

**A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF INTERACTIVE
PERFORMER-AUDIENCE METHODS WITH
SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO INTERACTIVE THEMBA
THEATRE (ITT)**

by

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Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Masters in Dramatic Arts by Coursework

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters in Dramatic Arts by Coursework in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree of examination in any other university.

Inge James

----- day of -----, 2008.

Abstract

The investigation of theatre as an agent of transformation raises the question of *how* this is possible. Theatre's most notable attribute is its ability to engage the hearts and minds of its audience members. The central argument that people make decisions through a rational and emotional process correspondingly, positions theatre as a possible channel of influence on its audience members. Applied Theatre for HIV/AIDS education provides a platform for further exploration of the possible impact theatre has on the behaviour of its audiences, with specific reference to Interactive Themba Theatre (ITT) and adolescents.

This study commences with reference to the potential of Interactive Theatre in Chapter One as a medium for experiential learning through active participation – complying with the documented prerequisites for effective learning. Chapter Two gives a brief overview of the development of revolutionary theatre forms utilising interactive approaches, and concludes with specific focus on Theatre In Education (TIE) and its key features. Chapter Three presents semiotics as a theoretical research methodology which enables interpretive observations of the ITT process, together with qualitative assessment criteria primarily based on engagement levels of audience members. These form a proposed framework for analysis of interactive performer-audience methods. Chapter Four focuses on Interactive Themba Theatre (ITT) as a case study and presents the ITT methodology, its approach to learning, and performance processes. Chapter Four also introduces the respective schools where observations took place. Chapter Five gives descriptive observations of the ITT process, specifically referring to the elements within preparation,

presentation and post-performance encounters, with a central focus on the engagement levels of learners during the ITT process. Chapter Six analyses the observations made in Chapter Five in relation to the theatre group's fulfilment of their prescribed aims and objectives, with specific reference to the elements within the preparation, presentation and post-performance encounters. This chapter looks at prescribed objectives in relation to actual outcomes, and will focus on engagement of the interactive performer-audience methods with the purpose of investigating their efficacy as a medium for audience interaction. Chapter Seven comprises recommendations of the investigations to enhance the interactive theatre process relating to the preparation, presentation and post-performance dynamics in a TIE programme.

The conclusion in Chapter Eight highlights the importance of engagement in the interactive methods of a TIE programme for optimum impact to occur. It also highlights that while learning may play a significant role in influencing behaviour, it may not necessarily result in behavioural change. In this regard, it is indicated how further engagement at an affective level might impact audiences to the extent that behaviour may be influenced.

Dedication

To all the theatre practitioners who endeavour to harmonize the
heart and *mind* through their work;

To my parents with sincere thanks for their love and
encouragement during the numerous years of my studies;

And to Mr and Mrs. Jones, the people whom I have not met, who
may just come across this study, not as theatre practitioners, but as
human beings, going about their lives and learning more about
themselves and the world we live in: I hope that you too will be
both challenged and enriched by this...

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Thank you mom for believing in me— your servant-heart is captivating. You are a woman *par excellence*.

Dad you are my pillar, and a man of integrity. Thank you for sustaining me with your love and support.

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Acknowledgement must be given to Arthur Matthews Primary, Bovet Primary and Masibambane College.

To all my friends for their support and prayers during this time, *'Thank you!'*

Finally, to God, for opening doors that no man can close...
'Lord, You will ordain peace (God's favour and blessings, both temporal and spiritual) for us for You have also wrought in us and for us all our works' ~ Isaiah 26:12. [Amplified]

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Abbreviations used in this paper:

AIDS	=	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HIV	=	Human immunodeficiency virus
THEMBA	=	Themba HIV/Aids Organization
Masibambane	=	Masibambane College
Arthur Matthews	=	Arthur Matthews Primary
Bovet	=	Bovet Primary
Interactive methods	=	Interactive performer-audience methods

Reference Method Used

The Harvard Method of Referencing has been used for references in this study.

For electronic sites the Harvard Referencing method does not require page numbers – page numbers have therefore been omitted in the reference list of this document except where a page have been made available for Electronic Referencing.

We do not need art, except that it helps us to
examine the chaotic experiences of our lives, except
that it reminds us of the potential of our humanity,
except that it advances our political literacy

~ Williams, 1993:106 ~

Abstract

The investigation of theatre as an agent of transformation raises the question of *how* this is possible. Theatre's most notable attribute is its ability to engage the hearts and minds of its audience members. The central argument that people make decisions through a rational and emotional process correspondingly, positions theatre as a possible channel of influence on its audience members. Applied Theatre for HIV/AIDS education provides a platform for further exploration of the possible impact theatre has on the behaviour of its audiences, with specific reference to Interactive Themba Theatre (ITT) and adolescents.

This study commences with reference to the potential of Interactive Theatre in Chapter One as a medium for experiential learning through active participation – complying with the documented prerequisites for effective learning. Chapter Two gives a brief overview of the development of revolutionary theatre forms utilising interactive approaches, and concludes with specific focus on Theatre In Education (TIE) and its key features. Chapter Three presents semiotics as a theoretical research methodology which enables interpretive observations of the ITT process, together with qualitative assessment criteria primarily based on engagement levels of audience members. These form a proposed framework for analysis of interactive performer-audience methods. Chapter Four focuses on Interactive Themba Theatre (ITT) as a case study and presents the ITT methodology, its approach to learning, and performance processes. Chapter Four also introduces the respective schools where observations took place. Chapter Five gives descriptive observations of the ITT process, specifically referring to the elements within preparation,

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The conclusion in Chapter Eight highlights the importance of engagement in the interactive methods of a TIE programme for optimum impact to occur. It also highlights that while learning may play a significant role in influencing behaviour, it may not necessarily result in behavioural change. In this regard, it is indicated how further engagement at an affective level might impact audiences to the extent that behaviour may be influenced.

The theatre allows us to converse with our souls – to passionately pursue and discover ways of living with ourselves and others. We are all artists, and theatre is a language. We have no better way to work together, to learn about each other, to heal and to grow.

(Michael Rodd, 1988: xix)

Introduction

Broad claims have been made about theatre's transformative ability. This art form has been regarded as 'a potent transformative agent [which] can open our eyes to new ways of seeing and understanding' (Taylor, 2003: xxviii). Over time, theatre practitioners have driven innovative approaches to challenge the role of theatre as extending beyond its most celebrated function of entertainment. This is poignantly articulated by Ken Wales in his reference to theatre's ability 'to inform with delight' (In Conversation with Ken Wales¹).

These claims raise the question of *how* this is possible. What positions theatre as having the capacity to bring about transformation? Is this premise viable? If so, in what manner does theatre achieve this? Is a transformation of the complex human being truly attainable within a theatrical setting? It is the need to answer these very questions which has driven this study.

The exploration of theatre's capacity for change has confronted the core parameters of traditional theatre through these approaches. This exploration extended the domain of theatre's performance space beyond the physical theatre building, and even redefined the essence of conventional theatre – namely, the division between the performance and the audience:

Modern experiments have transformed lorries, boats, even swimming pools, into theatre stages, and even the stage / audience division has been fragmented in various ways. (Boal, 1995:16)

¹ Veteran filmmaker on all the original Pink Panther films, *The Tamarind Seed*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *The Party*, *Christy* and *Amazing Grace*; Previous Vice President of Production for Walt Disney Pictures

The restructured space between the performance and the audience was initiated through various interactive methods in which the relationship between the audience and the performance was redefined, making for an *interactive theatre* approach.

Revolutionary approaches emanated in theatre forms that were developed and applied for specific purposes in community settings inter alia Community-based Theatre, Theatre For Development and Theatre In Education. These forms of theatre were classified as applied theatre and shared a central aim to bring about transformation of some kind:

[...] it is the application of the theatrical art form that is being harnessed to help communities determine some aspect of who they are and what they aspire to become [...] theatre is a platform that empowers a transformation. (Taylor, 2003: xxvi)

Amongst other applications, applied theatre has also been utilised to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic:

[...] the applied theatre worker is either commissioned to or interested in creating theatre that raises issues and questions that need to be addressed: How might theatre help a community address the issues of safe-sex practices? (Taylor, 2003: xxvii)

An interactive theatre group who employ this approach is Interactive Themba Theatre (ITT). This theatre group's methodology comprises an interactive theatre process and has been developed to fulfil the aim of 'influencing behaviour to prevent the spread of HIV' (van Rooyen, 2007). The ITT process facilitates an interactive theatre experience for all participants:

They have shared their concerns, practiced negotiating risk-free sexual encounters, taken on roles within the drama and interacted with the characters, spoken about different kinds of sexual activity, and learnt more about the risks of unsafe sex and HIV and AIDS. (van Rooyen, 2007)

In the context of viewing theatre as a transformative² agent with the capacity to influence and revolutionize its audience and their reality, the intention of this study is to examine to what degree this mode of theatre, with its present interactive methods, acts as a transformative agent in the context of South African societies, with specific reference to theatre as an educational tool for adolescents on HIV/AIDS.

The growing interest in applied drama and theatre in the performing arts serves to support the validity of such an investigation. There is a limited amount of published research documentation of this field, isolating any form of groundbreaking work to a few selected researchers. Thus far, attained knowledge regarding this style of theatre has not been widely or publicly shared. Broad claims have been made for applied theatre's innovative approach in dealing with social issues, and as such, it would seem imperative for a theatre practitioner to inspect whether such claims are valid. Furthermore, applied theatre praxis³ in this field of study present career opportunities and create space for constant development and growth in the performing arts, making exploration of these areas both necessary and relevant. To aid further exploration on this subject, an outline of central qualities significant to theatre will now be discussed.

Theatre's Capacity for Change

Amongst its unique attributes, theatre has the ability to engage the reason and emotions of its audience members, making it a language that both the heart and the mind can respond to (For a more detailed description of the characteristics of the emotional brain, see Appendix A). In theatre, '[d]rama engages the affective zone. It deliberately engages and explores emotional field forces' (Heathcote, 1984d: 197). An experience of theatrical performances can be both thought-provoking and emotionally absorbing:

² As defined by The Free Dictionary: to alter, change, modify, become different in essence; undergo a metamorphosis

³ performance or application of skill: the practical aspect and application of a particular entity such as a professional skill, as opposed to its theory

The characters' vulnerability in the context of their circumstances is exposed in the drama, and *if artistically marshalled* as the story unfolds, draws the audience empathetically closer. As the character behaviour is buffeted by the turbulence of fast-changing circumstances, so the emotions of the audience are disturbed. (Williams, 1993:101)

These faculties of thinking and feeling have been attributed to the composition of the human soul. However difficult in quantifying, the soul has been described as: '[t]he animating and vital principle in humans, credited with the faculties of thought, action, and emotion and often conceived as an immaterial entity'⁴; 'the emotional part of human nature; the seat of the feelings or sentiments.'⁵ Actor Rich Swingle classifies the soul as the 'emotional core' of the human being (In Conversation with Rich Swingle).

Theorists have described the soul as encompassing the cognitive aspects of the 'mind' as well as affective aspects, such as the human personality. These cognitive aspects include 'intelligence' and 'choice', where the process of understanding, evaluation and decision-making is fostered (Happel & Price III, 1995:61). Johnson asserts that the faculty of feeling is a second division that '[makes] up a human personality', and forms part of the non-tangible soul dimension (Johnson, 1995:49). Happel and Price III encapsulate this relationship of thoughts and feelings to the soul: 'Insofar as we think, feel, desire, or plan, we experience the movement of the soul' (1995:65). For the purpose of this study, the soul can therefore be described as a non-tangible, yet existent entity of the human being that comprises, amongst other faculties, that of thoughts and feelings – i.e. the *heart* and *mind*.

To communicate with the soul, Happel and Price III (1995:66) maintain that 'a science of inner experience that attends to the interior motions and patterns of the heart and mind', such as psychology, is required. Theatre is therefore also a language of the soul, for as Rodd (1998: xix) remarks: 'The theatre allows us to converse with our souls [...]' (Rodd, 1998: xix).

⁴ The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition. (n.d.).

⁵ The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. (n.d.).

Supporting research has brought to light that human beings have ‘two brains, two minds,’ which comprise ‘two different kinds of intelligence: rational and emotional’ (Goleman, 2004:28). How we experience life is informed by both of these entities:

In a very real sense we have two minds, one that thinks and one that feels. These two fundamentally different ways of knowing interact to construct our mental life [...] How we do in life is determined by both [...] each is a full partner in mental life. (Goleman, 2004:8, 28)

This positions theatre as a compelling channel of influence on its audience members as it engages not only the intellect, but also the affective zone of its audience members, and deliberately engages and explores emotional field forces’ (Heathcote, 1984d: 197). The dramatic enactments in theatre are sensory vehicles which possess the ability to trigger the emotions, without which, researchers endorse, we rarely make decisions:

[...] feelings are typically *indispensable* for rational decisions; they point us in the proper direction, where dry logic can then be of best use [...] the emotional brain is as involved in reasoning as is the thinking brain. (Dr. Damasio as cited in Goleman, 2004:28)

Theatre’s ability to access the thoughts and feelings of its audiences can potentially catalyse a behavioural change. A change in behaviour is, amongst other factors, informed by the *decisions* one makes, and the decisions of audience members can be highly influenced through the emotional engagement of the characters in a play. If the interplay between the affective and cognitive faculties is acknowledged, theatre qualifies as a type of ‘social encounter’ which centres on a performance and an audience – making it applicable to The Social Learning Theory⁶ – which postulates that behaviour can be influenced by observing others (Robinson, 1980:149).

⁶ Social learning Theory is a study of social behaviour, and focuses on learning that occurs within a social context. It considers that people learn from one another, including such concepts as observational learning, imitation, and modeling. Among others Albert Bandura is considered the leading proponent of this theory. Ormrod, J.E. (1999).

Smiley contests that '[t]heatre stands as the most human of all the arts because it involves lived experience' and is, in the simplest form, acting out of life' (Smiley, 1987:3).

Theatre, which often depicts real life scenarios, may present situations where the behaviours and choices of the characters can have a direct influence on audience members who observe them in the depicted enactments. Audience members can be placed within a realistic situation, thereby exposing them to possible solutions and resultant behavioural change through the depicted characters. Truby highlights the use of story-lines in this kind of audience engagement:

[...] stories aren't just about jolting and thrilling and then soothing an audience. Stories are the primary way we give meaning to our lives, but only when they show individuals making hard decisions with effects that can last a lifetime. (Truby, 2008)

Considering *how* transformation may be possible in a theatrical context serves as a framework for this study, in context of how theatre's approach to audience members engages them as sentient human beings. Contextual content of the study will now follow.

Context of the Study

Interactive Themba Theatre as a Case Study

A present day theatre group in South Africa who uses interactive methodologies for HIV/AIDS Education is Interactive Themba Theatre (ITT). This theatre group is actively involved in addressing the current global crisis of HIV/AIDS in their local communities, with adolescents as their primary target audience group. The methodology employed by ITT is built on interactive performer-audience methods which primarily include question-asking, hot-seating, and enrolment of audience members as characters. These methods make for an interactive process which takes audience-engagement to a new level of participation and will be elaborated upon in Chapter Six. ITT's location and mode of work will be described in more detail in Chapter Four, along with their target audience.

HIV/AIDS

Defining Concepts

In relation to the HI Virus and Auto Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), it is acknowledged that HIV⁷ is a virus and AIDS⁸ is a syndrome, with a causal link existing between the two entities. Many researchers in the field of HIV/AIDS believe that HIV is directly responsible for AIDS, yet others separate them – one as a virus, and the other as a syndrome, as there are documented cases of people living with HIV who have not contracted AIDS (refer to Appendix B). In addition to the complexities that surround the global HIV/AIDS pandemic, it is acknowledged that HIV itself is not a terminal illness. Rather, the virus creates a situation where the immune system of its host is weakened to the extent that opportunistic infections result in mortality. For the purpose of this study, reference to this endemic will be presented as HIV/AIDS as both are acronyms and thus capital letters are the most correct way of referring to the two conditions in terms of syntax.

HIV/AIDS and the Youth

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has spread in such a way that South Africa is documented as the country with the highest number of infections in the world. In the year 2005 alone, it was estimated that 5.5 million people were infected in South Africa (Pembrey, 2007b). At the end of 2006, an estimated figure of 37.2 million adults and 2.3 million children were living with HIV/AIDS around the world (Global Health Council, n.d.; Berry, 2007). Within these ratings, South Africa accounted for an estimated 260,000 children below the age of fifteen that were infected with HIV (Pembrey, 2007b). Another source of statistics estimates that 7 million South Africans are currently HIV-positive with the highest prevalence rates occurring among young people, especially teenage girls (Hartell, 2005).

In a national survey undertaken by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in 2006, it was noted that the widespread levels of misinformation about HIV/AIDS was prevalent particularly amongst those members of the population aged over 50 and in the

⁷ Human Immunodeficiency Virus

⁸ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

12 to 14 year age category (Global Health Council, n.d.). According to interpretative statistics, young people in this age category are more likely to be infected by HIV/AIDS than any other age group, yet will also be the most willing to change their behaviour as a result of education. This factor places the school environment at the forefront of this challenge, serving both as an opportunity and responsibility to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic:

Today's generation of school children have been born into a world where AIDS is a harsh, unavoidable reality – a situation that their time at school can help them to prepare for. Schools provide an environment in which people can be educated about AIDS [...] With a capacity to reach large numbers of young people with information that can save their lives, [schools] can have such a powerful preventive effect [at] a time when, globally, more children are in school than ever before. [I]t is therefore vitally important that countries invest in schools as a means of informing young people about how they can avoid HIV and AIDS before it is too late. (Pembrey, 2007a)

Pembrey's emphasis on the major role schools play in 'shaping the attitudes, opinions and, perhaps most importantly, the behaviour of young people', highlights the potential for impacting behavioural change which informs the vision of ITT for HIV/AIDS education among young people (Pembrey, 2007a).

The high level of HIV/AIDS infections occurring daily in South Africa reflects the challenges that have been faced by AIDS education and prevention campaigns (Pembrey, 2007b). The conservative approach to schooling, where educators endorse a factual and academic method of teaching subjects, leaves many teachers with great difficulties in addressing the topic of sexual behaviour and HIV/AIDS, in a relevant and easily identifiable way to their learners. The majority of teachers are simply not accustomed or trained to communicate on this level about this particular subject. This reality calls for an intervention of proportionate weight:

The scale of the AIDS epidemic among youth in South Africa is enormous and HIV/AIDS continues its deadly course. Throughout South Africa, the AIDS epidemic is affecting large number of adolescents, leading to serious psychological, social, economic, and educational problems. (Hartell, 2005:1)

Research has indicated that sexual behaviour plays a significant role in the escalating HIV/AIDS statistics: 'In South Africa, HIV is spread mainly through sexual contact between men and women' (Hartell, 2005:1). Statistics indicate that over 33% of adolescents in South Africa are sexually active and that sexual behaviour is commenced at an early age (Hartell, 2005:3, 5). Sexual activity amongst adolescents has resultantly been rated as a primary cause for the high HIV/AIDS infection rates:

When it is considered that 40% of the South African population is less than 15 years of age and that 15.64% of the South African youth between the ages of 15-24 is infected with HIV, one recognizes that HIV/AIDS represents a devastating pandemic among the youth of South Africa (Hartell, 2005:1). This points to the need for research on the sexual behavior of this group. (Hartell, 2005:1)

Adolescents and Sexual Behaviour

Research on adolescent's sexual behaviour in South Africa has brought the following observations to light:

- Sexual behaviour is initiated at the average age of 15 years⁹ and is characterized by several partners, 'with some reporting up to seven partners, yet few take steps to prevent sexually transmitted diseases' (Hartell, 2005:3).
- Attributing factors may include 'peer pressure, curiosity, and (particularly for young women) coercion and material gain' (Hartell, 2005:3, 5).

⁹ These findings are supported by the Health Systems Development Unit (1997) in their significant sample-size study which indicated that many adolescents are sexually active by the age of 15 years (Hartell, 2005:3).

- Several sources of documented research demonstrate that adolescents engage in unsafe sexual practices, with the following as primary causal factors: ‘pressure to engage in early and unprotected intercourse, coercion, pressure to have a child, lack of access to user-friendly reproductive health services, negative perceptions about condoms, low perceptions about personal risk, and low perceived self-efficacy in preventive behavior’ (Hartell, 2005:3).
- Studies specific to the Eastern Cape and the Free State provinces indicated sexual behaviour as early as 12 years, with boys engaging in sexual activity earlier than girls (Hartell, 2005:3).
- Although research shows that adolescents have basic to high knowledge about HIV/AIDS, statistics have indicated that many continue to engage in ‘high risk sexual behaviour’ (Hartell, 2005:2).
- Conclusive comments on the research of adolescents’ sexual behaviour state that, despite intervening efforts, ‘there has been no significant change in the rate of infection among adolescents in South Africa’ (Hartell, 2005:7).

The high statistics for HIV/AIDS among adolescents warrants an investigation of interactive theatre applied for HIV/AIDS education among the 10 to 15 year age category, attending primary and secondary schools. Schools are a prospective and relevant space for theatre groups, such as ITT, to bring about a change in young people’s attitudes and behaviour concerning this life threatening virus.

Adolescence is regarded as a time when many of the most important choices in one’s life are made. In this phase of their development, decision-making about life-commitments and the construction of a value-system form part of a primary challenge of their identity-formation (Goodenough & Tyler, 1959:401-404). This factor indicates a timely opportunity to provide adequate information to enable young learners to confront and explore their choices in life, including that of sexual behaviour, as one of the ‘major issues that confront the teen-ager’ in the process of developing their value systems (Goodenough & Tyler, 1959:403).

The decisions of adolescents in establishing a personal value system at this phase of identity formation can be highly influenced through such an intervention. How ITT engages with these specific issues regarding adolescents will be contemplated in Chapter Six.

Research Methodology

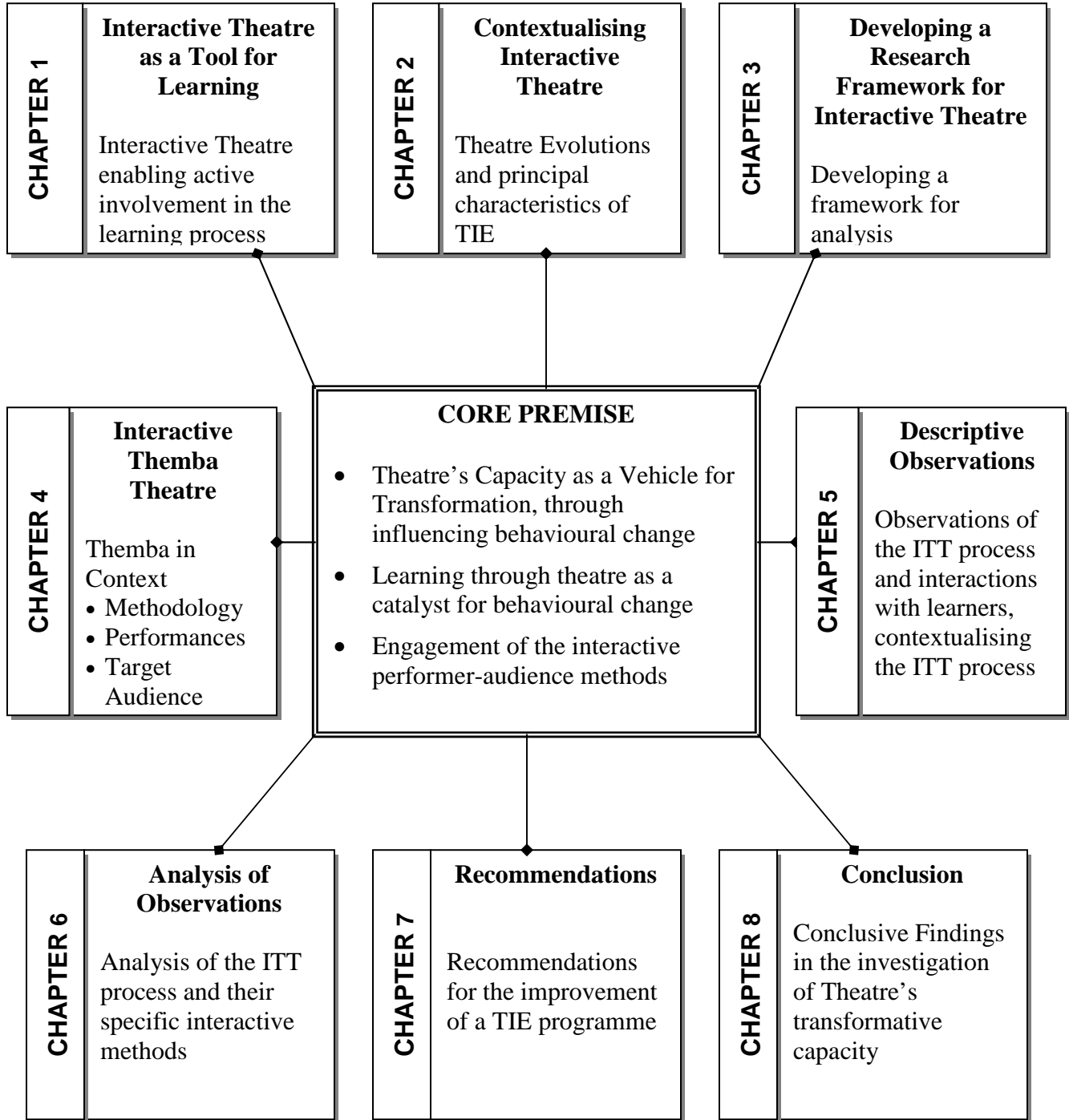
Investigation of this nature involves the study of human behaviour, and as a result, the observation of audience responses and their engagement levels to the interactive methods of a theatre group merits a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research entails ‘the use of qualitative data, such as interviews, documents, and participant observation [fieldwork] data to understand and explain social phenomena’ (Myers, 2008). This approach is characteristically used in the social sciences as opposed to quantitative research, which sources information primarily from statistics and figures.

Data for this study will be gathered through ‘direct observation’ for analyses, relying on one of the four recognized means of information gathering for this research method (Marshall & Rossman, 2006: 56). This study also includes the ‘researcher’s impressions and reactions’, making for a qualitative research methodology (Myers, 2008). Taylor (1996:16) defines a qualitative analysis as ‘ways of configuring human experience’, and observation of the ITT interactive methods attests to this.

Semiotics – a method of decoding based on a theoretical sign-system – and explained in greater detail in Chapter Three will serve to construct a proposed framework for analysis of the ITT interactive methods. This will enable qualified interpretations of observations that were made during the field research, which will be analysed according to attendant assessment criteria contained within the proposed framework, indicative of the engagement-value of the interactive theatre methods.

Schematic Representation of Chapters

An outline of the chapters as a collective is schematically illustrated in the following diagram:



The increasing number of people who are being infected and affected by this disease poses a challenge to theatre as a social science, drawing attention to the claimed transformative potential of theatre in relation to various social issues. The overriding question remains: 'Is theatre an effective tool in the South African context to facilitate a change in behaviour with specific reference to adolescents and the HIV/AIDS pandemic?'

In response to this, I will examine the efficacy of interactive methods employed by ITT in this study. This will include a qualitative evaluation of how the selected theatre group sets about to reinforce a level of audience engagement. I intend to specifically investigate their proactive efforts to educate learners regarding HIV/AIDS, within the context of the underlying debate as to whether these methods of performer-audience interactions strengthen theatre's ability to raise awareness and/or bring about change. In particular, the terms *transformation* and *engage* will be defined in the context of theatre.

For purposes of brevity the interactive performer-audience methods will mostly be referred to as 'interactive methods', and Interactive Themba Theatre will interchangeably be referred to as ITT or Themba. The term 'production' will refer to the entire ITT performance event, and may in some cases be used interchangeably with the term 'performance', referring to a dramatic enactment consisting of a story line and dialogue.

This investigation of interactive methods will be undertaken with particular reference to Interactive Themba Theatre (ITT) and in light of the increasing HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa.

CHAPTER 1

Interactive Theatre as a Tool for Learning

Professor of Theatre Studies at the San Diego State University, Peter Larlham, describes South African theatre compellingly, as a medium with which to address ‘issues of immediate relevance to South African society’ (Larlham as cited by Haedicke & Nellhaus, 2001:254). In recognising South Africa as a country consisting of communities which are, amongst other social dilemmas, most notably plagued by the global epidemic, HIV/AIDS, Taylor qualifies interactive theatre as ‘a platform that empowers a transformation’ and deems this mode of theatre as an effective approach to this problem in the twenty-first century:

Drawing on the traditions of storytelling and narrative discourses, troupes engage in theatre as the principal way to heighten understanding of AIDS, HIV, and safe sex. (Taylor, 2003: xxi)

In this regard, Larlham calls for theatre that ‘assists in re-education after the long period of enforced censorship and disinformation’ as ‘[t]here is little doubt today that AIDS has generated a good deal of angst in South Africa’ (Crewe as cited in Blumberg, 2001:256; Haedicke & Nellhaus, 2001:254). Aaron Propes supports theatre’s intervening capacity in the HIV/AIDS endemic:

It's my contention that the use of theatre makes such programs different from those who just use workshops run by peer-educators. It's my belief that by the use of theatre, such programs can bypass people's desire to ‘zone out’ when presented with material they may not be comfortable, or necessarily agree with. More-so than television, theatre presents three-dimensional images of real people with real problems, and cannot just be turned off, or switched to a different channel. And when done correctly, will not shut itself off, even long after the program has left the physical space of the performance. (Propes, 2005)

Theatre and Education

Since its earliest beginnings in the 1960's the potential of theatre to be harnessed in the educational frontier, was recognized: 'dramatic activity is not an educational frill but a forceful educational medium' (Redington, 1983:19). Boal elaborates on this potential:

Theatre is the most natural form of learning, and the most primal, since the child learns to live by means of theatre, playing, acting characters – and, through the other arts, looking at himself and painting, singing and dancing. (Boal, 2006:37)

Apart from simply arousing the audience's interest and keeping them proverbially glued to their seats, dramatic enactments form a core part of the learning experience as they evoke a sensory experience in the aesthetic performance space: Boal affirms how this dynamic in the audience-character relationship develops through the presence of *empathy* (*em*: inside, *pathos*, emotion):

The emotion of the characters penetrates us, the moral world of the show invades us osmotically; we are led by characters and actions not under our control; we experience a *vicarious* emotion. (Boal, 1995:42)

Because of theatre's capacity to involve the senses, the emotions and the intellect, dramatic enactments present the opportunity for a learning experience through the emotional engagement of the audience with the characters and the cognitive engagement of the audience with the decisions of the characters. In their ability to place audience members in the situation both emotionally and cognitively, plays could have a lasting effect on the conscious and/or subconscious of the audience member. This affect can provoke a learning experience through the journey of the characters and can potentially influence the behaviour of its audience members. The Social Learning Theory endorses this in stating that 'people can learn by observing the behaviour of others and the outcomes of those behaviours' and learners can therefore learn a great deal 'simply by observing other people' (Ormrod, 1999).

In addition, interactive theatre processes adhere to the viewpoints of Paulo Freire who believed that effective learning involves ‘an active process in the service of social change’ (Vine, 1993:111). In his progressive approaches, Freire challenged what he called ‘the banking concept of education’ – in which he held that information is deposited into ‘putatively empty vessels’ – and called instead for ‘learning through doing’ (Dalrymple as cited in Blumberg, 2001: 257). This viewpoint is upheld by Morgan and Saxton as a fundamental requirement for a learning experience:

[...] effective *learning* takes place when the [learners] are active participants in “what’s going on” [...] for effective teaching and learning to occur [one needs to] structure [one’s] teaching to invite and sustain that active participation by providing experiences which “get them thinking and feeling”, “get the adrenalin flowing” and which generate in [learners] a need for expression. (Morgan & Saxton, 1994:7)

Freire’s viewpoint also influenced internationally renowned theatre practitioner Augusto Boal¹⁰. His book “*Theatre of the Oppressed*”¹¹ has been ‘an enduring source of inspiration’ in the earliest techniques employed by theatre companies applying theatre as a medium for education:

In his struggle to make his work increasingly relevant and effective as a tool for liberation, Boal had come to the conclusion that traditional forms needed reworking and, specifically, that the relationship between the actor and the audience must be changed. He believed that feelings as well as the intellect were crucial to the development of people’s perceptions and understandings and saw in the language of theatre the means to help them think with their whole being – not passively but ‘in action’. (Vine, 1993: 111)

It is indeed this close inter-relationship that exists between ‘thinking’ and ‘feeling’ that makes interactive theatre a potentially dynamic tool for effective learning for *Theatre* has the capacity to evoke engagement in both the emotional as well as the cognitive domains of its audiences.

¹⁰ Brazilian Director

¹¹ Refer to Appendix C

Bolton endorses the potential of such a holistic learning approach:

It is indeed this close inter-relationship of knowing and feeling and the way in which they are combined, not separated, which opens up so many opportunities for drama in the education of all children. (Bolton, 1986d: 213)

What is represented in the aesthetic performance space ‘are examples from and interpretations of actual experiences – or fictitious ones derived from them – which are held up *as objects of reflection*’ (Robinson, 1980:163). For a learning experience to occur, learners must be able to see their own lives reflected back at them in the mirror-image upheld by the theatrical performance (Boal, 1995:13). When this happens, each learner, as an audience member, is able to relate the content of the play to the content of her/his own life:

In the case of the performing arts [our] perception of a play involves meeting the actions of representation on the stage with a reciprocal act of projection of our own by which we see and interpret them as such. (Robinson, 1980:171)

Heathcote supports the ability of plays to present a learning experience for audience members:

By using this truthful artificial environment learners can face up to emotional, affective ‘people’ responses before finally having to practice in society. So again we see the paradox of the artificiality of drama and its potential for real accountability in society. We can see this clearly in the work of the theatre where the ideas of playwrights are forged into action in the real conditions of audience presentation. (Heathcote, 1984d: 197)

In relation to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the customary TIE programme uses ‘recognizable theatrical forms such as plot, conflict, and characterization’ as fundamental elements that form part of the core of the interactive theatre presentation (Redington, 1983:5).

