university musical society
2000-2001 youth education

american repertory theater

the king stag

teacher resource guide
the university musical society’s
2000 - 2001 youth education program

american repertory theater

the king stag

directed by andrei serban • movement, costumes, masks, and puppetry by julie taymor

youth performances
friday, october 20, 2000
monday, october 23, 2000
tuesday, october 24, 2000
power center, ann arbor


This study guide is a production of the University Musical Society’s Department of Education and Audience Development. It was compiled and written by Sue Ratcliffe and Jennie Salmon and edited by Kristin Fontichiaro and Ben Johnson. Additional material provided by the American Repertory Theater.
# Table of Contents

## Part I: About the Production

- 5 University Musical Society
- 6 How to be a Good Audience Member
- 7 An Overview of *The King Stag*
- 9 Plot Synopsis for *The King Stag*
- 11 Cast of Characters
- 12 Artistic Staff
- 13 Carlo Gozzi: playwright
- 14 Andrei Serban: director
- 15 Julie Taymor: costumes, mask, movement, and puppetry
- 16 Julie Taymor’s Designs for *The King Stag*
- 17 Styles of Puppetry
- 22 Chinese Theater/Opera
- 24 Chinese Costume Influence in *The King Stag*
- 25 *The King Stag* – According to Julie Taymor
- 27 A Brief History of *Commedia dell’Arte*, or Italian Improvisational Comedy
- 30 Arlecchinio/Truffaldino
- 32 Pantalone
- 34 Dottore
- 35 Brighella
- 37 The Lovers
- 39 Theater Vocabulary

## Part II: Lesson Plans and Activities

- 42 Lesson Plans
- 43 Content Standards and Benchmarks: Making Meaningful Connections with *The King Stag*
- 45 Assessing Your Students’ Prior Knowledge
- 46 Lesson Plan 1: Previewing the Video
- 47 Lesson Plan 2: Shadow Puppets
- 49 Shadow Puppetry Ideas for the Academic Curriculum
- 50 Lesson Plan 3: *Commedia dell’Arte* Activities
- 55 Lesson Plan 4: Mask-Making
- 58 Lesson Plan 5: Poetry
- 59 Related Activities
- 60 Internet Resources
- 61 Bibliography/Recommended Reading
- 62 Community Resources
- 64 Drawings, Letters, Reviews
Part I: About the Production

Angela, in love with Deramo, King of Serendippo
University Musical Society

The goal of the University Musical Society (UMS) is to engage, educate, and serve Michigan audiences by bringing to our community an ongoing series of world-class artists, who represent the diverse spectrum of today’s vigorous and exciting live performing arts world.

Over its 122 years, strong leadership coupled with a devoted community have placed UMS in a league of internationally-recognized performing arts series. Today, the UMS seasonal program is a reflection of a thoughtful respect for this rich and varied history, balanced by a commitment to dynamic and creative visions of where the performing arts will take us into this new millennium. Every day UMS seeks to cultivate, nurture, and stimulate public interest and participation in every facet of the live performing arts.

Since that first season in 1880, UMS has expanded greatly and now presents the very best from the full spectrum of the performing arts: internationally renowned recitalists and orchestras, dance and chamber ensembles, jazz and world music performers and theater. Through educational endeavors, commissioning of new works, youth programs, artists, residencies and other collaborative projects, UMS has maintained its reputation for quality, artistic distinction and innovation. The University Musical Society now hosts over 90 performances and more than 150 educational events each season. UMS has flourished with the support of a generous community that gathers in Hill and Rackham Auditoria, the Power Center, the Michigan Theater, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, the Museum of Art and the Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre.

While proudly affiliated with the University of Michigan, housed on the Ann Arbor campus, and a regular collaborator with many University units, the Musical Society is a separate not-for-profit organization that supports itself from ticket sales, corporate and individual contributions, foundation and government grants, and endowment income.
How to be a Good Audience Member

Students attending the University Musical Society youth performances are expected to know how to be good audience members. Please take the time to educate and prepare your students for this live performance.

**Good audiences . . .**
- Are good listeners.
- Keep their hands and feet to themselves.
- Do not talk or whisper during the performance.
- Laugh at the parts that are funny.
- Do not eat gum, candy, food, or drink in the theater.
- Stay in their seats during the performance.

**Applause, Applause!!**
As a general rule, each performance ends with applause from the audience. This is how the audience acknowledges the performers. Applause says, “Thank you! You’re great!” Applause is a compliment defined by the loudness and duration of the clapping of hands.

In a theatrical performance, it is traditional to applaud at the end of each act and sometimes after impressive scenes. At the end of the show are curtain calls, when each of the actors take a turn to bow for the audience. The performers are acknowledged by the cast and rewarded with applause from the viewers. If audience members really enjoy the performance, they may stand and clap in what is called a standing ovation.

**Drawings, Letters, and Reviews**
After the performance, please conduct follow-up activities with your students. Help your students think about, discuss and internalize the production they’ve just seen. Please have the students make drawings or write thank you letters and reviews. These items will be shared with artists and the funders who make these performances possible. Encourage the students to be as imaginative and creative as possible. Send drawings, letters and reviews to: Youth Education Program, University Musical Society, Burton Memorial Tower, 881 N. University, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1011.
A Brief Synopsis of *The King Stag*

Deramo, king of the Asian Kingdom of Serendippo, is searching for a wife. With the aid of a magical statue, he has already interviewed and rejected 2,748 candidates before meeting Angela, the beautiful daughter of his Second Minister. She alone loves him for himself, not for his crown. Unfortunately, Angela is also loved by the evil Tartaglia, Prime Minister of Serendippo, who is determined that the King shall marry his daughter Clarice. Soon, Tartaglia hatches a terrible plan. He discovers that Deramo knows a magic spell with which he can transfer his soul into the body of a dead creature. When the King and his court are out hunting in the enchanted forest of Miracoli, Tartaglia seizes his moment and challenges Deramo to demonstrate his magical powers by sending his soul into the corpse of a stag, or deer, they have just killed. The King does so, whereupon Tartaglia, repeating the spell, implants his own spirit in the dead body of the King. Mayhem ensues, and for a time all seems lost for Deramo and Angela. But this is a fairy tale, and as in all the best fairy tales, everything ends happily ever after.

Julie Taymor

Julie Taymor is one of the most imaginative and productive directors and designers working in the performing arts today. Taymor received numerous awards including a Tony for her direction of *The Lion King*, becoming the first woman to receive this highest award for the direction of a musical. Taymor also designed *The Lion King*’s puppets and Tony Award-winning costumes. Over the past several years, she has directed plays, musicals, and operas in the world’s most prestigious halls and with some of the greatest musicians of our time, including Jessye Norman and Zubin Mehta. In addition to her Tony awards, Taymor has been awarded a MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, two OBIE Awards, the first annual Dorothy B. Chandler award in theater, and the 1990 Brandeis Creative Arts Award.

Cultural Influences

This production of *The King Stag* combines international influences from Asia, including China, Japan and Indonesia, along with the European method of play acting known as *commedia dell’arte*. These influences can be seen throughout the play in the form of shadow puppetry, *Wayang* puppetry, and in the costumes and movements of the actors. The blending and juxtaposing of the forms is intended to create costumes and styles that are not recognizable as coming from a specific place.
Commedia dell’arte (coh-MAY-dee-uh  dell AHR-tay) Commedia dell’arte was an art form popular in Italy and other parts of Europe between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. This form of theater combined mime, improvised and scripted dialogue, stock characters, and acrobatics. Stereotypical characters are at the heart of commedia dell’arte. These characters are put through different scenarios, twists, and turns in play after play. Part of the individuality of these characters lies in the use of half masks that help reinforce the characters' personality but still allow the actors full use of their voice inflections.

Chinese Theater/Opera
Chinese theater and opera are easily identified by their elaborate costumes, stylized poses, and dramatic motions. Unlike Western theater, the Chinese plays are less concerned about expressing emotion and place more emphasis on the beautiful way in which these emotions are portrayed. Actors in the Chinese theater spend lifetimes studying and practicing the dance-like moves of this art form, and the result is a production of the highest aesthetic quality possible.

Puppetry
There is an extensive combination of puppetry used in the performance of The King Stag that is inspired by cultural traditions throughout the world. Paper kites from Taiwan are used to represent birds. These kites are flown suspended from long bamboo poles by people on the ground. The stags are made of silk stretched on wooden frames manipulated by a visible puppeteer - a person with a blue face on stage. There is a giant 15 foot bear made of parachute silk, and an old man is created in the style of the Indonesian and Japanese Bunraku (buhn-rah-KOO) puppetry. Shadow puppets create a forest of animals behind a white screen.
This morality tale of good versus evil opens in the Forest of Miracoli (mee-RAH-coh-lee, or miracles), where Japanese-style kite-parrots on poles flutter in the air. One of these parrots is really the magician Durandarte (doo-ahn-DAR-tay) in disguise. Durandarte hides his true identity in order to catch evildoers on whom he then works positive magic. Meanwhile, in the capital of the make-believe Kingdom of Serendippo (seh-ren-DIPP-oh), King Deramo (der-AH-moh), our hero, searches for a wife. He wants his bride to be sincere and to love him for himself, not his title, wealth or power. Having interviewed 2,748 titled applicants to no avail, he begins to quiz the relatives of palace workers. Clarice (clah-REE-chay), the nasal-voiced daughter of the King’s Prime Minister Tartaglia (tar-TAH-lee-uh), is in love with a man named Leandro (lay-AHN-droh); she does not want to be Deramo’s queen. Her father, fearing that he will lose his position, threatens her with bodily harm if she fails to captivate the King.

