



## Teacher Guide

# HUA HUA ZHANG EAST MEETS WEST

### ABOUT THE PROGRAM

With the help of her amazing puppets, master puppeteer Hua Hua Zhang shares stories of China and America, and her puppets seem to come alive! *East Meets West* is a collection of wonderful vignettes guaranteed to delight audiences. Presented with string puppets, hand puppets, and rod puppets, the audience is sure to be enchanted and amazed. The short stories offer both Eastern and Western characters and ideas, blended together.

### Why was this show created?

From Hua Hua's experiences and studies as a puppet artist in both China and America, she has understood puppetry to be a multifaceted art form. Puppetry has endless potential for artistic expression for people of all ages and backgrounds. Both Eastern and Western puppetry have had a great influence on Hua Hua's current work, and *East Meets West* provides a vehicle to share with audience members the rich experiences she has had. The show is based on Hua Hua's journey of Eastern and Western studies of art forms.

It is Hua Hua's dream for *East Meets West* to broaden the audiences' perspectives, and open their heart, by sharing, appreciating, understanding, and embracing the many differences, and mostly the similarities, among Eastern and Western cultures so that we can live amongst each other in peace.

### LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Experience live puppet theater
- Learn the similarities and differences between Chinese and American cultures
- Understand the importance of both the artists and the audience in creating puppet theater



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### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS**

In China, figurines were used as burial objects as early as the 16th–11th century BC. Over time, these figurines evolved into puppets used for entertainment on festive occasions.

Chinese puppetry boasts a fine repertoire of styles and has entertained both the royal family and the public alike. Historic Chinese novels are usually adapted for puppet shows.

Having developed tremendously over the years, Chinese puppetry has combined artistic expressions with detailed handicrafts, traditional Chinese Opera movements and music, well-engineered mechanical puppet parts, and western technology to tell stories.

As all-time favorite toys of both children and adults, puppets come in many sizes, shapes, and varieties, and can be classified according to their structural characteristics. Some are manipulated by canes attached to a puppet's head, arms, legs, and hands. Some are string puppets. Some come with steel wires and there are also hand puppets.

A puppeteer requires a lot of practice to perfect the craft. Puppeteers must be performers, storytellers, technicians, and oftentimes visual artists. They create a reality on stage that requires a great deal of preparation in order for it to appear so effortless at the performance.



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### **What does the show look like?**

All of the puppets will be displayed on the stage. Hua Hua will be in the center. She will present each puppet and tell each puppet's story.

### **What style is presented in the show?**

Hua Hua Zhang studied classic rod puppet performance in China which included dancing, singing, speaking, acting, Chinese opera, and traditional stylized performance art. She has her own style which keeps the grace of Chinese traditional performance blended with the imagination of western puppetry. Hua Hua is a part of the show with each puppet. The performance uses the full space of the stage.

### **About the puppets**

Hua Hua Zhang designed and constructed all of the puppets in the show except the puppets from the Moon Dream vignette (it was made by Chinese master designer Liu Ji) and Magical Sticks (which is based on a design by puppeteer Bill Baird and Architect Buckminster Fuller). The puppets include marionettes (or string puppets), hand puppets, Chinese rod puppets, and Japanese Bunraku. Each puppet has its own character.

### **VOCABULARY WORDS**

Puppet  
Puppeteer  
String Puppet  
Rod Puppet

Water-Activated Puppet  
Human Puppet  
Hand Puppet  
Marionette



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### **EAST MEETS WEST VIGNETTES:**

**Fan Dance** (Chinese Folk Dance) is a traditional Chinese celebratory welcome. All Chinese people learn this dance and perform it at many different functions. At this moment, it is for your event.

**Zhu Ba Jie** (Marionette) He is a funny character who comes from the famous Chinese stories of Journey to the West. He is known as Pigsy.

**Mother's Love** (Hand puppet) This piece demonstrates the love of a mother for her child.

**Moon Dream** (Rod puppet) This story is about a traditional Chinese woman from several hundred years ago. She is from a middle-class family. She has been well-educated; she reads, writes, performs music, and has a good life. However, she is not free to leave her house. She is a traditional woman and must stay at home. This performance requires the audience to participate by using their imaginations as the woman leads them on a walk through her garden.

**The Witch** (Marionette) A scarf thinks it is a witch! Using simple, everyday materials, a great story can be told. This puppet is a captivating charmer that presents a unique twist at the end of the performance.



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**Pablo** (Based on the Japanese Bunraku puppet) Demonstrates that with perseverance, one can be successful in reaching a goal, even if the result may not be what is sought. This puppet was designed as though it were made by Pablo Picasso.

**Magical Sticks** (Marionette) Art comes in many different forms and shapes. This is a puppet made of strings and sticks that does not have a human or animal form. Designed by Master puppeteer Bill Baird and architect Buckminster Fuller, Magical Sticks is an exploration of the imagination. Anything can become a puppet.

