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Volume 6

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2021

## Editor's Introduction to the 6th Issue of the PTO Journal

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### Recommended Citation

Weinberg, Mark (2021) "Editor's Introduction to the 6th Issue of the PTO Journal," *Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Journal*: Vol. 6 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/ptoj/vol6/iss1/1>

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*Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Journal*  
*Vol. 6, Issue 1 (Fall 2021)*

## **Editor's Introduction to the 6<sup>th</sup> Issue of the *PTO Journal***

Mark Weinberg<sup>1</sup>

*This brief letter provides an introduction to my final issue as editor of the PTO Journal.*

Dear Readers,

I have always found rehearsal more gratifying than performance, devising more engaging than interpreting, talking more rewarding than telling. I preferred directing to acting but being a member of a collective was most fulfilling. I think that in some ways editing the *PTO Journal* has offered me the opportunity to find those same sources of gratification on the page that I found on and around the stage. And so I want to begin my final introduction by expressing my gratitude to the PTO Board that hired me three years ago and to the reviewers and editors who shared the work of producing the Journal, but mostly to the authors who trusted me, spoke to me, wrote and rewrote with me, and shared with me their time, their effort, their work, their discoveries, their questions, their critical acumen, and their activism. The many hours at my computer were more often gifts than tasks, more collaborations than chores.

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<sup>1</sup> **Mark Weinberg** (MFA, Ph.D., University of Minnesota) is co-director of The Center for Applied Theatre, which he co-founded with Jenny Wanasek in 2000. He has over 35 years of university experience teaching a wide range of traditional and applied theatre courses and communication skills, has been a member of PTO for over 20 years, and served on the Board for 9 years. Mark began his study of Theatre of the Oppressed with Augusto Boal in 1992. He has created Forum Theatre performances and conducted workshops and training sessions for educators, administrators, students, business leaders, NGOs, and community organizations in the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Austria. He has published and lectured widely on theatre and social activism and chronicled the development of collective theatre in his book *Challenging the Hierarchy: Collective Theatre in the United States* (Greenwood Press, 1992). Some of the techniques developed by CAT are described in "The One-Line Play," a chapter of *Come Closer: Critical Perspectives on Theatre of the Oppressed* (Lang, 2012).

I began the introduction to Issue 5 with a list of horrors we faced in 2020. Unfortunately, the list has only grown longer. But as I noted then, “many of us still teach, make theatre, and organize ... in ways that shout out against oppression, against the exploitation of people’s labor and the silencing of their voices. In ways that challenge oppressive systems by promoting critical thinking and social justice through liberatory theatre and popular education. In ways that act within, amplify, recognize, or document movements...”

Issue 6 continues to document, explore, challenge, critique, and question the ways in which we do those things – in Tennessee and Tehran, Connecticut and New Delhi, Chicago and Ghana, with youth and adults, online and in person, in schools and on the streets, in performances and publications. Every one of the eleven articles in this issue not only documents work done, but also looks to the future of liberatory theatre and pedagogy, basing speculation about potential on a critical analysis of work already done.

Taylor St. John in **Taking Youth Voices Seriously: Theatre, Storytelling, and Empowerment with Refugee Youth in Memphis, TN** writes about a project with refugee youth in Tennessee focusing on the potential of storytelling and community-based theatre as a model for youth empowerment and liberatory education. In **Pedagogic Experiences of a Joker in Tehran**, Hamze Aleepayam describes the potential of the Pedagogy of Freedom to return the power of learning and literacy to refugee youth in Tehran. His view of the classroom through the lens of the joker is very revealing. Nancy Parent in **Leveraging Standardized Testing to Transform Curriculum Through Arts Integration: Effects of Shadow Puppet Theater on Reading Fluency Among Elementary School Students** also describes how arts integration can support reading fluency and how the very tools that schools use to assess banking education can be used to promote liberatory practices.

Felicia Owusu-Ansah’s **Image Theatre as a Conduit for Academic Research** looks at Applied Theatre itself as a tool for research, in this case discovering the underlying causes of illegal migration by workers in Ghana. Some of her discoveries are disturbing; all are enlightening. Jasmin Cardenas in **Theater of the Oppressed and Labor Organizing: A Look at the Possibilities, Limitations, and**

**Challenges** describes a multi-year project creating a theatre company of temp workers to share information about and develop responses to labor exploitation in Chicago. Both of these articles explore the power and the limitations of activist theatre makers in the face of cultural and capitalist demands. Joschka Köck reflects on a multi-part conversation about a very similar concern in **Collective Beauty, Grace and Care Against Isolation, Mistrust, and Lack of Utopia: Global Community Events on Neoliberalism in Social Justice Theatre Work**.

