

Puppetry Development Consortium



Paradise, Theatre-Rites

Summary of Key Points and Action Plan 2015/6



Puppet Centre



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Puppetry Development Consortium

Mission Statement and 3-Year Plan

The Puppetry Development Consortium (PDC) exists to facilitate partnerships of practitioners and organisations who see the benefit of working together to address shared objectives and critical issues. This has the potential to make a positive impact on the health of the Puppetry sector as a whole.

As the initial year-long consultation process draws to a close the Consortium has formulated a three-year action plan to drive forward four key strands agreed as priority in these meetings and noted in other forums (please see Summary for full details of discussions had)

The purpose of this public three-year Action Plan is so that the Consortium members can connect their own practices and plans plus any other initiatives in the wider Puppetry Sector can link up if they would wish to.

	Leadership and Advocacy	Talent Development	Audience Development	Digital Strategy
Year One	<p>Extend Consortium Membership from 11 to 15 including the Diverse Puppetry Bursary Artist and 3 Strategic Puppet Friendly Venues and a Festival.</p> <p>Arrange 6 further meetings for Consortium members and key guests linked with identified agenda items.</p> <p>Produce a Consortium Bid (led by Puppet Centre</p>	<p>Produce a Consortium Bid for Talent Development (led by Joy Haynes and Sue Buckmaster). This would include the creation of a microsite of excellent Puppetry Training Opportunities in the UK with particular reference to the Puppetry Schools run by</p>	<p>Define a Strategic Touring Bid</p>	<p>Facilitate the Digital Steering Group (who have met 2 times so far) to meet so that they can discuss a long term Digital Strategy with all key Stakeholders. This has included Puppet Place, Puk, Unima, The</p>

	Trust) for an extensive research and data mapping of the sector.	<p>members Darren East and Sarah Wright. This bid would also include a year long Bursary for a diverse practitioner who would have placements with Consortium members organisations. Finally, it would ignite and host examples of new practice in Digital On-line Training Provision.</p> <p>Further discussions about linking up the Consortium members current #youthPuppetry initiatives and move towards writing a joint bid.</p>	agreed by all Consortium members and make application later in the year (currently led by The Boo, LAT and Norwich Puppet Theatre but in search of 15 buddy venues in total).	Guild and Puppet Centre as well as other Consortium members.
Year Two	<p>Further 6 meetings in order to evaluate existing, planned or possible new shared initiatives and funding bids.</p> <p>Annual evaluation of membership.</p>	<p>Produce Youth Puppetry Consortium Bid, (currently led by Slavka Jovanović, Keith Saha and Alison Duddle.)</p> <p>Engage in debate with</p>	Oversee the delivery of the Strategic Touring Plan which will likely include a specific programme for venues including commissioning films/trailers,	Fundraising to provide digital expertise to create the digital platform.

	Continued agreed advocacy for Puppetry initiatives which can be instigated by Consortium members and associates in their own or shared projects.	national bodies such as NT Connections. Oversee the activity of the diverse Puppetry artist.	branded show-cases and a venue "buddy scheme".	
Year Three	<p>Further 6 meetings.</p> <p>Evaluation of membership and key people to invite to meetings.</p> <p>Advocacy work and continued collation of shared visions and opportunities.</p> <p>Evaluation of continued purpose of the Consortium and fundraising for a Coordinator/Fundraiser if deemed necessary.</p>	<p>Evaluate the Training Micro-site and the Bursary Artist Scheme and develop as appropriate.</p> <p>Advocate and support the running of the Youth Puppetry Project.</p>	<p>Evaluate Strategic Touring Project and develop as appropriate, hoping to offer reduced financial risk model for those touring Puppetry.</p> <p>Collective vision to import international work and protect Puppetry festivals.</p>	<p>Creation of a front page for an outward facing Digital Platform to signpost and unite existing on-line provision.</p> <p>Ignite and support new initiatives in Digital On-line Training provision.</p>

"We want to raise the profile of Puppetry because it is diverse, inspirational and important. Not enough people know about it and we want to celebrate its wonderful history and contemporary impact."

