Introduction

I came across storytelling theatre as a middle school teacher in Exeter, UK, through the work of the local company, Theatre Alibi, and later in workshops led by Mike Alfreds, founder of Shared Experience and originator of this genre of performance. I then taught it as a module in Warwick’s MA in Drama and Theatre Education for several years. I still find it fascinating and enjoy exploring its subtleties in my work with teachers and teacher artists. Publications exist that present a rationale and describe its conventions in theatrical terms, but in this chapter, I wish to put forward an educational argument as to what teachers and teacher artists can learn from practising it and how children can benefit from watching it. The form can be adapted for audiences of all ages, but here I will concentrate on the upper primary age range (9–12-year olds), attending to specific examples of practice that focus in different ways on the portrayal of young women. This, I hope, will demonstrate that traditional tales can offer more nuanced and subtle readings of gendered behaviour than is often appreciated. Firstly, however, I will explain some important features of the theatre form itself before providing a brief educational rationale for working with stories and storytelling in the classroom.

What is storytelling theatre?

Alfreds has described how storytelling theatre originated from his attempt to strip the art form of unnecessary clutter and so recapture its purest and most essential energies. These he found in the telling of a story, which he deems ‘as essential to our existence as breathing’ and, above all, in the person of the actor. ‘Acting is the élan vital of theatre’, he writes, ‘its breath, its pulse, its source of energy … there is nothing essential to a performance that actors cannot create by their own powers of suggestion’. Most plays tell stories, of course, but what marks out this particular form of theatre is the fact that the third-person narrative voice is not only retained but becomes the essential feature of the entire performance. This means that actors must connect with and engage directly with their audience as narrators, in addition to taking on the role of characters, who dialogue and relate to one another within the world of the story itself. Costumes, scenery, props and lighting rigs can all be dispensed with. The actors’ task is thus multifaceted and challenging, as they narrate the story, perform
the characters and create the imagined environment with their voices and their bodies as their sole resource. Storytellers from the oral tradition have always striven to evoke the world of the story so powerfully that it comes alive in the imaginations of their audiences. Storytelling theatre shares this aim, reminding us that, however lavish the costumes and set design, the dramatic illusion is never complete unless the audience is successfully co-opted as its willing co-creator; and, as a theatre form, storytelling theatre addresses this challenge at its purest and most pressing.

**Stories, storytelling and education**

Stories have always been my key interest, and in previous publications I have offered arguments about the different ways that story theory can inform drama education. Here I will limit myself to a brief reflection on Walter Benjamin’s seminal essay, *The Storyteller*, which, although originally published in 1937, is arguably as relevant as ever in today’s cultural and educational climate.

In a somewhat mournful tone, Benjamin considers the passing of the oral storytelling tradition, pondering on its causes and what this loss means to the cultural life of modernity. This leads him to make a number of points about the relationship between storytelling, experience, information and explanation, beginning with a claim that shared experience and the oral tales that form its verbal correlative are regrettable no longer relevant to social life. This, he suggests, leaves us without a compass with which to navigate the social and moral world, as such stories are purveyors of wisdom, a wisdom that avoids straightforward explanation but rather provokes reflective curiosity. This kind of wisdom is at odds with the modern world, he argues, as storytelling has been superseded by journalistic narratives that prioritize the delivery of information. As Samuel Titan puts it:

> Exit the “chaste brevity”, the born storyteller’s reluctance to let explanation intrude into his tale; from now on stories must be promptly verifiable and readily comprehensible if they are to find a place in the assembly-line temporality of accelerating industrial societies.

As Titan tellingly remarks, if we substitute the word ‘data’ for ‘stories’ here, the same point readily applies to our own post-industrial society; and, switching our focus from the broadly cultural to the specifically educational, teachers may well recognize a parallel with contemporary schooling, in the prioritization of data, the emphasis on clear and readily recognizable objectives and testing that centres upon students’ accumulation of information. This is a turn that many who teach arts subjects continue to lament, as it fits awkwardly and only partially within the processes of creative learning within their subjects. The role of storytelling in education and, in particular, Benjamin’s emphasis on the virtue of stories that abstain from explanation need further consideration if we are to grasp the relevance of such storytelling.

