



INTRODUCTION

The Social Theatre Toolkit consists of five guides describing different approaches to social theatre in West Africa. This toolkit was created as part of the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) awareness raising approach in West Africa.

Due to its educational and transformative approach, social theatre is an important means of stimulating debate around social issues and sensitive topics.

IOM regularly uses it in the framework of community actions to engage audiences about safe migration, local opportunities and risks to irregular migration.

Social theatre is used by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations, as it can address certain socio-cultural realities by speaking directly to the target audience.

This toolkit shares knowledge and practical tools. It is intended for artists, facilitators, educators, teachers, and cultural and humanitarian workers who wish to use theatre for social purposes.

Included are tutorial videos, which help practitioners, amateurs and even the non-experts, to learn the basics to lead a theatre workshop or how to put on a show.

In this toolkit, the following five social theatre approaches practiced in West Africa are featured:

Theatrical Storytelling

Popular Theatre

Forum Theatre

Collective Creation

Improvisation Battles

This toolkit presents the basics of each of these approaches. It does not claim to provide a single definition, rather these guides are a proposal that can be used as a basis for experimenting and combining different approaches in order to develop new forms of theatrical expression.



THEATRICAL STORYTELLING

1	OVERVIEW OF THE APPROACH
2	HISTORY OF THE APPROACH
3	BASIC PRINCIPLES
4	CREATIVE PROCESS
5	PERFORMANCE PROCESS
6	PERFORMANCE SPACES AND PUBLIC
7	A SELECTION OF PROFESSIONAL STORYTELLERS IN WEST AFRICA
8	THEATRICAL STORYTELLING MAIN EVENTS IN WEST AFRICA

OVERVIEW OF THE APPROACH

A tale is an incredible story that was once transmitted orally. It is defined as a tale of imaginary adventures of an educational nature.

The tale is a mirror of society. It contains cultural values and traditional knowledge. It shows us symmetries, colours, magic and above all, and there is a moral at the end of the tale.

HISTORY OF THE APPROACH

Tales have nourished the imagination of oral tradition societies for thousands of years.

In Africa, storytelling is widely used to transmit knowledge in villages from generation to generation. It is an integral part of West African culture, thanks in particular to the tradition of the griots. They are musicians-entertainers and their performances include tribal histories and genealogies.

In the early 1980s, several popular tales in the region were made into television films or performed on stage (e.g., “Coumba am ndey”, “Sarzan and Xanju” in Senegal, and “La légende de Miniyamba” in Mali).

As time passes, the tradition of storytelling by the fire is being lost, especially in urban areas.

Combining storytelling and theatre therefore makes it possible to offer a new form of narration through a live performance, and thus helps to continue the transfer of knowledge and values contained in tales.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

A tale is a story, told by a person, with imaginary facts. It has a moral purpose and cultivates values. The universe is incredible and magical, and the characters can be humans, animals, elements of nature, spirits and more.

A tale appeals to our imagination, our fantasies, our deepest fears, our dreams, and our desires for adventure.

In a tale, one person narrates the whole story, whereas in Theatrical Storytelling, the characters can be played by different actors. Sometimes the roles are doubled to limit the number of actors on stage.

CREATIVE PROCESS

The theme of a tale is generally linked to a social fact. Once the theme has been translated into a moral message, one can look in the collection of folk tales to see if any of them reflects this moral message. Alternatively, one can also invent a tale.

Some people write the text on paper in order to facilitate the work of the actors and this text can evolve through the actors' inputs and improvisations.

PERFORMANCE PROCESS

The performance of Theatrical Storytelling does not require any particular props. It can be performed with or without a set, with or without music. Sometimes a musician accompanies the storyteller, but this is not necessary.

Traditionally in African storytelling, there is interaction between the audience and the storyteller. This interaction can also be recreated during the Theatrical Storytelling in order to satisfy the playful and educational aims of the show.

PERFORMANCE SPACES AND PUBLIC

As in any other forms of social theatre, Theatrical Storytelling goes towards its audience, and not the other way around. It can therefore be performed anywhere: in courtyards, in houses, in the streets, and in squares.

The audience for storytelling is wide, from children to youths and adults.

A SELECTION OF PROFESSIONAL STORYTELLERS IN WEST AFRICA

✓ Burkina Faso

Kientega Pingdéwindé Gérard, alias KPG
Website: www.compagniekpg.net
Zeinabou Nikiema
Website: www.bienvenuetheatre.com

✓ Côte d'Ivoire

Taxi conteur, founder of the Company Naforo Ba
Facebook: www.facebook.com/CompagnieNaforoBa

✓ Liberia

The Liberia Movie Union
Address: Capitol Hill, Monrovia
Website: www.liberiamovieunion.org

✓ Nigeria

Mosaic Theatre Production
Address: 423, Ahmedu Bello Way Abuja Nigeria
Email: dongozy@gmail.com

✓ Senegal

Massamba Gueye, founder of the House of Orality and Patrimony Kër Leyti, Dakar

Website: www.kerleyti.com

El Hadj Leeboon

Website: www.leeboonleconte.com/

Thierno Diallo

Website: <https://www.thiernodiallo.net/>

Ngary Mbaye



**THEATRICAL STORYTELLING
MAIN EVENTS IN WEST AFRICA**

✓ Burkina Faso

“Festival des Grandes Nuits du Conte” in Ouagadougou

✓ Guinea

Annual Festival “La Grande Nuit du Conte” in Conakry

✓ Senegal

“La Grande Parole Invite” organized by Kër LEYTI, la Maison de l’Oralité et du Patrimoine in Dakar

“Festival international du conte et de la parole” in Gorée

“Festiparoles”, Traveling festival of storytelling arts

For more information

Bibliography:

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✓ 2. Demarcy Richard. Contes et légendes en théâtre: Acoria, 2006.

✓ 3. Contes d’Afrique noire: www.mediatheque.chenneviers.com, 2016/05