

Theatre For Change Project: To Tell a Story About the Earth

FROM THE AUTHOR: Miranda Rose Hall

This is a play about devising. It's about what happens when a small ensemble tries to make a play from scratch. I think of it as a fairly traditional play that I have written in a fairly traditional way, but with one big twist: it's also a MadLib! There are prompts throughout the script for you to fill in as you see fit. That means that the play will be different every time it's produced. My hope is that these blanks help the play be of you and of the place where you perform it in a more personal and immediate way than I could ever write on my own.

I come from a devising tradition with my own small theatre company, LubDub Theatre Co. We have developed this play together, modeled after our own practices of devising and making work within climate crisis. We have found that talking about climate crisis is a very personal matter, and that talking about the entire earth gets very overwhelming very quickly. The arc of this play reflects the arc that we have experienced creatively over the past five years: what is personal is emotionally resonant; what is emotionally resonant makes for good theatre; and we need good theatre to help us make sense of our rapidly changing world.

And why do I think we need theatre to help us make sense of our rapidly changing world? Because theatre is made in community and shared in community. And community is our best defense against the anxieties, grief, and emergencies of our times.

In the sections that are yours to write, don't feel that you need to imitate my voice. I recommend experimenting with what these characters would say, workshopping things as a company, codifying a final draft, memorizing it, and then delivering it as if it were spontaneous material. Remember: the audience probably won't know that you're filling in blanks unless you tell them.

The biggest blank to fill in is the 10-minute play that you will create about a subject of your choosing. Find a part of the natural world that everyone in your ensemble has a personal story about, and let that be your guide. (But more on that later).

At the end of the day, what I care about the most is that each collaborator on this project might bring something of themselves that is specific, energizing, and personally meaningful. It is my assignment to you: bring something to life that you care about. And I acknowledge that making something you care about may involve some emotional vulnerability. I hope that you may build a trusting and courageous space for all of the

people making the play. It is a story about people who learn to hold each other. I hope that becomes true for your process as well.

And most importantly, please enjoy yourselves. It's called a play for a reason.

CHARACTERS: To Tell a Story About The Earth

While this is a devised piece that relies on an ensemble to create and perform much of the story, there are also established characters that will be cast:

THE LIBRARIAN – A Librarian, a generation or two above the others

TAYLOR – A Leader

JO – A Skeptic

SAM – A Visionary

CJ – A Romantic

RILEY – A Wise Fool

DEVISING CHORUS – A theatrical ensemble that helps with the creation and performance of an original 10-minute play

A note on casting: Think of these characters as archetypes. The roles are open in terms of race, gender, and other identities.

WHAT IS DEVISED THEATRE?

Devising is broadly defined as the collaborative process of creating an original work of theatre without a pre-existing script, written and performed by an ensemble of artists.

In a traditional theatre model, a playwright authors a script, and a director then assembles a team of actors and designers to interpret that text in production. In contrast, devised theatre begins with the ensemble collectively generating the material through theatrical exploration. A devised piece can emerge from virtually any source of inspiration - a painting, a song, a historical moment, a novel, or even a single word or gesture, or in our case, the environment!

While no two devising processes are exactly alike, most share five key stages: research, creation, development, rehearsal, and performance.

WHAT IS THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED?

Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) is a collection of theatre techniques and games developed by Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal. Boal believed theatre could be more than just performance; it could be a tool for awareness, dialogue, and social change.

In TO, the audience becomes active participants, or “*spect-actors*,” who step into the action to explore and transform real-life situations. These techniques invite people to “rehearse for reality,” imagining how things could be different and practicing ways to create change.

Boal’s methods include forms like Image Theatre (telling stories through frozen pictures), Forum Theatre (audience members intervene to change a scene’s outcome), and Invisible Theatre (performing in public without announcing it is theatre).

Theatre of the Oppressed encourages creativity, critical thinking, and empathy. Using theatre to imagine and build a more just world.

For more about Boal’s work and how it’s used today, check out:

- [Theatre of the Oppressed NYC](#) – community-based TO in action
- [Augusto Boal’s Official Site](#) – more about Boal and his philosophy