Stories as purveyors of information have always been used in education. Because, as Alfreds said, we live and breathe stories, it is natural for teachers to use them to help contextualize learning objectives, to appeal to learners, to grab their attention and to attempt to illustrate how the learning agenda is relevant to their lives. The teaching of language, arithmetic and history through story are three obvious examples of this, but even in the teaching of more evasive curriculum areas such as the teaching of social and moral values, stories may well be used to convey moral lessons rather than provoke questions for children to think about. Such didactic intentions equate with the provision of information. This can be particularly true with younger children, and I have seen many examples over the years
of drama being used precisely for such purposes. In more sophisticated drama programmes for older children, there will often be objectives of this kind that include the presentation and contextualization of important information. A Theatre in Health Education programme focusing on drug use or on sexual health, for example, will necessarily include the imparting of significant and important information as part of its intended learning outcomes and evaluation strategies. Class-based process dramas of the kind outlined by Bowell and Heap similarly begin from a consideration of learning objectives drawn from within a given curriculum rather than from a story that is seen as valuable in itself. There is nothing wrong with this, nor does it preclude the skilful use of artistry and ambiguity in the dramatic stories created. I am simply pointing out that there is a pressure in the curriculum to prioritize the delivery of information that teachers cannot ignore. This will become educationally limiting if, as Benjamin feared, it eradicates an appreciation of the unique value of stories as sources of wisdom as opposed to conveyors of information, and here is where we locate that difficult concept for a teacher, that of avoiding explanation, a feature that Benjamin sees as integral to the art of storytelling and how it speaks to experience.

Benjamin uses a tale from Herodotus to illustrate what he means here. The tale, briefly, tells of the Egyptian king Psammenitus, who, defeated in battle, is made to watch as a procession leads his daughter off to become a slave and his son to his execution. All this he witnesses apparently unmoved until, catching sight of an old, destitute servant of his among the ranks of the prisoners, he finally breaks down in uncontrollable grief. Benjamin praises Herodotus for offering no explanation to this tale and then proposes a variety of possible interpretations himself. The very dryness of the account he sees as the reason why the tale remains ‘astonishing and thought provoking’ to this day, like a seed that retains its germinative power after being shut up for millennia in an airtight chamber. In order to make sense of it, we have to believe that the story knows something about human experience that we must respect and reflect upon, and neither ignore nor dismiss.

The wisdom or the counsel that the storyteller finds in good stories, then, lies partially in their refusal to explain what they know. The implication here is that, far from illustrating something simple or moralistic, these stories engage our imaginations and expand our consciousness by remaining surprising and mysterious, but also honest and true to how humans behave. Among such stories, Benjamin counts folk tales and fairy stories of the kind that teachers in kindergartens and primary schools will be well acquainted with. But if we are to appreciate their value in Benjamin’s terms, we need to understand them as speaking primarily to experience rather than to innocence and strip them of any easy, conventional moralizing. The influences of Disney and of other much cheaper and cruder cartoon versions, together with a residual Romantic aspiration to regard childhood as a precious time of innocence, can make this step a difficult one for some teachers to take. But it is nonetheless necessary if teachers are to engage sensitively, reflectively and above all respectfully with these traditional tales in ways that can harness their educational potential. The same is evidently true for those teacher artists who will wish to use them to create storytelling performances. We can now examine how they might do this, not simply by deploying a set of specific techniques but rather by seeing how strategies for performance can inform decision-making during the devising process.

Tasting what the story knows: ‘Dear as Salt’

Stories know things that they don’t always tell us, and in order to access this knowledge, we must first learn to taste it. This is an idea I have borrowed from the literary critic Michael
Wood. Taste here does not correlate with good or bad aesthetic taste but rather relates to the pleasures of eating; after all, we get to know chocolate and chili initially by their taste, not by an analysis of their ingredients. The metaphor further implies that if teacher artists are to present a story to children so that they enjoy the taste of what it knows, then they need, first and foremost, to find ways to taste this knowledge for themselves before, as performers, analyzing the ingredients that create it. In other words, without searching for a set of learning objectives or simple morals that the tale might elucidate, they nonetheless need to reach a shared sense of what the story is about while, at the same time, avoiding explanation and letting the tale speak for itself. Ali Hodge has suggested that a good way to do this is to begin with making still images of key moments in the narrative journey of the tale, and I would add that we need to play with and interrogate what possible meanings there might be. Here I will use the Italian folk tale ‘Dear as Salt’, as retold by Italo Calvino, as an example of what this process might reveal, an example all the more apt as ‘taste’ and pleasure are central to its meaning.

