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The theatre of development: dramaturgy, actors and performances in the 'workshop space'

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ABSTRACT

This article explores performance within development spaces. Dramaturgy, a concept deriving from theatre studies, can be understood as an analytical lens that examines the various roles and performances of different 'actors' in particular social spaces. While there is literature exploring the use of the arts, such as applied theatre and dance, in development interventions, this article looks at the roles, performances and actors in development spaces. By analysing the subtle yet explicit composites of workshop spaces in development, in particular those engaging with arts-based methodologies, we can see how multiple and simultaneous performances converge. These performances are insightful in their own right and represent and enact a theatre of their own. Using a workshop in Sierra Leone as a case study, we explore the various dynamics at play within the 'workshop space' of development. We illustrate how these frequently overlooked and subtle elements in development are critical to understanding the perceptions and embodiment of what constitutes and enacts the theatre of development.

Introduction

This article demonstrates how analytical tools and approaches originating in the field of theatre studies can guide the preparation, execution and reading of development events, specifically 'the workshop'. We use a workshop on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) from Sierra Leone as our case study to explore the intricate dynamics within this space. Our findings explore how, in addition to the now common practice of using interactive theatre techniques as a means of addressing social and political issues, a dramaturgical lens offers a mode of analysis that elucidates and enriches understanding of the multiple intersecting factors – social roles, culturally inscribed expectations of performance–audience relations, relationships within and outside the workshop setting – that inform the data gathered in such spaces. A dramaturgical reading thus offers a far more comprehensive understanding of both how participants understand and engage with development activities, as well as

how these modes of engagement shape the actual activities and interactions in the work-shop space.

Performances[1] have long been core to development activities, although not necessarily examined or labelled accordingly. Performing arts methods are employed by practitioners to engage Global South audiences in particular messaging around social, political and eco-nomic issues. These have been analysed extensively by researchers and practitioners, largely looking at the efficacy of such methods (Bull 2016; Chinyowa 2011; Chisiza 2017; Dalrymple 2006). Conceptual and empirical scholarship has also explored the performative nature of development, as both international and local staff engage with audiences, wherein subjec-tivities and hierarchies are created and sustained over the course of these processes and programmes (Flynn and Tinius 2015; Prentki 2011). These identities are, however, not fixed, but rather result in performers, performance and audiences shifting and changing across space and time. As a result, the activities that enact development become spaces of multiple and simultaneous performances where various discourses coexist in an often-unresolved dialectical tension. These shifts, activities and tensions shape the dramaturgy of development.

While there has been a plethora of literature looking at performing arts techniques in development, often falling under the umbrella term 'applied theatre' (Mackey 2016; Anderson and O'Connor 2013; Thompson 2009), as well as the more conceptual and empirical literature that explores the interactions and performances of individuals at international and local levels (and between them) (Englund 2006; Obradovic-Wochnik 2020), we more explicitly put conversations from performance and development studies in dialogue with one another. We employ a dramaturgical analysis of development events to analyse the subtle nuances and dynamics between individuals and how they inform one another within development spaces. This article primarily draws on performing arts workshops that were conducted in Sierra Leone in summer 2021.[2] Our project explored perceptions of SGBV in rural areas of Bombali district, Sierra Leone,[3] by using different performing arts formats, namely theatre, dance and comedy. One Co-Investigator on the project has been working in Bombali for over a decade, has worked previously with the partner non-governmental organisation (NGO), an access to justice organisation called Timap for Justice, and is familiar with the region more generally. Beyond the practical explanations, Sierra Leone has also been heavily exposed to a culture of NGO-isation over the past 20 years (Kanyako 2011) and is, as a result, a good case study to explore dramaturgy and development (see further discussion below).

The project's aim was not necessarily to 'deliver' information, but rather for researchers to understand individual and communal modes of thinking about SGBV. Performances can 'narrate the life of the community' and assist communities in re-evaluating this narrative by looking at their social and personal contexts from a different perspective. Processes of change are entangled with the mechanisms upholding a community's social structures and issues (Makhumula 2013/2014, 113). The specific mode of performance (discussed later) encourages participants to offer concrete, practicable ways to navigate structural and interpersonal inequalities rather than by abstract means. Analysing performance evidences the power relations underpinning social issues and structures and encourage participants towards thinking and doing that can build more cohesive communities. The frame of performance and role-playing allows for matters that might otherwise be too sensitive or dangerous to be discussed in an open forum as the frame of performance is protective: the performance is 'not real' and participants are 'playing'.

Beyond the rehearsed scenes and prepared modes of performance that were delivered to the community, we became aware of simultaneous performances and dramaturgies at play within the whole event as audience-participants, researchers, NGO workers and actors took on different roles in the workshop. The entire engagement – not solely the designated performance – was a stage, worthy of analysis. These performances were equally (if not more) significant in understanding how perceptions were both shaped and performed publicly. They were indicative of broader perceptions of development engagement that went beyond the scope of the workshop.

