THE SYMBIOTIC EMBEDDEDNESS OF THEATRE AND CONFLICT: A METAPHOR-INSPIRED QUARTET OF CASE STUDIES

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By

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to demonstrate connections between theatre and conflict, as inspired by metaphor and embodied by case studies of four theatrical organizations working in conflict zones: The Freedom Theatre in Palestine, Ajoka Theatre in Pakistan, DAH Teater in Serbia, and Belarus Free Theatre in Belarus. In so doing, it attempts to name the overlaps and relationships as sub-concepts that exist as connective tissue between conflict and theatre, writ large. These sub-concepts - subverting to play, imagining hidden histories, embodying the unspeakable, and blurring illusion and reality - offer a taxonomy of various dimensions of the theatre-conflict relationship. This taxonomy explores the symbiotic embeddedness of theatre and conflict as a possible explanation for the existence of theatrical organizations in conflict zones.

TO THOSE WHO SHARED THEIR

STORIES, LIVES, AND MEMORIES WITH ME

AS THIS PROJECT UNFOLDED.

THANK YOU.

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Introduction

What is the nature of the relationship between theatre and conflict? This thesis is an attempt to move toward a comprehensive understanding of this question, perhaps going so far as to suggest preliminary answers. This question is played out on a daily basis in the work of theatre organizations that operate in conflict contexts. How these organizations function and the work that they do offers real examples of this relationship. As an entry point into investigating this question, some of these organizations can shed light on hidden dynamics that are at play in the theatre-conflict relationship.

This thesis begins as an exploration of the work of four theatre organizations operating in conflict zones. These organizations serve as the pillars upon which a platform is built, facilitating the emergence of sub-concepts that these organizations reflect. Out of this taxonomy of sub-concepts, multiple questions and one suggestion regarding the theatre-conflict relationship emerge. This proposition, that theatre and conflict reflect a relationship of symbiotic embeddedness, can serve as a foundation for future academic studies, questions, and inquiries. Perhaps more importantly, this suggestion can contribute to the work of theatre and conflict practitioners, creating space for them to intentionally embody and contest these ideas.

What follows, then, is a journey from theoretical inspirations and methodological approaches to the taxonomy of sub-concepts and the idea of symbiotic embeddedness in the theatre-conflict relationship. This thesis adopts a sense of curiosity about its driving question, mindful of the inevitable smallness that these four case studies represent in the context of numerous theatre organizations around the world. It hopes to offer concepts that scholars and practitioners alike can debate and enact.

Theoretical Inspirations and Methodology

Theoretical Inspirations

Exploring the performing arts as a peacebuilding strategy is an interdisciplinary endeavor, requiring an integrative theoretical frame. As a result, this research is approached through the work of cognitive linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson. Their influential text highlights the ways in which we use metaphor and create new meaning through it. Metaphors are systems of thought that help us organize our understandings of concepts by representing and experiencing them as other concepts.[1] Examples include the orientational metaphors GOOD IS UP and BAD IS DOWN.[2]

One key characteristic of metaphor is its ability to reveal and conceal.[3] Metaphor emphasizes certain aspects of a particular concept when that concept is likened to another. For example, when ARGUMENT IS WAR, we stress the conflict-based elements of argument: attacking positions, winning, gaining ground, and so forth. This metaphor, however, hides the collaborative and discussion-based elements of argument. In war, there is often no collaboration between enemies, just as there is often no collaboration between parties opposing one another in an argument. Nonetheless, there is a journey of dialogue that happens in arguments, which moves participants from one state of understanding to another. Using the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor hides the dialoguing dimension of argument while highlighting others.

Further, *Metaphors We Live By* explores how metaphor can create new meaning. Rather than limit themselves to metaphors that already exist in some sort of objective reality, Lakoff and Johnson provide space for the creation of new senses of meaning, based on the subjectivity of

[1] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 1980, p. 5.
[2] This thesis adopts Lakoff and Johnson's use of small capital letters for offsetting underlying metaphors.
[3] Ibid, pp. 10-13.

lived experiences and perceptions. When created, any effective new metaphor results in a series of "entailments" that exemplify one part of the new concept in terms of another.[4] These entailments are akin to sub-concepts that link broader ideas to one other. For Lakoff and Johnson, the "reverberations" coming from new-meaning metaphors have certain qualities: they highlight and hide, involve specific elements rather than entire entailments (love reflects a particular aspect of work rather than the entire concept, for instance), and offer meaning specific to culture and past experience.[5] In so doing, Lakoff and Johnson expose the usefulness of metaphor as connection, particularly in terms of how it facilitates the creation of new meaning. This idea - that metaphor links one concept to another, creating new meaning - inspires this thesis' exploration of the theatre-conflict connection.

Peace researcher John Paul Lederach and public policy researcher Angela Jill Lederach have applied the idea of creating new meaning through metaphor to the arts and peacebuilding. Their work uses metaphor to highlight the reverberating, echoing, and penetrating effects of sound and its implications for social healing in conflict settings.[6] This idea, of a concept that reverberates across multiple conflict-related spaces, may serve as a pillar of support for the juxtaposition of theatre and conflict that occurs in this thesis. Broadly, the non-linear nature of the arts dovetails with the cyclical nature of conflict - a field of study and practice that, in the West, is dominated by the "CONFLICT IS LINEAR" and "PEACE IS SEQUENTIAL" metaphors.[7] However, the cyclicality of conflict, a perspective encouraged by prominent peace scholars such

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[4] Ibid, pp. 139-146. Lakoff and Johnson's key new-meaning metaphor is LOVE IS A COLLABORATIVE WORK OF ART. Their entailments articulate what it means for something to be a collaborative work of art, which gives new meaning to the concept of love: love is work, demands sacrifice, is an aesthetic experience, requires discipline, creates a reality, requires instinctive communication, and involves creativity are just some of their sub-concepts.

[5] Ibid, pp. 140-142.

[6] John Paul Lederach and Angela Jill Lederach, *When Blood and Bones Cry Out*, 2010. In their conclusion on p. 208, the authors define social healing as "the capacity of communities and their respective individuals to survive, locate voice and resiliently innovate spaces of interaction that nurture meaningful conversation and purposeful action in the midst and aftermath of escalated and structural violence."

[7] Ibid, p. 49.

as Adam Curle[8] and Johan Galtung,[9] has implications for the arts. As a set of social healing practices, the arts link to conflict "as simultaneously available and circular phenomena...precisely because direct and structural violence are not experienced at community levels as linear and sequential."[10] Using Lakoff and Johnson's work as a foundation, Lederach and Lederach apply metaphor-driven techniques to the intersection of the performing arts and peacebuilding, with a particular focus on the aural dimensions of social healing. Lederach and Lederach serve as one example of a way to use metaphor to connect peacebuilding to the arts, approaching the task from the perspective of peacebuilding.

In a wider theoretical sense, the connection between the performing arts and conflict is real. John Paul Lederach, in his seminal peacebuilding text, asks the following question: "What if reconciliation were more like a creative artistic process than a linear formula of cumulative activities aimed at producing a result?"[11] Conflict experiences, often couched in political and physical terms, have an actual intersection with the arts because of the nonlinear nature of both. There is a natural marriage between the creativity and imagination of the performing arts and the serendipity and accident of conflict, given that both have affective rather than cognitive tendencies. Lederach calls for a move in the world of peace and conflict studies toward respect for the artistic process, particularly in the sense of valuing the process' "own sense of time" and lack of chronology, innate "fun," "simple and honest" expression, and essence as not "something that mostly deals with the head."[12]

Respect for the artistic process is but one component of the moral imagination, a concept coined by Lederach. Rather than worship the science and exactness of peacebuilding work,

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[8] See Adam Curle's seminal text, *Making Peace*, for more on conflict's cyclicality.
[9] Johan Galtung, in *Peace Research Education Action, Volume I*, also addressed the idea of conflict as cyclical.
[10] Lederach and Lederach, *When Blood and Bones Cry Out*, 2010, p. 54.
[11] John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, 2005, p. 159.
[12] Ibid, p. 159-160.

peacebuilders ought to be in touch with "the art and soul of building peace," to borrow the subtitle of *The Moral Imagination*. Lederach boils these principles down into a simple stanza, imagined as a plaque above the exit of the fictitious School for the Moral Imagination, attended by major community and world leaders:

> Reach out to those you fear.
> Touch the heart of complexity.
> Imagine beyond what is seen.
> Risk vulnerability one step at a time.[13]

These four principles - understanding the interdependence of all relationships through inclusivity, embracing complexity, embodying imagination and creativity, and opening up to risk - represent the keys to conflict transformation.[14] For Lederach, the moral imagination is an imperative that must be taken up if peace is to be achieved, a concept that resonates with this thesis in terms of imagination and creativity.

Aside from theory, there are numerous instances of theatrical practice being used for conflict transformation. The text *Acting Together: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict* seeks to chronicle the ways in which performance projects around the world attempt to transform conflict through theatre. Theatre practitioner and educator Cynthia Cohen, actor Roberto Gutiérrez Varea, and peace researcher Polly Walker bring together a series of reflective case study essays written by theatre practitioners working in conflict zones, establishing a pool of collective knowledge regarding this intersection.[15] The anthology highlights various theatrical examples of community responses to conflict, ranging from performance in Sri Lanka and peacebuilding in the former Yugoslavia to resistance in Palestine

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[13] Ibid, p. 177.

[14] As is the case in any interdisciplinary field, various schools of thought in the world of peace and conflict studies associate themselves with different conflict-related terminology: a) conflict management views conflict in terms of damage limitation, b) conflict resolution assumes that conflict is a problem that can be solved, and c) conflict transformation attempts to change conflict from one state to another without adopting an underlying premise of conflict as positive or negative. John Paul Lederach is respected as a main originator of conflict transformation.

[15] Cynthia Cohen, Roberto Gutiérrez Varea, and Polly O. Walker, eds., *Acting Together*, 2011.

and ritual in Australia. The collection gathers together numerous experiences, allowing the editors to draw an experiential connection between performance- and conflict-based endeavors.

Cohen, Varea, and Walker use the collection of essays in Volume I as a point of departure for theory development in Volume II. Intersecting Lederach's idea of the moral imagination with a separation between art and society, the editors argue that the nucleus of a performance space is surrounded by a "permeable membrane" that allows the lessons and experience of art to transform spaces beyond the membrane.[16] Theatrical and performative works that exist in the nucleus move through the permeable membrane to broader social spaces that surround it, connecting to, impacting, and being informed by real-world experiences. The moral imagination, as articulated by Lederach, allows lessons to become genuine as the membrane "between imagination and reality" is transcended.[17]

Lessons emerge from this collection of cases and theoretical articulation. Peacebuilding performances can be powerful: they can support communities in engaging "painful issues" and navigating conflicting dynamics, can cause harm that should be minimized, mutually reinforce "sociopolitical effectiveness," "make substantive contributions to justice and peace," depend on "respect for the integrity of the artistic process," and could have greater impact if non-arts organizations understood their effect.[18] As an explicit expression of the importance of the intersection of peacebuilding and performance, the theoretical framing of this type of theatre shows the ways in which this practice intersects with artistic and socially embedded values. The lessons learned from these experiences are a fundamental point of departure for work at the intersection of theatre and conflict. Bringing it all together, Cohen, Varea, and Walker attempt

[16] Cynthia Cohen, Roberto Gutiérrez Varea, and Polly O. Walker, "The Permeable Membrane and the Moral Imagination," in *Building Just and Inclusive Communities*, vol. 2 of *Acting Together*, 2011, pp. 162-163.
[17] Ibid, p. 188.
[18] Cynthia Cohen, Roberto Gutiérrez Varea, and Polly O. Walker, "Lessons from the Acting Together Project," in *Building Just and Inclusive Communities*, vol. 2 of *Acting Together*, 2011, pp. 191-197.

to link the moral imagination to lived theatrical experience. In contrast to Lederach and Lederach, Cohen, Varea, and Walker approach the relationship from the artistic perspective and with limited use of metaphor, serving as another example upon which this thesis builds.

This thesis, then, is inspired by connection. Developing a useful metaphor that likened theatre to conflict, which occurred as part of the pilot study (see the "Methodology" section below) that preceded this thesis, contributed to the articulation of a theoretical and practical theatre-conflict relationship. Examining existing literature, such as that of Lederach and Lederach as well as Cohen, Varea, and Walker, furthered and refined this thinking. This complicated the previous metaphorical expression from its original form as a one-way relationship, deepening and expanding the author's understanding of the theatre-conflict connection. In building on these perspectives and approaches, this thesis offers theatre and conflict scholars and practitioners a different space for exploring the theatre-conflict relationship. Further, it attempts to fill a gap between theatrical action in conflict zones and academic explanations of the theatre-conflict link, connecting theory and practice in a tangible way.

Methodology

This study explores the overlap of theatre and conflict, as embodied by theatre organizations working in conflict zones. As such, it relies on a combination of data sources. These include: participant-led, in-depth interviews and informal conversations with staff members from various theatre organizations working in conflict zones (The Freedom Theatre in Palestine, Ajoka Theatre in Pakistan, DAH Teater in Serbia, and Belarus Free Theatre[19] in Belarus and the United Kingdom); a review of publicly available data such as articles, documentaries, and websites; and performances and accounts of performances, whether in-

[19] Despite the author's best attempts, the staff members of Belarus Free Theatre could not be interviewed. Thus, they are the only organization reviewed in this study with which the author did not have any direct contact.

person, written, or videotaped. Interviews were analyzed through manual coding, and other data were examined or observed as corroborations or contestations of the themes that emerged during the process of coding interviews.

It is worth noting that this thesis builds on a short pilot study conducted for an applied conflict resolution research methods course in Spring 2014, resulting in the creation of the THEATRE IS CONFLICT metaphor.[20] During that pilot study, interviews were conducted as a result of the author's pre-existing relationships with colleagues who do integrative arts work in conflict zones. Working in Cyprus and Liberia with TheatrEtc and B4Youth Theatre, respectively, these colleagues offered indicators of questions, topics, and interview approaches that were more or less successful. A further interview conducted during the pilot study, with Shahid Nadeem of Ajoka Theatre, was used in this thesis as the foundation for the "Case Study 2: Ajoka Theatre" section. The pilot study used a grounded theory coding process to draw out themes from each interview. These themes helped shape the initial inquiry for this thesis.