The story opens with a king asking his three daughters how much they love him. Zizola, the youngest, answers that he is as dear to her as salt. At this, the king rages violently and Zizola is only saved from his wrath by the actions of her mother, the queen, who smuggles her out of the palace hidden inside a giant candlestick, which a faithful servant then sells at a market to a rich prince. The candlestick is duly taken to the prince’s dining room, where the servants leave food out for him to eat on his return later that evening. But, once the room is empty, Zizola comes out of hiding and devours everything herself. The prince is furious with the servants to find an empty table and they, in turn, blame the dog. The same thing happens the following evening. On the third day, the prince hides under the table and thus catches Zizola in the act, whereupon she tearfully tells him her story. Having immediately fallen in love with her, the prince orders the candlestick to be taken to his bedroom and all of his meals to be brought there, too, so that he and Zizola can eat together in secret. When he finally emerges, he informs his mother that he wishes to marry a candlestick. Fearing for her son’s sanity, the queen nonetheless arranges the wedding. Zizola waits until she is at the altar before stepping out and revealing herself ‘at exactly the right moment’. Upon hearing her story, the queen hits upon a plan to teach the king a lesson. Inviting all the local kings and princes to the wedding breakfast, she orders the dishes prepared for Zizola’s father to be cooked and served without salt. He finds the food inedible, of course, and is suddenly struck by the truth of Zizola’s love. Overcome with remorse, he begins to weep and, once he has confessed everything to the queen, she reunites him with his daughter so that the feasting and merriment can continue.

The relationship between taste and knowing is well illustrated in the climactic scene here, but the story knows a lot more than this. A still image of the queen (Zizola’s mother) hitting upon a plan to rescue her daughter, when placed alongside an image of the queen (the prince’s mother) planning to teach the king a lesson, together suggest that, in patriarchal societies, women, though operating behind the scenes, have traditionally been called upon to sort out problems, make sensible decisions and thus ensure that society functions smoothly. Cooking is something the king knows nothing about, of course, the kitchen being traditionally the province of the female; but such gender stereotyping is here presented as not only ignorant and foolish but also as potentially harmful. An image of the king banishing Zizola positioned alongside that of the prince shouting at the servants, who in turn blame the dog, illustrates the misguided effects of a tyrannical power structure, where judgements may well be founded upon error and ignorance. In the middle of this anger and confusion is Zizola, the only character in the story with a name. Still images will demonstrate her
love of food (and, by analogy, of pleasure, including sexual pleasure) but will also show her as a powerful giver and receiver of love. It is love for Zizola that calms the prince’s anger, and it is the king’s realization of her love for him that will finally lead him to remorse. As such, she, like salt, stands for the simple but powerful pleasures that make life worth living, pleasures we ignore to our cost. Ethical concerns about bulimia, or obesity, or the female as passive object of desire, or heteronormativity or class inequality are all valid enough for a health and social education curriculum, but they have no place in this charming tale. Feasting always and only on ethics and ideology may lead us, like the king, to neglect some of the good things in life and deprive our children of a pleasurable diet. This tale should be taken as a comedy that celebrates these good things, particularly those that revolve around and depend upon the humanizing, domestic energies of the female characters, whilst gently mocking the foolish, violent and tyrannical behaviours of the males. The artistic challenge is considerable, though, if actors are to produce a performance in which the audience will taste and enjoy this knowledge, in which they ‘imply rather than impose’ meaning on their audience. Building images that have been carefully worked on into the telling of the tale will be key to managing this process.

The candlestick is one such highly significant image, and actors need to reflect upon what it might mean as they search for playful ways to represent it with their bodies. In the story, it is described as a thing of beauty in itself as well as a bearer of beauty in the form of Zizola. She, in turn, can be likened to the flame of the candle it would usually bear, in that she brings warmth and enlightenment into the lives of those around her. The images the actors create will either imply or blur this reading. A good exercise is for two actors to work together, spontaneously representing various possibilities for imaging the candlestick with Zizola hiding inside it, giving it a personality that implies a developing relationship between the two. Is the candlestick initially resentful of her presence or is it immediately protective of her? How does it respond to her eating all the prince’s food, or to her discovery by the prince? Is it aware of his hidden presence or surprised at his appearance? What does it feel about the role it is called upon to play at the wedding? From such playful experimentation, actors can then work to create an image that is in itself aesthetically delightful but that will also track the emotional bond that the candlestick develops with Zizola as the plot develops. This will need to be carefully managed through changes in facial expression alone, as the same physical shape must evidently be retained throughout. Such considerations are intensely playful but by no means trivial. Attention to this kind of detail not only delights the audience, underlining the comic nature of the tale, but also helps actors imply the kind of meanings that children are very willing to reflect upon and discuss after viewing the performance. Reflective discussions such as this, I would suggest, are a fine way to sensitize children to how good stories (and good storytelling) work and to encourage in them a taste for both.