Rather than analysing the effect of the individual segments where performing arts techniques were explicitly displayed, we argue it is important to consider the multiple layers of performance taking place within the workshop space and offer a dramaturgical analysis of the event as a whole. The practice of dramaturgy in theatre can take on a number of forms and interpretations (see for example Romanska 2014; Bakke and Lindstøl 2021). For the purposes of this paper, dramaturgy is an analytical process that considers how composite parts of a performance interact to make and communicate meaning. Further, in dramaturgical practice 'the object of analysis extends beyond the performance itself, to include the context, the audience and the various[4] ways the work is framed' (Turner and Behrndt 2008, 18). While it is primarily a concept related to theatre, dramaturgy has also been applied in other contexts (Bakke and Lindstøl 2021, 285). Using dramaturgy allows for a better understanding of how the overall framing of these workshops and the context in which they take place shape the 'roles' individuals ultimately perform within them. This will allow for a more nuanced understanding of the multiple performances and dramaturgies that ensued over the course of the workshop.

We will consider the ways in which these performance workshops, although taking place in community spaces, effectively transform these sites so that the setting becomes defamiliarised for the audience-participants. The distance from the 'everyday' and habitual afforded by this transformation can on the one hand create a liminal space where conversations around sensitive subjects can be more easily discussed. We also consider how the liminal qualities of the performance event coalesce with other aspects, including the audience-participants' previous experience of development workshops, the NGO workers' explicit invitations to interact during the workshop, the presence of researchers in the performance space and the emergent dynamic between audience-participants themselves, to invite a performance particular to this context. The performative nature of audience-participants' contributions in these workshops enhances the value of the research gathered, as it is important to be attuned to these dynamics and the factors that invited such performances to better understand ideas and perceptions for different individuals. We conclude with a discussion about how using an analytical tool from the field of theatre can elucidate and enhance the reading of data gathered in a development studies context. We argue that dramaturgical analysis, which necessarily calls for a holistic understanding of how composite elements of an event are symbiotically influencing and shaping one another, can expose some of the tensions and complexities that arise in the workshop space. It allows us to consider tension between what is said, and how, for example, and offers a framework for exploring how differences between public personas and private behaviours manifest. Contradictions that emerge when paying attention to participant contributions in this way do not devalue or compromise the data gathered, but in fact offer valuable insights into the multiple and complex performances at play in

such settings, and what they in turn reveal about broader social and political roles and expectations.

Performance, dramaturgy and development

The 'performative turn' in humanities and social sciences has increasingly focused on the practical dimension of constructing and shifting socio-cultural meanings and experiences. It focuses on the idea of 'social process' (Bachmann-Medick 2016, 74), drawn from performance studies scholar Schechner's (2002, 2) notion that performance is a 'broad spectrum' and 'continuum' of human phenomena, activities and interactions from ritual, shamanism, play, sports, healing, the internet, the performing arts, and performing social, gender, race and class roles, with many inhabiting more than one category. The performative turn opened up a myriad of ways that theatre can be employed to analyse social processes.

Dramaturgy was historically used to examine how the composition of text, bodies, space and time in theatrical staging construct communication 'between the stage and the public, the actor and the role, and the text and the action' (Bakke and Lindstøl 2021, 285). This often involved a dramaturg working with a playwright or director towards script development or historical research (an orthodox interpretation of dramaturgy). In more recent times, the notion of dramaturgy has been extended beyond the historical interpretation to offer a lens for analysing how varied modes of human action and interaction interweave and perform. According to Tewksbury (1994, 325), two broad streams of thought arise when using dramaturgy as an analytical lens to read social processes and experiences. First, performance is a metaphor for life and social processes; second, life and social processes are performances (resonating with Schechner's notion of performance). The latter approach focuses on roles and normative expectations, as well as how these impact social interactions and processes. In both streams, a dramaturgical analysis assumes that pre-determined social scripts underpin interactions, experiences and processes. Tewksbury argues that the 'analytical power' of a dramaturgical analysis arises from the cleft between these two perspectives. We position our dramaturgical analysis in this cleft, whereby more orthodox and contemporary notions interweave. Thus, we understand dramaturgy as not as a professional position, but as a lens through which to read the myriad ways in which varied modes of performance come into existence.

Further, dramaturgy is an analytical yet 'slippery and elastic' (Turner and Behrndt 2008, 21) term that explores how these composite parts of a performance, its context, audience, internal structure and framing interact to make and communicate meaning, which is structured via a dramaturgical locus of control. This in turn structures nodules for meaning-making, which impact on the ways they communicate. Historically, the locus of control was the playwright or director, or the interface between the two. In the case of performances for intervention, or development activities in communities, the dramaturg is often the focal person or development agent conducting the workshop. Coetzee and Munro (2014) argue that the aim of dramaturgy in such contexts is to further an external agenda that aims at shaping communities towards pre-determined notions of empowerment, progress or development by inviting identification with these notions. Communities are seen as deficient – 'lacking something' – whilst dramaturgy acts as a hegemonic force promoting values, knowledge-systems and practices of a dominant centre.

We employ Augusto Boal's idea of 'simultaneous dramaturgy' (1995, 3) as a dialogical approach where there is an active interface between actors and spectators. The audience have the power to interrupt the play and to intervene in the development of the narrative, character relationships and behaviours. They are encouraged to propose such developments away from a given outcome in the play. Simultaneous dramaturgy is the 'first invitation made to the spectator to intervene without necessitating their physical presence on the "stage"' (Boal 1979, 109). Thus, while the audience 'makes' the play, the actors simultaneously perform it. We also extend the notion of simultaneous dramaturgy beyond the moment of performance, or what we might term the 'micro dramaturgical frame', and broaden our analysis to include the wider dynamics surrounding the performance, or the 'macro dramaturgical frame'.

