



Puppet Showplace Theater presents

Tall Tales

Stories and Songs from Old New England

By Brad Shur and Chris Monti

SHOW DESCRIPTION

Have you ever wanted to sing along with a sea shanty? Or dive deep into a fox's den? Then join us for a whirlwind tour of New England's lesser-known folklore! Along the way, students will help the residents of Cheshire, MA make the world's largest wheel of cheese, sail the oceans with the legendary giant sailor Alfred Bulltop Stormalong; and meet dozens of ordinary folk with extraordinary problems. Drawing from three hundred years of stories, songs, and local history, there is sure to be something for everyone on the Yankee Peddler's cart!



ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Brad Shur (Puppeteer) is a versatile puppeteer who has created and performed characters made of everything from pixels to papier mache. As the Resident Artist at Puppet Showplace Theater, he performs 6-7 different shows each year in multiple puppetry styles. He also teaches puppetry classes to students of all ages, Pre-K to adult. Prior to becoming the Resident Artist at Puppet Showplace, Brad toured the country as a performer with Big Nazo (Rhode Island), Wood & Strings Theatre (Tennessee) and The PuppeTree (Vermont). As a builder, Brad has designed and fabricated puppets for American Idol, Dollywood, Avenue Q, and the U.S.S. Constitution Museum. Brad is a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design.

Chris Monti (Musician) is a writer, singer, and musician based in Somerville, MA. He has released three records: *Home*, *Locust Grove*, and *Swampland Flowers* on CMO Records. Chris has opened for and toured with country-blues great Paul Geremia, and has had the pleasure of playing music with the Providence Wholebellies (led by harmonica wizard Chris Turner), with Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars, and with composer Steve Jobe (playing the gigantic Bosch Hurdy-Gurdy). Monti regularly performs for children all over New England in schools, hospitals, and community settings. In addition to guitar, Monti plays harmonica, banjo, mandolin, piano, lap steel, and kazoo.



Puppet Showplace Theater was founded as a small storefront business in 1974. Today, the theater has grown to become New England's premier puppetry presenter. Each year, the Puppet Showplace presents over 300 performances by professional puppet companies to audiences in greater Boston. Touring shows travel to schools, libraries, and cultural centers throughout the Northeast region. The theater offers workshops, classes, summer camps, and training opportunities to both kids and adults.

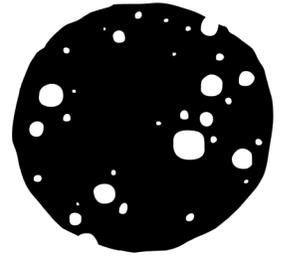
www.puppetshowplace.org

THE STORIES

"Tall Tales" includes stories inspired by real people and historical events. It also includes tall tales - improbable or incredible stories - and New England folklore - stories that people shared over and over again. Some stories are even told through songs.

"The Mammoth Cheese of Cheshire, Massachusetts"

A true story! When Thomas Jefferson became the 3rd president of the United States, the residents of Cheshire, MA decided to send him the world's largest wheel of cheese as a present. In 1802, the citizens combined milk from every cow in town and pressed a wheel of cheese weighing over 1,000 pounds. A cheese press monument stands in the town today.

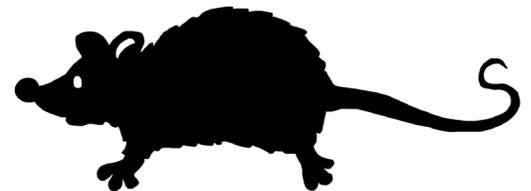


"A Baker's Dozen"

Why is thirteen a "baker's dozen?" This story is based on an old Dutch legend about an old woman with magic powers who comes into a baker's shop and demands thirteen rolls for the price of one dozen. When the baker refuses to give her what she wants, she curses his bread until he changes his mind.

"Letters to Rats"

Another true story! Excavations have uncovered letters to rats, mice, and other vermin in the walls and floor boards of historic homes. When all other methods failed, people tried to plead with the animals to leave them alone!



"The Legend of Alfred Bulltop Stormalong"

This tall tale is referenced in many sea shanties. Stormy was said to be a giant sailor who went to sea as a boy and who, throughout his life, faced off with a mythical sea monster called the Kraken. It was said that he sailed the ocean in a giant ship whose sails touched the skies. His adventures are told in stories and in songs called sea shanties.

WHO IS THE YANKEE PEDDLER?

Yankee

The word "Yankee" was once a word for Americans. You have probably heard of "Yankee Doodle," a silly song used by the British to make fun of revolutionary soldiers. "Yankee" also refers to people from the Northern United States. That's the region where our stories come from!

