

THE

PIGEONING

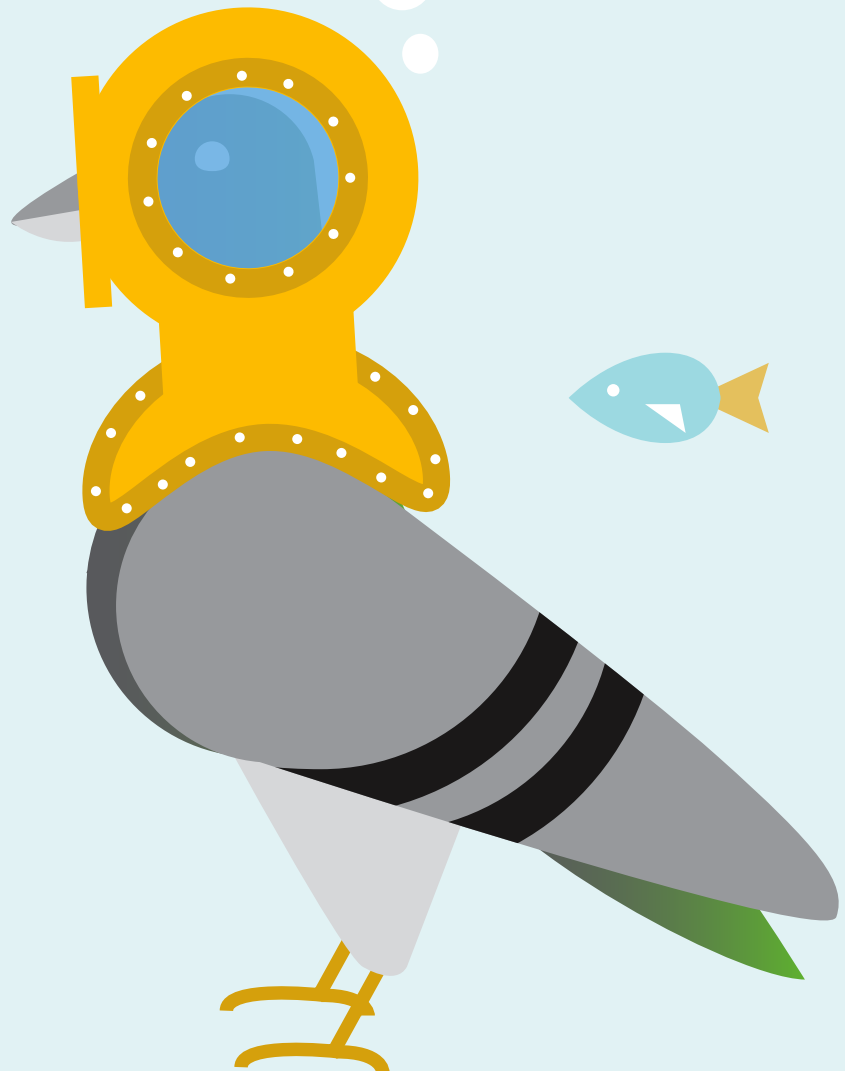
AUDIENCE GUIDE

Dear Theatergoer,

Welcome to the Williams Center for the Arts' Family Series! On Saturday, February 27th, at 2 p.m. or 8 p.m., you will attend a performance of *The Pigeoning*. This Audience Guide is designed to support and enrich your enjoyment of the production you will see. It contains information about the artist Robin Frohardt, who created *The Pigeoning*, information about the show, the style of puppetry in this production, and suggestions for pre- and post-show discussions. You and your children can actively participate during the performance by:

- **BEING OPEN** to the stories the artist is trying to tell
- **OBSERVING** how emotions and ideas are conveyed through the puppets
- **NOTICING** how the music, staging, props, and lights contribute to the story

We hope you find this Audience Guide useful. Following the performance, please join us in the lobby for refreshments and a chance to meet the artists. Thank you for coming to the Williams Center for the Arts. We appreciate your patronage!



ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

The Pigeoning is a bunraku-style puppetry show performed by five puppeteers with an original musical score. The main character, Frank, is an office worker living in New York in the early '80s who is obsessed with cleanliness and order. Plagued by pigeons in the park, Frank starts to believe they are plotting against him and sets out on an adventure to solve a problem that perhaps doesn't really exist. When a series of random events causes the order in his life to fall apart, Frank begins to lose

touch with reality and is gradually consumed by the mysterious behavior of the pigeons and their possible role in a larger plot. A darkly comedic yet heartfelt adventure, *The Pigeoning* spins puppetry, music, video, and lo-fi special effects into an epic tale about the illusion of safety and control in the context of unexpected events. *The Pigeoning* takes a look at the divide between man and nature at a time when listening to the animals may be our best bet.

To mount this production, creator/director Robin Frohardt worked closely with composer Freddi Price and a tight ensemble of puppeteers to devise humorous, articulate, dialogue-free scenes that capture the absurdity of Frank's journey. *The Pigeoning* is almost entirely wordless and is accompanied by music created just for this story.

ABOUT THE ARTIST: ROBIN FROHARDT

The Pigeoning was created by Robin Frohardt, a multidisciplinary, award-winning artist, puppet designer, and performer living and working in New York City. Known for her rich aesthetic and highly detailed constructions, Frohardt utilizes her wicked imagination, unique sense of humor, and stunning technical craft to create work that defies the conventions of traditional puppetry to explore the depths of human expression. Frohardt's work has taken her around the globe, from Istanbul, to the streets of Bangkok, to the Telluride Film Festival, to Radio City Music Hall—where for the last two years she has been a puppeteer in the annual Spring Spectacular.

Frohardt has designed and fabricated puppets for television, film, and theater as well as developed her own work. In 2014, Robin was awarded an Arlyn Award for Outstanding Design in Puppet Theater.

Robin Frohardt presently teaches puppetry at the University of Maryland and is developing a site-specific theater work set to open in 2017.



What's that? Technology, then and now

You might notice Frank using equipment you have not seen before, such as a Polaroid camera (which prints a photo right away); a slide projector (which transmits photo images onto a screen); and an audio cassette player (which records and plays back sound). These recording and display devices date back to the 1970s and '80s. In addition, you will see the pigeons attempting to communicate with Frank by tapping a code out. This method of communication is known as Morse Code, developed in the 1800s, when telegraphs were used to communicate long distance. Morse Code translates the alphabet into a series of dots and dashes, short and long tones and/or short and long electronic flashes.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

“My intention with this production was to create a complete and magical world for Frank, the main character, to exist in. I wanted to create sets and puppets that act almost as a living cartoon, drawing the audience in, making the puppeteers almost invisible.

“As an artist I am driven primarily by my passion for making things. I have a deep love for the materials themselves, the tactile experience of working with them, and how they transform into their ultimate expression.

“For me, puppetry is the ultimate means by which to explore the depth of human expression. The majority of my puppet creations are tragic and humorous characters influenced by cartoon archetypes that express the deep contradictions of a humanity that is as wonderful as it is terrible.”



Robin Frohardt



PUPPETRY

A puppet is a figure—human, animal, or abstract in form—that is moved by a person. There are many different varieties of puppets: finger puppets, sock puppets, marionettes, rod puppets, shadow puppets, hand puppets. Puppets are made of a wide variety of materials, depending on their form and intended use. They can be extremely complex or very simple in their construction.

People have been making puppets for at least 4,000 years! The earliest puppets were probably shadow puppets that originated in ancient China, India, and other Asian and Middle Eastern countries. Puppets have been found in the tombs of ancient Egypt and in the ruins of ancient Greece and Rome.