**Chung Kai** (Marionette) Here is a small, shy Chinese boy. He is curious about Western people and, after he becomes comfortable, is happy to perform for them.

**Dance of Seventh Sesame Official** (Rod puppet) Seventh of Sesame Official is a well-known Chinese funny character. He is always happy. This happy dance is to celebrate the Chinese New Year!



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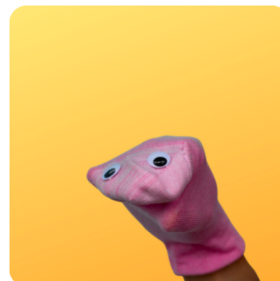
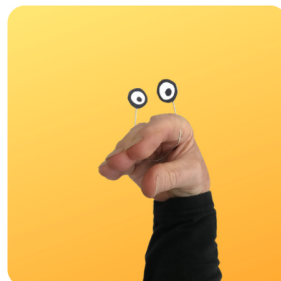
# HUA HUA ZHANG EAST MEETS WEST

### BEFORE THE PROGRAM

**MAKE A PUPPET:** There are lots of ways for students to make a simple puppet with everyday objects in class or at home!

- Students can use one hand to make a simple puppet that can open and close its mouth, swivel its head and move about, using their arm.
  - Students can add eyes by drawing directly on their knuckles
- Students can draw eyes on paper, cut them out, and attach them to paperclip stalks:
  1. Draw two eyes on paper and cut them out.
  2. Open a large paperclip so it is shaped like a U.
  3. Fit it to your middle fingers by squeezing it to a size that won't fall off.
  4. Tape eyes to the ends of the stalks.
- Students can make a simple sock puppet by bringing in an extra sock from home and taping/drawing on eyes, or simply just use the sock as it is.
- Students can make eyes and tape them to any object, like a ruler or water bottle!
- Students can also bring in a pre-made or -purchased puppet from home.

***THIS PROGRAM WILL SHOW THAT ANYTHING CAN BE A PUPPET!***





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### WARM-UP ACTIVITY FOR STUDENTS:

Throughout the program, you will see the puppets EXPRESS their feelings and reactions while they INTERACT with Hua Hua Zhang.

Many of her puppets do not speak and only communicate through movement. Ask your students:

- Using your puppet, how would you express: Being scared? Being curious? Being confused? Being sleepy? Being joyful?
- If your puppet DID use a voice, what would it sound like?

### DURING THE PROGRAM

Students: Watch the program with your puppet. Allow your puppet to express—*using only movement not sound!*—its reactions to the performance.

### AFTER THE PROGRAM

1. Have students bring their handmade puppets, created prior to the performance, to class. Discuss with the students how Hua Hua made her puppet characters come to life.
  - a. How can you borrow some of her techniques to add expressions and action with your puppet?
2. Believe in the students' puppets. Assume they are alive and treat them with respect to help the children think and create. Ask the puppets questions to help new puppeteers figure out what to do with the creatures on their hands.



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3. Interview the puppets in a curious, interested, and non-judgmental way. You might begin by asking the character how it feels. You might ask:
  - a. "Do you have a name yet?" rather than, "What's your name?"
  
4. Ask students to reflect on the program.
  - a. What did they like most and why?
  - b. Were there parts where they wish they knew more?
  - c. How would the performance change if you couldn't see Ms. Zhang?Ask their puppets to answer as well. Are the answers the same?
  
5. Ask questions of each puppet such as what it likes to eat, where it lives, and who its friends are. You can ask:
  - a. "Who is your friend back there?"— meaning the puppeteer. This reminds the uncertain puppeteer that together you are making an imaginary character.
  
6. Expand the conversation. Ask students to reflect on some of the themes in the performances (love from a caregiver, determination, etc.) or connect the discussion to a separate book or topic you are learning about in class. Allow students to respond as their puppets.





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### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Hua Hua Zhang was born in Beijing, China where she studied as a performer in the classical art of Chinese puppetry. She has received many awards for her performance. In 1996, Hua Hua came to the United States and earned a Master's of Fine Arts degree in the Puppet Arts program of the School of Fine Arts at the University of Connecticut (UConn) in 2000. She founded her company, **Visual Expressions**, in 2002. It is committed to using Asian and Western puppet art to explore universal themes and ideas through visual cross-cultural expression using theatrical performances and educational programs.

Hua Hua is an educator. She, as a guest artist, teaches at UConn, Eugene O'Neill National Puppet Conference, and Philadelphia Museum of Art. She is on the roster of teaching artists in Young Audiences Art for Learning and Pennsylvania Council in Art Education. She received the award of ***Distinguished Service*** from NJ Governor's Awards in Arts Education in 2019.

### ARTIST RESOURCES

Hua Hua Zhang's website:

<http://www.visualexpressions.org>