

Playing the Object

These handouts are designed to compliment the recorded video workshop 'Playing the Object' at www.hmag.org.uk, which took inspiration from the theatrical history of Hastings and St Leonards and some of the large collection of related heritage objects and artefacts at the Hastings Museum and Art Gallery.

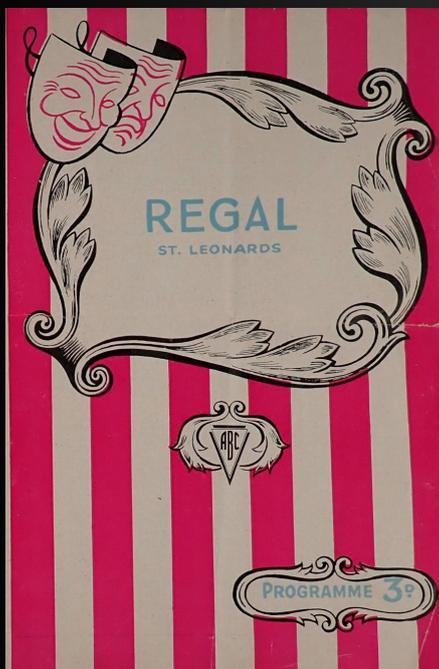
You can see a large selection of these on show in the ground floor galleries at the Museum.

The "Mystery Objects" from the Museum Collections that you can use to inspire the storylines for your plays are also listed in this handout.

It is recommended that to get the most from this workshop you also consult the video at hmag.org.uk

A transcript is available. Please email c.hwatts.art@gmail.com

The activities should be suitable for all ages and abilities but please adapt them to suit your needs. The workshop is suitable for soloists and small groups- enjoy!



**Print of the Theatre of
Hastings, 19th C.
Courtesy Hastings
Museum & Art Gallery**

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Objects from Theatre History

The following objects in the Hastings Museum and Art Gallery Collection all relate to the history of Theatre and Performance in St Leonards and Hastings.

Many related collection items can be seen in the ground floor galleries at the museum.

You can find more information about these on the audio captioned video or transcript.



**Georgian
“Peep Box”,
Jane Wood,
1840**

This beautiful object, hand coloured with ink and watercolour is constructed from paper and wood. It was made by Jane Wood, the daughter of James Burton, one of the architects who was responsible for transforming Hastings and St Leonards into a seaside resort during the Georgian period. This Peep Box shows Marina in St Leonards, and right at the back, if you look very careful you might even be able to recognise that view!

This uses a very theatrical device of layering different sets really to create a 3D effect when you look through the hole in the front. It’s a really beautiful thing and it was made in 1840 to raise money for St Leonards International School.

**Mr. Punch,
Day family,
c.1890**



This characterful hand carved and velvet costumed Mr. Punch puppet is from Hastings Puppet Theatre, who were very active between 1920 and 1940s. They were based in Palace hotel, which is now called Palace Courts and is flats. This puppet was made around 1890 and would have performed in a Punch and Judy box. There is one of these on display in the ground floor galleries of Hastings Museum, which you can come and visit and look at yourself. It's very heavy and actually quite uncomfortable to use and because it's solid wood, there's actually quite a weight to it.

Punch and Judy: A problematic History

Although traditionally a family show, Punch and Judy has been rightly criticised by modern audiences for the violence Mr. Punch shows in the play towards his family and others. As a result contemporary Punch and Judy masters, known as "Professors", have started to adapt the show for contemporary audiences.

Try making and using puppets in your own plays if you're feeling adventurous!

See the filmed content for a demonstration of the puppet.

Local Theatre programmes, 19th and early 20th centuries

Photos unavailable: see video for full content

Warming Up: Theatre Games

Below, you will find some simple fun theatre games to warm up your imagination and body before you write your own play!

They can both be done seated too- adapt to suit yourself or your group's own accessibility needs



Homage to Magritte

You will need:

- Yourself***
- A Water Bottle or a cup***

Homage means to pay tribute to or dedicate to or to be inspired by

This game is named “Homage to Magritte” after a surrealist painter called René Magritte. René Magritte was a Surrealist painter who questioned notions of reality and what could be beyond surface reality.

