

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS THE GUIDE BOOK



Theatre
Works
SILICON VALLEY

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About TheatreWorks Silicon Valley

Founded in 1970, TheatreWorks has grown from a truly original Silicon Valley start-up to become the peninsula's leading professional nonprofit theatre company.

Now in our 52nd season, TheatreWorks presents a wide variety of contemporary plays and musicals, as well as revitalizing great works of the past. We are champions of new work, offering artists support and a creative home as they develop exciting new stories for the American theatre. Offstage, arts education programs in our schools and arts engagement programs in our neighborhoods uplift our audiences and strengthen community bonds.

Whether onstage or off, in everything that we do, TheatreWorks seeks to celebrate the human spirit and the wonderful diversity of our Silicon Valley community.

For more information,
visit theatreworks.org

How to use this guide? It's easy. It's link-friendly!

TOC Click on Table of Contents title & you'll go right to that page!

● BLUE text links are active to external resources.

≡ The arrow (middle bottom of page) will take you to the TOC.

SYNOPSIS

SPOILER ALERT! Please only read on if you want to know more about the play before seeing it.

On the twenty-first day of the month of September, in an early year of a decade not too long before our own, the human race suddenly encountered a deadly threat to its very existence. And this terrifying enemy surfaced—as such enemies often do—in the seemingly most innocent and unlikely of places...

These prophetic words are spoken at the top of the show, not by a character onstage, but an all-knowing, disembodied voice. If the title wasn't a dead giveaway, things are about to get creepy. The tension is broken by the sudden appearance of three young women, a musical trio who continue to pop up onstage both as narrators and participants throughout the story. We meet the cast of characters: Mushnik, the proprietor of a Skid Row floral shop way past its prime; Seymour, the young man he took in and exploited for cheap labor; and Audrey, the beautiful, battered young woman who works with them at the shop.

After an entire day without customers, Mushnik is on the brink of closing the store forever when Seymour works up the courage to show off his “strange and exotic” new plant, which he's named after the woman he secretly loves. Just moments after being put in the front window, customers begin flocking to see “Audrey II.”

The mysterious plant has saved them all from ruin. Not only is the shop thriving, Seymour has become a celebrity overnight. Audrey's boyfriend, a controlling and sadistic dentist named Orin, suggests that Seymour take his plant and leave Skid Row behind forever. Overhearing this, Mushnik's disdain for Seymour suddenly evaporates into paternal affection as he proposes to adopt his longtime employee.

What no one else knows, though, is that the plant has an alarming diet: Audrey II craves blood. Seymour willingly offers drops of his own, but as Audrey II grows bigger and bigger, so does its appetite. One day, when no one else is around, Audrey II begins to speak. The plant promises to make all of Seymour's dreams come true—provided he keeps the plant well-fed. Seymour initially balks at the idea but Audrey II is very convincing, and surely the world would be a better place without an abuser like Orin in it...

Seymour sets out to kill Orin, but finds that when the moment comes, he doesn't have it in him. In a strange twist of fate, though, Orin asphyxiates on laughing gas, leaving behind a fresh corpse for Audrey II.

Seymour faces one dilemma after another as he struggles to keep the plant happy and evade suspicion. He now has everything he's ever wanted, including the girl of his dreams. By the time Seymour finally stands up to the plant, it turns out Audrey II no longer needs him.

Spoiler alert: it's not a happy ending.

What is the name of the owner of the flower shop?

- E. Mr. Ashman
- F. Mr. Mushnik
- G. Ms. Oz
- H. Mr. Menken

What is the profession of Audrey's boyfriend?

- C. Florist
- D. Influencer
- E. Dentist
- F. Baker

Who does Audrey II eat first?

- E. Orin
- F. Seymour
- G. Audrey
- H. Mushnik

What magazine is Seymour supposed to be interviewed for?

- A. *Time Magazine*
- B. *People Magazine*
- C. *The New Yorker*
- D. *LIFE Magazine*

What is the name of the organization that Patrick Martin belongs to?

- M. World Botanical Enterprises
- N. Guinness Book of World Records
- O. Skid Row Plant Society
- P. TheatreWorks Silicon Valley

What is Seymour's final fate?

- D. He defeats the creature
- E. He is eaten
- F. He runs away
- G. He goes on a rampage



BONUS:

What will you always have to do with your ambition when you'll do anything to get what you want?

