

## **Puppetry Arts Master Class**

Teaching Artist Lesson Plan, by Le Theatre de Marionette's Kent Williams

**OBJECTIVE:** Introduce students to the art of puppetry - its different styles, origins and manipulating challenges – in a hands-on workshop allowing students to explore and improvise old world storytelling under the guidance of a seasoned, professional teaching artist. Puppetry styles include finger, rod, hand and mouth, two-handed, and marionette. Students have volunteer opportunities to demonstrate throughout the classroom hour, and everyone tries out a marionette before the end of the session.

**PUPPETRY ARTS MASTER CLASS:** In a single-hour class, students have the opportunity to learn about a variety of puppetry styles by viewing, discussing and operating several toy and professional puppets displayed before them by the visiting teaching artist. It is also an opportunity to practice audience etiquette while applying narrative elements, especially character, and basic theater technique.

- Students are asked to sit in a group on the stage floor facing the teaching artist and an array of colorful and fun-looking puppet characters.
- The teaching artist gives a brief overview of puppetry and explaining what the students are about to learn and do.
- Through a series of questions, the teaching artist has the students nominate a list of the puppetry styles and how each is operated. As students may or may not completely populate the list, the teaching artist names these four key styles, or types/kinds: finger, rod, hand (hand and mouth & two-handed varieties) and marionette (string).
- Throughout the session, the teaching artist makes the distinction between puppet “styles/types/kinds” and puppet “characters”.
- The teaching artist also promotes self awareness as puppeteers must be sensitive to the needs and viewing perspectives of their audience.
  
- **Finger** puppets: 4 students are asked to volunteer, two boys and two girls.
  - 4 students are lined up side by side.
  - 4 different finger puppets are introduced, each adding more pockets (places where puppeteers place their finger(s) or hand(s) to operate the puppet).
  - Students are reminded the style of puppetry is finger and asked about the characters they see demonstrated.
  - Once all four puppets are revealed then teaching artist narrates a quickly improvised scene with the four student puppeteers.

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- **Rod** puppets: 2 students volunteers are selected, a boy and a girl.
  - Indonesian wooden rod puppets are revealed and discussed
  - Volunteers receive quick instruction and practice manipulation
  - Teaching artist narrates an improvised sequence of movements and gestures.
  - Again students are reminded of the style and are asked about the characters they see and what they might be like.
  
- **Hand** puppets: 2 students are selected, and boy and a girl - talkative ones
  - Students explore adding a character voice as they puppeteer.
  - Everyone learns proper hand placement and movement to create a believable lip sync – the difference between “speaking” and “biting” (many students are “biters” as hand puppeteers and must learn proper coordination).
  - Teaching artist narrates an improvised meeting of the two puppet characters and the puppeteers must explore ways to interact and converse in character.
  - A similar routine will follow in which two boys and two girls are selected to team up as puppeteers and operate a new style of hand puppet, the **two-handed** puppet (think Cookie Monster from *Sesame Street*).
    - One puppeteer serves as the **Body**, operating the arms and hands; one puppeteer serves as the **Voice**, operating the head and mouth.
    - **Cooperation** is key, as the **Body** must follow the commands of the **Voice**.
    - Teaching artist narrates an improvised scenario in which the puppeteers and the puppeteers must respond in character while cooperating as Body and Voice.
  
- **Marionette** puppets: Students all participate in the string puppetry segment. Teaching artist gives first opportunity to those students who have yet to volunteer.
  - Teaching artist introduces a four-string marionette puppet; the character is a bird, like a flamingo or ostrich with long legs and neck.
  - Students learn the terms **control bar** or **controller** as well as the attachments for the strings and what they operate.
  - 6-8 students are chosen as a group and stand side by side

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- Puppeteers are guided collectively through a series of movement techniques. Gestures include:
  - Walking – by rocking the controller side to side while gently swinging one leg out in front of the other repeatedly.
  - Pecking – holding the tail string to keep the legs straight while dipping the head string or front of the controller down toward the floor.
  - Searching – lifting one foot to the head, to shade eyes, while sweeping the head from left to right on cue
- Students are rotated through the process until everyone has had a turn and the class is returned to the care of the school teacher.