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INTRODUCTION TO SIMPLE PUPPETRY TECHNIQUES: Participatory Puppet Projects for Classroom and Community Activities.

1) arepp:Theatre for Life

The arepp:Theatre for Life Trust is a creative educational theatre organisation which has been operating nationally in South Africa since 1987. Using live dramatic theatre (drama and puppetry) performances arepp:Theatre for Life produces repertory tours which travel nation-wide, providing interactive, social life-skills education to school-going youth.

The performances address the issues inherent in sexuality and the development of self image and self esteem. Each show is carefully crafted to highlight and encourage thought and debate around the issues of relationships, pregnancy, gender, discrimination, sex, HIV/AIDS and STIs and all forms of abuse. The specific goal is that, through the encouragement of a positive self-image, the enforcement of self-esteem, and the provision of complementary information and life-skills, learners will make sound, informed lifestyle choices about what is best for them, and their society, in their particular situations.

2) WHAT IS PUPPETRY?

Puppetry is one of the oldest performing arts. Throughout the world the puppet show has been, and is, used as a form of popular entertainment. In some countries it has an ancient heritage; in others it takes the form of contemporary theatrical experimentation. For centuries puppetry has been used to relate myth and legend, portray traditional farces, or for religious enactments. In the twentieth century puppetry gained popularity and saw a revival as a form of entertainment for both adults and children with performances in theatres, television shows, state subsidised puppet companies and international festivals around the world.

Puppetry is a form of entertainment which has always appealed to audiences across the spectrum of age, education, status, gender and culture. To this day, folk puppet theatres may still be found in many places, presenting customary dramas with traditional figures. Puppetry is also used extensively in educational programmes on both television and in live performance.

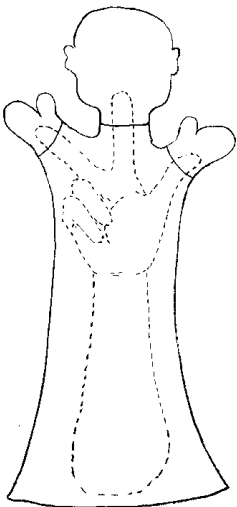
To every puppeteer, the concept of puppetry may conjure up different emotions and thoughts, they may define puppetry in different ways, and may even enter into heated debates about its meaning, origin and uses, but it is generally accepted that the simplest common denominator is **movement**. If a player is alive, then it is an actor, if it is inanimate, then it is an object, If it is an inanimate object which is being made to move, it is a puppet. A puppet then, is simply an object which, when manipulated, or made to move in a dramatic manner, by a person, can represent a human being, an animal or any imaginary character. Movement is the essential attribute of any puppet, and movement defines what puppetry is.

3) TYPES OF PUPPETS AND THEIR USES

If we define puppets by movement then all puppets can be categorised into one of three main methods of manipulation:

- Hand (or different parts of the body)
- Rod (or sticks)
- String (or marionettes)

There are a wide range of techniques, including mask, finger, giant, body and foot puppets, object theatre, animatronics and animated film which at their simplest can also be classified by the above methods.



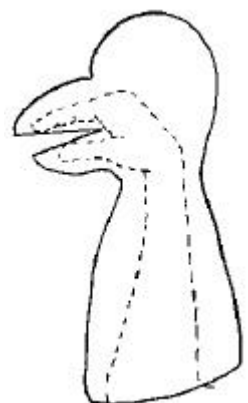
HAND PUPPETS

Hand puppets are manipulated or made to move, by the puppeteers hand or hands. The term *glove puppet* is used to describe puppets which are used like a glove over the operators hand and forearm. The fingers of the puppeteer's hand manipulate the head and arms of the puppet; the wrist makes the puppet's waist and the lower arm the puppet's legs. Glove puppets are best suited to smaller booth type stages because they are roughly the size of the puppeteer's hand.

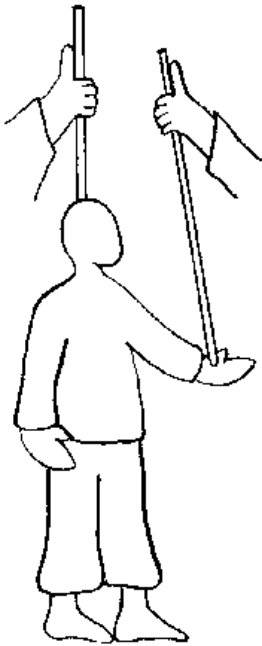
They are most adept in scripts with humour and buffoonery because of their comic appearance - their heads and hands are usually proportionally bigger than in life. They are capable of robust, strong and quick movements with lots of action (like fighting, hugging, and running away) and can hold and carry many small two-handed props. However, they are always contained and limited to a linear, stage space, humanoid or upright type characters, and smaller audiences, due to visibility problems.

