

This guide is intended to provide a basis for those starting with puppets, and also for those who want to start a Puppet Group.

The guide is not intended to be definitive, and will be amended in the light of experience. Feedback on its effectiveness is to be encouraged.

The whole guide is intended for Christian Puppetry, and includes advice on using puppets for evangelistic work with both the younger element and also with adults who are involved with the young:

1. As a Training aid; for those who are new to puppetry, who will find valuable information to help them to come 'up to speed' with methods of performing.
2. For existing puppeteers; we hope it will provide a practical 'aide memoir' and an opportunity to extend their repertoire.
3. We also hope the information here will be appreciated by those with an organisation responsibility rather than 'hands on'. Ministers and Youth workers, Etc. can get a good idea of how such a ministry can be used. It should also clarify the specifics of how to ensure performances are intended to avoid mis-representation of the Christian Faith.
4. Lastly, I don't want to ignore those who want to use Puppetry for secular entertainment. We hope it will guide performers to perform well and to respect good ethical principles. This is of course something we do not personally indulge in.

Finally, as a Christian Group, we want our efforts to honour God with the best possible representation of His Message, in whatever form that is to be presented. We do hope you will enjoy reading it.

By Fred Mercer.

CONTENTS

<i>General Introduction.</i>	<i>Pg. 3</i>
1. Types of puppet Performing.	Pg. 4
2. Puppet Handling.	Pg. 5
3. Staging.	Pg. 8
4. Stage Props.	Pg. 10
5. Stage Management & Choreography.	Pg. 12
6. Sound & Lighting Effects.	Pg. 15
7. Scripts & Script Writing.	Pg. 17
8. Ventriloquism.	Pg. 22
9. Managing a Team.	Pg. 28
10. Potential Venues.	Pg. 31
11. Sources of information.	Pg. 32

General Introduction

What do folk think of when you speak of ‘Puppets’? In different parts of the World, the first ideas would be very different to ours in the UK. The Chinese for instance, may think of long dragons, operated by teams of performers!

Those of you who have been associated with Riverside Puppets either as performers, helpers or even just as audience viewers would probably first think of soft puppets, child sized, and worn on one arm of the performer, and with the puppets arms controlled by wire arm rods. You will of course have also seen non-human puppets; Winston the Wolf, the Whale (who swallowed Jonah), the dancing pigs (prodigal Son) and the ‘love smitten spider’ to mention a few.

Some of you will also have seen puppets performing on stage, behind curtains, being carried in the arms of the performer and elsewhere! Stage ‘props’ can make the performance more theatrical, and suitable back-grounds, either static or moving, can make the performance more visually attractive. The art has many variations and is really only limited by the imagination of the director.

The aim of this Manual is to present the various aspects of puppeteering in a logical manner that is helpful in learning or maintaining a sound knowledge of what goes behind a good performance. It should also provide a sound background for imaginative development of individual and group repertoire.

It is intended to update the material as required, to incorporate any new ideas and developments so please, if you see anything here that you believe can be improved, do mention it to me – I promise to consider all genuine suggestions seriously and to incorporate them wherever practical. I hope you enjoy, and also gain benefit, from reading it.

CHAPTER 1 – Types of Puppet Performing.

<u>Introduction.</u>	There are quite a number of different types of puppet, I shall therefore endeavour to list those types that I am personally aware of: -
<u>Forms not considered here for the present:</u>	We do not currently use some types of puppet, therefore, though they might be perfectly valid, they are not considered here for the present: Finger Puppets; (Too small for general viewing) Marionettes; (These need special staging for the most part to be effective. They also require special operating techniques) Punch & Judy; (This type of staging and performance does not fall within the current thinking, especially Christian, about entertainment for younger audiences) Black Theatre (Puppets performing in a black & solely Ultra Violet lit Stage)
<u>“Hand & Rod” Type.</u>	Soft, child size puppets (Similar to the TV Muppets) which we use most frequently.
<u>2D Puppets.</u>	2-Dimensional puppets painted on shaped boards, sometimes with jointed arms Etc. Needs careful choreography. (“Bus-stop Samaritan”).
<u>Hand Puppets.</u>	For the most part these are not ‘human’, but are animal, insect, snake/s, inanimate or even just a pair of eyes worn on the second finger, using the thumb as a mouth (Some of you may remember the TV character ‘Lamb Chop’).
<u>Ventriloquist Dummy.</u>	Our normal puppets can be effectively used for this, but a specially constructed puppet with moving head, eyes and mouth, can be significantly more life-like. These are however very expensive!
<u>Trigger action ‘puppets’.</u>	(Flowers and birds can be favourably featured in this form). Here the puppet is mounted on a rod, the mouth is sprung loaded to closed, and is operated by a trigger at the lower end of the rod, which is held by hand.
<u>Full suited puppets.</u>	Puppets that are actually worn by the performer (‘Honey Monster’ type, from the popular T.V. advert)
<u>Shadow puppetry.</u>	Strictly speaking, any animated figure that can be appropriately controlled, with a strong light source which can be projected on a translucent screen, for practical purposes probably back-projected.

Note:- For some more information, see the Web-sites:

www.civilisation.ca/arts/ssf/ssfdeeng.html

<http://puppetshopper.com/puppetshop/religious.html>

<http://www.puppetproductions.com/>

CHAPTER 2 – Puppet Handling.

1. Initial “Ground Rules” –

When considering the use of Puppets for Christian outreach, it is important that any possible ‘subliminal messages’ that might be perceived even sub-consciously, should not be allowed to detract from Christian principles. Care should also be taken not to infringe the various legal provisions – such as the “Child Protection Act” and various provisions of the “Race Relations Act” Etc. This often means walking a fine line if the required message is to put over. (Quite recently I nearly got caught out when trying to put over the concept of kindness to strangers - sadly young children cannot now be encouraged to speak to strangers!)

Psychologically, particularly with younger children, there is often a tendency to identify puppets as ‘small people’. This can be beneficial, but it is important therefore that they should be handled, when in sight of others, with care, rather as if asleep, not like ‘an old rag doll’! Generally, keep puppets that are not in use, out of sight of non-puppeteers

Whilst the puppets clothing is quite easy to keep clean, the puppets face, arms & hands can very easily get grubby, and are almost impossible to really clean properly. To deal with this -

- ⊙ Please ensure washing hands before handling puppets.
- ⊙ When fitting puppet, put your hand in its mouth to press home the fingers inside the puppets head.

DO NOT ALLOW ANYONE to handle any puppet, unless

- ⊙ There is a serious interest (i.e. volunteer) AND
- ⊙ They have first been briefed in accordance with these notes. AND

2. Setting up for use –

Use of ‘Arm Rods is the most practical way of ‘animating’ the puppet. There are two main types:

1. Often sold with the puppet, a rigid wire rod, about 15 – 18” long, with a handle at one end and the other end tightly folded over the puppet’s wrist. Over quite a short period, this can deform the puppet’s wrist, so should be used with caution especially if it is changed frequently.
2. Arm rods can easily be ‘home made’. Most model shops will sell 36” rods of 12s.w.g. Piano Wire. These can be cut into 2x 18”, of which approximately ¾” can be centrally inserted into a Ramin wood dowel approx. 3” x ½” Diameter. – Attaching these to the puppets arm is by an elastic band (80 x 6 mm. [Size 63?])

Care should be taken with these rods as they can easily ‘catch’ someone painfully especially in the face – or damage clothing, Etc. Do NOT allow puppeteers to

3. Managing the puppets –

Note: *These following procedures should always be performed out of sight of non-puppeteers as far as possible.*

Fitting Arm Rods Each elastic band should be looped into itself around the free end of the rod, and pulled as tight as practical about 3/8” from the end. The loose end of the band should then be placed either side of the rod so that the two sides can be stretched around the back of the puppets wrist – with the rod lying at the ‘palm’ side of the wrist. Always remember to have the puppets thumb upwards.

Controlling Arms You can choose between having one or the other arm ‘rodded’ (Most probably the opposite puppet arm to the arm you are using for the puppet itself). You can also have both arms fitted with rods, and choose to use one or the other or

3. Managing the puppets –
Continued

Preparation for use both. It is desirable that in all of these cases, the puppeteer should be ambidextrous!
 Find the entry point, commonly either at the lower back or ‘small’ of the puppets back. Grasp the puppet by the throat with the free hand whilst feeling your way inside the head with your fingers in its head and your thumb in its lower jaw. Placing the fingers of your free hand in its mouth will assist in getting a good fit.

4. Basic Choreography

Entering/Leaving Simulate going up or down 4 stairs

Normal On Stage Puppeteers head should be only just out of sight Arm fully raised, head tilted down to face audience. Puppeteer’s left or right arm can be used according to stage position or to give one arm a rest between acts.

