

IMPLEMENTING PUPPETRY INTO *THE LITTLE PRINCE*

By

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## **Implementing Puppetry Into *The Little Prince***

### **Outline Of the Project**

Puppetry arts are inherently theatrical; however, puppetry is almost always isolated from traditional theatrical productions. In most recent history the use of puppets has moved away from theatre and exists primarily in the realm of “Puppet Shows.” Puppets are treated as or viewed as a prop and not an extension of a character in a performance. “Puppet shows” are shows that exclusively feature puppets with no human actors visible and are separate from general theatre productions that utilize puppetry. Puppets are a unique way to create fantasy elements and nonhuman characters in theatrical productions instead of glorified props on stage. When you treat a puppet as a character it becomes another actor in the production. In this section, I explain the goals of the project from my original proposal and the decisions that I made in order to prepare for the project. As well as giving an overview of the process of the creative project.

The goal of this project was to research various styles of puppetry from puppetry traditions around the world and implement these techniques into an established production that does not already include puppetry in the provided text and implement puppetry into the production. I set out to research puppetry techniques, design several puppets that could be used in a production that did not already call for puppetry to be used in the script, and construct prototypes, models, and one completed puppet. I noticed a deficit in traditional American theatre where I feel that puppets can be used to represent characters in theatre through visual storytelling techniques. I was interested in ways to implement puppetry into production which do not explicitly call for puppets to be used. I feel like this technique could be implemented in many theatrical productions. I sought to make discoveries on strategies to achieve this, through the process of designing puppets for a theoretical production. The main focus of the project was puppetry design that is rooted in the research of the art of puppetry. With a wide range of overall research into the art form, I was able to make decisions informed by my research into various forms of puppetry techniques. Having hands-on experience creating models helped me to find techniques and problems in placing puppetry in production which they are not included.

I chose to integrate puppets into a theoretical production of *The Little Prince* by Cummins and Scoular, and build puppets based on designs and informed decisions from the research. Recently as puppetry has been more related to young audiences, choosing a script written for young audiences seemed to be a logical choice for starting my research in how to bring puppetry into theatrical productions. Puppet theatre developed in areas where traditional actors theatre could not thrive due to practical, religious, and social reasons. The puppet served as a substitute for an actor. This is one of the main reasons that caused a shift where puppets moved away from production having actors. In a production where a traditional human actor is intended, something can be lost by using a puppet to represent this character. By using research into the traditional uses of puppetry as well as dramaturgy into the script of *The Little Prince*, I identified ways in

which the emotion is not lost by using an inanimate object. By adapting motion, visual design, and scale, a puppet has the ability to be as dynamic as an actor.

My original thesis proposal consisted of researching five styles of puppetry (marionette, rod, hand, Bunraku, and shadow puppets), designing and creating prototypes of at least three puppets for a production of *The Little Prince*, and constructed one puppet design fully.

The first step of the research was to define puppetry and its uses throughout history in traditional theatre to situate the work of the project in the overall context and history of puppetry. I chose to research various styles of puppetry to familiarize myself with varying forms of puppets. In making this choice, I could better inform my decisions when designing puppets for the production. I then spent time analyzing the script as well as its source material text to find dramaturgical evidence that would inform my designs. After deciding which characters in the play would best be represented by using puppetry, I then worked on making decisions and drawing sketches of what different puppets could look like. I worked on creating final design sketches of each of these puppets. And finally, I constructed one of my puppet designs.

## Initial Research

The creative project was informed by my research into the forms of puppetry, the history of puppet traditions from around the world, as well as looking into other productions which utilize puppetry techniques. The history of puppetry gave a grounding to what the art form of puppetry entails and specifically what puppetry originally set out to be and how it has evolved in relation to traditional theatre productions. This research helped inform decisions throughout the planning, design, and building process of the project.

Puppetry is defined as whenever an inanimate object is imbued with life and manipulated in front of an audience. Puppetry has been recorded from the early stages of human history. Historians generally cite around 30000 and 21000 BCE as the first evidence of puppets found in the world, inferring that cro-magnon men and women carved figurines out of clay and animal tusks to create miniature replicas of people. The first evidence we have of inanimate dolls is from an excavation of the Indus valley, in modern-day Pakistan, where toy-sized terra-cotta cattle with movable heads, legs, and tails were discovered dating to 2400 BCE. The first written record of puppetry comes from the Nile Basin from the twentieth-century BCE hieroglyphic text describing a performance in which a walking statue represented a God. Further evidence of these walking statues come from tombs of the same time which also include sculptures with movable limbs. From the inception of puppetry, there has been deep-rooted mechanics of the art which is very representative of society. One person who is using their position and authority to control and manipulate smaller fragile figures. Puppets have been used in theatrical productions for centuries, but in most recent history the art form has diverged from its theatrical origins and the two have become separated.

Puppetry has developed across the world and has manifested itself in different cultural forms. I will be strictly looking at the way puppetry has primarily developed and been used in western civilization and western theatre with influences from non-western culture. In western society, puppets were used in Italian morality plays. In Italy throughout the 18th and 19th centuries marionette puppets were viewed as “only for the aristocracy” and lower class citizens only had access to view rod puppet shows. Possibly one of the most recognizable puppet characters are the characters of Punch and Judy which are generally marionette puppets. Inspired by characters in *Commedia Dell’arte*, this puppet pair originated in Great Britain and is often associated with puppet shows being performed in coastal towns.

Historically and recently, puppet theatre has been used to explore and share messages or explicit teachings in politics, education, or religion. As puppets are targeted generally towards children, it acts as an entertaining medium that can teach lessons. This is seen in Carlo Collodi’s story of *Pinocchio* and with the many children’s programs that focus on education and social reform such as *Sesame Street*, *The Muppet Show*, and *Barney and Friends*. In the United States, the use of puppetry in TV series such as *Howdy Doody* began to integrate puppetry back into the general theatre model.

Mainly the styles of puppetry come from how a puppet is manipulated. These forms have developed in different times and regions of the world and have some set rules and techniques, but for the most part, manipulation is the key to how a puppetry style is defined. A puppet’s frame or body can take any form but the way in which it moves changes the way we define different forms of puppetry. For example, the structure of a marionette puppet and a rod puppet is generally similar but the defining characteristic which separates these two puppetry forms is the fact that one is manipulated by strings and the other is controlled by rods. The main styles of puppetry that I chose to research are as follows: marionettes, rod puppetry, hand puppetry, traditional Bunraku puppetry, and shadow puppetry. Marionettes are controlled from above by using wires, and generally, the puppeteer is hidden from the view of the audience. Rod Puppets are puppets that are usually manipulated by long rods from below. Hand Puppets are manipulated by the hand of the puppeteer and include finger puppets, glove puppets, and hand and rod puppets. Shadow puppetry is achieved by using a light source and some puppet figures to cast shadows on a screen.

