

**PUPPETRY BEYOND ENTERTAINMENT,  
HOW PUPPETS ARE USED POLITICALLY TO AID SOCIETY**

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**This research project is submitted to the Royal Welsh College  
of Music & Drama, Cardiff, in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Theatre  
Design**

**April 2008**

## Declaration

I declare that this Research Project is the result of my own efforts. The various sources to which I am indebted are clearly indicated in the references in the text or in the bibliography.

I further declare that this work has never been accepted in the substance of any degree, and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any other degree.

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## **Acknowledgements**

Many people have helped and inspired me in writing this dissertation and I would like to acknowledge them.

My thanks' to Tina Reeves, who suggested 'puppetry' as a subject to research. Writing this dissertation has opened my eyes to an extraordinary medium and through researching the subject I have met some extraordinary people.

I am grateful to everyone who has taken the time to fill out a survey or questionnaire, your feedback has been invaluable.

My thanks' to Jill Salen, for her continual support, inspiration, reassurance and words of advice.

My gratitude to friends and family for reading and re-reading my work, for keeping me company seeing numerous shows, for sharing their experiences of puppetry and for such interesting discussions on the subject.

Also a big thank you to my dad and my brother, they are both technological experts!

## **Abstract**

Puppets are extraordinary. While they acquire a life of their own, they remain inanimate and can seem less intimidating when addressing sensitive issues. They break boundaries between people, both physically and emotionally. They allow us to take on numerous identities and act as a shield for us to hide behind. They can give people the confidence to say and do things they wouldn't usually say or do if they were visible. Puppetry is an interactive medium that relies on an element of audience participation. Without believing in a puppet the puppet would cease to exist, but by believing in the puppet people are giving the puppet the time to listen to what they have to say. Visually, puppets are very striking and can be used efficiently to get our attention. They speak a universal language that can be understood across many cultures and can put a message across simply and effectively to a diverse audience.

This dissertation has been an exploration of the uses of puppetry beyond entertainment and an observation of the influence puppets have had and continue to have in society. It looks primarily at political puppetry across Europe, Africa and America. It gives an overview of the subject with reference to political icon Mr Punch, political activist Gary Friedman and the political puppet movement Bread and Puppet Theatre. This dissertation shows examples of how eminent puppets have been in society and how influential they can be as a medium.

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## An Introduction to Puppetry

I find puppets fascinating, the way they acquire their own identity and move apparently by themselves. In *The History of the English Puppet Theatre*, puppeteer George Speaight describes a puppet as “an inanimate figure moved by human agency.”<sup>1</sup>

Throughout history, puppets have taken many forms. In Europe, puppets were traditionally used to illustrate stories and bring people together. Today in western culture, they are often associated with children’s entertainment. On television, programs like *Sesame Street* use brightly coloured puppets to make learning fun and the series continues to be an international success since 1969, when it was first established in America. Other companies use puppets to create fantastical worlds such as *Garlic Theatre*, which was founded in Britain in 1996 and uses puppetry to create lively and imaginative shows that capture our imagination.



Figure 1: Puppets from Sesame Street

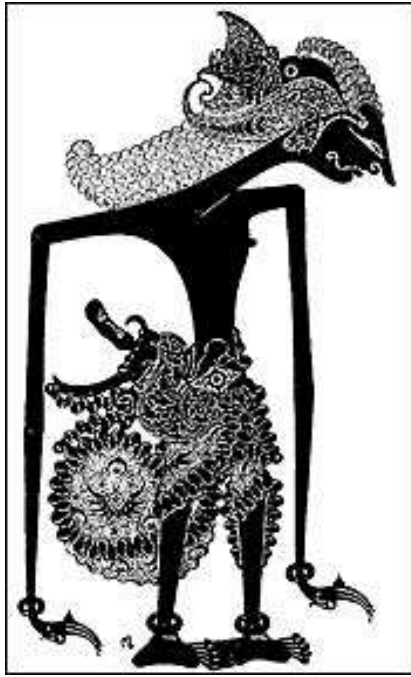


Figure 2: A puppet from *Fiddlesticks*, by Garlic Theatre

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<sup>1</sup> (Speaight 1955, p22)





**Figure 3: Javanese shadow puppet**



**Figure 4: Thai puppets**

In Asian culture, puppets are deeply rooted in tradition and are often considered sacred as they are used to portray religious epics and connect one with the spiritual world. In Thailand, different puppets are used symbolically in rituals to commemorate important ceremonies and rites of passage. To have a puppet show held in your name is considered honourable and across Asia, the art of puppetry is taken very seriously.

Through my research, I have grown intrigued by people's different perceptions of puppetry and their relationships with puppets. Physiologically puppets allow us to be more open as they can seem less intimidating when addressing sensitive issues. When operating a puppet, it can act as a shield for us to hide behind and allows us to take on new identities and say and do things we would not usually say or do if we were visible. Visually puppets are very striking and can be used efficiently to highlight events and symbolically put a message across simply and effectively using a universal language.

This dissertation is an exploration of the uses of puppetry beyond entertainment, focusing on the uses of puppets in society as a political aid.

## **An overview of Political Puppetry in Europe**

In Europe, from six hundred AD through to the sixteenth century, puppets were frequently used in service to the church. Puppeteers would reenact stories from the bible and visually portray the word of god to people who were illiterate and unable to read for themselves. Christianity was accepted as a part of life and puppets were used to unite people of shared beliefs. This maintained the popularity of the church, which at the time was a dominant influence over the politics of the country.

In *The History of the English Puppet Theatre*, George Speaight describes puppets as:

“Strangely suited to display the divine mysteries in roles where the human actor is all too conscious of his humanity. There is no doubt that religious drama can still-today, as it has in the past, be interpreted with curiously moving effect by the hieratic gestures of the marionette.”<sup>2</sup>

By the fifteenth century however, a turning point came for religious puppet shows, as religious role models were replaced by comic locals and performances became quite satirical:

“The shepherds were shown as country bumpkins, Noah’s wife as a shrew, Herod raged like the villain of a melodrama and the grotesque Devils slipped across the border from horror into farce as they dragged sinners into the smoking jaws of Hell.”<sup>3</sup>

With the turn of the century, the rise of new classical and secular ideas become known as *Commedia dell’ Arte*. Pastoral authorities were no longer able to control the content of shows and so finally forbade any form of theatre to be permitted in their churches.

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<sup>2</sup> (Speaight 1955, p 35)

<sup>3</sup> (Speaight 1955, p 45)

## An overview of Political Puppetry in Europe

Though performances grew less religious, they were seen to have moral undertones and became known as morality plays, in which characters represented personifications of human virtues and vices. The 'Seven Deadly Sins' and 'Old Vice' became popular rogue comics who spoke of common experiences with bawdy, vulgar humour. Puppetry returned to being the voice of the everyman and an expression of real human concerns for everyday life.



**Figure 5: Image of motion men and their portable puppet booths**

At this time, puppeteers were known as 'motion men' or 'players' and often travelled the country alongside tinkers and gypsies, touring their work to new audiences and collecting material for shows as they went. Across Europe, puppeteers played an important role in delivering news between communities. In England, the Elizabethan Vagrancy Act was set up to oversee the travels of vagabonds and sift out potential thieves and beggars. This meant puppeteer's were required to have a license to operate and upon arriving at a new town, would have to present themselves and their licence at the town hall before receiving permission to perform. It was custom for showmen to present themselves and their work in front of the mayor and aldermen, who would then pay them as they saw fit. Records show one case in Dover where a puppeteer failed to impress his audience and was paid a shilling to leave the town without performing.

By the seventeenth century, England saw the fall of religious authority and a rise in industrial power. With the outbreak of the civil war in 1642, parliament closed all theatres for fear people would use them to voice ideas against the government. Despite protests from actors, for the silencing of their profession and the end of the war in 1647, severe laws were passed to ensure theatres remained closed. William Cromwell and the puritan commonwealth who were in power at the time, feared theatre would spread revolutionary propaganda and any person found participating or even watching a performance was either whipped or heavily fined. Somehow puppet shows slipped through this law, whether it was because performances were easily portable and hard to keep track of, or that puppets were seen as the trivial 'poor mans theatre', historians aren't sure.

In 1648 John Warner, who was lord mayor of London at the time, attempted to ban puppetry, though the following year he died. Consequently, so did his laws and puppeteers returned as irreverent as ever and rebelling against his reign, mockingly portrayed him as a caricature of the devil. As George Speaight mentions in *The History of the English Puppet Theatre*:

“A broadsheet elegy of November 1648 lament:

Here lies my lord mayor, under this stone,  
That last Bartholomew Fair no Puppets would own.  
But next Bartholomew Fair, who liveth to see,  
Shall view my lord mayor a puppet to be.”<sup>4</sup>

For eighteen years, puppetry was the only theatre of England and flourished. It was during this time that Punch and his clan of rogue puppets became regional examples of the commoner's hero and voice for the working class of society. Through puppetry, they took to the street as a motion of descent as performances ridiculed authority and satirized local events.

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<sup>4</sup> (Speaight 1955, p 71).

## An overview of Political Puppetry in Europe

A century later, there was a similar ban in France. 1793 marked the second period of the French revolution and subsequently, all performing arts, including puppetry, were banned. Even when the law was lifted in 1852, the French government demanded all texts be submitted to paper so performances could be checked and approved of. Napoleon III's state were nervous about people gathering in groups and shows that attracted large numbers of people were kept under strict surveillance. Itinerant puppeteers were often accused of promoting crime as their shows drew crowds of poor people into respectable areas and authorities were reluctant to give showmen licenses, unlike those that were offered to other professions. Consequently, performers often took the law into their own hands and performed unlicensed and uncensored.

Puppetry was something authority was not able to take away from the people of society and remained a medium they still had control of. Performers preached their own newsworthy events through their puppets, and would often taunt authority in defiance to their laws.

During World Wars I and II, governments grew wise to the popularity of puppetry and it became a medium utilised by all sides to aid the war effort. When Germany was governed by Nazis, authorities ordered all mediums to actively promote the Aryan race. Kasperle was a popular marionette puppet throughout Germany and Austria and though at first his traditional hooked nose was considered too Jewish, his appearance was 'Nazified' and he became the governments' 'spokes-puppet'. His image was frequently used in propaganda posters, political cartoons and adverts for businesses serving the war. Puppetry workshops were organized for soldiers, to keep them entertained and boost their morale.

## An overview of Political Puppetry in Europe



**Figure 6: Image of Kasperle whacking down enemy planes in 1942**



**Figure 7: A puppetry workshop for Nazi soldiers 1940**

In World War II, Punch was seen with his bludgeon in hand, poised ready to fight for the Union Jack. Puppeteer Percy Press, dressed Punch as an English soldier, who would hang Hitler numerous times and an episode called *Punch and Judy go to War*, a glove puppet of Winston Churchill is shown clouting Hitler with a stick, in the same mannerisms of Punch.



**Figure 8: Winston Churchill clouting Hitler in Punch and Judy go to War 1941**

When Poland was captured by Germany in World War II, the anti Nazi company Szkuta (art) managed to perform in a prisoner of war nativity where the three wise men were Roosevelt, Churchill and the Polish general Sikorski. King Herod was portrayed with four heads representing the faces of several axis leaders and Stalin. Through symbolism, puppeteers used the reputation of popular figures to effectively put across their message and boost the moral of those who witnessed the show.

