



Tool sheet

# WORKSHOP

for the SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

## Forum Theatre

Forum theatre is a popular education tool created by Augusto Boal in the 1970s in Brazil, as part of the Theatre of the Oppressed. This theatrical practice is grounded in the idea that theatre can—and should—be a means of changing the world, by allowing anyone to experiment, become an active participant, and test their capacity to act.

### Objectives

Forum theatre is an interactive facilitation tool designed to encourage collective analysis, debate, and the testing of solutions through the staging of concrete situations involving power dynamics between one or more “oppressors” and one or more “oppressed” individuals. During performances inspired by real-life situations, actors and audience members interact: the audience is invited to intervene directly on stage in order to alter the course of events.

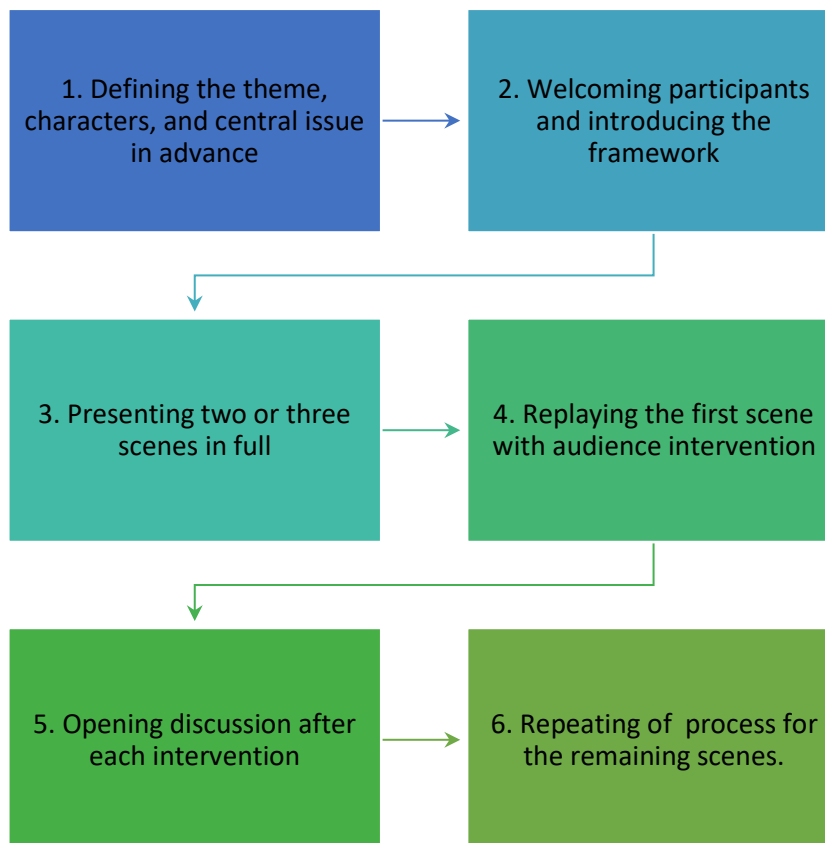
The aim of forum theatre is to make visible the mechanisms at work within a situation (power relations, attitudes, discrimination, injustice) and to analyse points of resistance or deadlock. By inviting the audience to step onto the stage, it fosters ownership of the issues, the expression of different perspectives, and the exploration of practical courses of action. Participants thus take on a central role: they become agents of change by experimenting, alongside the actors, with different ways of transforming the situation presented. Forum theatre is a valuable tool in a wide range of contexts, including training, advocacy, and social transformation initiatives.



## Workshop flow

A forum theatre session typically runs between 1.5 and 2 hours: around ten to fifteen minutes are allocated to presenting the prepared scenes, followed by approximately 1 hour 20 minutes to 1 hour 50 minutes of interactive theatrical debate. Forum theatre can take place in a wide variety of settings, including theatres, multi-purpose rooms, school canteens, lecture halls, outdoor kiosks, public squares, etc.

A forum theatre workshop typically unfolds in the following stages:



### **1. Defining the theme, characters, and central issue in advance**

The scene or scenes to be performed are prepared beforehand in collaboration with the facilitator (referred to as the “joker”) and the participants who will act them out. The scenarios should be clear and relatable enough for the audience to recognise elements of their own experiences, encouraging them to react and put forward ideas.

### **2. Welcoming participants and introducing the framework (5 minutes)**

The facilitator welcomes participants and outlines the origins and objectives of forum theatre, along with the guidelines that help ensure the session runs smoothly. It is important to clarify that the scenes performed do not necessarily reflect the personal views of the actors, but are intended to prompt reflection and explore possible solutions. To create a comfortable environment, the facilitator also emphasises that participation is entirely voluntary and that no one is required to take part on stage.

### **3. Presenting the scenes in full (10–15 minutes)**

The actors perform one or more scenes in full, with the facilitator indicating when each one comes to an end. This allows participants to fully grasp the situation and begin considering how they might intervene.

