Theater in the Fields
A Guide for Dynamic Outreach with Farmworkers

Student Action with Farmworkers
A digital version of this guide and additional theater resources are available on the Student Action with Farmworkers website.

English | [http://saf-unite.org/content/theater-work](http://saf-unite.org/content/theater-work)

Spanish | [https://saf-unite.org/es/content/teatro](https://saf-unite.org/es/content/teatro)

**Student Action with Farmworkers (SAF) brings students and farmworkers together to learn about each other’s lives, share resources and skills, improve conditions for farmworkers, and build diverse coalitions working for social change.**

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2012 SAF interns (Left to Right) Anschel Burk, Juan Leal, Griselda Casillas and Levi Vonk pose in character during a theater performance.
Acknowledgements

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Finally, a huge thank you to all the farmworkers and their families who have participated in SAF’s theater project since 1994. Farmworkers contribute immensely to the U.S. agricultural economy and provide affordable fresh food for our tables. Farmworkers often sacrifice their family and community ties, physical and emotional well-being, in order to provide for their families. One day, all farmworkers will have dignity in their work and livelihood. People United Will Never Be Defeated!

“Your theater presentation was very entertaining and fun. This is what farmworkers need. It teaches us and takes us out of the routine. Thank you.”

-2009 Farmworker Participant

SAF co-directors Raúl Gámez and Laxmi Haynes pose after a rainy performance in 2013.
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2007 SAF interns Molly Sweetser and Agmet C. Miguel during a theater performance. The fake microphone is a great prop to use for audience participation.
Introduction

Student Action with Farmworkers (SAF) has been using theater as an educational tool with farmworkers for over twenty years. By drawing on techniques of popular theater, SAF performs culturally appropriate, lively skits and facilitates theater workshops with farmworkers at farm labor camps. These performances spur conversations about mental and physical health, living and working conditions, and farmworker movements for social justice. Every year, SAF’s theater program reaches 85 to 185 farmworkers across North Carolina’s Eastern and Piedmont regions.

The theater group is a central component of SAF’s Into the Fields (ITF) summer internship and six-month Sowing Seeds for Change (SSC) fellowship programs. Each year SAF trains college students in the techniques of popular theater, improvisation and the history of farmworkers’ theater. Half of the students come from farmworker families, and are especially appreciated for their ability to easily connect with farmworkers, and share their lived experiences with student allies. Each performance is hosted by an organization that conducts outreach directly with farmworkers, such as health clinics and legal aid agencies. Performances take place at farmworker camps, which are usually barracks, multiple trailers, or a farmhouse provided by employers where workers live together for the agricultural season.

SAF has developed this manual in order to consolidate the techniques we have learned over the past 20 years. Many of our performances have focused on health issues, and we aim for this manual to offer dynamic tools for health care providers, health educators, outreach workers, and public health innovators. Practitioners can also use these techniques with other populations across the social justice spectrum. For both organizers and health educators, we hope that popular theater can bolster the messages and information that you so readily share and provide a dynamic approach to outreach.

“The theater project was great; we got more feedback from the workers about their conditions than from regular outreach with our agencies. We usually have to visit the camp twice to get the same information we can get in one visit with the theater group.”

-2006 SAF Theater Group Interns
Hand drawn poster for the play, Los Vendidos, by Luis Valdez, performed by SAF 2000-2002.
The Roots of Farmworkers’ Theater

Student Action with Farmworkers has developed its theater program around two modern philosophies: Augusto Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed and Luis Valdez’s El Teatro Campesino, or The Farmworkers’ Theater.

Augusto Boal (1931-2009) was a Brazilian theater director who believed that traditional theater was an elitist art that did not serve the needs nor represent the lives of the people. Inspired by his friend Paulo Freire (1921-1997), a Brazilian philosopher, Boal ascribed to the idea that those who are oppressed cannot be liberated by those who oppress them; instead, the oppressed must rise up and liberate themselves. Both men also considered the people to be experts in their own lives and the most creative with solutions to their own problems. They encouraged peer-to-peer learning and collaboration, which they called “popular education.” Boal incorporated these perspectives on liberation and education into the theater concepts that he developed, and called this method “popular theater.” He believed that the act of performance was socially liberating, and that transformation took place through the collaboration of audience and actors.

El Teatro Campesino was founded in the 1960s by Luis Valdez (b.1940), an American playwright, actor and film director from a migrant farmworker family. Like Boal, Valdez believed that theater’s function was to be life-affirming, and offer an alternative window on what is possible to the people who were most oppressed. Valdez established five guidelines for El Teatro Campesino’s performances: inspire the audience to social action, illuminate specific points about social problems, satirize the opposition, show or hint at solutions, and express what people are feeling.

The one-act plays or “actos” of El Teatro Campesino depicted the lives of farmworkers and spread the message of solidarity through humor, culturally relevant characters, and improvisation. The power of the actos lay in their rebellious, humorous, uplifting nature, and the close ties to the popular imagination of Mexican and Central American fables, archetypes and mythology. Each acto included an interactive element where the audience could change the nature of the play by yelling suggestions aloud. Valdez also believed that humor was theater’s most potent tool, and El Teatro Campesino was strategically used to help win seminal United Farm Workers of America campaigns. Valdez is famous for saying “...if La Raza won’t go to the theater then the theater must got to La Raza.”

For more on Boal and Valdez, check out these publications:

The Efficacy of Theater for Public Health Outreach

Farmworker gets his blood pressure taken by a SAF intern during health outreach, 2005.
The Efficacy of Theater for Public Health Outreach

The use of theater for education is a global, centuries-old tradition that can be used to increase awareness, foster problem-solving, and invoke collective thinking and action. The use of theater to improve health education among farmworkers has been supported by research, as well as by our own observations and feedback from partners in the field.

According to a recent study of the impact of a theater troupe on HIV/AIDS knowledge among a small group of farmworkers in Michigan, farmworkers’ knowledge of the subject increased significantly after viewing the performances and the authors strongly recommend using theater with other types of health education prevention projects (Hovey, Booker, & Seligman 2007). In SAF’s use of theater, we have found that it greatly enhances the productivity of outreach, noting an increase in workers’ willingness to access healthcare services and take action to address grievances. For instance, one partnering clinic noted that after hosting SAF’s theater performances about HIV/STI prevention, workers were much more likely to be tested for HIV.

Case Study: Theater for Alcohol Abuse Prevention and Stress Reduction

“Theater group] allowed the organization to participate in an activity that outlined concerns for our farmworkers who may have been resistant in sharing challenges with depression/substance abuse in another setting. The project created a relaxing environment to openly express these common emotions while working at the camps.”

-S. Martinez, Rural Health Group Inc. 2013

During the 2013 agricultural season, Student Action with Farmworkers used theater to educate 85 migrant farmworkers at three farm labor camps in Person, Franklin and Nash counties. The 25-minute play presented ways to prevent alcohol abuse and demonstrate positive behavioral health techniques (with an emphasis on stress reduction). SAF partnered with Piedmont Health Services, Carolina Family Health Services, and Rural Health Group, Inc. to identify the camps and conduct the outreach.