In this sense then, performances within development are not just representations, but are 'doing something' (Lynch 2018; Payne 2009). They are acts unto themselves, as well as lenses for understanding multiple and dynamic experiences. Scholars have pointed to the performative nature of these activities. Although not necessarily referred to as 'performance', the interactions frequently observed between people that come to constitute the development industry are indicative of ongoing and pervasive performances. As noted by Coultas (2020), the process of creating evidence through log frames and monitoring and evaluation exercises, which are largely unrelated to local contexts, are hugely performative. Development agents conform to donor standards by enacting particular roles that align with certain expectations. Harri Englund, who looks at civic education programmes in Malawi, illustrates how individuals (all Malawian) perform particular roles, either as 'educators' affiliated with the NGO, or as the studious audience who are taught 'to work for their development' (2006, 103). As workshop participants, they were expected to enact particular roles as active listeners and come up with the 'right answers' (Englund 2006). Performance is thus inherent to enacting development.

The critical development literature also examines some of the micro-dynamics and hierarchies occurring within these spaces (Martin 2021). Being a 'local' actor in particular spaces, such as workshops, means that often diverse groups of people are (implicitly or explicitly) expected to perform certain roles. For example, Obradovic-Wochnik (2020) examines how local employees in Serbia took on particular 'local roles' in front of international donors and partners. While these roles and performances have been implicitly acknowledged in some development literature, this piece more explicitly looks at how these scenes and performances unfold and what the agency of both individuals and their respective performances is 'doing'. These performances are all embedded within social processes and individuals inevitably shape and are shaped by the respective localities where these activities are enacted, as well as past experiences with development actors. People who participate in development-related workshops come with their own ideas, beliefs and understandings of the world (Payne 2009), which ultimately frame and influence their roles as audience members and actors and the ways in which performances are constituted, and play their own 'role' in development. We look at the intersections between the scripted performances that were designed to engage communities in conversations about SGBV in Sierra Leone, as well as the audience-participant engagement, to understand how these multiple and simultaneous performances and dramaturgies inform one another. They ultimately become mutually sustaining and embodied elements of a performance which, as Rai and Reinelt point out, 'frames a reality which is not, and yet also is' (2015, 13).

Setting the scene in Sierra Leone

Performances, performers and audiences

The research team comprised two female researchers from the 'Global North' specialising in international relations and development and theatre studies, respectively, and a female Sierra Leonean gender scholar, at a Sierra Leonean university, an activist. Dr Martin was a post-doc at the time and had over nine years of experience working in this region of Sierra Leone and five years with the partner organisation. Ms Shutt was a PhD student and theatre practitioner specialising in participatory performance, who has experience using interactive theatre techniques in the Global South. They partnered with two female paralegals from a locally founded and led, non-partisan access-to-justice organisation, Timap for Justice, which has longstanding ties with rural communities, and three local theatre actors – two men and one woman – with experience delivering performances for NGOs on different types of content. We will focus specifically on one particular workshop to conduct this analysis, where we employed interactive drama techniques to create space for dialogue with audience-participants about SGBV.

The team employed an interdisciplinary approach, with each team member drawing on their own local knowledge and experience with SGBV to address specific issues relevant to Sierra Leonean communities (notably, the Global North researchers deferred to the two female paralegals in the planning and design of the theatre skits, and to the actors for their respective techniques). In this way, the design was dialogic, with curated space for co-creation, as well as specific and responsive to local context. Before the first workshop, the research team, NGO workers and actors collaboratively devised four drama scenes to be performed for the audience-participants. The skills and knowledge of each member informed the creation of the scenes. The research team and the NGO staff discussed specific issues – changes in laws, for example – and recent legal court cases that were impacting the community. Building upon their own first-hand discussions with members of these communities, they were able to detail specific tensions or common social dynamics that were prevalent there. Over the course of the project, the team worked in three communities, delivering two workshops in each community. This was an iterative process in that the themes of the second workshop were created in response to the findings and observation from the first. These issues were consciously woven into the material of workshop two. In this sense, the participants also became co-creators of the material.

The actors, themselves local to the region and with experience of having performed in the community, brought their skills in highly physicalised performance, comedy, and caricature to shape a style of performance that sat within received expectations of performance in the communities. They drew upon culturally specific tropes to communicate characters that would be instantly recognisable to the local audience, using their vocal and movement skills, and costume design, to develop a performance aesthetic that would be both familiar and comedic for the audience. Researcher 2 then drew upon her knowledge of participatory performance techniques to explore with the actors how they could craft their performances to open up specific moments for interaction and discussion with the audience-participants. Building upon their existing expertise, she was able to work with the actors to develop a performance style that was more overtly dialogic and invited conversation. To activate a simultaneous dramaturgy, the team used forum theatre and hot-seating, followed by

post-show single-sex discussion groups. These strategies and techniques enabled us to engage participants on the purposive junctures that the pre-prepared scenarios presented which facilitated spectator intervention in response to key issues presented in the scenarios and narrative development.

