Introduction

In the theater, the siteline refers to the area the audience can see onstage. This publication is designed to expand the normal sightlines to allow students to see some of the processes and ideas that went into creating this Puppet Co. production of *Peter and the Wolf*. Through better understanding of the creative process, we hope students will develop a greater appreciation of the ancient art of puppetry.

A Brief History of Puppetry

There are puppet traditions all over the world, developing in different ways and at different rates, with diverse results. Asian puppetry started many hundreds of years ago, particularly with shadow puppets, where flat rod puppets throw shadows on a screen between the puppeteer and the audience. Japanese puppetry theater, called Bunraku, developed rapidly in the 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries into the most elaborate puppet theater in the world.

European and African puppetry is thought to have developed out of religious rituals, with totems and idols evolving into the moving figures. Making and performing these figures became a folk art, which is still largely the case in African culture. In Europe, puppetry gained acceptance in the Theatre and both imitated and innovated conventions of the “legitimate” stage. Today there are puppets on television, in theaters, used in movies for special effects. Types of shows range from simple library shows to expensive Broadway productions like *Disney’s The Lion King*.

“You cannot separate the history of puppets from the history of theatre in the same way as you cannot separate the theatre’s history from the history of humanity.”

--P. C. Ferrigni
Types of Puppets

In traditional puppet theater, there are three basic types of puppets: *Hand Puppets*, *Rod Puppets*, and *Marionettes*.

There are two types of Hand Puppets and they both fit over the puppeteer’s hand. In the *glove* type of Hand Puppet, the puppeteer’s fingers operate the puppet’s head and arms, and sometimes the feet. Glove puppets are the most commonly known of all the puppet types around the world. Punch and Judy are the most famous glove puppets. Kermit the Frog is a *mouth* style of hand puppet, sometimes called a sock puppet. Most of the puppets you see on television today are Hand Puppets.

The mouth puppet is so called because the puppeteer’s fingers hold the puppet’s head in place while the puppeteer’s thumb moves the puppet’s lower jaw down away from the head, to open and close the puppet’s mouth. The puppeteer’s wrist is the puppet’s neck and the remainder of the puppeteer’s forearm is the puppet’s body.

Sometimes, a mouth puppet will cover the puppeteer’s entire body. The puppeteer moves the mouth from inside the puppet. Sesame Street’s Big Bird is this kind of mouth puppet.

Rod Puppets work above the puppeteer’s head, on rods or sticks. A main rod goes up through the puppet’s body and attaches inside the head. Turning the rod from side to side moves the head left or right. A string may run along the rod to the head, to make it rock up and down, which helps the puppet look like it’s talking or looking around. Some puppets have strings that go up to the puppet’s eyelids, ears, jaw, and nose so they can move, too. Long, thin rods attach to the puppet’s hands so the puppeteer can control its hands and arms.
Marionettes, or string puppets, are worked in front of and below the puppeteer. The puppeteer moves controller sticks and pulls the strings to make the puppet walk, turn its head, move its arms, and much more.

Sometimes only one string runs from the control stick to the puppet’s figure. Most puppets have an average of six to ten strings, but some can have fifty strings or more! Sometimes the strings are only a few inches long. Other puppets may have strings that are several feet long.

The puppeteer stands on a platform that is called a bridge. The bridge is a special platform that stands above the floor, called the stage. Sometimes the bridge is only a few feet above the stage floor. Sometimes the bridge can be eight feet high or higher.

Combination or hybrid puppets mix two or more different puppet types to make a new kind of puppet. For example, some mouth puppets have rods or sticks to move their arms. Bert is an example of a mouth-and-rod puppet. Some puppets can be large costumed characters with masks. Many puppet makers look for new ways to mix different types of puppets to make new and interesting ways for puppeteers to perform.

Puppets are made of many different materials, including wood, fabric, papier-mâché, or porcelain, as well as different types of plastic, metal, and rubber.

When we design a new puppet or restore an older puppet at the Puppet Co., we usually start with a clay model of the puppet’s head and hands. Then we cover the models with a layer of a material like papier-mâché, or cast the model in a plaster mold. When the molded piece is hard, we sand, paint and assemble the pieces according to the type of puppet we are making. Finally, we add costumes and, if the puppet is a Marionette, we attach the strings.
About the Story

*Peter and the Wolf* explores the age-old struggle between man and animal, the value of friends, and finding bravery to overcome obstacles. It is the story of a boy named Peter, his Grandfather, a cat, a duck, a bird, and a wolf!