MOUTH PUPPETS

Mouth puppets are a type of hand puppet as the puppeteer's hand is used to operate the mouth and head. They are so called because their most distinctive characteristic is a moving mouth. Mouth puppets are well suited to smaller, linear, enclosed booths because they are relatively small (roughly the size of the puppeteers hand) but they can range in size from a small sock puppet to a very large puppet operated by a number of manipulators. Mouth puppets are good for wordy scripts because of the animation possibilities in the face and the moving mouth. They are well



suited to animal and fantasy as well as humanoid characters and are most often used in comedy or children's puppet theatre. Small children in particular seem to warm to them due to their common construction from soft materials, bright colours and their "cute" appealing features. They are capable of bold, comic movements. Depending on the design, they can hold and carry props. Mouth puppets can be designed as Mouth and Rod (i.e. the puppeteer's one hand is in the puppet's mouth and the other operates a rod on the puppet's hand) or as Mouth and Hand (i.e. the puppeteer's one hand is in the puppet's mouth and the other becomes one of the puppet's hands inside a glove)



ROD PUPPETS

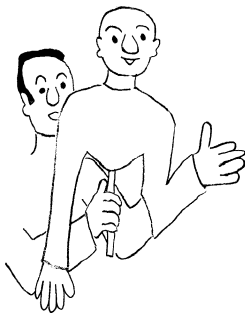
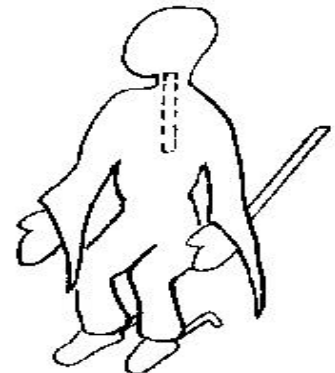
Rod puppets are held and moved by rods or sticks made of wood or wire, which are attached above, (see picture left) below, (see picture right), or behind the puppet. This style allows the puppet to be operated at some distance above, below or in front of the puppeteer. *Rod puppets* are usually quite simple in structure but may vary in complexity from a flat shape on a stick (or a cut-out) to a fully articulated figure with moving eyes and mouth. The number of rods (and therefore, the number of puppeteers) is dictated by the number of parts which need to be moved. *Rod puppets* offer great potential for creativity in design and presentation. Although rod puppets can be any size, they suit larger spaces and bigger audiences because of their potential size and height. They are at their best in expressive, flowing scripts because of the large range of hand and arm gestures available. Rod puppets are more realistic in their movements than



glove puppets, and tend to have more expression and weight (or presence). They are not limited to humanoid type characters, and there are possibilities for wings, tails, many limbs, articulated and /or horizontal torsos or bodies. The possibilities increase as one puppet can have several puppeteers. Sizes too can vary from as small as a little doll to a very large Chinese Dragon. Humanoid rod puppets require a booth below them so as not to appear to float, and they have limited prop capability and almost no flexible torso movement(s). There are many variations of the basic style, and combinations with other styles.

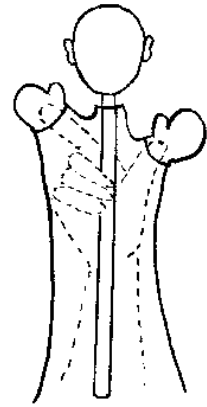
The Italian style of rod puppet, *marionettes a la planchette* has the rod inserted at the top of the puppet's head and is operated from above the puppet. The arms and legs are manipulated by rods or fine wire or, in combination, with strings.

Japanese *Bunraku* is a type of *rod puppet* which stands about a metre high and is operated by three puppeteers with short rods and sometimes fairly complicated mechanisms inside the head for facial movement. The master puppeteer operates the head and facial expressions with his left hand, and the puppet's right arm and hand with his right. The first assistant operates the left arm and hand, and the second assistant operates the puppet's legs and feet. While this tradition remains relatively unchanged in Japan, the technique has been adopted and adapted by puppeteers around the world.



Rod and hand puppets make use of the operators own hand as the hand of the puppet, while the head is manipulated with a rod inserted at the neck of the puppet. The puppeteer is usually visible, which must be considered when staging and performing. This method gives excellent prop capabilities, more expression using the fingers, and allows for a much more three-dimensional use of space. Puppets are life size and humanoid, and more like actors. *Rod/Hand puppets* can perform in a traditional stage type acting space without a booth. The puppeteers often wear black hoods and clothing to appear less visible than the puppet.

Rod and glove puppets are like *glove puppets* but have a small rod in the neck rather than the puppeteer's finger.



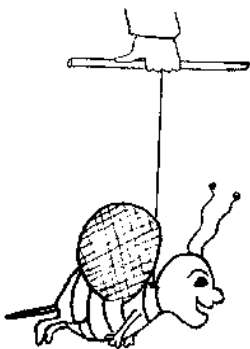
Shadow puppets are flat cut out figures held by any number of rods or wires against a translucent (semi-transparent) screen which is illuminated from behind. The audience watches the black (sometimes coloured) moving



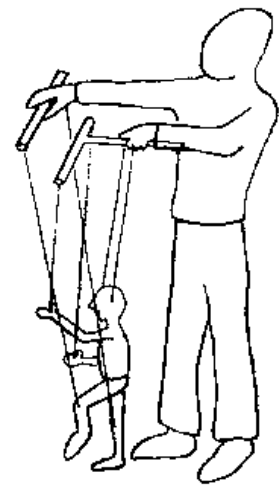
silhouette from the other side of the screen. Shadow puppetry is limited to one-dimensional performance and to an area where darkness can be achieved for the greatest shadow effect. The staging for shadow puppetry can vary from a formal theatre setting with expensive equipment and multi media (slide projectors, video screens and elaborate lighting effects), to a sheet tied between two trees with a fire behind it, or a candle and the shadow shapes of a hand against a wall.

