

**THE HEART OF THE PUPPET: FINDING INNER LIFE
AND TRUTH THROUGH PUPPET THEATRE**

Honors Thesis

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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Abstract

This project is an exploration of my personal journey with puppet theatre and my own philosophies surrounding it. The medium through which I explore these ideas is the final production of a fully realized scene from the play *Ubu and the Truth Commission* by Jane Taylor. This process is primarily documented through a director's prompt book which includes information on play selection, puppet designs, puppet construction photos, dramaturgical research, script analysis, process logs, blocking notes, and inspirational images needed to conduct the scene. Once I reflected on this process and compiled all of my materials, I decided to share it with others outside of the theatre department at the Undergraduate Research Symposium at Salem State University. This thesis is important to me because it has allowed me to explore my own artistic range as a director and a designer. This thesis is important to my discipline and my community because it exposes people to the art form of puppet theatre which they may not have come across in such a way otherwise.

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Summary

I first encountered puppet theatre in the summer of 2013. I arrived at the first rehearsal for a show I had been cast in at Salem State University. I knew very little about the show itself other than it was about the writer Franz Kafka and that it would involve puppets. Our playwright/director Peter Sampieri would later go on to title the show *Kafka in Tel Aviv*. It was during this show's process that I fell absolutely in love with puppet theatre. Peter taught us so much about puppetry technique in that first week. We all lovingly referred to it as "puppet boot camp".

Throughout this week I learned so much about puppet manipulation and, also about myself and those around me. We began with the one of the most important elements of puppeteering; breath. Before we were even given puppets we were each asked to select any random object in the room and "make it breathe". Through this activity we discovered what would become our cast's catchphrase: "everything breathes". We found that by adding breath into an object, we could make anything into a puppet. This is because we associate breath with life. If something appears to be breathing then we can believe it is alive.

"If the audience doesn't see the puppet breathing, isn't aware that there is breath in the figure, they hold their breath for the puppet. After a while you get tired of doing that so the image of the figure dissolves to a degree. So, the breath as a method of keeping the puppet alive is very important" (Kohler, "Breathing Puppets").

Breath was an essential part of our puppeteer training. We did endless hours of tai chi and yoga to prepare ourselves. These activities allowed us to gain control over our own breathing so that we may then be able to control the puppet's breathing.

Once our ensemble of puppeteers had been rehearsing for longer and longer we grew more comfortable with the art form and with each other. One thing I will always remember about *Kafka in Tel Aviv* is how close our cast was. This may have been a result of the actual physical closeness that was required of us in order to operate each puppet. Three people controlling a two-foot puppet



*Production Photo of me (center) in Kafka in Tel Aviv, fall 2013 Photo Credit: Christopher Morris
Puppet Design: Jane Hillier-Walkowiak*

doesn't allow a lot of room for personal space so, naturally our cast bond was extremely strong one. The act of puppeteering also cultivated a strong sense of teamwork amongst us. When operating puppets in unison listening is key. Each puppeteer must listen to one another and no one is more important than the other. Each puppeteer is an essential part of creating the life of the puppet. This was reflected in how our cast treated each other throughout the process.

What was most memorable about my time spent on *Kafka in Tel Aviv* was when I was actually puppeteering. The idea that if we didn't live and breathe then the puppet didn't live and breathe was such a profound and special concept for me. I felt as though I was part of a temporary creation of life. A life that ceased to exist without my fellow puppeteers and me. It was both magical and spiritual. I say spiritual because it felt as

though my body was no longer my own and that my spirit was a part of something bigger and more profound. Perhaps I can sum up my feelings in the words of professional puppeteer Martin P. Robinson, “When a puppet is true and good and meaningful it’s the soul of the puppeteer that you’re seeing” (*Being Elmo*, 2011).

As *Kafka in Tel Aviv* finally came to an end I continued on with my studies. I acted in several productions to come in the next year but, none of them felt quite the same as the work that I had been a part of when I was a puppeteer. I was creating art, but not in the authentic way that I had come to find with puppets. When one watches an actor onstage, they know that the actor is not the character they are attempting to portray. They know that the actor has a life outside of this story and will likely return home to their own lives after their performance is done. The puppet however does not have that block. The puppet exists only for the stories they tell. There is no outside life of a puppet. A puppet lives for the stories it tells. I find this to be incredibly truthful and authentic.

