

# Promoting Puppetry in Prague

An Interactive Qualifying Project Report

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## Abstract

Puppetry emerged during the middle ages in the Czech Republic, and it has since evolved into a staple of Czech art culture. This unique art form is immensely important to the Czech people, as puppetry helped save the Czech language under German-speaking Austrian rule. Despite puppetry's illustrious history and cultural importance, Prague puppeteers are struggling to attract and engage audiences. They are facing competition from modern entertainment such as television, the internet, and social media. The overarching goal of this project was to help promote puppetry in Prague. Through secondary research, interviews, and making a marketing video for a puppetry organization, our project team was able to create a guide that will assist puppeteers in promoting their art.



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## Executive Summary

Since the start of the twenty-first century, the performing arts as a whole have been seeing a decline in attendance worldwide. According to a report from Americans for the Arts, attendance of performing arts events in eighty-one metropolitan areas decreased by fifteen percent from 2003 to 2013 (Kushner and Cohen, 2016). Because of decreased attendance, performing arts are struggling financially; non-profit organizations now rely on fundraising for 60% of their revenue (Ford and Mandviwalla, 2020). Additionally, forty-two percent of non-profit organizations are running a deficit (Kushner and Cohen, 2016). In Prague, the decline has impacted one of its oldest and richest art forms: puppetry.

Puppetry first appeared in Czechia during medieval times, where it primarily served as a medium for religious ceremonies or used by jesters at fairs (Dubská and Malíková, 2012). Czech puppet theater companies were established in the late eighteenth century. Puppets would be featured in theatrical performances in lieu of actors to save money. Some companies began to specialize in puppet theater, and they would travel around the Czech-speaking areas of the Austrian Empire to perform their shows in town squares or pubs (Puppets in Prague, n.d.). In this time period, puppet companies performed plays by foreign puppeteers or adaptations of Czech dramas (Dubská, n.d.).

Puppetry cemented its importance to Czech history and culture when it was used to help save the Czech language under the rule of Ferdinand II, the leader of the Holy Roman Empire. As a way to repress Czech culture and religious diversity, Ferdinand II forced Czech locals to speak solely German (Richardson, 2020). However, woodcarvers and actors in Prague found a loophole in the language mandate: there was no law forbidding inanimate objects from speaking Czech in public (M. Keller, personal communication, September 16, 2020). So, the woodcarvers would make puppets for the actors to perform traditional Czech plays. These actors would roam throughout the Czech Republic and perform shows in their native Slavic dialects. Wandering actors and puppeteers helped preserve the Czech language, and they are the reason Czechs still speak their language today (Richardson, 2020).

Since then, puppetry has become increasingly important to the Czech people. The art of puppetry is considered to be intangible cultural heritage, which means “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage” (UNESCO, 2003). People in the Czech Republic celebrate this part of their cultural heritage. In Prague, puppet shops and theaters are targeted towards tourists, and puppet theaters are a way to meet new people (Bogatyrev and Minnick, 1999). In 2016, puppetry became recognized internationally for its cultural importance when it was added to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO’s) Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Hamar, 2016).

Despite international recognition, puppeteers in Prague are currently facing stiff competition in the form of movies, television, video games, and the internet. Because people are more engaged in modern entertainment, Prague puppeteers are unable to attract large foreign audiences. The purpose of this project is to help these puppeteers by providing actionable strategies to promote puppetry in Prague. To accomplish this purpose, our project team completed the following objectives:

1. Researching and determining the most effective ways of promoting cultural arts such as puppetry.
2. Examining the Prague puppeteering scene to understand puppeteers' problems and specific needs, and selecting the top promotion technique.
3. Creating a marketing video and outlining promotional strategies for future puppeteers.

For the first objective, we examined previous case studies involving the promotion of puppetry or a related art form. Through databases like JSTOR or the search engine Google Scholar, we found past projects that use techniques applicable to our project. We analyzed the pros and cons of how each promotional strategy worked, and we strategized how we could incorporate a similar strategy to promote puppetry in Prague. While examining promotional strategies, we considered factors such as feasibility, our project timeline, our skills and capabilities, the available resources, etc. Using secondary research allowed us to quickly develop a multitude of viable promotion options for puppetry in Prague.

Our second objective was to examine the Prague puppeteering scene to understand the puppeteers' specific problems and needs. We accomplished this objective by conducting semi-structured interviews with a Prague puppeteer and an artisan. The semi-structured interview format allowed the interviewee to voice their particular needs and experience in the puppeteering field, and they told us firsthand what they would like to see our project accomplish. Due to the unfortunate circumstances involving COVID-19, both of the interviews we completed were conducted over Zoom. After conducting interviews and reviewing several case studies, we determined that the most beneficial promotional technique would be to create a marketing video that could be posted on social media. The marketing video we created was made particularly for the Puppets in Prague organization.

Our third and final objective was a combination of two smaller objectives: making a promotional video for the Puppets in Prague organization, and creating a guide on promoting puppetry for future puppeteers. To generate the promotional video, we used material from the Puppets in Prague website and video testimonials from past students. The promotional video was created using Final Cut Pro X to edit together the student testimonials with the clips from the workshop. After making the first "cut" of our video, we then sent out a survey to the organization and their former students (as well as some of our peers) to get feedback on the video. This survey was created with Google Forms, and the survey allowed us to work closely with puppeteers to find the most effective possible solution to their issues. Our project team edited the video based on the survey results and certain feedback.

