

# Meet The Puppets

The Study Guide



by Vancouver Puppet Theatre  
2015 copyright ©

## Contents

Foreword.....	2
Artist's Bio.....	3
About the Company.....	4
Set Up Requirements.....	5
Making the Show.....	6
What will Happen During The Show.....	6
Activities Before The Show.....	8
Activities After The Show.....	9
Discussion Topics After The Show.....	10
Vocabulary.....	11
Useful Links.....	12

**Dear Teacher:**

We're looking forward to presenting "Meet The Puppets" for your students. This study guide has a synopsis of the show, information about the production, and some background on the Vancouver Puppet Theatre. If you'd like to know more about our company, please visit our website at [www.vancouverpuppets.com](http://www.vancouverpuppets.com)

If you would like to provide the feedback or get in touch please feel free to email us at [info@vancouverpuppet.com](mailto:info@vancouverpuppet.com). We hope your students and staff enjoy the show!



Kind Regards,  
Viktor Barkar  
Artistic Director and founder of the  
Vancouver Puppet Theatre

Through the arts education subjects, students also find ... a deeper awareness of themselves and their place in their environment, community, culture, and world. In particular, teachers should endeavour to include artistic styles representative of the cultural makeup of the community.

## Artist's Bio

Viktor Barkar was born and raised in Minsk, Belarus. He made his first puppet from his launch veggies at the age of 5 and hid it under his bed. After a few days his mom discovered the puppet by following an unusual smell coming from his bedroom. She was not impressed. Viktor keeps making puppets ever since thou now he prefers more reliable and long-lasting materials. He become interested in professional puppetry since the age of 9 when he attended the Belorussian State Puppet Theatre for the first time. Ever since then he was captivated by this art form.

Viktor developed his puppet shows and also privately studied 3-dimensional drawing and sculpture. He has personally designed and made over 25 puppets for his own puppet plays including those you are about to see.

Viktor Barkar presented in many schools, kinder-gardens, community centers and festivals over the years. He is also working on the puppet TV-series and preparing for the upcoming puppet Festivals across Canada and USA.

Viktor loves to present in schools. Why? Because children do not have the pre-formed ideas about what they experience. They are that “tabula rasa” that every artist is looking to fill. Children can form the life-long interest for art at an early age and Viktor is happy to help them to do so. His ultimate goal is to establish the permanent puppet theatre for children in Vancouver, BC.



## About The Company

Our mobile Vancouver Puppet Theatre (VPT) was founded by Viktor Barkar in 2012. The main goal of Vancouver Puppet Theatre is to introduce wide Canadian public to the art of puppetry and to establish a close bound between international puppet artists and the existing theatre community. During his stay on West coast Viktor has developed a wide network with local and international puppet-makers and puppeteers.

Vancouver Puppet Theatre presented in front of children of all ages as well as at mixed and adult shows over the years. Our customers range from small private events to a large fringes and festivals including Collingwood Festival, Richmond Multicultural Heritage Festival and many others. We performed in many schools and pre-school centers of Greater Vancouver area including YMCA West End Child Care Centre, Sr. Guy Carleton Elementary, West-End Community Centre and many others.



If you would like to know more please visit [www.vancouverpuppet.com](http://www.vancouverpuppet.com)

Also here are some links to our social media platforms:

