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THEATRE FOR CHANGE

ROBERT J. LAN
DAVID T. MONT



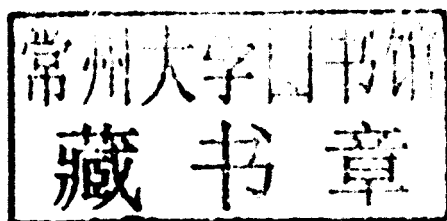
Theatre for Change

**Education, Social Action and
Therapy**

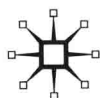
Robert J. Landy

and

David T. Montgomery



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'A timely update of the very influential handbook on educational theatre... I commend the authors for their painstaking research, the quality of their scholarship and outreach, and for the groundbreaking and timely contribution of *Theatre for Change*' – Philip Taylor, Associate Professor of Educational Theatre, New York University, USA

'As one who teaches undergraduate and graduate students in the fields of drama and theatre education, theatre for young audiences, and applied theatre, I would draw on this book in each of those courses as a means of helping students understand the connections among these disciplines. The work simultaneously provides an eagle's eye overview and a thoughtful, close analysis of specific praxis.' – Robert Colby, Associate Professor and Graduate Programme Director, Emerson College, USA

Building on Robert J. Landy's seminal text, *Handbook of Educational Drama and Theatre*, Landy and Montgomery revisit this richly diverse and ever-changing field, identifying some of the best international practices in Applied Drama and Theatre. Through interviews with leading practitioners and educators such as Dorothy Heathcote, Jan Cohen Cruz, James Thompson and Johnny Saldaña, the authors lucidly present the key concepts, theories and reflective praxis of Applied Drama and Theatre.

As they discuss the changes brought about by practitioners in venues such as schools, community centres, village squares and prisons, Landy and Montgomery explore the field's ability to make meaning of a vast range of personal and social issues through the application of drama and theatre.

ROBERT J. LANDY is Professor of Educational Theatre and Applied Psychology and Director of the Drama Therapy Program at New York University. His publications include *The Couch and the Stage: Integrating Words and Action in Psychotherapy* (2008), *Essays in Drama Therapy: Unfinished Business* (2001), *Drama Therapy: Concepts, Theories and Practices* (1994) and *Persona And Performance* (1993). He is also a playwright and composer.

DAVID T. MONTGOMERY is a clinical assistant professor for the Program in Educational Theatre at New York University. He is a specialist in drama education, theatre for young audiences, student teaching and integrated arts.

*In memory of Dorothy Heathcote and Nancy Swartzell,
who were always mindful that change comes from a deep
immersion in the art forms of drama and theatre where
the mind and heart are eternally alive.*

Foreword

Theatre, in all of its manifestations, is essentially concerned with change. The title of this book clearly reflects the potential of drama and theatre to transform the lives of individuals and communities around the world. As well as accounts of national and international practice, detailed case studies of individual practitioners and companies give glimpses of the depths of transformative thinking and feeling that may be generated by agents of change functioning in educational, cultural and therapeutic settings. Many practitioners aim to achieve positive adaptations in outlook or understanding among their clients, and the range and ambition of their work is inspiring. But any promise of individual or social change immediately raises difficult questions. Who or what needs to be changed, why and by whom, and what kinds of changes are likely to take place?

The efforts of these impressive individuals will be most effective when their work obeys the essential rules of theatre. It's worth remembering that the most powerful kinds of theatre and drama defy appropriation. They should never be reduced to convenient ways of transmitting information or transparent methods of achieving some kind of moral, social or political health. This book demonstrates that, like the greatest practitioners in theatre, experienced and exceptional facilitators are likely to work indirectly, raising problems and generating questions so that moral, social and political values are highlighted and challenged. Human conduct, situations, issues and relationships – 'tangled lives' as Dewey calls them – become both visible and palpable. Once visible they demand reflection, interpretation and in some cases, action.

But art, and perhaps most of all the drama, is essentially anarchic and volatile. In the unpredictable medium of theatre it is not always possible to anticipate the directions in which any desired changes may occur.