We sent our survey out to former students of the Puppets in Prague workshops, telling them to send the survey to their friends. The feedback we got from the survey was almost universally positive. The video got rated an average of 9.6 out of a scale of 10 in how engaging it was to the viewers. This meant that the video was effective as a form of promotional media that the Puppets in Prague organization could use. From the survey's short responses and speaking with the owners of Puppets in Prague, we were able to tweak the video to improve it even further. Some examples of suggestions we got were to change the music and to fix one of the cuts that was too quick and jarring. Through continuously fixing and editing the video, we were able to create a cohesive and professional-looking promotional video that engages the audience.

To create the guide on promoting puppetry for future puppeteers, we created an infographic explaining how to do a promotional campaign. The steps in the guide were established by reflecting on our own experience with this project and working together with Puppets in Prague to make their marketing video. We felt that an infographic would be the best way to quickly present information to puppeteers because infographics are data presented in an illustrious form. This makes it easier for readers to digest and learn new information (Siricharoen, 2013). Our group used Canva, an online graphic design platform, to create this infographic. When creating the infographic guide, we wanted it to be applicable to different kinds of promotional campaigns, whether it was social media posts or hosting a festival. The infographic, as well as the promotional video for Puppets in Prague, will be available on our project website: <https://sites.google.com/view/promotingpuppetryinpragueiqp/home>.

Due to the increase in popularity for digital media in the present day, it is clear that action needs to be taken to help preserve certain art forms such as puppetry. Our project goes from establishing the issues puppeteers are having in Prague, to doing research on promotional techniques, to finally creating a plan and video that future puppeteers can use for their benefit. For future projects, we would recommend getting a first-hand account of the struggles the puppeteers are going through. Whether this includes contacting more puppeteers or visiting different shows and shops or contacting a Prague tourist board, broadening the reach of the students will benefit the specificity and immersiveness of the project as they will witness the coveted artform of puppetry firsthand. This can open up new promotional campaigns for puppeteers that can be researched and pursued in the future. In conclusion, puppetry is an art form that is struggling around the world and through promotional strategies we believe that WPI IQP students can help one global place at a time, starting in Prague.

## Authorship

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## 1.0 Introduction

The performing arts are witnessing a decline in attendance worldwide. Americans for Arts found that attendance of performing arts events in eighty-one metropolitan areas decreased by fifteen percent from 2003 to 2013 (Kushner and Cohen, 2016). As a result, performing arts are struggling financially, and non-profit organizations now rely on fundraising for 60% of their revenue (Ford and Mandiwalla, 2020). This unfortunate decline is also a problem in Prague, where one of its richest and oldest artistic traditions - puppetry - is struggling.

Modern entertainment is competing with traditional arts, such as puppetry. A study by the RAND Corporation explains how people increasingly prefer flexible leisure activities that can be done from home, and they are more comfortable with entertainment provided through the internet rather than live performances (McCarthy, 2001). This problem is an issue for puppeteers all over the world, especially in Prague, where puppetry has been popular for centuries.

Puppetry emerged in the Czech Republic during the middle ages (Dubská and Malíková, 2012), and has since evolved as a staple of Czech cultural art. Puppetry has even been recognized as a distinguishable feature of Czech culture by the United Nations (Hamar, 2016). However, in spite of this critical acclaim, there is little public awareness globally regarding this historic art form. Thus, Prague puppeteers have had difficulty attracting large foreign audiences to their shows. Even though this is a serious problem, no major studies have attempted to raise awareness about puppetry in Prague.

The purpose of our project was to provide actionable strategies to promote Prague puppetry. We achieved this goal by researching effective strategies to advertise cultural arts by examining the current Prague puppeteering scene and by assessing the best promotion techniques. We began by collecting feedback from puppeteers and organizations on the implementation of our chosen promotional technique. After careful consideration, we decided to make a promotional video about puppetry. With this project, we believe our research and promotional video will help increase awareness of the unique art form of Prague puppetry.

## 2.0 Background

This chapter examines the history of puppetry in Czechia, cultural tourism and puppetry, and the cultural importance of puppetry. We discuss the problems modern Prague puppeteers are facing, and we look at ways to promote art to attract a bigger audience that will be useful to these puppeteers.

## 2.1 History of Puppetry in the Czech Republic

Puppetry is a historical art form in the Czech Republic. The following sections describe the emergence of puppetry in Czechia, how puppetry was a tool to preserve the Czech language, and the puppetry renaissance in modern times.

### 2.1.1 Origins of Puppetry in Czechia

Puppetry emerged in the Czech Republic in the middle ages as a medium for popular religious education (see Figure 1). Jesters would also use finger puppets as part of their entertainment acts at fairs or markets (Dubská and Malíková, 2012). Beginning in the late eighteenth century, Czech puppet companies were established. Puppets would be featured in theatrical performances in lieu of actors to save money (Puppets in Prague, n.d.). Two main forms of puppetry surfaced at this time: *loutkové divadlo* and *bramborové divadlo*. *Loutkové divadlo* describes the use of marionettes or other puppets requiring strings, whereas *bramborové divadlo* refers to the use of finger puppets and literally translates to “potato theater” (Bogatyrev and Minnick, 1999).



Figure 1: The First Known Depiction of a Puppet in Czechia (Puppets in Prague, n.d.)

However, soon, companies began to specialize in solely puppet performances. An entire family would usually run these companies, and they would travel around the Czech-speaking areas of the Austrian Empire to perform their shows in town squares or pubs (Puppets in Prague, n.d.). In this time period, puppet companies performed plays by foreign puppeteers or adaptations of Czech dramas (Dubská, n.d.).

