



Profitable Puppets

by John Williams

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About The Author

John Williams is a professional magician who also had a strong interest in puppets, originally inspired by Shari Lewis' television shows. He started doing Punch and Judy shows because no-one was doing them in his State (there are now three competing with him but John is doing quite well.)

He's written several books about doing Magic shows and also a few on other subjects – ask the eBookwholesaler Member that sold you this book about them.

John says, "Puppetry is a great hobby, but even better for earning either a part-time or full-time income. You can also use it to promote a group or cause which you are associated with.

Glove puppetry is hands-down the easiest way to get started even if you've never handled a puppet since you were a young child.

There's a lot of information in Profitable Puppets and it's all based on my own hands-on experience.

I hope that this book will help my readers get started with their own puppet shows and I want to hear of their successes and any suggestions for the future books.

They can get more information from the puppet section of my Magic website;

<http://www.ezymagic.com/puppets/> “

Prologue

Puppets come in as wide a variety as the people who use them. This book is a hands-on project book which focuses on the sort of puppets which I've mostly used, glove puppets. These puppet shows have a very wide appeal. As well as the parties and other events which focus on keeping groups of children happy, I've worked several events where the audience was entirely adult.

This book will give you enough ideas, tips and information to assemble, promote and perform your own puppet show so that you can make money for yourself or a group which you support – or both.

It's based on my personal experience which means that the information is 'proven in battle'. Nothing in this ebook should be regarded as a recommendation or otherwise about any particular person or company.

Your results will vary from mine. The results which you achieve will depend on your personal qualities, abilities, experience and exactly how you make use of this information.

The good news is that Profitable Puppetry does not impose very strict entry requirements on those who are willing to apply themselves to their business. Your age, ethnicity, economic circumstances and religion are unlikely to stop you reaching some level of success. Provided that your show is of a good standard and that you have access to a reasonable number of people who are willing and able to pay the fees which you set, this business can be operated almost anywhere that you might want to work.

You do need to keep yourself as fit as possible, but that's simply because your clients need to know that they can rely on you to meet your performing commitments and so that you have enough strength to carry your profits to the Bank.

You don't have to have good looks but a ready, sincere smile is important. You will probably be out of sight of your audiences most of the time when you are actually

performing, but there is a lot of personal contact with them before and after your performances, and also with the people who invite you to perform and pay your fees.

Remember too, that you must try to be pleasant to everyone when you are at a venue, even if they are hassling you or getting in the way when you are trying to prepare your show or when you are simply trying to get a cup of coffee between shows.

You may disagree, but my rule has always been to never drink any alcohol or smoke until after I’ve got my puppets, friends and myself safely home after the last show for the day.

I’ve performed almost all of my puppet shows solo, but there are good reasons why you might consider having someone else come along, either as a partner and puppeteer or just to help with transport, setting up, packing up and security. There are some possible drawbacks too and I’ll outline those in the appropriate sections.

Remember that you’re getting the benefit of my experience but that I am not a “puppetry guru”! I’ve had some success with my methods, but I’ve made more than a couple of mistakes in that time and you will have to adapt the tips and short-cuts to your environment. I could have done much better if I’d had this book with me when I started, so you have the chance to do much better than I am up to this point.

You will already be a couple of miles closer to success when you reach the end of this book for the first time than I was when I did my first shows, because you will know how to avoid a lot of the tricks and traps which can slow you down or even completely derail your progress.

And you’ll find more help in the book after you’ve started to put these ideas into practice. Some material will actually not seem very important until you have a little experience and start to polish your presentations on the flint-hard grinding wheel of actual public performance.

I'll tell you a bit about my experiences through the book and you are welcome to contact me when you've got any questions about your own puppet shows or suggestions which might help me to improve the next edition.

Please read the Safety Tips in the next (short) section. I may seem a bit paranoid to some but my sole aim is to help you to become the best and most successful puppeteer/business-person you can. To reach that goal and enjoy the rewards that you earn, it is vital that you protect your own financial and physical health as well as your clients and audiences.

Now, we'll get started right away!

Safety First

You must be alert to any possible safety issues when setting up, performing, packing away and also between your shows. If you don't, you will be stopped from working at most public venues, your insurance may be cancelled, you could be sued and you probably won't be paid if there is any sort of accident where you are shown at fault.

Anyway, you would never want anybody, including yourself and anyone working with you, to be hurt.

If you are using electricity, ensure that you have the required level of shock protection equipment and all leads are rated for heavy-duty use. If you are working outdoors, you may be required to put leads at least seven feet above the ground (you would probably have to supply the fittings and any poles necessary) or even bury them so that other people cannot come into contact with them. Check in advance of the day of performance if you have not performed at a particular outside venue before.

Battery operated equipment is preferable as rules become more strict, but make sure you check the batteries immediately before use, carry spares and make sure the equipment is kept away from any metal or wires.

Carry a quality first-aid kit and keep it well supplied. Ask your doctor or druggist for suggestions about items which they think should be in it. Some kits are put together with both eyes on keeping the cost down and may not have some fairly essential items in them.

If you make your own puppets, booth or other equipment and accessories, make sure that you observe safety advisories on cans etc., of the paint and other supplies – some could have some possible surprisingly nasty effects on your health if they come in contact with you.

Always wear safety goggles and protective eye-wear when it is appropriate.

Fiberglass was used by some people previously to cover puppet heads, but growing safety concerns mean that it's not used now.

Remember to be careful with the fumes and dust from your manufacturing. Sawdust, paint fumes and metal filings are just some materials which can affect your health or, at least, whether you will be fit enough to give a great show at your next event.

Puppet Shows in the 21st Century

Are puppet shows as popular with children and the paying customers – parents, organizations and promoters - today, like they were in the past? The answer is resoundingly, "Yes!" where the performer gives every audience a show which is 100% focused on their enjoyment.

I usually provide shorter shows than might have been the norm, say, 50 years ago but that's common with many types of entertainment.

The most important thing is that **you have to target the shows to the people that you're performing for.**

"Profitable Puppetry" focuses on Glove Puppets because they're probably the easiest means of entry into commercial puppetry. A significant section of this ebook is about Punch and Judy shows. You should read that carefully even if you do not intend to do that type of program because the Punch and Judy is one of the most successful puppet shows ever developed, a real survivor.

There are many things in the section which can be adapted for your shows, whatever type of program you are developing.

A traditional "Punch and Judy" show works well in England and other places where the performer offers a quality show. I get occasional specific requests for the traditional script, characters and routine but for the majority of my customers, who haven't grown up with a tradition of Punch and Judy, I offer a heavily adapted show which includes some extra puppets, novelty scenes and accessories. I've also got programs that are nothing like Punch and Judy.

Glove Puppets

These are my favorite type of puppet because my Punch and Judy outfit, along with a few other puppets, have been responsible for part of my working income for several years and, hopefully, will continue to bring in the odd dollar for several more.

They're easy to make and use and, even in this new Century, their appeal seems much like it was before personal computers, game consoles or even moving pictures!

You can buy glove puppets for home or professional use, but there's a lot to be said for making your own. That will not only save money, you can put your own creativity and ideas into the puppets, making them truly unique.

If, later on, you want to pursue other opportunities, you'll find they're very salable because puppetry is always popular and you can offer a ready-made, unique attraction. If you don't want to sell them, pass them on to a family member who will probably treasure more because they have something of you in them.

Decide what you are going to do with your puppets;

- amuse friends
- perform at clubs or groups where you are a Member or
- entertain for money at birthday parties and other events.

With each of these options, you should consider asking others to join you. Never bring anyone in to work at your puppet show if you are not 100% sure that you trust them and that you would 'get along' with each other through good times and bad. There will inevitably be times where something goes wrong or one of you makes a mistake. If you don't think that you could both handle that in a constructive way, then you're better off going it solo.

Try to see the benefits which they will get from being part of the puppet company. They may be your life partner, or just a good friend but, if they hate the work and conditions which are part of being a puppeteer, then it's better not to drag them in.

If they do accept your offer, they will bring companionship as well as skills and ideas which you do not have or, at the very least, an extra pair of hands. That will be very useful when you're making and carrying the puppets and even collecting the money at events where you aren't just paid by the organizers!

Making the Puppets

Traditionally, Punch and Judy puppets have their heads and hands carved from wood. That is the type which is likely to be booked by film, television and advertising agencies if you seek work in that area. They want the authentic look and sound, even if you are actually only part of the scenery in their production and not featured.

Their costumes must be crafted with care from quality fabrics which do not show creases readily and are easy to keep clean.

Many operators - including some of the most successful Punch and Judy people - use puppets which are made of a wide variety of materials.

Think about

- ? What do your intended clients want to see?
- ? What can you afford?
- ? What is available?
- ? What can you make?

Heads

The traditional wooden heads look great but are heavy and relatively difficult to keep steady during the whole show. The most common alternative is to make them from paper mache, a combination of either shredded paper or thin strips of paper and glue.

There are some products available which are like paper mache but supplied in powder form – you just add water and stir the mixture steadily for an extended time. That removes a lot of detailed work from your preparation but you will find that the cost of each puppet which you produce that way will be much higher. It depends what you feel your time is worth.

Though paper mache heads are lighter than the wooden heads, the weight of the largest ones can still become noticeable when you are doing a few shows in the same day.

To reduce the weight of your paper mache heads, you can make a smaller version of the head with modeling clay. Then, you cover the form with paper mache and then sculpt the features on to it.

When you have the head as you want it, cut down through the mache and the clay separating the front and back of the head in line with the ears.

Then, just scoop out the clay and use some more layers of paper mache or glued paper strips over the join to fix the two sections together securely.

These hollow heads are very durable and much easier to use for long periods.

Alternatively, you can build the head up by applying layers of paper mache to a thin plastic ball or even a small, inflated balloon.

There are several other methods of producing the heads.

Some people build the form of their heads from pieces of solid white foam – the sort which is used as packing around electrical appliances. These heads need to be covered with paper mache or some other durable material because the foam will deteriorate in a fairly short time and cannot withstand any of the almost inevitable knocks which puppets and puppeteers seem to receive on almost every outing.

Decorating the Heads.

Painting puppet heads and their hands is not beyond the average person but the more talent you have and/or the care you invest in the task, the better the results you'll get and the more impressed your audiences and potential bookers will be.

I have no skills for this but have learned to do an acceptable job through sheer need and perseverance.

