracy.

It is in this context that the term "cultural worker" has become part of the progressive vocabulary and it has grown in currency as a term which refers specifically to progressives involved in artistic activity in one way or another.

If we adopt the approach that from context derives meaning, then it is clear that cultural worker refers to those engaged in artistic activity. If however, one starts from an academic analysis of the terms and then imposes the conceptual meaning onto the context, then one is bound to encounter confusion and a conflict of interest in organising. In other words, if one says that on the (valid) basis of culture being defined as "a whole way of life" everyone - teachers, workers, students, artists, activists, etc - is a cultural worker, then when one transposes that academically logical definition onto the actual reality and one begins to organise cultural workers in terms of that definition, one will encounter the problem that most of these "cultural workers" are already organised and have in fact been so for years. An equally significant problem which one might encounter is that while one may seek to organise them . . . cultural workers,

those whom one seeks to organise would probably have already defined (and organised) themselves according to other sectional/group interests eg women, youth, teachers or according to class interests eg workers.

Our theory has to make sense in practise otherwise it is little more than academic masturbation. Clearly the actual reality makes nonsense of attempts to define cultural workers on the basis of an academically and ideologically correct understanding of culture as a way of life.

For the term to have any organisational value and theoretical validity within the actual conditions as they exist at the moment, "cultural worker" must refer specifically to those engaged in the arts (whether skilled or unskilled or whether as creators, performers, administrators, teachers or organisers)

The second part of the term i.e. "worker" has caused almost as much confusion and vagueness as "cultural." Much of this confusion is related to the fact that our experience of "workers" is that their objective class position is working class yet most of the "cultural workers" engaged in progressive cultural production and who "own", constitute and control most of the progressive cultural organisations at the moment, derive from the petit bourgeois and bourgeois layers of our society. This confusion is compounded when petit bourgeois intellectuals and "cultural workers" attempt to justify or understand the useage of "worker" in "cultural worker" by drawing parallels between the problems facing cultural workers and those facing workers generally.

The AKAL Rushdy-Donald dialogue gives a hint of this confusion.

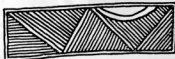
Donald:....I have encountered arguments that one cannot use the term 'worker' for a teacher, artist, student or academic. Why not the term 'cultural activist'?

To which Rushdy replies that perhaps the term worker is a symbolic identification with the working class movement. Donald then goes on to say "True, but I think that artists and educators are workers in a very real sense. Practical experience makes one think of the artist, for instance, as a worker, but in some way different to the industrial worker. Like the industrial worker, the artist produces something for sale. And like the industrial worker the artist does not control his/her end product, be it a poem, dance, song or painting."

In the first quote, Donald questions the use of the term "worker" to describe a teacher, artist or student no doubt because the class position and class interests of workers on the one hand and teachers, students and academics on the other, are radically different. In the second quote, Donald says though that teachers and artists are "workers in a very real sense" (in that what they do can also be called work?) although "in some way different to the industrial worker". Unfortunately, Donald does not say in which way he believes the artist to be different to the industrial worker. What he does often allude to though are the similarities eg the artist produces something for sale, the artist only controls a small part of the production process, the artist does not control his/her end product - just like the industrial worker.

The confusion which arises out of Rushdy and Donald's definition of "everyone equals a cultural worker" is again revealed here because while "worker" is justified for inclusion in the term "cultural worker" on the basis of the similarities between one KIND of cultural worker i.e. an artist and an industrial worker, these similarities do not hold good for other kinds of cultural workers according to their definition of the latter. In other words, teachers and academics are not primarily involved in producing "something for sale," they are involved in the service sector of the economy.

As intellectuals, I believe that Rushdy and Donald have allowed themselves to become too bogged down with academic definitions of "culture" and



"worker" and have further confused the issue of what a cultural worker is by trying to understand the term within class analysis language which they are attracted to because the term "worker" appears in "cultural worker" but which is quite inappropriate in seeking to clarify the term.

Having similar problems to that of the industrial worker eg not controlling the means of production or dissemination, is not the same as BEING working class or as necessarily having the objective interests of the working class at heart. Skilled cultural workers - generally derive from the ranks of the petit bourgeoisie. It is in fact their class position which has afforded them access to skills in the arts in the first place.

It is true as the Medu Art Ensemble point out, that "...very few cultural workers own the means of production to mass produce their work, to bring it to their audience (publishing houses, printing presses, theatres, recording facilities, often even good sound systems.)"

And it is also desirable for there to be "...unions for cultural workers to enable us to deal collectively with the owners of such means of production."

However, these similarities with workers do not mean that the unionisation of cultural workers or their attempt to control the means of cultural production and dissemination are by definition or necessarily in the objective interests of the working class. It may certainly serve their ends as cultural workers but where such groupings of cultural workers lack in working class participation or working class/socialist political consciousness, then their eventual control of the means of cultural production and dissemination is not necessarily in the long term interests of the working class.

The point that I am simply trying to make (and it has become necessary to do so because of the apparent confusion of the term "cultural worker" with socialist language) is that being a cultural worker, or being identified as a cultural worker or identifying oneself as a cultural worker does not necessarily mean that one is aligning oneself with the political and economic interests of the working class in its struggle for socialism. While "cultural worker" may have been coined originally by socialists engaged in the arts who rejected the hegemonic concept of the 'artist' and wished to express their commitment to the working class movement, the term does not have the same meaning today.

Our present reality is that those who are identified as, organised as and who identify and organise themselves as cultural workers i.e. progressives engaged in artistic activity, derive from bourgeois, petit-bourgeois and proletarian classes. Furthermore, our experience is that it is trained/skilled cultural workers - deriving primarily from the upper classes - who most constitute, own and control progressive cultural organisations.

Working class cultural workers are mostly organic cultural workers in the sense that they have received no training but participate in an art discipline out of their need to express themselves in their struggles, drawing on raw talent, energy, cultural traditions and collective experience. Such cultural workers are found totally outside of the structures of the progressive movement or within structures (other than cultural) in which they identify themselves primarily as workers, women, youth etc rather than as cultural workers although they may conceive of themselves as cultural workers as well.

In concluding this part of the discussion, I would argue that "cultural worker" should simply be a general term which is used to refer specifically to anyone engaged in the arts - it has nothing to do with the class position of whoever is referred to as a cultural worker, but neither is it so general that it includes anyone who may impact on the culture - or way of life - of a

community. As the Medu Art Ensemble believe, it is a description given to those who "work in the field of culture" with culture being understood in this case, as the arts.

"Cultural worker" is a general term to refer to anyone engaged in the arts and who locates him/herself and/or his/her cultural work on the side of those struggling for democracy in much the same way as the term "activist" is used to refer to anyone engaged in "the struggle". A DP member of the Conscientious Objectives Support Group (COSG) may be an activist as is a COSATU shop steward although their respective class positions and class interests are radically different. In this sense, cultural worker is similar to the term "health worker" which refers to anyone engaged in health care (doctors, nurses, porters etc) irrespective of function or class position.

Having dealt with the debates around the definition of a cultural worker with some kind of a personal definition beginning to emerge through the discussion, I now propose to offer as concise a working definition of a cultural worker as possible and then proceed to unpack this definition section by section, explaining what I mean.

My working definition of a cultural worker would be:

Anyone - irrespective of class, level of technical skill and function - who is engaged in artistic or cultural activity in whatever form or capacity and who locates his/her work and/or him/herself on the side of those extra-governmental forces struggling for a democratic, unitary state.

Now to "unpack" the working definition: A cultural worker is ANYONE-IRRESPECTIVE OF CLASS i.e. members of the bourgeoisie, petit-bourgeois and the proletariat can all equally claim the label "cultural worker." The term itself has nothing to do with class position, class interests or class commitment although originally it might have meant identification with the working class. The term is a general one, used to identify those working in the field of culture or the arts, rather than to indicate the class position of whatever is so identified.



LEVEL OF TECHNICAL SKILL - as opposed to artist which implies technical proficiency, skill and thus formal training, "cultural worker" includes anyone engaged in artistic activity, whether they are skilled or unskilled, trained or untrained, professionals or amateurs, formal or organic.

AND FUNCTION- while 'artist' refers specifically to those who create and perform cultural or artistic products, "cultural worker" recognises the importance of and thus includes all those involved in the creation, dissemination, organisation and administration of cultural work and products. Thus directors, receptionists in a cultural organisation, painters, concert organisers, performers ticket sellers, lighting operators etc, would all be eligible for the label "cultural worker."

WHO IS ENGAGED IN ARTISTIC OR CULTURAL ACTIVITY IN WHATEVER FORM OR CAPACITY- i.e. involved in a particular art discipline such as music, theatre, visual art or in inter-disciplinary artistic activity whether as a creator, performer, organiser, administrator or in the promotion of the arts or artistic activities generally. IN WHATEVER FORM also refers to the range of forms that one can be involved in in any one discipline too eg in music - disco, reggae, classical, mbqanga, folk etc. One cannot be excluded from being defined as a cultural worker by virtue of the form that one uses i.e. because you use "imperialist" forms like disco, you cannot be a cultural worker. The term is inclusive of every art discipline and of every form within each discipline as well as of every new form which emerges out of inter-disciplinary work.

At this point, it should be clear to the reader that there are two basic components to the working definition i.e. an arts component and a political component. It needs to be explained that the working definition is a product of its time and conditions, hence the need to include a political component. In a future, democratic order, the definition of a cultural worker may not need to include a political component as by then "cultural worker" could have achieved hegemonic maturity as a term which simply refers to anyone engaged in artistic activity i.e. as a broader term which will replace the present use of the limited "artist" term and will refer then - as "artist" does now - only to the artistic activity of whoever is identified as a cultural worker, irrespective of his/her political persuasion, irrespective even of whether s/he

regards her/himself or her/his work as political or "apolitical."

Within the present conditions of struggle, the significance of the term "cultural worker" lies in its association with progressive, extra parliamentary forces (I include all forces across the ideological spectrum) struggling for change. "Artist" as spelt out earlier, is a term associated with and reflecting the hegemonic values, ideas and aesthetic tastes of the ruling class. "Cultural worker" on the other hand is associated with the values and ideas and the developing aesthetics of those struggling for a new order. It is therefore necessary that a definition of the term contains a political component although like the artistic component, it should be as broad as possible to make allowance for the complexities of cultural struggle.

The working definition as a whole is deliberately broad because a) at this initial stage in the development of our cultural theory and practice, I believe we need to be as open as possible to many ideas, cultural influences and insights and b) I would like to resist as much as possible the all too common tendency within "the struggle" to be prescriptive, exclusivist and simplistic, particularly within the cultural arena.

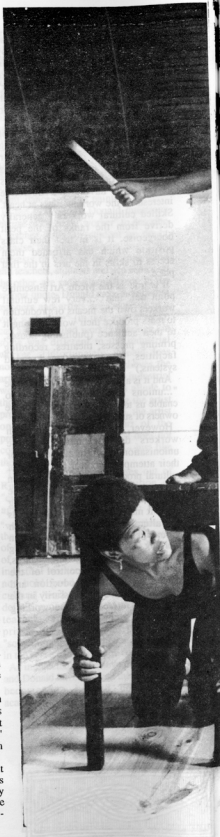
The political component of the working definition reads ... who locates his/her work and/or for him/herself on the side of those extra-governmental forces struggling for a democratic, unitary state.

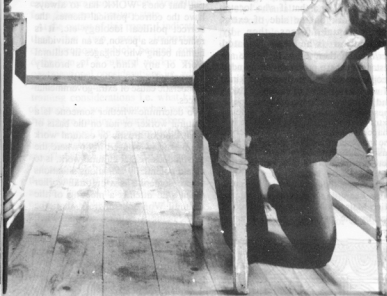
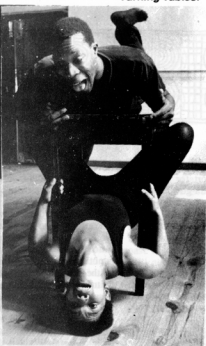
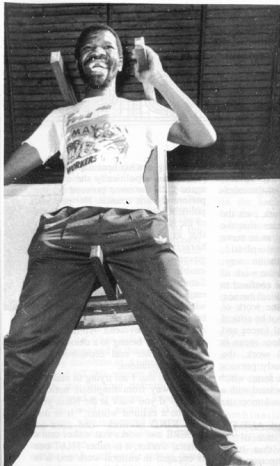
This is potentially a far more contentious component of the working definition than the artistic component, so I will spend some time explaining what I mean. I shall begin with the latter half of this component:

EXTRA-GOVERNMENTAL FORCES - by this I mean that broad movement of mass based organisations, interest groups (religious, educational etc) and service organisations, including the broadest spectrum of ideological tendencies, which exists outside of government structures such as the tricameral parliament, community councils, tribal and homeland authorities and which best expresses the opposition of the majority to the status quo.

It is within this broad movement in which working class organisations such as trade unions for a significant part, that the term "cultural worker" has currency, is most used and is given meaning.

While the term may be most current within Charterist organisations, it is not the sole property of this tendency but is rather a term associated with the broader movement of extra-governmental forces.



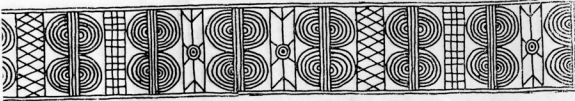


STRUGGLING FOR A DEMOCRATIC UNITARY STATE -

This is just to further qualify "extra-governmental forces" so as not to confuse progressive extra-governmental forces with reactionary and fascist extra-governmental forces such as the AWB. Different groupings within the broad progressive movement of extra-governmental forces may have different ideological tendencies and they may also have different understandings of what democracy would entail i.e. would there be a parliament based on a one-person one-vote system, a constituent assembly in which workers have a majority representation or a specifically blacks only majority rule government but they are agreed on the fact that the present order is undemocratic and that they are struggling for democracy in one country as one South African nation in rejection of the current apartheid strategy of ethnic and geographical division.

To come back to the first part of the political component of the working definition, perhaps it would make more sense to deal with it in three sections i.e. who locates ... on the side of, his/her work, and/or him/herself as "who locates" is directly linked to "on the side" (... of those extra-governmental forces described above).

"WHO LOCATES" does not prescribe a certain form of location i.e. does not mean having to belong to one or other organisation within the extra-governmental forces. "who locates"...on the side" simply means



rejection of the racist and undemocratic status quo and support for the anti-racist cause of the extra-governmental forces. It does not necessarily mean total support for everything which these forces or for what one or other grouping within these forces stand for. The phrasing is deliberately broad, from critical support to blind allegiance, from partial support to total support, from the initial beginnings of progressive political consciousness to advanced revolutionary consciousness, from moral or verbal or intellectual support to body and mind and 'should' activism, from fearful, unorganised individuals to hardened organisational veterans.

The point that I am trying to make with the broadness of this aspect of the working definition is that one is not a cultural worker only when one subscribes to this or that ideological tendency or only when one's political consciousness is well advanced or only when one becomes a member of a progressive organisation but rather that to be identified or to identify oneself as a cultural worker is to imply rejection of the present racist, undemocratic order or at least to be broadly associated with the anti-racist, democratic cause of those extra-governmental forces which articulate the aspirations of the majority. It is possible then to have a liberal cultural worker and a socialist one i.e. if one is cultural worker one is not by definition socialist.

Who locates work "on the side of" ... means that the person sees cultural work or artistic activity as directly or indirectly, covertly or overtly, didactically or subtly, in process or in content or in form as challenging the dominant ideological beliefs, ideas, values and aesthetic

tastes and/or as giving critical or blind expression to the ideas, values, ideologies and aesthetics of the extra-governmental forces.

"Who locates his/her work... on the side of..." in no way means that the work of cultural workers must serve "the cause" in a simplistic, functionalist and utilitarian way; neither does it mean that the work of cultural workers should be confined to propaganda or overtly political themes; nor does it mean that the work of cultural workers should not be critical of the extra-governmental forces and their cause(s). What it does mean is that in his/her cultural work, the cultural worker consciously pursues values or ideas or aesthetic forms which are different to those associated with a racist, exploitative and undemocratic order.

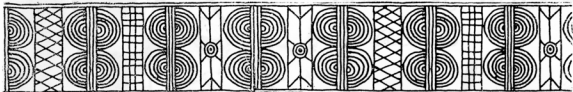
Who locates his/her work AND/OR HIM/HERSELF on the side of ... while it may appear that it is impossible to separate the person from his/her work and that if s/he locates her/his work on the side of extra-governmental forces then by implication s/he has located her/himself there as well, there are instances where progressively minded people are obliged to do certain kinds of work as a means of earning a living and it may not be possible to locate these kinds of work on the side of extra-governmental forces because it is shaped and controlled by and it serves the interests of the ruling class. In such cases, it is necessary to distinguish between the work which the person is obliged to do because of economic constraints and the person him/herself.

For example, a receptionist at the Nico Malan does the work required of her by the performing arts council

which employs her because that is her job, although politically she may not agree with the aims pursued by the performing arts council. Her personal political leanings may be toward that of the broad democratic movement so that as a person she would locate herself on the side of extra-governmental forces while being unable to locate her work there. Similarly a factory worker would be employed to produce goods for profit which she does, not because she believes in her work but because she requires employment. At the same time, she may belong to a union which articulates her real economic and political aspirations.

The point that I am trying to make is to get away from simplistic notions such as "if you work at the Nico, you can't be a cultural worker." It is not what KIND of work one does or WHERE one works that makes one a cultural worker, it is rather THAT one is engaged in cultural work and it is not that one's WORK has to always have the correct political themes, the correct political ideology etc, it is rather that as a person, as an individual human being who engages in cultural work of any kind, one is broadly sympathetic to the anti-racist, democratic cause of extra-governmental forces.

To determine whether someone is a cultural worker or not on the basis of what kind of artistic or cultural work the person is engaged in or where the person does his/her cultural work, is to create potentially ridiculous situations where someone is a cultural worker when s/he attends a meeting of the Cultural Workers Congress, that s/he stops being a cultural worker when



her/his record is played on SABC or SATV or when s/he does a Shakespearean play at the Nico Malan and then after such a performance s/he may become a cultural worker again by sitting on a CWC workshop subcommittee. The broadness of the working definition takes into account the complexities of the present conditions under which the cultural struggle is being waged.

I have dealt with the working definition section by section for explanatory and clarification purposes but it is important to bear in mind that each section only makes sense or only has validity when related to all the other sections and in the context of the working definition as a whole.

To end off this section then. I will repeat my working definition of a cultural worker as anyone, -irrespective of class, level of technical skill and function - who is engaged in artistic or cultural activity in whatever form or capacity and who locates his/her work and/or him/herself on the side of those extra-governmental forces struggling for a democratic, unitary state.