As the spring of my junior year rolled around it was time for me to start thinking about my honors thesis. My mind lingered to many possible options but, then one of my friends mentioned puppet theatre and how much I loved being in *Kafka in Tel Aviv* my sophomore year. From there I could think of nothing else. I knew I had found the thing I wanted to examine and create over the next year and the rest of my life. I wanted to explore my own personal journey and philosophies surrounding puppet theatre. I decided to begin my work by experiencing the best of what the puppet world had to offer me. When I secured my thesis advisor, Peter Sampieri, he sat me down and told me I was in one of the best areas of the country to study puppet theatre. He gave me a lot of places to

begin researching, but one stood out from all the rest, Bread and Puppet Theater. I was quickly fascinated by this company for its other worldly designs, rich political history, and surprisingly close proximity to where I lived.



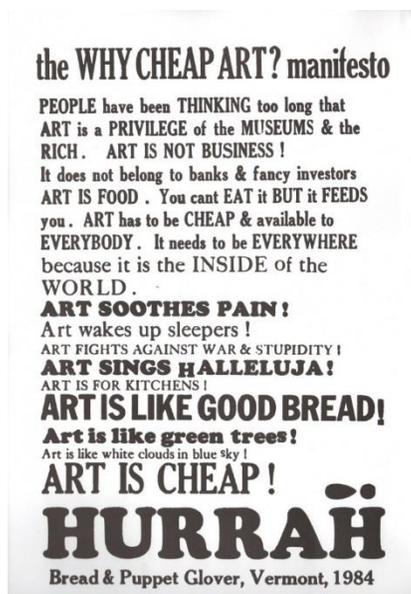
Me at Bread and Puppet Theater Summer 2015

When I learned of their summer

residence and performance season at their home in Glover, Vermont, I quickly planned a visit. On September 5th 2015 I traveled with two of my friends to Bread and Puppet Theater in Glover, Vermont. It was everything I could have imagined and more.

The company was founded by Peter Schumann in 1963. He headed a small rented out space on Delancey Street in New York, where he and a few friends put on weekly performances. With the help of Bob Nichols and Mabel Denison, Schumann converted their small space into a theater and puppet museum. It was in 1963 that Peter and his wife Elka decided to name the theatre the Bread and Puppet Theater based off of Schumann's philosophy, "theatre is like bread, more like a necessity" (Oxford). The name also stems from the company's practice in sharing bread with its audience after every show.

Schuman makes the bread on site and it comes from a family recipe. It is a thick barley bread that they serve. Elka Schumann says, "Our bread is a bit difficult to chew on, and



Cheap Art Manifesto no. 1

we hope that our shows are the same way.” Bread and Puppet’s sustainable art philosophy began publishing in 1984 with a series of “Cheap Art Manifestos” published at Bread and Puppet Press (see figure left). Here he encapsulates his ideas surrounding cheap art or course art.

“Our glorious civilization glorifies itself with what it calls high art. Puppeteers have no soul-searching trouble in that respect. What we produce has no

ambition to be high art. Low art is what we make and what we want. Not the Fine Arts—the Coarse Arts are what we use” (Schumann).

It was 1964 when Bread and Puppet Theater really stepped into the public eye. Elka's personal background of political activism led the theatre to bring its presence into the protests of the Vietnam War. The performances that were put on brought up issues of urban politics and social issues during this time.

Bread and Puppet Theater made its move to Glover, VT in 1975 after a five year residency at Goddard College. The property includes a large two-story barn that acts as a museum and storage facility for all of the puppets as well as a gift shop and printing press. Behind the museum stands Paper Maché Cathedral, a dirt floor barn that houses performances of new work that the theater’s core group of performers devise together. The stories range from a variety of material, all in keeping with the theater’s philosophy of authenticity.

“We make our stories from scratch (of course); from snow; newspapers; fairytales; trees; winds; pies; bread; gardens; the bible; radio reports; travels economic summits; wars; history; liars; grandparents; freedom; tears; conversations on the bus; our children; and many more and all things we live with” (Martens, 13).

Many local community members often join into the company of actors and puppeteers for these special performances. Bread and Puppet calls for volunteers to help with nearly all of their shows and parades.