Remember that your characters will almost always be viewed from a distance, unless you are performing for television, film or at some functions where the visitors are moving around all the time and come closer than most of your audiences do.

With that sort of booking, your puppets will need the best paint-work and design that you can do or afford to have done.

For most other occasions, I believe that most people can produce good work if they invest some time and care. You’ll have to decide whether you want to invest your time or do it the easy way and invest some money to get a more talented person to prepare your puppets for their public appearances.

Painting puppets is a fairly specialized area but you will probably be able to find artists that have at least done a few as experiments, for their own children or during their formal art training.

Remember that details are diffused or even lost at any sort of distance. Really fine details, such as small patterns, can change their effect when they are viewed from several feet away.

Eyes only need to be simple patterns with a colored ball as the pupil. The other important part is the eyebrows – thin, curved shapes for the ladies and heavy or pointed to the center of the nose for the nastier characters among the men. Large eyes are usually more appealing – that’s why they are used for cartoon characters.

Study the way that cartoonists from Walt Disney onward conveyed emotions with just a few simple lines. Use the techniques for your own work but make sure you never even get close to imitating any commercially copyrighted characters. The results for your bank account and reputation would not be funny.

You can apply a protective glaze to your puppet heads. Get advice from the supplier about which ones are best for the type of paint you use.

Hands

Simple flat hands with no separation between the fingers are sufficient for your puppets. Add a tube to the wrist end. This will mean that your puppet's arms can be longer than if your own finger-tips have to reach the puppet's wrists and, also, this will make it easier for you to manipulate the hands and pick up objects.

My puppets' hands are mostly made of Huon Pine, one of this State's most valuable woods. But don't fret, we didn't cut any trees to make them – they were made from very small off-cuts out of a furniture maker's workshop in return for some fittings which I sourced for him.

Any wood will probably do for your puppets' hands so long as it is strong and as light as possible. Paint them with an appropriate paint and use a sealer so that they are protected from water damage.

You could make the hands from paper mache, shaped and glued to a thin, flat piece of wood or, for characters like witches and ghosts, you can make the hands with long, thin fingers from thin, strong wire which you then cover with shaped and painted paper mache. It's worth joining the fingertips together with a piece of black-painted wire so that the hand will not catch on anything as you wave them around during your puppet shows.

Costumes

All costumes should, preferably, be sewn. I know a few people that glue some of the costumes for their puppets. This is probably faster and may be cheaper than paying a skilled seamstress, but my own experiments with some of the glues available in either liquid or powder form convinced me that traditional sewing gave results that were much better.

Select a strong material like drill or gabardine. The actual amount of material for a costume will obviously vary according to the size of the puppet, your own hand and arm, as well as the particular way you construct your puppets.

Your next decision is how your puppet's body will be designed. Many puppets have their arms sticking out from the sides of the main part of the costume. That's the simplest way. The cheap puppets in the toy stores have that sort of costume but so do many professional puppets.

It works alright for the professional puppets but there is almost always an outer costume (waistcoat or dress), all of the parts are carefully cut and matched and the performer practices with each puppet sufficiently so that the effect of the unrealistic design and the bunching of the costume around the puppet's hands is minimized.

I had the arms of my puppets' costumes made separately. Then, slits were cut in the front of the costumes for the arms to be sewn into. This made for a tidier look and removed the problem of the main costume getting in the way of the puppet's hands grasping and picking up sticks, pots and other accessories or when, say, Punch and Judy have a quick cuddle.

But the puppets which were part of the original set that I bought, that have not been remodeled and redressed (the Ghost and Polly), have their arms as part of the basic costume and they are almost as easy to work as the other puppets. The reaction from audiences is not different for either style of puppet design.

Many puppeteers make their puppets to fit the size of their own hands but I added tubes to the puppets' wrists so that the arms are longer than they could otherwise be. So, my puppets costumes are larger than they would be if I had kept the arms shorter so that my fingers actually reached into their wrists. I did this to make them more visible to larger crowds.

Holding the Puppets

There is another factor with the arms. There are three common ways of holding and manipulating glove puppets;



1] Use your thumb and second finger in the arms of the puppet and your first finger to move the head.

2] Use your thumb and little finger in the arms of the puppet and your first finger to move the head. Fold your second and third fingers in to your palm. They can be flexed out from your palm to make it look as if the puppet (a man or an animal such as a bear) has a large stomach.



3] (The method I use). Fix a thick stick in to the neck of the puppet and wrap your fingers around the stick. Use your thumb and second finger in the arms of the puppet. This method lets me use larger heads than I could support on my bare fingers.

Yes, that’s my Policeman out of uniform. But, it’s alright! He’s overdue for a new paint-job and it looks as if he’s looking forward to it!

Decide the method which is best for you to use, and then draw a rough outline of the expected size of your puppet’s body. The body should be just short of the length of your forearm. Measure the width and the height. You can make the arms part of the main sleeve pattern or do as I did with my main puppets; cut them out from a separate piece of cloth and then sew them in place, either on the sides or the front of the main sleeve.



You’ll use a piece of material which is twice that width for the main body so that the sleeve will be one piece to minimize cutting and sewing.

The costume will be narrower near the shoulders than it is near the bottom. That lets you pull the costume up around the puppet’s head when you pack it away to protect both the head and the

fancy parts of the costume.

Draw your pattern on a piece of thin paper, allowing a bit extra for a seam on all edges. Many professionals add a polished cotton lining inside the main costume sleeve which makes it a bit easier to slip your arm in and out.

When you have prepared the main sleeve for the puppet, you start on the other pieces of the costume which are different for each character. Each of the men will have two stuffed legs which you sew onto the front of the main sleeve, just below the character's waistline.

Some puppeteers make the legs of Mr. Punch hollow and set the open ends into the front of his costume, like his arms. Then, they use the fingers of their other hand to make the legs kick when Mr. Punch sits on the edge of the playboard.

I haven't added this feature to any of my Punch characters because it seemed too involved for the small amount of additional fun to be had from that bit of animation. But, I did work out a simple way to get the kick effect without using both hands for the one character, (that is important because I do most of my shows by myself) or even having hollow legs on the puppet.

The technique involves a piece of bent wire being pushed through the stick which supported Punch's head at the level of the top of his legs. Then, the two ends were bent forward and sewn into the top half inch of the legs. I could get a nice kick by just nudging the wire with my little finger. The one drawback was that the presence of the wire restricted the movement of the lower part of the puppet's body.

Your Punch and Judy Characters

It’s no show without Punch, but the other characters are just as important - they add the spice and contrast which makes the play interesting to your audience, whether you’re performing a traditional version or a heavily adapted one.

Performers have constantly adapted their “Punch and Judy” shows through the centuries, removed less popular characters and added new ones. That’s one of the reasons behind the show’s continuing appeal.

Mr. Punch

Originally, Punch looked as rough as he behaved. He had a sharply curved nose and a large hump on his back. These features are still common, to varying degrees, with many shows but there’s no real need to make your Punch a bizarre caricature.

Punch will have the largest head of the “human” characters in your show. Even Judy’s head will be a bit smaller.



His costume is usually red and yellow. His hat may be a real one, attached to his head or you may do what I have done – get the hat moulded as part of the head. If you want, you could have the shape of the hat moulded on and then fix a cloth hat over it. If you do this, then you will need to make the hat so that it may be removed for cleaning from time to time.

An important part of Punch’s outfit is his stick. Its length should be about equal to half the distance from his hands to the top of his hat - no longer because it will be too difficult to handle, at least until you have some experience. I saw one performer who used a clap-stick* but the sound was not sufficient to be heard. An ordinary piece of light-weight wood is sufficient.

An important feature of the traditional character is the Punch voice, usually achieved with a swazzle. This is usually made from metal with a piece of thin, flexible plastic or leather

across the center. Put this between your teeth and speak through it, then your voice becomes distorted and a bit screechy.

I feel that there are a couple of problems with this device for me. Unless your intended audience has grown up with the traditional style of a Punch and Judy show, they'll probably find it hard to understand what the character is saying. That may not be a problem if you practice moving your puppet to the point where you can convey or reinforce the meaning of everything he is saying through the puppet's actions. But, maybe you can avoid making the audience work really hard to understand what your main character is saying by just omitting the swazzle.

Then, apart from the metallic taste in your mouth, there is the discomfort you would put yourself through if you swallowed the swazzle. You'd have to make or purchase another swazzle even if you eventually recovered it! And you could be affected to the extent that you had to cancel some shows. If someone books you to perform a show like one they've witnessed where you used a swazzle, then you're obliged to use a swazzle for their show too.

Judy

The long-suffering wife of the most famous puppet in the World is usually a very plain woman who, with great fortitude, always bounces back after whatever treatment life, and, especially, her selfish, violent partner puts her through.



Judy is probably the real star of the show. She should be plain but happy in appearance. My Judy has a cap but it is moulded from paper mache and is actually part of the puppet's head. If you make it from cloth, make sure that you fix it firmly so that it won't come off during the show but that you can remove it easily for cleaning.

Judy's costume should be colorful. Get someone to look at the material you intend to use from a distance of several feet before you decide on it. It's surprising the way the details in small patterns dissolve together and the effect changes when you do this test.

I had a kitchen apron made to go over Judy's dress. There is a small pocket with a handkerchief poking out of it but that is actually glued in place.

Baby

The third member of Punch's family. This is often the ugliest of the Punch clan as well as being even louder than Punch!

The Baby has a very important part to play in the show. Read the outline of the script which I've included in 'Profitable Puppetry' to see how I downplay the violent aspect of Punch's treatment of the Baby.

I have had three different kinds of puppet as the Baby in my shows.

1] The first Baby was a small stuffed doll with arms and legs. It looked okay but was more awkward to pass between the puppets, so I changed to version 2.

2] This was a stuffed tube which tapered at each end. The outer covering was like the sort of blanket which you would wrap around a baby. The Face was large for the size of the Baby, with simple eye, nose and mouth shapes - and very, very ugly. I would always make the Baby have a slightly abstract, unpleasant appearance. This Baby *cries* and not much else.

3] The third is a small baby doll which came wrapped in a doll-sized baby blanket. The head pokes out of one end of the blanket and is really large in proportion to the size of the rest of the doll. The moulded features are like a real baby but they are just a pink blur to my audiences because of the distance between them and the performing area. I will never paint features on its face – they're unnecessary. This has worked really well for me, but, as far as I know, the doll is no longer being produced.