What does Audrey II want more than anything?
(use the letters corresponding to your answers above)

_____ !!!!!



Phil Wong with puppet by Matthew McAvene Creations / Photo Kevin Berre

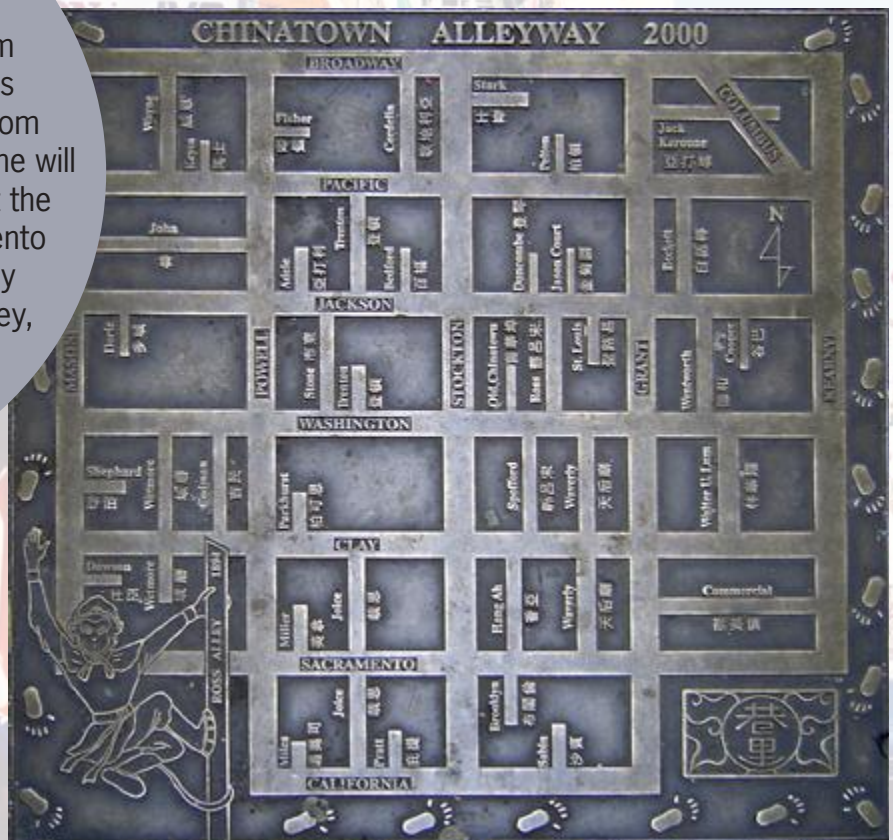
A VISITOR'S GUIDE: SAN FRANCISCO CHINATOWN

TheatreWorks' production of *Little Shop of Horrors* is set in San Francisco's historic Chinatown. This vibrant and beautiful area is the largest Chinatown outside of Asia and the oldest Chinatown in North America. Plan your visit!



Chinatown is a group of people bound geographically, culturally, linguistically, and economically during hostile times. Chinatown has flourished to become a vibrant, courageous and proud community for Chinese Americans and greater San Francisco. It is referred to as *Dai Fao* (Big City) in Chinese.

There are many Alleys in Chinatown that offer fun walking paths for your visit, like Hang Ah Alley. Enter from the Clay Street side and this alley's name will be Hang Ah Alley. Enter from Sacramento Street and this alley's name will be Pagoda Alley. It is best to start at the south end of the alley from Sacramento Street and walk north towards Clay Street. When you walk down the alley, you will see alternating English and Chinese text on the ground.

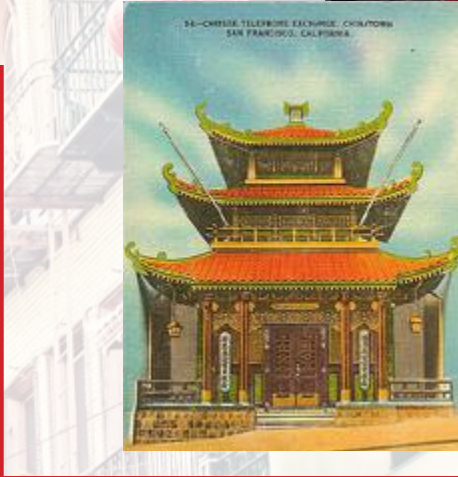


There are over 100 restaurants, cafes, and food courts in Chinatown. Try bao, traditional Chinese buns, traditional Chinese pastries and baked goods, and a wide variety of Chinese foods and experiences ranging from classic and traditional to new and experimental.