Moving about ‘Jog’ as for walking, don’t ‘glide’. Aim always to hide puppeteer’s arm. (Don’t turn puppet or have its back to the audience unless puppeteers arm is hidden within puppets clothes).

Communicating When puppets are supposedly talking, make sure they turn their heads to at least partially face each other.

Miming The better the puppet can be made to mime its part, the more realistic the performance will be. Pointing, hands over heart/ears/eyes/mouth, pushing as if something aside, Etc. can all be used to good effect.

Practicalities Remember the puppets are smaller than the puppeteers, and are off-set by being on only one arm of the puppeteer. If the puppets are to be close, use opposite puppeteer’s arms! Remember to allow space for arm rod controls. Sometimes one puppeteer can control the puppets body, whilst another controls the arms. (This can get very ‘personal’!)

Height The height of puppeteers may be quite different, a set of blocks can solve this (We have 6”, 4”, 3” & 1.5” high sets, each about 24 x 22” surface – MUST be solid enough to be safe!) Remember these in planning choreography!

5. Body language & expressing emotions

Lip Synch. As for deaf lip reading – or more usual, simply open once per syllable. (VIP: Keep mouth closed when not speaking).

Praise/Worship Raising arms fully, spreading arms, hands on heart.

Laughing Either – Rapidly nod head with mouth open; or Turn head away, ‘hide’ mouth with hand, & again nod rapidly.

Crying Wipe eyes, head bowed & mouth slightly open. If really distraught, then shake whole body.

Fear Shaking Puppet.

Excitement Jumping around; Waving arms; Head & Mouth as Laughing.

Shock/Surprise Jump back; Mouth open.

Embarrassed Looking anywhere but the audience and/or person speaking.

Boredom Fidgeting, lack of interest.

Quick Reference notes follow on the next page

Quick reference – (Summary of Information on One Page)

Perceived Problem	Recommended Answer
<u>1. 'Jack-in-the-Box' Entry & 'Trap-Door' Exit</u>	Make the puppet rise & descend in 4 steps, as if walking up and down stairs.
<u>2. 'Stargazing'</u> (Puppet looking up at the ceiling).	The wrist has to be bent down as far as possible, in order to make the puppet look at the audience. This will always be something of a strain!
<u>3. 'Head-Banging'</u> (Head moving instead of Jaw when speaking).	Care must be taken when 'talking' with the puppet, to ensure that the THUMB moves the mouth, not the fingers. This needs practise, because it is not natural whilst keeping the wrist bent!
<u>4. 'Wilting'/'Shrinking Violet'</u> (Insufficient puppet torso visible to audience due to arm strain).	The arm gets tired being held up, but if it sags, the puppet sinks down, till often only the head shows! This looks unrealistic and should be avoided. Ideally the arm should be upright from the shoulder, and the puppeteer's head should be only just out of sight below the curtain.
<u>5. 'Lip Synch'</u> (Puppet Mouth Control)	Generally, open the mouth once for each syllable, this is not exact, but provides a good approximation. Do however keep the mouth <u>closed</u> when not actually speaking!

More general guidance

Cleanliness: -

Whilst the puppets clothing is quite easy to keep clean, the puppets face, arms & hands can very easily get grubby, and are almost impossible to really clean properly. To deal with this -

- ☉ Please ensure washing hands before handling puppets.
- ☉ When fitting puppet, put your hand in its mouth to press home the fingers inside the puppets head.

Respect: -

Psychologically, particularly with younger children, there is a desirable tendency to identify them as 'small people'. It is important therefore that they should be handled with care, when in sight of others, rather as if asleep and not as 'an old rag doll'! Generally keep out of sight of non-puppeteers as far as possible.

Handling: -

DO NOT ALLOW ANYONE to handle any puppet, unless

- ☉ There is a serious interest (i.e. volunteer) AND
- ☉ They have first been briefed in accordance with these notes. AND
- ☉ They are supervised at all times, Preferably by me if I am available.

Specific notes for Christian Puppeteering

'Play Fighting':-

This is totally taboo, on or off stage –

any infringement can result in a permanent ban from puppet operation!

Playing **any** member of the Holy Trinity: -

NO Puppet is to be allowed to perform the part of God - Father, Son or Holy Spirit. Voices or off-stage inference is permitted with care and sensitivity. A bright light can indicate the presence of God, without any actual physical representation.

Psychology: -

When writing Scripts, it should always be ensured that even when the puppet character has mis-behaved, a 'way out' is provided, and forgiveness and restoration of relationship should be ensured before the end of the sketch. (Enactments of Biblical stories need special care to respect this principle as far as is possible).

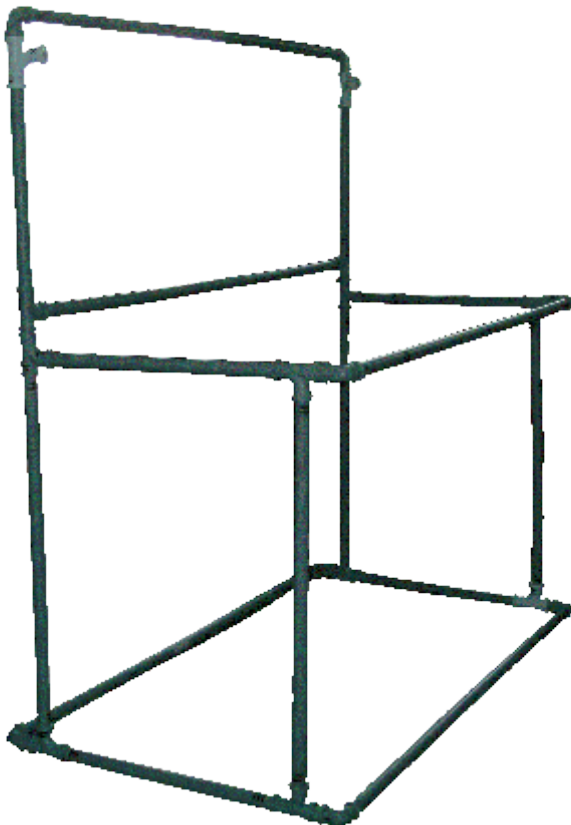
CHAPTER 3 - Staging.

Basic Concepts –

In order to present a puppet performance, some form of background equipment is required. This may be as simple as a case to carry the puppet to the venue, where the performer may intend to hold the puppet in his/her arms for a ventriloquist performance.

The next stage up would be a curtain on a horizontal rod, hiding the puppeteers, while the puppets appear above the rod.

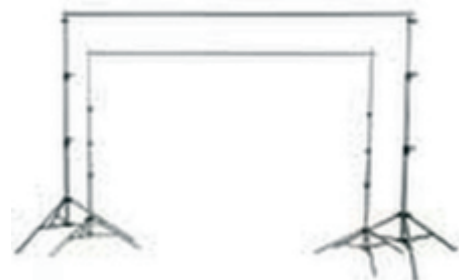
However if it is intended to put on regular performances, a proper stage is highly desirable. This need not be highly expensive (though custom-made equipment is available at a price!) At Riverside we started by using a multi-tier Frame staging, with suitable curtains and a Back-Projection screen. The basic details of this are shown below – (do be careful to mark connection points, otherwise re-assembly can be a proverbial nightmare!)



Basic 2-Tier Frame

We have now moved on to using extendable tripods with cross-beams. The benefit of this is to give a far more flexible set up that can be modified for the venue (beware winds if outside – guy-ropes are the best way of dealing with this, but can still be difficult!) The staging can also be changed according to the requirements of the specific choreography.

To find this equipment go to <http://www.karlu.com>
(Search the site for “ Interfit COR755 ”)
Interfit Medium Background Support System
(The cost was £70 each including carriage).



