

The Emotional Space and the Puppet R&D Arts Council Project Grant Report by Joy Haynes

The Rapunzel Workshops delivered in partnership with Norwich Puppet Theatre & Norfolk County Council's Looked After Children's (LAC) Team



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The Arts Council Project Grant description:

A research and development period that explores physical and emotional boundaries, interpersonal relationships and communication and investigates 'space' as a performative language working with Looked After Children as part of the process.

The project provides theoretical and practical enquiry into the wider uses of puppetry and its value within applied contexts. Children and carers will be active participants questioning accepted 'normal' family structures by reflecting their own experience and celebrating the diversity of modern family life.

This research and development project encompassed a week long artist's investigation, 2 weekend CPD opportunities and 2 days of participatory workshops working with Looked After Children led by puppetry and drama specialists. The intension was that the three project stands would interconnect providing in-depth research pathways towards the development of:

- a new touring production for children;
- an investigation into using space as part of performative language working with professional artists;
- exploration of the benefits of using puppetry within applied and educational contexts.



The workshops took place over over 2 day-long sessions at Norwich Puppet Theatre (NPT) in partnership with NPT's Voice Of The Child project, Norfolk County Council (NCC) Looked After Children's (LAC) Team and NCC Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.

Puppetry is an empowering medium, which enables practitioners to shift focus from themselves and still find means to express true life experiences. The puppet translates the grand scale of the human experience into a symbolic poetic language, which is delicate and playful and through movement/gesture can transform the personal into something different and universal. The process of sharing experiences and stories with others through the art of puppetry and performance builds connections and understanding between communities.



The children's workshops aimed to introduce participants to the Theatre environment and to telling stories using puppetry and performance. Our intention was to create space for enjoyable experiences where the children would feel supported and valued. Within the time-frame we were only able to achieve some first steps, but there is potential to extend this work to address and challenge perceptions of what it is like to be 'looked after' and enable children to realise and articulate a strong sense of themselves. The process led us to discover that this work is also beneficial for social workers and foster carers changing perceptions of themselves by providing the framework and tools to feel confident to play, build new relationships and develop stronger bonds through shared experiences.



Research Methods:

As project leader I decided to take the role of observer throughout the artists investigation, CPD and the children's workshops as I felt this would facilitate collecting diverse information by taking detailed notes, photographs, video and voice recordings. Due to permissions photography and video was limited as the children involved are vulnerable. We also collected feedback via questionnaires from the foster parents and children and reflected on the process and outcomes within the Emotional Space education team and had an in-depth reflective discussion with Sally Gallop and Claire Palmer from NCC LAC Team.

Research questions:

- Who engaged with the project and workshops - how did we reach them and what were the perceived benefits?
- What did we learn and what changed during the process from the original project brief and it's aims?
- How did the Looked After Children's workshops explore personal, physical and emotional boundaries, interpersonal relationships including family relationships, and communication?
- How did the workshops investigate the wider uses of puppetry and it's value within applied contexts?
- How did the children's workshop develop 'Space' as a performative language and design concepts?
- What is the project legacy and plans for the future?



A Summary of Key Findings from the Looked After Children's Workshops:

Workshop Development Process and Public Engagement Outcomes:

Workshop 1 on the 3rd April attracted 3 participants (3 girls) and Workshop 2 on the 22nd April attracted 9 participants (8 girls and 1 boy). The sessions were led by Hilary Thompson and Zara Goodfellow with Joy Haynes as helper and observer and Jonathan Lambert providing musical input. We were joined by Claire Palmer from the LAC Team for the first workshop.

This project was a learning experience for all involved and was constructive building new relationships between Norwich Puppet Theatre and the Emotional Space workshop team, Norfolk County Council's Looked After Children's Team, foster families and their networks.

'The first day was wonderful! Social Workers have few opportunities to do this. They saw me in a different light - they saw me as fun. The session created a new relationship between social workers and children - make or break and they decided they liked and trusted me as we'd had a shared experience.' Claire Palmer LAC Team

Through the process developed direct ways of communicating with families through individual carers who had connections with local foster agencies including Anita Powers Foster Carer's Network and the National Fostering Agency.