In Lithuania from 1989 to 1990, Sepos Theatre depicted “Karl Marx as a big red book with arms and a beard, usurping Gods place in heaven.”<sup>5</sup> Marx’s features combined with that of the book were used to make a powerful and poignant statement through the immediate form of puppetry.

Spejbl and Hurvinek, are the famous creation of Josef Skupa and are legendary marionettes that have been popular in the Czech Republic since the 1920’s. During the war, their performances became so increasingly topical, that a Nazi occupation in Prague accused them of being Jewish. Though they weren’t Jewish, Skupa took to performing in secrecy underground, until his arrest in 1944.



Figure 9: Spejbl and Hurvinek



Figure 10: A marionette of Kasperek

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<sup>5</sup> (Bicat 2007, p174)

Czech puppeteers played an important role in the revival of Czechoslovakia in the nineteenth century, as their puppets were used to promote native-language propaganda. In an essay on Czech Puppet Theatre, Pyotr Bogatyrev gives an account of a puppeteer who was summoned to court for launching political attacks from the stage of his puppet theatre, but was let off the hook as in court he announced that he was completely innocent as everything was his puppet, Kasperek's fault. Puppeteers continued to rebel against authority, as despite being forced to speak in German, they persisted to perform in their native language. When famous folk puppeteer, Matej Kopecky was asked to perform in German, he cunningly replied that, "although he could speak in German, his puppets did not know that language."<sup>6</sup>

There have been many cases of puppets getting away with doing things that would usually be frowned upon. In eighteenth century Rome, actors were only allowed to perform in carnival season, while puppets were allowed to perform all the year round and in nineteenth century Spain, shadow puppet theatre was the only theatre allowed during lent.

Puppets have often been used as a powerful and persuasive medium, able to speak where anyone else who would have spoken would have been shamed, sent to prison or in extreme cases, murdered or sentenced to death.

In medieval times, court jesters who were renowned for their cheek and charisma, turned to puppetry for some of their riskier performances. They would use a marotte, an all-in-one puppet, mock sceptre and noisemaker to aid their work, voicing some of their more controversial acts through puppetry. In this sense, the puppet is used as a shield to hide behind, a scapegoat to take the blame, even though it is an inanimate, blameless form.

In Burma from the 1400's to the 1800's, puppets were used by people to send important messages to the king. If someone had bad news to report to

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<sup>6</sup> (Bogatyrev 1923 in Bell 2001, p90)



authority, it could potentially cause conflict and cost them their life. In such circumstances, people would use the anonymity of puppetry to indirectly put their message across for the kings' court to decipher. Professor of theatre arts, Tina Bicat, states in her book, *Puppets and Performing Objects*, that:

“It would take a very brave or very stupid dictator to risk his dignity and credibility by arresting a bundle of sticks and rags.”<sup>7</sup>

Recently in Sicily, a journalist was murdered in connection with a report on organised crime. Since then, Sicilian newscasters speak through the disguise of a hand puppet named Paolino when reporting on the mafia and mafia friendly politicians. Through puppetry, reporters are able to protect their own identity and Paolino, being inanimate, remains unfazed by death threats.

In 1929 The Union Internationale de la Marionette, (UNIMA), was established and in 1945 it was affiliated with the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, (UNESCO). Both organisations are International and are active in working with the community to build a better future through many means. UNIMA in particular, places a direct emphasis in using puppetry to ‘promote peace and mutual understanding between people regardless of race, political or religious convictions and differences in culture’<sup>8</sup>. Both organisations continue to organise conferences, festivals and publications encouraging professional training and research of puppetry within the community.

From 1984 to 1996 Spitting Image was a popular satirical puppet show in Britain, broadcast on Sunday evenings on ITV. The series was designed by cartoonists Peter Fluck and Roger Law and satirised current events and public figures including politicians, celebrities and the Royal Family.

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<sup>7</sup> (Bicat 2007, p49)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.unima.org.uk/>

The series mocked many celebrities whose features were exaggerated so much that they looked quite grotesque. Margaret Thatcher made frequent appearances, portrayed as a bullying fascist who wore men's suits, used urinals and in one episode refers to her cabinet as vegetables<sup>9</sup>. She was shown to take advice from Adolf Hitler, who it would appear didn't commit suicide but was an old man who tended to the garden on the roof of nine Downing Street under the alias, 'Herr Jeremy'.



**Figure 11: Margaret Thatcher through the eyes of Spitting Image**

While originally quite political in content, the show became more comical and would often create spoof scenarios such as the wake of Margaret Thatcher and the hugely exaggerated possible blunders of Prince Phillip. Spitting Image also created parodies of popular songs, such as *every bomb you drop*, which was a take on *every step you take*, by the police and *our house*, which was a rewording of the original song by Madness and mocked the fall in house prices under the conservative government in the late 1980's.

The series won an Emmy in 1986 for being an 'outstanding popular arts program' and sold a range of merchandise including spin-off records, books, comics and videos that sold by the million. Spitting Image was also popular in Canada and America and inspired similar series abroad including *Les Guignols de l'info* in France, *Kukli* in Russia and *Hahartzufim* in Israel.

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<sup>9</sup> Thatcher's Steak, by Spitting Image, on: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33YUALnF3JY>

## Mr Punch, a Political Icon



Figure 12: Mr. Punch King of the Puppets

Mr Punch is recognised world wide in the history of political puppetry, for standing up to authority and living by his own rules. Though his origins date back to the sixteenth century, he is still very much alive today. Through puppetry, his existence is timeless and being famous throughout the world has been recognised as 'King of the Puppets'.

Punch was brought to England in 1662 by Pietro Gimonde, an Italian puppeteer who performed under the name Signor Bologna. With the end of puritan reign,

England was beginning to rebuild itself under Charles II and the country saw the revival of the performing arts. Puppet bawdies and up-to-the-minute topical writings were popular throughout Europe at this time and puppet shows were performed for the people, by the people. Punch was an overnight success as he mixed charm with slapstick humour and wit. Showmen were quick to reproduce him and tour him as their own and Punch was a new celebrity across the country. Ever since his birth, Punch has delighted diverse audiences of all classes' and cultures and to this day still stands as a popular personality.

Across Europe Punch is known by many names: in England he was first introduced as Policinella though this was soon shortened to Punch which was easier to pronounce, in France he is known as Le Guignol, in the Netherlands

as Jan Klaassen, in Germany Kasperle or more commonly Hans Wurst, in Belgium Tchantches, in Austria Kaspar, in Russia Petrouchka and in Turkey he goes by the name of Karagioz.

Despite so many titles, Punch has been consistently portrayed as a rogue comic with a distinctive humped back, potbelly, pointy chin, rosy cheeks and hooked red nose. While comical in appearance, having acquired features often associated with fools and jesters, Punch has made a lasting impression as the commoner's hero and voice of the everyman. To this day he is recognised as a symbol of anarchy and rebellion, though his performances are much tamer than they used to be, coinciding with the changing times of society.

In the 1700's, Punch caused turmoil as he was seen to take the law into his own hands at a time when everyone was expected to conform to the unspoken rules of society. The rise of the industrial revolution increased the ever-present divide in Britain's socioeconomic class system and Punch raised the moral of the 'demoralized' working class as he ridiculed authority, mocked god, the law, king, judge, policemen and even death by avoiding a hanging.

Punch has since grown famous as an icon of rebellion and voice for the underdog of society, breaking the mould of social hierarchy and listening to no one other than himself. In a review on Political Puppetry, Penny Francis describes Punch as an "outrageous champion of individual freedom, and hater of authority."<sup>10</sup>

Originally, Punch was a marionette puppet, but towards the end of the eighteenth century was refashioned as a glove puppet. While the reasons for this are debated by many puppet historians, one explanation accounts for a decline in the fairground circuit, that transported goods and entertainment throughout Britain, no longer being able to support large puppet companies,

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.puppetcentre.org.uk/animationsonline/aofourteen/feature\\_politics.html](http://www.puppetcentre.org.uk/animationsonline/aofourteen/feature_politics.html)

so redesigned performances to be operated by a single puppeteer. Scaling down the show made for a more intimate street performance, which suited the sprawling landscape of modern towns and cities.



**Figure 13: A Punch man with his glove puppets in portable puppet booth**



**Figure 14: Punch as a glove puppet**

The man who operated Punch was called a punch man, though today is known as a professor. He was author, designer, singer and actor for his entire repertoire and highly skilled. As a glove puppet Punch became more adept at holding things, which meant props could now be used in performances and as Punch became more mischievous, so he acquired his fearsome slapstick. Being a one-man-show meant a punch man no longer had to memorise scripts or rehearse performances with other puppeteers, this gave the operator the freedom to be spontaneous and adapt the show to suit the audience's reactions. Performances became livelier and Punch's antics more immediate.

Punch men performed in portable puppet booths and a smaller cast meant a smaller booth. Consequently, shows became easier to transport and performers were able to set up anywhere they pleased and could reach a wide audience cheaply and effectively. Frequently they would position

themselves on the streets of society where they were able to entertain the general public. Performances would catch the eyes of passers by and Punch's message of corruption reached anyone who dared to listen. A good punch man could set up or clear out in a flash, which made their 'instant theatre' a powerful tool as they could take off anywhere and promptly reflect upon a day's events.

To witness Punch is not a passive experience as he dotes on audience participation. Part of his success as a political tool for the everyman of society, is that his performances are in response to topical events that his audience can relate to. Though Punch has upset a small minority, who have mistaken his fight for individualism as a glorification of violence, he is redeemed for his slapstick 'knocking about' of fellow stage mates, as they return at the end of the show having suffered no evident pain or cruelty.

Punch's 'slapstick', though seen to be used as a weapon, is actually painless as little force is transferred from the object to the person being struck. While using it causes little physical damage, it creates a loud 'slapping' noise which aids its comical effect and has led to the term 'slapstick comedy.'

A lady once wrote to novelist Charles Dickens, asking for his support to suppress Punch for being a corrupter of youth, but Dickens, a fan of Punch who had mentioned him in several of his works, is famously quoted for writing back with defiance of the show and replied:

"In my opinion the Street Punch is one of those extravagant reliefs from the realities of life which would lose its hold upon the people if it were made moral and instructive. I regard it as quite, harmless in its influence and as an outrageous joke which no-one in existence would think of regarding as an incentive to any kind of action or as a model for any kind of conduct."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup><http://www.puppetanimation.org/sector/documents/DASANDERETHEATERBRITISHPUPPETRYISSUE.pdf>

When asked if Punch should be banned, puppeteers Geoff Felix and Bryan Clarke (also known as 'Professor Jingles') replied:

“Banning Punch would be like banning wine gums because there are alcoholics in the world.” “If Punch is banned, then it's time to ban Shakespeare, the Bible and Tom and Jerry cartoons, they're just as violent.” “Punch has adapted to the times he lives in, but an important part of the show is that he defies and overcomes the frustrations people feel as represented by his opponents. He does this on behalf of the audience.” “Punch no more encourages violence than Goldilocks encourages squatting.”<sup>12</sup>

In an article called introducing Punch and Judy, Professor Glyn Edwards describes Punch as, “a figure of popular culture – one who is truly ‘of the people’ and it is they whom have kept him alive down the centuries.”<sup>13</sup>

Over time Punch's fame spread beyond puppetry as he has inspired numerous operas, ballet, music, adverts and even the satirical magazine, 'Punch' was appropriately named after him.