When Deramo interviews potential brides, he relies on a statue who laughs and rolls its eyes when it perceives an insincere person. The statue in this production is actually the stage’s backdrop. When the statue laughs, Deramo rejects Clarice as well as grotesque Smeraldina (smay-ruhl-DEE-nuh), sister of Brighella (bree-GEL-luh), the King’s assistant. Angela, virtuous daughter of vice minister Pantalone (pahn-ta-LOH-nay), truly loves King Deramo. Her mask is pristine and white, and her beautiful red hair cascades down her back. Through the use of stylized Asian gestures, she expresses her innocence. The King wisely chooses her for his bride, ignorant of the fact that evil Tartaglia desires Angela as much as he lusts for royal power.

In celebration of Deramo’s choice of Angela as queen, a royal hunt is organized. The Forest of Miracoli is suddenly alive with tinkling, rustling music and the shadows of fauna. On a white screen at the back of the stage, the silhouette of a bear looms in turquoise light. A bat turns upside down. Stags flee across the screen; their lithe bodies are stretched by a projectionist’s trick into dachshunds as they leap. A dragon floats off into space. A fox slinks on the ground below. Guns in hand, the hunters struggle. A stag (male deer) and a doe (female deer) sink slowly to their deaths. Tartaglia tricks Deramo into revealing Durandarte’s magic spell by which spirits may pass from body to body.
King Deramo’s spirit passes into the body of the stag (hence the play’s title), leaving his human body behind. The stag is a rod puppet, carried by an actor and worked by wires and slim rods; its silken body is made to flutter by air currents. Tartaglia passes his own spirit into the king’s body and disposes of his discarded, prime minister body. Tartaglia, now in the body of the king, orders to have the stag (containing Deramo’s soul) hunted down and killed. Deramo’s soul then migrates again into the body of a bony old man, represented by a bunraku (buhn-RAH-koo), a type of Asian marionnette puppet. Tartaglia, meanwhile, heads back to “his” bride Angela, with the intent of dictatorally running the kingdom.

Though ignorant of the magic spells being perpetrated, the courtiers sense that something is amiss. Their “King” is behaving strangely: even his mask/face has changed. The real King’s refined, white half-mask, a blank countenance on which we can scribble heroism and romantic yearning, has been transformed by the murderous imposter’s spirit into a misshapen, bloated version of the same face. The King’s stance has also been transformed. Formerly, the real king had bounced on light golden elf shoes, but now, the character lurches and slithers across the stage.

Now in the body of the gnarled old man, Deramo must convince Angela that despite his appearance, he really is her husband. Because of the purity of his soul and her sweetness, true love prevails. In the end, the intervention of the magician Durandarte puts things right. The King and Angela end up happily together with the entire cast on stage, and Tartaglia is pointed out as the evil manipulator that he is.
Cast of Characters

Cigolotti (chig-lee-AH-tee), Durandarte’s servant
Durandarte (doo-ahn-DARR-tay), a magician
Brighella (brig-ELLA), assistant to the King
Smeraldina (smay-rul-DEE-na), Brighella’s sister
Truffaldino (troo-full-DEE-no), birdcatcher, in love with Smeraldina
Tartaglia (tar-TAH-lee-uh), prime minister and confident to the King, in love with Angela
Clarice (clah-REE-chay), Tartaglia’s daughter, in love with Leandro
Pantalone (pan-tuh-LOAN-ay), second minister to the King, father to Leandro and Angela
Angela (an-JUH-luh), daughter of Pantalone, in love with the King
Leandro (lay-AHN-dro), son of Pantalone, a courtier
Deramo (der-AH-mo), King of Serendippo

The scene for this play is the Asian kingdom of Serendippo (seh-ren-DIPP-oh) and the forest of Miracoli (Mee-RAH-coh-lee).
Artistic Staff

The King Stag
A Tragicomic Tale for the Theatre
by Carlo Gozzi

Stage Direction by Andrei Serban

Original Music by Elliot Goldenthal

Choreography by Julie Taymor

Set Design by Michael H. Yeargan

Costumes, Masks and Puppetry
by Julie Taymor

Orginal Lighting by Jennifer Tipton;
Adapted by John Ambrosone

Sound Adapted by Maribeth Back

Deramo, King of Serendippo
Carlo Gozzi

Playwright

Carlo Gozzi (GAH-tsee) is an artistic troublemaker, best known today for *Turandot* and *The Love of Three Oranges*, two fables that became the basis of a Puccini and Prokofiev opera, respectively. Carlo Gozzi was a poet, prose writer, and dramatist. A political reactionary, he was also a strong defender of the traditional *commedia dell’arte* that was giving way to the dramatic innovations of realists, especially his arch-rival Carlo Goldoni.

Count Gozzi was born into a noble but poor family. Sixth in a family of eleven, he grew up in a dilapidated castle under the misgovernment of his vain mother and ill-paid servants. The family experienced increasing poverty, for the Countess Gozzi was inclined to gambling and ostentation. As the once-prosperous estate dribbled away, Carlo lost his healthy mental balance and grew more manic and ill-tempered with time. He protested against the Enlightenment for destroying the old order of society and decaying the aristocracy and its values. A conservative, he championed correctness, purity, Italianism and conservatism.

In response to social change, he bitterly attacked Goldoni, who represented the emerging middle class and was a forerunner of a more democratic and national spirit. To depreciate Goldoni and to revive the *commedia dell’arte*, Gozzi wrote ten wildly fantastical plays, literally “fairy tales.” According to *The King Stag*’s director, Andrei Serban, Gozzi believed that “the theater’s truth exists only within the theater: the theater’s function is not to copy or mimic any sort of reality. Naturalism is a perversion of art.”

Gozzi’s fables are based on puppet plays, Asian stories, and fairy tales. They rely on *commedia dell’arte* masks or stereotypical characters. The play is overtly moral, yet intentionally implausible – to tweak the nose of Goldoni. Gozzi championed frank, gleeful artifice, as can be seen by his setting *The King Stag* in the exotic imagination, and by his proliferation of strange riddles, customs and magic.
Andrei Serban was born in Bucharest, Romania. He studied at the Theatre Institute, where he staged widely acclaimed productions. At age 19, Serban’s production of *Julius Caesar* won several first prize awards at international theater festivals.

Associated with Robert Brustein’s American Repertory Theatre Company for more than twenty years, Andrei Serban has directed *The Merchant of Venice, The Taming of the Shrew, The King Stag, Sganarelle, Three Sisters, The Juniper Tree, The Miser, Twelfth Night,* and *Sweet Table* at the Richelieu at the A.R.T. Further credits include *Ghost Sonata* and *Mad Dog Blues* at the Yale Repertory Theatre. In New York for Ellen Stewart’s LaMama, he staged *Fragments of a Trilogy* (*Medea, Electra, The Trojan Woman*), *As You Like It, The Good Woman of Setzuan,* and *Uncle Vanya*; for The New York Shakespeare Festival, he directed *The Cherry Orchard, Agamemnon, Master and Margarita, The Umbrellas of Cherbourg, Cymbeline,* and *The Seagull.*

He has navigated between theatre and opera in and out of thirty-nine countries and four continents, touching down for three years to head the Romanian National Theatre after the revolution. Within five months, he restaged *Fragments of a Greek Trilogy* with three separate casts and directed Timberlake Wertenbaker’s *Our Country’s Good,* also with three casts. In addition, he produced a musical, *Auditia,* based on Michael Bennett’s *A Chorus Line.* The Romanian production of *Fragments of a Greek Trilogy* has been invited to international theater festivals in Milan, Paris, Sao Paolo, Salzburg, and Edinburgh.

Andrei Serban has taught at universities and interantional and national theatre institutes, including the Yale School of Drama, Harvard University, La Conservatoire de Paris, the Stockholm Dramatic School, the Theatre School of Tokyo, University of California - San Diego, the Pittsburgh Theatre Institute and San Francisco State. Serban has received major grants from the Ford, Guggenhiem and Rockefeller Foundations. Currently he can be found at Columbia University, where he is Director of The Oscar Hammerstein II Center for Theatre Studies and the acting program. This summer, he directed *Hamlet* for the New York Shakespeare Festival.
Julie Taymor is one of the most imaginative and provocative directors and designers working in the performing arts today. Taymor received numerous awards including a Tony for her direction of *The Lion King*, becoming the first woman to receive this highest award for the direction of a musical. Taymor also designed *Lion King’s* puppets and Tony Award-winning costumes.

In 1996, Taymor directed *Juan Darien* at the Lincoln Center’s Vivian Beaumont Theater, which received five Tony nominations. Also, in 1996, she directed and co-designed another Carlo Gozzi play, *The Green Bird*, at the New Victory Theater in New York City and at the La Jolla Playhouse. In September, 1995, Taymor directed Wagner’s *The Flying Dutchman* for the Los Angeles Music Center in a co-production with the Houston Grand Opera. She directed Strauss’ *Salome* for the Kirov Opera in Russia, Germany, and Israel under the baton of Valery Gergiev. In June, 1993, she directed Mozart’s *The Magic Flute* for the Maggio Musicale in Florence, Zubin Mehta conducting.