One of his artworks is very strange and playful painting called *This is not a Pipe*. It’s a very realistic painting of a pipe, a very realistic painting of a pipe and underneath it says “this is not a pipe”.

This game is about taking a simple object and reimagining it, through mime, into something else while others guess. You must not make sounds or use words.

If you’re on your own, you can do this in the mirror, just for a bit of fun, see how many things you can make the water bottle. If you’re in a group, you get to have fun guessing “what on earth is that person trying to mime?” If you prefer a physical example please watch the video.

Top tip: If you really want to challenge yourself, try and think of things that are really different from the shape of the actual object! For example, see if you can transform a water bottle into a dog through mime!



“Sorry, I’m late”

“Sorry I’m late” ideally needs to be played with a minimum of two people.

It’s another fun warm up for your imagination and physical performance skills.

One person leaves the room and enters acting out being late and the weird and wacky reason they are late.

The rest of the group need to guess why. You can use sounds but no words.

The first person to guess is the next to “be late”!

Hopefully you enjoyed these games!

There are many, many other theatre games you can look up on the internet and play!

Time to learn how to write a play!

Writing a Play



There are many methods for writing a play and the following example is intended purely to be a guideline to demonstrate a slightly simplified format. It is also an example of a story inspired by one of the mystery objects and shows how you could write a play for one person, with a single performer playing all the characters.

The most important thing is to have fun and make it accessible to you and your group.

You could even record your play entirely through audio and describe the scenes that way or devise (write it) purely purely through improvisation or performance

See the next page for an example, inspired by one of the “Mystery Objects” from the Museum Collection

See the video for more inspiration!

Example Play

Please see the separate “Example Play” document for an example of a play using one of the mystery collectionb objects, in a simplified playwriting format

Mystery Objects to Inspire Your Play

Object 1:



Object 2:



Object 3:



Object 4:



Object 5:



Staging and Recording your play

Props, Set and Dramatic Techniques:

Even if you're simply working on your play at home and planning on showing it to family and friends you might want to think about props, set design and dramatic techniques to bring your work to life.

Props, Set and costume: You could make your own great props and backdrops or set pieces out of items that usually go to recycling like plastic bottles, moulded packaging and cardboard boxes, paint/ pens strong glue and your imagination! You could also paint up old sheets. Experiment with upcycling clothes you already have to make cool costumes or check out charity shops!

Working with Levels:

You could try working on different levels to make the work visually interesting or show different levels of power. For example, someone sits on a chair while someone else stands up and another person stands on a sturdy box or trunk.

Dramatic Moments:

You can show heightened moments of drama through using theatre techniques like "freeze frames" (freezing the action before new action begins, "flashbacks") to other moments in the play that signalled the drama or try using repetition in a creative way or put poetry or music into your play.

Revealing the Mystery Objects

Object 1: Taxidermy Stingray

A stingray caught on a dab hook from Hastings Pier on 17 July 1910. From accession register: "A Sting Ray, male, weight 9lbs. 7ozs. (nine pounds seven ounces) caught by the donor on Hastings Pier, 17 July, 1910



Object 2: Pierce Brosnan's Grey Owl Trousers (film came out 1999)

The trousers are decorated with dyed fringing and strips of beadwork on blue woollen cloth.



Object 3: Skull of Pilot Whale 31 x 43 x 49.5 cm

Object 4: Keepsake locket in the form of a book with early souvenir photographs of Hastings (date not known)



Object 5: Begging bowl, Burma, Myanmar

Wooden round begging bowl with long handle carved with tiger, deer?, frog and painted red, yellow, black, brown and green. Hook for hanging strap underneath.





Hastings Digital Museum Playing the Object

Explore **imagination, performance and storytelling** through playwriting using objects from the Hastings Museum & Art Gallery Collection in an open access online workshop with artist and theatre maker
Charlotte CHW

Suitable for all ages, individuals and groups

