



Study Guide for Punschi
Kasper and the Cow and Fritzi's Flea Circus

Punschi is a great show for children in preschool to 3rd grade. This study guide is designed to enhance children's knowledge of storytelling and puppetry and assist teachers, parents and mentors in understanding the show in an educational context. This guide covers puppetry topics, audience behavior topics and discussion ideas for how to evaluate the performance and the story of Punschi.

Puppets are an exciting means to engage children with their imaginations, encourage creative play, break down barriers and provide an effective means of communication. Puppets open a door to discovering an interactive experience of narrative, even in the most reluctant readers and shy children. The puppet provides a helpful, non-threatening and neutral medium with which children can interact, and explore a range of emotions, personalities and cultural traditions.

Puppets provide an essential link between learning and play, which makes them wonderful teaching tools for at home, the classroom and in the wider community.

Comprehension and Collaboration:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.2

Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood. (Discussion Topics for after the show)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.2

Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media. (Discussion Topics for after the show)

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.4

Describe familiar people, places, things, and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail. (Discussion Topics for before and after the show)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.4

Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly. (Discussion Topics for before and after the show)

Art Standards for Kindergarten through Grade 2:

1.1.PO 101. Demonstrate respect for others' opinions by respectfully listening while ideas are articulated. (Activities for before and after the show)

1.1.PO 102. Cooperate in the dramatic process. (Building a puppet and acting out a puppet show)

3.2..PO 101. Demonstrate respectful audience behavior. (Attending the puppet show)

3.2.PO 104. Justify the perception of a performance and critique its production elements. (Activities for after the show)

3.5.PO 102. Explain and justify personal preferences for specific elements and/or moments in dramatizations (Activities for after the show)

The story of Punschi comes out of the old European tradition of puppetry entertainment. Historically the context of these shows would be in a public market or street fair. This show includes some German language which is always translated into English.

Kasper is a traditional hand puppet particularly representative of German culture. As Punch and Judy is to the UK, Kasper is to Germany. *See Appendix A

The Flea Circus follows another one of Europe's oldest traditions. *See Appendix B

Sometimes, it's fun to review this story with your student or child before seeing the puppet show. Here's a brief outline of our version of the story:

The show is performed in two acts with interludes of song and silly banter between two sisters. The first story, *Kasper and the Cow* is a story of iconic German children's hero, Kasper, and his best friend, the endearing giant Augustin, who go on a rollicking chase to reclaim Kasper's suitcase...Stolen by the cow!

Then join the mighty Fritzi, a tiny flea with a big personality, as he dazzles audiences with his talents as strongman, tightrope walker, and even get's fired out of a cannon.

The puppets used in *Kasper and the Cow* are referred to as Hand Puppets. They are made from fabric, foam and stuffing. The faces are painted on. Their clothes are custom made for their bodies and are similar in construction to doll clothes.

Fritzi's Flea Circus is a puppet set built with mechanical gimmicks and the flea is powered by the force of the audience's imagination.

Discussion Topics for Before the Show

Objectives: Take some time to discuss with your students how to behave while seeing a live show. By starting this discussion before coming to see the show, students will be better prepared to watch the story. Also by talking to your students about the background of Punschi and traditional European puppet entertainment they will gain more from seeing

puppet show and be able to better discuss the story afterwards.

- Ask students to talk about theater audience behavior. Discuss the difference between behavior in a live theater vs. behavior at home watching television or out at a movie theater. Why must our behavior be different when the show is "live"?
- Do you think it's ok to yell out or talk to your neighbor during the show? What about laughing or answering the puppets when they talk to you?
- Have students discuss other puppet shows they have gone to or seen on television and in the movies. What did the puppets look like? How did they move?
- Review the history of Punschi and the flea circus. Are there other puppet styles that they are familiar with?

Discussion Topics and Activities for After the Show

Objectives: After seeing the puppet show, discuss with your students what they learned from the puppet show. By doing so, students will gain more from the experience. These discussion questions will encourage students to talk and dialogue about their thoughts on the show. Also, students will think more about the production and will be able to articulate what they thought about the story and the experience of watching the puppet show.

- Have students draw pictures of the puppet show. Have them share their pictures with the class, describing the scene they have drawn and the characters in it.
- Students can discuss what they thought about the performance. Encourage students to be specific and think about different aspects of the production such as lighting, sound, the voices and look of the puppets, etc. Make sure students justify their views on the puppet show and performances.
- Students can discuss what they think it would be like to be a puppeteer. Is this a job they would enjoy? What do they think are important things that a puppeteer can do?
- Color in a Punschi poster of Kasper and his friends. *See Appendix C
- Encourage students to recreate the story; engage the children further with a project to make your own Flea Circus from a shoe box.