STRING

String puppetry (also called "marionettes", the French word for puppet) refers to puppets operated by strings. The puppet is suspended on strings, cotton or nylon cord from a control bar held by the puppeteer.



They can vary in complexity from a simple figure suspended from one string, to a figure with any number of moving parts controlled by multiple strings. Marionettes are commonly presented on an open stage with the puppeteer visible and walking beside the puppet, or in a traditional marionette stage with a proscenium front to hide the operators and raise them above the puppets. The size, portability and setting up time of such stages makes it difficult to transport them which generally rules out touring and community shows. Marionette performances can be graceful and



charming but fast forceful action is generally ruled out by the danger of tangling the strings. The movement of string puppets are governed by their centre of gravity and the natural swing of their parts, thus they can be highly unpredictable and take great skill to operate.

All of these types of puppetry can be combined in one performance or even in one puppet to excellent effect.

4) THE USE OF PUPPETRY IN EDUCATION

The use of puppetry in education is not a new concept; puppets have been used to entertain, to satirise, to explain the inexplicable, to depict historical events, and in the retelling of folk tales and myth. It has also been used extensively for educational and therapeutic purposes. In recent years, puppetry has tended to be relegated to the sphere of children's entertainment, it is important however that we overcome this stigma if we are to tap into its vast potential as a tool for education.

Before launching a puppet performance, it is necessary to understand that there is no "miracle cure" for the problems in our communities. Puppetry is not the answer to **all** our educational needs. We should first try to understand puppetry and its potential before choosing it as an "easy solution". Puppetry is not always easy, and it is not always the right choice of communication medium; puppets do not work in every community, nor for every age group. If you cannot answer the question, "why am I using puppets?", then perhaps you should **not** be using puppets. Unless you are clear about your reasons for using puppetry then your project may be ineffective simply because another medium may have done the job better. Puppets must always be used where they are the best tool in any given situation and must be used to their best advantage.

Why use Puppets?

In order to make the tool effective, we need to distinguish between the different methods of utilising puppetry. Puppetry in education can be divided into three methods, teaching with puppetry, learning through puppetry and puppetry in therapy. Though all three are effective and have their place in education, it is important to understand the differences between them, and therefore where, when and how to use them.

TEACHING WITH PUPPETRY

The term teaching with puppetry refers to educational puppet performances where puppets are used to educate through entertainment.

Puppets and puppet theatre are unique. The puppet is not an actor, puppet theatre is not human theatre in miniature and a puppet should not be used to replicate the human actor, as its power lies in its very essence; the fact that *the puppet is a puppet*. An actor *represents* whereas a puppet *is*. A puppet is the essence of its character, the actor portrays his character. A puppet brings to a performance exactly what the performer wants and nothing more. A puppet has no identity beyond a performance, it brings no other associations and it is free from human limitations.

The appeal and benefit of puppets lies primarily in this lack of 'ego' or 'self'. It is the nature of the puppet to have *no* nature until given one by the puppeteer, and it is in this 'lack of self' that the usefulness of puppets lie.

Due to this lack of personal depth, puppets appear to be both naive and innocent, and, as such, the puppets concerns are the concerns of the moment. The audience responds to this transparency and the absence of ulterior motives, there is no need to be suspicious or distrustful, and so the puppets allow for identification without stigma, which is vital for accessibility to the educational messages.

The audience does not *fear* the puppets and the characters they represent, because they are not *real*, and thus cannot threaten their security or place in the 'real' world. This neutrality allows the puppet to address issues where the normal social and political

baggage of culture, colour, creed or gender may be a barrier to the message, breaking them down by exaggerating them and dis-empowering their stereotypes. It allows us to examine and perform taboo issues like sex, disease, death, family relationships, gender relations, religion and politics, without offence, or judgement.

Therein lies the tremendous power of the puppet as a tool for education. Because of the puppet's independence from the human agent, it can convey emotion without causing embarrassment, it can deal with taboo issues without causing shame, it can overcome stigmas linked to discussing sensitive and controversial issues without incurring blame or recriminations. Puppets can act out very private situations without being offensive or alienating. They can break the ice by making people laugh. The humour in puppetry helps to relieve the tension associated with discussing contentious issues. A puppet show can also provide a forum for post-performance follow-up discussion and question and answer sessions.

The puppet acts as a go-between, a negotiator; it forms a buffer between educator and audience. It becomes a medium through which an issue is discussed rather than a direct, didactic lesson. A puppet cannot be hurt or embarrassed, feel shame or fear. The puppet does not blame, condemn or pass judgement on an audience. The audience can therefore respond in the same way without needing to question or trust who is saying it.

Ultimately in a performance, it is the puppet putting itself on the line, not the performer/person. And how can you be angered or embarrassed by an object made from cloth, paper, paint and glue?

LEARNING THROUGH PUPPETRY

The term learning with puppetry refers to a puppetry workshop or the launching of a puppet project, i.e. learning through the act of creating puppet theatre. Puppetry projects for adults and children can have tremendous educational value because the construction of a puppet is not just the construction of an object; it involves both the making of a thing and the 'bringing to life' of that thing. The making of a puppet is the act of creating a personality and therefore plays a dual role in learning and development.