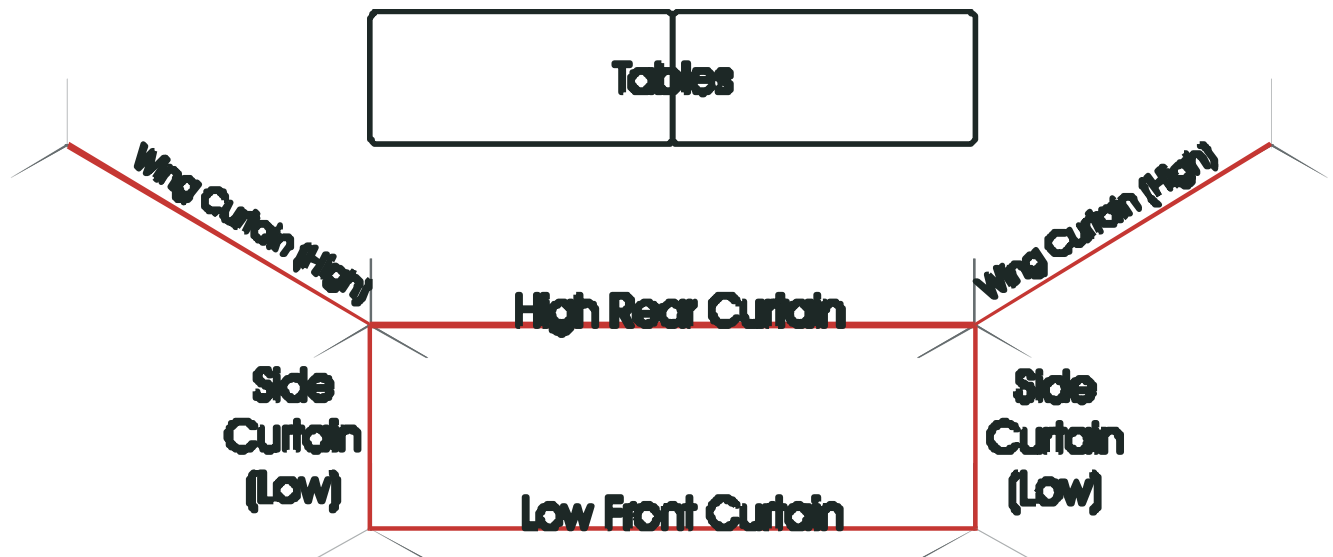
Plastic Tubing, available at any plumbers merchant

Simple 2-Tier Stage

1. Horizontal tubes – 72”, - 5 Required.
2. Lower vertical tubes, 40”, - 4 Required.
3. Lower Stage, side tubes, 31”, - 4 Required.
4. Upper Tier, side tubes, 21”, - 2 Required.
5. Corner connectors - 8 Required.
6. ‘T’ connectors - 10 Required.
7. Short tubes to join connectors, 2.75” - 10 Required.

Additional for Back-Projection Screen:-

1. Upper Rear ‘T’ connectors (shown on photo, but not facing to the rear) - 2 Required.
2. Lower Rear ‘T’ connectors - 2 Required. (replaces lower corner connector in photo, but existing corner connector holds vertical projection frame).
3. Rear horizontal distance tubes, 24” - 4 Required.
4. Projection frame horizontal tubes, 72” - 2 Req’d.
5. Projection frame support tubes, 69” - 2 Required.



Common Lay-out

Setting up for use –

- a. Will the staging be well visible to the audience? Remember that small children very close may only see the lower tier performers, and not the upper tier or any back projection.
- b. Beware of low ceilings, even if the staging fits, will the puppets who are above the curtain be hindered by either the ceiling or any support beams that might be present?
- c. Will inquisitive members be distracted by being able to see what is going on at the back, by looking round the sides?
- d. A concealed table should be available, large enough to hold all the puppets (Prior to performing), also any short term prop's you plan to use.
- e. Do you have suitable plinths for shorter members of the cast to be at the same height? (*Ideally their heads should be only just out of sight below the top of the curtain – any lower and they will have difficulty holding the puppet high enough*).
- f. Do you have any prop's that you plan to use, readily available when required, and in the right order?
- g. Are the semi-permanent prop's securely fitted? (This may require a purpose built support bar fitted just out of sight behind the top of the curtain).
- h. If the performers are voicing their own scripts (Even if they have learned them well in advance) Prompt scripts should be available.
- i. If 'Back-Projection' is to be used, is there space for the projector and beam not obstructed by back-stage operators?

A ventriloquist performance does not require such a stage, but it is often preferable to have the puppet sitting on a plinth alongside the puppeteer. Any such plinth **must** be sturdy and stable enough not to fall over during a performance, it should also have the appearance of being comfortable for the puppet.

CHAPTER 4 - Stage Props.

Use of 'Props' –

1. Construction/Design:

Size (Scaling)

All props have to be reasonably scaled to match both the size of the puppets they have to relate to, and also the available space 'on stage'

Strength

For the most part, props need to be strong enough to withstand the normal wear & tear of handling. This is not only during any performance, but also during storage & transit - it is quite surprising how easily things get damaged!

Weight

Within the needs of strength & rigidity, weight should be kept to a practical minimum. This is true whether the said prop is intended to be hand-held (or even 'puppet-held) during the performance, or if it is to be mounted.

Appearance

Try to get the appearance as realistic as practical (model-makers are particularly helpful here – some of whom, even if they have no interest in puppeteering, may be very happy to help).

Props can be in the form of a flat placard (including painted background scenery), decorative / mood setting, or to be capable of being manipulated.

Durability

If the considered prop is only for one performance, the only consideration is for rehearsal. If however, it is intended to re-use over an extended period for various performances, then the design must be sufficiently durable, and careful storage requirements must be considered.

In some cases, re-making simple props for later performances may be preferable to storing long-term. If you do want to keep over a long period, then maintenance should be considered when designing - elastic bands in particular need regular replacement.

2. Basic Multi-Purpose equipment:

Although there may be a great variety of props required, there are certain items of basic equipment that can be used in many situations.

Common Materials:

Always have a good supply of good strong elastic bands available. A supply of a good range of Safety Pins is a must. Some people like to use clothes pegs for holding the stage curtains neatly in position. For securing items throughout the whole performance, re-useable plastic ties are useful, also a range of 'Jubilee Clips'.

For pictorial Props - Placards can be made of cardboard sheet, painted or with printed artwork glued on (possibly tiled). A4 printed paper can be laminated (recommend 250 micron).

For backdrops, painted wallpaper can be very effective, you may need to stiffen the top & bottom edges, especially if using 'Flip-Over Clips' (see para. 3 below).

Plywood and hardboard are heavy, but are cheap and easily obtained and can be cut to shape with good finished rigidity. Correx corrugated plastic is more expensive but tends to be lighter and more durable.

Cardboard and Balsa wood models are very effective if well made - but are not particularly durable.

3. Some standard props for re-use in varied situations:

- **Flip-over Clips** - for hanging anything from the curtained frontage (Upper or Lower). These are made from about 3cm of plastic pipe (roughly same size as Stage framing horizontal rods). Each should be cut lengthwise and smoothed, so they can be stretched over the Horizontal rods (works for either type of Staging). Then drill a hole, centrally and opposite the cut, big enough to allow threading a double piece of string folded double, then, at the fold, insert inwards and bring the loop round to the outside, placing with the two 'tails' either side of the doubled string.



These ends can be knotted to secure, then tied to whatever you want to suspend. Multiples of these can be used for flipping over a series of backgrounds for instance. They are quite strong, cheap and open to many uses. The string can easily be replaced when it gets worn.

- **Placard Rods** - Simple wooden rods, probably cut from a board of good, straight-grained wood (Pirana Pine is ideal). The size we use is about 20mm x 9mm. Cross section, and about 80 - 85cms long. We find we need about 15 - 20 of these, it is a good thing to paint the sticks as near as practical, the same colour as the Stage curtains - this does not mean they can't be seen, but it does make them less noticeable! At the end of each stick, we stick a 15 cm. strip of 'velcro' (Fluffy type). When we want to use them, for instance as a placard, we laminate a printed A4 sheet (Minimum 250 micron pouch), to which is glued a 15cm. Strip of 'velcro' (hook type).

- **Support Bars** - It is convenient to have hidden 'support bars' to hold fixed props in place, either for the upper level or lower or both. These bars are attached to the stage frame, as near as practical to the top, but hidden from the audience by the curtain. These 'Support Bars span the whole width of the Stage. Standard 'Prop Support Saddles' that can be placed at any point along these bars will be used to build on any props that are required. This will allow quick change between performances (or even within a performance, in many circumstances). Please note, the dimensions shown are those we have used, but can be adjusted to suit your requirements.

The diagrams illustrate the construction of support bars and prop support saddles. The top diagram shows the 'End of Support-Bar' with dimensions 1.8 Cm, 1.2 Cm, and 6.0 Cm. The middle diagram shows a 'View from Back' of a support bar with dimensions 8.0 Cm and 6.0 Cm. The bottom diagram shows a 'View from Top' of a 'Prop Support Saddle' with a 'Leather Protector' and dimensions 1.2 Cms and 6.0 Cm.

- Some props will extend out towards the audience, whilst others may extend back into the performing area. In either case, care must be taken to ensure not tipping over. If the extension is backwards into the stage area, a support prop can be used, but beware blocking the movement of the puppeteers.

