The Newspaper Marionette by Margo Rose

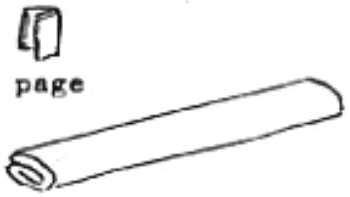
When I was teaching in a Creative Arts program for the O'Neill Theater Center, I designed this kind of a marionette for use in the schools; there was an unlimited supply of material that cost nothing and the making was simple enough that it could be handled by the fifth grade. Best of all, I would not be consentrating on hand or rod puppets because Marionettes were too hard to make.

Working with newspapers makes your hands dirty, but the black washes off.

Newspapers differ in size and texture so you may want to try a few pieces to be sure you are getting the results you want. For the paper I used, these proportions worked.

1. Making the Body

Fold 7 full sheets of paper together keeping the corners even until you have the size of one page. Beginning at the long open edge fold over 2 inches. Fold over again and again pressing it down firmly and tucking in the fullness. You should have a flat roll about 3 inches wide and as long as a newspaper page.

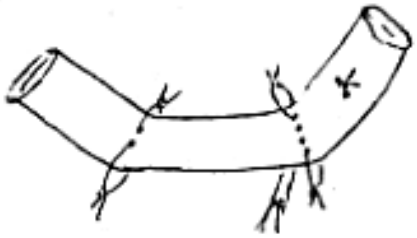


Fold each end in 2/3 of the way so they overlap and the body is 3 layers of the paper roll thick. It will be stiff, but if you put a pencil in the fold it will be easier to press the end down.

Now open the flat roll and with an ice pick make four holes all the way thru, evenly spaced, in one of the creases. These are for arm and head attachments. This is the shoulder end. In the crease at the other end, which will be the hips, make two holes at the center 3/4 inch apart. These are for leg attachments. Half way between the shoulder holes and the end of that section make two holes in the center 3/4 inch apart. Insert a strong cord in one of these holes and out the other, Tie off securely, closely and permanently. This is for the back string attachment.

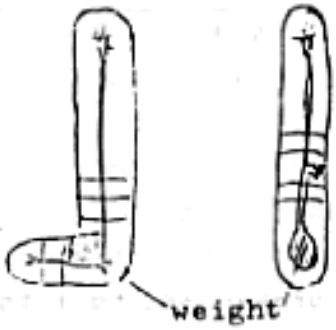
2. Placing the cord for joints.

Run a piece of cord thru each hole in the hip end and tie each one loosely(just so it won't pull out) on the outside of the roll. These cords will hold the legs on.
Do the same in the two outer holes in the shoulder end. These cords hold the arms on.
From the outside of the fold run a long cord into one hole in the center and out thru the other. Tie these off loosely on the outside of the roll. These cords hold the head on.
With all cords outside, fold the ends of the roll firmly over each other with the end with the backstring attachment outside. Bind firmly withscotch tape.



3. Making the legs.

Use 2 full sheets of paper for the upper segments. Fold to ¼ size keeping corners even. Beginning at the long open edge fold over ½ inch,then roll tightly tucking in the fullness. Press flat and fold both ends over to make the upper leg as long as you want it. Using the pencil in the folds makes it easier. Fasten these ends down to the main part of the leg with tape bound tightly. Make the lower leg the same only using one full sheet of paper instead of 2. You may make a foot if desired by folding lower end as illustrated.
Whether you make a foot or not add a weight to the bottom of the lower leg by inserting a large nut(metal) between the folds of paper and taping securely.

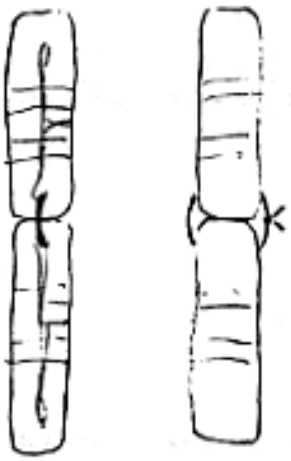


4. Making the arms.

Make the arms the same way only use ½ a full sheet (one page). It is essential to have each left and right section of arms and legs the same length. It is also necessary to roll these pieces snugly and tape tightly.