There is a strong tradition of holistic medicine in Chinese culture. Visit Herbal Shops in Chinatown to purchase ingredients for Chinese medicine.



Check out the Bank of Canton, which used to be the Chinese Telephone Exchange. In 1891, the first public telephone pay station was installed in Chinatown. In 1894, a small switchboard was set up to serve subscribers to the telephone system.

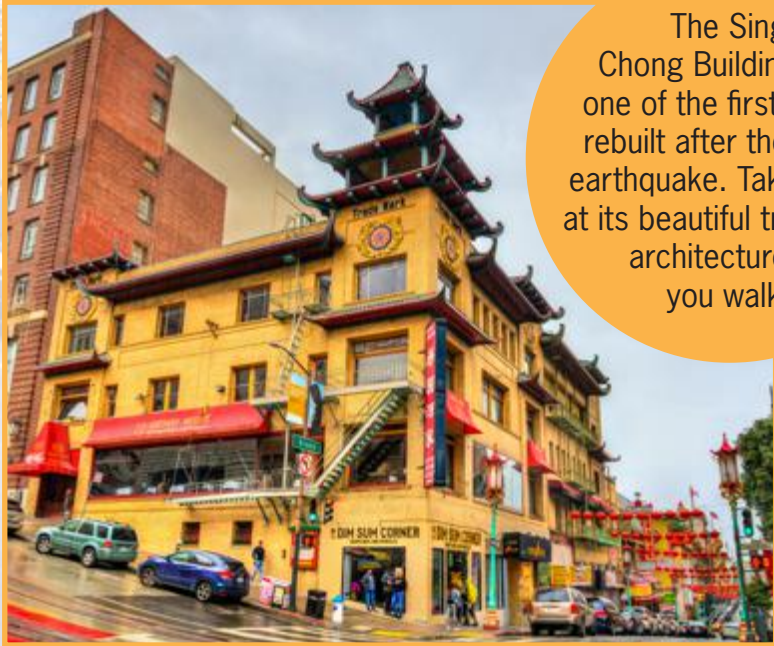


The Chinese Historical Society of America preserves and illuminates the History of the Chinese in America through exhibitions, public programs, and educational experiences.

The Chinese Cultural Center of San Francisco tells the stories of the Chinese and Asian American experience through activities, exhibits, and festivals.



The Sing Chong Building was one of the first places rebuilt after the 1906 earthquake. Take a look at its beautiful traditional architecture as you walk.



TIMELINE

1848

The first Chinese immigrants— two men and one woman— arrived in San Francisco on the American brig, Eagle. The Chinese arriving in San Francisco came primarily from the Taishan and Zhongshan regions as well as Guangdong province of mainland China. Many did so at the height of the California Gold Rush, and worked in the mines scattered throughout the northern part of the state.



1859

“The Chinese School” was created. Chinese children were not permitted into any other public schools in San Francisco.

Most of the immigrants coming from China were desperate to work—not only to survive but to send money to their families back home. Some also had to repay loans from Chinese-American merchants who had sponsored their passage to America.



1853

Old St. Mary's Church was erected.

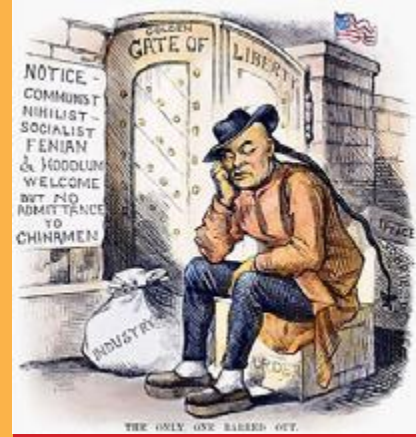
Presbyterian Church in Chinatown had its first meeting, establishing the first Asian church in North America.



1870

Anti-Chinese ordinances were passed in San Francisco, curtailing the housing and employment options open to them.

Queues were banned.



1882

The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act banned immigration of Chinese laborers to the United States and prohibited Chinese immigrants from becoming naturalized citizens.