### **2.1.2 How Puppetry Saved the Czech Language**

Traveling puppetry families actually became important to Czech culture because they helped preserve the Czech language (Puppets in Prague, n.d.). In 1620, Roman Catholic forces defeated the Protestants of Bohemia, the westernmost part of the current day Czech Republic. The leader of the Holy Roman Empire, Ferdinand II (1619-1637), did not accept religions other than Catholicism in his areas of rule. As a way to repress Czech culture and religious diversity, Ferdinand II forced Czech locals to speak solely German (Richardson, 2020). This rule was met with little resistance from the lower working class and the peasantry, but intellectuals and artists were more critical. Soon, even actors performing Czech plays were mandated to translate their works into German if they wished to perform them (Meyer, 2011).

As the native Slavic language of the Czech Republic began to slip away, puppets filled an essential role in preserving the language. Woodcarvers and actors in Prague found a loophole in the language mandate; there was no law forbidding inanimate objects from speaking Czech in public (M. Keller, personal communication, September 16, 2020). The carvers began making wooden puppets for local actors to perform traditional Czech plays. The actors began traveling throughout the Czech Republic performing puppet shows in their native Slavic dialects. These wandering actors and puppeteers single-handedly preserved the Czech language throughout the rule of the Holy Roman Empire (Richardson, 2020).

### **2.1.3 The Puppetry Renaissance to the Present**

The Puppetry Renaissance was a series of events that revived traditional Czech Puppetry. It began in 1895 when an exposition of Czech puppets was made at the Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition in Prague (Bernátek, 2015). Doing so injected puppetry into modern Czech culture at the end of the 19th century, rather than it remaining a niche hobby. In 1911, the Czech Union of the Friends of Puppet Theatre was created to promote puppeteering activities in an attempt to increase mass interest in puppetry (Dubská, 2018). A year later, in 1912, the first journal surrounding puppets, named *The Czech Puppeteer*, was created to further the public interest in the traditional art form. Through the journal and union, puppeteers and culture workers were able to reform the organization, aesthetics, and cultural significance of puppetry (Bernátek, 2015).

In the year of 1929, the International Union of Puppeteers was established in Prague, more commonly known in French as the *Union Internationale des Marionnettistes* (Dubská and Malíková, 2012). The creation of this union led to the promotion of many festivals, showcases, and museums that were established throughout the country, thus expanding the art of puppetry. By the 1930s, puppetry directors were inspired by avant-garde theater containing poetry, using metaphorical and symbolic ideas in their shows (Dubská, 2018). This literary and philosophical shift in puppetry style increased professionalism and enhanced the aesthetic development of puppetry.

During more modern times, puppetry still continued to prosper within Prague, even through both of the World Wars. During these hard times for the country and world, puppetry remained a strong foundation in the first Czechoslovak Republic and subsequent Czech states as thousands of ensembles across the country kept the art alive. The mass performances for young

children and their dedication to further developing the artform itself allowed puppet theater to withstand the blunt force of the wars and German occupation (Dubská and Malíková, 2012).

Most of the puppet theaters existing in the country today were organized after these twentieth-century tragedies. After World War II, an act was implemented in 1948 called the Theatre Act, heavily influenced by socialist principles arising from Soviet liberation of the country. The act created an interconnected network of theaters subsidized by the government. Czech puppeteers would perform through the lens of socialist realism, but in the 1960s, many puppeteers shifted to performances that were more theatrical and creative. This shift reflected a wider change in the cultural-political perspectives of both artists and the public.

Since the Velvet Revolution of 1989, there have been many puppet companies that have been formed in the Czech Republic, each having their own style and uniqueness (Dubská and Malíková, 2012). In 2016, Czech and Slovak puppetry was recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a significant material cultural heritage (Hamar, 2016). Without the promotion and legitimacy that puppetry gained during the Puppetry Renaissance, this would never have been possible.

## 2.2 Tourism in Prague

Since the collapse of the Iron Curtain, tourism has swept over Prague and the rest of the Czech Republic. Its most popular route, the Royal Way, connects exceptional attractions within Prague on a singular path (Dumbrovská & Fialová, 2020). In the 21st century, tourism is a major part of the economy of many small countries, including the Czech Republic, where tourism aids in enhancing awareness of puppetry. To put a spotlight on the art of puppetry in Prague, many shops sell them on the street in puppet shops and artisanal workshops teach how to construct them. Additionally, organizations such as Puppets in Prague focus on puppetry as a means of education. All these activities have kept the traditional art form of puppetry alive (Dumbrovská & Fialová, 2020).



Figure 2: A Local Puppet Shop in Prague (My Czech Republic, n.d.)

Similar to many other commercial and entertainment activities in the world, tourism has declined throughout 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistics of the World Travel

Organization (WTO) show that after the pandemic broke out, international tourism arrivals across the world dropped down 93% (CzechTourism, 2020). This decrease means a decrease in income for many countries and people that depend on tourism including puppeteers and artisans in the Czech Republic. Our community service project focuses on the economic struggles puppetry has had prior to the pandemic, and emphasizes how this economic crisis has only worsened with COVID-19. An example is the lack of attendance for theaters and places of large gatherings due to regulations originating from the pandemic. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, only a niche group of people attended traditional puppet shows as they were and continue to be overshadowed by more modern entertainment such as television series and movies as well as social media.

Cultural tourism contains ramifications that weigh heavily on small countries like the Czech Republic, as their biggest commodity is their unique culture. While people can quickly gather basic information through the internet in the digital age, cultural tourism has always provided a richer, deeper understanding of the lives, culture, and values of other peoples. Eva Šimková, at the University of Hradec Králové in the Czech Republic, writes that cultural tourism “contributes to the preservation and restoration of location cultural sources and to the economic well-being of a community” (ŠIMKOVÁ), emphasizing the importance of tourists in Czech culture and the art form of puppetry.

