

Reflection 1

The puppeteering workshop gave a hands-on experience with puppeteering. The workshop followed the phases, the creation of the puppet, the exploration of the puppet, and finally a short performance with the puppet. This practical approach ran parallel to the reading's emphasis on how puppetry can facilitate empathy, collaboration, and reflection. I noticed how our approach to making and handling puppets reflected Hazou's emphasis on care and empathy. Although our project was more informal than his prison production, both showed how puppetry can encourage respect for the characters we bring to life.

The first phase of creating the puppet of simply paper and tape proved to be challenging. With the example puppet from the video in mind, we attempted to follow. With a base so simple, creative liberties were taken out of pure necessity and lack of ability to create complex puppets. Although my group attempted to recreate the one in the video, other groups went other directions, creating an elephant, a dragon, and puppets in all shapes and sizes. Compared to the making of a traditional Bunraku puppet, our paper-and-tape creations were much simpler and less refined. Nonetheless, the masks and stylized versions of the Bunraku puppets described in the reading showed how even minimal designs can convey expressive characters and creative energy.

The exploration is where we, as a group, began to bring the puppet to life. The most simple and fundamental aspect of an expressive puppet is the breath. It is the key to the audience that the puppet is alive. To do this we had one person controlling the head and the right arm, another on the left, and me on the feet. In addition to this the person controlling the left arm also had their hand in the puppet's chest. At first, we only raised and lowered the chest to imitate breathing, however this was not enough. We continued to make the breath more exaggerated, adding breathing noises made by the person controlling the head, and raising and collapsing the entire body as the puppet breathed. By changing the pace of breathing, we were able to convey basic emotions of panic, calmness and surprise. The second thing we added was attention. This was easier than breath because it was not as exaggerated to the extreme. However, it was still important to hold the attention long enough for the audience to realize what was happening, and when changing the attention, it had to be purposeful and quick. The last and most challenging for me as I controlled the legs was weight and walking. Weight is important because it ground the puppet in our world, without weight it is simply float and unrealistic. With each step the puppet needs to be fighting against gravity and each time the foot comes down the leg must bend to absorb the shock. As each element came together to bring the puppet to life, we got ready for the short performance section.

The short performance was our attempt to bring everything together for an audience. This is where the lack of experience began to show. As we tried to put on a performance of our puppet

dying, we forgot breath, so our puppet was never living to begin with. On our second time through, when we included it our performance turned out much better.

Overall, the workshop reminded me of what reading emphasizes, that even simple puppets can become expressive figures when guided by care and intention. We saw how breath, weight, and attention made the puppet feel alive to an audience. In the reading, the inmates' careful manipulation of Bunraku-style puppets reflects how a deliberate focus on fundamentals can create empathy and respect among puppeteers. Similarly, our informal approach still highlighted importance of certain techniques to transform paper and tape into a compelling performer. Despite our initial stumbling through a "dying" scene, returning to these basics ultimately helped us create a more meaningful final performance.