<https://www.facebook.com/vancouverpuppet>

<https://twitter.com/vancouverpuppet>

<https://www.youtube.com/vancouverpuppettheatre>

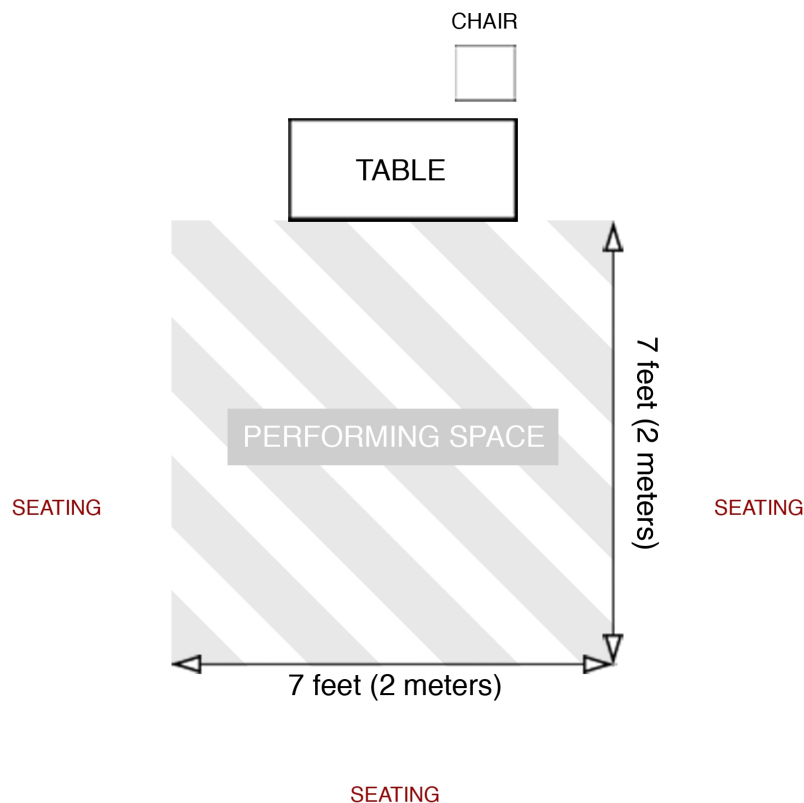
Thank you for your interest in the Art of Puppetry!



## Set Up Requirements:

Set-up time: 35 minutes.

We need a minimum of 20 X 20 feet (6 X 6 meters) of floor space with minimum 7 feet (2 meters) high ceilings. The puppet stage is made from PVC piping draped in fabric and works as a screen for the puppeteer only. The stage is placed directly on the floor. We will need 1 table and 1 chair. Usually we provide our own audio amplification system Rolland AC-33 but an existing system could be considered for an extra-large venues. We would like to be able to connect to a standard electric outlet but this is optional since our audio system could run on the batteries. Please call 778-330-4313 if you have any additional question and we would be happy to resolve them ahead of our performance day.





## Making the Show

We spent a lot of time developing ideas about the story, the characters and the setting. Once we had an idea of what the show should feel like, we wrote the script. After we imagined our main character there was a task of making it “real” and alive. For this task the hand-puppet was chosen since many kids are well acquainted with that type of puppets due to popularity of TV show such as Sesame Street and The Muppet Show.



But also we were eager to showcase other types of puppets in order to show a different puppet techniques and to teach the audience about the variety of puppet art. So we have decided to represent each character with its own unique puppet style. Therefore we made the Bunraku puppet, a table-puppet and a body-puppet to come along.

Most of the puppets were made by Viktor and dressed by a wonderful Vancouver-based seamstress Daria Volokhova. After the puppets were ready we started to research on the voices and music score. The music was chosen to represent each puppet and a long period of the rehearsal followed.

## What will happen during the show

Our “Meet The Puppets” is interactive, dynamic musical show consisting of 2 parts with 3 min excite-talk in between and 10 min Q&A period at the end. I will present puppets that are not widely known to a general public in Canada.

### *Notes for the Audience:*

Expect music, singing, loud laughter, clapping and a little bit of puppet wisdom. The audience is encouraged to interact with puppets but those who are timid will find it easy to watch it from afar.

### *Part 1 - 25 min*

We will present short musical numbers performed with different puppet styles.

The numbers are connected together with a story. The show has an interactive dialogues with an audience, dancing, songs and even a bit of magic. This part includes the hand-puppet, the rod-puppet, bunraku puppet and the table puppet.

### *Excite-talk - 3 min*

The puppeteer will come out from behind the puppet stage and briefly interact with an audience. We will have a little exciting stretch for an audience without moving them from their seats by moving hands and vocalizing together. I will also introduce the next part of the show.