Across the street from the museum sits the “Cheap Art Bus”, a rundown school bus which permanently resides at the side of Route 122. This acts as a gallery for local artist. The pieces range from oil paintings to milk carton wallets to small pocket sketches, and their prices range anywhere between one cent and twenty dollars. Before the bus came to its final grassy resting place, Schumann and his cohorts would drive it around to neighboring Vermont towns bringing “cheap art” to the people.

Deeper into the woods beyond the bus stands Bread and Puppet’s Circus Field. The wide open field showcases the company’s massive puppets that stand over 15 feet tall. The audience sits upon the large sloping hill that faces the field in a thrust. People travel from near and far to see these shows at circus field, they are held every Sunday in the summer time.

I came home from Bread and Puppet Theater inspired and looking for random objects to transform into puppets. As school began in the following week I pined to begin work on whatever it was my theoretical “puppet thesis” would be exactly. Peter and I

eventually decided to combine my puppetry endeavors with my work in his Directing II class for the fall of 2015. I spent several weeks designing and constructing my puppets, selecting actors and training them as puppeteers, and eventually creating a full-scale 10-minute showing of a scene from *Ubu and the Truth Commission* by Jane Taylor. I go further into this process in my director's prompt book which follows this section.

Once the work for this was done I compiled all of my resources, process photos, and puppet designs and presented them at the 2016 Undergraduate Research Symposium at Salem State



My display at the Undergraduate Research Symposium featuring puppeteers Zachary Hall and Caitlyn Jones

University. It was so rewarding to showcase my work with people outside of my field. I was able to explain to each person in a tangible way what inspires me about puppet theatre.

Sharing my work at the symposium several months after my Directing II presentation was invigorating in a way. It reminded me of the spiritual feeling of lending part of my life so that a puppet could live for an instant. Reflecting on all of this now it sort of feels like a dream. I find this extremely appropriate. For as director Eric Bass puts so eloquently, "Puppets are our dreams, our memories, and we, inversely, can be theirs." Thank you for being a part of my dream.

Director's Prompt Book: *Ubu and the Truth Commission*

Dramaturgical Research

Contributors: Jane Taylor, William Kentridge, Handspring Puppet Company

Jane Taylor

Born 19 April 1956, Jane Taylor is a South African playwright and poet. Since 1987 she has been a key leader in anti-apartheid literature. Notably, she curated an exhibition entitled "Fault Lines," at Cape Town Castle. This was a response to The Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She continued to provoke conversation surrounding the TRC when she later collaborated with William Kentridge and Handspring Puppet Company to create *Ubu and the Truth Commission*.

William Kentridge

Born 28 April 1955, William Kentridge is a South African artist and animator. His wife Felicia Geffen and he were each attorneys who represented victims of apartheid government. Kentridge graduated from the University of the Witwatersrand with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Politics and African Studies. He later received a diploma in Fine Arts from the Johannesburg Art Foundation. His artwork helped spark conversation surrounding the TRC of South Africa. He created the animations used in the original production of *Ubu and the Truth Commission*. He also directed the original production as well as the 2014 revival.

Handspring Puppet Company

Founded in 1981 in Cape Town, South Africa by Artistic Director Adrian Kohler and Executive Producer Basil Jones. Handspring's work has been presented in more than 30

countries around the world. Most noted for their conception of *War Horse*, Handspring Puppet Company erected the beautiful puppets of *Ubu and the Truth Commission*. Their designs range from small humanoid tabletop puppets to mischievous creatures to the haunting automated vulture.

Production History

“*Ubu and the Truth Commission* was first showcased at The Laboratory, The Market Theatre, Johannesburg on 26 May 1997, directed by William Kentridge. The play received its world premiere at the Kunstfest in Weimar, Germany, on 17 June 1997, and was staged shortly afterwards at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown. It toured to Italy, France and the United States (New York, Washington and Los Angeles) in 1998 and featured at the London International Festival of Theatre in 1999” (Kentridge, 28). The production had a revival in 2014 as a part of the Edinburgh International Festival.

*For more dramaturgical videos and scratching see my blog at:

<http://thesmellofbloodanddynamite.tumblr.com/f>

Script Analysis

I. Given Circumstances

A. Environmental facts

1. Geographical Location, including climate

Cape Town, South Africa, the days are scorching hot and the nights are dry and cold. The wind whispers through the shadows.

2. Date: Year, season, time of day

1996, summer, time ranges from near dawn to midnight.