Taymor’s first opera direction was of Stravinsky’s *Oedipus Rex* for the Saito Kinen Orchestra in Japan, Seiji Ozawa conducting. The opera featured Philip Langridge as Oedipus and Jessye Norman as Iocasta and debuted in Japan in 1992.

Taymor made her feature film directorial debut with her adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*. Starring Anthony Hopkins and Jessica Lange, *Titus* was released in 1999. Her production of Carlo Gozzi’s *The Green Bird* opened on Broadway in spring 2000. She is also collaborating with Elliot Goldenthal on an original opera, *Grendel*. In 1991, Taymor received a MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship. She has also received a Guggenheim Fellowship, two OBIE Awards, the first annual Dorothy B. Chandler award in theater, and the 1990 Brandeis Creative Arts Award.
Julie Taymor’s Designs for *The King Stag*
Styles of Puppetry

One of the magical properties of puppetry is its ability to empower. In handing over responsibility for words and feelings to the puppet, we are able to express ourselves more easily and effectively. A puppet is a figure—human, animal, or abstract in form—that is moved by human, and not mechanical, aid. Puppet shows seem to have existed in almost all civilizations and in almost all periods. In Europe, written records of them go back to the 5th century BC and the Symposium of the Greek historian Xenophon. Written records in other civilizations are less ancient, but in China, India, Java, and elsewhere in Asia there are ancient traditions of puppet theater. Among Native American tribes, there are traditions of puppetlike figures used in ritual magic. In Africa, records of puppets are meagre, but the mask is an important feature in almost all African magical ceremonies, and the dividing line between the puppet and the masked actor, as will be seen, is not always easily drawn. It may certainly be said that puppet theater has everywhere preceeded written drama and, indeed, writing of any kind. It represents one of the most primitive instincts of the human race.

Designer Julie Taymor is perhaps best known for her work with puppets. Many have seen her extraordinary puppets in the Broadway show *The Lion King*. Throughout her career, she has experimented with puppets, especially work with shadow puppets, rod puppets, and *bunraku* (bun-rah-KOO) puppets. Each of these three styles is found in *The King Stag*.

Three-dimensional Puppets

Hand or glove puppets

These have a hollow cloth body that fit over the manipulator’s hand; his fingers fit into the head and the arms and give them motion. The figure is seen from the waist upward, and there are normally no legs. The head is usually of wood, papier-mâché, or rubber material and the hands generally of wood or felt. Although hand puppets are not present in *The King Stag*, they remain one of a child’s first exposures to puppetry and are easily made by students.
Combination rod and hand puppets
Many of the puppets with which children are familiar are combination rod and hand puppets. The most famous example of these are the Muppets, created by the Jim Henson Company. With these puppets, the puppeteer crouches below. One hand travels inside the puppet to manipulate the mouth while the other hand holds two rods, one to control each arm. Muppets familiar to children include Kermit the Frog (pictured to the left), Grover, Cookie Monster, Miss Piggy, and Oscar the Grouch.

Marionettes or string puppets
These are full-length figures controlled from above. Normally they are moved by strings or more often threads, leading from the limbs to a control or crutch held by the manipulator. Movement is imparted to a large extent by tilting or rocking the control, but individual strings are plucked when a decided movement is required. A simple marionette may have nine strings—one to each leg, one to each hand, one to each shoulder, one to each ear (for head movements), and one to the base of the spine (for bowing); but special effects will require special strings that may double or treble this number. The manipulation of a many-stringed marionette is a highly-skilled operation. Controls are of two main types - horizontal (or aeroplane) and vertical -- and the choice is largely a matter of personal preference. Marionettes do not appear in The King Stag.
Bunraku (bunn-rah-KOO)
These five types are not the only examples of world puppetry. There are, for instance, the puppets carried by their manipulators in full view of the audience. The most interesting of these are the Japanese bunraku puppets, which are named for a Japanese puppet master, Uemura Bunrakuken, of the 18th century. These figures, which are one-half to two-thirds life size, may be operated by as many as three manipulators. The chief manipulator controls head movements with one hand by means of strings inside the body, which may raise the eyebrows or swivel the eyes, while using the other hand to move the right arm of the puppet. The second manipulator moves the left arm of the puppet; and the third moves the legs. The coordination of movement between these three artists requires long and devoted training. The magnificent costumes and stylized carving of the bunraku puppets establish them as among the most striking figures of their kind in the world. The photos to the side show the old man Bunraku puppet from The King Stag.

Two-dimensional Puppets

Flat figures
Up to this point, all the types of puppets that have been considered have been three-dimensional rounded figures, but there is a whole family of two-dimensional flat figures. Flat figures, worked from above like marionettes, with hinged flaps that could be raised or lowered, were sometimes used for trick transformations; flat jointed figures, operated by piston-type arms attached to revolving wheels below, were used in displays that featured processions.

Shadow figures
These are a special type of flat puppet in which the shadow is seen through a translucent screen. They may be cut from leather or some other opaque material, as in the traditional theaters of Java, Bali, and Thailand, in the so-called ombres chinoises (French for “Chinese shadows”) of 18th-century Europe, and in the art theatres of 19th-century Paris. Alternatively, they may be cut from colored fish skins or some other translucent material, as in the traditional theaters of China, India, Turkey, and Greece, and in the recent work of several European theaters. They may be operated by rods from below, as in the Javanese theater; by rods held at right angles to the screen, as in the Chinese and Greek theatres; or by threads concealed behind the figures, as in the ombres chinoises.
Taymor uses shadow figures in two places in *The King Stag*. The first is in the scene immediately following Deramo’s proposal to Angela. As the characters move behind a projector screen at the back of the stage, they are lit from behind, and their partying shadows are all that the audience can see.

The second occasion is at the beginning of the hunt. Look carefully for white shadowy figures of animals behind the same screen. This is a special kind of mirrored shadow puppetry. Julie Taymor explains this process in her book *Playing with Fire*:

“Going a step further with the idea of translucency, I designed mirrored Plexiglas shadow puppets for the rest of the forest animals. This technique is as old as reflection itself. The ancient Chinese would bounce the sunlight off a carved mirror-stone to send messages great distances. In *The King Stag*, the puppeteers stood behind a large rear-projection screen (unlike typical screens, the light comes from the back and not from the front) holding the two-dimensional mirror puppets. Focused light bounced off the mirror and onto the screen, causing the figures to be white shadows rather than black ones. When the Plexiglas was bent slightly, the light image stretched and contorted on the screen, which caused it to look three dimensional, similar to holograms.”
Rehearsal of *The King Stag*

The two stag puppets are center.

Note the human puppeteers controlling the puppets' movements.
Chinese Theater/Opera

The sweeping, striking acting style of *The King Stag*’s King Deramo and Angela may at first appear unfamiliar or melodramatic, but these mannerisms are actually distinguishing trademarks of classical Chinese theater. Chinese theater, which dates back to the late thirteenth century, is characterized by a lack of realism in the performance and emphasis on artistic achievement rather than moral instruction or complex plot structure. Every aspect of the art is carefully designed and executed to fashion an elegant, graceful, and luxurious drama of the highest aesthetic quality possible.

Chinese theater includes four characters types: men, women, comedians and masked figures. The categories of men and women are frequently divided into more descriptive subcategories by age (old, young, child) or status (warrior, official, scholar, lady). However, the little girl and adolescent figures never appear in the classical repertoire. Comedians play either a witty or an acrobatic role, while masks are typically reserved for characters endowed with special power or authority such as spirits, gods, high royalty, or the occasional villain. In *The King Stag*, designer Julie Taymor opted to have all of the characters in mask. Due to the specific techniques involved in portraying each of these characters, actors frequently specialize in one role type. Both men and women perform in the Chinese theater, but unlike early Western theater the Chinese costumes make it easy for women to play the parts of men and vice versa.

Elaborate and ornate costuming is one of the hallmarks of Chinese theater. All of the characters, no matter how poor or lowly, present themselves in beautiful silk gowns. These “disguises,” as they are often called, give the audience important background information concerning a character’s occupation, class, loyalties, wealth and family. For example, an actor wearing black is expected to be a servant or uncouth character. Yellow gowns symbolize royalty; greens represent virtue; red is used during formal occasions or celebrations; and children usually appear in white. The way in which the disguise is worn also helps identify the character’s mood. A man who is particularly agitated or distracted will wear his hat askew and his gown tucked into his belt, while a madwoman wears two coats with only one arm through the sleeve of the outer layer. Two long tassels on a large crown are indicative of the emperor, and pompons and wings on the various helmets denote rank and station. If you look closely at King Deramo’s hat, you will see “wings” that show his high stature.

Such conspicuous and decorative costumes greatly affect the performer’s movement and acting technique. In Chinese theater, the motions are highly stylized and choreographed with nearly continual music, appearing more like dance than typical Western acting. This results in the costumes becoming integrated into the actor’s
vocabulary of stage movement. While the standard student learns the forty-two different styles of walking on stage or the twenty-six ways of pointing properly, he or she also learns seventy-two motions involving the draping sleeves on his or her costume. Each motion symbolizes a particular emotion.