Resources

Common Core State Standards Initiative: <http://www.corestandards.org/>

Sandglass Theater: www.sandglasstheater.org

<http://www.punchandjudy.com/Kasper.html>

Appendix A from *Punch and Judy, A History* by George Speaight. Revised edition 1970. Published by Studio Vista Ltd.

Please send any thoughts or appreciation letters to:

Sandglass Theater

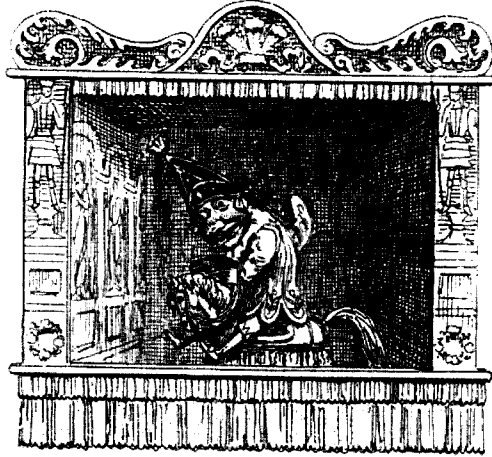
PO Box 970

Putney, VT 05346

info@sandglasstheater.org

We Love Hearing from You and Your Students!

10 The folk puppet heroes of Europe



To complete our story it only remains to look briefly at those folk-heroes of the European puppet theatre who do not descend directly from Pulcinella. To treat of these in detail would require a book in itself—a book I should like to write one day—for Punch's family, indeed, extends to a vast number of foreign cousins; in each European national or linguistic area, and sometimes in regions no larger than a single town, there has been a tendency for *one* comic character to take his place as the resident clown in the puppet show, appearing as comic relief in a wide range of different plays.

Pulcinella was carried all over Europe by Italian showmen in the seventeenth century, but he has since vanished almost everywhere except in England. He lingered longest in Russia, where he was known as Petroushka (the Pierrot-like figure familiar to us from the ballet is not an accurate guide to his appearance), but since the Revolution he has disappeared even there.

Even in England a new folk-hero was created in the touring marionette theatres of the nineteenth century. This was a slow-witted country bumpkin named Tim Bobbin, who had, nevertheless, some grains of cunning beneath his stupidity. The origin of this character may be traced to a certain John Collier, an itinerant schoolmaster and sign-painter in Lancashire during the mid-eighteenth century, who wrote a book about the misadventures of a typical yokel of his region, in a phonetic approximation to the Lancashire dialect, and published it over the pseudonym of 'Tim Bobbin'. His story gained immense popularity and many imitators in the North of England, and his own pseudonym seems to have become attached to the hero, or clown, of whom he wrote. Some time near the middle of the nineteenth century he became a marionette.

The folk puppet heroes of Europe

Tim Bobbin appeared, like the eighteenth-century Punch, as comic relief in almost every marionette play. He was one of the characters in the box of old puppets from a nineteenth-century marionette theatre that Gerald Morice and I restored to working order and presented during the Festival of Britain as *The Old-Time Marionettes*. We introduced him to speak a Prologue.

In every other country of Europe the same pattern can be seen of a native puppet hero displacing Pulcinella upon the puppet stage.

In France, at the end of the eighteenth century, a new character, Guignol, appeared in Lyons. This city already boasted a lively tradition of puppet theatres, one of which was directed by a certain Laurent Mourguet. Mourguet introduced into his performances a character based upon the type of bibulous, good natured, silk weavers of Lyons, and called him Guignol; soon Guignol had acquired a wife, Madelon, and a drinking crony, Gnafron. Mourguet and his children established a Guignol tradition in Lyons which spread all over France, and soon Polichinelle was quite deposed from the glove-puppet booths—though Guignol never achieved any success as a marionette. Guignol is a quite different character to Polichinelle, more naturalistic, more sympathetic, less bizarre. A very large repertory of Guignol plays was written, full of amusing incident. You can still see these shows in the Paris parks, and very good entertainment they are.

At about the same time as Guignol was sweeping into popularity in France, another character was taking his place in the puppet theatres of Germany. This was Kasperl, who seems to have superseded Hanswurst (Jack Sausage) as the German stage buffoon at about the end of the eighteenth century and to have acquired his present appearance in Hamburg in the middle of the nineteenth century. Kasperl was carried to all the German-speaking lands and throughout the Austrian empire. Wherever he went he acquired a new national personality. The Kasperek of the famous Czech puppeteer, Matej Kopecky, played a splendid part in sustaining Czech national patriotism.