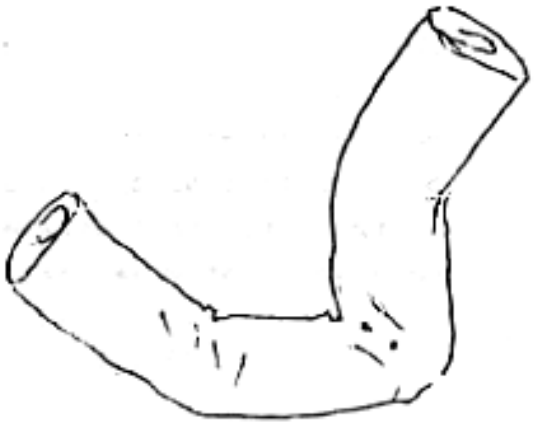
5. Making knee and elbow joints.

Place the ends of the upper and lower sections of the arms and the legs together, and connect elbow and knee joints by running cord thru the hole left by the pencil in each part. Tie the cord so the joints are snug but not tight. All knots should be made permanent so they will not come undone. A strip of tape placed lengthwise over the joint of the knees and elbows, on inside of the bend, when they are lying flat helps to prevent their bending backwards.



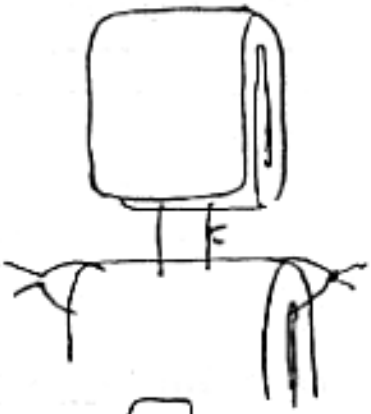
6. Making the head.

For the head use two full sheets of paper. Fold to ¼ page size. On longer open edge fold over 1½ inch. Continue to fold making the piece as wide as you want the head. Fold this in the middle crosswise, fold again crosswise so you have 4 thicknesses. This will be very stiff and hard to handle. Pound it with a hammer if necessary, but usually hand pressure will do it.
Now open up the last four folds and make 2 holes with the ice pick in the center crease 3/4 to 1 inch apart to receive the neckstrings which are hanging out of the shoulders.



7. Attaching the head.

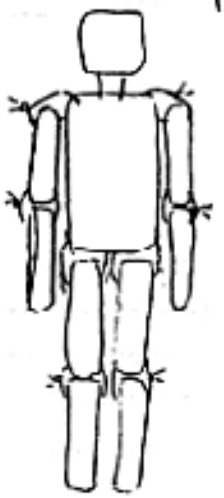
Run one of these neckstring cords thru one of these holes in the headpiece from the outside and ~~and~~ back thru the other hole from the inside. Tie off leaving enough space between head and shoulders. If you wish you may wind several layers of paper around these neck cords, but be careful not to restrict the movement. Fold the four sections of the head together and bind tightly with tape. The side with the open ends is the face.



8. Attaching arms and legs.

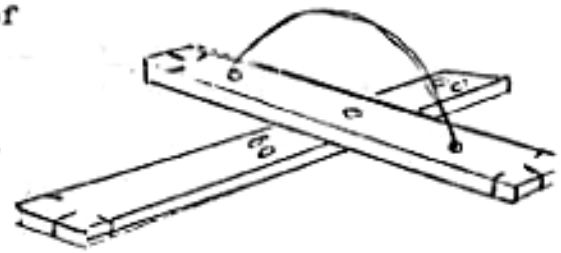
Attach the legs by running the cords at the hips thru the folded end of the upper leg where the pencil was. Make this joint just a little loose so legs move freely. Be sure legs are the same length.