At the outset of this paper, I indicated that the two most important considerations which begged some definition of a cultural worker were organisational considerations i.e. what kinds of people are we organising and training considerations i.e. what kind of people are we training when we say that we are training cultural workers.

The value of the working definition for organisational purposes is that it is specific enough in defining a particular, "organisable" constituency i.e. all those engaged in artistic or cultural activity and yet it is politically broad enough to include anyone within this constituency who is potentially

sympathetic to the democratic movement. It does not intend to exclude anyone within this constituency on the basis of technical skill or function or the level of political consciousness; rather it recognises the potential and allows for growth in all of these areas within individuals either organically or through non-formal or formal training and education. This is particularly important in the cultural sphere where the legacy of apartheid society is that those with technical skill in the arts generally derive from upper classes and lack political formation whilst working class cultural activists have political formation but little skill.

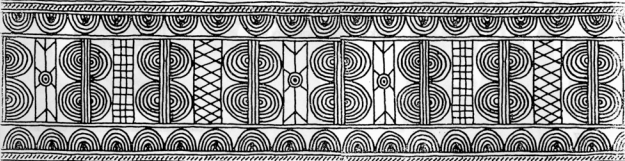
The validity of the broadness of the working definition of a cultural worker which allows for a wide range and combination of political consciousness, technical skills and organisational and administrative skill is affirmed by our own experience of the range of people who go by the label "cultural worker" - liberal, technically skilled, organisationally poor people, socialist, technically unskilled people, liberal cultural administrators and organisers, working class, organisational veterans with raw talent, bourgeois, unorganised, skilled individuals etc - all of these kinds (and more) of people are presently identified and organised as cultural workers or identify and organise themselves and others as cultural workers.

When it comes to training though, the working definition is far too broad for organisations involved in training to simply say "we are training cultural workers" The value of the broadness of the working definition on the other hand, is that it allows for different

levels of training. Since the working definition of a cultural worker is not based on the level of technical skill or the level of political consciousness, it is not possible to say that "we are training cultural workers" and thereby imply that people will be trained to or past a basic minimum of technical skill and political consciousness and thereafter they will qualify as cultural workers. In other words, one cannot say that a cultural worker by (working) definition looks like this and then devise a training programme to produce cultural workers made in that image.

The key to training cultural workers and to devising training programmes for cultural workers is to recognise that there are different kinds of cultural work based on different needs and different kinds of training programmes are required and necessary to produce different kinds of cultural workers to do the cultural work and meet the needs.

A cultural worker who passes through a weekend training programme for cultural workers focusing on street theatre is not any less of a cultural worker than one who graduates from a year long, full-time course for cultural workers specialising in community theatre. The two training programmes serve different needs (even within one particular broad discipline); each is designed to produce a different kind of cultural worker working in theatre. The fact that one has gone through a year long course does not make him/her more of a cultural worker than the one who did the weekend course since BEING a cultural worker is not dependent on one's level of technical skill or political consciousness. The difference between the two though is



that the year course graduate is a more skilled and thus better equipped cultural worker than the one who did the weekend course. It is possible and indeed necessary (because of the present conditions and cultural needs) to devise a variety of training programmes, each with its particular emphases to train different kinds and levels (in terms of skills and political consciousness) of cultural workers.

In training cultural workers as defined in terms of the working definition, the two most important elements to bear in mind are technical skills in the arts, organisation and administration on the one hand and political consciousness on the other. The variety of combinations and emphases when devising training programmes for cultural workers with these two elements in mind, is endless. Some programmes may concentrate exclusively on training in skills if the political consciousness of the trainees is being developed elsewhere or is already advanced eg training a union theatre group. Other programmes may concentrate solely on facilitating the development of political consciousness as through a cultural studies programme designed particularly for those who have sound technical skills but who lack in political theory and practice. Then there are programmes which would include both technical skills and political theory and yet which would vary considerably according to their function, purpose or aim. For example some courses may concentrate on imparting technical skills only in one art discipline and may include political input only for the purpose of raising awareness of issues among the trainees, other courses may include technical skills in three or four disciplines to encourage interdisciplinary activity as well as technical skills in administration, a

sophisticated cultural studies component and organisational skills such as how to keep books, how to take minutes etc. Still other courses may exclude technical skills in the arts altogether and concentrate on organisational and administrative skills and perhaps political theory in order to produce critically aware cultural workers for administrative and organisational tasks. Other courses may concentrate simply on how to plan and execute skills training workshops.

The point being made is that when training cultural workers, one is not training people who would all look, act and think the same on completion of their training. Training courses for cultural workers should be devised according to needs (different needs would require different training courses and different kinds of cultural workers) and according to long term political vision and strategy.

To conclude this article, I would say that in terms of the present cultural conditions and needs including

- * the need for skilled human resources to teach others
- * the need for new aesthetics
- * the need to develop new audiences
- * the need for progressive cultural theory to inform cultural praxis
- * the need for the arts to be asserted as an important site of struggle
- * the need for material resources to support progressive cultural work
- * the need for skills
- * the need for cultural organisations and structures to support cultural work
- * the need for skilled and lucid leadership within the cultural arena the ideal cultural worker within the present conditions would be someone who has acquired and integrated the following:
 - sound technical skills and theoretical knowledge in at least one art discipline
 - basic technical skills and theoretical knowledge in other disciplines so as to work in an interdisciplinary way.

- human development skills i.e. skills in group dynamics, leadership, etc.

- critical skills
- advanced forms of political and cultural theory
- workshop skills i.e. planning and running workshops
- basic, progressive adult education theory
- sound organisational skills such as how to chair a meeting how to draw up a budget, etc.

- basic administrative skills, and
- basic media skills.

It does not need to be pointed out that all of these skills are meaningless unless the one who has them is engaged in "hands on", practical cultural work. Praxis will sharpen the skills and the theory, and in turn the skills and the theory will sharpen the praxis. The long term cultural and political needs oblige us to research and develop training and education programmes which would produce such cultural workers.



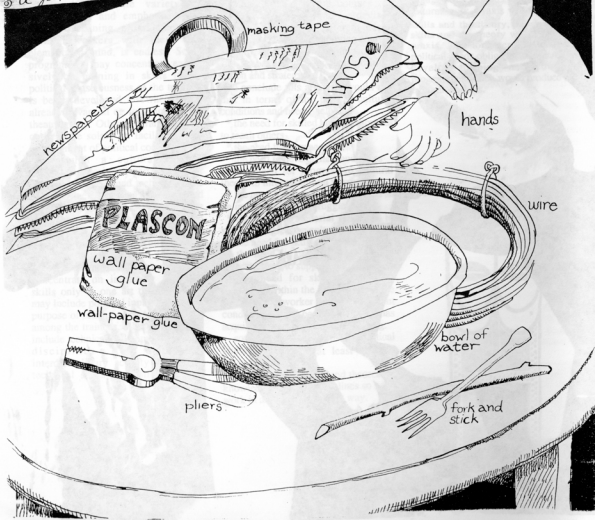
How to make
masks



Step One *OkokoQala*

What do you need

- 1 a roll of strong wire that does not bend too easily
- 2 a pair of strong hands
- 3 lots of old newspapers
- 4 packets of wall paper glue
- 5 a pair of pliers
- 6 masking tape
- 7 a bowl with water in it
- 8 a fork or stick



to make a huge mask to fit over your head
you need to make a wire frame

1. THE NECK

Cut a piece of wire to make a circle. Make sure that the circle is big enough to fit over your head. Make sure there is enough wire to twist the 2 ends together with the pliers.



2.

Cut another piece of wire the same length as the first and wind it around the first circle to make it strong.



3.

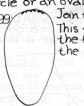
Cut 4 or 5 even lengths of wire and join them at equal intervals around the circle. These will form the supports for the neck of your head.



4. Make another circle the same size as your first circle and attach this circle to the top of the supports as shown in the diagram. Your structure should now form a hollow tube and this will become the neck of your head.



5. The face and head. Cut a piece of wire to make a flat circle or an oval shape like an egg. Join the ends. This will form the front of the face.



6. Join the face to the neck by the chin.



7.

Cut a very long piece of wire. Attach it to the top of the face at the point marked. Curve it into a nice shape to form the back of the head. Attach this end of the wire to the back of the neck. (o)



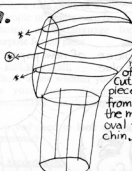
8.

Cut a long piece of wire and curve it around the front of the face and around the sides of the head. Join at the back of the head at the places where this piece of wire crosses the oval face circle. You can strengthen these places strong by winding masking-tape around them.



9.

Strengthen the head by adding more circles of wire. Cut a shorter piece to join from the middle of the oval face to the chin. (o)



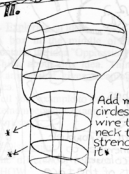
10.

Join a small nose piece to the piece of wire crossing the face from forehead to chin.



11.

Add more circles of wire to the neck to strengthen it.



12.

Add more pieces to the head to strengthen it.



WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

Workshop one: Learning to accept the unexpected things your imagination offers you.

Workshop two: Exploring your imagination - "putting your hand in deep".

Workshop three: Making conscious choices about the things your imagination offers you.

Workshop four: Working with critical feedback.

WORKSHOP ONE

Accept the Unexpected

1. Introduction: Points to bear in mind:

- * The words "good" and "bad" do not apply - we will come back to them later on - critically.
- * Work in the language you feel comfortable with.
- * Accept any idea or word that comes into your head - don't censor yourself.
- * If you are uncomfortable with what we do here, reject it. These are not necessary rules or methods.

2. Playing with Words:

- * Choose a word you like: say it in different ways (as if you were playing with it like a pet).
- * Give your word to someone else - a gift - and take their word in exchange: play with this new word.
- * Choose a word you don't like - give it a hard time.
- * Exchange words with someone - do nasty things to this new word.

3. Word Association:

- * One person calls out random words on any topic: write down the first word that comes into your head after each word you hear.
- * Working with one other person, write a letter word by word. You give a word, the other person gives the next word, etc.
- * Each word is the first word you or your partner think of, in response to the preceding word.

4. Visualisation:

- * Visualise the answers to questions asked by the workshop leader. Write down each answer.
- Examples: "You are in a place you like. Describe this place." "You see an object there. Describe the object." etc.

5. Discussion:

- * The act of writing - is it pleasant or difficult? Why?

CREATIVE

WRITING

WORKSHOPS

At the beginning of the CAP popular theatre course we asked Karen Press to run a series of creative writing workshops for the students. In these workshops we tried to overcome some of the blocks which people generally experience in writing.

WORKSHOP TWO

Explore Your Imagination

1. Free Writing: Write without stopping for ten minutes. Write whatever comes to your pen, without censoring or choosing.

Discussion:

Not everything you write is interesting, or worth developing.

Free writing can throw up exciting things for further work; or it can be a way of getting rid of the "junk" at the surface of your imagination.

2. Visualisation I (as in workshop one)

Discussion: Very often, if you want to write about an event or issue, you use the ideas, images, language that are already familiar to you. This leads to stereotyping, clichés and superficiality. You need to explore the topic from many different angles, before you come up with enough raw material to shape into a piece of writing. You need to look at the detail of your topic.

3. Exploring an idea:

A box in the middle of the room contains the idea "Oppression".

Think about this idea. Think of an example that gives meaning to this idea.

Tell your example to the group.

Remember your example for the next workshop.

4. Discussion:

The differences between TELL and SHOW.

WORKSHOP THREE

Making Choices

1. Free writing:

Do free writing for ten minutes.

2. Focussed free writing:

Explore your example of "Oppression" from Workshop Two by free writing on this example for ten minutes.

3. Discussion:

What sorts of choices are necessary, when preparing a piece of writing, for others to hear or read?

* Choices to do with the subject matter:

The depth of your exploration (and therefore of your understanding); the basic point you want to make (for example, if you describe an example of oppression, why are you doing this?); The form you write in - play, poem, story, song

* Choices to do with your audience: What will interest them/be understood by them?

You might end up deciding that the first words you wrote down were the "best" - but you must get to this decision through a process of careful critical thought.

4. First draft:

Write a first draft of a piece on your example of oppression, based on your choices about language, form, and purpose for the piece.

5. Edit your draft:

Check to see whether you are keeping to your aims; discovering new possibilities; not slipping into clichés.

Do you need to look up spelling or grammar?

6. Second draft:

Rework your first draft for the next workshop.

WORKSHOP FOUR

Critical Feedback

1. Two types of feedback

* "criterion-based" feedback.

* "reader-based" feedback.

Discussion of these.

2. Advice to readers:

(Thanks to Terry Volbrecht.)

The most valuable thing you can do for the writer is to tell him/her what you really see and how you really react.

You are not being asked, "How good is this?" but "What happened to you while you read this?"



Give specific reactions to specific parts of the writing.

Be conscious of the assumptions you are making in deciding what is 'good' or 'not good'.

3. Advice to Writers:

(Thanks to Terry Volbrecht).

You are not trying to find out from your readers how 'good' your writing is but what happened to particular readers in particular circumstances.

Don't be tyrannised by what your readers say.

Be willing to recognise and acknowledge your weaknesses and bad habits.

Choose questions you want to ask your readers.

4. Group Feedback

Working in groups of four, take turns to read out your piece of writing, and receive feedback from the other three people. Use the guidelines above for giving and receiving feedback.

5. Discussion:

What was your reaction to this method of exchanging feedback?

In the light of your responses, consider what sort of writing group would satisfy your needs.

Some Suggested Reading:

Poetry by:

Pablo Neruda (especially *Spain in our Hears*)

Osip Mandelstam

Anna Akhmatova

Vladimir Mayakovsky

Yannis Ritsos

Wolf Biermann

(All these poets have written poetry inspired by their experience of political turmoil and oppression)

Biographies, interviews, essays about writers:

Christa Wolf - *The Fourth Dimension* - interviews

(She is a novelist in East Germany, concerned with the role of fiction in building a socialist society).

Nadezha Mandelstam - *Hope Against Hope, Hope Abandoned*

(biographies of her husband Osip, and life in Stalin's Russia). Vladimir Mayakovsky - *How Are Verses Made?*

Pablo Neruda - *Memoirs*.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez - *The Fragrance of the Guava*.

There are many more!

Many of these books can be found in the Cape Town City Library.



MAKING PLAYS HAPPEN



Play-Making Guidelines for Facilitators

Introduction

In this section of the journal we introduce very practical things which have developed out of our experience on the CAP course this year.

First of all we present a short list of ideas pertaining to the role of facilitator. Then there's a check list for gauging whether one's play or concert is interesting or has potential. Thirdly we include a piece which explores a few theatre games that are useful when orientating oneself for workshop productions. Fourthly there is an article on how to make a play from scratch which lays down certain guidelines to consider when starting a workshop process with the aim of creating a play. Fifthly we give a detailed account of how a particular play was made at CAP together with its script. Lastly we include three sketches which were done with different facilitating styles.

The following points outline the ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES of the facilitator when creating plays/sketches through IMPROVISATION.

1. Encourage the creativity of each individual in the group and of the group as a whole.
2. Push for creativity/ideas beyond the literal or what people do easiest and most comfortably.
3. Suggest ideas but do not spoonfeed the group.
4. Be sensitive to the feelings and ideas of everyone in the group.
5. Give direction when the group appears to be floundering.
6. Allow for and encourage openness and experimentation during the creative process but assume a firmer approach when rehearsing and polishing the product.
7. You are ultimately responsible for the balance between form and content and for the overall aesthetic quality of the product. As the outside eye, you can see what works and what does not.
8. Offer only constructive criticism/feedback.

9. You are responsible for overseeing the whole process and all the details related to the product e.g. props, costumes, budgets, rehearsal schedules, rehearsal.

10. Prepare well for each session. Ensure that there is progress from session to session. Have a reservoir of ideas and suggestions in case they are necessary - always be a few steps ahead of the group.

11. Ensure maximum participation by all members of the group.

12. Ensure discipline and focus among all members of the group.

13. Build and maintain the group as a group while working towards the product at the same time - pay attention to process and product.

14. Build trust, a spirit of co-operation and openness to enhance experimentation and creativity.

15. Ensure that the process is documented - record all the ideas which emerge out of each workshop.

16. Spread responsibility for different areas among the members of the group e.g. props, warm ups, budgets, etc.

The following CHECKLIST can be used for preparing a play/sketch.

A. The play/sketch - for the group creating it

1. Form and content must balance each other - both must be interesting to the audience. What you say is NOT the most important thing, how you say it is just as important!

"Theatre should be both instructive (a means of education) and entertaining" - Bertolt Brecht.

2. It must begin strongly and end with impact.

3. It should have variety - song, dance, dialogue, mime, music, storytelling, acrobatics, poetry etc.

4. It must have humour.

5. Emphasise movement and the creative use of the body. Can you say in movement/mime what you say in words? Try to move away from words - explore non-verbal communication.

6. If it has dialogue, is it short and to the point?

B. The performance (bringing the play to life) - for the facilitator

1. Does it have energy? Is it lively? Are performers enthusiastic?

2. Articulation/projection - is the audience able to hear everyone and everything clearly?

3. Is the space used as effectively as possible?

4. Is sufficient use made of contrasts - between height levels, volume, size of characters, pace, colour, etc?

5. Are the voices and movements perfectly synchronised where they have to be?

6. Pace - does the play/sketch move along briskly?

7. Focus - are the performers concentrating, have they been mentally prepared for the performance?

8. Motivation - do the performers understand what they are saying and why they are moving in particular ways?

9. Does the movement enhance and complement the words?

10. Texture - is the play/sketch layered with different aesthetic ingredients - song, dance, music, movement, dialogue, etc. - to enhance what is being communicated by simultaneously appealing to a variety of senses within the audience i.e. by stimulating them in a number of ways?

HOW TO MAKE A PLAY FROM

scratch



Guidelines for Drama Groups

At Cap facilitators took students through the process of creating a few sketches from scratch. Once we had done this we tried to spell out in detail steps which had been taken in this creative process. Detailing and analysing the process will be useful for other groups who are starting out for the first time. So we write these guidelines for you.

It is important to remember that each play is different and often follows different paths before it is complete. Also there is no way of accurately describing the creative spark which is the driving force behind all these processes.

Choosing a Theme

There are many ways of choosing a theme.

* Someone in the group might suggest a theme.

* The theme might be determined by an event or a campaign.

* An organisation for which one is playing might specify a theme.

* The group might have a broad theme, for example, 'Mayday', but the group might narrow down the theme to concentrate on the new Labour Act.

Research

Once the group and the facilitator know which theme they are going to tackle, it is important to research the theme thoroughly before starting the workshop and there are many ways of doing this research.