Because this study highlights organizations working in conflict zones, it borrows its methodological orientation from grounded theory, an approach that allows researchers to develop new understandings and theory based on practice in the field. This technique emerged from the work of sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss,[21] later polished by Strauss and nursing scholar Juliet Corbin,[22] in their study of the sociological dimensions of illness. In essence, grounded theory seeks to extrapolate themes and justify relationships from lived experience and practical work. This thesis adopts the main elements of grounded theory in unveiling sub-

[20] Originally, this metaphor was the foundation for the current thesis. However, the research process revealed that the theatre-conflict relationship is more complex than metaphor allows for. Thus, the THEATRE IS CONFLICT metaphor became an inspiration for rather than an essential part of this thesis.

[21] See *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* by Glaser and Strauss for more on grounded theory.

[22] *Basics of Qualitative Research* offers more on the three types of coding found in grounded theory work.

concepts from interviews and other publicly available data sources, such as those mentioned above.

During the data analysis process, codes were created based on sub-concepts that emerged as organizing structures across multiple conversations. These sub-concepts were then examined and refined in light of publicly available information, which supported or challenged information found in interviews with theatre practitioners. Fundamentally, like grounded theory, this study reflects a progression from concepts to relationships to categories.

In the canon of interdisciplinary thinking, some have referred to this type of approach as bridging the explanation-action gap.[23] Though many interdisciplinarians - particularly at the undergraduate or graduate level - often move from explanation to action, this thesis works in the opposite direction: from action to explanation. Grounded theory is a useful methodology for transitioning from the practical, lived experiences of theatre practitioners in conflict zones to the foundational, theoretical frameworks that are of interest to scholars and academics seeking to understand the theatre-conflict relationship. That grounded theory allows for movement from action to explanation is an essential part of this study, particularly as far as understanding the methods of this thesis are concerned.

This thesis is built on the work of four organizations. Organizations were selected in consultation with the author's thesis advisor. Selection criteria included being an organization self-identifying as an artistic, theatre organization (as opposed to an activist organization that used theatre) working in a conflict zone (whether inter- or intrastate conflict). Conversations with the author's thesis advisor led to a series of connections with theatre practitioners working for four organizations, one each in Belarus, Palestine, Pakistan, and Serbia. These organizations, handpicked because of their link to this study's area of focus and the ways in which they

[23] Miller and Boix Mansilla, "Thinking Across Perspectives and Disciplines," 2004, pp. 12-13.

demonstrate diverse political, theatrical, and social experiences, served as the basis for this thesis. Initial exploration of these individuals and organizations included brief, unstructured conversations and an examination of publicly available information.

These four organizations are diverse, in terms of their theatrical approach, conflict context, and length of experience. First, The Freedom Theatre (TFT), founded in 2006, is housed in Jenin Refugee Camp in the Palestinian West Bank. Informal conversations with TFT staff supported its presence in this paper. Second, Ajoka Theatre, established in 1983, is based in Lahore, Pakistan. Co-founder Shahid Nadeem was interviewed for this thesis. Third, DAH Teater was born in 1991 in Belgrade, Serbia. Co-founder Dijana Milošević was interviewed for this study. Finally, Belarus Free Theatre began its work in 2005 in Minsk, Belarus, under the direction of Natalia Kaliada and Nicolai Khalezin. Despite the author's and his thesis advisor's best efforts, nobody from Belarus Free Theatre could be interviewed. Put together, these organizations represent the units of analysis for this thesis.

Participants were approached from an informed, context-specific, and arts-focused perspective, given the strengths of the researcher (the author of this thesis). As an interdisciplinary musical and theatrical performer who has performed, studied, and evaluated various types of artistic work (including collaborations between and across the disciplines of music, theatre, and dance), the researcher was able to speak to participants as both an interested outsider and a fellow artist. Simultaneously, given his pre-existing knowledge regarding peace and conflict studies (based on past undergraduate and subsequent graduate work), the researcher was able to consider this topic in light of specific conflict dynamics. He brought that understanding to conversations with participants, allowing for a greater degree of context specificity.

Because of the small sample size (four organizations) and the distinct nuances of each organization in terms of location, style, length of experience, and history, each organization's uniqueness was highlighted throughout the study. As such, case studies were chosen as the main structure for presenting findings. The organization of this paper places the cases at the literal and metaphorical center of the work in order for the reader to understand them as the heart of this text. These cases are not meant to offer generalizations about all theatre work in all conflict zones, but rather to explore the point of view of some insiders on the way to suggesting a taxonomy of sub-concepts[24] and a new overarching concept.

Since the insider individuals who feature in this study were connected to the author's thesis advisor, participants were contacted via email introduction. A 1-2 hour interview was arranged, either in-person (if the participant was in the DC area or would be traveling there soon) or via Skype. An informed consent document was reviewed, discussed, and signed before interviews began. The document offered varying degrees of confidentiality and anonymity for participants (see Appendix B for a sample). Interviews were audio recorded, a fact that was indicated in the informed consent document. Technical difficulties and poor Internet connections sometimes occurred during Skype interviews. These were handled by restarting the Skype call until the connection was more secure.

Interviews attempted to uncover the perspective of the participant. As a result, participants led the conversation regarding particular topics, though the interviewer introduced the topics. The areas explored in these interviews included:

- How the organization was founded;
- The organization's artistic process;

[24] Elzbieta Gozdziak, a member of the author's thesis committee, suggested the taxonomy of sub-concepts as a potential organizing framework offered by the discipline of anthropology (among others), which recalls a 1903 text, titled *Primitive Classification*, written by sociologists Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss.

- The larger political/conflict dynamics that were and are at play;
- The participant's view on their organization's relationship to conflict; and
- The participant's view of the theatre-conflict relationship writ large.

Each topic was underpinned by various embedded themes, around which conversation sprung. Participants explored the intersection of their personal and professional experience, considered the link between theatre and conflict, and reflected on sub-concepts that connect theatre and conflict. Once a particular train of thought was exhausted, the interviewer returned to the semi-structured thematic outline for further lines of inquiry. In the context of peace research, this approach has been referred to as "in-depth interviewing."[25]

After each interview concluded, the recording was transcribed by the author and then manually coded, as informed by grounded theory. During the coding process, interview transcripts were examined in terms for similar expressions of the relationship between theatre and conflict, as lived and embodied by the interviewed practitioners. Transcripts were reread and mined for sub-concepts that link theatre to conflict. Quotes were isolated from each interview, categorized according to similarities that arose from the interview transcripts and audio recordings, and developed into sub-categories that reflect the on-the-ground realities articulated by interview subjects.

In keeping with grounded theory coding processes, interview data was analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding. First, concepts were identified via open coding. For example, one participant indicated:

> I think that the mechanism of the theatre or the theatre play is based on conflict. But conflict is not necessarily something negative, and this is also what theatre can teach us. Conflict can simply be the engine that moves the situation or the characters further and something happens, and then something is transformed or something is being done and so on.

[25] Karen Bronéus, "In-depth Interviewing," in *Understanding Peace Research*, 2011, pp. 130-145.

From this, the researcher extrapolated concepts such as 'negative conflict,' 'conflict as an engine,' and 'theatre as a mechanism.' The next step was to assess causal relationships via axial coding. This quote offered the participant's perspective outright: "I think that the mechanism of the theatre or the theatre play is based on conflict." Here, the relationship was one in which theatre relies on conflict: conflict causes theatre. The final step was to find central categories or core variables via selective coding.[26] Emerging from the above quote, the researcher reflected that conflict is embedded in theatre, since theatre cannot survive without conflict. Because it was supported by other data sources, embeddedness became a core part of the theatre-conflict relationship that emerged from the study.

In an effort to corroborate and verify data, interviews were supplemented with publicly accessible information regarding each theatre practitioner and their organization. Members of the organization, the individual interviewed, or others connected to the organization have often produced publicly available information, which allowed for multiple angles of exploration for each organization. This came in the form of websites, documentaries, and articles that referred to the individual interviewed or their organization.

In particular, the researcher observed the work of each of these groups. In the case of The Freedom Theatre and Belarus Free Theatre, for instance, documentaries such as *Arna's Children* and *Dangerous Acts Starring the Unstable Elements of Belarus* offered key insights (including footage of various productions) into each organization. In another instance, the author was fortunate to witness a production by Ajoka Theatre, *Amrika Chalo*, that came to Washington DC. Observing performances, whether virtually or in person, increased understanding of the ways in which each organization embodied its values in its everyday work.

[26] Anol Bhattacherjee, *Social Science Research*, 2012, pp. 113-115.

Ultimately, the methodology used for this thesis favored practical experience as a way to articulate theoretical connections and core concepts. Organizations working within the theatre-conflict relationship became case studies that supported this exploratory and boundary-pushing endeavor. Themes from the daily work and lived realities of these organizations emerged through a grounded theory approach, which triangulated data from interviews with theatre practitioners, observation of performances, and publicly available information about the organizations. In using a grounded theory approach, these three sets of information checked against one another to support an articulation of the theatre-conflict connection as embodied by these organizations.

Case Study 1: The Freedom Theatre[27]

Based in Jenin Refugee Camp in the northern West Bank, The Freedom Theatre (TFT) is a theatre organization that works with Palestinians. It has been researched across multiple academic circles and considered in numerous journal articles.[28] The organization has toured the United States, presenting its work at major universities such as Brown, Georgetown, and University of Connecticut. The organization's relationship to international audiences has enabled it to promote and protect its original mission: using theatre as a method of "Creation Under Occupation."[29]

History

TFT has its roots in the First Intifada, with later links to the Second Intifada.[30] During the First Intifada, as all schools for Palestinians were closed, an organization named Care and Learning began filling the educational gap with informal, popular, and artistic learning. Founded by Israeli Jewish political and human rights activist Arna Mer-Khamis, Care and Learning opened four Children's Houses in Jenin. One of these would turn into the Stone Theatre, which was built inclusive of the surrounding houses. In an effort to further her vision of a society in which the fates of the oppressor and the oppressed are one, Arna promoted the use of the Stone Theatre by those who benefited from Care and Learning. After she passed away, her son, actor Juliano Mer-Khamis, took up the work of the Stone Theatre.

In 2002, the Stone Theatre was destroyed during the Second Intifada's Battle of Jenin. Recalling the memory of the Stone Theatre, Juliano, his former students, and some activists

[27] Though this case is not built on a specific, sit-down interview with one TFT staff member, it uses numerous informal conversations with and various presentations delivered by TFT staff members as a foundation. Quotes in this case study that do not have footnotes emerged from conversations with and presentations by TFT staff.

[28] Abdelfattah Abusrour and Hala Al-Yamani's discussion of "Juliano Khamis," Erin B. Mee's article in *The Drama Review* of Fall 2011, and Shilpi Saini's article titled "Theatre of the War-Zone" are just some examples.

[29] *The Freedom Theatre,* last modified 2015, Web.

[30] *Arna's Children*, directed by Juliano Mer-Khamis and Danniel Danniel, 2004.

established TFT in 2006. TFT began its work and developed a strong, though odd, relationship with the local context.[31] It operated under Juliano's direction until 2011, when "an unknown enemy of culture and freedom" murdered him.[32] Remaining activists and former students took up the mantle of TFT's work, such that a mix of Palestinians and non-Palestinians now directs the organization. The organization does its work with support from various high-profile international partners. In addition to receiving funds from UNESCO, Medico International, the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund, and the Annenburg Foundation, TFT benefits from multiple "Friends of The Freedom Theatre"-type organizations. The United Kingdom (Scotland, in particular), the United States, and Sweden all host significant support mechanisms for TFT.[33]

Values

TFT's values are embodied in its current slogan: "Generating Cultural Resistance."[34] The organization is explicit about its concern for culture as resistance, an organizing framework that aims to use the arts for wholesale social change and elimination of oppressive structures. TFT's previous slogan, "Creation Under Occupation," sought a similar outcome.[35] The constant reflection on and integration of the context of occupation is a thread that runs through both Arna's and Juliano's work.[36] The concept of intertwined fates is a clear part of TFT's narrative, which positions itself as an essential part of the struggle for Palestinian liberation.

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[31] Political theatre researcher Julia Hackman indicates that TFT would not exist without international staff and support. She argues that this results in TFT being viewed as an external, non-Palestinian imposition that is not a part of "indigenous civil society," but rather is "just another NGO."

[32] *The Freedom Theatre*.

[33] A quick Google search for "Friends of the Freedom Theatre" leads to the websites for support organizations based in the US, UK, and Sweden.

[34] *The Freedom Theatre*.

[35] Ibid.

[36] *Arna's Children*, a documentary shot largely by Juliano Mer-Khamis regarding his mother's anti-Occupation activities and the ways in which those activities intersected with her work in Jenin, details this experience.

Juliano's death in 2011 was a major catalyst for self-reflection within TFT as intra-organizational challenges began to emerge. The force of Juliano's personality and his overwhelming charisma may have, at times, overshadowed the framing of the organization's original values. However, Juliano's commitment to culture and art as opportunities for resistance is clear: "We're not healers. We're not good Christians. We are freedom fighters."[37] These original threads remain, but the organization's reliance on the international community for theatre knowledge and funding - combined with TFT's overlapping goals of social work, artistic development, and resistance - make for a dynamic mix of values that play out in work selection, international productions, and community relations. TFT's embodiment of these contested storylines and goals remains a work in progress.

Model

TFT enacts the aforementioned values via multiple methods, including through the development of professional actors and theatre practitioners. TFT focuses on acting and socially engaged theatre through the TFT School, which introduces the basics of acting and drama to young people who have completed high school. The School serves as professional preparation for the works that TFT produces, as well as future careers in the acting business. The ideas of expression and resistance are exemplified through workshops and performances, which further the capacity of the organization and the individuals who participate in its work.

Further, TFT uses multimedia programming to continue its mission. Story - and capturing story through film and photography - is an essential part of TFT's activities. Young people without advanced training in film and photography are given the equipment and tools to develop their abilities to expose the "humanity and truth of the Palestinian situation," challenging

[37] *The Freedom Theatre*.

popular and mainstream Western media narratives.[38] The translation of anger and struggle into creative and artistic development is a key component of TFT's approach, tracing to the days of Arna and Juliano. It is through these tools that the organization uses culture as a form of resistance.