This evaluation shows that barriers to more engagement included:

- communication problems - social workers across the 14 LAC teams county-wide were contacted to circulate information amongst their case loads, but the disconnect was that they didn't act on it;
- being time poor - weekend work for social workers is difficult and not conducive, families are busy and have planned holidays well in advance;
- developing trust - the difficulties of introducing any kind of therapeutic environment. potential and benefit of the project not clearly articulated;
- workshop structure - 2 consecutive days was too much. 2 stand alone workshops worked better as an introduction - more in-depth work could happen once trust is established;
- numbers of children per session - full cohort of 12 children would have been too much. 9 was enough and everybody got more benefit from the smaller group size. An ideal number would be 6 or 7.

We learned that developing trust and providing a framework of security was particularly important given the context and background of these children.

Practical recommendations for future participation include:

- using fostering agencies and networks to engage with more people county-wide;
- addressing barriers by providing information about social workers and foster parents role in the process via contact, networks and literature circulated beforehand;
- developing focused CPD where artists, educationalist and social workers can train separately and together;
- developing the workshop structure to encompass a fuller programme possibly over 6 weeks to include half day taster sessions on focused topics to build trust, relationships and confidence leading towards more in-depth participation over a few days;
- developing opportunities to perform and share work to celebrate achievement;
- limit numbers of children per session no more than 6 or 7 and include more carers - 1 or 2 from the LAC Team;
- allow flexibility in workshop content to respond to the needs of the group but stick to a schedule of breaks to eat lunch and have snacks;
- cleansing the space - allow settling time as emotions can become amplified;
- managing the structure of session and programmes of work to include a clear start taking into consideration latecomers and providing sharing of achievements at the end.

Workshop Creative Process and Activity;

The workshops plan grew from concepts explored during the Artist Investigation in which a team of theatre professionals worked with master puppeteer and director Luca Ronga, whose background and passion is the simplicity and directness of glove puppetry. His unique approach is to create emotional and physical spaces in an audience's mind's eye through physical gestures.

The workshop used the traditional Grimm's story of Rapunzel as stimulus to explore characterisation, concepts of family by examining the interrelationships within the tale and the importance of situation and landscapes in providing emotional and narrative contexts.

They were encouraged to create their own adaptations using few words and physical actions and the construction of puppets and scenery elements using a variety of materials and puppet styles.

The process developed collaborative work with the group creating still and moving pictures with their bodies inspired by words and phrases and devising short puppet and melodrama performance pieces to tell the whole story.

Throughout the activities children discussed story elements, who the characters were and what they and the places they inhabited might look like. They explored using objects as symbolic of these characters and condensed the narrative into physical interpretations.

Creating and dramatising stories using puppets and objects requires multiple imaginative and intellectual applications as well as practical construction and performance skills.

This process over the two workshops involved this sequence of activities:

1. Reading the Brother Grimm's version followed by discussion;
2. Improvising individual and group physical responses including still pictures in response to concepts, characters and landscapes stimulated by single words and phrases from the text;
3. Visualising these elements using materials to construct puppets and scenery;
4. Exploring objects as symbolic of character;
5. Devising melodrama style comic performances using gestures;
6. Performing to friends and family.

Benefits - the creative activity developed:

- understanding of story elements and how they might relate to real life;
- empathy with characters and their situations;
- confidence and security to express opinions whatever they might be;
- confidence to work independently;
- collaborative working towards shared goals;
- imaginative ability to translate abstract concepts either vocally or through physical demonstration;
- concentration skills listening, responding and seeing a process through
- a sense of self-worth - having their achievements celebrated;
- perception of others - seeing people in a different light;
- trust and the capacity to experience something new without fear;
- confidence and self esteem through sharing work via performance.

Benefits - the use of puppetry developed:

- imaginative and practical abilities to translate abstract concepts into real things through making and performance using objects and materials;
- imaginative and intellectual ability to use objects and materials to symbolically express complex concepts and characteristics physically and vocally;
- self-empowerment and confidence to face difficult emotions and situations playfully - taking the focus away from oneself and being able to channel energies through an object/puppet;
- ability to share space with others and collaborate to develop materials together;

- decision making and problem solving - you choose what you want your puppet or set to look like, design and select materials accordingly;
- practical skills - basic construction and dextral skills;
- knowledge about how to use simple tools and materials;
- confidence and self esteem through improvisation with and through a puppet.

Next Steps:

The scope of the project The Emotional Space and the Puppet R&D was broad with several activities engaging with cross-sector participants and stakeholders.