3. Economic environment

Poor, large division between classes. Pay inequality is significant between different races.

4. Political environment

Newly a full democracy. South Africa held its first democratic elections in April of 1994. This vote passed the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act. This abolished apartheid government and established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

5. Social Environment

Digital documentation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has allowed its testimonies to reach far reaches of the globe. Tensions are high.

6. Religious Environment

Predominantly Christian nation. However, Pa and Ma are godless.

B. Previous Action

Pa is a political criminal, he had abused and brutally killed many people. Ma is suspicious of Pa's strange actions at home. She believes that he is being unfaithful to her; she is oblivious to Pa's true actions. Pa is under pressure for fear of his criminal actions being exposed. Victims of the horrendous abuse they have suffered under apartheid are coming forward with their stories to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

C. Polar attitudes of characters

Pa Ubu

1. How do I feel about my world?

Before: Afraid, angry, ashamed, power hungry

After: Triumphant

2. How do I feel about my relationships?

Before: Ma is incompetent, a fool, she can never understand why I do the things I do.

After: Ma has proven herself useful to me. I shall embrace her as we begin this new future together.

3. How do I feel about myself?

Before: I am a good person who happens to do bad things. It's all a part of the job.

I am a hard worker and I deserve respect.

After: I can get away with murder. I am a sly and clever man and I should be proud of my cunning.

4. How do I feel about my prospects?

Before: I don't deserve punishment, but I fear the worst. I must conceal the truth.

After: The truth has set me free. I will no longer fear perjury for my sins, I must simply make them the sins of others.

Ma Ubu

1. How do I feel about my world?

Before: Dissatisfied, dreamy

2. After: Hopeful, content

3. How do I feel about my relationships?

Before: Dissatisfied, Pa might be unfaithful to me and I cannot stand it. I crave his attention.

After: happy, my husband is an important figure in our former government. He acted valiantly in the line of duty and now we are off to an exciting new future together.

4. How do I feel about myself?

Before: Terrible, what is wrong with me? Why can't I gain control of my life?

Why can't I get to the place I want to be?

After: Happy, I have practically been made famous following my media spot and my husband's testimony.

5. How do I feel about my prospects?

Before: Hopeful, I believe I can change my situation.

After: Gratiified, I am going to a new place where I believe I will do what I please to.

II. Dialogue

A. The words used by Pa, Ma, and Shadow are very vague and sparse. This creates the air of mystery with all three of them. We are never quite sure what is lurking within them. As Pa says to the Shadow, “How economically expressed” (Taylor, 55). Pa also refers to himself in the third person quite often, “Ma. We are hungry” (Taylor, 55). His use of the third person represents his need for deflection of blame. He hides behind the collective “we” in order to avoid facing the consequences for what he has done.

On the other hand, the Witness is very vivid in her imagery. She follows a deep through line in her speech. Her testimony is based on true life accounts from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She speaks in native Zulu and her words are translated for us into English. Despite this, she is the character who speaks most truthfully in the entire scene. She is the voice we must believe.

III. Dramatic Action

A. Title of Units

- a. Prologue: A day in the life of Pa Ubu
- b. Ma smells blood
- c. The witness stand/a mother’s fight
- d. Pa’s lament
- e. Some words of wisdom

B. Detailed breakdown of Action

- a. **Prologue: A day in the life of Pa Ubu:** In shadow we see Pa wake up, plot with his dog Brutus, and torment several innocent people. He is engulfed by darkness.

- b. **Ma smells blood:** Ma talks of her suspicions regarding Pa's nighttime activities.
- c. **The witness stand/a mother's fight:** A small witness puppet is brought out. She testifies about the people who attacked her and her son. She tells of her final moments with her son.
- d. **Pa's lament:** Pa searches for Ma to no success
- e. **Some words of wisdom:** Pa is visited by a shadow who gives him some advice regarding what he should do politically.

C. Summary of action

Pa goes about his day of aggression and abuse while Ma remains at home believing he is with another woman. This action is contrasted by the testimony of the witness. The Shadow arrives and advises Pa.

IV. Idea

A. Meaning of the Title

The "Truth Commission" part of the title refers to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (TRC), which the play is responding to. "Ubu" is a reference to Pa Ubu, a character originally created by Alfred Jarry. He is featured in many of Jarry's works (*Ubu Roi*, *Ubu Cocu*) as a mischievous and satirical trouble making political tyrant. Taylor uses this character to point out dark nature of the political crimes committed during apartheid and the media circus that surrounded the TRC trials.

