

# **THERAPEUTIC PUPPETRY FROM A DRAMATHERAPY PERSPECTIVE**

**Course Facilitator: Daniel Stolfi, PhD, MSc, MA Dramatherapy HCPC-reg.**

Both puppetry and dramatherapy are eclectic enterprises that draw on and optimise a vast range of skills, techniques, methods, creative and artistic sources, disciplines, and bodies of knowledge.

## **Therapeutic Puppetry**

Therapeutic Puppetry explores the therapeutic and healing properties inherent in puppetry and puppet craft in order to promote wellbeing. The work draws on the creative and performative elements of puppetry and puppet construction, mask-making, myth, storytelling, metaphor, and symbol. The therapeutic process helps to draw out clients' in-the-moment inspiration, spontaneity, and creativity as they work through their personal material.

## **Dramatherapy**

Dramatherapy is a form of psychotherapy that uses the creative and healing aspects of drama and theatre to help clients explore and address a wide range of personal and social problems. It is an active, experiential, and transformative form of creative therapy that draws on role play, voice, movement and embodiment, improvisation and performance, story-making and storytelling, puppetry and masks, myth, metaphor, symbol, music, and art.

## **The Workshop**

The aim of this workshop is to introduce and explore ways puppetry and puppet-craft can be used therapeutically in a range of settings with different clients keeping in mind many of the clinical themes and core ideas within dramatherapy and psychotherapy - for example: the subjectivities of trauma, attachment and loss, resilience, family dynamics, differing cultural values, the importance of play, spontaneity and creativity, and uses of metaphor. The sessions will incorporate arts-based, projective, symbolic, and narrative approaches and modalities and draw on themes and examples from a range of socio-cultural contexts.

## **Target Audience & Disclaimer:**

This workshop is suitable for therapists and students of psychotherapy and the arts therapies who are interested in learning about therapeutic puppetry and dramatherapy and in integrating them into their practice. The workshop is designed to be interactive and exploratory rather than prescriptive of a way of working therapeutically with puppets and will adhere to the safe, confidential, and ethical codes of practice within the dramatherapy profession.

## **PROGAMME OUTLINE**

*Each session will follow a basic plan centred on:*

- *a thematic concept interfacing puppetry and dramatherapy*
- *an experiential puppet-making and representational/performative activity*
- *discussion, reflection, and feedback*

*Participants can also occasionally be expected to do short ‘homework’ assignments for particular sessions.*

### **Day 1**

Introduction to Therapeutic Puppetry and Dramatherapy:

- Theoretical and clinical orientations, contexts, and settings.
- Key concepts.

Some puppetry basics:

- 5 types of puppets.
- Craft, materials, and skills.

### **Day 2**

Puppetry and Stories 1 – the Individual:

- Exploring fairy tales and personal stories as narratives of self.

### **Day 3**

Puppetry and Stories 2 – the Collective:

- Working with folktales and myths to investigate group dynamics.

### **Day 4**

Puppetry as case study and ethnographic performance – bringing Individual and the Collective together:

- Using puppetry as a dramatherapy medium to work with victims of political violence and trauma.

### **Day 5**

Revisiting Creativity and the Imagination:

- Exploring further therapeutic dimensions of puppetry, improvisation, and play.
- Drawing things together – constructing a conceptual representation of the workshop’s central themes.
- Ending.

### **Facilitator Biography:**

**Daniel Stolfi, PhD**, is a UK-based dramatherapist (HCPC-registered), a medical anthropologist, and the artistic director of The Awesome Puppet Company (<https://www.awesome-puppets.com/>). He is a Core Tutor and Academic Support Lead on the MA programme in Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy at Terapia in London as well as the organization's Institutional Link Tutor with Middlesex University. Daniel is also the Anthropology and Aesthetics Module Lead on Brunel University's MA in Art Psychotherapy in London, and an Associate Lecturer in Dramatherapy at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge. He has been a visiting lecturer at The Royal Central School of Speech & Drama in the UK, and at NYU Steinhardt and the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) in the US. Daniel has a specialist interest in the therapeutic uses of puppetry, and how our understanding and experience of suffering and healing are informed by and reproduce social and cultural value. He is active in education, training, research, and publishing in these fields, and has presented his work extensively at national and international conferences.

### **Recent Publications, Workshops and Performances**

1. *The (Mis)adventures of Pinocchio* – an adaptation of Carlo Collodi's classic story of Pinocchio exploring the theme of Memory for dramatic performance by arts therapy students across Europe. European Consortium for Arts Therapies Education (ECArTE), biannual conference, Vilnius, Lithuania, September 2022.
2. Stolfi, D. (2022): Eva Marxen, Deinstitutionalizing Art of the Nomadic Museum: practicing and theorizing critical art therapy with adolescents – Review. *Anthropology & Medicine*. DOI: 10.1080/13648470.2022.2075320
3. Stolfi, D. (2021): Disrupted Narratives, in: Hougham, R and Jones, B. (2021): *Dramatherapy: The Nature of Interruption*, Abingdon: Routledge.
4. Stolfi, D. (2021): 'What are these irruptions of the spirit?' - Exploring (the elusive) therapeutic properties of puppetry and puppet-craft within dramatherapy clinical practice with children and adolescents, in: Hills de Zarate, M and Herrmann, U. (eds.) (2021): *The Mental Health of Children and Young People: Research and contemporary Practice in the Arts Therapies*, Abingdon: Routledge.
5. *Healing the Wound* - Puppetry performance and panel discussion of Sophocles' play *Philoctetes* by The Awesome Puppet Company. European Consortium for Arts Therapies Education (ECArTE), biannual conference, Alcalá, Spain, September 2019.
6. Workshop design and facilitation: *...how marvellous is thy face...* A mask-making workshop for educators, arts therapists and health practitioners working with male client populations. 'Building Bridges' in Applied Arts and Health, Education and Community – University of Wolverhampton, Ironbridge, UK, August 2019.