

Applied Theatre and Marginalized Communities Conference

March 25-26, 2011 • North Greenville University in Greenville, SC



Overview

Conference goals

- To share applications of theatre among diverse communities and for diverse purposes by networking leaders and practitioners
- To strengthen the professionalism and quality of applied theatre work
- To seek out, explore and embrace commonalities among applied theatre programs
- To participate in both social and spiritual applications of theatre practice and performances

Accommodations

Special rates for Friday/Saturday nights available at:

- **Sleep Inn** in Travelers Rest, SC
- **Hampton Inn** in Travelers Rest, SC
- A *limited* number of residence hall beds are available for college students. Email theatre@ngu.edu for more information on prices and availability

Getting to the conference

- **By plane:** fly to Greenville/Spartanburg, SC (GSP). Rental car and ground transportation information available on the [GSP website](#).
- **By car:** [Google map](#) "Tigerville, SC" for directions to NGU campus. Registration is at the Billingsley Theatre located behind Einstein's Bagel at the corner of Highways 414 and 253. Parking is available behind Einstein's or behind the theatre.

Costs

Registration fees (include choice of tracks, both evening performances, dinner Friday, lunch/dinner Saturday, all breaks)

- **Single adult: \$135.00**
- **Group rate: \$95.00** (10 or more from a single organization – paid with one payment)
- **Student: \$75** (full-time high school or undergrad)
- **Day rate: \$75/day** (no meals included)

Track leaders

Amy Scheer

Rehearsal for Reality: Augusto Boal and Social Justice

The day an angry woman stepped out of the audience, onto the stage and into the role of the protagonist, Augusto Boal knew that merely doing plays about injustice would not be enough. The "spect-actor" was born, bridging the great divide and allowing the oppressed to fight for themselves rather than be fought for. The Theatre of the Oppressed (TO), begun in 1970s Brazil and currently practiced in over 60 countries worldwide, gives marginalized populations a language to define their oppressions and practice solutions. Our track will explore two branches of this complex system of theatre, and will stress games and scene work rather than performance. Games will provoke intense reactions and discussion, yet catharsis is not our goal: Tears are channeled toward social action.

Image Theatre relies primarily on physical dialogues and non-verbal imagery; as external oppressions and power relationships are embodied, awareness and problem-solving skills follow shortly behind. Rainbow of Desire is a more psychoanalytic branch that came about when Boal saw a need for processing internalized oppressions, as well; it, too, relies on body imagery, but within the context of improvised scene work. TO is indeed a "rehearsal for reality," to borrow a phrase from the late Boal. To that end, participants in this track should expect to spend much of their time on their feet, knowing that our practice will reveal the work that needs to be done for and with the populations we serve.

Amy Scheer has taught and directed theatre in schools, colleges, communities, and professional venues for nearly twenty years. An accomplished freelance writer, her essays have appeared in places such as Burnside Writers Collective and Christianity & Theatre. Scheer studied with Theatre of the Oppressed founder and Nobel Peace Prize nominee Augusto Boal; at the



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Track leaders (continued)

University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and at Riding Lights Theatre Company in York, England. She resides with her husband and two sons in Grand Rapids, Michigan. "Amy's Theater Games had a profound impact on each homeless woman who came to our drop-in center. She was able to connect with the women in a way that allowed them to look at themselves in a different light and see hope."
—Marge Palmerlee, Executive Director, Degage Ministries, Grand Rapids, Michigan

"Forum Theatre [a branch of TO] does not produce catharsis: it produces a stimulant for our desire to change the world. Let them create it first in the theatre, in fiction, to be better prepared to create it outside afterwards, for real." Augusto Boal "Theatre is a language through which human beings can engage in active dialogue on what is important to them. It allows individuals to create a safe space that they may inhabit in groups and use to explore the interactions which make up their lives. It is a lab for problem-solving, for seeking options, and for practicing solutions." Augusto Boal