One of the tenets of puppetry building techniques is designing from the inside out. Puppeteers must think of the desired motion and the mechanics of a puppet before designing the specific “look” of the puppet. This goes back to the fact that puppetry forms are defined by the way they are moved. A part of my research on the building techniques came from watching online videos on puppet construction and listening to Podcasts that interviewed prominent puppet creators such

as Jim Kroupa and Bart Roccobarton. The research into the construction practices of puppets informed decisions on which puppet techniques would best serve the production.

The role of the puppeteer is very important. The puppet is presented as reality and therefore an audience must suspend their disbelief when viewing puppet productions, they know that a puppeteer is controlling the puppets but they choose to ignore this fact to see the puppets as characters in the show.

As this was predominantly a creative project I decided to limit the research into more of a broad view of the puppetry art form. This initial research served as a starting point when creating puppet designs and deciding which puppets fit into the production. Specifically, the research into the forms of puppetry gave a base for visualization while reading the script of *The Little Prince* for the first time. After completing initial designs and prototypes some revisions of puppetry called for additional research into more specific forms of puppetry.

### **Analyzing *The Little Prince***

The first step of my dramaturgical process was to read both the novel *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and the script for the production by Cummins and Scoular. In reading these I identified themes from the production and the story. These themes are loneliness, friendship, love, and loss but mostly childhood vs adulthood. The Little Prince encounters many “adults” throughout the story and shows how adults view the world versus how children see it. It was important to me to portray this theme of childhood imagination into the puppetry designs.

While reading I paid close attention to the characters and tried to find commonalities in character groups. I sorted the different characters into categories. First, there were the main characters of The Aviator and the Little Prince who are present throughout the entire story. Second, there are the six adults whom the Little Prince meets throughout his journeys into space. And last, some characters did not fit into the category of adult nor main characters. These characters were present throughout the story and contributed to the prince’s journey and the discovery of himself. All three of these characters: The Rose, The Fox, and the Snake, were all non-human characters. I decided to use puppetry to portray these three characters because they are each non-human forces that guide the little prince throughout different stages of his overall journey. All of the humans that the prince meets are adults and they have lost the imagination and qualities of childhood, the Prince despises these characters and he learns nothing from them except a warning of how not to behave when he is grown. The characters of Rose, Fox, and Snake each interact with him on a level that the other characters do not. The adults that the prince visits only talk about themselves and their situations, but the non-human characters intimately talk to the Prince. These characters also facilitate the Prince’s journey by coming to him throughout different stages of the play. The Rose, in the beginning, is the reason the Little Prince sets out from his asteroid, he then meets the Snake who offers a way to return home, and then the Fox

helps the Prince to realize why he never should have left his Rose in the first place which makes him reconsider his decision to leave. Finally, the Snake returns and the Prince submits to the Snake and allows himself to be bitten to “return home.”

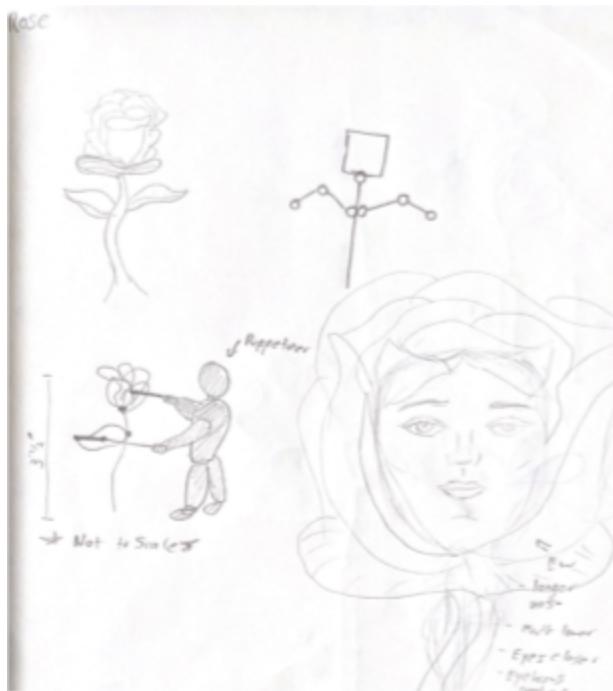
Additionally, the play starts with the character of the Aviator acting as the narrator of the story, telling the audience how he ended up in the Sahara Desert. I decided to represent this story and narration using shadow puppetry on a screen present onstage. While this shadow puppetry sequence does not fit into my previous rules for representing non-human characters, I included this sequence as a way to facilitate the narration and to introduce the audience to puppetry elements that will be present throughout the play. Traditionally shadow puppetry is used as a way to present stories and tales accompanied by narration or music. The sequence at the beginning of this script aligns with a tale that could be told using shadow puppetry projections to show the audience the life of the Aviator before the plot of the play begins.

One of the problems I encountered in my designs was the issue of following the illustrations in the source material. Since this production is an adaptation of a well-known children’s book there are certain “iconic” images that an audience has known to love and expect to see when they see adaptations of the story. One of the decisions I was faced with when starting the design process was, should I attempt to imitate the illustrations verbatim from the original source or should I take the creative liberty and create my own designs for the production. Theatre companies often want adapted stories to be recognizable to an audience. When designing anything for a show where there is a defined source material the realities of marketing the show must be considered while designing. Ultimately, I decided to take inspiration from the original novel and illustrations by Exupéry, but to create my own designs.

## The Rose Design

This portion of the project outlines the process of creating the design for the Rose puppet. The research into Bunraku puppetry suggested that a similar style puppet would best fit the portrayal of the Rose. Bunraku is a form of traditional Japanese puppetry which originated in the 17th century in Osaka. There are very set rules in the tradition of Bunraku puppet theatre. There are three components: the *Ningyōtsukai* or the puppeteers, the *tayū* or the chanters, and the *shamisen* who provide the music. Starting in the 18th century the puppeteers came into full view of the audience from previously being hidden. The puppet is generally a half-sized human and the points of articulation consist of three central areas which each takes its own puppeteer to manipulate. Bunraku puppeteers spend years training in their respective roles. The roles consist of the chief puppeteer *omozukai* which controls the puppet’s right hand and head, the *hidarizukai* who manipulates the puppet’s left hand, and the *ashizukai* who operates the puppet’s legs and feet. Each puppeteer uses a rod that controls their respective limb or appendage.