1885

White miners hoping to unionize blamed their Chinese counterparts, who had been brought to the mines as strikebreakers. On September 2nd of that year, 150 of the white miners attacked a group of Chinese laborers, killing at least 28, wounding 15 or more, and driving countless others out of town.

1880

The US and China signed a treaty giving the US the right to limit but “not absolutely prohibit” Chinese immigration. California's Civil Code passed anti-miscegenation law.

1906

The earthquake and fires that broke out across the city in its aftermath did more harm to the Chinese community than any legislative action could, destroying thousands of homes and businesses in Chinatown. Many Chinese-Americans were among the dead.



As the Chinese Exclusion Act was still on the books, Chinese immigrants arriving in San Francisco in the years after the earthquake had to be processed at the immigration center at Angel Island. Many immigrants arriving at the center—now a state park in San Francisco Bay—were detained in harsh conditions for weeks, months, or even years before being approved for or denied entry, usually based on their answers to questions about their identities and their reasons for coming to the United States.

1940

The Angel Island immigration station was closed in 1940 after it was destroyed by fire. The Chinese Exclusion Act was finally overturned in 1943, paving the way for a new generation of arrivals from Asia.



1965

The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 further loosened restrictions on immigration and fostered yet another wave of immigration that followed the closure of Ellis Island in 1954.



1977

The Chinatown Resource Center and the Chinese Community Housing Corporation launched a comprehensive improvement program striving to find solutions for land use changes.



2011

Mayor Edwin Lee became the first Chinese American mayor elected in San Francisco's history.

2020 and beyond

"If you question the merchants of Chinatown, which amounts to about 24 blocks, many old-timers say an era has ended. Some blame the pandemic and cite rising xenophobia. Some blame Amazon for undermining their bricks-and-mortar livelihoods. Some blame the rising tourist appetite for experiences and Instagram fodder instead of conventional merchandise."

- LA Times, 2022

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

What are our responsibilities in the Bay Area and as visitors to Chinatown?

How can we support and encourage this vibrant place of culture while helping it maintain its identity?



CAMP IN POP CULTURE

Camp is an aesthetic sensibility that regards something as appealing or humorous because of its deliberate ridiculousness, cheesyness, and cringe qualities.

Little Shop of Horrors falls squarely in the camp genre because of its outlandish story, its sometimes overly melodramatic music, and...well the idea of a giant, singing, flesh-eating plant.

The term “camp” originated long ago but the origin of the way we see camp now almost certainly stems from the drag and swish community of the 1960s. Camp culture and fashion is strongly rooted in queer culture. Queer and trans people of color are the driving forces of the persistence of camp in our society. It is an aesthetic that is over-the-top and challenges the norms of what is considered appropriate.

ICONS OF CAMP

RuPaul

One of the most famous Drag Queens in history, RuPaul has been a powerhouse in the queer community as a performer, celebrity and host of the show *RuPaul’s Drag Race*.

“Most people don’t understand it,” he said, noting that the concept is abstract. “You have to be able to see the façade of life—I’m going to get philosophical up in here—you have be able to see the absurdity of life from outside yourself. The idea of drag is camp because we’re saying, I’m not this body, I’m actually God in drag playing humanity. So when you are in that place then you can laugh at the absurdity.”

— *Fashion Week Daily*, 2019

Prince

Prince’s high-glam androgyny flew in the face of the hypermasculinity of other chart-topping Black artists. Taking cues from the blurring of gender boundaries inherent to ’70s disco, Prince turned androgyny, blackness, and sexuality into a mesmerizing, over-the-top camp performance, whether on stage or off.





John Waters

Waters' work is famous for employing and refining camp sensibilities, pushing the limits of taste and respectability to the edge. For decades, camp had been deployed by queer artists as a source of underground rebellion against mainstream society, but Waters totally reimagined the concept of camp for his own usage, and his unique brand of camp filmmaking is still unmatched.



Lady Gaga

An icon of the queer community, Lady Gaga has explored camp through her music, performances, and even her outfits. From her infamous meat dress to her 2019 Met Gala gown, she has explored every side of camp, saying on twitter, "Camp is a part of who we are. It's not something that we have to try to be."

CAMP IN MOVIES AND THEATRE



CAMPGROUND

Camp is a very difficult thing to define specifically—it's more of a feeling and an experience. What are your favorite examples of camp from social media? Think things that are ridiculous on purpose.

