

Hobey Ford's Golden Rod Puppets

ANIMALIA

Study Guide

THE PERFORMER

Hobey Ford, the creator of the Golden Rod Puppets, designs builds and performs puppet productions throughout the US and Canada. Today he is based in the mountains of Western North Carolina, near Asheville, but he was born in coastal Connecticut. He began working with puppets at The State University of New York in Purchase, where he studied art.

Ford founded the Golden Rod Puppets in 1980 after moving to North Carolina, and since that time he has worked at such venues as The Smithsonian Museum, The Kennedy Center, The Jim Henson International Festival of Puppetry, The Detroit Institute of Arts as well as schools, festivals, libraries and theaters across the country.

The Golden Rod Puppets are named for their focus on *rod* puppetry, including many related styles of puppetry, which involve the use of rods. Ford works with traditional European style rod puppets, shadow puppets, adapted bunraku puppets, as well as contemporary hand and rod puppets. Ford serves as rod puppetry consultant to Puppeteers of America.

Drawing on art, woodworking and basic engineering skills, Hobey designs and crafts his puppets. He is renowned for his techniques of carved foam rubber, which he uses in his "foamies", finely articulated realistic animal puppets. Ford employs complicated mechanisms and careful manipulation, while using his own voice and storytelling skills to bring his puppets to life.

Ford has won numerous awards including three Jim Henson Foundation grants, and puppetry's highest honor, a Citation of Excellence from Union International de la Marionette. He also teaches nationally through The Kennedy Center's Professional Development for Teachers program.



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 and not on your knees, 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.

ANIMALIA

“Animalia” is a puppetry ballet of animal creatures called the “Foamies”. The “Foamies” are incredibly realistic animal puppets created by Hobey Ford for the finales of his previous shows. Now he has devoted a whole performance to these wonderfully animated creatures. The show explores the beauty and movement of whales, dolphins, birds, butterflies, wolves and a menagerie of other animal creatures.

THE WORD ANIMALIA

The title, “Animalia”, comes from the scientific name for the kingdom of animals. Scientists organize the names of living things in many ways, putting them into groups that are similar. A plant is not an animal so it is in its own kingdom, called Plantae.

Scientists also divide each kingdom into smaller groups. Scientists classify humans in the following order:

Kingdom-	Animalia
Phylum-	Chordata
Subphylum	Vertebrata
Superclass	Tetrapoda
Class-	Mammalia
Order-	Primates
Family-	Hominidae
Genus-	Homo
Species-	Homo sapiens

THE KINGDOMS

Animalia - The kingdom of animals. This includes insects, reptiles, birds, sponges, mammals like cows, whales and people.

Fungi - The kingdom of fungi.

Monera - The kingdom of bacteria.

Plantae -The kingdom of plants.

Protista - The kingdom of protozoa and eucaryotic algae.

THE ANIMALS

(Not a complete listing. May vary in some performances)

ALLIGATOR

BALD EAGLE

BLUE WHALE

DOLPHIN

FROG

FISH

GRAY WOLF

HERON

JELLYFISH

MONARCH BUTTERFLY

ORCAS

OTTER

SPERM WHALE

ROD PUPPETS

Rod puppetry is traditionally an Indonesia form of puppetry. 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. Most puppets we see on TV today are a type of rod puppet. If the puppeteer, the person who moves the puppet, uses their hand inside the puppet's head to make the mouth move, we called the puppet a *hand and rod puppet*.

Rod puppetry has only been popular in the US for around thirty years. Before then most Americans were most familiar with hand puppets, puppets worn like a glove, with the head and hands of the puppet moved by the puppeteer's fingers within the puppet. Marionettes, or string puppets, were also widely used in the first part of the 20th century (around 1900- 1960). Muppets creator made hand and rod puppetry famous on the children's TV show *Sesame Street*. Today rod puppetry and adapted bunraku are more popular than ever.

BUNRAKU-STYLE PUPPETRY

Bunraku is a traditional Japanese form of puppetry. In 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 master bunraku puppeteers are considered national treasures in Japan. Japanese bunraku is usually not for children.

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 "Little Grandmother Spider Woman" and in the "Foamies".

THE FOAMIES

These puppets are a form of puppetry, which I developed. They 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 animals 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 all over the performance space including into the audience.

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 an 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.