The farmworkers that participated in this project were all men with an average age of 34. Although 79% of them were married, they all migrated alone while their families remained in Mexico. They had been migrating on average eight years and 96% migrate seasonally to the US from Mexico. Through an evaluation that SAF conducted with Duke Global Health Institute, we learned that over half (56%) of farmworker participants exhibited indicators of having an alcohol abuse problem, with a score of 2 or greater on the CAGE alcoholism screening questionnaire. Fifty seven percent said their reason for drinking was to “relax”, 36% to “cope”, 19% for “pain” or to “forget problems”, and 34% to “pass the time”.

Theater in the Fields
To measure our impact, SAF conducted pre and post-tests. After seeing the performance and participating in the theater workshops, 97% of participants reported feeling more confident in their ability to make healthy choices about drinking alcohol. One hundred percent of respondents found the performance entertaining, 98% believed it to be useful, 96% related to some of the characters, and 89% said the performance made them think differently about alcohol. There was a statistically significant increase in the proportion of participants who correctly identified daily and weekly safe drinking limits. Following the theater visits, SAF interns and fellows worked with their host clinic to set up appointments with primary care providers at the local clinic, as well as refer workers to mental health providers in the community.

2007 SAF intern, Agmet C. Miguel, asks audience about their experiences with pesticides during a performance (left). Song-writing exercise with farmworkers about alcohol abuse during a 2013 theater workshop (right).

For more research on the efficacy of theater for public health outreach, check out:


Boots of farmworker audience during a 2013 performance.
Theater in the Fields: Step-by-Step

Over the past twenty years, SAF has used theater as a highly effective strategy for engaging farmworkers with accessible, relevant information. While the majority of our recent plays have been health focused, SAF’s theater has also engaged farmworkers in a range of topics from migrant education issues, to housing issues, to understanding new laws and a new union contract. Farmworkers are considered an at-risk population for many serious health concerns due to their poverty, language barrier, isolation, migrant lifestyle and lack of access to available resources. Many of our summer interns work with health agencies providing access to healthcare, and the theater group is a great complement to health outreach.

SAF prioritizes theater with farmworkers as a way to practice values inherent to our mission: collaboration, exchange, and mutuality. Through the plays, farmworkers can see that they are not invisible, that their story is known, and that students are eager to come to them for their expertise. By peering deeply into the lives of a family, or by embodying their hopes, dreams, fears and ambitions in a public space, students perform what life is, or could be like for farmworkers. These exchanges offer the emotional pallet of relationships with farmworkers that support interns’ transition from working for, to working with farmworkers. The following is a collection of step-by-step activities and tips for the incorporation of popular theater into your work.

1. Collaborating with Partner Organizations

Collaborating with local community organizations that work directly with your intended population can be key to the success of a popular theater program. Many of you reading this guide may already work directly with your intended audience and your actors might come from the community that you work in. Partnership can be a helpful way to spread your message to other organizations, or to stand in solidarity with the work of your allies. Partnering organizations can also help identify or prioritize a relevant theater topic.

At Student Action with Farmworkers, we have been collaborating with organizations such as health agencies, labor unions, Legal Aid and migrant education programs since our inception. We have heard time and time again from our partners that the farmworker camps where we have presented theater performances are often more responsive to the work of the organization after our visit. The workers at the camp are much more likely to trust us if they know we are connected to an organization or community leader with whom they have had positive experiences.

We always recruit partner organizations months in advance so that they can talk to workers and see who is interested in having the theater group visit. Some partner organizations communicate with the grower or crew leader to know the workers’ work schedule, and arrange logistics such as meals and transportation if bringing multiple camps together. It is important to clearly outline what we expect of our partners and what they can expect from us.
2. Cast

Each summer, 6-8 bilingual (Spanish/English) SAF interns and fellows form the theater group. All are college students, and at least half are from farmworker families. Two SAF staff members plan and coordinate logistics and co-direct the theater group. The group practices with theater games and improvisational exercises, ultimately leading up to weekly performances at different camps throughout the summer. No experience is required and most interns are engaging with theater for the first time. As theater novices, much of the work with interns begins by encouraging them to step out of their comfort zones while performing. The directors cast all interns in one or more roles in the play. Neither gender, age, or ethnicity is taken into consideration when assigning characters; we have used wigs, face paint, costumes, and different voices to portray different characters.

“The moment I put on a blonde wig at the first theater rehearsal, I felt a little unsure if acting was for me. Being in the ITF internship sometimes means going out of your comfort zone, in a good way. Turns out I’m not destined to be an actress, but I couldn’t be happier that I was placed in the theater group.”

-Andrea Alexis Barreto, 2013 SAF Intern

3. Scripts

SAF’s plays and skits tend to be 15-30 minutes long. Timing is important; ideally the skit is short enough to hold the audience’s attention yet long enough to have a complete storyline and convey the key messages. We perform outside in the evenings when workers get home from work therefore we must be conscious of when the sun goes down or else we lose sufficient lighting. The philosophies of Boal and Valdez rely on the ability of actors to draw content directly from the audience. Since SAF uses untrained actors, they practice improvisation skills during rehearsals to be prepared to react when someone forgets their lines, if an audience member calls out a comment or joke, or if something unexpected happens like a pet dog wandering onto the “stage” during the performance.

Over the years, SAF has employed many different strategies to create our scripts. We have collaborated with theater professionals to write scripts, adapted current scripts, and also had staff and interns write our own plays. We have also found that a “reader’s theater” can be very effective when resources are limited (read more about the “reader’s theater” in the Scale and Replication section). Each strategy has benefits and challenges.
Hire a professional to write the script

Benefits:
- New and creative perspective on issues
- Strong writing skills, poetic language
- Sophisticated storyline and more developed characters

Challenges:
- The cost of a consultant and a translator
- Time consuming to educate the writer about the issues
- Time consuming to edit drafts and make sure the language and content are appropriate for your particular audience

Staff members adapt existing script to reflect your particular audience or issue

Benefits:
- It is helpful to have a basic story line to work from

Challenges:
- It can be hard to find scripts on the topics you need and have a story that will work with your audience
- Strong writing skills are helpful
- Requires staff time and expertise to adapt a script

Staff members write new scripts

Benefits:
- You have control over messaging and story
- The play is culturally and linguistically appropriate for your audience (assuming you are already culturally sensitive).
- The script can be flexible to include actor’s input.

Challenges:
- It can be time-consuming to start from scratch
- Experience with script writing, creativity and strong writing skills are helpful

Staff members facilitate actors to write scripts using a group process

Benefits:
- Actors have input and buy-in
- Script can be loose structure, mostly improvised with key messages OR structured with set lines to memorize
- It is easier for actors to learn improvised lines
- The performance is dynamic; lines and actions change based on the connection with the audience and the actors’ moods

Challenges:
- The director must have strong facilitation skills
- The writing process can be lengthy if the group is not feeling creative or can’t come to agreement
- There can be less control over messaging and story
No matter the starting method, actors fill in the details of the play during rehearsals, such as references to popular culture, character backgrounds, humor, and props. At least half of SAF interns are from farm-worker families and many farmworkers are the same age as the students. Therefore, SAF relies heavily on students to bring in relevant references and culturally appropriate elements the farmworkers can relate to.