In order to develop links further and offer a more in-depth programme of work with fuller outcomes it would be beneficial to separate the Emotional Space and the Puppet R&D project elements into three specific stands using this research as the foundation for each.

Considering findings from this report I propose that work is continued with Norwich Puppet Theatre in partnership with the NCC LAC Team and other partners to build a case for funding the development of a programme of education and participation over a longer time-frame that will:

- *build upon and broaden out from the research project to include exploration of a range of stories using drama and puppetry methodologies;*
- *provide Looked After Children with the tools to visualise their own personal narratives and develop individual and group performance works to be performed to friends and family and at school;*
- *develop a methodology and toolkit for using puppetry and performance with this audience benchmarking quality arts practice;*
- *develop opportunities to engage county-wide at various new venues;*
- *develop connections with foster family networks, agencies and child mental health providers;*
- *include cross-sector CPD for artists, educators and social workers;*
- *enable foster parents and social workers to participate as part of the process and the arts community;*
- *include taster sessions to build new relationships and confidence;*
- *include in-depth participation over a several days allowing participants to develop work and celebrate achievements.*



An Overview of the Workshop Planning and Development Process:

In response to circumstances, which included a shift of original dates set for artist's investigation and advice from the LAC Team that immediately after Christmas would not be an ideal time for foster families, we decided to run 2 consecutive children's workshops as separate activities during a week of the Easter holiday.

As preparation for the workshops with the Looked After Children Zara Goodfellow, Workshop Co-ordinator for NPT, Hilary Thompson freelance drama consultant and workshop designer and I met with members of the Norwich Children's Services LAC Team Sally Gallop team Manager, and social workers Sarah Sporle and Claire Palmer. We also met with Joy Burton, Child Psychologist for Compass CAHMS.

In these meetings we discussed project concepts and how the children would best benefit. What kind of support we might need to ensure vulnerable children were protected and their experience included in the process. The LAC Team were tasked with promoting the event and recruiting foster families via social workers and their case loads. The original plan was to engage with up to 12 children and their foster parents over two days over either the Christmas or Easter holiday periods 2018. It was decided to run the workshops on the 3rd and 5th April as this would give the team enough time to circulate information. It was discussed that Christmas time was often a difficult period for the children. The Emotional Space education team produced a workshop description that outlined the practical activities planned and introduced the workshops in a playful way and NPT provided a Visual Story for the Theatre for social workers to share with foster families.

Our meeting with Joy Burton was valuable as it introduced us to the particular parameters of working with Looked After Children. This cohort is transient as children come and go within the care system and often you don't know what happens to them. A six year old may have lived within several family structures and all children will have experienced difficult situations. After care and a sense of continuity is important. It is important to understand developmental trauma and the impacts of lack of nurturing in the early stages of life. Working with professionals within the LAC Team and with children's mental health will help raise awareness for those running the workshops.

We discussed Rapunzel as a story about families, love, pain and loss, which ultimately has a happy ending. This could have resonance and it is important we protect the children during the process and emphasis the emotional journey towards positive outcomes.

We discussed how puppets are transformative objects carrying with them the capacity to illicit personal responses, which could be difficult or exposing so it would be important to ask questions that were not direct or intrusive. The workshop should give the children permission to step out of real situations into a fantasy/fairytale and that working within the story structure would help them tolerate difficult emotions like rage, sadness, hurt, abandonment by expressing them imaginatively and playfully within a safe environment.

Starting with the Rapunzel story we would develop an understanding of the narrative, which could lead to examination of emotional contexts and relationships within a family structure. Also of character archetypes including male and female, mother, father, child and fantasy characters like the enchantress/witch. We could ask questions like - What happens to the mum and dad? What or who is the enchantress? Who would make a good witch and why? What is the next chapter of the story?

We planned to have further consultation with Joy Burton in order to discuss and test workshop content, but she had left her Job working as a Art Psychotherapist for Compass Outreach Service and was unable to assist further with the project.

We met again with Sarah Sporle and Claire Palmer to discuss the plan and due to difficulties with communication and time constraints this ended up being quite close to the workshop dates originally planned. This meeting was critical in clarifying the message. We experienced some

general problems with our contact with Children's Services and understand that this often due to work load, changes within the Service and related pressures on time and resources. We were very unsure about how many children we would actually have attend the workshop right up until the last minute - the fluidity that had been built into the planning became very important as we had to be highly responsive to who turned up on the day.