SHADOW PUPPET PROJECT

MATERIALS AND TOOLS

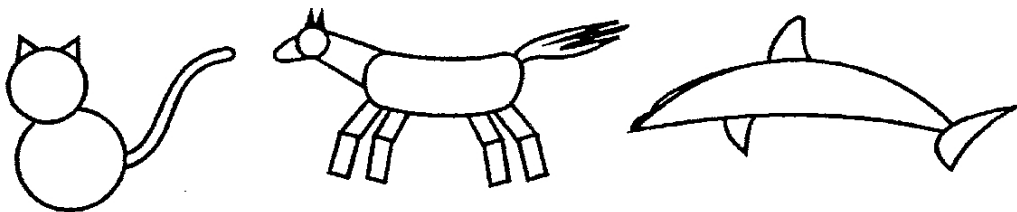
- Black (or blue, or green) poster board. One 7" X 11" or two 5-1/2" X 7"(poster board comes 22" X 28")
- Art tissue in assorted rainbow colors. One pack per 10 workshops
- Bamboo skewers. 12" length approx. one pack per 25 participants.
- 1/2" paper fasteners. 3/4" will work
- Masking tape. 1/2" width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

PREPARATION

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

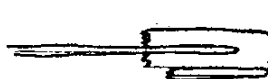
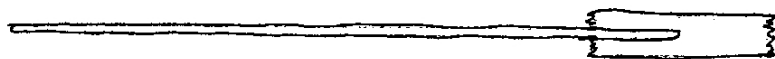
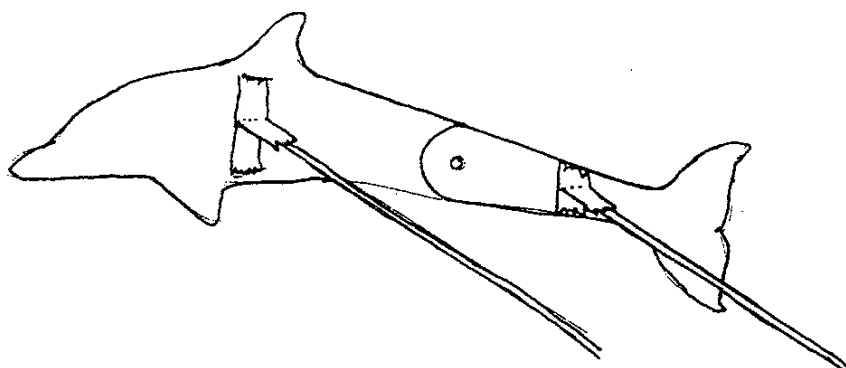
MAKING SHADOW PUPPETS

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.



Cut out drawings with scissors. 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. Bend fasteners over the tip of a scissor to create a loose joint.

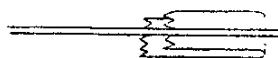
Tape on rods to make parts move. Try to limit students to two rods, unless three rods are necessary to control the puppet. Often it is sufficient to let the legs of a puppet dangle and swing without any rod.



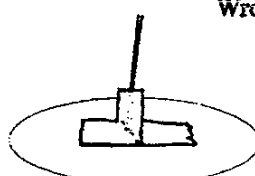
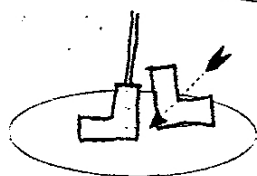
Wrong



Right



Wrong



SHADOW PUPPET THEATER

MATERIALS AND TOOLS

- Card board project display board. Available at office supply.
- Shower curtain liner or white bulletin board paper.
- Sturdy yardstick.

- 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

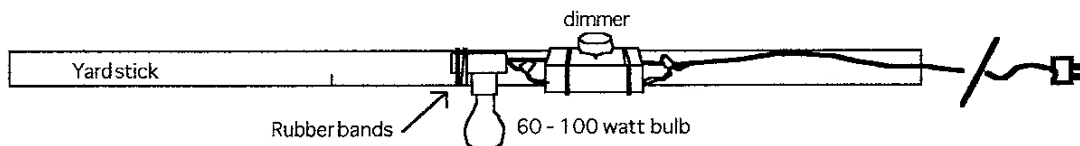
I. **PROSCENIUM**

Make a compass for drawing a 24" circle. You can use a couple of pencils and rubber bands 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.

