

## □ Small ABC of Puppetry

The Italian clown *Pulcinella* and his descendants would like to welcome you to the *Poppenspe(e)lmuseum/Puppetry Museum*. Through our *Puppet Pamphlets (Poppenspe(e)lmuseumpamfletten)* we inform our visitors and anyone who is interested about the *museum's collection, library, theme exhibitions, activities and websites*. These pamphlets are not only available in English, but also in Dutch, French and German.

## Names, figures and techniques

This illustrated *small ABC of Puppetry* explains some traditional names, concepts and characters from *folk puppet theatre*, and the most common *puppetry techniques*. The old Dutch *Jan Klaassen* and his wife *Katrijn* (cousins of the English *Mr Punch and Judy*) wish you lots of fun playing, watching and reading. Applause!

### Commedia dell'arte

In European national puppet theatres, characters are used that descend from the *commedia dell'arte*. One of the 'zanni' (comical servant characters) from this Italian form of folk theatre is *Pulcinella*, the sixteenth-century forefather of many European puppet heroes. Several other zanni have been given a permanent role in folk puppet theatre such as the maid *Colombina*, the white clown character *Pedrolino (Pierrot)* and the comical *Arlecchino*.

### Death

*Death* is a major theme in folk puppet theatre. But it does not really involve sadness or mourning. Instead, it is more as if pleasure in life is given extra emphasis by performing *Death*. *Death* is a common character in European folk puppet theatre and, depending on local tradition, has taken on a variety of appearances. 'Heavens above, good Lord, I'm dead!' cries the English *Mr Punch* when lying supposedly lifeless on stage.

### Dupák

A *dupák* is a *rod marionette* and *trick puppet*. The routine with the *dupák* is always performed as an encore in Czech and Slovakian folk puppet theatre shows. The puppet jumps about and his body changes from short to long. Stretching and shrinking the *dupák* takes place at a rapid pace and goes hand in hand with a lot of noise. The word 'dupák' itself means 'stamping'. A cord is attached to each side of the *dupák's* head. With these cords the puppet is fixed to a wooden *control bar*. By moving the control bar up and down, the cloth body stretches or shrinks. The pop seems to squat down and then spring back up. Besides jumping, the *dupák* can also turn on its axis; its arms then swing out.

### Food and drink in puppet theatre

Everywhere in Europe there used to be buffoons who entertained the audience with their Tricks at fun fairs and annual fairs. For this purpose, they used characters that were usually named after lovely *dishes*. In Germany this character was called *Hanswurst*, in France *Jean Potage*, in the Netherlands *Jan Soep*, in England *Jack Pudding*, and in Italy *Signor Maccheroni*. *Folk puppet theatre* also uses farcical figures who enjoy a tasty *meal*. Some of them prefer the *bottle* and occasionally have one too many. The old Dutch *Jan Klaassen* likes a drop of gin (*jenevertje*), while the French *Polichinelle* loves drinking a glass of wine, as does *Gnafron*, the cobbler in the puppet theatre from Lyon.

### **Guignol and Madelon**

*Guignol* and his wife *Madelon* are the main characters in French folk puppet theatre. *Guignol* was created in *Lyon* around 1800. He wears a brown *tailcoat* and has *braided hair*. He is as poor as a church mouse, but is always jolly. *Madelon* is prim and proper but also quarrelsome and sharp. *Guignol* quiets her down by hitting her. *Gnafron* the cobbler is their friend.

### **Hand puppet**

A *hand puppet* slides over the puppeteer's hand, who moves the puppet with his *fingers*. The puppeteer sticks his index finger in a hole in the bottom of the puppet's head. He sticks his thumb in one sleeve and his little finger - sometimes together with his ring and middle finger - in the other. Little hands are usually attached to the sleeves. Sometimes small legs dangle from the bottom of the jacket. The hand puppet has no body under his clothes. The puppeteer's fist fills up this space.