Works

Daily, TFT engages with themes that reflect its values and experience. One of the plays that TFT produces on a regular basis is titled *Suicide Note from Palestine*. This play blurs reality with illusion; in it, a young girl dreams that she is the Palestinian nation. She has decided to commit suicide, reflecting on the lived experience of "general depression" and "confusion" that plagues Palestine's youth.[39] The physical embodiment of national and generation-specific trauma[40] through a blending of truth and fiction - particularly in the sense of the dream and lived state - brings the illusion of hope and a positive future to the fore. TFT's use of audiovisual and multimedia techniques adds another dimension of embodiment to the overall production.

Another play that TFT produces is *The Island*. This play features two inmates, housed in a prison based on the notorious Robben Island facility that held anti-apartheid revolutionary Nelson Mandela, performing a condensed version of Sophocles' *Antigone*. Adopted by TFT to reflect the contemporary experience of Palestinian political activists held in Israeli prisons, *The Island* is a production that reminds audiences of the parallels between the Palestinian experience under Occupation and the South African experience under apartheid. Separation, abuse, trauma, suffering, and art are intertwined as TFT embodies its value system of culture as resistance. As the inmates within the play undertake the artistic project, the incarcerated nature of the

[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Medical anthropologist Arthur Kleinman refers to such collective trauma as "social suffering," a concept discussed in his "Everything That Really Matters." TFT enacts social suffering in *Suicide Note from Palestine*.

production reaches across Palestinian society, particularly in light of characterizations of the Gaza Strip as the world's largest "open-air prison."[41]

Discussion

As an organization, TFT draws theatre and conflict together. First, TFT is explicit in its embrace of theatre as conflict. It makes clear that its staff and participants are not "healers" or "good Christians."[42] Theatre is embedded in the conflict dynamics found in the surrounding environment, just as conflict is built into the theatre that TFT produces. Juliano, TFT's founder, took this approach and infused it into the organization, which highlights the importance of the lived experience of conflict in TFT's theatrical work. This framing expands into the broader artistic experiences that TFT promotes, including filmmaking and photography. The arts are viewed as a weapon in the conflict, one that challenges the physical and mental Occupation of Palestinian society and creativity.

This approach to the intersection of theatre and conflict reflects multiple Palestinian narratives, reflecting intergenerational differences between older and younger Palestinians. Theatre could be viewed simply as a method of expression for beneficiaries of TFT's work. However, it is couched in the context of the middle generation of Palestinians that seek a political solution and the younger generation of Palestinians that favor militant approaches to challenging the status quo.[43] Though Juliano was not Palestinian himself, his ability to move between multiple communities and his murder in 2011 reflects a strong connection with the Palestinian cause, notable acceptance by Palestinians, and integration into certain aspects of

[41] John Collins' "Confinement Under an Open Sky" is just one publication that uses this term to describe Gaza.
[42] *The Freedom Theatre*.
[43] Sophie Richter-Devroe, "Return Narratives of Palestinian Refugees in the West Bank," in *Palestinian Refugees*, ed. Sunaina Miari, 2012, pp. 103-118.

Palestinian identity. Theatre allows TFT to connect to people across the intergenerational differences found in Palestinian society.

Within this context, resistance is essential for TFT. Framed by the daily realities of the Occupation that controls and regulates every aspect of Palestinian life, only two options remain: submit or fight.[44] Submission entails a slow erosion of personal daily control, while fighting entails a potential loss of life. In either case, the power of the individual in constructing opportunities and choices is lost. Indeed, the broader Occupation makes decisions for Palestinians before those decisions are even presented as options.

Given the background of TFT's founding, with the freshness of the Second Intifada, theatre becomes a weapon. TFT is clear about its identity as an organization that seeks to generate cultural resistance. In resisting the Occupation, theatre allows mental and artistic resistance to occur alongside physical, political, and economic resistance. Equipping a new generation of Palestinian youth with the skills to publicize their alternate narratives, TFT contributes to a culture of resistance by presenting various theatrical productions, plays, and skill development workshops. Its use of the arts creates a flow of resistance that challenges pre-existing structures and paradigms.

This, too, is a reflection of the generational differences associated with the Palestinian refugee community. As an organization seeded in Jenin Refugee Camp, TFT exists within the context of the broader narrative of revolutionary and militant youth that do not accept the status quo.[45] In its capacity to connect with the youth that it serves, adopting a similar mentality and framing enables TFT's success. TFT fits into the narrative stream forwarded by its participants as it promotes a culture of resistance among them. Then, it becomes possible for youth to

[44] *Arna's Children* shows this when following the story of Ala, one of the original members of Care and Learning.
[45] Sophie Richter-Devroe, "Return Narratives of Palestinian Refugees in the West Bank."

engage in struggle in a more extensive and involved manner by putting more than just their bodies at risk.

Thus, theatre is viewed as a way to exacerbate or accelerate conflict, bringing greater awareness and knowledge of the Occupation to those exposed to TFT's work. This exacerbation is a specific characteristic of TFT. The struggle for freedom is intertwined with the potential for exacerbating conflict. Fighting for change is preferred to the alternative of sitting with or avoiding lived situations and realities. For TFT, theatre and broader cultural forces are a way to challenge such experiences. The imaginative capacity of the arts, one that blurs reality with illusion, enables TFT's participants and TFT as an organization to expand the realm of the possible. In so doing, they imagine a future different from the status quo via exacerbation of the current conflict dynamic.

TFT is aware of this exacerbation potential. In fact, it does not shy away from it. Juliano, in *Arna's Children*, argues that TFT is a collection of freedom fighters that fight through art. This belief is continued in the form of productions that TFT hosts and workshops that it holds. Essentially, theatre is an exacerbation of conflict because it runs counter to the mental and creative oppression that is a feature of the Occupation. Indeed, it is more than just a physical space that is being occupied, but a mental and emotional one as well. Producing plays such as *Suicide Note from Palestine* and *The Island* challenges the oppressive stranglehold that the Occupation has on the Palestinian experience.

In so doing, TFT subverts to play. A concept that stems from the overlap of theatre and conflict, subverting to play refers to the ways in which individuals and organizations undermine and subvert pre-existing ideological, social, political, cultural, and religious structures so that

they can produce dramatic and theatrical work.[46] Subverting to play reflects a simultaneous experience of two activities: subverting established structures and playing with conflict. TFT's subverting to play enables it to exist in a shared space, suggesting a symbiotic relationship between theatre and conflict.

A final component of TFT's work, insofar as the relationship between theatre and conflict is concerned, is the degree to which theatre thrives on conflict. The conflict that plays out as a lived reality in the West Bank and other parts of Palestine is a source of inspiration for TFT. It serves not as a backdrop, but as an integral part of the theatrical, dramatic, and creative process. Actors and directors draw on their daily experiences in an effort to connect their productions to audiences from around the West Bank and the world. Not only does this make the artistic product more relatable, but it also deepens the metaphors of the product's content. Connections between current conflict conditions and theatrical productions are common in many of TFT's works. The capacity of theatre to relate to lived experience - to recreate life - is reflected in the degree to which conflict is at the heart of theatre.

TFT points to a relationship between theatre and conflict as a result of generating cultural resistance, intergenerational Palestinian narratives, conflict exacerbation, subverting to play, and a thriving of theatre on conflict. Framed by the context-specific dynamics of the Occupation, TFT's approach to resistance and conflict hints at a strong theatre-conflict connection. TFT's existence at the heart of this intersection sheds light on the ways in which these two concepts and experiences are inextricably linked, both in theory and practice.

[46] This concept echoes the work of Ajoka Theatre; it is further explored in "The Taxonomy" section of this thesis.

Case Study 2: Ajoka Theatre[47]

Based in Lahore, Pakistan, Ajoka is a theatre organization that works with Pakistanis. It aims to present contemporary content in an entertaining way, with the goal of promoting universal human rights, gender equality, and secular and democratic values. Though Ajoka has not benefited from immense documentation in the English-speaking part of the world, the recent selection of co-founder Shahid Nadeem as a Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellow with the US' National Endowment for Democracy[48] and a Spring 2015 production of Nadeem's *Dara* at the National Theatre in London have helped publicize Ajoka's work to non-Urdu- and Punjabi-speaking audiences. In so doing, Ajoka's 'contemporary' aim has come to resonate with political and theatrical communities across the world.

History

A Pakistani theatre organization, Ajoka Theatre was founded in 1984. As remains the case today, Pakistani politics in the 1980s reflected extremist influences. This was accentuated during the rule of General Zia al-Haq, who was both president and commander-in-chief of Pakistan's military.[49] Enforcing fundamentalist values and a strict interpretation of Islam, al-Haq's rule saw the banning of political parties, authoritarian control of the media, and censorship of the press. This approach to governance stifled Pakistani originality, challenging rather than continuing the rich artistic and creative tradition that has, historically, flourished across the Indian subcontinent. Ajoka's founding was a reaction to this experience, which must be viewed in the context of opposition to the extremist tendencies of the time.

[47] Unless otherwise noted, any quotation found in this case without a footnote come from the main interview that informed this case study; the author is grateful to Ajoka's co-founder Shahid Nadeem for his generous responses.

[48] Nadeem's capstone fellowship presentation at the National Endowment for Democracy, titled "Promoting Democracy through the Performing Arts in Pakistan," is available on YouTube.

[49] Later presidents, including major US ally General Pervez Musharraf, would emulate this tradition of simultaneously holding the highest Pakistani civilian and military positions. However, Zia al-Haq is considered by many to be the originator of this practice.

Ajoka's co-founder Shahid Nadeem, a university student in the late 1970s and early 1980s, was engaged in anti-extremist political activism at the time. Though optimistic about the future, Nadeem's protest activities and resulting arrests helped him realize that political change took a long time to reach fruition. He began to see that the public could be more easily reached through creative rather than protest-driven means. This led to a desire to write accessible creative work such as short stories and plays. Some of his earliest plays, including *The Dead Dog* and *The Third Knock*, explored political change as a metaphor for his own personal transformation. It is out of this intersection - that of the broader context of extremism in the Pakistani public sphere and the private experience of Nadeem's transformation from political activist to socially engaged theatre practitioner - that Ajoka emerged.

Values

Ajoka was born with the goal of establishing a "secular, democratic Pakistan" that respects human rights and fosters equal treatment of men and women. Ajoka exists as a countercultural force, particularly because of its reactionary nature. As such, it is seeded in contemporary issues and experiences, drawing on its political and activist origins. The organization seeks to "raise important issues confronting the society." Simultaneously, Ajoka's works attempt to provide high-quality entertainment. In the Pakistani context, this often arrives in the form of folktales. Through such stories, modern concerns are veiled beneath humor, pleasing aesthetic experiences, and cultural celebration, all of which are values that Ajoka holds dear.

Additionally, the organization is committed to reconnecting Pakistanis with the pre-Partition tradition of performing and visual arts. When Pakistan was founded, the country's originators defined the nation as anything that was not Indian. This was reflected in religious,

geographic, and linguistic separations. In so doing, the founding fathers rejected the longstanding performing arts heritage found throughout the Indian subcontinent, a tradition that has contributed to international art forms as diverse as flamenco dance[50] and contemporary music education in the US.[51] This denunciation turned minor differences into entrenched cultural divisions.[52] Ajoka's aim to reconnect Pakistanis with their historical artistic lineage is an attempt at creating a new Pakistani identity. This adds another layer to the meaning of Ajoka's name; in Punjabi and Urdu, *aj-ka* means 'contemporary' or 'today.'

Model

Ajoka's approach favors an integration of multiple art forms and audiences. Theatre serves as an opportunity for actors, set designers, producers, and directors to forward drama, music, and visual art. These multiple art forms allow audience members to engage with the product in a variety of ways: some individuals may understand the message more directly when music is used, while others might benefit from an artistic backdrop and opulent costuming. Integrating numerous art forms makes for a community experience that has a "social, collective" purpose in "mobilizing and educating" audience members. The interactive nature of Ajoka's performances allows audience members to connect to the material, content, and symbolism of a particular work.

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[50] Some flamencologists have noted similarities between flamenco dance and the classical North Indian *kathak* form, traces of which may have come to Andalusian Spain via the Roma people. Without overstating the connection, dance scholar Michelle Heffner-Hayes' *Flamenco: Conflicting Histories of the Dance* touches on the issue while respecting the contested nature of the debate.

[51] Musician and composer Don Ellis was among the first Western musicians to use Indian counting techniques to better teach rhythm to young musicians. His text, *The New Rhythm Book*, discusses these applications.

[52] Political scientist Edward Azar's work regarding the "Theory of Protracted Social Conflict" examines the role of Othering (see footnote 74 for a definition of the process of Othering) as a cultural phenomenon that exacerbates tensions in conflict situations. This entrenches difference, which is passed from generation to generation as - paraphrasing Azar - hatred is imbibed along with a mother's milk.

Beyond the integration of numerous art forms, Ajoka relies on rhetorical devices. Working in the censored society of Pakistan, in which the government reviews all public theatre for objectionable content, the theatre company must use metaphor and satire to veil its true intentions. Presenting a story regarding a particular historical character may seem to offer a narrative from the past, but Ajoka uses that framing to pass censorship while subliminally delivering contemporary content to its audiences. While this can be dangerous for the organization's survival within Pakistan, concealing its true message through metaphor, satire, and other rhetorical devices allows for freedom of expression and facilitates opportunities for Ajoka to remain true to its goals of promoting human rights, equal treatment of men and women, and secular countercultural dynamics.

Works

One of Ajoka's more recent productions satirizes US-Pakistani relations. Named *Amrika Chalo* ('Let's Go to America'), the play takes place in the visa-granting section of the US embassy in Pakistan.[53] Numerous individuals come to the embassy hoping to obtain a visa. Rather than take a serious approach to the issue, *Amrika Chalo* uses comedy. The satirical tones of the play allow audiences to laugh at the ridiculousness of the visa-granting process, poking fun at the US government, the Pakistani government, and the self-importance with which both take themselves. Undermining a process that politicians often consider to be a matter of national security through humor is a quintessential example of Ajoka's style.