Hilary and Zara developed a response in relation to contact with the LAC team and Joy Burton and the Arts Council project brief - an overview of general outcomes and content in terms of themes. Hilary was very involved in the artist's R&D, which enabled her to have a very full understanding of the whole project and it's process. Zara was involved for a day and subsequently they sat down together to draft an initial workshop outline. This included sharing space - who delivered what. The workshop design grew from Hilary's thoughts relating to the artist process and her experience and she and Zara discussed how to develop the puppetry element. The design was based on the original concept of the 2 days being consecutive - Day 1 providing an introduction with the children getting to know each other, other feet and using and responding to different materials, which would lead to more in-depth activities on Day 2. It was also thought that we would be including the carers in the activity. The team did not think it appropriate to launch into the thematic material which included family relationships without some lead in.

Zara responded with the puppetry element by incorporating elements used the Emotional Space and the Puppet R&D namely use of glove puppetry, materials to extend concepts of landscapes and use of objects to develop metaphor and symbolic relationships.

Hilary and Zara were aware they might not be able to use all of the material and built in flexibility so exercises could be adjusted or taken out on the day if needed. They wanted to explore the children's responses to the narrative of Rapunzel using a variety of physical theatre/drama and puppet theatre methodologies. The structure also needed to be fluid in order to adapt to circumstance and be led by the children.

As it transpired we only achieved 3 participating children on the first day with 2 foster parents in attendance. We were also joined by Claire Palmer and Sarah Sporle from the LAC Team. As a result the workshop plan had to change to cater for fewer participants than had been anticipated and we also decided on the day that it would be better to postpone the second workshop for a couple of weeks in order to attract more. Very helpful and active foster mum's present on that first day agreed to reach more families through their networks. We decided on a new date of the 22nd April. Hilary Thompson in consultation with a foster parent designed a flyer containing the workshop information to be sent out to great success as we attracted 9 participants accompanied by foster carers.

Both stand-alone workshops provided different perspectives working with the children and developed rich and interconnected outcomes.

Findings from the workshop development process and public engagement outcomes including:

Who engaged with the project and workshops and how did we reach them and the perceived benefits;

What did we learn and what changed during the process from the original project brief and its aims.

Workshop 1 on the 3rd April attracted 3 participants (3 girls) and Workshop 2 on the 22nd April attracted 9 participants (8 girls and 1 boy). The sessions were led by Hilary Thompson and Zara Goodfellow with Joy Haynes as helper and observer and Jonathan Lambert providing musical input. We were joined by Claire Palmer from the LAC Team for the first workshop.

This project was a learning experience for all involved and was constructive building new relationships between Norwich Puppet Theatre and the Emotional Space workshop team, Norfolk County Council's Looked After Children's Team, foster families and their networks. Moving forward there is huge potential to develop further programmes, which encourage improvements to existing relationships and discover new relationships using the puppetry and drama methodologies exemplified by this pilot. One social worker cited that the workshops provided the space to be viewed by the children in a different light:

'The first day was wonderful! Social Workers have few opportunities to do this. They saw me in a different light - they saw me as fun. The session created a new relationship between social workers and children - make or break and they decided they liked and trusted me as we'd had a shared experience.' *Claire Palmer LAC Team*

Comments from Foster parents and children include:

'Excellent - Girls so excited, helps with their confidence and self esteem' *Foster Parent*

'It has been lovely to have a little time for myself to be able to explore Norwich - Thanks' *Foster Parent*

'To do the play and have fun with the people' *Child in response to 'what was your favourite part of the day?'*



Through the process we developed direct ways of communicating with families through individual carers who had connections with local foster agencies including Anita Powers Foster Carer's Network and the National Fostering Agency.

This evaluation shows that barriers to more engagement included:

- communication problems - social workers across the 14 LAC teams county-wide were contacted to circulate information amongst their case loads, but the disconnect was that they didn't act on it;
- being time poor - weekend work for social workers is difficult and not conducive, families are busy and have planned holidays well in advance;
- developing trust - the difficulties of introducing any kind of therapeutic environment. potential and benefit of the project not clearly articulated;
- workshop structure - 2 consecutive days was too much. 2 stand alone workshops worked better as an introduction - more in-depth work could happen once trust is established;
- numbers of children per session - full cohort of 12 children would have been too much. 9 was enough and everybody got more benefit from the smaller group size. An ideal number would be 6 or 7.

