

*Hobey Ford's Golden Rod Puppets*  
*present*

The Rainbow Bridge and  
Other Tales

***Study Guide***

SHOW DESCRIPTION

Hobey Ford's Golden Rod Puppets present, *The Rainbow Bridge and Other Tales*. This shadow puppetry production brings to life three folktales through Ford's unique presentational style combining stunning puppetry, storytelling and topical educational themes. The stories include "The Rainbow Bridge", "El Coqui" and "The Three Billy Goats Gruff", with a finale of his Peepers Puppet, which turn the bare hand into a myriad of creatures and his famous beautifully carved foam animal creatures which he calls the Foamies. His productions touch on themes across the curriculum with an emphasis on his art form.

The Rainbow Bridge is a Native American folktale of the Chumash, a tribe who inhabited the southern coastal regions of California. The tale recalls the origins of the Chumash on Santa Cruz Island. The people received the gift of fire with it the means to develop and flourish until they became overcrowded

were forced to migrate to the mainland on a rainbow bridge. The tale also tells of the ones who didn't make it across, but fell into the sea becoming dolphins.

El Coqui is a Puerto Rican folktale about how the little tree frog got his song. The animals of the lush rain forest had become lazy on their island paradise until a race was set which forced the animals to get in shape. Little Coqui worked extra hard, being so little, and his efforts led him to win the race. He was rewarded with his famous song : "coqui coqui coqui...".

The Three Billy Goats revisits this classic nordic tale with humor and issues of the day. When the long winter has finally come to an end, The Billy Goats Gruff have exhausted the resources of their meadow and must migrate to the upper meadows. To do this they must cross a bridge where a troll stands guard to prevent their passage. They use the ploy of the original tale by sending the smallest first and begging the troll to let them him as progressively larger goats will soon be along providing an even bigger meal. From there all goes haywire as little billy goat turns the story on its ear with a surprise ending, for something has gone totally wrong in the environs of the upper pasture and while Big Billy Goat and the Troll are busy fighting it out little Billy Goat sounds the alarm that all is not well and that they should redirect their energies to preserve their world.

The show lasts 45 minutes with time for Q&A where appropriate.

## BIOGRAPHY

Winner of puppetry's highest honor, the UNIMA Citation of Excellence, and recipient of three Jim Henson Foundation grants, Hobey Ford is known for excellence in puppetry performance and craft.

Hobey's intricate shadow puppetry work and creation of the original rod puppets, the "Foamies", have earned him a place on stages across the world. Hobey's performances incorporate a variety of puppetry styles including Bunraku, rod, marionettes, "Foamies", and shadow puppetry. Hobey adapts folk tales from various cultures for many of his performances, always adding a special "Golden Rod" twist. He uses his own voice to create characters and sound effects, tell stories, and sing.

Hobey utilizes his artistic study at The State University of New York at Purchase and the University of North Carolina at Asheville to design and construct all of his Golden Rod Puppets and the beautiful sets that surround them.

Hobey is considered both an innovator in puppetry craft and a compelling storyteller. He has created both the "Foamies" and the clever hand puppet known as "Peepers". The "Foamies" are large animal puppets carved from blocks of foam. After studying each animal's characteristic movements, Hobey designs various control mechanisms to make the puppets themselves move in a lifelike manner. The "Foamies" are presented using both stage and house performance space.

In conjunction with The Kennedy Center's Partnership In Education program, Hobey provides teacher workshops in puppetry: "Telling Folktales With Shadow Puppetry" and "Monarch Butterfly Metamorphosis and Migration". He also provides classroom workshops in shadow puppetry.

## THE AUDIENCE

A good audience is as important as the performer to make a performance go well. It is important to listen quietly and not to talk unless the performer invites the audience to do so. If you are sitting on the floor you should sit cross-legged so the children behind you can see. Clapping at the end of a story or at the end of the show is always appreciated. Good audience skills are an essential for the success of the show, so have fun but remember your audience manners.

## PUPPETRY STYLES OF THE PERFORMANCE

### SHADOW PUPPETRY

The folktales in this production are told through shadow puppetry. Shadow puppetry is originally an Asian and Indonesian form of puppetry. Traditionally, flat or two dimensional puppets were performed against a semi-transparent screen by the light of a oil

lamp. The audience watched the shadows on the other side of the screen.