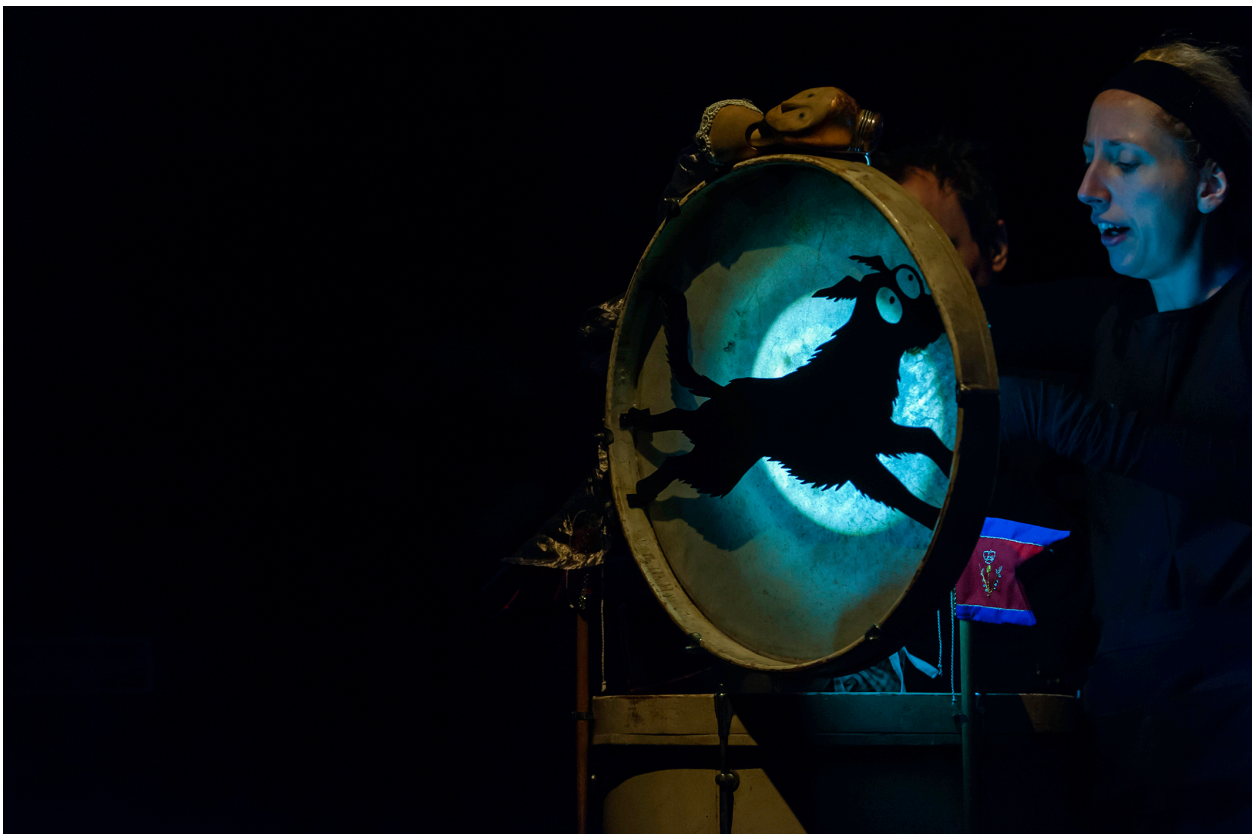
PDC members

Background

The key purpose of this Consortium is to formulate, coordinate and communicate a strategic action plan to support Puppetry in England. This will be done in consultation with a wide range of partners, focusing on priority strategic areas identified as:

- Leadership and Advocacy
- Talent Development
- Audience Development

The core programme has been extended to invite contribution from partners and stakeholders to develop a Digital Strategy. The PDC have identified developing a coherent audience facing Digital Strategy as being central to the growth of the sector.



The Tinderbox, Norwich Puppet Theatre, Photo by Andi Sapey

The PDC was funded by Arts Council England (ACE) to hold six meetings over one year to identify and address long-term priorities for their own practice and for the sector, to devise short-term plans to achieve them and help develop a collective voice for Puppetry. This programme was extended to eight meetings to develop the basis for a Digital Strategy policy.

The organisation is membership-led and comprised of key individuals who represent different parts of the Puppetry infrastructure and a broad geographical spread. The PDC is currently administered by the Puppet Centre Trust (PCT) as an accountable body.

Puppetry has developed within experimental and mainstream theatre and is now an emerging force within Britain's vibrant contemporary arts scene. Populist productions have flourished, large scale outdoor arts delight the public, Puppetry-focused festivals are thriving and the technical versatility and innovation of the art form has been proved as an ideal vehicle for touring. Despite this success, the Puppetry sector in England is still fragmented, historically made up of small organisations and individual practitioners who work in relative isolation with little professional infrastructure support.



King Pit, Corina Bona and Stuart Bryson

Leadership and Advocacy

The PDC recognise the need for a shift in this culture towards a more collaborative way of working, which emulates progress made by other performance art form areas such as dance, circus and outdoor arts.

The Consortium is responding to a requirement for the sector to work together to establish a level of strategic coordination and to develop a voice that can speak on behalf of its key constituents, in order to secure investment. ACE and other funders require assurances that under-pressure resources are having greatest impact at a national level on leadership and advocacy, talent development and audience development.

The concept of the PDC evolved from the ACE funded Working Together to Strengthen Puppetry initiative led by PCT. That group agreed that establishing a leadership model and structure was important to formulating a coordinated and strategic approach to the priority areas identified. This would develop fundraising opportunities and provide mutual leadership support.



Faust [Redacted], Touched Theatre, directed by Darren East, photo by Liga Kamare

The PDC Membership

The membership settled at eleven places with Joy Haynes, Director of Norwich Puppet Theatre (NPT) for five years, elected as Chair. The group sought mentorship and consultancy from Eddie Berg who acted as external Chair for two meetings and helped focus and drive forward Digital Strategy development. Eddie has been recently appointed as CEO of Rich Mix and has worked in various capacities for the BFI Southbank including as Director (leading the £8m transformation of the National Film Theatre) and then as Director of Partnerships. He is the founder and former CEO of FACT Centre in Liverpool and has extensive experience as Chair of the Board of Directors for numerous organisations including: Film and Video Umbrella, London; Film Strategy Board for Greater Birmingham and the External Advisory Board for the Institute of Creative Enterprise at Edge Hill University.