Since Bunraku puppetry is based on tradition and has very set rules, I cannot call my puppet design for the character of the Rose a “Bunraku puppet.” Since I am not following the tenets of Bunraku puppetry in terms of manipulation, my design is more “Bunraku inspired.” My designs only feature manipulation by two puppeteers, with one puppeteer controlling the head and one arm and an additional puppeteer controlling the other arm. This puppet has no legs and does not require the same movement practices as traditional Bunraku puppetry.

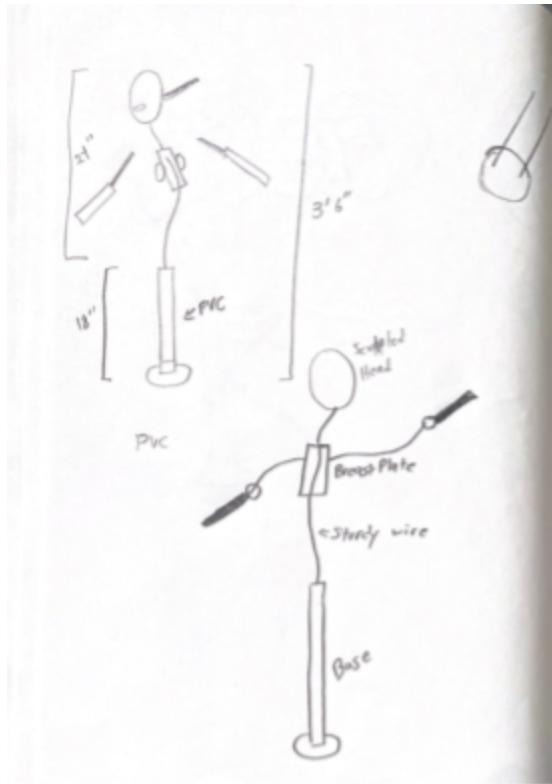


Initial sketches for the design of the Rose  
puppet

The character of the Rose is vain, naive, and melodramatic. The rose is in one scene from the play and only a few chapters from the novel. However, she is an integral character, as her nature is what prompts the Little Prince to begin his journey. Another key characteristic of Rose is her pride and how she feels that she can be independent despite having to rely on the Prince for all of her needs.

In looking at this character I wanted to choose designs that showed the audience the contradictions in how the Rose views herself versus how she truly is seen by the Prince and others. I chose that the best way to do this would be to limit the rose range of motion, if the character can not control her position she lacks agency and becomes helpless. Therefore the puppet is designed to be grounded in one position onstage, however, she does have mobility in her upper body and can move her leaves- which act as arms. The puppetry style most similar to this mobility would be Bunraku. While not following all rules for Bunraku puppetry, the way the

arms and head are designed for movement aligns with the same methods of the traditional Bunraku style.



Designs for the mechanics of the Rose  
puppet

In terms of aesthetics and design, I wanted to portray how beautiful, yet fragile, the character of the Rose is. This fragility is what causes the little prince to worry about her, yet she being so dramatic insists that she is not fragile and can fend for herself. I thought the best way to make the Rose look fragile would be in the materials that are used. Making the petals delicate and soft, and making her face have the appearance of a porcelain doll furthers the design decision that she could break or die at any moment without the help of the Prince.

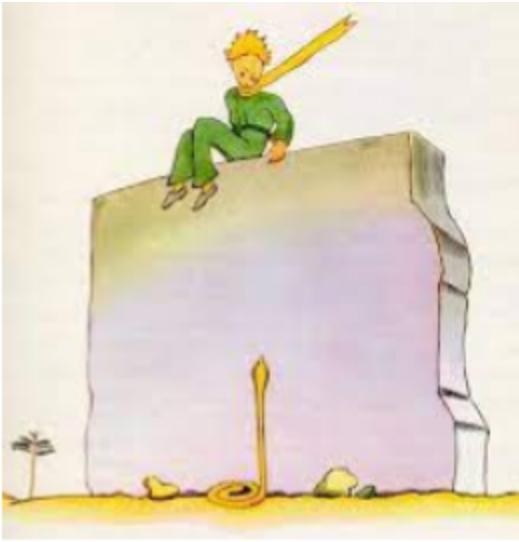


Design options for the Rose puppet

The production of this model began by creating clay models of the face and the body of the puppet. I sculpted the face the way that I wanted it to look on a smaller scale. Then I constructed a clay model of the body and the head.

## The Snake Model

This section of the project outlines the process of creating the design and movement prototype for the Snake puppet. The Snake from the script is very persuasive and comes to the Little Prince when he is at his weakest moments. The character of the Snake represents death and uses his words to trick the Little Prince into allowing him to bite him. I wanted to make the Snake seem mystical and otherworldly to show physically the persuasiveness that he holds. In the novel there is only one picture of the character of the Snake (below), however, there are many pictures of snakes throughout the story (below). In both these images, the snakes are moving very differently. In one the snake is resting and just talking to the Little Prince, in the other a snake is wrapped around a mouse as it is about to consume it. These were the two feelings I wished to portray through the puppet design. Another aspect of the design is the snake's ability to overpower the Little Prince. This could be done in many ways, by making the Snake larger, or by showing a stark contrast between the two characters. However, I chose to use the puppeteers as a way to create a more menacing feeling of the Snake. By using multiple puppeteers acting as one organism, the Snake becomes more powerful by sheer force. Even though the puppeteers should be suspended in disbelief, the audience is still aware of the scale of the force that is against the Little Prince.

