Image Theatre:

Image Theatre is a large part of Boal’s form, as imagery is extraordinarily communicative. Images are created to reflect particular moments of oppression. This technique is perhaps one of the more accessible of Boal’s methodologies, as it is something that can be created quickly and easily evokes an audience’s response. The still images allow the spectators to both reflect upon the situation at present, and hypothesize solutions.

For our workshop, we will use “Image of Transition,” a technique in which the players create three images. The first is a “real image” or a representative depiction of the present situation; the next is the “ideal image” or the desired situation. Through these two images we try and find a ‘transitional image’, what could get us from one to the other, and in doing so we see the a visual representation of the steps we could take to create that ideal image in actuality.

Who Is He?

Augusto Boal was a Brazilian theatre artist born in the 1930’s. He developed a new form of theatre meant to incentivize and initiate social change called Theatre of the Oppressed. While in traditional theatrical forms the characters and the actors drive the action of the play forward, in Theatre of the Oppressed, the focus is on the action itself and the audience has the ability to comment upon and alter that course: “In order to understand this 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 (Boal 122).”
The work begins with an exploration of what that oppression is and how the given audience sees and is affected by it. Then, Boal’s theatrical techniques are used to allow the audience an interactive approach to problem solving. They are given the opportunity to explore solutions, develop tactics, and gain perspective so that they might then be able to resist their oppression.

Cop In the Head:

One of the techniques that Boal developed is called “cops in the head.” This technique gives the spectators insight into the mind and internal struggle of a protagonist. For instance, we may see a scene in which a protagonist struggles with a decision or situation, and then we are presented with the ‘voices’ in her life that impede or influence her decisions. The scene plays out and we hear from those voices out loud, as the protagonist tries to handle her given situation. This method displays societal pressures or ‘hang-ups’ that a might play a role in real-life situations, and we, as an audience see what is influencing the protagonist’s decisions.

We used some of these techniques in the development of our piece. Here is an example of a “cop in the head” form written into our script:

Zakee: Do you wanna go out with me and Justin this weekend? You could bring a friend.

The scene freezes.

Cop: You are so smart and intelligent. You know the right choice to make.

Cop 2: But he’s sooo cute!

Cop: He pushes a kid, just to show off. That’s not very attractive to me!

Cop 2: Everyone will be so impressed. You’ll get to hang with the popular crowd.

Cop: Is popularity more important to you than integrity?

The scene unfreezes.

Skyla: [Breath] You know, I would have said yes, but I saw what you did earlier. You’re not someone I wanna hang out with. You treat people like they don’t have feelings.