Svatantria, Anoushka Shankar in concert. Puppets by Sarah Wright

Membership for the project period comprised of:

- Joy Haynes, Director of Norwich Puppet Theatre, Freelance Director (East) – Chair
- Corina Bona, Practitioner and Puppet Place Creative Group Member (South West)
- Sue Buckmaster, Director, Theatre-Rites (London)
- Alison Duddle, Co Artistic Director, Horse and Bamboo (North West)
- Darren East, Director, Brighton Puppetry School (South East)
- Slavka Jovanović, Interim Director, Head of Learning, Little Angel Theatre (London)
- Mervyn Millar, Director, Significant Object & Freelance Director (London)
- Sean Myatt, Senior Lecturer at Nottingham Trent University (East Midlands)
- Natalie Querol, Director, The Empty Space (North East)
- Keith Saha, Co-Director, 20 Stories High (North West)
- Sarah Wright, Director, Curious Puppetry School (London and South West)

Bethan Tomlinson was the PDC Coordinator (South East). Bethan is also Executive Director of the Tunbridge Wells Puppetry Festival and Producer for Strangeface.

Membership criteria are based on regional representation, strategic placing, ability to attend meetings regularly and a financial contribution to membership fund.

The PDC membership agreed that there is a lack of clear definition about who the Puppetry sector is. This is coupled with lack of data and evidence to support an understanding of the scale and reach of the Puppetry community in England. That undermines the case for support and the ability to advocate about the sector. The members agreed that an essential part of the initial phase of work undertaken by the PDC was to support a large-scale research project working with academic experts in data collection to properly map the sector.

To identify a leadership model, which would provide strategic co-ordination for Puppetry at an England-wide level the following options were considered:

- Consortium model based on the existing remit and membership
- Network model based on regional leadership and partners, with a National Executive
- Single leadership organisation model to represent and lead the sector
- Hub model of existing organisations to operate as one, with regional centres or representation

The membership considered the merits and challenges of these options with reference to example models currently in use by other art form areas including Dance UK, North East Artist Development Network, Association of British Orchestras, Sustained Theatre, BFI Film Audience Network and Puppet Animation Scotland.

The PDC membership agreed that the Consortium model based on the existing remit and membership works. The meetings have been beneficial in supporting its members and recognising gaps in the Puppetry sector's current ability to support its infrastructure and artists. It has developed relationships and provided a solid foundation from which a more pro-active organisation can emerge.

Key Purpose

During the next phase of development the PDC will be an informed and active advocacy voice that stands up for Puppetry in England engaging with audiences, professionals, cultural policy makers and funders making the clear case for investment into continued growth and recognition of excellence within the sector.



The Lion The Witch and the Wardrobe, Birmingham Rep. Puppetry by Significant Object

"We want to raise the profile of Puppetry because it is diverse, inspirational and important. Not enough people know about it and we want to celebrate its wonderful history and contemporary impact."

PDC members

Building on the foundation of its initial year, the Consortium aims to work in collaboration with a broader range of partners in the future. Together we will provide advice and direction within targeted development areas, in order to deliver on its core purpose of supporting the sector through leadership and advocacy, talent development and audience development.

The PDC membership will work together to deliver a strategic three-year plan of fundraising and project delivery that will include developing:

- National vision for Puppetry and signposting the sector
- Diversity including youth theatre and entry level engagement initiative
- Access to training
- Regional Puppetry hubs
- Audiences via national touring strategy
- Digital Strategy
- Research and data collection
- Debate and opinion

It was agreed to select a Chair from within the membership and to bring in an external facilitator as required. Continuity was observed as important and that financial responsibility should be allocated among the members.

The PDC will continue to seek national focus and membership from existing Puppetry hubs across England. We will articulate a clear remit for membership that includes drawing members from a wide geographical spread and who represent cultural, artistic and sociopolitical diversity within the sector.

The membership discussed options for the most effective future operating model and the merits of becoming a constituted body against those of remaining a non-constituted body working in partnership with an existing organisation, which would provide financial and management accountability. The members agreed to seek further advice and consider logistics and timescales before committing to the preferred option of becoming a constituted body. Big Imaginations, "a region-wide group of venues and promoters dedicated to bringing brilliant children's theatre to the North West", exists under the umbrella of Z-arts and was cited as a potential model to emulate.

It was agreed that in order for the Consortium to deliver an ambitious plan of sector development it would require a post who would provide strategic leadership and advocacy in order to drive forward the shared ambitions of the membership, develop and coordinate project fundraising and cover basic administrative tasks.



The Nightingale, Horse and Bamboo

Digital Strategy

The PDC membership agreed that developing a Digital Strategy for the sector is central to creating a unified and coherent voice for Puppetry, particularly for external audiences. A Digital Strategy means more than having a website and websites on their own are a limited form of communication.

This discussion spanned two meetings in Birmingham and Liverpool and involved partner organisations in person or via Skype: Puppet Place, PUK, The British Puppet and Model Theatre Guild, Adam Bennett (freelance puppeteer and PCT Trustee). The purpose of these meetings was to:

- Identify the core purpose of a shared digital platform for the Puppetry sector
- Identify shared objectives to deliver the core purpose
- Identify how the strategy was going to be delivered
- Consider funding and the best opportunities

It was agreed to be vitally important to have an advocacy model for professionals and public. There was support from the membership for a shared digital platform that represents a “plural but inter-related vision of Puppetry,” (Clive Chandler) which would create and change public perceptions and would achieve broad consensus and support.