Another play, one of Nadeem's earlier works, is titled *The Third Knock*. It references the revolving door of dictators that was found in Pakistan during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. In *The Third Knock*, the residents of an apartment building plot to kill their landlord after he raises

[53] As part of this study, the researcher was fortunate enough to witness a production of *Amrika Chalo* at Georgetown University. That experience informs this thesis since it represents some of Ajoka's work.

the rent beyond their ability to pay. While partying after their success, they hear a knock at the door; the landlord has returned from the dead. They kill him again and return to their party, but another knock again reveals the landlord. The ever-returning landlord serves as a metaphor for the ways in which numerous dictators were overthrown throughout Pakistan's early history only to return to leadership in a different form and person. While such a storyline does not make a clear statement regarding the country's state of affairs, audiences viewing the play at the time were aware of its political and social connotations as well as Ajoka's viewpoint.

Discussion

Ajoka brings theatre and conflict together, particularly in terms of the ways that it engages with the outside world. The practical challenges of producing dramatic work in a country with heavily censored public spaces requires Ajoka to consider ways in which it can get its message across. It must undermine and subvert pre-existing censorship structures while also submitting, perhaps on a surface level, to the requirements of engaging public spaces. Were it to forward its secular and human rights-based message in a direct manner without the rhetorical or theatrical protection of metaphor, it is possible that the messages Ajoka promotes would never find their way into public space. Rhetorical and theatrical devices make possible public dispersal of Ajoka's message.

Ajoka's theatrical and dramatic devices subvert to play.[54] A sub-concept connecting theatre and conflict, subverting to play requires that the theatre practitioner or organization has an intimate understanding of the ways in which theatrical content will be perceived by social and political forces of control. Organizations and practitioners play with this dynamic, testing limits

[54] Though touched on here, a fuller discussion of subverting to play can be found in "The Taxonomy" section.

and borders. In so doing, they look for "the boundaries of experience."[55] In order to assess where these edges are, practitioners subvert norms of all types: gender, political, social, economic, religious, and others. Whether featuring gay embassy officials in *Amrika Chalo* or using a dead dog as a symbol of obvious but ignored social issues in *The Dead Dog*, Ajoka subverts pre-existing structures in an effort to clarify the conflict that its works seek to address.

Metaphorical content deepens Ajoka's message. On the surface level at which censors and officials are able to engage, plays like *The Third Knock* reflect innocent and naïve stories. However, the true messaging and content, in which the undead landlord represents the revolving door of dictators in Pakistan, remains hidden, subliminal, and metaphorical. Audiences then have to access this content by reading into the production itself. The message is not foisted on them, but rather is layered into their experience. By bringing their cultural lens, baggage, and personal experiences with them into the performance space, audiences co-create the meaning behind a production. For Nadeem, the audience is a crucial part of Ajoka's work because theatre is "a community activity, a social, collective activity, which has a very special role in mobilizing and educating your audience because of its character."

Beyond educating audiences, Ajoka is focused on recalling a particular historical tradition that has long been lost in Pakistan. The rich performing arts tradition found across the Indian subcontinent was marginalized and dismissed in the founding of Pakistan, particularly in the years after Partition when Pakistan stylized itself as the anti-India. The state has continued this way of thinking, according to Nadeem, promoting the idea that "the performing arts are not

[55] In studying the Amazonian Pirahã people, anthropological linguist Daniel Everett stumbled onto a group that he believes are the world's "ultimate empiricists," given the way that being on the edge of experience is embodied in their culture. The Pirahã use the word *xibipíio* (pronounced: i-bi-PEE-o) to refer to any situation in which something is on the edge of experience; a flickering match or an arriving canoe are both "*xibipíio*-ing." Theatre practitioners who subvert in order to play have a similar mindset of pushing the boundaries, flirting with the edge of their own existence as well as social and political levels of tolerance.

Islamic…they [the state] generally discourage or even show hostility towards performing arts like music and dance or theatre or film." Ajoka, even though it focuses on contemporary content, draws inspiration from the strong performing arts tradition that thrives in India and is beginning to experience a rebirth in Pakistan.

In so doing, Ajoka is in conflict with the established vision of Pakistan forwarded by the state. Connecting to history allows Ajoka to imagine a hidden history through theatre. However, this imagination is also used by the Pakistani state in an effort to control marginal voices. As scholar of English Ashis Sengupta writes, "the nexus between Islamist orthodoxy, military oligarchy and the feudal rich did not let theatre and performance flourish" in Pakistan after the 1947 Partition, informed by the Muslim League's pre-Partition anti-Hindu sentiments.[56] By referring to the performing arts as a non-Islamic practice, the Pakistani state performs a particular history (that of the Muslim League), which continues the conflict between emerging liberal and entrenched conservative Pakistani values.

For Ajoka, conflict is embedded in theatre: "if there is more conflict, there is more effective theatre." Conflict allows theatrical messages to be clearer and more direct, since conflict fuels theatrical productions. Drama comes to be inspired by conflict in Ajoka's work, making productions relatable to audiences. In conversation, Nadeem cited another one of his works, *Dara Shikoh*, in which conflict is the heartbeat of the piece. Strong conflict emerges between the two lead characters, which allows for the character development of both. Without the dichotomy that balances one against the other and the presentation of multiple points of view, the story would carry less weight with audiences.

[56] Ashis Sengupta, "Introduction: Setting the Stage," in *Mapping South Asia through Contemporary Theatre*, ed. Ashis Sengupta, 2014, p. 25.

However, the value of conflict does have a ceiling. Nadeem reminds that conflict, such as violence or other issues that limit Ajoka's performance opportunities, outside of Ajoka's control may challenge the organization's ability to produce effective theatre and promote its core values. This balance, between conflict as a desired source of inspiration and as a potential hazard for actual performances, is worth noting in the way that it makes Ajoka cautious regarding the theatre and conflict relationship. Nonetheless, it seems that conflict and theatre are intertwined for Ajoka, whether as external influences or internal sources of theatrical and dramatic excellence.

Case Study 3: DAH Teater[57]

Working in the context of the former Yugoslavia, DAH is an organization that uses experimental theatre as its main entry point into theatre and conflict. DAH also engages with activist causes, attempting to create publicly accessible art. This occurs in a country (and region) within which the state maintains a strong influence over many artistic products. DAH is unique among the organizations reviewed in this thesis because of the collaborative, devised,[58] and experimental character of its work, a by-product of the state's artistic control. Pushing the limits of what is acceptable gives DAH an opportunity to create new work, innovate in its collaborations, and develop unique techniques.

History

DAH Teater was born in 1991 as the Balkan War raged throughout today's Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Kosovo. Developed not as a response or reaction to but rather alongside violent events, DAH served as a unique institution in the context of the theatrical tradition of Serbia. At that time, all theatre was controlled and run by the state, propagating certain messages and content.[59] This meant that DAH's very existence was an act of subversion, one that tested the mechanism of state arts control. Without a history of independent theatre or a governmental understanding of the "difference between "independent" and "amateur" theatre groups," DAH's beginnings represented an unknown experience.[60]

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[57] Unless otherwise noted, all quotes without citations in this case come from the main interview that informed this case study; the author is grateful to DAH's co-founder Dijana Milošević for her generous responses.
[58] See footnote 65 for a definition of devised theatrical work.
[59] Dijana Milošević, "Theatre as a Way of Creating Sense," in *Resistance and Reconciliation in Regions of Violence*, vol. 1 of *Acting Together*, eds. Cynthia Cohen, Roberto Gutiérrez Varea, and Polly O. Walker, 2011, pp. 23-43.
[60] Ibid, p. 25.

DAH began in conflict. In order to survive, it developed into a force opposing the surrounding current of destruction and violence. The organization worked to create rather than destroy, build rather than tear down. This essence is embodied in its name: translated from Serbian, *dah* means "breath, spirit."[61] For the four actors who joined DAH in its earliest years, DAH came to represents a reason for being amidst turbulence and violence.[62] Simultaneously, as co-founder Dijana Milošević[63] notes, *dah* backwards is *had*, a word that, in Serbian, refers to Hades' underworld: hell.[64] This gives DAH the opportunity to address challenging issues of conflict from the position of a life-giving theatrical force.

Values

Aside from its roots, DAH has a two-fold aim: skill and human development. In terms of skills, technical expertise and proficiency are among the most important values for DAH. The organization seeks to present devised theatrical works[65] that originate from a particular topic or line of thought. This framing, of DAH as a theatre laboratory, allows for original and creative reflections on the issue upon which DAH seeks to focus. It also requires a particularly tight-knit group of actors and directors who are all committed to the cause and able to bring the value of

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[61] Ibid, p. 29.

[62] This characterization of DAH recalls a folktale, in which a king, returning to his kingdom after a long series of wars, initiated a contest seeking the best painting of peace. After many submissions, he whittled it down to two. One was a calm and serene mountain scene with still water reflecting the sky above. The other was the image of a tumultuous and angry storm, featuring lightning and rain attacking a small bush, behind which a bird, sitting calmly, had built its nest. The king picked the scene with the bird. Justifying the selection to his doubters, he indicated that peace is not the absence of trouble, hard work, or noise, but rather being amid all the fuss and still having a calm heart. DAH's emergence through violent circumstances reflects the second image in this folktale.

[63] It is unclear whether or not Dijana is related to Slobodan Milošević, former president of Yugoslavia who was put on trial for war crimes in 2002. However, Milošević is a common surname among many Serbians.

[64] Dijana Milošević, "Theatre as a Way of Making Sense," p. 29.

[65] Though devised work (also referred to as devised theatre or collaborative creation) resists definition, it tends to involve creating work around particular themes or areas of focus using improvisatory play and game-based techniques. Often, those who perform devised pieces also develop them; final results have a distinct form and sequence. *Devised and Collaborative Theatre* by performance practitioners Tina Bicât and Chris Baldwin is a useful resource.

devised and created knowledge and experience to bear. It is rare to find DAH using plays that were written by others and adapting or reinventing them for the purposes of DAH's message.[66]

This devised approach enables DAH to initiate or reinstate in its audiences a process of becoming human, becoming better.[67] The organization seeks to improve human relations, both interpersonally and across social and ethnic groups. DAH's perspective furthers the idea that the knowledge needed to relate to others across and throughout society is available to actors based on their lived experiences, rather than reliant on imported and external worldviews. Much of DAH's human relations and development work is informed by the nationalist tendencies that contributed to the Balkan War, which DAH's actors have lived through. Tapping into this experience and transforming it from internal to dramatic in an effort to promote a process of becoming better humans is one of DAH's core values.

Model

As mentioned above, DAH comes to theatre via devising.[68] It first identifies a particular theme and works with actors to create a piece that reflects the identified theme. In order to recreate life onstage, these creation sessions take immense energy and require tremendous dedication. DAH attempts to embody the idea of an energy transfer that demands that actors change their "body-mind temperature," enabling the movement of an idea from actor thought and action to audience receipt and internalization. DAH's devised performances involve intensive body movement and "extraordinary" recreations, even for the simplest of actions like drinking a cup of tea, in order to allow audiences to feel the emotions of the actors.

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[66] In her chapter, Milošević indicates that DAH's first use of a "classic play" as the basis for a production was in 2006, 15 years after the organization's founding. The work was *Three Sisters* by playwright Anton Chekhov.

[67] Here, Milošević reflects philosopher Ernst Bloch's idea of becoming, which argued that reality is less about being than it is about becoming. As such, it is unsurprising that devised theatre is a cornerstone of DAH's work.

[68] See footnote 65 for an explanation of devised work.

Beyond the technical proficiencies of DAH, it is clear that DAH works at the overlap of theatre and activism. Collaborations with Women in Black, a major antimilitarist feminist group in Serbia, have helped cross-fertilize DAH's messages, allowing them to reach a demographic that might not otherwise experience performance.[69] Operating at this intersection allows DAH to present historical and contemporary social issues through a theatrical lens. This facilitates safe spaces for healing and mourning, a particular need given the way that "mourning was officially forbidden" by the Serbian state during the war.[70] Addressing these and other social needs goes hand-in-hand with the devised approach that DAH uses, since the organization is able to draw out lived realities that are in tune with the surrounding society.

Works

DAH's first performance was a work titled *This Babylonian Confusion*, based on the poetry of playwright Bertolt Brecht. The work highlighted the war that was being executed in the name of the Serbian people and "created a space for the truth to be heard," such that people could be told what they were unaware of or otherwise uninterested in hearing.[71] Performed in a major public square in Belgrade, the work put the actors in an unsafe situation that opposed "violence and destruction" in favor of "creating sense."[72] Despite the risk, this process of creating sense protected the actors from danger through their performance, particularly since the actors gave their best efforts to and embodied tremendous intensity in the work. Moreover, it

[69] Though internationally characterizing itself as a network rather than an organization, Women in Black has numerous branches and chapters around the world. The Serbian branch, however, frames itself as an activist organization. It was founded in October 1991 (around the same time as DAH) in opposition to the destructive ways of Slobodan Milošević, president of Serbia from 1991-1997 and president of Yugoslavia from 1997-2000.
[70] Dijana Milošević, "Theatre as a Way of Making Sense," p. 27.
[71] Ibid, p. 31.
[72] Ibid, p. 32.

spoke the unspeakable, evoking the voice of a generation that was unable to or uncomfortable with discussing the current events of the war.[73]

Another one of DAH's works that unveiled hidden divisions was their 2005 production *(In)Visible City*. In that piece, DAH's actors embodied characters from diverse ethnic groups. The characters sat on public buses throughout Belgrade, showing passengers the city in a different light. Running counter to the nationalistic Othering[74] that was a key part of the war and post-war experience, the work sought to highlight the multiethnic nature of Belgrade.[75] It celebrated the rich cultural mixing and integration that preceded the Balkan War, attempting to recall the historical tradition that existed in stark opposition to contemporary experience. The work imagined hidden history in a public and communal way, offering an alternate narrative to those who chose to explore it.

