



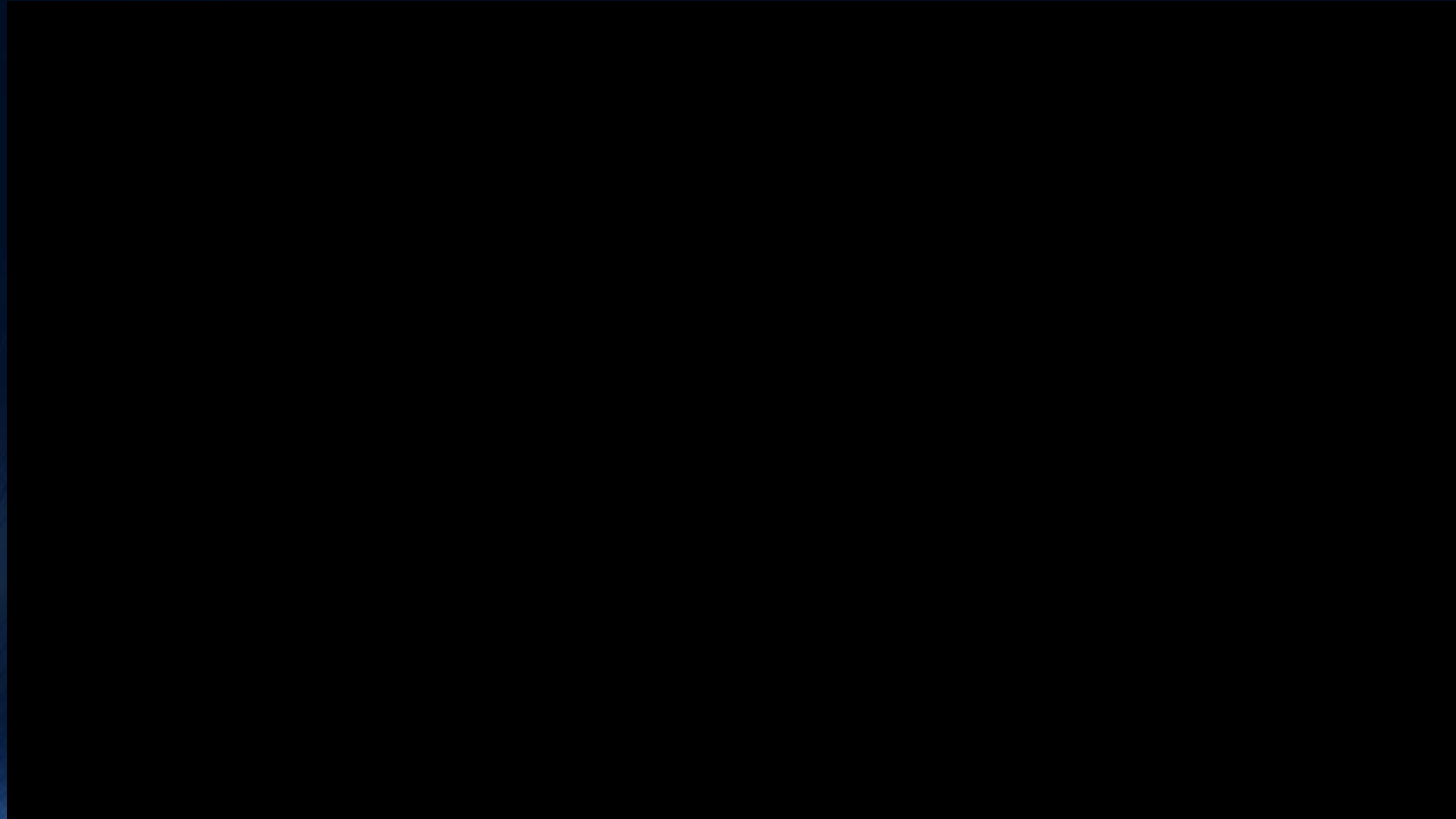
Theatre of the Oppressed

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This session will cover:

1. Introduction to Theatre of the Oppressed (TOTO)
2. Biographical and contextual details about Augusto Boal
3. Influences on Boal's philosophy
4. The Poetics of the Oppressed
5. Main aim of Theatre of TOTO
6. Actors and non-actors
7. Role of the spect-actor
8. Role of the Joker

Introduction to TOTO



What was that?