- **Control Rods** - Whilst most puppets are sold with arm-Rods, we find in practice that it is helpful to have a supply of spares. We use Piano-Wire rods, 3mm. Diameter by 36" long (approx 92Cms.) cut in half to make a pair. For the handles, cut a length of 1.2 Cm. Dowel into 8 Cm lengths, and insert the wire at least 1.5 Cms. Into the end. (Roughing the wire and glueing can help durability)
- **Toy Musical Instruments** - Where musical instruments are required, as they frequently are, toy instruments provide the ideal props where they are available. If these are not available, then suitably scaled models will suffice quite well. In any event it is important the puppet playing the said instrument looks realistic. Elastic bands holding the puppets hands as appropriate can be used to good effect. Puppet control arm rods can be permanently extended for Drum-Sticks and violin Bows for instance. n.b. Rubber bands wound round mouthpieces of wind instruments can help keeping a good hold using the puppets mouth.
- **2D Models** - Very effective props can be made in 2D, by using a sheet of Cardboard / Hardboard / thin Plywood or best of all, Correx Board. Two examples I have personally used are a Whale (with opening mouth and a moving eye) this was about 48". The other example was a 'Bus', about 48" long & 22" high.
- **Trigger Action** - Props, and even some puppets ('Talking' Flowers for example) can be made, using a hollow tube for the stem, having a trigger at the operator's end, pulling on a cord to the lower 'jaw' to open the 'mouth', against an elastic band spring to close the 'mouth'. The same principle can be adapted to operate other 'moving' props.
- **General** - Always have plenty of strong elastic bands available, also releasable Plastic Cable Ties and Jubilee Clips of various sizes.

CHAPTER 5 - Stage Management & Choreography.

Managing the performance–

- i. Plan the out of sight movements of the puppeteers. Space can be very restricted back stage.
- ii. Have someone ready to operate any sound requirements, together with any contact arrangements between the Stage Manager, the performers and the sound operator.
- iii. Plan the puppet choreography, especially inter-reaction between puppets. Plan which arm the individual puppeteers will use (They should ideally all be ambidextrous in this respect).
- iv. Decide, for each puppet whether one or two arm-rods are to be used (If two, consider the experience of the puppeteer). Be prepared to use an additional operator for the arms if arm movements are too detailed, such as ‘playing’ drums, Etc.
- V. If you use plinths for shorter puppeteers, remember they then have restricted movement – this can also affect taller performers who do not want to trip over, or stand on plinths!

Use of ‘Props’ –

a. Construction/Design

Size (Scaling)

All props have to be reasonably scaled to match both the size of the puppets they have to relate to, and also the available space ‘on stage’

Strength

For the most part, props need to be strong enough to withstand the normal wear & tear of handling. This is not only during any performance, but also during storage & transit - it is quite surprising how easily things get damaged!

Weight

Within the needs of strength & rigidity, weight should be kept to a practical minimum. This is true whether the said prop is intended to be hand-held (or even ‘puppet-held’) during the performance, or if it is to be mounted (see next paragraph).

Appearance

Try to get the appearance as realistic as practical (model-makers are particularly helpful here – some of whom, even if they have no interest in puppeteering, may be very happy to help).

Props can be in the form of a flat placard (including painted background scenery), decorative / mood setting, or to be capable of being manipulated.

b. Manipulation

Puppet-held

To make the puppet appear to ‘hold’ a certain ‘prop’, elastic bands, safety pins or velcro can all be used to good effect. If the prop is in the form of a musical instrument (toy instruments can be very effective) it is important that puppet movement is realistic. For instance fingers and thumbs in the right position. Guitars, Saxophones, Violins, Drum sticks, Etc. all need this consideration. Don’t forget that arm-rods have to be in position to enable the puppeteer to manipulate the puppet realistically! (Two puppeteers may be needed, one to operate the puppet’s body and the other to operate the arms).

Hand-held

Hand-held props normally need a separate puppeteer to hold in position for the puppet ‘cast’ to interact with. These include informatory placards to be used instead of a narrator.

Mounted or Free-standing

This group can include painted backgrounds and items attached to the staging structure. Such attachment might be pinned, hooked over structure, ‘terry’ clipped or even attached to a specially constructed “ ‘props’ bar”. Some may ‘lean’ on a support rod to the ground, or be tripod mounted in some form.

Basic Choreography –

a. *Choreography – Puppeteers*

When planning the performance of a script, choreography is vital.

Remember the available space, the relative heights of the performers. If blocks are to be used, remember the puppeteer using them cannot move very far – and others may also have to avoid the blocks when they move around!

Allow for the fact that some performances require the operator to use their right arm for the puppet's body/mouth work, and others their left arm. (It is helpful if all puppeteers are ambidextrous when operating the puppets).

Remember that subliminally, people read left to right, so, unless there is good reason to do otherwise, the action of the sketch, seen from the audience point of view, should tend to be left to right also.

In the front area, puppeteers may be kneeling, which can restrict their rapidity & smoothness of movement, also their heels can obstruct others movement in the restricted space.

It is important that when puppets are 'talking' to each other, they must turn their heads to partially face each other. The reason for it being only partially, is twofold – firstly we want the audience to see the movement of the mouths; and secondly, we also don't want the operator's arm to show. In some puppet configurations, the puppeteer's arm enters the puppets body in the 'small of its back'! Suitable clothing can conceal this, but care should be taken, especially if the puppet has to turn its back on the audience at any time.

All puppeteering can necessitate puppeteers working in very close proximity. Whilst this does not normally create a problem with the folk we normally get on our teams – planners should apply sensitivity, especially where performers of mixed gender are involved.

b. *Choreography – Props*

Where props are in a fixed position, ensure that they are secure enough not to be knocked out of position. Remember the possibilities of inadvertently knocking any part of the staging; movement of puppets or puppeteers; movement of other props; or, if outside, the effects of wind!

In deciding their location, ensure that they are positioned to enable the puppets to interact with them realistically.

If there are any moving parts, ensure that there is an adequate system for the puppets in question to realistically move them – arm rod control has its limitations – alternatively, another puppeteer can move the item from a hidden position, but do ensure good synchronisation.

Occasionally, props are required to appear at key points of the performance (or even between successive sketches). Ensure that such placing of props is performed smoothly and efficiently. For the most part, the less the audience realises about the technicalities the better!

Hand held props have to fulfil all the requirements referred to above, but are normally operated by an independent puppeteer. In this case remember that the prop operator must in all cases synchronise to the needs of the puppet action and not independently!

These may take the form of placards; mobile equipment (I particularly remember one case, using a stretcher to 'carry' a puppet as a patient); or even to appear almost as an independent 'puppet' in its own right (Flying birds are a good example of this).

The third type of prop is that which is, in effect 'worn' by the puppet. Good examples of this type are musical instruments.

If a puppet is supposed to be playing an instrument, great care must be taken to ensure that the instrument is securely placed in proper relationship to the puppet - scale is vital here. Velcro can be helpful but is unlikely to be strong enough by itself. Good elastic bands are invaluable, as are strong safety pins.

To give a realistic appearance of the puppet actually playing the instrument needs the puppets

hands and even fingers/thumbs to be properly placed! An elastic band wound around and around a mouthpiece, can help the puppeteer to hold it in the puppets mouth. Great care needs to be taken by the puppeteer to ensure that the puppet's body & head movements are appropriate, as well as the hand movements by control rod – this needs to be thought out at the setting-up stage. Some situations, drummers for instance, need both the puppets hands to be synchronised. A 'Y' stick control rod can reduce this problem, but a better answer in most cases is for two puppeteers to operate the puppet, one for the head & body, whilst the other controls the two hands. This works very well but needs careful planning and rehearsal to achieve the desired effect!

Setting up for use –

Preparation, all items should be readily 'to hand'. There's nothing worse than not being able to find something in the middle of a performance!

Where props are to be mounted, check position and security with actual performers as they would be during the action. Don't forget puppets & performers move about during performance.

CHAPTER 6 - Sound & Lighting Effects.

Sound Effects –

It is not my intention to go into any great depth in dealing with sound – most churches have specialists who already look after that in ordinary Services. Do bear in mind however that when performing away from ‘home’, you may find yourself on your own! A good, simple sound desk and speakers are of great value in this, providing someone on the team knows how to operate it. If this is not possible, most venues have their own system and will quite probably be willing to play tracks from CD’s as prompted by the leader of the team.

Scripts can be bought ready made, which is by far the easiest way – however there is no flexibility in this to personalise the sketch. This can be unfortunate but the advantage of ease can outweigh this.

If the performers are to voice their own script, they will have to speak up, as they will mostly be behind screens, which will tend to muffle their voices. Also, memorising scripts, including the relevant timing and artistic expression – can cause quite a heavy work load, when taken together with having to make the puppets perform, Etc.