Audiences are drawn into the respective interactive presentations through the realm of the fictitious by their “willing suspension of disbelief”. Aaron Propes underlines how theatrical performances can be used as a means to address social issues:

Using theatre in a peer educational program is an attempt to reach the people who may 'tune out' because of a feeling of being lectured at. With issues such as acquaintance rape, sexual harassment, and physical and emotional abuse, where the perpetrators are numerous and the society lends itself to these behaviours, it is advantageous to attempt to reach audience members through the 'willing suspension of disbelief'¹² theatre allows us, and create an atmosphere open to questioning our values and ideas. (Propes, 2005)

In the traditional model of learning, teachers are accustomed to presenting learners with facts and figures through a primarily static and one-way communication approach. However, HIV/AIDS education provided through interactive theatre affords learners with an active learning experience and a variety of feedback channels. This creative practice, which requires engagement in the performance itself, may prove to be an influential avenue to assist learners in making responsible choices regarding relationships and sexual activity, in a process where they become co-creators of the staged presentation. Aaron Propes underlines the potential of these performances:

These plays carry messages which include the importance of knowing whether or not one has the HIV-virus, living positively, combating stigma and discrimination, being a role model in one's community, as well as encouraging the delay of first sexual encounter, engaging in safe(r) sex, and negotiation around different sexual activities. (Propes, 2007)

Theatre has emerged as a potentially powerful vehicle in addressing relevant societal issues in an approachable and non-threatening manner. Embracing theatre's educative quality through interactive theatre methods will present opportunity for proactive engagement in the learning experience, and in turn may harnesses theatre's potential as a tool for learning. This can be examined alongside ITT, however, an outline of interactive theatre's evolvment and its defining qualities need to be looked at first.

¹² The phrase, 'willing suspension of disbelief' means that the audience, for the duration of the performance, accepts the identities and situations of the characters, and not those of the actors playing the parts.

CHAPTER 2

Contextualising Interactive Theatre

Look sometimes at the theatre whose stage is the street.

(Brecht as cited in Chapman & Dale, 1980:105)

Like any discipline, theatre has experienced a series of changes in its development due to the influence of complementary fields and practitioners. These were in particular driven by the objectives of groups of theatre practitioners and their vision for this field.

Although it is not possible to describe all of these, they are acknowledged as key turning points in theatre's history which have served in shaping it as an art form. In understanding these changes, the relationship between the performer and audience member needs to be brought to the forefront as without these two elements, theatre would not take place.

In the following chapter, this evolution will be explored along with terms which are specific to this field. Forms of theatre utilizing an interactive approach are placed within their historical context and discussed and key concepts for this study of theatre as a social encounter are clarified.

Exploring the Concept of Theatre

Theatre, derived from the French word '*théâtre*' or from its Greek origin, '*theatron*' (*θέατρον*), meaning '*place of seeing*', can be described in its most elementary form as 'a space set apart, a "place of representation"' (Zárybnická, 2007; Boal, 1995:16). Included within a myriad of definitions, *theatre* is considered as 'what occurs when one or more human beings, isolated in time and/or space, present themselves to another or others' (Beckerman¹³ as cited in Zárybnická, 2007). For Lope de Vega¹⁴, *theatre* is 'two human beings, a passion and a platform' – which can consist of 'a few planks in a public square',

¹³ Bernard Beckerman, head of Hofstra University's department of drama, awards this definition to theatre in his book, '*Dynamics of Drama*.'

¹⁴ Lope de Vega: Acclaimed Spanish playwright and dramatist of the 17th century.

located in ‘an Elizabethan playhouse’, or situated in ‘the arena, just as yesterday this was the Greek stage’ (Boal, 1995:16). Regardless, however, of each respective definition, theatre in all of its most basic representations has conventionally implied a fixed element of ‘separation’ between the performers and the audience, duly affirmed by Robinson: ‘In the theatre there is a clear, generally understood, demarcation between the audience and the actors’ (1980:163).

In recognition of the definitions for theatre which have evolved and endured over the centuries, it is the second primary component in Goffman’s statement that highlights the distinguishing factor of all theatre – that of the relationship of actor to audience. It is here that a consistent definition for theatre is determined, for theatre’s most significant and constant aspect is human presence: ‘[I]ts continuing power and appeal reside in the constant of every theatrical event: actors playing to an audience’ (p.15). Smiley emphasizes the central position that an audience holds in this art form:

For theatre to happen, more than one person must be present. It cannot occur in solitude. As fleeting as life itself, theatre exists as the art form of the present tense. It always involves live human beings [...]. Without people present, theatre is impossible. (Smiley, 1987:3, 15)

Robinson (1980:149) encapsulates theatre as ‘a type of social encounter [...] centred on a performance and with a separate audience’:

‘Theatre’ does not refer to what the actors do nor the presence of the audience. It refers to the encounter which takes place between them. Take away half of this and you will be left with nothing we could call theatre. (Robinson, 1980:149, 150)

Distinguished by theorists in its essence from *drama*, theatre constitutes ‘the process of performance’ whereas drama – which is literally translated as ‘*action*’ from the Greek ‘*dran*’, meaning ‘*to do*’ – is a branch of theatre that entails speech either from improvisation and/or ‘the written text’ (Carlson, 1993:10). In spite of their defining differences, drama and theatre are both ‘two types of social encounter which use elements

of make-believe and forms of role-play' (Robinson, 1980:150). Irving Goffman illustrates the relational quality between these two art forms:

[Theatre] is that arrangement which transforms an individual into a performer; the latter, in turn, being an object that can be looked at in the round and at length without offence, and looked to for engaging behaviour, by persons in an audience role. (Goffman as cited in Heathcote, 1984c:130)

Robinson encapsulates this interrelation: 'We can't begin to make sense of drama or theatre if we approach them as isolated phenomena' – and further expands on the relationship between the two art forms:

Drama and theatre are not separate but they are different. The audience do not watch theatre: they watch a drama. They *participate* in theatre because it is partly their presence and their activity which identifies what is going on as theatre. (Robinson, 1980:150)

For the purpose of this study, the term *theatre* will be explored and framed within the understanding that, at its most basic level, *theatre* is viewed as a production of some kind that involves two main groups of people: performer and audience.

Understanding Interactive Theatre

Since the Second World War, the notion of 'a picture-frame theatre' was challenged by actors wanting 'to break out' of their 'frame' of the performance space; enabling performers to 'get at' their audiences' (Brown, 1969:32). This frame, 'created subjectively by the gaze of the spectators', and referring to a 'restricted space', traditionally deemed as the stage, has the primary function of creating a sense of '*separation [or] division* between the space of the actor – the one who *acts*, and the space of the spectator – the one who *observes* (spectare [means] to see)' (Boal, 1995:18, 19). This separation is still enforced by the 'conventional ritual of the theatre':

On stage images of social life are presented in an organic, autonomous fashion, in such a way that the audience may not alter them. During the show, the audience is de-activated, reduced to contemplation, ([be it] critical) of the events unfolding on the stage. (Boal, 1995:41)

Directors were looking to ‘challenge their audience and elicit their cooperation in ways not possible from within a picture-frame’ by way of introducing innovative performer-audience interactions (Fox, 1994:32):

One way [of] marking a fundamental change from mainstream theatre and high art, was in the role of the audiences [...]. Rather than sitting passively in the dark watching a fully prepared play, the audiences participated at some point in the production’s creation, sometimes by offering the stories woven into the text, sometimes by writing the text, and sometimes by performing as well. Thus, the dramatic text and often the performance developed collaboratively out of the community [...]. (Haedicke & Nellhaus, 2001:14)

This mode of theatre, which adroitly evokes dialogue with the audience, is characterised by the element of audience participation and marks a collaborative process in which the role of the playwright and director as sole conductors of a performance, are reformed. This approach is distinctive in its eradication of the customary separation between actors and spectators, also known as the ‘dividing line’ – traditionally maintains an aesthetic, (i.e. an artistic and visual) distance from the audience – and gave way to a globally recognized form of theatre, designated *Interactive Theatre* (Fox, 1994:61-67).

Performances may or may not take place in a formal theatre setting with a traditional performance stage, and have featured on a broad spectrum in site-specific arenas where ‘[m]odern experiments have transformed lorries, boats, even swimming pools, into theatre stages, and [in which] the stage / audience division has been fragmented in various ways’ (Boal, 1995:16). This action ‘to transform a passive experience on the part of the spectators into an active and interactive one’ developed as an extended branch of innovative theatre forms which were sparked by the social revolutions of the 1960’s (Julian Beck as cited in Fox, 1994:65).

Boal upholds that '[t]heatre has nothing to do with buildings or other physical constructions' (Boal, 1995:13). 'Theatre that makes history', rather, is a theatre that 'embraces the possibility of enhancing social justice or promoting [...] greater freedom for all mankind' (Taylor, 2003: xii). Motivated by this belief and driven by a desire to revolutionize their societies, theatre activists of the 1960's were key figures in the pioneering approaches to radical modes of theatre¹⁵. These originated from a conviction to expand the traditional use of theatre and enlarge its purpose beyond mere entertainment value, and to function as a revolutionising tool in a time of socio-political consciousness:

The uprisings of 1968 awakened a socio-political consciousness in a new generation of theatre artists who were eager to help those oppressed by the cold war system of global power and the elites and governments within each country that supported it [...]. To connect with this new audience, these troupes typically performed in parks, community centres, popular demonstrations, village squares, churches, and similar gathering places. (Zarrilli et al, 2006:430)

During this period, theatre practitioners challenged the actor-audience spatial relationship in its use of a demarcated performance space and the notion of pre-established texts as the sole author of a performance. This modification to the actor-audience relationship integrated the element of an interactive dialogue between performers and audience members in theatre, and altered the role of the audience from mere spectators to that of active co-creators of the performance.

Alongside its evolutionary methods, theatre conventions have expanded over time to develop a mode of theatre which is rooted in a form that is applied for social change and activism – aiming to challenge conventions or build communities – and other societal interventions such as education. It is, in summary, theatre that is applied for change. With the goal of implementing theatre as an applied form to bring about a transformation in society, the use of interactive theatre has filtered through to alternative modes of

¹⁵ Refer to Appendix D: for Catalysts in Theatre's Evolution

theatre and informs the theatrical approaches of Applied Theatre and its branching forms inter alia Theatre for Development, Community-based theatre, and Educational theatre.

Forms of Theatre Utilizing an Interactive Approach

Interactive Theatre has developed into a number of specialisations where various interactive performer-audience techniques have been employed by a number of evolving modes of theatre, all of which ensure an ‘ongoing dialogue between artist and spectators’ (Zarrilli et al, 2006:437). Two aspects will be explored: a) how interactive theatre developed into different forms, and b) key principles that emanated from these forms, becoming the defining elements of interactive theatre.

Applied Theatre

Applied theatre praxis¹⁶ refers to ‘the manipulation of theatre form by leaders to help participants act, reflect, and transform’ (Taylor, 2003: 30). As a mode of theatre that is *applied* for a specific purpose, Applied Theatre has become the umbrella of evolving theatre forms. In accordance with its name, Applied Theatre is a theatre of action which ‘engage[s] people on experiential and reflective levels’ with the aim of assisting ‘learning and change [that] become[s] sustainable’ (Nebe, 2007)¹⁷. Applied drama and theatre require participatory involvement from the audience and ‘refers to the manipulation of theatre form by leaders to help participants act, reflect, and transform’ (Taylor, 2003: 30).

At its core, applied theatre is focused on engaging participants in ‘important conversation[s] on issues directly experienced in the community’ (Taylor, 2003: xxix). Through participatory role-play¹⁸ ‘[which] becomes a vehicle for dialogue’, participants are then ‘uniquely plac[ed] in situations where they can interrogate some issue, confront a problem, and analyze their own relationship to the world in which they live’ (Taylor, 2003: xxiii, 4).

¹⁶ 1. performance or application of skill: the practical side and application of something such as a professional skill, as opposed to its theory

2. established practice: an established custom or habitual practice

¹⁷ Nebe, W. 2007. *Drama in Education: Notes*.

¹⁸ Role-play: Where audience members act in the place of characters

Through application of the interactive problem-solving process, this mode of theatre enables ‘practices by the people as a way of empowering communities, listening to their concerns, and encouraging them to voice and solve their problems’ (Taylor, 2003: 27). Philip Taylor introduces such an activist kind of approach to theatre in his book “*Applied Theatre*”, in which he qualifies the empowering quality of theatre:

I am likening this [type of] work to an applied theatre – a theatre that is not simply a presentational medium that occurs within a conventional mainstream theatre house. This is a theatre that is taken out into nontheatrical settings, community centres, parks and streets, prison and rehabilitation venues, therapy and health care sites, housing projects, support service settings, and other locations for the purpose of helping the audience, or the participants, grapple with an issue, event, or question of immediate public and personal concern. (Taylor, 2003: xx)

Applied theatre has been referred to as ‘a people’s theatre’ which requires ‘community presence and action [with] commitment to helping others help themselves’ (Taylor, 2003: 27). Philip Taylor highlights the use of an applied theatre production:

The applied theatre is powered by a need to change: a community is hurting and theatre can enable people to process their hurt; or if there are too many unnecessary acts of disease, of hate, and of substance abuse in our midst, theatre might be one way for a community to consider alternatives. Applied theatre opens up new perspectives, poses questions, and anticipates change. (Taylor, 2003: xx, xxi)

Its approach has branched into a variety of theatre practices to reach out to communities and has found its way into current South African theatre forms including inter alia Drama Therapy, Theatre in Education, Theatre for Development, and Community-based theatre.

Community-Based Theatre

Theatre forms where features draw on the legacy of '*Nuevo Teatro Popular*'¹⁹ and other suchlike theatre troupes, presently form part of a 'worldwide phenomenon that U.S. theatre scholars and [other relevant personas] have called community-based theatre' (Zarrilli et al, 2006:437). Featuring political confrontation and developmental strategies, '*Nuevo Teatro Popular*' spoke of a commitment to the upliftment of communities and was also characterised by an 'ongoing dialogue between artists and spectators' as they pursued and explored 'ways of maximizing the agency of a local audience', whether composed of the 'urban intellectual' or 'village peasant audiences' (p. 435-437).

The term *community* may be referred to as encompassing 'one or several regional, racial, or ethnic groups, but usually involves [the] exclu[sion of] some groups as outsiders' (Zarrilli et al, 2006:437). Correspondingly, any form of community theatre encompasses '[a]ctors working in, and performing to a particular community [...] in a number of different venues from pubs to youth clubs or community centres' to audiences of different ages (Redington, 1983:10). Today there are 'thousands of community-based theatres around the globe', yet unlike their forerunners, the work of present day community theatre artists are inspired by a 'commitment to a local community or social group' rather than positioned for the promotion of revolutionary political beliefs or 'democratic socialism' (Zarrilli et al, 2006:437). This objective calls for a shift in focus from product to process:

The significance of community-based performance today is frequently in the process, not in the product, and the theater work grows out of and strives to address the present-day needs, hopes, and culture of a particular, usually undeserved, community. As the center of balance shifted from product to process, in some community-based work [...] the 'product' in the sense of a public performance disappeared altogether. (Haedicke & Nellhaus, 2001: 13, 14)

¹⁹ *Nuevo Teatro Popular*: A mode of theatre that combined elements of radical political theatre and theatre for development and which evolved in Mexico during the 1970's and 1980's. With its contesting versions for a democratic socialism, over 200 theatres in Mexico integrated socialist politics with community development events. This movement was called *Nuevo Teatro Popular* and spoke of the combination of radical political theatre and theatre for development (p.435).

With an altered intention to ‘involve, mobilize, and politicize’, community based-theatre has expanded its approaches and developed in an ‘extensive variety of communities and contexts’ (Haedicke & Nellhaus , 2001: 1). This is primarily sought through introducing ‘participatory performance techniques that blur the boundaries between actor and spectator in order to maximize the participants’ agency’ – and often hinges on a dialogue between the audience and the theatre group – disrupting the traditional actor-audience relationship (p.3).

With the audience as its primary focus, community-based theatre programmes have aspired to ‘engage the hearts and minds of the audience participants and to improve their lives through art’ (p.14). The evolving *interactive theatre* methods have increasingly sought to engage its participants in a ‘process of empowerment through theatre’, declaring community-based theatre as ‘an agent of social change’, with the overriding goal of ‘transforming communities in the global future’ (p.12-15). With the need to reach out to various communities, Theatre for Development and Theatre In Education developed.

Theatre For Development

Although much of this revolutionary theatre began in Europe, it resulted in greater political effectiveness in developing countries (Zarrilli et al, 2006:430). In Africa, another form of theatre using interactive methods originated in Botswana in the mid 1970’s. ‘*Theatre for Development*’ (TFD) was initiated with the intent ‘to help communities address their difficulties with health, agriculture, literacy, and similar problems’ (p.435). Using the portrayal of community-based problems as a basis for performance, theatre activists produced plays through a collaborative process of debate and improvisation, which emerged from a series of conferences and workshops undertaken within particular communities. These collaborated efforts added the audience to the ranks of the playwright and director as participants in the final outcome of the performance.

Adhering to this basic model of interaction, presentations of respective performances to the community were characteristically followed by ‘discussion and community planning’ (p.435). From its start to present day theatre performances, TFD has aspired to ‘improve the lives’ of their audiences and develop communities through ‘theatrical means’, with the ultimate goal to ‘transform’ communities (p.435). This approach to theatre also branched into the education system where theatre was applied to positively influence the lives of young people.

Theatre In Education

The development of theatre’s effectual role in society as a force for social change soon gave rise to an exploration of theatre’s potential as an educational medium. One such theatre group was The Philippine Educational Theatre Association (PETA), a radical political theatre group whose aim to empower communities engendered a focus on educating their audiences. In their struggle against the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos from 1967 until its fall in 1986, the organization comprised of ‘a network of community-based theatres’ who ventured into the countryside ‘to educate villagers in anti-imperialism and democratic socialism’ by means of ‘theatrical performances’ (Zarrilli et al, 2006:433-435).

A call for repertory theatres to assume a ‘more dynamic responsibility’ in society, particularly amongst the youth, rose from the local Arts Council in Britain during the late 1960’s. A growing dissatisfaction in the educational system as well as on the theatre terrain encouraged practitioners from both professions to unite and produce performances that became more than the ‘running [of] special school matinees’ for young people in their communities (Malan, 1973:93). Inspired by this prospect, The Belgrade Repertory Theatre of 1965 pioneered a new theatre movement and launched The Belgrade Theatre In Education. Combining the expertise of teachers and theatre practitioners, this newly established theatre company performed during and after school hours with the sole purpose of ‘working for and with young people in schools and in the theatre’ (p.93).

The year 1965 introduced the acknowledged term Theatre In Education, usually abbreviated as TIE, at Coventry (Redington, 1983: 2). The Belgrade Theatre at Coventry demonstrated ‘the value of theatre as an educational method’ with a number of ‘pilot’ projects they ran at schools (Jackson, 1980: viii). This resulted in the establishment of a fulltime TIE unit financed by the Belgrade Theatre and the local authority and spread to other theatres across the country (p. viii).

Essentially TIE emerged as a new genre of theatre ‘in direct response to the needs of both theatre and schools’ in aspiring ‘to harness the techniques and imaginative potency of theatre in the service of education’ (Jackson, 1980: viii). Due to the fact that the focus of this study is on the form of theatre which is practised to facilitate a learning process, context will now be given to TIE, its origins, key elements and defining concepts.

Understanding Theatre in Education

In defining this theatre form, Jackson distinguishes TIE from the ‘conventional ‘children’s theatre’ by the inclusion of the TIE programme:

The TIE programme is not a performance in schools of a self-contained play, a ‘once-off’ event that is here today and gone tomorrow, but a co-ordinated and carefully structured programme of work, usually devised and researched by the company, around a topic of relevance both to the school curriculum and to the children’s own lives, presented in school by the company and involving the children directly in an *experience* of the situations and problems that the topic throws up. It generally combines elements of traditional theatre (actors in role and the use of scripted dialogue, costume and often scenic and sound effects); educational drama (active participation of the children in improvised drama activities in which ideas are explored at their own level); and simulation (highly structured role-play and decision-making exercises within simulated ‘real-life situations’). There is, however, no set formula. The shape and style of the programme will vary enormously depending upon the subject tackled and the age range catered for [...] The TIE ‘programme’, as the word suggests, will usually involve a fully conceived programme of work with the theatrical event as the central stimulus for a deeper and richer learning process than the ‘one-off’ play (or indeed most other teaching methods) could possibly hope to provide. (Jackson, 1980: ix)

In essence, TIE denotes the use of key elements of theatre which are ‘radically’ adapted ‘to serve an educational purpose’ (Schweitzer, 1980: 78). Bearing this in mind, the following is a schematic representation of these forms, and their elements which will be analysed together with respective origins.

The Origin of TIE

TIE companies like the Belgrade Theatre work on the premise of the Plowden Report’s emphasis on ‘children being agents in their own learning’ (Malan, 1973:95). In line with this, this pioneering company founded its work on the 70’s ‘Use of English’ Movement in English-teaching stating that ‘children should encounter human experience, evaluate it, make moral decisions, and articulate their thoughts and feelings’ (p. 95). Present-day TIE companies operate on these same premises and are inclusive of the radical and renowned educational views of Paulo Freire²⁰ who had a great concern for the oppressed and those ‘who do not have a voice’ (Smith, 2007). Freire insisted on ‘situating educational activity in the lived experience of participants’ with an emphasis on dialogue– supporting the Belgrade’s vision of children as agents in their own learning (Smith, 2007).

Key Principles of TIE

Theatre In Education intentionally uses ‘theatre performances’ as a foundation ‘to teach young people about a range of subjects [hosting from] environmental issues to issues of ethics’ (Nebe, 2007:1, 2). Instead of delivering a children’s play such as ‘Hansel and Gretel’, TIE teams are much more likely to offer pupils ‘an aspect of a national or world problem be it historical or contemporary’ and the opportunity to undertake collective problem-solving (Redington, 1983:2). Learners are not ‘just an audience’ but are invited to participate during the performance process – which may vary from physical involvement in a drama session to watching a play and taking part in a discussion during or afterwards (p.2). Employing theatre as a tool for education developed hand-in-hand through partnering Drama in Education (DIE).

²⁰ The Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire was one of the most influential and progressive thinkers in the late twentieth century (Smith, 2007).

Drama In Education

Drama In Education (DIE) refers to drama that is taught in schools traditionally and might include theatrical bias in the preparation for the public presentation of a play, yet a more contemporary approach centres on ‘the exploration of themes and problems through role play and improvisation’, with the focal emphasis on ‘developing the child’s imagination, self-awareness and expressiveness’ as well as ‘social skills [for] group work’ (Jackson, 1993: xi).

A key distinction in TIE and DIE lies in the reliance on a teacher who is acquainted with the particular needs of his/her learners and who meets with them on a continual basis, as well as the ‘absence of the full theatre resources’ inter alia characters, costumes, and a set (Jackson, 1993: xi). The difference between TIE and DIE is more effectively encapsulated in their practical application:

The basic aims are the same – helping young people to come to terms with themselves and their environment. The theatre, however, is a storehouse of communication skills in a group situation. We provide a common experience for the people we are working with and for. It is one session, encapsulating, focusing, concentrating. Drama-in-education develops the same aims, slowly evolving a sure and true response from knowledge of individual children. Theatre-in-education provides a theatre service; a group experience or ritual. (Malan, 1973:96)

Understanding TIE requires an acknowledgement of its dynamism:

T-I-E has progressed by not being categorized too rigidly. It is best seen as a constantly evolving experiment, responding to new stimuli and passing on new ideas. (Malan, 1973:96)

A key figure in the development of DIE is the globally acclaimed Gavin Bolton who was also President of the National Association for Drama in Education and Children’s Theatre during the 1980’s. A sought after lecturer at schools and universities, Bolton has made major contributions to drama in education theory over the years. Bolton mainly distinguishes between the two forms of educational theatre, DIE and TIE based on their approach to the use of *context*: where DIE uses the context as a ‘pretext for opening up

the theme', TIE has a duty to 'make the context significant' (Davis & Lawrence, 1986:138). His position on theatre and education strongly upholds that, 'if the audience just submit themselves in a feeling way to a piece of theatre they miss the chance to participate *actively* in the theatre experience in a thinking/feeling way' (Davis & Lawrence, 1986: vii, viii).

Corresponding to the development of the aforementioned community-based theatre, the focus on learning that takes place in the *process* of the dramatic event is a defining characteristic of both DIE and TIE. This occurrence in turn gave rise to the accredited concept of *process drama*, which features indispensable attributes necessary for both TIE and DIE, of which it is a key aspect.

Process Drama

Virtually synonymous with the term *drama-in-education*, process drama emerged in the late 1980's in Australia and North America, and refers to an 'exploratory dramatic activity' which combines 'creative dramatics [with] improvisation'; focusing on *process* rather than *product*. O'Neill (1995: xv) elucidates the term *process* as indicative of 'an ongoing event' and (being) dissimilar to *product*, which (in turn) implies 'conclusion, completion' and a final 'object'. The purpose of this method was to shift the focus to learning that takes place in the theatre and/or drama experience. Motivated by this occurrence, drama educators in Britain have aimed at developing a 'complex learning medium' rather than an activity employed as 'a mere rehearsal device, a display of skills without context or a brief entertainment' (O'Neill, 1995: xv). Developing alongside process drama, TIE similarly shifted its focus from *product* to *process*:

A theatre piece is often regarded as a *product*, although it will be experienced by the audience as an event rather than as an art object. But every theatre event arises from a complex process of composition, rehearsal, and theatrical interpretation. Both *process* and *product* have the disadvantage of being simple terms required to indicate intricate structures. In improvised drama, process has been defined as 'negotiating and renegotiating the elements of dramatic form, in terms of the context and purposes of the

participants’²¹. This definition could be applied with equal fitness to a process undertaken with a theatrical outcome in mind. (O’Neill, 1995: xv)

TIE has significant educational value. Bolton highlights its educational capacity:

[...] TIE can stimulate multi-level experiences that a drama teacher does not have the resources to provide. It is theatre in education. The context itself can be rich in meaning and significant for the children, not simply as stimulation but because it also taps universals and personal connotations of meaning that all good theatre provides. (Bolton, 1986c:188)

Forum Theatre

The Greenwich Young People’s Theatre (GYPT) was the first British company to incorporate Boal’s²² work into its existing TIE practice in 1982. Since its initial integration, the influence of forum theatre spread throughout the TIE movement, introducing the methodology of the “*Theatre of the Oppressed*”¹¹ to a large audience of theatre practitioners and teachers around the world (Vine, 1993: 110). The use of Forum Theatre in particular, revolutionised TIE methodologies, from a form of direct intervention to the audience in which audience members are invited ‘to ‘act’ in the place of the main protagonists’ and ‘test out their ideas’ as they ‘step into the shoes of the central character’ (p. 112, 114). This interactive method has also become known as *role-play*.

Amongst its defining characteristics, the relevance of forum theatre to TIE’s goals included the following: shared influential personas inter alia the pedagogy of the Brazilian educationalist, Paulo Freire where prominence was given to audience involvement (Vine, 1993: 110). TIE companies adapted this methodology for their own applications.

²¹ O’Toole, J. 1992. *The Process of Drama: Negotiating Art and Meaning*. London: Routledge, p.2.

²² Brazilian Director - His ‘*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*’ remains one of the most quoted educational resources (Smith, 2007).

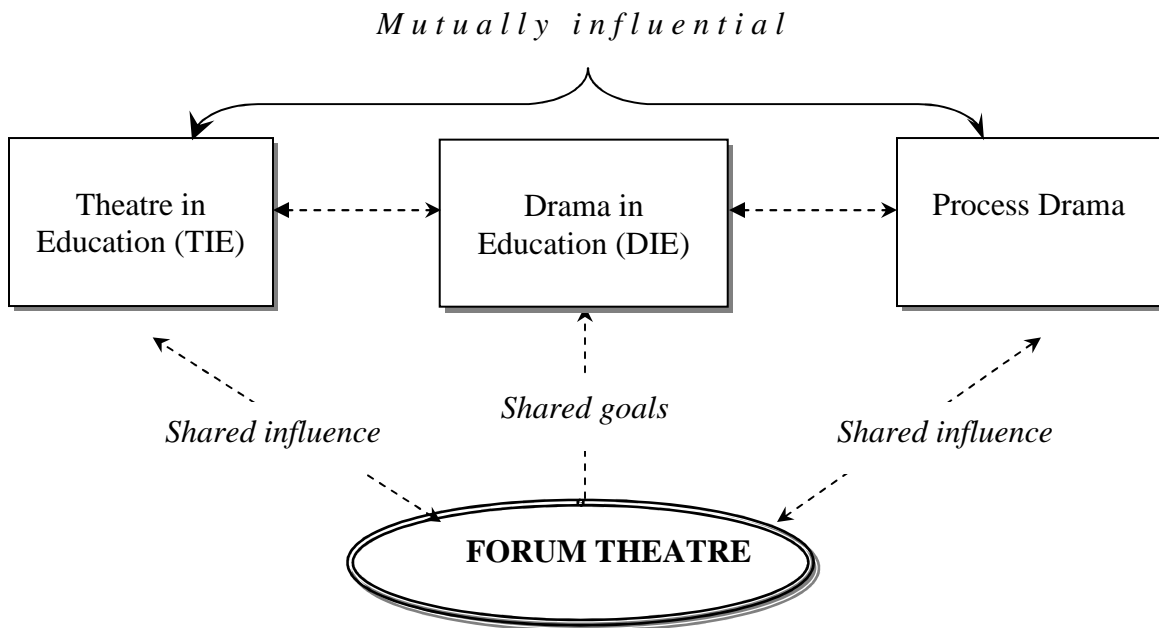


Diagram A: Theatre Forms Influenced by Forum Theatre

Summarised Defining Elements

Alongside Gavin Bolton’s theoretical framework drawn from his essay, ‘Drama in education and TIE – a comparison’, (1986c: 180-189), an overview of the primary principles that involve TIE is outlined in the following points below from ‘*Can Theatre Teach?*’ by C. Redington. In this work, Redington points out the overall efficacy of TIE’s work in schools, based on its ability to meet objectives, and explores its use of theatre to teach, analysing TIE’s efficacy as a teaching medium:

KEY WORD	EXPLANATION
Participation	TIE is based on the child's participation – both on a physical and intellectual dynamic (Redington, 1983:3). Participation is in order to have a 'living through experience (Bolton, 1986c:182).
Experiential Learning	The essence of a TIE programme lies in its proactive approach to learning: children ' learn by experiencing the events that occur within a programme': 'This experience is physical, mental and emotional, and through this total involvement the pupils learn by discovery (Redington, 1983:3). It includes a gut-level experience (Bolton, 1986c:188).
Age-relevant	The work must be both contextually and thematically significant (Bolton, 1986c:180-181). TIE teams 'devise, or write, 'programmes' for very specific age groups ' which often include 'a complex mixture of theatrical forms and educational techniques ' (Redington, 1983:1).
Age-appropriate	Form and content are related to a particular age group , thereby using 'the accumulated knowledge of child psychologists and pedagogues concerning mental, physical and emotional stages of development. The length of the TIE programme is an essential part of this thinking, and to ensure that they can work in some depth with pupils of TIE teams usually play to one class of pupils at a time, perhaps for only half a day (Redington, 1983:4).
Child-centred	TIE teams devise programmes adhering to the intellectual level and experience of their audiences and ensure that the subject matter and the form of the programmes centres on the child's needs, abilities and potential; making it child-centred (Redington, 1983:3).
Theatrical Elements	Imaginary situations , created by the TIE team, are presented and used to draw on the child's 'natural enjoyment of play'. Children do not make up the plot nor invent the characters, yet have a definite role and an influence on what happens next in the unfolding events (Redington, 1983:3). Actor-teachers usually remain in character throughout the programme. The theatrical elements of a programme are a means and not an end in themselves, providing plot, suspense, dramatic climax and characterization (Redington, 1983:2).

KEY WORD	EXPLANATION
Interactive Methods	TIE uses DIE methods such as occupational mime, role-play and improvisation as an integral part of the work (Redington, 1983:4).
Change in Understanding	Main objective of bringing about a ‘ change in understanding ’ – implying some modification of (or awareness of perception of, insight into or knowledge about) something taking place (Bolton, 1986c:185).
Believable Situations	The subject matter of a TIE programme has some basis in real life (Redington, 1983:2). The subject-matter is frequently presented in a realistic manner, and involves the learners within the action (p. 2). A principal expertise of a TIE team lies in its ability to create highly credible exciting contexts. So whatever universal meanings the team may intend to draw on, they must additionally focus on the context as an important end in itself (Bolton, 1986c:182, 187). Problem-solving is incorporated through characters that ask learners to help them find solutions; and is used to ‘stimulate learners’ curiosity, retain their attention during’ and ‘motivate’ post-performance learning. In the process learners must understand, and be able to analyse, the character’s differing points of view’ (Redington, 1983:4)

Key Features of TIE

In addition Redington (1983:1) highlights a number of main principles of TIE in ‘*Can Theatre Teach?*’ An essential observation made is that a presentation to learners at schools should cover the following aspects in order to be deemed educational:

- a) It should ‘widen pupil’s horizons’
- b) Include probing questions ‘about the world around them’ and
- c) Have the enigmatic ability to ‘entertain’.

Referring to a discipline in which the two professions of actor and educator have joined forces to bring about a creative and active learning experience, Redington defines TIE as a new branch of theatre which has introduced terms such as 'actor-teacher'. She continues to define a TIE team as 'a group of actor-teachers who usually have experience in both professions' (Redington, 1983:1, 93).