Performing ethics and gender: ‘The Two Sisters’

There are many folk tales in which two sisters, one good and one bad, go successively on the same journey, with the one being rewarded for her goodness and the other punished for her malevolence. Such tales can be interpreted as moral fables, promising rewards in life for those children who display the kinds of mild-tempered, cooperative behaviours that adults prefer – the sort of tale wonderfully satirized by Saki in his short story ‘The Storyteller’.

The often-excessive punishments that the bad girl has to endure render these tales darkly comic rather than morally pious, however, and, if children do enjoy them, it is likely to be...
these details that appeal to them rather than any moralizing tone, largely because experience teaches them to doubt the truth of such easy, moralistic lessons. In this sense, such stories can prove to be, in the words of Maria Tatar, ‘wonderfully unsafe things’, leading some teachers to worry that encouraging children to wonder may well lead them to wander. Educators sceptical of drama sometimes question its value by asking what it offers to the experience of stories that reading does not. This section will offer an example that directly addresses this query whilst also indicating the unique possibilities of storytelling theatre to address the ethical ambiguities of tales such as this. It draws from a specific version performed some years ago by a talented group of four MA students, and from subsequent workshop activities I have since developed.

The version used here is taken from *English Fairy Tales*, written by Flora Annie Steele and published in 1895. The two sisters, ‘as like each other as two peas in a pod’, live with their father, but when he loses his job the good sister goes off to search for work. On her way she is asked for help by a tree overladen with fruit, a cow desperate to be milked and a baker’s oven in which the loaves are burning. She willingly helps them all. She then finds work by keeping house for an old woman, who turns out to be a baby-eating witch. One day, although she has been told not to, the good girl cleans the chimney and discovers a bag of gold hidden there, whereupon she runs off home with it, the witch in hot pursuit. The cow, the tree and the oven all protect her from being caught, and, indeed, the oven encourages the old woman to climb inside, only to slam its doors and badly burn her. The good girl is thus able to return home safely with the money, much to the delight of her father. Jealous of her success, the bad, ‘ill-tempered’ girl decides to make the same journey, only she, of course, rudely refuses to help the tree, the cow or the oven. As a result, after she has finally had the opportunity to steal the witch’s gold, they refuse to help her escape. The witch catches her, ‘gives her a thorough, good beating’, retrieves the gold and sends her off home, bruised and beaten, with not a penny’s reward for all the work she has done.

The performers added depth to the story by, at key points, creating images that contrasted ironically with the tone of its narrative. So, in the initial scene that introduced the two sisters, the figure of the father was portrayed in a way that demonstrated that the good sister was his favourite and that the bad sister felt excluded. The fact that this contributed to her ‘ill temper’ was demonstrated by her reaction to the good sister’s return, which emphasized the pleasure the father gained from seeing the gold. It was clear from the images, though not in the words of the narrator, that her subsequent journey was a search for acceptance and approval rather than a selfish quest for wealth. As such, the final image of her upon her return, bruised, beaten and in pain, only to be ignored by both father and sister, stood in stark contrast to the fun children had had in witnessing the impatience and rudeness that had characterized her up to this point. To further stress the ambiguity of this ending, the narrator’s stance was highly ironic here, her tone seeming to revel moralistically in the sister’s misfortune, the wicked glint in her eye daring the children to disagree with her.

The representation of the good sister, too, was similarly problematized in the performance, it becoming quickly evident that she was performing according to a particular self-image, often struggling to maintain a façade of sweetness when responding to the requests asked of her on her journey, and quickly dropping it on discovering and stealing the old woman’s gold. In particular, it was in the looks she gave to her sister that children could detect a smug malevolence, particularly noticeable in the final image of the tale. All of this made for ample and lively discussion among the ten-year-olds who watched the performance, this very liveliness indicating how, in this manner of telling, the actors had indeed tapped into how the story could be made to speak to children’s experience – of sibling rivalry, of adult
favouritism, of feeling excluded – in ways that a straightforward reading, or a telling without actors, could never achieve.