No matter how big or small a puppet project is, it should always encompass the following:

- Hands-on experience.
- A combination of the creative and performing arts.
- Cooperation and self expression

Hands-on experience

Both adults and children are able to attain and retain knowledge, skills, and an understanding of concepts through active participation and personal experience. Learning through hands-on experience allows people to experiment, expand, discover, observe, solve problems and use their imaginations for themselves.

A puppet project by its very nature will deal with and allow its participants to internalise a number of concepts and issues. For example:

- *COMMUNICATION AND TEAM WORK*: If a project is to be successful, the participants have to get along with each, they need to learn how to listen to, and respect the ideas of others. But rather than having to deal with direct interaction, the focus is on the puppetry activities. All energy is concentrated on, and channelled

- through a medium: puppetry.
- *REHEARSING CHOICES, DECISIONS AND CONSEQUENCES*: Participating in an educational puppet show allows people to deal with issues such as moral or life threatening choices during scriptwriting, scene improvisation and performance; it lets them explore the consequences of their actions and the reasons for their moral decisions. It allows them to experience other people's situations and view points; to understand how others feel; to experience "real life", without physically going through it themselves.
 - *CONCEPTS*: When constructing a puppet, sets and props, one is actively involved in dealing with, learning and talking about concepts such as colour, numbers, proportion, size, shapes, sorting, measuring, spatial relationships, scale, etc.
 - *PROPERTIES*: The properties of light, sound, colour, music, movement, mood and atmosphere are dealt with in a practical manner through discussion, observation and activity.
 - *MOTOR SKILLS*: When participating in activities such as sewing, cutting, drawing, etc, one's motor skills can be developed and improved through practical exercise.
 - *LANGUAGE SKILLS*: In the creation of a puppet project, the spoken word is used in relation to one's activities and one's performance, and the written word through work on scripts, posters, lists, invitations, etc.
 - *BODY AWARENESS AND COORDINATION*: Through performance exercises, warm-ups, and the exploration of the movement of the puppet on its own, and in relation to one's own movement, one can develop an understanding of one's body and how it works, and improve coordination and spatial awareness.
 - *CONFIDENCE AND SELF ESTEEM*: Being involved in a puppetry in education project, gives people of differing abilities and levels of confidence the opportunity to participate, to share a variety of personal strengths and to contribute something that is seen as worthwhile to their communities.

The creative and performing arts:

Puppetry is the amalgamation of almost all of the performing and creative arts, and in the creation of a puppet show it is necessary to utilise many of the diverse skills associated with these, such as creative writing, dramatic art, voice, characterisation, song, music, movement, mime, dance, masking, live performance, drawing, modelling, sculpture, painting, sewing, carpentry, welding, etc. All of these talents must be drawn out of people and pooled together for a production to be successful and for people to learn from each other.

Cooperation and self expression:

Because it requires so many different talents puppetry allows people to work towards the same goal while contributing different skills. A puppet project brings people together in the creation of something bigger than the individual, and therefore encourages teamwork and collaboration.

Exploring the movement, voice and characterisation of a puppet is one step removed from doing the same as a live performer, therefore improvising and performing with a puppet (as with masking), can often help performers to overcome their inhibitions. Sometimes, people who are too shy or withdrawn to participate in live drama, even though they may really want to be involved, and have very important things to share, are able to express themselves through a puppet. Hidden performing talents may even emerge from the most unlikely people.

While many projects may deal with one or more of the above issues, few bring them all together as comprehensively as puppetry does.

PUPPETRY IN THERAPY AND COUNSELLING

Puppets are often used by therapists for adults and children with learning disabilities, behavioural problems and communication failure. Being involved in a puppetry project allows people who have low self esteem or who think they have nothing of worth to offer, to be good at something that people around them value. Puppetry allows them to contribute to society and thus regain some self respect.

Maladjusted people can inflict violence on puppets and express their feelings against society without remorse or repercussions. It gives them the opportunity to say what they are afraid to say, cannot say, or have said, but feel has not been understood. Sometimes the act of saying or doing something with a puppet is therapy in itself. Puppets inspire people to respond spontaneously. People are able to touch and be touched by puppets, and allow them to say and do things that might be unacceptable from a person.

Puppets are often used in hospitals where physically disabled children can come to terms with their disabilities or act out any character with any physical ability. They (as with unimpaired people) can also develop coordination and motor skills and improve verbal communication skills through puppetry.

It is important to note, however that even though much of our work by its very nature is therapeutic, any actual therapy in the wrong hands can be more damaging than productive, so be wary of dabbling in an area requiring expert skills.

5) MAKING A SIMPLE MOUTH PUPPET FROM A SOCK

OBJECTIVES:

- Simple, quick, easily accomplishable tasks for learners of all ages.
- Effective visual tools for use by adults in classroom or community projects.
- Can be achieved with limited resources and cheap, used or found materials.
- Visually engaging and effective medium for use in education entertainment projects.

