

# Study Guide For Teachers

## Hua Hua Zhang in East Meets West

presented by

Young Audiences

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### 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! Hua Hua is trained as a performer in the ancient art of Chinese puppetry, and has received numerous awards for excellence in performance and direction. She is an international artist, and has made appearances in the Jim Henson International Festival of Puppet Arts.

### LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

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

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

In China, figurines were used as burial objects as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> 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 common 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.

## **BEFORE THE PROGRAM**

1. Have each student bring to class a puppet that they have at home. Discuss with students what type of puppet each is, and how it functions. How does it move? What physical characteristics of the puppet give it personality and why? If one wants the puppet to communicate, how would one make it happen?
2. Get the visual arts teacher involved! Have students make their own puppets. There are a number of simple ways to make a variety of types of puppets, i.e., hand puppets, shadow puppets, etc. Have students review their answers to the above questions and think about what they want their puppet to represent and how they will make that happen.

## **VOCABULARY WORDS**

Puppet

Puppeteer

String Puppet

Rod Puppet

Water-Activated Puppet

Human Puppet

Glove Puppet

Wire Puppet

Marionette

## **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.
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.
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, "Do you have a name yet?" rather than, "What's your name?"
4. Ask questions of each puppet such as what it likes to eat, where it lives, and who its friends are. You can ask, "Who is your friend back there?"— meaning the puppeteer. This reminds the uncertain puppeteer that together you are making an imaginary character.

## **ARTIST INFORMATION**

Hua Hua Zhang graduated from the Beijing Performing Arts Academy where she was trained as a performer in the ancient art of Chinese puppetry. From 1974 to 1995 she toured nationally and internationally with the China Puppet Arts Troupe of Beijing. She received many awards for excellence in performance and direction. Hua Hua earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in Puppetry from the University of Connecticut's School of Fine Arts, She also received the distinguished University of Connecticut Fine Arts Award for Excellence. Hua Hua Zhang has appeared in several New York Theaters, as well as two appearances in the Jim Henson International Festival of Puppet Arts in New York City. Ms. Zhang designed, constructed and performed puppets for a national U.S. television program, *Between the Lions*.

## **RESOURCES**

Hua Hua Zhang's website:  
<http://www.huahuaz.com/index.htm>

For a listing of over 225 puppet and puppet related books and other materials contact The Puppetry Store, a service of Puppeteers of America -  
<http://www.puppeteers.org/puppstore.html>