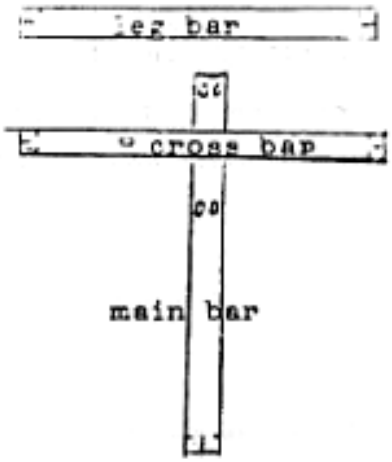
Attach the arms loosely with the shoulder cords.



9. The controller.

Use an airplane type controller. It can be made by cuttingtwo cheap rulers at the 5 inch mark. One 7 inch piece is the body of the controller and a 5 inch piece is the cross bar. The other 5 inch piece is the leg bar. Bore a hole in the main controller 2 inches from the front end and in the cross bar in the center big enuf to receive a small bolt which goes thru a hole in the flange of a spring paper clip, thru the hole in the cross bar and thru the holein the main bar and is secured with a wing nut. The leg bar is placed in this clip when not in use.



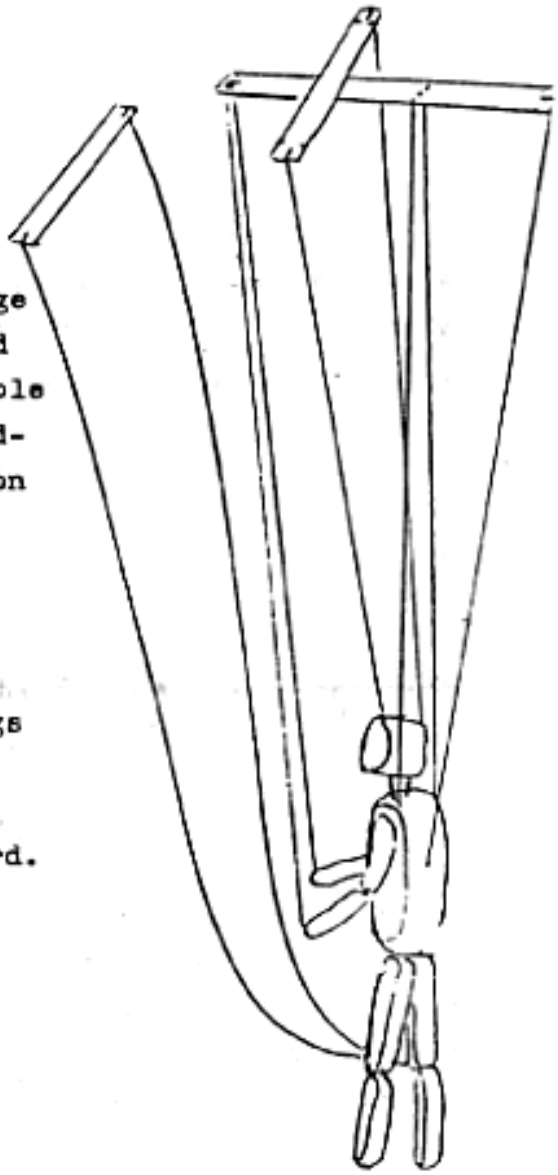


With a coping saw cut a 3/8 inch slot in the center of the back end of the main bar, in both ends of the cross bar and both ends of the leg bar. Cut a ½inch slot on each side of these same pieces ½ inchfrom the end. Bore two small holes ½ inch from the front end of the main bar. Bore two small holes 1 inch back of the cross bar in the main bar, and a hole in each end of the cross bar 1½ inch from the end. These last two holes receive a small woven rope which loops above the controller and is held in place at each end by a knot underneath. This is for hanging the puppet.