We learned that developing trust and providing a framework of security was particularly important given the context and background of these children.

Through the process we developed an understanding of the importance space and how it effects the emotional states and behaviours of the children. The physical working spaces at Norwich Puppet Theatre affected the children differently depending on the activity and changes of space affected the group dynamic - there appeared to have been a security in the theatre. An unusual and magic space where the outside world is suspended with dark with focused areas. In the Octagon Studio, a more ordinary room, we are very aware of activity around and this could have been distracting. There were difficulties during one session in Workshop 1 in particular when the large group was split to work in separate spaces. Some members of the group who moved into the Octagon from the Theatre were very distracted and unfocused and the mood effected by certain personalities who were very unsettled - this could have been contributed to by the change of space and shift of focus.

Timing of the activities through the session e.g. lunch and break times needed to adhered to in order to minimise feelings of stress, manage expectations and ensure participants did not feel adrift in unfamiliar surroundings. This was shown in Workshop 2 when timings were adjusted for the lunch break put back. Changes to the timing of the session and when lunch-time happened affected the confidence of those in the group who needed a clear schedule.

Our intention was to include parents in the workshops, but this only happened at the beginning and end of each day as the children were dropped off and when they returned for the performances as they assumed the workshop was solely for the children. This is an area that would be very useful to address when planning and designing future workshops where we want to involve foster parents and children working together. If we want to engage with parents while respecting that 'time out' is also essential there should be opportunities for co-creating either at the beginning and end of each session, which are built into the planning as an expected part of the process.

It was noted by the LAC Team that the workshop leaders were 'brilliant how they managed the planning and the flexibility' but this was largely unsupported and more practical training and preparation for the workshops would have been very beneficial providing Zara and Hilary with more tools to manage the the particular needs of the children.

Social workers need to be supported through more opportunities to participate and be viewed in a positive light.

Practical recommendations for future participation include:

- using fostering agencies and networks to engage with more people county-wide;
- addressing barriers by providing information about social workers and foster parents role in the process via contact, networks and literature circulated beforehand;
- developing focused CPD where artists, educationalist and social workers can train separately and together;
- developing the workshop structure to encompass a fuller programme possibly over 6 weeks to include half day taster sessions on focused topics to build trust, relationships and confidence leading towards more in-depth participation over a few days;
- developing opportunities to perform and share work to celebrate achievement;
- limit numbers of children per session no more than 6 or 7 and include more carers - 1 or 2 from the LAC Team;
- allow flexibility in workshop content to respond to the needs of the group but stick to a schedule of breaks to eat lunch and have snacks;
- cleansing the space - allow settling time as emotions can become amplified;
- managing the structure of session and programmes of work to include a clear start taking into consideration latecomers and providing sharing of achievements at the end.



Findings from the workshop creative process and activity including:

How the children's workshops explored personal, physical and emotional boundaries, interpersonal relationships including family relationships, and communication.

How the workshops investigated the wider uses of puppetry and its value within applied contexts.

How the children's workshops developed 'Space' as a performative language and design concepts.

The original intention was that we would be working with the same children over both workshops. The plan had to be flexible as we were not sure until the day how many children would attend. Throughout the process Hilary and Zara adapted to the situation rethinking timings and activities based on the numbers and interest of the children present.

Workshop 2 was designed in the light of what had been done previously. We had hoped to build slowly over the 2 sessions an exploration of family relationships. As both workshops were introducing new participants it was important to keep the content light and relaxed and focus on building trust and relationships within the groups. Planned activities over both workshops were adjusted, extended or omitted in the light of circumstance. Examples included extending the making activities in Workshop 1 as the small group became fully immersed in design and construction. In Workshop 2 participants made a family using peg puppets and creating small box scenes, which was a deviation from the original plan designed to encourage the children to think about family structures that could be personal or imagined.



The workshop plan grew from concepts explored during an artist investigation in which a team of theatre professionals worked with master puppeteer and director Luca Ronga, whose background and passion is the simplicity and directness of glove puppetry. His unique approach is to create emotional and physical spaces in an audience's mind's eye through physical gesture. Characters and situations from the story of Rapunzel were generated from single words, such as 'family', 'terror', 'restlessness', 'solitude'. With the absence of the traditional glove puppet booth the energy and focus of the 'actor' provided the emotional counterpoint to the puppet characters and, most interestingly, playfully embodied landscapes and architecture.