All types of Baby puppet were received well by the varied audiences which I work for, but I suggest that you give most consideration to something like #2 or #3 as the protruding legs and arms of the other type are a real hassle for the performer in a fast-moving show like this.

Toby the Dog

Originally, the Punch men used their own real dogs. Very few would do this now because of risks to the dog. Also, a dog puppet is much easier to control.

My dog puppet is similar to the fur fabric animal puppets which you can get at any toy store except that this one is a bit larger and, perhaps, better constructed than most. It is the regular glove puppet design with no back legs and mine does not have a mouth which opens.

I put a very small tab of hook-and-loop on the stitched mouth and a corresponding very small piece of the hook fabric on the sausages. This makes it easy for Punch to pull the sausages away from the dog during the show.

I had the dog made from medium-quality fur fabric (there's no reason to use real fur). The head was filled with foam to make the almost square shape of the dog's head (you could use small scraps of fabric) and animal eyes from the craft shop were used rather than painting the eyes on.

At one point, I used Toby to start the show, telling the audience that, "If they could see the Dog, then they would be able to see the show" in order to check the lines of sight. But, I changed after a while and started using the Clown during the set-up because it's a much more colorful character. Also, I can go straight into my regular script from there.

Doctor

The Doctor is a pompous, greedy quack – sort of like Punch but less violent and with a terrible wig and a black bag.

You don't need to decorate this puppet very much. Put a black coat on him, puffy red face – like a nasty Bank manager. You can have his hat loose and glue a little crepe hair inside it, then paint the top of his head pink. Now you can let Punch knock off the doctor's hat and his wig goes too. Not real 'nice', but children love it and most parents will love what gets their children laughing.

Policeman

Smiling, friendly – obviously no match for the devious Mr. Punch. My Policeman is dressed in a simplified version of the traditional British police outfit with the domed hat which they haven't worn for years but children in this State, thousands of miles from England, have always recognized the character immediately. Maybe that's because of British television shows.

Another simple puppet. Although the lady who made the costume for my Policeman decorated it, the audience only see a blue blur of a costume. They recognize the gold badge and the traditional London Bobby's hat though we're thousands of miles from England.

The 'badge' is actually an oval piece of gold paper but that's all that's necessary to give the right effect.

Scaramouche

Punch's neighbor, who I've renamed Mr. Brown for my shows. He is another of Punch's victims.

This fellow is a nice, average man, so you can put him through almost any sort of trouble at Punch's hands. I had my puppet dressed with a suit and bow tie. That's so that it can also be used for a short puppet sequence where he is a magician who is made to vanish by his rabbit! (The rabbit is made in a similar way to Toby the Dog.)

Hangman

He's a standard character in the traditional program that enjoys his work until Mr. Punch tangles him up in it! I stopped using him very soon after I began doing Punch and Judy. This meant that I could remove the wooden gibbet and rope noose which were a bit awkward to use and were not familiar to my audiences. I have thought of using him as a burglar character instead.

This is, after the Baby, the easiest puppet to prepare. His face is partly covered by a black hood so you only have to paint a mean mouth with down-turned ends and black pupils in round, white eyes – that's all.

Ghost or Devil

The Devil was the only character mean enough to give Punch his well-deserved come-uppance but I've always used a ghost instead and I let Judy save Punch from his clutches. Both of those alterations are always well received but you make up your own mind.

The Devil is usually clothed in red and black, with red skin and the facial features and a beard almost entirely black (except for the whites of the eyes).

The Ghost is entirely dressed in a simple white shroud, black eyes, white teeth outlined in black (put in one large gold tooth if you want to) and the mouth area black. Hands can be a bit longer than normal but don't separate the fingers because they will inevitably catch in Punch's costume or break off during their fight.

I learned the value of simplicity from this puppet. My original Ghost was very basic – white shroud, white face and black eyes with small white pupils. I found a rubber skull of the right size in my magic props, so I painted it white, added flashing red eyes (light emitting diodes and a battery!) The completed puppet looked good but got nothing like the reaction which children gave to the previous, much more basic model! That basic model got a new layer of paint and has been getting a good reaction as a permanent fixture in my Punch and Judy shows ever since.

Clown

I, for one, am very grateful to the early Punch man who first added a Clown character, based on the great clown, Joseph Grimaldi, to his Punch and Judy show. I always start my show with the clown because he's instantly recognizable as a fun character by everyone.

This is a good choice for the first puppet you make because any imperfections in the form can be decorated and will not look out of place.

The clown is usually an auguste type with the tall cone-shaped hat and simple baggy costume. I always start my show with him. He gets the audience to help him call a very grumpy Mr. Punch into view.

Mr. Punch's Horse

Yes, many operators used a horse puppet and Mr. Punch actually rode it! Of course, he fell off too.

Make the body of the horse from hard foam. Cut a hole half-way along the back and leave it open at the rear of the puppet. This is where you put Mr. Punch to ride the horse. You can put a Velcro™ tab inside the horse which will connect with a similar tab on Punch's costume so that they can both be operated together by the same hand.

Crocodile

Even though crocodiles are not native to Britain, leaving the crocodile out of your show will disappoint your audience and rob you of a lot of potential (funny) mayhem.



You can make your crocodile by putting a hinge at one end of two light wooden boards and then building up the shape of the crocodile with papier-mâché. Add a tube of green fabric to the

hinged end, then slide your hand inside the tube to operate the hinged jaws.

Put big eyes made from extra papier-mâché on the top of the crocodile and paint the inside of the hinged jaws pink. You can either paint the crocodile's teeth on the inside of the jaws or add big white teeth, made from thin wood or plastic along the edges of the jaws.

My crocodile was made by sculpting the basic shape in modeling clay, then coating it with several layers of liquid latex. Then, after the latex was thoroughly dry, the clay was removed and more latex applied to join the inner end of the two jaws together.

When that had dried, more latex was added to make the neck and the artist painted the whole creature with the correct paint. This was not a quick job but the effort and expense was well worth it.

When I received it, I added a tube of green material to extend the neck and painted white teeth inside the jaws. This is a ferocious looking creature that is an instant success with everyone except an occasional small child but, when I take the crocodile out to show the audience and they see a few bigger children put their hands inside its jaws, they also become fans!

I would not let any child put their hand inside the jaws if the puppet was not made of this strong, but very flexible, material. The inside of the mouth is coated with a strong water and paint-proof glaze and the paint used on the crocodile is safe around children.

Blind Man

In the traditional program, Mr. Punch would whack him to add to the general merriment. I don't use the character even when I do a traditional program.

Made in a similar way to the Hangman, without the hood. Usually a grim character.

Black Man

Another of Mr. Punch's victims who is seldom seen these days.

This character does not have anything special or important to do in the play. I had a slightly more elaborate costume made for him and he became Mr. Brown (my version of Scaramouche), Mr. Punch's neighbor.

Whale

This easy-to-make character never was part of the Punch and Judy show until a British Punchman thought him up. He appeals to very young children especially and also those few very sensitive parents that think their child (usually an only, very young child) might be frightened by the crocodile.

I occasionally use this creature as an alternative to the crocodile where the parents who book me believe that their child might not like the crocodile. He's a gentle, grey giant with large red lips and large rolling eyes (get the eyes from the local craft shop.) I've never bothered to put in a blow-hole so that it can squirt Mr. Punch (the less gadgets – the less problems) but just letting Mr. Punch get his hand caught in the whale's mouth gets a few laughs.

Just cut two large, flat pieces of foam to be the body of the whale. Shape them to be narrower at the tail end, then cover them with a single piece of gray fabric. Slit the fabric at the front of the whale and sew the red lips in place.

Use a thinner piece of foam, at right angles to the narrow end of the body to be the whale's tail and cover it with more of the same grey fabric.

Add large, rolling plastic eyes from your local doll or craft shop and, maybe, a couple of pieces of loose grey fabric as side fins. We don't have to be anatomically accurate here – if it's large and grey it's either a whale or a politician and we never have anything political in a puppet show.

Puppet Stages and Theaters

When you start to design the theater which you need to provide for your troupe, these are some of the most important factors which you need to consider;

Where will you perform? You might perform your puppet show in a small private home on Monday and a major exhibition hall on Tuesday morning. The more adaptable you are with regard to the types of venues and audiences which you can perform for, the more likely that you can make the amount of money which you want from your puppetry.

Location of your performances will also affect what you make your booth from. Both my original frame, made from light, strong wood and the aluminum frame I have used for the last several years, are light enough to be used in people's homes and yet strong and stable enough to suit outdoor venues and exhibition halls.

If the frame which you usually use is very large or heavy, then you may need to have a second, smaller one to use in people's homes. My frame at just over six feet, is about the maximum height which I would take into someone's home. Many people have low ceilings or even chandeliers and you must be extra careful not to damage their property. Even if it's not your fault, you would probably have to replace anything which was damaged while you were working there.

Stability: Your prime consideration is to ensure a highly enjoyable and **safe** experience for everyone that you work for. Puppet stages are usually tall and fairly narrow. Brainstorm every possible problem that might crop up in the venues where you work.

If you work in the open air, there's rain (rain and electricity, batteries, portable amplifiers, metal structures – *ouch!*) and *wind*. Your stage must be prevented from falling or even having parts fly off it. This would affect your already high insurance costs, but the main concern is that you never want to put anyone, especially a child, at any risk for any reason.

Use bags and tubes made from strong material and filled with sand or earth, or even metal or cement weights which can be fastened to the struts or base of the stage. Always cover those weights with thick cloth or glue pieces of carpet around large ones so that people do not hurt their toes or scrape their expensive shoes on them. Keep the weights entirely inside the cover of your puppet booth so there is no chance that anyone could fall, or pretend to fall, over them and sue you.

You can also get plastic containers which can be transported empty, then filled after you reach the venue and tied to the frame of your booth. The disadvantages of this tactic, for me, is that the containers are bulky, take up valuable space inside your frame and the time you need to carry them to the nearest tap, fill them and then carry them back before fixing them to the frame is too valuable and better used for other tasks.

I put a crossbar in the floor section of my booth. I stand on that the whole time that I am inside the stage when setting up and performing. If you use square metal tubing, like I do, to construct your booth, you might consider making the square section at the bottom from steel tubing rather than aluminum. This gives extra weight and adds to the frame’s stability. I would not use the steel tubing when I was performing inside a private home but it should be okay at public venues and outdoors so long as you are careful.