1. One of the most interesting ways and a way which builds the spirit of the group is for the facilitator to ask each person in the group to share their experience which relates to the theme or the experience of others whom they know. A simple way of doing this is for the group to sit in a circle and for the facilitator to spin a bottle on the floor. When the bottle points at a person she or he speaks immediately of any experiences they know. The facilitator must take down careful notes of what people are saying or the main ideas without slowing down the speakers.

2. The group could identify people important for their theme and go out to interview them. For example, if you are doing a play on pensioners you might decide to interview old people whom you know. You might go along to the pension pay-out and observe the old people as well as the behaviour of the clerks. In doing so one would also be collecting very important material on how people move, in other words, their physical attitudes. If you are doing a play exposing the implications of a new law you might get information from the organisation which knows the details about this law.

3. Your group could go to a library and ask for books relevant to your topic. Similarly there might be pamphlets, newspapers or journals that relate to your theme.

4. You might decide to go on an educational tour which relates to your theme. If, for example, you are doing a play about physical conditions you might just go to the nearest hospital and observe how nurses respond to patients and how doctors respond to nurses and patients; you might interview some of the patients about their experiences too.

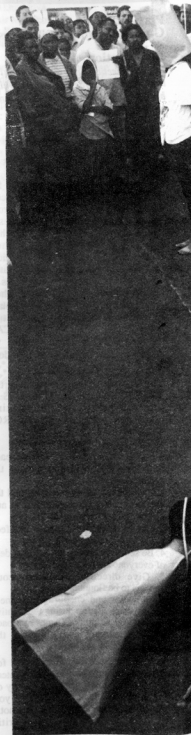
5. On the other hand, you and the group might be so involved in the theme that you are participating directly in activities which you will later use for your play. For example, if you are on strike and you are going to do a play about your strike you will take your concrete experiences as a starting point for your play.

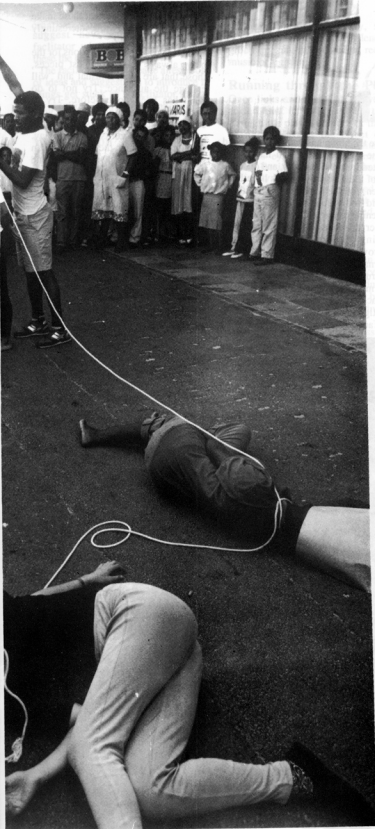
6. You might watch films, slideshows, or videos which relate to your theme.

Whatever kinds of research you do it is important to record the research. If the group goes out to interview different people or if each person gives a summary of a book they have read relating to the theme, all this must be written down.

Sharing Research

Once the group and the facilitator have done research around the theme it is important to share the research through discussion.





CAP anti death penalty street theatre, 11/11/89.

Reportbacks need not only take the form of discussions. One can report back to the group in the creative way. For example, one could recite a poem one has written around the research, draw pictures, sing a song around the topic, or mime something. All these might be done at a later stage during improvisation. For example during preparations for a piece, in one group where four characters were supposed to be fire, earth, water and light, we asked each person to draw a picture which represented their element. Once people had drawn these pictures, they told the group about them and how it felt to be fire or water or earth or light. This exercise helped the group create dances around these elements using ideas from their drawings.

If, in the research process, one has collected factsheets or articles, one would hand these out to the group at the report back. One might also like to show the group any pictures or photographs from books and magazines, or newspapers which one has found.

Selecting the Main Ideas

Once everyone has shared the research which they have undertaken the facilitator can initiate a process whereby main ideas are selected for improvisation. When selecting ideas it is important to remember that not all ideas from the research need be included. Also when selecting the main ideas, one does not have to be detailed about them since the details will come up in improvisations. One would select the most important ideas and any unusual interesting ideas that could be dramatically effective.

It is important to note that the theme which has been selected by the group might change a little after one has shared research and selected ideas. These might also change when the group begins to improvise around main ideas and in the process of workshopping as a whole.

The group should be open to these changes and not dogmatic about the original theme. The importance of being open is that someone or a small group of people might come up with a wonderful idea in improvisation that you have not thought of before and it would be important to include that idea.

Once the main ideas have been selected the facilitator must come up with a programme of action with regard to improvising around these ideas. The facilitator should start off by choosing one of the main ideas for improvisation.

6 ways to use a rope



Improvising around Main Ideas

A very useful way of conducting improvisations is to split the group into smaller groups to improvise a scene, write a song, compose a dance or write a poem around one idea.

The facilitator can specify whether the group should improvise using one or more of these forms. Each individual in the group could also be asked to go and compose a song or whatever. However we would like to stress the importance of improvisation as this brings out the unique qualities of each participant. If you write down scenes before improvising you miss out on the creativity of each participant and the liveliness they could bring to a scene through improvisation.

Once the smaller groups have worked by themselves on an improvisation for five or ten minutes, they are all called back by the facilitator to present their different improvisations to the group as a whole.

One improvisation might be much more interesting than the others and the group will keep this idea or the facilitator might suggest combining some of the ideas which appeared in the improvisations.

It is very important for the facilitator to record each improvisation either by using a tape recorder or by jotting down notes as smaller groups are acting out their improvisations for the whole group.

Then the facilitator must record carefully the idea which is chosen out of all the improvisations. The facilitator might also ask another person in the group to record what has taken place in order to train that person. However, even if another person is recording, the facilitator must also continue to record as he/she is ultimately responsible for pulling the play together.

Once the group has improvised around one main idea, they can proceed to improvise around all the other main ideas which have been selected.

When one is improvising around main ideas, do not try to structure these too early into a sequence as you might miss out on some interesting tangents that might come out of the process of improvisation.

Once the group has improvised around all the main ideas which have been selected from the research, and once the best of these improvisations have been chosen, the facilitator might decide to extend individual scenes further by deepening characterisation, by working further on a dance or practising the singing before structuring the improvisations into a sequence. Alternatively these improvisations may be structured into a sequence first and then more careful work might be done on each scene. Once having deepened and tightened or polished the scenes, the facilitator might check the links

between scenes seeing that these make sense and that they flow interestingly into one another.

When selecting improvisations for the play, always select the best pieces, those that are most unusual and will engage the audience. Try not to do what has been done before. Try to surprise the audience with your creativity and inventiveness. Try not to only depend on words for your play. Do not forget that the body too can speak. Expressive body movements and dance can be used to represent emotions and ideas. Above all, what you select must be exciting to look at and consistent with your overall theme.

As a facilitator try to draw out the creativity in each participant.

As facilitators lead improvisations, they should plan carefully the structure around which people are going to work every day. This programme of action changes from day to day and is based on the facilitator's assessment of what has happened during improvisations each day. What comes out of the



creative workshop process might suggest new approaches to the facilitator who might then introduce these the next day.

The facilitator should have a reservoir of ideas and suggestions to introduce if things get stuck so a facilitator has to be sensitive to what is happening in the group.

Working on Extension of Scenes

When one works in more detail on a scene there are many things the group can do. The facilitator has an important role to play as an outside eye and must ensure that the main idea contained in a scene comes across clearly.

One could extend the scene working on the creativity of the scene and the form. One might ask the group to develop the characters further. How does each character walk? What do they feel while speaking? In this way one would try to develop the truth of a scene so that it doesn't come across as being phoney.

Characters would have to think of the motivations behind their actions and the words with which they speak. One might decide to develop the dialogue so that the ideas come across in an interesting way.

At this stage the group might start making props and costumes for their play. Once scenes have been extended the dialogue and action could be written down by the facilitator as a basis for a script.

Structuring Improvisations

Here are some ideas on how to decide on criteria for structuring improvisations, scenes or bits into a sequence. Consider whether the sequence one has chosen develops the theme and whether the sequence makes sense logically. Try to structure the play in such a way that, for example, all songs are not together, that scenes move in an interesting and varied way from one to the other.

Once the group has extended scenes and decided on a sequence, the time has come to work on the links or transitions between scenes. One might have to make the links between scenes more logical by adding something or by cutting out.

The group should practise transitions between scenes so that these take place quickly and smoothly. If there are props in your play it is important to set exactly where these are going to be placed for the next scene and who is going to place them there. Scenes can

be linked through poetry, songs, placards, slides, a narrator, silence, the group freezing in mid-action, recorded music or lighting.

Running through the Play


Once links and transitions have been sorted out it is important to run through the play a number of times to be able to assess the effect of the whole. The role of the facilitator as 'outside' eye becomes very important here. Facilitators have to focus critically on the whole play and see which parts need to be edited, what needs to be cut out and what doesn't work. Something might need to be added or highlighted.

Polishing the Play

Once these things have been done, polishing needs to take place. The facilitator could take notes during a run-through and then report back to the group afterwards so that individuals could make improvements.

Once the play is more or less ready the group could invite people or the organisations for which they have produced the play, to watch it. The audience could then give feedback which would help to improve things where necessary.

After this, rehearsals and more rehearsals are needed. Then the play has to be launched into communities for many different audiences. This experience itself will teach the group untold things.



PATHS TO CREATIVITY, DEPARTURES FROM DISCUSSION INTO THE IMMEDIATE PRESENT:

Patti Henderson

The workshop process involves a leap into an immediate playful present, a present in which a scene is improvised - the bare bones of its structure perhaps having been thought out previously.

It is in this immediate present that the inventiveness and experiences of the participants find an outlet; and because this is play in the immediate present, other subtle messages are conveyed to those watching, through the body, through its capacity for movement and expression, through the relation created before the eyes of the spectators between those improvising, those who are surprised by their very improvisations, and the responses which it calls forth in those acting opposite them.

So this process from the improvisatory stage to the final formation of a scene requires watchfulness, the ability to change, to cut, to extend.

The process of workshop is like travelling into an unknown country. The landscape of the play reveals itself gradually as the participants submit themselves to the workshop situation. The end is never visible at the beginning. It is out of this framework of the unknown - this framework which presupposes a lack of rigidity - that spontaneous departures from any preconceived ideas occurs. It is in this framework that the experience of participants and their knowledge emerge with freshness.

The workshop situation presupposes the collective contribution of all those taking part. Plays which have been completely scripted by one individual are very difficult to stage dramatically when participants are not professional actors. It also seems important that worker and community theatre pool all the skills and experiences of those taking part.

If one is a facilitator in a workshop situation there are a few basic things to which one can draw the attention of participants. These have to be experienced through action rather than spoken about in order to be truly known and are often best explored through exercises before any real improvisation of the content of the play takes place. Making participants aware of these things can assist everyone in tightening the play, making it more interesting to watch, or more dramatic.

1. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACTORS AND AUDIENCE AND BETWEEN ACTORS THEMSELVES

The establishment of these relationships is what makes a play dynamic and exciting. In the kind of work we do the relationship between actors and audience is very important. Especially in worker theatre where what is being portrayed on stage often resonates directly with the audiences experiences.

A simple technique which can be used to create this connection is to be aware of the importance of eyes. This means that when interacting with actors on stage and speaking to another actor, eye contact becomes very important. Likewise when a general appeal is made to the audience, it is

important for the actor or actors to make eye contact with individuals in the audience. This is not simply a matter of turning one's eyes in the direction of the audience, but of actually making eye contact with members of the audience.

In order to do this, actors have to overcome their shyness and reach a point, the dangerous territory, where genuine contact is made. Learning to convey one's message effectively therefore means learning to be brave and allowing oneself to become vulnerable, as the full gamut of emotions is reflected in the eyes. In making eye contact we are able to pick up very quickly ranges of these emotions and their instantaneous variability. Eyes are able to express fear, rejection, hostility, acceptance, pleasure - many things which are not always easy to accept.

Another way of establishing the connection between actors and between actors and audience involves the notion of a gift. Often when dialogue between actors lacks life I ask the actors to think of what they are saying to the other as being like a gift. You have to be sure that what you are saying is being truly given to the other actor. Likewise the actor to whom one is speaking must be sure that he or she receives your gift and responds to it by giving something back.

Before doing actual improvisations it is useful to play certain games which bring out the importance of these 'things'. When it comes to eyes for example, there are two simple and entertaining games which can be played. They show immediately the dramatic quality and interest which is generated when eye contact is made. Here the group is split into pairs.

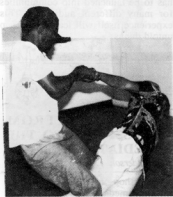
i. In the first exercise one partner must follow the other person's eyes by looking into them as the other person moves about.

ii. In the second exercise one person tries to avoid the gaze of the other by turning their eyes away every time their partner tries to pin them down by forcing them to look at them.

These two exercises are fun and generate a lot of movement and concentration. They also show two types of interaction; co-operation and conflict, types of interaction which when used in a play generate dramatic interest.

2. THE LANGUAGE OF THE BODY AND OF SILENCE

When people in workshop begin to tell their stories or to improvise scenes, they are often unaware of the body as a means of communication. Learning to extend the everyday movement of the body, learning to dance, learning how to move 'in character', and becoming more aware of the body, all contribute to the dramatic interest of a play. In portraying any character, machine, animal or creating a



mood, the body is able to communicate powerfully. The movements of the body have to be carried out with concentration, with sustained energy. Moving in a half-hearted way, unless the intention is to deliberately show inhibition, makes for boredom and does not engage those watching. This often happens when actors begin to sing and fall into clichéd patterns of movement which are carried out in small and limp movements.

In learning to use the body as an instrument of communication, learning to use mime to convince the audience of the existence of illusory objects which are not really there, adds life. So when drinking a cup of tea or clocking into work, the action must be worked out logically without any step being missed out so that the illusory cup does not suddenly disappear or the clock-in machine does not move about as successive workers clock in.

If actions and movements are convincingly carried out on stage there is no need to continuously talk. Silence is powerful. An example of how effective silence can be is how it is used in a scene from the Dambusa Youth Play where a raid by police is carried out on a vigil in almost complete silence. The tension created by silence combined with movement can be very powerful indeed.

Exercises to free the body are many and many more can be invented or proposed by participants.

Here I will only mention two.

i. The first is for all participants to stand in a large circle. One person lifts an imaginary object and passes it to the person next to them and so on. Here it is important to see from the body movements how heavy the object is or how light. It is important for participants to maintain the illusion of the size of the object and its weight. So this exercise builds concentration and observation.

ii. Another exercise is to try to move across the floor like some kind of animal; a slow and ponderous one, or a jerky fast moving one.



3. FOCUS

It is important for actors to realise that if they are not actually speaking they are still visible and part of the scene.

This means that they cannot relax into themselves. They have to remain within the present moment of the play and retain concentration which helps to hold together the whole scene. This is a difficult skill to learn. Yet if people concentrate on each moment of the play it can be sustained. This proved to be a big problem with the youth play when workshops and rehearsals were not held regularly as the cast is large and often a number of participants were not the main focus of the scene. These comrades had to learn how to keep still and focussed while other actors were operating.

An easy way of getting the ideas of focus across and one which is comprehensible to participants, is to suggest that the actors on the stage at all times form a picture which people are looking at. So participants have to remain aware of the total picture they are creating on stage. By analogy the group is like one being and must be conscious of this at all times.

Certain things which are useful in this context are learning how to freeze action and keeping still but alert.

4. TELLING YOUR STORY

In a play not every step in a story need be shown. This is often very boring. Chunks of your story can be summarized by a commentator, for example. Quick changes between scenes as they finally come to be are very important in sustaining the pace of the production. Often these changes have to be practised separately at the end of a workshop so that people learn exactly where they are going to be in the next scene and so that they also learn the sequence of the scenes.

A useful way to practise this is to start acting from the end of a scene and then quickly change to the beginning of the next scene. This process is carried through all the scenes until the end of the play.



5. THE VOICE

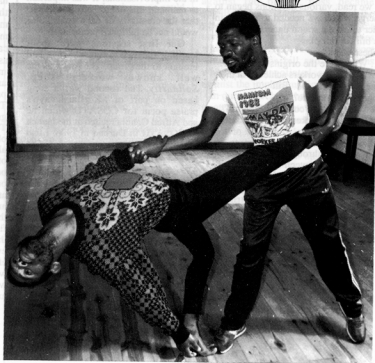
It goes without saying that the voice is very important in any production. Participants have to learn how to project their voices. This is also learnt through exercises. Also actors have to learn not to speak too fast so that their language is easily understood.

One exercise which is useful in improving the projection of the voice is to imagine that participants are greeting one another across long distances, perhaps between two

mountains. It is important for people not to scream their lines but to learn how to make the voice big from the pit of the stomach so that it does not strain.

CONCLUSION

These exercises and suggestions have been given as tools to enable cultural workers to polish their performances and the scenes which they have devised out of their collective experience. I am sure that there are many omissions above and that there are many roads to making one's work as tight and effective as possible in the way in which it communicates with the audience.



Photographs/ dance and movement at CAP.

It is important to note that we decided on an order of the improvisations only once we were satisfied that enough material had been collected. This was because imposing a premature structure on workshop theatre inhibits the creativity of the group and the interesting tangents which individuals and groups might come up with in the improvisatory process.

The order which I suggested to the group and which was accepted was as follows:

1. Each person enters the stage one by one with their metal implements
2. The metal bell songs
3. Each person in the group goes over the gains workers have made
4. (celebration of these gains) *Inkanyamba*, the workers' freedom train song
5. Bosses' lament scene complaining of worker strikes and militancy and in the end claiming that Botha would 'fix' the situation
6. Botha's speech
7. Thatcher scene
8. Spy and bosses dance, "If Thatcher can do it so can we"
9. good' worker/bad' worker scene
10. *Solidarity* song
11. Protest against the bill
12. Last song, improvised May Day song

I then presented the group with scripts and we started the process of polishing scenes and improving the logical connection between the scenes. We also spent whole sessions improvising dances for the songs so that they could be dramatically presented.

While individuals learnt their words, for example, those playing Thatcher and Botha, others would perfect the spy and bosses dance so that the movements were exact. We explored the Thatcher scene thoroughly, the group acting a group of South African spies who invade her bedroom and when she enters become part of the furniture while she sings about her economic policy putting on make-up, phoning her husband, Dennis, and twirling about. While she undertakes these activities the spies jot down points and take photographs of her. The entrance of the spies became very funny in the end. This section of the play was helped along by the other facilitators at CAP who came to watch some of our workshop.