In forum theatre, actors perform short scenes around themes that directly relate to the lived experiences of the audience members. The scene presents an unresolved crisis or dilemma that the audience is invited to help resolve by offering suggestions. Actors then improvise with the audience intervening by giving advice or correcting actions (Silver 2015, 213). The idea is not to solve problems but to explore multiple potentialities for change. Simultaneous dramaturgy in forum theatre exposes the underlying power dynamic and root causes of oppression to experiment with transformation. It offers spectators the opportunity to intervene and transform their ideas of the current world to something more ideal (Boal 1979, 141). A facilitator (known as the Joker) manages communication between the actors and audience. For Boal, the Joker both facilitates and 'difficultates' in that he would steer audiences towards the complexities of an issue and explore the plausibility of their suggestions or solutions in the real world – a 'difficultator' (Jackson in Boal 1995, xix). In our workshops in Sierra Leone, the NGO workers took on facilitator roles by moderating the discussion and inviting the audience-participants to reflect critically on their responses to the scenes and draw parallels with their own experiences.

Arrival and introductions – the macro dramaturgical frame

Before the event, the NGO staff went to the village to seek permission from the chief, as is customary in rural areas. The staff instructed the chief to choose individuals who would actively participate and speak out. While there is the possibility this may have excluded voices of dissent, women's commentary in single-sex focus groups and individual interviews suggested this was not necessarily the case, as they spoke openly about their experiences and contradictions they witnessed in the workshop (discussed below). On the day of the workshop, the researchers and NGO workers arrive by car. In rural villages where vehicles are less common, this signals distinct positions from the outset. The actors arrive independently by motor bike and begin warming-up. The arrival of these 'outsiders' draws attention from young children who yell '*oputu*, *oputu*' while waving and giggling. While not necessarily uncommon, a workshop is also not an everyday occurrence in such a small community. The presence of the team and actors is highly visible, even to those not attending. It is clear that 'something is happening'.

As is customary, the NGO workers speak with the chief and introduce the research team and actors before entering the community hall (which also functioned as a church). They then begin registering workshop participants. The actors and research team prepare the space by creating a circle of wooden benches that are usually positioned in such a way that everyone sits in full view of one another. The actors perform scenes in the centre, meaning the 'fourth wall' between actor and spectators is dissolved as all present become part of the *mise-en-scène*, enveloped within the physical framework of the performance.

With the presence of outsiders and the layout of the space altered, this familiar community space is transformed, signifying to participants that the space sits outside the habitual. As people enter, they register with the NGO workers by signing their name (or placing a thumb

print next to their name) before taking their seat in the square and affirming their position as audience-participant. There are 40 participants, approximately 25 women and 15 men (as requested by the NGO workers and discussed in meetings beforehand). Without prompting, the men congregate in one half of the square and women in the other, reflecting broader socialised roles. Amongst those assembled are community leaders, including the chief, the court judge and the mammy queen,[5] all of whom would be consistent attendees at workshops (across different topics and through a range of formats) due to their community status.

Two researchers sit together in the square, amongst the audience-participants but clearly distinct from them. They talk in hushed whispers as the Sierra Leonean researcher provides translation and context for the second who takes notes. Outside the square a third researcher is poised with her phone camera, preparing to film the workshop and cementing her role as one simultaneously inside and outside the event. Both the notebook and camera also function as 'props' in this performance setting by communicating the researchers' role as distinct from that of the audience-participants. From outside the building, children peer in through the windows to get a glimpse of the workshop, another layer of spectatorship. Therefore, a series of performances are already underway before the actors have even taken the stage.

The NGO workers finish gathering the registration details and enter the centre to officially welcome all the participants and introduce the event. They have worked at the organisation for almost a decade and are familiar to some in the audience. This, compounded with the fact that Sierra Leoneans have experienced extensive development outreach and workshops over the past 20 years (Kanyako 2011; Menzel 2016), means that audience members likely have preconceived ideas about the general topics and how the format will unfold. They see themselves as representatives of the community who aim to adhere to the organisation's programme and ensure an ongoing working relationship with them. In line with expectations, one NGO worker outlines the format of the event, explaining that performances will be presented and that all audience-participants are encouraged to interact with the characters and ask questions about the scenarios. Using a call and response method, she clarifies that the audience-participants understand their roles and then explains that the research team – and gestures to them – are interested in hearing their contributions and thoughts on the themes explored in the performance. The researchers nod and smile by way of affirmation.

Gareth White has analysed the different ways the invitation to interact is executed in participatory performance in a process he has described as 'procedural authorship'. He argues: '[T]he episoding conventions used by procedural authors to introduce a participatory frame can be described as different kinds of "invitations": overt, implicit, covert and accidental' (2013, 42). This aligns with the conditions for simultaneous dramaturgy. For White, these invitations become part of the artistic material of participatory performance. He pays particular attention to the ways the invitations to interact are managed by facilitators, arguing that how audience members are invited to engage with a work will inform the quality of participation (White 2013). In the introductory speech in Sierra Leone, one of the NGO workers employs both implicit (call and response) and overt (instructions to engage in dialogue with the characters) invitations to participate in the workshop. The silent nodding and smiling from the researchers serve as implicit, non-verbal reinforcement of this expectation.