Discussion

DAH operates at the intersection of theatre and conflict, given, most obviously, the circumstances under which it was founded. The arrival of war in the Balkans coincided with the founding of DAH, creating a particular context and experience for the organization. This backdrop imbued DAH with a sense of responsibility regarding public voice and messaging:

> …when we were in the middle of the civil war,[76] we had to start to be very aware that actually we are doing art in the very difficult, very hard

[73] In *When Blood and Bones Cry Out*, Lederach and Lederach use "speaking the unspeakable" to refer to aural experiences of social healing.

[74] Intercultural education researcher Fred Dervin, citing interculturalist Martine Abdallah-Pretceille, defines Othering as "objectification of another person or group" and "creating the other" in a manner that "puts aside and ignores the complexity and subjectivity of the individual." Much of this definition echoes the work done by postcolonial theorist Edward Said, author of the classic text *Orientalism*.

[75] Edward Azar's "Theory of Protracted Social Conflict" was mentioned in the case study regarding The Freedom Theatre, but it also applicable here, in terms of the idea of Othering (footnote 74 defines the Othering process).

[76] When interviewed, Dijana Milošević referred to the Balkan War as a "civil war." However, the author is grateful that Ilana Shapiro, a member of his thesis committee who has worked in the Balkans and Eastern Europe more generally, pointed out the distinctly Serbian nature of this characterization. In this quote, the phrasing remains as it was uttered to honor the participant's word choice. In the rest of the case study, the events are simply referred to as a "war" or the "Balkan War" in an effort to avoid marginalizing other voices and historic complexities.

> times; and that we are responsible. And that our responsibility is even bigger, because we have the power of the public action. Our words are easier to be heard, through media, through our performances, public action, and so on, than the words of other people. And with that comes big responsibility.

For DAH, the intersection of the organization's private goal of producing good art and the public goal of increasing general understanding results in a form of wider social responsibility. DAH does not see itself as a reckless artistic force that produces what it wants without regard for consequences that might result, but rather as part and parcel of the country and society from which it originates.

This attempt at being in between private and public motivations puts DAH, as an organization, in a position of conflict. Beyond the theatrical nature of the organization's work, key aspects of this conflict filter down to the choices that affect the individuals working with DAH. One of these is the challenge of making a distinction between being a theatre practitioner and being an activist. DAH's work with Women in Black contributes to the question of what separates activism from theatre, and vice-versa. DAH stylizes itself as a theatrical organization with activist elements, but Women in Black is the opposite: an activist organization with performance elements. In either case, theatre and activism overlap - they are embedded in one another, though DAH emphasizes theatre more than Women in Black does.

In terms of content, DAH maintains a focus on the conflict-driven aspects of Serbian society. Much of this requires that DAH stay on the margins of society. This allows for a movement between the center and the periphery, in terms of power. Existing at the margins enables DAH to converse with everyday people and use theatre as a transitional force that moves major, but hidden, issues from marginalization to prominence. DAH's work in *(In)Visible City* is one example, in which the rich and historic ethnic diversity of Belgrade was rearticulated and emphasized, despite being unseen by the general public. In this regard, DAH views its members

and itself as "shape-shifters" who can transform and move between spaces, particularly within a shared theatre-conflict space.

Such metamorphosis matches how DAH subverts, particularly political and social structures, in order to play. In creating *This Babylonian Confusion*, DAH required permission from the appropriate municipal authorities, given the public nature of the performance. Using Brecht's antiwar poetry in a public theatrical production at a time when the government was denying national participation in the war represented a tremendous risk.[77] DAH, however, knew of the uneducated nature of the police officials from whom permission would have to be requested. Thus, it painted *This Babylonian Confusion* as a classical play, indicating that Brecht was a playwright echoing and celebrating Greco-Roman traditions. This framing subverted with the government's limitations, allowing the performance to be staged in a public space.

DAH subverts to play as a tool for giving voice. Their production dealing with disappearances, *The Presence of Absence*, runs counter to governmental attempts at closing the historical record and maintaining absolute control over the narrative of the past. DAH's engagement with disappearance challenges and subverts this overarching structure. At the same time, it allows families who seek information regarding their "dearests" to reflect on their experience in a way that offers healing and some sense of closure. Such productions attempt to engage in what transitional justice scholar Charles Villa-Vicencio calls "honest reporting," a contestation of the "organized forgetting" that is "one of the most sinister forms of literary and political domination."[78]

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[77] In conversation, Dijana Milošević indicated that she realized the peacebuilding value of DAH's risk in developing and staging *This Babylonian Confusion* only years later, after reading peacebuilder John Paul Lederach's *The Moral Imagination*. For Lederach, one of the key characteristics of the moral imagination is risk-taking that, while dangerous, allows for the exploration of new peacebuilding possibilities.

[78] Charles Villa-Vicencio, "Honest Mourning and Peace Psychology," *Peace and Conflict* 20, no. 2 (2014): 161.

Remembering histories that have been sidelined by official political narratives is another dimension of the symbiotic embeddedness of theatre and conflict that DAH embodies. Both theatrical and antagonistic responses to conflict imagine hidden histories, highlighting a specific type of remembering. In the case of DAH's connection families struggling to cope with the lack of closure that disappearances afforded them, the organization worked towards creating a new narrative regarding missing people as a result of the "incredible power of the stories that need to be told." Telling these stories through theatre imagines hidden histories that subvert official histories. Such official histories, in which those who have disappeared do not exist, is its own, contesting imagination of the past that forwards a particular vision and expression of conflict. Government organs imagine their idealized history through destroying sites, erasing records, and rewriting history books. Indeed, these contestations of imagined histories demonstrate an ongoing creation of truth.

One of the final parallels that DAH highlights is the way in which theatre and conflict seep into the body. Theatre requires an energy transfer, in which the actor overemphasizes and exaggerates every thought and action for the audience, attempting to "recreate" rather than "imitate" life. This intensity moves emotion and thought from the stage to the audience member's psyche, translating across space and body. In a similar way, conflict moves through bodies: heartbeats increase, pupils dilate, and brain activity increases.[79] Bodies respond to conflict in a way that evokes bodily responses to the arts, especially theatre and other types of performance.[80] The visceral reactions of participants to both theatre and conflict express another

[79] We see changes in heartbeat and pupil dilation in personal experience, but increased brain activity in conflict situations has been shown when, among other instances, moral reasoning comes into play - activity seems to be greater in adolescents than in adults. See cognitive neuroscientist Monika Sommer et al.'s "Me or you?"

[80] Conflict researcher Michelle LeBaron et al.'s *The Choreography of Resolution* discusses the intersection of body/movement and conflict situations. In a similar sense, the work of dancer and conflict transformer Dana Caspersen shows an overlap between body and conflict. For more, see Caspersen's presentation at the Association for Conflict Resolution's 2014 conference, titled "Conflict and Choreography."

way in which the two overlap. DAH's embrace of both theatre and conflict allows it to "recreate" the embodied experience of life in the way that conflict elicits bodily reactions.

Case Study 4: Belarus Free Theatre[81]

Operating via a unique geographic split, Belarus Free Theatre (BFT) exists in both Belarus and the United Kingdom. The Belarusian element performs underground productions through a network of staunch supporters and private homes used as theatres, while the UK-based element produces shows in London and tours internationally. Both are, in fact, one organization that operates in collaboration. Geographically, however, they are separate. At the heart of these two branches is one core that embodies principles of pro-democracy, anti-dictatorship, and theatre as a means for naked and stark political expression.

History

In March 2005, theatre practitioner Natalia Kaliada and former newspaper editor Nicolai Khalezin founded BFT. Soon thereafter, they were joined by Vladimir Shcherban, a theatre director who was fired without due cause from his position with the Belarus Army Drama Theatre, a state-run theatrical institution.[82] These three artists form the core team of BFT in the UK. From its founding until 2010, BFT operated as an underground theatre group that performed and rehearsed in secret. Its performances were held in covert venues such as private homes and, occasionally, in the woods.[83] The organization began to build a tremendous base of support throughout various dissident communities in Belarus, including those in political opposition to Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko, office-holder since 1994.[84]

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[81] As mentioned above in footnote 19, despite repeated attempts by the author, it proved impossible to interview a member of the Belarus Free Theatre. However, BFT benefits from copious press coverage and publicity as a result of their core team seeking asylum in and relocating to England. This coverage includes a number of interviews with BFT staff that served as a foundation for the writing of this case study.

[82] *Belarus Free Theatre*, last modified 2015, Web.

[83] Natalia Kaliada, "Theatre - My Weapon against Oppression," *TEDx*, Mar 2011, Web.

[84] BFT's staff members seem to prefer to use of the term "dictator" when describing Lukashenko. Western journalists have also referred to Belarus as "Europe's last dictatorship" (see recent articles in *The Guardian* regarding Belarus), though others have problematized use of the term.

Lukashenko won more than 75% of the vote in the 2010 presidential election, resulting in allegations of election fraud. Thousands of protesters gathered to demonstrate against the result, including BFT's founding members. They were arrested as part of the government's crackdown; upon their release, they fled from Belarus and were granted asylum in the UK in 2011. Since then, BFT has developed two identities: as an underground performance ensemble creating new work and training students in its theatre laboratory in Minsk and as a registered charity and non-profit theatre group in London.[85] This geographic split offers unique challenges and opportunities for the organization and its creative process as it caters to two distinct demographics.

Values

One of BFT's major values is that of stark and aggressive political theatre. Since the organization was born in the midst of a repressive regime, its work echoes the political nature of its original intent. This character, despite the organization now having two geographic bases, remains throughout its productions in Belarus and the UK. The political dimension of BFT connects to its physical nature, which aims to embody statistics with minimal dialogue.[86] Action represents reality for BFT, which results in physical rather than aural depictions of political truths. For those without a pre-existing connection to the Belarusian political scene or those that consider themselves to be apolitical, this can make accessing the group's content difficult. However, since its exile to London, English productions have evolved to include more dialogue that retains the physical nature of the work.[87]

[85] *Belarus Free Theatre*.
[86] *Witness*, "Free Theatre of Belarus," *Al Jazeera English*, Aug 2009, Web.
[87] Chris Hislop, "Stronger than the Message," *One Stop Arts*, Jun 2013, Web.

Another important tenet of BFT is being on the edges of "arts, science and politics."[88] Much of this comes from the organization's context, as well as its founding. The experiences of Kaliada, Khalezin, and Shcherban moving into exile and being separated from their families find their way into the organization's theatrical work. Under constant threat when performing in Minsk and without a permanent home in London, the organization operates on the fringes of society, including in its anti-dictatorial perspective (at least in reference to the situation in Belarus). This marginal framing is consistent with the other theatrical organizations examined for this thesis; however, BFT's embodiment of it is unique because of the geographic split from which the organization operates.

Model

BFT is wedded to integrating various art forms into its productions. Whether that includes projection, music, dance, text, or other media, BFT carries with it a spirit of inclusion that allows for increased expression. Numerous videos and accounts of BFT's productions indicate the use of projection and imagery in particular, which has become a bit of a trademark: classic elements of a BFT production include "vignettes made up entirely of movement over a monologue or projected set of numbers," "naked bodies being subjected to surreal tortures," and "striking visual imagery."[89] Integration also comes in the form of combining classical and narrative material. This mixture allows for suggestive allusions and references that audiences connect to, while also enabling the interweaving of original and documentary-based lived reality.

BFT's integration also carries over to the translation between public and private. This ensures that BFT's works operate as a window into social taboos, mores, and structures. Simultaneously, it allows performers to be both playwrights and directors, such that their

[88] *Belarus Free Theatre.*
[89] Chris Hislop, "Stronger than the Message."

intimate familiarity with the material facilitates greater depth and opportunity for audience engagement. BFT creates the "universal artist" that blurs the "boundary between acting, writing, and directing."[90] Their experimental theatre laboratory, Fortinbras - the name of Hamlet's foil in the Shakespearean tragedy - furthers this. Based in Belarus, the Fortinbras school has led more than 50 actors through its coursework in an effort to develop the "universal artist," a number of whom have gone on to act in BFT's productions in Belarus and abroad.[91]

Works

One of BFT's first works after the 2010 presidential election was *Minsk, 2011*. The production features distinct physicality, overlaid audio and video of the situation in Belarus, and stark political statements. Visual and rhythmic integration include inflated balloons scratched to sound like marching soldiers, old video recordings of Lukashenko playing the accordion, and hosepipes smacked against a gymnasium floor to remind audiences of police beating their riot shields during protests.[92] It operates in contrast to the types of works that are often produced in major cities, as the theatrical drive behind the piece is entirely political: *Minsk, 2011* has no plot and minimal dialogue. Actors embody puppets of the presidential regime, mocking and satirizing the way that actual members of the Belarusian government's political machine fall into line without question.

Another major work developed by BFT was *Trash Cuisine*, produced in 2013. An original production featuring torture testimony, lines from Shakespearean plays, and Taiko drumming, *Trash Cuisine* uses food and gastronomy as the heart of the work. Eating luxurious meals, chopping onions, and grilling meats serves a metaphor for "man's inhumanity to man" in

[90] *Belarus Free Theatre*.
[91] Ibid.
[92] *Dangerous Acts Starring the Unstable Elements of Belarus*, directed by Madeleine Sackler, 2014.

executions, mutilations, and murder.[93] The work features executioners speaking about the normalcy of their occupation while enjoying a meal of strawberries and cream, and champagne.[94] The Rwandan genocide also makes an appearance, with one character recounting atrocities that occurred in the East African country. Blending together a multisensory production with BFT's trademark physicality and politically driven messaging, the group reminds audiences how "conspicuous consumption co-exists with state torture."[95]

Discussion

Perhaps in the most literal sense, BFT subverts to play. The theatre company's challenging of overarching political and military dynamics that have forced them underground in Belarus toys with its very ability to perform theatrical work. The loss of BFT's original performing space and the real possibility of a raid during any of its shows means that existing is subverting. Keeping secret the locations of its shows reflects the nimbleness of the organization, an attempt at playing with the reality of danger. Indeed, BFT subverts to play and plays so it can continue subverting.