As we ran through the play, scene by scene, we noted that certain speeches were too long. For example, the Botha speech had to be cut a bit. So too, the end of the Thatcher song, as it spoke of Botha prematurely in terms of the logical order of the scenes and we didn't want to give Botha away too soon.

In this polishing process we also decided that in the bosses' lament scene, bosses need not cry hysterically all the time but that each needed to assume a definite character with mannerisms and facial expressions. In all of the scenes extending the characterisation of different characters became important.

We decided to link the scenes through a number of placards.

The group then had a prop-making session to make placards, hats out of cardboard and bamboo walking sticks for the spy and bosses dance and a paper carnation for Botha. The placards which we made read as follows, "bosses' lament", "Botha's blues", "meanwhile in England", "back in South Africa".

Once we had made all the props and had basically polished each scene, we did many run-throughs of the play so that people would be clear about the order of the scenes. We also had a technical run-through to set who was going to carry which implements onto and off the stage, who was going to carry placards and guitars and where these would be placed on the stage.

We tried to check that each part of the play was dramatic, interesting, and carried out with conviction, energy, life and concentration. It was very important to work hard on the transitions between the scenes so that the energy of the performance was sustained and did not fluctuate. The transition between the bosses' dance and Botha's speech did not work well and so one person suggested that people hum, *Uit die blou van ons se hemel*, which worked very well as the actors were moving to their new positions.

Finally the play came truly to life when the group performed in front of the audiences. In this context the variety, humour and defiance of the play fed off the response of the audiences.

I have described the process of creation of this play in detail to try to show the open endedness of the workshop process. The facilitator in this process has to be well prepared in terms of providing ideas around which to improvise.

A facilitator might suggest certain content directly because of time constraints, or might come up with stylistic suggestions like the metal piping which appeared at the beginning of the play and at the end again. A facilitator has to know when to intervene and when to allow things to run. One of the most important things is to structure improvisations so that the whole group is occupied so that no one gets bored. The facilitator has to keep good records of the process, suggest cuts, and be open to input from others.

As we have tried to describe the process of creating the play, we now present the script of the play so that those who are interested can examine the details, and so that the process of recording is complete.

LABOUR BILL PLAY

script

Scene 1.

Each person in the group comes onto the stage one by one with metal pieces and then freezes. Once people have made their entrance everyone scrambles for their bell pipes and knocks them on the floor producing noisy metallic sounds. Zamikhaya then summons people to play their pipes. Each person stands up and the pipe music begins. When this ends, people walk purposefully and noisily across the stage clearing it of all metal objects.

Scene 2.

Union gains scene.

Pat: My name is... I work at... We fought long and hard for union recognition, for the right to negotiate, to bargain for better working conditions.

Nombulelo: My name is... I worked at... We fought for health and safety at work,

Makhosi: For a fair hearing for dismissed workers and for the right to strike.

Shaamiela: For a say in the retirement process. For the right to fight for reinstatement.

Nomkitha: Our aim was one industry one union. We fought for the right to support workers in other factories so that the bosses feel the pinch.

Zamikhaya: We boycotted white shops. We refused to board busses when transport costs went up.

Nomkitha: We went to the funerals of our leaders, Neil Aggett, Phineas Sibiya, Andries Raditsela.



Nombuloco: We stayed away to show our anger at the banning of organisations and at the restrictions placed on our unions.

Pat: We continue to build slowly from the bottom up. It is difficult to cut off the many heads of iNkanyamba, our tomado snake.

Scene 3.
iNkanyamba song.

*Where are you ancestors?
Lalelani and witness
Here is the mammoth creature you
wanted to create
the one you dreamed of
iNkanyamba
the workers' freedom train
'kanyamba, 'kanyamba, 'kanyamba x2
the workers' freedom train
COSATU here we are
heed our cry
we have emerged
from all corners
of this land
we say, today
that our hope
is in your hands
and we are ready
for the workers'
freedom train
helele helele helele x2
the workers' freedom train*

Scene 4.

Bosses'Lament. (Placard reading
Bosses' lament.)

Shaamiela: What is on the agenda this morning, gentlemen?

Nomkitha: All these strikes.

Nombuloco: Don't talk to me about strikes, man!

Pat: These stayaways.

Shams: Sympathy strikes.

Zamikhaya: Boycotts.

Makhosi: Stoppages.

Nomkitha: Do you remember the SARWU strike?

Everyone: (agonised), Oh no! (as if Please don't remind me)

Zamikhaya: Do you remember the Post and Tele-communication Workers' Strike?

Everyone: Oh, oh, oh.

Makhosi: Do you remember the biggest strike of all, the Miner's Strike?

Everyone: Oh, no, no, no!

Pat: We are losing millions and millions, Botha better do something about this.

Scene 5.

Botha scene. (Placard, Botha's Blues.)

The players become spectators watching Botha delivering his speech and are also obviously supporters. They hum *Uit die blou van ons se hemel* as Nomkitha puts on her carnation for the part of acting Botha.



Scene 6.

Thatcher scene. (Placard, 'meanwhile in England.' Enter spies, testing out their walky-talkies in high comic style.)

Pat: testing, testing number two.

Zamikhaya: Yes number one.

Pat: You know number one, I'm longing for Lion lager.

Zamikhaya: Listen number one, this is not South Africa here. We must work. Testing, testing, number three, number three, number three?

Makhosi: Yes number two, I've been listening to the lekker music en ek is moeg nou! Testing testing number four,

Shamiela: Ya number three, a klein stukkie braai vleis sal nou neea wess, ne!

Pat: Listen, we must go back to South Africa with good information. (The spies move into Thatcher's room and search about).

Nomkitha: I greet you in the name of the National Party in this land of our forefathers. Terrorists are busy invading the country. People are wasting time burning people, houses and government properties. Because we love the people of South Africa, we are here to protect you. The government has declared a state of emergency for our people's safety, for our children's education and for a brighter future in South Africa.

I am prepared to release Mr. Nelson Mandela if he denounces violence and if he agrees to go back to the Transkei.

Lastly, people who support sanctions, they must know that they are killing themselves. I am not going to suffer.

They will, not me. We are to prepared to fight till the last man is left behind, for the protection of this country.



Bosses' Dance, The Labour Bill Play.

Nombulelo: Oh, My God, it's ten o'clock, I must phone Dennis.

(As soon as the others hear "Thatcher's" voice they dive into positions becoming part of the bedroom furniture, a phone, a cupboard, a mirror and a dressing table stool. Thatcher enters humming to herself and notices that one of her drawers is open and goes to the phone to phone Dennis. She presses the nose eyes of one of the group to ring the number and speaks through her hand as a receiver.

Nombulelo: Hello, is that you, Dennis? I'm home already. See you at lunch time then. Bye.

(She then moves to her dressing table and sits one of the group members who has become a chair. While putting on her makeup she sings).

See I'm riding high on my democracy plans.

Mrs Maggie here with her iron clamps

'Cause I promote scabbing with my money and my laws
Split unions, take closed-shop agreements away.

Thatcherism.

Yes I say no more solidarity strikes with the workers.

Can't you see I got it right in 1985
I smashed the miners, drove them from the pits.

No minimum wage agreements for unionists

cause they want to be wiser than me
So I fine them for strike damages in my country.

Be Thatcheristic, Imperialistic, Yes Capitalistic.

Mrs Maggie's out to kill.

Scene 7.

Spy and bosses' dance (placard, Back in South Africa. Hat and stick dance.)

Everyone:
*If Thatcher can do it
why can't we?
They say we are the scum of the
world
but, so are they.
Who are they,
Thatcher and Bush,
The iron lady and the war monger?
But how?
With the new labour bill
With the new labour bill
(One by one) No more illegal strikes.
Gone are the days of sympathy strikes
No more last in first out
Don't you think it's fair for politics to
stay at home?
No more consumer boycotts!
Let's play divide and rule x4
Let them pay for the damages done
100% representation for recognition
of the unions.
Don't you come with your 60%,
don't you come with your 80%,
don't you come with your 90%
100% is the number we want!*

Scene 8.

'Good' worker 'Bad' worker scene.
(A boss enters and sits on the backs
of two workers and filed his nails)

Pat: Morning Koosie, morning
Kitha!

Nombulelo and Nomkitha: Morning
baasie!

Pat: Smile.
(they smile)
(Pat polishes his shoes on their
backs)

Pat: You see, these are the workers
who I prefer.

They do whatever I ask them to. They
come to work even when it's a workers'
holiday. (suddenly gets a headache).

Koosie, Koosie.

Nomkitha: Yes Baasie.

Pat: I've got a head ache, Please do
something. (She massages his head and
back and it becomes quite a sexual
thing. He then falls of nombulelo's
back and the other workers laugh at
him. He gets up and threatens the
'bad' workers.

Pat: These are the workers giving me
all the trouble. When they finish here
at five o'clock they go out organising
the union.

But I've got a surprise for you. The
new labour bill will be on top of your
head.

Scene 9.

Workers song - *Solidarity*.
*When the unions' inspiration through
the workers' blood shall run there shall
be no power greater anywhere beneath
the sun*

*Yet what force on earth is weaker than
the feeble strength of one
but the union makes us strong
solidarity forever x3
for the union makes us strong
In our hands is placed a power greater
than the hoarded gold
Greater than the might of armies
magnified a thousand fold
We can bring to birth a new world
from the ashes of the old
for the union makes us strong
It is we who ploughed the fields
built the cities where they trade
dug the mines and built the
workshops
endless miles of railroad laid
Now we stand outcast and starving
midst the wonders we have made
but the union makes us strong.*

Scene 10.
response to the bill.

Shaamiela: When we first heard of the new labour bill we organised a seven week campaign in the factories across the land to show our rejection of the bill. At lunch time there were stoppages, go-slows and dances in the street.

(The groups dance and meet in the street. Zamikhaya, the boss is pushed about in the centre of the group.)

Zamikhaya: What is it you want me to do, gentlemen? Oh I see.

You want me to sign the petition against the new labour bill. Of course I'll sign. I think Botha is mad up there. We've gained so much in the past ten years. Why throw it all away now? (He mimes putting on a pair of glasses and signing the document). Don't you worry, I will post this myself to the minister of manpower.

Makhosi: Some companies have rejected the new bill. GAWU, for example, in the Western Cape has signed an agreement with the bosses against the bill. Premier milling has signed a code of conduct which rejects the bill. Numsa is busy with an agreement with seifsa. Nevertheless, as one shop steward has said,

Pat: The bill will make it difficult for the unions to operate.

Numbulo: Workers will be forced to look for other forms of pressure outside of established industrial relations

Zamikhaya: Employers will find it difficult to deal with these kinds of action and the unions will too.

Nomkitha: It will be difficult to influence or control these actions.

Everyone:

That is the bullet the bosses will have to bite.

(The last song, drums, dance, guitar, voices humming.)

In the middle of the song,
Si boshiwe .

Phansi ne new labour bill, phansi!

We will fight them to the last even if we are jailed.

Forward to the May Day celebrations.

May day, May day, workers' holiday x

4
(exit with the dance and the voices).



THREE SKETCHES

*Experimenting with different
facilitating styles*

Introduction

At the beginning of the first term we did three short sketches on the CAP Popular Theatre course - each of which was facilitated by one of the CAP tutors.

We decided to take three different approaches in these sketches. The one would be totally conceived of and directed by the facilitator, the second would be a combination of workshop production with central ideas being presented by the facilitator and the third would be totally conceived and executed from scratch through a workshop process with the students.

The purpose of this exercise was so that students could analyse the difference between the approaches and think of situations in which these would be appropriate.

Spelling out these processes in more detail one sees that each requires a different style of facilitation by the facilitator.

The Script Completed

In the first the facilitator presents the students with an already completed script. He/she has already clear ideas about how to translate the script dramatically. In other words the facilitator has clear ideas about the visual and aesthetic aspects of the play. It remains simply for the facilitator to give clear directions to participants in order to actualise his or her interpretation. Perhaps it is not as simply stated as this since even within these conflicts the participants are able to bring particular nuances to their parts as is obviously the case with skilled actors and actresses.

Improvising around a Theme

In the second approach the facilitator might have an overall theme in mind as well as a basic structure. They might then ask the group to improvise scenes which are pertinent to this structure and theme. Here participants are able to draw on their own experience and creativity in relation to the theme. However if the theme is remote from their experience and they are unable to draw on imaginative resources to leap as it were into an unfamiliar situation, they might struggle to translate the themes which have been presented by the facilitator.

Participation

In the third approach the facilitator tries to ensure the full participation of all participants. Here they might ask each participant for a suggested theme, then the group might choose a theme which seems most gripping. The facilitator will then ask the group to split up into smaller groups and to improvise some of these ideas. The best out of these improvisations will be chosen. This method directly draws on the creativity of all those participating as well as their particular vitality. If this process is skillfully handled by the facilitator a great deal can be drawn out of participants who need not have acted before. This method also has the advantage of empowering the participants with a sense of what they are able to bring to the group process.

The first sketch we did, called Temba the Activist, was completely conceived by the facilitator. The style employed in this piece centered on four narrators, the use of visual puns, humour and the use of minimal, suggestive props. The writing was characterised by short, crisp dialogue. Here other students clearly identified the intention of the piece when they saw it since very clear instructions had been given to the student actors.

In the second piece, the intention had been to reflect life within worker hostels on Friday nights i.e. a particular reality. This theme had been chosen by the facilitator. The students themselves had little, if any, experience of migrant hostel life. The way spectators read the piece did not cohere with the intention of the facilitator. What came across most clearly was that the play exposed exploitation of women and criticised alcohol abuse in the hostels. These aspects came across most strongly because people were more easily able to act out these things from their own experience. In other



words the students brought a particular colouring to certain improvisations.

In terms of form, style and techniques, this piece was also done in a story-telling mode but narration needed to be clearer. Students noted that different levels were used through the use of boxes to make the piece visually interesting. Students also noted that different spaces were used to create different atmospheres. For example cramped space was used to create the feeling of crampedness in the hostel.

The third piece attempted highlighting awareness of detainees' plight and Vlok's promise to release a substantial number of people, and to encourage vigilance with respect to Vlok to see whether he would keep his promise. The perceived function of the piece was co-terminous with this intention.

Here people noted how both dialogue and story-telling were used, as well as a chorus and characters. Visual effects were created by using bodies creatively. The piece was characterised by the use of a variety of forms - music, dance, mime, drama, dialogue etc.

The candles which were used at the end of the play and which were used while making different dedications to the hunger strikers provided atmosphere.

In getting students to identify various aesthetic elements in the pieces - the visual 'language' of the pieces - as well as getting students to analyse whether the perceived function of the pieces was the same as the facilitator's intentions with regard to the aim of the sketches, we began to equip students with the ability to analyse their work on different levels.

The students also identified what they thought would be the advantages and disadvantages of these three methods. These were as follows.

Advantages of the first approach: It was felt that this approach could be useful when a play is required in a short space of time. Here one starts with a script and this simply has to be translated into visual form. However there are disadvantages to this approach because it limits the creative contribution of individuals in the group- The group simply gives effect to the facilitator's ideas.

In the second approach the advantages were that one started with a theme, so less time was spent discussing this. This method also allowed space for research into areas which people were not necessarily familiar with, for example the students could theoretically have visited some hostels and spoken to workers there as a basis for their improvisations. This method also allows individuals to contribute from their experience and creativity in improvisations. The disadvantages of this method is that a lot of rehearsal time is needed to explore the themes suggested by the facilitator. Also, participants might be at a loss if they have no experience of the theme which they would be able to translate expressively.

In the third approach there is the important advantage that the group is involved in each part of the creative process from its inception to its completion. This method therefore builds the group. If the facilitator plans the workshop carefully, all participants can be fully occupied throughout the process in multiple improvisations which are then shared with the group and assessed collectively with the facilitator's guidance. This is a great advantage in maintaining the energy of the group. The method draws particular strengths out of the individual participants which all contribute to the liveliness of the piece. People are invariably surprised by what they can come up with in improvisations and this has the effect of galvanising the group and increasing people's excitement and their commitment to the task.

The disadvantages of the method are that it is time consuming. Also it might not have the coherence that a completely scripted piece might have because, in this latter case the writer has perhaps considered consistency of form and might ensure that the piece has a 'pleasing' shape, that themes are adequately developed and followed through etc. This need not necessarily be the case for a piece which has been totally improvised. However if the facilitator is doing a good job, he/she

consistency, etc. and suggest where things need to be extended or cut.



CHILDREN'S WORKSHOPS

Planning workshops for children

In this article we give guidelines on how to plan workshops for children. These were brainstormed within CAP when students were asked to run children's workshops for International Children's Day at Ocean View. These guidelines could in principle be applied with modifications to content when planning other kinds of workshops.

We decided that it was important for students to learn how to plan a workshop so that these would not be run in an ad hoc way where the outcome would be uncertain.

Planning a workshop involves clearly thinking through the purpose so that one achieves what one has set out to do. Before one can plan for a specific kind of workshop, it is important to have certain information.

More specifically one needs to know:

- * The number of people attending the workshop.

- * The kind of venue that will be used, whether it will be indoors or outside, as well as the size of the space.

- * Which kind of people will be attending the workshop. Will they be adults, children, disabled, illiterate?

- * What is their employment status, their gender, language, level of consciousness, class and age?

- * How long will the workshop be? - That is, how many hours or days will you be required to run the workshop?

- * What is the level of theatrical experience of the participants?

Structuring a Children's Workshop

1. One must first establish the aim of the workshop and there are a number of ways you can do this.

- * Consult with the host organisation.
- * Draw on one's own experience or one's organisations' experience.

- * Research International Children's issues.

- * Research International Children's Day itself.

- * Analyse what is needed by children at the time and assess one's own skills in terms of this.

- * Consult children's books and gather games for children.

Once one has gained the basic information regarding the place, time, language to be used, the children's ages, etc., one should have a clear idea as to the aim of the workshop. Resource organisations which one might contact for information on children in the Cape are: Molo Songololo, Sached-Upbeat, Grassroots Education Trust, Vumani, Children's Resource Centre, Free the Children.

Aims for a Children's Workshop

We suggest possible aims for a children's workshop. One should not choose all of these but a few that could really be worked through.

- * to encourage sharing
- * to teach the children and learn from the children at the same time

- * to encourage caring
- * to break down competitiveness

- * to break down socialisation or social stereotypes of how boys and girls should behave e.g. challenge the notion that 'boys don't cry' or 'girls don't climb trees'.