Punch has always had a cult following and in 1980 local puppeteers founded the Punch and Judy Fellowship in order to protect and preserve the traditions of his shows. On their website they state:

‘The Fellowship's aims are to raise the public's appreciation of Punch & Judy shows and increase their understanding of the show's development, history and traditions. We achieve these aims by exhibiting and encouraging the highest standards of entertainment and performance.’<sup>14</sup>

With the support of organisations like the 'Punch and Judy Fellowship' and the 'Punch and Judy College of Professors', Punch continues to be a success and to this day can be seen reflecting upon the days events and satirising the current contradictory strains of popular culture.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.punchandjudyfellowship.org.uk/media.shtml>

<sup>13</sup> <http://punchandjudyworld.org/portalblog/index.php?itemid=3>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.punchandjudyfellowship.org.uk/>

Political cartoonists regularly adopt the theme of Punch and Judy when representing politicians in childish squabbles and recently, two Punch and Judy organisations agreed the red stripe in their traditional red-and-white striped booths, was symbolic of the red tape the government drapes round its activities.

Past shows have included the presence of glove puppets mimicking 'celebrities' like Lord Nelson, Winston Churchill, Adolf Hitler and more recently Margaret Thatcher, Jesse Helms and Tony Blair.



**Figure 15: Mr Punch and John Styles just after being awarded a MBE**



**Figure 16: Mr Punch clouting Jesse Holms for his opposition to government funding for the arts, in *A Works in Regress*, 1994**

Punch Today is still a popular celebrity and in 2004 puppeteer John Styles was awarded a MBE in recognition of his work. In 2005, the government officially classified Punch as a cultural icon of England and the Arts Council of England are currently funding the show to be kept up to date.

In Germany however, Mr. Punch, more commonly know as Kasperle, has come to represent different values. In 1920, puppeteer Max Jacob transformed Kasperle from a rogue comic into a well to do character who has become a positive role model for children. Since Jacob's Influence, Kasperle



has grown more childlike in appearance, helping children to identify with him. Modern story's show Kasperle helping his friends with their various problems and teaches children important values such as friendship, honesty and respect for authority.

## Gary Friedman, Political Activist

Gary Friedman is an accomplished visual artist and puppeteer, who has worked with puppets all his life. He was born in Cape Town, South Africa in 1956 and over his outstanding career has produced a multitude of political puppetry across the world; through live theatre, television and focused workshops.

Since childhood, Friedman has been fascinated by puppets and by the age of ten had formed his own puppet company. At twenty, he studied drama at Cape Town University and after graduating, received a scholarship to study puppetry at the Institute de la Marionette in Charleville Mezieres, France.

Friedman's political career took root in 1983 with *Puns en Dodie*, a socio-political satire that was portrayed through glove puppets. It was made as a stand against apartheid that was portable and could be easily performed to the public. The series evolved around the central characters Pun and Doedie and highlighted topical issues that were happening in society. Scripts were kept up to date with current events and included glove puppets of President P. W. Botha, Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu, Ronald Regan and Margret Thatcher.



Figure 17: Pun en Dodie in protest against apartheid



Figure 18: Pun with President P. W. Botha

Friedman describes street puppetry as a powerful means of communication as it provokes a direct response, he said:

“You get people who are so enthused in the performance that they give and they shout comments and they criticise.”<sup>15</sup>

*Puns en Dodie* ran as a live performance for five years across South Africa. In 1987, it toured to different puppetry festivals and theatres across Europe.

In 1987, Friedman helped established African Research and Educational Puppetry Program, (AREPP); a small non-government funded organisation that run a grassroots theatre based on the traditions of African mask and puppet theatre. They use these mediums to lead a number of health education and development programs to disadvantaged communities. Their mandate is to use puppetry as a non-threatening medium to address sensitive issues and educate as many people as possible about life and the world around them.

Friedman describes puppetry as, “a medium that forms a ‘buffer’ between the performer and his audience. It can deliver the strongest possible message, in a light-hearted manner without offending or frightening an audience.”<sup>16</sup>

A puppet has no opinion of its own, it is a neutral medium and through puppetry the company are able to address personal issues without shame, stigma, condemnation or taboo. To this day, the organisation continues to use puppetry in topical performances and community workshops around the world. The organisation is currently known as, ‘AREPP: Theatre for life’ and amongst others, programs include: *Puppets Against AIDS*, *Puppets for Democracy* and *Puppets in Prison*.

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<sup>15</sup> Puns en Dodies (Puppets Against Aparthied) on:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NW4vfbOp044>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.africanpuppet.com/workshop03.html>

*Puppets Against AIDS* was one of the initial projects put together by AREPP in 1987 and was set up to raise awareness of HIV and AIDS, which were relatively unknown at this time. The production was first launched in Johannesburg and proving to be a success toured throughout Africa, Australia, Canada and Europe.

The story evolves around the lives of two puppets Joe and Mary, a couple who both individually stand over two metres tall. Joes sleeps around and catches HIV, he infects his wife Mary and she passes the virus onto their baby. The couple argue about sex and the use of condoms while a live band plays in the background. HIV develops into AIDS and we see the horrible effects of the disease as it consumes Joe and causes his body to cave in on itself and eventually kill him. Each show was followed by a questions and answers session with trained AIDS counsellors who encouraged the general public to question safe sex and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. They stressed the importance of stopping the spread of the disease and demonstrated the correct use of a condom.

While the storyline remains consistent, *Puppets Against AIDS* has been translated into over 20 languages and adapted to the customs and dialects of the different communities it has toured to. Rural audiences in Africa are given advice from traditional healers, whereas urban showings place more emphasis on western medicine. The show toured too many communities that were illiterate and puppetry proved to be an effective medium overcoming any social and educational barriers.

The main characters of the performance have grey skin, illustrating the fact that the spread of the virus is not restricted by race. Through puppetry, Joe's death is evocatively portrayed and his passing made significantly dramatic, hitting home and making the show visually very powerful. The puppets stand out from the ordinary making the performance one that won't be easily forgotten and its simple message is memorable; 'practice safe sex to survive'.



**Figure 19: Joe and Mary as full body puppets, in *Puppets Against Aids***



**Figure 20: Joe and Mary as glove puppets, in *Puppets Against Aids***

Initially the company used giant puppets to illustrate *Puppets Against AIDS*, though later replicated them as glove puppets for ease of transport. Both versions were used effectively to draw in a crowd and the company performed for free in numerous public venues, attracting a varied audience from the casual passer by to hospital patients, city workers and businessmen. The puppets have also been celebrities at numerous AIDS events across the world. Through puppetry, the company were able to go to many places in South Africa that were previously inaccessible to AIDS educators, as their culture forbade open discussion of sexuality.

Friedman describes puppetry as having, “an amazing potential to mobilise ordinary people, to make them understand the nature of the problems they are facing. ..We realise that millions of people will still die from AIDS. But if we can show the important facts through puppetry then those facts will be remembered.”<sup>17</sup>

AREPP were one of the first groups of people to address the issue of AIDS in public, at a time when the government had made little effort. In some parts of the country, foreign doctors were deported for predicting that AIDS could depopulate Africa. Countries such as Uganda tried to play down the extent of the AIDS epidemic, for fear it would affect their tourism industry and were suspicious that attempts to promote condoms were a conspiracy to

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<sup>17</sup> The Sydney Morning Herald, Australia, 14/01/ 1989 by anonymous

depopulate the black community. For many people, seeing *Puppets Against Aids* was the first time they had heard of the disease or seen a condom. Shows were made to be entertaining as well as educational, to make the sensitive subjects they addressed easier to talk about.

*Puppets Against Aids* was quick to grab the attention of the media and in an article in The Sunday Independent Daryl Accone wrote:

“Puppets express emotion and feelings without words. It is the theatre of metamorphosis and transformation. ..This is the magic of puppet theatre, actions are a thousand times more effective than words.”<sup>18</sup>

In 1993 AREPP produced *Puppets for Democracy*. They were commissioned by Harriet Gavshon, from Free Film Makers, to produce a Voter Education Puppet Series to be part of the Democracy Election Broadcast Initiative, (DEBI), which was being organised to follow the run up to South Africa’s first ever democratic election, due to take place the following year. April 27<sup>th</sup> was the first time the public were invited to vote for who they wanted as president. The date is remembered as Freedom Day and is a public holiday across South Africa. The public had not experienced something like this before and Friedman was commissioned to produce a series that would explain the process of the election; showing the public who they could vote for, how they could vote, where they could vote and why they should vote.

The puppets were designed to represent the diverse population of South Africa and were made to appeal to a wide audience crossing linguistic, cultural, social, and racial barriers. The puppets helped draw people’s attention to the elections and encouraged the public to take an interest in the voting process and policies of the different parties being interviewed.

One of the main characters from the series was a white Afrikaans newsreader who interviewed a number of politicians. He proved to be popular with the

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<sup>18</sup> Sunday Independent, South Africa 21/04/1996, by Daryl Accone

public and was officially hired to broadcast daily on South African television during the elections. His colleague Clarence Keyter, a green-skinned impudent news reporter with a natty moustache and purple bowtie, interviewed a number of different party's asking them about their policies and campaigns for the election. He was seen to have a lot of charisma and get away with asking questions that would usually be seen as controversial. On africanpuppet.com, he is described as capturing the hearts of all the popular politicians including Nelson Mandela, President FW De Klerk, Roelf Meyer and Tokyo Sexwale.



**Figure 21: Clarence Keyter, from *Puppets for Democracy*, shaking hands with Nelson Mandela**



**Figure 22: Puppet with a Ballot box, from *Puppets for Democracy***

*Puppets for Democracy* proved to be so successful, the company went on to produce a regular two-hour show. This led onto founding, 'African Puppet Television' and gave the company the ability to reach audiences beyond the scope of live theatre. Through puppetry and television AREPP have produced a number of educational programs and addressed sensitive issues within a safe environment for various audiences. Current series include *Pezoolies*<sup>19</sup>, *Jabulani*<sup>20</sup>, *Running to the Rainbow*<sup>21</sup>, *Bable and Fizz*<sup>22</sup> and *Kid Gloves*.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Tallulah, Malume, Urp and Zwabble presented various educational programmes in a similar way to Sesame Street, in all eleven official languages of South Africa.

<sup>20</sup> Jabulani ventures to the many countries that make up Africa mixing with the public to discover each countries culture and traditional arts.

In 1994, Friedman set up Gary Friedman Productions, to develop his own projects outside of AREPP. In 1996, his company was asked by the South African correctional services to run an AIDS education program, to raise awareness of HIV and AIDS which was an issue of rising concern within the prison community. This led to the development of *Puppets in Prison*, a program that worked directly with prisoners and through puppetry, encouraged them to educate their peers.

Workshops encouraged participants to discuss issue that were previously seen as taboo, such as: AIDS, sodomy, rape, prostitution and gang violence. All these issues were frequent activities within the grossly overcrowded prisons and contributed to the spread of the disease. Programs supported individuals in speaking from personal experiences and talk about the things they felt were important and needed to be addressed.