So as to keep the essential interactive elements that makes Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed work so highly effective, it is essential to structure into the script some interactive elements that have to do with the dominant themes. For example, if a play were about HIV/STI prevention, there could be an opportunity for the audience to practice the correct way to use condoms. For a play about stress management, the audience could be instructed in gentle yoga stretches and relaxation breathing techniques. Alternatively, actors can ask specific questions to the audience at pivotal moments in the production, such as “Why do you think Juan wants to use a condom?” or “How else could Pedro relax without drinking alcohol?” As SAF students are new visitors to the camps, it usually takes a while for farmworkers to get comfortable with their presence. They are not always eager to participate in the play the first time. However, more often than not, they are content to watch and add commentary. Actors are encouraged to be outgoing and insistent on farmworkers participating. Actors will often go into the audience and call on people or offer small prizes for participation.

Incorporating music, dance, poetry and song makes for dynamic outreach and adds dimension to the script. We recently used a Salsa dance scene to demonstrate healthy exercise for stress reduction and one character sang and strummed a guitar to demonstrate healthy ways to pass the time (alternative to alcohol use).

See the Resources Section for:
• Script excerpt (professionally written): Giants In the Fields ........................................ p. 25
• Script excerpt (staff written): A Beer a Year Does No Harm ........................................ p. 26
• Improvised Skit Outline (actor written): Looks Can be Deceiving ............................. p. 27
• Songs for Outreach .......................................................................................................... p. 28

4. Props and Sets

Some of the great benefits of popular theater is that it is low-cost, portable, and adaptable to the performance setting. Performance locations vary depending on what space is available at the farmworker camps, and this adaptability is critical. Student Action with Farmworkers has performed outside in the parking area, in the yard, inside a communal kitchen, in a living room, at church fellowship halls, and in school auditoriums. When developing a set, keep in mind that it has to function in a variety of settings. We try to set up near a streetlamp or outdoor lighting in case the sun sets on us during the performance.
As a traveling theater group, all of our performances are very light on props and sets. Props vary depending on the skit but are usually culturally meaningful to the audience. We have used flags, devotional objects (candles, photo of the Virgin of Guadalupe), food, soccer balls, harvesting buckets, folding chairs and table, and musical instruments. Props can be exaggerated for dramatic emphasis, such as an oversized condom (found at a party store), a huge remote control and a large cell phone made out of cardboard.

Costumes are simple thrift store finds, and often include long sleeves and work pants, bandanas and baseball caps for farmworker characters (appropriate protective attire for farm work), and doctor’s coat, and scrubs for health providers. If getting costumes is not feasible, using handmade signs tied by a string around the actors’ neck can display the name of the character. (For example, “Crew Leader” or “Farmer”). Occasionally large puppets have been used by SAF, and we are interested in exploring the strategy of using hand puppets.

Access to electricity can be difficult. If recorded music is necessary, SAF brings an extension cord and speakers. There may be a few scene changes, and sets are minimal, thus encouraging the audience to engage with the play through imagination. By performing at the farmworkers’ housing and using simple sets, the students are communicating their intentions to be relaxed, informal, and conversational. The important thing to remember is to use props and sets that are essential to differentiate the characters in the story, and spark laughter and engagement. Use your creativity!

5. Curriculum

SAF’s internship and fellowship programs begin in early June with a weeklong orientation. The curriculum frames the work and lives of farmworkers within a global social justice perspective. Interns and fellows participate in team building exercises, explore the layered and often invisible mechanisms of the US food system, and learn about state, national and international policies that impact farmworkers.
When the theater interns gather, they learn about the history of El Teatro Campesino or “Farmworkers’ Theater”, and the uses of popular theater as a community and labor organizing strategy. Students are introduced to their characters, and practice a few theater games to get them comfortable with acting. Interns are also educated on health or other topics that they will be relaying through the performances.

Because of the relatively short duration of the summer internship program, students have a very short turn-around time to learn their lines and develop their characters. Student actors rehearse for a total of 15 hours before performing for farmworkers. After the orientation, students have one week to memorize their lines. SAF staff members direct a day-long rehearsal the following weekend, and the first performance takes place during the third week of the internship. As you can imagine, the first performance can be a little shaky; actors can forget their lines, blocking may be botched, and important props can go unused. Yet, actors are prepared for this, and often use some of the improvisation techniques that they have practiced during rehearsals to get them through the first performance.

6. Rehearsals

Rehearsal time is an important part of the bonding process for the actors, and gives them a critical opportunity to shape the performance. During rehearsals actors explore the themes that the play touches upon, including public health messages. They discuss elements of farmworker life that are woven into the play: challenging working conditions, labor exploitation, the physical isolation of farmworker camps, the emotional toll of being far away from family and social support systems, and the hopes and dreams that carry farmworkers to the Southeastern United States for work.

To get into character, the students are guided in theater games to get them more comfortable with performance. We often start with an icebreaker to get the actors working together and comfortable using their bodies and voices in different ways. Next, we may play an improvisation game, for example “Opposite Oneself” where actors improvise being a character that is very different than their usual personality (ex. A happy, positive person plays a grumpy cynical personality).

SAF interns explore issues that are relevant to farmworkers through activities that are interactive, relational, and entertaining. To deepen the dimensionality of each character, interns weave together back-stories that contextualize the experiences that they are aiming to represent. It is here that they are able to contextualize their character not just as someone who speaks the words of the dialogue, but whose words are informed by the micro- and macro- systems that shape many farmworkers’ lives: family systems and cultural expectations, religious beliefs, international free trade agreements, domestic and international agricultural policy, and capitalism. Through their characters, interns place themselves in the experience of farmworkers, and get to embody some of their challenges, joys, motivations, yearnings and contradictions.

Rehearsals also create a safe space for the cast members to build trust with each other. By exploring unfamiliar roles and activities without judgment, and watching a storyline unfold as the characters develop, the cast learns to follow the collective process and cohere. Practicing and playing builds trust to perform as a unit.
Blocking

Blocking is the arrangement of the actors on stage in order to facilitate the performance of the play. During blocking you should figure out entrance and exit points that make sense, actors interaction with the set, and making sure actors are moving around using the space and not all stagnant in one spot. The biggest un-learning actors have to do is to face the audience at all times instead of the actor they are speaking to. To talk to someone behind or beside them actors should have their bodies and face at an angle towards the audience. This will allow their voices to carry clearly.

Acting

The biggest challenge that SAF has in working with amateur actors is with voice projection. Performing in front of people can be a daunting task for amateur actors. We focus on voice projection to make sure that their words are audible to all members of the audience. Because SAF performances are outside at farm-worker housing and in front of large groups, actors are competing with the sounds of nature, road noise, music, television, and side conversations. Many early rehearsals can focus on voice projection. During a full run-through of the play, try having all actors stand in opposite corners of the room and deliver their lines to each other. At first the actors may feel like they are screaming, then they realize how important voice projection is for the audience to be able to hear them. We also suggest teaching actors to exaggerate facial expressions and body movement, to improvise, engage the audience, and develop accents or mannerisms for their characters. When the actors loosen up and have fun, the audience does as well.