## **2.3 The Social Importance of Puppetry**

Puppets are an excellent pedagogical tool, and they can be used as a medium for educational or therapeutic purposes. For example, puppet shows are often used in the Czech Republic to introduce children to native literature and classical tales (Bogatyrev and Minnick, 1999). Puppets can also be used in a classroom setting. A literature review of fifteen papers on puppetry in education determined five possible uses for puppets in classrooms: (1) generating communication, (2) supporting a positive environment, (3) amplifying creativity, (4) fostering cooperation and teamwork, and (5) changing attitudes (Kröger, 2019). Another study observed how puppets could be used to destigmatize mental illnesses in children and promoted dialogue about mental health (Pitre et al., 2007). These important educational and social endeavors make it clear why this traditional art form must be preserved.

### **2.3.1 Cultural Heritage**

A number of scholars make the case that because of how deeply intertwined puppetry is with the national identity of Czech culture, that it is of significant importance to preserve this performance art. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), cultural heritage involves two main categories: tangible and intangible heritage (*Definition of the Cultural Heritage*, 2017). We will be focusing on the intangible cultural heritage (as UNESCO considers Czech puppetry to be intangible). Intangible cultural heritage is defined by UNESCO as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage” (UNESCO, 2003). Intangible cultural heritage includes practices such as oral traditions, performing arts, festivals, cuisine, crafts, and so on (UNESCO, 2003). Both the intangible heritage and tangible heritage contribute to a culture’s identity.

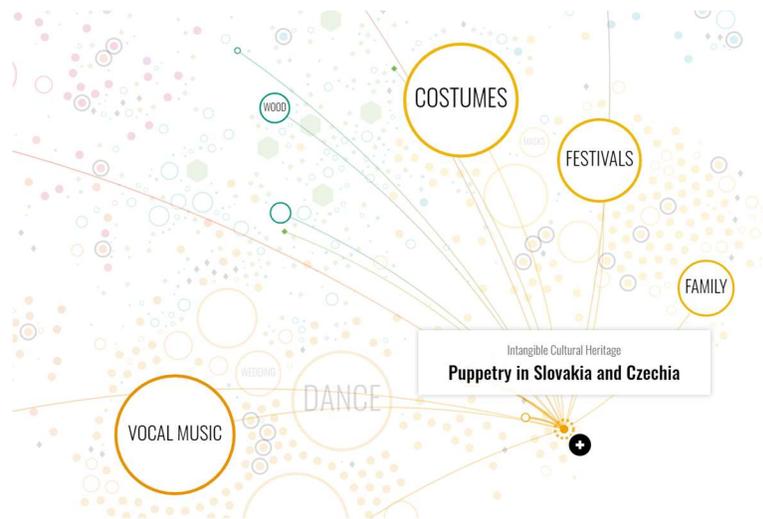


Figure 3: Czech Puppetry on UNESCO’s Constellation of Living Heritage (UNESCO, n.d.)

Though there is no one absolute truth as to why cultural heritage is important, a recurrent answer is that heritage acts as a comforting presence or anchor in a rapidly modernizing world (Wijesuriya et al., 2013). Additionally, many people believe the cultural heritage benefits their quality of life. Researchers from Britain Thinks surveyed over 4,000 people in twelve British districts about why cultural heritage is important, and based on the respondents’ answers, they determined the following:

- Cultural heritage promotes social cohesion,
- Cultural heritage adds aesthetic value to a location,
- Cultural heritage provides familial activities, and
- Cultural heritage stimulates the economy through tourism (*Why Do We Need Cultural Heritage?*, n.d.).

Puppetry is central to Czech culture. In Prague, puppet shops and theaters are targeted towards tourists, and puppet theaters are a way to meet new people. Even the nation’s younger generations appreciate puppetry’s roots in their cultural identity. One reason why Czech children who lived in a mixed population of Czechs and Hungarians preferred to attend Czech schools instead of Hungarian schools is because the Czech schools have puppet theaters (Bogatyrev and Minnick, 1999). As mentioned above, puppetry became recognized internationally for its cultural importance in 2016 when it was added to the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Hamar, 2016). On the list itself, Czech puppetry is characterized as an integral aspect of Czech theater, helping performers become critical thinkers and giving them an identity (*Puppetry in Slovakia and Czechia*, n.d.).

## 2.4 Struggles of the Modern Puppeteer

Puppeteers in Prague nowadays are currently facing stiff competition in the form of movies, television, video games, and the internet. A 2018 survey conducted by Nielsen Admosphere found that Czechs watch an average of three hours and forty-five minutes a day, thirty-one minutes longer than a decade ago (B.D. Staff, 2018). The Czech Republic is not the only nation where media consumption is on the rise. According to the Digital 2020 Global Overview Report of We Are Social, people worldwide are spending almost seven hours on the internet, two hours and a half on social media, and a little over an hour playing video games (*Digital 2020 Global Overview Report, 2020*).

In the sections below, we first discuss how performing arts, in general, are struggling. Then, we specifically discuss how puppeteers from all over the world are facing hardships.

### 2.4.1 Decreased Interest in Performing Arts

As a whole, performing arts are struggling to attract audiences. Performing art companies are primarily non-profit organizations that rely on fundraising for sixty percent of their revenue; the remaining forty percent is based on ticket sales. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, performance deficits have been steadily growing, and these performance companies now rely on philanthropy to remain in business (Ford and Mandviwalla, 2020). All performance arts are seeing a decrease in attendance, according to the 2016 annual report on arts and culture from Americans for the Arts. From 2003 to 2013, attendance of performing arts events in eighty-one metropolitan areas decreased by fifteen percent (Figure 4). Additionally, the report observed that forty-two percent of non-profit organizations were running a deficit (Kushner and Cohen, 2016).