Learning the basics of puppetry was a good icebreaker for the group and allowed them to get to know and trust each other informally. It was a good team building exercise and encouraged individuals to be more open, as puppetry helped discussion of issues that were difficult to talk about. Puppetry gave individuals the option of talking in the third person and use the puppets as tools through which they could voice themselves. Puppets allowed performers to distance themselves from their audience, so there was no direct stigma or condemnation associated with them and helped to build their self-confidence.

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<sup>21</sup> Two young boys, fed up with city life decide to run away and explore the world. They get lost and in searching for one another find out more about themselves enriching their lives... As described by africanpuppet.com

<sup>22</sup> An offshoot of Corporate Creatures released on video and TV for use in the workplace addressing sensitive issues such as racism, sexism and ageism.

<sup>23</sup> Didi and Dada, two aliens from a distant planet arrive in South Africa and learn about the places and people they meet on their adventures, including religion, food, customs, disabilities and reproduction.



Speaking in response to the program Friedman says: “Since we’ve started working with the group they’ve defiantly come out of their shell, they’ve got a zest for life that none of the other prisoners seem to have. They are real people who really want to use their skills and talents to achieve something and if I could impart this kind of energy in other prisoners we could defiantly change the way the prison system operates and its way of rehabilitating and changing people.”<sup>24</sup>

*Puppets in Prison* not only educated the prisoners involved and those that came to see performances, but it also gave participants a new sense of self confidence, ambition and skills that they could continue to develop in the future.

The pilot program of *Puppets in Prison* ran for eight weeks in Diepkloof prison, Johannesburg and received an extremely positive response from the prisoners, the public and governing authorities. Documentary programmes following the scheme were aired on television in South Africa, France and the United Kingdom and many requests were made by prisoners throughout South Africa asking for the program to be introduced in their vicinity.

Mr Carl Niehaus, chairperson of the Correctional Service Portfolio Committee, described the program as outstanding and was impressed by both the talent and the clear and frank message that came out in the performance. In response to the Launch program, that was released in April that year, he said:

“I don’t think anyone who’s been in this hall today can doubt that we need a clear and comprehensive aids education program in every prison in this country... We cannot allow any period of delay before this project becomes a permanent feature of the education programs throughout our prisons. Every day that goes past that they are not able to share their

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<sup>24</sup> *Puppets in Prison*, By Gary Friedman Productions, on:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzOJEzJpTR4>

knowledge in the very special way that they do with other prisoners is a day wasted.”<sup>25</sup>



Figure 23: Stills taken from a documentary on *Puppets in Prison*, showing the prisoners with their puppets

Through workshops, Friedman encourages participants to be hands on, creative, imaginative and confident. Gary Friedman Productions have implemented similar community workshops around the world and encourage communities to develop their own puppetry in education workshops to address issues relevant to their communities. What makes the workshops so successful is that they encourage active participation from the whole community; there is something for everyone to be involved in, from those who want to be in the spotlight to those who want to stay back stage.<sup>26</sup>

In an interview Friedman says: “Puppetry can be used to help people to express themselves and say things about themselves which they wouldn’t normally be able to or allow to say.”<sup>27</sup>

In 2002, Friedman was awarded a ‘Distinguished Talent’ visa by the Australian Government. Since immigrating there has been teaching ‘Puppetry for Film and Television’ at the Sydney Film School, Seymour Theatre and Technical And Further Education, (TAFE). He has also been involved in running numerous workshops in the Australian school system and extended

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<sup>25</sup> Puppets in Prison, By Gary Friedman Productions, on:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzOJEzJpTR4>

<sup>26</sup> For more information on the Aims of Gary Friedman’s workshops, see appendix 1.

<sup>27</sup> Gary Friedman, By Gary Friedman productions on:  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_5prcT1nYs4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5prcT1nYs4).

international lectures. At present, he is developing a company to bring puppetry to the corporate world. He is also in post-production of his documentary film, *Looking for a Monster*, which is the realisation of a puppet show that was written by a thirteen year old boy who was locked up in a concentration camp in Terezin, Poland, 1923. It is a testimony of the evils of war.

## **Bread and Puppet Theatre**

Bread and Puppet Theatre, is a politically motivated theatre that uses puppetry to highlight global issues. The troupe was established in New York City in 1962, by the company's director and central driving force, Peter Schumann. In 1970, part of the theatre moved to Plainfield Vermont, where they became a theatre in residence at Goddard College. Currently, Bread and Puppet Theatre reside in Glover, Vermont and continues to use puppetry to make political statements around the world.

Schumann was born in 1934 in Silesia, when it was originally ruled by Germany. During World War II Silesia was sized by the Soviet Union and transferred to Poland. Under Polish rule, many of the native Germans were expelled from their home land to make way for Polish settlers. When this happened, Schumann escaped to Northern Germany with his family. In 1961 he immigrated to America with his wife and their two children.

Schumann came from a background of sculpture, music and dance, mediums he was very passionate about and fused to create his unique 'puppet' theatre. Schumann believed that art was for the soul and that it was a necessity that should be as basic to life as bread. Friends of Schumann said, "Peter has always believed that his puppets nourished the hungry." "He would say, 'Puppets are food, you can't eat them but they nourish you.'"<sup>28</sup>

Moving to New York in the 1960s, Schumann was inspired by the rising democratic art that rejected the elitism of the current art scene that was being driven by profit and expectation. Schumann sought to re-establish art and the process of creating art, as experiences for everyone to enjoy. To achieve this, he founded 'the cheap art movement', which stressed that art should be available to all. This belief is the philosophy behind Bread and Puppet Theatre who, on a limited budget, make art out of any available means. They use

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<sup>28</sup> [http://www.bartonchronicle.com/html/bread\\_puppetbookreview.html](http://www.bartonchronicle.com/html/bread_puppetbookreview.html)

resources such as the clay dug from the local river bed and recycle old paper and card. Bread and Puppet Theatre promoted audience participation and used theatre to create community. They encouraged people to voice their concerns through their art, as they believed art had the power to liberate.

## **the WHY CHEAP ART? manifesto**

**PEOPLE** have been **THINKING** too long that  
**ART** is a **PRIVILEGE** of the **MUSEUMS** & the  
**RICH**. **ART IS NOT BUSINESS !**

**It does not belong to banks & fancy investors**  
**ART IS FOOD** . You cant **EAT** it **BUT** it **FEEDS**  
you . **ART** has to be **CHEAP** & available to  
**EVERYBODY** . It needs to be **EVERYWHERE**  
because it is the **INSIDE** of the  
**WORLD** .

**ART SOOTHES PAIN !**

Art wakes up sleepers !

**ART FIGHTS AGAINST WAR & STUPIDITY !**

**ART SINGS HALLELUJA !**

**ART IS FOR KITCHENS !**

**ART IS LIKE GOOD BREAD !**

**Art is like green trees !**

Art is like white clouds in blue sky !

**ART IS CHEAP !**

**HURRAH**

**Bread & Puppet Glover, Vermont. 1984**

Figure 24: Bread and Puppet Theatres 'Cheap art Manifesto'

Some of the first issues Bread and Puppet Theatre addressed were about the police, rats, and increasing rent, amongst other concerns of the general public. They took their theatre to the streets of New York for everyone to witness and used puppetry to draw attention to the issues and concerns of the local neighbourhood.

Schumann made theatre through the simplest means to involve anyone, no matter what their abilities were. Through puppetry, Bread and Puppet Theatre used a striking visual, familiar and universal language that was understood across many cultures. Their performances and street protests made the sensitive issues they addressed inviting for their audience, so that they would stay and listen. Holland Cotter, from the New York Times, commended Schumann for his courage, "to live an ideal of art as collective enterprise, a free or low-cost alternative voice outside the profit system."<sup>29</sup>



**Figure 25: Puppets of Mammon and the God of Hope, from *Our Domestic Resurrection Circus*, 1993**

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.theaterforthenewcity.net/bread.htm>



**Figure 26: Puppet of Mother Earth, with paper cranes, watched by a giant head. The puppet is being operated by two hundred volunteers. From *Our Domestic Resurrection Circus*, 1995**

Bread and Puppet Theatre created huge oversized puppets to publicise events and grab the attention of the public, media and authorities. Often reaching heights of twenty foot, their puppets stood highly visible and were visual leads at protests. Puppetry allows for symbolism and Bread and Puppet Theatre frequently used personifications to clarify their work to large audiences. Frequent imagery included the characterisation of Mother Earth and iconic Uncle Sam. Mother Earth had wise, enigmatic features that represented nature and the environment around her. In contrast, Uncle Sam, also known by Bread and Puppet Theatre as Uncle Fatso, was an embodiment of American greed and imperialism and was shown smoking a fat cigar and wearing a top hat adorned with skeletons.

In 1964, at the Spencer Memorial Church, Easter show, Schumann said:

“Puppet theatre is the theatre of all means. Puppets and masks should be played in the street. They are louder than the traffic. They don't teach problems, but they scream and dance and hit each other on the head and display life in its clearest terms.”<sup>30</sup>

Schumann believes puppets to be free from the seriousness and constraints of human authority and responsibility. In ‘A Fiddle Lecture’ 1993, he writes about the challenges and possibilities of puppet theatre:

“It is possible to poke fun at all kinds of targets with a puppet where the live performer might be less accepted. On the one level, we simply expect puppets to make us laugh, and often they do. On another, they offer social criticism and hopefully cause the audience to think about the questions they raise.”<sup>31</sup>

Bread and Puppet Theatre relies on volunteers, as it is a non-profit organisation. As their events became better known, more people became involved. Throughout the sixties and seventies, Bread and Puppet Theatre formed mile long parades involving giant puppets and hundreds of people in protest to the Vietnam War. Through Grace Paley, American author, poet and political activist, they became frequent participants of anti-Vietnam War events.

In 1966, the company performed a production they called *Fire*, in honour of the death of three Americans who had lost their lives in protest against the Vietnam War. The piece was a slow, prayerful composition of masked performers. *Fire* caught the attention of Christian Dupavillon, a French theatre scout who invited the company to perform at the *World Theatre Festival* two years later in Nancy, France. The French newspaper, *Le Monde*, called Bread and Puppet Theatre “a Sensation.”<sup>32</sup> The same year, the company made a big

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<sup>30</sup> [http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/features/bread\\_puppet/index.html](http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/features/bread_puppet/index.html)

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/papers/Schumann.html>

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/features/bread\\_puppet/index.html](http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/features/bread_puppet/index.html)



impression at the *Radical Theatre Festival* in San Francisco and over the following years, the company made plans to tour across Europe and America. With their rising fame, Bread and Puppet Theatre became emblematic of peaceful protest and political theatre.



**Figure 27: Full Body puppets, worn for an event at the Boston Centre for the Arts**

In 1970, Bread and Puppet Theatre moved to Plainfield, Vermont. Here they became a theatre in residence at Goddard College, where they would perform and give workshops in sculpture, mime, dance, story-telling, puppet building, and puppeteering. Goddard College was an experimental school that was becoming the centre of counterculture and alternative way of life, away from the mass consumer society of American capitalism. Using masks and puppets, Bread and Puppet Theatre and their newly acquainted residents, created abstract sketches in response to current politics. In 1974, Bread and Puppets residency at Goddard College ended and the company moved north to Glover.

