

- 10 Luscombe received an honorary doctorate from York University, and one from the University of Guelph where he taught undergraduates until his resignation due to ill health. In 1981, Luscombe was awarded the Order of Canada by the same government that, after more than two decades of support, repeatedly turned down TWP's grant applications and brought about its closure in 1988.

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Jack Winter was born in Canada and taught literature at York University. The author of many stage plays, radio and television plays, critical articles, prose fiction and non-fiction and several books of poetry, during the 1960s and 1970s he was resident playwright and dramaturge at Toronto Workshop Productions.

Creating Artful Dialogues: David Diamond's *Theatre for Living*

By Emily Rollie

Theatre for Living: The Art and Science of Community-Based Dialogue. By David Diamond. Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2007.

Written by David Diamond, artistic director of Vancouver-based Headlines Theatre, *Theatre for Living* articulates Diamond's philosophy of creating community-based, forum theatre. Influenced significantly by Theatre of the Oppressed pioneer Augusto Boal, Diamond recognizes the need to develop the language of Theatre of the Oppressed beyond the strict designations of "oppressor" and "oppressed." Acknowledging the diversity of the communities in which he works, Diamond combines systems theory and theatre as a way to "understand [his] own evolving work better" and to "stimulate discussion about the central role that storytelling and art play in creating and living in healthy communities" (23). Part resource book, part memoir and part theoretical exploration, *Theatre for Living* eloquently articulates Diamond's modification of Boal's techniques and contributes both to the scholarly and the practical development of Theatre of the Oppressed.

Through straightforward writing and illustrative examples, Diamond's text offers theatre scholars and practitioners, or anyone interested in theatre's potential for social change, a new perspective on Boal-based techniques.

The foreword, written by physicist and systems theorist Fritjof Capra, sets the initial context for Diamond's Theatre for Living methodology. Capra outlines the influence of systems theory on scientific thought, noting that, in the last twenty-five years, the traditional, mechanistic conception of life has shifted in favour of the integrated-systems-theory paradigm. He explains, "Instead of seeing the universe as a machine composed of elementary building blocks, scientists have discovered that the material world is, ultimately, a network of inseparable patterns of relationships" (14). Moreover, this living network encompasses "language, culture and the experience of community," upon which Diamond bases his Theatre for Living techniques (15). Thus, the opening pages set the tone for the community-oriented praxis of Theatre for Living.

Using systems theory's holistic approach, Diamond then draws connections between theatre and science. Within the living network, communication among organisms creates thoughts and meaning, from which behavioural and social structures subsequently develop. Because of these interconnections, the entire community must be addressed in tackling any single issue within the network. While this theatre-science connection may seem a theoretical stretch, Diamond makes a compelling argument for the acceptance of a community as a complex organism, a "living community," in which "all aspects of life and the world around us are interconnected" (19, 22). Throughout the book, Diamond artfully "weaves science into the theatre," referring to scholars in non-linear chemistry, psychology and other sciences while discussing theatre exercises and relating performance anecdotes (23).

Without distinctly numbered chapters, the book's organization reflects the flowing, interconnected nature of Diamond's methodology; in lieu of numbered divisions, there are nine primary sections, arranged topically. The first section situates Diamond's Theatre for Living in relation to Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed. Unlike Theatre of the Oppressed, which identifies a specific oppressor and oppressed, Diamond's philosophy explores the dynamic of the living network. Theatre for Living not only examines the plight of the oppressed but also "makes space to investigate the fears, desires, and motivations of the oppressor" (38). In fact, Theatre for Living eliminates these terms entirely and instead "recognizes that the community is an integrated and perhaps dysfunctional organism that is struggling to resolve difficult issues" (24).

Subsequent sections discuss the application of systems theory to theatrical practice. Using personal vignettes and pertinent performance experiences to illustrate his points, Diamond cites "overlapping feedback loops, or dialogues

with the world” as the basis for creating the structure of communities, including “laws, architecture, patterned ways of being” (62). These feedback loops then affect all members of a community, both locally and globally, and create a complex network of life that, according to Diamond, should be reflected by theatre.

