

**Seamus Heaney Lecture Series, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra**

**WHAT'S THE STORY? .... THE TEACHER AS ARTIST ... THE ARTIST AS TEACHER ...**

**Theatre of the Oppressed**

**Chrissie Poulter**

**Monday 23 March at 8.00pm Auditorium, Saint Patrick's College**

30 years later ... As she prepares to leave Protestant-now-secular Trinity College Dublin for Catholic-now-catholic Trinity College Leeds (Leeds Trinity)\*, Chrissie Poulter reflects on the role of teacher and artist in the evolving civil society on this island of Ireland in the final lecture in the current Seamus Heaney Lecture Series.

1979 – Belfast: I was invited to advise the Northern Ireland Arts Council: can Community Arts benefit this divided city? Could a neighbourhood-based model from my elsewhere guarantee some parity of provision for this neighbourhood-based society, for whom the steel-encircled city centre was not a destination-of-choice of an evening? ... I lived and worked in the Belfast barrios for the summer to find out... and further afield on the island over the next 30 years ... until my elsewhere faded into a half-remembered story and the lessons I learnt here became looked-for in other parts of the un-neighbourly world.

I travelled to other parts of Europe to create and teach - the language always evolving to include ... and exclude ... this is me ... and/not you ... The practice always evolving to include ... and not exclude ... this is me and you-not-me ... So the understanding of how to work with you-not-me grows and crosses its own borders, from art into teaching into business into social policy, into publications and even, for you, into lectures ...

In 1990 I met Brazilian theatre-maker and pedagogue Augusto Boal, 78 years old this March, whose practice never stops finding a way for theatre methods to be placed at the service of social justice – for individuals and communities. He calls it Theatre-of-the-Oppressed and his writings explain it all so clearly. He became, and still is, a guide and frame of reference for my own work. I shall share some of his praxis alongside my own.

\*Catholic and catholic is how I see Leeds Trinity after reading their Diversity Policy ... one paragraph of which follows here:

“Trinity and All Saints' College imposes no dress code on its community members and welcomes the variety of appearance brought by individual styles and choices. The wearing of items arising from particular cultural / religious norms (e.g. hijab, kippah, mangal sutra) is seen as part of this welcome diversity.”

A home for the hijab ... in a Catholic college ... How catholic ... I want to live in such a place ... To learn new lessons for our new world ...

I look forward to speaking with you before I go... of self and other ... of fight and flight ... of co-existence and community ... of giving and taking ... of what I have learned of the role of teacher and artist in the evolving civil society on this island of Ireland.

(More about Chrissie Poulter can be found at [www.chrissiepoulter.com](http://www.chrissiepoulter.com))

Leeds Trinity: [www.leedstrinity.ac.uk](http://www.leedstrinity.ac.uk)

Trinity College Dublin: [www.tcd.ie](http://www.tcd.ie)

Theatre-of-the-Oppressed: [www.theatreoftheoppressed.org](http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org)