Actor Input

SAF encourages actor input. The actors are involved in every aspect of the theater group, both as actors and contributors to the script. They help to block scenes, edit the script, develop new characters, make their own props, and develop poems and songs. The experience of this kind of theater should encourage and foster teamwork. The directors are the facilitators of the group, and we recommend they encourage everyone’s creativity and talents to shine.

Assign Roles

There are a lot of logistics and components to balance for the theater visits, so SAF often assigns actors roles and responsibilities for the evening. For example, actors explain the icebreaker to the audience, introduce the play, pass out and collect evaluation forms, gather people for souvenir photographs, serve dinner, gather props and clean-up before leaving.

See the Resources Section for:
• Ice Breakers & Theater Games .................................................. p. 30
7. Performances

Performances usually take place on a weeknight and we travel no more than 1.5 hours to our destination. The group arrives after workers have completed work for the day, and have had a short time to shower and rest. SAF staff members and the partnering organization staff members introduce themselves to the farmworkers, as the interns unpack props and set up the dinner. Dinner is provided for three reasons: as compensation for the farmworkers time, because it would take too long to wait for all the farmworkers to cook and eat their individual meals, and because eating together with visitors is a bonding experience for everyone. The theater set and dinner is set up in a location that is central to the camp so that farmworkers can easily and casually join the audience. Often farmworkers are reluctant to first approach the theater area, and it can be helpful to spend a few minutes asking the more curious farmworkers to gather the others and remind them that dinner is provided.

After dinner the actors begin with a short introduction and an invitation to play an icebreaker game. Each performance lasts between 15-30 minutes, and includes solicitation of ideas from the audience or activities for farmworkers to try on their own. When the play is complete, the actors bow, and introduce themselves by their name, what state or country they are from, and what partnering organization they are working with this summer. Interns ask workers to fill out a quick low-literacy evaluation and take souvenir instant photos with the farmworkers in their costumes. On occasion we have been able to provide additional services or opportunities for the farmworkers during the evening such as rapid HIV tests, participation in documentary interviews, sharing testimonies of their work experiences or presentations about health issues such as drug use and needle sharing.

SAF always leaves a goody bag of additional reading material on the topic, candy, and relevant items, such as condoms or athletic equipment. We seek to provide reading material that is in Spanish, low-literacy, has visuals and is easy to understand. We have used photonovelas (educational comic books), public health brochures and stickers with key health messages.
As the informal part of the evening begins, interns introduce themselves to individual farmworkers in the audience. Interns are encouraged to keep up conversations with the workers, asking about their lives and what parts of the play resonated with them. Often farmworkers have a lot to say in response to the play, and will ask questions about the content, or make jokes with the interns. Sometimes interns and farmworkers will be from the same regions, which always inspires excitement on both ends.

If interns notice a volleyball net or soccer ball, they invite the workers to play a game. They ask about and play with the children. If there are fields near by, they ask about the crops and how work is going. Although people may be having great conversations, SAF tries to be respectful of the participants’ time and that they must get up early for work the next morning. We suggest leaving by 9pm. At most camps, we may be among just a handful of visitors the workers receive during the entire agricultural season; they are often reluctant to see us go and encourage us to come back. This first visit has opened a door.

“After finishing the play, the audience challenged us to a volleyball match- it was a very competitive game. After each performance we usually have about one to two hours to converse with the workers. In every camp we find similar stories: some explain the hardships of the job, others talk about the beauty of working outside and feeling the breeze on their face. The theater group is definitely one of the highlights of this summer; it permits us to inform, entertain, and overall have fun being ourselves.”

-Jose Cruz Araujo, 2013 SAF Intern

See the Resources Section for:
- Performance Day Agenda ................................................................. p. 31
- Theater Evaluation Form ................................................................. p. 32

8. Theater Workshops

Over the last four years, Student Action with Farmworkers has realized that returning to camps for a second visit is a valuable opportunity to build on the relationships that the first performance initiated. Inspired by Boal’s theories that the power of popular theater is in its practice by the most marginalized, SAF returns to camps with the mission of following up on the central themes and messages of the play through theater exercises. While one visit is certainly sufficient to perform a skit and share a key message, it is during the second visit that workers are finally comfortable enough to try some of the popular theater techniques. This often results in deeper conversations about what they have learned, and what they plan to do with the new information.

When the theater group arrives for the second visit, we are often welcomed with much excitement and anticipation from workers. Again, this visit is scheduled for an evening after work, and dinner is provided.
SAF staff prompt the workers to review the skit performed, discussing the characters, plot and messages that resonated with them. After breaking into small groups, workers and interns discuss when they have experienced something that happened in the play, such as discrimination, unjust labor practices, family separation, a health issue or stress. It is important to note that the staff and interns also share their personal stories so that we can share vulnerability with the farmworkers, find commonalities, and learn from each other.

Interns and staff facilitate a variety of theater exercises to explore these themes. Together with interns, workers develop short skits about their lives, and perform them for each other. With the topic in mind, they develop songs, create human machines, and human sculptures. These creative exercises lead to deeper discussions about personal struggles, social justice and the broader contexts within which workers are situated. In our experience and evaluation, the theater workshops are usually a lot of fun for the farmworker participants, and for a few hours they may learn together, be playful, strategize about healthy solutions and envision a different world.

“More than anything, this [theater workshop] allowed us to share life experiences with our co-workers.”

-2011 Farmworker Participant

“I am excited for when we will return to the same camps in a month to conduct theater workshops with the farmworkers. This time, they’ll be in the ones participating in improv and doing some acting themselves! I was at first out of my comfort zone with the theater group, but I am learning how fun a medium it is to entertain, engage the audience and teach at the same time.”

-Christine Burke, 2013 SAF Intern

See the Resources Section for:
- Theater Workshop with Farmworkers ................................................................. p. 33
- Using the Arts for Education ................................................................................. p. 35

9. Encountering Resistance

When driving down the dirt road to a farmworker camp, you will often encounter a “No Trespassing” sign. Often farmworker camps are covered by tenants’ rights, and workers residing there are legally allowed to invite visitors of their choosing to their temporary homes. However, many growers maintain that since the housing is on their private property, only they can decide who can visit. Although some have been open to SAF’s theater work, not all crew leaders or growers will be excited to have strangers speaking to their employees. Because state laws differ, we suggest familiarizing yourself with the laws covering farmworker housing in your state. Collaborating organizations can suggest camps that will be accepting of the program.
Unfortunately, it can never be certain that a visit from a popular theater group will inspire confidence in a farm owner or crew leader. In our experiences, growers have been known to punish the workers who participated in the theater program by taking away their phones, denying them transportation and restricting their access to other resources. Whether this hostility comes from defensiveness, fear or something else, it can create an environment that is unsafe for farmworkers. Thus, we never arrive at a camp without prior consent from the workers. And, if a grower shows hostility and asks us to leave, we do so immediately. By working with a partner organization and a camp that already have a trusting working-relationship, SAF has generally been able to avoid conflict and successfully deliver our program.