Ultimately, Bolton affirms that DIE and TIE share a principal objective, to bring about a 'change in understanding' (Bolton, 1980c:184). Bolton re-affirms that for TIE 'there can be no other' (p.185). Schweitzer summarizes the TIE experience:

So TIE takes the key elements of illusion, plot and character to extremes, adding them to a direct involvement of the audience. Something is created which, if it does not sound too paradoxical, one might call Theatre of Reality, comprising total illusion, total character, total plot and total staging in the interests of a total educational experience. (Schweitzer, 1980: 84)

Since its inception, prominence has been given to the audience 'working alongside the actors in a theatrical context' (Vine, 1993: 110):

This practice was part of a conscious attempt to enhance the cognitive and affective experience of the audience by combining the power of the theatrical experience with the techniques developed in the field of drama in education (DIE). (Vine, 1993: 110)

The prime motivation for TIE lies in 'its explicit educational purpose' and its 'distinctive formal feature is its use of active audience participation' (Vine, 1993: 109). Central to the discipline, in its variety of theatre forms and educational strategies, are the convictions: a) 'human behaviour and institutions are formed through social activity and can therefore be changed' and b) that audiences are 'potential agents of change' and need to be 'active participants in their own learning' (Vine, 1993: 109).

Harnessing the concept of active learning – ‘learning through doing’ – the contemporary approach of TIE provides a hands-on learning experience that includes engagement of the senses. The aesthetics of theatre combined with interactive methods – such as enrolling of audience members and facilitated discussions – enable learners to participate in a ‘lived-experience of learning’ in the creation of imaginary worlds alongside in-depth reflections that are facilitated by performer-facilitators, either ‘in, or out of role’ (Nebe, 2007:2).

In all of the evolutionary forms of interactive theatre, the intent has been ‘to transform a passive experience on the part of the spectators into an active and interactive one’ (Fox, 1994:65). In a typical TIE programme, learners are ‘active participants’ and not ‘passive recipients of information’ (Redington, 1983:2). TIE requires participation in order to have a ‘living through’ learning experience (Bolton, 1986c:182). TIE is a theatre form that employs the basic elements of theatre that a playwright uses and a director builds upon: for example, focus, tension, contrast and symbolisation. Just as a playwright and director will consciously create tension, so the TIE group use these elements to create a learning experience.

Along with Bolton, I will now endeavour to qualitatively analyse the most important aspect of them all: ‘I shall examine the nature of the experience itself’ (Bolton, 1986c:181). In the following sections of this study, I will investigate the aspects of TIE efforts that require the learners to participate i.e. the interactive methods employed by an existing interactive theatre group. However, before this process is commenced, a framework for assessment criteria needs to be established which will enable a method of qualitative observations for Chapter Five, and serve as impact indicators for analyses in Chapter Six. This proposed framework will now follow in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER 3

Developing a Research Framework for Interactive Theatre

Selected Methodology

Theatre is an enigmatic ‘phenomenon associated with [...] the production and communication of meaning in the performance itself and with the systems underlying it’ (Elam, 1980:2). In response to the generally accepted view that theatre produced plays speak for themselves, Peter Brook argues that ‘[a] play cannot speak for itself’ and one must ‘conjure its sound from it’ (Brook as cited in Carlson, 1990:11). Cameron and Hoffman (1974:6) affirm this in stating that ‘[a] performance creates a language of its own’ and that this ‘communication involves more than verbal messages’.

In order to understand the language and semantics of theatre, Lehmann’s exposition on this topic can be referred to in how theatre’s visual, audible, gestic and architectonic elements can be deconstructed as theatrical ‘signs’ within contemporary theatre forms. In considering the fundamental question of how meaning is created in a theatrical production, Aston and Savona (1991:1, 9) propose *semiotics* as a methodology to ‘open up new practices and possibilities of ‘seeing’, given that ‘the heart of all communication is *sign* [and] theatre is the art form which is totally based on sign ’ (Johnson & O’Neill, 1984:158).

For a qualitative analysis of interactive methods, theatre semiotics enables a functional framework for examination of the dynamics which are employed within an interactive performance episode.

Semiotics

'*Directing Postmodern Theatre*' introduces the study of semiotics whereby 'every object, every moment, every sound or noise, every smell, every colour, every physical contact, every spatial relationship, is a sign' (Whitmore, 1994:20). The denotations²³ of various methods of interaction in a performance employed to engage audience members as well as the audience responses to these methods can be signs that connote²⁴ qualitative meanings by which to investigate the efficacy of interactive methods.

In his book '*Theatre Semiotics*', Marvin Carlson bases semiotics upon a three-part communication model comprising a sender, a message (encoded by the sender)²⁵ and a receiver (who decodes, to a certain degree, the message)²⁶. Alongside Carlson's model of 'art-as-communication', Elam quotes the founder of semiotics, Ferdinand de Saussure, who explained that through the spectacles of semiotics, all elements pertaining to the theatre are viewed as signs that transfer meanings. Saussure viewed a sign as a 'two-part entity' comprising a signifier (the actual object, substance/sign-vehicle) and a signified (the mental image or feeling that is generated when a signifier is produced or received) in the reading of a performance (Elam, 1980:6). Semiotics, therefore, provides a 'theoretical approach' in analysing a performance while serving as 'a system of knowledge that studies [these] signs and offers explanations about how signs are used to communicate meanings' (Elam, 1980:3; Whitmore, 1994:5).

Semiotics Applied to Theatre In Education

Dorothy Heathcote asserts that theatre is 'a synchronic art form not a diachronic one, and events are constructed semiotically not in literary mode' (Heathcote, 1984c:131). She underpins how '[a]ctual living and theatre' – which, in essence, is a depiction of real life – both emanate from 'the same network of signs as their medium of communication' (Heathcote, 1984b:160). Heathcote asserts, however, that 'theatre is the art form which is

²³ Denote: the actual meaning of an object ex a rose is a rose

²⁴ Connote: associative meanings ex. Red could stand for love

²⁵ encode: the formation of the signifier - done by the sender (director) (Carlson, 1990:4).

²⁶ decode: the creation of the signified done by the receiver, the meaning the audience interprets of the sign (Carlson, 1990:4).

totally based in sign' and the drama additive to the process of learning creates the required urgency through its unique use of immediacy (imminent time) (p.169).

Lehmann verifies semiotics as a framework for analyzing theatre:

The emission and reception of signs and signals take place simultaneously. The theatre performance turns the behaviour [in the performance space] into a *joint text*. (Lehmann, 2006:17)

Signifiers in the TIE Process

In the TIE process, as in conventional theatre, every action becomes a sign 'whenever there is more than one person present to read the action' for we cannot help signing 'so long as there is another human being who needs to read the signs' (Heathcote, 1984b:160). The 'network of signs' employed in TIE (as a means of communication) encapsulates, most crucially, 'the human being', who 'signal[s] across space, in immediate time, to and with others, each reading and signalling simultaneously within the action of each passing moment' (p.160). The TIE team is, under theatre conventions, acknowledged as 'total signers':

They have given permission to others to stare so they can employ *significance* from the start. It is accepted as normal for the actor/teachers to employ such aspects of sign as clothing, properties and setting for action. (Heathcote, 1984b:165)

The intricate system of signs in theatre also includes 'objects, sounds, language, gestures and [all] images' which, combined, 'bring significance to the events of the drama and direct attention to them' (Bowell & Heap, 2001:11). These signs are 'the means by which the theatre element of symbol is evoked' and 'represent more than just their utilitarian function' (p.11). In theatre, however, one needs to 'signal across space meaningfully, [in order] to get a response which will have been born from [one's] own signal, as the person/s alongside you read the sign' (p.160). Bowell and Heap (2001:11) support this principle by stating that the 'crucial aspect of signs' in any mode of theatre is 'that they function symbolically and efficiently':

Individuals read signs very differently, and therefore decipher the code more easily if it is rich and highly selective, for its present purpose. (Heathcote, 1984b:161)

Heathcote reinforces that ‘the heart of communication in social situations is the sign’ and that ‘[a]ll teachers need to study how to exploit it as the first basis of their work’ (Heathcote, 1984b:169). Relating to this observation, I intend to investigate the interactive performer-audience methodologies employed by ITT, their overall impact and related effects on selected audiences within the premise of a semiotic framework. This will enable a qualitative analysis of *interactive methods*²⁷ such as role-play, hot-seating, and enrolment of audience members as the characters in the plot presented, image working, storytelling and performance, alongside *audience response*, as signs of interpretation.

As a theoretical framework, semiotics is able to illustrate how these methods establish an *interactive* process that strengthens audience-engagement to a new intensity, nearing the goal-orientated effect of the theatre. These analyses however, are carried out in light of a proposed set of assessment criteria. The overall findings will enable a deeper and richer understanding of the transformative power of theatre and inform conclusions on the effective (as defined in the study) use of interactive methods used by contemporary interactive theatre groups in adolescent communities of South Africa.

Impact Assessment Criteria

Cecily O’Neill affirms that ‘[a]ttempts to analyze any theatre event, however detailed, can never be more than tentative and partial’ and that it is ‘impossible to reconstruct the totality of any performance, but it is possible to grasp some of the basic organizing principles ...’ (O’Neill, 1995: xix). The use of a sign-system for interpretation of effective interactive methodologies will be investigated in conjunction with the observation of audience response and participation as a signifier for the *reading* of a qualitative analysis.

²⁷ Defined by Taylor (1996:72) as research results pertaining to human and artistic interaction

TIE is labour intensive, and works in depth with few pupils. It can present two-or three-part programmes to one or two classes at a time. Any use of criteria based on the numbers of schools and numbers of pupils visited will be emphasizing the quantity rather than the quality of the work produced and shows a basic misunderstanding of TIE. (Redington, 1983:142)

Morgan and Saxton (1987:21) note that there are ‘different levels of [learner] involvement in the dramatic experience.’ This qualitative study draws on a number of concepts that serve as the framework for analysing TIE, which will be discussed next.

Key Concepts of Interactive Theatre

Robinson asserts that theatre’s defining quality feature does not lie in what the actors do nor the presence of the audience. For him theatre is about ‘the encounter which takes place between them – [t]ake away half of this and you will be left with nothing we could call theatre’ (Robinson, 1980:150).

Interaction

As opposed to the formal theatre setting, ‘where the audience area is clearly demarcated, separated off with curtains, seated in rows’, the audience in an interactive theatre performance ‘is interactive and has little of the formal demarcation of place and continuity of role of traditional Western European theatre’ (Jones, 1996:111,112). The ‘customary contract in the theatre’ which prohibits any form of direct participation in the dramatic event in the performance area, is superseded by calculated performer-audience interactions, purposefully included by the theatre group, with the intention of creating a space for audience members to participate within a theatre presentation; exerting the audience as co-creators of the theatre event (O’Neill, 1995:115). This kind of interaction results in the surpassing of the traditional dividing line between the audience and theatre due to the participatory actions of the audience.

Interaction also occurs at a spontaneous level stemming from engagement of the senses. This includes watching and listening to the play, and may involve expressing a reaction at one's experience of what is seen, heard, smelt, felt etc. such as laughing. Interaction thus occurs on a two-phased level of intentional, as well as spontaneous involvement in the theatre event.

Aesthetics

Drawing on its Greek origins, *aesthetic* means 'of or pertaining to things perceptible by the senses' (Boal, 1995:18). The Oxford Dictionary qualifies this definition as 'Received by the senses' (Onions, 1989:30). Aesthetics also means, 'of or pertaining to the appreciation or criticism of the beautiful or of art' (Brown, 1969:34). Wright summarises this:

The physical experience of beauty, which lifts us out of ourselves and enables us to see more deeply into the great realities, has been called aesthetic pleasure. It is the stimulation of the imagination through the senses and the result is an appreciation of the beautiful. (Wright, 1972:26)

In consideration of the variety of definitions, aesthetics can be defined as 'pertaining to perception by the senses', and therefore will be used in this study to include all theatrical and interactive elements that include sensory experience in the ITT performance (Brown, 1969:34).

In addition the performance area functioning as the 'stage' of a TIE theatre presentation is classified by Boal as 'an aesthetic space [...] created subjectively by the gaze of the spectators' and can encompass any place from a corner in a classroom to a site in the open air under a tree (Boal, 1995:18):

Anyone can designate and thereby create such a space, in their own front room, a space which occupies part or all of the room and immediately becomes, 'aesthetically', a 'stage': the 'platform'. (Boal, 1995:19)

Authentic

Referral to the Oxford Dictionary elucidates 'authentic' as an entity pertaining to that which is 'real, actual, genuine, original, first-hand, really proceeding from its stated source' and exerts 'authority' and credibility (Brown, 1969:150). In light of its definition, the authenticity of performances undertaken by interactive theatre groups considers, amongst others, the unique approach and actual content of a performance, as well as their work's ability to influence audiences through significant content.

Heathcote (1984a:120) discloses how her drama learners were 'caught in "a moment of authenticity"' when they were faced with a moment 'of real choice and real concern' during a role-play session in class. Heathcote determines that drama's purpose lies in 'shattering the human experience into new understanding' as it 'fuses the new understanding with the facts' (p.122). In summary, she states that 'drama gives us the opportunity to allow our classes to stumble upon authenticity' (p.120).

Considering a theatrical performance of a TIE-programme the issue of authenticity lies in the following: When learners are exposed to issues of real-life concern and personally engage with the theatrical presentation and interactive processes, are they brought to a new place of understanding?

Transformation

Transformation is 'The action of changing in form, shape, or appearance'. A transformation is the result of 'a complete change [in] characters [or] condition'; ultimately a 'metamorphosis' (Simpson & Weimer, 1989:400). In context transformation, therefore, refers to a change in perception, attitude or belief that has occurred during or because of the ITT performance and/or its interactive elements.

The concept of transformation is central to any theatre or drama process whether referring to the transformation of the human being to the performer, to audience member, or transformation of objects into props or representational entities (Jones, 1996:119).

In the TIE approach to interactive theatre, transformation is sought in the behaviour of the individual participating – either aesthetically or deliberately. Evreinov places transformation at the centre of all theatre:

Transformation [is] the essence of all theatrical art, [it] is more primitive and more easily attainable than formation, which is the essence of aesthetic arts. (Evreinov as cited in Jones, 1996:119)

Engagement

To engage is qualified as being able ‘to attract, charm [or] fascinate’ or ‘to attach by pleasing qualities’, and is adept ‘to cause to be held fast’, and likened to being entangled, as in the physical sense of ‘a snare or net’ (Simpson & Weimer, 1989: 247). The Oxford Dictionary supports that the ability of a performance to engage its audience lies in its aptitude to ‘urge, exhort, persuade, [and] induce’ and is a craft that will ultimately ‘entangle, involve [and] commit’ audience members (p.247).

Amongst others, Morgan and Saxton single out the following characteristics as depicting *engagement*. Although their findings are based on teaching drama in the classroom, they are still applicable to observations in the theatrical sphere:

Step 1: Interest

Interest is considered by developmental psychologists as ‘an emotion in its own right and one of the earliest to appear’ (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:22). Morgan and Saxton propose that the level of interest with which learners engage in a theatrical sphere can be monitored in light of the following observations of their responses:

- a) Attending: The physical presence of learners is imperative (p.22).
- b) Watching: This is evinced by learners making and maintaining eye contact (p.22).
- c) Listening: Listening can be monitored by the ‘congruent, appropriate [and] supportive verbal response’ to the theatrical experience or to presented questions (p.22).
- d) Reacting: This is indicated by ‘congruent, appropriate, supportive non-verbal response’ to the theatrical experience (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:22).

Attaining the interest of learners is accordingly the first step to personal engagement, and is also captured by arousing curiosity (p.23). Interest proverbially functions as a hook with which to gain attention. Interest of learners can, in summary, be monitored by answering the following questions (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:23):

- ‘Are they there?’
- ‘Are they watching?’
- ‘Are they listening?’
- ‘Are they responding?’

Within this model Morgan and Saxton (1994:19) attest that a lack of interest can be indicated by:

- a) Aggressive disinterest – which can be detected by yawning, talking to a neighbour.
- b) Passive disinterest – which cannot be detected easily as learners might ‘take on the shape of interest’ but one can see there is ‘nothing behind the eyes’.

Step 2: Engaging

This adjacent step to a deeper level of engagement requires one ‘to be involved in the task’ (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:22). Engagement at this level equates ‘active identification with imagined roles and situations’, and can be estimated by the following (p.23):

- a) Acquiescence in being involved – which is seen in voluntary ‘participation in a congruent, appropriate and supportive manner’ (p.23).
- b) Willingness to engage and operate in theatre’s requisitely ‘*as if*’ realm where ‘the willing suspension of disbelief’ enables a realistic experience of the fictitious (p.23).
- c) Relating is dependant on assenting to ‘accept others, places and objects into the imagined world’ (p.23).
- d) Identifying takes place when there is an ‘[a]greement to endow the role with self, summoning past experience to the demands of the present dramatic situation’ (p.23).

- e) Evaluating constitutes an assessment of the performance and its experience for the individual will mirror, according to Morgan and Saxton, satisfaction acquired from the experience (p.23).

For the purpose of this study this ensuing stage also concerns the ability to relate to and identify with the characters and/or content of a performance. From the standpoint of analysis for this study, this occurs when the audience member can “see him/herself” in the shoes of the character, i.e. envision him/herself in the situation, as it is not unknown but rather familiar to their world of existence. This translates into audience members understanding the emotional context and relating to the situation at hand as it is, or has been, as a part of their world, and, accordingly, impacts the creation of meaning. Once there is engagement in the imaginative situation and audience members are prepared to identify themselves with the role of the character(s), the way is open for an internal learning process to occur.

Step 3: Commitment

Similar to participation in any form of a game, Bolton asserts that dramatic involvement requires a level of commitment: ‘Whether it be a game or a drama, to start requires commitment’ (1980:73). In working towards this level of commitment in the drama process, Bolton aspires to regulate ‘the quality, degree and intensity of emotional engagement’ in the topic at hand (p.73). With this he aims to engage learners in the fictitious dramatic context with ‘integrity, spontaneity and a sharpened consciousness’ (p.73). Bolton argues that this regulating of the ‘emotional temperature’ is essential in order to bring learners to a place where a form of transformation can take place, i.e. ‘a change in understanding’ (p. 74):

Often a teacher cannot use theatrical form to enhance meaning, that is to bring about some change in the participants’ understanding of a topic, until steps are taken to modify the emotional loading that topic carries for a particular class. (Bolton, 1980: 74)

This level of emotional absorption relates to the TIE process as learners need to engage at a *thinking* and *feeling* level with the subject-matter at hand. Morgan and Saxton affirm that at this stage there is a level of personal engagement to the work, which in turn will translate in learners generating their own ideas, attitudes and points of view about the subject-matter (1994:20). Engagement at the level of commitment is demonstrated by:

- a) An absorption in the work which is also evinced by a reluctance to move on to the next event (p.20).
- b) An ability to control and manipulate the material for themselves (p.20).
- c) The emergence of creative ideas (p.20).
- d) A confidence to challenge the direction of the work (p.20).

Commitment therefore can, except for being monitored on a more proactive level of generating new ideas, attitudes and points of view toward the material, also be seen in the occurrence of absorption in the presented material. The amount of personal investment in the work is witness to intense absorption, and *this* paves the way for the ensuing level of internalization (p.20).

Step 4: Internalizing

Internalizing happens during an 'aesthetic experience' when 'a moment of truth' leads to 'a shift in understanding' (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:25). This occurrence refers to 'the intimate interplay between personal feeling and thought and empathetic feeling and thought' (p.24). Internalizing is a result of a connection that takes place between 'what the [learner] is thinking and feeling and doing *now* with what [he/she] already knows, feels and has experienced' (Morgan & Saxton, 1994:21). In a nutshell it is when learners have begun to make associations between their own experience and the learning material they are exposed to at an affective level as well as an intellectual understanding (p.21). Making these connections lead to 'a new realization' and 'a different way of understanding' (a change in perspective) (p.21). This equates to 'a change of understanding' (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:22).

When there is engagement at the levels of commitment and internalizing, which comprises ‘personal investment’, there will be ‘confidence to communicate this new understanding’ – corresponding to the deep level of ‘interpretation’ (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:25).

Step 5: Interpreting

Morgan and Saxton (1987:26) refer here to the ‘contextual selection for clarity of communication’. Whether learners are interpreting, i.e. conceptualising and making meaning of the content, and have ‘the need to communicate the new understanding’ (p.22). This level of engagement can be detected by the following indicators:

- a) Communicating: Are they *communicating* in the following ways – listening, observing, judging the effect, predicting other points of view; and willing to sharing their own feelings and opinions (thoughts) particular to the context? (p.26).
- b) Experimenting: This occurs when learners are experimenting with expression, using voice, gesture, props etc. to discover that which seems most appropriate (p.26).
- c) Adapting: This is evident when learners are open to consider other ideas and adapt their conclusions in light of new information and ideas; ready to consider an experience outside of the self; and ready to negotiate experience to the needs of the role (p.26).
- d) Analyzing: When learners are confident to submit their feelings and ideas for analysis and consideration by others; and are willing to analyze feelings by defending a point of view. This is also evident when learners participate by making predictions and are apt to considering the implications of their thinking (p.26).
- e) Reflection: Learners are considered to engage in the reflective mode when ‘gripped by the possibilities of their new understanding’ and ‘anxious to make it concrete in some way’; by speaking or writing, physical action or inner reflection. (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:26; Morgan & Saxton, 1994:22).

Step Six: Evaluating

Morgan and Saxton (1987:27) assert that evaluation is ‘the testing out of meaning’, (private feelings) in public through consciously working in the art form, whether in class or in performance’, and can happen through:

- a) **Dramatizing:** This involves a selection of appropriate theatrical elements to enhance thought and feeling (p.27).
- b) **Symbolizing:** When significant meaning is relayed through symbolic expression (p.27).
- c) **Monitoring:** This refers to detached observation of the effect of action (p.27).
- d) **Re-creating:** This is evidenced when memories and associations from the past are reawakened when emotions are experienced in the present (p.27).
- e) **Communicating:** At this stage there is a satisfaction in the shared significant experience (p.27).

The taxonomy of engagement is ‘cumulative’ as ‘[learners] will not necessarily all be at the same level at the same time’ and ‘they may shift back and forth through the levels’ (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:28). Morgan and Saxton do however emphasize that the levels of engagement are part of a sequential progression and moving in succession through the sequence is imperative to deepen their level of engagement (1994:22-28).

In summation of the engagement levels Bolton implies that ‘the significance of drama as an expressive form of thinking and feeling lies in its concern with the process of personal engagement with the objective world’ (Bolton, 1986b:156). Before engagement at any level can take place, however, one needs to ‘capture’ their interest (Bolton, 1980: 73). Dorothy Heathcote emphasizes the importance to gain and maintain the attention of learners:

I must first attract their attention. If I have their attention, I can gain their involvement. Then I have a chance for their investment and from that their concern. If I have their concern, I have hope for obsession. (Heathcote as cited in Morgan & Saxton, 1987:22)

Herewith a summary of the key engagement levels that will help to inform the analysis of this study. These criteria will serve to provide a framework for investigation of the ITT performances.

Engagement Levels	The Engagement Process
Interest	Learners are interacting by <i>watching, listening, responding</i> (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:22).
Engaging	Participation in the fictitious world of the characters ex. answering questions pertaining to characters. Identifying with the characters and relating to their world (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:22).
Committing	Generating own ideas pertaining to the work (Morgan & Saxton, 1994:20).
Internalizing	Learners come to a new understanding (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:25).
Interpreting	Learners share their new understanding (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:26).
Evaluating	Learners utilize a tangible method to express their assimilation of the process (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:27).

For a semiotic reading of the key engagement levels of audience members in a TIE production body-language is proposed as a means for interpretation of their possible engagement levels. That body-language can be used as a means to assess engagement levels of learners will be illustrated in the following section.

The Sign-System of the Body

The study of learners' non-verbal body language included, amongst others, observation of their postures, eye movement and facial expressions while watching the ITT presentations. In addition to these aspects, direct intentional responses such as the raising of hands and answering of questions posed by facilitators served to indicate learners' levels of engagement and interest. These deemed to be feasible signifiers for this qualitative study of interactive performer-audience methods and played a key role in assessing the ITT experience as *authentic*, or *transformative*. Fast (1970:14) refers to the findings of researchers in psychology to qualify body language as a practical signifier of meaning:

What their work proved [is] that we can inherit in our genetic makeup certain basic physical reactions. We are born with the elements of a nonverbal communication. We can make hate, fear, amusement, sadness and other basic feelings known to other human beings without ever learning how to do it. (Fast, 1970:14)

The audience's genuine response to Themba's performances was especially evident whilst observing their facial expressions. Investigations of appraised researchers²⁸ have found that although culture is a guiding factor in all body language, 'facial expressions of emotion are similar among humans' (Fast, 1970:13, 28). Their theory of this universal signifier postulates:

[...] innate subcortical²⁹ programs linking certain evokers to distinguishable universal facial displays for each of the primary affects – interest, joy, surprise, fear, anger, distress, disgust, contempt and shame". [Simplified] this means that the brains of all men are programmed to turn up at the corners of the mouth when they're happy, turn them down when they're discontent, wrinkle the forehead, lift the eyebrows, raise one side of the mouth, and so forth and so on, according to what feeling is fed into the brain. (Fast, 1970:13, 14)

²⁸ Darwin, Ekman, Friesen (from California's Langley Porter Neuropsychiatric Institute) and Sorenson (from the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness) as referred to in Fast, 1870. p.13

²⁹ part of the brain: the parts of the brain that lie immediately beneath the cerebral cortex (Encarta Reference Library 2005).

Facial expressions are for the most part socially regulated and, even at an unconscious level, controlled as the habitual mask we wear in public is a face presented to the outer world and 'rarely our real face' (Fast, 1970:53). Knapp explains this:

Since we are aware of the communicative potential of our face, we tend to monitor it carefully – inhibiting when desired and exhibiting when desired. (Knapp, 1972:121)

However, in a situation where we feel 'invisible' and safe, 'the need to mask is gone', such as when we are travelling in a car (Fast, 1970:55). Correspondingly, during the ITT performances, learners do not feel on display and are relieved from sustaining their own performance to the outside world. As with any traditional audience, they focus on the action at the front of the room, and then their 'mask is dropped' (Nebe, 2006). When this happens, what people really feel is shown in their facial expressions and/or in their actions (Fast, 1970:53). Research on non-verbal communication endorses facial expressions as a viable interpretative signifier:

Considering sending capacity, internal feedback, and external feedback, the face ranks highest on all three dimensions; hands next; and feet/legs last. (Knapp, 1972:104)

In this chapter a framework for the interpretation of qualitative data in a performance event has been constructed, and will be used to observe and analyse the ITT process in succeeding chapters. But first, Interactive Themba Theatre will be introduced in Chapter Four.

Chapter 4

Interactive Themba Theatre

Themba in Context

A pioneering theatre group in South Africa which utilises interactive theatre methods is the Interactive Themba Theatre (ITT), housed within the Themba HIV/AIDS Organization. Situated in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, Interactive Themba Theatre has been proactive in presenting interactive performances to schools, community based organisations and businesses in Gauteng since February 2002 (van Rooyen, 2007). With the overall aim of preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS, ITT has sought to maximize theatre's potential as a vehicle for intervention with the aim to create preventative awareness in the lives of their audiences (van Rooyen, 2007).

The History of Themba

The Themba HIV/AIDS Organisation was established in January 2002 as a non-profit organization by Kim Hope – an international theatre practitioner from the UK and pundit drama teacher in the forum theatre techniques of Augusto Boal – and Theresa Lynne, a drama therapist practising in the UK. The Themba Organization formed in response to a request from Reverend Thabo Makgoba³⁰ to devise a drama-based programme for the youth at the Trevor Huddleston Memorial Centre in Sophiatown, Johannesburg (Interview with Kim Hope, 2008). The project required three main elements: an HIV/AIDS focus, application to the youth, and utilisation of interactive theatre methods (Hope, 2007:2).

At its inception, young people were recruited from Soweto and Alexandra, two peri-urban areas in the outskirts of Johannesburg. Candidates then underwent rigorous audition processes which operated as workshops modelled as interactive drama games

³⁰ Reverend Thabo Makgoba was recently elected as Archbishop of Cape Town in September 2007 (diocesegramstown, 2008).

and activities with the overall aim of ‘learning about yourself and HIV/AIDS’ (Interview with Kim Hope). As the organisation evolved, particularly in light of the emerging HIV/AIDS pandemic, Themba developed interactive training workshops and theatre performances which focused on preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS primarily within the youth of South Africa.

The Interactive Themba Training programme provides training in inter alia prisons and youth correctional services where inmates are trained to create their own interactive plays centring on the HIV/AIDS pandemic – enabling them to reach out to their direct surroundings with informative plays on HIV/AIDS, safer sexual practices and related issues. The second department of Themba is performance-based and driven by a uniquely developed (interactive theatre) methodology, and is termed Interactive Themba Theatre (ITT).

The Interactive Themba Theatre (ITT) Methodology

The ITT methodology originated from the Forum Theatre techniques of Augusto Boal’s “*Theatre of the Oppressed*” which were used during ITT’s pilot phase. Director Kim Hope, however, found that this approach was not adequately flexible to address the specific complexities introduced by the HIV/AIDS pandemic to South African audiences. In response to this challenge, ITT was reworked as a distinctive approach containing unique interactive theatre methods drawn from inter alia forum theatre, drama therapy, improvisation and play making and which have formed the core of the ITT methodology (van Rooyen, 2007). These modifications resulted in ‘a movement away from “pure” Forum Theatre’ to a more ‘structured forum’, enabling a controlled learning experience within ITT’s predominantly school-based audiences (Hope, 2007:4). ITT’s distinct interactive performer-audience methods include question-asking, hot-seating³¹, and enrolling of audience members as characters, and are integrated into the performance component which comprises scenes focusing on the accounts of HIV-positive people.

³¹ Dialogue with the characters which normally includes questioning their behaviour and motivations, is opened up to audience members.

Alongside these methods, the ITT methodology includes short ‘cameo’ scenes which demonstrate a range of possible responses to situations involving sexual encounters. These 5-liners are presented by actor-educators in groups of two and focus on negotiations regarding safer sexual activities, which Themba communicates as the use of a condom, or sexual foreplay. Except for these cameo scenes, the ITT process involves a scene where colour-coded visual aids are used to display information on the subject matter of sexual encounters. These comprise large green, orange and red posters – akin to the colours of a robot – with large inscriptions displaying corresponding levels of sexual intimacy in a format indicating the safe to dangerous phases in sexual behaviour, according to Themba (see Appendix H). Posters are held up into the air by actor-educators who assemble in a line within the performance space, standing shoulder-to-shoulder, and facing the audience. During this episode, audience members are invited to offer alternative words in any other vernacular for the terms displayed on the posters to ensure that universal understanding is attained.

Apart from these, further collective interactive performer-audience episodes form part of the ITT process. A method harnessing the impact of intrapersonal communication is utilised during which audience members are asked to bow their heads and/or close their eyes and introspectively answer: “*What is one thing I can do to when I leave this play today to keep myself safe and healthy?*” This question is repeated twice and followed by a few moments of silence.

The ITT performance concludes with the Themba song “*It’s my Life*” of which the first few lines are sung by the Themba group, and are then sung by audience members after a few lines into the song.

The ITT methodology solicits audience involvement which creates an interactive theatre process, as the engagement of audience members in the performance results in a transcendence of the traditional ‘dividing line’, which is characteristic of its separation of actors and spectators by maintaining an aesthetic (i.e. an artistic and visual) distance from the audience. As a result, a two-way communication process is created which facilitates

accessible channels of dialogue regarding HIV/AIDS with audiences between a performer and the audience through unique interactive performer-audience techniques.

Themba's goal to combat myths and stigmas associated with the HIV/AIDS pandemic informs ITT's slogan '*We are all HIV+ until proven negative. Let's get tested now!*', and together with the interactive methods, dramatic enactments – described as 'short unresolved plays' – form part of the ITT process and underpin Themba's central vision: To prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS through engaging audience members in uninhibited dialogue on associated issues on this subject matter, such as the delay of one's first sexual encounter, abstinence and/or engaging in 'safer sex', implying the use of a condom (Hope, 2007:4).

Together with these stated aims, ITT's overriding objective is to educate young people through disseminating accurate information concerning HIV/AIDS, thereby equipping them to make responsible sexual choices. Through the ITT-process, Themba's primary objective is to influence behaviour to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. This is a focus core to their methodology, specifically amongst their adolescent audiences in school settings. In relation to this objective, ITT's methodology is also informed by Prochaska and DiClemente's Transtheoretical model of behaviour change (See Appendix E).

ITT's approach to Learning

ITT's approach to learning draws on Plato's Theory of Forms which is illustrated in the "*Allegory of the Cave*" (Refer to Appendix F). In this parable-styled allegory, Plato uses the illustration of people who are trapped in a cage whose ignorance of reality enforces their inability to distinguish appearance from reality. Their only connection to the outside world is images of reality cast on to the wall of the cave by the shadows of a fire behind burning behind them. Similarly, Plato believed that we, likewise, 'may acquire concepts by our perceptual experience of physical objects' but that 'we would be mistaken if we thought that the concepts that we grasp were on the same level as the things we perceive' (Cohen, 2006).

Themba's managing director, Eric Richardson, converts this historical theory into a contemporary application and states unequivocally, that to infuse knowledge in itself 'is not where real learning takes place'. Real learning, rather, equals a process of contemplation and interaction:

Knowledge can't be given. You give facts or information. Real learning takes place when people themselves are involved in debate and not treated as passive receivers [...] when people are provoked and made uncomfortable. (Interview with Eric Richardson)

Adding to this premise, Richardson asserts that it is 'pointless to just give information' through the traditional format of merely presenting a play. The addition of audience participation in the performances enables an interactive process, beyond the traditional 'dividing line', and provides an experiential learning process for audiences through tailored interactive theatre methods. ITT's approach to learning corresponds to Paulo Freire's view of the deficient banking model for education, whereby true learning can only take place through active involvement (Interview with Eric Richardson).

Themba Actor-educators

The majority of employees who work as actor-trainers at the Themba Organization are 'young and black' and come from outlying townships and peri-urban communities in and around Johannesburg, such as Orange Farm and Soweto (Hope, 2007:1). As in most sectors of industry, Themba's personnel are responsible for supplying their own sustenance and travel allowances. Transport to performances however, is provided. The Themba team has a designated driver and a branded passenger vehicle.