A far better way is for the team to record speech, sound effects & music in advance. This will take a lot of care if the result is to achieve a good professional standard. Modern computer programs can facilitate this. Fortunately, the necessary computer expertise is far more readily available now.

If you intend to follow this procedure, the first task is to create the basic recordings,

- I would suggest the spoken script should come first – get the mood and timing right and you will have the basis to work with.
- Next get any required sound effects (Many varied sounds are available from the Internet). Clip them and slot them into the ‘time-line’.
- Lastly decide on any background music accompaniment Clip and set them onto the ‘time-line’.
- The final task is to adjust respective volumes and ‘Master’ a CD or DVD.

If you have the facilities to use back projection, this can also be put on the same CD/DVD, providing you have a suitable computer available for the performance.

For further information, I suggest you seek the help of whoever is going to take care of the task, as they will have the relevant computer software to hand. In most cases they will naturally be familiar with their own software.

— ooo —

Lighting Effects –

For further information, I suggest you seek the help of whoever is going to take care of the task, as they will have the relevant computer software to hand. With which they are familiar.

— ooo —

Use of Back-Projection –

Back Projection can be used to good effect to provide ‘themed’ background scenery, appropriate to the story/sketch. This scenery can be either static, animated or videoed. Remember that it will only be visible behind the upper level of staging, so generally only the upper half of the normal area will be available

A suitable translucent screen will be required to be mounted in a convenient and appropriate place above and behind the highest level of staging. Puppets will of course be performing in most cases in front of this screen.

Types of Back Projection –

OHP projected

Fixed acetates, changed as required

Manually moved models, movement timed to the performance

Computer controlled projector

Static

Animated

Video

Either of the above can be prepared as ‘mirrored’ image, for direct projection on the back of the translucent screen - or – via a high set mirror behind the staging. Remember, **safety** is a vital aspect - do not risk a heavy mirror falling on someone! Sufficient rigidity is also needed to ensure the resulting images are steady.

If direct projection is used, remember the extra space needed behind the performing area, and also the performers must be warned that their movements back-stage can create unwanted shadows! This method is however the easiest (& cheapest) to produce.

The high mirror option significantly reduces the problem of shadows, and cuts the back-stage space required by about one third.

In all cases, the angle of projection will cause some distortion of the rectangular image, which should ideally be corrected by creating an equal and opposite distortion in the drawings, Etc. that are used.

CHAPTER 7 - Scripts & Script Writing.

Starting from scratch –

It's surprising how intimidating a blank sheet of paper can be when you want to start writing a script! Most people find there are two basic types of response to this:

- a) Ideas come flooding in with no time to get them down before losing them – Needs ORDER!
(A good suggestion is to note down random ideas as briefly as possible before they are forgotten, then arrange them later).
- b) Some minds 'go blank' – Use a standard planned ORDER, then fill that out.

In both these cases, you need some kind of organised plan. The problem can be that there are so many situations that planning has to be adjusted to the broad situation. The following sections should get you thinking in the right direction.

Purpose of the Script –

There are various sorts of script, each of which have their own specific considerations. (In this section I am ignoring puppets performing music/singing with no dialogue).

- c) Ventriloquism – Visible performer & Puppet
May be Ad Hoc but the theme should still be planned; can involve more than one performer and puppet/s
If fully scripted, consider 'learning time' / 'performer experience'. 'Prompts' can be awkward and beware difficult word combinations.
Note: the performer/s can mouth words if they are not capable of concealed speech, but this is generally less satisfactory, especially for older audiences.
- d) Full staging, with voiced scripts – This will have the performer out of sight so the script can be visible to the performers. However this can only be read with difficulty, so performers will have to be well familiar with scripts.
- e) Pre-recorded Scripts – The puppets only have to mime the words. This is easiest for inexperienced puppeteers.
- f) Script may be part of a larger performance – Coherency with other aspects of the whole program must be considered.

For whom is the performance required –

Thinking behind the development of the script will vary according to expected audience make up:

- a) Own church audience (Children, Youth, Special or General congregation).
- b) Visiting other church event, (with the same age considerations).
- c) Arranged by church, but otherwise mainly secular.
- d) Secular arranged, but with evangelistic opportunities.

Basic 'Types' of Script –

- a) Simple entertainment.
- b) Teaching a simple ethical principle.
- c) Enacting a well-known story, possibly Biblical.
- d) Paraphrasing a pre-existing story, such as a well-known parable, brought up-to-date and placing it in a contemporary setting.

General underlying principles –

When working with puppets there are some general underlying principles which should be considered sensibly at all stages: -

On a more General Level –

- a) Who will your audience be? If you can build your routine around things that happen to that group of people, your audience will enjoy your act even more. Incorporate activities that your audience does or knows about. Possibly even mention the name of at least one outstanding member of the audience for a personal touch that will make you special to them.
- b) Choose a main idea on which to build the dialogue. Try to build it around the audience and the event or celebration/holiday.
- c) Where planning a sketch for repeated use, keep the above points in mind - possibly a basic sketch can be modified for different audiences.

Additional points for Ventriloquist Performances –

- a) Put your best part last and your second best part first. Fill the middle with quick, fast-paced lines. The puppet should have short punchy answers for quick laughs. The puppet should get most of the funny lines. The audience wants to hear everything the puppet says; so if you want an important point to be remembered, let the puppet say it.
- b) You should endeavour to personalise your sketches (and Ad Hoc work) to the audience. When doing a School Assembly for instance, I try in some way to speak to the children, sometimes even going for limited dialogue. Referring to things that happen at school and sometimes referring to actual teachers! (Beware not to offend, even in fun!)
- c) Broadly speaking, remember it is the puppet that the audience wants to hear from. Where possible let the punch lines come from him/her and keep it moving vocally – Interest spans can wane very easily, especially for children. Try to introduce some humour at the level of your audience and keep their attention to the very end. Ideally the audience should be slightly disappointed when it's come to an end!
- d) Songs are very useful, and where there is an identifiable relationship, there is no reason why the puppet can't actually sing – it doesn't even have to be too accurate musically! We often precede a sketch with a song performed by the puppets before leading on to a sketch. This can be done excitedly or humorously.
- e) Don't feel you have to avoid tension between the puppet and the puppeteer. Good object lessons can be put over to the audience by this means but do try to 'keep it light' Ideally it should still be fun, despite the serious element you're trying to put over. You must always resolve all differences amicably before the sketch ends.
- f) As has already been touched on, try to actively introduce humour, geared to the audience; the puppet's character; the puppeteer; the content of the sketch; or even known persons (with their approval & forewarning).

Now for Practical Sketch Design -

Before actually writing anything, decide on the purpose of the sketch. Quite often it will be important to fit in with a theme – particularly when it is integrated into a church service, but it can also apply when the performance is for a secular group.

You may be required to fit into strict limits, but even if this is not the case, you should decide carefully exactly what you want to put across before you progress too far – This makes the whole thing far more coherent.

There are various ways of tackling this task:-

1. A generalised message (like bullying, selfishness, generosity, Etc.) – probably followed up with a suitable Scripture reference.

2. A literal enactment of a suitable Bible story, like the ‘Prodigal Son’ for instance.
3. A ‘modernised’ version of a suitable Bible story, the ‘Prodigal Son’ could again be used in a modern setting, without loss of the ethical points.
4. A ‘Mixed’ version, e.g. an imaginary modern person/archetypal character in a Biblical setting or vice-versa.
5. A Biblical story looked at from a different standpoint. (Be careful!) As an example, the ‘Good Samaritan’ can be used to refer to prejudice...

For our purposes here, I am going to use a recent example that I was actually asked to plan. I had two sets of requirements, which dovetailed very nicely together – I’ll explain as I proceed.

Requirement 1 The shepherds, Luke 2 v 8-20 (also Mary), [ordinary people are precious to God]

Requirement 2 The Youth and Children's Pastor has asked if we would provide the folks with a Christmas show that is not particularly traditional.

Let us think first which formats we could use – Generalised is not appropriate; Literal is OK but does not fulfil the requirement to be “not particularly traditional”; modernised could work well but may be difficult to formulate without diluting the message. I shall choose a combination of Mixed & Different standpoint.

Firstly get the basic idea down on paper (or screen if you work better that way!) Make sure you include any features, jokes, Etc.

Background:

(This will probably not be mentioned, but is a background to the sort of characters they are!)

Visualise a modern, ‘Papperazzi’ type of press reporter who has got wind of the fact that an important baby has been born. He thinks the Authorities are trying to hide something and is determined to expose it at all costs.

The second character is a shepherd, a solitary man who does not communicate well.

