

Curriculum Guide

The Fratello Marionettes

The Vaudeville Follies

Teacher Guide

K-8

About the Artist

The Fratello Marionettes began entertaining audiences in 1989 by bringing the ancient art of marionettes to audiences throughout the world. We have toured extensively throughout the United States and internationally.

The Fratello Marionettes produce high quality marionette shows using the “cabaret style” of manipulation. In this truly American style the puppet and puppeteer perform in full view of the audience. Our shows present intricately handcrafted marionettes that range in size from one foot to three feet tall. Our shows are geared for children of all ages, and some of our work is performed without dialog. These music-based programs are designed to surmount the language barrier.

About the Program

Vaudeville is a theatrical form popular from the 1880’s until the 1930’s. Long before people had television, iPods or radios, the most popular form of entertainment was a vaudeville show. A typical production had small vignettes performed by actors, dancers, singers and variety performers that would be repeated continuously throughout the day. The final act of a vaudeville show was a strategically placed unpleasant routine. This was to get the audience to leave so another audience could enter.

The Vaudeville Follies is created from a long line of marionette variety shows. The first marionette variety shows were made in the 1800’s in Europe and typically featured a family of performers traveling around to different venues. Much of the shows featured specialized trick marionettes. These marionettes were designed to do very specific tasks such as juggling, balancing on a tightrope, playing musical instruments, singing, dancing, and transforming.

Our modern marionette variety show, *The Vaudeville Follies*, consists of our most popular marionette acts. The production showcases our juggling waiter who can balance cups and saucers; the opera singer who can’t quite hold his long note, and our trained dog Puddles. Also included in this production is our bluesy cat singer Miss Kitty Litter, the clown Pierrot who can blow up a balloon, the high flying antics of our trapeze artist, and many more.

Learning Objectives

- To introduce children to the art of Puppetry
- To open children's imagination to theater
- To learn the history of Vaudeville
- To listen to classical music
- To show how to follow one's dreams (Both puppeteers started in puppetry at a young age)

Teacher Preparation for the Program

Discussing the History of Puppetry

- What is a puppet?
- What is a marionette?
- How many types of puppets are there?
- How can I make a simple puppet?
- When did the art of puppetry begin?

The Vaudeville Follies

- When was Vaudeville performed?
- What type of performances would you see in a vaudeville show?
- Why did people stop performing vaudeville shows?
- Who were some famous people that started in vaudeville?

Follow-Up Ideas and Activities

How to Create a Puppet Show

- Think of a clever story to tell.
- Writing the script.
- Develop what characters are involved.
- Decide what type of puppets to use to tell the story.
- Determine how and when to use sound effects or music.
- Decide who is going to play which characters.
- Rehearse the show.
- Put on a performance.
- Have fun!

Vocabulary and Key Concepts

Vaudeville: theatrical entertainment consisting of a number of individual performances, acts, or mixed numbers, as by comedians, singers, dancers, acrobats, and magicians.

Acrobat: a skilled performer of gymnastic feats, as walking on a tightrope or swinging on a trapeze.

Juggler: a person who performs juggling feats, as with balls or knives.

Marionette: mar-i-o-nette ; a puppet manipulated from above by strings attached to its jointed limbs.

English-Language Arts Content Standards

This puppetry program meets the VAPA and ELAC standards:

- 1.1 Artistic Perception: puppets, story, classical music, conflict
- 2.1 Creative Expression: Students connect emotional bonds with the characters portrayed in the puppet show presentation
- 3.2 Historical and Cultural Context: Students are enlightened on one of the earliest forms of performance art. They are also encouraged to ask questions following the performance.

Resources

Greg Palmer, *Vaudeville*, DVD, 2000

Lionel Blair, *Music Hall Days*, DVD, 2004

Robert M. Lewis, *From Traveling Show to Vaudeville*, University Press, 2007

Luman Coad, *Marionette Sourcebook*, Charlamagne Press, 2007

Mabel and Les Beaton, *The Complete Book of Marionettes*, Dover Publications, 2005

David Currell, *Making and Manipulating Marionettes*, Crowood Press, 2005

Mark Mazzarella, *Stories of the American Puppet*, DVD, 2007