Even the escape and exile of BFT's core members, Kaliada, Khalezin, and Shcherban, represent subverting to play. Having been smuggled out of the country via the open border with Russia, the three core members subverted the international migration system through their receipt of asylum in the United Kingdom. They continue to produce theatrical work; Amnesty International supported Khalezin after Russian intelligence services issued a warrant for his arrest in 2011.[96] The system of international migration, while in serious need of repair, is subverted as a byproduct of the repressive circumstances in Belarus. The ultimate existence of

[93] Philip Fisher, "Trash Cuisine," *British Theatre Guide*, Jun 2013, Web.
[94] Charles Spencer, "Trash Cuisine, Belarus Free Theatre, Young Vic, review," *The Telegraph*, Jun 2013, Web.
[95] Michael Billington, "Trash Cuisine - review," *The Guardian*, Jun 2013, Web.
[96] "Protest at Belarus embassy in solidarity with prisoners of conscience," *Amnesty International*, Feb 2011, Web.

subverting to play is that individuals (Kaliada, Khalezin, and Shcherban) have subverted the Belarusian government by continuing to develop anti-dictatorial productions in exile.

While subverting to play exists in the individual and personal experiences of BFT's members, BFT's methodology is based on it. First, the group plays with and subverts established European theatrical mechanisms. In most European approaches to theatre, the roles of director, playwright, and actor are separate. However, BFT's "universal artist" concept puts it in a position of twisting these theatrical roles and limitations.[97] Instead of conforming to European theatrical traditions, the organization subverts this in an effort to integrate them in a given production. The geographic split seems to challenge this desire. Given the entrenched theatre tradition within which BFT now operates (in London), works that are produced in the UK seem to maintain separated roles of director, playwright, and actor, while the repression in Belarus make the integrated "universal artist" approach more necessary.

Whatever the case regarding the geographic split, BFT retains a sense of subverting to play in its content. Juxtaposing state torture and repression against a gluttonous sense of consumption plays with audiences' sense of truth and reality. Visual imagery and rhythmic intensity subvert political structures by providing specific triggers that recall Belarusian protest events. These areas of focus allow for BFT to engage with established senses of reality, co-creating - with their audiences - new truths. These new truths challenge and contest official viewpoints with topics that are taboo or ignored and marginalized by government narratives. It is in this work, of creating an alternate examination of Belarus' social ills, that BFT becomes a major threat to and outspoken opponent of the country's existing political regime. If its potency is to be recognized, BFT must be understood as both an activist and a theatrical organization.

[97] BFT's website lays claim to the "universal artist" label as a way of working in theatre that is "unmatched anywhere else in the world." This statement cannot be verified, but it is certain that an increasing number of theatre practitioners, particularly in smaller start-up ventures, fulfill a number of roles at once.

This overlap, of theatre and activism or theatre and conflict with governmental and political structures, puts BFT on the margins of society. This occurs physically, based on the relocation of its core members to London and its clandestine use of private houses and apartments in Minsk, and content-wise, given the ways in which it addresses marginalized topics of social significance. It does so in a way that brings to light the embeddedness of theatre and conflict, since none of BFT's productions come from separate places; it is not as if the process of developing theme and content is removed from the concerns of form and theatricality. Rather, they are interwoven and considered at once. Both conflict content and dramatic concerns exist in concert, feeding off and building on one another.

Perhaps it is out of this overlap of theatre and conflict that BFT's trademark use of physicality and the body emerges. BFT's political messages are conveyed with tremendous force and power. These messages are not spoken, but rather embodied, recalling the idea of speaking the unspeakable. Yet instead of being used for greater social healing, BFT's demonstration of that which cannot be spoken is a push for, among other goals, higher impact and urgent action. BFT's physicality matches this, adding an imperative resulting in affective rather than cognitive audience engagement. The group pushes the envelope by using the human body as a canvas for its messages, sometimes effecting physical reactions among audiences.[98]

BFT's use of the body extends beyond the physical; it represents a commitment to openness and the stark truth as well. For instance, many of BFT's productions include nudity. One scene in *Minsk, 2011* features a character speaking about the scarred nature of Minsk; the actor is shirtless while delivering his monologue, and audiences see his marked body as a physical manifestation of Minsk's scars.[99] Major portions of *Trash Cuisine* involve nudity as

[98] Michael Billington, "Trash Cuisine - review."
[99] *Dangerous Acts Starring the Unstable Elements of Belarus.*

well, which presents a stark visual accompanied by a glaring truth. BFT's use of the body facilitates a conveying of intimate messages on a corporeal and visceral level while simultaneously developing a direct connection between the audience and broader social justice issues at play.

The Taxonomy[100]

In an effort to understand the ways in which theatre organizations work in and around conflict, this section draws on the lived experiences and real-world works described in the previous cases to suggest a taxonomy of sub-concepts regarding the theatre-conflict relationship. The taxonomy is a crucial part of the idea of symbiotic embeddedness that this paper explores, because the connective sub-concepts found within the taxonomy suggest that theatre and conflict share the same core. Beyond the study, these sub-concepts allow for the expansion of grounded and informed questions, offering guidance for future inquiries regarding and studies of this relationship. As a result, this taxonomy forwards four sub-concepts: subverting to play, imagining hidden histories, embodying the unspeakable, and blurring illusion and reality.

Subverting to Play

One of the more apparent parallels emerging from these case studies is the idea of subverting to play.[101] Subverting to play represents two concepts, beginning with subverting. Subverting highlights challenges to and contestations of pre-existing power structures of all types. These structures can take political, social, cultural, or other forms. Deriving from the Latin word *subvertere* meaning, 'to overthrow,' to subvert is to seek to transform structures, generally through non-violent (though not necessarily ethical) means. For the most part, subverting attempts to defeat some government structure. As a result, subverting can be understood as acting toward some political end by undermining an existing system. In some

[100] For anthropologists, taxonomies are naming systems used to classify and organize various aspects of life. They attempt to articulate concepts that frame the mental, social, and cultural world of a researcher's subjects. Often, a taxonomic system is hidden and embedded into the everyday practice and language of a researcher's subjects, requiring extrapolation from a subject's social knowledge (see *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* by sociologist Émile Durkheim as a classic example). The taxonomy found in this paper attempts to articulate concepts that frame theatrical practices in conflict zones.

[101] To the author's knowledge, this thesis represents the first time that this concept has been used in the context of theatre and conflict. However, an anthology edited by art historian David Getsy titled *From Diversion to Subversion: Games, Play, and Twentieth-Century Art* seems to be the closest example of an overlap.

instances, subversive acts can be insidious, dishonest, or immoral. Subverting can come in the form of actions within a country that aim to undermine ruling structures or actions in another country that are executed in solidarity and collaboration with subversive parties within the relevant country. In either case, subverting pushes for an overthrow of the existing political and authoritarian status quo.

This subversion occurs in an effort to enable play. Play encourages experimentation and the creation of new experiences. It opens up space for new ideas and opportunities. It has a significant place in culture, with its 'is' and 'is not' character serving as a foundation for this cultural value.[102] The seriousness with which children, professional athletes, and artists play is an obvious example of the 'is' and 'is not' character of play: games, sports, and performances have rules, and participants enforce those rules with great vehemence. Each rule has a consequence, such that slide tackling an opponent or spitting in another player's face can result in a red card in football (not to be confused with American football), the world's favorite game. However, football is just that: a game. All forms of play, including games, exist in simultaneous states of seriousness and fun.

Subverting to play represents a confluence of subversion and play. Organizations subverting to play engage in creative and experimental acts that attempt to destabilize political structures while enabling play. Performances and the day-to-day activities of organizations that subvert to play exist in a space that pushes the envelope, has serious ramifications for participants and audiences, and seeks to undermine official narratives. Subverting to play means

[102] In his seminal text titled *Homo Ludens*, cultural historian Johan Huizinga offers a deeper explanation of the idea of "the play-element in culture," which is found across cultures and societies in forms such as histrionics, wordplay, and ritual. Ultimately, he argues that the prevalence of play makes *homo ludens* ('playing man') a more fitting description of people than *homo sapiens* ('rational man').

using creative methods to exploit the weakness of a single story.[103] In countries where government organs and political authoritarians project official narratives that have no counterbalance or harmonizing force, subverting to play is a vital tool that enables the survival of multiple storylines and contributes to a vibrant and energetic society. In one way or another, all of the organizations examined for this thesis connect theatre and conflict by subverting to play.

Subverting to play can arrive in the form of metaphor. For example, TFT uses its productions as spaces within which it connects the experiences of other oppressed societies to its own, linking across continents and time. In particular, *The Island* links the Palestinian experience under Israeli Occupation to that of South African apartheid. Rather than comment on the current apartheid in Palestine, TFT's production of *The Island* subverts and undermines Israeli occupation - the mechanism of control that rules all aspects of Palestinian life - so that it can play out the metaphor of a similar, yet distant, situation.

Ajoka also uses metaphor in its acts of subverting to play. When submitting plays to the censorship authorities in Pakistan, Ajoka veils its messages through metaphor and other theatrical devices. Even in its direct interactions with the political system, Ajoka subverts the system's understanding and ability to engage with theatrical and dramatic themes, playing with the singular narrative that the government prefers to forward.

Additionally, subverting to play is found in how organizations ensure the success of their performances. For example, DAH's first work saw the organization conceal the anti-war nature of its production from government officials. It pitched *This Babylonian Confusion* as a classical Greco-Roman piece rather than the Brecht-inspired work that it was. And despite receiving

[103] Novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explores this idea in her TED Talk titled "The Danger of a Single Story," as does Latin American performance scholar Ana Elena Puga in her 2008 text titled *Memory, Allegory, and Testimony in South American Theater*.

official permission, it conducted its performance in a public space surrounded by police and security forces. Performing the work ensured its success, a direct result of subverting to play.

In a similar sense, BFT's ability to secure audiences subverts the system so that it can play. Audience members are brought to performance locations through covert means, and they do not know in advance where a performance will be held. They bring their passports and other relevant documents with them, as police raids are commonplace at BFT's productions. The organization also relies on a network of trusted individuals who are opposed to the government of Belarus, allowing their message to reach a greater number of people. In subverting the country's political system, BFT assures that its work can continue.

As a sub-concept, subverting to play exists at the overlap of theatre and conflict. The concept is expressed by all the organizations examined for this thesis, each of which reflects subverting to play in its content, everyday activities, and government engagement. This concept, then, stretches across numerous aspects of each organization. It facilitates theatre as a means of enacting social change while also demonstrating the intimacy with which conflict features in dramatic work. As a result, subverting to play points to the symbiotic embeddedness of theatre and conflict.

Imagining Hidden Histories

Another key parallel of theatre and conflict that the above organizations embody is imagining hidden histories.[104] Part of the concept involves the word imagine, which relates to the Late Latin word *imaginare*, meaning 'to form an image of, represent.' Imagining, then, is an

[104] Though many of those who imagine hidden histories are not historians, the idea of the historical imagination, found in the discipline of history, is an instructive one. According to historian Craig Wollner, a key component of the historical imagination is empathy, which he defines as "the ability to project oneself into the time and place of the actors under study, to see their world through their eyes." Historians use empathy "to show what actually happened" using "the highest degree of objectivity possible." Theatre organizations that imagine hidden histories, contesting and challenging official narratives, engage in a similar type of practice.

active process of creating something that does not exist. Indeed, the created image is not real - it exists as an *imaginacion* (Old French): a 'concept, mental picture; hallucination.' Perhaps the most famous contemporary use of the word is as the title of a song by rock musician John Lennon, who calls for a world free of material possessions, religions, countries, greed, and hunger. The song creates an image in the mind of the listener, one that has yet to be realized.

History, as the driver of the second part of this parallel, is both a discipline and a reflection of the past. The word traces to both the Latin and Greek versions of *historia*, referring to a 'narrative of past events, account, tale, story' and 'a learning or knowing by inquiry; an account of one's inquiries, history, record, narrative,' respectively. There is a thread of narration in these etymologies, echoing and recalling the past. Modifying history, the word 'hidden' originates from the Proto-Indo-European root *keu*- meaning 'to cover or conceal.' Hidden histories, then, are concealed or covered narratives of the past.

It is these veiled storylines that the imagination of hidden histories attempts to reveal. Theatrical practices imagine hidden histories by creating an informed, if fictitious, sense of the past. The fictitious nature of their imagination is only so because the past has passed and cannot be completely known except by those who were there. However, theatrical spaces give organizations license to embody and reflect lost narratives as they perform stories that are kept in the shadows. This covering exists as a result of tremendous power differences, as states with resources and influence (witness all the oppressive states from which the organizations in this thesis hail) create their own senses of history. In so doing, they control the truth within their borders, since progress is built on and relative to the past.

Most of the cases explored in this thesis imagine hidden histories. Ajoka, for example, seeks to remind Pakistan of its performing arts heritage, a storyline that has been lost since the

country separated from India in 1947. Official Pakistani government narratives have sidelined the rich cultural tradition of major provinces such as Punjab, despite there being tremendous artistic pride in neighboring Indian Punjab. Ajoka's very existence reminds Pakistanis of their part in that history, hoping to rewrite the past.

Similarly, DAH imagines hidden histories in its works. *(In)Visible City* had performers ride city buses and educate fellow passengers regarding the ways in which Serbian ethnocentrism had marginalized the multiethnic history of Belgrade. The organization took a literal approach to the imagining history, contributing to a process of reminding others of the past. Rather than maintain the politically motivated storyline of Serbian ownership over all dimensions of Belgrade, DAH's imagination of hidden histories contested that narrative.

Further, BFT attempts to hold on to memories that are missing from key public spaces. BFT's production of *Minsk, 2011* recalls the violent crackdown on peaceful protesters voicing dissent against the Belarusian government. The production aims to recreate the symbols and imagery of the uprising so that it can remind those who have forgotten or were otherwise unaware. The performance, itself, is a hidden history.

Imagining hidden histories is a key aspect of these organizations' work. It reflects an immediate and urgent need to recall, remember, and recreate the past. In most cases, imagining history attempts to remind audiences of truth. The organizations use the past as an entry point into imagining their own vision of society, which tends to be different from the one that they are living. In so doing, they provide an alternate reality that can be understood only through theatre. Imagining hidden histories enables these organizations to contest and counter narratives that encourage complacency and the status quo, exacerbating conflict. As such, it points to the symbiotic embeddedness of theatre and conflict.