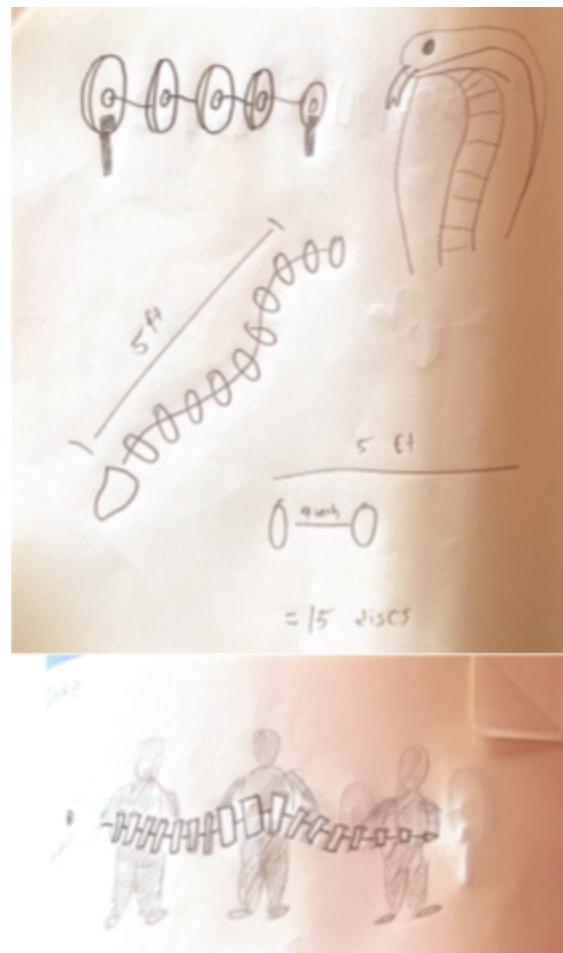


The character of the Snake from the novel *The Little Prince*

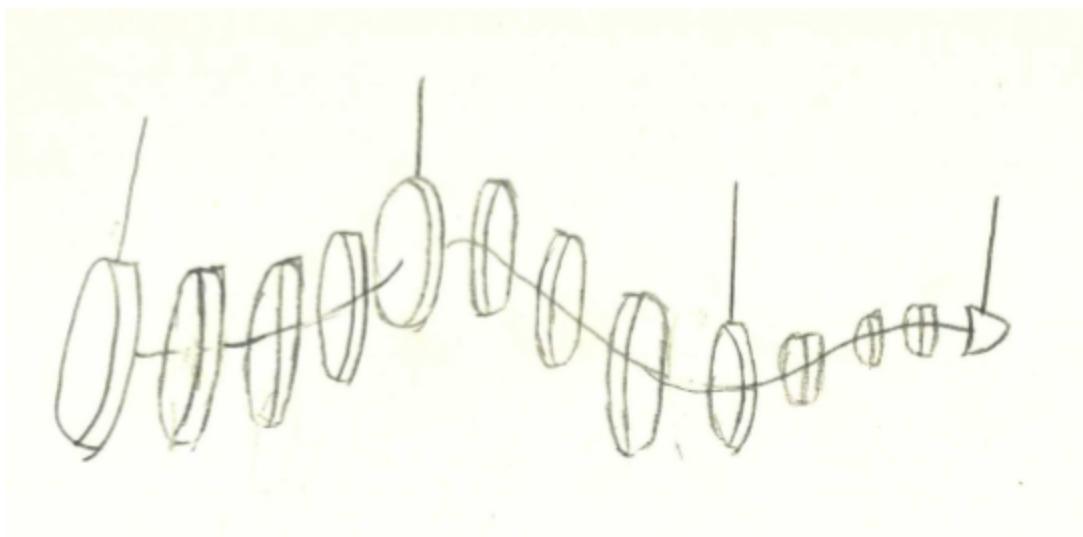


Image of a snake from the novel *The Little Prince*

The design for this puppet started by viewing the way snakes move. A snake is a unique animal because it moves in mysterious ways and there are virtually no limits to how the snake can behave. My original design consisted of creating a hand puppet that was manipulated by two puppeteers and could move around the stage in a slinky-like fashion. After attempting a motion test, the logistics of using a hand puppet seemed too difficult as the choreography of the puppet would cause the puppeteers to become tangled into the puppet's mass. In looking at the options of ways to adapt this design, I explored options of removing the "head" of the snake to give a greater range of motion for the puppeteer and changing the materials used to create a puppet that could stretch and change sizes. After talking through the issue with Gina Grandi, my advisor, together we considered changing the original hand puppet design to using a rod puppet model. Based on previous research on rod puppetry and motion testing I settled on this model. This method would achieve the same aesthetic and the same motion but allow the puppeteers to distance themselves from the puppet structure. This design would also allow for a larger range of motion and allow the puppet to interact on levels that were lower and higher than previously available. The choreography for this puppet would include scenarios of moving along the ground, rising high in the air, and wrapping around the actor playing the Prince. The revisions in the initial design of the Snake puppet required additional research into the techniques of constructing and manipulating rod puppets. I started to research Chinese dragon puppets and similar parade floats that utilized the same motion and structure as a rod puppet. The design featured a series of separated discs secured by a rope running through the center horizontally. The rods attached to separated discs would allow puppeteers to support the body of the puppet but still allow for a flexible range of motion. At one end of the puppet, a sculpted head would be controlled by the lead puppeteer.



Initial sketches for the Snake puppet



Adapted Snake puppet design including rods

The production of this puppet started with creating a scale model of the body. The main goal of creating this prototype was to test the mobility and the movement of the puppet. I used cardboard, rope, and dowel rods to create a model that could move like the desired puppet. I tested the motions of running the model on the ground, in the air, and wrapping around a test subject. However, the discs continued to get tangled and would not hold the rigid shape that was necessary for the motion. The puppet was flaccid and therefore did not seem “alive” when presented.



Prototype 1 of Snake puppet to test mobility

After creating my prototype to test the motion I found problems in my original design. There was little support to keep the discs from leaning on the rope. The center was not firm enough to keep the separate discs upright. Also, the desired motion was not achieved because the rope did not maintain its shape. I thought this would force me to change my original design, however, after consulting Jordan Howlett, a sustainable technology major, he recommended changing the materials of the prototype model. He suggested adding clear plastic tubing around a braided wire to keep the discs separated from each other and to provide more support to the center wire. This revision in the design created a more stable puppet and allowed a range of mobility. Revision was a crucial part of the task of creating this puppet, therefore, additional research was required in both the design process and the construction of the model. This research led to conclusions that informed my decisions of the final design and construction of this puppet model.