### **Jan Klaassen, babies and animals**

Scenes from puppet theatre with characters such as the old-Dutch *Jan Klaassen*, *Katrijn*, the *baby* and an *animal* are applied internationally.

*Jan Klaassen* originated during the seventeenth century. He resembles the Hungarian *Vitéz László*, the French *Polichinelle*, the English *Punch* and the German *Kasper(l)*. In traditional Dutch puppet theatre with *marionettes* the ever-quarrelling *Jan* and *Katrijn* have five children. In *hand puppet theatre*, however, *Jan* and his wife *Katrijn* and *Mr Punch* and his wife *Judy* are the parents of just one baby.

In addition to a fixed set of puppets, the folk puppeteer generally also has a puppet that represents an *animal*. This is usually a *monster* with a large mouth that snaps. In English *Punch and Judy shows* a puppet *dog* or even a real one is often used.

### **Jester**

A *jester* is a fool that ridicules others. During the Middle Ages jesters were connected to courts. They were supposed to entertain the king, but were also allowed to criticise him. Jesters are usually *hunchbacks*. He wears a *cap 'n' bells* on his head. *Bells* hang from his *suit* and the floppy peaks of his cap. He is holding a *fool's bauble* or 'marot', a stick with a head that resembles the jester himself. With this stick, in fact, he holds up a mirror to someone's face. 'Look at yourself, this is me, that is you!'

### **Jumping Jack puppet**

A *Jumping Jack* is a flat toy puppet. Its hinged limbs move when you pull the string at the bottom of its body. The arms and legs move simultaneously but only sideways. Jumping Jack puppets can be made of wood, but the nineteenth-century *paper puppets* are better known. In those days sheets were produced with figure parts that could be cut out and coloured, if so desired. In French the Jumping Jack is called *pantin*.

### **Karagöz and Hacivat**

*Karagöz* is the main character in traditional Turkish *shadow puppet theatre*, which means 'black eye'. He has a black beard, is bald and wears a turban. *Karagöz* is a hunchback. He can only move one arm, with which he deals hefty blows. *Karagöz* is underdeveloped compared to his friend *Hacivat*. Turkish shadow figures are made of transparent leather which is decorated with holes and painted colourfully. They are moved directly against the screen with a short stick that is attached to their shoulders.

### **Kasperl**

The main character of German-language puppet theatre is called *Kasper(l)*. Like the Dutch *Jan Klaassen*, the English *Mr Punch* and the Hungarian *Vitéz László*, he wears a pointed cap that leans forward. His costume resembles a *fool's dress*.

### **Marionettes**

*Marionettes* are controlled from above by means of strings that are usually tied to crossed sticks. Generally, the sticks are made of two strips of wood connected like a cross. The ends of the strings are tied to the various parts of the performing figure.

### **Objects in hand puppet theatre**

European *hand puppet theatre* makes use of standard *objects* such as a *frying pan*, a *rolling pin*, *sausages* and a *little disappear box*. Many objects are far too big in comparison with the puppets on the puppet theatre stage. Other objects, however, are much too small, such as the *gallows*. This gives a comical effect. The main character of puppet theatre holds a *big stick* clasped between his hands. Wielding this weapon varies from rhythmically punching his opponent's head to prodding his belly.

### **Paper theatre**

The *paper theatre* is a type of miniature theatre that used to be very popular in European upper-middle class circles during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. People could buy *assembly sheets* of cardboard toy theatres with prints of *theatre facades*, *sceneries* and *small figures*. The parts needed to be cut out and stuck together. By means of long 'sliders', the paper puppets could be moved up and down the small stage. The puppets were flat and, usually, did not have any moving parts. They always faced the audience.