The performers at Themba are called actor-educators, a term taken from TIE³² and referring to performers taking on the role of both an actor and educator simultaneously. Training for actor-educators take place according to specific levels: The Themba training process commences with auditions for actor-educators, which is then followed by "initial training" where the elected participants are trained in information concerning HIV/AIDS

³² Cross Reference Chapter 2

and the Themba organization. At the third level of “intermediate training,” candidates undergo acting training primarily based on Stanislavski’s system, and are familiarized with the Themba interactive process as part of their preparation for performances. Stanislavski’s method of acting is employed in order to attain ‘naturalistic acting’ with the aim of better enabling audiences to identify with realistic characters (Interview with Kim Hope). After completing these training sessions, qualifying candidates are permitted to join the ITT presentations on stage – this is seen as an additional level of training gained through practical experience.

The ITT process is steered by actor-educators functioning as facilitators who introduce the interactive performer-audience activities, and become the connectors between audience members, the performers, and the interactive performance. The remaining actor-educators perform in the dramatic enactments and aid in disseminating HIV/AIDS information during the productions and specifically during informative scenes.

Themba’s Target Audiences

The audience groups for ITT generally consist of learners from ages 10-15 years. These age groups are classified by developmental psychologists as *middle ages* and *adolescent* groups (Goodenough & Tyler, 1959: 327-385). The middle childhood phase broadly spans from ages 7-11, and the ensuing years of adolescence are broadly defined as ‘the period in which the transition from childhood to adulthood occurs’ – which follows on into the next years before the ensuing phase of young adulthood, usually marked by the completion of higher education (Goodenough & Tyler, 1959:385). The audiences for ITT are therefore on the perimeter of the middle ages phase but fall mostly within the early stages of adolescence. For the purpose of this study a brief focus on the developmental stages of adolescents will be provided in the following section.

Developmental Stages of Adolescents

The middle ages – which some of ITT’s audiences are on the brink of leaving – is a period during which a child gathers lessons on the basic areas governing the human experience, ‘most of the information and skills’ his society expects him to know, and ‘develops competence and skill that enable him to cope with life’s problems’ (Forrester,1992:307, 324). In addition, the young adolescent finds him/herself in an overlapping phase where expectations are set to behave both as a child (with limited decision making and power of self-determination) and as an adult (with requirements to make reasonable, logical and law-abiding decisions) in most spheres of his/her existence.

Research in the developmental stages of audience groups:

ITT’s primarily adolescent audiences are consciously or unconsciously, ‘moulding their own lives into the shapes they will take in the years to come’ (Goodenough & Tyler, 1959:404). The developmental stages of the adolescent substantiates that adolescence is a time when many of the most important choices in one’s life are made. They are in a phase of their development where decision-making regarding life-commitments, and the construction of a value-system form part of a primary challenge of identity-formation (Goodenough & Tyler, 1959:401-404).

Awareness to stages of self-consciousness:

Facilitators need to keep in mind that there may be ‘some degree of self-consciousness’ due to the physical growth changes – resulting in feelings of awkwardness and embarrassment, among their adolescent audiences when communicating with learners falling within this age group due to its effect on audience participation and TIE practitioners should take the necessary steps to create a relaxed environment, especially during interactive methods such as role-play.

Knowledge of cognitive development:

ITT’s interactive methods approach centres on problem-solving. Slater and Bremner (2003:360) contend that an understanding of adolescents’ ability to problem-solving requires the comprehension of their process of thinking – how they find the solution to a

problem; their structure of thinking – the influence of their other cognitive abilities to problem-solving; and the content of their thinking – what information they tend to employ during problem-solving.

Knowledge of how the audience groups make decisions:

Adolescents have been described as ‘apprentices in thinking’ and the manner of influencing their behaviour on a cognitive scale will subsequently differ to that of an older group of people (Slater & Bremner, 2003:360). One’s approach to an audience of retired 65 year olds in comparison to a group of 13 year olds will differ greatly in context and content, and it should be considered that learning takes place on a different scale as well. These requirements may appear overwhelming; however, if the aim of the performance is for learning to take place, knowledge of the majority of these aspects is evidently needed.

Group Dynamics

During adolescence, group dynamics also have a significant role to play in the lives of the audiences as ‘the peer group supplants the family as the central social reality’ (Forrester, 1992:308). Forrester explains this:

During the school years, the influence of the group upon child behaviour becomes far more apparent. From this time on one can note a clear distinction between the child’s behaviour toward his mates and his attitude toward adults. He senses more clearly the distinction between the generations. These are his kind. With them he must compete. By them he will be judged. So as he grows older the influence of adults becomes relatively weaker. (Forrester, 1992:329)

This highlights the importance of addressing beliefs and behaviours in both the individual and the group structure. When addressing the subject of HIV/AIDS and sexual behaviour, disregard of the group dynamics – even in creative deliverance of the factual content – may frustrate the objective of influencing behavioural change. Richardson affirms that one needs to engage with gender and acknowledge diversity in addressing myths and ideologies that might be present at that age – ‘such as that it’s ok to be 16

years old and not having sex’ (Interview with Erich Richardson). With identity formation as the basic goal of development during adolescence, peer pressure to engage in sexual activities in order to find acceptance from a peer group is an equally important aspect to address. Forrester reiterates the role that group dynamics play during adolescence:

Opinions, prejudices, beliefs, likes and dislikes are likewise determined by the group, and the boy or girl who differs is made to feel the force of group ostracism unless he has sufficient force of personality to bring the others around to his point of view. Mastery, conformity, or exclusion – these are the social alternatives with which the adolescent is faced, and no half-way measures are possible. (Forrester, 1992:401)

Sullivan maintains that the behaviour of adolescents can only be understood ‘as the result of interaction processes between self and others’, reinforcing that ‘psychological growth is driven by the need to satisfy interpersonal needs’ (Sullivan as cited in Slater & Bremner, 2003:389). Peer group opinions as a result work together with an adolescent’s perceived value and/or relevance of the topic at hand.

Performance Setting

Due to the location of their target audiences, Themba performances are generally undertaken within the school environment, the setting for school audiences. The three schools that Themba visited during my observations of their performances were based in Gauteng. These included Orange Farm – an informal housing settlement southwest of Johannesburg; Alexandra – a densely populated township characterised by scarcity of land, homelessness and a high rate of unemployment; and Florida – a well-established middle to lower middle-class suburban area. The former districts are largely black township communities in peri-urban and peri-rural areas, and the latter is a formal residential area housing a variety of different race and ethnic groups belonging to a similar socio-economic stratum (Garson, 2002).

Themba performed for learners ranging from 10 to 15 years of age, and respectively falling in the categories of grade 6 – grade 9, at all three primary-schools. The learners were all dressed in school uniforms and seemed excited as they walked into the venues. All audience members were seated on chairs in the respective performance venues – respectively a large school hall at both Masibambane College in Orange Farm and Arthur Matthews Primary School in Florida, and an average-sized classroom in Bovet Primary School in Alexandra with windows and painted walls. Whether these learners were hungry or unwell during the time of the performance was unknown to me. I visited with Themba on fairly hot days and although not impossible, it was unlikely that any of the learners were experiencing cold.

To begin with, I observed Themba’s work in bringing HIV/AIDS education performances to Masibambane College in Orange Farm, which is a primary school with two additional high school grades (grade 8 and grade 9). Masibambane College was equipped with a solid infrastructure, such as brick-buildings and well-maintained facilities and was dissimilar to many other under-resourced schools located in townships which bear the signs of inadequate maintenance.

Although also sourced with classrooms and a school hall consisting of brick buildings, Bovet Primary School in Alexandra is challenged with a lack of necessary internal resources required to sufficiently operate a learning environment. Despite this, Bovet is ‘very rich in dedicated teachers and diligent pupils’:

Although our school is new and beautiful on the outside, it is empty on the inside because we don't have resources. At the moment we are desperately in need of a big photocopier which can cater to 1,016 pupils. (Principal Khosa as cited in Mathabane.com, 2001)

Arthur Matthews Primary School is located in the West Rand. Corresponding with its middle class setting in Florida, the school enjoys good infrastructure with brick-laid classrooms, a school hall and well maintained sports fields. However, irrespective of their facilities and available resources, all three schools created an educationally driven

environment which created and regulated the context in which the theatrical performances of Themba took place.

Attending their performances in all of the local primary schools led to the observation of the interactive relationship between the theatre group and its young audience members. Observing the young spectators as Themba undertook these performances brought to light how a variety of elements can influence the dialogue between a theatre group and its audience. Amongst these was the manner in which the theatre group positioned itself in relation to the audience, as well as the use of certain interactive approaches to create audience involvement. These factors proved to play an important part in how the theatre group captured the attention of viewers, maintained it and ultimately affected the interactive dialogue between audience member and performer. Amongst others, the outcome of the introductory meeting between performers and audience members proved to be a vital part of the overall process.

Themba's Production in Context

Whilst I visited as an observer with Themba, the performances "*Heartbreaker*" and "*Class of 2007*"³³ were shown at the designated schools, Masibambane College, Bovet Primary and Arthur Matthews Primary. At the time of my visit these two plays were recurring productions that were repeatedly shown each year.

During the presentations at the respective schools, both the grade 8 and 9 learners from Masibambane College were presented consecutively with the play "*Class of 2007*", while "*Heartbreaker*" was showcased for the grade 6 and grade 7 learners from both Bovet Primary and Arthur Matthews Primary. Observations were thus undertaken of six ITT performances in total.

³³ This researcher observed the performance "*Class of 2007*" when it was presented in 2007. The Name changes progressively with each progressive year i.e. this year it is "*Class of 2008*"

As was viewed in each production, the core components of an ITT production consist of dramatic story-lines, the target audience and the performance setting, and will be discussed further in the following sections.

Primary Story-lines

ITT performances comprise scenes which are short and dramatic enactments that focus on the accounts of people personally affected and infected by HIV/AIDS. The story-lines exhibit unresolved dilemmas and are used as a base for soliciting interactive dialogue. During my observations of the ITT performances, the two plays “*Heartbreaker*” and “*Class of 2007*” were presented. These plays are relatively short rehearsed presentations of two different scenarios concerning HIV positive people, and both these story-lines are created by Themba ‘to suit different audiences and age groups’ in tandem with various learning outcomes for the different plays (van Rooyen, 2007).

“*Heartbreaker*”

“*Heartbreaker*” centres on an adolescent schoolboy who contracts HIV³⁴ and intricately portrays how this affects his close relationships, especially those with his parents, a supportive friend and his girlfriend, with whom he has been sexually active. Through these relationships, the play addresses stigmas associated with HIV/AIDS and the different ways that people react to individuals infected by the pandemic. The protagonist’s father, who is a truck driver, resents his son for contracting HIV, whilst his mother continues to offer love and support. The news is broken to his girlfriend in a scene where she takes him flowers just as he is discharged from hospital, and illustrates the tension and resultant shock when one is informed of a partner’s previously undisclosed status. The scene comes to a close with the girlfriend’s words, “*You’ve been having sex with me for two months and knew?*”

³⁴ HIV is the virus – AIDS is the body’s response to the virus which characteristically results in death.

A successive scene emanating from the protagonist's past follows and displays a moment in his childhood during which the father has a 'sex-talk' with his now 7-year old son. This skit commences with the youngster's question to his father, "*Where do babies come from?*" and is used to trigger a discussion on this subject-matter, prompted by an invitation to audience members to comment on the accuracy of the information provided in reply by the father.

"Class of 2007"

The first scene of "*Class of 2007*" commences with a provoking dialogue between a male and female protagonist who play the roles of Mzobo and Lebo, an adolescent couple who has been sexually active. During the opening scene, Lebo's incomplete statement of her visit to the clinic to obtain test results sets the scene for the couple's split up in the ensuing conversation during which Lebo discloses that she has contracted the HIV virus – but that Mzobo has been her only sexual partner. Consecutive scenes follow in which the protagonists' friends dispute his impulsive decision to end the relationship and serve to challenge overall responses to the news of an acquaintance contracting HIV. Throughout these scenes, Mzobo's behaviour is highlighted as that of an arrogant, modern day nymphomaniac who has many sexual partners and believes that this is the stamp of manhood. His lifestyle is in contrast to that of a friend, who lives according to a different value system.

The final dramatic enactment is a historical scene displaying the night when Lebo contracted the virus, and highlights the difficulty experienced when there is a lack of independent negotiation on levels of sexual intimacy within a relationship. After a late night party, the protagonist is persuaded by her boyfriend Mzobo to visit his apartment in a somewhat drunken state. She assents on the condition that they do not have sex. However, when they arrive at his apartment, she is forced to choose between having sex or leaving his apartment late at night. Due to the country's high crime rate, this is a dangerous situation for any woman to face in present day South Africa³⁵ (this factor is

³⁵ Testament to this fact is that on the Southern Domain Online Travel Guides, tourists are warned not to go for walks through parks, dark parts of the inner cities in the evenings (Southern Domain Online Travel

considered in the performance as influencing the choice that the young woman needs to make). A facilitator interrupts the scene when Mzobo says, “*When I saw you at the party tonight, I wanted to kiss you from your head to your toes*”, and uses this comment to catalyse audience participation. Hereafter, questions are posed to the young audience members regarding possible courses of action for a woman who is placed in such a situation with attendant extenuating factors.

After the initial scenes, the specifically tailored ITT interactive methods are introduced and interspersed within the ensuing dramatic enactments commencing with question-asking, and progressing with hot-seating and role-play – with the intention of initiating proactive audience participation.

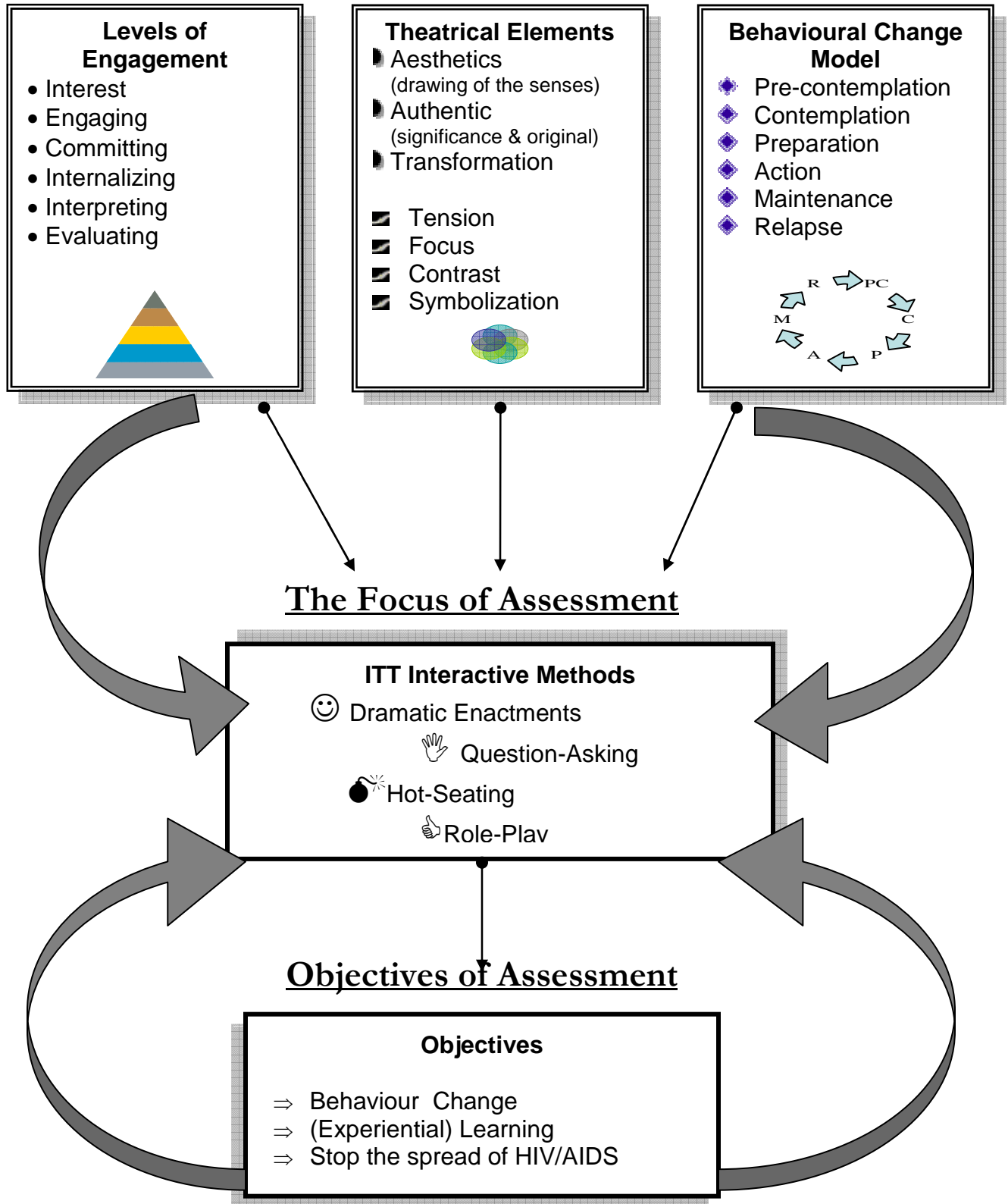
Schematic Diagram of the ITT Approach

In order to obtain a true assessment of Themba’s methodology, the outcome needs to be measured according to Themba’s pre-established objectives that are embedded in their approach. For a comprehensible view of the ITT methodology the following schematic representation has been constructed as a pre-determined model that Themba subscribes to (See Diagram B).

Guides, 2007). Furthermore statistics indicate that young people are especially prone to fall victim to crime late at night in South Africa (Schönteich & Louw, n. d.).

Diagram B

The Assessment Framework



According to my knowledge, The Interactive Themba Theatre (ITT) is the only theatre company in the vicinity of Johannesburg that makes use of interactive methods *during* a performance. Unlike most TIE programmes, which present a play and use it as a catalyst to facilitate discussions with their audiences *after* its presentation, dialogue with the audience facilitates participation *during* these performances. This technique is an integrated element of the presentation as a whole and forms an integral part of the ITT methodology.

The ITT team comprises trained actor-educators operating with the ultimate goal of educating their audiences about HIV/AIDS³⁶. For the purpose of this study, they are referred to in the following task-based roles which require a clear change for each task:

- Performers when referring to their role as actors, dancers, or any other form of theatre practice
- Facilitators when they function as conductors of the ITT presentation who guide the performance events, and in so doing directly communicate with the audience
- The Themba group when referring to the Themba employees as a team of actor-educators introducing theatre as a means for educating their audiences on the subject of HIV/AIDS

In relation to the various roles of the actor-educators, the audiences were composed of school-going learners between the ages of 10-15 years, and due to their profile, will be referred to as audience members, adolescents and learners for the purpose of this study.

The profile of Themba outlined in Chapter Four provides a comprehensive overview of the theatre group that was selected for investigation of theatre's transformative capacity – specifically when applied for learning regarding a prevalent social issue. In order to provide a contextualised understanding of the ITT process, descriptive observations have been made which also set the stage for analyses of their mode of work.

³⁶ Cross Reference Chapter 4.2.4

Chapters Five, Six and Seven are building blocks positioned in succession to provide the context for assessment of the interactive methods utilised by ITT. These building blocks are respectively: Descriptive observations, an analysis of the interactive methods and recommendations comprising suggestions and points to consider. Chapter Five will now commence with the initial building block, namely descriptive observations of the ITT performances.

CHAPTER 5

Observing the ITT Performances

Chapter Five consists of detailed observations of the ITT productions as well as information gained from primary research. The act of observing has been driven by its denotative elements which are contained within its definition: To observe is the action of intently watching someone or something and is synonymous with considering, contemplating, perceiving, viewing, noticing, witnessing (Soanes, 2001:611). In this manner, the following section provides descriptive observations of audience responses to ITT's mode of work, and equates to observations of six performances at three schools³⁷. It is divided into sub-focus areas pertaining to the preparation and presentation of the show, as well as several post-performance observations, comprising the performers, an audience, and the presentation of the performance, as well as pre and post-dynamics. All of these areas are discussed in relation to the significant aspects of assessment criteria as outlined in Chapter Two. What must be noted is that this discussion is observation driven, and is not analytical in intent as the overall analysis of this work will be the focus of Chapter Six.

The ITT performances form part of a process³⁸ rather than existing as a single event, and characteristically constitute several dynamics. As opposed to having a fixed start or ending, the performance episode is effectively set in motion before the actual staging of a production, and carries on long after the proverbial curtain is dropped.

³⁷ Cross Reference Chapter 4

³⁸ Process: A series of actions taken towards achieving a particular end; a natural series of changes (Oxford Dictionary, 2001:705).

Pre-Performance Dynamics

The pre-performance dynamics are a synopsis of the way in which the audience is engaged before the production and the factors surrounding the preparation of the theatre group, and do not focus on the actual production itself.

The following annotations of the pre-performance dynamics have been made with the author in the role of an observer, and constitute aspects of the production leading up to the actual performance, of which several key facets are discussed under the following headings:

1. Audience-Performance Engagement

a) *Exposure prior to the performance date*

Research gathered from enquiries indicated that Themba communicated with the three schools via email, telephonically and/or through a facsimile. The first interaction ITT had with the school audiences prior to the day of the performance was predominantly undertaken by a teacher who informed the learners of Themba's upcoming visit. This was the only observable form of pre-performance marketing confirmed by Themba.

b) *The first encounter preceding the performance*

The first interaction with audience members on the day of the performance took place as learners entered the performance venues – two school halls and a classroom respectively³⁹. The learners were promptly directed to seats by two or three actor-educators on each occasion. The encounters were brisk and impersonal, with actor-educators focusing their efforts on seating the learners in an orderly fashion and as quickly as possible.

³⁹ Cross Reference chapter 4

c) *Research of the target audience*

In response to the question of whether audience research takes place prior to performances, both Themba's managing director Eric Richardson and Bongani Sihlangu, Themba's Rehearsal and Development Practitioner, promptly answered "no!" (Interview with Eric Richardson and Bongani Sihlangu). Richardson explained that when the Themba HIV Organization was founded, donors required performances to be held in the region of Soweto. At that time, Themba's approach maintained that if an organization was working in a particular community, it needed to recruit from that community. The core group of performers accordingly came from the vicinity of Soweto, which enabled locally sourced performers to understand the meta-language of their audiences (Interview with Eric Richardson). Although Themba's performances expanded to other regions, audience research prior to a performance has, in practice, not formed part of the prerequisites of an ITT performance.

d) *Space set-up*

The setting up of the performance venue included placing chairs in rows and making sure that there were enough seats for the awaiting number of audience members, as arranged beforehand with each teacher. The chairs were stacked in two separate quadrants with several rows placed parallel in each quadrant, all facing the front. With the exception of the second run of the show at Arthur Matthews Primary School, which was presented on the stage in the school hall, all performances took place on the floor and at eye-level with audience members.

The performance area was demarcated by a row of chairs set out for the actors and placed at the back of the allocated performance space, all facing the audience. The costumes of the characters, which comprised mainly shirts, were placed over the back of the chairs. Additional props put into position included a Jembe drum. All of these preparatory activities were undertaken by Themba actor-educators before the learners entered the performance venues.

2. Theatre Group

a) *Performance Schedule*

As described in Chapter Four, the majority of performers travel from outlying townships⁴⁰ and thus travel great distances daily to Themba's central office. Performers need to arrive at Themba's offices in Braamfontein where they commence duties at 08h30, with the exception of earlier scheduled performances when they are required to meet at 07h30. Among these performers is actor-trainer Bongani Sihlangu who travels 90 minutes from his hometown Tembisa, and another young female performer who travels up to 120 minutes each morning from her residence (In Conversation with Themba Actor-Educators). Apart from this, daily travelling distances are increased where performance venues are located in far-flung areas. Whilst I travelled with the team on certain occasions, relaxed group communication took place.

From information gathered by the Themba group and from witnessing performances, travelling time and distances together with overall levels of fatigue were primary aspects affecting performances.

b) *Training for actor-educators*

In conversation with the founder, Kim Hope, it was stated that Stanislavski's method of acting is employed in the training of actor-educators in order to attain 'naturalistic acting' with the aim of better enabling audiences to identify with ITT's 'realistic characters' (Interview with Kim Hope).

c) *Preparation prior to a performance*

The Themba group performed primarily without undertaking warm-up sessions in all of the performances observed, with the exception of a short focus-exercise at Bovet Primary just before the start of the second performance. This was undertaken while audience members were seated and in full view of the learners at the back of the classroom. During the initial moments of this performance, an increase in overall energy levels was noted.

⁴⁰ Cross Reference Chapter Four

In addition to ushering learners into the performance venue, actor-educators were responsible for setting up and preparing the performance venue and performance space at the start of each presentation. This included placing chairs in rows and counting them to correspond to the expected number of learners, and the positioning of props.

Subsequent to the pre-performance dynamics, observations of the ITT performances follow in the next section, with these being observations of the *actual* performances at the respective schools.

Observations of the Performances

The ITT productions as an entirety formed part of a two-part process: The first segment combined ITT produced plays and interactive processes and contained short enacted scenarios performed alongside ITT interactive methods – the latter being interspersed in between the dramatic scenes.

The second segment of the ITT process took on a more informative direction where actor-educators provided information through visual aids⁴¹. Proactive participation from audience members gained a collective dynamic, where learners were required to interact with the performance by listening and participating as a group.

The following section consists of observations which are provided to describe the characteristic structure of the ITT performances with comprehensive details recorded to provide a pictorial framework and enable optimum contextual understanding. For this purpose, observations are discussed chronologically to create a logical flow for analyses and recommendations in the subsequent chapters. For the purpose of clarity, the two performances “*Heartbreaker*” and “*Class of 2007*” are referred to as “dramatic enactments”, while addressing interactive performer-audience methods in the performances as “interactive methods”.

⁴¹ Cross Reference Chapter 4

1. The Performance Event

Herewith follows observations of the first part of the ITT process and audience-performance engagement:

a) *Primary audience-encounters*

The actor-educators were dressed in bright green shirts with the caption, “*Peer-Educators*”, and black pants with matching black shoes. As a result they were easily distinguishable. As previously mentioned, the audience had their first encounter with the actor-educators whilst being directed where to sit as they entered the performance venues at their local schools. Themba’s first interaction with the learners was entirely functional and constituted actor-educators out of role, i.e. the actor-educators were initially encountered as ushers and not as actors. Their first encounter of Themba *during* the performance was however, introduced through a vibrant entry with song and dance.

Each performance at the elected schools officially commenced with one of the actor-educators playing on a Jembe-drum in the designated performance space, in full view of the audience members. The remaining actor-educators were then introduced in quick succession as they made their way from the back of the venue – running to the front as their names were called out. When introduced, actor-educators greeted the audience non-verbally with friendly faces and contemporary dance movements. This introduction induced a spontaneous reaction of learners clapping along to the beat and laughing in delight at the amusing dance movements performed by the actor-educators.

Following this opening, one of two facilitators who were consecutively placed at the two opposite sides of the performance area officially introduced the group as the Interactive Themba Theatre – stating who they were and the purpose of their visit. The theatre group was then collectively introduced as actor-educators. Thereafter, learners were advised to pay close attention to the remaining events of the production in order to become personally involved at a later stage in the performance.

The routine introduction with song and dance was followed by a moment of silence in which a candle was lit in remembrance of those who have died because of HIV/AIDS. All members of the audience cooperated and there was wide-spread silence. After a few moments of contemplation, the co-facilitator was introduced and learners were invited to sing along or clap to the introductory songs of each performance. Learners at all three schools were unhesitant to respond to the invitation and several began to sing with, indicating that the selected music was familiar to them. The high noise levels were only superseded by learners at Arthur Matthews Primary who added to the singing by stamping their feet while clapping along to the beat of the music.

This format of events served as the initiating structure for every production, after which audience members were then introduced to the characters of the first dramatic enactments.

b) Audience Engagement during the Performances

As stated before, “*Heartbreaker*” and “*Class of 2007*” were respectively presented to learners ranging from 10 to 15 years of age, and respectively falling in the categories of grade 6 – grade 9. Themba performed “*Heartbreaker*” for grade 6 and 7 learners at Bovet Primary (in a classroom) and Arthur Matthews Primary (in the school hall), and “*Class of 2007*” to grade 8 and 9 learners at Masibambane College (in the local school hall). Observations were thus undertaken of six ITT performances in total. The following are observations of the how the audiences responded to the two ITT dramatic enactments, namely “*Heartbreaker*” and “*Class of 2007*”⁴².

Audience Responses to “*Heartbreaker*”

The first enactment of “*Heartbreaker*” was introduced with the song “*hona jwale*”⁴³. Learners sang and/or clapped along with great zest during all four performances. Throughout the majority of the dramatic scenes, audience members had their eyes fixed

⁴² Cross Reference Chapter 4 for story-outlines

⁴³ Translated as “Right now, on the chest of my sweetheart”

on the performance area, and displayed multiple reactions to the unfolding story-line, constituting non-verbal body language and verbal responses.

Learners responded with different non-verbal cues to the unfolding story. Smiles broke out on faces when Tumelo's⁴⁴ girlfriend brought him flowers during his stay in hospital. A number of learners leaned forward to hear and see the father's reaction to the news of his son being HIV-positive, with several watching their conversation with wide eyes and open mouths. At certain instances, learners hushed their peers who broke out into laughter. During the second performance at Arthur Matthews, some learners looked elsewhere than at the performance area when extended moments of silence ensued between characters' dialogues.

The performances were presented at eye-level with the audiences (with the exception of the final performance at Arthur Matthews which was presented on the stage). For the greater part of the dramatic enactments, learners at Bovet Primary were stretching and leaning forward and to the sides to see and hear. This response was also prompted by inaudible articulation from the performers at certain instances. Learners started to fidget soon after the first dramatic enactment. This was especially evident amongst the male learners. Other learners were at times staring out of the classroom window during these performances at Bovet.

The grade 6 learners at Arthur Matthews stood in order to see and hear through the majority of the dramatic enactments. When one female learner was pulled down to her seat by a peer she exclaimed: "I can't see!" Similarly, some audience members left their seats and stood closer to the performance space. Perhaps due to this experience, the Themba team moved the performance to the stage for the second showing at Arthur Matthews. Although visibility was improved an increased problem with audibility prohibited one's ability to follow the story-line at all times, and as a member of the audience, I also experienced this challenge. The grade 7 learners faced the performance at all times and watched the stage with fixed attention. Some female learners were sitting

⁴⁴ Main Protagonist in "*Heartbreaker*"

with crossed arms while a number of male learners were leaning backward into their chairs with hands loosely placed on their laps, or casually holding the back of their chairs⁴⁵. Others sat forward with their hands cupping their faces and one female learner was sitting with her leg pulled up to her side and onto the chair. Another male learner had his fingers resting on his face while watching the dramatic enactments intently with an open mouth.

Audience responses to “*Class of 2007*”

“*Phela Amandla*” by Malaika commenced the first enactment of “*Class of 2007*”. This song caused immediate reaction from learners at both performances who began to sing along without reserve. During the first scene there was complete silence for the most part, with the exception of some male learners who were seated at the back of the performance venue and who began speaking amongst themselves. Learners in the front rows watched the dramatic enactments with their eyes fixed on the performance space, and audience members seated further away from the front, and who were too short to look over their classmates’ heads, were leaning and stretching to the sides to get a better view of the performance. Learners seated at the back rows especially, began to lean forward to see the performers and it was not long into the performance when several male learners began to fidget and speak amongst themselves. With the exception of one grade 7 male learner who stood up to see, learners remained seated during both the performances.

Inaudible articulation from performers at times made audience members strain their ears to hear, and this was further hindered by shouts from outside the school hall. One distinctively short male learner sitting right at the back could barely see atop the heads of his classmates, and it was not long into the performance when he began to speak to his neighbours.

The humorous conversation that followed in the successive scene between the protagonist and his friend, due to a misunderstanding, aroused laughter from several learners. Facial

⁴⁵ Refer to Appendix H.

expressions with wide eyes and gaping mouths were further observed from a majority of learners who were quietly sitting to the sides of their chairs, watching with stretched necks, or looking straight ahead at the evolving performance. A loud applause emanated as the performers bowed at the end of the first dramatic enactment, and this was the customary reaction after all six performances.

After these initial dramatic enactments, the performance space was no longer the sole centre of attention. The presentation format for all performances proceeded with audience participation becoming more interactive as audience members were presented with opportunities to become personally involved with the inclusion of the ITT interactive methods⁴⁶. The following are observations of how learners responded to the ITT interactive methods *during* the performances.

c) Audience Participation during ITT Interactive Methods

ITT interactive methods were employed within scenes from each dramatic enactment, and essentially followed a similar format of question-asking, hot-seating, more question-asking and role-play. As mentioned before, these were interspersed within short scenes of the plays.

The first formal interactive method was introduced straight after the first dramatic enactments in each of the consecutive ITT presentations with the facilitator's announcement, "*Now it's time for you to get involved*". This direct address to the audience was followed by one or two content-based questions such as: "*What was the play about?*" and "*What was the last thing [the character] said?*" Although the response from learners was not typically restrained, more learners raised their hands when facilitators informed the audience that answers could be given in any vernacular. Facilitators also introduced the routine procedure of learners being required to raise their hands and state their name before giving an answer. Actor-educators consistently repeated the names and answers or questions of any audience members who participated.

⁴⁶ Cross Reference Chapter 4

Audience Participation in “*Heartbreaker*”

Proactive audience participation was elicited after the first scene of “*Heartbreaker*” through the posing of questions to learners regarding the difference between HIV and AIDS, the means of contracting the virus and questions regarding condom usage. Although not a universal response, a large number of learners unhesitatingly raised their hands to answer these questions. Hot-seating followed during which audience members were invited to ask the two main characters questions. Most learners readily participated in this activity.

Another dramatic scene followed these preliminary interactive events, and displayed a time in the protagonist’s past when he was 7 years old and enquiring from his father where babies came from. The father’s hesitant response and incomplete answers evoked audible gasps and giggles from the audience members. At a certain point in their dialogue, the facilitator loudly stated “Freeze! And relax”, after which the two performers turned their attention from each other and towards the facilitator and audience, and remained seated in their chairs.