Having established the idea of a complex, living community and the ways theatre addresses that complexity, the middle section of the book immerses the reader in a Theatre for Living workshop. In this section, Diamond applies his methodology to practice through detailed descriptions of exercises and techniques he uses regularly. One such exercise, entitled “Magnetic Image,” asks each of several actors to form a physical shape that symbolically conveys her or his emotional response to a specific issue. The remaining actors then move toward the shape that resonates most closely with their own experiences and emotions, as if it were a magnet. Connected by their shared response to these still images, the small groups then discuss it, seeking out their common struggle. From these magnetic images, larger-group images are created and then animated, a process that ultimately leads to the beginning improvisations of a play. Throughout this section of the book, Diamond addresses the reader as a workshop participant in active, jargon-free language. This clever narrative style offers an accurate perspective on the tone and atmosphere of a Theatre for Living workshop experience.

Diamond concludes with specific case studies that illustrate how Theatre for Living “actually works in a community setting” (209). Supported by journal entries Diamond wrote during the creation processes, the chronological accounts of these productions are tangible examples of Theatre for Living at work. Diamond candidly addresses both the challenges and the breakthroughs associated with each production. In a case study recounting Headlines’s 1998 “Dancers in the Mist” project, for example, Diamond recalls the difficulty of many community members when asked to address directly sensitive issues affecting First Nations people. Rather than actively and honestly engaging in the exercises, several group members behaved disruptively, working against TFL’s dialogical intent. However, the following day provided a powerful breakthrough for the entire group, in which the actors, without planning, seeing or speaking to one another, created a communal physical image that, when animated, artfully articulated the entire group’s perspective. In this moment, the group had “plugged into something much larger than [them]selves” and was “stunned by the results” (218).

A comprehensive appendix rounds out the text, highlighting additional exercises and rehearsal techniques and listing suggested reading. A point of interest in the appendix is the full-length article, “Television and the World Wide Web” (287). Here, Diamond explains Headlines’ innovative use of tele- and Webcasts for selected forum theatre productions. A Headlines tele- or Webcast functions just like a typical forum

theatre performance; however, in addition to the regular theatre audience, the performance is broadcast live over a local community television channel and the Internet. During the performance, viewers watching at home can call in and have a tele-actor or web actor intervene in the play’s action on their behalf. Thus, for Headlines’s forum theatre performances, interventions are not limited to those attempted by the live audience but include ideas from the community at large. Thoroughly documenting the procedure, its implementation and the global response to the broadcasts, Diamond’s book reiterates the systems-theory connection, asserting that “individual communities are part of even larger living organisms that comprise the human community that spans the planet” (295). The broadcasts engage the global community in theatrical dialogue for social change.

While not a radical departure from Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed, David Diamond’s Theatre for Living might be considered a dynamic outgrowth of Boal’s practice in that it provides a more holistic, complex lens through which to view traditional Theatre of the Oppressed techniques. Diamond’s text and Theatre for Living methods document the evolution of Theatre of the Oppressed and ultimately serve as an inspiring example of theatre’s potential to cultivate community dialogues as complex as the communities themselves.

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La Pocha Nostra Performs at MOCCA: A Radical Critique of Colonial Relations

By Karen Kugelmass

Divino Corpo: Temple of Improbable and Invisible Causes. Interactive performance by La Pocha Nostra. Perf. by Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Roberto Sifuentes, Violeta Luna (U.S.-Mexico); Jessica Wyman, Mark Rush, Gale Allen, Ulysses Castellanos and performance students from York University (Canada). Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art. 7 Nov. 2008.

Divino Corpo is the latest piece by the international performance troupe La Pocha Nostra, performed in 2008 at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art (MOCCA). The performance is configured as a living diorama with the audience standing in the middle of the gallery looking out at scenes located on all four sides of the room. At one end, there is a body covered by a Canadian flag. At another, there is a man wearing nothing but a camouflage headband and a diaper made of gauze. The