

### Reference

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**Teachers Act Up!: creating multicultural learning communities through theatre**, by Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor and Mariana Souto-Manning, New York, Teachers College Press, 2010, 169 pp., ISBN 978-0-8077-5073-5

In this useful book, education professors Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor and Mariana Souto-Manning make a case – and provide a model – for incorporating Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) in teacher preparation. Within the context of a grant to increase the number of bilingual teachers, especially Spanish–English, in the state of Georgia, the authors used TO with various groups of pre- and in-service teachers. They aimed to counter traditional forms of 'solution-oriented' education (17) with an embodied, problem-posing approach and to empower teachers. The book that ensued brings together the scholarly literature on multicultural education with the practice of TO, showcasing concrete exercises from the authors' workshops. It offers an accessible and rousing teacher-based approach to applied theatre that will be of value not only to educators and education scholars but also to theatre practitioners and community activists working in various multicultural contexts.

The book is divided into two parts: the first providing the critical framework, and the second, in-depth descriptions of the theatre workshops. True to the legacy of Boal, Cahnmann-Taylor and Souto-Manning begin with a social problem. Too often, teachers are treated as 'passive recipients of ideological scripts regarding what they [can and cannot] do in their roles as educators' (13). These protocols tend to presume culture-blindness, ignoring the academic and emotional needs of diverse students. Consequently, teachers do not see themselves as agents for change, a problem that is exacerbated by external constraints. In the USA, teachers are faced with larger class sizes, limited resources, 'English only' mandates and the pressures stemming from the system of testing and accountability instituted by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Chapter one contextualises this problem within a clearly written review of the literature on multicultural education, through which the authors highlight the importance of diverse, personal knowledge and call attention to the complex ways in which power and ideology are operative in schools. They conclude that while much of the literature argues that change to our educational status quo is possible, the practical question of *how* that change should happen has gone largely unaddressed (22). By way of an answer, Chapter 2 delivers a wonderful introduction to the life and work of Augusto Boal, emphasising his connection to the critical pedagogy developed by his mentor and friend Paulo Freire. This chapter does not attempt to make a contribution to the scholarly literature on Boal and community-based performance, but rather seems intended for educators and education scholars unfamiliar with TO. While both chapters in part one are strong, I would have liked to see a better integration of the two.

Part two, the 'heart of the book' (7), documents their theatre workshops – or I could also say, teacher-training sessions – through which pre- and in-service teachers worked through their daily conflicts and struggles. The authors provide astute and engaging descriptions of participants' movements, sounds, exchanges and discussions, which they complement with photographs and 'trans/scripts'—that is, short plays that they developed by compressing the original transcripts of audio-recorded sessions (104–105). While reading this second part, I felt as if I were present during their workshops. The authors offer clear renderings of Games, Image Theatre, Forum Theatre and Rainbow – all tailored to teaching in multicultural schools – which should prepare readers who are inexperienced with theatre to try out TO. They invite readers to 'do what all great teachers do: beg, borrow, and steal ideas and then adapt these treasures to one's own needs in one's own context' (41). Unique among these treasures are the authors' trans/scripts, amalgamates from their sessions, presenting common stories and experiences relating to teaching in today's multicultural schools. These generative scenarios will provide good jumping-off points for applied theatre in various educational and multicultural settings.

This book's contribution could not be timelier. As schools across North America and Europe become increasingly diverse, it is crucial that teachers learn to view themselves as agents for change and adopt better-suited teaching tools. Cahnmann-Taylor and Scuto-Manning's primary audience is educators and scholars of education, but it seems important to me to stress that the insights presented in this book have broader, political implications. Allow me to explain by means of an image. During an Image Theatre exercise, one participant held her arms in front of her 'as if carrying a large rock, then lifting the weight over her head' repeated '[t]he weight of the world, the weight of the world' (81; see also the photograph on 82). Indeed, public school teachers today carry the weight of our most significant socio-economic problems, and the US media blames these overburdened (and underpaid) teachers for our declining system of public education – as if the teachers themselves were the problem. Is it not time for more of us to *Act Up* in solidarity with those committed to educating our youth?

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**Ritual theatre: the power of dramatic ritual in personal development, groups and clinical practice**, edited by Claire Schrader, London, Jessica Kingsley, 2012, 334 pp., ISBN 9781849051385

Horticultural metaphors come up throughout this book. The idea of the seeds of personality being nurtured or not, the resilience of the individual 'plant', and the support which a careful gardener can provide are used to illustrate the delicacy and delight of this area of practice. In drawing together authors with a range of experience, which Schrader posits itself as gardening, the text offers the opportunity to visit a veritable Chelsea Flower Show of experience and appreciate the potential beauty of working in this field (pun intended).

Schrader notes that the book is aimed primarily at therapy trainees and qualified dramatherapists. There is always the question as to how therapy fits within the wider