Working with Looked After Children we explored developing characters and landscapes drawn from the Rapunzel story in order to create their own adaptations. The process enabled the children to confidently engage with the narrative in a variety of ways - they collaborated to create still and moving pictures with their bodies and translated this work into working with materials to make puppets and scenery. Throughout they discussed story elements, who the characters were and what they and the places they inhabited might look like. They explored using objects as symbolic of these characters and condensed the narrative into physical wordless interpretations.

This process over the two workshops involved a sequence of activities:

1. Reading the Brother Grimm's version followed by discussion;
2. Improvising individual and group physical responses including still pictures in response to concepts, characters and landscapes stimulated by single words and phrases from the text;
3. Visualising these elements using materials to construct puppets and scenery;
4. Exploring objects as symbolic of character;
5. Devising melodrama style comic performances using gesture and text ;
6. Performing to friends and family.

Benefits - the creative activity developed:

- understanding of story elements and how they might relate to real life;
- empathy with characters and their situations;
- confidence and security to express opinions whatever they might be;

- confidence to work independently;
- collaborative working towards shared goals;
- imaginative ability to translate abstract concepts either vocally or through physical demonstration;
- concentration skills listening, responding and seeing a process through
- a sense of self-worth - having their achievements celebrated;
- perception of others - seeing people in a different light;
- trust and the capacity to experience something new without fear;
- confidence and self esteem through sharing work via performance.

Benefits - the use of puppetry developed:

- imaginative and practical abilities to translate abstract concepts into real things through making and performance using objects and materials;
- imaginative and intellectual ability to use objects and materials to symbolically express complex concepts and characteristics physically and vocally;
- self-empowerment and confidence to face difficult emotions and situations playfully - taking the focus away from oneself and being able to channel energies through an object/puppet;
- ability to share space with others and collaborate to develop materials together;
- decision making and problem solving - you choose what you want your puppet or set to look like, design and select materials accordingly;
- practical skills - basic construction and dextral skills;
- knowledge about how to use simple tools and materials;
- confidence and self esteem through improvisation with and through a puppet.

In the time the children engaged with the narrative in a variety of ways - during making activities they discussed characters and situations together, which informed approaches and selection of materials. Interpretation of the emotional content and relationships between the characters became less of a focus with the story often taken at face value. They enjoyed the certainty of the tale, although there was some discussion about the motivation of the enchantress/witch and her relationship with Rapunzel.

The children were quiet and focused in both sessions listening to the story being read this formed the basis of their exploration. There was noticeably more focus on the middle to end of the story. The children were fascinated by the desert location and Rapunzel's twin children. They also focused on the tower with Rapunzel meeting the King's Son and the iconic scene of the long hair falling from the little window. They were interested in the drama of the witch discovering Rapunzel's pregnancy and cutting off her hair and the King's Son's eyes being pierced by the sharp brambles as fell from the tower. They wanted to get the beginning over and done with - the parents being portrayed as a stupid and vacant.

Attitudes to the character of the enchantress was that she was evil and they embraced the dark nature of the character - they also discussed that maybe she wasn't that bad really, but looking after Rapunzel by shutting her in the tower. I video interviewed the puppet characters after the performances during Workshop 1 and suddenly she became the 'social worker' looking after 102 children or a baby trader Cruella De Ville type character deliberately tricking people for her own ends. She was many faceted and it was interesting that they could absorb and comprehend the ambiguity.

Over both workshops the icebreaker games at the start and the physical work loosened everybody up and channeled desperate energies focusing on collaboration and communication. The invitation to play helped with feelings of self consciousness and they became physically imaginative working together providing insightful interpretations moving from story concepts of a cottage, eating food and a tower etc. to abstract concepts such as 'freedom' and 'imprisonment'. One girl in particular had very high energy levels, but was motivated by the material contributing physically and wholeheartedly.

During Workshop 1 the physical retellings of the story it was interesting that the adults in the group became the structures - the walls of the house and surrounding the garden and the tower and the children the characters. In Workshop 1 this was partly down to limited numbers, but also came about naturally. They were inspired by the task to create characters and landscapes with their bodies; partnering up to make one entity; Rapunzel for example who needed two people to create the long hair.