The ethical idea that we may well be judged by how we act, rather than what we may feel we are, was emphasized by the group’s decision that the three females share the acting of both the good and the bad sister, using the scene changes implied within the story as moments to exchange roles. In order to manage this successfully, they each had to adopt a specific *gestus* to demonstrate clearly which of them was in role as either the good or bad sister at any given moment – *gestus* being the Brechtian term for ‘showing’ rather than ‘being’ the character. In the process, they made a deliberate decision to work against one of the strategies I had taught them, namely, how to manage a scene change without the audience necessarily noticing it. This requires the actors to know precisely what the shape and position of their new role is so that they can transform quickly and precisely while one actor, in role as narrator, commands the focus of the audience from a different part of the space. The effect of such ‘invisible’ transformations, when managed well, is one of surprise and delight on the part of the audience. Here, however, the group wished to foreground the moments when two actors exchanged roles by having them come together back to back in the centre of the performance space and, as they rotated 180 degrees, visibly become, or cease to be, the good or bad sister. The children therefore witnessed three different females at the moments when they chose to perform being ‘good’ or ‘bad’, readily and at will, which in itself raised further questions about how far we should make judgements about people’s essential, moral nature solely from how we see them behave.

A parallel question can be playfully addressed, in this and many a tale, to the performance of gender itself. When I have used this story in workshops, male actors have sometimes taken on the role of the sisters, often to the great delight of other participants. Asking the question of how we could tell, despite their male bodies, that they were performing a female character can lead to a listing of behaviours that we stereotypically associate with gender. Similarly, women in an all-female group might be asked to perform different kinds of masculinity in such tales as ‘The Three Brothers’ by the Brothers Grimm. Rather than reinforcing stereotypes, such analysis and discussion can have the opposite effect, revealing as it does that gender should be understood in terms of appearance and performed behaviour rather than in essentialist terms. Witnessing switches in gender identity being openly and skilfully performed solely through the resources of the body’s physicality will lead to laughter, stimulated by admiration and appreciation rather than ridicule, as the audience laughs *with* rather than *at* the performer. Such laughter has a liberating energy, as it celebrates human identity as flexible rather than tyrannical, at least partially determined by behaviours that can be played with and unfixed and hence be open to change.

**Spatial depth as emotional signing: ‘Rumpelstiltskin’**

I have noted in many a workshop a spontaneous tendency among participants to neglect spatial depth and to unconsciously imitate the cinema or TV screen, performing in two dimensions rather than in three. Apart from resulting in flat, aesthetically uninteresting images, such an approach fails to exploit the nuanced, emotional signals an audience can pick up subliminally through the positioning of actors, as characters or narrators, in different parts of the performance space. Alfreds has made use of the long-standing convention of ‘warm’ and ‘cold’ zones on the stage to help counter this tendency and to provide performers with a rudimentary emotional geography to help them plot their telling in space as well as time. Simply put, we can interpret downstage right as the warmest part of the stage, with upstage
left the coldest and centre stage the most neutral. The emotional signing from positions in other parts of the stage is similarly nuanced in their relation to these zones. This is not a science, of course, and is not helpful with regard to performances in the round, but it nonetheless provides performers with a language of space to help them shape and plot how they wish an audience to respond to events depicted during the storytelling. Upstage left, for example, is a good position for a narrator speaking in cold or ironical tones, or for a particularly unsympathetic character. By contrast, downstage right is a good position for a narrator when demonstrating sympathy with the heroine of the tale, who may herself regularly make her appearance in this zone as the plot unfolds.

A good example of how such considerations can lead to a subtle use of signing was demonstrated by a group that worked with the Grimms’ tale ‘Rumpelstiltskin’. The plot of this tale is sufficiently well known to make a summary unnecessary here, but its very mysteriousness and resistance to any straightforward moral reading have made it a popular choice among students I have taught. Jack Zipes has provided a fascinating and authoritative analysis of the tale, relating it to the male appropriation of the means of production of the spinning industry in the early nineteenth century, when the Grimms wrote down their version. Such a Marxist analysis provides information that is arguably more useful for sociologists and folklorists than for storytellers who wish the story to speak to experience rather than to ideology for an audience of today’s children. Here, as with the tale of Psammenitus, the very resistance of ‘Rumpelstiltskin’ to simple interpretation can serve to hold attention, provoke curiosity and stimulate discussion.