- * to be patient
- * to develop trust

- * to teach new values or new perspectives

- * to break down racism
- * to encourage co-operation

- * to have fun

- * to educate children about important social, and medical and health issues e.g. the sexual abuse of children and other violence against children.

- * to teach the children skills such as music or dance.

Once one is clear about the aim of the workshop it is important to spell out one's rationale for the aims. The rationale of one's aims for a particular workshop are the reasons why one has decided upon a certain aim, why the aim of the workshop is important.



CHILDREN'S WORKSHOP

Content of the Workshop

Once one has decided on the aim and the reasons for choosing the aim/s of the workshop, one has to develop an outline of content for the workshop which will fulfil the aims identified. The content of the workshop refers to components which will make up the workshop, i.e., the kinds of things one will be doing.

For example one might decide to do some of the following in a workshop:

- * play non-competitive games
- * exercises, warm-ups to make children feel more at home and energised
- * story telling
- * improvisation (in dance, around animals/ or characters, or music)
- * drawing/ visual art
- * reading a story and having children act it out
- * singing
- * pictures/ slides of other places
- * recitation/ poetry
- * puppetry

There are an infinite number of things one could choose for a children's workshop. One's own imagination and creativity are also an important resource.

Structure

Once the general content of the workshop has been chosen, structure the workshop in detail, deciding the order of the items and how much time will be spent on each. If more than one person is facilitating, it is important to know which person is going to introduce which section of the workshop.

The running of the workshop should be smooth and energetic so that the children do not lose interest. It is therefore important to write down who is leading which section of the workshop. Once one has itemised each section of the workshop and decided how long each section will last, add up all the times to see if you have enough to fill the time allocated for the workshop.

A suggested structure is as follows:

1. Introduction.

The facilitator/s introduce themselves to the children and explain what the workshop is about as well as the rules of play, for example, children are not to hurt each other, signs for silence, etc.

The facilitators should also explain what the workshop aims to do.

Name-games may be played so that children learn one another's names.

2. Warm-up exercises and energetic games making use of both words and body movements (10 minutes).

3. Communication and trust games (15 minutes).

4. A forth section concentrating specifically on the aims of the workshop (one and a quarter hours).

5. Evaluation (10 minutes).

At the end of the workshop it is good to ask the children what they liked and what they didn't like. This kind of feedback is useful in evaluating what

has been done so that one can improve future workshops.

Method

Lastly, it is important to explore the method of teaching or facilitating that one will be using.

Content and structure refer to what is going to be done in the workshop. The method refers to how the content will be explored. The method one uses in the workshop must be consistent with the aims of a workshop. If, for example, one is teaching values of participation and non-competitiveness, it is important to make sure that all children participate.



POPULAR THEATRE AND MUSIC

CAP's MUSIC COURSE

In the CAP music course this year we approached sound and 'music' from a performance point of view. In other words we decided not to concentrate on musical proficiency in the narrow sense but examined how music and sound could be effectively employed in the context of theatre, or drama.

The course aimed not at trying to teach the students how to play complex musical instruments because very creative and exploratory sounds could be made with simple objects and the human voice and body. We wished to explore this potential in the students so that when they returned to their communities and organisations, collective sound exploration could take place within new cultural groups. We felt that students did not have to have expensive instruments to make music.

We began the year by exploring the voice as instrument. We engaged in collective sound exploration using the voice and body movements. Here we tried to explore sounds unrelated to language and sounds which were not clichéd ways of expressing certain emotions. We explored how important silence is and how, if the group becomes aware of the power of silence, the sounds which emerge from this or which are born out of it can be effectively staggered. In this way the group tried to be very conscious of the relationship between each participant since the sounds which were improvised were only effective if all participants listened very carefully to one another and were sensitive to the sounds which were being created. In these sound sessions we tried to show how sound in its own right can be a very powerful and unusual means of communication. It is not always necessary to use words in presenting a play for others. Also even if words are used within a play groups should not be afraid of including long spaces of movement and sound or; silence, and movement within their plays.

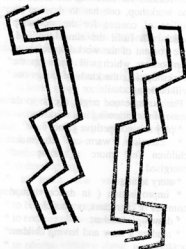
Voice as Instrument

Such sound explorations can be used to create different moods. For example: gentle sounds growing out of silence or loud, harsh sounds. Different moods which might be explored are; fear, anger, solitude, happiness. Sounds were also used for exploring more literal things, for example, early morning sounds, storms, band sounds, police attacks.

One of the most important exercises which we practised in the music sessions was one which I call the birth exercise. Here each individual starts panting on all fours and then lets any sound escape unconsciously from them. The person explores a whole host of sounds, whatever comes to them. To do this exercise the group has to be fully focussed and centred on what they are doing. Also the group has to have built up a lot of trust with one another since the sounds which emerge from people are often extremely powerful and embody very powerful feelings. This exercise is certainly not easy to do and is the equivalent, metaphorically speaking, of taking a very private journey.

The second thing which we attempted in the music course was to collect different styles of song from around the country. The song forms which people came up with were as follows: Cape Malay, Isicathamia, amagwijo or initiation songs, wedding songs, songs sung by izangoma, ezomngungqo or click songs which bring out the particular musicality of different languages, ikhaka or choir songs, war songs, lullabies, children's songs, work songs, struggle songs, drinking songs.

In each type of song students taught one another different songs pertaining to that group. We stressed the



importance of the richness of forms in African music and suggested that these could provide a resource which people could draw upon when writing their own songs. In this exercise we attempted to reclaim forms so that people could compose songs with a contemporary content in the styles which are already part of the life of different communities.

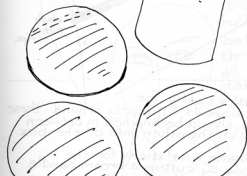
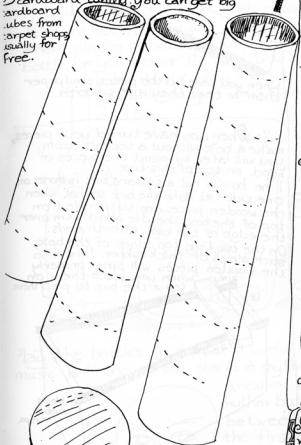
We then workshoped song writing skills. Here groups wrote lines for songs collectively and then put new tunes to these lines rather than trying to fit the lines into already well known tunes.

We also learnt how to make instruments. We made a number of wooden xylophones out of miranti and pine. We then learnt how to play these in a complex two-three rhythm. One of the most exciting instruments which we made was a set of drums made out of cardboard tubing and covered on one end with thin ply wood. We made a set of metal bells out of scrap metal bars. These have a very powerful and penetrating sound. We also formed a bottle blowing orchestra where different notes were created by altering the level of water contained in the bottles.

Finally we learnt a few songs from different countries, particularly from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia, and Namibia.

Cardboard Drums

You can make very effective drums out of cardboard tubing. You can get big cardboard tubes from carpet shops usually for free.



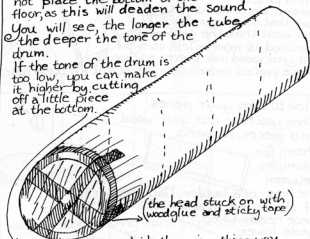
When you have got the carpet tubes, cut them into different lengths. Use the same principle as when making a xylophone. Cut the tubes so that the lengths increase at an even rate. When you cut through the tube, make sure that you are cutting smooth and straight, as uneven cutting will affect the tone of the drum. When you have cut the tubes into different lengths, place them with their openings down on top of a piece of thin plywood. (Buy a piece of the thinnest plywood you can find.) Trace the openings of the tubes onto the plywood by drawing circles round the outside edges of the tubes. Cut out these circles of plywood carefully. These will form the heads of the drums.

2 Now paste the circles of plywood onto the top of each tube, leaving the one side of the tube empty. Use wood glue to stick the plywood to the tube. Cross the head with some sticky tape and allow the head to dry for at least 24 hours before playing.

When you have done this with every tube, you can test the tones of the drums. Place each drum between your knees and strike the head lightly with your hands. Do not place the bottom of the drums on the floor, as this will deaden the sound.

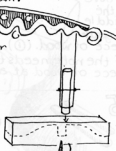
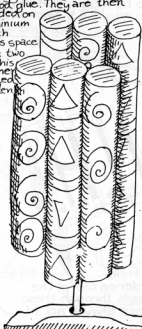
You will see, the longer the tube, the deeper the tone of the drum.

If the tone of the drum is too low, you can make it higher by cutting off a little piece at the bottom.



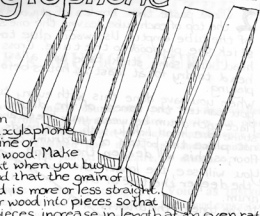
If the tone is too high, there is nothing you can do except make a longer drum.

3. You can make a stand for the drums by sticking them together with wood glue. They are then suspended on an aluminium rod which occupies space between two drums. This rod is then embedded in a wooden foot.



Details of the stand
Trace your design for a stand onto a block of wood. Cut this out. Glue a short dowel stick into a drilled hollow in the centre of your stand. Also fix the dowel rod firmly by screwing it into the bottom with a screw. The aluminium rod is slipped over the dowel which should protrude from the hole in which it is embedded to stop the aluminium tube from moving. Drill a fine hole through the tube and the dowel and place a metal pin through

MAKING A WOODEN xylophone



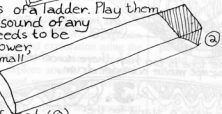
You can make a xylophone out of pine or mirandi wood. Make sure that when you buy the wood that the grain of the wood is more or less straight. Cut your wood into pieces so that these pieces increase in length at an even rate.



When you have cut the pieces, sandpaper them so that they are smooth.

How to tune your pieces.

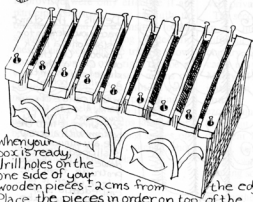
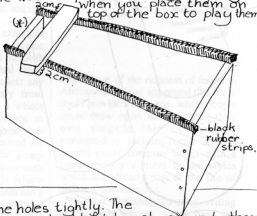
When you have cut your wood into pieces, suspend them, for example, between the legs of a ladder. Play them. If the sound of any piece needs to be made lower, saw a small groove in the middle of your piece of wood. (1). If the note needs to be higher, cut off a piece of wood at an angle as shown (2).



When you have tuned your pieces, make a box without a top or bottom. You will later suspend the pieces of wood on top of this box.

The box is not a square, but is shorter on one side (*). Make the box so that when the wooden pieces are suspended on top of the box, they lie about 2cm over the edge of the box at both ends.

On the two long top edges of the box, stick strips of thick rubber. This is so the wooden pieces will sing properly when you place them on top of the box to play them.

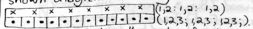


When your box is ready, drill holes on the one side of your wooden pieces 2cms from the edge. Place the pieces in order on top of the box and knock long nails through these holes as shown. These should not fit

the holes tightly. The pieces should fit loosely around these holes. Nails should be knocked in between the pieces on the other side of the box as shown.

You can make nice sticks for the xylophone by cutting a broom handle into pieces.

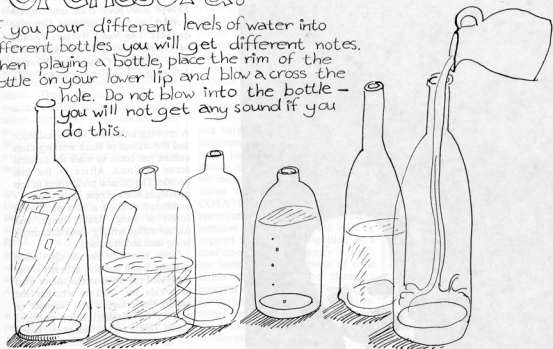
You could practise composing tunes for the xylophone by playing a 2/3 rhythm. One hand would play cycles of two notes and the other hand would play cycles of 3 notes. If you clap this rhythm with your hands you will see that the first '2' beat and the first '3' beat fall at the same time. The second '2' beat falls on the 'and 3' beat of the other hand. This is shown diagrammatically as follows:



Practise each hand's cycle of notes separately before putting them together.

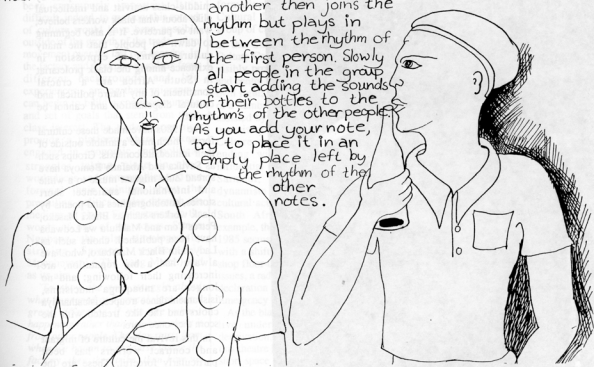
How to make a bottle Orchestra:

If you pour different levels of water into different bottles you will get different notes. When playing a bottle, place the rim of the bottle on your lower lip and blow across the hole. Do not blow into the bottle - you will not get any sound if you do this.



Play the bottles in groups. A useful way of composing tunes for bottle music is if one person starts a rhythm with their bottle,

another then joins the rhythm but plays in between the rhythm of the first person. Slowly all people in the group start adding the sounds of their bottles to the rhythms of the other people. As you add your note, try to place it in an empty place left by the rhythm of the other notes.



KELWYN SOLE ON :
"Organise and Act"

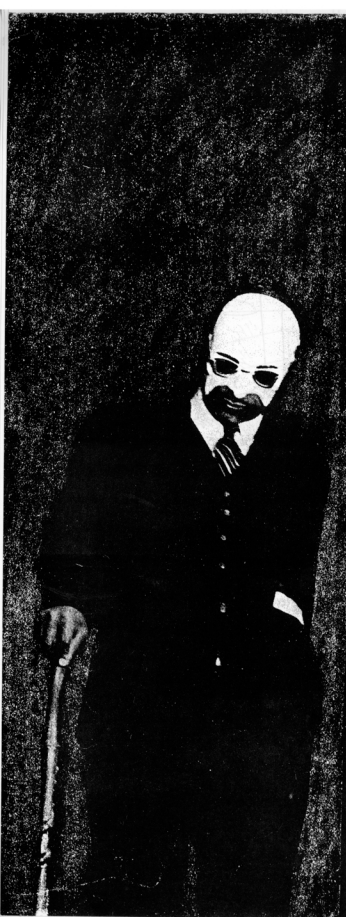
Kelwyn Sole, poet, critic and English lecturer at UCT, critiques Organise and Act: The Natal Workers Theatre Movement 1983-1987 by Astrid von Kotze (Durban: Culture and Working Life Project, University of Natal: 1988)

A growing awareness of the resilience and importance of black working class culture has come to mark the cultural scene in South Africa in the last decade. The cultural preferences of less privileged black people in the country - expressed through a host of diverse forms of song, dance, music and (occasionally) writing - are increasingly being used and discussed.

Gone, hopefully, are the days when academics and political activists either dismissed culture as irrelevant, or tried to decide for workers whether the culture that emerged was 'suitable' or not, in an ideological or political sense. This arrogant viewpoint, based on ignorance and manipulation, is being replaced to some extent in contemporary South Africa by debate. What is becoming clear is how little was actually known in the past by middle-class activist and intellectual alike about what black workers believe, want or perceive. It is also beginning to dawn on people that the many cultural forms of expression in existence among the black proletariat in South Africa are a crucial constituent of any future political and cultural dispensation and cannot be denied.

The 1980s have made these cultural forms much more available outside of their immediate contexts. Groups such as Savuka and Abafana Bomoya have spread Zulu migrant music to a white and international audience: short stories, autobiographies and poems by black workers such as Bheki Maseko, Petrus Tom and Makhulu wa Ledwaba have been published: choirs such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo, who have always had a big reputation, are increasing their following; and no longer are mbaqanga musicians, isishameni dance troupes, isicathamiya choirs and the like treated with the scorn they once were.

In this revival the culture of migrant and contract workers has been particularly forceful. These are the 'people between', who found



historically little meaningful entertainment or means of expressing themselves in the cities and compounds. Consequently, out of what are often extremely impoverished circumstances, they have created a culture which uses traditional and rural forms as a basis and expands and changes these forms to fulfil new needs. They are uniquely situated to mould traditional and modern, rural and urban, ethnic and class identities into exciting new forms. Mandlenkosi Makhoba, foundry worker and actor, explains his experience and expressive urge:

I work here in Boksburg but my spirit is in... the countryside. I was born there and my father was born there. But for twenty years now I have worked in the factories on the East Rand... I tell you this story to remind you of your life. I tell you this story so you will remember your struggle and the story of the struggle we fight. AMANDLA!' 1

It can be seen through statements such as this that these writers and performers - many of whom use African languages out of preference and necessity - see their primary audience as other black workers. Furthermore, in this cultural upsurge the democratic organisations of the working class have been enormously important. It is difficult, indeed, to see how this spread of culture would have been possible outside of the growth of the trade union movement over the last two decades. In the factory and workplace workers from different backgrounds and life experiences - among them migrants - can begin to build a common purpose and set of goals that stem from their class interest. The trade unions also provide a platform where workers engaged in economic and political struggles taking place in their workplaces and communities and put forward their opinions about the prevailing political order through the medium of plays. For instance, in the words of one of the actors, Simon Ngubane, the play developed by striking Sarmcol workers in Mpophomeni (The Long March) had as its aim

To show the real struggle about what happened at Sarmcol. It makes a great difference if you see what's happening rather than just hear about it from other people. The play starts from when we began to organise inside the factory, then the strike, then how we organised in the community.' 2

Yet the price of cultural activism and change, like everything else in South Africa these days, is often high. Simon

Ngubane, for one, was murdered by politically motivated assailants in 1986; a prominent COSATU activist, poet and actor, Temba Qabula, was forced to go into hiding during the ongoing UDF-Inkatha clashes in Natal after receiving death threats; and on one occasion a non-worker play about rent boycotts was attacked by vigilantes, its road manager killed and the costumes and props burnt.