B. Philosophical statement in dialogue

"We have nothing to be ashamed of. We were only doing our job!" (Taylor, 55).

- C. How does the idea emerge from the *outcome of the struggle* undergone by characters—how it turns out for them?

Pa Ubu ultimately decides to tell his own version of the truth and betrays his dog Brutus. Ma tells the truth to gain fame and fortune. The witnesses tell the truth to gain comfort and reparations for the atrocities done to them. In the end, Pa is granted amnesty and he and Ma ride away into the sunset together.

- D. Why is this scene in the play? Could the play do without it, why or why not?

This scene is a lot of things to the play. It holds an important witness testimony that is based on true accounts. That is a piece of someone who this play needs to be honored. The visit of the Shadow is essential because it triggers Pa's actions for the rest of the play, leading to the ending when he betrays Brutus.

V. Moods After the number of each unit, express mood for that unit in 2 categories

A. Mood adjective list

- a. Dark, dissonant/loud, damp, burnt, overwhelming
- b. Cold, sharp, metallic, moldy
- c. Formal, sparse, sterile, ominous
- d. Intimate, dreadful, bloody, warm, salty, flood of words
- e. Bare, musky, clammy, whisky, whining
- f. Big, looming, silky, oil, fluctuation, vomit

B. A mood image

- a. Dark circus
- b. Waking from a dream
- c. Interrogation room

- d. Church confessional/therapy
- e. Drunk mother
- f. Nightmare

Personal Statement

In my directing career thus far I have taken Directing I, where I directed a scene from *Red* by John Logan. I have also had many opportunities to assistant direct shows such as *Port* by Simon Stephens with the Student Theatre Ensemble. I have also assistant directed through internships at high schools, as well as at my job where I teach children at a performing arts camp. It has been quite some time since I have gotten to direct a show by myself. *Ubu and the Truth Commission* is a highly visual show. Being both a dancer and a puppeteer, it is natural that I gravitated towards it. I recall first reading this play in my World Drama class a year ago. I instantly knew that I needed to direct this piece: it is something very different and special. The multiple worlds of the play were particularly appealing to me. The human world, the puppet world, and the animation world all exist together. I see the worlds as being in conflict throughout the play. Each one has a certain level of truth within it. The human world seems to be living in its own reality and constantly represses and conceals the truth. The puppet world attempts to reveal the truth and holds authenticity in its form and material. The animated world is one where the truth is played out without hesitation.

Social Relevance

Ubu and the Truth Commission was conceived in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (TRC). This committee was assembled in 1995 following the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act which abolished apartheid. The TRC was made to air grievances, dictate punishments, and hopefully give a voice to those who were wronged during the many years of apartheid. However, the effectiveness of the committee has been widely criticized and questioned; Taylor's play does the same. Does bringing to light these atrocities help those who have bared witness to them? Why are some perpetrators granted political amnesty for their horrendous acts? What happens when we fully disclose the truth?

We are still living in a flawed political system in the United States. Institutionalized oppression of black populations is a huge issue today, especially at the hands of the police. There are cases all over the country of police brutality, particularly against black males. In many of these cases the police officers are seen as "acting in the line of duty" and never face repercussions for their actions. In some cases there is even video documentation of the brutality and still nothing is done. My audience needs to see this show because it is effecting our local and global society.

Logistics of Actors

Cast:

Pa Ubu- Zachary Reardon

Ma Ubu- Caitlyn Jones

Translator- Tristan Burke

Puppeteers- Ayako Tanigaito, Caitlyn Jones, Tristan Burke, Zachary Hall

I did not hold auditions for my scene because I knew that I wanted to work with people whom I enjoy working with and who would also be excited to work with me. I chose Zack R., Caitlyn, Zach H., and Ayako because I have worked with them all personally and know that each of them are extremely dedicated. Tristan was a last minute addition.

One of my puppets was growing too large for the size of my cast. So, I asked David Allen George who he would recommend among the freshmen actors he had in class, and he recommended Tristan. I am happy with my cast because they are all open and enthusiastic about diving into this new world of puppet theatre with me.