They translated this work into using materials during the following construction sessions. The three girls became fully immersed into the design and construction. They explored how to visualise the three landscapes described in the story by building:

- A beautiful walled garden with a woven fence surrounding coloured paper flowers and a huge rampion plant in the centre;
- A 3D cardboard structure for the tower - it was important and be able to physically climb in and out of it. It became like a puppet booth or Wendy House with space for all the children and a window through which to play the puppets;
- Geometric pyramids on a flat yellow open landscape became the desert - cinematic and biblical with the two lost souls of Rapunzel and the King's Son reuniting in a wasteland.

I was very inspired by this work and have incorporated aspects in to the development of design for the proposed touring production of Rapunzel.



In this workshop the children made simple glove puppets and decided that Rapunzel needed to be two separate puppets - one with long flowing golden hair and one with short brown hair to properly show the character transformation. The plants/forest were acted and created using materials and given importance through scale e.g. the Rampion in the enchantresses garden was far bigger than the forest trees. It was interesting how consideration of characters and landscapes converged at times with the 'scenery' acquiring emotional contexts - the brambles were sharp and fierce, animated and alive and the tower safe and secure with time spent working out how to keep the entrance shut.

Workshop 2 introduced the group to melodrama, which involved splitting the larger group into two and using the separate spaces of the Octagon Studio and Main Theatre to work in. This caused some difficulties for one of the groups due to changes in the timing of the session, change of working space and personalities within the group.

Both groups devised pieces based on condensed versions of the Rapunzel narrative focusing on action and stock characters. They benefited from the morning's work developing still pictures from word stimuli and collaborated to create physical landscapes using their bodies - some quite abstract associations emerged with the plant being enacted by one of the group being eaten by the woman, brambles as before acted as characters with sharp fingers poking out the King's Son's eyes. One group added silent movie style written captions - 'Boo' and 'Ahhh' (to encourage audience participation) 'The Desert' and 'They lived happily ever after'.

The performances were very different - hugely enjoyed and very energetic. They were humorous and moving at once as the children managed to convey deep emotion and difficult circumstances with a lightness of touch and authenticity.

Exploring objects as symbolic of character in Workshop 2 the group responded to a collection of found objects placed in the centre of a circle. It was amazing how this work engaged the older children and particularly the ones who had perhaps found the melodrama and acting work difficult. The choice of objects to denote characters from the story were insightful. The change of dynamic was also interesting as the adults joined the children in the exercise on an equal level and not in the capacity of leader/instructors. This did throw up some issues with one child who chose to dip in and out of the activity and it was felt that an somebody standing outside the process to manage this disruption would have been helpful.

This exercise was extremely useful with regard to developing narrative understanding of the story through the eyes of the children. There were some powerful abstract associations which included:

- padlock and key as the enchantress - safety and security, but also imprisonment
- small doll's house wicker chair as the mother - 'because she is lazy!'
- small connected mirrors as the twin children
- cheese grater as the brambles - feeling of being cut
- rope as Rapunzel 'because of her hair twisting about her'
- string as Rapunzel 'because she is thin and naive'
- small empty box as the father 'because he doesn't know what he wants'
- hand whisk as Rapunzel with her hair cut off - 'she is changed by the experience'
- battered leather hand bag as Repunzel 'because although she is young she has suffered a lot'.

Making families of puppets in Workshop 2 involved creating family groups using pegs and constructing box environments/scenes for them to play in. We hadn't had the time to build more trusting relationships where the children might feel comfortable enough to improvise from their own experience so in the majority they stuck to creating the family of characters from the Rapunzel story, apart from the one boy in the group who decided on a naked peg and a girl in a pink dress!

It took the group a while to settle and needed more time than had been planned for. The majority really enjoyed the session and got on well together. One member of the group was very unhappy and wanted to go home almost immediately. She did not want to co-operate and withdrew completely from the process. She was very anxious to be with her foster mother and as soon as she returned left the room to join her.

The performances at the end of the day for both workshops offered opportunity to release energy, which was much needed by some members of the group. They were very focused on being able to perform and show their foster parents what they had been doing - this was reflected in their feedback as the majority cited this as being their favourite part of the day.

They were introduced to the idea of an audience and showing the story through the medium and materials rather than telling it. After Workshop 1 the three girls choose to present the whole story and were really confident and free this could have been due to the size of the group and the fact they all knew each other. The balance of support was good with 3 adults to the 3 children. There was no bossing around - an atmosphere of openness where anything could happen.

