

# Puppets in Therapy

An information of the  
UNIMA commission “Puppets in School, Development and Therapy”,  
 section “Puppets in Therapy”, Barbara Scheel.

## Puppets in Therapy - Information

*Barbara Scheel, Germany, (contact: [babuschka-theater@web.de](mailto:babuschka-theater@web.de))*

In 1984 the „German Association Puppets in Therapy“ was founded by psychologists, puppeteers and teachers. The aims were to exchange information, to document, to research and to support those people who work with puppets, shadow puppets or masks, in situations of healing in psychological, physiological and pedagogical surroundings/backgrounds.

**Therapists and teachers** were asking what puppetry does to children and adults and why puppets are a very successful way to communicate between therapists and clients, children or adults in depressing or other problematic situations where they are not able to communicate in a normal way.

**Puppeteers** were asking how puppets work when they are on stage. They wanted to know what is up with the audience when they look to a puppet play.

We developed an explanation why puppets help to communicate in situations where other mediums fail. The reactions of people on puppets deal with the so called “interim object” well known in psychology. It says that in childhood we all have things/puppets/pillows etc. what we take as substitute for persons which we need to survive emotionally. It deals with the process of personal independence.

1. Puppets **can heal** if they are in the hand of trained professional therapists.
2. Puppets **do manipulate** if they are in the hand of people who want to do this. Soldiers during the Second World War were indoctrinated with puppets as well in Germany and Russia. (We have documents about this.)
3. Puppets in the hand of puppeteers **deal with the emotions** of the audience. Puppeteers should know what they do and should know why children/adults react to a “thing” like a puppet.
4. In difficult situations in psychotherapy and also physiotherapy puppets, at hospitals and homes **can clear situations and help to communicate** to open bridges for the process of healing.
5. **There are rules** that therapists, teachers and puppeteers should learn when they deal with puppets. That does not only mean correct manipulation of puppets but also to know for instance which kind of puppets should be chosen in a special situation; handicapped people need special puppets that can be developed specially for them; how to begin with a communication through puppets etc.
6. It is possible **to work with puppets in groups** of disabled, mentally retarded, physically handicapped or other handicapped people, people in hospitals, under cancer or near death, seniors and small children. Puppets not only can reduce the level of medicine given to them. Clients will also be less aggressive,

can deal better with their emotions, have a better understanding to stories and a better communication to the therapists/social workers/doctors and build out a better group understanding and self understanding.

The German Association Puppets in Therapy was founded in 1984. Since then we have a yearly meeting where we exchange techniques, theses and thinking and show other members what we do, and discuss difficulties. People from all over the world were guests at these meetings and reported about activities they know in their countries. There is also a yearly journal (sorry – in German).

Barbara Scheel is one of the founders and honourable member of the association and a worldwide requested teacher of puppet therapy. She is as well puppeteer and was teacher at school and professor for pedagogical psychology at the university of Frankfurt/Main. She wrote a book about pupils in primary schools, many articles about puppets in therapy and puppets on stage and tries to make people understand what puppets can do in the hand of a therapist or teacher and in the hand of a professional puppeteer.

Barbara Scheel is puppeteer since 1976 and performed in more than 25 countries and gave lessons about puppets in therapy throughout the world.

-----

## **Literature, articles, papers and films**

*from Åsa Viklund, Sweden,*

for UNIMA commission  
„Puppets in School, Development and Therapy“

**In facebook there is a group “puppettherapy” you can join in.**

Addition from Åsa Viklund, April 2012:

For information: A facebookgroup called “Puppetry in Education and Therapy” is an alternative or complement for those of you who are interested in education as well. It is an open group. A similar open group focusing on “Puppetry & Therapy” also exists, but that is only to have a forum for those who don’t like to become members. It is also a way to inform about this group for those with a deeper interest in puppet therapy.

*This literature is mainly about puppetry in therapy, but also in education. If you miss books on this list, please contact Åsa Viklund (through facebook) or Barbara Scheel (by mail: [babuschka-theater@web.de](mailto:babuschka-theater@web.de))!*

Af Forselles, B (2005) *Etik och moral med dockan som verktyg. En studie kring en alternativ metod.* Malmö: Malmö högskola.