In the role of the facilitator (or what Boal would term the 'Joker'), the NGO worker reiterates what a 'good performance' will look like, encouraging audience-participants to be vocal and

engage in dialogue with the designated performances. Particular emphasis is placed on the value of participation, but not necessarily specifying what the quality of that participation might be. Consequently, our observation of the audience-participants was that in order to optimally engage with the performance material and be the 'correct kind of performer', they needed to contribute some form of dialogue, regardless of whether or not it was truthful or authentically reflective of their experiences. This proposition is further supported by the fact that some of the comments of the male audience-participants during the forum theatre performances contradicted their (and their wives') descriptions of the behaviours they exhibit at home, as shared in the more intimate setting of the focus group discussion.

Forum theatre scenes – the micro dramaturgical frame

The actors enter the central playing space, and the performances begin. Wearing a battered straw hat, and trousers pulled up high with a cravat around his waist, the actor playing 'the husband' arrives, exaggeratedly puffing his chest and preening his clothes. In this heightened performance style, the husband gleefully congratulates himself on being the best dressed man in the village, with higher status than the chief, although the mismatched garb and caricatured gestures suggest to the audience this notion of himself may be somewhat delusional. The female actor playing 'the wife' enters in a panicked state. Her tense body language and raised voice clearly convey the anger and resentment she feels towards her husband. She critiques him, telling him she is frustrated and desperate that he has not given her the money she needs to feed their children. The husband becomes annoyed and he lashes out at her for always nagging at him. In his rage he turns to members of the audience looking for support in his cause. The actor asks a man in the audience for support, what White would term an overt invitation to interact. This man has not volunteered himself and the question posed to him by the husband, 'You agree with me, don't you, Sir?', is leading. The character has effectively set up a role for the audience-participant to step into and it is perhaps unsurprising that the male audience-participant agrees with the husband that if the wife knows her husband does not have money, she should not bother him with such issues. The 'wife' in the play reacts to this indignantly, calling upon other audience members to defend her. This invitation is also overt, but open; by not calling upon specific audience members she leaves space for volunteers. Women in the audience begin speaking up and offering their support for the wife. One female audience-participant directly addresses the husband and tells him: 'You took on a responsibility when you married your wife and you should honour that'.

By addressing the fictionalised characters, the audience-participants, or spect-actors (Boal 1995) become embedded in the fictionalised frame. Although ostensibly still presenting as themselves, by 'playing the game' and engaging in dialogue with the character, the audience-participants are taking on roles reflective of the staged performance. The dramatic frame, however, acts as a distancing device that foregrounds the double consciousness of audiences engaged with the dramatic action, called metaxis, which is anchored in a both–neither principle. Boal (1995, 43) describes metaxis as 'the state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different, autonomous worlds: the reality of the image and the image of reality'.

This duality is at play as these scenes unfold, where audience-participants begin to inhabit an in-between space in which the 'not me' encounters the 'not not me' (Schechner and Turner

1985, 113). In Boalian theatre, this is the both–neither principle in metaxis, which allows the audience-participants to engage with challenging scenarios, reflective of personal experience, while simultaneously being distanced from it (ie themselves and not themselves). The oscillation between immersion and distancing that metaxis fosters is a third space of understanding or realisation, where perspectives, values and positionalities collide (Jordaan and Coetzee 2017). Metaxis dislodges the pre-reflective foundations of knowledge, identities and understandings and encourages discursive and performative repositioning through participation in simultaneous dramaturgy. It offers a performance-based way of accessing knowledge and understandings, and elicits responses that are rooted in embodied experiences and affect.

Simultaneous dramaturgy and metaxis are interdependent. Following on from this first response from a female audience-participant, more women begin to speak in defense of the 'wife' by volunteering comments that critique the husband for his negligence. The other women in the audience begin enthusiastically clapping and stamping their feet in support of what the women say, while the men become reticent. The women are loud, publicly expressing their disdain for the male character, which mirrors the behaviour of men in their lives, many of whom are in the audience and, as comes to be noted later on, are common topics of conversation and complaint amongst women in the community. At this point, different components of the performance event and dramaturgies are working together to create space for women to express frustration at the injustices of their domestic situations in a manner that may not be typically sanctioned in their everyday lives.

Various elements of the workshop interact to both invite and endorse these displays of solidarity between women: the other-ness and liminality of the transformed space, the calls to participate from the facilitators, the confirmation from the onlooking researchers that they welcome the interaction and the theatrical framing of a domestic scenario, which is recognisable but presented as somewhat removed with the exaggerated techniques employed by the actors. The simultaneous dramaturgy of women scripting a space for voicing amongst broader cultural and gender dynamics becomes apparent. The women's pleasure and the camaraderie that emerges between them are also apparent. Their applause, indicating both familiarity and agreement, becomes a form of performance in itself, simultaneously a physical expression of support for the character, the wife, but also a form of female solidarity in the space.