Today Shadow puppetry is performed in many ways and in many lands. The puppets can be two or three-dimensional. They can be made out of anything from plastic to cardboard, to your hands. The light source can be diffused or a sharp focused electric light. You can make shadow puppets for the overhead projector or create huge shadows on fabric screens covering a whole theater stage.

## FOAMIES

The Foamies are an original puppet style created by Hobey Ford. These creations are realistically carved foam rubber puppets, depicting animals. Sometimes the foam is covered with fake fur but more often they are painted with acrylic paints. The carved foam animal have rods or sticks attached which I use to fly, swim and run them through the air. Their environments exist in the imagination of the audience. The puppets are performed to music and move all over the performance space including into the audience using an adapted bunraku-style wherein the puppeteer works in full view.

## BUNRAKU-STYLE PUPPETRY

Buraku-style puppetry is an adaptation of traditional Japanese bunraku puppetry. In Japanese bunraku, the puppeteers are dressed in black and perform in full view of the audience. Three puppeteers usually are needed to operate one puppet. The puppeteers must coordinate their efforts as they manipulate or move the puppet. It takes many years to master bunraku and these masters are considered national treasures in Japan. Bunraku is a very formal art form and is aimed at adult audiences.

Today puppeteers from around the world borrow this idea of working in full view and call it bunraku-style or adapted bunraku. It is very different than traditional bunraku and is only loosely based on it. I use bunraku style puppetry in the finale of this performance using my “foamie” puppets.

# HISTORICAL PUPPETRY TECHNIQUES

## (NOT USED IN THIS PRODUCTION)

### A. HAND PUPPETRY

Hand puppetry originated in ancient China and spread to Europe centuries ago. The first puppet show performed by Europeans in this continent were hand puppets. The show was “Punch and Judy”, which originated in Europe several hundred years ago. The hand puppets used consisted of a glove like costume topped with a wooden head and equipped with wooden hands. This puppet tradition led to the contemporary plush hand puppets we know today.

### B. ROD PUPPETRY

Rod puppetry is originally an Indonesian form of puppetry, which later spread to Europe. It is now used around the world. Rod puppets are named for the rods, sticks or wires which are used to make the puppets move. Rod puppetry has only been popular in the US for around 40 years.

### C. HAND AND ROD PUPPETRY

Most puppets we see on TV today are hand and rod puppets. The puppeteer uses their hand inside the puppet’s head to make the mouth move, while the hands of the puppet are manipulated by rods. The Muppets creator Jim Henson made hand and rod puppetry famous on the children’s TV show *Sesame Street*.

#### D. MARIONETTES

Marionettes are string puppets. The first marionettes were made in India over 3000 years ago. They had one string to operate the whole figure. Marionettes used today have many strings and are often very realistic miniatures of real life characters. Marionettes were the most popular form of professionally used puppetry in this country during the first half of the 20th century. It was the coming of Jim Henson's Muppets that caused a shift to the use of hand and rod puppetry.

#### E. BLACK THEATER

Black theater is a modern puppetry technique from Europe. Bunraku-style puppets are operated in a sharply focused curtain of light in front of the puppeteer. Meanwhile the puppeteer is dressed from head to toe in black velvet, with a thin veil over the eyes to allow vision. The operator works against a black velvet draped enclosure in total darkness. The puppets appear to be totally animated with no visible means of control. It is a very difficult technique to control because it is difficult to tour a show requiring total darkness in the performance space. It is also very hot for the performer. It is rarely used today.

#### F. BLACK LIGHT THEATER

Black Light Theater is similar in every way to Black Theater except that the light source is black fluorescent light and the puppets are painted in fluorescent paints. It is also a difficult technique for the same reasons noted above in the section on Black Theater.

#### G. MASKED COSTUMED PUPPETRY

In many parts in the world both in modern and ancient times people have used masked costumed puppetry. The performer wears a mask and is hidden in a costume or robe. The puppets can often be gigantic and paraded through the streets while operated by several puppeteers.