Sketch outline:

Gaudily dressed Puppet with a ‘PRESS’ badge enters stage to talk to a Shepherd in Biblical eastern dress (already on stage, possibly with a background of sheep visible)

Press man (P) speaks to the Shepherd (S) in an condescendingly friendly manner, to ask if he knew of an important baby in the area. (S) answers “Yes”.

(P) tries to draw him out, asks of there is a palace nearby? (S) “No”.

Conversation continues, (P) trying to push his viewpoint (S) answers truthfully, either Yes or No – but very little else!

(P) begins to show his exasperation – during which he tries to belittle (S) and Mary as not fit to take any part in the ‘grand story’

Finally (P) sarcastically suggests that God’s Son had been born in a dirty stable, of a poor and therefore unsuitable mother, and the only people who were told where to find him were a few Shepherds on a nearby hillside!

At this point, for the first time, the (S) becomes excitedly enthusiastic in his agreement. Pointing out that 1000 years ago, God had chosen a Shepherd, the youngest of his family, to be King of Israel. “God is no respecter of persons”.

(P) is thoroughly disgruntled, saying there’s nothing ‘newsworthy’ in that.

(S) replies that even if he doesn’t write about it, someone will - and the Story will be read more widely across the world than any other!

Both exit stage at opposite ends.

This is only an example, but in reality, if the script is to be a team effort, decide who is heading up the team, then suggestions should go through that person. At this stage, generally write down all suggestions, thinning out can be done later!

Re-arrange it then in the order you want, always be ready to incorporate improvements and/or changes. No one should be 'possessive' or sensitive about this.

Once the general pattern is established, decide what puppet characters and stage props are required. A preliminary plan of choreography can be considered. These requirements may give rise to some modification of the basic plan!

In this case, I suggest only two puppets are required (S) and (P)

Props – a number of sheep might create a better 'atmosphere'. These could be painted on a background, held up on sticks by volunteers, or even just implied by playing a recording of sheep noises.

Choreography is simple, (S) is on stage R. (As viewed by audience) right at the start – soon joined by (P) (with prominent and obvious 'PRESS' badge) at stage L. (P) approaches (S), who moves forward slightly to meet him.

(P) is highly animated, whilst (S) is calm until near the end.

At the end, both exit at opposite ends of the stage.

Only when these stages have been satisfactorily completed, should the actual dialogue be attempted.

Shepherd: 3 – Reporter: 0

<u>Char.</u>	<u>Words</u>	<u>Notes</u>
(s)		Appears Stage R.
(P)	Hello there! Are you the person who was told where to find this new Baby? The one who's supposed to be so important?	Appears Stage L.
(s)	Yep!	
(P)	Well! That's <u>amazing</u> ! You must have a Fantastic story to tell. – Is there a Palace or something near here that I didn't know about?	
(s)	Nope!	
(P)	Come on now, I'm sure you know something more about this?	
(s)	Nope!	
(P)	You can't fool me you know, I've been in this business too long not to know something is afoot.	
(s)	Yep!	
(P)	Now we're getting somewhere! Just what are the authorities trying to hide?	
(s)	Nuttin'!	
(P)	I know there's something unique about this baby, even though his parents don't seem to be even the slightest bit important.	
(s)	Yep!	
(P)	You don't seem to be the 'Secret Agent' type either – You're just a mere Shepherd.	
(s)	Yep!	
(P)	So who told you all about it then?	
(s)	An Angel.	
(P)	Oh that's nonsense, you'll be telling me next that God's had a Son who's been born in a dirty stable, of a poor and therefor unsuitable mother, and the only people who were told where to find him were a few Shepherds on a nearby hillside!	
(s)	That's right, you've got it at last! Don't forget, around 1000 years ago now, God chose a Shepherd, the youngest of his family, to be King of Israel. "God is no respecter of persons".	Excitedly!
(P)	That's as may be, but that was a long time ago – this is now! There doesn't seem to be anything newsworthy in this after all!	Disappointed & 'flat'
(s)	That may be your opinion, but even if you don't write about it, <u>someone</u> will - and the Story will be read more widely across the world than any other!	Both exit stage at opposite ends.

Please note, this sketch is not complete! It is just a first full draft – I have already seen some areas where it could be improved. However I am not going to do so here, because I'd like you to see what you can do to improve it yourself.... Go on, have a go at making it what you would like.

CHAPTER 8 – Ventriloquism

1. Introduction.

Ventriloquism has been defined as “the act, art, or practice of speaking in such a manner that the voice appears to come from some source other than the vocal organs of the speaker”.

There are six aspects of this art which must all be practised and brought together:

1. ‘Throwing’ your voice.
2. Sound substitution.
3. Distance as expressed by the Ventriloquist.
4. Scripts.
5. Achieving ‘body language’ in the puppet. Performance.

2. ‘Throwing’ your voice.

This is actually an illusion! You cannot literally throw your voice anywhere, but you can create the illusion by various means, primarily by not giving any indication that it is you who are talking, especially by means of lip-reading. You don’t actually speak with your mouth shut – just hold your lips and jaws completely still – (as a learning method, you can hold your teeth together, but with your lips slightly apart). With practice, you must achieve a more relaxed expression – indeed you should aim at showing any expression you want, quite independently of what you are causing the puppet to say.

The next part of the illusion is ‘body language’. The puppet must always have its ‘lip synch’ in time with what it is supposedly saying, and the remainder of its body-language must be synchronised to be compatible of its supposed emotions.

Finally the performer must establish a body language compatible with the supposed conversation the puppet is having with him/her.

3. Sound Substitution.

You can already say twenty letters of the alphabet – only six need special attention - and with practise these can be mastered.

Sounds need to be substituted for: W & M – F & V – B & P.

W is the easiest - try saying ‘ooooe’ as in sweet. ‘oaaa’ water, ‘hoo-i’ which etc.

M isn’t too difficult - use ‘N’, as in the word ending in ‘ing’ (alternatively push the sound as far forward in your mouth as possible).

F and V - we use ‘th’ as in ‘thin’ for ‘F’, and as in ‘there’ for ‘V’.

P and B - the closest sounds to p and b are t and d - all four are ‘plosive’ sounds - voiced and unvoiced, but we can get closer –

Use the word ‘big’ - say it normally. - Watch what happens to your tongue. Now say it again with your tongue out between your lips. Now say it again and again - drawing your tongue further back into your mouth. Then say it with your tongue touching your upper gum ridge - it will sound like dig - push your tongue as far forward as you can. In some words, especially when the ‘B’ occurs in the middle of a word, the letter ‘g’ can be a practical alternative, only use when really necessary. (Try saying “able”!)

P works the same way. Practice, using the attached sheets. Again there is another alternative: the hard ‘c’ or ‘k’ sound (Try saying “except”!)

3. **Sound Substitution.** Do be particularly careful when the substituted sound is actually another word - e.g. **Power** - Tower/Cower.
(Continued)

4. **Distance as expressed by the Ventriloquist.** There are three elements of distance that may be required by ventriloquists - the near voice, the muffled voice, and voice coming from a distance.

- a) ***The near voice*** – the ‘puppet voice’ must sound sufficiently different to distinguish it from your own voice - It should be appropriate to the puppet you use. A child’s voice is probably the most common, though a higher pitched voice should probably be used for a Mouse puppet or a very deep voice for a Whale! Timing also helps to add to the illusion – rather slow and lumbering for a large creature, fast and ‘chirpy’ for a mouse!
- b) ***The muffled voice*** – Many ventriloquist performances start with the puppet speaking from inside a case. The sound should be flat and indistinct. It could be helpful to try it first without worrying about lip movements, when you are reasonably satisfied with this, then bring in the true ‘venting’ speech.

Voice from a distance – Just think about this for a moment, when someone is some distance away but still wants to be heard, they will tend to shout. In most cases this will mean they raise the pitch somewhat. They may also separate their words a little more than usual to make what they say more distinct. Practice these ideas till you are happy with the result.

5. **Scripts.**

First you should read Chapter 6 on scripts & Script writing which gives a good picture of what is required of a puppet script in general. In this section I only plan to cover those elements which apply specifically to ventriloquist performing.

The first difference to consider is that it is totally impractical to pre-record any ventriloquist performance, so the performer will need to memorise everything that is said. Adding to this is the fact that it is quite difficult to provide a system of ‘prompts’ to be available without being seen by the audience!

In the early stages it is a good idea to vet the script for puppet words or phrases that may cause more difficulty to ‘vent’. This can be particularly important if using or modifying any script that has been written by someone who is unaware of the particular difficulties. (Would-be script writers please note!)

A lot of ventriloquist performing is entirely ‘Ad Hoc’. This is fine and can be very entertaining. If used however, it can put a lot of pressure on the performer to plan the dialogue, synchronise the puppet lip-synch & body language, interact with the audience. If it is going to be professional, the ‘venting’ technique has to be ‘second nature’ and the performer has to be able to create a good repartee with the audience.