Given the current under development of cohesive and effective web-based resource for Puppetry there is potential for a unified platform for the sector, which is audience centred, informed by industry expertise and insight-driven. This platform would demonstrate and articulate the artistic and cultural impact of the art form to audiences and professionals alike and work in collaboration with existing effective industry related on-line resources.

The PDC aims to work with partners to generate a Digital Strategy that acknowledges and embraces the diversity of the sector and works towards developing a shared ‘front page’ or access point. This would bring together many voices in a coordinated way, distributing information across multiple and evolving platforms.

This was recognised as being complex and requiring long term planning. The sector is currently quite fractured and represented by isolated areas of activity with little focus on national strategic thinking and shared working practice. The membership discussed how working in collaboration with existing hubs of excellence and umbrella organisations

would help avoid crossover and doubling up of activity via clear mapping and signposting to specific areas of individual organisation's expertise and focus.



The Broke 'N' Beat Collective, 20 Stories High/Theatre-Rites

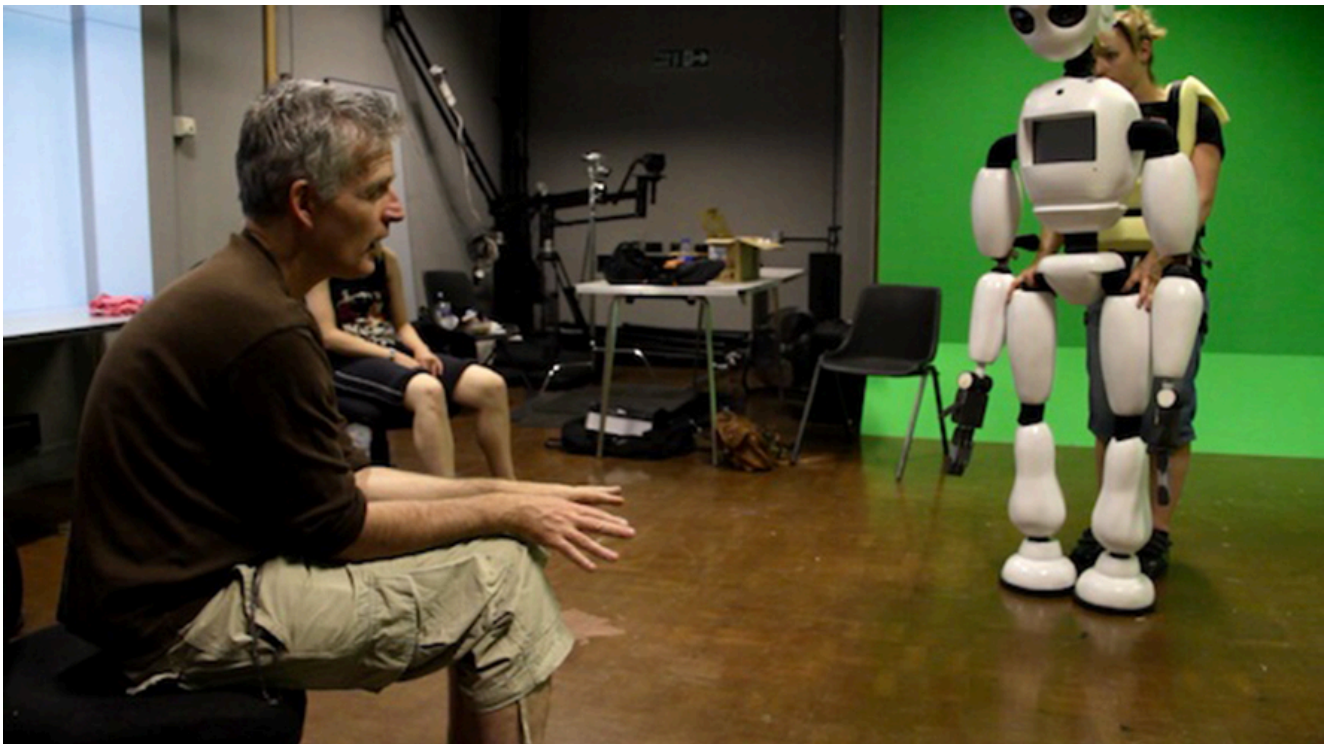
The PDC aims to initiate and facilitate a Digital Strategy Steering Group. This will bring together individuals and organisations that share a vision for coordinated digital platform for the sector and want to work together to achieve it. Development of the Digital Strategy will be informed by the PDC's other priority strategic areas of talent and audience development. The Consortium will ensure that all content is open and fully accessible working in conjunction with a diversity action plan.

Digital Strategy discussions highlighted that the eventual model must be financially sustainable and scalable. Existing subscription arrangements would be re-examined and sponsorship deals identified. It was discussed that an initial digital R&D application would be appropriate to fund the development of the Steering Group, initial scoping and research work, inviting in expertise with specific knowledge regarding digital practice and web-based work to help design the full project content, determine timescales and costs.