Andrew Nelson

Theatre on the Autism Spectrum

Autism (along with Aspergers Syndrome, a related condition) is a spectrum condition affecting how an individual experiences sensory input, social interactions, and communication. Persons on the autism spectrum often bring a wide variety of unique strengths and skill sets to the table and many creative supports have been developed to help support them. Since approximately 2004, theatre has emerged as a powerful tool to help individuals on the autism spectrum enhance their sensory-social-communicative experiences. Many individuals on the autism spectrum are drawn to creative and performing arts and often find an extremely supportive community in the theatre. Our track is designed to give participants a solid foundation in autism



spectrum history and awareness, autism strengths and challenges, the variety of theatre techniques developed and developing for autism, how to implement techniques in safe and effective ways, and how bring this foundation of knowledge to his or her community to help individuals with autism access exciting theatre programming.

Andrew Nelson, M.Ed., founder of the Autism Theatre Network (www.autismtheatre.org), is a Positive Behavior Support Trainer with the West Virginia Autism Training Center at Marshall University where he provides Family Focused Positive Behavior Support and training to parents, teachers, and professionals on a variety of autism-related topics. Andrew has worked with parents, teachers, and individuals on the autism spectrum in India and the US using applied drama and role playing techniques. He is the author of *Foundation Role Plays for Autism* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2010) and his work has been noted in *American Theatre*, *The Autism File* and *Tathaastu: So Be It* magazines. Andrew also has a BFA in acting.

Rich Swingle

Sociodrama for At-risk People

This dynamic technique can be used in a host of ways with a variety of demographics. Rich Swingle will lead workshop attendees in several sociodramas throughout the weekend, focused on various needs, exploring themes which the group helps define. Individuals act out the theme in a specific scenario. Rich uses several techniques to direct the action in ways which explore the theme most valuably. Once the action is completed, Rich leads a discussion of what was learned through the process. Sociodrama was developed by Jacob Moreno, father of group therapy, and role play sprang from sociodrama and Moreno's original form, psychodrama. Rich's thesis for his masters in theatre was *The Effect of Sociodrama on a Population of Men in Transitional Housing* (available at <http://RichDrama.com/Workshops>). He



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Track leaders (continued)

worked with men in a 200-bed drug rehabilitation center in New York City, using sociodrama to help them deal with issues of recovery and transition back into society. Rich's mentor, Patricia Sternberg, was a student of Moreno.

Lisa Wagner

Theatre in Prison: Reaching Incarcerated People through Drama

In 1998, Still Point Theatre Collective began a theatre arts program for incarcerated women at the federal Metropolitan Correctional Center. The program was highly successful, with a focus on presence and listening, as opposed to evangelization. Since then, Still Point's outreach has grown to three Illinois institutions, and includes a new theatre group comprised of formerly incarcerated women: Sisters Rising.



In this training, participants will learn the "nuts and bolts" of starting and maintaining a prison outreach program. Topics that will be covered: the creative process-helping incarcerated individuals to write and perform their own production, working with prison personnel in setting up and running workshops, the experiences of incarcerated individuals – participants will hear from formerly incarcerated women who will describe the impact of the theatre arts program on their prison experience, and the incorporation of simple sets and costumes into prison performances.

Lisa Wagner is the founder and director of Still Point Theatre Collective. She founded the company in 1993, motivated by a strong desire to combine ministry and theatre. For over fifteen years, she has toured the country and overseas with *Haunted by God: The Life of Dorothy Day*. Ten years ago, Lisa began a theatre program for women at Chicago's Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC), and recently expanded the program to two other Illinois institutions. Lisa is also the founder and co-director of The

Imagination Workshop, a theatre company for adults with developmental disabilities based at Esperanza Community Services. Lisa received a Seeds of Hope Award from Wheatridge Ministries in February of 2009.