Embodying the Unspeakable

Embodying the unspeakable is another dimension of the overlap of theatre and conflict that some of the examined organizations reflect. The first half of the concept, embodying, refers to an internalization and externalization, in physical form, of an idea or concept. The *em-* prefix is placed before a stem when indicating that it is causing the stem to happen: to embody is to cause body. It is to provide a physical reality to an otherwise non-physical or non-corporeal experience, transforming ideas or concepts from abstractions to physical realities that can be felt and encountered. Embodying, then, is experiencing in a corporeal and tangible way while retaining the character of the original concept. That embodiment must be felt rather than abstracted supports an experience of the embeddedness of theatre and conflict, as opposed to favoring a distant and removed evaluation of that overlap.

Deconstructing the word 'unspeakable' offers some insights as to what it means to embody the unspeakable. Speaking is an act of identifying, communicating, naming: to speak is to name. In the classical Greco-Roman tradition, to name something is to know it - speaking creates knowledge in the identifying and naming of things. Replacing the word 'speak' as found in 'unspeakable' with 'know' makes the 'unspeakable' the 'unknowable.'[105] Indeed, that which is spoken or named is known in a way that the unnamed is not. The unspeakable, then, is a phenomenon or set of experiences that are beyond vocalization and beyond knowing. For instance, acts of disappearance often fit into the category of the unspeakable. When activists are disappeared by a government, their fates are unclear and uncertain. Speaking of them occurs in question and inquiry rather than in naming the truth of their current or past condition. Combined

[105] Popular culture provides a ready example of the relationship between naming and knowing, found in the works of novelist JK Rowling. The main villain of the *Harry Potter* series, Voldemort, is often referred to as "He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named" because saying his actual name would make more intimate the tremendous evil that he represents. As a replacement name, "He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named" tempers the reality of Voldemort's evil, decreasing the number of witches and wizards who know the depth of his evil - and thus, him.

with the political and personal consequences of speaking out, this means that the unspeakable remains unknown.

Putting these two elements together seems to create a paradox in embodying the unspeakable, just as "speaking the unspeakable" appears to be.[106] Indeed it is, as embodying represents a physical and corporeal materialization, while the unspeakable implies something that cannot and will not be known. However, whereas "speaking the unspeakable" implies a direct counter to the naming and verbalizing of an unexplored experience, embodying the unspeakable provides a non-verbal approach that connects to the heart of an observer's emotional state. In a literal sense, speaking still requires vocal discussion and dialogue, which necessitates the courage to speak. Embodying gives space for individuals to feel it in their bones, literally. This physical manifestation exists as a complement to the idea of "speaking the unspeakable," highlighted in the previously cited *When Blood and Bones* ***Cry Out*** (boldface added for emphasis). In either case, the corporeal dimension of the unspeakable is clear.

DAH is one organization that attempts to embody the unspeakable. Physical performances require an exaggeration of simple acts that allow DAH to express complex emotions and understandings in simple and transferrable ways. Co-founder Milošević refers to this as changing the "body-mind temperature" of the actor and the audience. In so doing, DAH transfers more than emotion. It also transfers the unspeakable content of its work. In a recent production devised based on interactions with family members of those who have disappeared, DAH used the intensity of the energy transfer to help "create some kind of sense out [of] their experience" and "offer them anything meaningful." The unspeakable content of the experience of not knowing what has happened to a loved one was manifest in the production *The Presence*

[106] Referenced above, Lederach and Lederach's use of "speaking the unspeakable" is a reminder of the power and potential of this type of work. Embodying the unspeakable is a play on this phrase.

of Absence, in which testimonies of loss were enacted and recreated on stage. One particularly striking image of the production shows a woman in heels bound and gagged, embodying the experience of detainment.[107]

Pictures are useful in understanding key, physical moments in a production, but the uniqueness of theatre as a performing art is its ability to weave such instances into stories and narratives. For the observer seeking to understand the embodied unspeakable, witnessing live performances carries significant weight. By all video accounts and external reviews, BFT's approach is one that embodies the unspeakable. The organization's use of the human body with minimal costuming as well as the lack of dialogue in its productions offers a visceral and grounded physical reality. Video clips from *Minsk, 2011* show actors mimicking soldiers in the Belarusian army, embodying governmental yes-men, and representing the sounds of police brutality. BFT's work reflects the unspeakable, particularly because only those who have experienced such situations know them. Embodying the unknowable allows BFT to offer increased understanding to a wider public, reducing the impenetrable character of the unspeakable.

Ultimately, embodying the unspeakable moves across the perceived mind-body dualism. Whereas "speaking the unspeakable" encourages cognitive understanding, embodying the unspeakable gives theatre organizations the opportunity embed history in the body. Conflict experiences come alive in the bodies of actors and audience members, implanting a reminder connected to a visceral and physical muscle memory. In embodying the unspeakable, these organizations make the body a tool for adding intimacy to concepts and experiences. The ideas of the past, rather than remaining in the abstract, come alive, inspiring people to re-imagine, reconstruct, and reframe their understanding of the world and their own place in it. At the heart

[107] *DAH Teater*, last modified 2015, Web.

of embodying the unspeakable is the bodily experience of both theatre and conflict, adding further strength to the overlap of the two.

Blurring Illusion and Reality

A final sub-concept worth noting is the blurring of illusion and reality. To blur is to smear or obscure something, making it difficult or impossible to visualize or hear. A blur is not in focus, and it has an indistinct shape. In terms of its etymology, the word 'blur' comes from a Middle English term *blear*, which recalls the Middle-High German word *blerre* ('blurred vision') and the Low German word *blarroged* ('bleary-eyed'). These word origins have an element of sightedness to them, such that a blur is a visual experience. Those experiencing a blur see a mix of two or more distinct elements. Yet, a blur does not create something new out of the combination. Rather, it represents the messy stage from which clarity ultimately emerges. Thus, a blur has the potential to develop into newness, but it exists in a state of uncertainty.

As the second and third parts of this sub-concept, illusion is deception and reality is seeded in proper existence. Illusion reflects a situation that is not interpreted or perceived correctly by the senses. As a word, illusion traces, via Old French, to the Latin word *illudere*, meaning 'to mock.' In Latin, *illudere* is broken into two parts: the prefix *in-* means 'against' and the stem *ludere* means 'to play' - literally, 'against play.' Whereas play is a state of being in reality, illusion exists in opposition to states of play that hold actual seriousness and fun together. On the other hand, that which is real is that which is experienced and that which is a thing; indeed, the word 'reality' comes from the Latin roots *res* ('thing') and *realis* ('relating to things'). It is something that actually exists: some philosophical commentators consider a thing

to be real when it can be "safely" depended upon.[108] It is not subject to human whims or decisions, but rather operates as something beyond the sphere of human control. It serves as an objective system that does not rely on decisions or changes for its existence.

Blurring illusion and reality is not combining opposites, but rather slurring and smudging two related experiences. An illusion is something that is seen in a deceptive way, while reality is something that is seen as it is. Both offer audiences an experience, but one tricks its audience into believing something that is not real. Blurring the two makes the line between them fuzzy, such that audiences question the reality of the real and the illusion of the illusory. In some situations, reality and illusion replace one another, as in instances of government narratives or official propaganda. Both theatre and conflict have the ability to confuse reality and illusion with one another, adding complexity to and questioning the nature of both.

TFT's *Suicide Note from Palestine* does much to smear illusion and reality. The production reflects a young woman who dreams that she is Palestine and has decided to commit suicide because of the constant oppression and lack of freedom that she faces. Though dreaming, the young woman interacts with real people who represent the political, military, historical, and paternalistic forces that govern everyday Palestinian experiences. The ideas of "confusion, torture and despair" become the real-world characters that create the Israeli Occupation and reflect everyday realities.[109] The penultimate scene of the production reminds audiences of the manipulation of the Palestinian people and the complicity of others who ignore the injustice: "When the leaders speak of peace, the common folk know that war is coming."[110] Lines such as these blur with the dreamlike state of the young woman, as well as with the

[108] *Philosophy Now*, an academic magazine, asked its readers to provide philosophical responses to the question: "What is the Nature of Reality?" One reader defined the real as "genuine, reliable, what I can safely lean on."
[109] *The Freedom Theatre.*
[110] Ibid.

performative world of theatre, creating an experience that leaves audiences questioning the nature of the truth.

While TFT blurs reality and illusion in the content of its productions, BFT does so in the overall audience member's experience. For BFT, the performance is an illusion. It links two or more aspects that are distinct from one another, which can deceive audiences into making the connection. *Trash Cuisine* is a perfect example, as it creates an illusion that relates food preparation to experiences of torture. At the same time, there exists the reality of attending a performance in a condemned or dilapidated house in Belarus with passports and other personal documents, in which audience members must be prepared to leave at a moment's notice. The line between the two is blurred - without the illusion, the reality is unneeded; without the reality, the illusion is impossible. BFT's political circumstances make the blurring of illusion and reality integral to its success as a theatre organization.

Both conflict and theatre blur reality and illusion. In terms of conflict, this blur is most apparent when the reality of everyday peace is shattered and the illusion of a new reality is created.[111] Individuals, as well as communities, become part of the illusion, finding it to be the new normal that must be adapted to rather than an anomaly that can be changed.[112] Such experiences overlap reality and illusion, making it unclear which is which. The illusory world of theatre, especially socially conscious and politically engaged theatre, creates a similar context. Theatre provides a space within which public illusions become theatrical realities, resulting in

[111] Ras Baraka, principal of Newark, NJ's Central High School until he was elected city mayor of in May 2014, points to this illusory abnormality when speaking to his students after a shooting claimed the life of one of Central's students. Part of Baraka's speech is available on YouTube; it also features in season 1, episode 5 of *Brick City*, a documentary series chronicling Newark's struggle to overturn decades of violence and corruption.

[112] Normalization of violence happens on individual, as well as community, levels. Sociologist Eloise Dunlap and her colleagues have documented the case of adult crack users who view physical abuse in childhood as an "ordinary" aspect of their youth. See Dunlap et al.'s article titled "Normalization of Violence" for more.

dramatic realities exposing public illusions.[113] The line between fact and fiction becomes unclear, questioning conventional thought and beliefs. Experiencing productions furthers this murkiness, as affect mixes with cognition to challenge pre-conceived notions and perceptions of truth. Indeed, the ways in which both theatre and conflict represent a blurring of reality and illusion strengthens the suggestion that there is a symbiotic embeddedness of theatre and conflict.

Concluding Thoughts

This taxonomy aims to: a) demonstrate a conceptual connection between theatre and conflict work by drawing on real-world examples, b) suggest the symbiotic embeddedness of theatre and conflict, and c) create space for theatre and conflict practitioners to consciously play and experiment with these sub-concepts. To these ends, this taxonomy highlights four sub-concepts that emerged as a result of examining these organizations: subverting to play, imagining hidden histories, embodying the unspeakable, and blurring illusion and reality. With these four sub-concepts as elements that theatre and conflict share, this thesis moves to its final section regarding symbiotic embeddedness. Do these four sub-concepts point to, suggest, or imply that theatre and conflict are irremovable from one another? Or, do they contribute to a refining and contestation of such inextricability, questioning the symbiotic embeddedness of both experiences and inspiring further inquiry? The final section of this thesis, "Symbiotic Embeddedness," considers these questions.

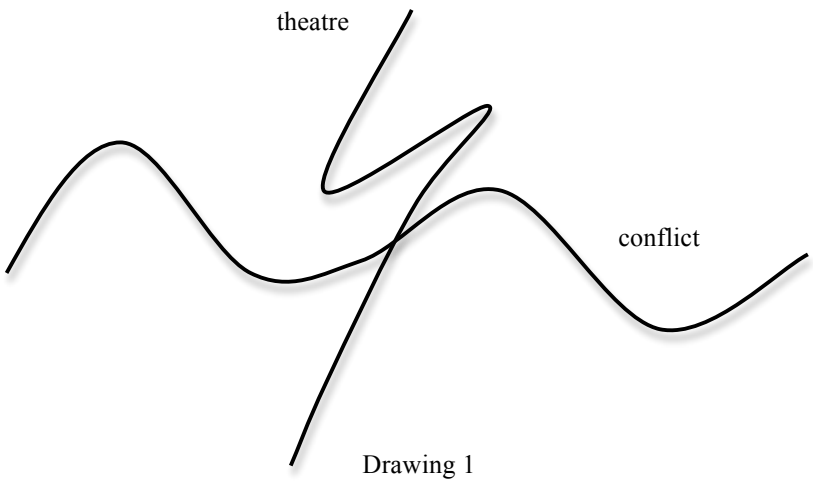
[113] Ajoka Theatre's *Amrika Chalo* is just one satirical and comical example of this interplay.

Symbiotic Embeddedness

This section uses the sub-concepts articulated in discussion of "The Taxonomy" as a point of departure. It improvises on and around them, exploring ways in which they might demonstrate a symbiotic embeddedness of theatre and conflict. This probing section hopes to provide answers, but may, in fact, arrive at more intensive and thorough questions regarding the relationship of theatre and conflict. Some hidden connections between theatre- and conflict-based approaches may emerge from this discussion. At the same time, issues that this paper was unable to address (such as the nascent nature of the sub-concepts, for instance) may veil this connection, resulting in inquiries that can guide future practice and study.

"The Taxonomy" articulated four sub-concepts (subverting to play, imagining hidden histories, embodying the unspeakable, and blurring illusion and reality) that clearly have a place in both theatre and conflict work. But the real question is, why? Theatre organizations working in conflict zones live these principles in their performances, content, everyday operations, and so on. Yet, the question remains: why do they do so in a way that has equal applicability to theatrical and conflict settings? Is there something special about these organizations that makes it so? Or, are there broader structures at work that frame this intersection/overlap?