All action on stage is expected to be graceful, artistic, and controlled. Overacting is considered offensive and disruptive. The audience is less interested in knowing that a character is angry than in observing how beautifully the actor goes about portraying that emotion. Overall body movement is also more highly valued than minute detail or facial expressions, primarily because the audience is traditionally seated too far from the stage to appreciate fully such gestures. Acting troupes therefore emphasize the importance of elegance being observed from a distance through poses, sweeping motions, walking, and carrying oneself properly at all times.

The stage itself is usually bare of any scenery, with only necessary hand props and occasional furniture. You will notice that this is also true for the set of *The King Stag*. Actors employ dialogue and miming skills to illustrate setting. Pages and stagehands, who walk freely about the stage performing duties while the drama’s action continues around them, will frequently carry scrolls or plaques with descriptions of location or environment written upon them. This is another Chinese element incorporated into *The King Stag*. They will even guide the major characters during journeys from one location to another, perhaps bearing a scroll with “water” penned across it, indicating that the actor is crossing the ocean by boat. However, the pages are rarely given an acting or speaking role in the play.

Considering how rarely sets are used, the presence of anything extra on stage is quite significant. A chair, for instance, is a popular stage prop that serves diverse purposes. By standing upon it, an actor is able to mimic being high in the mountains, riding a cloud, or traveling on a boat. Addressing others from such a higher position also implies superiority or dominance. Other noticeable props carry similar symbolism to add to the artistic depth of the performance.
Chinese Costume Influence in *The King Stag*

The photograph on the left is of a traditional warrior in Chinese opera. Notice the rigid ‘wings’ on his backside. Notice how Tartaglia’s cape mimics the traditional design.

The photograph on the right is of the character of a Chinese prime minister. Compare Tartaglia’s headdress to that of the Chinese minister.
Julio Gozzi, the eighteenth-century playwright, wrote *The King Stag* in the tradition of the *commedia dell’arte*. This oriental fantasy is peopled with a host of stock *commedia dell’arte* characters such as Pantalone, the old buffoon; Truffaldino, the whimsically clownish Harlequino; Deramo, the romantically noble king; Tartaglia, his wickedly evil prime minister; and others. In addition to the human elements is a wondrous array of animals and magical events. My task was to find a unifying style for all these elements that would blend Eastern and Western techniques and visual motifs.

We decided to use the *commedia dell’arte* traditional method of half-masks for the actors. This allowed the dialogue to be delivered and comprehended without obstruction. First, I made plaster casts of the actors' faces. These were the foundations upon which I sculpted the characters out of clay. The finished sculptures became molds, which were then covered in celastic, a cloth impregnated with plastic that, when dipped in the solvent acetone, becomes pliant. Like papier-mâché, these masks are extremely light and slightly flexible, which makes them bearable to wear. To finish the face, I designed makeup to be worn on the chin complementing the upper half-mask. Some of the characters' masks, however, had sculpted chin pieces that were separately strapped to the performers' faces, still allowing for the dialogue. A few of the actors wore piece masks, where only small portions of the face were covered, accenting the most important feature, such as a singularly long nose or high, balding forehead. In these cases, the unexposed portions allowed for terrific freedom of facial expression and were particularly appropriate for comic characters.

The challenging and sometimes disconcerting aspect of the mask process for actors is that the designer decides on the characters of the roles before the actors even get to rehearsal. It is absolutely critical that the actors have their masks from the first day of rehearsal, as they will inform the actors as to the characters' idiosyncrasies as much as the dialogue will. And because the acting style is not naturalistic, the masks will also clue the actors as to their physical type of movement. The actors' bodies must complete the sculpture. The shape, color, and dominant features of the mask are the guide. This method of working from the outside in is more Eastern than Western and can be liberating to actors. For once, they are not necessarily typecast. Having their own faces hidden from view allows them to truly transform into other beings.

The costumes were designed to be as sculpted as the masks. They were not clothes that a character might choose to wear but were the core of the characters themselves. In some cases, as with Tartaglia, his cape held its bell-like structure thanks to rods sewn into the lining. Thus, when he would open his cape, taking hold of the two front poles, the effect was that of a bat spreading his threatening wings. The costume and mask demanded that he move in a certain way. At first, the actor felt inhibited by the limiting nature of the costume. He could not kneel, sit, or put his hands on his hips without breaking, or wanting to break, the rods. These are the tension-filled moments that a designer "loves": Does the costume stay and the actor learn to use it? Or does
one modify the design, making it comfortable to wear but ultimately lacking the edge of the original concept? In this case, through the encouragement of the director and myself, the actor discovered the power of his “wings,” recognizing and embracing the essential physical vocabulary that was unique to him.

In Japanese Noh theatre, the kimono demands that the wearer raise his or her arms only to a certain height. Beyond that the fabric will crease and weaken the image. The actor’s talent lies in the quality of movement of the arms within that restrained scope.

The oriental aspect of the play allowed me to experiment with a variety of styles from all parts of Asia - Japan, the Philippines, Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, India and China. The unifying factor was the blending and juxtaposing of the forms so that not one costume was recognizable as coming from a specific place. European details such as the white ruffled collars were thrown in to bridge the continents. To cohere the style further, every costume was made from white fabric and subsequently hand dyed, painted, or stenciled. Japanese block printed kites, with their glorious colors and patterns, were a source of inspiration.

I carried the notion of the kite into the various puppets designed for the play. Real paper bird kites from Taiwan, suspended from long bamboo poles, conquered the air space with marvelous simplicity. The stags were constructed out of stenciled silk stretched on shaped rattan frames whose moving parts were pulled by the strings of the visible puppeteer. The giant, fifteen-foot bear was also constructed out of rattan and parachute silk, which would fill the air, giving body to the animal. Light emanating from the milky Plexiglas floor illuminated the puppets’ translucent fabric. These materials added a magical delicacy to the production. Again, as in Savages, I was looking to discover the minimal, elemental characteristics of a subject and its movement that, when the puppet was animated, would give it soul.

The only puppet of a human, and one of a totally different nature, was that of the bony old man, a life-size Bunraku-style puppet made of fiberglass and painted purple and white. Three puppeteers manipulated his body, but soon, as with the Bunraku from Japan, one forgot that the puppeteers were there at all. The movement was so lifelike in spirit that it became super-real and very moving. At one critical moment in the play, the heroine, Angela, performed by a flesh-and-blood actress, was asked to believe that trapped in the body of this old man was her husband, the young, handsome King Deramo. She gently carries the fragile figure in her arms. She sighs, sadly. He shudders with regret. The audience sees a pile of fiberglass limbs and yet suddenly, almost miraculously, through the physical and emotional interaction of this human being and this puppet, a heightened perception of humanity is engendered.
Commedia dell’arte (co-MAY-dee-uh dell ART-ay) or “the art of comedy” was an art form that flourished in Italy and other parts of Europe between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Commedia dell’arte emerged in Tuscany around 1550, rooted in the masked comedies of ancient Rome, both in the works of dramatists and in the folk tradition of the character acting troupes. The form combined mime, improvised and scripted dialogue (often coarse), with tumbling and acrobatics. Commedia dell’arte performances and techniques spread throughout Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries with offshoots in France, Spain and England. Gradually, the form lost its satirical force, becoming more stylized, relying less on improvisation and more on extravagant costumes and production. It evolved in the late eighteenth century into forms such as vaudeville and is still evident today in sitcoms and comedy sketches.

In general, one actor would lead a small troupe of wandering players from city to city, performing all varieties of plays in all manners. The exact number of existing plots performed at the time is not known today. There were about twelve people in a troupe, each representing a different regional stereotype, speaking a specific Italian dialect of the time. The popular fixed roles were played by actors who wore masks and blended their own personalities with the part they played. An actor identified with his role and was known publicly by its name. Specializing in one part enabled the players to develop unmatched comic acting technique based on exaggeration, wit and parody. There were serious characters along with the jokers and fools. The mask didn’t always indicate greater vulgarity of character. Pantalone (pahn-tah-LOAN-ee) was a Venetian merchant and a father, prone to long tirades and good advice. He was rarely conscious that he was a comic figure. The Dottore (doh-TOE-ray, or doctor) was gullible, lecherous and pedantic. Romantic young men and women paired as often-doomed lovers. The zanni (TSAH-nees) or madcap servants such as Arlecchino (arr-lih-KEY-noh) and Brighella (bree-GAY-luh), guaranteed fun, topical and practical jokes and comic business.

Popular theater emphasized ensemble acting and improvisations in a firm framework of masks and stock situations. Plots were borrowed from the classical literary tradition. A typical scenario might involve a young couple whose love was thwarted by their parents. In preparation for performance, first the outline of the plot would be composed by the chief actor or selected from a classic play or stock. The director would then fix the distribution of the parts and the length and importance of the episode. When the outline was settled, each player turned to his private stock of material, prepared for improvisation. Each possessed a
memorandum book containing long-winded speeches and behaviors that suited his character, along with a collection of sayings proverbs, snatches of song, quotations, all handed down from one actor to another. New material would be added as well. Actors’ tricks were learned by imitation and repetition.

Commedia dell’arte performances centered around a handful of main characters. Part of their strength lay in the use of masks, which reinforced the idiosyncrasies of the main characters, separating them from the more empathetically portrayed characters, such as the Lovers, who did not wear masks. The characters worked within one of several stock scenarios, over which they improvised (a little like the Marx Brothers, perhaps), using the familiarity of the main characters to drive and unify performances.