Conference organizer Dr. Dale Savidge

Dale Savidge is Executive Director of CITA, Christians in Theatre Arts, an organization he helped found 20+ years ago. He holds two Masters degrees in theatre and a PhD in English and Theatre (from the University of South Carolina). He is also Chair of Theatre at North Greenville University, where he helped begin the BA degree in 2003. Today the department serves upwards of 40 majors (NGU Theatre). After teaching collegiate theatre at the undergraduate and graduate levels for fifteen years, in 1996 Dale launched Associates and Savidge, an arts management organization for professional actors (www.savidge.com). He resides in Greenville, SC with his wife Tammy, a registered nurse, and together they are the proud parents of three children: Timothy, Patricia and Olivia – as well as one cat.



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Schedule of events

Friday, March 25, 2011

- 10 am - 1 pm **Registration** (School of Theatre lobby)
Exhibit set up (Billingsley lobby)
- 1 - 2:15 pm **First keynote session** – *Applied Theatre in Contexts* (Billingsley Theatre)

Join the four track leaders for an overview of the five applications we are exploring in this conference.

- 2:15 - 2:45 pm **Break, exhibits** (Billingsley lobby)
- 2:45 - 5 pm **Breakout sessions by tracks** (attend the track you registered for)

- **Track 1:** *Rehearsal for Reality: Augusto Boal and Social Justice* (Amy Scheer) – Billingsley
- **Track 2:** *Theatre on the Autism Spectrum* (Andrew Nelson) – SOT Acting Studio
- **Track 3:** *Sociodrama for At-risk People* (Rich Swingle) – Hayes Ministry Center
- **Track 4:** *Theatre in Prison: Reaching Incarcerated People through Drama* (Lisa Wagner) - Band room

5 pm **Dinner in the NGU cafeteria** (included in registration fees)

7 pm **Evening performances in the Billingsley Theatre**

- Dwight Woods and the Phyllis Wheatley Repertory Theatre Company
- Rich Swingle: "Alienation Immigration Training"

Saturday, March 26, 2011

- 8 am **Registration** (School of Theatre lobby)
- 9 - 10:15 am **Breakout sessions by tracks** (attend the track you registered for)
- 10:15 - 10:30 am **Break, exhibits** (Billingsley lobby)
- 10:30 - 11:45 am **Breakout sessions by tracks** (attend the track you registered for)
- 12 - 1 pm **Lunch in the NGU cafeteria** (included in registration)
- Second keynote session** – *Applied Theatre and Transportation/Transformation* (Billingsley Theatre) – Dr. Dale Savidge
- 1:30 - 3 pm **Breakout sessions across disciplines** in 15 minute segments at 1:30, 2:00, and 2:30

Attend a track you did not register for but are interested in learning more about in three 15-minute "speed learning" segments. Travel time between segments included

- 3 - 3:15 pm **Break, exhibits** (Billingsley lobby)
- 3:15 - 4:30 pm **Breakout sessions by tracks** (attend the track you registered for)
- 5 pm **Dinner in the NGU cafeteria** (included in registration)
- 7 pm **Evening performances** – celebrating what we've learned

Each of the four tracks will be invited to demonstrate through performance and improvisation what they've learned this weekend.

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What you'll learn

Friday March 25, 2011

1-2:15 pm

All four tracks will provide an overview of their disciplines, what they will be covering, and how their work relates to the subjects of applied theatre and to marginalized people groups - each leader will have about 10 minutes

2:45-5:00 (Session one)

Theatre and Autism track

- Expansion of the autism strengths/challenges - theatre connection
- In depth description of the variety of autism theatre approaches (Masks for autism, focal points, theatre for social skills development, Body awareness and movement, theatre for non-verbal performers, Theatre for community dev., theatre for self advocacy, etc) and the connections to Applied Theatre
- Multimedia supplements showing a variety of the techniques in action, with a healthy portion of participant interaction

Sociodrama track

- Sociodrama for overcoming addictions: Examples will be provided from Rich's work with addicts in a 200-bed recovery unit in New York City, an after lunch workshop for a meal program on Times Square and a recovery house in Sydney, Australia.
- Sociodrama techniques which help addicts deal with critical choices will be the focus of this session.