I hold on to the booth when I am going in and out and always either dismantle it or lay it down in a low traffic area before I leave it, even if only for a quick food or toilet break.

Security: Put strong wire netting across the under-side of the bottom panel of your booth if you intend to lay it down when you are not near it. That’s to reduce the chance that anyone, especially a small child, could get in if you are away from it for a moment.

Always securely pack away puppets and anything which is valuable or easily portable every time you leave the performing area.

There are 3 kinds of people;

1. **Honest people:** the people like you and me – no worries.

2. **Dishonest people:** a substantial minority.
3. **Seemingly honest people:** They will grab a chance to take something if the opportunity arises and they think they won't get caught. They're the people who buy hot merchandise from shifty guys in bars, encouraging the actual thieves to continue thieving.

Always make sure that you prevent anyone, especially children, from getting inside your stage, whether you are there or not. I don't let anyone except newspaper photographers, close friends or assistants inside that area for safety, security and peace of mind.

Construction;

These are the standard parts which you need to incorporate in your puppet booth:

- **Frame:** The skeleton of the booth or stage where you perform your shows.
- **Playboard:** A flat board at the front of the area where the puppets perform.
- **Proscenium:** The decorated frame around the area where the puppets perform.
- **Puppet Rack:** A bar with pegs or hooks that you hang the puppets on during your show.
- **Puppet Bag:** An open bag which you can carefully drop the puppets which you've finished with during your show.
- **Cover:** The 'skin' over the frame of your puppet stage.

The traditional method of constructing a puppet stage, and particularly a Punch and Judy booth, is to make the framework and fittings from wood and then put a canvas cover over it.

That's a great system but, like many other puppeteers, I have incorporated more modern materials while retaining the traditional look.

My first stage was constructed by a friend – a retired magician and craftsman - from one inch square wooden rods – twenty-one of them (in addition to the playboard and proscenium which were flat pieces of wood). I could break that theater down for transport in my battered Leyland Mini car!

When it was assembled, it looked really impressive – about six feet three inches tall and just under four feet square.

The downside was the time and effort which it took to assemble and break down the stage. The current version takes about seven minutes to erect and twelve minutes to pack away.

My Puppet Booth

I'll concentrate on the system which has been best for me. Then, I'll give you some suggestions about other options which are worth your consideration before you undertake the major task of creating, or having produced, your first stage.

Pictures



booth shows
proscenium,
playboard, canvas
front & prismatic
lettering.



The booth showing
aluminum
tubing. The front
bar supports
the wooden
proscenium.



The proscenium and playboard (the
lettering was wind-damaged at time
of photography.)

My Frame

My current stage is constructed almost entirely from 1 inch square aluminum tubing with a platform (playboard) and stage surround (proscenium) made of light, strong wood.

The lengths of tubing are fixed together with joiners. These vary in shape – some are straight and have just two ends, others have extra sections at right angles and are used to join up to five pieces of tubing together. These joiners vary in strength and cost. You must always carry extra joiners, especially if you use the cheaper and lighter plastic ones rather than those made of metal.



Frame. The front bar supports the proscenium.

You can use short lengths of wood instead of some of the joiners to fix the sections of tubing together. Get a short (about four inches long) piece of dowel, slightly thinner than the width of your tubing. Push it in to the tubing and put a couple of screws through the side of the tubing to fix the wooden joiner in place. This may be more economical in the short term but the sections of your frame will be more awkward to carry because they will vary more in length and the wooden joiners will become loose in time.

It’s a better idea to use the specially made joiners, if possible.

This type of set-up, with aluminum instead of wood, might upset purists but has many advantages;

Lightness – it is easy to transport and can be used inside private homes, while also being rugged enough for outside presentations.

Strength – Almost indestructible with reasonable care and maintenance, so I can use it for outdoor shows so long as I prevent it from being affected by wind and/or rain.

- **Quick Set-up and Packing** – for all performers, time is money. Save 5 minutes, or even half an hour, of set-up and packing-up time for every show which you do and that can add up to hundreds of extra productive hours each year.
- **Portability** – The average person can lift this sort of frame fairly easily – it’s more awkward than weighty. I always have someone help me to move the frame when I am set up at a venue, but that is for safety and insurance reasons. I can fit the disassembled unit in a large bag which goes in the boot of my car or a cab if my vehicle is unavailable.
- The puppets travel separately in a well-padded case which never leaves my side,

I’ve thought of an improvement which (I think) I will use in the next version of my booth. The area where the puppets perform is, traditionally, a rectangle – like the television screen. One drawback is that it restricts the area where your audience can sit or stand and be assured of getting a clear view of the performance.

I will extend the bottom of the play area forward so that the puppets will be visible to people who are further to either side of my booth. Because the front section of my canvas cover is a sewn-in panel, it should just be a matter of unpicking the sides, adding two strips of matching canvas and then sewing them in place. That’s what I believe but, because I’ve never done any of the sewing involved with my booth, I may find that there’s more work involved to get a professional result.

I’ll move the curtain which is behind the puppets’ performing area forward to be about one inch back from the hem on the sides of the booth (so that my head, behind the curtain, will still not be visible to the audience) and fix the playboard to the front of the extended section.

Aside from the cost of the canvas, a few more meters of aluminum tubing and paying for the sewing (I’ll do the unpicking myself), there doesn’t seem to be any expenses involved.

If I was doing Punch and Judy for television or other media, then I would keep my present set-up as it is for that sort of work, so that the booth fitted the traditional style very closely and I would make another booth with the additional section for use with my other shows.

The frame is basically a tall square tube. Mine is just over six feet high and about three and a half feet wide and deep. Inside this, I can hold the puppets I am using at shoulder height which is quite comfortable even for extended periods. I can also watch the audience through the gauze curtain which is behind the puppets' performing area, hiding me from the audience.

This is a great technique, giving the same effect as those two-way mirrors used in stores. So long as it is darker behind the curtain than it is outside of the booth, I am practically invisible but I can clearly see what is going on outside.

Traditional Punch and Judy booths are a couple of feet higher than this. Those Punch men and women hold the puppets which they are using about level with their eyes. This takes a degree of physical fitness and quite some time to get used to the un-natural position.

The main reason for this is so that their show can be seen by more people. If I adopted that sort of booth, then I would stand on a strong wooden box (with a thick rubber mat on it) so that I did not have to keep my arms raised to that height through the show and I could see the audience right through the show, as I can do with my present set-up.

After the last show for the day, I make sure that no-one is closer than ten feet to the booth while I dismantle it, pack everything into the vehicle and go to collect my fee. If I have a trusted friend or assistant with me, I'll go and get my fee before I start the last show. I've lost count of the treasurers who disappear before anyone else has even thought of starting to pack up.

Following up to get your fee a week or more after the event can be very frustrating when you are dealing with honorary treasurers of amateur organizations.

You will have to submit invoices to all your customers but most will pay you on the day. Companies generally will not pay until the end of the month and sometimes that will be strung out to 90 days.

When you get home, unpack everything from your vehicle and put away everything that does not need urgent repair.

I know that, many times, you will want to leave that part of the job until the next day. But, if you give in to that impulse, that will be something you have to contend with on a morning when, even if you don't have to rush to a regular job, you'll probably have a few aches from your exertion at the venue and from the driving the previous day. That will reduce after your body becomes more used to the long hours and the extra effort.

But, you'll probably feel as I do that getting everything packed away on the day of the show gives you a better chance of a good night's sleep and a clear conscience in the morning.

Proscenium

This is the decorative frame around the area where the puppets perform. It's really just made from one or more flat pieces of wood – usually two for the sides and one across the top which has the name of your show painted on it.

If you, like me, cannot paint to a professional standard, either get someone that can do the job or you can cut the letters from a thinner piece of wood. Use your computer to produce the letters as large, simple outlines – one per page if necessary.

Then trace the letters on to your sheet of thin wood and cut them out. Then glue them to the top section of the proscenium. Paint the edge of the wooden letters the same color that you use for the letters but make it slightly darker and the letters will stand out better.

I used thin prismatic sheeting on the letters last season. They were very easy to spot and a variety of colors kept flowing across them in sunlight or even artificial light.

The prismatic material was cheap but very thin and had to be replaced after every show. This would not be used if you wanted to offer a strictly traditional program.

Playboard

This is the shelf which is at the bottom of the puppets' performing area. It projects out from the front of the booth. I make this from the same board which I use for the sides of the proscenium and paint it the same color.

Mine is permanently hinged to the sides of the proscenium but I also have a couple of bolts which go through the back of the playboard and through the horizontal aluminum bar behind it to increase stability of the whole unit.

My Cover

My cover is made from a few lengths of striped canvas;

1] Front: One piece which reaches from the floor to the bottom of the puppets' performing area.

2] Sides and Top: One continuous strip which forms both sides and the top of the cover.

3] Back: This is made from two strips of canvas, each half the width of the back section of the frame. The two strips are joined all the way down the center (the long side of the canvas strips) by a large, six foot long zip.

All of these sections are permanently sewn together.

I've stuck with a canvas cover because of the strength, appearance and durability of the material. One advantage of canvas is that its colors do not fade quickly and canvas tends to repel water.

You can clean it with soap flakes and water, then just brush it down. The best way to dry it is to set up your frame and put the wet canvas, playboard and proscenium in place, then leave it for a couple of hours.

There are chemical preparations for waterproofing various materials. I have not needed it for my canvas booth. If the weather is so rough that too much water starts to enter the booth, you won't get audiences anyway.

These preparations apparently vary in effectiveness, depending in part on the material you apply them to and how carefully you follow the manufacturer's instructions when you apply them. Talk to the person that sells the material you use for your cover. If they want to sell you a specific product, give it fair consideration. Most businesses are genuinely interested in your repeat orders and the positive word of mouth you can give them as much as they are in the profit from adding a few cans of chemicals to your first order.

There are some synthetic materials which can give you the appearance of canvas but are much cheaper. There is nothing wrong with using them or even heavy duty fabrics instead of the traditional materials, so long as they look good and are durable enough to withstand the weather (if you work outside), constant folding and regular cleaning. They should, preferably, also be at least water-resistant so you, your puppets and sound equipment do not get soaked half-way through a show, be easy to clean and quick-drying.

Canvas may be relatively expensive but its durability and other features means that it's always worth considering.