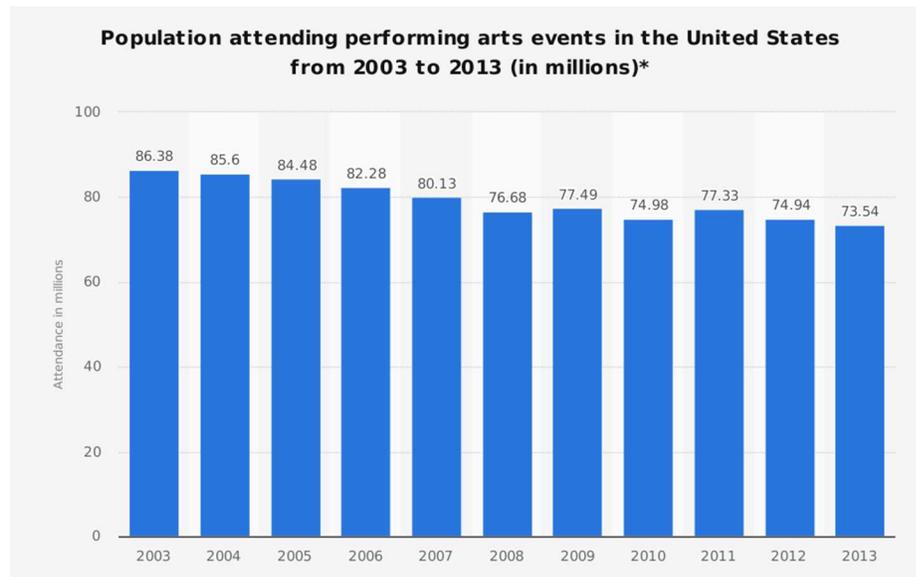


Figure 4: Attendance at Performing Arts Events from 2003-2013 (Americans for the Arts, 2016)

There are varying causal factors as to why attendance has been declining. From surveys conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts, several reasons that people cite for not

attending art events include lack of time, difficulty in getting to the performance, interest in other leisure activities, and expensive cost of attendance (NEA Office of Research and Analysis, 2020).

## **2.4.2 Worldwide Struggles**

Of course, Prague puppeteers are not the only ones facing hardship. In India, BBC reported how a colony of 3,000 puppeteers were being evicted from their homes. Despite performing for foreign diplomats and visitors and creating “spellbinding” puppet shows, these puppeteers received no support from their government as they pleaded to promote their colony as a tourist attraction (“India’s Puppeteers Struggle to Survive,” 2017). Because people are not coming to see their shows, puppeteers are struggling to make ends meet. As stated in the report, many people in the puppetry profession are choosing to leave the profession in hopes of finding better living conditions (“India’s Puppeteers Struggle to Survive,” 2017). The departure of puppeteers exacerbates the disappearance of this ancient art form.

Another relevant issue for contemporary puppeteers is the idea that puppet shows are regarded as entertainment for children only. Americans, in particular, are exposed to puppets in shows or movies aimed towards children. Most of the puppets Americans see are from the Muppets, Sesame Street, and stop-motion animation movies, such as Tim Burton’s *The Corpse Bride* (*Puppets on Radio, Film, and Television*, 2014). Though many puppet productions worldwide are aimed towards children, a lot of puppet theater companies (especially in Prague) have shows targeted at an adult audience. It is imperative that puppet companies in Prague appeal to adults as they cannot survive solely on the income from children’s shows, as there is a smaller audience and cheaper admission fees (Speaight, 2017).

## **2.5 Promotion of Art**

There are a plethora of techniques to promote art and culture, and each has its strengths and weaknesses. Social media, websites, events, and traditional advertisements in newspapers and television are all viable promotional tactics. However, advertisements in newspapers or on television tend to be costly, so when promoting puppetry, cost-efficient models are more practical (Kruger, 2015). Additionally, promoting a cultural art like puppetry is different than promoting a business or specific product. The focus of cultural promotion is on educating the target audience and engaging them in the art form, so they will be more likely to participate in it in the future (M. Keller, personal communication, September 16, 2020).

### **2.5.1 Case Study - Main Art Festival in South Africa**

There have been similar projects to our own in the past that use a variety of promotion techniques that can be learned from and applied to this project. In a paper titled “Developing and promoting Puppetry in South Africa: The Role of Arts Festivals,” the author Marie Kruger had a very similar goal to our own of promoting puppetry to the public. Her example gives us a look at how public events such as festivals can be a useful means to engage with new audiences.

Kruger’s project studied the impact that art festivals had on puppeteers by looking at two festivals in particular and interviewing puppeteers about their participation in the festivals. The Main Arts Festival and the more contemporary Fringe Festival in Cape Town were the focus of

her project. The Cape Town Fringe Festival is an annual festival based on the Edinburgh Fringe Festival (which was the first Fringe Festival) and features non-mainstream entertainment such as theater, comedy, music, dance, storytelling and puppetry (*Prague Fringe 2020: About Prague Fringe, n.d.*). There are Fringe Festivals all over the world including in Prague.

Through their findings, they concluded that festivals “are popular because of their unique features, including their ability to attract new groups of visitors, to focus consumers’ attention on some extraordinary ... cultural experiences and their newsworthiness.” The fact that festivals can give positive exposure is important to less mainstream art forms such as puppetry, as most people would simply never think to engage with it if they have not seen it before. However, if they interact with it at a festival, they are more likely to attend other puppetry shows and events in the future (Kruger, 2015).