As the German dramatist Peter Weiss puts it:

Everything that we see and hear
Can add to or increase us in some way,
And so it might be with this play.
Some seeds have drifted from our stage. A few
May even have entered and taken root in you.
But what these seeds are – even though

In your darkest places they feed and grow,
 Whatever these seeds are – you will never know.¹

There is no doubt that involvement in drama and theatre will ‘increase’ us, even if any of the ‘seeds’ that take root may remain unknown and unavailable to ordinary discourse. Many of the case studies included in this book demonstrate this ‘increase’. It is always engagement in the dramatic encounter, whether as participant or spectator, that will be truly transformational. This will not arise just because of any intention on the part of the facilitator to induce change in the participants. The greater the struggle to discover emerging meanings, the greater will be the commitment to the encounter. Shallow texts, banal themes, an explicit ‘message’ and the absence of any irony or ambiguity will all limit the effects of the work. Emerging speculation, interpretation and reflection will demand sensitive and informed responses. The engagement becomes transformational because of the insight, the delight, the enlargement of identity, the alternative perspectives that are offered and the developing sense of artistry that arises from that engagement.

Harley Granville Barker (1877–1946), playwright, director, critic, scholar and all-round man of the theatre, insists that the dramatic form, if used honestly and artistically, can be the vehicle for a very vital sort of truth. In ‘Exemplary Theatre’ (1922) he introduces a Minister of Education who argues against allowing professors of theatre to spread abroad ‘a respect for complicated lingo, because ‘they’ll go on complicating it indefinitely for their own greater credit’.² The result, he believes, will be to muddle up teachers’ minds. Even in 1982, when the predecessor to this book, Robert Landy’s *Handbook of Educational Drama and Theatre*, was published the field suffered from a proliferation of designations as practitioners and theorists attempted to identify and define their practice.³ Three decades later some labels and titles have fallen out of favor, but instead of a consolidation and simplification of the field, further terms have been added to the already extensive catalogue. This book lists an astonishing number of locations, applications and objectives of possible practice in education, health and social welfare.

In the decades since 1982 the struggle for practitioners in drama and theatre remains the same. The challenge is to find an effective balance between form and content, skill and spontaneity, process and product, acceptance and exclusion. As in all other aspects of human endeavor, fashions have come and gone. Dramatic play, small group improvisation, games, exercises, conventions, structures, all had their moments of success in the hands of outstanding practitioners and most of the approaches

surveyed in 1982 continue to be popular, although they may have acquired different names.

In this book Robert Landy and David Montgomery show us a remarkable range of philosophies, theories and practice in a variety of contexts, and demonstrate that gifted and ethical practitioners can bring about beneficial changes in the lives of others. But the greatest challenge remains. How do we identify, train and support the kinds of teachers, directors, facilitators and therapists who will be capable of constructively employing the many-faceted art that is theatre? This book reveals the huge potential of drama and theatre in the hands of such agents of change and their impressive capacity to achieve positive transformations in the lives of individuals, groups and communities.

Cecily O'Neill

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We begin with our immense gratitude to our dear colleague, friend, mentor and question poser, Philip Taylor, who organized the mix of Educational Theatre and Drama Therapy students to study with Boal in Rio in 2008, where we met and planned this book. Philip also introduced us to Kate Haines of Palgrave Macmillan, who brought this work to fruition.

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Geo Britto at CTO-Rio for photo of Augusto Boal and his jokers, Olivar Bendelak, Helen Sarapeck, Augusto Boal, Claudete Felix, Barbara Santos, and Geo Britto (n.d)

Sai Ye for photo of Robert Landy leading Drama Therapy group in China, photo by Sai Ye (2010)

Adam Kalesperis and Joe Quintero for photo of B.R.I.D.G.E Project (2008)

Peggy Stern, producer, for photos of *Standing Tall* (2004)

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Richard Termine for photo of the Les Freres Corbusier production of *Hell/ House*, directed by Alex Timbers, photo by Richard Termine (2006)

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My family – wife Annie, daughter Mary Leigh and sons Danny and James. They motivate me daily to do my best. Special thanks to Annie, a constant inspiration, for her sacrifices and love.

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To my dear children, Georgie and Mackey, who are in my heart.