This group was particularly interested in the miller’s daughter’s journey from powerless to powerful, from being at the mercy of different male figures to her eventual triumph over Rumpelstiltskin. Such a reading is conventional enough these days, perhaps, but their interpretation rendered the performance more interesting by making the daughter’s actions appear more and more ethically ambivalent as the story progressed. They did this not only through the actor’s performance but also by changing her position in the performance space. Initially, and while imprisoned by the king, she occupied the warm zone, downstage right, whereas her various male tormentors – father, king, guards and Rumpelstiltskin – made their appearances in, and approached her from, upstage left. Her eventual wedding with the king was centre stage, and from then on her new chamber was located in the colder parts of the space; at the end she stood firmly upstage left, watching coldly and triumphantly, as the narrator, from downstage right, spoke in tones of horror and bewilderment as Rumpelstiltskin, centre stage, tore himself in two.

The implication of this telling was that power and, in particular, money had served to corrupt the miller’s daughter, with greed becoming one of its central themes. An early image showed the father scrabbling on the floor for gold coins a guard had thrown down as payment for his daughter. There were no props, of course, but, at the wedding, it was clear from the actions and eye focus of the daughter that she was far more interested in her new gowns and jewellery than in her new husband. There were images of her ordering clothes and luxuriating in an expensive lifestyle once she was married. She had also clearly learned how to play on male sympathy by acting both helpless and coquettish with Rumpelstiltskin, later using a similar tactic to solicit the devotion of the soldier sent off to discover his name. She was thus seen to end the tale as a very different person from the innocent girl who had begun it, a change whose emotional impact was both emphasized and problematized by a considered use of the performance space itself.

In this version, one actor, a young Muslim woman from Malaysia, played the miller’s daughter throughout. Her long dress, her tudung (or hijab), her skin colour, her accent,
even, at times, her Malay language were all openly on display as she did so. Doreen Massey has written about how geographical space carries historical depth within it, and this insight can be applied to a performance space, too, once actors enter into it.19 This young woman’s cultural identity was clearly on show throughout, her performance thus becoming a celebration of who she was and where she was from, as well as a demonstration of her abilities as an actor which, in turn, worked against any tendency for her to be seen as a cultural stereotype. Without the need for discussion, it also exemplified how stories such as this can continue to speak to human experience shared across cultures and common to different historical eras.

Conclusion

My examples here have been drawn from the Western canon of traditional tales, but this particular theatre form is flexible and readily adaptable to stories from all over the world. Students from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, for example, have shown a particular aptitude for incorporating physical signing derived from Chinese opera when performing tales from their own cultural traditions. I believe that working with this form can benefit drama teachers in a number of ways, and not simply those teachers who wish to make use of it for performance purposes. Technically, its very rawness and economy as a theatre form are founded on a subtle attention to detail, a clarity of physical communication, rigorous reflection on how to make best use of limited space and due consideration of different ways to make use of the narrative voice. Perhaps its key contribution to teaching and learning, however, lies in the respect it asks teachers to pay to good stories as source material and the strategies for textual analysis it provides for them to interpret what good stories know. In this way, teachers can cultivate in children the qualities we associate with a generous and intelligent theatre audience: curiosity, openness, a willingness to pay attention and creatively engage with the dramatic illusion, and a collective imagination that is both receptive to new stories and able to reflect critically upon their possible meanings.

Notes

2 Alfreds, Then What Happens?, 5, 6, 10.
3 See, for example, Joe Winston, Drama, Narrative and Moral Education (London: Routledge, 1997).
5 For an example, see the introduction to Joe Winston, Drama, Literacy and Moral Education (London: David Fulton, 2000), 5–11.
7 In actual fact Benjamin was mistaken as Herodotus does offer an interpretation in the voice of Psammenitus himself; see Herodotus, The Histories (London: Penguin, 2003 edition), 175–176. However, the general point that Benjamin is making remains a valid one.
8 Benjamin, Storyteller Essays, 55.
10 Hodge, Storytelling as Theatre.
12 The phrase is taken from Alfreds, Then What Happens?, 30.
Joe Winston

15 Accessible online from whisperingbooks.com.
16 See Wilson, *Storytelling and Theatre*, 57.
17 My experience is that it does, however, work very well with a space that mirrors a thrust stage, the audience seated on three sides.