

Encounter Theatre

Encounter Theatre is a Social Theatre technique that allows one to discover, get to know and talk face to face about a social conflict.



Inclusion And Diversity



Storytelling, Forum Theatre, Live Action Role-Playing (LARP), Body language



20-30



15-30 participants



Scripted Scenes.
Props and set design.
Costumes and makeup.
Sound and music.
Personal stories and testimonials.
Found objects or environmental elements.
Multi-sensory elements such as tactile experiences, aromas or taste.



Flexible



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- 3.3 Theatre Methodologies
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It is an activity that can be performed both outdoors and indoors depending on the needs of your group.



Some Encounter Theatre productions integrate interactive technology, such as augmented reality, virtual reality, or interactive projections, to engage participants in innovative and immersive ways.

Implementation:

In Encounter Theatre, the narrative unfolds in unconventional spaces, such as streets, public places, or non-theatrical venues, allowing for a more intimate and engaging connection between the actors and the audience. This style of theatre aims to evoke emotions, provoke thoughts, and stimulate dialogue by immersing participants in the story, often through personalized or participatory elements.

The main activities of Encounter Theatre are:

- Site-Specific Performances.
- Interactive Storytelling.
- Live Action Role-Playing (LARP).
- Debriefing and reflection.
- Other creative activities (for example, related to the use of body or metaphors).

Encounter Theatre can be used with a wide range of themes. For example:

- **Social Justice.** Theatre encounters can explore issues of inequality, discrimination, human rights, and social justice. They can raise awareness and encourage dialogue about marginalized communities, systemic biases, and the need for societal change.
- **Mental Health and Well-being.** Productions can delve into themes of mental health, anxiety, depression, and emotional well-being. They can aim to reduce stigma and promote understanding.
- **Environmental Awareness.** Theatre encounters might focus on ecological concerns, sustainability, climate change, and humanity's relationship with the environment. They can inspire reflection and action towards a more sustainable future.
- **Personal Identity.** Exploration of themes related to identity, including gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and cultural heritage. These encounters can foster empathy, understanding, and appreciation for diverse identities.
- **Conflict and Resolutions.** Productions can address interpersonal conflicts, societal tensions, or global conflicts, aiming to promote dialogue, reconciliation, and peace-building.

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- **Historical and Cultural Narratives.** Theatre encounters can bring historical events, cultural traditions, and forgotten narratives to life. They offer a way to revisit history, challenge established narratives, and celebrate cultural diversity.
 - **Technology and Society.** Exploring the impact of technology on human relationships, privacy, ethics, and society as a whole. These encounters can provoke discussions about the benefits and drawbacks of technological advancements.
 - **Community and Empowerment.** Encounter Theatre can focus on community building, empowerment, resilience, and solidarity. It can be celebrated the strength and stories of communities, fostering a sense of belonging and support.

The ideal space for Encounter Theatre is often non-traditional and can vary widely depending on the specific goals, themes, and requirements of the performance. Some spaces that work well for the Encounter Theatre could be:

- **Site-specific locations.** Venues that are not traditional theatre spaces, such as parks, warehouses, historical sites, or public squares, can provide unique settings for immersive experiences. These spaces can become integral parts of the narrative, enhancing the overall impact of the performance.
- **Non-theatrical venues.** Places like art galleries, museums, community centers, or unconventional indoor spaces offer opportunities for innovative performances. They allow for a departure from the typical stage setting and enable closer interactions between performers and audience members.
- **Immersive environments.** Some Encounter Theatre experiences are designed to create temporary or specially constructed environments that completely immerse participants in the narrative.
- **Outdoor spaces.**
- **Adaptable venues** that can be transformed or adapted to suit the needs of the performance.

The phases for the Encounter Theatre would be:

Theme. Participants must choose a social issue that affects them and explain why. The choice of issue can be made in different ways. For example, in a debate or by using the famous Dixit cards. Participants should agree on which social issue they are going to address.

Ingredients. Once the theme of our story has been chosen, the writing and staging process begins. The ingredients are 4 exercises that participants can do to internalise the chosen social issue. There is a wide variety of ingredients. However, we choose those that we find most effective.

- Create a timeline about incidents that are related with the chosen topic.
- Representation of the theme with a moving figure. "The Human Machine". The participants must represent without words the chosen theme. It could be interesting start with an easy object, for example a motorbike and continua to reach the social issue.
- Metaphor. Choose an object that can represent the social issue.
- Storyboard with plasticines.

Final text/representation. Once the "ingredients" have been "added", the participants have to represent their social issue to the audience. They can do this by combining some of the ingredients or by creating a new story (written or staged) about the social issue.

Instructions for debriefing:

Begin by asking participants how the activity made them feel and what thoughts or emotions it brought up. Encourage them to share their initial reactions.

Once the social problems have been presented to the audience, the facilitator opens a debate with the audience.

He asks them different questions that help them to reflect on the social problem.

For example:

- what social problem have they represented?
- do you feel that you reflect it?
- do you think it happens in the same way in your environment?
- how can we change this problem?

Tips and notes to the facilitator:

- Create a safe environment. Establish a safe and welcoming space for participants. Encourage openness, respect, and confidentiality. Make it clear that everyone's experiences and contributions are valued.
- Set clear expectations. Explain the purpose, goals, and rules of the Encounter Theatre session beforehand. Let participants know what they can expect and what is expected of them.
- Icebreakers and warm-ups. Start with icebreakers or warm-up activities to help participants feel comfortable and connected. These activities can also set the tone for the session.
- Establish trust. Building trust is crucial. Encourage open communication, active listening, and empathy among participants. Encourage them to be vulnerable but also ensure that they feel safe doing so.
- Role definitions. Clarify the roles of participants - whether they'll be audience, actors, both. Ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities.
- Adaptability. Be flexible and ready to adapt to the needs and emotions of the group. Sometimes, plans might need to change based on how the session unfolds.
- Debriefing. After the session, provide time for debriefing. Allow participants to reflect on their experiences, share insights, and discuss what they learned. This helps in processing emotions and experiences.