Glover was much more remote and moving to the farm of his father-in-law, John Scott, Schumann acquired space to develop Bread and Puppet Theatre. Scott had recently sold tons of soil from his fields to a local construction company and the remains left a scar in the land. This inspired Schumann, who saw potential for a large outdoor amphitheatre, which led to the creation

of one of Bread and Puppet Theatres' greatest events, *Our Domestic Resurrection Circus*.



**Figure 28: Ariel view looking down onto an estimated thirty thousand spectators watching *Our Domestic Resurrection Circus*, in the amphitheatre at Glover, Vermont 1998**

The circus became an annual event and brought people together to share their ideas on the world. While in its early days the Circus attracted local residents from Glover and previous Bread and Puppet Theatre supporters from Plainfield and New York; word soon spread and the event attracted a diversity of people from around the world.

Puppeteers, storytellers and performers came to present both small and large scale productions and in the afternoon Bread and Puppet Theatre would perform their yearly circus, which followed a theme in reflection of the year's events. Acts touched on a lot of issues, some serious, some not, though they were often political in content and focused on overcoming tyranny and oppression. Past titles include: *How To Overthrow a Government*, *The Arrogance of War Mongers and the Despair of their Victims*, *Maximum Security Democracy*, *Who is a Terrorist* and one year they performed an adaptation of Berholt Brecht's *Three Penny Opera*.

In the evenings Bread and Puppet Theatre held a pageant that was often more serious in content and would show an encounter of good over evil. The pageant typically began with the presence of a giant puppet of Mother Earth and ended with the burning of an effigy, usually taking the form of a 'rotten idea' from a previous act.

Over the years *Our Domestic Resurrection Circus* became ever more popular, attracting an audience of well over 30,000. With the growing numbers, the event became unmanageable and audiences grew less and less interested in the concerns of the theatre. After 1998 Schumann drew an end to *Our Domestic Resurrection Circus* and scaled down what used to be a weekend event into a much smaller, intimate occasion that has become known as, *The World Insurrection Circus*.

Bread and Puppet Theatre are devoted to social, political and environmental issues and are still active today highlighting the injustice in the world through their illuminating puppetry. Recent events include works in response to

America's invasion on Iraq, Global warming and the violent conflict between Israel and Palestine.

Since the 1960s, Bread and Puppet Theatre have been an inspiration to the world. Not only have they brought attention to political issues through their work, but they have taken their theatre to the street and encouraged others to be part of the process. They have created a simple theatre that anyone can be apart of and across the world they have inspired many others to use puppetry to voice their concerns to humanity.

## Conclusion

A puppet is a neutral medium. Puppets are able to break boundaries between people, not only in terms of what they can do physically, but also emotionally. They form no opinions of their own and unless they have been made to represent a stereotype, such as 'bully', or 'someone of authority', a puppet is completely dependant of a social class, race or culture. Puppetry is a medium that allows for visual freedom. Unlike a human actor, who inherits their characteristics from their ancestors, puppets features can be thought out in the initial design process. Puppetry allows for a characters features to be exaggerated and for the imaginary to be brought to life.

An example of this is Spitting Image, where puppets were used to animate the caricatures of different celebrities and visually emphasise different aspects of their personality. This visual freedom allows for a puppet to be tailored to suit a specific audience, making it an authentic medium when used to the best of its ability.

Puppetry is a flexible medium. While puppets can be satirical, they can also be used to draw attention to sensitive issues without causing offence or sounding patronising. This makes them an excellent means of breaking down barriers and prejudice between people. Puppets are impartial. They can be used to bridge gaps in communication. Therapists will often use them to communicate with patients who are usually non-communicative.

Puppets allow for a puppeteer to communicate beyond themselves under the guise of numerous characters. While a puppeteer can take on new identities, their own identity becomes ambiguous which is useful when raising political concerns that may get an individual in trouble, or social concerns where a person may prefer to talk in third person.

As Friedman found with his workshops, getting people to communicate through puppetry helped individuals to open up and be more confident.

Puppets can be used as a shield for us to hide behind. From my experience of being a puppeteer, knowing that the audience weren't focused on me but that their attention was drawn to what I was manipulating, made performing in front of people a lot easier.

Puppets are inexpensive and easily portable, so are well suited to tour to different venues and the street, allowing a performance to be seen across the world. Puppetry is a visual medium. Puppets are symbolic and can illustrate a message simply and effectively using a universal language understood across many cultures. A puppet is visually striking and can be used effectively to capture the attention of the public. They have a life of their own, they don't take days off sick, they don't get old and when they get injured they can be fixed or reproduced. Mr Punch is a living example of the legacy of how long a character can survive. He has outlived many people who have puppeteered him and passed him down to the next generation.

Writing this dissertation has been a voyage of discovery. Since I first discovered puppetry I have been fascinated by its magic. The mysterious way a puppets inanimate form is brought to life and appears to move by itself is captivating. I grew up watching Sesame Street, whose colourful characters made learning fun and have seen numerous puppets in other contexts; but before setting out to write this dissertation, I didn't realise quite how extraordinary or diverse puppetry could be as a medium.

People like Gary Friedman and Peter Schumann have pushed the possibilities of puppetry to get across a political and social message. And in different ways, continue to prove just how powerful puppetry can be. Working with the public, they encourage others to discover the potentials of puppetry for themselves as a means to raise issues and highlight their concerns.

In my research for this dissertation, I have primarily looked at political puppetry, which is one aspect of such a diverse medium as puppets have been used in many in ways to aid society. In my research of puppetry in the UK, puppets today are more commonly seen to be used as moral role models,

then anything political. The majority of puppet companies I contacted were not politically active, but utilised the medium for other reasons. Like Sesame Street, they saw the benefits of teaching through puppetry.

In this country, Jacolly Puppet Theatre, in Cornwall, run puppet programs for schools that link with the English National Curriculum. Their shows include topics that deal with bullying, road safety, energy saving and recycling. Jacolly encourage audience involvement and half way through a performance will invite their spectators to help make decisions for the characters. Through playing out their suggestions, they illustrate the consequences of ones actions. Through performance, their puppets teach children life skills, social interaction and right from wrong.

The little Angel Theatre in London, run puppet workshops specifically aimed at children to help them develop social skills, expression and a chance to explore their imagination beyond the limitations of the human body. Indigo Moon Theatre, also in London, run similar workshops, but take them one step further by involving individuals in designing and making their own puppets. This encourages development of skills in decision making and problem solving.

Puppetry is a medium that holds no boundaries as a puppet can defy the laws of nature and is bound only by the limits of an individual's imagination. In the hands of a skilled animator, the possibilities of puppetry are endless.

Puppets educate, motivate and liberate. I hope my dissertation has demonstrated the power of puppetry as a tool to raise political concerns and influence society.

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## Appendix 1

### Puppets in Prison

#### Aims of the Programme: <sup>33</sup>

1. To work with prisoners, a high-risk population not reached by any other intervention, who deserve particular attention, before being released from prison to spread the disease, through sexual contact, to the general population.
2. Running peer-group educational workshops, using the medium of puppetry, for the prisoners to educate their communities about AIDS and STDs, its dangers and related topics, both inside and outside prison.
3. To discuss the issues surrounding the disease and dispel the myths and false beliefs that exist in different social surroundings.
4. To help prisoners understand their own risk and to take prevention strategies.
5. To empower prisoners to perform their own educational puppet programmes to their peers, which contain all the necessary information and effectively make use of this, to change behaviour patterns and lifestyles.
6. To use the same process and medium to address other important prisoner issues.
7. All the above steps in the implementation of the programme is being carried out in conjunction with the Department of National Health and the Department of Correctional Services.

#### Objectives:

- 1) To provide informed, entertaining and challenging supplementary HIV/AIDS education and knowledge to prison communities, by means of travelling puppetry-in-education workshops and performances in selected prisons in
- 

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/using/PuppetsinPrison.html>

South Africa, in association with the Department of National Health and the Department of Correctional Services.

2) To, by means of the content of the puppet show, identify and address - in a non-threatening, non-confrontational way - social attitudes, issues and mores that contribute to ignorance, oppression and the proliferation of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV.

3) To, by means of the content of the workshopped puppet shows and contact with the facilitators, provide the seeds of empowerment, to individuals and prison communities, to initiate the process' of self-growth and knowledge around the issues that AIDS affects.

### **Gary Friedman Productions.**

Why do we use puppets?<sup>34</sup>

Because the puppet is one step removed from the human, it provides a safe space for many types of conflicts to be resolved, within a therapeutic holding space.

Also: Skills intrinsic to story telling are developed: By sharing stories, the participants get to know each other on a different level, developing empathy, compassion and acceptance within the group. Listening skills are enhanced. New views and perspectives are provided to old issues. The opportunity is provided to express feelings and deal with anxiety provoking situations or events in a fun safe way and realising they are not alone in these feelings. Skills intrinsic to group Improvisation: Quick decision making skills, spontaneity, trusting intuition, confidence and being in the moment are all enhanced.

Puppetry has a unique ability to bridge gaps of misunderstanding and to bring people together to examine community social issues. Our productions combine both music and humour - two proven ingredients in crossing cultural and language barriers and reaching people internationally.

The puppet is a visual metaphor, representing the 'real life', but at the same time, it is one step removed from the real world. It can inform and educate at the same time. Puppets, and other inanimate objects, become alive and interactive, and combining them with humour and music, generating both an entertaining and educative experience for the target audience.

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<sup>34</sup> <http://www.africanpuppet.com/workshop.html>

Puppetry holds up a mirror to society and gives people a chance to look objectively at themselves and especially enables people to laugh at themselves. It is less threatening than the human performer.

Puppetry breaks down barriers - It can be used to challenge social and political barriers as well as stereotypes, because it represents the 'neutral' aspect of the human, exaggerating its 'larger than life' issues. The reason for this is the puppet does not necessarily have to belong to any particular culture or language group or social class, as these can be researched and adapted to the target audience.

Puppets can say more than the 'live' actor - They can get away with being highly controversial and thus often 'say more' than the live actor could get away with. This is especially so when tackling taboo issues like sex, dying and racism. The puppet can be less embarrassing to the audience. The puppet forms a 'buffer' between the performer and his audience. It can deliver the strongest possible message, in a light-hearted manner without offending or frightening the audience.

### **The Aims of Community workshops:<sup>35</sup>**

To work in communities promoting health and development issues and an understanding of these messages within our culturally rich society.

To discuss the issues surrounding HIV/AIDS, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, and other sensitive and difficult diseases and issues, dispel the myths and false beliefs that exist about them.

To empower communities to perform their own educational theatre programmes to their peers, which contain all the necessary information and effectively and make use of this, to change patterns of both thought and behaviour.

All the above steps in the implementation of the programme will be done in conjunction with both government and local community-based organisations.

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.africanpuppet.com/educmenu7.html>



**Peoples responses to workshops:**<sup>36</sup>

"I have attended three of Gary Friedman's workshops this year with the intention of deepening my skills both as a Drama and Play Therapist. Both the 'World of Paper' and Object Manipulation Workshops exceeded all expectations I had. The experience of the workshop refreshed my own creativity, developing my spontaneity further enhancing the gift of a magical introduction into the world of objects and their value in terms of holding symbolic and metaphoric meaning for the unconscious. I would recommend these workshops to any therapists, performers or individuals who are prepared to engage with themselves in a wonderfully different and creative way".