Aronoff, M (1995) Puppets go hand in hand with loss. *In Children in Scotland: conference report: "Working with loss."*

Aronoff, M (1996) Puppetry as a therapeutic medium: An introduction. *British Journal of Therapeutic Rehabilitation*, 3, 210-214

Aronoff, M (1997) Puppetry projects with children in psychiatric assessment units of pediatric hospitals. *La Marionette et Les Ages de la Vie, Comte Rendu Villéme Colloque International, Organisé par Association "Marionette et Thérapie", 14-18.*

- Astell-Burt, C (1981) *Puppetry for mentally handicapped people*. London: Souvenir Press (Författaren undervisar på London School of Puppetry)\*\*
- Astell-Burt, C (2002) *I am the story – The Art of Puppetry in Education and Therapy*. London: Souvenir Press.
- Bender, L & Woltmann, A (1936) The use of puppet shows as a therapeutic method for behaviour problems in children. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 6, 341-354.
- Bender, L (1941) Play and psychotherapy. *The Nervous Child*, 17-42.
- Bernier, M & O'Hare, J (red) (2005) *Puppetry in Education and Therapy – Unlocking Doors to the Mind and Heart*. Indiana: Authorhouse.
- Borin, J & Hammarstrand, O (1973) *Dockteater i skolan*. Kristianstad: Hermods.
- Bratton, S.C (1995) Group puppetry. In D.S. Sweeney et al (Eds), *The handbook of group play therapy: How to do it, how it works, whom its best for*. San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bromfield, R (1995) The use of puppets in play therapy. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 12(6), 435-444.
- Carter, R.B & Mason P.S (1998) The selection and use of puppets in counselling. *Professional School Counseling* 1(5), 50-54.
- Cole, N.A (1993) *Lend them a hand: Therapeutic puppetry*. Box 45, Milford, Ontario, Canada, K0K 2P0: Arthur Cole
- Dilien, L (2009) When puppets speak: Dialectical psychodrama within developmental child psychotherapy. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* 22(1), 55-82.
- Egge, D (1987) Puppets and adolescents: A group guidance workshop approach. *Elementary School Guidance Counseling*, 21, 183-192.
- Ekstein, R (1965) Puppet play of a psychotic adolescent girl in the psychotherapeutic process. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 20, 441-480.
- Forsberg Ahlcrona, M (2012) *Förskolans didaktik och dockan som redskap - kommunikation och skapande i förskolan*. Studentlitteratur.
- Forsberg Ahlcrona, M (2009) *Handdockans kommunikativa potential som medierande redskap i förskolan*. Göteborgs Universitet.
- Forsberg Ahlcrona, M (1991) *Ta handdockan - Lek - Skapande - Fantasi*. Trelleborg: Skogs Boktryckeri AB.
- Gauda, G (2007) *Theorie und Praxis des therapeutischen Puppenspiels*. Books on Demand GmbH, Norderstedt.

Gauda, G (2008) *Traumatherapie und Puppenspiel. Wie Dornröschen sich selbst erlöste*. Books on Demand.

Gauda, G (red) (2004) *Puppen- und Maskenspiel in der Therapie – Aus der Arbeit in der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Therapeutisches Puppenspiel*. Frankfurt: Puppen & Masken.

Gauda, G (red) (2010) *Therapeutisches Puppenspiel in der Gruppenarbeit. Berichte aus der Praxis*. Norderstedt: Books on Demand GmbH.

Gendler, M (1986) Group puppetry with school-age children: Rationale, procedure and therapeutic implications. *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 13, 45-52.

Gerity, L (1999) *Creativity and the dissociative patient: Puppets, narrative, and art in the treatment of survivors of childhood trauma*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Gerity, L (2006) Art and community building from the puppet and mask maker's perspective. In Kaplan, L (Ed.) *Art therapy and social action*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Gill, E (1994) *Play in family therapy*. New York: Guilford.