The next audience-participant to speak is the Judge (male). He talks at length, looking the husband squarely in the eye and pointing at him for emphasis, and tells him that women are vulnerable and do not have the same opportunity to work and find money as men do. The husband should recognise this and provide for her. Clearly adept at public speaking and workshop participation, a visible and respected member of the community, he was also understood to dispense community justice, as well as participate in what was expected as part of the established 'NGO-audience' script (Martin 2021). He inserted the skills and characteristics associated with his public role into the performance setting. As a senior member of the community with authority and status, his engagement with the fictional scenario also serves as validation and permission for other community members to interact in a similar manner. In this way, then, his performance inspires subsequent performances from others. The Judge's contribution is well received from the audience-participants as both men and women show their support with enthusiastic clapping and foot stomping. As the scenes continue, it is evident that the applause and physical gestures of appreciation from the

collective act as a form of motivation for other members of the community to step forward and make their own contributions. This could also be viewed as another example of simultaneous dramaturgy at play, as the interactions from audience-participants inspire more performances and interventions from their peers.

In the second scene performed, the husband and wife once again argue. The husband announces that he is going out for the evening but refuses to tell his wife where he is going. She complains that he causes her distress when he stays out all night and calls upon the audience for help. This time, the first audience-participant to contribute is another senior member of the community, the Mammy Queen. She directly addresses the husband, her voice is raised, she swings her arms wide across her body for emphasis as she berates the husband for being a negligent spouse. She finishes by telling him: 'you are not a *toko* [chicken] and you should not be coming and going all day as though you are one!' This elicits a lot of laughter from the audience-participants and all the women stomp and clamp. This performance illustrates the pleasure the Mammy Queen took in engaging with this character, and how the fictional framework sets up a context where she could publicly and humorously critique the behaviour of a negligent male (behaviours that she will later tell us she has personal experience with) without the negative consequences that might arise outside of this performance setting. Again, the 'not-me' encounters the 'not not-me' as she is able to express feelings that may have their root in real, lived experience but to do so under the protective guise of the fictional framework.

Following this second scene, one of the NGO workers remarks that many of the men have been quiet for the duration of the play and not contributed to the discussion, suggesting this is because they were witnessing behaviours, they recognised being critiqued. She then playfully teases them by asking what they would think if the roles were reversed, strutting across the stage in an overtly sassy way performing as a woman refusing to tell her husband where she is going. This draws a big reaction with fits of laughter. This illustrates how the NGO worker takes on the role of the facilitator in the forum theatre construct. As discussed earlier, Boal's 'Joker' is typically characterised by 'difficultating' (Jackson in Boal 1995, xix), a statement or insight which the NGO worker activates by taking on the role of provocateur. Using humour prompts the men to reflect on why they had not been contributing. This display from an improvised performance is delivered in response to the behaviours of the audience. In this way, simultaneous dramaturgy occurs in process and in response to the relations and reactions arising in the workshop event. By calling upon the male contingent of the audience and inviting them to contribute, the facilitator is suggesting and shaping future performances that might arise from the audience-participants. As a performance framework, then, the structure is dialogic and responsive, as this impromptu performance evidences. This also illustrates the different roles NGO workers take on, hosting and delivering information in a manner more typically associated with their position with the NGO, performing as 'facilitator' in the forum theatre sense, and these moments of acting in a fictionalised role (the 'sassy wife').

Hot seating

Hot-seating is an established technique within applied theatre practices wherein the characters take the 'hot-seat' and audience-participants are invited to ask them questions and establish more details about the performed scenes and characters. This serves to invite

critical reflection among participants by creating space for live issues and concerns to surface. This allows for multiple perspectives to coexist in an unresolved dialectical tension. An NGO worker introduces the activity, telling the audience-participants that they are free to ask the characters whatever they would like to gain insight into their behaviours in the previous scenes. The actors take the 'hot seat' and sit in the centre. Unlike the energetic, emotive performance in the forum theatre scenes, their presence here is subdued. There is a shift in mood during this activity prompted by the move from the exaggerated (often laughable) performances in the scenes to a serious, focused atmosphere that would be more characteristic of a local court setting.

In the previous scenes, the relation between audience-participants was foregrounded by the fact that the 'performance' element was evident. In this device, the focus is on the relation between characters and audience-participants. The audience-participants took their role questioning the characters seriously, evidenced by the considered and specific lines of enquiry they pursued. One male audience-participant asks exactly how much money the husband is giving his wife to feed the family. The husband reveals the amount, which the audience-participants agree is not enough and advise him to provide his wife with more money to prevent conflict. Another male audience-participant asks the husband if he intends to work more in the future and what his plans are for future employment. The audience-participants evidence a desire to establish the context of the situation, and the character's intentions for the future. Through this technique we witness the audience-participants critically interrogating the dramatic scenarios. The emphasis in the line of questioning and the ensuing conversation is centred on the facts of the scenario, rather than, for example, the feelings of the characters.

One woman addresses the wife and asks her to think of her children. Conflict in the home has a negative impact upon the children and, if the wife resorts to beating her husband, then the children will be cursed and 'will be denied God's Blessing'. This comment is met with murmurs of agreement and affirmation from other audience-participants. Similar remarks were made in the focus group discussions, and it was apparent this was a shared cultural belief that held a lot of power and significance for the community. Here, the micro and macro levels of simultaneous dramaturgy are juxtaposed. Whilst the audience-participants co-script the play in its processes of becoming, they simultaneously script relationalities to the broader dramaturgy of social relations, conditioning and beliefs. The fictional situation of the 'micro' dramaturgy interacts with the values and cultural beliefs that shape performances in the 'macro dramaturgy'. The question as to whether interventions and provocations from the audience-participants were enacted as part of a broader role-play strategy to foreground, safeguard or socially position themselves in relation to the broader socio-cultural dramaturgy – or the research – remains.