Even if you have a friend or family member who is willing to put this together for you and has the equipment to sew it (a heavy duty sewing machine and special needles are essential), check the cost of getting the supplier of the canvas, or some company which they recommend, to do it.

They will do it faster, probably with a better result because they are experienced at doing this specialized work, and it will save you and your family member a lot of stress.

If you make your cover in line with the plan I suggest in this ebook, you will need to have;

1. an opening for the puppets performing area (where the proscenium and playboard will fit),
2. grommets (open metal rings) clamped into the covering material at regular intervals around that section and the bottom hem so that you can tie the cover to your frame, and
3. a long zip down almost the entire back of your cover,

One important point about that zip; have it sewn in with the tag which you pull to draw the zip closed nearest to the top of your frame – not at the bottom, near the ground. Otherwise, some mischievous passer-by is going to open that zip at the most inconvenient point during your performance.

If you want to use the addition I’ve also described, but not yet used, where the front section of the booth is moved forward a few inches from the rest of the frame, so that spectators at the sides of the viewing area can better see your show, then you will need to experiment with the design for the cover. I’ve listed the way I intend to include this feature in my new booth but I don’t yet have precise measurements or any photos.

Other options which you can think about are to use a durable, brightly colored, quality fabric for the cover or to cover your frame with light wooden panels. I believe that wooden panels would not be viable because they would be heavier, a less comfortable environment to work in (sort of like an old-fashioned outside toilet) and would not provide as attractive an appearance to your audiences.

Set-up and Performance

I thought that it could be informative to walk you through a theoretical set-up and performance at a public venue such as a hotel or public hall. You may feel tired, even depressed, after you read through all this but it's meant to help you, not scare you.

Remember that if I asked you for a thorough step-by-step to your normal working day in some job which you have done, the full story would probably be as long as this. It's just that I'll try to cover as many possibilities as I can.

You won't encounter all of the things which I mention every time you do a show but there are probably some that I mention which you've not heard of before and which you will be very glad to know about before you encounter them.

When you've been doing shows for a few months, doing most of this will be second-nature for you.

The routine starts about a week before the show. Unless the show is a child's birthday party or to be held at someone's private home, I try to get access to the venue a few days before the event so that I can check for any possible problems with the show or the venue.

It's great if you can meet the staff of the venue and find out any special requirements they may have for visiting performers. They may ask you (meaning they politely tell you) that you must use particular entrances to the building, where you can leave your equipment (and that they will not, of course, have any responsibility for it) and any other restrictions.

You check that your route from the car park or loading dock to the actual spot where you will perform are navigable with your equipment, check the time that trip is likely to take (and double it to allow for unexpected events – you must always be on the spot ready to perform before the specified time.)

Write down the name of the people in charge of the venue whom you deal with. Get their business card if possible and don't forget to send them a handwritten thank-you note after the event.

If you are not the only entertainment, check what type of acts will be on before and after you if they will be using the same performing area. If the act before you is a rock band, you may not be able to start setting up your booth until they have completed their performance and also packed and removed their gear – check with them directly that they intend to do that immediately after their show and that they don't intend to have lunch in between!

Inspect the performing area thoroughly:

1] Will you have to set up on a ten foot high stage to entertain a group of five year olds who will be corralled on the floor of the hall? That would mean a minimum gap between you and your audience of about sixteen feet.

2] Will there be any loud noises in the immediate area of your performance. It does happen and you might not be able to get any changes in their arrangements – at least you will be better prepared than if you arrived on the day and had to set up next to an ice-cream van with a very loud freezer motor.

3] Where are the nearest working power points? Ask permission to use them beforehand and check if you and three other people have to share one double adapter.

The day before or, at the latest, the night before the show is when you get everything ready for your performance. If you have your car in a secure garage, then you can pack everything as you check it. Remember the old rule; pack the items in the reverse of the order that you'll need them on the day.

If you have to park on the street, don't put anything in the vehicle, not even a packet of gum, until you are getting ready to go to the venue. But, of course, you still check that

you have everything which you will take with you, including food, drink (no alcohol) and your performer's first-aid kit (see later chapter.)

Set two alarm clocks if there is any chance you might sleep in. Don't let anything short of an erupting volcano stop you from getting to the venue in plenty of time.

When you arrive at the venue, check the time again. Lock your vehicle and take your gear to the performing area.

Make contact with the person who is running the program and check if the program is on schedule. You might be surprised how angry some people can get if their program is ahead of schedule and you're not ready to perform 15 minutes before the set time.

Be as flexible as you can if they want you to start later unless you really do have another show some distance away, already booked for later that day.

Some people will want you to fill some extra time without extra payment – try to work in with them unless it's obvious they are trying to get double work from you for nothing instead of booking an extra act.

Although you are carrying your equipment with you, try to be as inconspicuous as possible so that you don't interfere with other people's presentations.

I assemble the frame, open the zip to its full length and then lift the open back of the cover over the front of my frame. Then I get inside the frame and draw the top part of the cover over to the back of the top of the frame.

Then, I put all the gear, including the bag with my puppets and my "first-aid kit", inside the frame, before pulling the whole cover into its proper position. Then I close the zip and fit the proscenium and the playboard to the frame through the grommeted holes in the front of the canvas.

I fit the cover, the proscenium and the playboard to the frame in the same way when I wash the cover. That way, the canvas dries in exactly the right shape.

Now, I put the bar in place inside the front of the booth, ready for me to hang the puppets on.

I put the public address system in place on the right side and fir the bag where I dispose of puppets which I’ve finished with during the show.

I set up speakers (and lights if I’m using them).

Then I get the puppets out, pull their costumes down into place and put them on the puppet bar.

I put a sign on the top showing the time my first show is due to start. I use a large, flat clock-face with moveable hands which I can bolt at the position I want them. If you have a sponsor for this show, put their sign(s) in place on your booth.

I have thin, colorful, corrugated plastic panels (Corflute™ is the brand which I’ve used and I’m very happy with it) professionally decorated with the name of my show and you’re my contact details (these are tastefully small and right at the bottom of the signs – otherwise some sponsors, if you have them for that event, will be unhappy.)

Then, I place the curtain behind the puppets’ performing area which hides me from view. If you use the taller kind of set-up, about eight feet tall, then you won’t need that unless you do your show while standing on a box which brings your head level with the performing area. But, with that set-up, your arms are likely to become very tired from holding the puppets above your head through the show – at least until you have some experience and weight-training.

In my set-up, the puppet rack is fixed about nine inches below the playboard. I hang the puppets on it when I set up. The puppet bag is fixed to the left side as I keep Punch on my right arm throughout the show. Each time I finish with any of the other puppets, I drop them carefully into the bag unless they are re-used later in the show.

My P.A. system is fixed to the right side of the frame, opposite the puppet bag. The microphone is on a harness around my neck – the harness is adapted from a wire coat

hanger. I no longer use a radio microphone but the cord on my current microphone is thin, very strong and about nine feet in length..

Start making announcements about half an hour before your show starts. If using your P.A. would interfere with other acts or demonstrations in the area, stand outside your booth and you're sure to get people asking you what time the show starts etc.

If you have an assistant or partner, this is the time when they can circulate while wearing a costume related to your show.

When it is time to start, I put the yoke for my microphone around my neck, switch on the P.A. and check the sound level.

Then ... *On With The Show!*

As you can see, the actual show is but one part of the performance.

Start your first show at the agreed time even if your audience is just a dog and a couple of sparrows. You can be fairly sure that the person who booked you will be told if you do not start on time for any reason.

Do your show, adjusting the length of the different segments according to the reaction from that particular audience. That's very easy if you can see the audience through the gauze curtain behind the puppets' performing area.

Ignore any hecklers. There's no points for you in showing that you can shout down a seven year old – anyway, he'd probably turn out to be the favorite grandson of the person who booked you!

If you have more performances at that venue on the same day, use the time between the shows to gather your next audience. Never leave your puppets, sound gear etc., unattended - **never**.

Promoting Your Shows

The first advertising which some people think of is their Yellow Pages® phone Directory. I have found this less effective and more expensive than I expected. Look at your current directory to see what size of advertisement other performers are using.

Most enquiries will go to those with the largest and most colorful advertisements but it's not worth putting in a large advertisement until you have some experience and know what features of your show it is best to publicize. Otherwise, you might be wasting most of your money.

Check if the Directory suppliers have any special offers for new customers. Make sure that you get any offers, which you accept, in writing.

Contact organizations which conduct the sort of events which you would like to be paid to work at:

- Shopping Centres
- Exhibition Promoters
- Daycare centers
- School Administrators.
- Major Hotels
- Party and Event Organisers
- School Fair committees
- State Fairs

Sponsored Programs

You can broaden the scope of your offerings by approaching companies and suggesting that, as well as considering your show for their staff Christmas parties, they might sponsor your show to be performed at events which are focused on raising funds for charities.

One very successful mini-tour I did was around several agricultural shows (mini State Fairs) with my Punch and Judy show adapted to promote electrical safety under the sponsorship of the government-owned electricity authority. This sort of program could be sponsored by a similar organization in your State or by a company which supplies electrical equipment or appliances. Some companies might be persuaded to sponsor shows during special events at stores which sell their products.

These sort of programs should be shorter than your regular shows and very fast-paced. You will probably have to work on the organisation for some months to get this sort of work but it's usually very well paid and one can easily lead to more with other organizations as the sponsors and very different themes.

Your Public Address System

Every puppeteer needs a powerful and reliable public address system. Through my years of experience with magic and puppet shows, as well as working in markets and exhibitions, my voice is used to getting my words to people at a distance clearly and without causing me discomfort.

If you don't have that background, you really must have the support of a good P.A. system.

I always carry at least one P.A. system to each show that I do. That includes those venues where I have been told there is a P.A. system available for me to use!

When you are in your booth, your un-aided voice will be partly blocked by the booth as well as the conditions outside it. At a party, that might be no more than 20 or 300 happy children and the adults who are sometimes completely absorbed in their own, loud discussions at the back of the room.

At an exhibition or outdoor event, you may have to set up next to a rock band or dodgem cars!

Keep these points in mind when you look for a suitable system;

1] It should be able to operate on either rechargeable batteries or mains power, whichever is available. The batteries should be a standard size which you can get replacements for locally without having to wait for them to be brought from another state or country. Get a spare set of batteries when you buy your system and try to keep both sets charged. You should be able to recharge the batteries without using the system. That way, you can use the P.A. for a show while the spare batteries are being recharged on a power point.