### *Part 2 - 15 min*

Mini-puppet play “Kolobok” with 4 masks, 1 carnival-puppet and 2 hand-puppets.

Cultural Note: Kolobok is the main character of an East Slavic national fairy tale with the same name, represented as a small yellow spherical bread. The fairy tale is prevalent in Slavic regions in a number of variations. It is also easy and fun to perform because it has many characters. The story is similar to Gingerbread Man in English tradition. Kids will hear the songs and find some bits of wisdom in it.

### *Q&A (10 min)*

The puppeteer will come out from behind the puppet stage to show of the puppet mechanisms, interaction with an audience and motivational talk.

The message that we would like to share with our audience is this:

- ✓ Puppetry is an ancient form of theatre art
- ✓ There is a wide variety of puppet-styles and their applications in every culture
- ✓ Puppetry has its place in every culture of the world
- ✓ Puppets have been used since the earliest times to communicate the ideas of human societies
- ✓ Puppetry is a flexible and inventive medium and could be practiced by anyone



## Classroom Discussion and activities before the show:

### *Discussion Topics:*

What famous puppets do you know? (Elmo, Kermit The Frog, Big Bird)

What is your favourite puppet show/character? (Sesame Street, The Muppets. etc)

Name famous puppeteers (for older grades)? (Jim Henson, Bill Baird, Frank Oz, etc)

### *Interesting facts about the Puppetry:*

#### The “Petrushka” Ballet

There is a famous ballet named after Russian traditional puppet character called “Petrushka”.

Igor Stravinsky composed the music and fashioned the libretto. *Petrushka* was first performed by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in Paris on 13 June 1911.

Vaslav Nijinsky portrayed Petrushka with Tamara Karsavina as the Ballerina. It is one of the most popular of the Ballets Russes productions. A version of Petrushka, played by Frank Zappa and the “Mothers of Invention” can be heard on the official bootleg 'Tis the Season to Be Jelly'.



*Petrushka*

#### Ancient Puppets

There is evidence that puppets were used in Egypt as early as 2000 BC when string-operated figures of wood were manipulated to perform the action of kneading bread. Wire controlled, articulated puppets made of clay and ivory have also been found in Egyptian tombs. Hieroglyphs also describe "walking statues" being used in Ancient Egyptian religious dramas. Puppetry was practiced in Ancient Greece and the oldest written records of puppetry can be found in the works of Herodotus and Xenophon, dating from the 5th century BC.



## The Longest Puppet Shows in the World

Tholpavakoothu (or Tolpava Koothu) is a tradition of shadow puppetry that is unique to Kerala, India. Tholpavakoothu puppet plays are based on selected verses from the Tamil epic *Kamba Ramayana*. As a ritualistic art form, Tholpavakoothu is performed at more than 100 temples in the Palakkad, Trichur and Mallapuram districts of Kerala from January through May on specially constructed stages called *koothumadams*. Depending on the temple tradition, the performance may last 7, 14, 21, 41 or 71 days!

The following song is incorporated in our show. Children could learn this before the show and sing along during the performance or just listen to it.

*I am the tasty fellow!  
I'm gentle, kind and mellow.  
Made from the snow-white flour  
And pure cream that's sour,  
Set to rest on the window sill,  
I ran away from my far-away mill.  
I ran away from The Bunny.  
I ran away from The Wolf.  
I ran away from big Bear.  
With you I see there's no deal  
I won't become The Foxe's meal.*

### **Post performance activities:**

*The Game - "What's Your Puppet?"*

Ask the child to imagine her/his own puppet character.

Start with a drawing. Elaborate.

What colours would you use for your puppet clothing?

What materials? (wood, clay, metal, paper-mache, vegetables)

What voice would it have? (low, raspy, high-pitched)

Describe the character of your puppet.

What is her/his story? Favourite food? Does it have a family?

A simple sculpting workshop could be organised.

The sculpting dough and white paper-plates and crayons work great for that purpose. For more puppet-related activities visit: [www.activityvillage.co.uk/puppets](http://www.activityvillage.co.uk/puppets)

### *Make a paper-bag Puppet (craft activity)*

Now its time to bring your puppet to life!