### **Poesjenellen**

*Poesjenel* is the name of the traditional *rod marionette* from Antwerp. Its name was derived from the Italian *Pulcinella*. The *poesjenellen theatre* had its heyday during the nineteenth century. The theatres were usually situated in cellars in working-class areas, hence the name *poesjenellenkelder* (*poesjenellen cellar*). The figures are controlled from above. They are heavy and hang on rods, whereby one end is attached to the puppet's head and the other end is bent to serve as a handle for the puppeteer. A second rod is attached to the puppet's right wrist and is used to move its right arm. When there is a fight *de Voddebalen* (ragbags) - the main characters in this puppet theatre - enter the stage with a large bat to deal the enemy a *blow* (*akketatje*). Their leader is called *de Neus* (the Nose).

### **Polichinelle**

*Polichinelle* used to be the main character in French puppet theatre. During the nineteenth century he was ousted by *Guignol*. The theatre in which the puppets perform is often also called *Guignol*. Polichinelle's *costume* is very colourful. He wears a *tricorn hat*, has a pointed *chin*, a *hooked nose*, a *hump* and a *big pot belly*. Like *Jan Klaassen* and *Mr Punch* he attacks his opponents by wielding a *big stick*. One of his permanent acts is a fight with a real *cat*.

### **Poppenspe(e)lmuseum library**

The following is a quotation from the well-known Dutch puppeteer *Feike Boschma* (1921): 'A puppet is soundless, silence is its strongest language. But, because - from a pantomime viewpoint - it is not strong enough, we tend to resort to texts.'

The *Poppenspe(e)lmuseumbibliotheek/library* comprises over seven thousand titles. It has national and international works in the field of folk and mainstream puppet theatre and related arts. The collection can be consulted by request.

### **Pulcinella**

The Italian *Pulcinella* has a *hunchback* and a *pot belly*. He originates from the Naples area and is the grandfather of the old Dutch *Jan Klaassen*. Pulcinella dresses in *white*. The upper half of his face is hidden behind a *black half mask*.

### **Puppets on the shelf**

Puppets on the shelf (*marionnettes à la planchette* in French) are figures that have a horizontal string running through their chests. One end is attached to a small pole, while the other end is knotted around the puppeteer's knee. The puppeteer is a musician at the same time. The puppets dance when he moves his leg to the beat of the music.

### **Rod marionette**

Generally, a *rod marionette* is a very heavy marionette with its head hanging from a rod. A second rod or a string is often used to move an arm. Sometimes these puppets are called *bar puppets*. Well-known varieties are the *Sicilian*, *Czech*, *Antwerp* and *Liège* rod marionettes. The puppets are moved from above. The fight scenes are usually very wild and rowdy, with heads literally rolling.

### **Rod puppet**

The *rod puppet* is operated from below. The head is attached to a rod that is held up by the puppeteer. To make the body move slightly, controlling rods are usually attached to the outside of the arms.

### **Shadow play and shadow puppetry**

In *shadow play* and *shadow puppetry* a *screen* or a *wall* is used on which the shadow of the puppeteer or a puppet appears. In the meantime figures, objects or body parts are illuminated, such as the hands, the head or even the entire body. European shadow puppetry is usually referred to with the French term *ombres chinoises*.

### **Staged photography**

Around the nineteen eighties, *staged photography* became popular, mainly in the Netherlands. This involves the photographer playing with reality and imagination, or rather recording a 'situation' with his camera that he has *stage-managed* himself. The photograph becomes an isolated image, like a work of art. The Puppetry Museum's collection includes works from visual artists *Teun Hocks* (1947), *Erwin Olaf* (1959) and *Henk Tas* (1949). Teun Hocks is always the main character in his own drawings, paintings and photographs. Erwin Olaf's photographs always catch the eye because of their imaginative and technical perfection. On the one hand he applies excessive staging, while, on the other hand, he is involved with eroticism and the shift in standards in this respect.

Photographer Henk Tas populates his fantasy world with every type of creature from mass and pop culture. He presents us a fairy-like, plastic world.