BUNRAKU

In *The Pigeoning*, the puppetry you will see is based upon a style called *bunraku*. Bunraku is the traditional puppet theater of Japan and was developed more than one thousand years ago. Traditional bunraku puppets are a type of wood-carved puppet originally made to stand out through torch illumination. The puppeteers are in full view of the audience, but are dressed in black to symbolize that they are to be taken as “invisible;” however, their presence as kind of “shadow” figures adds a mysterious power to the puppet. Bunraku traditionally uses three puppeteers to operate a puppet that varies from 1/3 to 1/2 life size. Strings are not used, but rather, the puppeteers work together to maneuver the puppet. As you can imagine, the puppeteers require much training to achieve perfect synchronization of movement and lifelike actions and portrayal of emotions in the puppets.



AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

YOUR ROLE AS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Prior to coming to the show, talk to your children about what it means to be an audience member and how a “live” performance is different from TV and movies.

The most important quality of a good audience member is the ability to respond appropriately to what’s happening on stage. This show is perhaps different from other shows your child may have attended. There is little dialogue in this show and there is only one character (and several pigeons!). The movements of the puppets create images and evoke emotions which are often humorous or whimsical but which, at times, may be quiet or serious. The mood can be easily disrupted by audience behavior that might be acceptable in a different theatrical context.

Assure your children that they can discuss everything they see with you after the performance is over. During the show they should quietly focus their attention on the stage, but feel free to laugh, applaud, sigh, or even shed a tear if so moved.

GOOD AUDIENCE MEMBERS KNOW THESE KEY WORDS:

Be prepared: Arrive early. Allow time for travel, parking, picking up your tickets and using the restroom. It’s always a good idea to be in your seat at least 15 minutes before the performance begins.

Concentration: If the audience watches in a concentrated, quiet way, this supports the performers and they can do their best work.

Quiet: The theater is a “live” space. This means that sound carries very well, so that the voices of the performers can be heard. But it

also means that any sounds in the audience—whispering, speaking, or rustling papers—can be heard by other audience members and by the performers. Do not make any unnecessary noise that would distract other audience members or the performers.

Respect: Good audience members bring their best behavior to the theater. This shows respect for the performers as well as the audience around you.

Appreciation: Applause is the audience’s way of thanking the performers for doing a good job. When the performers take a bow after the show, that is their way of thanking the audience. If you really enjoyed the performance, you might even thank the artists with a standing ovation.

Q&'s to-do's



AFTER THE SHOW: THINGS TO TALK ABOUT AND DO

Reflecting on the performance after the show is a valuable way to share the joy of the experience together. It also helps retain the artistic event in your child's memory and further generate creative ideas. Here are some questions you can ask to guide the discussion.

- Was the performance similar to what you expected to see or different? Why?
- What did you notice in this performance? How was it different from other shows you have seen?
- What was your favorite part? Why? Was there anything that you didn't like?
- How is the way Frank moves different from puppets you may have seen in other shows, or on TV?
- Did you understand what was happening, even when no one was speaking? How?
- How did the music contribute to the performance?
- How did the props help us understand the character and the story?
- Why do you think the stage got dark at certain times of the show?
- Can you summarize the story? Does the main character change his outlook? How so?
- The features of Frank's face didn't change. How do you think the puppeteers moved Frank's body to express his different emotions?
- Choose an emotion (sadness, happiness, surprise) and use only your face (no words) to demonstrate it.
- Choose an emotion and use only your body (no facial expression) to demonstrate it.
- Try making a puppet at home. Start with a simple prop (a wooden spoon, a sock, a paper bag). Experiment with moving it and expressing emotions. Perhaps use crayons, buttons, feathers, ribbon, fabric, etc., to give your puppet unique characteristics.
- You can find the International Morse Code alphabet online. Try writing, tapping, or signaling a message with a flashlight in Morse Code, and see if someone can translate it.

Credits:

The Pigeoning Audience Guide
Deborah Robbins, Editor
Jennifer Philburn, Graphic Designer
Hollis Ashby, Artistic & Executive Director, Williams Center for the Arts
Lafayette College © 2016

Williams Center for the Arts
Lafayette College Campus
317 Hamilton Street
Easton, PA 18042
Ticket office: (610) 330-5009
Administration: (610) 330-5010
williamscenter.lafayette.edu