Lesley Bester, therapist in South Africa  
BADA Hons (RSA), MA Dramatherapy (London), PGDip Play Therapy  
(London) November 2006

"It provided the students an opportunity to tell their stories and share parts of themselves that they never get the opportunity to. All sorts of stereotypes were cracked wide open. The boys let down their guard and discussed very sensitive issues. They did not feel the need to maintain a macho image or play the hero."

Sile Ni Bhroin  
Head of Drama, Prague International School, Czech Republic, 2007

"( the workshops are)...extremely valuable not only in their ability to stimulate us creatively, but bring us to a different level of understanding about ourselves and about how we interact with each other... I think we all need a chance to relax and to release things, and to explore possibilities with people... Puppets are able to do and say things that people often cannot....she (a student) was able to open her self up and discover things about herself and about how to build positive relationships in a very short space of time... It opened up tremendous new ways of solving potentially problematic scenes and issues in school. The workshop brought puppets out of the cupboard and into the spotlight. It unleashed the power of puppetry as something much more creatively challenging to students and teachers. I found the workshop personally very liberating"

Mhairi Macinnes  
Head of Drama, Vienna International School, Austria, 2007

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.africanpuppet.com/workshop05.html>

"It was just astonishing... It was good to feel that we were in a real safe environment that we could trust each other and explore and create.. magical.. absolutely well worth the day!"

Artist and performer, Vancouver, 2007

"Through just playing with something as simple as a piece of paper, and allowing the piece of paper to tell them how it moves, how it might sound, how it might interact with another piece of paper, another character, another body in the space, they can see that anyone, at any time is capable of making new stories."

Jessica Bowles Central School of Speech and Drama, London, 2007

## Appendix 2

Examples of replies to a survey I sent to several puppet companies:

### Example 1:

From: Blind Summit

1. Why have you chosen to work with puppets?  
WE LIKED THE WAY DESIGN AND PERFORMANCE MEET IN THE PUPPET.
2. What is it Blind Summit Theatre values in puppetry over other mediums?  
THE IMMEDIACY OF CONNECTION WITH THE AUDIENCE. THE UNDENIABLE THEATRICALITY AND THE FACT THAT THE TECHNIQUE IS CLEARLY VISIBLE.
3. What do you think makes puppetry more effective than other mediums?  
IT ISN'T ALWAYS MORE EFFECTIVE!  
I THINK THEY ARE ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INNANIMATE. THEY EXPOSE ISSUES OF POWER AND CONTROL. THEY VERY EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE FRAGILITY OF PEOPLE, AND BRING OUT COMPASSION IN THE AUDIENCE. THEY ARE VERY IMMOTIVE.
4. How does Blind Summit Theatre decide what shows to perform?  
MANY DIFFERENT WAYS. USUALLY THE PROJECTS WE CHOOSE HAVE A SPECIFIC CREATIVE CHALLENGE WHICH INTERESTS US: WORKING WITH A PARTICULAR PUPPET, OR WITH A TEXT, OR PERSON: MUSICIAN, DIRECTOR, PRODUCER, THEATRE COMPANY. WE NEED SOMETHING TO FEEL ATTACHED TO.
5. What does Blind Summit Theatre hope to promote through their work?  
THE VALUE OF PEOPLE.
6. What audience, age group(s) does Blind Summit Theatre aim performances to?  
ALL AGE GROUPS.
7. How does Blind Summit Theatre hope to leave their audience feeling?  
ENTERTAINED, PROVOKED, EXHILARATED.
8. Do you find you are able to achieve this through puppetry?  
SOMETIMES
9. What do you think makes a successful performance?  
EXCELLENT PERFORMANCES, GOOD JOKES, SOMETHING TO SAY.

10. What do you think makes a successful puppet?  
CHARACTER.

11. How do you find people react to your puppets?  
THEY WANT TO HOLD THEM.

12. Is there a message Blind Summit Theatre hopes to promote through their work?  
WE ARE EASILY DISTRACTED FROM WHAT'S IMPORTANT - PEOPLE, ANIMALS, THE NATURAL WORLD - BY WHAT ISN'T IMPORTANT - "STUFF".

13. How does Blind Summit Theatre hope to leave the onlooker feeling after seeing a performance?  
SEE 7

14. Do you feel you are successful in achieving this?  
THEY HAVE TO JUDGE THAT

15. Has Blind Summit Theatre ever been involved in any political productions, if yes when was this and what was it in aid of?  
DON'T THINK SO

16. Generally speaking do you find puppets, friendly, scary, or somewhere in between; why do you think this is?  
SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN. THEY LIVE BETWEEN US - IN THE SPACE BETWEEN PEOPLE, IN A LUMINAL WORLD BETWEEN THE LIVING AND THE NON-LIVING. THEY ARE HALF ACTOR, HALF SCENERY.

**Example 2:**

- > From: The Wright Stuff
- >
- >
- > 1. Why have you chosen to work with puppets?
- >
- > Got into it in 1994, totally unexpected, then totally gripped!
- >
- >
- > 2. What is it The Wright Stuff values in puppetry over other mediums?
- >
- > The ability to create characters to challenge stereotypes
- >
- >
- > 3. What do you think makes puppetry more effective than other mediums?
- >
- > Third person character studies, comedy, ability to challenge perceptions of
- > puppetry itself amongst non traditional audiences
- >
- >
- > 4. I read on your website that The Wright Stuff uses puppetry to educate,
- > how do The Wright Stuff decide what shows to perform?
- >
- > Depending on the current PHSCE Curriculum.
- > Commissions.
- > 5. What do The Wright Stuff hope to promote through their work?
- >
- > Long term Survival! Respect, understanding and equality.
- >
- >
- > 6. What audience, age group(s) do The Wright Stuff aim performances to?
- >
- > 14+
- >
- > 7. How do The Wright Stuff hope to leave their audience feeling?
- >
- > Amused and educated
- >
- > 8. Do you find you are able to achieve this through puppetry?
- >
- > Yes
- >
- > 9. What do you think makes a successful performance?
- >
- > Good writing, making and good manipulation of puppets.
- >
- >
- > 10. What do you think makes a successful puppet?
- >

- > Design and character
- >
- >
- > 11. How do you find people react to your puppets?
- >
- > Very well
- >
- >
- > 12. How do The Wright Stuff hope to leave their onlooker feeling after  
> seeing a performance?
- >
- > Inspired.
- >
- >
- > 13. Do you feel you are successful in achieving this?
- >
- > Very much so.
- >
- >
- > 14. Have The Wright Stuff ever been involved in any political productions,  
> if yes when was this and what was it in aid of?
- >
- > Politics have a part in all our social projects, one has to balance  
> political commentary with insight.
- >
- >
- > 15. Generally speaking do you find puppets, friendly, scary, or somewhere  
in  
> between; why do you think this is?
- >
- > I find puppets can be inspiring and can make positive relationships with  
> difficult audiences.

**Example 3:**

- >
- > From: Green Ginger
- >
- > > 1. Why have you chosen to work with puppets?
- > Primarily because the opportunity arose early in my theatre career. twenty
- > years on I still do because of their versatility in solving all manner of
- > dramatic challenges...
- > >
- >
- > > 2. What is it Green Ginger values in puppetry over other mediums?
- > Their ability to transcend all physical laws; gravity, time & space
- > etc...actors struggle to portray flight, weightlessness, dreamstates, size
- > and shape-shifting. all of these abilities make puppetry an ideal choice for
- > special effects in any theatre show...
- > >
- > > 3. What do you think makes puppetry more effective then other mediums?
- > We believe that puppetry should be a well-used tool alongside everything
- > else in the tool-box, not necessarily as a stand-alone solution.
- > >
- > > 4. How does Green Ginger decide what shows to perform?
- > We start with an itch or a suspicion and begin to scratch it to see what
- > lurks beneath. In the past we've started with well-known classic texts
- > (Frankenstein, Sweeney Todd, Bambi...) and had our wicked way with them.
- Our
- > latest production RUST was company created as an ensemble piece which
- the
- > core team shared writing, designing and performing duties.
- > >
- > > 5. What does Green Ginger hope to promote through their work?
- > A sense of nonsense.
- > Also to play our part in generating future audiences by trying to engage
- > with young adults/ teenagers with exciting, original material.
- > > 6. What audience, age group(s) does Green Ginger aim performances to?
- > from 12 years up and adults
- > >
- > > 7. How does Green Ginger hope to leave their audience feeling?
- > Engaged, satisfied and entertained.
- > >
- > > 8. Do you find you are able to achieve this through puppetry?
- > Yes
- > >
- > > 9. What do you think makes a successful performance?
- > Clear, exciting storytelling of a good story. And an audience that is open
- > to being transported and is willing to engage their own imaginations with
- > those of the theatremakers. And they should ideally be facing the right way
- > with clean fingernails.
- > >
- > > 10. What do you think makes a successful puppet?
- > A strong character that an audience can identify with. Obviously from a

- > performer's POV, one that is easy to manipulate, not uncomfortable, too
- > heavy or too cumbersome. But a puppet can be anything from a simple
- > household object to a complex animatronic creation...
- > >
- > > 11. How do you find people react to your puppets?
- >
- > Mostly positively; it's great when they say that they'd forgot they were
- > watching puppets; for us that means we've done our job properly...
- >
- > > 12. Is there a message Green Ginger hopes to promote through their work?
- > No, our personal politics may be deeply woven into our work but we are not
- > banner-waving or didactic.
- > >
- > > 13. How does Green Ginger hope to leave the onlooker feeling after
- > > seeing a performance?
- > Isn't that the same as Q7?
- > >
- > > 14. Do you feel you are successful in achieving this?
- > Mostly, yes
- > >
- > > 15. Has Green Ginger ever been involved in any political productions, if
- > > yes when was this and what was it in aid of?
- > Nothing directly political beyond fundraising cabarets for Amnesty
- > International or Greenpeace
- > >
- > > 16. Generally speaking do you find puppets, friendly, scary, or
- > > somewhere in between; why do you think this is?
- > I can understand why they may be all of the above to some people. It depends
- > on their earliest interaction with dolls, teddy bears, puppets and clowns.
- > These moments can colour your enjoyment/ability to engage with all of those
- > later in life. Our manipulation workshops begin with assuming EVERYONE in
- > the room is an expert because we've all breathed life into our childhood
- > toys as small children.



#### Example 4:

From: Wise Fool

Why have you chosen to work with puppets?

Magical - other worldly and they catch people's eye - they walk right by a picket sign but stop to ask about a beautiful giant puppet - guess that's how i got into it and then it was addicting...

What is it Wise Fool values in puppetry over other mediums?

Wise Fool works in lots of mediums - but puppets and circus are our two favorite i think - they both appeal to people's sense of wonder - to the child still alive inside - they allow you to broach subjects ordinarily avoided - they are just that little bit removed from reality that people are willing ot go a little deeper - take a little risk...

circus reminds us that we can do the impossible and puppets come in through the back door...

Do you think puppetry is more effective then other mediums, why do you think this?