Facilitators proceeded to ask the leading performer, whilst still enrolled in their respective characters, if he thought his father had given him a sufficient answer to his question. When the same question was directed to the audience members they unanimously shouted “No!” A series of questions were then posed to audience members on what they thought ‘a good father might say’. Where learners at Arthur Matthews promptly shared their opinion and response to this question, learners from Bovet were initially more hesitant to answer but in time participated with more ease.

The question-asking events were followed by role-play during which audience members who participated in the preceding question-asking event were invited to step onto the stage or into the performance area, and act out their answers. Learners engaged in the role-play event with differing levels of involvement.

At Arthur Matthews, the first learner to participate was a grade 6 female who was asked to relay her answer on the subject of conception, enrolled as the mother of Tumelo. On joining the actor-educators at the front, the father's shirt was placed onto her shoulders, and she was directed to sit in his chair. After a few moments of silence a facilitator prompted her to present her answer, yet she sat immobilised in the character's seat, staring into the audience and without looking at the Themba actor enrolled as Tumelo. Nevertheless, she left the performance area with an encouraging applause from the facilitators. A second female learner was invited to participate in the same role and assertively relayed her answer to the actor seated next to her.

A male learner from the second performance at Bovet who enrolled as the father of Tumelo was quickly and easily responsive and gave an informative answer with no perceivable self-consciousness, whilst his peer in the first performance evidently found it more challenging to find the right words which led to facilitator's endeavouring to prompt the unresponsive learner.

More question-asking followed with the provision of answer-driven information about sexual behaviour, after which another dramatic scene was presented. This enactment centred on the main character having to relay the news of an HIV-positive diagnosis to his girlfriend. When the scene was paused in the course of the characters' conversation, audience members were asked for their input into how the protagonist could share his newly discovered status with his girlfriend, as well as how they, as audience members, would respond to the news that someone they knew were HIV positive. This provided another opportunity for role-play during which learners at all schools participated favourably and seemed more at ease to do so.

Additional questions posed to audience members by facilitators between the ensuing dramatic enactments included the following: "*Is 16 years too young to be having sex?*"; "*What age is ok to have sex?*"; "*At what age should parents talk to their children about sex?*" There was immediate response from the young audience members to these questions with more hands raised than the amount of required responses.

During the time of question-asking, there were some instances when learners called out answers before their designated cues. The overall hot-seating responses indicated the most proactive participation and learners would regularly shout, “Me! Me!” when the invitation was made to the audience to question characters. The role-play events generally proceeded question-asking. Overall, learners at Arthur Matthews participated more quickly than learners at Bovet Primary. Responses to all these interactive methods were restricted to two or three candidates, and every participant was allowed to demonstrate his/her answer once.

Audience Participation in “*Class of 2007*”

After the initial dramatic enactment, the subsequent interactive methods were, as with “*Heartbreaker*”, introduced with the facilitator’s comment that it was now time for the audience members to become involved. Question-asking once again led the succession of performer-audience interactions with the question, “*What was the play about?*” This was followed by hot-seating – with facilitators posing questions to the characters as an exemplar format – and steering the discussions into relevant content-based feedback. This method once again elicited favourable input from the young audience members at both performances in Orange Farm.

After these interactions, facilitators addressed the characters of the play, portraying a couple, about their use of condoms. The mention of the word ‘condom’ resulted in giggles from several learners. This hot-seating event was used as a basis for question-asking, followed by questions posed to the audience members by facilitators about condom usage. Questions regarding the difference between HIV and AIDS then followed. More female learners answered these questions. In the second performance, several male learners seated in the back rows were speaking and laughing amongst themselves.

An informative session on sexual behaviour – mainly focused on the use of condoms – followed with the assistance of visual aids. Depictions of condoms on A3 posters were shown to learners together with the factual information presented. Hereafter, facilitators

addressed two of the main characters in a succession of questions, once again setting the stage for hot-seating during which learners were invited to interview the characters. Learners at Masibambane quickly partook in this interactive method and unhesitatingly asked the characters questions – which mostly centred on their motives for choices and actions taken.

The consecutive dramatic enactment was a scene displaying the protagonist disclosing her HIV-positive status to a friend. The facilitator's order to 'Freeze! And relax' marked the next interactive session. Learners were asked to imagine that there was a bubble between the two Themba characters which prohibited them to hear each other. The dramatic enactment served as a catalyst for the subsequent informative discussions. Audience members were informed about the transmission of HIV/AIDS and asked how they would respond to the news of a friend being diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Answers from learners were loudly repeated by facilitators to the entire audience. Selected participants in the question-asking event were then invited to enact their answers in a role-play session. Participants were applauded as they entered the performance area and encouraged with verbal cheers from their peers.

The next dramatic enactment was a scene from the past showing the night that the protagonist, Lebo, contracted the virus from her boyfriend, Mzobo. The scene commenced at Mzobo's apartment after they had both returned from a party. After he had helped Lebo to a seat due to her (enacted) drunken state, Mzobo sat next to her and began to seduce her. A facilitator paused the scene as he was drawing closer to her and straight after his line, "*When I saw you at the party tonight, I wanted to kiss you from your head to your toes*". Straight after this interjection, the facilitators addressed the audience with the question, "*What would you do if you were in this situation and not ready to have sex?*" A number of learners responded and were then asked to role-play their answers in the performance space. Facilitators asked learners to show how they would either "say no to", or "negotiate" to having "safe sex". Throughout the ITT process, Themba's inferred answer to the question of 'safe sex' was the use of a condom.

During the first performance, a young grade 6 female learner was elected to role-play her answer. Sitting next to the Themba actor who played the role of the boyfriend, Mzobo, the young female learner only expressed the words, “*I’m still too young, I’m still too young!*” while trying to move away from the boyfriend-actor. She did not look at the Themba actor but squirmed in her seat, and did not say anything else for the remainder of her time in the performance area.

Learners from the second performance who responded to the question-asking event were mostly females. When they were invited to role-play their answers, no learners volunteered to enrol as the girlfriend, and facilitators had to extend the invitation several times before any learners participated.

A consecutive series of interactive methods communicated the themes “*once is all it takes*” along with the importance of going for an HIV/AIDS blood test. These were introduced through questions posed to audience members on what they thought Mzobo needed to do to change his behaviour, followed by hot-seating in which Mzobo was interviewed by the audience members about his behaviour. Learners were slow to respond during the question-asking, yet more responded to the hot-seating event, where answers centred on going for an HIV test and adhering to sexual relations with one partner at a time.

During this hot-seating intervention, Mzobo was given a “truth-stick”⁴⁷ and after questions were asked concerning his potentially dangerous form of chosen sexual behaviour, it was brought to light that the source of his choices resulted from a conversation he had with older males as a young boy. This conversation led him to believe that a real man is one who is sexually active with a number of females. The scene ended with the actor playing the role of Mzobo, taking off his shirt, placing it on the chair where he was seated, and informing the character Mzobo (hypothetically still

⁴⁷ A truth-stick is used when a character is obliged to tell the absolute truth and can no longer hide behind denial or image.

sitting on the chair), that “*real men don’t do that*” and advising him to wait until he was older before becoming sexually active.

The overall response to the question-asking interventions involved learners raising their hands – at times responding eagerly, at times hesitantly and at certain instances not at all. Learners were especially reticent during the question: “*Who of you think using a condom is cool, or not cool?*”, and only a few raised their hands to answer to this. Contrastingly, responses to the hot-seating events prompted a perceivably high level of audience participation, but learners were more hesitant to participate in role-play. Facilitators allowed two to three responses within the interactive methods, except during role-play sessions where one, or at the most two, participants presented their answers.

Apart from the ITT methods of question-asking, hot-seating, role-play and dramatic enactments, the ITT process also includes interactive events in which audience members are invited to participate collectively during the process. The following elements below are observations of these activities.

Collective Interactive Methods

At some stage during the ITT performances, the Themba actor-educators stood in two rows facing each other, respectively repeating the phrases “*I’m HIV-positive*” and “*I still care for you*”. Actor-educators then turned to the audience who were asked to quietly stand to their feet and repeat the exercise. The actor-educators began by saying “*I’m HIV-positive*” upon which the audience members collectively answered “*I still care for you*”, and visa versa. This activity was incorporated in both performances while soliciting audience involvement with the question posed of how they would respond to the news of a friend being HIV positive, and directly followed a short information session on how HIV/AIDS is contracted.

The majority of learners at all three schools readily participated in this intervention, except for a few in the first performance at Bovet Primary who did not stand up. The facilitator's statement "*It is now the end of the play but by no means the end of the process*" introduced the second stage of the ITT process. In this regard, herewith follow observations of the second part of the ITT process:

In this latter section of the process, cameo-scenes⁴⁸ were presented at Masibambane and Bovet Primary but not at Arthur Matthews due to the limited time available. Learners sat in their seats for the most part and watched these scenes, yet at some instances also moved about in their seats and looked around the venue.

The informative colour-coded posters⁴⁹ were shown to learners by actor-educators, and this episode found learners responding in different ways. Providing supplementary answers for the projected words were resolved at differing paces and with various selections of words during the different performances. While the greater percentage of learners watched the actor-educators and responded to the questions, many learners started to fidget and look around, with a selected few hurriedly yawning. The differing responses are perhaps best encapsulated in the reactions of the following two male learners: the first learner leisurely applied emollient from his lip-ice bar, and offered the bar to his friend. His peer, who at that stage was leaning forward and watching the actor-educators, declined with a quick gesture, and instantly returned his focus to the performance.

Before the end of production as a whole, audience members were asked to bow their heads and/or close their eyes and answer the following question introspectively: "*What is one thing I can do when I leave this place today to keep myself safe and healthy?*" In general, learners quickly bowed their heads and there was no speaking or fidgeting during this interactive event. This question was repeated twice and learners were given ample time to meditate on this challenge.

⁴⁸ Cross Reference Chapter 4

⁴⁹ Cross Reference Chapter 4

The ITT productions were concluded with the song “*It’s my Life*”. At Bovet and Masibambane, the words of the song were displayed on a big white banner with the lyrics easily visible right to the back of the venues. This banner was not used at Arthur Matthews; instead learners were each given a copy of the printed song lyrics of this theme song, which also included basic information on HIV/AIDS as they left the hall.

Actor-educators initiated participation in the song as they began to sing the lyrics and were then joined by audience members after a few lines into the song. Most learners spontaneously clapped along, however not all learners participated in the singing during all of the performances, with the majority singing being female learners. During this concluding activity, it was observed that some male learners were laughing and speaking to one another.

At Arthur Matthews, where the words of the song were not visible during the presentation of the performance, learners simply clapped along and generally joined in the singing when the chorus was repeated several times. The interactive song marked the end of the production as a whole.

d) *The Performance Space Dynamics*

Posing questions to the audience was one of the first interactive methods to prompt engagement. A negative aspect of this method, however, arose with question-asking during the second run at Arthur Matthews when the performance was presented on the stage. While the peer-educators were facilitating from the stage, learners who answered were not easily heard. Whilst stage-facilitation enabled a better view of the performance for the learners, the distance from where the Themba team could engage with the audience increased, and as a result facilitators recurrently needed to ask learners to repeat their answers.

Although audience attention was gained from the initial introductions and regained during several points in the performances, the problem of visibility and audibility during

the entirety of the performances – presented at eye-level with the young audience members – minimized the levels of perceivable audience engagement. This factor in combination with the length of the whole performance-episode, which had no interval, resulted in notably erratic levels of concentration.

The only time the stage was used during my observations of performances, occurred during the second run at Arthur Matthews Primary School in Florida. The stage at Masibambane College in Orange Farm was stacked with Marimba instruments and the classroom in Bovet Primary School, located within Alexandra, had no form of a stage.

2. Theatre Group

Questions and answers solicited from the audience members were always repeated in conjunction with the participant's name, which facilitators requested with any form of interactive method, as per example: "*John* says he thinks Mzobo should go for an HIV test".

During all the interactive events, facilitators were attentive to interact with audience members from both sides of the venue. This was made possible with a facilitator situated at each side of the performance area. Facilitators mostly held eye contact with participating audience members during their responses and throughout the overall production.

Facilitators worked systematically through the ITT process and attempted to regulate the environment and encourage discipline through a hand-raising routine. During this intervention, audience members were requested to keep silent when one of the facilitators raised a hand in the air. This however, did not ensure silence consistently, particularly when learners were collectively engaging in discussions between the performances. At times this necessitated a vocal request, in addition to the lifted hand of the facilitator in order to ensure that audience members ceased interruptions.

From the first performance observed at Masibambane, a low energy level from the performers and facilitators was often evident, frequently at the start of the performances. This was a recurring observation which culminated at the end of the last performance at Arthur Matthews when a facilitator expressed the phrase “*I’m tired*” after stepping off the stage. This factor was emphasized when actor-educators and facilitators sat on chairs placed on the sides of the hall during the second run at Arthur Matthews to rest, visibly tired, in view of several young audience members who were watching them. Their focus was recaptured by the performance of the dramatic enactments that followed. While preparing for the performances, Themba actors also dragged their chairs into the performance area and seated these and other props with visibly low energy levels.

Adding to the perception of fatigue, during the performance actor-educators frequently sat in their chairs placed in the performance area, with expressionless faces showing decreased interest in the production activities. However, when presenting their performances or while interacting with the audiences, the faces of the actor-educators were visibly friendly and approachable and learners clearly felt at ease to participate.

Observations of the ITT performance events were followed by observations of the Themba group and any form of interaction with the audience members. These concluded the observations of the post-performance dynamics.

Post-Performance Dynamics

Observations of selected post-performance dynamics will now follow with a specific focus on forms of engagement of the theatre group with the audiences after the ITT production, as well as post-performance debriefing of the actor-educators.

1. Audience-Performance Engagement

Post-performance interaction included an invitation to audience members to speak to actor-educators about the performance, or to gain further information about HIV/AIDS. Themba terms this activity ‘small group discussions’ after their shows (Hope et al, 2007:9). A few learners stayed behind to speak to an actor-educator after each respective performance. Apart from this interaction, Themba’s Rehearsal and Development Practitioner, who is also responsible for training Themba actor-educators, states that there is presently no follow-up work undertaken with school audiences (Interview with Bongani Sihlangu).

The song introduced at the close of the performances prompted immediate singing from the majority of audiences, and learners could be heard singing the words of “*It’s my Life!*” while leaving the venues after performances at the respective schools. The pamphlets containing the words of the theme song and basic information about HIV/AIDS, which were distributed at Arthur Matthews, were the only other form of post-performance engagement.

During every performance, an actor-educator was responsible for completing a Themba Monitoring/Statistics form. These forms help to capture records which enable the documenting of interactive participation from learners in each performance. The form functions as a means by which Themba endeavours to assess the achievement of their performance goal of influencing behavioural change. Evaluation forms were also distributed to the teacher(s) involved and a few learners after each performance.

2. Theatre Group

The Themba actor-educators are required to participate in a debriefing session after each performance on return to their offices in Braamfontein. As a result, this primarily occurs in the late afternoon. The event comprises a feedback session during which actor-educators sit in a circle and take turns in providing answers to the following questions: “*What is one thing that I did well?*” and “*What is one thing that I can do differently?*” The actor-educators are also given the opportunity to present feedback to each other with

these questions forming the basis for their recommendations. Comments are, however, restricted to two answers per actor-educator.

The same exercise is repeated after every performance, and from an external viewpoint it appeared that actor-educators engaged in this activity with noticeably low energy levels. Answers to questions were visibly forced and facial expressions lacked vitality or interest. In conversation with several actor-educators regarding the process, it became apparent that they found the debriefing tedious and unbeneficial. During my visit at Themba, these predetermined debriefing sessions were the only form of post-performance engagement undertaken with the group ensemble, with no exercises for de-rolling of characters.

The purpose of Chapter Five was to provide a comprehensive overview of the ITT performance process. From these observations Chapter Six will focus on analyses of the engagement levels of learners during the ITT process. This will be done alongside the proposed framework for assessment outlined in Chapter Three, with specific focus on the engagement levels of audience members during the process, as well as pre and post assesters of the ITT process.

The ITT methodology claims to facilitate learning through active involvement in a two-way communication channel between performer and audience. It is stated that ITT interactive methods seek to facilitate channels of dialogue regarding HIV/AIDS⁵⁰ with the overall goal of bringing about a change in young people's attitudes and behaviour concerning this life threatening virus. Analyses of the descriptive observations in Chapter Five regarding the interactive methods and several pre and post performance events, will be provided in Chapter Six, and will therefore follow now.

⁵⁰ Refer to Appendix G

CHAPTER 6

Analysis of Observations

Observations of the ITT performances from Chapter Five will now be analysed. The Oxford Dictionary states that to *analyse* means to ‘examine (something) in detail so as to explain it or to find out its structure or composition’ (Soanes, 2001:28). The function of the word ‘analyse’ is clarified further in its synonyms: to break down, dissect, evaluate, examine, interpret, investigate, take apart, and test (p.28).

Chapter Six comprises analyses of contextual factors that influence the application of the interactive methods, as well as qualitative⁵¹ evaluation of these interactive methods. For the scope of this study I have chosen to focus on selected key elements of the pre and post-performance dynamics as observed in Chapter Five, followed by analyses of the ITT interactive methods.

Pre-performance Dynamics

Each of the pre-performance dynamics described in Chapter Five play a contributing role in establishing the expectations of audience members regarding the performance and how it is received, including the promotion of the production, and the proxemics⁵² of the performance space.

1. Audience-Performance Engagement

a) *Pre-performance Expectation Management*

The life-orientation teacher usually announces the upcoming visits from Themba and resultantly assumes the role of a promoter who introduces Themba to respective learners, possibly for the first time. Morgan and Saxton (1994: 97) contest that ‘[learners] are

⁵¹ Cross Reference Chapter 1

⁵² Proxemics: *Sociology, Psychology*. The study of the spatial requirements of humans and animals and the effects of population density on behavior, communication, and social interaction

great sign readers'. The teacher's mode of address, including tone of voice, choice of words, body language and overall mood while broadcasting the upcoming event function as significant signs read by learners and influences their level of anticipation of what to expect from the upcoming theatre event. I base this tenet on the Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura⁵³ who includes expectations as an integral part of the social learning process:

As a result of being reinforced, people form expectations about the consequences that future behaviours are likely to bring. They expect certain behaviours to bring reinforcements and others to bring punishment. The learner needs to be aware however, of the response reinforcements and response punishment. Reinforcement increases a response only when the learner is aware of that connection. (Ormrod, 1999)

The ability that teachers have to influence the setting of expectations can be seen in the following example: When a group of learners is told that 'what they *will study next* is not on the test, learners will not pay attention because they do not expect to know the information for a test' (Ormrod, 1999). However, when learners are informed that they need to invest dedicated efforts to study for a test which can be expected to be difficult, it 'exerts credibility and authenticity in the classroom' where the learner is not unfocused but attentive to the information presented (In Conversation with Charlotte Steenekamp – Community Development Practitioner).

The expectations created prior to a performance event evidently influence the assimilation of content and the assimilation of meaning, and function as a 'reinforcing factor in social learning' (Ormrod, 1999). The pre-performance expectations established by a theatre group such as Themba will potentially assist in *learning*, and are thus critical to the learning process as a whole. These expectations are set by the type and tone of exposure prior to the performance date.

⁵³ Social learning theory focuses on the learning that occurs within a social context. It considers that people learn from one another, including such concepts as observational learning, imitation, and modeling. Amongst others, Albert Bandura is considered the leading proponent of this theory (Ormrod, 1999).

According to Themba, the announcement made by the teacher is the only influential attribute in the marketing of their ITT productions. This highlights the importance of the voice and intonation of the teacher in initiating and maintaining any form of learner engagement (Boal, 2006:85). A teacher's intonation 'can change the meaning of what they are saying' for it is 'not *what* words you say but *how* you say them which has the most significant personal impact' (p.85). Boal verifies this:

Words are a means of transport, like busses and lorries. In the same way [...] words transport our ideas, desires and emotions. With the same word we can say exactly the opposite of what the dictionary states – in writing the phrase, by means of syntax, and in speaking the phrase, by means of the language of the voice – i.e. the timbre, the tone, the volume, the pauses, etc. (Boal, 2006:14)

Resultantly, the quality of the teacher's promotion could either positively or negatively influence the expectations with which learners receive Themba and the performance – impacting the resultant levels of audience-performance engagement.

The manner by which teachers introduced ITT to the audience members was unknown to me at each of the three schools. In conversation with learners at Arthur Matthews Primary School after the performance they disclosed that they were initially not overly excited to see the theatre production as they expected 'a boring show for babies' (In Conversation with learners at Arthur Matthews Primary School). However, post-viewing feedback indicated their expectations were surpassed: When asked whether they would watch the performance again, they answered with a resounding 'Yes!'

Attention to pre-performance expectation management forms part of the encounter between the theatre group and its audience prior to the performance on the day of the presentation, and can be favourably regulated with strategic marketing efforts.

b) *Proxemics*

The following elements will now be discussed which influenced the audiences' interactions with the performances and demonstrated how space impacts the engagement, learning and communication of audience members with the theatre event.

Themba chose to position themselves in relation to the audience by setting up the performance space in front of parallel-placed seats which all faced to the front of the classroom or hall. This resulted in an eye-level-performance for the young audience members, and was problematic in that it prohibited visibility of the performance for several viewers – particularly those sitting in the back rows. Learners frequently stretched their necks and bodies to get a clearer view past their classmates' heads while others seated at the back leaned to the sides to try to hear what was being said. Sitting at the back of the performances at Masibambane College I myself often had to lean forward to hear what the actors were saying. During a performance at Bovet Primary I went to sit behind the back row of learners and could only see indistinct glimpses of actor-educators from in-between the heads of pupils sitting in the rows in front of me. The learners at Arthur Matthews seemed to be more gregarious and expressive, as it did not take them long before they were watching the performance from a standing position, from the middle sections through to the back rows.

The reactions of the spectators emphasized two largely influential elements that could create or undermine a process: visibility and audibility. Boal (1995:28) upholds: 'Before all else, we see and we listen, and it is thanks to this that we understand', confirming sight and hearing as 'the principal senses mediating in theatrical communication.'

The obstructed presentations, together with the intermittently inaudible voices of actor-educators could easily have been the reason for learners becoming restless and distracted by the view outside the classroom window, and resulting in a loss of interest in the performance.

2. Theatre Group

a) *Pre-performance Preparation*

Rehearsal Development Practitioner, Bongani Sihlangu, upholds that the actor-educators have much to deal with at the start of their working day: ‘a lot of things happen before a performance’ (Interview with Bongani Sihlangu). The tired expressions of actor-educators at the start of several performances testified to this.

Numerous factors could be attributed to this. At times the schools are remotely located or a sizeable distance from Themba’s head-office, and departing late could cause them to forfeit available preparation time before the start of a production. As mentioned before, the Themba performers are required to meet at 07h30 when they have an early morning performance. According to actor-educators, the group left at 08h30 the morning of their performance at Arthur Matthews Primary School in Florida – approximately 30 minutes drive from their offices in Braamfontein. The performance was due to start at 09h00 but they were only able to commence at 09h10, without sufficient time for a warm-up session.

Barring their tired composes, the level of collective fatigue and the lack of warm-up sessions before the ITT-performances could easily have been the reason for a number of performance errors that occurred within the six observed performances. Among these errors were actor-educators who cut off each others’ lines by interrupting each other before it was their time to speak. This was especially observed at the start of the second performance at Bovet Primary with the introduction of the characters in the dramatic enactments; and at Arthur Matthews with the hot-seating interventions, during the sessions with the colour-coded posters, and where audiences were informed on factors around condom-use with visual aided posters.

During the hot-seating interventions at Arthur Matthews’s second presentation, the facilitator’s “freeze!” interrupted the actors before they finished their lines. Actor-educators interrupted each other while delivering their rehearsed lines of the colour-

coded posters they were holding. These interjections demonstrated a lack of concentration.

In addition, a misplaced prop during the first performance at Arthur Matthews attested to this observation. The needed packet of condoms was handed to the facilitator just before the informative session on condoms and their usage by a co-performer, and just in time before having to show it to the audience members. These are understandably human errors, and no performance of any nature is exempt from making them. Yet at the same time their reoccurrence indicate a lack of focus. The latter example of the prop that was not set in place at the right time, is not substantial in itself to make this conclusion, yet does inherently support this notion and point to the need of ensuring that levels of focus and attention are maintained and if need be, re-adjusted.

A lack of energy was furthermore evident at several points in the observed performances when actor-educators spoke languidly and slurred their words. This inhibited clear articulation and audibility for the audiences. Intervals of sullen faces, which can also be attributed to tired performers and weary responses, were especially noted in some hot-seating sessions. Except for these actor-educators memorably dragged their feet from the performance area as they walked to their chairs at the back of the performance area or to the seats at the sides of the venue with heavy and slow steps and it became characteristic for actor-facilitators who were not involved in a scene to sit facing the audience with expressionless faces. All of these observations could be attributed to fatigue; actor-educators typically looked exhausted at the end of their performances. At the last performance of Arthur Matthews a facilitator encapsulated the experience of the actor-educators as she exclaimed “I’m tired!”

These occurrences indicating a shortage of energy could be attributed to factors such as an intense amount of travelling undertaken prior to a performance and the lack of proper warm-up sessions. The effect of this became a general trend and could be seen throughout the performances.

Following from the analyses of the pre-performance dynamics, the presentation of the ITT performances involves the primary usage of interactive methods, making its analysis central to the research question, and a vital layer in understanding the entire TIE process undertaken by ITT. The next section will therefore focus on the interactive methods incorporated in the presentation of a production episode by ITT.

Analysis of the Performance Events

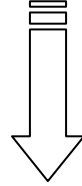
This section constitutes analyses of the actual performance event and productions as a whole that were presented at the respective schools. It includes an in-depth discussion of the ITT interactive methods, namely: dramatic enactments, question-asking, hot-seating and role-play.

1. The Interactive Methods

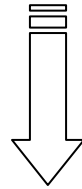
The ITT interactive methods are analysed in light of Themba's goal, which is 'to enable dialogue and influence behaviour change among young people to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS' (van Rooyen, 2007). As previously stated, ITT base their interactive approach on providing an experiential learning, thereby reinforcing the standpoint that learning influences behavioural change. In applying these theories, the following inference can be drawn: To influence *behaviour* or bring about a *behavioural change*, a *learning experience* can be utilized. However, for effective learning to take place, *engagement* is imperative (See Diagram C for a representation of how ITT approaches this process).

Diagram C

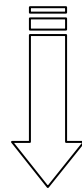
Influencing Behaviour



Learning Experience



Engagement



Taxonomy of Engagement

In light of this fact, at the outset, the ITT interactive methods need to elicit engagement (participation is a prerequisite) in order to function as a tool for learning⁵⁴, possibly influencing the behaviour of their audiences. In this regard, the next sections of this study set out to examine the ITT interactive methods in light of their engagement value – evaluated alongside the proposed model of engagement taxonomy⁵⁵ – and endeavour to answer the central question: “Did the learners *engage*?”

Pammenter (1993:64) endorses that involvement in a TIE programme can range from ‘full-scale active participation with [learners] themselves in role’, to the other end of the spectrum where learners are ‘passive’ yet attentively ‘watching and listening’. Inasmuch as the ITT interactive methods might be seen as an independent entity, the enacted plays ultimately function as the foundation of the interactive process as a whole, and are therefore as much a part of the interactive methods as the question-asking, hot-seating and role-play interactive activities. Commencing with the dramatic enactments as the primary means of drawing attention and engaging the interest of audience members, analysis will now follow of the ITT interactive methods.

Dramatic Enactments

Although there are many aspects to explore in the ITT plays such as characterization, acting techniques and the use of props, the question of how the plays engaged their audiences and ultimately played a role in influencing behaviour, is the focal point of analysis for this chapter. The following section looks at how the dramatic enactments “*Heartbreaker*” and “*Class of 2007*”⁵⁶ engaged audiences by capturing their interest, and hence led to the audience engaging in the world of the characters, committing to the content, internalising, interpreting and evaluating it, and comprises an overall view of the engagement of learners from all three schools.

⁵⁴ Cross Reference Chapter 2

⁵⁵ Cross Reference Chapter 2

⁵⁶ Cross reference – outlines of plays already given in chapter 4

Audience Engagement in “Heartbreaker”

The reactions from learners at both Arthur Matthews and Bovet showed that the performance “*Heartbreaker*” was effective in engaging its audience members at several levels – irrespective of impeding factors relating to the audience’s relationship to space. The first dramatic enactment of “*Heartbreaker*” was introduced with the song “*hona jwale*”⁵⁷ and appeared to resonate deeply with the learners who sang and clapped along with great gusto.

The first enactment depicting a school boy who contracted HIV and its resultant effect on his relationship with relatives and peers was a catalytic story line which resulted in learners physically moving nearer to the performance to watch the unfolding of the plot. The ensuing dramatic enactments captured the *interest* of the majority of its audience members evident from their *verbal* and *non-verbal responses* of gaping mouths, fits of giggles and transfixed eyes directed to the front where the performance was taking place.

Learners were attentively *watching*, or stretching to the sides and even standing up to maintain *eye-contact* with the evolving performance. Corresponding and appropriate *verbal responses* such as laughter in response to comical moments in the plot, and exclamations such as “Yoh!” to the father’s stern reaction to his son, affirmed that learners were *listening*. These were accompanied by *non-verbal reactions* such as smiles from audience members when the protagonist’s girlfriend brought him flowers, and the reaction of a male learner who clasped his face with his hands in exasperated laughter as his neck fell backwards in exasperation – expressing disbelief at the humorous misunderstanding between father and son in their conversation about conception. Due to the learners’ age and developmental stage where romantic relationships are an important factor, giving flowers to the opposite sex is a gesture that will induce a likely response and the topic of conception will itself provoke widespread interest. These non-verbal reactions to the content of the story-line, together with moments of complete silence

⁵⁷ Translated as “Right now, I’d be in the arms of my sweetheart”

emanating from the audience, clearly indicated *interest* and *engagement* with the dramatic events.⁵⁸

Interest was however, not maintained consistently throughout the enactments with extended silences that occurred between the dialogues of certain characters during a production at Arthur Matthews, and one or two male learners began speaking amongst themselves. *Interest* also decreased at Bovet amongst several male learners who were sitting in the back rows and who struggled to see and/or hear the performers at all times. It was evident that these learners were not *listening* when they responded counter to the content with laughter at the end of the first dramatic enactment which ended on a serious note.

Achieving the consecutive level of *engaging* audiences was further demonstrated by the *voluntary reaction* of several learners who moved closer to the performance area in order to gain a better view and greater audibility. Gaping mouths and frowns together with mesmerized gazes all displayed *a willingness to partake in theatre's fictitious realm of make-believe*. Furthermore, learners sat with their bodies positioned to the front at all times. Knapp (1972:97-100) supports that body orientation indicates levels of interest and engagement: Collectively relaxed body language signified openness to the unfolding story line in the "*imagined world*" of the characters as learners were evidently at ease with the subject matter, discarding reflexive defence mechanisms.

The scene that proved to have the highest engagement level was the conversation regarding conception between father and son. Learners *verbally* silenced each other to hear the father's response to his seven year old son in answer to the question "*Where do babies come from?*" This is a topic that in itself provokes a great deal of *interest* amongst adolescents due to their developmental stage⁵⁹ where a growing awareness of sexuality and related aspects emerge, and therefore has high engagement value. As demonstrated in this scene, learners' fixed attention was also a result of *identification* with the

⁵⁸ Cross reference Chapter 1 and 4

⁵⁹ Cross Reference Chapter 4

characters in the plot and the ability to *relate* to the situation at hand. In discussion with learners at Arthur Matthews after the production, they agreed that the play felt like real life to them, confirming their personal identification with the content.

The final element indicating the second level of engagement in the performance event is *evaluation* of the performance as a *satisfying* experience. Loud applause with occasional cheering was a recurring response after all four performances and demonstrated that most audience members found watching the performance fulfilling.

The most visible demonstration of audience members engaging at the third level of *commitment* was evident in their individual *facial expressions* signifying *absorption* during different scenes in the play. This was especially evident during tension filled moments in the plot. An example of this is the scene portraying the father's response to the news of his son having contracted HIV. Learners watched the unfolding dialogue with expressions signifying anticipation⁶⁰ and fascination, culminating in the moment of tension when the father received the news of his son's HIV positive status which repeatedly saw learners leaning forward, signifying an eagerness to hear the father's response. These young audience members are at a stage where the opinion of a father figure holds significant importance despite their burgeoning adolescence and journey of self-exploration. The conversation between father and son induced complete silence from the audience at all four performances as learners intently *watched*, visibly immersed in the content, and indicating high levels of *absorption*. Engagement at this level is a cumulative progression from *identifying* with the emotional context, to relating to the world of the character.

For further assessment of succeeding levels of engagement according to the engagement taxonomy, proactive involvement from the audience members such as generating their own ideas and expressing resultant opinions would be required. In view of this it was difficult to assess these levels of engagement quantitatively, with audience members being inactive participants in the dramatic enactments, and at this point of the ITT

⁶⁰ Refer to Appendix H

process. Hence, it cannot be stated that engagement at the levels of *internalization*, *interpretation*, and the final level of *evaluation* did not take place. These levels of engagement could more readily be monitored during learners’ participation in the ensuing interactive methods. For the dramatic enactments, however, external monitoring of these levels was not feasible enough to make conclusive statements due to their internal occurrence, and therefore required another form of evaluation. Time did not allow for this though, and as a result, the following assessment is based on observations of learners’ reactions.

Engagement levels during “Heartbreaker”:

Impact Indicators	Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3
Interest	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Engaging	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Committing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Internalizing	Not evident	Not evident	Not evident
Interpreting	Not evident	Not evident	Not evident
Evaluating	Not evident	Not evident	Not evident

Audience Engagement in “Class of 2007”

Engagement levels of audience members in “*Class of 2007*” occurred inconsistently during different scenes of the play, yet occurred in many moments during which the attention of learners was held, including the introductory song to the first scene, “*Phela Amandla*” by Malaika, which clearly resonated with the young audience members.