The PDC will seek to include key individuals and organisations' who are not currently members of the PDC, but who have been invited to Consortium meetings and who are central to the national Puppetry development landscape into the Digital Strategy

Development Group - these include:

- Adam Bennett, Trustee Puppet Centre Trust, <http://www.puppetcentre.org.uk>
- Clive Chandler, Chair, and Peter MacDonald, Editor, Puppeteers UK, <http://www.puppeteersuk.com>
- Peter Charlton, The British Puppet and Model Theatre Guild, <http://www.puppetguild.org.uk>
- Jeremy Bidgood, Chair, BrUNIMA <http://unima.org.uk>
- Rachel McNally, Executive Producer, Puppet Place, <http://www.puppetplace.org>



Sean Myatt, Nottingham Trent University Puppet Workshop

The PDC discussions set out to concentrate on defining five key areas:

- Vision – agreeing a vision statement that partners can work together to achieve and defining the measures of success
- Strategic Aims – confirming and refining the points above
- Approach – confirming and refining the points above
- Partners – confirming partner roles and approaches
- Mechanisms – to take the vision forward

Creating a sense of ‘liveness’ was viewed as critical. The ability, wherever you are, to access information about Puppetry in your area, to find out ‘what’s on’, and to understand more about resources available to professionals, to emerging talent, to audiences.

A summary of the various success measures were identified:

- More young people becoming puppeteers
- More people excited about going to see Puppetry
- More diverse audiences (socio-economic groups, ethnicity, class, and geography)
- Awards and critical recognition given
- Regional centres strengthened
- Better PR, more centrally funded organisations
- Cross art form – Puppetry used more often in other work
- ACE policy for Puppetry development and representative
- Better resources for artists – physical, expertise, critical reviews, industry knowledge
- Puppeteers are better connected with peers and support mechanisms
- Increased capacity in the artistic community for self-support
- Better representation, a network and legal framework, a puppeteers union
- Mainstream venues interested in diverse programming
- Venues being part of the development
- International perspective and recognition
- History and world cultural context of Puppetry better understood
- Live listings celebrating the work that is already happening



Mischief, Theatre-Rites

The Digital Platform as a 'Department Store' was offered a useful analogy when considering the structure, naming, journey and experience of a platform:

<p>Main Buttons on Front Page:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn More • Workshop • Watch • Take Part • The Conversation 	<p>Leading to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking • Campaigning • Resources • What's On • News • Reviews • Funding and Sector • Education • Conversation Flow • Featured
<p>Audience sector / reaching people:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social-media • YouTube channels • Digital content – MCN's • Interaction • Focus on key related content • Craft/Tech/Maker Movement
<p>Design/content to consider:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to resources, demonstrations and forums • Information for emerging practitioners – funding, working with venues, legal advice, training opportunities, marketing advice, support creating new work • Database of available contacts/Twitter handles • Understanding of the network of places • Heat maps – location specific information • Insight into recent conversations with funders (understanding policy) • Newsletters and updates

Talent Development

The PDC discussed ways that the sector might work collaboratively to support talent development. Talent development priorities identified included:

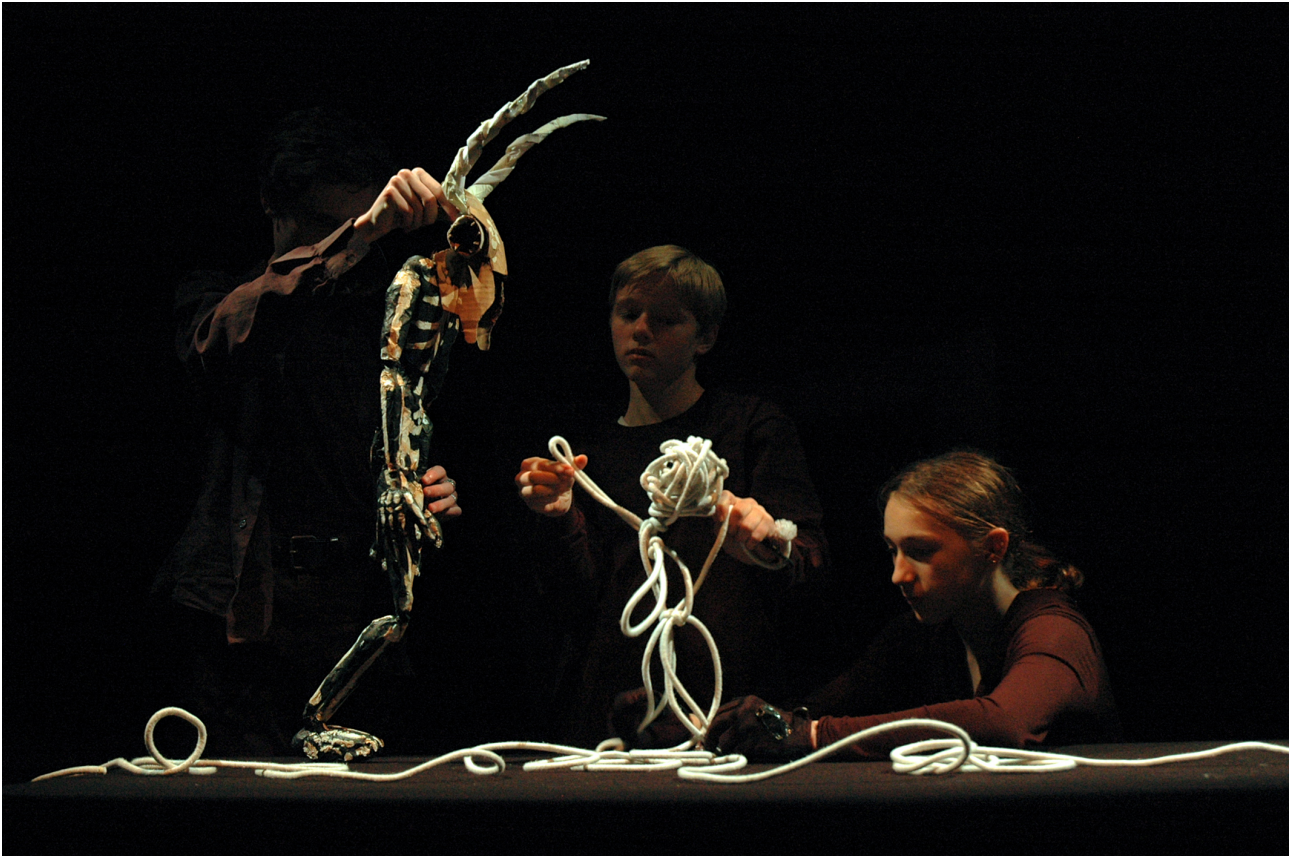
- Provision of clearer information about entry points
- Professional development to support career progression for practitioners
- Bringing more diverse practitioners into the industry