These conclusions can be applied to the Prague puppetry scene as well, as Prague has its own Fringe Festival every year in which puppeteers participate, much like the Cape Town Fringe Festival. The use of festivals such as these are beneficial to Prague puppeteers to attract new groups of potential audiences and focus their attention on important cultural experiences in the process. Festivals are an excellent form of promotion that engages new audiences who are unfamiliar with puppetry.

### **2.5.2 Case Study on Social Media Promotion**

Social media is an excellent promotional tool because it is a low-cost way of engaging with a large community of people. “The Power of Promotion: Using Social Media to Promote a Radiology Department” compares the pros and cons of multiple different forms of social media platforms. Their goal was to increase engagement between the radiology community and their specific department. The social media types they focused on were Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and a website with a blog. This study is relevant to our project as conducting a social media campaign is one possible avenue of promotion we considered pursuing.

Twitter is a social media platform centered around sending our short messages of 140 characters or less to users who follow the account. To use Twitter effectively for promotion, one should construct regular content around a specific topic of interest (Ranginwala, S., & Towbin, A. J., 2017). In the radiology department, it was used to tweet about medical education and research, as well as about conferences the radiologists had attended. The radiology department tweeted about two to six times per day, as they found that to be the optimal range for user engagement through tests and looking at the engagement analytics. Similarly, a twitter account for a specific puppetry organization might be useful to inform people about show and workshop schedules and interesting facts about puppetry. Twitter could be an easy way to create a community of people who enjoy puppet shows online. However, Twitter might be less effective for attracting those in Czechia as only about 6.87% of people in the country use twitter on a regular basis (*Social media stats Czech Republic*).

Facebook has the largest user base of all social media platforms, boasting 1.44 billion active monthly users (Ranginwala, S., & Towbin, A. J., 2017). Similarly, it is by far the most popular social media platform in Czechia with nearly 50% of the public actively using the service, as seen in Figure 5 (*Social media stats Czech Republic*).



Figure 5: Social Media Usage by Platform in the Czech Republic (GlobalStats, 2020)

This means that Facebook provides excellent opportunities for attracting audiences from all over the world. Additionally, Facebook has a business-specific platform that allows users to “like” a page, which encourages others to follow its content. The platform gives the business a greater opportunity to analyze data such as post engagement. Unlike Twitter, Facebook allows for longer posts with a large amount of characters in it. The longer posts mean that more information can be shared with users per post. The radiology department used Facebook to target co-workers as well as patients and their families. They used it to create special announcements about upcoming events, as well as promote blog posts (Ranginwala, S., & Towbin, A. J., 2017). Because of the larger nature of Facebook posts, they found that posting less than Twitter (about three or four posts per week) was optimal.

Using websites and blog posts are another free way of conveying information to a target audience in an appealing way. Blogs are excellent because they are customizable to the users needs, and any person can access them without needing an account. Blog posts tend to be longer than both Twitter and Facebook posts. They can consist of articles of text and media and hyperlinks. It is possible to customize the blog pages to give whatever look and feel is desired. However, all this freedom means people need to spend much more time on creating the blog than other social media forms in order to get a professional look. Due to this need for extra time, blogs tend to only be updated with content once or twice a week, and it is a good idea to prepare multiple weeks of posts in advance (Ranginwala, S., & Towbin, A. J., 2017). Overall, websites and blogs are a great way to provide your audience with more information in an engaging way.

Overall, looking at how the radiology department promoted and educated the public provided some key insights into possibilities for promoting puppetry in Prague. Although they are promoting a completely different topic, many of the same principles apply to the issue of promoting puppetry. Social media helped them promote to their community in a cost-effective manner. Social media is also most effective when using multiple different forms, as they layer on one another to reach the largest possible audience (Ranginwala, S., & Towbin, A. J., 2017). Implementing social media platforms can increase knowledge about a community, and connect its existing members together, as evidenced by the growing community that the radiology department was able to amass, such as the 603 followers they achieved on their Twitter account.

### 2.5.3 Case Study on Promotional Videos

Using Social Media is a very efficient way of engaging a wide audience of people. However, there are many forms of social media. “Marketing via Social Media: A Case Study” specifically focuses on the impact video marketing campaigns can have on social media. The goal of the case study was to create a promotional video for the Tsinghua University Library in China and present its influence on engagement. This is very similar to our project, as we have decided to pursue creating a promotional video as well.

The case study references a journal by Colburn and Haines that stresses that “the key to viewership increase is to promote the videos via as many venues as possible, including websites, local or campus communication vehicles, and other social media platforms” (Colburn, Haines, 2012). Following the steps these journalists took in the case study would be useful towards our project, as it helps associate the importance of promoting your video in different ways with an increase in viewership.

The members of the study each had their own part in the creation of the video as well as the library staff who oversaw the making of the campaign. First, a script was made that had the primary intention of being lighthearted and easy to connect to. The effect of this perspective for the video allowed for “humorous and refreshing” scenes that students could connect to as many of the scenes were based on “similar experiences in the library” (Luo, Wang, & Han, 2013). The final product of the case study consisted of a five-episode video series that conveys a romantic story between a couple in a library that reportedly mirrors the campus culture of Tsinghua University.

The video was posted on a website similar to YouTube in China called Youku. Once uploaded, the product was “announced and promoted in multiple channels, including the library website, poster displays, postcards and bookmarks, word-of-mouth advertisement, RenRen, and the library’s Weibo page” (Luo, Wang, & Han, 2013). When the group moved to conduct its findings, they found that they received a large amount of engagement throughout all of their social media platforms, proving their methods had success.