With the commencement of the dramatic enactments, engagement at the first level of *interest* was evidenced by learners who were *watching* intently and *listening* attentively, notably by those sitting in the front rows. The interest of learners further to the back who were struggling to see and hear was still captured as they were constantly trying to reposition themselves by stretching and leaning to the sides in an attempt to maintain eye-contact with the performance, which was run at their eye-level. In spite of this problem, only one learner from both performances took the initiative to stand up in order to follow the story-line. Ensuing *verbal responses* of laughter during humorous moments and *non-verbal reactions* such as learners leaning forward in their seats furthermore signified that

the interest of most of the audience was gained as they attentively watched the dramatic enactments of “*Class of 2007*” with transfixed gazes for the greater part of the performance.

Levels of *absorption* in the dramatic enactments were once again clearly indicated by the *facial expressions* of several learners who displayed gaping mouths with fixed gazes on the performance area. This testified to learners being transported into the imaginary world of the characters as learners watched as though “lost in time and space”, becoming ***committed*** to the content. Learners conveying disinterest by breaching eye-contact and speaking to each other during certain times of the production were mostly seated in the back section of the rows and evidently had difficulty in viewing and hearing the production. Complete silence during tension-filled moments in the play suggested that their attention was regained, yet was lost again when these moments passed. The end of the dramatic enactments was once again marked by a loud applause accompanied by smiles from audience members, and this signified high levels of enjoyment which indicated that their ***evaluation*** of the performance event amounted to a *pleasurable* experience.

Engaging in the scenes on the levels of ***internalizing, interpreting*** and ***evaluating***, was once again difficult to assess due to learners not becoming involved beyond viewing the performance at this point – thus they did not deliver solutions or physically partake in the performances. Nevertheless, learners may have internalised, interpreted and evaluated in the form of personal inward debates. The following summary is a depiction of the overall responses of learners:

Engagement levels during “*Class of 2007*”:

Impact Indicators	Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3
Interest	☑	☑	☑
Engaging	☑	☑	✘
Committing	☑	☑	✘
Internalizing	Not evident	Not evident	Not evident
Interpreting	Not evident	Not evident	Not evident
Evaluating	Not evident	Not evident	Not evident

Assessing Possible Learning and Behavioural Change during the Dramatic Enactments

The dramatic enactments presented within the performances “*Heartbreaker*” and “*Class of 2007*” contained many opportunities for learning and potential for influencing the behaviour of audience members. The required elements of engaging audience members were mainly obtained where depicted scenes evoked empathy for characters in ‘a firm plot line [...] based upon dramatic conflict’, and functioned as the aesthetic means of sensory interaction in the ITT performances (Redington, 1983:5). The process of engaging audience members, by initially capturing their interest and then taking them into further levels of engagement, proved to be dependent on content and context relativity interchangeably.

Dependant Factors for Creating a Learning Experience

Kotter emphasizes how these factors are key for a learning experience to occur, and for transformation to follow: ‘Over the years I have become convinced that we learn best – and change – from hearing stories that strike a chord within us’ (Kotter, 2006).⁶¹

According to my observations of “*Class of 2007*”, most learners reached a *commitment* level of engagement where emotional absorption took place⁶² (as evinced on their facial expressions and verbal responses) at stages, though not in every scene of this performance. Prevention of sustainable and deeper engagement at this consecutive level could be ascribed to the problem of visibility and audibility – which would inevitably impede *engagement* in the world of the characters. Apart from this, a context that learners could not always readily *relate* to, might also have caused disengagement, due to the content⁶³ being delivered in a context⁶⁴ that learners could not always identify with. Based on the statistics that some adolescents start to engage in sexual behaviour at the age of 12 years⁶⁵, “*Class of 2007*” contains relevant content-based material for learners in

⁶¹ (John Kotter, a renowned expert on leadership at the Harvard Business School, 2006).

⁶² Refer to Chapter Three

⁶³ Content: the subject-matter, i.e. the meaning or message contained in the story-line. (Encarta Reference Library 2005)

⁶⁴ Context: the circumstances or events in which the content is delivered and which forms the environment within which something exists or takes place. (Encarta Reference Library 2005)

⁶⁵ Cross Reference Chapter 1

the grade 8 – 9 category; in the depiction of a young female who does not want to partake in sexual activity, and who is placed in a situation where her boyfriend is seducing her. With the high percentages of sexually active adolescents in South Africa, this scene depicts a reality of sorts, equating it to relevant content.

Due to the collective frame of reference of these young audience members, the scenario portraying a young girl who became drunk at a social gathering and ended up in a situation where her boyfriend asked her to leave his apartment if she didn't agree to have sex with him was a questionably relevant context to a group of 10-14 year old learners. I was required to ask myself whether generally speaking, any learner in the grade 6-9 category would find themselves in such locations? Barring abnormal circumstances where there is a lack of healthy parental supervision, what 10-14 year old learner would be consuming enough alcohol to become inebriated at an unsupervised party and would then be left to visit his/her partner's apartment at 12'o clock at night? Furthermore, South African legislature prohibits access of persons under the age of 18 into liquor-licensed establishments such as a nightclub, primarily due to the presence of alcohol and cigarettes which are on sale and the laws which govern the purchase of these items. This enforces the debate as to whether this scene contained a context that the young adolescent audience members could readily relate to or more importantly, should be relating to. The content of this scene would more realistically depict a world *familiar* to an older age group. From a perspective that holds 'age' as an important factor in the approach to any form of performance, I was also required to consider: What other scenarios could have been presented that would accurately depict a child's world at ten, eleven and twelve years of age? What is applicable and appropriate to *their* context and *their* world? Perhaps a family member who wants to conduct sexually inappropriate behaviour with them? Or peers of the same age who want to engage in sexual activity, and how to handle such a situation.

Approaching a young audience with the mindset that they are all sexually active in the same way that adolescents and adults are could limit the relevance and appropriateness of this message to a younger audience, such as the group in Orange Farm – as illustrated in the reactions of the young female learner.⁶⁶ Such content, however relevant statistics might endorse them to be, need to be placed in a context that learners can relate to, and with sensitivity to the appropriate age of exposing learners to certain material. If they are not emotionally ready to engage with certain material of sexual behaviour – which is also an important factor to consider with such a young audience, it might also result in disengagement. In conclusion to this conflicting debate of the appropriate manner to address the issue of sexual behaviour to a young and impressionable adolescent audience, it is for the reader to note that the most important factors for *optimum engagement* in the dramatic enactments remain content and context that learners of a specific age group can relate to. At this stage I would like to remind the reader of Bolton’s statement: ‘the significance of drama as an expressive form of thinking and feeling lies in its concern with the process of personal engagement with the objective world’ (Bolton, 1986b:156). For this process of personal engagement they must be able to identify with the world presented by the characters. Although the majority of learners were watching and listening, and trying to follow the unfolding storyline, the level to which they were able to *identify* and *relate* to the world of the characters was therefore questionable.

How Behaviour Might Be Influenced

This premise regarding content and context relativity in dramatic enactments is also apposite within the goal of wanting to bring about behavioural change. Based on the taxonomy of engagement it is demonstrated that change occurs when there is ‘a moment of truth’ and ‘a shift in understanding’, and is therefore dependant on learners engaging at the level of *internalization*, which is pre-empted by the level of *absorption* (*commitment*) (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:25). For engagement at this consecutive level, learners must be able to associate with the scenes portrayed at an affective level as well as an intellectual understanding (Morgan & Saxton, 1994:21).

⁶⁶ Cross Reference to Chapter 5: Audience Participation in “*Class of 2007*”

Alongside the dramatic enactments that constitute the actual performance component of the process, interactive methods were distinctly introduced into the ITT process through the facilitator's statement: "*Now it is time for you to get involved*". Following this introduction, planned interactive audience interventions involved audience members directly and invited vocal participation from the audience. These interventions include question-asking, freeze-frames, hot-seating and role-play, and create collective impact through a mutually supporting placement within the performance.

Question-asking

ITT's opening and most commonly utilised interactive method involves a selection of pre-designed open and close-ended questions⁶⁷ incorporated into the presentation, with close-ended questions serving as the initial means of soliciting audience participation during the ITT process. In both "*Heartbreaker*" and "*Class of 2007*", question-asking commenced with the question: "*What was the play all about?*" and followed with questions pertaining to the fictitious world of the characters. Informative questions which ensued included the following: "*What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?*", "*What is a condom?*" and "*Can you get HIV through sharing a house with someone who is HIV positive?*"

Each play solicited differing levels of participation in response to question-asking as an interactive method, with specific reactions from learners at respective schools to different questions within each play. Learners watching "*Class of 2007*" were at times more reluctant to answer questions whilst "*Heartbreaker*" evoked more responsive answers with less hesitation and a larger number of participants. Questions that elicited the greatest response alongside the opening question, "*What was the play all about?*" were: "*At what age is it okay to have sex?*" and "*Where do babies come from?*"

Question-asking involved only a few participants and the engagement of the group was therefore difficult to assess at all levels, and at all times. The following evaluation is based on

⁶⁷ Close-ended: Questions which can be answered finitely by either "yes" or "no."

Open-ended: Questions allowing for expanded answers; questions that will solicit additional information from the inquirer

collective observations during the performances and monitored alongside the following criteria:

- Positive response of at least 60% of learners engaging
- Unresponsive reactions where 35% - 40% of learners were not engaging

Engagement Levels during “Heartbreaker”

Engagement	Responses	Reactions from Learners
Interest	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Watching attentively ▪ Appropriate answers to posed questions which also attracted their attention e.g. <i>“At what age is it okay to have sex?”</i>
Engaging	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Apt responses to questions drawing learners into active involvement ▪ Immediate and decisive answers from learners to closed-ended questions such as <i>“Is 16 years too young to be having sex?”</i> ▪ Apt responses to questions centring on characters and their fictitious reality e.g. <i>“Is the father giving Tumelo enough information?”</i>
Committing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Answers reflecting a thought process in open-ended questions e.g. <i>“What might a good father say?”</i>
Internalizing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learners responding thoughtfully to questions such as <i>“What would you do if your friend told you h/she was HIV positive?”</i>
Interpreting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learners were willing to share their ideas to questions resulting from inner reflections ex. <i>“What would you do if your friend/partner told you they were HIV positive?”</i> ▪ Answers do not always display coming to a new understanding
Evaluating	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No external engagement evident at this level

Engagement Levels during “Class of 2007”

Indicators	Responses	Reactions from Learners
Interest	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Watching attentively ▪ Appropriate answers to posed questions ▪ Learners talking and joking
Engaging	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Congruent responses to closed-ended questions ▪ A degree of reluctance to answer questions centring on the behaviour of characters ▪ Minority raised their hands with certain questions
Committing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learners responded to thought provoking questions such as “<i>What would you do if you were in this situation?</i>”
Internalizing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hesitation to respond to thought-provoking questions such as “<i>What would have to happen for Mzobo to change his behaviour?</i>” ▪ Answers reflecting ideas rather than a change in understanding
Interpreting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Answers not cohesive for the demand of the situation
Evaluating	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No external engagement evident at this level

An overall view of audience engagement proved question-asking to be an interactive method of great value in enticing the attention of audience members as up to 75% of all learners participated at each performance. Learners’ gave predominantly appropriate responses to the questions posed by the facilitators which illustrated their engagement at several levels. Analysing non-verbal gestures of learners at Masibambane College, Bovet Primary, and Arthur Matthews especially, indicated that they were generally keen to answer questions posed by facilitators – demonstrated by an excited response of most audience members raising their

hands to participate by giving answers. Questions were promptly answered, especially when they were drawn from the lives of the depicted characters and their situations. Pertinent responses from the audience members also confirmed that the learners listened to the content of the performance and their interest was gained with the dramatic enactments, as they gave ‘congruent, appropriate [and] supportive verbal responses’ to questions posed by the facilitators.

Learning and Behavioural Change

Morgan and Saxton (1994:7) maintain that ‘effective questions generate in learners thought and interest in making answers’. Actor-trainer Bongani Sihlangu states that the use of audience-directed questions by facilitators is incorporated ‘to elicit specific information’ – to encourage learners to speak and to assist them in forming their own questions. In observation of audience members’ responses, closed-ended questions encouraged the sharing of factual information, which was characteristically non-emotive, whereas open-ended questions facilitated the transfer of more qualitative, opinion-driven and thought-provoking feedback. These initial questions also served as a framework to regulate the participation of audience members in the succeeding interactive methods, ensuring that the necessary parameters of effective content driven question-asking were understood and followed.

The high level of engagement during the question-asking interactions enabled peer-education, and on a cognitive level, afforded great potential for learning to take place: Learners were predominantly listening and engaging with the responses of co-learners. (This was in exception to the second run of the performance at Arthur Matthews where facilitators and learners had to repeat answers and as a result learners began speaking to each other and did not listen to their enrolled peers). Francis Hunkins asserts that “The question is central to learning” (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:67). Morgan and Saxton maintain that the formulation of questions reflects the learning process that takes place:

The classic concept of learning is that it occurs when the teacher asks the questions and the [learners] can answer them, but the reality is that learning does not occur until the learner needs to know and can formulate the question for himself/(herself). (Morgan & Saxton, 1994:19)

From factual information gained through the question-asking interactions, it is probable that many learners might change their behaviour regarding sexual activities. This can be more accurately measured with quantitative questionnaires provided after a period of time such as three weeks to two months following the performance event. Concerning the occurrence of learning on an affective level at this point, and resulting in further behavioural change, is a probable possibility, but not a quantifiable one.

Hot-Seating

ITT's use of hot-seating comprises an interactive method whereby audience members are invited to ask the characters questions. After the question is repeated by a facilitator, the characters in turn, need to answer the particular question; making for an interview-type of intervention. Through the questioning hot-seating allows for interrogation of the characters: 'At various points, [learners] are invited to interview the characters in order to uncover their motives, opinions, and beliefs' (Propes, 2005).

In both performances "*Class of 2007*" and "*Heartbreaker*", hot-seating appeared to be one of the interactive methods which facilitated the most engagement, despite moments of erratic engagement where it appeared to decrease. The *interest* of learners was usually immediately arrested with a recurring response of multiple hands that were raised at each respective school. This indicated a large number of learners willing to participate, and was surpassed only in expressiveness by learners crying out, "Me! Me!", during opportunities to question the main characters in "*Heartbreaker*".

The audience responses to this interactive method clearly signified that not only the first level of engagement – requiring gaining the *interest* of audience members – was successfully achieved, but also the second level, which involved absorptive engagement⁶⁸. Despite this however, due to two influential factors, the attention that was attained initially was not maintained at all times, throughout the entire performances. The difficulty that the facilitators experienced in hearing the questions raised by the audience members was a particular setback during ITT performances in the hall at

⁶⁸ Cross reference Chapter 3

Masibambane, and the second performance at Arthur Matthews when the ITT-presentation was performed on the school stage.

Although the facilitators consistently repeated the names and questions of the learners who participated, the momentum of responsiveness decreased as learners began to whisper and fidget amongst themselves. This occurrence also led to the level of order becoming interrupted, and the fluidity of performer-audience engagement was disrupted when facilitators had to strictly request learners to listen and not fidget. The accompanying challenge faced by facilitators to hear learners’ feedback to the performance alongside the low energy levels of actor-educators that was evident at certain intervals also contributed to the decrease in order and the challenge faced by facilitators to maintain discipline.

Engagement at the consecutive levels was obstructed with inadequate responses from actors in answering the questions posed to them by the learners. Answers from actors were at times not credible or sufficiently comprehensive and thought-provoking.

Assessment of learners’ engagement levels are indicated by the following results:

- Positive response of at least 60% engagement by learners
- Unresponsive reactions where 30% – 40% of learners were not engaging

Engagement Levels during “Heartbreaker”

Impact Indicators	Responses	Reactions from Learners
Interest	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Watching and listening attentively ▪ Apt responses to actors’ answers
Engaging	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keeness to participate indicated by many hands going up and learners crying out: “Me! Me! Me!” ▪ Learners not afraid to ask questions ▪ Learners fidgeting and talking
Committing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Generating credible questions pertaining to characters and their fictitious reality ▪ Answers reflecting a thought process in open-ended questions

Internalizing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learners responding to questions such as “<i>What would you do if your friend told you h/she was HIV positive?</i>”
Interpreting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No external evidence
Evaluating	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No external evidence

Engagement Levels during “*Class of 2007*”

Impact Indicators	Responses	Reactions from Learners
Interest	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learners watch and respond to actors’ answers. ▪ Learners not always listening to others’ questions
Engaging	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some learners are eager to participate ▪ Appropriate questions to characters ▪ Not all learners want to participate indicated by a low amount of raised hands
Committing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learners show engagement by generating their own points of view in questions posed to facilitators ▪ Not all learners participate
Internalizing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some learners present thought provoking questions.
Interpreting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some learners present thought provoking questions. ▪ Questions not representing implications of their thinking
Evaluating	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No external evidence

Assessing Possible Learning and Behavioural Change during Hot-seating

The premise of this interactive method is that an amount of power is placed in the hands of the audience as they are able to direct this part of the interactive process. In addition, the use of hot-seating enables learners to authentically engage with the thoughts of the characters as it presents an opportunity to really “get into the minds of the characters”. This interactive method can therefore impressively be used to interrogate and bring learners to an understanding of, amongst other elements, the inner debate of a character, and how difficult characters (i.e. people) can be to negotiate with. It presents a valuable opportunity to bring learners to a change of understanding and perception, also in sexual behaviour.

Statistics of adolescents’ sexual behaviour indicating boys commencing with sexual intercourse earlier than girls⁶⁹ points to the understanding that “this is what makes a man” – as showcased in ‘*Class of 2007*’ where the character Mzobo’s believes that being actively engaged in sexual behaviour is a sign of manhood. This presents an opportune occasion for debate during the hot-seating intervention regarding this myth of manhood.

Role-play

ITT’s use of role-play as an interactive method is derived from Augusto Boal’s forum theatre in his “*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*”⁷⁰, where audience members are invited to ‘leave the privacy of the audience, enter the dramatic world, and transform the dramatic action’ by stepping onto the stage or another performance area, and physically act out their reasoning (O’Neill, 1995:119). Boal asserts that whilst audience members enrol as characters, they acquire voice and movement, sound and colour, and thus become able to demonstrate their ideas and desires’ on the theatrical stage (Boal, 1995:23). ITT’s approach to role-play, however, diverts in some ways from the original forum theatre technique. Unlike forum theatre which allows audience participants free reign in dialogue and action, the role-play interventions incorporated into the ITT methodology is

⁶⁹ Refer to Chapter 1: Adolescents and Sexual Behaviour

⁷⁰ See Appendix C and refer to Chapter 4

a ‘controlled’ and ‘structured theatre or forum’ with pre-determined boundaries for discussions and actions (Interview with Bongani Sihlangu). Themba’s primary rationale for this approach is two-fold: 1) Allowing open-ended dialogue could lead the conversations into multiple directions and prohibit their purpose of disseminating specific information; 2) Lack of focus and unregulated parameters could negate their specific learning outcome in the limited time made available by schools for their performances. Another aspect of deviation is that although the moment of enrolment was clearly denoted by learners putting on and taking off each respective character’s shirt, learners were asked to “come and show what *you* would say/do in this situation”, and in actual fact presented answers while maintaining their individual identities (*Italics added*). In theory, audience members were invited to take on the role of each respective character, yet in practice they took on the responses in their own capacity. This gap between theory and practice impacted the fictional approach which is necessary in its ability for participants to distance themselves from the subject matter during a role-play intervention.

Role-play stimulated engagement from participants and observing onlookers in different capacities. In this scenario where the learner is removed from the traditional audience space, the enrolled participants are assessed based on their attention to and their focus on the role-play process. This approach facilitated assessment of participants’ engagement levels at the respective levels from interest through to evaluation, and seemingly indicated where possible learning and behavioural change might have taken place. Engagement of audience members who remained seated was evidenced in their responses to the role-play. (For the purpose of focus, analyses are undertaken of one selected role-play intervention in each performance)

Engagement during “*Heartbreaker*”

The question-asking sessions paved the way for the successive interactive method of role-play – which is by far the most challenging form of theatre interaction for any audience as participants are required to leave their seats and step into the performance area. Following their brave answers to the question of conception, one to two audience

members who participated in the question-asking were invited to step into the world of the characters by role-playing the answers they gave. Enrolment of audience members as a parent relaying sufficient information to his/her 7 year old son regarding the topic of sexual intercourse proved to have especially high engagement value for observing audience members. Boisterous applause from the audience at Arthur Matthews confirmed that their *interest* was arrested when the first female learner stepped into the performance space. The learner was enrolled as the protagonist's mother, yet when seated next to the Themba actor enrolled as Tumelo⁷¹, looked straight ahead and made very little *eye-contact* with the Themba actor. She was unable to relay her answer or respond to any further questions from the facilitators. The performance space renders one 'conscious of himself and his action', and although her immobile reactions could possibly have been a result of feeling self-consciousness, she did not signify engagement – from or after the first level of *interest* (Boal, 1995:25). Her succeeding peer, conversely, had her *eyes* set on Tumelo and passionately relayed her answer, signifying an intense involvement in the activity. The appropriate responses in answer to Tumelo's ensuing questions indicated that she was *listening* and that *interest* was assertively attained, as well as a level of *commitment in engaging* in the *fictional* sphere while constructing creative answers. Moreover, the learner's physical positioning which pointed towards Tumelo accompanied by her relevant responses to his ensuing questions signified *absorption* in the activity. In response, learners in the audience intently *watched* their peer relaying her answers, and some learners were found pulling their legs up and even holding their breath; signifying *absorption* in the moment.

Engagement levels of enrolled participants and observers in the audience varied with each respective performance yet were particularly lessened during the second run at Arthur Matthews. The performance was presented on the stage and, although visibility was improved, audibility levels were poor which resulted in audience members and actor-facilitators struggling to hear each other. Facilitators requested audience members to repeat their answers several times and a number of disengaged learners began to fidget and talk amongst each other.

⁷¹ The protagonist son who contracted HIV in "Heartbreaker"

Similar results were attained with the performances at Bovet Primary. A young male learner enrolled as the father experienced significant difficulty in articulating his answer, and found the enrolment more challenging. Many reasons could be attributed to this predicament, amongst which the most pertinent are, arguably: sensitivity of the subject matter, the practice of unprepared speaking, as well as the influence of socio-economic conditions on learners attending this school (Bovet Primary is located in a resource-poor area and poverty has a key impact on children's developmental progress (Mathabane.com, 2001)). The next learner to participate delivered a clear and sound summation to his enrolled actor-son, and, unlike his predecessor, relayed his answer whilst maintaining *eye contact* with the Themba actor. During these interactions, audience members indicated a high degree of *interest* as they attentively *watched* and responded to their peers' comments with bursts of laughter. Engagement at the first level of *interest* was therefore attained with differing results in this scene and during the respective performances.

The inciting question for this role-play activity during "*Heartbreaker*" was more information driven in nature and predominantly succeeded in engaging learners at the first two levels of arresting their *interest* and *engaging* them in the world of the characters. Overall responses of laughter and excited giggles in response to the interactive process indicated that the learners' attention was gained and preserved for the greater part of the role-play intervention. Up to 75% of audience members and 50% of participants appeared to be *absorbed* in the event. Whether this role-play intervention imparted a learning experience for learners beyond gaining factual knowledge, or led to a change in understanding, could not be conclusively determined. The intention of this role-play intervention suggested reasons rather to be a means of peer-education, and/or assessing what the audience knew of this subject matter.

Learners did not struggle to role-play their answers of how one could break the news of being HIV positive, and displayed moderate to high levels of engagement for this question. They participated and engaged in conversation with the actors in both of the scenarios, signifying that learners were *engaging* at the second level which calls for a willingness to operate in the fictional sphere of the presented plays, as well as the ability to *identify* with the characters presented.

Engagement levels during “Heartbreaker”:

Engagement Indicators	Role-play Participants	Observing Audience Members
Interest	☑ ✗	☑ ☑
Engaging	☑ ✗	☑ ✗
Committing	☑ ✗	☑ ✗
Internalizing	✗	✗
Interpreting	✗	✗
Evaluating	✗	✗

Engagement during “Class of 2007”

In “Class of 2007,” audience responses were enlisted with the following questions leading up to the role-play: “What would you do or say when someone says ‘I’m HIV positive?’”, and, “What would you do in a situation where you are not ready to have sex and your partner wants to?” These questions provided potentially worthwhile interventions:

They become involved in the action, and practice negotiating risk-free sexual encounters and decision-making alongside the characters in the play. (Hope et al, 2007:4)

Although seemingly introverted, learners at Masibambane did not experience difficulties in enrolling as the character of a friend who confides to a peer that he/she is HIV positive. In contrast, enrolment during “the party-scene” solicited by the boyfriend’s remark, “I

wanted to kiss you from your head to your toes”, presented the opportunity for learners to enrol as the drunken girlfriend who has to negotiate regarding an unwanted sexual encounter while at her boyfriend’s apartment late at night. The reactions of the young female learner who enrolled as the protagonist during the first performance at Masibambane reiterated the importance of content-relevant material in relation to a specific age-group⁷². Her unrelated *responses* to the probing questions of the facilitators and inattentive *gaze* displayed no degree of focused attention in the activity. From her reaction and overall body language it was clear that she was overwhelmed by the situation. Her hesitancy could be attributed to many factors, including the discomfort of having to engage with a much older male concerning this sensitive topic. During the second performance at Masibambane, no female learner was willing to portray this role. The *reluctance* of learners in the second performance hindered engagement at the consecutive levels when it became a compulsory activity of sort.

Interest was positively evoked for observing audience members who were intently *watching* and *applauding* when their peers went on or left the stage. Further engagement at the levels of *commitment*, *internalization* and *interpretation* were not observed to be obtained to the full extent in these enrolments.

Engagement during “Class of 2007”:

Engagement Indicators	Role-play Participants	Observing Audience Members
Interest	☑ ✗	☑ ✗
Engaging	☑ ✗	☑ ✗
Committing	☑ ✗	✗
Internalizing	✗	✗
Interpreting	✗	✗
Evaluating	✗	✗

⁷² Cross Reference Chapter 5

Assessing Possible Learning and Behavioural Change during Role-Play

The role-play interventions presented in the ITT performances undoubtedly afforded learning of some kind to observing audience members: This may have been the acquiring of new knowledge from the factual information shared by their peers (as in the “*Heartbreaker*” enrolment) or insight into possible responses to the news of an acquaintance having contracted HIV. From its foundational stance,⁷³ Boal asserts that in role-play it is imperative that observing audience members are able to ‘identify with the [enrolled], sympathetically’ (Boal, 1995:44). The ‘individual account of a single person will immediately be pluralized’ in the context where participants are drawn from ‘the same social group [such as learners] at the same school’ (p.45). For audience participants who act as ‘outside observers’, Boal maintains:

[...] there occurs a kind of inverse phenomenon. Though they are [...] observing from a distance, by virtue of the *sym*-pathy created with the protagonist they become empowered to penetrate into his lived experience and they travel within this protagonist, feeling his emotions and perceiving analogies between their own lives and his [...] And so they will recognize the points of view of the protagonist and his perspectives. (Boal, 1995:26-27)

Watching their peers in the performance space was in itself an incentive for arresting the audience’s *interest*, and enabled a process of *identification* as learners were especially able to identify with their enrolled peers.

For the participating audience member, role-play is possibly the most active method of stakeholder involvement as partakers are required to leave the safety of their seats and step into the performance area. For the kind of learning that leads to behavioural change, engagement levels were assessed alongside the following criteria for role-play:

- Dramatic role-play needs to stimulate a high degree of focused attention at the ‘imaginative and intellectual level necessary for most good subject-learning’ (Bolton, 1986b:156). (*Interest*)

⁷³ Role-play is derived from Augusto Boal’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Refer to Appendix C

- Role-play asserts to ‘an ability to engage with something outside oneself using an ‘as if’ mental set to activate, sustain or intensify that engagement’ (Bolton, 1986b:156).
(Engaging)
- Role-play requires learners to ‘draw on prior knowledge’ and ‘apply it through rational discourse to the logistics of a problem’ (Bolton, 1986b:156). *(Internalizing)*
- The role-play needs to be ‘felt’ as a ‘lived through’ experience (Bolton, 1986d: 215).
(Internalizing)
- Role-play must provide a structure where participants need to grapple with the problem, and in the experience come to a change in understanding (Pammenter, 1993:65).
(Internalizing)
- Role-play requires sufficient time to explore ideas and alternatives in action (Pammenter, 1993:116). *(Interpreting)*

In writing on Drama In Education, Bolton asserts that a significant experience in the lesson is when it feels to the learner that ‘it is actually happening’; similar to when, during a sports game, it feels though it is actually happening although it is ‘just a game’:

[...] he is not acting; he is not pretending; he is not demonstrating; he is living-through an event of heightened significance. He will feel real and perhaps intense emotion; he will think on his feet in action, making decisions and solving problems. (Bolton, 1986a:46)

ITT’s method of role-play is included in the process with the primary aim of providing *learning through experience*, corresponding to the succeeding levels of engagement where internalizing and interpreting of the content and material presented. Morgan and Saxton (1987:25) assert that learning takes place when there is ‘recognition of the relationship of the task to the self’⁷⁴. Learners appeared to relate to the situation of confronting the reality of HIV-positive peers and the need to convey information regarding sex-education. The learning, however, occurs when there is ‘a change in understanding’ (p.25). Boal affirms how role-play assists in this: ‘In daily life, we see the situation; on stage we see ourselves and we see the situation we are in’ (Boal, 1995:26).

⁷⁴ Cross reference to Chapter 3

According to Sihlangu, ITT's method of role-play aims at facilitating a rehearsal for real life, and he contends that when learners are faced with a similar situation, they will have formed an experience to draw from (Interview with Bongani Sihlangu). Boal (1995:44) validates this view: 'The scene, the stage, becomes the rehearsal space for real life' as the audience member '*practices in the second world (the aesthetic), in order to modify the first (the social)*'. Boal maintains that 'the performance of that action in theatrical fiction will enable him to activate himself to perform it in his real life' (p.46). Whether learners felt they had sufficiently *rehearsed* possible responses to similar situations presented in "Class of 2007" and "Heartbreaker" was questionable, considering the backdrop of the timeframe in which the interactive episode had to be concluded.

Secondly, Sihlangu contests that role-play leads to a shift in perception as people are placed in the proverbial shoes of another and this positions them to practice empathy as opposed to judging the decisions made by people around them. Robinson (1980:159) expands on this concept of 'getting into someone else's shoes' as 'taking a different view of things' and 'trying to see things "as others see them"'. It is by gaining a different perception that possible behavioural change could come about. In this regard, the role-play experience could assist for, '[w]e come to see things as we do partly because of the experiences we directly undergo' (Robinson, 1980:161). A change of behaviour could thus come about when there is a change in perception.

In the endeavour to analyze the learning that took place during these interactive methods, I would like to now introduce Boal's three levels of perception:

1. The first level is where *information is received*: 'light is reflected onto objects' and information is sent to the brain, yet it is 'not archived' (Boal, 2006:35). I propose that this level occurs during the interactive methods such as question-asking and hot-seating where knowledge is shared via the facilitators and actors, and among audience members.

2. The second level is *the more active level of knowledge and tactical decision-making*. Reactive decisions occur in light of previously received information and new information on the same subject matter (this was seen with the learners' outcry "No!" when asked whether the father answered his son sufficiently).
3. The third level, called *ethical consciousness* consists of 'giving meaning and value to the decisions we take' and is where doubt and ethics influence our choices (Boal, 2006:38). Of this level Boal says:

[...] it accords values to each act and projects the human being in his *actions* into the future, rather than merely dwelling on his *reactions* in the present. It is creative [and] requires the intervention of alternatives. (Boal, 2006:38)

Boal maintains that it is 'on this ethical level that that a Forum Theatre session should operate' (p.36): Merely presenting good ideas 'are not enough; they need to be ethically justified' (p.36). Furthermore Boal asserts: 'It is not enough to work with ideas that already exist: we need to invent' (Boal, 2006:36).

As stated before, the taxonomy of engagement requires engagement at the level of *internalizing* where 'a new realization' and 'a different way of understanding' (i.e. a change in perception) (Morgan & Saxton, 1994:21). The scene in "*Class of 2007*" discussed earlier in this section which presents the scenario of a female being persuaded by her boyfriend to engage in sexual behaviour against her will, provided learners with a relevant role-play opportunity in view of the statistics around adolescents' sexual behaviour.

The ITT methodology process concerning role-play does not allow for unrestricted dialogue during the role-play sessions. In wanting to influence the behaviour of adolescents around sexual conduct it must be taken into account that adolescence is a time where sexual awakening transpires: 'In early and middle adolescence, the sexual and affiliative systems are more salient [...] in shaping views about romantic relationships' (Bergevin et al, 2003:407). In view of this, the question of whether such a role-play

intervention should allow for a learner to say he/she wants to engage in sexual behaviour needs to be considered, as this is also a reality. (From observation of the role-play events learners were encouraged to negotiate “safer” sexual behaviour, or how to say “no”).