Theatre in Prison track

- The Creative Process (Writing and Improvisation). This portion of the workshop will focus on the beginning stages of theatre with incarcerated persons, including writing, improvisation, discussion, and theatre basics.

Rehearsal for Reality: Augusto Boal and Social Justice track

- Word Made Flesh: In this first session, we'll use Image Theatre as an entry point to further exploration of the history and theories behind Theatre of the Oppressed. The language of embodied images uniquely helps par-

ticipants identify concrete oppressions and develop skills in self-reflection, cooperation, and problem-solving.

Saturday March 26, 2011

9:00-10:15 (Session two)

Theatre and Autism track

- Structuring a successful theatre experience for individuals with autism (materials needed, environmental supports, personnel, sensory breaks, activities, pacing, etc)

Sociodrama track

- Sociodrama for conflict resolution: This form of drama therapy has some ideal techniques for escalating and de-escalating scenarios to help those in at-risk people groups gain helpful insights into resolving conflicts in their lives.

Theatre in Prison track

- The creative process (writing and improvisation) contd. and an exploration of the experiences of incarcerated individuals.
- This portion delves more deeply into the writing, improvisation, discussion, and theatre basics discussed in the previous session, with a focus on relating to the incarceration experience. Participants will gain a glimpse at the non-Hollywood reality that is incarceration and explore how arts based programs can serve as a tool to reflect on and, at times, rise above that experience.

Rehearsal for Reality: Augusto Boal and Social Justice track

- Theatre, not Therapy: Participants will enter The Rainbow of Desire, a more therapeutic branch of Theatre of the Oppressed.
- Though its intent is to identify internalized oppressions, catharsis here is not a mere unloading of emotion, but instead an effort to remove obstacles in the path of social action against injustice.



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What you'll learn *(continued)*

10:30-11:45 (Session three)

Theatre and Autism track

- Case Study: participants gather information about a case participant, discuss appropriate matching of techniques to the individual, practice setting up an environment, and running some simple techniques.

Sociodrama track

- Sociodrama for script writing: Rich will show a three-minute film that was developed through sociodrama and lead participants in using this dynamic resource to create a script that would appeal to at-risk audiences.

Theatre in Prison track

- The nuts and bolts of working with prison personnel and an examination of the impact such programs have had in institutions throughout the United States and overseas. This workshop will give participants an understanding of working within the confines of the Department of Corrections. Participants will receive instruction concerning the proper procedures when making initial contact with the institution, and will explore the importance of creating a congenial relationship with their institutional contact person. We will also discuss a variety of prison theatre programs throughout the United States and overseas.

Rehearsal for Reality: Augusto Boal and Social Justice track

- Continuation of Session two

1:30 - 3:00

15-minute rotating presentations to people in the other 3 tracks - where participants will learn more in depth about the other tracks they are not attending, how they might apply in other contexts, and can ask questions, etc

3:15 - 4:30 (Session four)

Theatre and Autism track

- Role play to prepare for challenges that may arise
- Discussion of Applied Theatre and Autism: does it work for you?
- Criticism of the technique, ethics conversation
- End with theatre games

Sociodrama track

- Rich will use sociodrama techniques to lead the group in deciding which focus they would like to bring to the whole community in the evening and then rehearse those techniques.

Theatre in Prison track

- Overview and a look at the question, "Where do we go from here?"
- In this session, participants will review the work of the three previous sessions, and will begin discerning if they feel called to explore their new skills and ideas in their home cities and states. This session will also offer an opportunity for an extended question and answer session with the instructor.

Rehearsal for Reality: Augusto Boal and Social Justice track

- Rehearsal, then Reality: In our final session, we'll bring our study of Image Theatre techniques and The Rainbow of Desire to a conclusion. We'll discuss practical applications of the work by looking at the composition of our group and the populations it represents, as well as documentation of the success of TO in various cultures and people groups worldwide.