It was agreed that the development of the youth Puppetry strand in England was of vital importance to grass roots invigoration of the sector and that this could be achieved through members working together on joint funded initiatives. This would have impact across the country and improve practice through collaboration. As part of this bid and the development of partnerships the Consortium discussed the value of approaching NT Connections to develop a conversation around a more flexible approach to using text, which would enable young performers to develop skills in Puppetry and visual theatre practice. The following PDC members were interested in developing a joint youth Puppetry project bid:

- Horse and Bamboo
- Little Angel Theatre
- Theatre-Rites
- 20 Stories High

The Paul Hamlyn Arts Access and Participation Fund was suggested as a funder and a partnership bid including the following potential activity as a starting point:

- Building the provision with a mini festival to share work, working with four or six youth groups
- Inviting NT to add Puppetry as a strand to Connections and research possible relationship with NAYT who act as a central information point offering opportunities for training
- Developing young writers and visual theatre makers working with established Puppetry directors
- Encouraging a young ambassadors scheme at the different hubs of youth Puppetry activity



Macbeth: The One Half World, Little Angel Youth Theatre

The membership also agreed there was urgent need to improve and consolidate on-line information about professional development and pathways into Puppetry for puppeteers at all stages of their careers and also for those wanting to access Puppetry skills. There was recognition that new initiatives such as Brighton School and Curious School had significantly improved and broadened the year round national training offer and that regional hubs such as Little Angel Theatre, Norwich Puppet Theatre and Puppet Place consistently offered high quality internationally recognised training opportunities. It was agreed that the development of a micro-website, which collated information about training being delivered across the country and that signposted potential participants via an attractive, easily accessible and chronological digital format to training opportunities, would be immediately beneficial to the sector.

The Consortium agreed to support the establishment of a year-long bursary for the development of a diverse Puppetry practitioner. This would include BAME or those with a disability. The bursary would be aimed at those who already have some skill in other areas, but who want to become immersed in the Puppetry landscape. Puppetry is often a secondary option for those who train, initially in fine arts, acting, dance or directing. By calling out to practitioners from areas that already attract diverse artists we have learnt that excellence can be reached and nurtured. This opportunity would enable participants

to become advocates for the sector through engaging with wider audiences via social media and blogs about the process, which will inform and promote Puppetry as a viable professional choice.

The PDC will support existing centres of training provision. We will work towards the development of formal geographical talent development hubs as part of a nationwide network in order to develop a coordinated approach to these priorities. The PDC is committed to engaging with further and higher education institutions. We will promote the inclusion and development of Puppetry and visual theatre learning and to research broadening opportunities for accredited Puppetry training.

The consensus was that defining quality of provision, making it broadly accessible and recommending people individually was important. The Consortium also discussed how the sector might coordinate, shape and accredit training provision.

Mechanisms included:

- An agency, strategic organisation or institution, which directs people to specific workshops suitable to their experience
- Validating individual elements e.g. developing a credit or a point system, which would have weight in an academic context

There was a great appetite for a conference, reference to April 13 Symposium on Applied Puppetry for educational and community settings.

As a result of PDC activity and training meetings convened by Cariad Astles, Central School of Speech and Drama, two Facebook groups have been established and supported exchange and debate:

- A closed group for trainers to share ideas and opportunities online
- An open group to market any activity to the wider world



Rumplestiltskin, Norwich Puppet Theatre, Photo by Andi Sapey

Audience Development

The PDC discussed areas of work that were successfully attracting large audiences, e.g. commercial shows such as *War Horse* and smaller-scale family and children's shows. In terms of growing an audience for adult Puppetry, the group thought that a number of matters could help, including:

- Raising profile
- Developing more midscale work
- Developing a supportive touring model
- Capitalising on the appeal of festivals

The membership agreed that developing a leadership and advocacy structure, which takes strategic advantage of commercial and artistic successes and builds profile with audiences, communities and funders would strengthen the profile of Puppetry within the broader arts and theatre arena. Questions were asked as to why there are not more

Puppetry works represented at the Edinburgh Fringe or Imagine Festivals - both events provide exposure and ideal showcase opportunities for small to mid scale touring companies.