MATERIALS:

- 1 cotton sock per participant
- Scrap fabric
- Assorted felt
- Scissors
- Hand sewing needles
- Cotton sewing thread (various colours)
- Accessories such as wool, buttons, beads, shredded paper, steel wool, feathers sequins, lace, old table tennis balls, etc
- Scrap foam rubber and cotton stuffing
- Clear adhesive glue
- Cardboard

Sock puppets are one of the easiest types of mouth puppet to make. They can be quickly and effectively accomplished by participants of all ages in a relatively time, and are ready for use almost immediately after construction, resulting in instant gratification and quickly

achievable projects. The puppet can vary from very simple designs of a sock tucked into the hand with buttons stuck on for eyes, to complex designs involving shaped heads, 3 dimensional facial features such as sculpted jaw lines, ears, eyebrows, hair or manes and even limbs and clothing. The more you experiment with ideas, the more you will learn.

Puppets can be made from just about anything and can be relatively cheap to make. Start collecting boxes, cartons, newspaper, old clothes, socks and dish towels, sticks, straw, left over wool, cut-offs from fabric and foam, used fishing gut, everything and anything can be turned into a puppet with a little imagination. Projects utilising used or found objects and waste materials can also be used to encourage environmental awareness.

Step One: Before you make your puppet, you need to know what it will look like. If you have already written your script, you will know what characters need to be made for the story. Even if you don't have a script you need to decide what you want to make. Think about the physical features of your puppet; is it a human, an animal or a fantasy character? What sort of person is it, fun, old, studious, evil, silly, etc? What sort of facial features and distinguishing characteristics does it have; a big red nose, spectacles, slit eyes, pointed ears, long green hair, wings, etc? Decide what colour would suit the character; is it a red devil, a brown dog, a green man? It is useful to draw a picture of what you would like to make – this will help you to focus and remember your ideas, and to get an idea of shapes, sizes, proportion and placement.

Step Two: Choose your materials.

Step Three: Place the sock over your hand and as far up your arm as it will go. The sock can either have the heel facing up (back of the head) or downwards (the chin and neck). Look at the sock and imagine your design.

The Mouth: Pull the toe slightly forward and push the toe of the sock between your thumb and fingers to form the mouth shape. Put a few stitches into the corners of the mouth to keep the shape. Cut out some dark felt or fabric in the shape of the lower and upper palate and sew or glue them inside the puppet's mouth. You can also add a tongue.

A more complex way of making the mouth is to cut the sock open and stitch in a fabric covered cardboard mouth. This can be any shape; wide, long, pointed, depending on the character. Put the sock on its side and cut a slit from the toe towards the heel, only as far as you want the mouth length to be. You can cut the lower lip slightly shorter. Cut the palate shape (inside of the mouth, top and bottom) out of folded cardboard, glue felt onto one side of the card and glue or stitch it into the opening in the sock.

The Body Shape: You can stuff the toe and heel with scrap foam, cotton stuffing or scrap fabric to make a nose or bigger head. This can be glued or sewn in place.

The Eyes: Eyes can be flat on the head made from buttons or disks of plastic or felt, or raised like balls. These can be made from beads or you can make stuffed fabric or foam rubber balls. You can also use two halves of an old table-tennis ball. Make both eyes and then test them in different positions until you are happy with where they will sit. Both eyes should face forward and be focused in the same direction (not squint, unless the character is). The puppet needs to make direct eye contact with the audience and with other puppets so the eyes should not be placed too far back or to the sides. Test that you are happy with the position of the eyes by looking at the puppet in the mirror and sew or glue them in

place. If the eyeball is white, remember to add an iris and pupil with different colour fabrics, or drawing it on with a Koki, or sticking on buttons or sequins. Add folded fabric **eyelids**, and feather or felt **eyelashes**.

The Nose: noses and or nostrils made from felt, covered foam, pom-poms, beads, buttons, etc can be stuck or stitched to the toe of the sock

Ears and horns can be made out of foam, stuffed fabric shapes, or by pulling and tying off sections of the sock. **Hair, crests** and **manes** can be made from stitched or glued on feathers, wool, string, shredded paper, steel wool, strips of fabric, blobs of foam, raffia, etc. **Accessories** such as hats, earrings, spectacles can be made and added, as can items of clothing and arms, legs, paws, wings and tails.

6) BREAKDOWN FOR WRITING AN EDUCATIONAL SCRIPT

The construction of the *scenario*, or story that you wish to tell, is, arguably, the most important process of the pre-production preparation. A good scenario or script is much more than just a common understanding of what makes a story. A good script is a combination of characters, settings, themes, events and story lines which all work and mesh together into a coherent purpose and unity - the **narrative**. Without an engaging, coherent story, characters and plot you have nothing.

When writing for educational theatre this becomes even more important, as every element of the narrative must be structured very carefully in order to enhance the messages of the work, and not detract or undermine them.

Here are some guidelines to help you construct an educational scenario:

1) Scriptwriter:

Name of writer.

2) Title:

This must be something catchy and engaging. Ask yourself: What will make people want to see my play? Therefore not for example *"HIV is a killer Disease"*, but rather something like *"Silent Reaper"* or *"The Secret Life"*. And something appropriate to your story which gives a hint of what it's about but does not spoil the surprise. The title may only come to you after you have finished writing.

