



Young
Audiences
Arts for
Learning

Oregon & SW Washington

PROGRAM GUIDE

This information is intended to prepare teachers and students for a Young Audiences performance.

OREGON SHADOW THEATRE

Thumbelina

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

In this adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale **Thumbelina**, the miniature girl born from a flower journeys through a series of natural habitats to her final home in the land of the flower fairies. Thumbelina has adventures throughout the seasons of the year with frogs in the frog pond, flying beetles in a tree, a swallow in the woods, a mouse in the field and a mole in his underground home. The visual design of this colorful shadow play is drawn from Art Nouveau, the decorative art movement of the late 1800s which is characterized by its flowing organic lines and its nature themes. Art Nouveau had resurgence in the 1960s, and the art and music of the Rock and Roll era inspired much of both the visual design and the score for this production. While the plot of the play follows Andersen's story, the script supports a comic subtext linking the music of the 1960's and '70s to Thumbelina's desire to find her home in a land of flowers. The live music is performed on electric guitar, hammered dulcimer, and an assortment of percussion and sound effects devices.

ABOUT HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

Hans Christian Andersen was born April 2, 1805 in Odense, Denmark. His parents were a poor shoemaker and a washerwoman. At the age of 14 he went to seek his fortune in Copenhagen. He became a successful writer best known for his 168 fairy tales. His fairy tales contain wisdom and whimsy. Andersen invested stories of folk and legendary origin with moral and symbolic significance. He could convey a fine perception of life's ironies while describing the fate of a tin soldier or a drab duckling. Andersen cutout numerous beautiful and intricate designs from paper to illustrate his tales.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Oregon Shadow Theatre is a Portland, Oregon based company specializing in the ancient art of shadow puppetry. Their award-winning shadow plays have toured the United States and Canada, including performances at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and at theatres, schools and festivals from coast to coast. **Deb Chase** has been specializing in the magic of shadow puppetry for twenty-five years. She has designed shadow puppets for many theater companies, and has taught shadow puppetry for years as an artist in residence at schools and theatres. **Mick Doherty** is an accomplished performing and studio musician. Specializing in traditional music, he has produced numerous album projects, composed music for theater, video and film productions, and has toured internationally as a solo performer and ensemble member. The Oregon Shadow Theatre's "Thumbelina" received the Citation of Excellence in Puppetry from Unima-USA (the American puppetry award created by the late Jim Henson).

©2008-2009

Young Audiences 1220 SW Morrison, Suite 900 Portland, OR 97205-2228 www.ya-or.org
Phone (503) 225-5900 (360) 693-1829 FAX (503) 225-0953 youngaudiences@ya-or.org

ABOUT THE ART FORM

Shadow puppetry is considered the oldest form of puppetry in the world. It began thousands of years ago in China and India, and is a living folk art in China and Southeast Asia -- most notably the islands of Indonesia. In China the shadow plays are often folk-tales and legends of the past, many based on Chinese opera themes. In Indonesia the plays are taken from two religious epics featuring struggles between good and evil. Turkey and Greece also have a history of shadow puppetry, where plays are based on working class life and contain much physical comedy and magic. In Western Europe shadow puppetry enjoyed popularity during the 1800s when the art of cutting silhouettes out of paper was fashionable.

Traditional shadow puppets are flat and made of leather. Areas within the puppet are punched out with sharp knives. These areas suggest facial features and help define clothing. The puppets are made from separate pieces and joined together with wire or string. They are controlled by long rods and moved behind a white translucent screen made from paper or cloth. A lamp on the puppeteer's side of the stage provides the light. The audience on the other side sees the moving shadows. Cutout areas within the figures allow light to shine through. Today shadow puppets may be made from a variety of materials including paper, wire, colored plastic and found objects such as dried plants, glass jewels, feathers and even kitchen utensils. Contemporary shadow theatre might employ a variety of specialized lighting effects including various theatrical lighting instruments, overhead projectors, reflected light, hand held lights and projected film.

VOCABULARY

SHADOW PUPPET VOCABULARY:

Opaque- A material that will not let light rays shine through

Rods- Long sticks of wood, stiff wire or straws that are used to support shadow puppets and control moving parts

Shadow- A darkened area formed by an object placed in the path of light

Silhouette- The outline of an object or its profile, filled in with black.

Translucent- a material such as white typing paper that will let some of the light rays shine through.

Transparent- A material such as a window or a clear transparency that lets most or all the visible light rays through.

VOCABULARY RELATED TO THUMBELINA:

Amphibian- An animal that passes through a "tadpole" stage where they live under water, breathing through gills, and as they age develop lungs and breathe air; frogs, newts, salamanders, among others

Aquatic- Living in water

Carnivore- An animal that eats meat

Community- A group of organisms that live together in the same place

D.J.- Abbreviation of Disc Jockey- the person who plays the music on a radio program

Dung beetle- An insect that feeds upon or lays eggs in dung (manure)

Ecology- The study of plants and animals at home in their natural environment

Fairy- An imaginary being of folklore usually having diminutive human form.

Food chain- A hierarchical arrangement of organisms in an ecological community such that each uses the next usually lower member as a food source.

Habitat- An organism's environment; the place where it naturally lives

Herbalist- A collector/grower of medicinal plants

Herbivore- A plant eater

Hibernate- To spend the winter in close quarters, in a resting state

Instinct- A tendency to actions which lead to a goal that is natural to the species, such as a bird's need to migrate south for winter

Migration- To pass periodically from one region or climate to another for feeding or breeding

Nectar- A sweet plant secretion that is the raw material of honey

Nocturnal- Active at night

Omnivore- A creature that eats both animal and vegetable foods.

Pollinate- To transfer pollen from one plant to another

Predator- A hunting animal

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES/DISCUSSION

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE:

1. Read Hans Christian Andersen's *Thumbelina*
2. Read the vocabulary list.
3. Learn about shadows and shadow puppetry.

An exercise: What is a shadow? Put different objects behind a backlit white translucent screen or put objects on an overhead projector. Try black, white, clear, and colored construction paper. Does the light shine through? Can you see the color? Try wax paper, clear and colored transparencies. What is the difference between something that is transparent, translucent and opaque? Try 3 dimensional objects such as scissors or a comb. What happens when you rotate the object? Is it still recognizable? What happens to the paper or other objects when you take it back from the screen towards the light? Is the shadow image clear and in focus?

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE:

1. Identify which characters in the play are carnivores, herbivores, omnivores.
2. Discuss why it was easier for Thumbelina to live outside in the summer time than the winter. What did the squirrel do to prepare for the winter? How did Rainbow (the swallow) plan to live through the winter?
3. Think about why it would be hard for Thumbelina to live in a frog pond? What makes a frog better suited to live in a pond? Why would it be hard for her to live underground? What makes a mole better suited to live underground?
4. Discuss the differences between Hans Christian Andersen's *Thumbelina* and the Oregon Shadow Theatre's version of the story.
5. Other questions to think about: What parts of the story are make believe? What parts are based on real events in nature? How did the use of sound effects affect the performance? What would it be like to be really small?
6. Review the "behind the scenes" information shared in the demonstration that took place after the performance.
7. Be a critic! Have the students express their thoughts and feelings about the performance and act as critics by sending letters to Oregon Shadow Theatre care of Young Audiences.