Peddler

A "peddler" is traveling salesman. Instead of having a store, a peddler packs his wares into a cart and brings them throughout the countryside. Some peddlers would try to sell people goods they did not want, such as broken toys or fake medicines. Has anyone ever tried to sell you something you did not need?



CLASS DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

1. If you were a peddler, what sort of things would you try to sell? Draw a picture of your product. How much does it cost? Act out a commercial for your classmates.

2. Think of a true story about something that actually happened to you or your family. Now, change something about the story to make it a "tall tale." Share your story out loud with your classmates.

SING ALONG!

The Fox

The fox went out on a chilly night
prayed for the moon to give him light,
he'd many a mile to go that night,
before he reached the town-o
town-o,
town-o,
he'd many a mile to go that night
before he reached the town-o.



Jenny Jenkins

Will you wear green oh my dear, oh my dear-o?
Will you wear green Jenny Jenkins?
No I won't wear green it's a shame to be seen.
I'll buy me a foldy-rolly, tildy-toldy,
Seek-a-double, use-a-cozza roll to find me
Roll, Jenny Jenkins, roll

(Repeat with each color)

I won't wear white cause the color's too bright.
I won't wear red cause it hurts my head.
I won't wear yellow cause I'd never get a fellow.
I won't wear blue cause blue won't do.

(Try making up your own verses. Pick a color and find a rhyme)

SHADOW PUPPETRY

People have been performing with shadow puppets for thousands of years. It's believed that the first shadow puppets were made in china, but the idea quickly spread around the world.

The country of Indonesia is especially famous for their shadow puppetry. They carve their puppets from water buffalo skins. Then, they stretch huge silk sheets between two poles and perform by pressing the puppets against the sheet in front of a flickering lantern.



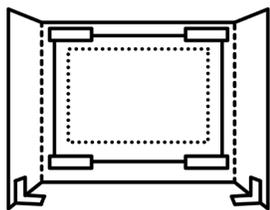
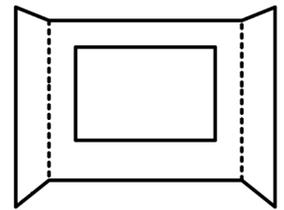
MAKE YOUR OWN SHADOW PUPPETS

There are a lot of ways to make shadow puppets. You just need three things:

- 1) A light source.** This can be a flashlight, a candle, an overhead projector, even the sun! Anything that makes light will work.
- 2) A screen.** This is where your audience will see the shadows. Most shadow puppet shows shine light from behind a translucent screen (paper, fabric, or plastic shower curtain liners all work well), but you can make shadows on the wall, the ceiling, or anywhere you can shine light.
- 3) Puppets.** Anything that makes a shadow can be a shadow puppet. Students can use their hands to make shapes, or you can cut shapes from cardstock.

SIMPLE SHADOW THEATER

A shadow theater can be made from very simple materials. To begin, cut all but three sides from a cardboard box. Then cut a window into the middle section. You can make your stage any size.

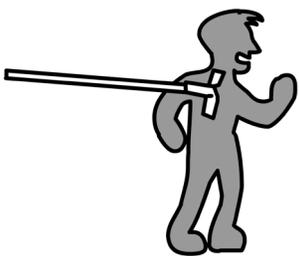


Tape a piece of paper over the window. You may also want to tape the theater to the table (or floor, if it is larger). Children will press their puppets against the paper and tape will keep the stage from tipping over.

Place a desk lamp behind the screen. Use one with a 40-60 watt bulb. Higher wattage bulbs can get very hot. You'll want to place your lamp as close as possible to the screen while still having the light reach the corners. This will depend on the size of your screen. A few inches should work.



Have your students draw their characters, then cut them from thin cardboard. Posterboard or cereal boxes are both effective. Attach rods to the back of each puppet. Bamboo skewers work very well, drinking straws will do in a pinch.



Now you're ready to put on a show! Have your students press their puppet against the paper screen. Practice moving the puppets to tell a story.

ADDITIONAL READING

Baird, Bil. *The Art of the Puppet*. New York: Macmillan, 1965. Print.

Botkin, Benjamin Albert. *A Treasury of New England Folklore: Stories, Ballads, and Traditions of the Yankee People*. New York: Crown, 1947. Print.

Metaxas, Eric. *Stormalong: The Legendary Sea Captain*. Rowayton, CT: ABDO, 1995. Print.

Wisniewski, David, and Donna Wisniewski. *Worlds of Shadow: Teaching with Shadow Puppetry*. Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas, 1997. Print.