Focus group discussions – the macro and micro in tension

For this component, the collective, shared space that had been created for the forum theatre and hot-seating is dispersed. Audience-participants are divided into two groups of men and two groups of women, approximately 10 people in each group. The space is divided into two, with two members of the research team joined by one of the NGO workers to help translate in each respective group. Although the researchers and audience-participants have been in full view of one another throughout the workshop, this

phase of the event is the first time there is direct interaction between them. Each group sits in small circles. The change in physical set-up is also indicated in the change of the activity focus, as the emphasis shifts from reflecting on the fictional scenes to the audience-participants discussing their personal experiences. The audience-participants deliver their answers directly to the researcher, holding eye contact, while others listen closely to their peers and respond. The more intimate set-up and the fact that the groups are single-gendered impacts the content of the conversations. While the discussions open with a reflection on the forum theatre scenes, audience-participants are asked to draw parallels with their own lives. The audience-participants discussed how they enjoyed interacting and hearing their peers contribute, as it was rare for such matters to be discussed in a public setting, which supported the idea that the 'other-ness' or liminality of the event allowed for discussing issues outside the everyday.

One female audience-participant said that she did not interact during the performance because her husband was present. This is a notable counterpoint to the analysis above, where audience-participants effectively encouraged and motivated one another to participate in the forum theatre. In this instance, there was concern about how her public engagement would impact her everyday life. She explained that, during the performances, her husband critiqued the fictional husband for beating his wife, yet he was, in reality, violent towards her in the home. Here, her role as abused wife denied her access to metaxis and voice that simultaneous dramaturgy in the context of the performance invites. The discourses, gender and cultural relations that the social script prescribes thus did not destabilise through the simultaneous dramaturgy of the performance. Other female audience-participants echoed this sentiment and said they witnessed the male audience-participants advising the characters to behave in particular ways that these same men would not necessarily do at home. This reveals a certain disingenuousness on the part of male audience-participants, but more importantly, it illustrates something about the convergence between the performance and the audience.

The locus of dramaturgical control during the forum theatre moments seemed to reside with men supported by a social script. While this may seem contradictory with the fact that men were reticent to speak in forum theatre scenes, it has to be noted that while there was some appearance in the 'micro dramaturgical frame' of women co-scripting and engaging with one another, ultimately demonstrating how the social script of the macro dramaturgical frame influenced their behaviours. This serves as an example of how multiple discourses coexist in a dialectical tension. The framing of the workshop event, the presence of the researchers, the repeated calls for contributions from the facilitators and the encouragement from audience-participants themselves all invite a particular type of performance from them in public spaces. Yet in more intimate discussions, a different picture emerges where the violent and irresponsible husband is critiqued. As noted above, emphasis is placed on the importance of contributing for the audience-participants, rather than, for example, that contributions should be reflective of their own behaviours. Here, the notion of 'collective dramaturgy' better describes what transpired in the focus groups. This aptly illustrates how people are conditioned to respond in particular ways, reflective of Harri Englund's point about 'eliciting the right answers' (2006, 103): there is also a 'right performance'. People know and understand that they should respond in particular ways that align with what they know about human rights frameworks, but they must also *act* or *perform* in line with expectations.

In the male-only focus groups, some men expressed the guilt and discomfort they felt at seeing violent behaviours they recognised in the scenes. None of the male audience-participants voiced these feelings during the forum theatre performances, indicative of concerns over how they might have been perceived in a mixed-gender setting, potentially opening them up to critique or humiliation from friends and colleagues. This further evidences the different quality of performance invited in the different activities – as audience-participants engaged in dialogue with the fictionalised characters in the designated scenes, it appears they also took on heightened and, to some extent, fictionalised versions of themselves. In the more intimate and (not insignificantly) single-gendered format of these groups, audience-participants were more willing to either be self-critical or share personal challenging circumstances. This does not devalue the insights obtained from the contributions made during the forum theatre; on the contrary, these performances reveal something in themselves, namely an awareness on the part of the participants of the 'expected' views they should offer. Comparing these performances with the more reflective contributions offered in the smaller interviews enhances our understanding of the tension between public and private behaviours around SGBV. Much like how researchers have multiple variables or components to consider in their research, audiences and informants are also attuned to the multiple elements at play in a workshop event, which are informing and shaping the quality of participation in the different activities and ultimately shaping how individuals and groups perform, with a conscious consideration of how and for whom they are enacting particular roles and, thus, how dramaturgies interface and are shaped in the workshop space.

Meal

As is customary, the workshop concluded with a meal that had been prepared by women in the community. The researchers and NGO workers were familiar with this custom and thus gathered around one plate of cassava leaf with rice. The meal signalled two things. First, it was a transitional period between the event and the return to everyday activities. People ate and chatted as they would normally, although still in the context of the workshop space, but at this stage there was little discussion of the workshop content. As people finished, they slowly dispersed, reprising their roles in the everyday. The research team also played small but significant roles during the meal. Unlike the audience-participants, they did not ordinarily eat meals without utensils. As was pointed out by one of the team members, it is important to take part in this component of the workshop, as it signals appreciation of communal efforts to welcome the organisation and researchers, and a willingness to take part in their customs.