Von Kotze's book traces the genesis and burgeoning of one of the most important constituent parts of this battle for working class culture: the theatre movement which arose out of the initiative of members of the trade union federation FOSATU (later COSATU) in its Natal region of operation. Beginning with its early, tentative steps as a means to build up support for union recognition at a conflict-torn Dunlop factory in 1983, the book traces the growth of trade union theatre and the changing concerns and increasing self-confidence of its participants. Important milestones along this road are documented: the decision after the success of the Dunlop play that culture, indeed, was a vital means of operation for trade union members and not simply a useful occasional means of support for isolated union issues; the consequent formation of the Durban Workers' Cultural Local (DWCL) by a core group of cultural activists; the opening of the Clairwood Trade Union and Culture Centre in 1985, a venue which visibly provided an autonomous base and centre for trade union culture in its own right; and a detailed examination of a number of plays either initiated or assisted by the DWCL and its support organisation at Natal University, The Culture and Working Life Project, ending with the well known and influential play by strikers from BTR Sarmcol, The Long March. The dynamism and responsiveness of cultural activists to political events in South Africa is also traced. For example, the formation of COSATU in 1985 seems to have gone hand in hand with a shift in theatrical concern from shop floor-orientated to wider political issues, a radicalisation sharpened by the declaration of a country-wide State of Emergency the same year.

As the black workers of South Africa live under conditions of extreme deprivation, the success and popularity this theatre has achieved in a relatively short space of time is striking. The actors usually have to perform in exceptionally crowded, improvised conditions at union meetings and other

gatherings, and the stage props they have to rely on are sometimes rudimentary in the extreme. Volunteers who have come forward to participate in these plays tend to come from a cultural background to which notions of 'theatre' - at least in its Western connotations: are alien. One reads again and again of actors whose previous performance experience before taking part in these plays was limited to sketches at school, participation in rural traditional oral forms, or other types of display such as boxing, soccer and gospel groups.

Trade union members are often not fully literate or proficient in English, and their resultant oral and vernacular predilections have allowed an immediate, wide-ranging response that not much other theatre in the country enjoys. Audience participation is desired and expected: in the singing of songs, the chanting of slogans and so on. At times the division between actors and audience is broken down by shrewd improvised means. Scabs on stage threaten to report the audience who boos them to the boss; or the audience is invited to submit demands for a fictional labour dispute taking place on stage.

The DWCL has relied on workshopping as a way of formulating and rehearsing plays, and von Kotze goes into this process in some detail. She shows how a more democratic, flexible and representative product emerges from such pooling of resources, skills and life experiences in making the plays. The book further points to the political, as well as artistic, gains from this technique. A sense of unity, respect for collective experiences of oppression and their causes are some of the advantages the author notes. Moreover, this theatre is responsive and responsible to the views of its constituent trade union organisations. Often participants are elected to these plays by the trade union concerned. Shop steward, union meeting and community responses and suggestions have shaped the ongoing additions and alterations that are made as the plays are performed over time.

Given the political profile of COSATU in South Africa at present, it comes as no surprise that this theatre is politically committed and takes up a combative anti-apartheid and pro-working class stance. Von Kotze isolated two main types of plays which have emerged over the first five years of the theatre movement. The one - which she calls 'plays for mobilisation' - are propaganda tools used for

publicising areas of conflict, and are generally initiated by workers from within a work-place or factory to mobilise support for strike action or related campaigns such as consumer boycotts. The second type are 'educational' plays which aim to deal with and facilitate discussions and debates, and widen understanding of working class or other issues. The concerns dealt with in this latter type of play are diverse, and include the disintegration of moral values caused by migrancy, the history and intertwining of capitalism and apartheid in South Africa, the localised history of communities such as the now destroyed Mkhumbane (Cato Manor), generational conflict, the sexual exploitation of women and the problems caused by 'sell-outs' in the factories and right-wing vigilantes in the townships.

The gains of the cultural organisation of workers have been many. "Plays give a message to the people to think", notes Temba Qabula. Other activists point out that this theatre has helped forge links between workers and other township dwellers by reflecting worker concerns at home as well as factory. It has also strengthened worker unity and shown up divisions which do not assist the struggle for liberation, and has provided a platform for debate and a model of democratic, collective procedures of operation. Mi S'Dumo Hlatshwayo adds: "We're talking about a whole new world with COSATU. It's our responsibility as cultural workers to broaden it. To extend it" (p.77).

The cultural activists here involved are aware that their world view has been downplayed in South African history. The need to begin creating the possibilities for workers to control their own creative power is an implicit theme throughout the book, as is the desire to put across a true picture of things - our picture' (p.65). It is interesting to note the overwhelming audience demand for realism in these plays: accuracy of presentation always, we are told, outweighs theatrical licence in evaluations by audiences. Thus, while various forms of stylization and symbolic and humorous depiction do occur (the appearance of a masked actor in a huge, grotesque likeness of Maggi Thatcher is one of the high points of *The Long March*), communication of working class experience and consciousness, and portrayal of the brutal realities of life for the vast majority of people in South Africa, is of paramount concern.

There are, however, a few weak areas to be found in this generally

informative and fascinating work. While Von Kotze does touch on some of the problems that have accompanied the inception of this kind of theatre - in the production and presentation of *The Long March*, for instance - a full discussion of problems this theatre and, indeed, COSATU, have had in their attempts to forge a unified working class consciousness in the strife-torn regions of Natal still under Inkatha sway are rather lightly touched upon. The collapse of the Kwamashu Street Cleaners' Play, under the pressures of the divergent political opinions of its members and worsening situation, leaves the reader with several unanswered questions as to the extent of the political and ideological cleavages this theatre is faced with; as does the incident of the burning of *The Long March kombi* in Soweto while on tour, by a group of self-professed 'comrades'.

We are told early on that the book does not intend to take up the debate regarding 'working class culture' and 'popular culture' which has occurred spasmodically in various progressive and labour journals in South Africa over the past few years. There are seemingly good reasons for this, as we are told that *Organise and Act* must be seen as only an introduction to this subject matter. Nevertheless some of the consequences of this decision are to be regretted. There is no consistently precise overall sense as to what boundaries of acceptability of working class definition and ideology might be, except in the most obvious sense of the division between the apartheid government and its allies on one side and the 'oppressed' on the other. This means in effect that the working class and its organisations blur too absolutely into the pan-class popular-democratic forces it is allied with at present, in the drive to end apartheid. The problematic areas of the intertices of racial, class, ethnic and gender identities consequently do not really begin to be explored in any useful manner. At times, attitudes which must appear controversial to any socialist are recorded uncritically in the course of the book (vide the ethnicist statement about Pondo-speakers on p.57 and the patriarchal-incorporative message lurking behind at least one of the play's discussed (pp. 112-3)).

Furthermore, despite the disclaimer that 'there is no recipe for making plays' (p.16), a strong identification of the author with certain practices and goals within the trade union movement becomes discernible as one reads. Again, this might not necessarily be a

bad thing: but the practical and theoretical pros and cons of the 'true/false consciousness' discourse the book is implicitly steeped in need to be foregrounded and discussed. The early disclaimer does not fit very easily with the increasingly imperative and teleological tone of the book as a whole (cf., for instance, p. 106).

Finally, Von Kotze describes herself as a 'participant observer' in some of the plays, and documents the interaction of militants from the unions with cultural activists as herself who, from the springboard of extra-union and radical middle-class theatre groups, have become increasingly drawn into and identified with trade union culture. The commitment and inside insight she can therefore muster give this book a quality and interest that would probably be missing from a more distanced, academic study. I am less happy, however, with those who are shop stewards or strikers - and the class as a whole they speak for and to. The vision of a participatory and unified working class is ever present in the words of cultural workers quoted in this book. Unfortunately, the complexities of interaction between self-conscious cultural purveyor and newly-elected actor or partly conscientised community sometimes are blurred into a facile organic relationship as a result. This leads to one or two unconscious ironies, such as the rejoinder by actors in the *Long March* to advice from an audience that 'together as actors we decide not to change things without the advice of our organisers' (p.97). This is coupled with a downplaying of the implications of the role of the core-group of activists within the DWCL in shaping the direction, form and ideology of many of the plays discussed here. Moreover, for some working class actors these plays seem to be perceived as in part an enabling device, allowing them to become proficient in English or more 'professional' as actors (pp. 97-8). These gains are heartening, but there is no discussion of how such individual advancement accords with or contradicts the anti-specialist and anti-elitist thrust

of this theatre as a whole. The book's lingering tendency to collapse activist into community (or, on a different level, performer into audience) is in my opinion too easily made.

Nevertheless, this is a valuable book. Its author, and the tirelessly committed cultural workers she speaks of, are to be congratulated on their achievement. One comes away from *Organise and*

Bambatha's Children



Sarmcol Workers' Co-operative

Act with an overwhelming impression of the importance of what has been begun here. One of the members of the DWCL, Mi Hlatshwayo, has since been elected the first full-time cultural co-ordinator of COSATU, and has taken on the task of facilitating and consolidating culture on a national scale. Recognition that "the struggle for liberation" (p.78) seems to be forthcoming in progressive circles in South Africa now, in a way which must be satisfying and heartening for the activists who have been involved in this generative experience in Natal.

Footnotes

1. Mandlenkosi Makhoba, *The Sun Shall Rise For the Workers* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press: 1984) P.1

2. Pippa Green, 'A Place to Work' *South African Labour Bulletin* (Johannesburg) 11,4 1986 p 19.



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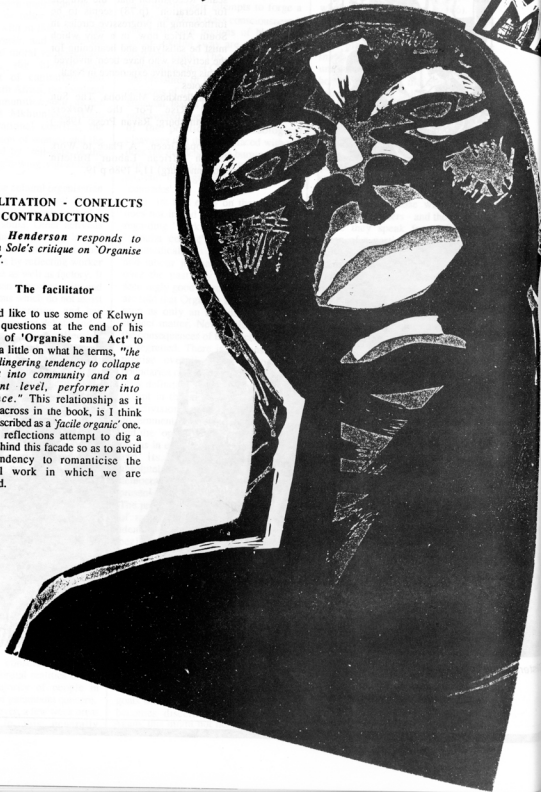
FACILITATION - CONFLICTS AND CONTRADICTIONS

*Patti Henderson responds to
Kelwyn Sole's critique on 'Organise
and Act'.*

The facilitator

I would like to use some of Kelwyn Sole's questions at the end of his review of 'Organise and Act' to reflect a little on what he terms, "*the book's lingering tendency to collapse activist into community and on a different level, performer into audience.*" This relationship as it comes across in the book, is I think aptly described as a '*facile organic*' one.

These reflections attempt to dig a little behind this facade so as to avoid any tendency to romanticise the cultural work in which we are involved.



G MARCH

They do not claim to be exhaustive but simply try to look at these relationships more openly perhaps not disguising the conflicts or contradictions which have played themselves out in concrete experience.

As a self-conscious cultural purveyor previously involved in facilitating some of the Natal plays, I would like to expose to view the role of facilitator as I experienced it in both the Sarmcol workers' plays, **The Long March** and **Bhambatha's Children**.

I will also examine how I perceived the role of workers participating in the creation of these plays and in their subsequent exposure to audiences of all kinds.

Facilitators in these contexts tried to create a workshop situation in which the participants' particular skills, creativity and experience were given expression. However facilitators often contributed directly in terms of stylistic devices, ideas about how an experience could be translated dramatically etc. This stylisation was not necessarily imposed but sometimes extended out of the actual improvisations of participants. However these extensions arose out of direct prompting from facilitators and involved their particular choices.

Bhambatha's Children

A case in point is the position which the Imbongi or praise poet of Bhambatha occupies in **Bhambatha's Children**.

The notion of the Imbongi being a kind of spirit who survived all generations and who witnessed each generation's particular vitality and resistance, and the idea of him wandering through the play with ever decreasing herds of cattle to reflect dispossession in a poetic manner, were ideas directly introduced by facilitators. These ideas were brainstormed at a discussion about the broad parameters

of the play before the workshop process was embarked upon. Similarly another idea was formulated in this manner - the idea that in each generation similar characters should re-emerge for the sake of continuity and for the sake of winding a complex set of themes throughout the play. Not all of these devices were carried through in the end due to lack of responsiveness from participants who marked the play with their particularity and were not so easily 'persuaded' of the importance of facilitators' obsessions.

On the side of the participants, for all its strengths, the play **Bhambatha's Children** reflected a strongly patriarchal bias. It was as if no women existed in the history of these three generations of resistance. These particular predilections were immediately played out in the present when young women who had participated in the play-making process due to the insistence of union organisers, were later excluded from acting in the play by their male comrades involved in the play.

It is true that as cultural facilitators we attempt to create parameters for workers to express their voices. However voices which emerge might not please everybody and certainly they do not comply with any idealistic notions of working class consciousness. The voices of workers will speak from specific historical experience where issues of race, class and gender have taken on specific forms.

Giving Direction

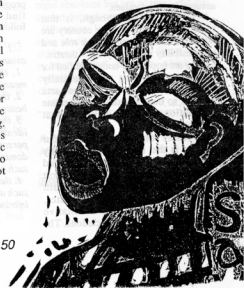
In both these worker plays, the role of facilitator became more directional towards the end of a process when the plays were being tightened and polished for performance. One facilitator might suggest that a more developed speech needed to be written to set the ideological parameters of the play. (An example of this is the first poem which introduces **The Long March** as well as how the ideas contained in this poem are echoed at the end of the play.) Another facilitator might decide that something needs to be cut out or included to make the play flow more easily or to make it more entertaining. In some instances these decisions introduce ideological and aesthetic considerations which are new to participants, or if not new, not internalised.

In this journal we have tried to spell out the complex roles of facilitators which have grown out of experience and the prime reason for running the facilitators' training course at CAP is that we, together with unions and community organisations, have recognised the need for trained workshop facilitators.

All of this suggests that the role of facilitator needs to be explored, its complexities spelt out and these in no way diminished or disguised. It is in reality a skilled role in which questions of form and direction are often initiated by the facilitator and in some cases participants may not share a similar understanding of these.

This situation suggests that on the one hand there are ways in which facilitators can abuse their position - becoming as it were a technocratic elite pressurising people to create pieces which fit the narrow confines of certain 'acceptable models'. Similarly, the ideas of participants might mitigate against ideas which unions or community organisations are trying to promote.

These things call for an insistence on openness, evaluation and education. Situations in which participants set themselves apart from other workers describing themselves as professional actors and being unwilling to share their skills with other workers points out a need for ongoing theoretical education and understanding of how worker and community culture needs to forge new roads, new openings which do not reflect current structures. This is a long hard process and we have barely begun. These problems might also reveal that there is something lacking in the workshop processes we have so far employed concentrating so much as they do on the actual production.



Political theatre that locates itself within the broad democratic movement or that consciously seeks to advance the interests of that movement, must take serious account of its audiences if it wishes to make optimum political gains. In this regard, and not withstanding its first world context, the experience of John McGrath's 7:84 theatre group among working class audiences in Britain, can provide some useful insights into the nature of working class and middle-class audiences. Local progressive theatre groups which because of their ideological orientation and strategic considerations, direct themselves primarily towards working class audiences, would do well to examine these insights.

McGrath writes

My belief, and the basis of my practice as a writer in the theatre for the last ten years, has been that there ARE indeed different kinds of audiences, with different theatrical values and expectations, and that we have to be very careful before consigning one audience and its values to the critical dustbin. Unfortunately, almost all the current assumptions of critical thought do precisely that, by universalising white, middle class, sensitive but sophisticated taste to the status of exclusive arbiter of a true art and culture.

(McGrath, 1981, p.3)

McGrath may as well be writing about theatre criticism and its values in South Africa. In our country, theatre audiences derive particularly from white, English, privileged backgrounds and bring with them certain cultural values and expectations. Newspaper theatre critics - for the daily commercial newspapers anyway - almost all derive from such backgrounds as well and they play a significant role in shaping the audience's theatrical assumptions and values.

A major problem though, is that many theatre critics in our country are not sufficiently aware of their role and responsibility in developing theatre.

Many are hopelessly underqualified for their jobs, as they are essentially journalists employed in the arts sections so that they simply perpetuate the notions and assumptions that already exist.

The reality for political theatre in our country is that there is no financially viable alternative theatre circuit and neither is there organisational support to explore, create and sustain alternative circuits or to foster, encourage and affirm alternative theatrical values and expectations. The

TOWARDS A WORKING CLASS THEATRE AESTHETIC -

Mike van Graan

danger then for political theatre which has its origins in working class experience and which, for whatever reason, ventures into the realm of middle-class, conventional theatre, is that it makes itself vulnerable, and potentially sacrifices itself, to the values and assumptions of its privileged audience. Newspaper critics generally have difficulty with such work, patronising it out of liberal sensitivity or guilt, or applying their traditional values and criteria in a wholly inappropriate way or otherwise acknowledging their difficulties in assessing the work in terms of their values and training, making only general comments in the end.

The long and short of it is that the dominant values and assumptions of bourgeois theatre have significant potential in influencing and shaping even progressive theatre. What white, English, middle to upper class audiences and critics deem acceptable, will dictate the forms of political theatre, certainly of that political theatre which has commercial and/or international aspirations.

Progressive theatre has a responsibility to challenge the values and assumptions of bourgeois theatre and thus to resist the hegemony of the cultural values and ideas of the dominant classes. In this context, progressive theatre practitioners should find resonance with McGrath's following statements

...I do not accept the following assumptions:

- 1. that art is universal, capable of meaning the same to all people*
- 2. that the more "universal" it is, the better it is*
- 3. that the "audience" for theatre is an idealised white, middle-class etc., person and that all theatre should be dominated by the tastes and values of such a person.*
- 4. that, therefore, an audience without such an idealised person's values is an inferior audience*

5. that the so-called "traditional values" of English literature are now anything other than an indirect cultural expression of the dominance over the whole of Britain of the ruling class of the south-east of England.

To be more specific, I DO believe that there is a working class audience for theatre in Britain which makes demands, and which has values, which are different from those enshrined in our idealised middle-class audience. That these values are no less "valid" - whatever that means - no less rich in potential for a thriving theatre-culture, no thinner in "traditions" and subtleties than the current dominant theatre-culture, and THAT THOSE VALUES AND DEMANDS CONTAIN WITHIN THEM THE SEEDS OF A NEW BASIS FOR MAKING THEATRE THAT COULD IN MANY WAYS BE MORE APPROPRIATE TO THE LAST QUARTER OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY THAN THE STUFF THAT PRESENTLY GOES ON AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE, OR AT THE ALDWYCH (my emphasis) (ibid., pp3-4)

McGrath challenges some of the fundamental assumptions of bourgeois theatre eg. that good theatre is theatre which is "universal." Generally what this means is that "good theatre" is defined in terms of its acceptability to establishment theatre audiences (predominantly white and middle-class) in the major cities of the western world eg. London, New York and Paris. Such theatre may not necessarily be "universal" to that particular country even eg. a Neil Simon play on Broadway may have very little appeal to a black audience in the ghettos of Harlem, yet it is considered universal if conventional theatre audiences in London and Paris appreciate and enjoy it.