10. Scale and Replication

Student Action with Farmworkers recognizes that the strategies shared in this manual are very much a result of our programming structure. However, we believe that theater programs can be successful at organizations with many different levels of capacity. We also know that our theater model is not restricted to working with farmworkers. The tools in this guide can and should be used with the broader Latino community and other communities. Some ideas for alternative scale and replication include:

- Develop a 1-2 person skit for your staff to perform for farmworkers. Different characters can be portrayed through use of simple costumes, props and signs.
- During outreach, give farmworkers the assignment to create a short skit in 15-20 minutes about what they know about a health topic or their experiences dealing with a health issue.
- Recruit volunteers from community theaters, or local college students who are studying theater and/or Spanish.
- Use a Readers’ Theater model by sharing a written script with a group of people to simply read out loud to each other.
- Use song, poetry or dance movements to illustrate emotions around health issues or other topics, and spark a discussion.
- Work with a college to coordinate an alternative spring break in which the students lead theater exercises with farmworker camps every evening for a week.
- Partner with a college service-learning course in which a class creates theater skits and performs for/with farmworkers.
- Create skits with your organization’s staff and board members as a team-building strategy. Skits can be used for education, illustrating an idea, or demonstrating a problem to be solved.
- Create a theater intern position at your organization. The intern can develop a 1-person skit or monologue to perform and/or facilitate theater exercises with farmworkers around health issues or other topics.
Conclusion

2013 SAF interns (Left to Right), Jose Cruz Araujo, Christine Burke, Andrea Barreto, Oscar Vitali Garay, Juan Martinez, and Bernardo Lopez, take a bow after performance.
Conclusion

Theater and the arts have been vehicles for spreading messages, establishing solidarity, and nourishing empathy. For Student Action with Farmworkers, this theater tradition has consistently resulted in high engagement and immediate rapport with farmworkers. We have found that farmworkers’ theater is a potent tool for sharing information and inspiring action because:

- **Farmworkers’ theater is based on narratives that are familiar and personal to workers’ lived experience, and thus results in heightened engagement, reflection, and incorporation of the public health messages.**

  By centralizing a play around experiences common to farmworkers, they can easily relate the emotions, dilemmas, and lessons to their own lives. Workers imagine different decisions that they would make in common situations, and are often encouraged to add their reactions to the resolution of the play. Information about safe-sex practices, for example, will be more readily heard and internalized within the context of a personal narrative than through a non-narrative format such as a lecture. This narrative structure also offers workers the opportunity to reflect on their personal beliefs and experiences as it relates to the story-arc of the play.

- **Theater offers farmworkers a way to build trust and break isolation through entertaining and culturally relevant storytelling.**

  The familiar characters in the skit often resonate deeply, and draw them in. After the play is complete and the interns introduce themselves, workers are ready to ease into conversations about not only the narrative content, but also their own families, dreams, goals and lives. Interns are trained to ask questions, and share about their own lives. By reflecting the farmworker experience and building trust through the empathic portrayal of real-life experiences, genuine conversations between farmworkers and interns become much more possible.

- **Farmworkers can be inspired to political action and directed to helpful resources.**

  Due to the satirical nature of farmworkers’ theater, objects or characters can represent macro-systems within the story line. For example, in one SAF production, a giant puppet named “Big Papa” was an amalgamation of challenges for farmworkers. He represented abusive and exploitative employers, racism and discrimination, greed, and nationalism at its worst. This puppet was omnipresent in the background of the performance, just as the impact of those dynamics was omnipresent in the background of farmworker lives. One camp that SAF’s theater group visited was so inspired by the play’s messages of safe and adequate living conditions that they connected with Legal Aid and ultimately filed a complaint. Worker testimonials from theater performances have also been used in SAF’s policy advocacy campaigns.

Educators and organizers are busy and they have ambitious goals to meet. They can be tempted to share as much information in as little time as they can to the population they are working with. There’s always a balance to be found in providing quality vs. quantity of information and services. SAF has found that although theater may seem time consuming, unprofessional, or uncomfortable, it can reap a richer bounty than traditional presentations and discussions about an issue. Theater engages people through multiple
senses using our mind and body. A farmworker who saw or participated in a skit, made up a song, or did a condom demonstration in front of his co-workers may want to share that dynamic experience with others for weeks, months or years to come. At one theater performance, a farmworker showed us a souvenir photograph from a previous year’s theater group visit he had participated in. He had brought the photo back and forth from his home country because it left a strong impression on him.

It is our hope that this theater guide offers resources and advice to bring theater strategies into your work, more effectively share vital public health messages, and ultimately ignite individual action and systemic change. These methods are presented to you not as a finished product, but as an evolving art and organizing strategy that is central to Student Action with Farmworkers work. We would love to hear how you use these tools, and hopefully we can improve upon these methods together and share them with others. Good luck, or rather, break a leg!

“What you do is very good for everyone who comes here, because with this you can avoid a lot of health problems.”
-2008 Farmworker Participant

SAF theater co-director, Raúl Gámez, takes a souvenir photo of the 2008 theater group.
2008 SAF intern Diana Rosales serves food before a performance.
Collaborating with Partner Organizations

Memo: Recruiting Partner Organizations

Hello!

I’m writing to request your organization to host Student Action with Farmworker’s Into the Fields Theater Group this summer. SAF collaborates with health clinics, legal aid and other organizations serving farmworkers as we use artistic means to educate, inspire dialogue and promote positive change in farmworkers health concerns. The focus of the play will be on HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections. We will be training all of our health interns on the topic at our Orientation in June.

SAF will pay for the farmworkers’ dinner, and give them souvenir photographs after the performance. After each performance the actors introduce themselves and their work placements and engage in informal dialogue with the workers. We also have an evaluation form to gather farmworkers comments. Each year the theater group gets requests from farmworkers to come back and visit them. This year we will return to 2 camps to do popular theater exercises with them. This will allow them to combat isolation by visiting more with SAF interns, and express themselves through theater exercises.

The theater group consists of approximately 7 actors and 2 directors. Due to travel restrictions we can only perform in some parts of the Piedmont and Eastern North Carolina.

Host organizations are responsible for:
• Choose a camp in your area with 30+ farmworkers. We need to have a minimum of 30 to reach our audience goals.
• Provide SAF with the time and directions to a meeting place at least one week before the performance.
• Visit the camp at least one week ahead of the scheduled performance to ask farmworkers permission for our visit and to inform that you will bring dinner that night.
• Coordinate meal including drinks and paper items for farmworkers and theater group. Budget is $300 per meal, feel free to ask restaurants or individuals for discounts or donations to defray costs. Bring your receipts for the meal to the performance; SAF will mail you a reimbursement check.
• Follow-up with camps after performance date to get further feedback on the play and allow opportunity for farmworkers to raise more health or labor concerns.