I think any medium can be effective if it's used in the right context - right time etc - i think when i was starting out with puppets it was a critical time for them to be in the streets - drawing attention and support - it had been done before but not for a long time and people were ready to have their actions and voices metaphorically represented larger than life - i think music is an incredible medium to reach people and there are so many things you can say in one song - and spoken word is super powerful too - what's most important is being willing to flow with what people are responding to - to find the way in that sparks somewhere in their hearts/souls so they are open to hearing and dialogueing about their vision of the world

How does Wise Fool decide what shows to perform?

Wise Fool is comprised of a myriad of artists - shows have been decided in so many ways through the years - but i would say overall the artists who are the most involved in making things happen at the time decide what is most important to them to talk about - sometimes by the time a show is made people are off on the next thing but still it was cultivated in passion. Right now we have a structure with Artistic Directors - this is sort of new for us - so currently the AD's decide what we will create work about - but still they make their decisions based mostly on what the artists are saying they feel inspired about - we try to keep the field open for lots of input...

What audience, age group(s) does Wise Fool aim performances to?

We have shows for all ages and very diverse audiences - for example:

we are just about to embark on a family performance series that has shows for kids from preschool to teens and of course there's always something in it for the adults too - we try to always be infusing our work with our ethic and visions for the world and the change we see as important - anti-oppression, accessibility, questioning global capitalism, greed, looking at resources like water , etc....

We also have shows that are totally adult - like Baggage which is about surviving domestic violence - it took three years to make and started with open forums for new mexican women to come forward and tell their stories - it was a powerful and often painful journey to create it but it is a life changing show and we toured it throughout the state of NM this past fall - this included shows in juvenile detention centers and many very rural communities - we collaborated in each community with their local DV agency to provide outreach and educational support.

Do you find you are able to achieve this through puppetry?

not sure what you're asking here - but yes- i think we acheive alot using puppetry ... and that we can access many different types and ages of audiences - although we do fall prey sometimes to the common myth that puppetry is for kids - so we have to be very clear when we are making an adult show

What do you think makes a successful performance?

a performance that touches people in their hearts and souls - it can stir greif, anger, joy, action - you name it - if it touches people enough to make them think about something in the world differently or makes them feel like their voice matters or inspires them to reach out or face fears or feel empowered to do something, somehow - then i think it is successful. i guess i consider it important to create theatre that inspires - things that are not just entertaining but have something underlying them - it can be very subtle or very in your face - but if you are transported and arrive to find yourself back in your seat but somehow it's not quite the same place - that is good...

What do you think makes a successful puppet?

It can be the simplest little flat piece of cardboard or piece of trash that barely moves - but if it somehow becomes alive - convinces you it exists and draws you into it's world then it is successful

How do you find people react to your puppets?

So many ways - some kids go screaming to their parents - some people stare in awe - some folks just want to know how it is made - every puppet and every person have their own unique relationship - this is one of the beauties of making puppets - they have a life of their own with relationships to the outer world of their own too

Is there a message Wise Fool hopes to promote through their work?

That everyone's voice matters - that connecting with each other and sharing experiences leads to understanding and respect and these can strengthen our communities and strong communities take care of each other and their home and in the long run make a better world

How does Wise Fool hope to leave the onlooker feeling after seeing a performance?

hmmmm.. each performance is different in that way i suppose - sometimes we want to leave people with a sense of joy and wonder and hope - other times with a sense of urgency or inspired to take action - sometimes with a feeling that nothing is impossible - the list goes on...

Do you feel you are successful in achieving this?

sometimes we get responses that say things like - "this show has changed my life" ..and sometimes we hear that it didn't work for the person at all... i guess if we touch one person that is an important thing in this world - so yes - we have had many successes...

Has Wise Fool ever been involved in any political productions, if yes when was this and what was it in aid of?

Yes - we were involved in many political productions in the past and continue to be - from rallies for take Back the Night to anti war rallies to direct action campaigns at the Test Site and other nuclear facilities - and also i would include creating work for substance abuse prevention trainings in native communities and performing free street theatre about living with Aids... most of what we do is political in nature - we also were very involved in the creation of Art and Revolution which trained folks around the country to create art actions in their communities.

Generally speaking do you find puppets, friendly, scary, or somewhere in between; why do you think this is?

both and neither and in between too - partly it depends on the puppet - partly it depends on the person interacting or watching it and partly it depends on the context.

**Example 5:**

From: Bread and Puppet Theatre

1. Why have you chosen to work with puppets?

The possibilities are infinite.

2. What is it bread and Puppet values in puppetry over other mediums?

The possibilities are infinite. Puppets are clear representations of whatever it is you'd like to represent.

3. What do you think makes puppetry more effective than other mediums?

Puppets make it easier to work in archetypes.

Puppets make it easier to avoid psychological drama.

(In terms of mediums I'm only thinking of theatrical possibilities - not really different media like music, painting, etc.)

4. How does bread and Puppet decide what shows to perform?

We invent the shows when our director sees a need to work on a particular - or vague - subject or theme.

5. What does bread and Puppet hope to promote through their work?

Thought and reflection.

6. What audience, age group(s) does bread and Puppet aim performance to?

All ages, though not everyone of our shows is for all ages.

7. How does bread and Puppet hope to leave their audience feeling?

Thoughtful.

8. Do you find you are able to achieve this through puppetry?

Yes.

9. What do you think makes a successful performance?

Timely theme, focused performance, good puppets, good music, etc. and a perfect design of all the elements.

10. What do you think makes a successful puppet?

Ambiguity. clarity, universality.

11. How do you find people react to your puppets?

Pretty good.

12. Is there a message bread and Puppet hopes to promote through their work?

We want people to think about the ideas, themes, situations, conditions, etc. we are presenting.

13. How does bread and Puppet hope to leave the onlooker feeling after seeing a performance?

Thoughtful.

14. Do you feel you are successful in achieving this?

Often enough to continue working.

15. Has bread and Puppet ever been involved in any political productions, if yes when was this and what was it in aid of?

Almost all of our work is political - war, high rents, the IMF, globalization. the assassination of Archbishop Romero, Palestine, consumerism, etc., etc., etc., Look at a history of our productions.

16. Generally speaking do you find puppets, friendly, scary, or somewhere in between; why do you think this is?

You can't define puppets in one word; it depends on their context. A figure can be scary in one context and very sweet in another.

**Example 6:**

From: Puppet Theatre Wales

Why have you chosen to work with puppets?

My first experience of a puppet was at the age of 3 - and 40 years on I have never forgotten it-a play group leader had drawn the face and body of an owl on a paper bag and he began to talk to the owl – who only ever whispered back into his ear – and we were also given the opportunity to talk to the owl. I remember being utterly engrossed and convinced that the owl was real even though I was aware that it had been created out of a paper bag. My imagination had been allowed to excel and flourish and I cherish that memory as a wonderful event in my earlier life. Years later my first opportunity to work as a trainee puppeteer with a touring company in primary schools also provided me with a positive, enjoyable and enlightening experience. I trained to become a teacher, but I had also trained as an actress, so puppetry – in – education gave me the perfect opportunity to both teach and perform, using a medium in which I felt comfortable and skilled.

What is it your company values in puppetry over other mediums?

Puppetry can be a powerful medium through which to captivate and educate. Puppets fascinate and delight young children (and adults too of course – the teachers also become engrossed in the productions)There is an immediate connection between children and puppets, and this connection can be utilised and taken full advantage of when teaching and attempting to convey new information, messages and ideas. Puppetry can be integrated with live action and music to create unique, exciting and emotionally engaging productions.

What do you think makes puppetry more effective than other mediums.

As above really. We value puppetry because it is so effective and it is our chosen medium and greatest skill. We also value high quality theatre – in – education, and I am involved with directing and assisting other touring companies who do not always use puppets.

How does your company decide what shows to perform?

All the productions are curriculum based and are devised and developed upon Early Years, Key Stage 1/2 themes. Our productions take children and their teachers on an imaginative and interactive journey, through various landscapes and cultures, where colourful and entertaining characters are discovered, and where adventure awaits....and problems may need solving!

What does your company hope to promote through their work?

We aim to promote high quality and accessible theatre – in – education, using the powerful medium of puppetry that provides a rich and unique experience which is both entertaining and educational. We are promoting the usefulness and delight of puppets as tools through which communication, language, concentration, personal and social skills may be developed, and through which emotional expression may be released and confidence building may be achieved. We also hope to stimulate and motivate children and teachers, to re-discover the value and effectiveness of puppet making, creating, playing and performance. We also promote the Welsh language through productions in Welsh.

What audience, age groups(s) does your company aim performances to?

We specialise in Early Years and Primary School age. Most productions are aimed at either 3-5 or 5-8 yrs, but we also perform to 7-11 yrs through the medium of Welsh.

This is mainly due to my training as a primary school teacher and enjoyment of working with younger children. There is also very little available through the medium of Welsh to the Infant age group and so we aim to help fill this gap.

How does your company hope to leave their audience feeling?

Stimulated and motivated to continue their work on the theme of the production, having learned many new things about it...Excited and happy, having enjoyed what, for many, may be their first experience of live theatre..... Emotionally moved by the characters' plights and problems, and satisfied by the solutions and assistance the children have had the opportunity to offer, and delighted by the happy conclusions! We hope that children are left with a positive and caring attitude towards others and the world around them.

Do you find you are able to achieve this through puppetry?

Yes – the puppets are powerful characters, with whom the children become emotionally involved. Children become wholly immersed in the unfolding events and respond with enthusiasm where interaction is expected. Teachers have commented about how effective puppets can be to help release and express emotions that are often locked away, or simply never called upon. Blank, expressionless, bored faces are often transformed during intense concentration, and in moments of sadness, joy, intrigue or surprise.

What do you think makes a successful performance?



As a professional company we believe a successful performance needs well made puppets, simple but flexible sets and a good sound system (professionally produced recordings), for effective visual and audio experience,.....skilled and committed puppeteers/actors/musicians who communicate well with children and teachers,.....excellent well – balanced script, ( with comedy and serious moments of concern) .... strong characters and age appropriate storyline that is based on themes recognised by the children,.....enough opportunity for audience participation,.....a smooth and well timed delivery.....appropriate length.....evocative music and sound effects..... Etc

What do you think makes a successful puppet?

One that is operated by a skilled and sensitive puppeteer. Strong characters that communicate effectively on the child's level for T.I.E. work.

How do you find people react to your puppets?

School audiences react very positively and enthusiastically to the puppets for above reasons. Teachers always give excellent feedback – relating to appropriateness of production for children's age groups and children's high concentration levels and responses.

Is there a message your company hopes to promote through their work.

Answer contained in 5.

How does your company hope to leave the onlooker feeling after seeing a performance?

See 7.

Do you feel you are successful in achieving this?

See 8.

Has your company ever been involved in any political productions?

Our productions are all curriculum based for children of primary school age. Personal and social development issues are very important and always have a place in our presentations...these include environmental issues, green issues and acceptable behaviour towards others and positive attitude to the world around us.

Generally speaking do you find puppets friendly, scary, or somewhere in between: why do you think this is?

It depends on the puppet and the manipulator. Obviously we use child friendly puppets! Puppet characters that bear some sort of threat or treat others inappropriately are handled sensitively and often with humour to alleviate any fears.