## The Fox Prototype

This section outlines the process of designing and building a prototype of the Fox puppet. This character in the script has the most interaction with the Little Prince. The Fox acts as both a pupil to the Little Prince and also a teacher urging the young boy to “tame him.” The Fox is very wise and helps the Prince to realize why his Rose is special. The act of “taming” the Fox is something that caught my interest. I wanted to show this process onstage through the manipulation of the puppet. The act of taming the once wild creature to a domestic animal is the focus of this section of the story, for only when you tame something it can truly belong to you. As I discussed earlier, the role of the puppeteer can tell the audience a lot about the relationships between the character and the puppet on stage. This led me to think about the role of the puppeteer representing the wild animal characteristics of the Fox and as the scene progresses having the actor playing the Little Prince, take over and become the manipulator of the Fox puppet. This would further communicate to the audience that the Fox now “belongs” to the Little Prince, as the script says.

The first decision was choosing which form of puppet would be easiest to maneuver and which would facilitate the aforementioned transfer of puppet between the Fox puppeteer and the actor portraying the Prince. I decided that a hand puppet would be the best style as the main puppeteer can easily remove the Fox from his hand and the Prince actor can then take over the control of the puppet. I also chose a hand puppet because the proximity between the puppet and the puppeteer is much smaller when using a hand puppet which creates a more intimate connection between the two. This is very important to the scene as this is the first puppet character with which the Little Prince has meaningful conversation and interaction.

The design started by finding research images of foxes and seeing what distinguishes them from other animals physically. Generally, foxes are very sleek, slender creatures and the upright triangular ears are an identifying factor. The Fox illustrations from the original source material have very large ears. At this point, a decision was needed whether to closely follow the source material or my own personal design. I felt that the Fox has one of the more recognizable looks from the novel, which portrays the character with very large ears. I chose to include the size of the ears in my designs as a reference to the original illustrations.



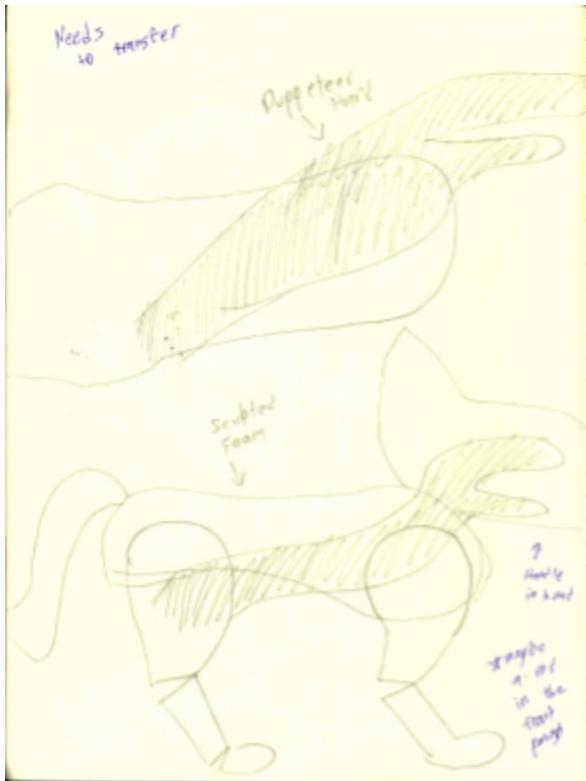
First design for Fox puppet head



Final design for Fox puppet

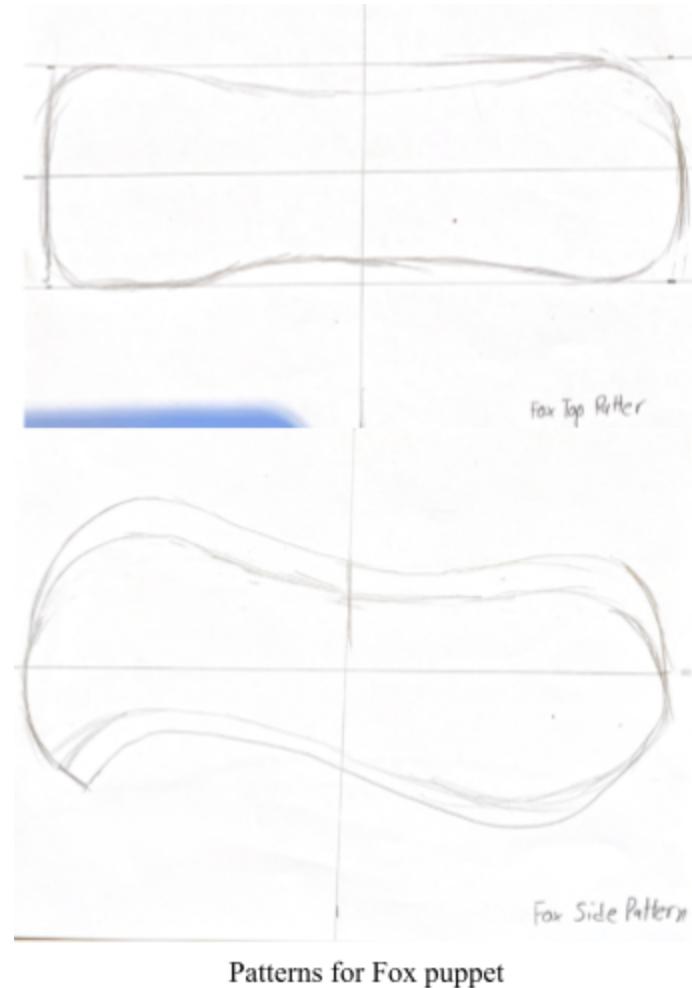
The design started by creating a blueprint of how the mechanics would work for the puppet. It included a place for the hand of the puppeteer to fit inside the body of the fox while using a rod

attached to the head to articulate these movements. I also included a rod to be held by the puppeteer attached to the front paw of the Fox to articulate motion in the hand when needed. The model follows the design for standard Hand and Rod puppets.



Initial Fox puppet design

For the prototype of this puppet, I started by using polyfoam to carve the body of the Fox. I made several two-dimensional patterns that were traced onto the faces of the foam which acted as my guides while starting the cutting process. Eventually, I was able to create the desired shape and I inserted a dowel rod that would act as the articulation point for the head.



Patterns for Fox puppet



In creating the movement prototype of the Fox, I made the mistake of not carving the area of the puppeteer's hand before gluing the pieces together. This caused a problem in my first prototype

as the desired movement was unable to be achieved. This prototype helped to identify issues in the initial design and what revisions should be made for a final production. The revision for the movement prototype would be to include the hand space before carving the body mold of the Fox.