The eighteenth century saw the decline of *commedia dell’arte* as popular theatre became confined by its own rules, growing stale. Actors stopped altering their characters; roles became frozen in time, no longer reflecting the changed socio-economic and political conditions of real life. Carlo Goldoni (gol-DOH-nee) (1707-1793) helped end *commedia dell’arte* when he reformed the Italian drama by creating a new, realistic style of comedy. Audiences were enthusiastic about his innovations.

Sadly, though there have been revivals of *commedia dell’arte* since the 1960s, the art is a lost one, and today’s troupes can only approximate what productions must have been like then, since so much of early popular theatre was improvised and not written down. However, *commedia dell’arte* inspired the national dramas of Europe. Its influences can be traced in the works of great masters like France’s Moliere (moh-lee-AIRE) and England’s Ben Jonson and Shakespeare. Its comic business can still be seen in the pantomime of Marcel Marceau (mahr-SELL mahr-SEW), Punch and Judy puppet shows, in today’s comedy sketches, and in the films of America’s Charlie Chaplin.
Drawing from “La vita di Pulcinella,” (The Life of the Character Pulcinella) by Domenico Tiepolo. This scene represents a typical outdoor performance of a commedia work. (courtesy *The Italian Comedy* by Pierre Louis Duchartre)
The King Stag's Truffaldino is a variation on the well-known commedia character of Arlecchino (ar-leh-KEE-noh). Even today, Arlecchino's character lives on: he is the ancestor of the modern-day Harlequin, well-known for his multi-colored satin jacket and knickers.

Traditionally, the Arlecchino character is a servant, someone lower in social standing, although he is never deeply devoted to his work. Sometimes, he is an assistant to the Il Dottore (eel doh-TOE-ray, The Doctor) or Il Capitano (eel cah-pee-TAH-noh, The Captain). If he appears in a skit with Brighella, he is lower in status.

Arlecchino is rarely a leading character, although he had prominent roles in the works of Goldoni (goh-DOLE-nee), Gozzi's top rival. Truffaldino’s role in The King Stag is limited to a quite small one as the love-besotted admirer of Brighella's sister Smeraldina. Of course, his affection is in vain, as Smeraldina is more interested in King Deramo's wealth than in Truffaldino. However, this complete devotion is characteristic of the Arlecchino/Truffaldino type; he is noted for his impetuosity and impulsiveness. If he has an idea, no matter how far-fetched, he flings himself into it with full force without consideration of the consequences. He moves acrobatically and is sometimes considered agile in body but slow of mind. As he developed over time into the Harlequin of France, he became more quick-witted and more able to think his way out of trouble. Don't be surprised if Arlecchino, despite his ardor for one woman, turns his head to admire other ladies.

His traditional costume is a tight-fitting long jacket and trousers, sewn over with randomly colored patches. He wears a black beret or felt hat with a feather sticking out of it. In commedia tradition, Arlecchino appears masked. To this day, we associate harlequins with black half-masks that descend from this commedia habit.

Traditional and King Stag images of Arlecchino and Truffaldino are on the following page.
Truffaldino

Truffaldino, the King Stag

Arlecchino

Arlecchino (the Harlequin)
Note his diamond-patched clothing.
Pantalone

Pantalone (pahn-tuh-LOW-nay) is the wealthiest character in *commedia*, controlling the characters’ finances. He is the bossy employer of many servants and the dictatorial and controlling father to his children, especially his daughter, who is usually a beautiful girl.

He is often portrayed as tall and scrawny; note his long legs in the photograph. A son of Venice, he tends to retain traditional Venetian clothing: a black gown and hat, and red vest, breeches, socks, and shoes. Although Pantalone’s costume in *The King Stag* doesn’t quite match that description, it is red. He may sport a large medallion or other accessory that demonstrates his wealth.

Although some of his body shows the sign of age, his head, hands, and feet are still active. His hands flutter often, gesturing with each new thought.

Pantalone’s downfall is his greed. In many *commedia* plays, he is caught in a greedy moment and made a laughing-stock by the younger characters. He is eager to marry his daughter to a wealthy man but tries to find a way to do so without paying her dowry. This is evident in *The King Stag* when he pushes his daughter to interview with the king. When things don’t go according to his plan, he becomes emotionally extreme, often slipping into incredibly anger over something petty. He is mean to his servants, limiting to his children, fawning to Il Dottore (the doctor), and unpleasantly flirtatious with young women.

His main function in plot is to stand in the way of someone else’s plan. For example, he might wish to marry the same young woman as his son or to stand in the way of his daughter’s marriage by refusing to provide the dowry.
Pantalone, circa 1577

Pantalone in *The King Stag*
Il Dottore (The Doctor)

A great busybody, Dottore is well-educated and possesses classical and academic language, although it’s not unusual for him to mix up ideas or misuse large vocabulary words.

By the end of a performance, Dottore’s high opinion of himself usually catches up with him. He is the most likely character to be the fool or laughing-stock, trumped by the younger men in the production. Traditionally, he wears a black cape and hat and may seem oversized or overweight. His traditional mask features huge white fuzzy eyebrows and a bulbous nose (showing his fondness for alcohol and drinking). He juts out his belly. The evil prime minister Tartaglia in *The King Stag* contains the most Dottore-like characteristics.
Brighella

Among the lower-class characters, Brighella is the boss. Of course, he’s only a small-scale boss, perhaps an inkeeper or shopkeeper, but the fact that he’s pulled himself up to this point is what gives him higher status. Brighella can teach someone of higher status than himself in, say, how to break into a lover’s house in secret. He is a jack-of-all-trades who can be anything that’s required of him: a hangman, fortune-teller, or servant, for example. He never ends up the victim. In *The King Stag*, notice how he crafts an interview with the king for his single sister Smeraldina.

Brighella’s traditional costume is a white jacket and full trousers with green frogged braid trailing down the side. His white cap or hat has a similar green border. Says Brighella in one of his classic speeches, “The green and white uniform that I wear means: white because I have carte blanche to do or undo whatever I like; green, because I can always keep the desires of my clients green with the many tricks of my devising.” In addition, he often sports a purse and dagger.

Brighella is flexible in movement, although he often stands with heels together and toes apart, as in ballet first position. He can squeeze himself into tight situations easily (as in waiting tables in a crowded restaurant). His job is to stir up the comedy and keep it moving. He may be the maneuvering force in helping things to go wrong.

He is cunning and witty. Notice in *The King Stag* that he is the character who delivers the jokes that have been updated to present-day.

Sometimes, however, Brighella is portrayed as bumbling. You may notice this quality in the actor’s portrayal in *The King Stag*. 
A sketch of Brighella from the 18th century.

Above: Brighella at the hunt in *The King Stag*
Below: Brighella and his sister Smeraldina in *The King Stag*
The Lovers

Every *commedia* outline contains lovers, generally two pairs. This is true in *The King Stag* as well. The two pairs are Clarice and Leandro and Deramo and Angela. *Commedia* lovers, unlike the other stock characters mentioned earlier, do not have 'official' names that correspond to their characters. Male lovers may be named Ottavio, Fabrizio, Silvio, Leandro (as in *The King Stag*), or Lindoro; female names include Clarice (also in *The King Stag*), Aurelia, and Vittoria. These are beautiful and romantic names for beautiful and romantic people.

The lovers do not adopt traditional dress or masks like the other characters. They do not wear masks but instead wear thick makeup, including mascara and beauty spots to accentuate their attractiveness. (Note that in *The King Stag*, Julie Taymor chose for her lovers to wear masks; this is a break from *commedia* tradition.) Their clothing was the most contemporary of any characters. They might carry romantic props like small nosegays, lacy handkerchiefs, and fans for women. They carried themselves like floating dancers, moving with grace. This idea of 'floating' lovers continues in contemporary imagery: think of the ubiquitous image of lovers running slow motion through a flowered field.

Despite their physical beauty, lovers have erratic personalities, fluctuating between complete devotion and a despairing feeling of abandonment, doubt and vanity, jealousy and fickleness. Not vicious or vengeful, their love is reminiscent of adolescent puppy love: full of sighs, pledges of devotion, posturing, and hyper-animation. Perhaps their insecurities are for good reason. Greedy Pantalone fathers often push their daughters away from their boyfriends and into a match with a pedantic Dottore type. Alternatively, Pantalone and Dottore may both be wooing for the female lover and getting in the way of the lovebirds. In another scenario, Pantalone may try to promise his daughter to Dottore although his daughter is in love with a man her own age.
Commedia lovers, early seventeenth century
(courtesy of The Italian Comedy by Pierre Louis Duchartre)
Theater Vocabulary

**Apron**: Area between the front curtain and the edge of the stage.

**Borders**: Short curtains hung at intervals above the acting area to mask lighting and flown scenery from audience.

**Bunraku**: A three-dimensional puppet that is manipulated by puppeteers in full sight of the audience. See the article on *bunraku* in the Puppetry section of this guide.

**Bracing/jacks**: Wood frames or legs used to support flats so they stay upright.

**Commedia dell’arte**: Literally, “the art of comedy.” Comic improvisation descended from the Italian Renaissance and featuring stock or stereotyped characters, no written scripts, and masks. *The King Stag* began as a *commedia dell’arte* sketch.