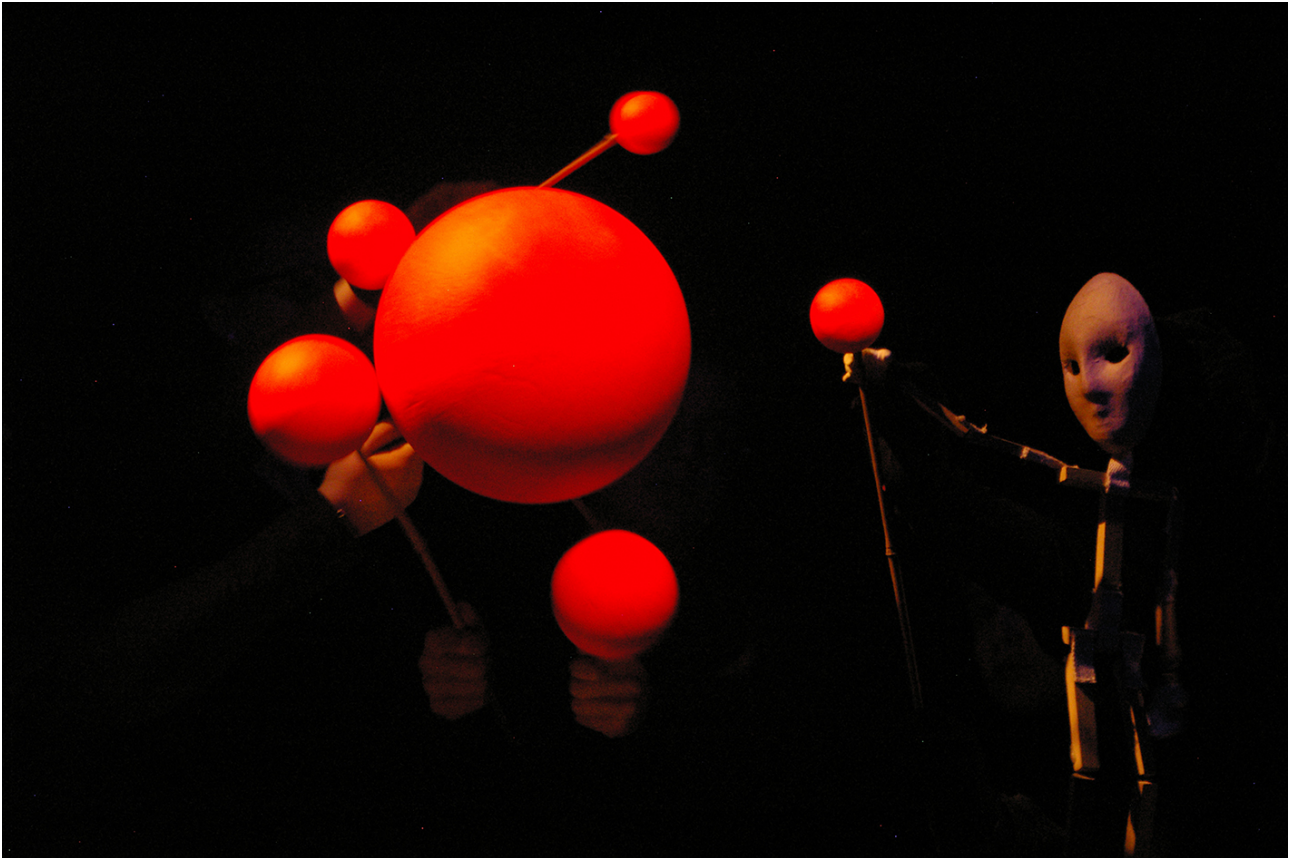
The membership discussed that in order to raise profile and develop perceptions of Puppetry as a distinct performance art form, in the same way as Dance and Circus Arts have achieved recognition, there needed to be research done and data collected. This would describe the body of venue and festival programmers currently booking Puppetry, whether this is just children's work and what the perceived barriers are. It was suggested that working with the Audience Agency on a mapping exercise would be helpful.

Touring was considered a priority for Puppetry companies wanting to reach broad audiences and venues programming new Puppetry works. The PDC membership agree to develop a ACE Strategic Touring Bid, which brings partners together and engages directly with national venue programmers. Initial ideas include coordinating the Puppetry and visual theatre festivals currently taking place in the UK on an annual or bi-annual basis. The programme would support a delegate programme, which highlights the best Puppetry work, along the same lines as the House model, in order to inspire and incentivise programmers to book more challenging pieces of homegrown and international adult work by reducing financial risk.

Members of the Consortium interested in being part of The Strategic Touring Bid development group are:

- Little Angel Theatre, Slavka Jovanović
- Norwich Puppet Theatre, Joy Haynes
- Horse and Bamboo, Alison Duddle
- Puppet Place, Rachel McNally to be approached as non Consortium partner
- A buddy scheme was proposed for up to 15 additional venues

The confirmed project partners will meet to discuss approach, process and timescales in May this year.