Sculpted prototype of Fox puppet

## Shadow Puppet Sequence

This section outlines the research of shadow puppetry traditions, research into the mechanics of shadow puppet design, and the process of constructing a shadow puppet sequence for *The Little Prince*. Shadow puppetry is one of the oldest recorded forms of puppetry, most likely first originating in China or India during the first millennium BCE. One record from 200 BCE India cites puppets being used in a production of *tholu bommalata*, which is a theatrical story of Hindu epics. Today in Indonesia a shadow puppetry form, *Wayang Kulit* is popular and shows Javanese stories of good and evil. These wayang puppets are constructed from painted pieces of leather and are rear-projected onto a linen screen using coconut oil lamps. The dalang or puppeteer manipulates the puppets between the screen and the light source. In European culture, it has been theorized that in Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, the shadows he is referring to are early examples of shadow puppetry performance where figures of animals and humans are being cast onto a cave wall by the light of a fire. These shadows are described as the only "reality" to the implied audience. This opens the door for illusion with shadow puppetry. The Indonesian poet of the *Arjunawiwaha* cites, "[The audience] do not realize the magic hallucinations they see are not real" when describing the *Mahabharata*. Poerbatjaraka, a Javanese philologist suggests this section of the *Arjunawiwaha* could be the basis for wayang performance. In shadow puppetry the puppeteer sees reality and the audience sees an illusion which is the "persistent metaphor of the shadow theatre."

The process of creating shadow puppetry generally requires a concept called "negative thinking" or "inverse thinking." In shadow puppetry, the positive "black" figure is the most important because that is what the audience will see. Anything that is highlighted or the negative cut

portion will be seen as “white.” Therefore the puppet maker must think about what shadow will be cast by the cut-out portion. Another concept that requires inverse thinking is the scale at which the shadows are cast onto a screen. In projection, the closer to the light source that an object is, the larger the shadow cast becomes, and the shorter the distance between puppet and screen creates a smaller ratio of shadow to the puppet.

One of the questions I had when researching forms of shadow puppetry was the issue of scale and distance. I sought to find if there was a set rule that defined how large a shadow a puppet would cast given a certain distance, light source, fabric, etc. I searched online articles on the perception of shadows and tried to find mathematical equations that were similar to what I was seeking. However, in my research, I found no proven results that such a formula did exist that would answer my questions on the mathematics behind shadow puppetry. To check once more I went to the forum website Reddit and made similar posts in each of the groups: “techtheatre”, “puppetry”, “puppets”, “Theatre”, and “lightingdesign.” From there I gained insight and the resounding conclusion that no such equation exists and that shadow puppetry scale is dependent on finding multiple factors: the size of the projection screen, light intensity, puppet density, distance, and angles to calculate a definite equation. When posting in these forums, I did receive many tips from members on how to create different kinds of shadows and various materials that could work for my intended purposes such as using overhead projectors and placing puppets against the screen to create clear images.

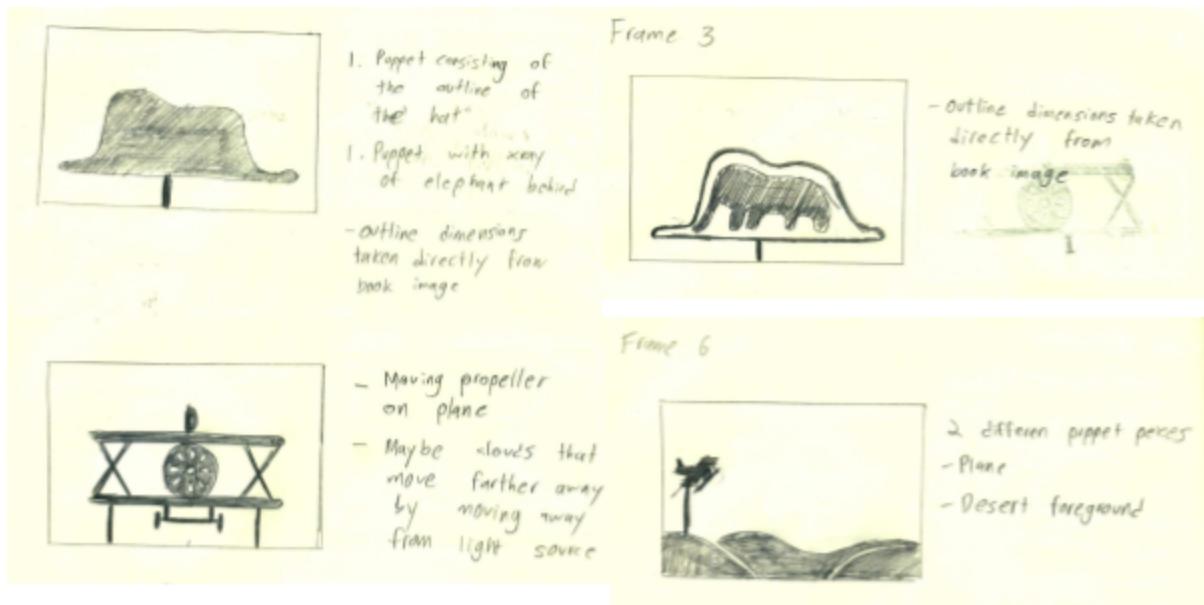
In *The Little Prince*, the beginning of the script outlines the story of the Aviator and how he came to be in the Sahara desert. In the story, the character of the aviator shows the audience illustrations from his childhood. The scene ends with the Aviator flying a plane and crashing in the Sahara Desert. Since the scene is predominantly narration, I concluded that portraying the narrated sequence through shadow puppetry would play well on stage. During the narrated sequence the Aviator presents the audience with images. By using shadow puppetry these images can be seen by being projected onto the shadow screen. The second part of the narration simulates the Aviator flying and crashing a plane, both of which are difficult events to portray onstage. By presenting them using shadow puppetry the story becomes intriguing and not just narration.

The process of creating the designs for this shadow puppetry sequence started with deciding which actions would best show as “frames” for the sections of the story. I began by designing a title card that would be on display before the show. This title card uses the font from the original book and images of stars and the asteroid from the original illustrations. The second frame of the Aviator’s drawings also comes from the original illustrations. The third sequence comes from the narration and is of the biplane that the character flies. I originally designed clouds that would move towards the screen to give the illusion of forward motion. The third frame includes the background of the Sahara desert, a biplane crash, and the appearance of the Aviator which ends

the narration. The last frame designs came from original drawings illustrated by me. I started by completing rough drafts of my drawings in a journal and planning out when the “frame” shifts would take place.