10. Stringing the marionette.

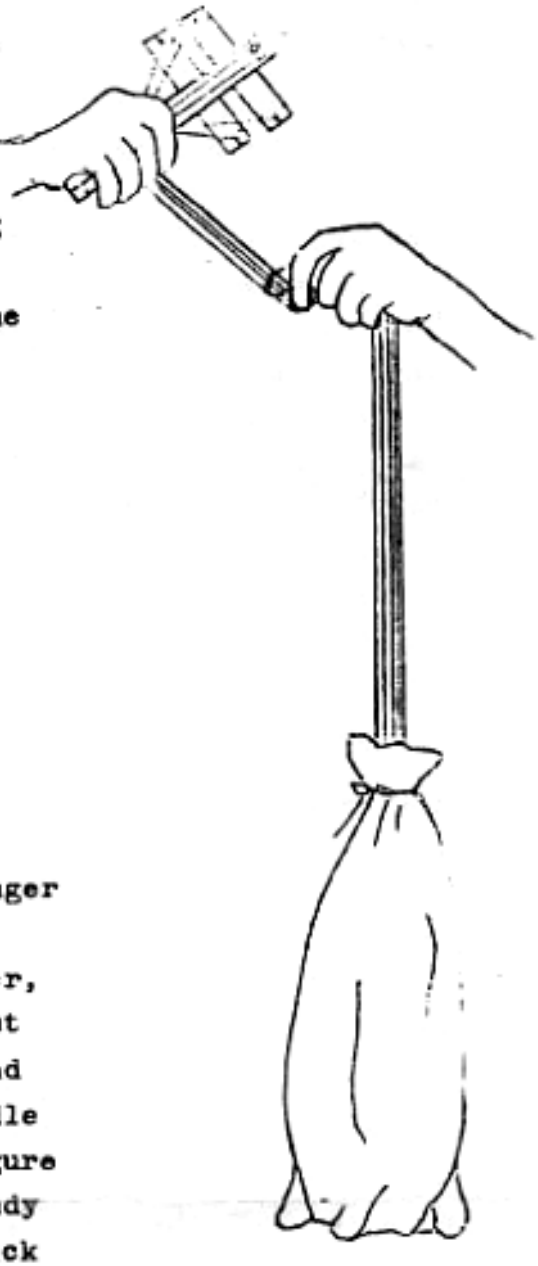
The length of strings is determined by stage proportions. The controller should be held just below elbow level which is a comfortable position. So whether the puppeteer is standing on the floor or on a bridge his position is the same.

Hang the controller. With a large needle run a length of woven fish line thru each upper corner of the head slightly back of center. Pull the other end of these strings thru the slots in the ends of the cross bar and wind the excess string thru the side slots. Be sure the puppet faces forward. With the big needle run a double length of fish line thru the back of the shoulder, up thru one hole back of the cross bar, down thru the other and thru the back of the other shoulder. Be sure these lines are not twisted. With the controller held level adjust these four strings so the tension is equal.



Fasten a fishline string to the cord in the middle of the back, and pull the other end thru the slot in the back end of the main bar. Wind excess thru side slots. Fasten a double length of string to one hand, bring it up thru one hole in the front of the main bar and down thru the other. Tie off on the other hand so both hands are held slightly raised.

With the needle fasten strings to each knee, with the other end drawn thru the slots in the leg bar and wind excess thru side slots. Leave a little slack in these strings when the leg bar is in the paper slip.



11.

How to prevent tangling

When your marionette is not in use hang it by the cord on the cross bar. Or if you wish to pack it away pull a bag that is longer than the puppet up over the figure and tie with a draw string. Holding the controller, with leg bar in the paper clip, in the right hand grasp ALL the strings in the left hand and wind around the controller. ALWAYS handle the marionette by the controller. If the figure should be dropped, before you pick it up study the strings carefully. You may be able to pick it up without tangles. But if it is tangled follow the back string, study how to clear it and you will have a guide to the untangling.

Rainbow Puppet Productions

This classic craft design comes from legendary puppeteer and puppet maker Margo Rose. She helped create television's first puppet superstar Howdy Doody. Our puppet maker, Helen Spaetzel got this design from Margo and shared it with us. It's a really clever way to make a marionette. Please enjoy and share your results on our website and facebook page.
www.rainbowpuppets.com