

Roberto Varea Biography

Roberto Gutiérrez Varea began his career in theatre in his native Argentina. His research and creative work focuses on live performance as means of resistance and peacebuilding, in the context of social conflict and state violence. Varea's stage work in the United States has focused on Latin@/Chican@ theatre, and directing world or west-coast premieres of works by Migdalia Cruz, Ariel Dorfman, Cherrie Moraga, and Jose Rivera (among others). He is the founding artistic director of community-based performance groups Soapstone Theatre Company and El Teatro Jornalero!, and co-founder of the San Francisco-based collective Secos & Mojados. He is an associate editor of *Peace Review* (Routledge) and guest-listed the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics' e-misferica. Varea is a founding faculty of the Performing Arts and Social Justice Program, and director of the Center for Latino Studies in the Americas (CELASA), at the University of San Francisco.

In April 2012, Roberto Gutiérrez Varea hosted a screening of the *Acting Together* documentary at the *Festivo de Teatro Alternativo* (Alternative Theatre Festival) in Bogota, Colombia. The documentary and *Acting Together* project was received quite enthusiastically. The festival is a biennial event and was scheduled to run parallel to one of the world's largest film festivals, the *Festival Iberoamericano*.

The Alternative Theatre Festival was founded by independent collectives, artists and presenters as a popular response to the *Iberoamericano's* high ticket costs, elite performances, and government connections, and supporting the message that "art is not just for a privileged elite." The festival includes community-based performances and experimental stagings, which have a central social justice dimension. For the first year, the smaller independent festival brought in more viewers than the larger festival.

After the screening, there was an energized discussion with attendees facilitated by Gutiérrez Varea and the festival's producer about the definition and roles of peace and of reconciliation, and the experiences of those in attendance with the repressive governments and violence experienced by their families. Questions were raised about whether 'peace' meant the 'absence of conflict' and whether reconciliation meant forgiving those who were unremorseful.

Gutiérrez Varea shared with the group that he felt that "peace is a process, not a destination, and that it would be more conducive to our healing, our personal and societal health, if we acknowledged reconciliation's place in that process, even when we felt not ready for it." He also shared with the group the *Acting Together* anthologies and website, and the group agreed that a Spanish translation of the *Acting Together* materials would be very useful. Gutiérrez Varea said that he "left with a very positive feeling of the power of story, and what the *Acting Together* material can do to allow for these stories and perspectives to be shared."

Gutiérrez Varea was the featured guest at an event presented by Aluna Theatre and TheatreBooks called *A Conversation with Roberto Gutiérrez Varea*. He presented the *Acting Together* project, and talked about his work as the founding artistic director of community-based performance groups Soapstone Theatre Company and El Teatro Jornalero!.