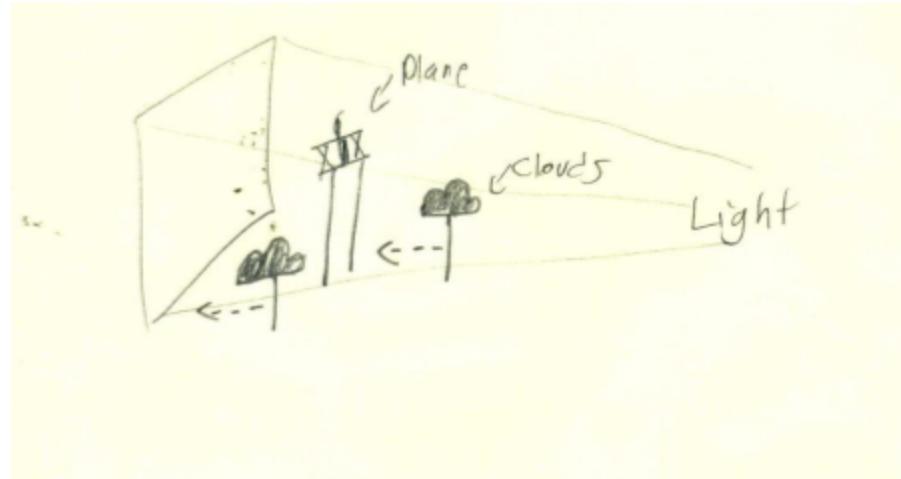
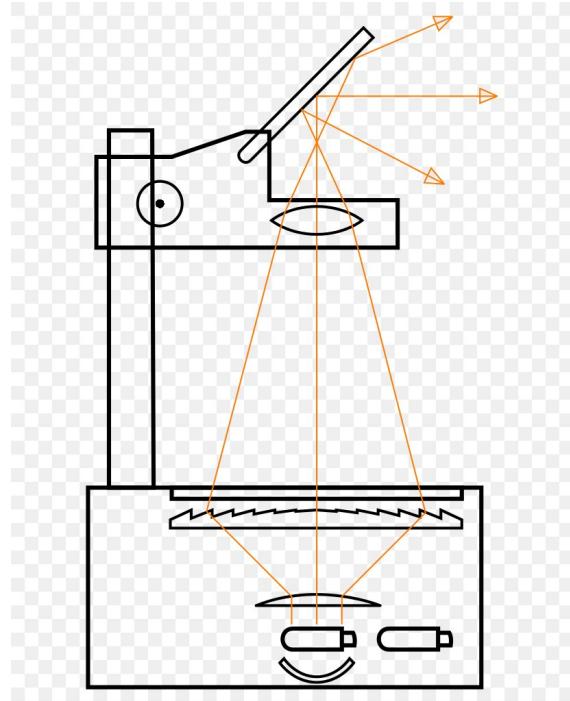
Initial plan for frames of the shadow puppet sequence



Initial Designs of each shadow puppet “frame”

Using a Cricut (Computer-Controlled Cutting Machine), I refined the drawings and created svg files in the Cricut Design Studio. With the machine, I cut the shadow puppet shapes from the files. Since my research led me to the conclusion that all shadow puppetry depends on the light source and distances, I resized and reconfigured the files many times to obtain the correct scale for my projector medium. The next task was deciding how to move the shadow puppetry shapes around the screen without the puppeteer casting their own shadow onto the performance space.

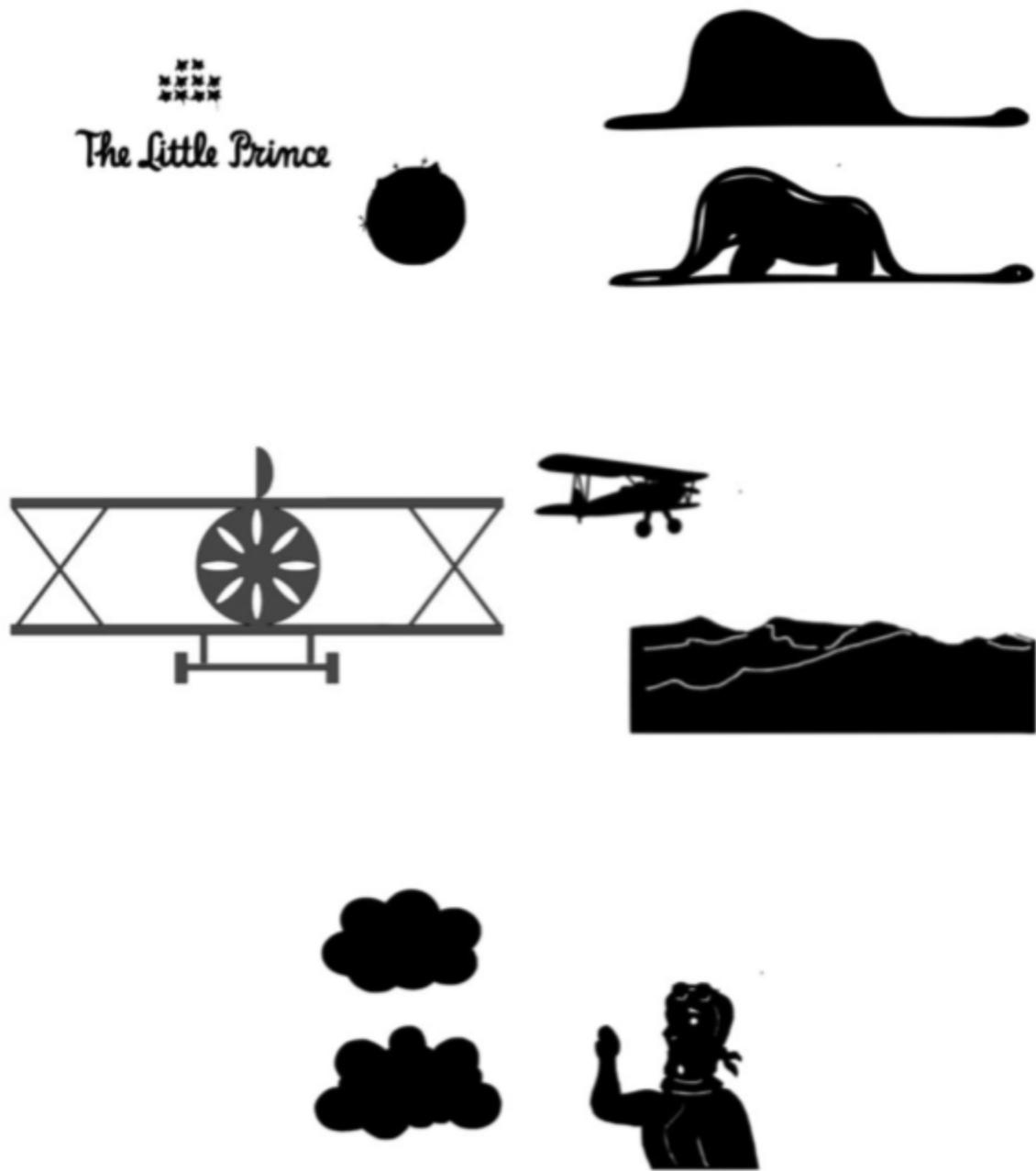
The revisions I made in both my designs and production came from the materials available to me. The light source I used was an overhead projector. My original intention was to use the projector as simply a light source from the back, however, while experimenting with my first draft of shadow puppets, the images were not focusing, and the final product images were not showing up well on the screen. My solution to this challenge was to use the bed of the overhead projector to cast the shadows on the screen. With this came multiple new challenges to overcome. The first of these challenges was reworking the scale of the images to fit with the 10-inch by 10-inch confines of the projector bed. The second challenge came from my now inability to portray some of the motion that I had originally planned for, namely the clouds. When using an overhead projector all shadow puppets must remain at the same distance from the mirror. The projector surface is a set distance from the mirror which casts the light onto the screen, (below) meaning that any object that is not at that precise distance is out of focus when projected. The initial design was to have the clouds change sizes by varying the distance between the light and the screen (seen in the image). This would create the illusion of flight and forward motion of the plane as the clouds would appear smaller as they moved farther from the light source.