During their conclusion, they split their results up into four factors that helped attain their accomplishment. The four factors were content, style, venue, and partnership with students (Luo, Wang, & Han, 2013). These attributes all played a part in making the promotional campaign successful. Using these factors, our project can be similarly influenced to make sure it contains values that people can relate to, that people can find fun, and that can have a major impact.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Puppetry has a rich and fascinating history in the Czech Republic and Prague itself. What began as a medium in religious ceremonies during the middle ages is now considered to be a staple of Czech culture by the United Nations. Additionally, puppetry plays a role in Czech tourism. Despite international recognition and puppetry's part in the tourism trade, puppeteers in Prague and all over the world are struggling. They are having difficulty attracting audiences due to an increased interest in digital and film entertainment and a lack of appreciation for the performing arts in general. Fortunately, there are many means of advertising puppetry, such as social media or a promotional video. Because this project is focused on the promotion of puppetry, we will examine how our group promoted puppetry through the creation of a video and the methodologies behind our effort.

### **3.0 Methodology**

The goal of this project was to provide actionable strategies to promote puppetry in Prague. To accomplish this goal, we completed three main objectives:

1. Researching and determining the most effective ways of promoting cultural arts such as puppetry.
2. Examining the Prague puppeteering scene to understand puppeteers' problems and specific needs, and selecting the top promotion technique.
3. Creating a marketing video and outlining promotional strategies for future puppeteers.

The following sections examine each objective and the methods that were used to achieve the objective.

#### **3.1 Research and Determine the Most Effective Ways of Promoting Cultural Arts Such as Puppetry**

The first objective was to research and determine the most effective ways of promoting puppetry to tourists. We thought it was best to investigate all possible methods of promotion (including using social media, building a website, creating a promotional video, or utilizing festivals) and decide which promotion techniques will be the most feasible and suitable to achieve the goals of this project.

For this objective, we examined previous case studies involving the promotion of puppetry or a related art form. Using databases such as JSTOR and Proquest, we found past projects that use techniques applicable to our project. For example, we reviewed "The Power of Promotion: Using Social Media to Promote a Radiology Department," which focused on promotion through social media. We analyzed the pros and cons of how each promotional strategy worked, and we strategized how we could incorporate a similar strategy to promote puppetry in Prague. When looking over the promotional strategies that we could possibly use, we considered the following factors:

- Feasibility
  - How effective the strategy would be remotely
- The scope and focus of our project (puppetry)
- Any potential costs or fees
- Our limited project time of seven weeks
- The resources available to us
- Our project team's skills and capabilities
- Opinions from people in the puppeteering field (see section 3.2)

To evaluate if the case studies we reviewed were relevant to our project, we took into consideration the following questions: what was the aim of the study, who collected the data, and what methodology was used to collect the data (*How to Do Your Dissertation Secondary Research in 4 Steps*, 2020). We looked for promotional campaigns that focus on educating and engaging the public in an art form or culture, as these were the most applicable to the goals of this project. For example, looking at promotional campaigns for a product or specific brand were not as relevant to our project, as the goals of those are to increase sales or awareness of a business product, instead of educating and engaging the public. Using secondary research allowed us to quickly develop a multitude of viable promotion options for puppetry in Prague.

### **3.2 Examine the Prague Puppeteering Scene to Understand Puppeteers' Problems and Specific Needs and Select Top Technique**

Our second objective was to examine the Prague puppeteering scene to understand the puppeteers' specific problems and needs. In order to provide actionable plans to puppeteers, it is vital to create a plan tailored to them so that any individual puppeteer or puppetry organization can easily implement it. To complete this objective, we conducted semi-structured interviews with a Prague puppeteer and an artisan. A semi-structured interview develops a dialogue with a local person about a particular subject, not just getting someone to answer only specific questions (Beebe, 2014). By using a semi-structured interview, the interviewee was able to voice their particular needs and interests, and they told us firsthand what they would like to see our project accomplish. Before conducting the interviews, the participants signed an informed consent letter (found in Appendix A). Both of the interviews we completed were conducted over Zoom.

With this objective, our goal is to gather a fuller understanding of the current puppetry scene in Prague. This goal requires examining multiple perspectives, including those of tourists, puppeteers, and Prague citizens, allowing us to better grasp diverse challenges facing contemporary puppeteers. The interview questions and the transcriptions of both interviews are shown in Appendix B. After we understood their problems and reviewed several case studies, we determined that the most beneficial promotional technique would be to create a marketing video that could be posted on social media. This specific marketing video would be used for Puppets in Prague, a local group in Prague that holds workshops on creating puppets.

### **3.3 Creating a Marketing Video for Puppets in Prague and Outlining Steps for Other Puppeteers**

Our third and final objective was a combination of two smaller objectives: making a promotional video for the Puppets in Prague organization, and creating a guide on promoting puppetry for future puppeteers.

#### **3.3.1 Creating a Marketing Video for Puppets in Prague**

The first part of this objective was to generate a specific video that would cater to Puppets in Prague. Using material from the Puppets in Prague website and video testimonials from past students, we created a marketing video for the organization to use. The marketing video was created using the program Final Cut Pro X to edit together the student testimonials

with the clips from the workshop. While creating the video, we got feedback from the organization and changed the video based on their suggestions.