3) Theme:

What is the overall topic which I want to deal with in my play? *For example: HIV/AIDS; Child Abuse; Substance Abuse; Rape, Poverty, etc.* Try to be specific and not to choose too many – one will do.

4) Issue:

What are the issues within my overall subject? Break down the theme to a smaller issue or issues, *for example: my theme is HIV/AIDS and my issue is living positively with HIV; attitude, care, acceptance in the community.* Ask yourself: What is the problem here? What's the big issue? Why do I need to write an educational piece?

5) Message:

Within each theme, there are a million possible stories with as many messages, therefore what point do I wish to make about the above theme? *For example, do I wish to say that people with*

HIV should be isolated in order to curb the spread of the disease or do I wish to say that people with HIV can lead relatively long and happy lives and be loved and loving productive members of the society? (Ask yourself: What am I trying to say? What do I want people to learn from what I am saying? What do I want them to have taken from my piece? What do I want my impact to be? - And is this really important?)

6) Target Audience:

Remember that a performance is for an audience, so your script needs to be right for the people for whom it is intended. Who do I wish the recipient of my message to be and is it appropriate? What is my target age group, what language do they speak? What is their cultural background (traditional, western, conservative, religious, etc?), what gender are they? Are they rural or urban, rich or poor or somewhere in between? What is their educational background? What sort of families, and community do they live in? Ask yourself: Who is my audience? What am I trying to tell them? What do they already know? What don't they know? What do I want them to know? What don't I want them to know? And is all of this really appropriate or of relevance to them? Is there a need for this message? Are these people ready to hear it in this way?

Narrative = Discourse + Big Event + Story

7) Discourse:

Choose your discourse. Decide on the way you wish to get your message across? What medium do you wish to use to tell your story, and is it appropriate, viable or practical? For example; puppetry, live drama, TV, traditional dance, song, mime, ballet, opera, poetry, novel, video, lecture, etc, and the style you wish to do it in, for example, comedy, action, drama, farce, realism, pantomime, musical, narrated, etc. Once you have chosen your discourse and style, ask yourself: is this really the best way to tell the story and is the style I have chosen appropriate to the message and to my target audience? If it is not, then change it.

For our purposes the discourse of the narratives has already been chosen - *Educational Puppet Theatre*. It is, therefore, vitally important to consider the ways in which this will affect your story.

- The story is to be **performed**. Performance means that you will bring the story to life (or animate it), it will unfold in real time, and an audience will be watching. This means that all elements of the story must be accessible to actors creating them in the moment. Whatever effects you wish must be possible for actors, or you must have the equipment to facilitate them.
- Performance is **audiovisual**. The audience sees and hears the action/story unfold. Both elements must be included in the script. Don't discuss what can be shown.
- Performance is **dialogue**. Characters talking - and not talking - to each other and the audience not describing things. Never describe. It is a script not a novel.
- Performance is **communication** - telling your story to *another*. A performance script is about dialogue, and dialogue is communication, for the story teller, characters and the audience - even when it is in actions not words.
- Performance is to an **audience**. An audience is fully half of a performance, without one there is no point. The elements of the story must be understood and accessible to the watching audience in real time.

Secondly, the story is to be performed by **puppets**. What are the specific elements, limitations, differences and problems of puppetry?

- Sometimes, puppet's faces, eyes and mouths **don't move**. Therefore they must not try to make long speeches, or engage in monologues because there is no action,

- i.e. nothing to watch, and the audience gets bored very quickly. Interaction (*dialogue*) between puppets should be quick, concise and to the point.
- Puppet theatre is **action theatre**. For the story to work and hold interest it **must** contain lots of **action** - not only the physical action of movement through the space, but also character action with gesture and interaction **and** plot action and movement. Never describe. Scenes should *move* from beginning to end, be short and to the point of the action/plot.
 - Puppet theatre is **visual theatre**. Don't discuss what can be shown. Most puppets have a **limited capability** with props. Puppet / prop interaction must be limited to *only* that prop which is *essential* at that moment to the plot.

Lastly, the story is to be **educational**. What are the specific elements, limitations, and differences of an educational script?

- Educational scripts are about **issues**. There is a reason or purpose to the script, something you are trying to say. Every element must enhance and develop this.
- Educational scripts are about **characters** not stories. The value of educational theatre lies in how the audience identify, internalise and personalise the issues, which is achieved through their identification with the characters.
- Educational scripts are **familiar** in order to highlight their differences. Educational scripts use what the audience know and understand to demonstrate the impact of the issues, what they might not know or understand.
- Educational scripts are about the **audience**. Educational theatre is solely for its audience, they are the point and the reason for the entire exercise - it is their learning that is being facilitated. Every element of the content must cater to their needs.

8) The Big Event:

Now you can start thinking about turning all of the above points into your storyline, and transform your message into a theatrical play: Choose the big or central event that needs to happen in the story, ask yourself: what is the crisis point for my characters or what happens in my story that will cause my character to have a realisation or make a change? For example, *the father discovers that the two young lovers have committed suicide, or the angry brother reaches out to hug his crying sister.*

9) The Story:

Once you have the big event you need to work out what happens before and after it, or how you are going to get to it and how you will get away from it? What is the lead up to the big event and what is the follow on? Where/how do people change? How will you make your point through the lives of fictitious people and a made up story?