HORROR/COMEDY

Little Shop of Horrors explores both horror and comedy together. Sometimes we decide that we want to laugh and scream at the same time! But *Little Shop* isn't the only one doing this.

Check out the descriptions of other comedy/horror movies and musicals below, and then write your own horrifyingly funny premise!

Hocus Pocus

After moving to Salem, Massachusetts, teenager Max explores an abandoned house with his sister Dani and their new friend, Allison. After dismissing a story Allison tells as superstitious, Max accidentally frees a coven of evil witches who used to live in the house. Now, with the help of a magical cat, the kids must steal the witches' book of spells to stop them from becoming immortal.

An American Werewolf in London

Two friends are attacked by werewolves as they backpack through England. As one of the friends transforms, his victims turn into zombies.

Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street

Barber Sweeney Todd just got out of prison for crimes he did not commit. He returns to London vowing revenge on the man who put him there. When he meets a pie shop owner named Mrs. Lovett, the two decide to take revenge on the whole city...by baking Todd's barbershop clients into meat pies!

The Rocky Horror Show (musical) / ***The Rocky Horror Picture Show*** (film)

When an unsuspecting couple is trapped during a rainstorm, they take refuge in a creepy house. Little do they know the house is inhabited by an evil (and very fashionable) doctor: Dr. Frank N. Furter, who is eager to unveil his newest creation.

What We Do in the Shadows

In this mockumentary, three vampires live together, bicker together, and murder together. All of the most boring parts of being a vampire.

Reefer Madness

High school students are lured to their death and demise by a horrible drug.

What's your horror comedy masterpiece?





COUNTERCULTURE

The musical *Little Shop of Horrors* is loosely based on a 1960s black comedy of the same name. It was a movie that rose out of and celebrated the rejection of the social norms of the 1950s.

Counterculture is the rejection of mainstream or traditional culture by the youth of a generation. Coming out of World War II and in the midst of the Vietnam War, the counterculture of the '60s rejected war and segregation and embraced psychedelic rock, pop art, and spirituality.



Here are some counterculture movements in the United States.

HIPPIE MOVEMENT

From around 1967, young people started rejecting the “proper” culture of societal norms and wanted to live by a different philosophy including harmony with nature, communal living, and artistic experimentation, particularly in music.



CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and beyond began with a rejection of the status quo—that it was okay for white people and black people to be “separate but equal”.

FEMINISM

Rejecting the view that women were second class citizens, the feminism movement fights for things like women’s liberation, reproductive rights, safety against domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, women’s suffrage, and protection against sexual assault and abuse. The movement’s priorities have expanded since its beginning in the 1800s, and vary among nations and communities.

ENVIRONMENTALISM

In the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, several events illustrated the magnitude of environmental damage caused by humans. Following these and many other events, the environmentalism movement grew. Environmentalists advocate the just and sustainable management of resources and stewardship of the environment through changes in public policy and individual behavior. In its recognition of humanity as a participant in (not enemy of) ecosystems, the movement is centered on ecology, health, and human rights.

Counterculture movements can be big or small. What are 5 things about the status quo that you want to change or fix?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

How will you go about changing these things?