2] If you use a radio microphone, ensure that the system is one which is approved by your country's communication authorities so that there is no risk of your system interfering with other people's equipment or being confiscated.

3] The power of the system is important but reliability and ruggedness are also required.

4] You need to have someone with good hearing and pitch listen to you test the system before you buy it, so that you can be sure that your audiences will be able to hear and understand every word that you say.

5] Always treat your microphone as if it is permanently on – otherwise you might say the wrong thing sometime and that's when you can be sure that your microphone will pick up every syllable.

Scripts and Scriptwriting

Here are some scripts which you can use and adapt for your shows. You must not distribute them to other people or claim that you wrote them.

When you want to write your own scripts, please keep these basic points in mind;

- In two words, AVOID OBFUSTICATION. Keep the story, and especially the words you use, simple and easy to understand.
- Keep each section of your play short. You can extend or shorten the sections as required when you feel the reaction of each particular audience.
- Don't use too many characters, especially when you are performing for very young audiences.
- Variety is essential but very young children really enjoy repetition and music.
- You must use only original music which you record yourself or obtain permission from license holders to use anyone else's music.

Punch and Judy Script

This is just an outline of the main parts of the show. If it reads dull, don't worry because there's a vast difference between written and spoken dialogue. Your actual show has the added benefits of color, action and a responsive audience. Also, you will probably only ever write a broad outline like this one for any shows that you develop yourself and then extend or shorten particular parts of a routine according to the reaction of each audience.

Characters:

You don't need to use all characters in every show.

Judy: Mrs. Punch, who loves and cares for Mr. Punch, their baby and their dog Toby.

Mr. Punch: The cheeky, lazy and aggressive hero who only cares for himself.

Baby: Judy and Mr. Punch's child – the ugliest and loudest-crying baby in the world

Toby: The neighbor, traditionally, Toby is Mr. Scaramouche's dog but he is Judy and Mr. Punch's dog in my program. He never gets the sausages, but he's smarter than Punch.

Policeman: The representative of right and reason who never wins in *this* play.

Polly: The pretty girl next door who is Mr. Punch's neighbor.

Scaramouche: Judy & Mr. Punch's other neighbor. I call him Mr. Brown in my show.

Clown: Always happy – great character to start the show with. The Clown is usually named Joey, after the legendary real clown, Joseph Grimaldi, who inspired an early Punch and Judy operator to include a clown for the first time.

Doctor: More 'quack' than any duck – very pompous too.

Crocodile: Mean and hungry – sort of like Mr. Punch with green scales and big teeth.

Devil: Comes to collect Mr. Punch for being so naughty but just gets a lot of trouble.

Ghost: Alternative to the Devil character. Use one or the other, but not both, in a show.

Properties:

Mr. Punch's whacking stick.

Doctor's Hat: Some attach imitation hair to the hat and Mr. Punch knocks it off the doctor's head during the show.

Sausages: Meant for Toby who's tricked by Punch but the crocodile always gets them.

The Play:

This is a simplified version of a traditional treatment. I've given fairly generic wording because some of the jokes and catch-phrases which I use would probably not suit you. They're regional or topical and could be meaningless or just not funny for your audiences. You can adapt these scripts to suit you more closely and, especially, to appeal to the specific audiences which you'll perform for.

*Start with a short introduction in front of the booth by yourself or your assistant to gather your crowd. Then, **Clown** appears on the stage;*

Clown: The Punch and Judy Show is starting now! I need your help to find Mr. Punch. Has anyone seen Mr. Punch here this morning?

Clown: Young man! Hey, ... in the red jumper (*the Clown points to a particular child and describes them in a nice way – never make fun of anyone. I choose an outgoing boy here because a girl might not reply loudly enough for the rest of the audience to hear. I'll balance that by picking a girl later in the show when they'll all be very comfortable about talking to the puppets!*)

Clown: What's your name?

Clown: My name is Joey and I'm a Policeman (*or Ghost or even a Dog!*)

*The children react, and Joey chats with them, finally understanding he's really a **Clown**.*

Clown: Mr. Punch must be asleep downstairs because he's not here and he's **always** asleep ... or eating!

Clown: Please help me wake up Mr. Punch so we can start the show! (*Never ask, "Will you ..." because they might say, "No!" just for fun.*)

Clown: When I say, Go!" let's shout, "**Wake up, Mr. Punch!**". Ready, ... steady, **GO!** (*You don't have the Clown make a mistake and start an irrelevant chat with the audience here because you've got their interest, so you start building some speed (and noise) into the show.*)

Clown: I couldn't hear that! Try again, and let's lift the roof off (*really good if it's an outdoor performance*)

The **Clown** jumps and falls over, reacting to the loudness of the audience's shout.

Clown: I think he's coming up the stairs.

Clown rushes to the side of the stage and looks down. If **Punch** will be on your right hand, then **Clown** goes to the left side and vice-versa.

Then, **Punch** appears, sees **Joey** and goes off again.

Clown: He isn't there! Oh, he was over the other side?

Clown goes to the other side, looks down and then turns to the audience.

Clown: He isn't there either!

Punch comes on behind the **Clown**. When someone shouts that "He's behind you!", **Punch** moves around so that he's still behind **Clown** as the **Clown** turns to one side.

*When the **Clown** turns the other way in response to more directions from the audience, keep **Punch** still. Then, the **Clown** jumps and yells in fright. You use this same piece of business later with either the **Devil** (or **Ghost**) and **Punch**, so keep it short and get it over quickly now.*

Punch: Hello, Joey. Hello everyone, I'm **Mr. Punch** – the star of this show and all-round good fellow!

Clown: Hello, Mr. Punch!

Punch: Hello, Joey. Where's Judy? I hope she has a nice big breakfast (*or whatever is appropriate for the time of the show*) for me because I've been working very hard.

Clown: Yes, I heard you sawing wood (*Puts his head to one side and makes a snoring noise*). I saw Judy at the shop buying a lot of lovely sausages.

Punch: I love sausages, especially with peanut butter!

Clown: Sausages and peanut butter - That sounds terr-ib-ble! I won't stay for lunch now!

Clown goes.

Punch: That's good! It means more sausages for me! (*Punch asks the audience*) Where's Judy? Let's all shout, "J-U-D-Y!"

*Audience shout and **Judy** arrives with **Baby**.*

Punch: Hello Judy! What's that – it's the funniest sausages I've ever seen!

Judy: Punch, this is our baby. I can't make breakfast unless you look after him for me?

Punch: I'm the best person for looking after sausages *ever*!

Judy: He isn't sausages, he's a *baby*! Hold him and no silly games.

Punch: I know that. I know everything! (*Here you can start the traditional exchange of, "No you don't!" from the children and "Yes I do" from **Punch** but I don't unless I hear some of the audience challenge **Punch** in a friendly way at that point. My reason is that **Punch and Judy** is not common here and most of the children are not programmed with those traditional exchanges here.*)

Punch: Can I have some peanut butter with my sausages? (***Punch** never says, "Please" but all the other characters, even the **Ghost**, always do.*)

Judy: I'll make you a big fry pan full of peanut butter and sausages.

Punch: "L-o-v-e-r-l-e-e-e-e!"

Judy passes the baby to **Punch** who almost drops him.

Judy *leaves.*

Punch: Let's play a game of Ba-Bee-Up to keep the baby quiet. When I say, "Go", you shout ***Ba-Bee-Up!*** Ready, set, **Go!**

*The audience shouts and **Punch** bounces the **Baby** up just a little.*

Punch: He liked that. See, he's got a big smile! Now, let's do it one more time before Judy gets back.

*The audience shouts and **Punch** bounces the **Baby** up just a little but then lets him drop inside the stage.*

Punch: Baby do-o-o-w-n!

Judy rushes on with **Baby** in her arms.

Judy: Punch, the Baby dropped on to my head!

Punch: I told him not to jump around! *(Another point where you can start the traditional exchange of, "No you didn't!" from the children and "Yes I did!" from **Punch** if some of the audience challenge **Punch** in a friendly way.)*

Judy: He made me spill your peanut butter!

Punch: Not my peanut butter! Where's my sausages then?

Judy: They fell on the floor so I gave them to Toby the dog. I'll go to the shop again after I've put the Baby in his crib.

Punch: I'll starve!

Maybe Toby hasn't eaten all my sausages yet. Toby! Toby!

Punch: Maybe he didn't hear us! Toby! Toby! Toby! Toby! Toby! Toby!

Toby enters with sausages.

Punch: *(points upward)* Look there, Toby!

When **Toby** looks up, **Punch** grabs the sausages.

Toby barks.

Punch: No, Toby – these are my sausages! Go away! Bad dog!

Toby goes and **Punch** dances and sings, "That's how you do it" or "Lovely sausages".

Policeman enters.

Policeman: Mr. Punch, where did you get those sausages. They belong to Toby, don't they?

Punch: No, sir, I got them from the shop myself. I'm going crocodile hunting and these are my bait.

Policeman: Watch out, Mr. Punch. Crocodiles are nastier than anyone!

Punch: I'm not afraid of anything, especially crocodiles!

Policeman: Just be careful Mr. Punch. I'll keep looking for Toby's sausages.

Policeman leaves and **Crocodile** enters.

Punch: I'll have to watch for that crocodile but I won't give him any of my sausages!

Have you seen a crocodile around here?

Punch: No, that's not a crocodile. That's just a green dog!

Punch: No, I know everything. Crocodiles have big teeth and he doesn't have any.

Crocodile opens its mouth.

Punch: Oh, he's got a few big, white teeth - but you don't bite, do you?

Crocodile *shakes its head.*

Punch: He's just yawning. And he doesn't eat sausages anyway!.

Punch: What do you eat?

Crocodile *grabs Punch's nose.*

Punch: *(very nasal, loud voice, half crying)* Ow! Let go my nose!

Punch *lets go the sausages so the* **Crocodile** *lets go of Punch's nose, grabs the sausages and leaves.*

Punch: I'm still hungry and I haven't got any sausages or peanut butter.

Doctor *enters.*

Doctor: Mr. Punch, was that you crying out for expensive ... I mean, urgent medical help?

Punch: No, I'm fine. I've been bitten by a crocodile but I'll survive!

Doctor: You can have some of my medicine. It's good for crocodile bites and will clean the wax out of your ears too!