Write the story down. *For example; once there was a man who had moved away from the farm to find work on the mines. When he left, his wife and children had cried, but he promised to write and send money and visit them at Christmas time. But now he lived far away in the big city with his girlfriend and his new baby son and his family had not heard from him in years...*

10) Character Breakdown:

Who is in my story, which people are facilitating the telling of my story? Know everything about everyone in the story, their name, age, culture, family history, background, language, education, experiences, relationships, health, views, feelings, economic status, personality traits, likes and dislikes, relationships with others in the story, etc. ("Know your characters better than god knows you"). You also need to know exactly what their purpose is in the story; why are they there? How will they serve the story or the message? And if they have no real reason to be in the story, then you should cut them out.

11) Scenic breakdown:

Break the story down into scenes which are sort of like chapters in a story book. Each scene needs to be a step in the process, either towards or away from the big event. These will be divided according to:

- What happens, or the *action*
- *Who* is doing it, or to *whom* does it happen? Which characters are in the scene and what are they doing?
- And *where* does it happen, the *settings* or the time and place. When does it take place and where? Which part of the story is it?

Give the blow-by-blow account of the action in each scene, what purpose the scene serves, and how the characters are affected by the events or by what happens to them. What change, transition or realisation occurs in the characters? What character and plot development has occurred? Cut any scenes that do not truly serve the story or the message.

12) The Script; Filling in the gaps/ Writing down Dialogue:

Turn the scene breakdown into drama by adding dialogue. Exactly what do people say to one another and how do they say it? Is it appropriate to the story and the character? What conflict occurs? How do the relationships between characters develop? What are the characters thinking and feeling? What is the subtext as created by emotion or relationships?

How do we say the same thing in different ways and what difference does it make? What are better ways of saying something or getting a point across? What are better ways of facilitating change or plot or character development? Is what is said appropriate to the story and the character?

For Example:

Scene 1: Daytime. At the train station in Zamdela.

Enter Dumisani stage right carrying a suitcase. As he sets it down and looks up at the clock, Mpho runs in from stage left, she looks frantic.

Dumisani: (*Looking surprised*) Mpho! What are you doing here? Who is with the children?

Mpho: (*Breathless, desperate*) Dumi, don't go, we can work something out. Please can we just go somewhere and talk about this.

Remember:

- Keep it short and stick to the point / message/ key issues of the story
- Keep the script simple (complex not complicated)
- Ensure that all the scenes and characters serve a purpose
- Maintain the pace of the action in the writing
- The crisis point of the story which causes the characters to change
- Always keep your audience in mind; their age, customs, cultural norms, gender, etc.
- Active participation, humour, and music can be powerful tools, but only where appropriate to certain audiences.
- Rewrite; do not be afraid of changing and reworking the script.

7) STAGING AND BOOTHS

Every performance, whatever its nature, requires a designated area where the performers can work, unhindered by the audience or the things around them. In the type of work you will be doing, you cannot expect to work in specialised performance settings with raised stages, raked seating, expensive lighting equipment, microphones and sound systems, and indeed it should never be necessary. For community education programmes you need to be able to go to your audience and perform in whatever space they have available for you. Your stage could be a street corner, a hospital ward, a classroom, a football field, and you will need to adapt your performance and setting to your environment.

A booth is what we call the space, or stage area, set aside for a puppet performance. There are many possibilities for booth design and they differ according to the type of puppet in use, the requirements of the performance, and the setting. Generally speaking, but not always, a booth will have a play-board, (a stage against which the puppets perform) and will hide the puppeteers, allowing only the puppets to be visible to the audience.

When creating a puppet booth, you must first establish what you need your booth to be able to do. In general, all booths should be lightweight and portable, able to fit into the mode of transport, strong, rigid and stable, able to be set up and dismantled quickly, suitable for a variety of possible venues and able to accommodate all of the performers, their puppets and props, comfortably. It is also important that the booth is presentable and appropriate to the performance.

The entire audience needs to be able to see your show, so it is important to consider the sight lines. If your audience sits too close to your booth, or round the sides, they will not be able to see the puppets, and, if your play-board is too low, they will not be able to see over each other's heads.

Take the average height of all the performers in the group and make the play-board about 5cm higher. Taller puppeteers will have to squat down so that their heads are not visible to the audience, and shorter puppeteers stretch up, or stand on a little platform, in order for their puppets to be seen.

It is possible to have a carpenter or welder specially design and construct a booth which suits your requirements, or you can make one from available resources.

IDEAS FOR PUPPET STAGES

- A big rectangular table standing on its end.
- A table standing normally with a cardboard screen balanced on top of it.
- Two 6-step ladders with a bar fixed between the top steps and the curtain suspended from the bar.
- A rope tied tautly, like a washing line, between two windows, trees or poles from which the curtain hangs.
- A rail, like a clothes rack or a hospital screen.

From these, you should be able to develop your own structure which suits your individual resources and requirements.

8) MANIPULATION

In order to bring a puppet to life, there are two areas in which its character has to be developed: The way it moves and the way it speaks (characterisation). Characterisation is the process whereby the puppet is 'brought to life', acquires its identity through physicalisation, vocalisation, traits and mannerisms. Through characterisation the puppet is given the individual personality which makes it uniquely the character which is expressed, first in the written word, and then in the design and construction and lastly in the "life" of the puppet. The characterisation of the puppet must always remain true to the story which it is serving.