THE TEMPTATIONS



The Jackson 5

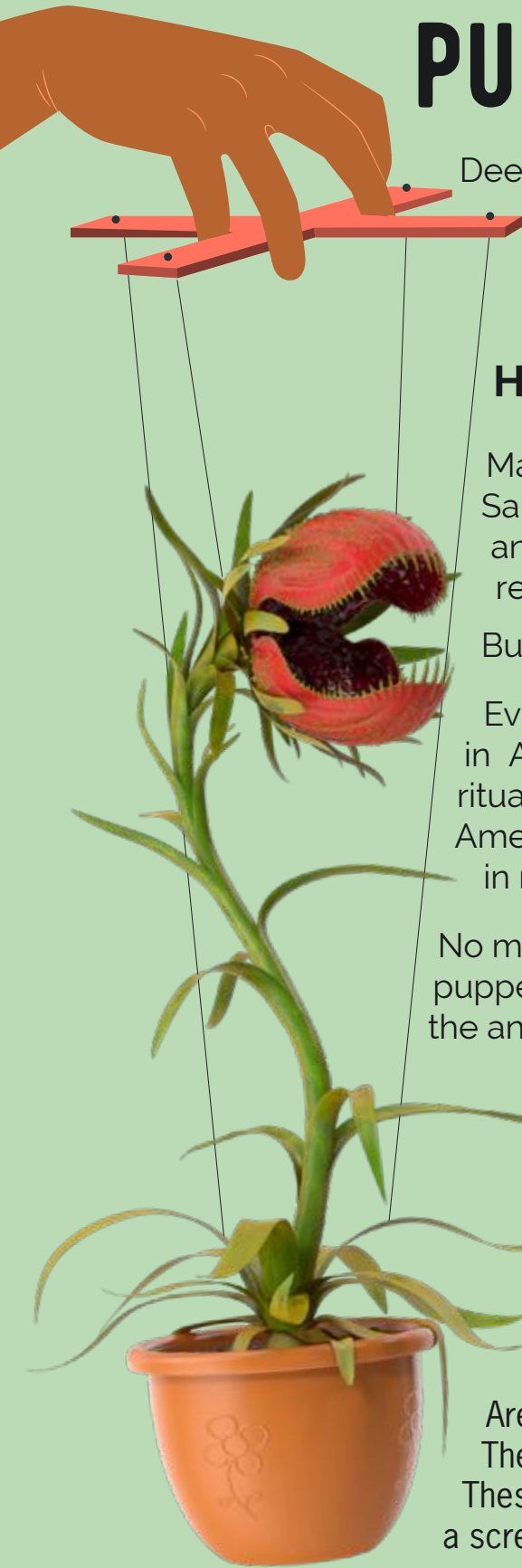


Boyz II Men

ERYKAH BADU



PUPPETRY



Deep inside the depths of Audrey II, a human performer inhabits the massive puppet to make the plant do all of the incredible things on stage. Puppets have been around for almost as long as performing has been.

How did we get here?

Many historians believed that puppetry began in India. Sanskrit words like *sutradhara* (he who holds the strings) and *sutraprota* (puppet) are the first written words that refer to puppetry in any literature in the world.

But...

Evidence of puppets in the ancient world can be found in Africa, from Maori tribes in New Zealand, and even ritualistic dolls from throughout Asia. Similarly, Native North Americans of the Aztec culture had figurines that were used in many ways.

No matter what, puppets or the use of dolls manipulated like puppets were almost certainly a part of religion and ritual in the ancient times.

Types of Puppets Today

Over the years there have been near infinite styles of puppetry. Here are a few you might not know about:

SHADOW PUPPETRY

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. These puppets are placed in front of lights to create an image on a screen or a surface of some sort.

BUNRAKU PUPPETRY

A form of Japanese puppet theatre. Most puppets are carved by specialists, and the bodies and costumes are constructed by the puppeteers themselves. Stories are often taken from kabuki theatre, and most puppets need at least 3 people to operate!

BODY PUPPETRY

Using the skills of mime and dance, body puppeteers create a variety of characters using their knees, feet, hands, elbows, and a handful of props.

Puppetry in Theatre

Audrey II isn't the only puppet that's been on Broadway! Many Broadway shows have featured puppets. Here are a few:

AVENUE Q

The musical described as an R-rated *Sesame Street* relies on the same style of puppeteering as the famous tv show: hand puppets with performer/puppeteers.

THE LION KING

Broadway's most famous and longest running puppet show! In addition to beautiful costumes and masks, performers don moving puppet elements to transform their bodies into gazelles, lions, giraffes, and many other creatures.

KING KONG

One of the most ambitious puppets ever put on stage. On Broadway, the King Kong puppet weighed 1 ton and was 2 stories tall! Puppets like this combine marionette techniques with very sophisticated hydraulics and automation.

Ready to make a puppet of your own?

A simple hand puppet can even be made from the pages of this book. Follow the instructions below (from KiwiCo)!

1. Start with one rectangular sheet of paper with the long side facing you.
2. Fold it into thirds by folding the bottom third up toward the middle and the top third down.
3. Now fold it in half by taking the left edge over to the right edge.
4. Almost done! Take the top flap and fold it in half, back toward the folded crease.
5. Flip it over and fold that edge back toward the folded crease.
6. Now your fingers fit perfectly into the openings of the puppet. It seems a lot more complicated than it really is. If you follow the steps once or twice to get the hang of it, you will be able to fold a puppet in seconds! Time to decorate.



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