- Based on your prior knowledge and the clip that you just saw, what do you think TOTO is about?



What was that?

- Basic principles of TOTO
 - Gives a voice to those members of society who do not have one
 - Help engage the audience in learning about ways to overcome oppression
 - Engage the audience in the creation of theatre
 - Presents a certain view of the world which allows others to then attempt to change it

Who is Augusto Boal

- From the end...



Augusto Boal - Biography

- Raised in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- Early work with the Arena Theatre in Sao Paulo led his experimentation with new forms of theatre
- Because TOTO allowed civilians to have a voice and question social rules, Boal drew attention as a cultural activist and, in 1971, was kidnapped and exiled to Argentina

Brazilian Military Government

- <http://study.com/academy/lesson/military-rule-democratic-reform-in-brazil.html>
- Authoritarian military dictatorship that ruled Brazil from April 1, 1964 to March 15, 1985.
- Enacted a new and restrictive Constitution which stifled freedom of speech and political opposition.
- Censored all media (including theatre) and tortured and banished dissidents (such as they viewed Boal because of his Theatre of the Oppressed).



Augusto Boal & Theatre of the Oppressed

- TOTO was established in the early 1970's by Boal
- A participatory theatre which fosters democratic and cooperative forms of interaction among participants
- Here, theatre is emphasised not as a spectacle but rather as a language accessible to all
- A type of theatre that allows people who are oppressed to learn ways of fighting back against oppression in their daily lives
- **Forum Theatre, Image Theatre and Invisible Theatre** are the major parts of Theatre of the Oppressed

Augusto Boal & Theatre of the Oppressed

- While exiled in Argentina, Boal developed Invisible Theatre to get around the repressive political climate.
- Overall, Boal used TOTO to transform the “monologue” of the traditional performance into a “dialogue” between the audience and the stage.
- SPECT-ACTOR → Boal defined the audience members who participate in TOTO as ‘spect-actors’. A process whereby audience members could stop a performance and take over from an actor playing a particular character/role and try out alternative strategies to resolve issues of oppression.

Role of the Joker

- Much of Augusto Boal's theatrical process requires a neutral party to be at the centre of proceedings. This individual is usually called the "facilitator". In Boal's literature this role is referred to as the "joker", in reference to the neutrality of the Joker card in a deck of playing cards.
- In most cases, but not all, this would be a drama workshop leader. This person takes responsibility for the logistics of the process and ensures a fair proceeding, but must never comment upon or intervene in the content of the performance, as that is the province of the "spect-actors".

Boal's Influences

- Most of Augusto Boal's techniques were created after he realized the limitations of didactic, politically motivated theatre in the poor areas where he worked.
- He found that his attempts to inspire the people living in poor or "slum" areas to rise up against racial and class inequality were inhibited by his own racial and class background, since he was white and comparatively financially comfortable.
- His new techniques allowed the idea for change to come from within the target group – the group experiencing the particular type of oppression.

Boal's Influences

- Hegel's Theory of Tragedy
 - Through the action of the tragic hero the main institutions of **ethical life**, the family and the state, come into conflict. In Hegel's view the essence of tragedy is conflict, not a moral conflict between right and wrong, but **a conflict between legitimate rights and institutions**.
- Brecht – Epic Theatre
 - Not allowing the audience to become passive observers and consumers of theatre and, as a result, adding to the social and cultural oppression.
 - Raising awareness of social and cultural issues, though Boal goes a step further and actually makes the **spect-actor** try to resolve the issues that are presented.

Homework

- You should now be able to complete pp.7-17 of your activity booklet