Above all, we are grateful to our extraordinary students and colleagues who toil daily on the front lines to work toward change. Your collective passions inspire us to give all that we have.

List of Interviewees

Ela Weissberger	Holocaust survivor and original cast member of Brundibar, in Terezin
Johnny Saldaña	Professor, Arizona State University
Philip Taylor	Associate Professor of Educational Theatre, NYU
David Booth	Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto
Cecily O'Neill	Scholar, artist and practitioner of Educational Theatre
Gavin Bolton	Scholar, artist and practitioner of Educational Theatre
Kristy Messer	Drama Specialist, Inner-City Arts
Adam Kalesperis	Co-founder, B.R.I.D.G.E Theatre Project
Joe Quintero	Co-founder, B.R.I.D.G.E Theatre Project
Emelie Fitzgibbon	Artistic Director/CEO, Graffiti Theatre Company
Nan Smithner	Clinical Assistant Professor of Educational Theatre, NYU
Chrissie Poulter	Head of Media, Film and Culture Department, Leeds Trinity University College
Lisa Citron	Founder and Executive Director, (Out)Laws and Justice
Linda Cook	Drama therapist and drama educator, New Orleans, Louisiana
Judge Helen Berrigan	Judge, US District Court, Eastern District of Louisiana
Soohyun Ma	Drama therapist and drama educator, Seoul, Korea
Akeyo Onoe	Drama therapist and drama educator, Professor, Ritsumeikan University, Japan
Jun Watanabe	Drama educator and Professor, Nihon University, Japan
William Sun	Professor and Vice-President, Shanghai Theatre Academy, China

Dorothy Heathcote	MBE, innovator of Drama in Education
Jay Pecora	Assistant Professor, Theatre and Dance, Potsdam, The State University of New York
Jennifer Holmes	Adjunct Faculty, Manhattanville College and Founder and Director of Global Empowerment Theatre (GET)
Chris Vine	Academic Director, Master of Arts in Applied Theatre, The City University of New York
James Mirrione	Playwright and Professor, United Arab Emirates University
Peter Harris	Lecturer and Practitioner, Tel Aviv University
Michael Rohd	Artistic Director, Sojourn Theatre; Visiting Chair in Theatre, Northwestern University
Jan Cohen-Cruz	Professor, Syracuse University; Director, Imagining America
Hazel Barnes	Senior Research Associate, Drama and Performance Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus
Teresa Fisher	Adjunct Lecturer at Bronx Community College, Coordinator of the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable, and Producer/Administrator of New Plays for Young Audiences
James Thompson	Professor of Applied and Social Theatre at the University of Manchester
Nisha Sajnani	Director of the Drama Therapy, Community Health, and Prevention program at the Post Traumatic Stress Center in New Haven, CT, and is on faculty at the Institutes for the Arts in Psychotherapy (NYC) and at New York University.
Nancy Swortzell	Founder and Artistic Director Emeritus, New Plays for Young Audiences
Edie Demas	TYA and Arts Education Specialist
Carol Korty	Playwright for children and young adults
José Cruz González	Professor of Playwriting and Directing, California State University, Los Angeles
Tony Graham	Visiting Artist in Educational Theatre, NYU and noted director of plays for young audiences

Natalie Burgess	Educator/Puppeteer/Musician, Brooklyn Children's Museum
Sally Fairman	Executive Director, The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company
Jonathan Shmidt	Assistant Director of Education, The New Victory Theater; Co-Director, Trusty Sidekick Theatre Company
Renée Emunah	Director of the Drama Therapy program at California Institute of Integral Studies
Zeina Daccache	Executive Director, Drama Therapist, Catharsis – Lebanese Center for Drama Therapy
Zerka T. Moreno	TEP, along with her late husband, J. L. Moreno, developed the theory and practice of psychodrama
Armand Volkas	Clinical Director of the Living Arts Counseling Center
Jonathan Fox	Founder/Emeritus, Playback Centre
Tom Magill	Voluntary Artistic Director of ESC: Understanding through Film
Christopher Odhiambo Joseph	Associate Professor of Literature and Intervention Drama, Department of Literature, Theatre and Film Studies, Moi University
Hsiao-Hua Chang	Professor of Drama, National Taiwan University of Arts

Introduction: The Praxis of Theatre for Change

Drama and theatre are aesthetic forms of performance with historical roots in ritual and religion. Both trace their etymology to ancient Greek, which speaks to drama as an action taken, and theatre as a place for observing an action. Both are intimately linked in their confluence of acting and witnessing. As drama is conventionally performed in a theatre, each theatrical space presages an action compelling enough to be seen.