If a child has a positive experience of puppetry at an early age then there is unlikely to be subsequent fear.

## **Appendix 3**

The following pages show examples of replies to a Questionnaire I sent to members of the public:

**Example 1:**

Firstly thank you for taking the time to read this. I am a theatre design student at the Royal Welsh college of Music and Drama and am currently researching puppetry and its influence in society as a political aid.

Please tick relevant boxes where they apply and elaborate answers where you can..

**Section A:**

Are you familiar with puppets? Yes  No  ..if yes, where have you come across them, could you write the title of what you saw, where you saw it, and when you saw it? If no skip to section B.

① "Punch & Judy", ~~the~~ seen somewhere on the Seaside as a child.

② "Malcolm", a ventriloquist's dummy, a performance by a member of ~~my~~ my carving club at a pub in Wales for our club christmas dinner.

Was there a significant theme or message to the performance(s) that you were aware of? Please tick boxes in relation to all performances Yes  No

..If yes were the performances, moral  Political  or purely to Entertain  ..why do you think this was? (Please write the title of the performance followed by your answer.)

"Malcolm" was mainly "in jokes" and carving-related material to entertain the club after dinner.

In a sentence could you describe the general theme of the performance.. (Please write the title of the performance followed by your answer.)

"Malcolm": Adult humour and in jokes; audience interaction & involvement.

Was the performance part of an event? Yes  No  If yes, what was the event?

Caving club Christmas meal.

Overall do you find puppetry effect as a medium? Yes  No  Could you describe why?

Expression of emotion seems to me ~~more~~ easier from a distance when watching puppets. They ~~may~~ may have less facial expression but I think your mind fills this in whereas you try and look for expression on actors' faces.

Generally speaking do you find puppets friendly  scary  other  why is this? How would you describe a puppet?

I think I find puppets friendly as I know they won't form any opinions of me.

I would describe a puppet as and physical object manipulated by a ~~human~~ ~~or humans~~ person or persons to represent ~~a~~ an animate object.

## Section B:

Please tick the following images if you are familiar with them

Could you describe the reasoning behind the following images? Promote awareness of  
 ① Country code ② Countryside and Rights of Way Act (Access Land) ③ Disability





Are you aware of Creature Discomforts? Yes  No

Creature Discomforts is part of a campaign to raise awareness of the country code and disability. What is your opinion of the use of animation/puppetry as a tool to raise awareness of certain issues? How do you think people react to this?

I think animation/puppetry can appeal to a wide audience from the very young to the very old. The inclusion of physical humour and "stunts" that could not be done by actors adds greatly to the impact of the messages. Also, being able to see things from the point of view of, e.g., animals makes the message more personal and ~~possibly~~ more likely to be heeded.

What is your age and gender?

Male  Female  Age

What is your profession? IT Systems Administrator

Thank you for taking the time to fill out my survey, any further information you have about puppets, in particular puppets involved in politics would be invaluable to me and I would be grateful if you can email me at [Emily@soord.org.uk](mailto:Emily@soord.org.uk)

**Example 2:**

Firstly thank you for taking the time to read this. I am a theatre design student at the Royal Welsh college of Music and Drama and am currently researching puppetry and its influence in society as a political aid.

**Please tick relevant boxes where they apply and elaborate answers where you can..**

**Section A:**

Are you familiar with puppets? Yes  No  ..if yes, where have you come across them, could you write the title of what you saw, where you saw it, and when you saw it? If no skip to section B.

College Puppetry, The Ballroom + some TV

Was there a significant theme or message to the performance(s) that you were aware of? Please tick boxes in relation to all performances Yes  No

..If yes were the performances, moral  Political  or purely to Entertain  ..why do you think this was? (Please write the title of the performance followed by your answer.)

In a sentence could you describe the general theme of the performance.. (Please write the title of the performance followed by your answer.)

Was the performance part of an event Yes  No  If yes, what was the event?

Colony Puppetry

Overall do you find puppetry effective as a medium? Yes  No  Could you describe why?

More interesting than real people, like apes. Interesting to watch & fun to play with! Also ~~watch~~ puppets are gd to take the human out of the performance - you can blame the puppet for mistakes (e insults!)

Generally speaking do you find puppets friendly  scary  other  why is this? How would you describe a puppet?

It depends on the play but I find that whatever the puppet looks like, it can be friendly/scary/medium depending on its role in the story. I could fall in love with a plank of wood if the story is gd enough! Puppet = anything the puppeteer brings to life

### Section B:

Please tick the following images if you are familiar with them

Could you describe the reasoning behind the following images?

Don't walk off cliffs (country code etc.)





Are you aware of Creature Discomforts? Yes  No

Creature Discomforts is part of a campaign to raise awareness of the country code and disability. What is your opinion of the use of animation/puppetry as a tool to raise awareness of certain issues? How do you think people react to this?

Can present serious issues in an easy and approachable way, without coming across as nagging the listener. In this case the use of animals makes the advert more endearing to the audience and light comedy also helps to maintain interest in the advert to stop people getting tired of it.

What is your age and gender?

Male  Female  Age

What is your profession? Park Ranger

Thank you for taking the time to fill out my survey, any further information you have about puppets, in particular puppets involved in politics would be invaluable to me and I would be grateful if you can email me at [Emily@soord.org.uk](mailto:Emily@soord.org.uk)

**Example 3:**

Firstly thank you for taking the time to read this. I am a theatre design student at the Royal Welsh college of Music and Drama and am currently researching puppetry and its influence in society as a political aid.

Please tick relevant boxes where they apply and elaborate answers where you can..

**Section A:**

Are you familiar with puppets? Yes  No  ..if yes, where have you come across them, could you write the title of what you saw, where you saw it, and when you saw it? If no skip to section B.

An Edinburgh student production "Hawzka" NSDF student production 2007 - researched Burmese puppetry. hand manipulated puppets by the students.  
The Ordinaires - another NSDF student production.

Was there a significant theme or message to the performance(s) that you were aware of? Please tick boxes in relation to all performances Yes  No

..If yes were the performances, moral  Political  or purely to Entertain  ..why do you think this was? (Please write the title of the performance followed by your answer.)

student drama productions.

In a sentence could you describe the general theme of the performance.. (Please write the title of the performance followed by your answer.)

Visual entertainment, visual feast for the eyes backed up by a strong story line. - "Hawzka"

Was the performance part of an event Yes  No  If yes, what was the event?

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Overall do you find puppetry effect as a medium? Yes  No  Could you describe why?

*They can be used to say difficult things and get people to listen to them perhaps more effectively than a human - c.g. in the "Creature Comforts" advert the animals look cute and attractive - a contrast to their stark messages.*

Generally speaking do you find puppets friendly  scary  other  why is this? How would you describe a puppet?

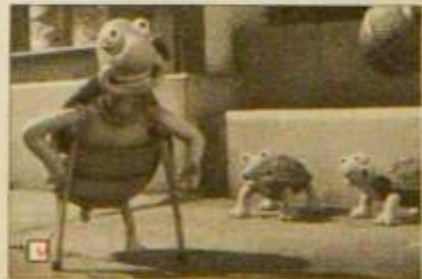
*A puppet is mouldable depending on the effect you are trying to convey. I don't think they fit into the stereotype categories of friendly / scary that easily. They are intriguing because of their potential as a blank canvas to project lots of different emotions / effects on people - best thing about puppetry is the human interaction element where the relationship between actor and puppet is evident for the watching audience.*

**Section B:**

Please tick the following images if you are familiar with them

Could you describe the reasoning behind the following images?

*creature comforts awareness of disability t.v advert*





Are you aware of Creature Discomforts? Yes  No

Creature Discomforts is part of a campaign to raise awareness of the country code and disability. What is your opinion of the use of animation/puppetry as a tool to raise awareness of certain issues? How do you think people react to this?

Popularity of "Creature Comforts" I think instantly raised the profile of "Creature Discomforts". It is a really good fun informative way of focusing on awareness of disability. It is a shame that other organisations are overlooked however - lyrics would only be only has prominence because of the prior popularity of Creature Comforts - but at least it has a high profile and will hopefully carry on in the future because of this.

What is your age and gender?

Male  Female  Age

What is your profession? Student

Thank you for taking the time to fill out my survey, any further information you have about puppets, in particular puppets involved in politics would be invaluable to me and I would be grateful if you can email me at [Emily@soord.org.uk](mailto:Emily@soord.org.uk)

**Example 4:**

Firstly thank you for taking the time to read this. I am a theatre design student at the Royal Welsh college of Music and Drama and am currently researching puppetry and its influence in society as a political aid.

Please tick relevant boxes where they apply and elaborate answers where you can..

**Section A:**

Are you familiar with puppets? Yes  No  ..if yes, where have you come across them, could you write the title of what you saw, where you saw it, and when you saw it? If no skip to section B.

The Devoted Friend; Sherman Theatre Cardiff; 29<sup>th</sup> Dec 2007.  
Puppet Show; Cardiff Castle, Summer 2007  
Alice; Cardiff; 2006

hits on TV: Thunderbirds, UFO, Stingray, Fiddler x15,  
Wooden Taps, Spitting Image, The Muppets  
Magic Roundabout, Sesame Street.  
Wombles & Wimbledon, Wallace and Gromit.

Was there a significant theme or message to the performance(s) that you were aware of? Please tick boxes in relation to all performances Yes  No

..If yes were the performances, moral  Political  or purely to Entertain  ..why do you think this was? (Please write the title of the performance followed by your answer.)

- ① Moral - The Devoted Friend  
② Political - Spitting Image  
Education! - ③ Sesame Street. ④ Wombles Wombles.

In a sentence could you describe the general theme of the performance.. (Please write the title of the performance followed by your answer.)

- ① What makes a true, real friend and what doesn't  
② Satire behind politics.  
③ Teaching reading, counting etc.  
④ Keeping the country clean - should be brought back as being 'Green' is a political hot topic now.



Was the performance part of an event Yes  No  If yes, what was the event?

At Cardiff Castle - showing what entertainment was like in the past. Putting on news in the form of a story.

Overall do you find puppetry effect as a medium? Yes  No  Could you describe why?

Bringing to life objects/character that would not otherwise be made to be visible. For example, Dragons.

Generally speaking do you find puppets friendly  scary  other  why is this? How would you describe a puppet?

Puppets and generally, in my opinion friendly. Mainly because these are made of soft cuddly materials and carry childhood memories.

**Section B:**

Please tick the following images if you are familiar with them

Could you describe the reasoning behind the following images?

① has campaign - maybe



Are you aware of Creature Discomforts? Yes  No

Creature Discomforts is part of a campaign to raise awareness of the country code and disability. What is your opinion of the use of animation/puppetry as a tool to raise awareness of certain issues? How do you think people react to this?

It can help by breaking down barriers. The way that people view the country side and people with disabilities can be hostile. Having a puppet to taking the place of someone with a disability can get the message across yet keep by making it accessible - No barriers fears or threats from a puppet.

What is your age and gender?

Male  Female  Age

What is your profession? Software Engineer

Thank you for taking the time to fill out my survey, any further information you have about puppets, in particular puppets involved in politics would be invaluable to me and I would be grateful if you can email me at [Emily@soord.org.uk](mailto:Emily@soord.org.uk)