Some performers have a natural aptitude for the Ad Hoc performance, but may be lacking in the area of ‘venting’ technique. In this case there are two basic methods to proceed

- Speak to the puppet normally, but give the puppet a very shy character where it can only whisper into the ear of the performer. With some

5. Scripts. (Continued) thought it is possible to make the puppets sentiments very clear without it ever actually speaking a word!

It is possible to create a fair show by not even trying to ‘vent’ the puppets words. In practice, especially if the performer makes no pretence of being a ventriloquist, but still has the body language and dialog skill the performance can still work well.

6. ‘Body language’ in the puppet. You should always try to make your puppet a real person, and commonly it is more identified with a child’s perspective (even if taking an adult persona) – therefore it should never be still, even worse, it can appear somewhat lifeless which spoils the whole illusion! Many of these movements will appear whilst you are taking no notice, He/she should be independent of you The normal control arm rods are not very efficient for this, so I have developed a system using one normal rod and one specially extended rod.

As with other forms of puppeteering, the most important aspect is accurate lip synchronisation (see Chapter 3 – Voices; for a more detailed description of ‘lip-synch’ procedures). In one way this is slightly easier than during recorded stage work, as the performer has full control of the voice and the puppet.

Other body movements are significantly more important when the audience attention is on one sole performer, also the whole of the puppets body is in view, not half hidden behind a screen! This takes a lot of practice to give a realistic impression.

Here is a list of some of the more common moves to express emotions in the puppet character: -

- Mouth open to express surprise.
- Sudden head turn to face human (or other source), to express concerned surprise.
- Sudden head back to express alarm at what has been said.
- Fidgeting to express boredom, also feigned lack of interest!
- Looking anywhere but at the speaker (or audience) to express guilt or embarrassment.
- Waving arms to express excitement.
- Head onto shoulder of human to express need for comfort.
- Hand in front of mouth to imply whisper (even if this is a ‘stage-whisper that is intended for the audience to hear).

I’m sure there are many more, but these should be enough to get you started.

7. Performance.

The first thing to decide is where to have the puppet?

- ***In your arms*** – This is the only practical way if you plan to walk around, possibly amongst the audience. In some ways, carrying the puppet this way is the easiest, especially for those performers who have not yet learned ‘venting’, but you do lose a lot of flexibility when the puppet’s head is so close to yours. Also there is a tendency for the legs to dangle somewhat lifelessly which you have to be wary about.

7. Performance.

(Continued)

- **Seated on a plinth** – This method (either to the left or right of the performer) involves the performers’ elbow resting on a plinth, suitably decorated & cushioned; the performers’ upper arm should be roughly horizontal.

Don’t forget to maintain the illusion that the puppet is a living person, treat it always with respect and care for its comfort!

Be careful with dialogue, whether it is scripted or impromptu – it must

Practising Ventriloquial Speech.

1. <u>Alphabet needing No Substitution</u>	A C D E G H I J K L N O Q R S T U X Y Z								
2. <u>‘Easy’ Words</u>	aid	Donald	good	hits	Jotted	lid	quins	so	tray
	cat	dote	gut	Ho Ho	Justice	light	quote	sons	tree
	cheese	dough	had	hone	keen	list	raise	talc	trick
	clean	drawn	hag	hoot	kilt	lit	rate	Tayside	Yawn
	cone	dread	has	hose	kind	load	road	tea	yeast
	coat	drool	hat	hot	king	loan	rod	thigh	yen
	coo	duel	hay	how	kneel	newt	rotor	thick	York
	could	excite.	head	hug	know	node	route	tide	your
	cut	Gail	her	hung	latch	nought	Roy	till	yo-yo
	Dane	get	hid	husk	lax	nutter	rule	Trojan	zed
	dean	ghoul	high	Jar	lean	quad	said	too	Zion
	din	goal	hill	jaw	lest	quick	setting	took	Zorro
	do	goat	hilt	Joan	let	quiet	shoes	tow	Zulu

More advanced Practice Phrases

3. Phrases requiring sound substitution.

W -

Wall Well Will Won't Wool
Cower While

M -

Good morning, Mister Maloney.
Market. Miracle. Remote. Command.
More. Animal
Look at the magazines.
Mary had a little lamb and a mouse with
a mink coat.
Many mighty men do miraculous things.
Among the magical materials was much
money in large amounts.
Excellent management must seem a hard
requirement to muster.
The horizontal measurement will remain
the smallest dimension in the system.

F -

fair fuel fake fellow flower
define physical
You're doing fine. Let's talk faster.
Follow the leader.
If you find the exercise difficult at first,
do not fear.
Financial figures often look a little fishy.
The feathered fowl was offered to the
affluent financier.
I will fly to Florida for a few days.
Flattery is frustrating for a friend to find.

V -

vital avow evangelist virtue
vast advice
Ventriloquism is very easy.
Use your voice.
Voting is valued as having very great
validity.

V (Cont.) -

The ventriloquist is very vivacious.
The avid adventurer resolved to reveal
his virtuous victory.
I never advise that you give violets, even
though they are lovely.
The vulture with his evil eye viewed the
valley

B -

They lost the battle but won the war.
The battalion would not bear a loss.
I caught the basketball on the rebound.
The red balloon was blown away.
As I was about to say, "Be good".
I had nothing to eat but a slice of baloney
Little boys don't like to take baths.
She had toast and butter Just before lunch
There's a big dog down the block in our
neighbourhood.
The combination works out best.
I'd like a big bottle of beer.

P -

Pleasant. Play. Supply. Surprise.
A partridge in a pear tree.
They repealed the peace treaty.
I will put the passport away.
Three little pigs went out to play.
Patricia was looking at the picture.
I like hot roasted peanuts in a peculiar
way.
The Gospel is happy news.
I like to watch the pigeons play.
Peter was an outspoken apostle.
The Holy Spirit is the third Person In the
Trinity.
I participated eagerly in the program.

4. More Difficult words -

Except, Symphony, Faithful, Stable
I have the packet.
The Poppy fields of Flanders

The Bible is a Brilliant Book.
I'll have twelve bottles of beer please.
That is terribly difficult.

5. Practice Prose -

Almost anything you wish to read can be vocalised to practise your skills,
the only factor is that you must be in a position to be able to speak it out at
sufficient volume to be useful.

Be aware of the character of your vent figure to make your routine believable. Communicating this to your audience will help them to empathize with your little partner. A ventriloquist has to be a good actor and be aware of two or more characters at the same time.

Alternative advice on substitution, seems correct, but I think harder to understand!

Where the sound glides is formed in the mouth	(voiced)	V=voiced		U=unvoiced	
		plosives V. U.		fricatives V. U.	
Bilabial	m wh w*	b		p	
Labiodental				v	f
Linguodental				Th #	Th?
Linguo-alveolar	L n r y*	d		t	J,z Sh,s
Linguopalatal		g		k	
Glottal	h				
Combination Sounds	x = k+s, g+z q = k+w	dge = d+j ch = t+sh			
* w and y are really semivowel sounds, but for our purposes here they may be treated as glide consonants.					
Th # th as in <i>this</i> .					
Th? th as in <i>thin</i> .					

Notes:

Bilabial = Both lips.
 Labiodental = Lower lip + upper teeth.
 Linguodental = Tip of tongue + upper Teeth.
 Linguo-alveolar = Tip of tongue + back of mouth.
 Linguopalatal = Back of tongue + back roof of mouth.
 Glottal = Throat.

**B
E
G
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6. Finally -

Before leaving this Chapter, I do feel one word of warning might be helpful. If you are performing to anyone with limited hearing, remember that even if they don't actually need a hearing aid, they may well resort to a level of 'lip-reading' to supplement their comprehension of the spoken word. In any such case, the principles of ventriloquism will be a significant problem to them, and in their efforts to make out what you are saying, especially if on a one-to-one basis, they may pick up on the substitution sounds. You will need to deal with such cases tactfully, as they may be sensitive to their failing hearing! I personally find that 'letting them in on the secret' can overcome the problem whilst giving them a feeling that you are taking them into your confidence.

Whatever you do, don't get offended with them! That would be a very poor Christian witness!

I do a fair amount of 'walk about' performing before and after a show, and find that this is where I see most of this type of problem. Please don't let these small difficulties stop you if you plan to do the same. Let me assure you, I always find this aspect of my work very rewarding - especially with young children.

In this Chapter, I have sought to tell you "how to do it" - proficiency however takes practice, practice, practice & more practice! To achieve excellency, you must move on, to stamp your own personality (& your puppets') into your performances. That's when it becomes really rewarding.

