

## **FORUM THEATRE**

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

Working with the Theatre of the Oppressed method (T.O) is a gift for actors and non actors. The process of work within the method is unique to each group, with each bringing its own dynamic. According to Augusto Boal, the founder of the Theatre of the Oppressed, everyone has a rainbow of desires, a dream, and in front of each one of them there is a barrier. The barrier is different for each individual and this is what makes each group varied and dynamic. In the T.O process we are asking questions about the barriers and sharing these same questions with a forum of audience members. Together with the spectators, the group are trying to learn how to cross barriers and how to live their dream, their rainbow of desires. In a group of people with disabilities we will work on the same path but with additional care to each individual's needs. The process may require more time; each exercise may need more steps in its delivery and execution; we will need supports of varying kinds but the process and the methodology will be the same as with any other T.O group. The three main steps of Theatre of the Oppressed are as follows:

1. Building of trust and the essential T.O tools.
2. Staging and dramaturgy of personal stories and practice of the forum theatre technique as a preparation for meeting the spectators.
3. Directing of rehearsals and performing for an audience.

It is very important to point out that as part of the process of delivering the personal stories and personal experiences of the group to the stage, we will work on the structure of the forum theatre piece and the dramaturgy of the theatre of the oppressed play. In the traditional Boal technique there is no writing of a script. This allows for creative free thinking and improvisation within the group. The script comes from the personal stories of the group. It is for this reason that we are not including a writer in our programme. However, the stories can be documented as a tool for the actors to rehearse their scenes.

### **By end November 2011:**

Engage with a community based ethics review group (TBC) in order to develop our evaluation method.\*\* Undertake desk based research of attitudinal surveys in Ireland and N.Ireland towards disability. Pre-evaluation findings to be presented to the Project Leader.

Meetings set-up by Good Relations contacts [NAME] and [NAME] with potential participant groups. On-site visits and interviews with the Forum Theatre Director and Good Relations contacts.

Ten people with physical and sensory disabilities invited to participate in the Forum Theatre disability awareness programme.

**By end December 2011:**

Forum Theatre Director and participants begin theatre work - Part 1: Building trust and learning the T.O tools.

Three weeks of workshops – one session per week.

In the first part of the work we will build a trusting environment, one which will encourage the group members to feel belonging, acceptance, togetherness and support. We will build a common ground for the theatrical work and the T.O practice by considering the abilities and disabilities of the individuals in the group. In this part of the process we will explore Image Theatre and the use of the body as a tool to express our feelings, imagination and creativeness.

**By end January 2012:**

Communications Strategy

We intend to promote the disability awareness programme and performances through an online campaign using our website and that of The Alley Theatre and by making use of our social media tools. We will publicise the programme in our season brochure, in the local press north and south of the border, through press releases and reviews and on popular radio stations by setting up interviews with those involved. Posters and flyers promoting the theatre performances will be distributed through arts venues, libraries and community organisations. Schools and young adult training centres will be contacted by telephone, with secondary information supplied by post and/or email.

**By middle of February 2012:**

Part 2: Staging and dramaturgy of personal stories and practice of the forum theatre technique as a preparation for meeting the spectators.

Six weeks of workshops – one session per week.

We will learn how to stage the personal stories. We will use different 'triggers' that will encourage the group members to share their personal stories and life experiences. A personal object, a family picture, an unwritten letter are examples of theatrical triggers. The T.O method offers a wide range of tools to

process life experiences on stage. The T.O specialist knows which exercise or method to pick to meet an individual's need.

**By end of March 2012:**

Part 3: Directing of rehearsals and performing for an audience.

Three weeks of workshops - two sessions weekly.

The show may be made up of one chosen story developed from the rehearsal period or a selection of stories. Following the rehearsal period we will perform the pilot in front of a group of friends and relatives. Changes can be made if necessary.

**By end of November 2012:**

At a minimum, we propose that the forum theatre piece will be performed in An Grianán Theatre in April, in a secondary school in Strabane in May, in The Alley Theatre in June, at the start of the month in an outreach centre in Donegal in July, in September - in a secondary school in Donegal, during The Donegal Bay and Bluestacks Festival in October and during Disability Awareness Week in Strabane in November.

**\*\*Monitoring and Evaluation Framework**

Developing a method of evaluation, into the difference that the theatre programme has had, with a "critical friend" type of evaluator, one who would be prepared to form a relationship with the participants and the process is important to us. We would seek an evaluator to act both as an objective support and an external observer. We believe this gives the best balance of evaluation. [NAME - ORGANISATION] is supporting us in our proposal and is our first point of contact for advice on seeking out such an evaluator/ evaluation team.