Although the team were not 'faking their appreciation' nor did they feel discomfort eating in the community, they were self-conscious about these acts as some people (particularly children) were watching them. It was, however, still a signifier of respect, ie 'doing something', to partake in community rituals in the same manner as the community. The self-consciousness of the team may also be indicative of the fact that in this more convivial aspect of proceedings, their 'role' is less clearly defined. With research materials and questions set aside in favour of informal conversation with each another and audience-participants, the dramaturgical locus of control shifts to a more negotiated stance. The members of the community invite the 'outside' team to partake in their customs and perform the signifiers of cultural

hosting, and in response the researchers become conscious of 'performing' *their* correct role for their hosts.

Conclusion: dramaturgy and the theatre *of* development

A dramaturgical analysis considers the ways composite elements of performances interact to create meaning. Consequently, these can be extrapolated to social settings, including development. By using dramaturgy to analyse development, it allows for the nuances, or distinct elements, of an event to become central rather than by-products of an analysis and highlights a range of 'social registers' that are performed in the theatre *of* development. A dramaturgical analysis draws attention to how separate aspects of an event can be consciously crafted in a manner that will inform participant engagement – how the event and research teams are introduced and their respective relation to participants, as well as how a space is curated. Being aware of how these elements interact to shape participant engagement can help inform the design of workshops but also invites an acute awareness to the analysis by examining how the multiple dramaturgies inform these findings.

Although some consideration can be given to these elements in advance, we highlight how the multiple performances are ultimately processual and responsive – how they are modes of simultaneous and collective dramaturgy. Boal's notion of simultaneous dramaturgy decentralises the locus of dramaturgical control by crafting explicit moments of dialogue, allowing for an interface between the research team and community participants. The scenes, although rehearsed, are ultimately created through a collaborative process with audience-participants. While the responses and discussions of the dramatic component of the play are certainly important, the role and performance of the audience-participants really provides insights, not only into their perspectives on gender, but more generally on perspectives of development as revealed by the rupture in the simultaneous dramaturgy, reflective in that the locus of dramaturgical co-control occurred in these settings. Gender relations, drawing on a social script, saw the locus shift to men. In the focus group discussions, however, the locus of control was fluid, with different groups in control at different times. In structuring and executing forum theatre in a development context, the theatre performance should move beyond the personal dimension of the story and relationships and towards what the political and social dimensions can tell us about gender and cultural relations. Otherwise, dominant values and practices in place shape the dramaturgies in, of and around the event – acting as a locus of dramaturgical control. It is in the slippage between dramaturgies and dramaturgical loci of control that development should intervene.

What we thus exposed is how a simultaneous dramaturgy emerges beyond the scenes in the forum theatre and surfaces in the multiple performances and role-taking that are occurring within the workshop space, opening up the possibility of analysing multiple and simultaneous positionalities. At these junctures, the rituals, roles and performance practices embedded within the community surface shape the dramaturgy of the event embedded as part of 'development'. These different performance modalities collided to inform one another. The crafted offering from the NGO team and researchers interfaced with the expectations and existing performance practices of the community, resulting in the co-creation of an event. These components are inherent to creating the 'workshop space' and ultimately creating the theatre of development. While theatre for development is an established

practice, the theatre *of* development is not well analysed. Ultimately, this theatre emerges symbiotically with the explicitly crafted theatre that has become common in development practice but speaks much more to how and why people perceive particular activities in the way they do. If we are to understand how development does (or does not) work, performance should be central to this analysis, as it has the potential to speak truth to multiple modes of power in relation to particular social scripts. Whether people want to hear it or not is another script entirely.

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Notes

1. Historically, theatre studies has been associated with drama and the staging of dramatic texts, excluding cultures favouring orality and other somatic modes of self and societal presentation. Boal named his work 'theatre'. This naming is neither aligned with the explanation of theatre we offer, nor with the dominant 'theatre' of his day. Following on from Schechner's (2013) definition of performance, we explain in the body of the article that performance is a broader and more inclusive concept. We understand it as an umbrella term that includes theatre and theatrical events.
2. This project was approved by the University of Sheffield ethics committee, Application No. 037483.
3. Sierra Leone is a small West African country with historical roots in British colonialism. Bombali is a district in the Northern region home primarily to farmers.
4. Bertolt Brecht's idea of *verfremdung* refers to the process of distancing and defamiliarisation via theatrical strategies in order to remind the spectator of the artificiality of the performance so as to keep a critical and intellectual distance from the performance. Further, to make the familiar strange means facilitating a shift in perspective of that which is presented. This was done by performers stepping out of character or directly addressing the audience (Allain and Harvie 2006, 28–30). These strategies resonate with applied theatre, including Augusto Boal's theatre-for-development. Boal's theatre aims at bringing into consciousness social and power relations underpinning social issues to develop practicable solutions. This is done by spect-actors stepping in and out of roles or intervening in a performance. For more information on convergence and divergence between Boal and Brecht, see Figueira (2019).
5. A position of female leadership in rural areas.

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