We begin this book with the assumption that drama and theatre truly matter and not only to actors and audiences. They matter to teachers and students, social activists and spiritual celebrants, therapists and clients, those who apply aspects of performance toward understanding and changing their life circumstances. As such, performance elucidates pedagogical structures in classrooms, social, political and religious structures in communities and psychological structures in the heart and mind. When applied to learning, social action and therapy, performance becomes a means for changing understanding, power dynamics, consciousness and behaviour.

This performative model of action and observation also encompasses a critical element when the actors and observers reflect upon their experience. Furthermore, such reflection can lead to transformational action in the world on the part of the actor and the observer.

This is a book about drama and theatre praxis in the service of personal and collective change. We view praxis as a practice informed by theory (and vice-versa), or, more specifically, a model of action–observation–reflection–re-action, where re-action points to change. With etymological roots in Greek, praxis, which means action, is deeply grounded in drama through Aristotle's conception of tragedy as *mimesis praxeos*, an imitation of an action.¹ The concept of praxis, with applications to philosophy, politics, aesthetics, religion and more recently, pedagogy, will frame our discussion of drama and theatre for change. We will also adhere to Paul Taylor's understanding of praxis as a creative process, steeped in dialogue, an idea consistent with the educational philosophy of Paolo Freire who writes: 'Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it.'²

Throughout this book, we will work toward describing and analyzing the praxis of drama and theatre as it is applied to the education, social action and therapy of individuals and groups. By social action, we mean efforts within a community to enhance a social justice agenda. In addition, we will make some remarks about religious expression through drama and theatre, again situating our discussion within the framework of praxis.

This book builds upon a previous text, *Handbook of Educational Drama and Theatre*, written by Robert Landy and published in 1982.³ That volume was based upon a 48-part television series 'Drama in Education,' which Landy created and hosted on WCBS-TV in 1980.⁴ In the series many of the leading figures in the field were interviewed, including Gavin Bolton, Brian Way, Geraldine Brain Siks, Richard Courtney, Nellie McCaslin, Nancy and Lowell Swortzell. In his book, Landy incorporated many of the ideas of these and other leading figures in an attempt to define and survey the field of Educational Drama and Theatre as it existed in the US and the UK in the early 1980s.

In the current volume, Landy and his colleague David Montgomery, re-examine the field 30 years later. This time the authors cast a wider net, looking at the field more globally for signs of development. In this new endeavor, they not only identify many of the best practices, associated with specific practitioners and performance groups, but also critically examine these practices through the lens of praxis. As in the previous volume, the authors interview practitioners and theorists worldwide and incorporate their points of view. They also interview some of the original figures in the 1982 volume and ask them to discuss the changes they see over a 30-year span.

One constant from 1982 to 2012 is the lack of a coherent and integrated understanding of the discipline. In fact, few then or now would even agree on an optimal title. In 1982 Landy proposed the title 'Educational Drama and Theatre' as an umbrella for the field as a whole, integrating many of the discrepant parts including: Creative Drama, Drama in Education, Developmental Drama, Theatre in Education, Children's Theatre, Drama Therapy and Psychodrama.

What was clear in the early 1980s, and remains so 30 years later, is that these forms of drama and theatre exist in many environments, including schools, community centers, hospitals and auditoriums. Given the technology in common usage since the end of the 20th century, drama and theatre are also practiced globally in the virtual spaces of the World Wide Web. In one example, 'World of Warcraft', an internet game played by millions, players take on fictional roles, called avatars, and enact transformational journeys within the frame of cyberspace.⁵

Although much of the terminology is similar today, a conceptual shift has occurred over the last 30 years, based in the development of theory, practice and research, as well as political and psychological concerns. This is especially clear in the domains of social action and therapy. Action has become a mainstay of several forms of psychotherapy,⁶ and Drama Therapy has matured and expanded internationally as a praxis. In education and social action, the field of Applied Theatre has burgeoned, consistent with the need of adherents to address issues of social justice through performance.