Concept Statement

My concept that I wish to explore in my selection from *Ubu and the Truth Commission* is that puppets are the vessels that hold truth within them. Each form of puppet used reveals a piece of Pa Ubu's life that he is hiding away. First, the shadow puppets reveal his merciless killings and wrong doings. Then the witness puppet exposes the true human effect that Pa Ubu's actions are having on his victims. Finally, the giant shadow puppet represents the growth of Pa's lies. He has hidden the truth more and more so that his lies have grown and expanded stretching to the point where they over take him. The truth has been concealed so much that it can no longer be contained by the shadow screen. The truth emerges into the third dimension and eventually engulfs him. In my excerpt from *Ubu and the Truth Commission*, Pa Ubu does not ride away into the sunset being granted amnesty, he is taken down by what he has done. In this case, the truth certainly does not set him free.

Scratching/Process Photos & Videos

“Scratching” is a term coined by choreographer Twyla Tharp. It refers to the influences outside of one’s own work that inspire it. My “scratching” for this project consist of photographs, videos, and artwork. These, as well as my process photos and video from my puppet construction and rehearsal process can be found online*.

*See my blog at <http://thesmellofbloodanddynamite.tumblr.com/>

Director's Journal

Rehearsal #1

10/13/15

9:00am-10:00am

Location: Ellison campus Center Underground Room

Attendance: Full Company

Today we met and did an extensive warm-up which included yoga and Tai Chi. Then I put my actors to work, having them find an object in the room to animate and bring to life. I was thoroughly impressed by everyone's enthusiasm and willingness to jump right into puppeteering. Then I took out my practice puppets and demonstrated some basics. Then everyone took a turn at making the puppet stand, breathe, and scan the room.

Rehearsal #2

10/20/15

9:00am-10:00am

Location: Ellison Campus Center Underground Room

Attendance: Ayako and Caitlyn

Today I took the opportunity to work with two of my puppeteers who are new to puppetry. We did a yoga warm-up focusing on activating our breathing. Then we got to work with the practice puppets, reviewing certain moves that I want to utilize in performance. For example, having the puppet enter from offstage, discovering something

and moving towards it on an inhale, bringing the puppet to its knees on an exhale, rising from the knees on an inhale. Then I had them operate the puppet together. It was amazing to see that once they did this the movements of the puppet flowed with much more ease than when they were working individually.

Rehearsal #3

9:00am-10:00am

10/27/15

Location: Ellison Campus Center Underground Room

Attendance: Full Company

Today we had a full read-through of the scene. Then we reviewed table top puppet basics (standing, walking, kneeling, and scanning the room). Then we played a game of “captions” where we worked on syncing the puppet’s movements and words together. We will use this work as we head into moments where puppets have text to speak within the scene.

Rehearsal #4

11/4/15

4:00pm-5:15pm

Location: Ellison Campus Center Games Room

Attendance: Full Company

Today we reviewed table top basics. Then we began staging the prologue. We worked on a white wall with various flashlights. We found some great moments with Pa stomping some farmers and sending his dogs to go kill people. I have decided to set this opening moment to “God’s Away on Business” by Tom Waits. It starts off the scene with a devious quality and underscores the violence and goofiness of the prologue.

Rehearsal #5

11/23/15

11:00am-11:30am

Location: Honors Center

Attendance: Caitlyn

I met with Caitlyn briefly today to teach her the pronunciation of the witness testimony. The words are in a form of Zulu so I showed her some instructional tips that I found in my research. Once she understood the sounds for all of the vowels, consonants, and clicks we read through all of her dialogue and wrote everything down phonetically. This gave Caitlyn a sense for what she would be dealing with linguistically before we got to table work.

Rehearsal #6

11/25/15

4:00pm-5:15pm

Location: Ellison Campus Center Metro Room

Attendance: Full Company

Today we finished staging the prologue. We added a moment of Zack R. dousing Tristian in petrol and burning him, as well as Zach H. engulfing Zack R. in a giant shadow. I think this last moment will fit nicely because it foreshadows what is yet to come (the giant shadow) and it works well with my concept statement of the truth overcoming Pa Ubu.

Rehearsal #7

11/30/15

1:00pm-1:30pm

Location: Honors Center

Attendance: Caitlyn

Today I met with Caitlyn and we went over her witness dialogue, this time talking about beat structure, action verbs, and breath. We decided that it would be easiest for her to deliver the words properly if she did not have to operate the witness puppet at the same time. I plan to have Ayako and Zach H. operate it while Caitlyn rests her hands on their shoulders and speaks the text.