**Cyclorama (nicknamed “cyc”)**: Tightly stretched white fabric hung extremely upstage and used to project light or images on.

**Drop**: A large cloth (often painted) used for creating a scene or picture background on stage.

**Flats**: Wooden frames with a flat surface used to create walls or separations on stage.

**Fly Gallery**: Against one of the backstage walls, it is where the fly rope and pulley system is operated from. Pulling on the ropes allows scenery to lift or descend.

**Front or Act Curtain**: Curtain that masks the acting area or stage from the audience. May be used at the beginning and end of a show and between acts.

**Grid**: Metal framework above the stage from which lighting instruments and flown scenery are hung.

**Masking**: Used behind stage windows and doors to hide the backstage area from audience.

**Proscenium Opening/proscenium arch**: Opening through which the audience views the play or performance. Sometimes called a picture frame stage.

**Rake**: A gradual gradation in stage floor height so that the stage floor appears slanted.
Tabs: Long curtains hung parallel to the tormentors on the right and left wing areas to create masking (see below) or entrances.

Teaser: Heavy curtain hung from above the proscenium opening to adjust the height of the opening.

Theatre in the Round: An acting area or stage which may be viewed from all sides simultaneously. The audience circles around the stage.

Thrust Stage: An area of stage which extends from the proscenium arch toward the audience; a stage that “thrusts” out into the audience. The Power Center in Ann Arbor can be turned into a thrust stage by removing some seats.

Tormentors: Curtains or flats on both sides of the proscenium used to regulate the width of the opening.

Scrim: A drop of loosely woven material (cheesecloth, shark's tooth) which is opaque if front lit and is transparent if back lit.

Spiking: Using tape to mark where a piece of scenery will be placed; it can also tell an actor where to stand or show a crew where to piece furniture onstage.

Tormentors: Curtain or flat on each side of the proscenium opening used to regulate the width of the opening.

Trap: An opening in the stage floor.

Tread: The area on a step where you place your feet.

Wings: Offstage areas to the right and left of acting/onstage area. The audience usually can't see the wings from their seats.
Part II: Lesson Plans and Activities
Lesson Plans

The following curriculum offers suggestions intended to be used in preparation for attending a performance of the American Repertory Theater’s *The King Stag*. Teachers may pick and choose from the cross-disciplinary activities and can coordinate with other subject area teachers. The lesson plans are meant as aids or guidelines for creating specific lesson plans. You may wish to use several activities, a single plan, or pursue a single activity in greater depth, depending on your subject area, the skill level or maturity of your students, and your intended learner outcomes.

Learner Outcomes

- Each student will develop a feeling of self-worth, pride in work, respect, appreciation and understanding of other people and cultures, and a desire for learning now and in the future in a multicultural, gender-fair, and ability-sensitive environment.

- Each student will develop appropriately to that individual’s potential, skill in reading, writing, mathematics, speaking, listening, problem solving, and examining and utilizing information using multicultural, gender-fair and ability-sensitive materials.

- Each student will become literate through the acquisition and use of knowledge appropriate to that individual’s potential, through a comprehensive, coordinated curriculum, including computer literacy in a multicultural, gender-fair, and ability-sensitive environment,
State of Michigan
Content Standards and Benchmarks:
Making Meaningful Connections with
The King Stag

English Language Arts

Standard 5: Literature
All students will read and analyze a wide variety of classic and contemporary literature and other texts to seek information, ideas, enjoyment, and understanding of their individuality, our common heritage and common humanity, and the rich diversity of our society.

• Early Elementary: Describe and discuss the similarities of plot and character in literature and other texts from around the world.
• Later Elementary: Describe and discuss the shared human experiences depicted in literature and other texts from around the world. Examples include birth, death, heroism, and love.
• Middle School: Identify and discuss how the tensions among characters, communities, themes, and issues and literature and other texts are related to one’s own experience.
• High School: Describe and discuss archetypal human experiences that appear in literature and other texts from around the world.

Standard 10: Ideas in Action
All students will apply knowledge, ideas, and issues drawn from texts to their lives and the lives of others.

• Early Elementary: Make connections between key ideas in literature and other texts and their own lives.
• Later Elementary: Identify how their own experiences influence their understanding of key ideas in literature and other texts.
• Middle School: Analyze themes and central ideas in literature and other texts in relation to issues in their own lives.
• High School: Use themes and central ideas in literature and other texts to generate solutions to problems and formulate perspectives on issues in their own lives.

Social Studies

Standard 1.2: Comprehending the Past
All students will understand narratives about major eras of American and world history by identifying the people involved, describing the setting, and sequencing the events.

• Early Elementary: Identify who was involved, what happened and where it happened in stories about the past.
• Later Elementary: Identify and explain how individuals in history demonstrated good character and personal virtue.
• Middle School: Select conditions in various parts of the world and describe how they have been shaped by events from the past. Use historical biographies to explain how events from the past affected the lives of individuals and how some individuals influenced the course of history.
• High School: Identify and explain how individuals in history demonstrated good character and personal virtue.
Mathematics

Standard III.3 Inference and Prediction
Students draw defensible inferences about unknown outcomes, make predictions, and identify the degree of confidence they have in their predictions.

- **Elementary:** Make and test hypotheses.
- **Middle School:** Formulate and communicate arguments and conclusions based on data and evaluate their arguments and those of others.
- **High School:** Make predictions and decisions based on data, including interpolations and extrapolations.

Standard VI.1: Probability
Students develop an understanding of the notion of certainty and of probability as a measure of the degree of likelihood that can be assigned to a given event based on the knowledge available, and make critical judgments about claims that are made in probabilistic situations.

- **Elementary:** Compare events and describe them as “more likely” or “less likely” and use the language of fractions to describe simple probabilities.
- **Middle School:** Describe events as likely or unlikely and give qualitative and quantitative descriptions of the degree of likelihood.
- **High School:** Analyze events to determine their dependence or independence and calculate probabilities of compound events.

Science

Standard I.1: Constructing New Scientific Knowledge
All students will ask questions that help them learn about the world; design and conduct investigations using appropriate methodology and technology; learn from books and other sources of information; communicate their findings using appropriate technology; and reconstruct previously learned knowledge.

- **Elementary:** Generate reasonable questions about the world based on observation.
- **Middle School:** Generate scientific questions about the world based on observation.
- **High School:** Develop questions or problems for investigation that can be answered empirically.
Assessing Your Students’ Prior Knowledge

- What is art? What is music? What is dance? What is theatre? How does it fit into our lives?

- Ask your students if they have ever attended a performance before. If they have, what? If they haven’t, what do they think it would be like to attend?

- Ask the students to compare the differences between going to sports events and attending the theater, listening to the radio or going to concerts.

- Have your students create their own University Musical Society in which they could perform in anything they wanted. What would they be, and who would help them?

- Discuss the kinds of jobs associated with a performing arts center: costumer, dancer, director, actor, stage manager, set designer, musician, etc. If they could work in a theater, what would they do?
Lesson Plan 1: Previewing the Video

Purpose
This lesson plan is structured to introduce students to the plot of *The King Stag* through previewing the video tape that accompanies this guide.

Materials
Video of *The King Stag*
VCR and television

How to Watch a Play
After listening to a story ask the following questions as a way to talk about the elements of the story:

**Characters**
Who are the characters in the story?  
What do they look like?  
Can you draw pictures of the major characters?

**Plot**
What happens in the story?  
Can you arrange the events in chronological order?

**Setting**
Where does the story take place?  
What does it look like there?  
Can you draw a picture of the place?

**Exposition**
How did the story begin?  
How were the characters introduced?

**Climax**
Was there a high-point in the story where the story became more exciting?  
Did the story have surprises?

**Conclusion**
How does the story end?  
Is there a lesson that the story teaches you?

**Vocabulary**
What new words did you learn from the story?

You may wish to ask students to keep a running list of new vocabulary words and have them create their own dictionaries with the definitions or characters.
Lesson Plan 2:
Shadow Puppets

Shadow puppetry has been a popular form of family entertainment for more than 1,000 years. A typical performance can feature as many as 50 intricately crafted characters. Your kids can cast a shadowy show of their own with just a few of these simplified paper puppets and a tabletop stage.

Purpose of Lesson
This lesson plan is intended to introduce students to the concept of shadow puppetry, creating fantasy, magic and stories out of puppetry. Students can learn how to present a show, create characters while engaging their imagination and expanding their understanding of theatre.

Materials
Poster board, scissors, masking tape, drinking straws, a paper hole punch, paper fasteners, a 34-by-18-inch piece of cardboard, a craft knife and a large sheet of white paper

Classroom Instruction
THE CAST
For the simplest shadow puppet, just cut out a character from poster board (you can work from a tracing) and tape a drinking straw handle to the back. For one with movable parts, such as a bird that can flap its wings or a horse that can toss its head, you’ll need to cut out the parts individually. Use the paper hole punch to make one hole in the movable part and another in the body where the part will be attached. Use a paper fastener to join together the pieces. Tape an extra straw handle to the back of the movable part.

BUILDING THE STAGE
To make a freestanding stage, fold back the cardboard (about 45 degrees) 9 inches in from each side. Next, use the craft knife (a parent’s job) to cut out a large window in the center panel. Place the sheet of white paper up against the back of the window and tape the edges in place.