In addition SAF may partner with x organization to provide:
• HIV testing during the visit
• Distribute condoms with facts or myths about using them
• Distribute handouts about HIV/STI’s

Theater Performances and workshops will be held on Monday evenings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday June 18</th>
<th>Monday July 23</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday June 25</td>
<td>Monday July 30 (return to camp, theater workshop)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday July 16</td>
<td>Monday August 6 (return to camp, theater workshop)</td>
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If you are interested in hosting the theater group this summer please let me know. I look forward to working with you!
Giants in the Fields
By Cara Page and Vanessa Davis
Professional script written for Student Action with Farmworkers

Characters
Juán (the poet/dreamer)  Carlos (the beltmaker/the elder)
Miguel (the flamboyant dancer)  Paul (NC Grower)
Rolando (the Mariachi band leader)

Excerpt from Scene 5
(MEN ARE WORKING IN THE FIELDS, WHEN CARLOS BEGINS TO LOOK ILL.)
JUAN: Carlos, are you ok?
CARLOS: I’m not sure. I’m so hot.
JUAN: Miguel, bring water!
MIGUEL: There aren’t any cups.
ROLANDO: What?
CARLOS: I’m dizzy.
JUAN: You’d better lie down.
MIGUEL: Just don’t let the grower see you.
ROLANDO: He’s going to get fired anyway if he can’t work.
CARLOS: I can work. (TRIES TO CONTINUE WORKING AND PASSES OUT)
JUAN: (TRYING TO REVIVE HIM) Carlos? Carlos?
MIGUEL: What should we do?
ROLANDO: We’ve got to get him some medical help.
JUAN: I’ll stay with Carlos. You go and get the grower.
ROLANDO: Paul? Paul? Help! Carlos is in trouble!
PAUL: (ENTERS AND LEANS OVER CARLOS) Hmmm….Sleeping on the job. Keep working men. He’ll wake up in a minute.
JUAN: Carlos is not sleeping, he’s sick and needs to see a doctor!
PAUL: He’s not sick, he’s just old and lazy. Back to work! (EXITS)
ROLANDO: Now what do we do? If any of us complain, we will get in trouble. We’ll be blacklisted and we won’t be able to get work next year.
MIGUEL: What about the union contract?
ROLANDO: The union? Do you really think that would make a difference?
A Beer A Year Does No Harm
By Raúl Gámez, SAF Migrant Youth Director

Characters
Juan (farmworker, new arrival from same town as Pancho)
Pancho (farmworker, elder, heavy drinker who hasn’t been home in years)
Pedro (farmworker, young)

El Cuate (farmworker, elder)
Yoga (Student health outreach worker, yoga practitioner)
Salsa (Student health outreach worker, dancer)

Excerpt
(PEDRO STANDS CENTER STAGE AND SHARES HIS CHILDHOOD REFLECTIONS)
PEDRO: One of the reasons why I don’t like to drink is my experience with my Father. Drunk, he even hit my mom and we couldn’t do anything. He always felt bad after doing it and promised not to do it again, but the promise didn’t last long.

YOGA: That can be a common behavior. Many people who drink too much alcohol tend to be violent toward their loved ones. If someone is violent when drinking, it’s time to look for help.

SALSA: But it may not only have an effect on your personal life.

YOGA: Well, yes, you are workers who are strong! I imagine all of you enjoy taking it easy. If you drink a lot after a long day at work, it will be more difficult for you to rest and you’ll be dehydrated the next day.

SALSA: Which can make you more prone to heat stroke.

YOGA: Well, let’s hope that nobody will be in that situation!

JUAN: I doubt it. But here we are isolated away from the city, there are no telephones nearby and there’s no cell signal. What else is there to do? Even though we are strong and we don’t want to, there are times when there is no other way to deal with our loneliness.

PANCHO: It’s also part of our culture. When our soccer team wins that’s how we celebrate. Unless you’re like Pedro whose team always loses.

PEDRO: Yes, but it’s not just a way to celebrate, we also turn to alcohol to relax. It’s a way to get away from our problems and get over our loneliness.

YOGA: That’s why I practice yoga. If you want, I’ll show you a bit of yoga.

PANCHO: And what do you eat that with or what?

YOGA: Oh, what a jokester! Yoga is a discipline that combines physical, spiritual and mental practice with the goal of reaching a permanent state of peace and relaxation!

JUAN: Isn’t that when people twist and bend themselves into weird positions?

(YUAN TWISTS IN AKWARD POSITIONS)

SALSA: At first glance, that’s what it seems like. But the benefits go beyond a simple stretch! Yoga, why don’t you show us?

(YOGA GOES CENTER STAGE, THE WORKERS LINE UP BEHIND HER AND FOLLOW HER BREATHING AND STRETCHES. ENCOURAGE THE AUDIENCE TO DO THE SAME.)

PANCHO: I’ll stick with soccer. What if I can’t get out of one of those weird positions!

YOGA: Perfect, it doesn’t matter what you decide to do if it’s something good for you. Will you show us some soccer moves?

PANCHO: Sure! Who has a ball?
Looks Can Be Deceiving
Skit Outline for improvised performance
Developed by 2010 SAF interns

Looks Can be Deceiving is a play about HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's). The play looks to break some stereotypes. A person who looks completely healthy can be a carrier of a disease and not even know it. Some of these diseases don’t produce symptoms that can be detected via the physical appearance. The play also talks about how using a condom properly can reduce the risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease.

Characters
Jerry (farmworker)  Angel (imagined in Luke’s conscience)
Luke (farmworker)  Dr. Lorena (doctor at local health clinic)
Veronica (girl in bar)  Luke’s wife
Devil (imagined in Luke’s conscience)

Skit scenes
1. Jerry and Luke at camp discuss work and family and going out to local bar to “fulfill their needs.”
3. Luke and Veronica sex scene, using handheld curtain to hide them as they throw off clothes and funny props (wigs, huge underwear, plastic handcuffs) over the curtain towards the audience. Veronica gives Luke a sign around his neck that reads “HIV.”
5. Luke talks on phone with wife. She tells gossip of friend who cheated and got an STD. Luke says he hasn’t been feeling well. She encourages Luke to go to the clinic.
6. Luke at clinic with doctor Lorena. Luke says he’s concerned he may have an STI. Dr. Lorena asks his symptoms and describes STI’s and how they can be transferred (vaginal, oral and anal sex, vaginal secretions, sharing needles, breast milk [current research is challenging this theory]). To show audience that HIV tests can be quick and non-invasive: Dr. Lorena performs an oral swab for HIV and gives results after 10 min. He’s HIV positive. She comforts him and gives facts about living with HIV. Luke is very upset and regrets not using protection. He’s concerned about his family.
7. Magical return to bar scene (Luke snaps out of Angel’s magic dust spell). Angel says to Luke, “Now you see what can happen if you don’t use protection!” Luke makes a statement that he will always use protection from now on. He get’s rid of the devil and goes off to dance with the angel, ladies and Jerry. They dance and sing Pontelo! Angel brings devil over to dance with them.
8. Actor says she will demonstrate how to use a condom but does it all wrong (in a funny way). Another actor comes over and helps her. Interactive with farmworkers. Make sure to cover these points: Don’t use teeth to open condom. Pinch the tip of the condom to get out the air. Don’t use lotion or Vaseline for lubrication-use water-based lubricant. How to dispose of the condom. Don’t use more than one condom at a time. Don’t use the same condom more than once.
9. Get a volunteer from the audience (not an actor) to do the whole thing correctly. Give prize.
10. Applause and actors bow. Actors introduce themselves.