This factor informs the statistics that merely relaying factual information regarding HIV/AIDS has proven to not be enough to change the sexual behaviour of adolescents:

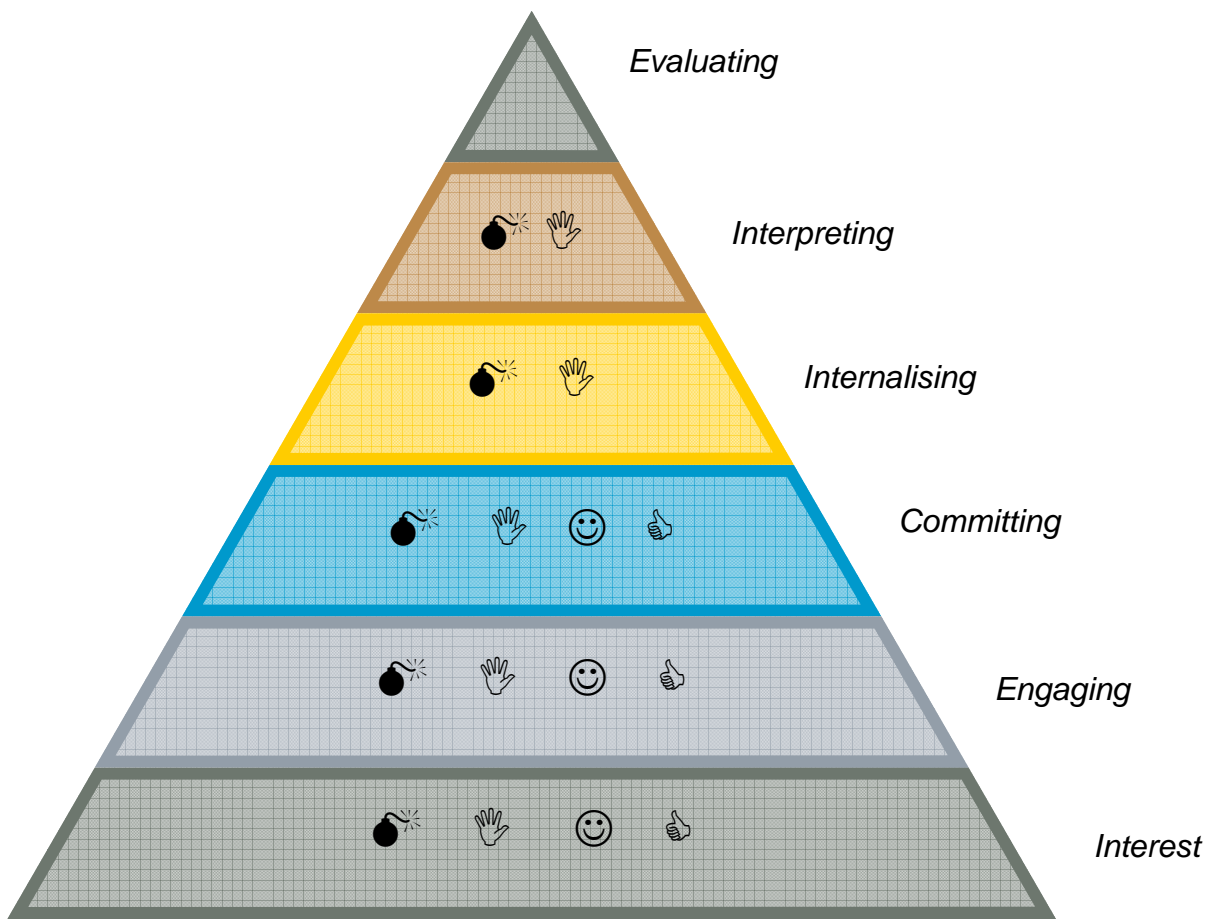
A study case by CASE (1995) concluded that the level of knowledge of HIV/AIDS among adolescents is high, but few perceive themselves to be at risk and few take the need for safer sex seriously. (Hartell, 2005)

In light of the objective to influence behavioural change during a role-play intervention the following is considered: In order to substantially influence learners’ behaviour regarding sexual activity, a change of perception needs to take place at the level of *internalization* on the subject-matter of sexual intercourse. Addressing and working to change learners’ view on this subject-matter, i.e. their perception, rather than imposing or presenting a course of action as a model for behaviour, may prove to rather have a lasting effect on their behaviour. The decision around sexual intercourse is an internal one and it is only when ‘a moment of truth’ [for the individual learner] leads to ‘a shift in understanding’ around this subject matter that substantial behavioural change will follow (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:25).

Rather than provoking a challenge of the material, the ITT role-play interventions occasionally centred on relaying information. Observation of learners’ responses interrogates as to what degree the role-play interventions provided a learning experience at a “feeling-level”. In seeking to transform the behaviour of its audience members, role-play will only lead to a shift in understanding and possible behavioural change when it branches from the essence of its original format in the *Aesthetics of the Oppressed* and embraces ‘more than simple perception [but] aims at enabling’; and seeks to produce ‘emotional and intellectual stimuli’ (Boal, 2006:37).

The following diagram represents a visual assessment of the overall engagement levels of the interactive methods as discussed in this section. Hot-seating and question-asking are positioned as the interactive methods that seemed to have the highest engagement levels in the observed ITT productions (See Diagram D). The engagement levels for dramatic enactments could only be comprehensively assessed up to the third level of *commitment* (as discussed on pages 106 and 107).

Diagram D



Key:	
Dramatic enactment	☺
Question-asking	✋
Hot-seating	💣
Role-play	👍

2. Theatre Group

a) Actor as sign

The body is often described as the primary means by which communication occurs between the self and other. This takes place through gesture, expression and voice (Elam, 1991). The facilitators maintained an approachable yet formal attitude at all times, and handled the subject matter and responses from learners respectfully. Attention is still given to the ways in which the body communicates on an unconscious, as well as conscious, level:

In teaching we [...] deliberately sign for the responder to come into the active participation in the event. If, therefore [as facilitators] we send out some signs to be part of the event, but demand of children that other signs, which are also present, are to be ignored, then we baffle them by the confusion of what to discount. The most developed skill which children bring to school is that of making sense for their own ends of sign in their immediate environment. (Heathcote, 1984b:161)

Post Performance Dynamics

Focus will now be turned to analysis of selected events pertaining to the post performance dynamics, with specific focus on factors that lead to ongoing engagement of an audience after the production, as well as post-performance aspects regarding the actor-educators.

1. Audience-Performance Engagement

a) Engagement with the audience after the production

The fact that learners were showing interest and proactively engaging with the closing song by *singing with* the actor-facilitator indicates the appropriate choice of music and words. Forrester reiterates how the use of a song in a learning experience will be retained in the memory long afterwards, making the concluding song “*It’s my life*”, with its easily remembered chorus a remaining reinforcement of Themba’s message of making responsible sexual choices (1992:360). Furthermore, to aid learning and retention post

the performance, learners were each given a copy of the printed song lyrics of this theme song. However, this activity was only undertaken at Arthur Matthews primary.

2. Theatre Group

a) *Debriefing*

Boal describes the profession of an actor as ‘unhealthy’ and ‘dangerous’, for it is there ‘in the depths of the person, that the actor is obliged to seek out her characters’ (1995:37).

Boal explains that ‘[when] our actor – of sound mind – must play a sick character’, he/she must go to the deep inner core of his/her person, ‘deep within, right inside’, and draw from there, awakening the character from the inside:

Their *personalities*, a picture of health and sanity, go looking in their *persons* for sick people [...] in the hope that, once the curtain has fallen, they will be able to get them back into their cages. And, in the best of hypotheses, they succeed in doing this [...] But sometimes – and it is tragic when it happens – once awoken, Iago and Tartuffe, having discovered the bright limelights, also want to know the light of day, and refuse to return to the darkness of that Pandora’s box which each of us is. There are actors who become ill. Our profession is truly unhealthy! (Boal, 1995:37)

For this reason, Boal contends that actors should be entitled ‘to the same danger money allowances as miners seeking out coal or tin in the depth of mines, or astronauts who have to fly to vertiginous and infinite heights’ (Boal, 1995:38). The Themba actor-educators’ vocation requires them to tap into their emotions and their personal essence to produce different characters. Jones asserts that an actor ‘takes on a role, involves the self and projects the self into the role’ while at the same time ‘assuming a different identity’ as they ‘project aspects of themselves into the dramatic material’ (Jones, 1996:101):

[...] the protagonist-actor produces thoughts and releases emotions and sentiments which, whether her own or not, are supposed to belong to the character, that is to say, someone else. (Boal, 1995:24)

The context of having to portray the emotional states of people infected or affected by HIV/AIDS requires the actor-educators to draw those emotions from within themselves according to the Stanislavski method and places, without a doubt, a high demand on their emotional capacity on a daily basis. A lack of efficient debriefing of the “unhealthy” or “traumatic” emotional engagement where the character and their emotional journey is left behind, or processed, will cause performers to take the fictional reality and their excavated personalities home with them, for ‘[t]hey move into a fictional world to perform, and yet they come from and return to ‘ordinary’ life (Jones, 1996:117). This could resultantly lead to performers being emotionally drained, cutting themselves off emotionally as they go into “survival mode”, or going about their occupation with a façade – all of which will inevitably have an impact on their performances.

Themba’s tailored debriefing sessions have been observed as unproductive in meeting the demands that the productions present to the performers. This repetitive and inefficient exercise and the lack of de-rolling after each production might have debatably played a role in the tired composure and state of minds with which actor-educators commenced several of the ITT productions. Jones (1996:101) summarizes the demand of acting on performers: ‘They stop being themselves and yet remain themselves’, in searching ‘the depths of the soul and the infinity of the metaphysical’:

To sum up, the healthy personality of the actor searches out, in the richness of her person, her characters or *personages*, beings less healthy than herself, sick people. Thus, within the limits of the scene and the moment, the free exercise of all asocial tendencies, unacceptable desires, forbidden behaviours and unhealthy feelings is allowed. On stage, all is permissible, nothing is forbidden. (Boal, 1995:38)

In consideration of the actor-educators as artistic employees, who are not classically trained actors who would understand the importance of debriefing and de-rolling, and would have experiential knowledge in these areas, it needs to be remembered that ‘To be an actor is dangerous’, and any form of TIE group will inhibit the productivity of their work if their workforce is not taken care of (Boal, 1995:38). The analyses in Chapter Six will now be followed by recommendations in Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER 7

Recommendations

Chapters Five and Six formed the context and background to understanding the ITT process. In Chapter Seven, discussion will follow on how to better recreate or modify the ITT process in order to reach fundamental objectives. Recommendations for the aspects constituting the pre and post-performance dynamics and the presentation of a performance, will be presented in Chapter Seven in the form of suggestions and raised questions. This will be done with specific reference to ITT.

To recommend is to ‘put forward as being suitable for a purpose or a role’, to ‘make appealing or desirable’, and the act of giving a recommendation is defined as giving advice, approval, counsel, reference, or support (Soanes, 2001:744).

Pre-performance Dynamics

Ultimately, it must be considered that the engagement between a respective TIE interaction and its corresponding audience begins before the actual production starts. Any form of engagement between the theatre group and a school prior to the performance creates specific communication and associations concerning the production itself. It is the role of the theatre group to ensure that sufficient preparation in terms of space management and promotion of the production is undertaken prior to their arrival – and in the most effective manner possible – these factors play a particularly significant role in establishing the expectations of the audience.

1. Audience-Performance Engagement

a) *Optimizing Pre-performance Audience Engagement*

Expectations play a significant role in learning, and the interactions that stakeholders have with a specific production before its enactment need to be managed as far as

possible due to their influence on these expectations. Clearly, neglecting the management of each formal impression that stakeholders develop will only be to the TIE group's disadvantage.

One such tool that enables effective management is visual marketing which represents the premise of a production with great impact and quickly gains attention. Boal asserts that '[m]ore than the ears or the nose, human beings use the eyes: the image', for all humans are '*visual spectacles*, with the other senses assisting' (2006:30). The visual aspects of pre-performance marketing recognizably have a great impact on setting expectations prior to a performance.

With this in mind, the following are suggestions for marketing related activities leading up to the enactment of a respective production, with a view to positively influence the setting of expectations:

1. Visually appealing posters that attract and maintain the attention of observers (adhering to the guidelines of effective aesthetics, design and layout).
2. Actor-educators who act as promoters by visiting schools and addressing learners about the performance in person, thereby managing the first impression the TIE-group desires to make with the initial exposure of learners and teachers to the performance.
3. Formal and visually dynamic invitations (as per the first suggestion) for the performance distributed to learners by a group of actor-educators at the respective schools.

Naturally the implementation of these suggestions is dependent on the availability of funding, as well as the distance of a school from where the theatre group is stationed. Where these aspects pose a challenge, other suggested means of marketing include the following:

1. A fax or email containing a carefully written synopsis of the performance and/or theatre group sent to the respective schools and read by the teacher to a class of learners, ensuring that the learners' initial exposure to the TIE performance is managed by the TIE team.
2. An audio CD/cassette (dependent on the facilities available at a particular school) sent to the school by the theatre group containing a pre-recorded invitation delivered through the voice of an enthusiastic and vibrant actor-educator in the most appropriate vernacular(s).

Prospective audience members need to be captivated at the outset and their attention preserved by the most appropriate means available. The significant role of marketing prior to a performance is not to be overlooked, for it is in the initiation of impressions regarding a theatre group or their performances that an accumulation of expectations and opinions translates into a pre-performance. Prospective audience members are thus in actual fact, engaging with the performance in their minds before its enactment, albeit some to a greater and others to a lesser degree.

b) Impact of the first encounters preceding the performance

An approachable, amenable and authentic facilitator-learner relationship is central to the participation of audience members in an interactive theatre show and its development needs to be carefully initiated throughout the whole production. Morgan and Saxton (1994:106) reiterate this: 'the facilitation of significant learning rests upon the certain attitudinal qualities which exist in the personal *relationship* between the facilitator and the learner'. In this regard, the first interaction with the actor-educators on the day of the performance plays a key role in the receptiveness of learners. Any negative (i.e. disengaging) encounters could impede the interaction facilitators seek to initiate with audience members or learners' engagement with the performance at a later stage during the TIE presentation. Due to the learners' age and the position of the actor-educator as an authority figure and/or bearer of knowledge, learners are impressionable, and may become less disposed to engaging openly if they perceive that an actor-educator has interacted in a negative manner.

In the case of the ITT performance set-up, where actor-educators would usually be required to usher learners quickly to their chairs, required voice prompts and attendant body language might be observed by learners as brusque in nature due to the need to create order and fulfil strict time parameters. This could result in an unintentional offence and a resultant disinterest from audience members even before the start of the performance. Jones (1996:112) underpins that ‘gesture, expression and voice’ are signs reinforcing how communication occurs ‘between self and other’: ‘Attention is given to the ways in which the body communicates on an unconscious, as well as conscious level’. Consideration needs to be given to these factors, with efforts being made to avoid all possible hindrances.

c) *Research of the target audience*

Boal asserts that theatre is ‘a means of communication’ (Boal, 2006:25). Yet in order to optimise its potential for shared meaning, one needs to understand the metalanguage of each respective audience, especially in the context of a multi-lingual and multi-cultural country such as South Africa. Nobel Prize-winning Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka affirms that, when one attempts to communicate to any culture, irrespective of what culture it is, one needs to advance ‘with some humility’:

You have to understand the language, and by that I do not mean what we speak, you’ve got to understand the language, the interior language of the people. You’ve got to be able to enter their philosophy, their world view. You’ve got to speak both the spoken language and the metalanguage of the people. (Soyinka as cited in Haedicke & Nellhaus, 2001: 17)

Knowing one’s audience, i.e. having a thorough understanding of the context, ‘metalanguage’ and reality of the audience group is directly related to the level of influence an interactive theatre group will attain before, during and after a performance. In addition, the ability of an interactive theatre group to relay information in a relevant way is fundamental to its purpose, which makes research of respective audience groups a vital component of the preparation phase of a TIE performance. David Pammenter enforces this crucial element in the successful efforts of a TIE programme:

The devising team must have a clear perspective of the purpose and function of their work before they start devising at all – in the same way that a conscientious teacher or writer has. They must have a clear understanding of the forces at work both on themselves and on the children they wish to work with, and a real awareness of the parameters or confines set on their work by the morals, values and ethics of the society we live in – whether or not they are subsequently to be challenged. It is this understanding which lies behind the selection of subject material and definitions and aims, and it is this understanding – or lack of it – which ultimately determines the nature of the programme. (Pammenter, 1993:56)

As the interactive approach of the theatre group involves the whole person, it is indispensable for the theatre group to know where learners in this age group are positioned emotionally, physically, and cognitively in their developmental stages, as well as their perspective of the subject matter at hand.

A summary of the developmental stages as discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three endorses that the efforts of ITT can play a significant role in helping young people shape their values regarding sexual behaviour. This factor should form a foundational element in any TIE theatre's approach to adolescent audiences, and is a key determinant in Themba's vision to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS through influencing behaviour.

Research into the developmental stages of the learners' lives, especially where learning is concerned, will benefit the theatre group. This does not mean that all members of the TIE group require a formal training in psychology to be effective actor-educators, but a general overview of the developmental stages of their audience's will only help to improve the impact of their work. For optimal guidance in this area, observation by a child psychologist during performances can also be undertaken.

d) *Regulating Space set-up*

Heathcote reinforces that the most important factor in arranging the TIE audience is that 'the participants have to be framed into a *position of influence*':

I take it as a general rule that people have most power to become involved at a caring and urgently involved level if they are placed in a quite specific relationship with the action, because this brings with it inevitably the responsibility, and, more particularly, the viewpoint which gets them into an effective involvement. (Heathcote, 1984b:168)

An optimum teaching environment is promoted by creating an atmosphere that encourages effective questioning as part of the learning experience: Where learners are ‘arranged in rows facing you’, it may impede on the effective way of ‘generating different kinds of discourse’ (Morgan & Saxton, 1994:84). Morgan and Saxton maintain that *all* learners ‘should be in a position where they can see and hear and make eye contact’ for maximum participation to establish an environment for learning (1994:84). From the stance of the performance area, actor-educators should be able to ‘catch [learners’] eyes’ as it is a way to ‘invite response[s] non-verbally’ (p.84). As part of the process it is therefore imperative for learners and actor-educators to be in full view of each other, as eye contact plays a key role in the learning process.

In addressing the problem of visibility, director Kim Hope asserts that what is required is simply an elevated stage of a few centimetres, but emphasises that this is dependant on financial and labour resources and may require much time to set up before each performance (Interview with Kim Hope). This is reinforced by Redington: ‘As TIE companies travel out to schools every day the amount of technical equipment they can carry and set up is limited (Redington, 1983: 22).

Practical solutions for the problem in visibility and audibility could involve performing in Theatre-in-the-Round where the play is presented with audiences ‘seated all around the acting area’ (Hartnoll, 1972:546). Where visibility is less obstructed, as with the use of the stage in a school hall – which is the most probable performance venue for TIE productions – lapel-microphones can be obtained to assist with audibility. This device will enable facilitators and the rest of the audience to hear learners’ responses, and is a viable tool to procure.

2. Theatre Group

a) *Optimizing Actor-Educator Output*

The actor-educators are the instruments through which the work is done, and without these individuals, Themba as an organization delivering interactive theatre performances cannot function. Similar to a computer which acts as a vehicle that provides optimum output when adequate maintenance is undertaken, the output of the actor-educators represents their well-being. The well-being of the actor-educators is determined by their individual and thus collective, physical, emotional (this includes their spiritual health) and mental health. Koos van der Merwe, Group Specialist in Employee Relations at ABSA Bank, contends that consideration of the wellness of employees is crucial for productive output:

Most organizations declare that their human capital (employees) is their most valuable and important asset. Human resources are not mere commodities or dispensable units of labour, but dynamic human beings who put their productive capacity to the disposal of the organization. Caring for your workforce by appreciating the holistic person and maintaining a sound work/life balance is an invaluable investment in the wellbeing of your employees, yielding a return of loyalty, commitment and productive energy in the workplace. (In Conversation with Koos van der Merwe)

For productive output in the ITT performances, the overall wellness⁷⁵ of Themba's actor-educators needs to be considered and maximised as far as possible, particularly considering that their well-being determines the output of Themba as an organization, as well as meeting its goals and collective vision. Mentally and physically healthy employees provide higher levels of productivity, and job satisfaction has a causal influence on personal and group output, and the usage of initiative and creativity. Research indicates that employees who feel appreciated and acknowledged are also more likely to remain in an organization, and in relation to this fact, if poor remuneration is a factor it can lower a theatre practitioner's morale, especially if other benefits or forms of acknowledgement have not been provided to offset poor financial remuneration (This is not a direct referral to Themba but an overall observation for any TIE company).

⁷⁵ Wellness refers to the physical and mental well-being, especially when maintained or achieved through good diet and regular exercise

Although it is not possible to change every circumstantial factor, it will benefit any theatre organization to consider the well-being of their actor-educators as a high priority. In this regard, the following aspects need to be taken into account, as perceived contributing factors to the quality of ITT performances:

- The long travelling hours that it may take employees to get to their stations – from home to work and from work to the performance place – will result in tired performers, and accumulated fatigue will result in low energy levels during the performances. A practical suggestion would be to provide a source of sustenance and energy for performers in bananas or energy bars whilst en-route to performances, or travelling back to the office.
- With the high HIV infection rate in South Africa it is probable that Themba comprises employees who are themselves infected. Whether this is, or is not the case, conditions should endorse the maintenance of a healthy diet on a daily basis – especially in labour-intensive work such as acting – together with the need for nutrition in combination with ARV treatment where necessary. These factors and their impact on daily activities (such as regulated lunch breaks) need to be taken into account.
- The need for counselling or a safe space for debriefing after confronting real-life issues, which are often traumatic and emotionally draining in this area of work is a vital requirement. Due to their role, actor-educators need to process real-life experiences of audience members who often share traumatic experiences such as family members who have passed away due to HIV/AIDS, or where they have been involved in a rape-situation or domestic violence. In the case where some of the actor-educators themselves are infected/affected by HIV/AIDS, they also require appropriate counselling as their direct exposure to these issues in their work will induce a number of emotions that will need to be processed whilst fulfilling their roles. In having to face this subject matter daily, coping mechanisms may arise in order to facilitate self-protection. This may result in actor-educators becoming

noticeably distant or removed from the subject matter, or performing behind a psychologically constructed mask. In both cases this will inevitably influence the performances, and could also be attributed to the lack of energy observed in some performances.

- Emotional support for the actor-educators, whether infected or personally affected by HIV/AIDS, could prevent burnout and staff turnover.
- In addition, the contact numbers of a medical doctor should be within reach of the group at all times.

Although there is sizeable emotional and physical strain associated with being an actor-educator, HIV/AIDS infected and/or affected people are not less fit for an HIV/AIDS prevention driven theatre group such as Themba. In fact, inclusion of such individuals may actually be the most effective ambassadors for the group as they *know*, i.e. have an experiential understanding of the topic at hand and its implications. The factor of their circumstances however, does need to be considered in the management of employee wellness to provide each actor-educator with the resources to provide outstanding work.

b) *Training for Actor-educators*

The naturalistic approach to acting truly engendered a strong sense of authenticity which led to an effortless identification with characters presented in the dramatic enactments. During the hot-seating sessions however, the responses of actor-educators to the questions of audience members posed to their characters, were given under duress and appeared superficial. In the context of a TIE programme such as ITT where interactive methods ‘actively and verbally invit[e] the participants’ dialogue’, the actors’ prepared lines often have to be ‘modified in order to make cogent responses’ (Williams, 1993:101). This calls for reasonable capacity in improvisation skills and although previously mentioned factors⁷⁶ could be strongly attributed to the tentative answers

⁷⁶ Cross Reference: 2a) *Conditions affecting the Actor-Educators*

during the hot-seating sessions, a greater focus on the technique of improvisation would be required to prepare actor-educators to provide more substantial and meaningful answers. Williams confirms the importance of improvisation as part of the training for the TIE actor:

Improvisational skill is essential. For devising [,] exploring ideas with a writer, and in performance when an actor will have to improvise away from the script, engage in character/audience dialogue and wind back onto the prescribed script. (Williams, 1993:94)

Actor-educators are required to answer numerous types of unprepared questions and accordingly need to be trained in unprepared speaking. Williams also accentuates the great demand placed on the actor-educator and the required skills essential to be obtained during the preparation phase in the rehearsal space:

The actor in TIE must be able to work in uncondusive circumstances, in a classroom cluttered with furniture, or in a school hall with intruding sounds from adjacent rooms. Hence the paramount need for actors who can combine a deep concentration on character with the ability to create a theatre arena for, with and amongst children. (Williams, 1993:94)

Furthermore the necessity of audience research in the drive to engage the audience ‘actively, physically, and verbally [as well as engaging them] emotionally and intellectually’, reiterates the focal point which the audience takes, and which must be incorporated as a foundational element in the rehearsal process (p.102):

The company must therefore give prime regard to the place and identity of the audience – the other participants – throughout the gestation and rehearsal phases. In improvisation and rehearsal an actor has to see with her mind’s eye the audience at all times. (Williams, 1993:102)

c) *Preparation prior to a performance*

The moments leading up to any performance sets the tone for the performance and has a direct impact on the efficacy of the delivery in the performance space. Actor-educators who are required to prepare venues and seat learners before the performances are not able to undertake important focus exercises. A non-performing member of the theatre group could be appointed to do this, or the relevant schools could be requested to provide prefects or teachers to direct the learners to their chairs in an orderly fashion.

Incorporation of consistent warm-ups and focus exercises before a performance becomes a routine that acts as a ritual, functioning as ‘fixed points from which we measure the rest of our experience’ (Bial, 2004:77). A warm-up session and focus exercises serve the following purposes:

- To enable performers to focus their minds by concentrating on the task at hand
- To assist performers to be present in the moment
- To increase and heighten energy levels which prepare the bodies, minds and emotions of performers
- To create a sense of community to enhance the output of the collective performance

As discussed, the importance of warm-ups and focus exercises cannot be over-emphasised as an essential for the delivery of optimum performances: In the space of theatre, rituals and ceremonies ‘bring a sense of harmony and fulfilment’ (O’Neill, 1995:147). Theatre companies of any manner should do whatever is required to ensure that this aspect of preparation is not neglected: This includes practical elements such as actor-educators departing with sufficient time to do a complete warm-up before a performance. The help of a theatre practitioner can be solicited to establish an adequate warm-up programme.

Presentation of Performance

1. Audience-Performance Engagement

The following recommendations have been selected for discussion due to their relative importance:

With reference to any TIE performance, Pammenter reinforces the importance for ‘educational analysis’ as well as the capacity to ‘get up and hold your audience’ (Pammenter, 1993:69). Bolton asserts that a key expertise of a TIE team lies in ‘its ability to create highly credible exciting contexts’ establishing the importance of context, as ‘whatever universal meanings the team may intend to draw on’ as an important end in itself (Bolton, 1986c:182). Within the first encounter plays a significant role and should be carefully managed:

Other research has shown that in the first few milliseconds of our perceiving something we not only unconsciously comprehend what it is, but decide whether we like it or not [...]. (Goleman, 1995:20)

With the attention span of learners it would be advisable to have short breaks between the performances: Short breaks between learning sessions account learning sessions account for more effective learning as ‘a proper distribution of work periods and rest periods ... makes it easier to learn’ and that people err on making learning periods too long (Forrester, 1992:363). A recommendation in this regard is that breaks could be incorporated between different sections of each performance.

2. Theatre Group

In endeavouring to ensure the focus of the young audience members, the facilitator has a leading role to play in the overall objective of the performance: ‘Many of the ethical ambiguities revolve around the role of the facilitator’ (Haedicke & Nellhaus, 2001:15). It was evident from observation that learners were much more open to a friendly and affable face than a lifeless expression, which could also be accompanied by an impersonal tone of voice. Acknowledging their comments – however simple in the mind of the adult-facilitator – proved to be critically important.

Two great strengths observed during the ITT interactive process which encourages engagement lies in the unremitting use of participants' names during the interactions of audience members, and the consistent eye contact facilitators hold with audience members. Forrester (1992:112-113) recognizes personal name-calling as an attention-focusing technique:

[...] proper name use by adults fulfils the primary communicative functions of orienting the child's attention or instructing her/[him] to act. (Forrester, 1992:120)

Noland asserts that people 'can tell how you feel about them simply by how you look at them – or whether you look at them at all' (1999:255). He goes on to say that, 'whether you're aware of it or not, how you feel about those you lead registers on your face. They can see it in your eyes. If [they] see your face light up when you see them, they will feel accepted. They will be drawn to you [when they can see] the look of acceptance' in your eyes. The facilitators maintained an approachable yet formal attitude at all times, and handled the subject matter and responses from learners with the utmost respect and sensitivity.

Recommendations of Interactive Methods

Recommendations for the two interactive methods that also function as the first manner to initiate engagement with the audience, namely dramatic enactments and question-asking, will follow in this section.

Dramatic Enactments

The prerequisite for dramatic enactments to impact the heart and mind of their audiences, is encapsulated by Bolton: 'It seems to me that the art of acting is the drawing out of both an emotional response and, more important, a reflective response in an audience' (Bolton, 1980:72).

In order to bring learners to a place of deep engagement in the dramatic enactments presented by a TIE performance, the question of content and context-relevancy must be carefully considered. Jones endorses this:

Dramatic empathy refers to the creation of a bond between actor and audience. It relies upon the audience being able to identify with and engage their emotions in the characters portrayed. (Jones, 1996:104)

Bolton affirms this crucial element for TIE when maintaining of the TIE performers: ‘Their very skills as actors allow them to offer a rich context not normally available to the drama teacher, so that this work must be both contextually and thematically significant’ (1986c:188).

An alternative way to have measured engagement of audience members at these consecutive levels during dramatic enactments may have been the completion of questionnaires directly after the performances by audience member. This method is however, superseded by a follow-up visit to the school by the theatre group after the performance and engaging in post-performance programmes.

The level of absorption is first needed to amount to a level of ‘personal investment’ where ‘a shift in understanding takes place’ at the ensuing level of internalization in the mind and heart (Morgan & Saxton, 1987:25). This is the level to aim for when the focus is to ‘bring about a change in understanding’ – adhering to the primary purpose of TIE, and in light of the overall view of Themba, which is to bring about a behavioural change.

Question-asking

In asking a question, there is a need to use simple, clear direct language which allows learners to connect with the thinking and the feeling behind the words. A question cloaked in complicated grammatical structure and ‘high-sounding’ language rarely produces high-level, well-expressed thinking’ (Morgan & Saxton, 1994:86). Haedicke & Nellhaus express that ‘... the facilitator’s expertise must translate into active listening more than informing or instructing’ (2001:17). Morgan and Saxton support this:

The art of questioning involves not only the ability to make and deliver good questions, it also involves active listening, thoughtful answers and, of equal importance, time to think. The key to good questioning is *quality* not quantity. (Morgan & Saxton, 1994:80)

Suggestions for the post-performance dynamics will follow in the next section.

Post-Performance Dynamics

Engagement of audience members with the TIE performance continues after the theatre group has left the respective school. Williams (1993:102) upholds this: ‘But the event of theatre, if it is to be an organic experience, does not rest when the actors and the audience depart’. TIE is ‘a stimulus during and ling[ers] after a programme’ because ‘it offers a memorable learning experience in a carefully-structured form which guarantees its assimilation by each individual child on his own level, and by the whole group as a collective memory’ (Schweitzer, 1980: 84).

1. Audience-Performance Engagement

a) *Managing Post- Performance Engagement*

Pammenter asserts that ‘Theatre is a social art’ and in the event of a TIE performance which ‘appears before the child uninvented’, the theatre group needs to take its social responsibility ‘very seriously’ (Pammenter, 1993:69). In the context where the interactive theatre process centres on subject matter such as HIV/AIDS – which, due to the high HIV infection rates in South Africa means that many audience members, or possibly family members will be directly affected by HIV/AIDS – its capacity to invoke an emotional response from audience members must be taken into account. Bearing this in mind, theatre practitioners cannot simply illuminate and explore issues without bringing resolution to audience members in the form of emotional and intellectual closure. In such cases, the collaboration of trained follow-up workers with TIE performances, or the value of developing a strong relationship with local social workers cannot be underestimated.

The closing event is the final impression that a performance leaves with the audience, and should be purposefully selected and incorporated in consideration of what the TIE group wishes their audience to walk away with. The last encounter should therefore be a reinforcement of their message, and should be selected in answer to the question: “If the audience members forget everything else, they need to remember *this*”. The concluding

song, “*It’s my life*” encompasses and summarises Themba’s goals and its upbeat tune and easily memorable words proved to be effective in engaging audience members. This occurred the most effectively at performances where the banner enabled learners to see the words of the song and engage in the event of singing. Distributing pamphlets to learners at Arthur Matthews as they left the performance venue, without the visual aid of a big banner, hindered engagement with learners as they were not able to engage with the song without the words displayed for their perusal. As an observing audience member at the first set of performances where the banner was used, I can personally remember some of the phrases of the song. The pamphlets make vital information available to audience members and this in itself is a necessity; however they might also be discarded in dustbins, or be forgotten in a drawer. Conversely, being able to engage in the song may have a far more lasting impression on audience members than leave-behind pamphlets.

2. Theatre Group

a) Debriefing as an Essential Element of Cohesion

As previously stated, the actor-educators are the central workforce and the work needs to be kept real and alive for the actor-educators in order to present it authentically as they are the medium of the message.

Variation in the debriefing sessions will ensure ongoing stimulation and vitality due a dynamic format. Any form of acting can place a great demand on the performer physically, emotionally and cognitively as actors both experience and reflect the emotional journey of the characters in their exposure to traumatic events, including HIV/AIDS: ‘They move into a fictional world to perform, and yet they come from and return to ‘ordinary’ life’ (Jones, 1996:117).

Debriefing needs to happen on two levels: debriefing of their own experience with the performance event and surrounding issues, and debriefing of the emotional journey of the characters they portrayed, namely de-rolling. A theatre practitioner can be approached to put together creative and enriching debriefing and de-rolling exercises, tailor-made for the needs of the specific theatre group.

Registered Drama Therapist and director of the Bonfire Theatre Company Paula Kingwill contends that de-rolling is a ritual which functions as a tool or technique for stepping in and out of character, i.e. 'to make the transition between the world of pretend/of not me back to the world of 'me''. Kingwill describes its important role in a performance:

[...] taking on roles that carry a certain weight along with them has an effect on oneself in the long term. This effect might be slow and build up over time, so that you hardly even notice at first and so that when you are suffering the consequences (which may be anything from a feeling of depression, or of not wanting to play the role anymore, or of not feeling like yourself) you don't know why you are feeling this way. De-rolling can help with preventing this build up. Partly because it makes conscious the fact that the role you were playing carries some weight and that you need to choose not to take it with you into the outside world. (Interview with Paula Kingwill)

Kingwill states that in the process of de-rolling, 'it's more about making something conscious' endorsing an awareness to 'choose to let it go and that if you don't let it go it may continue to affect you in your day':

I think if you do not do this, there is also the possibility that you will reduce sensitivity within the role in order to protect yourself from the consequences and the uncomfortable feelings. (Interview with Paula Kingwill)

Kingwill continues to point out that in the case of a theatre group who works with improvisation without sufficient de-briefing, there could be a very negative effect on the show and ultimately the actors. She also affirms the importance in incorporating it as a group ritual:

People can do this in many different ways which are personal to them. But often they do not do it. So it is useful to have a ritualized process with the whole group to ensure that it does happen. (Interview with Paula Kingwill)

The recommendations in Chapter Seven serve as a base to improve any form of TIE process. These have included matters pertaining to the pre-performance dynamics and preparation phases of a TIE production, and deemed as essential for optimum production; suggestions for facilitating optimum engagement regarding two of the interactive methods; proposed ideas for managing post-performance engagement; as well as raising essential factors pertaining to the actor-educators. Chapter Eight will now follow with concluding statements for this study.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

The question of theatre's transformative ability has informed the investigation of *how* change can occur through the vehicle of theatre. This question has driven the focus of this study in its exploration of interactive methods, applied for educational purposes, with specific reference to HIV/AIDS and adolescents.