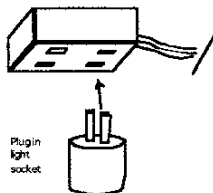
II. **SCREEN**

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 yardstick, 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 yardstick, using a rubber band, as shown in illustration.

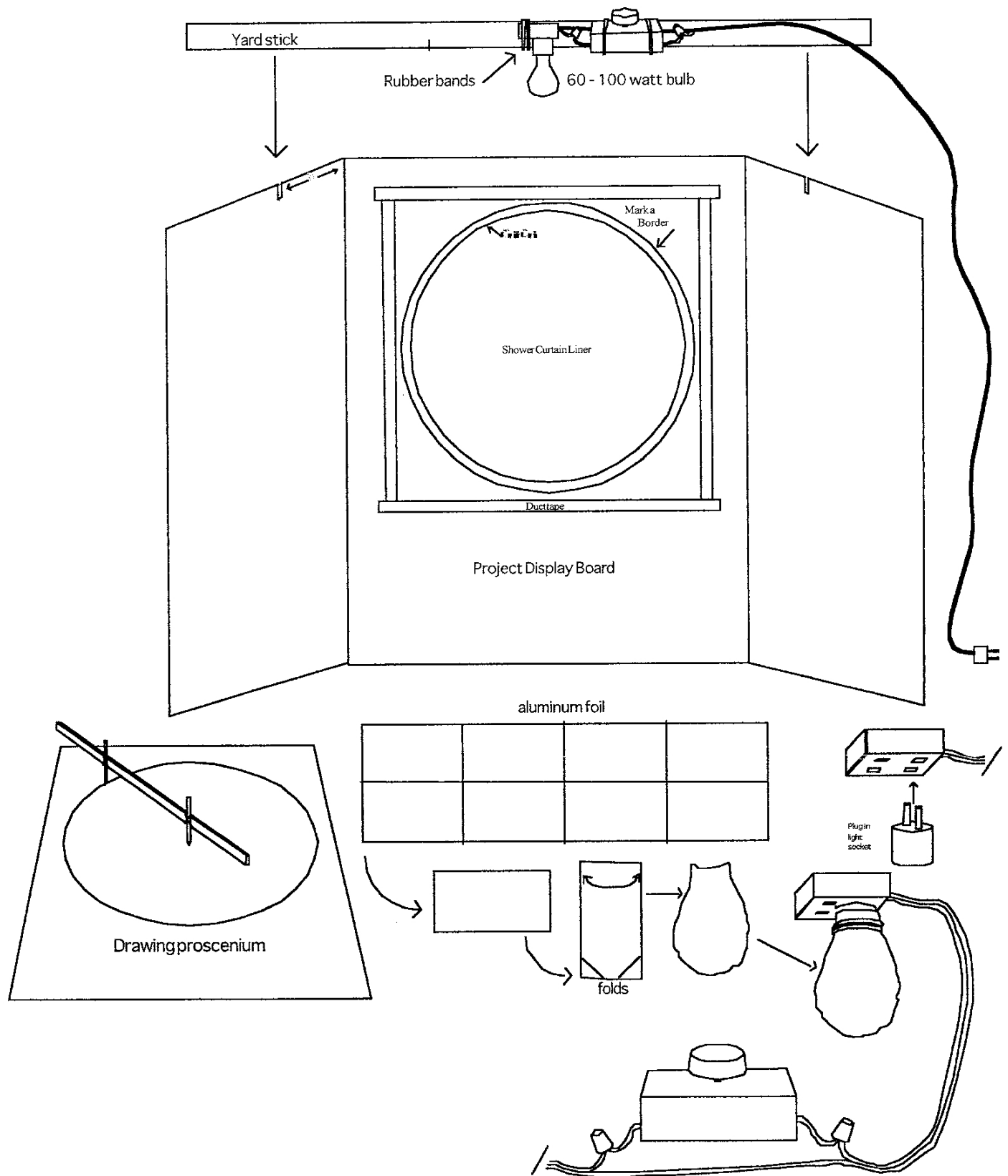
Install a 60 to 100 watt light bulb into socket. Make a lamp reflector out of a piece of aluminum foil 3 ft. long, folded into a rectangle approximately 6" X 8". Attach the visor to the light socket with a rubber band.

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



Wiring a dimmer switch into an extension cord

choose dimmer location