To see a video of this play in action visit this website: http://vimeo.com/14125652
**Heat Stroke**  
*(to the tune of “La Cucaracha”)*  
By Erin Leyson, 2013 SAF Intern

Dizziness, light-headedness, cramps, or headache,  
Dry mouth, paleness,  
It is heat stroke.

Extreme thirst, malaise, exhaustion,  
And much concern,  
Because of dehydration.

Go to the shade and rest,  
And take off your boots,  
Drink water, unbutton your shirt,  
To feel better.

Heat stroke is very serious.  
Take care of yourself and your coworkers,  
To keep on, working on.

**Lower Your Blood Pressure**  
*(to the tune of “La Macarena”)*  
By Erin Leyson, 2013 SAF Intern

Lose weight and stop smoking  
Low-fat diet and limited salt  
Exercise and less alcohol  
Lower your blood pressure  
Ah!

(Repeat)
**Pesticides**
*(to the tune of “La Cucaracha”)*
2008, from the play “The Visit of the Campolín”
Written by Into the Fields Interns, Student Action with Farmworkers

Pesticides, pesticides  
Are very bad for you  
You should shower, you should cover up  
And wear boots on your feet  
(X 3)

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**Our House**
*(to the tune of “Cielito lindo”)*
2008, from the play “The Visit of the Campolín”
Written by Into the Fields Interns, Student Action with Farmworkers

This ‘ol house  
For us farmworkers  
Is too hot and cramped  
For the mice  
This ‘ol house  
For us farmworkers  
Is too hot and cramped  
For the mice  
Oh, the boss  
Our boss that we have  
Why won’t he buy a mattress or nightstand?  
For our house  
Ay, ay, ay, ay,  
Let’s all unite  
Together we’ll seek justice  
To better our future…
Icebreakers & Theater Games

Rock Paper Scissors with Fans (An energizer/ icebreaker)
Start in pairs. Each pair plays rock paper scissors and who ever looses becomes the winner’s biggest fan, cheering for them as they play with another winner. Eventually the fan base grows very large and there are 2 people left to play with a bunch of fans cheering for them. One person will win and everyone will cheer for them.

Changing Places (An energizer/ icebreaker)
We’ve used this many times with farmworkers. Since it is done in silence, it is great to use with a group where there are language barriers.
Form a circle with one person in the middle. The person in the middle’s goal is to get into someone’s spot in the circle. The people in the circle make non-verbal gestures to each other to change places (a wink or nod), as they run to change places with each other the person in the middle tries to take their spot. Who ever doesn’t succeed in changing places ends up in the middle of the circle.

Night at the Museum (A game of senses and awareness)
We did this game once with farmworkers and they really enjoyed it. A senior farmworker played the night guard and used a soda can as a flashlight. His co-workers would sneak up behind him and scare him.
The museum has come to life but don’t let the night guards see you or you’ll be removed from the display and sent to storage. One person plays the night guard, they can use a flashlight as a prop. Participants spread out in the space and “become” a museum artifact/display in a frozen position. As the night guard begins to walk around the space, the displays (participants) change position. The object is for the participants to continually change positions without the night guard seeing them. As the night guard sees participants move, they are removed from the display floor.

Zip, Zap, Zop (A game of focus and concentration)
Have small groups stand in a circle. Facilitator begins by clasping their hands together pointing at someone else in the circle, saying, “Zip” and making eye contact with that person. That person clasps her hands together, says, “Zap” and points at and makes eye contact with someone else in the circle. That third person clasps her hands together, says, “Zop” and points at and makes eye contact with someone else. The pattern then repeats and continues. Try to move the motion around the circle as quickly as possible without pauses.

Colombian Hypnosis (A game of concentration and body movement)
From Games for Actors and Non-Actors by Augusto Boal
Divide in pairs one person will be the hypnotizer and the other will be the hypnotized. The game is done in silence. The hypnotizer holds his hand a few inches away from the person’s face who will be hypnotized. The distance must be the same at all times. The hypnotized must follow the hand as if she was hypnotized. The hypnotizer should try to manipulate the hypnotized into all sorts of positions, using forgotten muscles, in order to use her body in a different way. Hypnotizer starts a series of movements, to left, right, back, front, up and down etc. After a few minutes, switch roles.

The Opposite of Myself (A game of improvisation)
From Games for Actors and Non-Actors by Augusto Boal
Each person gets a piece of paper in which they write characteristics they would like to possess, a characteristic
completely different from their actual personality. For example, someone timid who wants to be outrageous, someone outgoing who wants to be shy, someone very nice who wants to be mean, etc. The sky is the limit, this is the opportunity to discover what it would be like if you had a different personality. Participants pair up and dialogue with each other in front of the rest of the group. They have to act out one of their new personalities for a period of time. The facilitator will instruct them to alternate back and forth from their normal behavior to their opposite self. After a few minutes, the group watching the dialogue should try to guess what personalities were being portrayed.

**Story Times 3 (A game of improvisation)**
Participants will choose what kind of scene they improvise, for example, a man breaking up with his girlfriend. Give the actors 3 minutes to improvise the scene. After they stop (or facilitator stops them) they will improvise the scene 2 more times but in different genres, comedy, drama, horror film, music video etc.

**Character Interviews (A game for character development)**
Have actors sit in the middle of the room. They must embody the character that they will portray in the play, have them introduce themselves and do a three minute interview with them. They must respond as the character. Allow them to use costumes and props if you have them. You can ask some of the following questions: How old are you? What is your favorite activity? Are you in love? Tell us about your family. What is your profession? What is your biggest fear?

**Performances**

**Performance Day Agenda**
2hr session

- 15 Minutes  Arrive to camp and set up for dinner.
- 35 Minutes  With the help of the partner organization introduce the group to farmworkers. Eat dinner together and set up for performance (choose location, set up props).
- 10 Minutes  Facilitate an icebreaker. This can be skipped if running behind schedule.
- 5 Minutes   Facilitator explains the reason for visit and the topic of the performance.
- 25 Minutes  Perform the play.
- 10 Minutes  After the play is performed, actors introduce themselves, open the space for questions, and pass out goodie bags, and evaluations. The evaluation forms should be explained.
- 20 Minutes  After question and answer actors talk informally with the workers and take souvenir photo. If you are going to a farmworker camp, keep in mind that they have to be up really early for work. Try not to stay too late! Thank the workers for their time and say goodbye!
Theater Evaluation Form

INTO THE FIELDS THEATER GROUP

Please mark one of the following options.

I liked it.

I didn’t like it.

I was okay.