People relate to "art" in terms of their values afforded by their class position and socialisation, their life experience and their education so that it is foolhardy to speak of the universality of art if one believes universality to mean that the work of art is "capable of meaning the same to all people." It is difficult to believe that a Van Gogh painting will mean the same to a business executive living in Bishopsclout, a migrant worker from a rural area in Transkei, a truck driver for the city council, a domestic worker in a black township, a divisional commissioner of police, Andries Treurnicht and Alan Hendrickse.

Working class audiences in different countries may respond similarly to theatrical techniques such as the use of caricature. For them, this may be a "universally" acceptable technique. Yet bourgeois audiences resent caricature and prefer well rounded, complex characters. For them, this is a universally acceptable and approved theatrical value and expectation. Why should the bourgeois notion be accepted as universal and not the conflicting working class notion? The only reason why this is the case is that the ruling classes of various western countries own or control the cultural, media and educational institutions which perpetuate and ensure the hegemony of their aesthetic tastes and values. McGrath rejects the hegemonic theatrical values of bourgeois theatre in favour of working class values and traditions; it is a conscious political choice and commitment. He is committed to socialism and he sees his theatrical role as identifying, affirming and celebrating the progressive values and traditions of the working class ("...the only social force capable of transforming society in a progressive manner..." *ibid.*, p. 97) and in contributing towards the growth of these values to hegemonic maturity.

Once one accepts the realities of different audiences with their different values, perceptions, assumptions and expectations all of which are generally determined by the respective class positions of the audience, then a conscious political choice needs to be made i.e. whether one will submit one's self to the tyranny of having to pursue acceptability and affirmation by bourgeois audiences and critics by conforming to their values and assumptions about theatre or whether one will work and develop one's theatre in the context and under the guidance of the working class.

It is McGrath's perception, and I believe that it is a perception which is wholly relevant to our situation, that conventional theatre has reached a point of sterility and that it is within working class experience, values and forms that there lies significant potential for the development of new, exciting theatre.

Within this context, there is much content; there are few, if any inhibiting and stifling theatrical values and traditions and there is an increasing demand for theatre; for theatre that is politically effective because it is attractive, interesting and vital. The conditions for exciting progressive theatre are ripe; even the lack of resources may be seen as a spur to greater inventiveness. How much and how soon progressive theatre groups develop their skills, acquire theatrical knowledge, seriously search for exciting forms and respect their audiences, will determine if and when their potential for exciting theatre will be realised.

It remains to be seen whether McGrath's belief that "...theatre can best achieve its independent artistic objectives by becoming part of this hugely complex movement towards a developed, sophisticated but liberating form of socialism..." (*ibid.*, p.98) will be realised in our situation.

The extent to which the broad democratic movement comes to understand and respect the arts as an independent site of struggle with its own laws and dynamics, and allows it to develop as such under the leadership of progressive cultural workers, will determine whether its significant potential will be realised.

To end off, McGrath's generalised list of differences between the theatrical tastes of bourgeois and working class audiences are interesting and valuable. McGrath admits that it is a highly contentious list, but I believe that it can serve as a useful, general guideline and it does arise out of McGrath's extensive experience of both bourgeois and working class audiences.

1. Directness

A working class audience likes to know exactly what you are trying to say or do.

A bourgeois audience prefers obliqueness and innuendo.

2. Comedy

Working class audiences like music in shows, preferably live

Middle class audiences prefer music in operas or musicals: theatre must be theatre!

3. Music

Working class audiences love to laugh.

Bourgeois audiences think that too much laughter makes the play less serious.

4. Emotion

Working class audiences are open to emotion. Middle class audiences are embarrassed by it.

5. Variety

Working class audiences love variety - comedians, singers, juggling etc.

Bourgeois audiences emphasise the spoken word.

6. Effect

Working class audiences demand moment by moment effect, they could get bored easily.

Middle class audiences are trained to sit for hours and wait for dramatic climaxes.

7. Immediacy

For working class audiences, the most interesting subject matter is that which is close to their own lives and experience.

Middle class audiences prefer the subject to be at arm's length from their daily experience.

8. Localism (sense of identity with performers)

Working class audiences take to performers, even if they are from outside of their town, who identify with them culturally.

Bourgeois audiences do not really care where the performer comes from, as long as s/he's great.

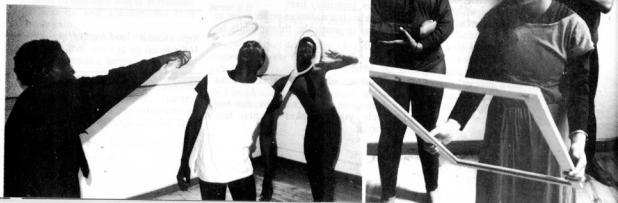
(see pp.54-59, McGrath, 1981)

While these "principles" may indeed be generalised and open to much debate and while they originated in a British context, as general principles they could be quite informative and useful to local progressive theatre groups when determining forms, techniques and how to "pitch" a play to a working class audience, provided they do not become rigid absolutes but are adapted and discarded through praxis where necessary.

Whatever, local theatre groups can take much courage from McGrath's study as they develop new forms and a new critical tradition which will contribute to the growth of a working class theatrical feel.

Reference: A Good Night Out - John McGrath

Scenes from the CAP play, *Tri-cameral Blues*.



Popular Theatre: Functions,



Forms and Techniques

What is Popular Theatre?

"Popular theatre is gaining increasing attention in the third world as a tool for popular education and community organising.

It finds expression in a number of forms including drama, music, dance, puppetry and poetry and is performed for - and often by - ordinary peasants and workers. Popular theatre is used as a means of bringing people together, building confidence and solidarity, stimulating discussion, exploring alternative options for action and building a collective commitment to change: starting with people's urgent concerns and issues, it reflects on these issues and suggests possible strategies for change.

... At its best, popular theatre is not an isolated performance or a cathartic experience, but part of an ongoing process of education and organising, aimed at overcoming oppression and dependence, and at securing basic rights."

(Ross Kidd: Popular theatre and non-formal education in the Third World: Five stands of experience).

Based on this description, popular theatre may simply be defined as theatre of the people for the people and by the people with "the people" being understood as the masses of ordinary workers, peasants and the unemployed who are generally marginalised politically within their societies.

Popular theatre is of the people in that it deals with issues and concerns which affect or arise out of marginalised communities whether it be national issues such as representation in political decision-making structures or community issues like increased busfares and the lack of a fresh water supply or social issues such as child abuse and alcoholism. It seeks to address these problems and to contribute to the process of finding solutions.

In this respect, Popular Theatre differs from commercial theatre where the function of theatre is primarily to entertain and to make profits and where much of the fare is imported from Europe and America and does not arise out of the experience of the audience.

Popular theatre is for the people in the sense that it functions in their interests with the overall aim being to raise their quality of life. Its purpose is to conscientise and facilitate community action to transform adverse social conditions. As opposed to commercial theatre, it is performed free of charge to reach a large audience and is taken to where the people are in makeshift venues or out in the open rather than for an economic elite who can afford theatre ticket prices and travel to specially build theatres.

Finally, popular theatre is by the people in that it is created and performed by generally untrained members of the community in which the issues have their origin. Relatively skilled animators or facilitators may assist the creative process but it is unlike commercial theatre which is performed by skilled professionals who do the works of individual playwrights whether they are committed to what the works are saying or not.

Popular theatre is created within a community, generally through participatory processes, and it is performed for that and similar audiences to reflect their reality to them as a basis for discussion towards action.

What are the functions of popular theatre?

The function of Popular theatre varies according to the context in which it takes place, but basically there are two main strands:

1. Theatre for Development

In post-colonial situations in the third world, popular theatre is used primarily to facilitate community or social development. In this context, popular theatre serves as a springboard for community interaction, decision-making and action.

It is used to stimulate a process of communication, organisation and collective effort. Popular theatre could help bring the community together, facilitate participation, build community spirit, raise issues for discussion, challenge apathy and inspire community effort. It could reflect the community to itself in a way that challenged the community to do something.

Some of the concerns addressed by this kind of theatre are health, literacy, land and resource distribution and agricultural methods. Ross Kidd describes an example:

One of the first experiments was in Botswana where extension workers and village leaders developed an annual programme of theatre-based community education campaigns called "Ladza Batanani" (Community Awakening).

Based on the problems identified in each year's pre-campaign community workshop, themes ranging from cattle theft and venereal disease to nutrition and sanitation, the extension workers and a few village leaders put together a show of socio-drama, songs and puppetry and toured it around the villages, organising discussion at the end of each performance and encouraging the villagers to take action on their problems.

...In Sierra Leone, this approach was applied to a community based health





programme. Village health committees (voluntary bodies set up to spearhead preventative health efforts), prepared plays and put them on to raise health problems and enlist community support for their solutions. This included referring TB victims for treatment, passing village laws to enforce the immunisation of pregnant women and children and digging wells and latrines.

2. Theatre for liberation

The second strand of popular theatre may be found in situations where there is a struggle for liberation from oppressive economic and political structures. These two strands of theatre i.e. popular theatre for development and popular theatre for liberation are not mutually exclusive; they may co-exist in a particular situation. The nature of the overall social context will determine which strand will be found more commonly within that context.

The functions of popular theatre in oppressive and exploitative situations are:

a) Conscientisation/education:

In such cases, a theatre group would travel from place to place educating the masses or their particular constituency about specific issues. The consciousness of the audience would be raised so that they understand firstly, that there is an issue and secondly why that issue exists. In all probability, the theatre group would also convey a solution to the problem.

An example of this kind of group was El Teatro Campesino (The Peasant Theatre) which was formed in the 1960s by a union which organised Spanish-speaking and Filipino farmworkers on the grape ranches of California. The union had called for a strike in support of increased wages and their theatre group, El Teatro Campesino, played a major role in informing workers about the strike by travelling throughout California to all the grape ranches with a variety of sketches on the subject. The theatre group was also sent to play at universities and other urban centres to raise financial and moral support among the broader community.

b) Organisation: When engaged in a political struggle, it is not sufficient to educate or conscientise people, they need to be organised into groups which could collectively plan and execute action in support of their aims.

El Teatro Campesino played a significant conscientising role but they did this within the broader framework of their union which farm workers were encouraged to join through the sketches.

A very important example of this kind of organising popular theatre was developed in Peru in the 1970s by Augusto Boal. In 1973, the Peruvian government decided to embark on a literacy campaign but they did not only want to develop literacy in the indigenous and official Spanish languages, they also wanted to develop literacy in the arts. Boal participated in the theatre programme which developed theatre as a means of raising the aesthetic consciousness of rural peasants but also as a potent tool of analysis and conscientisation based on the ideas of Paulo Freire.

Boal's philosophy was that the means of theatrical production needed to be transferred to the people so that they themselves could utilise these means in their interests.

"Theatre" he says, "is a weapon and it is the people who should wield it."

It was not good enough for skilled groups to come in and conscientise a community and then leave again; it was necessary to impart the skills to such communities so that they had the tools for analysis, organisation and action.

In Boal's model, the spectator is not simply the receiver of information or a passive object of conscientisation facilitated by players performing a politically progressive play; rather the spectator evolves through the process towards becoming the deviser of the script and the performer in a role-play type rehearsal for real life action.

This does not negate the role of conscientising theatre for there will always be the need for theatre as a tool of analysis and conscientisation,

Boal's philosophy was that theatre provided a means to raise consciousness about particular issues.

In the long term though, Boal's model makes a more significant contribution to social transformation because the skills and knowledge are shifted from a few progressive experts to grassroots members of oppressed communities thus empowering them to take action that will lead towards the transformation of their exploitative conditions.

It is a model which moves beyond conscientisation, laying the basis for organisation and action through a theatrical process which facilitates their growth as people and which empowers them by equipping them with tools for analysis, organisation and action.

The model consists of four stages.

Stage One: Knowing the body

This stage is predicated on the belief that "... the first word of the theatrical vocabulary is the human body, the main source of sound and movement. Therefore, to control the means of theatrical production, man must, first of all, control his own body, know his own body, in order to be capable of making it more expressive" (Boal, 1979, p125)

It is a stage that consists of a series of exercises to help one to get to know one's body, its limitations and its potential, as well as its distortions and its possibilities for correction.

Stage Two: Making the body expressive

In this stage, a series of games is played in which the participants abandon their usual ways of communication and instead express themselves solely through the body. In this way, participants are made aware of the vast potential for self-expression which exists in the freeing and creative use of their bodies.

Stage Three: Theatre as language

During this stage, the participants begin to use theatre as a language - not communicating as through a finished product but in a form which is adaptable and exists in the present.

This stage itself consists of three levels:

1) Simultaneously dramaturgy

Here the spectator may intervene in the action without having to be on stage. A group of actors act out a short scene dealing with a particular problem pertinent to that community. They develop it to a point where the problem leads to a crisis, then they stop the action and ask the audience to propose solutions. All the suggestions are then improvised and the audience may correct the actions and words of the actors who are obliged to obey the instructions of the audience.

In this way the audience "writes" and the actors perform at the same time, hence the term simultaneous dramaturgy.

What is interesting about this process too is its potential to raise the theatrical awareness and aesthetic sense of the spectator/audience since not only words are used to improvise their suggestions but preferably other theatrical forms as well.

2) Image Theatre

At this level, the spectator participates more directly by expressing his/her views on a particular subject. But this is done without speaking, only using the bodies of the other participants or actors as if s/he were sculpting them into a group of statues in such a way that they clearly articulated his/her thoughts and feelings on the subject.

When s/he is satisfied with the sculpture, all discuss whether they agree with the "sculpted-" perspective. Modifications are made to the statues until all are satisfied. Then the original

"sculptor" is asked to make another "sculpture" showing how s/he would like the situation to be i.e. to present an ideal image as opposed to the first actual image.

Finally s/he presents a transitional image to indicate a possible transition from the actual reality to the ideal reality. After this, all the others are given a chance to show how they would change the actual to the ideal reality.

3) Forum Theatre

Here the spectator becomes more directly involved in the dramatic action. A skit on a particular problem with a difficult solution is presented after some discussion about the problems. After the skit, the participants are asked whether they agree with the presented solution. If there is disagreement, the skit is presented exactly as before except that now any participant may replace any actor at any stage in the dramatic action and shift the action in the direction that s/he thinks is appropriate.

The other actors have to respond to all the possibilities that the new solution may represent. Those who replace actors are not allowed to simply talk and tell the others what to do, they must lead by action thus emphasising both the importance of action rather than talking and the theatricality of what they are doing.

Through these three levels there is an evolution from the spectator dictating the action from the outside to actively participating in the action and giving direction.

Stage Four: The theatre as discourse

All the previous stages had to do with "rehearsal theatre". This final stage involves simple forms of "spectacle theatre" according to the need to discuss particular themes or raise the consciousness of others in the presented solution.

Such forms include "newspaper theatre" where daily news items are performed theatrically and "invisible theatre" which consists of prepared scenes performed before people without them knowing that they are actually watching a prepared scene.



This "Theatre of the Oppressed" methodology is something that could be used effectively in our situation. Particularly in rural areas where oppression and thus subservience are greatest and where there is little access to analytical tools, the deployment of such a method could equip people with their own analytical tools, serve a politicising function and provide the basis for organisation and action.

It is a method which can be based effectively in working class or urban areas. Besides serving the political functions, it can develop theatrical consciousness and encourage the development of skills which will enable people to create their own theatre. It is a method which does not only pass on theatrical skills or only facilitate the development of political consciousness and organisation. It does both at the same time. Herein lies its strength.

Kidd comments on the Boal method: *Putting the means of the artistic production and analysis within the hands of peasants meant that they were taking control of their own transformation process rather than remaining passive recipients of ideas and analysis from the outside. They were voicing their own concerns and doing their own thinking and this had a major effect on their self-confidence. At the same time the fact that they were doing the cultural work themselves meant that it could be linked more organically with an organising process.*

e) Mobilisation: Popular theatre may be used to mobilise people i.e. to call upon them to act in particular ways. During the Vietnam war against American occupation, the Vietnamese National Liberation Front (NLF) developed culture-drama groups whose sole purpose it was to create support for and recruit people into the NLF and so call on them to resist the American presence there.

d) Boosting morale: Another function of popular theatre is to provide entertainment for the purpose of boosting the morale of activists. During the war in Zimbabwe for example, peasants and guerrillas developed a cultural event known as the *pungwe* which was

... an all night cultural gathering in which the guerrillas and their supporters put on skits, songs, dances and poetry and discussed the issues of war. It was highly participatory. People joined in the singing, contributed their own sketches, music and dances Villagers and fighters acted out and danced their commitments and built up their strength and unity through collective music making.

El Teatro Campesino was also used to entertain workers during long union meetings - in fact, it was a strategy to promise the workers that the group would perform at the end of the meeting, to keep them interested. The longer the strike went on for, the more important became the morale-boosting role of the Teatro as they were popularly known.

e) Developing political leadership: The nature of popular theatre is that it can contribute to the building of political leadership either consciously as through Boal's methods or as an offshoot of participation in theatrical activity.

For example, the experience of El Teatro Campesino was such that the ordinary workers who made up the group developed confidence and gained much organisational experience through their wide travels so that members of the group were often elected to become union representatives or organisers, thus leaving their place in the theatre group to be filled by someone else.

f) Self-criticism: Popular theatre groups attached to movements and organisations struggling for social transformation often raise issues for debate and raise critical points within the movement itself. The theatre form - particularly its use of humour - is most conducive to raising such criticisms in a way that is non-threatening .

g) Raising the quality of life:

Finally, popular theatre may serve to raise the quality of life and aesthetic consciousness of communities which, because of oppressive economic, political and social structures, are denied access to skills training in the arts or to the art institutions of their society. Popular theatre brings theatre to the people and in its best forms, imparts theatrical skills to the people.