At the same time as Kasperl was travelling south, in the north of Europe a puppet with variants of the name John was coming into popularity. This had long been a popular name for Anglo-Saxon clowns. In the Netherlands he was Jan Klaasen; a Jan Klaasen glove-puppet theatre still performs in the centre of Amsterdam. In Denmark, a similar figure was called Mester Jakel. In Lille and Tournai he was Jacques, a marionette, who was a more conventionally virtuous and heroic character than most of our puppet heroes. The Hänneschen of the traditional Cologne theatre is another form of John. This theatre is particularly interesting because it is a rod-puppet theatre, a form which has been comparatively rare in western Europe. Hänneschen is a jolly and unexaggerated type of person. It is a mistake to imagine that all these folk-heroes have identical natures.

I can here only briefly list the heroes, or resident clowns—almost all marionettes—of some other folk puppet theatres of northern Europe, a region

Punch and Judy

where folk puppet theatres have greatly flourished. There is Woltje, of the Théâtre Toone in Brussels. 'The Nose' is the hero of the Antwerp cellar theatres. He may be compared with 'Long Nose', a character at Lille. Pierke, or Pierrot, of Ghent, is a character in the Pulcinella tradition; Peter Long Arm is also of Ghent. Tchanchès, a corruption of François, is the hero of Liège; Tchanchès and his wife Nanesse appear in the sagas of Charlemagne and his knights that the Liège marionette theatre seems to have borrowed from Sicily, and in the traditional Nativity play they are pilgrims to the manger with the three Kings. Morveux Courtelapette or 'le p'tit Morveux', a diminutive figure, was the hero of Roubaix in northern France; there was also Jacques Lenflé—the Jacques of Roubaix; these characters were created in about 1870 by a Belgian puppeteer who had settled in that town. Barbisier was a regional type from the French province of Franche-Comté, who was originally a real person, a local worthy, who was introduced into the crib theatres of Besançon in about 1793; these theatres presented Nativity plays at Christmas-time. Like many other puppet heroes, Barbisier was taken to the hearts of the people, and became a character who symbolized the region in folk tradition. Lafleur, hero of the puppet theatre of Amiens, is a late-eighteenth-century type; his costume suggests a rather higher social class than other puppet heroes, but he was, in fact, a valet.

In Spain, a Pulcinella-like character is Christovita, sometimes abbreviated as Tofol, while the indigenous hero of Catalonia is Perot, a form of the familiar Pierre. In Italy each province has its own particular puppet hero. We have already seen Pulcinella in Naples, but there are many others: Gianduja of Turin; Gerolamo of Milan; Faggiolino and Sandrone of Bologna; Facanapa of Venice; Stenterello of Florence; Cassandrino of Rome; and Arlecchino who at one time appeared in marionette theatres from all over Italy.

As we pass towards the east of Europe, we must not forget to salute Vitez Laszlo of Hungary and Vasilache of Rumania, both probably derivatives from Kasperl. And we finally reach Karaguez of Greece, who originally came from Turkey and really belongs to an oriental, rather than a European, tradition. He is the only shadow figure in our collection.

Finally, I must mention one famous traditional folk puppet theatre in which a single puppet hero plays only a small part. This is the Opra dei Pupi of Sicily. Everyone has heard of the Paladins and Saracens who make up the casts of these plays. Not so many have heard of Vertichio and Nofrio, the resident comedians. Vertichio, in particular, is a vivacious wine bibber who is introduced to provide light relief in matters of high tragedy and universal drama.

Some of these puppets are glove puppets, some are marionettes, a few are found in both forms. Most of them speak with a squeaker. There is one feature in which all these puppet heroes are truer to Pulcinella and to the eighteenth-century Punch than is Punch himself. They all appear as clowns in a wide repertoire of different plays. Only in England did the popular puppet drama

The folk puppet heroes of Europe

become ossified into one invariable form. This form is, indeed, well suited to the street or the beach, but there is no reason why this should remain the only example of popular English puppet drama. The introduction of Punch into a wider repertory, based on themes of popular story and legend, might help to preserve his vital presence among us.

What conclusions can we draw from this rapid survey?