Punch: I like my wax. They're very popular. Would you like some?

Doctor: If you've got some free wax, I can use it to make some more medicine. Do I drink it or rub it on?

Punch: I apply this wax – no charge!

Doctor: Well, give me two, please.

Punch *picks up his stick and whacks the Doctor.*

Punch: That's the way to do it!

Doctor: You're very mean, Mr. Punch. You'll be taken by the (**Devil/Ghost** – *whichever you use*) if you keep doing that!

Punch: I don't care. I'm a good boy. I'm very good at giving whacks to people and I'm not afraid of the Ghost!

Doctor *leaves.*

Punch: Let me know if you see a Ghost?

Ghost *floats in at opposite side of stage but Punch, of course, doesn't see it.*

Punch: You see the Ghost? Where?!

Punch: On the other side?

Punch *leans around the outside of the stage.*

Punch: No, It's not there?

Ghost *leaves.*

Punch: It's on the other side of the stage?!

Punch *goes to the other side and the ghost appears again at the opposite side. Then the Ghost drops down inside the stage.*

Punch: I still can't see it?!

Punch: It went down? Okay!

Punch looks right over the front of the playboard and almost falls down.

Ghost *re-appears behind Punch*

Punch: Now it's behind me?

Punch *turns around but the Ghost stays behind him.*

Punch: Okay, I'll try one more time!

Punch *turns round in the other direction and sees the Ghost.*

They fight. Punch picks up his stick but the Ghost takes it and whacks Punch.

Punch: O-o-h!

Ghost *grabs Punch (actually, Punch grabs the Ghost but make it seem that the Ghost is winning). Remove your hand from the Ghost, and then bring Judy back on while the hand which operates Punch holds the Ghost.*

Judy: Naughty Ghost! Leave my poor husband alone.

Judy *grabs the Ghost and throws it down inside the stage.*

Punch: Oh, thanks Judy!

Judy: I think you'll be a good boy now.

Punch: Yes, I will. Darling Judy, will you ... will you ...

Judy: Give you a kiss?

Punch: Darling Judy, will you ... will you ... go to the shop and get some more sausages and peanut butter?!

Judy: Alright Mr. Punch, but we'd better say Goodnight to the girls and boys. It's almost time for their tea.

Punch: Goodnight everyone. You're the best audience we've had today. Now, eat up all your dinner so you can grow strong and healthy ... *like Judy!*

Judy: Goodnight!

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Jack and the Beanstalk

Characters:

Jack: Our Hero, he’s strong and brave but not very bright.

Jack’s Mom: The widow who asks Jack to sell their cow.

Bean Man: He buys Jack’s cow for just three “magic” beans.

Cow: Fun character, which you could make in a similar way to Toby the dog and then add a couple of horns and an udder.

Giant: The most important puppet. I’d make this as a large, cloth head and use one of your hands as the Giant’s hand so that it’s very large in proportion to the size of the other puppets.

Properties:

Goose: Lays golden eggs. It’s like the Baby in Punch and Judy – makes no movement on its own. But the shape and color is different. I’d make it as an egg-shape, covered with cotton wool or feathers (from the craft shop). Then, just add a curved neck (made from bent wire covered with white fabric) and small head. The only decoration needed on the head are two black dots for eyes and the gold-colored beak.

Beanstalk: A stick covered with green fabric (or plastic), with leaves made from the same material stuck every inch or so. Tie this to a fishing line which you will use to pull it up toward the top of the puppets’ performing area. You need to have a couple of small hook-and-loop tabs on the side of the stalk and matching pieces on the edge of the side of the proscenium so that you can fix the beanstalk at different heights during the play without having to hold it in place.

Performance:

*Start with the **Cow** at one side of the performing area and **Jack** at the other. Jig the cow about.*

Jack: Hello, everybody! Has anyone seen Bossy, my Mother's cow? *(I told you he's not very bright!)*

*The **Cow** goes behind **Jack**, then bobs below the performing area when the children tell **Jack** and **Jack** turns around. You can do the same routine as with **Punch** and the **Ghost** except these two don't fight because they like each other!*

Jack: Hello, Bossy. *(**Jack** puts his arm around the **Cow**'s neck. Your hand inside **Jack** actually grabs the **Cow**, so your other hand can slip out of the **Cow** and you can bring on **Jack's Mom**.)*

Jack's Mom: Hello, everybody. Jack, I want you to take Bossy to the Fair today.

Jack: Why Mom, do you think she might win a prize?

Jack's Mom: No, Jack. We have to sell her because we have nothing to eat!

You can add some more talk here but don't go on too long because the real story hasn't started yet.

Jack: Okay, Mom. I know that someone will pay us a lot for a great cow like Bossy!

Jack's Mom *waves as you move her backwards off to the side of the stage and away.*

Jack *drags the **Cow** to the center of the stage and you bring on the **Bean Seller**.*

Bean Seller: Hey Jack, that's a nice dog you've got there!

Jack: This is not a dog, Sir. This is Bossy, the best cow in the Country!

Bean Seller: Jack, I thought it was a dog because all the cows I saw at the Fair are much bigger!

Jack: Are they really bigger?

Bean Seller: A lot bigger, I am glad you're not trying to sell her at the Fair.

Jack: But that's what I have to do!

Bean Seller: You won't get much when all the other cows are much bigger. But I like your little cow. I'll even give you three for her!

Jack: three whole dollars?

Bean Seller: Much better than that. Three whole B-E-A-N-S!

Jack: Oh, no thanks. Three beans would not last us more than a week.

Bean Seller: Ah! These M-A-G-I-C beans will. They'll last all year!

Jack: Okay, Mom will be real pleased if I get enough to last us all year.

*The **Bean Seller** takes the **Cow** and hurries away. **Jack** starts calling out to his **Mom**.*

Mom: Jack, I hope you got a good price for our lovely cow?

Jack: Mom, I got THREE!

Mom: Three dollars? That won't last us a week!.

Jack: Much better – the nice man gave me THREE B-E-A-N-S! And he said they are MAGIC and they'd last all year.

Mom: Jack, only three beans! Give me one. Ouch, they taste terrible – that's why they last all year!

Jack: Oh, NO! I'm very sorry, Mom!

Mom: I should have gone myself. Throw those terrible beans away. We'll have to get some fruit in the forest tomorrow or we won't have anything to eat!

Jack and his Mom go off-stage. Then, you slowly pull the **beanstalk** up until it is several inches above the playboard.

Bring **Jack** on from the side of the stage farthest from the **beanstalk**.

Jack: Look, the beanstalk has grown overnight. But there's no beans! I bet I can climb it. I'm very brave!

Jack goes to the **beanstalk** and grabs it. It suddenly starts to grow again, lifting **Jack** up. Of course, your hand, inside the **Jack** puppet is drawing the **Beanstalk** upward. Bring **Jack** (and the **beanstalk**) back down to the level of the playboard. Fix the beanstalk to the hook-and-loop on the side piece of the proscenium.

Jack looks around.

Jack: I wonder who lives here? Oh, there's a duck.

Jack brings up the **Goose**.

Bring the **Giant** on from the other side of the stage.

Giant: Ah, little man. Would you like to be breakfast?

Jack: I would like some breakfast if you have enough to share, thank you.

Giant: I won't share my breakfast! I said you can be my breakfast!!!

Jack: I won't be your breakfast. Maybe this duck will lay you an egg.

Giant: That's my Goose that lays golden eggs! I can't eat them!

Jack: Well, you won't eat me. But I can give you two....

Giant: Two eggs? That's not enough for my breakfast. They would not last me a second.

Jack: No, I mean two B-E-A-N-S and these are guaranteed to last for years!

Giant: Well, beans are too soft.

Jack: These beans are not soft – that's why they last so long.

Giant: Well, I want more than two – I'm a growing Giant!

Jack: You won't need more than two. My Mom had one and she said she'd never tasted anything like it!

Jack: Let me put this goose down and I'll get the beans for you to try.

Giant: Okay.

Jack: Oh, the goose has got away!

Giant: You lost my Goose! Now, you'll have to be my breakfast.

Jack: Well, please don't take my beans.

Giant: Give me one. It will sharpen my appetite so I can eat you all up!

Jack: Alright.

Jack *puts one arm out as if giving the Giant a bean. Bob the Giant's head up and down slightly as if he's chewing a bean.*

Suddenly the Giant roars loudly!

Giant: I broke my tooth – these beans are too hard!

The Giant puts his hand (actually your hand) in front of his face.

Jack: Now's the time to get away before I really become his breakfast!

Jack *puts his arm on the beanstalk and quickly slides down and away from the Giant who falls down moaning.*

Mom *comes on to the stage carrying the goose.*

Mom: Jack, look at this lovely goose. Maybe we could have goose pie!

Jack: Mom, that goose lays golden eggs!

Mom: Real gold?

Jack: Yes, Mom and that means that you, me and this lovely duck ... I mean gorgeous goose ... will all live happily ever after!

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Dealing with Real People

You will get most of your problems and the most enjoyable and exciting moments in your puppetry when dealing with real people – the puppet part is much easier!

Your Audiences

Your success depends on gathering audiences and encouraging them to respond to your shows. It’s not really hard to do – most people at an event where you are performing will be focused on having a good time and, especially, ensuring that their children have a great time, so you’re half-way there if you do a reasonable show and keep smiling, as if it never rained and everything always works perfectly.

Make it easy for people to enjoy your shows. Set up early and always have a sign which displays the times of your shows. A clock-face with moveable hands is good so long as you can secure the hands in place so that a mischievous or malicious passer-by cannot easily change or even remove them.

A vital point that some of you may believe is so obvious that it doesn’t need mentioning is that you must always treat every person that comes near you and your shows as well as you would hope that other people would treat your wife, little sister or child.

Unfortunately, my experience is that should be mentioned, not just to remind the few who might say or do something intentionally which could upset a child, the child’s family or any other spectator but also as a reminder that we all need to carefully protect our reputations by never doing anything which might be misconstrued by anyone.

- Never touch a child, or any female (if you’re a male), in any way except on the hand and then only when they are aware that you are going to touch them and why.
- Never offer anything to any child who is not accompanied by an adult and then only when you have first asked the adult.

This is a very sad situation which has escalated over the last few years but it’s a reality which we have to be aware of.