Howells, J.G (1973) Puppetry as a medium for play diagnosis. *Child psychiatry quarterly*, 6(1), 9-14.

Irwin, E & Shapiro, M (1975) Puppetry as a diagnostic and therapeutic technique. I Jakab (red) *Psychiatry and art* (4). New York: S. Karger

Irwin, E & Malloy, E (1975) Family puppet Interview. *Family Process*, 14, 179-191

Irwin, E (1980) The projective value of puppets. In Herink, R (ed.) *Psychotherapy handbook*. NY: New American Library.

Irwin, E (1985) Puppets in therapy: An assessment procedure. *Journal of Psychotherapy*, 34(3) 289-400.

Irwin, E (1993) Using puppets for assesment. In Shaefer, C.E (Ed.) *Play therapy techniques*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.

Irwin, E (2000) The use of a puppet interview to understand children. In *Play diagnosis and assessment* (pp. 682-703). New York: Wiley.

Jalmertz Moritz, I (2002?) *Innanför Ögat*. Stockholm: Långa Näsan. (inspelad dockteaterföreställning om anorektisk tonårings tillvaro).

Kaplan, B (2006) *Dockteater bakom taggtråd: Kulturens kamp mot ondskans våld i Theresienstadts ghetto 1941-1945*. Västra Frölunda, Dockteaterbiblioteket: Palmeblads tryckeri.

Kors, P (1963) The use of puppetry in psychotherapy. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*. 17, 54-63

- Korosec, H ( ) *Symbolic Play - The Way of Communication in the classroom* (film)
- Koppelman, R (1984) *Handpuppetry with a chronic psychiatric population*. Jan 1984, The Arts in Psychotherapy.
- Källström, L & Bradic, M (2008) *Konflikthantering bland förskolebarn -en studie i hur man kan arbeta med "Nonviolent Communication" i form av dockteater*. C-uppsats på Göteborgs Universitet.
- Lagerqvist, I (1976) *Handdockan som kontaktmedel i terapi och pedagogik*. I boken *Omsorg om utvecklingsstörda*, Grunewald, K (red), NoK
- Lagerqvist, I (1981) *Dockteater – också på de svagas villkor*. *Dockteatern* 3-1981, UNIMA-bulletinen Sverige.
- Lambert, M (1945) *Children in Conflict, Twelve Years of psychoanalytic practice*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Lawry, L (1951) *The use of puppets in child psychotherapy*. *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 24, 206-214.
- Lyle, J (1941) *The therapeutic value of puppets*. *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, 5, 223-226.
- Linn, S (1978) *Puppet therapy in hospitals: Helping children cope*. *Journal of the American Medical Women's Association*, Feb, 62.
- Linn, S, Beardslee, W & Patenaude, A.F (1986) *Puppet therapy with pediatric bone marrow transplant patients*. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology* 11(1), 37-46
- Majaron, E & Kroflin, L (Ed) *The UNIMA Puppets in Education Commission (2002) :The Puppet, What a Miracle!* Zagreb: Grafocentar (english / french / spanish)
- Mykles, B (2000) *The Puppet and Childrens Creative Thought*. *Ånd I Hanske* 2-2000.
- Pelicand, J, Gagnayre, R, Sandrin-Berthon, Aujoulat, I (2006) *A therapeutic education programme for diabetic children: Recreational, creative methods, and use of puppets*. *Patient Education and Counseling* 60, 152-163.
- Petzold, H (Hrsg) (1983) *Puppen und Puppenspiel in der Psychotherapie - Mit Kindern, Erwachsenen und alten Menschen*. München: Verlag J Pfeiffer
- Petzold, H. (2004 und 2005), *Mit alten Menschen arbeiten, Teil 2: Puppenspiel in der therapeutischen und geragogischen Arbeit mit alten Menschen*
- Pfeiffer, W.M. (1967) *The play with hand-puppets in the therapy of psychoses*. *Puppet Post*. London: Educational Puppetry Association.
- Pfeiffer, W.M. (1977) *Puppets and psychotherapy*. In A.R.Philpott (Ed) *Puppets and therapy* (pp 7-48) Boston: Plays.