During 2021 arts activists continued to expand the possibilities of online PO and TO, and three articles in this issue look at TO online. Jeffrey Pufahl, Emmanuelle Crider, and Kelviana Walker describe the structure of online workshops using Forum Theatre to explore issues about women's health care and addiction recovery in **Exploring Online Participatory Theatre During COVID-19: Reflections on Adapting, Delivering, and Evaluating Student-Led Theatre for Health Workshops** and conclude that online participation improves audience understanding of issues in the social sciences. Akhila Khanna's **Unmuted: A Digital Dilemma Inspired by Forum Theatre** presents a detailed description of the process of developing an online Forum about online sexual harassment in New Delhi and discusses the way in which digitized Forum increases both aesthetic distance and open dialogue. **Expanding and Expounding Upon Forum Theater to Engage Spect-actors in Virtual Spaces** by LaSonja Roberts, Tara Nkrumah, María Migueliz Valcarlos, and Vonzell Agosto presents a description of the process of developing workshops to support the anti-racist efforts of student groups in Florida and Arizona. The report points to the lessons learned and offers recommendations for further exploration of Forum online.

This issue also contains reviews of two recently published, extremely significant books on Theatre of the Oppressed. Amy Phillips' review of ***The Routledge Companion to Theatre of the Oppressed***, edited by Julian Boal, Kelly Howe, and José Soerio, describes the contribution of this anthology of essays by practitioners and theorists around the world to the study, critical examination, and development of TO. Uri Yitzchak Noy Meir offers a more personal response appropriate to a review of a more personal, but still

astutely critical, combination of history, theory, and memoir, ***Theatre of the Oppressed – Roots & Wings: A Theory of Praxis*** by Barbara Santos. Finally, you can read a report from the PTO Co-Presidents about the activities of the Organization over the past year and some information about upcoming events.

As I look back at the list of contributors over the past three issues, I am delighted to see that the Journal has become a way of sharing our work across borders and oceans, of illustrating both international solidarity in the battle for human rights and respect for cultural diversity in the face of capitalist globalism and the educational systems that support it. I welcome the new international team of co-editors of the *PTO Journal* – [Patricia Freitas](#) who lives in São Paulo, Brazil and [Aaron Ellis](#) in Orlando, Florida, US – certain that they will continue to expand the scope and enhance the quality of the Journal. They will be supported by Joschka Köck from Vienna, Austria who will be the Assistant Editor for the Review Section.

I am certain, as well, that the mission of the *PTO Journal* will remain the same: participating in anti-oppression struggle by providing a venue for promoting, documenting, and critically reflecting on the theory and practice of revolutionary pedagogy and theatre. The Journal has been designed to create a rigorously critical and community-based space for dialogue about oppression and liberation, and to foster collaborative connections that share, develop, promote, and document how transformative theory (including, but not limited to, Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Theatre of the Oppressed) can affect social change locally and globally. *PTOJ* is dedicated to critically celebrating the experiences of communities to which we belong and with whom we interact, and serving as a weapon in the struggle against systemic oppressions in the pursuit of liberation and justice.

We welcome submissions from artists, educators, practitioners, and activists who wish to contribute to the on-going discussion and development of liberatory practice around the world in any style or format that you feel communicates your ideas. The editorial and review staff will support both experienced authors and those new to publishing with editorial advice, critical commentary, and whatever else is needed to help you make your contribution ready for inclusion in the *Journal*.

I urge you as well to read *Raising Revolutionary Voices*, the monthly PTO newsletter. Not only does the newsletter provide information about TO and PO and links to timely articles and events, but it serves as a venue for dialogue about articles in the *Journal*. If you have a response to anything published here, send it to *Raising Revolutionary Voices*. Please take advantage of this opportunity to make the *PTO Journal* another way of extending the vibrant dialogue that is at the core of liberatory practice.

During an online workshop I participated in last year, facilitator Willa Taylor asked participants to answer three questions: Who walked before you? Who walks beside you? and Who will follow? Those questions seem particularly appropriate to me now as I complete my time as editor. The lists in answer to the first two questions would be very very long, but I'd like to mention three people to whom I owe very personal debts of love and gratitude: Doug Paterson, who founded PTO and with whom I have worked and played for 40 years in activist theatre endeavors; Jenn Freitag, the first editor of the *PTO Journal* who set the course of the publication guided by the desire to serve those engaged in struggle; and Augusto Boal, who in the seventeen years we knew each other never failed to challenge my perceptions, demand my active curiosity, and inspire my search for activist artistry based on love and respect.

Who will follow? I know from the authors who have so generously shared their work that this list will be long as well. I am eager to see who will be on it.

And so I bid you all farewell with

Love and Solidarity –

Mark