Comments: ____________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

What topics would you like to see in the future? __________________________________________

______________________________

Christine Burke, Andrea Barreto and Bernardo López, 2013 SAF interns, in a scene about family life.
Theater Workshops

Theater Workshops with Farmworkers
2 hours

15min  
Arrive & set-up meal

25 min  
Dinner
Icebreaker: Sing Happy Birthday (5min) – Actor
Actor asks the farmworkers who had a birthday since arriving in NC. All actors initiate singing happy birthday (Las Mañanitas).

History of Farmworkers Theater (5min) – Staff or Actor
We are here to practice theater. We use theater for social change. Our group is based on El Teatro Campesino (The Farmworker's Theater). El Teatro Campesino is a type of theater founded by Luis Valdez in the 1960s as a cultural branch of the United Farmworkers Union (UFW). In the beginning, all actors were farmworkers who portrayed events inspired by their lives.

The Theater of the Oppressed is a form of community popular education that uses theater as a tool for transformation. This type of theater, created by Augusto Boal, was first used with farmworkers and other workers. This technique is used around the world as a form of social and political activism, problem solving, community building, and more. Through these exercises we will try to perform critical analysis without accepting the truth, asking questions instead of giving answers, and acting instead of just talking. We invite everyone to share their experiences and opinions about the situations we will witness.

We want to go beyond being a passive spectator. You are the main character of your story and we want to guide you to find a way to reach liberation. We cannot create change by being passive. This type of theater has united entire communities and has led to significant change in their behavior. We don’t want to assume that problems exist, but we want to provide tools that have worked in other communities in case you ever need them. We ask for your participation. Our goal is to create a safe space where everyone can express herself or himself freely.

10min  
Theater game: Night at the Museum – Actors

60min  
Theater game: Breaking the Oppression

Intro – Staff (5min)
This is an improvisation exercise that will help us see different sides of a situation and helps us come up with better solutions to any issue.
Share Stories and Choose 1 (15min)
Break up into groups of 5-6 farmworkers. Introduce yourself-names. First every participant must think of a situation in their life in which they were struggling--subject to oppression, faced discrimination because of their identity. (Students share their own story as an example. Not everyone has to share.)

Participants tell the story as clear and with as much detail as possible. Each group selects 1 story to perform as a skit for another group.

Choose actors and create a short skit (10min)
The skit will be improvised and has 3 phases.

First phase: The participants sharing the story and other volunteer actors will recreate the situation without editing or adding details to the story. The purpose is to recreate the situation as it happened in real life.

Second Phase: In this phase the protagonist will switch roles and become the antagonist. The oppressed becomes the oppressor.

Third Phase: In this phase the protagonist of the story will resist the oppression. This improvisation will bring about the result that was wanted but was unrealized in real life. If you could do it over, what would you do differently?

Perform for large group and debrief (15min)
After sharing stories and practicing your skit, small groups perform for each other & debrief.

Facilitate a debrief session after each performance.

What was happening in the scene?
Who was struggling in this situation? Why?
Why did you take certain actions?
How would you have done things differently?
Why does the antagonist oppress the protagonist in the skit? What could be their reason?
Why does the protagonist react that way? Why would they allow the oppression to happen?
Where does the anger or frustration come from?
How did it feel to be in the other person’s shoes? What did you take from it?

Large group debrief (15min)
Debrief entire exercise in the large group.

What was it like to do this exercise?
What issues came up?
Did you have any new thoughts about your situation?

Comments:
The 2nd phase helps us to see through the eyes of the oppressor. If we understand their perspective, we can work to bring them to our side.
10 min.  

**Closing Remarks - Staff**

We hope theater can be used for sharing our stories & knowledge, sparking dialogue about issues and thinking of different ways of coming up with solutions to issues. And it’s entertaining! Having a process like theater to think about issues we face and talk about them may produce better results than our initial reactions to oppression. We appreciate your time and participation, thank you for the work you do.

**Evaluations – Actor**

Please complete the evaluation forms; we want to know your opinions about doing this exercise. Did you enjoy it? Did it benefit you? What could make it better?

---

2012 SAF interns Levi Vonk, Daryn Lane, and Emma Lawlor during a dance scene.

**Using the Arts for Education**

Use these dynamic activities with small groups during outreach, in the classroom, or at a meeting.

**Collective Poem**

Each person writes answers to the questions. Compile into one group poem using one answer from each person in the blank. You can order the questions and answers in the way that sounds best.
North Carolina is/has/will... ____________, ____________, ____________, ____________, and ____________.

North Carolina smells like... ____________, ____________, ____________, ____________, and ____________.

In North Carolina I hear... ____________, ____________, ____________, ____________, and ____________.

North Carolina's farmworkers are/have/will... ___________, ___________, ___________, ___________, and ___________.

North Carolina makes me feel... ___________, ___________, ___________, ___________, and ____________.

Now, try making a group poem with a health, legal, or education topic. Ex. Pesticides, High School graduation, Working at piece rate instead of hourly, Sexual Harrassment etc. You can change the prompts to suit the topic.

Song Writing
Think of a song that most Mexican farmworkers will know. Ex. De Colores, Las Mañanitas, La Bamba, La Cucara-chia, Cielito Lindo etc. Write new lyrics to the song that are educational for a topic of your choice. Ex. Heat stress, joining the farmworker union, finishing high school GED, learning English etc. Get as far as you can with the song, be prepared to share it with the large group.

Skit
Take 20 minutes to read an existing skit or create a new one about a topic of your choice. Perform it for a larger group. Reflect on the themes portrayed in the skit with the large group, share experiences, thoughts and questions.

Film
Watch a short educational film (ex. Amor Amargo about HIV). Use discussion guide to discuss HIV/STI's. Reflect on the themes portrayed in the film and share your experiences, thoughts and questions.

Life Map Drawing
Draw a visual representation of your life from beginning to present. Draw a map of your life, noting whatever events, people, or places you think are important. Be prepared to share your map with others. Use this activity to do goal planning, reflect on a challenging time in your life or as a get-to-know you activity.

Human Sculpture
Based on Image Theatre From Games for Actors and Non-Actors by Augusto Boal
Working in a group, create a human statue. 2-4 people will be the clay, starting as a ball on the floor, and 1 will be the sculptor. The sculptures don’t necessarily have to touch the clay, but by placing a hand near the bit of “clay” they want to move, they can manipulate the arms, legs, head and body of the “clay” into an interesting statue based on given stimuli, ideas, themes. Choose a theme, for example, farmworker health, activism, educational barriers, a time when you faced discrimination etc. The sculptor should come up with the idea for the sculpture, and keep it a secret from the “clay”. This exercise is best done in silence. Show your sculptures with the large group. Have the group try to guess what the sculptor was trying to portray. Allow group members to share their own interpretations of the sculpture. This is how you get new ways of looking at an issue. You can transform your sculpture into a machine by giving the “clay” a single movement and sound that they repeat.
NC migrant camp at night during health outreach. Photo by Jim Coleman, 2010.
Trabajo de alcance de salud por la noche en un campamento de migrantes en Carolina del Norte. Fotografía de Jim Coleman, 2010.