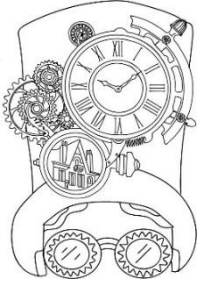


Victorian Time Traveler Kit

Arts Activity: Family Playtime Productions



In this activity, we will create theatrical productions featuring stick puppets, paper dolls, or human actors, and learn about Victorian Theatre.

Supplies Needed: puppet templates, scissors, color pencils, markers, or crayons, glue stick, scratch paper, and video demonstration.

Time: Approximately 30 min – 3 hours

THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS were an important part of social and cultural life in Victorian times. As cities and towns grew in size, professional musicians, actors, and costume designers arrived, ready to provide entertainment to the emerging middle class. Improved transportation, such as the railroad and the streetcar, helped these creative people travel from town to town, and helped their audiences travel to see their productions. At Körner's Folly, the entire family worked together to create productions in Cupid's Park Theatre. Jule was in charge of the scenery, Polly Alice and Aunt Dealy sewed the costumes, and Gilmer and Doré had starring roles, along with other Kernersville students from the Juvenile Lyceum.

During Victorian times, actors had a particular style that was popular: exaggerated movement, big gestures, weather effects, physical comedy (think the Three Stooges), and extravagant costumes. Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, Arthur Conan Doyle, and other popular playwrights of the era wrote stories about regular people who turned out to be heroes, overcoming their struggles at the hands of evil villains.

We can make our own THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS, using the templates provided. For simpler productions, one person can use puppets (directions included in video demonstration). For more complex productions, involve multiple people, follow the directions below and make notes on scratch paper.

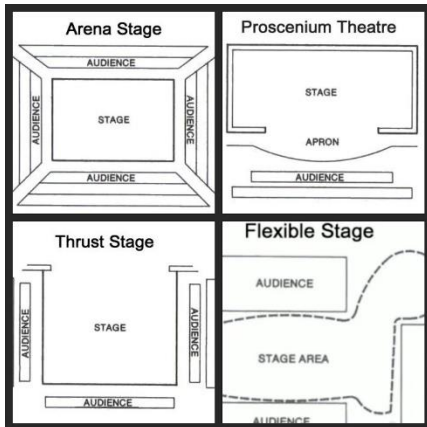
Steps of Creating a Theatrical Production

1. **Create Characters & Costumes** – who will be in your puppet show or play? Use the templates provided for puppets, or create your own! Think about the following: name, species, age, gender, height, likes, dislikes, dreams, journeys, etc. and write a character description for each. Also think about what kind of costumes you'll need – you can even draw a sketch of each character. You can make your own with supplies provided for puppets, and find items around the house for props or costumes for your play.
2. **Create Plot** – once you have your character descriptions, you can make a plot. This can be a very simple story, or a complex one. However, all good plots have

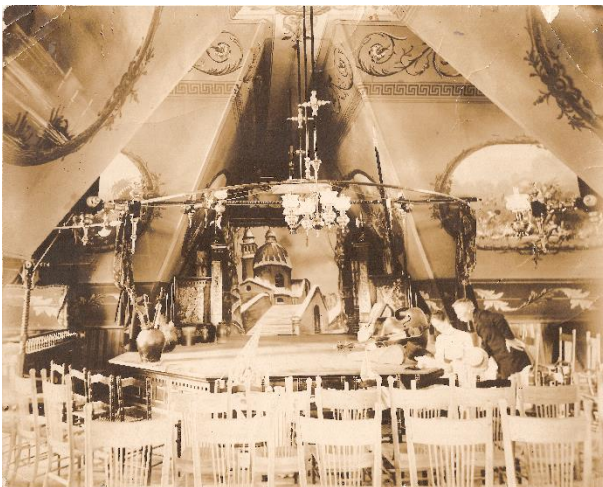
three parts: an Introduction (where we meet the characters), a Conflict (where the character/s struggle against something), and a Resolution (where we find out what happens as a result of the characters' struggles – doesn't have to be a happy ending, though in Victorian times, there was often a moral of the story). Write the story of your plot, and don't forget to think about the characters' movements and actions. Make copies for all characters to use in rehearsal.

3. **Find Theatre/Stage** – determine where your Theatrical Production will take place. Typically, a stage is elevated, but any space that has room to move will work. If you want to be very theatrical, you can use a length of rope or cord and a sheet for a curtain (make sure to ask permission)!
4. **Rehearse** – part of making a good Theatrical Production is rehearsing. The first couple of times, feel free to read directly from your script. Gradually, you will start to remember the order of your lines and the actions of your plot. When you think you're ready, it's time for the last step.
5. **Premiere** – the first time your Theatrical Production is seen in public – you may want to invite guests, hand out tickets, connect with friends via Zoom, and introduce your creativity to the world. Don't forget to take a bow at the end!

Below are several types of stages that are commonly used. Cupid's Park Theatre, on the third floor of Körner's Folly, is a proscenium theatre.



Gilmer dressed as his character Napoleon in a family production in Cupid's Park Theatre



The whole family in Cupid's Park Theatre, rehearsing for a production