Rehearsal #8

12/2/15

3:30pm-5:00pm

Location: Ellison Campus Center Underground Room

Attendance: Ayako, Caitlyn, Zach H., Tristan

Today we began work with the “Shadow” puppet. I’ve named him Brian. He is a giant head that measures roughly 5’7”x 3’5”. He has silk fabric arms that stretch about 10 feet wide. He will eventually have large claw-like hands that will measure roughly 2’ x 1’3”, but we did not incorporate them in this rehearsal. We began with a short physical and vocal warm-up which included some Tai Chi. Then I had each of the puppeteers cradle the head of the puppet together and make him breathe while initialing from the legs. Once they had achieved this at a slow tempo, I had them increase the speed. Then we turned the head upright with Zach H. controlling the base of the head and Tristian using a dowel to support the weight from the top of the head. We played with eye focus and movement of the head, attempting the make it float. Then we added the arms, Ayako operating the right and Caitlyn on the left. We had the form float for a bit with everyone ascending their movements on the inhale and descending on the exhale, but it didn’t look quite right. We decided that the arms should ascend as the head descends while it floats. We tried this out and began to add text, but the synchronization was proving to be very difficult. So, I had everyone sit down and go through their text in unison together to get a sense of where the breathing should be placed. Caitlyn was struggling to grasp the motion of the arms in relation to the head. So, I had each actor sit up with a straight spine and their arms at their sides and inhale. Then as they exhaled, I had them contract their spines curving in and at the same time lift their arms up. They continued this motion as they said their text, finding their placement for the breathing. Then we got Brian on his “feet” again. We proceeded to stage most of their text finding the physical life of the puppet in relation to the text. Brian is functioning very well thus far. I am curious to see what

happens when we add his hands and face. I also look forward to adding Zack R. to this scene.

Rehearsal #9

12/9/15

4:00pm-5:00pm

Location: Ellison Campus Center Metro Room

Attendance: Ayako, Caitlyn, Tristan, Zach H.

Today we reviewed the prologue of the show because we hadn't done it in a while. Then we staged the witness testimony scene. I introduced my puppeteers to the witness puppet, Hawa. We went through each line and staged Hawa's movements along with Caitlyn's dialogue. She moves very nicely in Zach and Ayako's hands. At times it almost looks as though her lips are moving under the light. Now that we have set blocking that works, I hope to solidify the tempo and timing of this middle section of the scene.

Rehearsal #10

12/15/13

6:30pm-8:00pm

Location: Callan Studio Theater

Attendance: Ayako, Caitlyn, Jimmy, Tristan, Zach H.

Zack R. could not attend rehearsal today and I am uncertain whether or not he will be able to perform in the final scene showing. So, I have asked Jimmy Flaherty to step in for

him. We staged the ending unit “Some words of wisdom”. We also staged the two transitional units “Ma Smells Blood” and “Pa’s lament”. I was able to stumble upon a great moment for the ending of the scene. When the puppet swoops in and engulfs Pa there will be a blackout. In the blackout we will hear a cry of terror from Pa and an inhale. This staging sort of defies the message of the play as a whole. I’ve made it a cathartic display of Pa’s destruction instead of him tricking the legal system to get away with crimes.

Rehearsal #11

12/16/15

12:00pm-1:00pm

Location: Callan Studio Theater

Attendance: Zack R.

Zack R. is back at rehearsal and able to perform. Today I was setting up lights and set pieces in the Callan so, I was able to fill him in on the blocking that he had missed at last night’s rehearsal. I think he is finding the discoveries and the vulnerability in Pa very easily.

Rehearsal #12

12/16/15

3:40pm-4:00pm

Location: Callan Studio Theater

Attendance: Full Cast

Today was our set-in rehearsal. I mostly had the actors become acquainted with the space and all of their properties. Then we experimented with lighting for the witness unit. I decided to use the ghost light as my only front light in the entire scene. Then I took a look at the final moment where Pa is engulfed by the shadow. I then had an epiphany. Why not close in on the ghost light with Pa? He could deliver his last line the light itself as if it were the microphone at the TRC. Then, when he is engulfed he can turn out the light for the blackout.

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