The Jabberwocky, Little Angel Youth Theatre

It was agreed that activities such as championing National Puppetry Day or Week would be instrumental in raising the profile of the sector. Other initiatives included:

- Developing innovative ways to share work such as employing filmmakers to create a series of promotional trailers
- Developing a touring Puppetry showcase road show
- Inviting local authorities into venues for performances and workshops

The Consortium agreed that drawing together a network of Puppetry centred venues around the country along the lines of Big Imaginations would be beneficial to the sector and assisting in raising the profile of touring Puppetry works for all ages. This network would help empower programmers by working in partnership with producing companies or as part of a buddy scheme enabling them to take risks and book new works.

Consortium discussion on touring opportunities involved invited guests Michelle Dickson, Director of Touring for ACE, lead for Strategic Touring and Kate Anderson, Director of Bloomsbury Festival and PCT Board Member.

This discussion was held prior to the programmers' event at Little Angel Theatre (LAT), as part of the Suspense Festival. LAT worked with the PDC to arrange a showcase and three hour discussion with speakers, Chris Pirie, Green Ginger; Molly Freeman, Smoking Apples; Heather Rose, House; and Samantha Lane, Artistic Director, LAT. Following the event PDC member Natalie Querol wrote a specific report making recommendations based on ideas and feedback generated.

Opportunities and challenges discussed included:

- Young companies finding routes in
- Transition from small scale to mid scale
- Working with schools, their budgets are under pressure
- Sales driven work – how do we stimulate new ideas and how do we communicate new ideas?

Michelle Dickson offered the following contributions:

- There are existing networks to tap into
- Showcasing is still the strongest way to reach the venues
- Not many touring companies apply collaboratively to work with venues e.g. a group of companies making a menu to offer out to venues
- Cultural education is planned collectively with schools and could be a useful opportunity for tour booking - companies offer one collection of work rather than sending lots of different options
- Established festival support networks such as Without Walls might develop a Puppetry offer for outdoor audiences
- Usefulness of getting to groups of people e.g. CPP commissioners, and showcasing on other peoples platforms
- Puppetry festivals currently don't do much to encourage and enable programmers to see more. House pays for twenty promoters to go to Edinburgh to get more promoters to festivals
- Where are programmers in their journey "Adventures in Puppetry"? Are there bookers interested in Puppetry, but don't know how to programme it?

Michelle Dickson talked about the process of applying for the ACE Strategic Touring Programme, which is about skills development and leaving the landscape better than when you found it. ACE would like to see shared learning to help others - one way to do this would be seeing the world from the new partnership's point of view.

Priorities are:

- Work made overseas coming in to this country
- Middle scale
- Diversity - disability not seen on stage or in audiences

Strategic Touring Funding can cover pilot work and can start with a minimum of two venues. ACE as a backer matters to venues to underwrite costs and provide quality control. The Made in Scotland Showcase was referenced as another inspiring model.



Moominland Midwinter, Horse and Bamboo

Executive Conclusion

This year the public have enjoyed popular Puppetry works such as *The Lorax*, *Beasty Baby*, and *Hand to God*, which have gained national critical and commercial success. Since *War Horse* Puppetry has become mainstream and what has become clear is that we have an opportunity to build on the popular appetite for this innovative yet time honoured art form.



Joey (*War Horse*, National Theatre) and Moses (*The Table*, Blind Summit) at the Tunbridge Wells Puppetry Festival, photo by David Bartholomew

There are also challenges facing the sector and small-scale touring companies that are the life blood of the national touring circuit. Well respected building based flagships are sustaining through hard work and commitment and need support. The PDC recognises the need for a distinct shift of focus within the Puppetry community in order to respond positively and collaboratively to the current wider arts funding landscape. We know that perceptions amongst audiences are changing. The sector has not yet achieved a coherent outward facing vision of its practice nor does it provide an clear advocacy model or adequate platforms whereby professionals and public can access information and inspiration.

During 2015/6 Arts Council England's investment into the Puppetry Development Consortium brought together a group of key Puppetry professionals into a conversation who are strategically placed to represent different aspects of the sector and drawn from a broad geographical spread across England. As a result a hugely valuable process has been initiated, which has cross-referenced experiences across regions and artistic practice.

As a direct result of these conversations:

- Grass roots meetings have taken place inspiring action
- Existing industry networks have shared their ambitions
- Partnership initiatives have begun to take shape

The PDC aims to build on two years of important work carried out during the Working Together to Strengthen Puppetry project, facilitated in 2014 by the Puppet Centre Trust. The steering group comprised of a focused membership of four practitioners with support from mentors, administration and research. We followed this experience by working in consultation with a wider group over eight meetings during the PDC project 2015-16, which has developed this conversation further by establishing a sustainable leadership model and structure. This has initiated an ambitious three-year action and fundraising plan and formulating a coordinated strategic approach to talent development, audience development and Digital Strategy development. The PDC has been valuable to members providing mutual leadership support and enabling them to work together to address critical issues that face the sector as a whole.

The PDC aims to continue into a next phase of its development working in collaboration with a broader range of partners. Together we will provide advice and direction within targeted development areas. It will be an informed and active advocacy voice that stands up for Puppetry in England. It will engage with audiences, professionals, cultural policy makers and funders making the clear case for investment into continued growth and recognition of excellence within the sector.

Joy Haynes, Chair, on behalf of the PDC

"We want to raise the profile of Puppetry because it is diverse, inspirational and important. Not enough people know about it and we want to celebrate its wonderful history and contemporary impact."

PDC members