

International Theatre of the Oppressed Organisation (ITO)

Declaration of principles

Preamble

1. The basic aim of the Theatre of the Oppressed is to humanize Humanity.
2. The Theatre of the Oppressed is a system of Exercises, Games and Techniques based on the Essential Theatre, to help men and women to develop what they already have inside themselves: theatre.

Essential Theatre

3. Every human being is theatre!
4. Theatre is defined as the simultaneous existence – in the same space and context – of actors and spectators. Every human being is capable of seeing the situation and seeing him/herself in the situation.
5. Essential theatre consists of three elements: Subjective Theatre, Objective Theatre and the Theatrical Language.
6. Every human being is capable of acting: to survive, we necessarily have to produce actions and observe those actions and their effects on the environment. To be Human is to be Theatre: the co-existence of actor and spectator in the same individual. This is the Subjective Theatre.
7. When human beings limit themselves to observing an object, a person or a space, renouncing momentarily to their capacity and necessity of acting, the energy and their desire to act is transferred to that space, person or object, creating a space inside a space: an Aesthetic Space. This is the Objective Theatre.
8. All human beings use, in their daily lives, the same language that actors use on the stage: their voices, their bodies, their movements and their expressions; they translate their emotions and desires into the Theatrical Language.

Theatre of the Oppressed

9. The Theatre of the Oppressed offers everyone the aesthetic means to analyze their past, in the context of their present, and subsequently to invent their future, without waiting for it. The Theatre of the Oppressed helps human beings to recover a language they already possess – we learn how to live in society by playing theatre. We learn how to feel by feeling; how to think by thinking; how to act by acting. Theatre of the Oppressed is rehearsal for reality.
10. The oppressed are those individuals or groups who are socially, culturally, politically, economically, racially, sexually, or in any other way deprived of their right to Dialogue or in any way impaired to exercise this right.
11. Dialogue is defined as to freely exchange with others, as a person and as a group, to participate in human society as equal, to respect differences and to be respected.
12. The Theatre of the Oppressed is based upon the principle that all human relationships should be of a dialogic nature: among men and women, races, families, groups and nations, dialogue should prevail. In reality, all dialogues have the tendency to become monologues, which creates the relationship oppressors - oppressed. Acknowledging this reality, the main principle of Theatre of the Oppressed is to help restore dialogue among human beings.

Principles and Objectives

13. The Theatre of the Oppressed is a worldwide non-violent aesthetic movement which seeks peace, not passivity.

14. The Theatre of the Oppressed tries to activate people in a humanistic endeavor expressed by its very name: theatre of, by, and for the oppressed. A system that enables people to act in the fiction of theatre to become protagonists, i.e. acting subjects, of their own lives.

15. The Theatre of the Oppressed is neither an ideology nor a political party, neither dogmatic nor coercive and is respectful of all cultures. It is a method of analysis and a means to develop happier societies. Because of its humanistic and democratic nature, it is widely used all over the world, in all fields of social activities such as: education, culture, arts, politics, social work, psychotherapy, literacy programs and health. In the annex to this Declaration of Principles, a number of exemplary projects are listed to illustrate the nature and the scope of its use.

16. Theatre of the Oppressed is now being used in approx. half the nations around the world, listed in the annex, as a tool for the making of discoveries about oneself and about the Other, of clarifying and expressing our desires; a tool for the changing of circumstances which produce unhappiness and pain and for the enhancement of what brings peace; for respecting differences between individuals and groups and for the inclusion of all human beings in Dialogue; and finally a tool for the achievement of economical and social justice, which is the foundation of true democracy. Summarizing, the general objective of the Theatre of the Oppressed is the development of essential Human Rights.

The International Theatre of the Oppressed Organization (ITO)

17. The ITO is an organization that coordinates and enhances the development of Theatre of the Oppressed all over the world, according to the principles and objectives of this Declaration.

18. The ITO does so by connecting Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners into a global network, fostering exchange and methodical development; by facilitating training and multiplication of the existing techniques; by conceiving projects on a global scale; by the stimulation of the creation of local Centres for Theatre of the Oppressed (CTO's); by promoting and creating conditions for the work of CTO's and practitioners and by creating an international meeting point on the internet.

19. The ITO is of the same humanistic and democratic nature as its principles and objectives; it will incorporate any contributions from those who are working under this Declaration of Principles.

20. The ITO will assume that anyone using the various techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed subscribes to this Declaration of Principles.

Under Pressure 12/13, February 2003