Content of Popular Theatre

The content of popular theatre often displays the following characteristics:

a) It is simple in theme. It normally focuses on a single theme, rather than risk possible obscurity of the central message by including too many themes.

b) Reality is presented in stark terms. It is stripped of its complexities and is shown in stark black and white, good and evil terms to facilitate understanding of the basic conflict. Good characters - often representing the audience eg workers - are wholly good; bad characters such as bosses, are wholly bad. They are caricatures rather than the complex characters capable of both good and bad.

c) A third characteristic is the presentation of solutions. It is not enough to educate the audience about a particular problem (they may very well know what the problem is) and hope that they will find their own solutions. In Boal's theatre, the people themselves do indeed develop their own solutions. But other types of popular theatre - particularly conscientising theatre - seek to educate so that action towards the resolution of problems can be taken - hence, the presentation of solutions which could at least be the basis for discussion.

Forms and techniques of popular theatre

International popular theatre groups have discovered that in order to communicate effectively with their audiences or for their theatre to be an attention-holding politically effective weapon, their theatre needs to be visually exciting, attractive and entertaining.



Some commonly used forms and techniques are:

a) Variety

Popular theatre makes use of a variety of disciplines in the same piece and performances could include singing, dancing, dialogue, acrobatics, juggling and visual art. The theatrical styles and forms are gleaned from the circus and from the everyday life experience/culture of the audience and performers i.e. its style is that it consists of many styles.

b) Non-verbal communication

To communicate effectively with bilingual audiences or on the streets or to large audiences where words cannot be heard, popular theatre groups often employ mime, movement and other non-verbal forms of communication.

Sometimes the spoken words are substituted by placards which bear the important words and which are shown at appropriate times. Where words are used, it is in the language of the audience (sometimes 2 or 3 languages are used) but they are accompanied by movements which clearly communicate ting, attractive and entertaining.

c) Humour

Humour is used in most popular theatre pieces as a means of

establishing rapport with the audience and to make them more receptive to the themes being communicated. Humour also provides some kind of cathartic outlet for the audience which is experiencing severe suffering.

d) Props and costumes

Sets, props and costumes - where they are used are very simple as they need to be portable and because the performing group often has very limited resources. Costumes usually just give the suggestion of the character being portrayed, eg a big stomach to represent a boss. Props are usually used in a multi-functional, non-literal way so that for example, a table can be bridge, a prison, a car and a mountain.

Methods of creation

A piece of popular theatre is very rarely written by one person. It is workshoped through improvisation around particular themes identified within the community in which it is to

be performed. Often popular theatre is created by a group of relatively unskilled performers under the guidance of a skilled or trained animator/facilitator.

The ideas for the piece come from the group and they suggest how the ideas should be strung together; the role of the facilitator/animator is to encourage the process of putting forward ideas and suggestions and trying them out and then finally to ensure that the ideas have been put together in the most effective way. (See elsewhere in this journal for a suggested workshop process.)

Summary

Popular theatre is theatre of the people, for the people, and by the people. Its main functions are to serve community development and the struggle for economic justice and political rights.

In terms of content, it is characterised by simple themes, stark presentation of reality and the presentation of solutions.

Its main aesthetic characteristics are variety, humour, non-verbal communication and simple, multi-functional props and costumes.

Its primary method of creation is through group improvisation under the guidance of a relatively skilled facilitator.

COMMUNITY THEATRE IN ETHIOPIA

Jane Plastow

During the course of 1977 the village of Yet Nora (in Northern Ethiopia), near the source of the Blue Nile, requested that the Ministry of Culture send to it some arts trainers. Because Yet Nora is a model co-operative village, the ministry agreed to the request and in a unique experiment sent four trainees in music, theatre, literature and fine arts to spend six months in the village in an effort to set up community arts groups.

The theatre trainer was a young graduate from the Theatre Arts Department in Addis Adaba University, the only centre in the country where a training in the performing arts can be obtained. When he arrived in the village, up a dirt track which is only accessible by mule during the rainy season, he was allocated twenty volunteers who had been released from all but essential farming duties for the period of the training and who would spend six days a week working in the mornings on music and dance and in the afternoons on theatre.

The village leader had a firm idea that he wished the final production to record in fairly eulogistical style the history of the village, but it quickly became apparent that many of the community had other concerns, and in discussion it was established that the issues of drunkenness and wife-beating were of concern to many members of the group. Since the village leader was frequently absent on administrative duties the group decided to work on creating a play about the issues that concerned them without informing the leadership.

Initially they encountered many problems. None of the participants had any experience of formal drama, and few had ever been more than a few kilometers from the village. Women in Ethiopia are traditionally expected to be soft-voiced and unassertive, and even in Addis Adaba female actors were until very recently regarded as prostitutes, so for these rural women it was especially difficult to confidently express their ideas and put them forward as performers. However, through improvisation and discussion the work slowly progressed until the day of the first presentation to which not only the entire village but even the Minister of Culture had been invited.

The play told the story of a family which was tormented by dire poverty as a result of the husband's drunkenness. Whenever his wife reproached him with the ruin he was bringing upon her and their daughter he beat her, and his dissolute habits left more and more of the work to fall upon her shoulders. Although the husband was taken to task by the local party cadre he preferred to listen to the advice of his father who was of the opinion that to drink and beat one's wife was only natural and indeed desirable in a 'real man'.

When the husband finally robbed the money he had earned for his year's crop of teff* while celebrating the sale in a bar his wife decided to leave him, and in spite of his pleading and tears she ended the play by packing her meagre possessions and leaving with her daughter for a unknown future.

The performance was acclaimed by the entire community, but the crowning moment was possibly when the village leader came to the actors in tears to apologise for his previous insistence on his own pre-conceived ideas. "This" he said, "is our life".

The Yet Nora experiment came under the Rural Arts Programme which has been running since 1984 in Ethiopia in an effort to bring arts training to the mass of peasantry of the country. Much of the work is improvised and has led to the formation of theatre groups in schools, youth groups and women's groups who present plays dealing with the social issues of concern to them and their communities.

However the Rural Cultural Workers labour under enormous difficulties. Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world. Many communities may be days or weeks travel from the nearest road and the northern part of the nation has been for many years wracked by civil war and famine. Moreover there are some 70 languages spoken throughout the country, while trained theatre workers are majoritatively only urban speakers of Amharic, the nation's dominant tongue.

As in many nations, cultural work receives only minimal funding. Cultural workers are seldom given any budget for their work, and may be isolated for years at a time, hundreds of miles from resource centres and fellow theatre

trainees, they are consequently limited in the groups they can contact and are often confined to working in regional capitals.

The Rural Arts Programme grew out of the revolutionary process, when following the 1974 Marxist overthrow of Haile Selassie's feudal government, many traditional village dance groups started to put on short agit-prop plays explaining the new programmes of mass education and land reform. It was gradually realised that such groups needed assistance to build on their traditional skills, particularly with regard to drama which had previously been confined to only urban centres.

However, with the passing of time the people became disillusioned with the lack of follow up to initial reforms by the military government, theatre has suffered increasingly stringent censorship. Several theatre artists who mounted plays in the capital critical of the Dergue* have spent time in prison, until at the present time all performance material has to be passed by the ideologist of the Party before it can be seen in public. This has effectively stopped community groups dealing with any overtly political material unless it follows a strictly party line. Instead they have been forced to confine themselves to 'social' issues and even these plays can arouse distrust in some rural bureaucrats who would prefer performances devoid of social comment.

In spite of all these problems community theatre is slowly becoming a popular form, particularly among the youth of Ethiopia. Many plays have been mounted regarding education, the abuse of women, of the issues of corruption. In Urban centres popular plays may run up to three years at a time, while in the regions, those few groups which have managed to tour the villages, are building increasingly enthusiastic audiences which are slowly becoming enabled to set up their own theatre groups.

*Teff - a grain indigenous to Ethiopia from which the staple food 'urjura' is made.

*Dergue - The name given to the military government which took power in 1974. The name simply means 'committee' in Amharic.

PROCESSES FOR CREATING COMMUNITY THEATRE

Ngugi wa Mirii and Kimani Gecau

Introduction

Theatre has now come to be recognised as an important aspect of national life. In the formerly colonised countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, community theatre workers and community development workers are increasingly using their organisational and theatre artistic skills for the following general reasons:

(a) By taking part in theatre, people are able to discover their creative talents, develop their self-confidence, self-expression and sense of self-discipline. This is so because theatre requires that thought, feelings and all of one's senses be tapped and harnessed;

(b) Because theatre work is necessarily collective, the individual discovers himself or herself in the practice of working within a group which is united with its common aims. The individual thus learns to be sensitive to others, to participate in the collective effort, to be open and to be responsible to others through self-criticism and constructive criticism of others in the group. All of these are necessary if a successful theatre project is to be mounted. Thus the individual develops as the group develops. It is also within the group that individuals and the community discover their organisational and leadership skills.

(c) A community based theatre group organises its work around the problems which affect the community in which the group lives. The process of play-making provides a collective basis and a stimulus for a critical appraisal and discussion of these problems within their wider socio-economic context and the prevailing social relations.

As a result of a, b and c above, theatre helps people also to strengthen an awareness and appreciation of their common history and culture, thus strengthening their sense of common and national identity, unity and purpose. The people become aware of their concrete historical situation; what it has been, what it is, and what it can become in the future if they call forth and mobilise their energies to make their world as they wish it, as they dream it. Melchor Murante, discussing a different but nearly similar context to that of Zimbabwe, says that "the organisation of the oppressed people is what encourages them towards unity and through creative dramatics, they can mirror their dream and ultimately, liberation can be attained."

Theatre should never raise issues in a dry and pedantic academic manner, but rather it should re-create and respond to any situation in an imaginative, creative and entertaining way. Thus, it becomes an effective means of educating both the actors and the audience. Through its use of artistic means to project a picture of the world, it invites a wide and deep response through thought, feelings and all senses. Thus, actors and audience come to understand the social environment depicted by theatre in a deep and lasting manner. At the same time, because of the way the situation is depicted, both actors and audience are implicitly educated about how they can rationally master such a situation. This is how theatre gives birth to a new educated man, a new people who are conscious of their being, who are ready to transform and develop their lives for the better.

However, theatre being a very effective communicative tool, channel, vehicle, or a carrier of information, it can be easily misused. It can be used, and has been used, to mystify the social reality by uncommitted playwrights, community theatre workers and development workers who use theatre for empty entertainment. Theatre has also been used, whether consciously or unconsciously, as a means to pacify the people by using it to present an abstract picture of the world. This happens when the theatrical content is isolated from its cultural reality, i.e. from on-going socio-economic processes. It is thus used as a means to disseminate isolated and abstract messages drawn from the cultural life of the people. For this reason, we should look out, question and analyse theatre so as to understand and differentiate when theatre is used as:

(a) a mere tool for disseminating information and messages, for instance in advertising, or singing praises to power groups and leaders, disguising their power interests under the pretext of the well-being of the masses;

(b) theatre for art sake, with more emphasis on artistic skills to the extent that the theatrical content alienates the audience;

(c) a cultural force for social change and people's development, but with a balanced combination of emphasis on both artistic skills and progressive political ideological content.

In other words, in examining the various ways in which theatre is used, we should bear in mind that any theatrical production has three inter-linked dimensions:

THEATRE METHOD
ART SKILL
CONTENT MESSAGE

This is what we need to know and understand - the use and role of each of these dimensions. We should also learn how to administer their marriage in a concrete situation. For this reason, let us now examine closely how theatre has been married and divorced, in an endeavour to create community theatre.

In order to encourage and facilitate community participation, and thus hasten development, in many countries a community theatre approach has been tried. The question is, how successful has such an approach been? Let us discuss them.

1. THE TRAVELLING THEATRE APPROACH

In Africa, travelling theatres were initiated by universities with the aim of breaking away from the urban based theatre inherited from colonialism. This is literally taking theatre to the people and has been tried in Ibadan, Makerere Nairobi, Malawi, Zambia. The travelling theatre group might or might not organise workshops for, and hold discussions with, its audiences. The important point is that the audiences - who are the community - are not involved and do not participate in the play-making process. However, with some luck, the travelling theatre group might just inspire theatre groups in the communities visited. The University of Nairobi Travelling Theatre, for example, did influence the development of theatre in the country and strengthened the development towards theatre at the Kamirithu Community Educational and Cultural Centre.

2. THE OUTSIDE TEAM WORKERS APPROACH

The second approach is when a group of people goes to a community, stays with that community, listens to and observes the people's main problems and concerns, exchanges opinions with the people and then goes back to base to make a play on what were seen as the major themes arising out of the discussions and observations. The resulting play is then brought back to the community, written and acted by people from outside. The usual discussions after the play might be tackled in.

3. THE PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

Alternatively, the same group of theatre workers comes to the community and listens to the community's problems, discusses, observes as in paragraph two above. However, instead of moving away from the community to evolve and make a play around the issues arising out of the community, the group stays with the community with whom it makes the play. This is obviously a more participatory oriented approach. A much higher level of community participation happens when the community itself takes the initiative to create theatre and invites people outside their own community, as was the case in Kenya with the Kimirithu Community Educational and Cultural Centre (KCECC).

The first two approaches have been tried in Botswana, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Swaziland, Malawi and Tanzania, and earlier in Kenya and Uganda. The major weakness of these approaches is their failure to involve people, to tap the people's creative potentialities, cultural strengths and to develop their awareness of their environment. And though the second approach purports to reflect problems seen in the community, the presentation of these problems is nonetheless as they are seen by the theatre workers - not as the people see them. The process of play-making does not involve the community's participation, therefore, the community is not afforded the chance to ask itself why things have happened the way they have - and yet again why, until their understanding of these problems encompasses the wider socio-economic context. Needless to say, the community has little opportunity to develop its own artistic and cultural skills.

The limitations of the above two approaches are particularly glaring when theatre is used by extension workers to propagate specific and localised narrow 'developmentalists' messages to do with health, literacy, agriculture, etc. The failure to involve the community in intensive discussion and in the evolving of the play as well as denying the community the chance to develop its artistic and cultural talents also leads to the following:

(a) the tackling of specific and localised problems usually also involves a pat solution tacked on to the end of the play e.g. 'The child is getting sick. Do not go to the n'ang! Go to a medical doctor! Drink clean

water! Eat wholesome food! etc.' As well as the pedantry of these solutions prescribed down to the people from the top, this method leads to the people being imposed upon by outsiders. They are forced to accept uncritically and without thought, whatever 'developmentalist' solutions are offered by the extension workers. Thus, their initiative is emasculated, their awareness, self-confidence etc. not developed. The people are still the passive and dependent recipients of 'aid' from outside, denied the chance to become the active participants in, the subjects and not objects, the makers and not consumers of their history and destiny.

(b) The ways that the problems are posed and solutions put across is usually in the context of accepted and acceptable government practices and ideas which neither challenge the status quo nor suggest new structural alternatives for the people. Thus these so-called 'pragmatic' and technical solutions fail to answer such vital questions as:

(i) Does the community have the material means to afford a consultation with a medical doctor? If not why? Are health services free? Is there a doctor within reach of the community? If not why? And again why?

(ii) Is there clean water available to the community? If not why? Why? Can the community afford wholesome food? Do they have the means to produce it? Do they have the land; the money for agricultural inputs?

(iii) In any case, why is the community so ignorant as not to know about medical doctors? Clean water? Wholesome food? What type of opportunities, if any, have they been offered

for their spiritual as well as material development?



Looked at this way, it is obvious that even seemingly simple problems cannot be seen in isolation from the historical, national and international socio-economic context. To do so is to mystify the problems, their solutions and to offer not just a reformist, but ultimately, reactionary, theatre.

(c) This kind of theatre does not, therefore, raise the political understanding of the people. And, appearances notwithstanding, it does not help in the transformation of people's lives.

(d) Because of its prescriptive nature and failure to involve the people, it is doubtful that the people will be inspired enough to organise their own theatre groups and develop a dynamic theatre tradition. This kind of theatre is usually a one-time affair.

(e) Not only does this theatre fail to develop the artistic talents and skills of the community, but it also robs theatre of these important attributes (i.e. artistic and cultural contents), and turns it into a 'technical' tool. This is a vulgarisation of theatre and a presumption that by presenting pat solutions theatre will be a panacea to development problems.

THE PARTICIPATORY APPROACH:

The third approach to community theatre process has been found to be the more meaningful approach and the one that is able to fully mobilise a community, as the KCECC in Kenya testifies. This is because:

(a) Involvement of the people is a necessity if the process is to be community based in any way. Failure

to do this robs the process of its essence, makes the people depend on outsiders, thus perpetuating the principal of community dependence on outsiders, which community theatre is supposed to fight against. When these outsiders leave the community, the process fails because of the community's inculcated sense of dependency.

(b) The involvement of the community in the theatre process in all its stages inevitably leads to the community analysing the problems that it confronts, how these manifest themselves and what effect they have on the community. The desire to find the root causes of these problems is avoided even before possible solutions could be posed. Thus this method is the more educational for the people. It offers them an opportunity to learn about the realities of their economic, political and social situation and how these relate to the national and international socio-economic structures. But before this is understood, the people are forced to dig deeper and deeper in the historical causes of their material condition. This helps to sharpen their critical perspective and to become more constructively responsive to national issues. Thus the process of play-making becomes an educational and politicising experience.

(c) The people become transformed by this experience. The play-making process taps and develops their artistic skills and talents, and makes them discover other latent potentialities. And because the theatre experience demands that their basic feelings and thought be involved, they become more sensitised

to their history and to the current national issues.

(d) As part of the human development of the community, the discipline and organisational structure which necessarily arise out of this experience teach people organisational skills and encourages them to take initiatives and to control these structures. This also helps to dynamise their collective life.

(e) This process, once it takes hold in the community, complements the formal education of the community. In the words of an observer, "history, contemporary events and issues, social realities, become take-off points of knowledge as they are discussed and portrayed through theatrical devices and improvisations."

OUR STAND:

Since theatre is a medium of communication and each user as we have seen has his aim and purpose, the question is: what is our stand? What is our position? Have we got a clear conscience as to how and above all for what purpose we are going to use theatre?

Our stand is our class position and our attitudes; our activities manifest on whose side we are, i.e. whether on the side of the people or on that of their enemy. But if we are on the side of the people, needless to say "our primary task is to understand people and know them well". As community theatre organisers, we should never play the role of the 'hero' to the community' for the more you try to peddle such stuff to the masses, the less likely they are to accept it."

The backbone of community theatre is the community's participation, without which community theatre is a failure.





The Community Arts Project (CAP) is a progressive education and training organisation which seeks to promote and develop the arts, crafts and media as vehicles for social transformation and as means for community and human development. Its four Projects — Visual Arts and Crafts, Media, Children's Arts and Popular Theatre — plan and implement full-time and part-time training courses, run one-off and ongoing workshops and offer services which enhance its education and training goals.

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