At the outset, it has been acknowledged that amongst its most powerful attributes, theatre's ability to engage both the faculties of reason (intellect) and emotion (feelings), renders it as a medium for communication that can speak to the whole person as a sentient human being⁷⁷. This premise has reinforced the claimed capacity of theatre to influence behaviour in light of the acknowledged understanding that the faculties of reason and emotion play a role in the act of decision making.

The claimed assertion which has been investigated underpins the stated goal of TIE, which is to bring about a change of understanding. Accordingly the capacity that interactive theatre holds for effective learning has been explored in Chapter One. In this chapter it has been highlighted how Interactive Theatre complies with the prerequisites for effective learning in its ability to provide experiential learning through active participation and affective engagement.

⁷⁷ 1. Capable of perceiving by the senses; conscious. 2. Experiencing sensation or feeling. (Dictionary.Com)

For a better understanding of the origin and purposes of Interactive Theatre, a historical outline of its development has been presented in Chapter Two, concluding with its evolution into present day TIE methods where active participation plays a key role in the learning experience. This discourse adheres to the recognised view that effective learning is dependant on engagement at a proactive and affective level.

To enable investigation into how an applied theatre form would bring about a transformation, a proposed framework for analysis has been constructed in Chapter Three, consisting of semiotics as a system for interpretation of qualitative data (such as direct observations of a theatre performance), fundamental theatrical elements as well as a taxonomy for assessing engagement levels and suggestions for its practical application. This framework serves to assist in the interpretation of the engagement levels of audience members during an interactive TIE performance.

The documented goal of TIE to bring about a change in understanding aligns with the primary objective of Interactive Themba Theatre (ITT), namely to influence behavioural change. This has positioned ITT as a relevant case study for required investigation. An outline of this interactive theatre group has been provided in Chapter Four, with specific focus on the theatre group's methodology and related aspects.

In Chapter Five, descriptive observations have enabled a detailed account of the ITT performance process, alongside consideration of the pre and post performance dynamics. This has enabled a comprehensive overview of the entire ITT process, including influential factors determining efficacy, and has provided a resource for referral in the consecutive chapters.

From the analyses in Chapter Six, it has been demonstrated that the effective usage of the capacity of the interactive methods initially relies on their ability to gain and maintain the attention of the audiences. In-depth analysis has brought the following conclusions to light: A fundamental requirement for engagement is attention that is garnered through interest and maintained through context and content relativity. These in turn are also key

factors for an effective learning experience. Contributing factors such as visibility and audibility and relevant content that the learners can relate to and identify with are influential factors that could impede the engagement of learners, and ultimately undermine the learning process. In all the interactive methods, disinterest prevented engagement at a deeper absorption level, and were disrupted where poor visibility and inaudibility created a problem.

It has been demonstrated that the ITT interventions, similar to the levels of engagement, are consecutive, following one on the other, and are dependant of engagement in the previous method. In principle the impact of each interactive method influences the efficacy of the proceeding method. These methods are therefore not independent, but are rather interdependent and have a cumulative effect as the collective effect is dependant on the individual strength of each interactive event.

In Chapter Seven, I have made several suggestions for improving the TIE programme and have drawn attention to factors that need to be considered, which will ultimately have a substantial impact on a TIE process. Chapter Eight continues to present final conclusions for this study.

Theatre's capacity to bring about Change

In view of Themba's stated objective, an approach for learning and behavioural change through interactive theatre has been developed, with the understanding that learning facilitates behavioural change (See Diagram C). This is drawn from Themba's stated objective: '[To] empower and educate young people by providing accurate information through the Interactive Themba Theatre (ITT) process, thereby influencing behaviour[al] change to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS',⁷⁸ (van Rooyen, 2007). In turn Themba's stated approach to effective learning highlights active participation as a determining factor for learning, and is informed by the theory of Plato's cave: 'Knowledge can't be given. You give facts or information' (Interview with Eric Richardson).

⁷⁸ Refer to Appendix G

Although Themba claims to provide a learning experience, it is questioned whether the ITT process conforms to the Cave allegory which maintains that knowledge emanates from an internal process of assimilation, and is not externally created. The allegory illustrates that the infusion of knowledge is not where true learning occurs – rather, true learning is found in a personal process of active contemplation and interaction with the subject matter.

With this applied allegory informing the ITT methodology, its actual application to the Themba productions is questioned in light of the outcomes of this study. From research undertaken, learners do not always engage in the ITT methods and therefore the process becomes primarily information-driven. Themba has developed an expertise in providing factual information about HIV/AIDS, but in terms of their approach to learning – driven by Plato’s Cave allegory – as to whether learners are predominantly actively engaging with the subject matter, the ITT process is questionable.

In light of this overriding objective, I would raise the argument that the dissemination of knowledge in itself might not be sufficient to ‘keep people that are HIV negative, HIV negative’ and to ‘stop the spread of HIV’ by catalysing a change of behaviour which will enable these results (Interview with Eric Richardson). This is shown in the fact that although adolescents have received much information about HIV/AIDS, this has not translated into significant behavioural change concerning sexual activity:

Adolescents appear to have a high level of awareness about HIV/AIDS but this has not translated into substantial behavior change. They have more than one sexual partner; between 40% and 60% of adolescents have more than one partner within a 6-month period. Few perceive themselves to be at risk, few take the need for safer sex seriously, and do not see AIDS as a personal threat, although most adolescents acknowledge the disease's severity. (Hartell, 2005:5)

Although learning may result in behavioural change, the Social Learning Theory states that learning can occur ‘without a change in behavior’ and ‘may or may not result in a behaviour change’ (Ormrod, 1999). This theory positions learning as a category, but not

as the catalyst of behavioural change. When learning takes place at an affective level, however, it can have a sizable effect on impressionable adolescents. Due to theatre's ability to access the thoughts and feelings of its audiences, it has been maintained that theatre has the ability to speak to the psyche of the human being. Theatre as an *art* form, triggers emotions and as a result, can bypass the frontal lobe of reason (Refer to Appendix C – Aesthetics and Neurons). How emotions advance reason is further explained by Goleman:

Because it takes the rational mind a moment or two longer to register and respond than it does the emotional mind, the “first impulse” in an emotional situation is the heart's, not the head's. (Goleman, 2004:293)

In view of Daniel Goleman's assertion regarding both the emotional brain and the intellectual brain, which are active elements of the human being, it can be said that the Arts have the capacity to bypass the frontal lobe of the brain – the plane of reason and intellect – and connect directly with the emotional side of the human being (Goleman, 1995: 13-29). Theatre's strong emotive quality therefore renders it as a powerful force that can speak directly to the deep level of the human soul. This force enables theatre to powerfully influence the lives of its audience members. As an art form with the capacity to influence both the heart and mind of its audience, theatre is powerfully positioned to bring about a transformation of sort:

Art has the most wonderful advantage of being able to invade the private world and thinking of the audience. Art can disarm and relax the audience, and then, when all the guards are down, it can throw *thought bombs* into the heart that will explode with the kick of inspiration and awe immediately, or preferably after some contemplation, some time later [...] Propaganda confronts and alienates, art should disarm and convict. (McKellar, 2005:8)

When working with the human being, whether to inform or influence in any capacity, it must be taken into account that as sentient creatures, the faculty of the human mind is not the only avenue of influence, but that the soul dimension (including thoughts, feelings

and attitudes) is a component of the human being that is as impressionable, if not more so. Engaging with the soul presents a direct channel of influence which can be harnessed – rendering Interactive Theatre as a medium of great potential in providing an authentic learning experience as it involves active participation on an affective level.

Addressing Adolescents on HIV/AIDS

The specific choice of adolescents as a target audience group is justified by their developmental stage of identity formation: ‘Nevertheless, there is much evidence that the timing of puberty, rather than puberty itself, is associated with behavioural changes in adolescence’ (Bergevin et al, 2003:399). To address the issue of HIV/AIDS requires addressing the primary causes of this pandemic and not simply its devastating impact. With national and international statistics listing adolescents’ sexual behaviour as one of the major reasons for the spread of HIV/AIDS, this is one of the aspects that need to be addressed.

The laws in South Africa governing the sexual behaviour of adolescents state that no adult may engage in any form of sexual behaviour with a person under the age of 16 – without or without the consent of the minor (Criminal Law, Section 16, 2007). Although in dispute, stipulations regulating sexual behaviour among adolescents presently include the prohibition of kissing and touching (South Africa Travel Guide, n.d.). These regulations which are enforced specifically in South Africa will not necessarily prevent adolescents’ engaging in sexual behaviour. In light of the increasing HIV/AIDS pandemic the alternative message of condom usage is also not a sustainable solution due to numerous reports on faulty circulated condoms (up to 20 million defective condoms have been reported at one point in time) (News 24.com, 2007).

The decision regarding consensual sexual behaviour is, ultimately, an internal decision, as ultimate regulation of sexual activity lies with the individual – this decision will be driven by an internal value-system. A value-system influences one’s decision-making as it classifies what is important and what is not for each individual. The developmental

stage of adolescents position them at a place where they are forming personal value-systems, and this process could thus create unsurpassed potential for influencing behaviour. Based on this premise I would argue that for transformation in this regard, one needs to speak to their value-system.

In order to address this issue, one would need to address the perceived value of sexual behaviour and its role in healthy human relationships. As sexual intercourse is acknowledged to involve the whole person – mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually – simply providing factual information will not engage a person holistically, which is required for sustained behavioural change. To this end, emotionally driven and spiritually conscious input would be a prerequisite for a person to appraise their personal value system, from which their perceptions of the value and relevance of sexual activity is based. In accordance with this premise, I would argue that for transformation to occur in this area, the engagement of human value-systems needs to be considered. As this study has indicated, theatre has the capacity to speak to the level of the conscious where the value-system is embedded, and has the ability to ‘harmonize head and heart’ in addressing this concern of sexual behaviour and HIV/AIDS (Goleman, 2004:29).

Goleman elaborates:

The emotions, then, matter for rationality. In the dance of feeling and thought the emotional faculty guides our moment-to-moment decisions, working hand-in-hand with the rational mind, enabling – or disabling – thought itself. (Goleman, 2004:28)

As an aspiring theatre practitioner, my personal interest in theatre as a transformative agent in contemporary society has motivated the development of this study – in particular, I have found theatre’s ability to create an authentic learning experience for its audiences a compelling dynamic: This essentially renders theatre as a forceful and proactive tool for education and mobilization of action where change is needed. The words of globally applauded theatre practitioner, Augusto Boal, summarize this:

Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it. (Boal, 1992: xxxi)

Appendix A

Abstract from “*Emotional Intelligence*” by Daniel Goleman. (pp.8-9).

A friend was telling me about her divorce, a painful separation. Her husband had fallen in love with a younger woman at work, and suddenly announced he was leaving to live with the other woman. Months of bitter wrangling over house, money, and custody of the children followed. Now, some months later, she was saying that her independence was appealing to her, that she was happy to be on her own. “I just don’t think about him anymore – I really don’t care,” she said. But as she said it, her eyes momentarily welled up with tears.

That moment of teary eyes could easily pass unnoted. But the empathic understanding that someone’s watering eyes means she is sad despite her words to the contrary is an act of comprehending just as surely as is distilling meaning from words on a printed page. One is an act of the emotional mind, the other of the rational mind. In a very real sense we have two minds, one that thinks and one that feels.

These two fundamentally different ways of knowing interact to construct our mental life. One, the rational mind, is the mode of comprehension we are typically conscious of: more prominent in awareness, thoughtful, able to ponder and reflect. But alongside that there is another system of knowing: impulsive and powerful, if sometimes illogical – the emotional mind.

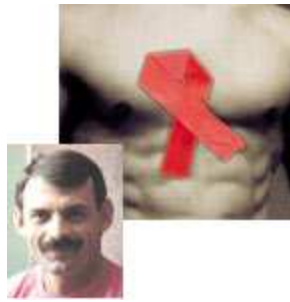
The emotional/rational dichotomy approximates the folk distinction between “heart” and “head”; knowing something is right “in the heart” is a different order of conviction – somehow a deeper kind of certainty – than thinking so with your rational mind. There is a steady gradient in the ratio of rational-to-emotional control over the mind; the more intense the feeling, the more dominant the emotional mind becomes – and the more ineffectual the rational. There is an arrangement that seems to stem from eons of evolutionary advantage to having emotions and intuitions guide our instantaneous

response in situations where our lives are in peril – and where pausing to think over what to do could cost us our lives.

These two minds, the emotional and the rational, operate in tight harmony for the most part, intertwining their very different ways of knowing to guide us through the world. Ordinarily there is a balance between emotional and rational minds, with emotion feeding into and informing the operations of the rational mind, and the rational mind refining and sometimes vetoing the inputs of the emotions. Still, the emotional and rational minds are semi-independent faculties, each, as we shall see, reflecting the operation of distinct, but interconnected, circuitry in the brain.

In many or most moments, these minds are exquisitely coordinated; feelings are essential to thought, thought to feeling. But when passions surge the balance tips: it is the emotional mind that captures the upper hand, swamping the rational mind. The sixteenth-century humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam wrote in a satirical vein of this perennial tension between reason and emotion.

Jupiter has bestowed far more passion than reason – you could calculate the ratio as 24 to one. He set up two raging tyrants in opposition to Reason's solitary power: anger and lust. How far Reason can prevail against the combined forces of these two the common life of man makes quite clear. Reason does the only thing she can and shouts herself hoarse, repeating formulas of virtue, while the other two bid her go hang yourself, and are increasingly noisy and offensive, until at last their Ruler is exhausted, gives up, and surrenders.



Appendix B

David Patient is an extraordinary man, and not only because he's been living healthily with HIV for 20 years...His story is an inspiring one, and while he doesn't claim to have all the answers to why he's survived when millions haven't, his outlook on life, AIDS and what it's all about is inspiring.

I first met David at an international conference for people living with HIV/AIDS about 7 years ago, ... was fascinated by this man who had lived a relatively healthy life with HIV for 13 years then, while others were dying within a few years. He was already considered a curiosity, and he spoke of dialoguing with his virus so that he could co-exist with it. ... He is South Africa's longest HIV survivor, and one of only a handful in the world who have lived so long. He takes no anti-retrovirals.

David has been prodded and probed by dozens of researchers trying to discover why he has never progressed to AIDS. . . . I have been studied by the who's who of HIV, including all three of the co-discoverers of the virus, so I feel I have done my bit.' ...

...My logic was that in any holocaust, war, plague or pandemic, there were always one or two people who lived to tell the story – and why couldn't one of those people be me? Somebody had to stay alive to tell the story for all those who had died with their song still in them, unsung.' ... He and Neil Orr are working for the National AIDS Council of Mozambique, on a programme called Vida Positiva/Positive Living, a behaviour change model ...HIV, believes David, is about equity. 'When men can respect women as more than life support systems for a vagina and women claim their rights, then HIV will start to decline. But with all the cultural beliefs around the role and rights of women, HIV will stay entrenched in our reality.' His personal lesson, he says, is that people treat him the way he teaches them to treat him. ...

<http://www.altheal.org/testimonies/dpatient2.htm>

Theatre of the Oppressed

In order to understand the poetics of the oppressed one must keep in mind its main objective: to change the people – ‘spectators’ – passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon – into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action. I hope that the differences remain clear. Aristotle proposes a poetics in which the spectator delegates power to the dramatic character so that the latter may act and think for him. Brecht proposes a poetics in which the spectator delegates power to the character who thus acts in his place but the spectator reserves the right to think for himself, often in opposition to the character. In the first case a ‘catharsis’ occurs: in the second an awakening of critical consciousness. But the poetics of the oppressed focuses on the action itself: the spectator delegates no power to the character (or actor) either to act or to think in his place; on the contrary, he himself assumes the protagonic role, changes the dramatic action, tries out solutions, discusses plans for change – in short, trains himself for real action. In this case, perhaps the theatre is not revolutionary in itself, but is surely a rehearsal for the revolution. The liberated spectator, as a whole person, launches into action.

“TIE and the Theatre of the Oppressed”

(Vine, 1993:110).

Aesthetics and Neurons

The Aesthetics of the Oppressed is based on the scientific fact that in any individual when the neurons of sensory perception – the cells of the nervous system – are activated, these neurons do not get filled up, like the bytes in a computer, storing aesthetic information. They neither empty nor fill – knowledge does not take up space, as common sense tells us! In contrast to solitary bytes, when stimulated, neurons from circuits which become ever more capable of receiving and transmitting more and more simultaneous messages – sensory or motor, abstract or emotional – enriching their functionality and activating neighboring neurons so that they too go into action, creating ever greater networks of linked circuits which make us remember other circuits,

establishing relations between circuits which maintain some semblance or affinity between themselves, which enables us to create invent, imagine. Imagination is memory transformed by desire. The neurons are already starting to be produced in the fetus, in an accelerated manner, by the third week of uterine life. They are all similar, with no specialization. Depending on where they are to be finally installed, they are specialized in the function that they will need there: They are plastic. If they go to the auditory nerve, they specialize in transmitting sounds to the cerebral cortex, if to the optic nerve, images, and so on. The messages received by the cortex – sounds, images, smells, tastes, cutaneous sensations, ideas, physiognomies – transformed into neuron circuits, relate with other circuits already existing in deeper and more fixed strata of the brain, and can be carried back to the cortex, where they will engage in dialogue with the new messages, a dialogue from which will emerge the subject's decisions.

All these modified circuits will return to the sub-cortical strata where they will influence the reception of new messages with which they retain some relationship. The primary sounds will influence the reception of new sounds; the primary images, new images, the old words will be confronted with new words; old concepts with new concepts; primary values with new values. None of these primary, archaic elements are immutable. They can be modified, substituted because they are not definite – nothing in the human being is definitive! But they have influence. If the brain of a television viewer is filled with Hollywood-inspired films, void of ideas and full of brute force (which is their only form of dialogue), it stands to reason that these shots, bombs, explosions, punches and machine-gun volleys are going to influence this hapless viewer's future perception of the world. They are going to influence his decisions. It is not the violence per se which causes damage to the viewer, but the lack of rationale for this physical activity. When dealing with Rambo and other “super-heroes” of the sub-species, Empathy plays a very dangerous role. Empatheia, in Greek, means the vicarious experience of feelings and thoughts of others – characters in the performing arts, or a real person in daily life. This is especially potent when imposed by the Protagonist in Tragedy on passive spectators.

“The Aesthetics of the Oppressed” ~ Augusto Boal, (2006: 21-23).

CATALYSTS IN THEATRE'S EVOLUTION

The 1960's marked a significant change in the world of theatre. Worldwide uprisings against existing political regimes filtered through to the arts and altered the role of theatre and its denoted value in society. Incited by the French revolution of 1968, theatre activists pioneered new avenues of performances which centred on the needs of present day communities and ignited innovative theatre praxes.

Uprisings against the incumbent De Gaulle government in 1968 resulted in major street riots undertaken by two-thirds of the entire French labour force and an escalating number of students throughout the country. Although the political impact of these upheavals lost momentum towards the end, 1968 is branded as 'the watershed moment' that left, in its wake, an 'enormous social impact' on the country's development of social ethics.

Conservative morality, encompassing religion, patriotism and respect for authority, was replaced with liberal morality, harnessing equality, sexual liberation and human rights, and which dominates present day French society (Wikipedia, 2008). Democratic socialist ideals of the time inspired 'radical artists' who opposed 'the disparities in power caused by class, racial and/or regional differences', to venture into unconventional performance methods in order to 'help workers, peasants, and others to oppose capitalist power' (Zarrilli et al, 2006:430).

The unusual practice of performing outside the traditional theatre space (i.e. a building with an elevated stage) was also embarked upon in Italy during 1968 by theatre activists Dario Fo and his playwright-actor wife, Franca Rame. These crusaders performed at several conventions and rallies for progressive causes, frequently donating the proceeds to radical political movements (Zarrilli et al, 2006:431). With performances such as '*Accidental Death of an Anarchist*' – a farcical attack on police corruption' – Fo and Rame 'broke from the commercial theatre to establish a theatrical cooperative' which addressed contemporary social issues in a new performance space within 'culturally-deprived zones' (p.437). Akin to these radical artists, theatre activists in the 1970's and

1980's employed theatrical means in pursuing a revolution in the political and economic censorship of their countries toward a more liberal and egalitarian version of 'democratic socialism' (Zarrilli et al, 2006:432). In this venture of reformation, radical theatre artists of the post-1968 era explored innovative theatre methods to impact their audiences:

They targeted non-theatre audiences of agricultural or industrial labourers, often worked in collective and created plays collaboratively, and generally incorporated many elements of folk and popular culture without, however, bowing to commercial tastes or values. (Zarrilli et al, 2006:432)

Prochaska and DiClemente's Stages of Change Model

Stage of Change	Characteristics	Techniques
Pre-contemplation	Not currently considering change: "Ignorance is bliss"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Validate lack of readiness ▪ Clarify: decision is theirs ▪ Encourage re-evaluation of current behaviour ▪ Encourage self-exploration, not action ▪ Explain and personalize the risk
Contemplation	Ambivalent about change: "Sitting on the fence" Not considering change within the next month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate lack of readiness • Clarify: decision is theirs • Encourage evaluation of pros and cons of behaviour change • Identify and promote new, positive outcome expectations
Preparation	Some experience with change and are trying to change: "Testing the waters" Planning to act within 1month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Identify and assist in problem solving re: obstacles ◆ Help patient identify social support ◆ Verify that patient has underlying skills for behaviour change ◆ Encourage small initial steps
Action	Practicing new behaviour for 3-6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on restructuring cues and social support • Bolster self-efficacy for dealing with obstacles • Combat feelings of loss and reiterate long-term benefits
Maintenance	Continued commitment to sustaining new behaviour Post-6 months to 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plan for follow-up support ▪ Reinforce internal rewards ▪ Discuss coping with relapse
Relapse	Resumption of old behaviours: "Fall from grace"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evaluate trigger for relapse ○ Reassess motivation and barriers ○ Plan stronger coping strategies

Plato's "*Allegory of the Cave*"

In the allegory, Plato likens people untutored in the Theory of Forms to prisoners chained in a cave, unable to turn their heads. All they can see is the wall of the cave. Behind them burns a fire. Between the fire and the prisoners there is a parapet, along which puppeteers can walk. The puppeteers, who are behind the prisoners, hold up puppets that cast shadows on the wall of the cave. The prisoners are unable to see these puppets, the real objects, that pass behind them. What the prisoners see and hear are shadows and echoes cast by objects that they do not see. [...] Such prisoners would mistake appearance for reality. They would think the things they see on the wall (the shadows) were real; they would know nothing of the real causes of the shadows. [...] The prisoners may learn what a book is by their experience with shadows of books. But they would be mistaken if they thought that the word "book" refers to something that any of them has ever seen. (Cohen, 2006)



<http://www.geocities.com/thembahiv/index.htm> - accessed 24 October 2007

This page was last updated on 27-May-2007

[ABOUT US]

Winners of the Mail and Guardian's 2006 "Investing in the Future" Merit Award for Most Innovative Project.

Our funders include:

- Comic Relief
- Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
- Elton John AIDS Foundation
- Bishop Simeon Trust, UK

Read our Annual Report, 2005

The Themba HIV/AIDS Organisation has been delivering interactive performances to schools, community based organisations and businesses in Gauteng, South Africa, since February 2002. The focus of the Interactive Themba Theatre process is influencing behaviour to prevent the spread of HIV.

Themba also provides training for people in community based organisations, schools, work places, and youth correctional centres. All the training is interactive and participatory using effective action-based learning methodologies.

Over 50,000 people have benefited so far. In their interactions with the Interactive Themba Theatre (ITT) Process, participants have engaged with the "actor-educators" and facilitators. They have shared their concerns, practiced negotiating risk-free sexual encounters, taken on roles within the drama and interacted with the characters, spoken about different kinds of sexual activity, and learnt more about the risks of unsafe sex and HIV and AIDS. The actor-educators **and** audiences have contributed to making ITT a process specific to South African HIV and AIDS contexts.

All the work - both performances and training workshops - is based on internationally recognised behaviour change methods. In addition, the methods we use are informed by a range of theatre methodologies including Forum Theatre, drama therapy, psychodrama, theatre games, improvisation, formal teaching methods, play devising, play directing and performance. We have a range of plays which we develop to suit different audiences and age groups, and the learning outcomes vary with the different plays. All plays (with interactive activities) cover aspects of communication, relationships, discrimination, attitudes, sexual behaviour, ignorance and stigma – within the context of HIV, AIDS, and traditional norms and myths.

We offer interactive training modules to trainers so that they can go into their communities or workplaces to put on plays about HIV, AIDS, safer sexual practices and related issues. Our training workshops can last two hours, or we can offer a full two weeks of training. We've conducted these two week modules in Gauteng, Limpopo and KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. The participants learn about HIV and AIDS as well as becoming actively involved in the ITT process.

The culmination of the workshops is the creation by participants of devised plays around issues to do with HIV and AIDS. These plays carry messages which include the importance of knowing whether or not one has the HI-virus, living positively, stigma and discrimination, being a role model in one's community, as well as encouraging the delay of first sexual encounter, engaging in safe(r) sex, and negotiation around different sexual activities.

The Executive Director is Kim Hope.

"We are all HIV+ until proven negative. Let's get tested now!"



Preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS in young people.

[MISSION]

Developing Interactive Theatre process to enable dialogue and influence behaviour change among young people to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.

[OBJECTIVES]

1. Empower and educate young people by providing accurate information through the Interactive Themba Theatre (ITT) process, thereby influencing behaviour change to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.
2. Develop an effective South African tool (including mechanisms for dissemination, manuals, training, methodology and workshops) to influence behaviour change.

Develop a core group of Themba actor-educators to advocate and sustain the initiative. From these actor-educators create further Interactive Themba Theatre Companies to further the work in schools and businesses.

[METHODS]

The **Themba HIV/AIDS Organisation** has developed the "Interactive Themba Theatre" (ITT) methodology to help individuals explore ways of transforming their lives and give them strategies to keep themselves safe within the specific context of HIV and AIDS in Southern Africa.

This methodology uses a range of interactive theatre techniques from a variety of sources including aspects of drama therapy, psychodrama, theatre games, improvisation, formal teaching methods, forum theatre, play devising, play directing and performance. A unique feature of the methodology is the use of short 'cameo' scenes that demonstrate a variety of possible responses to situations involving sexual encounters and to stigma and discrimination at work.

- Colour-coded visual aids are also used to impart clear messages about sex using popular terms and language.
- Clarification, to prevent cross-cultural misunderstanding, is achieved by inviting audience members to offer alternative words to ensure understanding is achieved among the whole audience.

While the original work was informed by the Forum Theatre technique, this was found to be not flexible enough to address the complexities of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa. Therefore this new methodology (Interactive Themba Theatre) enhancing the Forum Theatre Techniques has been created (and is still developing). Its development is based on the experiences of the group in devising and using material, and the wider experiences of the manager in charge of rehearsal and development of our plays. The Prochaska & Diclemente behaviour change model informs the methodology. The Interactive Themba Theatre (ITT) Process intervenes directly at the 'pre-contemplative', 'contemplative' and 'decision making' ('determination/preparation') stages of the Cycle of Change model. Our work allows for both an abstinence based and a "harm reduction" (i.e. condom use, fewer partners, delaying first sexual encounter etc) approach to HIV and AIDS prevention. ITT also affirms healthy behaviour at the 'action' and 'maintenance' stages.

Both the content of the plays and the subsequent audience involvement promote appropriate care and concern for people infected with and affected by HIV and AIDS, within a context of human rights and social justice.

"The cutting edge nature of Themba's work places it in a position to continue to be innovative in exploring alternative messages to engage people in positive behaviour change."

-Colin Collett van Rooyen. External Evaluation of the Themba HIV/AIDS Project, 2003

[HISTORY]

The Themba Project began in Johannesburg in 1996 with two trainers, Kim Hope and Theresa Lynne. It ran 'training for trainers' workshops to help extend the skills of creative conflict resolution in young people, church leaders, community leaders, teachers, youth workers, people in prisons, and women's groups. The methodology included Drama processes, and the workshops were interactive and experiential, with participants actively involved in working towards peaceful change. Workshops were held in Gauteng, Eastern and Western Cape and Kwa Zulu Natal. In 1998 the Themba Project was taken over by two South Africans in the Eastern Cape who extended the work of the Project and ran it until 1999 when it was reviewed in the light of emerging issues caused by the HIV epidemic. In partnership with the Trevor Huddleston CR Memorial Centre, this Project was formed.

[CONTACT]

Themba HIV/AIDS Organisation – celebrating 5 years of success!

Winners of the Mail and Guardian's 2006 "Investing in the Future" Merit Award for Most Innovative Project.

The Organisation's head offices are located in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, South Africa.

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Appendix H





Learners at Arthur Matthews Primary – February 2008.

Interviewees

Interview with Kim Hope

1. What was your journey to Themba?
2. Your journey as a Theatre practitioner?

Themba

1. How was Themba established? What was the inspiration and how did it come about?
2. What were the primary purposes / goals? Have they evolved? Are they the same today?

Theatre Group

1. How / what kind of people are chosen as actors / actor-educators?
2. What does training and preparation of personnel consist of?
3. What does the term actor-educator imply?
4. How important is it for Themba to have 'trained actors'?
5. Actors are exposed to the serious subject-matter of HIV/AIDS the whole day – has this posed a potential problem? Does it affect the performances?
6. Are there any other forms of debriefing except for the repeated exercise of asking the questions: What have I done well? What can I do differently?

Audience

1. Who is the target audience for Themba?
2. Will they adapt certain aesthetics / tools that are used for engagement such as music?
3. What is the primary language used for performances?

Performances

1. Why the term actor-educator?
2. How important is audience research?
3. What performance-style is suitable according to you for the work that Themba wants to do?
4. Is there any form of counselling afterward for the audience members and / or performers?

Assessments

1. What are ITT's goals?
2. How does Themba assess whether they've reached their set-out goals?

Interview with Eric Richardson

Eric

1. How did you end up working at Themba? What was your journey?

Themba

1. How was the organization established?
2. What are Themba's primary goals?

Theatre Group

1. On the training and preparation for actor-educators?
2. Actors are exposed to the serious subject-matter of IV/AIDS the whole day – has this posed a potential problem? Is there any form of counselling for performers?
3. What time do actor-educators need to be at Themba's head-offices and till what time are they scheduled to work?
4. How important are warm-up sessions and debriefing sessions in *your* view?
5. On the ITT methodology and its approach to learning?

Audience

1. Who is the target audience for Themba?
2. Will Themba adapt certain aesthetics / tools that are used to engage audiences of different cultures such as music for instances?
3. Is there any form of research done pertaining to the target audience groups?

Performances

1. Why the term actor-educator?
2. How important is audience research?
3. On the interactive methods and their purpose?
4. What performance-style is suitable according to you for the work that Themba wants to do?
5. Is there any form of audience research?

Assessments

1. What are ITT's goals?
2. How do they assess whether they've reached their set-out goals?

Interview with Bongani Sihlangu

Theatre Group

1. On the ITT methodology and its approach to learning?
2. On the interactive methods and their approach to learning?
3. How are candidates chosen?
4. On the training and preparation for actor-educators?
5. What does the term actor-educator imply?
6. Actors are exposed to the serious subject-matter of HIV/AIDS the whole day – has this posed a potential problem? Does it affect their performances?
7. Are there any other forms of debriefing except for the repeated exercise of asking the questions: ‘*What have I done well?*’, and ‘*What can I do differently?*’
8. Where do most of the employees stay?
9. Is travelling a problem at any level?
10. What time do actor-educators need to be at Themba’s head-offices and till what time are they scheduled to work?

Audience

1. Who is the target audience for Themba?
2. Will they adapt certain aesthetics / tools that are used for engagement, such as music?
3. What is the primary language for performances?
4. Is there any form of follow-up work with school audiences?
5. Is any form of research done on the target audience groups?

Performances

1. Where does Themba mostly perform?
2. Why the term actor-educator?
3. How important is audience research?
4. What performance-style is suitable according to you for the work Themba wants to do?
5. Is there any form of counselling afterward for the audience members and / or performers?
6. Are actor-educators supposed to do a warm-up before each performance?

Assessments

1. What are ITT’s goals?
2. How does Themba assess whether they’ve reached their set-out goals?

Interview question for Paula Kingwill

From the viewpoint of a drama therapist and theatre practitioner, what are the effects if an actor does not undertake debriefing and de-rolling exercises? If performers dive into a production without undertaking warm-up and/or focus exercises, how, in your opinion, will this impact the performer on the long run? What effect will it leave on the performer if they go directly home day after day, after having engaged in the emotional journey of a character?

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List of Conversers

Koos van der Merwe, Florida, May, 2008

Rich Swingle, Indiana, USA, June, 2007

Themba Actor-Educators, Braamfontein, February, 2008

Ken Wales, Indiana, USA, June, 2007

Learners at Arthur Matthews Primary School, February, 2008

List of Interviewees

Bongani Sihlangu	Themba, Braamfontein, Johannesburg.	February, 2008.
Charlotte Steenekamp	Florida, Johannesburg.	January, 2008.
Eric Richardson	Themba, Braamfontein, Johannesburg.	March, 2008.
Kim Hope.	Melville, Johannesburg.	February, 2008.
Paula Kingwill.	Interview via email.	April, 2008.