Sergei Prokofiev wrote the story in April of 1936 for a children’s theater in Moscow. The story takes place at Grandfather’s house, in a beautiful lush meadow behind the house, and in a dense forest beyond the house.

Grandfather warns Peter not to go into the meadow, for even though it is tempting, it is dangerous. Grandfather knows there is a wolf prowling through the meadow and forest. He warns Peter that he is much too young to go wolf hunting, but Peter doesn’t believe his Grandfather. He has already decided that he is ready to be a hunter.

As the story unfolds the wolf is captured, but only because Peter becomes aware of the importance of his animal friends, and the importance of working together.

In a version of the original story, the wolf eats the duck before the hunters capture him to take him to the zoo. In our version, we never see either the hunters or their guns. We believe the wolf has eaten the duck, but the duck comes out in the end and is just fine!
About the Production

In *Peter and the Wolf* all of the puppets are *marionettes*, also called string puppets. In this performance Christopher Piper operates (or manipulates) the puppets that you’ll see, and provides all of the character voices and personalities.

Christopher is one of the founders of the Puppet Co. He has dedicated his life to puppetry and performance. He is a second-generation puppeteer. His parents, Len and Pat Piper, were also puppeteers. They performed together in Hawaii, where Christopher and his three brothers grew up. The four brothers often performed in the shows with their parents.

Christopher Piper’s parents passed down this version of the story to Christopher; however, Christopher Piper made the marionettes used in this production. He is truly a Master Puppeteer.
About the Composer, Sergei Prokofiev, and the Music

Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) was born in the village of Sontsovka in the Ukraine. He was a child prodigy on the order of Mozart, composing for piano at age five and writing an opera at nine. His first teacher was his mother, a talented pianist. He traveled widely, spending many years in London and Paris, and toured the United States five times. In 1936, Prokofiev returned to settle permanently in the Soviet Union.

Peter and the Wolf was one of Prokofiev’s first compositions after his return, and was written in April of 1936 (in just two weeks), for a children’s theater in Moscow. Prokofiev invented the story and wrote the narration himself, drawing on memories of his own childhood. He constructed the music as a child’s introduction to the orchestra, with each character in the story represented by a different instrument or group of instruments: Peter by the strings, Grandfather by the bassoon, the bird by the flute, the duck by the oboe, the cat by the clarinet, and the wolf by three French horns. The music is sophisticated enough for adults to enjoy adults, even through repeated hearings. The story’s moral—you can’t be a hero if you don’t take risks—delights children as much as it did nearly a century ago when it was written.
**Before the Show**

1. Read the full story of *Peter and the Wolf* to your students – it is very brief. If you can’t find the story in your school library, there are several versions available online.

2. Listen to a recording of *Peter and the Wolf*. You may be able to find the recording in your school library as well.

3. Explain to your students that they are going to see marionettes (puppets on strings) perform the story. Tell them that the gentleman performing the puppets is a puppeteer.

4. Tell your students that before the story begins, there will be a brief introduction to the musical instruments used to tell the story, and the characters that they represent.

5. Seeing a performance can be an exciting experience. Remind your students of the rules of theater etiquette, which you will find at the end of this instructor’s guide.

**After the Show**

1. The story of *Peter and the Wolf* is simple and easy to remember. Have your students act out the story to see how well they have remembered what they have seen and heard.

2. Play the music for your students again and see if they can remember which instruments represent which characters.
Theater Etiquette

A visit to the Puppet Co. Playhouse may be the very first trip to any theatrical performance for some of your students. We want this to be a happy experience for everyone. Before you enter the theater, our House Manager (the person who is responsible for your safety and comfort during the performance) will welcome you, and will tell you about the seating for you group. Please listen to the House Manager’s instructions and follow them as you find your seats in the Playhouse.

At some Puppet Co. performances, a performer may come out to introduce the show and remind everyone about theater “manners” using this easy to remember poem:

Please don’t eat, and stay down in you seat.
Don’t walk about, and don’t talk or shout.
Don’t take pictures or touch the display fixtures,
And, if the babies bawl, take them down the hall!

Have a great visit to the Puppet Co. Playhouse!