### **Try it yourself?**

In the Puppetry Museum you can try one of the *puppetry techniques* or create a funny Dutch-language *treasure hunt and try-it-yourself game*. In our *library a touch screen* offers information (text spoken in Dutch) about folk and mainstream puppet theatre in Europe and Asia. Or if you feel like playing a family board game, enjoy the *Puppetry Happy Families Game* or play a game of *Puppetry Chess*. Another exciting game is *Polichinelle's Obstacle Course* (after the old French family board game 'Le Saut des Barrières par le Célèbre Polichinelle') while the board game *Jan z'n Ganzenbord* (based on a traditional Dutch family board game) contains entertaining puppetry scenes. The traditional geese in this game have been replaced by the big stick - Jan Klaassen's favourite batting object.

The family board games, postcards and a wide range of documentation about puppet theatre can be obtained from the *museum shop*.

### Wayang puppetry

*Wayang* literally means 'shadow'. The word comprises *puppet* and *shadow play*, *dance* and *masquerade* from Indonesia. The *gamelan orchestra* is an indispensable part of wayang performances. The orchestra consists of xylophones, gongs, flutes, a drum and stringed instruments. Singing voices are also essential. The *dalang* is the puppeteer and leader of the orchestra that sits behind him. He moves all the figures, speaks their parts, sings and narrates the story. The dalang sits behind the *shadow play screen* facing the audience. Wayang performances usually last all night. The shadow puppets of the *wayang kulit theatre* are made of leather.



### Websites

For more information about folk and mainstream puppet theatre, click the little mouse holding a globe between its legs on the left on the [www.poppenspelmuseum.nl](http://www.poppenspelmuseum.nl) home page.

Choose a language on the second web page (an image of Western Europe through a magnifying glass). The Dutch *Jan Klaassen* invites you in with a 'Welkom'. The German *Kasper(l)* says 'Willkommen'. The English *Mr Punch* will greet you with 'Welcome', and *Guignol* - the hero from the traditional puppet theatre of the French city of Lyon - calls 'Bienvenue'. On one of the next web pages, click on the brush in Jan Klaassen's hand and add colours to him.

On [www.poppenspelmuseumbibliotheek.nl](http://www.poppenspelmuseumbibliotheek.nl) you will find the illustrated Dutch-language *ABC of Puppetry*. Hundreds of puppetry pictures can be found on the bilingual website [www.geheugenvannederland.nl/poppenspel2](http://www.geheugenvannederland.nl/poppenspel2).

Would you like to get started at home? Then answer the questions (in Dutch) on [www.poppenspelmuseum.nl/onderwijs](http://www.poppenspelmuseum.nl/onderwijs) and receive a free puppetry cartoon.

## Puppetry Museum

The Puppetry Museum in *Vorchten* is an exciting and unusual museum about puppet theatre. Vorchten is a small town situated about 95 km east from the centre of the Netherlands. The illustrious Punch family, and others of their circle, look upon the museum as their Dutch country estate. Judy sometimes calls it 'Punch's annex'. And Punch, in a stage whisper, calls it 'Judy's hovel'. Nonetheless they are as proud as Punch (forgive the pun) of the 'leisure palace' close to the banks of the river IJssel between the towns of Deventer and Zwolle.

### Fascinating exhibitions for young and old

In colourful, characteristic rooms and cabinets we have a display of unusual (photographic) work by contemporary artists. There are surprising, cheerful rooms and a fascinating cellar full of mini displays about various aspects of puppet theatre. Embark on a voyage of discovery, a return to childhood innocence; come and enjoy yourself.

### Opening days and times

The museum is open on *Wednesday*, *Saturday* and *Sunday* from 12 noon to 5 p.m. Advance booking is required. Opening days and times can be extended on request.

- Picture:** Pulcinella figures forming the initial S. Naples (195-?).  
Extra: appendices I, II, III, IV, V and VI (illustrations and acknowledgment of the origin of pictures and figures). Hyperlink: **Pamphlet no. 25d**.

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