- Philips, M.E (1996) Looking back: The use of drama and puppetry in occupational therapy during the 1920's and 1930's. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 50(3), 229-233.
- Robbins, A (1992) The play of psychotherapeutic artistry and psycho aesthetics. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 19, 177-186
- Rojas-Bermúdez, J (1970) *Títeres y psicodrama el objeto intermediario / Puppets and psychodrama : the intermediary object*. Buenos Aires
- Rosenberg, M B (2003) *Non Violent Communication - Ett språk för livet*. Encinitas: PuddleDancer Press. (NVC i Sverige ofta kallat Giraffspråket)
- Ross, P.P.T (1977) A diagnostic technique for assessment of parent-child and family interaction patterns: Family puppet technique for therapy with families with young children. *Family Therapy* 4(2), 129-142.
- Sattem, L (1990) Suicide prevention in elementary schools. *Death Studies* 14, 329-346.
- Scheel, B (1979) Kommunikation im Puppenspiel für Kinder. In: *UNIMA-Almanach, 1979*, Deutschland.
- Scheel, B (1979) Puppenspiel mit behinderten Erwachsenen. In: *Puppenspiel-Information des Verbandes Deutscher Puppentheater e.V.*, Deutschland.
- Scheel, B (2003) Sinn und Unsinn des therapeutischen Puppenspiels. In: *Rundbrief der Deutschen Gesellschaft für therapeutisches Puppenspiel*, Deutschland.
- Scheel, B (2011) Puppets and the Emotional Development of Children – an International Overview, *Veröffentlichung der UNIMA-Kommission "Puppets in School, Development and Therapy"*
- Shapiro, D.E (1995) Puppet modeling technique for children undergoing stressful medical procedures: Tips for clinicians. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 4(2), 31-39.
- Shuttleworth, R (1986) *Alternate methods of communicating with children in family therapy*. Maladjustment and Therapeutic Education, 4, 55-66.
- Sommers, S (1977) Marionett-making and self-awareness. *American Journal of Art Therapy*, 16 (2), 51-53
- Steinhardt, L (1994) Creating the autonomous image through puppet theatre and art therapy. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 21, 3, 205-218
- Sullivan, D (1982) *Pocketful of puppets: Activities for the special child with mental, physical and multiple handicaps*. Austin, TX: Nancy Renfro Studios.
- Walters, M (2009) *Dockor som sceniskt uttryck*. Dramatiska Institutet Skriftserie 9.09.Stockholm: Katarina Tryck.

Weiss, F (1997) The field of wings: Puppetry as therapy from an object relations point of view and incorporating field psychology. In Robbins, A (Ed) *Therapeutic presence: Bridging expression and form*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publisher.

Wilson, K, Kendrick, P & Ryan, V (1992) *Play therapy: A non directive approach for children and adolescents*. London; Ballière-Tindall.

Woltmann, A.G (1952) Puppet shows as a psychotherapeutic method. In L Bender (Ed)*Child Psychiatric Techniques*. Springfield, IL: C.C. Thomas

Woltmann, A.G (1960) Spontaneous puppetry by children as a projective method. In A Rabin & M Howarth (Eds). *Projective techniques with children* (pp 305-312) New York: Grune & Stratton.

Woltmann, A.G (1972) Puppetry as a tool in child psychotherapy. *International Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, 1(1), 84-96.

Wüthrich, K & Gauda, G (1990) *Botschaften der Kinderseele: Puppenspiel als Schlüssel zum Verständnis unserer Kinder*. München: Kösel, cop.

Wüthrich, K & Harter, K (2007) *Das therapeutische Puppenspiel. Ein Spiegel der kindlichen Seele*. Tyskland: Kösel-Verlag. (224 s)

Zelevansky, P (2006) Presece: The touch of the puppet. *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 66(3), 263-288.