Always remember that, while you will get a lot of enjoyment from this type of activity, you are actually working for pay – you are not basically there for fun and you’re not always going to be allowed to join in the fun to the same extent as the paying customers or guests. Your focus should always be to increase the enjoyment which your audiences get from the occasion. Then, you can be confident that they, and the person who booked you, will want your show for future events.

Interaction

The most important factor with any show is the interaction with the audience. That can involve no more than responding to the audience during the show (something which they haven’t figured out how to do from a television set *yet!*) or you may let the audience meet the characters either before or after the show.

For more contact with your audiences (who can be a great source of future bookings), you could;

- use a portable stage and take the show to various parts of the venue,
- take a couple of the puppets outside the booth and talk with the children as the audience gathers for your next show or just after a show has finished (that’s probably the best time for photographs for families and any media who may be covering the event – try to get your sign in some of the photos without making it obvious.)
- put yourself, or a helper, in a costume like that of the main character in your show and wander around large venues, promoting the times of your shows.

Clients

They are the people who will pay for your performances, give you most of the problems and, hopefully, spread complimentary words about you, your shows and your methods to their friends and colleagues.

Always treat them with respect and make sure that you both understand exactly;

- the name and type of organization booking you
- what sort of show(s) that you will provide,
- what time you will arrive at the venue,
- the name and mobile phone of the member of the committee or organization who will meet you
- When and how much you will be paid and
- what form the payment will be in – check, cash, other.
- what paperwork the organization want from you – receipt, of course, but some will want an invoice (maybe in duplicate).
- How many shows you must do and approximate length of each show
- What arrangements are in place if the weather is bad or the venue is not available
- Approximate number of people attending
- If media (newspapers, television) are likely to be present
- That your name and type of show will be specific in any/all advertising – “Smith’s Puppet Show”, not just a useless, anonymous “children’s entertainment”

Always follow up with a hand-written thank you note after each show that you do. Then, follow up with a note a few weeks before the same date the following year.

Other People Working at the Event

Even if you operate as a solo entertainer, your success will depend in large part on the success you have in interacting with all of the other people who work at the venues where you perform.

I’m not just talking about the person or organization which books you and pays your fee and the people who you perform for.

You need to look at the whole event as being one where you are part of a team which includes everyone who works in any capacity at the event. The better the overall impression that people have of the event and your participation in it, the more likely that they will want to book you again or come to other events where you are performing.

People, such as those who work behind catering tables, seem to be almost invisible to the guests at an event, almost non-people. You will also be treated the same way by many guests and some organizers so I always thank the people when I get my food or drink. Anyway, it’s the right thing to do.

Try always to be completely self-sufficient and not needing special treatment or favors from other people who have their own responsibilities at the event.

Keep clear of people who are working when they are busy. That includes times when they are not actually performing or serving customers – you’ll realize that they, like you, have plenty of other tasks and rarely any real spare time at an event. After a few events, you’ll understand when people have the time and want to talk with you.

Don’t ever pass on any gossip or any other information which comes your way.

If you can help someone who has a problem, do so without thought of payback – never mention it in the future.

That's right, it's all common sense – but there's very little of that around.

Remember that you are a walking advertisement for your show even when you are not performing.

Business Matters

Show Business has two sections which are equally important. Without a great **show**, you won't be able to get the paid bookings which pay for your bread and jam (and cream).

But, equally important, you must do everything which all people in other **businesses** do. Proper book-keeping (especially tax records), customer relations, promotion and constant improvement of your shows are all equally important factors in your journey to success.

Insurance

You must have insurance for your equipment and also Third Party – Public Liability for possible injury to other people (audience and passers-by) and their possessions.

It will probably cost you much more than you expect and you won't know whether it's worth the money unless you have to claim. There are more traps with insurance policies and the people who sell them than you will find in the average used car purchase.

But you cannot get around the necessity of having a multi-million dollar cover.

All venues must have their own comprehensive insurance cover but most venues, for their own protection and to minimize their own costs, will not let you set up without first sighting your own current insurance certificate or cover note.

When you have been working in this area for a while and become known, you should ask other performers, venue operators and people operating other attractions or displays for recommendations and, if you know them fairly well, their experiences with insurers. Do not take offense if they are too busy or otherwise unwilling to pass on their knowledge. Also, do your own due diligence checking about all recommendations which you get.

Try to find insurance companies and agents which have experience in insuring performers and demonstrators. Some performers put their insurance with companies in other states or even other countries because those companies have related experience or just because their premiums are lower, but I would not be comfortable in dealing with an

insurer that does not have a representative in my area who can pay any claim which I might submit in a reasonable time.

Even if an agent or company say that they have some knowledge of the area, it is entirely your responsibility to make full disclosure of every relevant detail about your business, firstly in the original query you submit to the potential insurer but - most importantly – in the correspondence with the company whose policy you accept.

If you submit a claim but the company finds any information which they say is relevant and which you did not tell them up-front, they may refuse any claim which you make. This level of disclosure is a legal requirement in Australia and probably there are similar requirements in your country as well (the insurance companies have pretty good connections with the legal profession and legislators.)

When I did my most recent survey before renewing my policies, there was one change, common to all the policies I looked at, which I had not seen before. Performers who offer any sort of workshop, even if that just involved a couple of minutes showing your audience, for instance, how to operate a puppet, had to declare this activity and inevitably this required payment of higher premiums than if they just did their normal puppet or other shows.

When you have a policy which you think may be the best which you can get, make sure you find a place where you are not likely to be disturbed, then take the time to read every word of the policy – **twice!** If there is any material which you do not understand, do not assume anything. You must ensure that everything is understood and not able to be interpreted in more than one way. Get any clarification in writing and signed. It must be seen to be part of the detail of the policy.

Tell your potential insurer about everything which you do as part of your performances. Anything you don't mention might be used if they want to refuse any claim which you make.

First Aid Kit

Don't go to any show without this!

This kit is to give first aid to your puppets, your stage and amplification equipment. It can also prevent serious damage to your finances – if you cannot perform because some small, but important, part of your gear is damaged, you probably won't get your full fee!

Adapt to your own set-up, but don't leave out *any* of these items without careful thought.

Extra swazzle and/or kazoo

Velcro™ or other hook-and-loop fabric tape.

Assorted adhesive tapes; heavy duty double-sided tape, gaffer (electrician's) tape and wide white tape on which you can write quick signs (Back in 10 Minutes! etc).

Marking pens – black, white and red as a minimum to use for signs and masking small scratches on the equipment and puppets (don't forget to make a note of the damage and do a proper fix as soon as possible after you unpack).

Light colored cardboard for making disposable, instant signs. Dispose of them in your garbage bag which you take away with you. You'd be surprised how many bookers and committee members notice small touches like this but, remember, that they'd probably have to clean up your rubbish themselves if you didn't take care of it.

Strong thread (preferably waxed boot-repair linen thread), needles, thimbles and, if you sew like I do, adhesive plasters for any wounds you inflict on yourself.

Needles – I keep them in a small tin with a strong, square magnet. The little plastic boxes with a movable slot for dispensing the needles tend to break in this sort of environment. If that happens, put all the needles on a wide strip of masking tape and put it away. Make sure you don't leave any needles or broken bits of plastic at the venue.

Adhesive gum (such as Blu-tak™)

Torch and a means of suspending it to light the inside of your stage while you're fixing something.

Fresh, spare batteries for each piece of equipment – amplifier, microphone, mobile phone and flashlight.

Fast drying glues for fabric and wood.

Hand cleaner – wipes or liquid.

Paper towels and tissues.

Clean waste cloths or cheap towels for drying puppets and stage after rain

Clean drop cloths for spreading on ground or floor of venue for children to sit on.

Strong plastic garbage bags for rubbish – you never leave anything behind but smiles!
You can also put your drop cloths in these so no water or discarded sweets contact your gear or your car during the trip home.

Electrician's plastic ties.

Cutter with snap-off blades – get a strong, reliable one, not just some cheap one.

Scissors, assorted sizes – including nail scissors for cutting in confined spaces.

Safety pins, assorted sizes - try to get some black ones as well as the shiny silver ones.

Rope and elastic tie-downs (use these with care – they can snap back and cause injuries if not secured carefully).

Roll of flexible wire and wire-cutting pliers for securing anything which someone might be tempted to 'borrow'.

Rubber-headed mallet for knocking the different sections of your aluminum booth together.

Large screwdriver with flat blade for prying the sections of metal tubing apart and for removing broken joiners from inside the ends of the tubing if you use joiners.

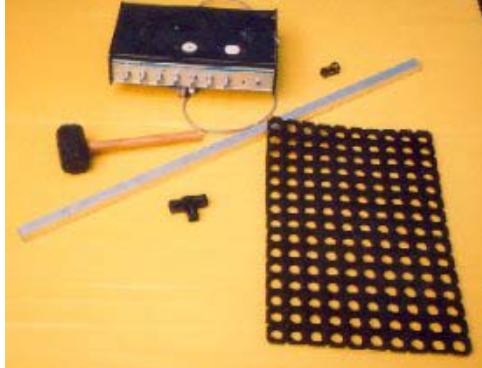

Hand drill and variety of bits or a portable electric drill with freshly charged and tested battery.

Small clock with the correct time. Fix it inside the top of this first aid box.

Adjustable straps used for securing suitcases. Put one around the box and have at least one spare inside the box.

Re-sealable plastic bags.

Pictures

	<p>This picture shows my old, durable TOA brand PA.</p> <p>Rubber mallet</p> <p>Spare aluminum tubing</p> <p>Springy rubber mat</p> <p>Black joiners for tubing</p>
<p>20 metre lead with certification sticker.</p>	

That's Not All, Folks.

This book has enough material to get you started.

I tried to give you a fairly comprehensive guide to setting up your own puppet show, everything which I think you must consider and what I think you must do to be a successful puppeteer and business-person.

If you feel that you need more information about any part of this, then [please contact me](mailto:puppets@ezymagic.com) puppets@ezymagic.com. I'll add more information and answers to readers' questions to the site.

If you use the material, then your questions will get priority treatment and I'll be doubly grateful if you let me know how it works out for you.

Remember that I'm not a puppetry expert – I learned everything 'on the job' and from books and then I had to unlearn a lot of what I read.

Everything in this book is based on my experience. Let me know if you want to read more about it.

Thanks for purchasing this book.

If you like it, please tell your friends and ask the eBookwholesaler Member that sold my book to you about my Magic and other books.

John Williams

<http://www.ezymagic.com/puppets/>

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