The act of animating a puppet is a bit like performing a magic trick. We all know that a sculpture made of foam, glue, fabric and thread is not real, it is not alive, but we are willing to believe in the magic, if the magician's sleight of hand is convincing enough. We as puppeteers are like sorcerers, conning the audience into believing that the puppet is real, or at least into suspending their disbelief for the duration of the performance.

In order to maintain the *illusion* of life, a puppeteer must imbue the puppet with the *manifestations* of life. From the moment that the puppeteer takes the puppet in hand, even when it is not active or speaking, it must appear to be a living being. A puppet does not have a heart, brain, lungs, voice or ears of its own, so it is the puppeteer who needs to keep it living, thinking, breathing, speaking and listening all of the time.

Movement is the essence of puppetry. A puppet is brought to life through movement; therefore mastering the movement of your puppet is an essential part of the animation process. This is called manipulation.

There are many ways to manipulate a puppet and each performer may develop their own unique style. Every puppet too, is different. Even if the controls are similar, each puppet is unique, and has its own limitations and potential for movement. Therefore, the handling of all puppets is different, and you need to learn and experiment with your own puppet in order to ascertain what it is, and equally important, is not, capable of doing.

Following, are a number of guidelines to help the puppeteer bring the puppet to life in a convincing way, but the most important rule is to ensure that we never break the spell; whatever the puppet does or says, it must look real and believable to the audience.

Focus

Puppeteer must focus on puppet all the time for three reasons:

- See what the puppet is doing, correct any mistakes that are being made.
- Transfer energy, life, character, actions, thoughts, and emotions into the puppet. Puppeteer gives up own identity and transfers it to the puppet.
- If both the puppet and the puppeteer are visible to the audience, the audience's eyes will be drawn to the puppet.

Puppet Eyes

- Eyes can make the puppet appear to be alive, thinking and listening.
- Puppets must make eye contact with each other and audience and look at what they are doing.
- Movement and focus of eyes part of non-verbal communication and body language. Eye contact establishes essential communication link.
- Puppets chin should be angled slightly downwards.

Breathing

- Essential to live. Brings life to puppet.
- Breathing gives clues to character: nature, age and health, or emotional state of puppet.

Movement

- The puppeteer gives puppet life through movement.
- Every action, gesture and physical trait, supports the character and should match its emotions and what it is saying.
- Find the puppet's movements when it is stationary.
- Always keep puppet listening and thinking.
- Every action must have a purpose; avoid repetitive movements and meaningless or nervous gestures.
- Hands are tools of expression; use hand and arm gestures to express, emphasise and enhance what puppet is saying.
- Use the movement and angle of the head for animation and characterisation. Flexibility in the wrist allows the head of the puppet to move.

Space

To make the puppet's world seem real and believable, establish conventions of space which the puppeteer must always adhere to.

- Establish the height of the puppet above the play-board and maintain the level of the puppet throughout.
- Ensure that the height of the puppet constantly matches that of all the other puppets on stage.
- Entrances and exits happen on an angle or a diagonal, like walking up or down a flight of stairs. Puppets never pop up or fall out of the space.
- Keep the puppet straight and maintain the angle.

Control

- Puppeteer must maintain control over the puppet's actions; Movements to be clear, accurate and distinct. Precision essential.
- Puppeteer must maintain good posture and balance while performing.
- If the puppeteer is too tall for the booth bend knees and take weight into the thighs.
- Never lean or rest arms against the play board as this restricts the movement of the puppet.
- Never let the puppeteer's head or hands be visible above the top of the booth.

Voice

- Voice of the puppet must suit its character.
- Must be audible. Curtain in front of face absorbs the sound.
- Be aware that puppeteering puts different tension on the neck, shoulders and vocal chord area.

Mouth Synchronisation

- When the puppet speaks, the movement of its mouth must match what it is saying, and the sound of the voice needs to look as if it is coming from the puppet's mouth.
- Lower jaw moves, not upper.
- Puppet must maintain eye contact when speaking.

- Keep flexibility in the wrist. Wrist is moving up and down and your hand thrusting forward to make the lower jaw move without the upper jaw, or head and eyes flapping up and down.
- Mouth opens on the vowel sounds and closes on the consonants.
- For every syllable, the puppet's mouth should open and close. Words with more than one syllable require more than one movement.
- Vary the width of the opening to indicate volume.

Care and Maintenance

- Keep puppets clean and in bags or boxes.
- Try not to put puppets on the ground, rather use a floor cloth.
- Wash hands before use.
- Wear gloves. Wash gloves daily.
- Don't let children touch or play with the puppets.
- Puppet's clothes can be removed and cleaned and ironed.

9) CONCLUSION

This is only a starting point. If puppetry has in any way sparked your interest in any of the subjects only briefly touched on in these pages, then there is a wealth of information on theatre, puppetry, the performing arts, writing, design and other related topics, just waiting for you to get your hands on it.

The reference list below are the books which we use most often in our work and in the writing of these notes, but this is only a fraction of the books, videos and magazines which are (not always easy to find, but) available.

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