Many in Applied Theatre, influenced by the political and philosophical implications of globalization, post-colonialism and postmodernism, embrace a position of critical consciousness, also known as conscientization or *conscientização*, a term coined by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, whose theory springs from work with oppressed people in Brazil in the 1970s.⁷ Conscientization in practice urges people to raise essential questions about their circumstances and to expose the mechanisms of oppression. Freire's work provided the philosophical basis for that of theatre artist, Augusto Boal, who has influenced generations of practitioners of Applied Theatre and related forms.

Applied Theatre, discussed in Chapter 4, is based not only in the ideas of Freire and Boal, but also the critical theory of Giroux, Kincheloe and McLaren, among others.⁸ Critical theorists offer an intellectual perspective that challenges assumptions about privilege, culture, gender, race and class. These perspectives inform our understanding of Theatre for Change.

In this book, we present a holistic view of a field still very much in development. Many will argue that a single umbrella is too inclusive and that fields like Applied Theatre and Drama Therapy are and ought to be separate. However, going against the stream that foregrounds specializations, we take the point of view that the several forms of drama and theatre that apply to education, social action and therapy are more similar in praxis than not and can be viewed as one discipline. As such, we open an expansive umbrella and let go of the previous, more limited name, Educational Drama and Theatre.

Our vision is of a discipline that holds together forms of drama and theatre which exist to facilitate change. Our focus is upon three parts of the whole: Drama and Theatre in Education, Applied Theatre and Drama Therapy. Because these fields are in themselves so burdened with terminology, we attempt to clarify each major field and sub-field. In addition, we look briefly at related applications of drama and theatre to the spiritual domain as religion deeply impacts people's lives in the 21st century.

We are well aware of the problems associated with an umbrella for the three applied fields of drama and theatre. There are certainly key

differences as pointed out by many writers in Applied Theatre and Drama in Education who make it abundantly clear that they are not therapists equipped to swerve into the dangerous traffic of the inner lives of their constituents. They are correct in asserting that the training and contract between therapist and client in Drama Therapy is different from that between facilitator and participant in Educational Drama or Applied Theatre. And yet, theatre artists have been grappling with the problem of aesthetic distance for at least a century, debating whether or not to delve too deeply into an actor's psyche and whether or not to preserve the sanctity of the fourth wall to protect the spectator from psychological harm, or, in some cases, physical engagement with the actors.

Given the political and psychological agendas of contemporary drama/theatre practitioners, these issues are very much alive as all use methods of performance to nudge and sometimes startle viewers out of their comfort zones into new dimensions of seeing, thinking and acting. The problem of containing and generating too much or too little emotion continues to challenge most all in the drama/theatre profession.

As an umbrella term, we propose Theatre for Change, a phrase which speaks to the purpose of the several dramatic forms applied to education, social action and therapy. We acknowledge that some may question whether theatre and its applied forms really do foment change and if so, how can the change be measured.⁹ And yet, through our research within the three domains, we have discovered that change is a shared principle that guides and motivates so many practitioners and researchers.

We conceptualize change in a way consistent with Freire's notion of critical consciousness. Change concerns two basic processes: awareness and action. In Theatre for Change, the actor and viewer are provided the opportunity through an engagement with the aesthetic object of performance to develop their critical consciousness and to rehearse options toward action. We also recognize that change is not necessarily indicated in all circumstances. For some, taking personal action in a repressive political arena can lead to further repression and harm.¹⁰

What are some of the unique qualities of Theatre for Change? For one, Theatre for Change is an applied form. It can be applied to many locales that require change. In this book, we look at three: educational settings, community settings, with a strong orientation toward social justice issues, and therapeutic settings.

Further, practitioners apply aesthetic performance for specific reasons, in our three cases, pedagogical, political and therapeutic. Consistent with many others in the field, we believe that changes in cognition, consciousness and behaviour can occur optimally through an aesthetic process of