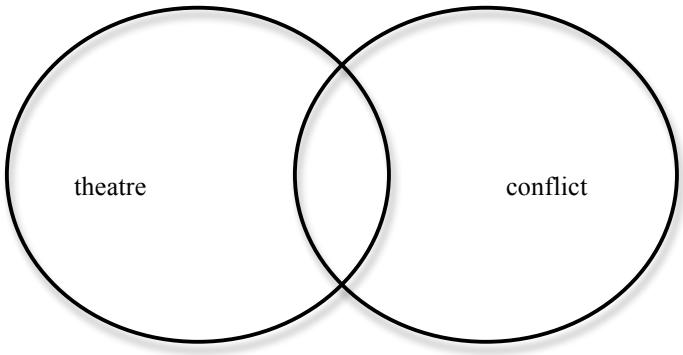
This distinction, of theatre and conflict overlapping compared to theatre and conflict intersecting, seems to be key. The intersection of theatre and conflict lends itself to a visual of two lines coming together at one point, moving on in different directions after doing so. Consider the following image:



Drawing 1

In Drawing 1, the vertical theatre squiggle intersects with the horizontal conflict squiggle at one point (stylized here as in the center of both squiggles, but the intersection could be anywhere along either line). Presumably, if we zoomed in on that point enough, we would find the aforementioned sub-concepts in the vicinity or on top of that intersection. Those who work only in the world of theatre or only in the world of conflict may see theatre and conflict in the way that they are depicted in Drawing 1: separate lines that have their own trajectory and nothing to do with one another, intersecting at one point, unaffected by the interaction as they continue along their path.

By comparison, an overlap implies that there are two larger bodies that have some space of commonality, of shared purpose and experience. Think of a Venn diagram, somewhat like this:



Drawing 2

In Drawing 2, theatre and conflict are each independent bodies that have a space of overlap. The central space, theoretically, would hold sub-concepts such as subverting to play and embodying the unspeakable. In this view, theatre and conflict share some space rather than a point. Arguably, many of the theatre practitioners interviewed for this thesis, as well as others working in similar ways around the world, view theatre and conflict in this way: each having their own space, coming together and working in concert with one another around particular principles and issues, and remaining unaffected as a result of the overlap.

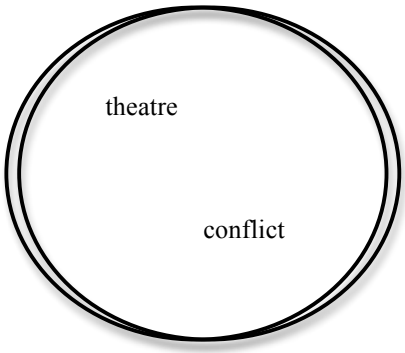
These illustrations may have some merit, but they don't seem to reflect the conversations and discussions that informed the sub-concepts in "The Taxonomy." Participants mentioned, time and again, that theatre relied on conflict for its success. Conflict was described as a building block for theatre, without which drama could not exist. Anyone reading this thesis who has heard a good story or viewed an excellent theatrical production will know that narrative rests on struggle and tension, played out between characters or within an individual - theatre is nothing without conflict. The audience's experience of anticipation, emotional build-up, and investment in the journey - whether internal or external - is typically predicated on conflict occurring within the theatrical production. Theatre's reliance on conflict is not found in Drawings 1 or 2.

But even that reliance is not enough. The aforementioned sub-concepts demonstrate that the relationship between theatre and conflict is not a one-way street.[114] Conflict depends on theatricality, on performance. The conduct of the Serbian government during the Balkan War required dramatic action that tricked many Serbs into believing that the country was uninvolved in mass atrocities; the government blurred the reality of the war with the illusion of non-involvement that it wanted its people to believe. Pakistan's fueling of tensions with India relies

[114] If it were, then the THEATRE IS CONFLICT metaphor, developed in the initial pilot study, would suffice.

on an ongoing performance of Pakistan as anything that is not Indian; over decades, the government has enacted an imagined history that it wants past, present, and future generations of Pakistanis to believe. In order for such struggles to continue, drama, propaganda, and play are needed - conflict is nothing without theatre. Drawings 1 and 2 do not illustrate this.

Theatre relies on conflict, and conflict relies on theatre: that is the "turn."[115] Each is required for the other to exist, such that each is found in the other. Conflict is present in and predicated on theatre, and theatre is present in and predicated on conflict. Perhaps a more accurate diagram might look like this:



Drawing 3

Astute observers will notice that neither of the two circles in Drawing 3 is superior to the other. In fact, both are simultaneously sitting atop and sitting below the other circle in the image. Likewise, theatre and conflict sit both atop and below one another to such an extent that they are within one another. Though the two concepts are separate, they require each other. In Drawing 3, we cannot see which circle sits on top of the other, reflecting the ambiguity that neither concept is more predicated or more reliant on the other. Based on the sub-concepts discussed above, this seems a more accurate representation of the theatre-conflict relationship.

[115] Derek Goldman, the author's thesis committee chair, is a theatre practitioner familiar with theatre's reliance on conflict. His use of the term "turn" to describe this relationship, borrowed here, points to an understanding that both conflict and theatre rely on one another. See below for more.

Closer examination makes clear that only two points on either circle intersect: they are at the top and bottom of each circle. In order for that to occur, an imaginary core (think of a cylinder or pole running through the center) would have to be at the heart of each circle, one that is shared by both. Indeed, the points at the top and bottom of each circle can only overlap as they do in Diagram 3 if the circles rotate around a single axis: they "turn" freely. That single axis represents a shared core that seems to run through both conflict and theatre, highlighting a fundamental common essence and reflecting the "turn" of theatre and conflict relying on one another for mutual benefit.

Drawing 3 is a useful visual, but a name for this concept is needed. Because of the way in which both theatre and conflict are found in one another, combined with the way in which both benefit from the presence of the other, the relationship may be considered one of symbiotic embeddedness.[116] Breaking the term apart, symbiotic comes from the word 'symbiosis,' which refers to the Greek *symbiosis*, meaning 'living together.' Symbiosis is often used in a biological sense, particularly to describe relationships between organisms.[117] Embeddedness comes from 'embed,' which splits into the prefix *em-* ('to put into') and the Old English *bedd* ('sleeping place in the ground'). In the 18th century, the term 'embedded' was used to describe fossils found in beds of rock. Today, it operates in a broader sense of referring to anything that is built into something else.

[116] Though the author arrived at this term without reference to the study of child development, some scholars have used 'embeddedness' to describe the psychoanalyst Margaret Mahler's concept of "symbiosis," which highlights the relationship between a mother and child when the child is in the womb (see psychoanalysts Stephen A. Mitchell and Margaret J. Black's *Freud and Beyond* and psychologist Susanne Cook-Greuter's "Maps for Living"). Other mentions include that of man having a symbiotic embeddedness in the world (see Egyptologist Jan Assmann's "What's Wrong with Images?" in *Idol Anxiety*). Whatever its previous uses, symbiotic embeddedness does not seem to have been explored as a standalone, specific term related to theatre and conflict.

[117] Not all scientists agree that symbiosis should only refer to mutually beneficial relationships like the theatre-conflict one; in fact, most current biology and ecology textbooks use the term to describe all interactions between species. However, the etymology of the word seems to point to a mutually beneficial relationship, as does its overall connotation. Thus, it is adopted here in reference to mutually beneficial relationships only.

Putting these words together, symbiotic embeddedness describes a situation in which two ideas or concepts are built into one another, offering mutual benefit to both. Each is its own, autonomous experience, but each includes elements of the other in its own experience. Whereas part of a bee is not found in the flower that it is pollinating (a classic example of a mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship) and vice-versa, theatre is found in conflict and vice-versa (a symbiotically embedded relationship). The mutual benefit remains, as does the way in which both are built into the other. Drawing 3 expresses this as two circles sharing a core: both are distinct experiences, but which is superior and which is inferior cannot be determined. As an idea, symbiotic embeddedness highlights a relationship of mutuality, one that inspires questions rather than provides answers.[118]

In terms of theatre and conflict, it may be that one is more dependent on the other than vice-versa. Can theatre exist without conflict? Can conflict exist without theatre? Perhaps we need a specific element of the other, rather than the entire concept. What components of theatre are required for conflict to exist, and what dimensions of conflict are needed by theatre? Further, there may be some theatre organizations, performances, conflict organizations, or conflicts that do not reflect this symbiotic embeddedness. What would conflict without theatre look like? What would theatre without conflict look like? Beyond all of this, it is possible that symbiotic embeddedness has implications beyond theatre organizations that work in conflict zones. Where else can we find symbiotic embeddedness? What other intersections and overlaps (whether theatrical, conflict-based, or otherwise) reflect the idea of symbiotic embeddedness? Looking for

[118] To the researcher's knowledge, there are no other authors who simultaneously see that theatre is embedded in conflict and conflict is embedded in theatre. Certainly, numerous drama researchers have written on conflict as a building block of theatre, but the reverse is less common. Two notable examples of researchers using performance as a lens into conflict issues are: performance practitioner James Thompson's *Humanitarian Performance* and anthropologist Susan Slyomovics' *The Performance of Human Rights in Morocco*. However, neither text suggests that there is a fundamental core shared by both theatre and conflict.

additional examples of this phenomenon will help challenge its perspective, solidifying its usefulness as a theoretical and practical tool.

Final Thoughts

Let us begin to end. This study sought to demonstrate connections between theatre and conflict, as embodied by case studies of four theatrical organizations working in conflict zones: The Freedom Theatre in Palestine, Ajoka Theatre in Pakistan, DAH Teater in Serbia, and Belarus Free Theatre in Belarus and the UK. In so doing, it attempted to name the overlaps and relationships as possible sub-concepts that exist as connective tissue between conflict and theatre, writ large. These sub-concepts - subverting to play, imagining hidden histories, embodying the unspeakable, and blurring illusion and reality - contribute to a taxonomy of various dimensions of the theatre-conflict relationship. This taxonomy hints at the symbiotic embeddedness of theatre and conflict as a possible explanation for the existence of theatrical organizations in conflict zones.

There are certainly limitations to this study. The small number of cases in this study affected the generalizability of its conclusions. Further, within each case, the conflict context was unique and specific in a way that complicated the development of theory. The researcher was challenged by the short time frame within which interviews were to be conducted, further affected by the lack of response from potential participants. More interviews would have allowed for greater detail in the work and the descriptions of the case studies.

However, there is also some value in this study. First, the articulation of the sub-concepts regarding the theatre-conflict relationship can allow practitioners and scholars alike to use a common language that describes their understanding and experiences. Second, the taxonomy of these sub-concepts opens up a new area of debate regarding whether or not these ideas reflect ongoing theatrical practice. This presents an opportunity for scholars and practitioners to experiment with and contest these ideas, both in theory and practice. Scholars can conduct

research regarding these ideas, and practitioners can integrate them into or contest them in their everyday work. Finally, the idea of symbiotic embeddedness suggests a new way of thinking about and embodying theatre and conflict, given their shared core.

Studies such as this one are never complete. Attempting to explain why a phenomenon operates the way it does is a work in progress, one that relies on ongoing inquiry, research, and experience. Indeed, this study inquires as to the nature of the theatre-conflict relationship, the organization and design of that relationship, and its conceptual and real manifestations. This initial inquiry, the concepts that emerged from it, and the questions that remain can serve as an inspiration and point of departure for further research and theory development. Ultimately, however, this study's greater value is that it highlights and celebrates the everyday risks these organizations take in complex conflict contexts as they wrestle with life, death, and everything in between.

Appendices

Appendix A - Distilled Interview Questions (based on themes explored):

1. What led you to engage in this type of work?

2. What type of work does your organization do?

3. Your organization operates in a conflict zone or environment (pick one, depending on organization). How would you say this impacts your work?

4. How does theatre feature in your organization's work? Why does it use theatre rather than another performing art?

5. In looking through your materials, it struck me that your organization operates at the intersection of theatre and conflict. Would you agree? How do you think these two aspects intersect within your organization?

6. Are there any explicit metaphors that your organization uses to organize how you use theatre in conflict?

7. How would you say that theatre is similar to conflict, if at all?

8. How would you say that conflict is similar to theatre, if at all?

9. What are the main challenges that your organization faces in integrating theatre and conflict?

10. What is the primary goal that your organization believes it is accomplishing by using theatre (mode of expression, skill development, entertainment, etc.)?

11. How does your organization view the conflict around you (inspiration, environment, background noise, etc.)?

Appendix B - Informed Consent Document

This study aims to highlight connections between the performing arts and conflict. It seeks to demonstrate the ways of thinking surrounding professional practice of this intersection. It will allow scholars and practitioners to understand this intersection from an artistic perspective.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked for 1-2 interviews. With your consent, each interview will be audio taped for purposes of accurate data collection. Only I will have access to those audiotapes, and they will be erased at the conclusion of the project. I will make

transcriptions of the audiotapes, which will be coded to contain no person-identifiable information to ensure confidentiality.

Your participation in this study is ***voluntary*** and you may withdraw at any time and for any reason without penalty. In addition, all of the data collected in the study will be ***confidential.*** Unless you give explicit permission for me to use your name or the name of your organization, all person-identifiable data will be coded so that you cannot be identified. You will have the opportunity to review and correct my description of your theory of practice before the final analyses to ensure that I have accurately represented your views. There are no foreseeable risks, costs, or anticipated negative effects to you or any other party for participating in the study.

On the other hand, your participation in the study may help advance the field of conflict resolution by developing more informed theory about the ways in which theatre is used as a peacebuilding and conflict transformation practice. Copies of the interview transcripts and final thesis will be made available to you if you would like them.

This study is being conducted in an effort to promote your organization, support the researcher's endeavors at writing a thesis, and publish an article. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me by e-mail (am3096@georgetown.edu). You may also contact my faculty advisor: Derek Goldman at dag45@georgetown.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Georgetown University IRB at (202) 687-1506 or irboard@georgetown.edu.

Thank you for taking the time to review the information contained in this letter. I sincerely hope that you will agree to participate in this study. If you do agree, please print and sign your name on the back of this page and initial next to the option for full or selective confidentiality that you prefer.

I agree to participate in this research study:

_____
Signature

_____
Name

_____
Organization

Please select one:

_____**Full Confidentiality:** No person- or organization-identifiable data will be used in the research. Your name and the name of your organization will not appear anywhere in this project.

_____**Selective Confidentiality - Option A:** No person- or organization-identifiable data will be used in the body of this research or associated with any substantive information about intervention processes or projects. Your name and the name of your organization will appear in the appendix on a list of participants in this research.

_____ **Selective Confidentiality - Option B:** You and your organization will receive full credit and acknowledgment for the intervention processes and projects described in this study. No person-identifiable data will be used for specific statement or views without your prior review and approval.

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