Paper bags aren't just for carrying your lunch anymore!

You only will need a launch paper bag, coloured craft paper and a scissors.

No fancy materials needed...whatever you have at home will do!



Free

patterns and detailed instructions are available at:  
[www.easy-child-crafts.com/paper-bag-puppets.html](http://www.easy-child-crafts.com/paper-bag-puppets.html)

For more puppet craft ideas visit:  
[www.easy-child-crafts.com/easy-to-make-puppets.html](http://www.easy-child-crafts.com/easy-to-make-puppets.html)

### **Post show Discussion Topics:**

#### *Characters*

How many characters from the show do you remember?

Who was your favourite puppet in the show?

Why? What is a character of this puppet?

Can you come up with a story for this character? Is it young or old?

Does it have a friends? Family? What kind of voice does it have?

Would you like to make your own puppet? Who would it be?

What kind of voice would you use?

What would be its name? Does it have a story?

## *Music*

Which melody you liked the best?  
Was it happy? Sad? Funny? Did it make you feel  
sleepy? Did it make you to want to move?  
What music do you listen too? Why do you like it?  
Name your favourite piece of music.  
What musical instruments do you know?

## *Props and Materials*

How does the way puppets look contribute to their personality?  
Why do you think so? Can you describe him or any other character?  
Which puppet design you like the best? Why?  
Which puppet design you like the least? Why?  
What do you think the puppets are made from? (Papier-mâché and foam)  
Do you know what Papier-mâché is and have you ever worked with it?  
Do you like to sculpt? Did you ever taken a sculpting lessons?

## **Vocabulary:**

**Bunraku puppet** - The bunraku puppets are a type of wood-carved puppet originally made to stand out through torch illumination. Developed in Japan over a thousand years ago and formalised and combined with shamisen music at the end of the 16th century, the puppeteers dress to remain neutral against a black background, although their presence as kind of 'shadow' figures adds a mysterious power to the puppet.

**Carnival puppet** - usually designed to be part of a large spectacle. These are often used in parades and demonstrations, and are at least the size of a human and often much larger. One or more performers are required to move the body and limbs.



*Bunraku puppet*

**Hand puppet** - The hand puppet (AKA glove puppet) are puppets controlled by one hand which occupies the interior of the puppet. The Punch and Judy puppets are familiar examples of hand puppets. Larger varieties of hand puppets place the puppeteer's hand in just the puppet's head, controlling the mouth and head, and the puppet's body then hangs over the entire arm.

**Puppet** - an inanimate object animated or manipulated by a puppeteer. It is used in puppetry, which is a very ancient form of theatre.

**Rod puppet** - is a puppet constructed around a central rod secured to the head. A large glove covers the rod and is attached to the neck of the puppet. Below you can see an example of simple rod puppet.



Fig. R-3

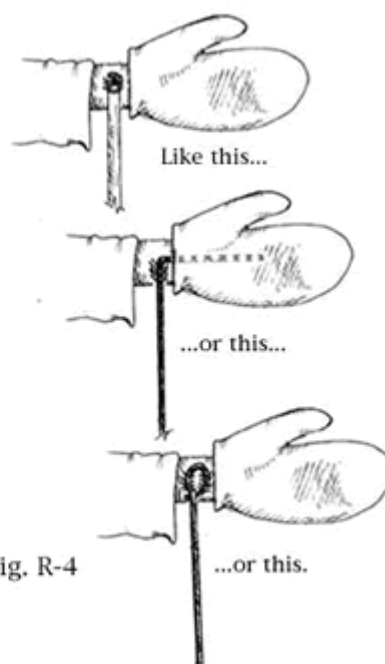


Fig. R-4

*the rod puppet*

**For more info on Puppetry for Kids:**

<http://www.easy-child-crafts.com/easy-to-make-puppets.html>

<http://www.netmums.com/activities/g/top-puppet-making-ideas-for-kids>

<http://www.freekidscrafts.com/school-days/puppet-crafts/>

<http://www.activityvillage.co.uk/puppets>