CHAPTER 9 - Managing a Team.

General –

It is fully recognised that anyone who wishes to start, or take over Leadership of a Christian Puppet Team, may well have leadership experience in other areas of church life. Those who do not would be well advised to study more comprehensive material than that which is presented here. If in doubt, get advice on suitable study material from the Pastor of the church, or some other trusted authority.

Our aim here is to present those areas where particular care is needed when leading a specific Puppet Team. Before ending this introduction, I would like to comment that even if you are not involved in this, it can still be helpful to be aware of the factors surrounding Puppet Team Leadership. So that you can better co-operate and ‘watch the backs’ of those who are!

Overall Team Leadership –

The overall Team Leader may be responsible for starting the Team from scratch, which will therefore be considered here. He/She will certainly be responsible for Liaising with the Senior Pastor regarding all matters affecting the church as a whole, including Finance, raising a Team and negotiating performances outside the home church. I plan to comment on each of these briefly:

1) STARTING -

- (a) It is essential to get your Pastors approval if the venture is to be a success. You may expect him/her to be interested in the practical and spiritual implications. With regard to the latter, it is a good idea to make available to the pastor, the rules and principles it is intended to work within, also to listen to see if there are any further limits he or she feels strongly about - they may want to approve individual performances till they get to know how you work.
- (b) Obviously Finance will have to be raised, even if much of the equipment is to be home made, the materials still have to be bought. The obvious source of funding would be the parent church, but others include specific donations from interested persons and even specific fund-raising. Decent puppets (say 5) cost about £50 each, stage framing as described earlier about £40 and minimal curtains require about 10 mtrs at 1.5m width @ say £6 per metre gives £60 and thus a total £350 for a minimum start - I assume here that sound equipment can be borrowed and that all labour would be free (in house). These figures are only very approximate to give a general idea!
- (c) Getting a team together can be more difficult than it may seem, you really want mature people who have the time commitment you need. I also like to encourage fairly young people, but remember, teenagers will not be able to do School Assemblies!
- (d) Initial Training
- (e) Getting Equipment together
- (f) Legal Aspects
 - i Insurance
 - ii ‘Political Correctness’
 - iii Child Protection

2) RUNNING -

- (a) Be pro-active in getting Professional music & CD’s
- (b) Liasing your performing Schedule
 - i Own Church
 - ii Outside & 3rd. Parties

- (c) Safety (Including the Team, visitors, Audience and any by-standers outside)
- (d) Training
- (e) Using Available Talent
- (f) Motivating
- (g) Rehearsal Planning

Production Team Leadership –

When a performance is planned, a Team Leader should be allocated to manage that performance. This need not always be the overall Team Leader, but must be someone who, by reason of their experience and loyalty, can be trusted to manage a single performance without any supervision. Such a person should be able to hold the following responsibilities:

- 1) Be capable of completely organising that performance - This may include making booking arrangements (Approved in principle by the Overall Leader)
- 2) Getting a suitable Team together from within the whole Puppet Team.
- 3) Using their own initiative setting up everything in the local environment.
- 4) Possibly program selection and planning. (Approved in principle by the Overall Leader).
- 5) Negotiating appropriate ‘slots’ in the rehearsal schedule.
- 6) Ensuring all equipment & persons are available on-time (including set-up time needed)
 - (a) Equipment required list.
 - (b) Notify Team.
 - (c) Travel Arrangements (if any)

Training Advice –

Good training can easily be overlooked, especially in what may seem a simple task, performed by volunteers. This is definitely a mistake when there is a desire to provide the sort of professional performance we should all be aiming at! If I may interject something personal here, my statement is based on over 50 years of experience of professional Training, giving Instructors’ Courses, writing Gov’t. Approved Training courses, and examining within the Aviation Industry.

It has often been said (rather un grammatically!) “Them as can - Do; Them as can’t - Teach”. I disagree strongly, but there is a truth hidden within this - being able to do something brilliantly does not automatically make a good instructor. Conversely, so long as a person can perform adequately and knows the subject well, they can still have the potential to be an excellent instructor!

So, what are the basic rules for being a good instructor?

1. Don’t miss things out because you have assumed knowledge within the student - cover the subject fully. This mistake can sometimes be made in the guise of encouraging ‘initiative’! Initiative is good and should be encouraged, but only after the subject has been learned.
2. Be careful to say what you really mean, being slack and over-casual can cause confusion the can take a long time to eradicate.
3. Never be impatient, slow learning and grasp of the subject or skill must never be made into a matter of discipline! If your student hasn’t grasped what you are saying,, the odds are that you haven’t put it over correctly. If ever a student has difficulty, the first place to look for improvement is yourself! (One small but important side-note here, never make the students errors a matter of ‘gossip’ especially be careful if the results were genuinely amusing - the learning process should as far as possible, be strictly confidential)

4. Whilst a subject should be taught and learned precisely, you should encourage dialogue, and welcome new ideas. If these have to be rejected, always do so with consideration and with a clear explanation of why you consider it has to be rejected.
5. At the start of any training session, always have a clear plan of what you hope to achieve. Make sure the student has been properly briefed before the session, and is given ample opportunity to ask questions and raise points after the session.
6. Once newly taught, ensure students have an early opportunity to put their skills into action and monitor their progress. Whilst cross-comments between fellow students and those who have been newly taught can be good - do keep a careful watch over these, so that slack or off-beam ideas are not allowed to infiltrate the Team.

These notes are certainly not intended to be more than a general guide. Those who are given training responsibilities should be carefully selected, bearing in mind that a real enthusiasm for teaching is far more important than great skill in performing. If classroom talks are planned, then more guidance is necessary for someone new to the art, before they are left to deliver lectures unsupervised.

CHAPTER 10 - Potential Venues.

General –

Whilst it is central to the very existence of a Christian Puppet Team, that performances should contain a strong Christian message. It is not unreasonable to accept requests from Non-Christian Venues. If such a performance is accepted, then a humorous or ethical theme that does not conflict with the Christian 'ethos' would be fully acceptable. Remember, the simple witness of Christian folk working for the pleasure of people in general, can well be a first step in reaching those who would not even attend any recognisable Christian performance.

Where public performances are involved (even in church at times) there are legal implications, such as a Licence to perform. (If in doubt, check with local Police), Copyright as applicable, Insurance, 'Political Correctness' of sketches used, Etc. which must be considered seriously

Whilst not wishing to discuss financial implications here – setting up a performance does cost money and while it should not be a profit-making activity, proper expenses & other costs should reasonably be covered.

Christian Venues –

Providing the distance is acceptable, then performing at local Churches will widen the scope of the team. This will be a blessing to more folk, and the additional performances will also benefit the value of the work needed to put a sketch together - whilst also improving the professionalism of the team.

Schools –

School Assemblies provide a highly rewarding venue, especially in view of the current trend to side-line Christianity in the educational curriculum. School 'Open Days' are also an excellent venue, especially if they lead to ongoing relationships with the School in question.

Local Events –

Trade Fairs, Christmas Bazaars, Holiday events, Etc. can all welcome a puppet performance – Seasonal Christian themes are usually accepted over the Christmas & Easter times.

Outreach –

A specific 'targeted' Christian Outreach performance can be a more challenging venture, but if chosen right, is well worth the effort. A good way in to start, is to join in with a larger organisation that has a major event planned and might welcome something aimed at the younger element. Another possibility is to use the Foyer of a sympathetic trader. There are a number of Christian Businesses 'out there', who may be sensitive to being too open about it for fear of legal 'discrimination' problems, but who would welcome the opportunity of 'hosting' a puppet performance.

The Salvation Army bands and other carol singers are fairly often seen in some of the big Supermarkets.

If any reader has any other ideas, I would welcome your input! Remember, we don't have 'Agents', (who would cost us anyway) like secular performers do, to get bookings for us – however, if we are in Gods' purposes, and are sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading, He is far better at getting the right openings for us, than any human agency!

CHAPTER 11 - Sources of information.

- **Books –**

One Way Ministries have a number of books available for sale. These generally go into more detail on specific subjects than this overview.

- **Web Sites –**

There are a large number of Web sites featuring puppetry. To explore these extensively would take a great deal of time – However, to start you off here are a few you might find interesting:

www.onewaystreet.com/page1.html

www.onewayuk.com

www.civilisation.ca/arts/ssf/ssfdeeng.html

www.cln.org/themes/puppetry.html

www.axtell.com/contact.html

www.axtell.com/vent.html

www.axtell.com/manip.html

- **Miscellaneous –**

There are a few shops who sell puppets, that are suitable for our uses. Some of these are only too pleased to talk about their goods and possibly let you 'have a go' yourself. The main advantage being that you can actually speak face to face with someone!