When your kids are ready to use the theater, cover a table with a long tablecloth or sheet and set up the stage on the rear of the table where they can duck down and operate their puppets. Then, set up a lamp behind the stage, and show off the shadow star players.

A more rewarding approach is to use attach a sheet to a frame. In their book Worlds of Shadow: Teaching with Shadow Puppetry, David and Donna Wisniewski recommend lighting a framed sheet from behind with a classroom overhead projector. (Many educators are already familiar with David’s work; he won the Caldecott award for Golem.) By doing so, puppets can be placed between the light and the screen or on the projector itself. If the projector is placed far enough away from the screen, your students can stand between the screen and the projector and become human shadow figures! Please see their drawing on the next page.
Student Audience; cannot see the ‘backstage’ workers, only the projected images

Sheet tightened on frame

Students hold shadow puppets between the light and the screen

Projector is light source

Students place cutout directly on overhead screen to create scenery or very large characters

Student Audience; able to see the projectionists at work and the projected image

Students placing characters and scenery directly on the overhead glass

Student Audience; able to see the projectionists at work and the projected image
Shadow Puppetry Ideas for the Academic Curriculum

You can implement puppetry quite easily into your curriculum and daily lesson plans! Don’t limit puppet making activities to the arts requirements in your curriculum. Using puppetry to complement other subjects can make your lessons more fun, and the facts more accessible, to your students. Science, health, history and literature lessons can be readily transformed into puppet making activities and performances. Here are a few ideas and puppet patterns to use with your class that can be applicable to any subject matter. Have fun!

History
Have your students research a historical event like the signing of the Declaration of Independence or the first Thanksgiving. Assign students different historical figures to model their puppets after. Review the historical event with them to help your class create a script. Props and scenery can also be created! At the end, put on a show for other classes. Your students will surely remember all of the facts about this historical event!

Science
Have your students choose a scientist and research what he or she discovered. Have them decorate their puppets appropriately and write a short monologue from the point of view of the scientist. Have students design their own props that involve the work of their scientist. Create a science revue and invite other classes to watch or join in.

Literature
Choose a favorite story that your class has read and transform it into a script. Assign characters and rehearse a show. Scenes and props can be the different settings described throughout the story. Besides inviting other classes to watch, parents are a great audience! Have a reception afterwards as a reward for a job well done.
Lesson Plan 3:  
Commedia dell’Arte Activities  

Objective:  
Students will demonstrate understanding of the major stock characters in *commedia dell’arte* by assuming their personalities and performing in short scenes.  

Materials:  
Copies of *commedia dell’arte* handout from this guide  
Copies of stock character descriptions from this guide  
Copies of the following pages of scripts, monologues, and scenes  

Lesson:  
1. To connect students’ interest to this activity, lead a discussion on stereotypes that they find prevalent – although possibly unpleasant – in today’s society.  
2. Ask students for examples of times in which actors use stereotypes to entertain audiences and tell stories. Examples might include *MADtv*, *Saturday Night Live*, or sitcoms.  
3. Mention that this type of entertainment, in which plots are predictable and characters seem similar from show to show descends from a 17th century Italian comedy art form called *commedia dell’arte*. Literally, this means “the art of comedy.”  
4. Distribute and discuss the stock character descriptions featured earlier in this guide. Ask students to make connections between the *commedia* personalities and contemporary characters in today’s media.  
5. Mention that *commedia* plays weren’t completely written down, like they are today. Instead, *commedia* troupes kept outlines of the plot and let the actors make up the specifics as the play was performed. This is called improvisation and continues in comedy today at places like Second City in downtown Detroit.  
6. Divide the class into groups depending on the number of characters in the scene and pass out copies of the following scripts or improvisational scenarios. Be sure to choose scripts whose subject matter is appropriate for your own classroom needs. Let each member of the pair choose a character, rehearse, and perform for the class.  
7. Another option is to assign a student a character and allow the student to write and perform and allow him/her to write her own monologue.  
8. Adaptation for younger students: Brainstorm a list of stereotyped characters with your students. Then brainstorm a list of funny situations. Assign each team characters from the list and one of the situations for them to act out with the class.
Monologue
Arlecchino/Truffaldino
(excerpted from *Commedia dell’Arte: An Actor’s Handbook*, by John Rudlin)

Scene: Arlecchino is feeling overly-emotional and depressed because his girlfriend Colombina (coh-lum-BEE-na; named for the columbine flower) no longer loves him. Thinking that his former lover is overhearing him, he goes over-the-top as he plans his death.

ARLECCHINO

Ah, I’m so wretched! The Doctor is going to marry Colombina off, and I’ll have to live without her! Oh, you unhappy Arlecchino! Let’s make it a quick death. I will go to my room; I’ll fix a rope to the ceiling, I’ll kick the chair away, and there I’ll be hung. (*Mimes being a dangling corpse*) That’s that, then, nothing can stop me. Off we go to the gallows . . .

(*changes voice*) To the gallows? Don’t be silly. You mustn’t even think of it. Killing yourself over a woman, that would be a very silly thing to do. Indeed: but when you’re hung, will you be any the better off for it? . . . No, I’ll be worse off for it . . . But I want to be well off, I do: what have you got to say to that? If you want to share the benefits, you only need to come along. I’m going, I tell you. Let’s nip off and hang ourselves.

(*stops suddenly*) But, no. Hanging oneself is a very commonplace sort of death; it wouldn’t be appropriate for someone like me. I need to find a more unusual death, a more heroic death, a more Harlequinistic death.

Dear me, what a lot of trouble dying is! I’ve ready somewhere that people have died laughing. If I could die laughing, that would be a funny death. I’m very ticklish; I’ll tickle myself and then I’ll die.

(*He tickles himself, starts laughing and falls on the floor.*)

Improvisation:
Brighella, a chef, and patrons in a restaurant

Brighella is a waiter in a busy restaurant. He issues orders to the waiters without getting flustered amidst chaos. However, whenever he enters the kitchen, he fights with the chef. Every time he returns to the eating area, he fawns over his important patron.
Pantalone: Arlecchino! Arlecchino!

Arlecchino (from offstage): Calm down. I'm coming.

Pantalone: Will you come here? (To the audience) I want him to go and fetch my daughter. Well, are you coming?

Arlecchino (offstage): Wait a minute, can't you? She's just about to boil.

Pantalone (offstage): Who, my daughter?

Arlecchino (offstage): No, Sir, my kettle.

Pantalone: If I have to come after you, you'll know all about it. (Enter Arlecchino) Come here: I thought you were talking about my daughter.

Arlecchino: No, no, Sir. I was just pouring.

Pantalone: Pawing? Who, my daughter?

Arlecchino: No, Sir, the kettle.

Pantalone: Shut up about your kettle when I'm talking about my daughter.

Arlecchino: Yes, Sir. I just didn't want her to get her bottom burned.

Pantalone: My daughter?

Arlecchino: No, no, no. For Pete's sake, the kettle. The kettle!

Pantalone: You rapscallion scamp of a gallows-bird, if you don't stop going on about your kettle I'll pull your ears off. Just for once stop making jokes and go and fetch my daughter.

Arlecchino: That's a useless task – here she is.
Improvisation:
Arlecchino/Truffaldino and Brighella

Arlecchino is on his way to see his girlfriend. He is carrying a present for her, a beautiful cake. Brighella passes by and sees him. They greet as friends. Gradually, by pointing out a number of absurd symptoms, Brighella makes Arlecchino believe he is dead and therefore does not need the cake anymore.

Monologue:
Dottore

Because Dottore is prone to long-winded, unwanted speeches, very few examples of his dialogue remain. This speech epitomizes Dottore’s lengthy, academic vocabulary and his tendency to talk endlessly while communicating nothing.

You have seen that I have slipped up; indeed, I might have fallen. Had I fallen and hurt myself, I would have put myself to bed: a doctor would have been called. He would have prescribed a remedy: such prescriptions are composed of various ingredients: such ingredients come from the Levant, whence, according to Aristotle, emanate the winds. Aristotle was tutor to Alexander the Great. Alexander the Great was master of the world, and the world is held up by Atlas. Atlas is, necessarily, a man of considerable strength: it is such strength which supports columns, and columns support palaces. Palaces are built by masons, masons are instructed by architects, architects make drawings, drawing is the basis of painting, painting is a fine art of which there re seven, seven also were the wise men of ancient Greece, the Goddess of which is Minerva . . .
Dialogue:
The Lovers

Note the melodramatic and quickly changing emotions of the lovers in this dialogue.

He: Do you not realize . . .
She: Do you not consider . . .
He: . . . your shortcomings,
She: . . . your mistakes,
He: . . . so that you believe . . .
She: . . . so that you think . . .
He: . . . that I am standing here just to look at you?
She: . . . that I remain here just to gaze lovingly at you?
He: I cannot deny that you are beautiful . . .
She: I must confess that you have great charm . . .
He: . . . but of what worth is beauty . . .
She: . . . but of what use is charm . . .
He: . . . if it is spoiled by lies?
She: . . . if it comes with deceit?
He: Get away! Disappear!
She: Get out of my sight!
He: Yet when I try to go, what spell holds me back?
She: Yet when I make to go home, what unknown force prevents me?
He: You have been deceived!
She: You have been misled!
He: I do like you.
She: I do find you pleasing.
He: I adore you.
She: I idolize you.
He: My hope.
She: My love.
He: My life.
She: My blessing.
He: My goddess.
She: My idol.
He: Cupid lives once more.
She: And it is dislike that dies.
Lesson Plan 4:  
**Mask-Making**

Julie Taymor’s designs for *The King Stag* called for each character to wear a mask. Masks are common to nearly every world culture, from ancient Greek theater to African tribal dances to Egyptian death masks.