The traditions we have examined are not always very old; the oldest—the *Commedia dell'Arte* characters—date only from the seventeenth century; many of the most interesting characters date only from the nineteenth century. It is significant to note that in all the countries affected by the French Revolution, new puppet heroes, local and national in character, sprang up at the beginning of the nineteenth century to supplant the progeny of Pulcinella—Guignol in France, Kasperl in Germany, and many another. Even in northern Italy, the old characters of the *Commedia dell'Arte* were replaced by a new set of regional heroes. Only in Russia and England—countries which were never defeated by Napoleon—did the Pulcinella character survive in its assimilated form. And in Russia, Petroushka did not survive the Russian Revolution. Punch in England is the last of his kind. Like the British monarchy, he has ridden out all storms; also like the monarchy, he once came from abroad, and has been long absorbed into English tradition.

Moreover, the new puppet folk-heroes of the age of the French Revolution differed significantly from their predecessors. Pulcinella was a peasant, with a peasant's rough humour; Polichinelle was a peasant dressed up in court clothes; Punch was a peasant playing the part of John Bull. But the new race of puppet heroes were townsmen, not country men; industrial workers, not peasants; shabbier, sharper, less coarse, more witty.

Yet, whatever changes there may have been in the passage of time, and however much the folk-heroes that we have examined may differ between themselves, there are certain basic characteristics that unite them all. They were all of the working class. In their practical jokes, their pretended stupidities, their avoidance of danger, their lack of heroics or indeed of any civic sense, these puppet characters reflect the inarticulate sentiments of the common people. In their farcical adventures, their audience, too, could get their own back on nagging wives, on mothers-in-law, on policemen, on sergeant majors, on tax collectors, on busybodies, on landlords, on money lenders, on foreign invaders, on the 'boss'. There is a poem by G. K. Chesterton with the final line:

For we are the people of England, that never have spoken yet.

We may say that these folk-heroes of the European puppet theatres incarnate the people of Europe, and in their crude dialogues and little voices, in all the tongues and dialects of our continent, the people of Europe spoke.

PERNSCHNITZ!



Sandglass Theater

Putney, Vt. ☆



Hier ist die Uebersetzung. Habe auch versucht, das Gedicht mit Reim zu fabrizieren:

Did you know:

...that Rolof was my predecessor who used to perform at the English royal palace.

I worked under his tutelage from 1946 to 1949. After his death I took over his flea circus. Until this day my family is still running it.

...that there are over 3000 kinds of fleas. That has just been found by scientists.

... that the female is 3 times the size of the male.

... that only females suck blood whereas the male only lives off juice from plants.

... that about 3 to 5 dead fleas weigh 1 milligram.

The explanation inside was given by Rolof to his customers/ patrons in the thirties.

Poem:

Who ever thought, if he or she,

Would ever laugh at just one flea,

And here, you never thought it true,

You watch a circus with its crew,

Where every artist they could hire,

Is tied to finest golden wire.

Come, people, come and see,

The great achievement of a tiny flea.

Rolof and his flea show visited all continents. He performed in England, France, Spain, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Marocco, India, Argentina, and many other parts of the world. Rolof gave special performances to people of highest ranks like kings, sultans and even to Pope Leo XIII and he and his flea circus were recognized as a unique curiosity. In Germany Rolof was very successful as well with his shows and was asked to Berlin among others four times by Hitler to give special performances there.

Description:

Flea circus or flea show, most famous for centuries. Already 500 years ago one man succeeded in tying fleas to golden wire and have them work. He paid with his life for his art for he was executed as witch master. Rolof learned this art in his youth and travelled the entire world with his flea show. Some tried to imitate his flea show. But to this day nobody in the world was able to surpass his art. The work requires greatest patience and endurance to teach the fleas their chores. Only fleas that feed off humans can be used in the flea circus. The 'dust' of 'dog flea' cannot be used since it has only a short life span and when used perishes after only 24 hours. The flea that only feeds off humans has a life span of 2 years and can, when working, live up to 6 months. Rolof needed 6 to 8 weeks to train the fleas in their work. Each flea has a distinct job. Working fleas are attached to a golden wire and are being fed once, or , when working twice a day off Rolof's upper leg. Also the young breed is fed daily. The flea is the strongest and fastest animal in the world. In relationship to its height it jumps so far as a human would have to in order to go around the globe in 7 jumps. A flea can pull about 45 grams. Thus a human , if he/she wanted to achieve the same in relationship to his/her height would have to pull a heavy locomotive along a highway. We show you fleas as jugglers, dancers; fleas get mills or merry-go-rounds going. They pull different wagons and populate a village of fleas.