Workshops 2's performances included one of the melodrama pieces - interestingly one of the members of the group who had been most confident during the development withdrew and became shy not wanting to perform in front of the larger audience. The programme also included improvised group performances with the peg doll families and scenery, which were fun and full of laughter.

The addition of music provided by Jonathan Lambert was sensitive and also flexible. It wasn't the focus and there had not been time for the children to experiment with making sounds so Jonathan's music and sounds accompanied the performances in an improvisatory way. There were aware that he was there playing along with them and the children enjoyed his presence. Would be interesting in future to include a percussion session so children could explore creating sounds for the story.

At the end of Workshop 1 I videoed short puppet interviews - the puppets were asked a series of questions about their characters and their part in the story. This was fun and offered the opportunity for the children to speak through the puppets about their experience. Although responses resulted from the narrative they also added their own interpretations.

The children were able to take puppets they created away with them as memory of the session. This was important as they had invested time and energy into making things. They were asked about what to do with the items they did not want or were too big to take away - should they be thrown away? They were really mindful of the reuse of materials and asked if they could be used next time.

Next Steps

The scope of the project The Emotional Space and the Puppet R&D was very broad involving several activities and engaging with cross-sector participants and stakeholders. It was important for me to plan inter-connection between the project activities and observe how the artists investigation and the children's workshop positively fed off each other as part of the research process.

The Looked After Children's workshops benefitted from being conceived and planned in the light of the artists investigation with workshop leaders Hilary Lewis and Zara Goodfellow translating the core elements into suitable activities for the children. The CPD opportunity 'The Emotional Space' led by Director Luca Ronga used aspects of the children's creative work particularly with regard to developing a physical and performative language and dynamic use of materials to convey emotional landscapes. I have collected rich information from all aspects of the project that will provide the basis for the design and development of a new touring production for children.

In order to develop further and offer more in-depth work with fuller outcomes, seek further partnerships and funding support I feel it is necessary to separate the Emotional Space and the Puppet R&D project elements into three focused stands using this combined research as foundation for each:

- development of new touring production for children working with production partners;
- development of CPD into using objects and puppets as metaphor and 'Space' as a performative language;
- development of education and participation programmes using puppetry with Looked After Children, their foster families and social workers.

The Rapunzel Children's Workshops built relationships, developed communication, shared working knowledges and mutual understanding amongst it's partners and participants. The two day

workshop tested the ground providing a successful introduction to the potential, positive impacts and benefits of telling stories using drama and puppetry methodologies with children who have had challenging life experiences.

Evaluation conversations with the LAC Team members highlighted the importance of this work in also improving existing relationships and discovering new relationships between social workers, carers and children. The work is not only hugely beneficial for the children involved, but for all those adults who surround and support them by providing a positive, fun space to meet and co-create. The limited time-frame of this project allowed the team to discover this potential, learn from the process and collect evidence that could be the foundation for a more in-depth working.

Considering findings from this report I would like to continue to work with Norwich Puppet Theatre in partnership with the NCC LAC Team and other partners to build a case for funding future initiatives using puppetry as the central focus working with Looked After Children, social workers and foster families and artist/educators.

This work would be beneficial to participants in all the ways outlined but also help address pre-perceptions and negative associations in the wider world about children in care and the system that supports them.

Learning from the Emotional Space and the Puppet R&D next steps could be informed by:

- better understanding and addressing barriers to arts engagement across the care community;
- developing connections with foster family networks, agencies and child mental health providers;
- offering taster sessions to build new relationships, trust and confidence;
- developing more opportunities to engage county-wide at various new venues;
- offering cross-sector CPD for artists, educators and social workers;
- developing approaches and a 'toolkit' including activities supported by social and children's mental health research for wider use, bench-marking quality arts practice for this sector;
- building upon and broadening out from this research to include exploration of different stories using drama and puppetry methodologies;
- extending research and gaining recognition of Puppetry & Play as a therapy;
- providing Looked After Children with a voice and the tools to visualise and present their own 'life stories' through puppetry;
- developing perceptions in the wider world via children creating performances that communicates their experience to share with peers and at school etc;
- providing social workers and foster carers tools and experiences, which enable them to engage in and promote creative expression alongside the children.