In the Pacific Northwest puppetry this style flourished before any European settlers had arrived. Their puppets were carved from red cedar. A similar technique is still used in China where we see giant undulating dragon figures in Chinese New Years celebrations. The technique was also used in Africa. It is perhaps the oldest form of puppetry.

## SHADOW PUPPET PROJECT

### MATERIALS AND TOOLS

- Poster board (or blue, or green). One 7" X 11" or two 5-1/2" X 7" (poster board comes 22" X 28") for each part
- Art tissue in assorted rainbow colors. One pack per 10 workshops
- Bamboo skewers. 12" length approx. one pack per 25 participants.
- 1/2" paper fasteners. 3/4" will work
- Masking tape. 1/2" width or 3/4" several rolls for convenience.
- Hole punch. 1/8" diameter is best, but regular 1/4" size is fine. Provide several for convenience
- Glue sticks, several for convenience.
- Pencils
- Scissors

### PREPARATION

- A. Cut poster board into (8) – 11" X 7" or 5-1/2" pieces. Allow for one or two pieces per student.
- B. Trim sharp ends off skewers using wire cutters (on pair of needle nose pliers or piers), metal shears or garden pruners.

### MAKING SHADOW PUPPETS

- A. Have students draw the outline of a person or animal on their piece of 11" X 7" poster board, making the drawing as large as possible. Drawings smaller than their flat hand are difficult to work with.
- B. Cut out drawings with scissors.

C. For students above 2nd grade consider having moving parts on the shadow puppet. Moving parts can be attached using a hole punch and a paper fastener.

## SHADOW PUPPET THEATER

### MATERIALS AND TOOLS

- Card board project display board. Available at office supply.
- Shower curtain liner or white bulletin board paper.
- Sturdy yard stick.
- Lamp extension cord, a power strip will allow you to turn it on and off easily, or you can install a switch or dimmer in the cord.
- Plug in light socket (see illustration 1.)
- Duct tape, to tape the screen onto the theater.
- Rubber bands, 2-3" diameter 1/4" width approx. 2 or 3 will do.
- Aluminum foil, 3 feet of it.
- Utility knife, a nice new sharp disposable one for cutting out proscenium
- Two pencils

### I. PROSCENIUM

Make a compass for drawing a 24" circle. You can use a couple of pencils and rubber to fasten the pencils a foot apart on a yard stick as in the illustrations of the shadow puppet theater construction. After scribing the circle onto the display board, use a utility or razor knife to score the circle and then cut deeper until the circle is removable. Decorate the façade of the theater at this time if you wish.

### II. SCREEN

Lay a piece of either paper or shower curtain liner over the proscenium opening and mark and cut out the screen material in a square so that it overlaps the edges of the circle by an 1-1/2". Tape the corners with duct tape, stretching the screen as you tape. Next stretch and tape the middle points of the top,

bottom and side edges. Now lay duct tape along the whole perimeter of the screen as shown in the illustration.

### III. LIGHT BAR

Cut notches on the top edge of each wing of the display board, 1-1/4" deep and 1/4" wide, 8" from intersection with the center panel. These notches will hold a sturdy yard stick which will carry the light fixture.

Plug the light socket into the extension cord into the outlet slots closest to the end which the wire comes out of, on the side of the extension cord which has two spaces for plug ins. Refer to the illustration. Attach the socket/ extension cord to the center of the yard stick, using a rubber band, as shown in illustration.

Install a 60 to 100 watt light bulb into socket. Make a lamp reflector out of a piece of aluminum foil 3 ft. long, folded into a rectangle approximately 6" X 8". Attach the visor to the light socket with a rubber band.

### IV. DIMMER SWITCH

Adding a dimmer switch to the extension cord on your light bar adds versatility to your theater. If you want to skip this detail, you can either unplug the cord to turn off light or plug the cord into a power strip which will give you an easy on off switch.

Locate the spot on the extension cord where you want to install the dimmer switch. With the cord UNPLUGGED cut the center crease between the wires several inches, referring to the illustration. Cut one of wires and strip the ends around 1/2". To each stripped end, twist together one of the wires coming off the dimmer switch. Twist on wire nuts, which usually come with the dimmer switch.

# Shadow Puppet Stage