### **4. Replaying the first scene with audience intervention**

The first scene is then performed again. This time, audience members can interrupt at any point if they wish to step in—either by taking the place of a character or by introducing a new one—in an attempt to improve the situation. If needed, the facilitator may also pause the scene at a key moment to invite suggestions on how it could be changed. The scene can be replayed as many times as necessary to explore different approaches and outcomes.

The facilitator, or “joker”, plays a central role throughout: remaining outside the scene, they coordinate audience interventions and guide the actors’ responses, ensuring a dynamic exchange between stage and audience. They also support deeper reflection by encouraging participants to articulate their perspectives and intentions, helping to foster collective thinking and initiative.

### **5. Opening discussion after each intervention**

After each intervention, the facilitator invites the audience to reflect on what changed in the scene—whether in terms of body language, choice of words, or attitude. This helps deepen the collective analysis and supports the exploration of practical ways to respond to the issues raised.

## **Example: a forum theatre scene on participatory advocacy**

During the October 2025 seminar of the *Former pour Transformer* collective, participants were introduced to forum theatre with the support of actors from the Théâtre de l’Opprimé company. They performed two short scenes designed to highlight the challenges involved in developing participatory advocacy initiatives.

Here is the first scene:

*A facilitator meets with two young people to create a video presenting their project for the neighbourhood to local authorities. The two young participants feel discouraged, while the facilitator tries to motivate them. The young woman is not convinced, as she has other responsibilities to manage—such as helping her mother at home—which make it difficult for her to commit time to the project. The facilitator insists that it is a project “by you, for you”, but this argument fails to persuade them.*

After the initial performance, the facilitator invites the audience to reflect and, if they wish, to step into the replayed scene. Several types of intervention emerge:

- One participant steps in as an alternative facilitator. They take on a mediating role, actively listening and trying to understand the young people’s concerns. By showing personal commitment and positioning themselves alongside the group, they help generate greater enthusiasm. They emphasise the value of collective action, noting in particular that “it’s important to come together with others and build collective strength.”

- Another participant intervenes in a similar role but shifts the focus: the project is not just for the two young people, but for a wider group. When the young people express a sense of disconnection, she suggests creating a video to encourage their friends to get involved. She highlights the importance of allowing young people to express their feelings without guilt, and works with them to identify solutions, even beyond the immediate scope of the project.

During the discussion, she reflects: “At the start of the scene, the different actors aren’t on equal footing—it feels as though the young people are taking part in the facilitator’s project.”

- A third participant, also stepping in as a facilitator, proposes meeting with the young woman’s mother to explore how her situation could be eased. In her view, “it’s also important to support her so she can free up some time to engage with the project. You need to make suggestions, but without imposing them.”

Other participants, even without stepping onto the stage, share how powerful the method is in helping them grasp—both physically and emotionally—the complexity of such situations. Throughout the exercise, everyone is constantly reflecting on what they would do in each role. As a result, this approach is far more engaging than a simple exchange of opinions: it actively involves all participants and fosters deeper awareness.

### Testimonial from Merveille, workshop participant



“As far as I’m concerned, this was my first experience with forum theatre. I wasn’t familiar with it before and had never used it within my organisation.

As a participant, I felt fully engaged throughout the session. I drew on APEF’s experience—particularly in the area of advocacy—which allowed me to contribute in a concrete way to the discussions. The interactions with the actors were smooth and dynamic, encouraging genuine participation and collective reflection.

I find forum theatre to be a particularly relevant tool, as it enables everyone to share their ideas, co-create responses, and develop a deeper understanding of the issues while actively taking part.

I would be very open to using this facilitation method again in other contexts, particularly to explore topics related to gender and positive masculinities, as well as environmental issues.”

### Testimonial from Bigué, workshop participant



“For my part, this was a particularly enriching experience.

As an observer, I realised that in the heat of the moment, we sometimes tend to get locked into our roles and responsibilities, overlooking the collective dimension. Forum theatre highlights just how important it is to

draw on the group’s shared intelligence. I was also struck by the range of skills required to support others: communication, group facilitation, active listening, conflict resolution, and more.

As an actor, this immersive experience made me aware of how easily certain details—and even valuable resources, such as potential allies—can be missed in the moment. This strongly reflects our everyday realities, both professional and personal, and underlines how crucial our stance and approach are to the success of our actions.

Although I wasn’t specifically familiar with the term “forum theatre”, I had previously experienced similar formats, such as role play and scenario-based exercises. However, this approach adds another dimension: it encourages collective analysis, critical reflection, and the exploration of new ways of acting.

Given its impact, forum theatre strikes me as a particularly relevant tool—one that deserves to be used more widely in our activities. It supports learning, strengthens participation, creates meaningful spaces for dialogue, and encourages deeper reflection.”

**Link to the article :** [Forum Theatre - L'atelier de la transformation sociale](#)