Original plan for flight sequence in shadow play

The solution to this problem was to introduce more motion into the overhead projector. Since I was unable to experiment with perspective and size due to using the overhead projector, I attempted to achieve the illusion of flying by moving the cloud shadow puppets around the plane puppet on the projector bed. The third challenge in using an overhead projector was the fact that the images cast were very refined, meaning that anything that is on the bed of the projector will be cast onto the projection screen. For the title frame, I originally attempted to glue my lettering onto a clear plastic film, but the projector light was casting the adhesive residue onto the screen as well. There was no way to hold the letters into place and still be able to move the title card for the beginning of the shadow puppetry sequence. The solution was to simply place the letters,

stars, and planet cut-outs onto a plastic sheet and move that sheet at the start of the show. The downside of this method is that there is no margin for error and the letters can come out of place due to any circumstance.



Images from the Cricut Design Studio, used to cut out the shadow puppet designs



Final title frame in presentation

Link to Video Performance of Shadow Puppetry Sequence: <https://vimeo.com/536380263>

## Final Reflections

Throughout the process of completing this creative project, the goals from my original proposal shifted. I originally sought to culminate my education into a final project by creating puppets to be used in a theoretical production. My goals shifted as I found a new interest in using puppetry as a storytelling technique in theatre. Through my research, dramaturgy, and construction process I sought to describe my creative process for implementing puppets into shows where they are not called for. The process of designing puppets for the production of *The Little Prince* became a lab that allowed me to focus on ways that the art of puppetry could be used as a medium in other theatrical productions. My research in the history of puppetry and puppet styles showed me the ways in which puppets have been used in various cultures and traditions. The traditional construction of Bunraku puppets and the original applications of shadow puppetry in east Asia informed decisions throughout the design process. Analyzing the script and source material for *The Little Prince* led to discoveries in the themes, characteristics, and motivations of various characters in the show. These characteristics become even more important when designing puppets. Since a puppet is only what it is created to be, designers must include all of the nuances of the characters in the visual designs. An actor is not portraying the character as originally intended by the script and therefore the inanimate puppet must be able to communicate emotion through movement and visual aids. The creation of prototypes, models, and fully constructed puppets showed me ways in which the puppet and puppeteer must be able to move in order to effectively implement themselves into productions. The revisions made after making models

allowed me to discover new ways in which a puppet could potentially move and what the movement can communicate to an audience. My original designs on paper were often not practical, so after creating mobility prototypes the discoveries led me to further examine the role of the puppeteer when using puppets on stage.

There is limited research on the role of the puppeteer which became the main focus of my research. Most of my research came from reading educational forums and viewing online resources. As most of the books I read on puppetry were printed in the 1970s the research was not updated to reflect modern theatrical practices. Some designs worked on paper but when presented with the theorized motion in tests the design needed to change. In others the logistics of the puppeteer and their range of motion impacted designs. All of these challenges needed to be addressed and the adaptations shifted my original view of the puppet and consequently made me realize different ways to present these puppets on stage.

My original goal for this project was to theoretically implement puppetry into a theatrical work that did not previously include puppets as an element of storytelling. The work of adapting these characters meant to be played by human actors into inanimate objects made me examine how to present these puppets as “real” within the world of the play. Using research into the history of puppets, puppetry styles, and techniques for movement I came to the conclusion that a way to achieve a sense of reality in puppetry is by presenting the puppet as well as its puppeteer as actors in a production.

I started the process by wanting to learn about puppetry and its implementation in the world of traditional theatrical productions. One of the areas of puppetry that I had never really thought of but learned the most about was the relationship between the puppet, puppeteer, and the audience. Through my research and practice, I discovered that this, at its core is the key to merging puppets and theatre productions. In looking at the history of puppetry in theatre, a shift occurred around the 19th century with the emergence of “puppet shows” as the puppeteers disappeared from the view of the audience. The puppets themselves became the sole actors onstage. The removal of the element of the puppeteer separated theatrical performance from puppet performance. When a production introduces puppeteers in full view and establishes them as actors in a show, suddenly the dynamic changes because the audience views the story differently. This is why a show such as *Avenue Q* or *The Lion King* is considered a traditional theatre piece and not a “puppet show” even though most of the actors are puppeteers. The way a puppet is controlled and manipulated can inform the audience of the different nuances of the show and characters. I believe one way to start to implement puppets into theatre is to treat both the puppeteer and puppet as fellow actors in a production. This attitude can change the way that puppets are viewed, making them more than just another prop onstage.

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