When making a mask, the mask-maker must carefully choose only one facial expression or emotion for the character to have.

Teachers can tie masks in to many areas of the academic curriculum, including:

- **Social Studies:** masks representing figures in history
- **Language Arts:** masks for characters in books, fairy tales, plays
- **Science:** masks of the animal kingdom
- **Math:** masks symbolizing mathematical processes (i.e., What kind of mask represents addition? A fraction?)

**Simple Masks for Elementary Students:**

**Materials:** Scissors, paper plates of various sizes and colors, hole punch, yarn, construction and/or tissue paper, glue, found objects (shells, pine needles, sand, rocks, feathers, etc. - these could be found on a nature walk), craft objects (string, raffia, faux fur, glitter, sequins, pipe cleaners, small mirrors, etc.)

**Instructions:**

1. Cut the paper plate in half. Hold it up to your face so that the curved side faces up. Ask an adult to help you mark eyeholes. Then place the plate on your desk and cut out the eyeholes.

2. Study the shape of your mask. Imagine what kind of mask you’d like to turn this into. You might think about cutting the curved part (the part that will be at the top of your head) or the flat part (the part that will go around your nose) into a new shape.

3. Cut your construction/tissue paper into interesting shapes. Perhaps your mask will have curlicues or a mosaic of torn tissue paper. Add layers of paper color to your mask. Do paper strips hang from the bottom of the mask? Come out of the top?

4. Look at the found objects and craft items on your desk. Which of these would look good on your mask? Can you trade what you have for what someone else has?

5. Have an adult help to place a hole on either side of the mask and to string yarn through. Tie the strings together around your head to
hold the mask in place.

Look at yourself in the mirror. How do you need to change your body’s movements to match the mask? How do you need to change your voice? Do you feel like a different person with your mask on than you do without a mask?

Find one or two in the room whose masks interest you or remind you of your own. Meet as a group and create a small skit to share with the class. Consider adding *commedia dell’arte* elements to your mini-play.

**For Older Students**

**Materials:** 4’ x 8’ sheets of 3/4” extruded foam insulation cut into 1’ squares with a utility knife (the pink-and-blue rigid foam insulation is available at the Home Depot or other hardware stores; a sheet runs between $8 and $10 and will have ample foam for a class of 30), sharp scissors, utility knives (do not use without adult supervision), household primer paint (BIN or KILZ work best), colored paint, strips of fabric, white glue, construction glue, yarn or twill or bias tape, found objects (see list above), craft objects (see list above)

**Directions:**

1. Remove the plastic backing from both sides of the insulation sheet.

2. On the printed side of the foam insulation, draw your mask’s shape. You may wish to hold your foam up to your head to estimate how big you need it to be.

3. Using scissor blades or a utility knife, score the foam insulation on your drawn lines. Eventually, you will cut all the way through it, and your mask will pop out.

4. Have a friend help you to mark eyeholes. Cut them out with scissors or a utility knife. **Make sure the foam is on your table before you begin to cut!**

5. Use the scissors or utility to cut shadows and shapes into your mask. Look through the pictures of Julie Taymor’s masks in this guide for ideas. Perhaps you want to cut away the section around the eyes so the cheeks look fuller. You may also wish to use construction glue to glue your foam scraps onto the mask to make more depth.

6. Paint both sides -- and all cut edges -- of your foam with ordinary household primer. Let dry for 1/2 day.
8. When the class’s masks are completed, break into small groups to create your own *commedia dell’arte* skits.

Creating a mask for *The King Stag*. This technique uses plaster of Paris to shape a mask. Note how the actor’s face is protected by plastic sheeting. Plaster of Paris masks should be made in the presence of a professional maskmaker.
Sleep is impossible anyway
as long as the children here
play at making shadows with their bodies
thin as flat leather shadow puppets.
How much longer will you go on arranging all this?

The wind does indeed pass over the island of Nias.
And above the kitchen that has lain cold for so long.

The ebb tide breathes in its own waters
A rotten watermelon dashes itself to bits
because it hasn’t the power to equal
the roundness of the moon. Colors
pile up to become a stairway.
Go ahead, climb up. The people pray
for rain, but we are playing at shadows merely
The children have already prepared themselves
to become shadow puppets.

You are master of the play.

Teacher’s Note:
Poetry and music can be a powerful form of creative and cultural ex-
pression; please share this poem with your students. Discuss such
items as metaphor, imagery, symbolism, and cultural expression. Have
your students write poetry, songs, stories, or journals about themselves,
the performance, their surroundings, and the society in which they live.
Related Activities

Communication Arts
- As a variation on a spelling and comprehension test, have students fill in the blanks of a short synopsis of the plot. Combine these with the students' own illustrations to create a book.

Social Sciences
- Theater and storytelling vary in styles and mood across historical periods. Discuss the continuity of story traditions. Discuss reasons for the differences.

- Have the students research the animals in a particular habitat or region described in this guide and humankind’s interactions with these animals. Several relationships can be considered: religious, ecological, ceremonial and mythical.

- Have the students study the clothing and jewelry of China. The study can include how the clothing and jewelry is used as a status symbol and also how they’re used as ceremonial objects.

Music
- Teachers can demonstrate that musical style is a choice composers make by having students create their own songs or select popular songs for each of the main characters. Students should give reasons for their choices.

- Discuss how adding music to words both enhances meaning and obscures diction. Demonstrate by having students read aloud the lyrics to a popular song, then singing the song.

Visual Arts
- Make a puppet show with characters depicting a story of your own culture.

- After studying and researching a cultural group, the class may construct a mural which will illustrate some of the cultural attributes the students thought were important.
Internet Resources

Commedia dell’Arte
http://mx7xoom.com/half mask/members.xoom.com/half mask/home.html

http://www.geocities.com/commedia_dellarte/

Puppetry
http://www.gis.net/~puppetco/


http://family.go.com/Categories/Activities/Features/family_1999_01/famf/famf19puppet/famf19puppet.html

http://www.henson.com/

http://www.puppet.org/teachers.html

http://www.gis.net/~puppetco/


Theatre Games
http://www.accessone.com/%7eup/playbook/

http://vl-theatre.com/

K-12 Theater/Drama Teacher’s Resource
http://www3.sk.sympatico.ca/erachi/

National Standards for Teaching Theatre
http://www.byu.edu/tma/arts-ed/
Bibliography/
Recommended Reading


Community Resources

There are many community resources, people, and organizations that can enhance your in-class activities. Listed below are a number of contacts who could be involved as you teach about theater, visual arts, and *The King Stag*.

**University Musical Society**
University of Michigan  
Burton Memorial Tower  
881 N. University  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1011  
734-615-0122  
umsyouth@umich.edu

**Ann Arbor Art Center**
117 West Liberty  
Ann Arbor, MI 48108  
734-994-0067

**Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum**
219 East Huron Street  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
734-995-6439  
www.aahom.org

**Ann Arbor School for the Performing Arts**
4090 Geddes Road  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103  
734-995-4625  
http://community.mlive.com/cc/arts

**The Art Center**
125 Macomb Place  
Mt. Clemens, MI 48043  
810-469-8666

**Arts & Scraps**
17820 East Warren  
Detroit, MI 48224  
313-640-4411

**ArtServe Michigan**
17515 West Nine Mile Road, Suite 250  
Southfield, MI 48075  
248-557-8288 x16  
www.artservemichigan.org
Arts League of Michigan
1528 Woodward Avenue, Suite 600
Detroit, MI  48226
313-964-1670

Detroit Institute of the Arts
5200 Woodward
Detroit, MI  48202
313-833-7900
www.dia.org

Detroit Puppet Theater
25 East Grand River
Detroit, MI  48226-2103
313-832-8540

Matrix Theater Company
2740 Bagley
Detroit, MI 48216
313-967-0999

Michigan Theater and Dance Troupe
24333 Southfield Road
Southfield,MI 48705
248-552-5001

Mosaic Youth Theater
PO Box 09667
Detroit, MI 48209
313-554-1422
www.surf.to/mosaic

University of Michigan Museum of Art
525 South State
Ann Arbor, MI  48109
734-764-0395

Walk and Squawk Performance Project
122 East Mosley
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
734-668-0407
www.walksquawk.org

Youtheatre
350 Madison Avenue
Detroit, MI  48224
313-963-7663

For a complete listing of arts/service organizations that can be
invited into your classroom, please contact the Michigan
Association of Community Arts Agencies – 800-203-9633 or
Drawings, Letters and Reviews

After the performance, please conduct follow-up activities with your students. Have students think about, discuss, and internalize the production they’ve just seen. Please have the students create drawings or write thank you letters and reviews. These items will be shared with artists and the sponsors who make these performances possible. Encourage the students to be as imaginative and creative as possible!

Send drawings, letters and reviews to:
Youth Education Program
University Musical Society
Burton Memorial Tower
881 North University Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1011