We used surveys, specifically questionnaires, to gain feedback from the group and their workshop students. For these surveys, we included the following response formats: continuous responses (fill-in-the-blanks), and interval-level responses where we gave the links to our proposed video and asked to rate the video on a scale of 1 to 10 (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The survey was created using Google Forms. Examples of the survey questions can be found below in Appendix F. This process allowed us to work closely with puppeteers to find the most effective possible solution to their issues. We analyzed the survey results and edited the video based on certain feedback. After making changes according to the responses, we then produced our final promotional video for Puppets in Prague.

### 3.3.2 Outlining Steps for Other Puppeteers

The final part of our project was to outline actionable steps that future puppeteers could follow to promote their puppetry. Reflecting on our own experience on this project, we created an infographic guide to making a promotional campaign. An infographic is “data in graphic illustrative form,” which makes it easier for readers to digest and understand new information (Siricharoen, 2013). Thus, we felt that an infographic would be the best way to quickly present information about promotional campaigns to puppeteers. To design the infographic, we followed this process outlined by Jane Krauss: get an idea, sketch it out, collect the data, develop proof of concepts, and lay it out (Krauss, 2012). The infographic was created using Canva, an online graphic design platform.

### 3.4 Methods Flow Chart

Below, in Figure 6, we demonstrate how the list of promotional methods was created and then narrowed to the top one or two methods through the steps of the research.



Figure 6: Methodology Flow Chart

### **3.5 Conclusion**

The goal of this project was to provide actionable strategies to promote puppetry in Prague. To accomplish this goal, we did the following: (1) we conducted secondary research on promoting cultural art and evaluated their effectiveness, (2) we examined the Prague puppeteering scene by interviewing people in the field, and (3) we created a marketing video for Puppets in Prague and made an infographic that puppeteers can follow to promote their puppetry.

## **4.0 Results**

Over the course of seven weeks, we accomplished our project goals. We gathered secondary research on the promotion of art, conducted two interviews, and created a promotional video for the Puppets in Prague organization. By completing these objectives, we were able to create an outline of promotional strategies that future puppeteers can follow.

### **4.1 Secondary Research on Promoting Cultural Art**

The paper titled “Developing and Promoting Puppetry in South Africa: The Role of Arts Festivals,” by Marie Kruger, discussed the effectiveness of festivals when promoting puppetry. Kruger found that festivals are a unique offering for the arts as they attract a wide variety of people, some that usually would not participate in the arts. Unfortunately, festivals were not a feasible option for our project. This is due to the fact that we are currently remote, festivals are very expensive to conduct, it takes a lot of time and effort to organize a festival, and it would not be safe in terms of public health due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Social media was a viable option for promoting puppetry as it is widespread and easily accessible to most. The case study “The Power of Promotion: Using Social Media to Promote a Radiology Department” found that social media is one of the most low-cost but effective means of promotion and different social media platforms could be used to yield the largest promotional audience. Although it is a great option, the organization Puppetry in Prague, that we worked with to promote, preferred to avoid using social media as they already have a Facebook page and are content with their social media presence.

The case study “Marketing via Social Media: A Case Study” explores using a video as means of promotion. It was found that a promotional video receives a large amount of engagement if it is interesting and the correct length for the topic it is discussing. Although Puppets in Prague did not want us to use social media, they were open to a promotional video that they can post on their website, Facebook page and anywhere else they desire. We decided that we would create an intriguing promotional video under five minutes using clips from Puppets in Prague, including workshop videos and testimonials from students of the organization.

### **4.2 Interview Results**

Our group conducted two interviews with two puppeteers in Prague, Leah Gaffen and Marek Bečka, which helped us narrow down our most effective promotional strategy. The questions we asked gave us insight into the background lives of puppeteers in Prague, information on past promotional techniques used, and a look into the future of their profession. Leah is a puppet artisan while Marek is a puppet performer; we wanted to have the perspectives of someone who creates puppets and someone who performs with puppets. The interview with Leah (the questions and her responses) can be found in Appendices B and C, while the interview with Marek can be found in Appendices D and E.

During each interview, the topic of puppetry’s perception around the world was discussed. The common response highlighted the United States as a country that perceives puppetry through a childish lens, shown in popular media such as The Muppets and Sesame

Street. However, the opposite is true in Prague, where many puppet performances are intended for a mature, adult audience. Another issue with how Americans perceive puppetry is that they generally think of puppetry as puppet shows not as its own complex art form.

Both puppeteers have had public shows and showcases of their work, so our group asked questions based on their previous promotion techniques to attract audiences to their events. Leah Gaffen outlined many of the problems with promoting puppetry to tourists and began by talking about the interest of puppetry in foreign countries. Leah mentioned that in Prague, it is difficult to engage with huge tourist groups who may only want to experience non-puppet facets of the city. Puppet shows are rarely well-promoted to tourists; the shows that are promoted are incredibly expensive, which turns away tourists. Additionally, there are no puppet museums in Prague, and there is an overall lack of information about puppetry available in English for tourists. For her organization, Puppets in Prague, Leah runs a Facebook page and a website for the group, but she doesn't know how much viewer engagement she is getting from these pages.

The second puppeteer, Marek Bečka, used many different methods when he went about promoting his shows and festivals. He mentioned promotional techniques such as putting up posters and flyers around the city to gain attention and word of mouth - which involved talking to people and getting their feedback on his events, and he sometimes pays for ads in the newspaper. Of course, these promotion techniques were the ones he used during the '90s, before the age of digital media. Now, his theater company has two PR managers who manage the social media accounts and host live streams of the company's theater performances. During the interview, he noted that these live streams were popular and got many views.

From these interviews, we got to know the experiences and the challenges puppeteers have in Prague, as well as their perspective on the best promotional campaign to pursue with this project. Ultimately, from their responses and our secondary research, we chose to create a promotional video, which would be made for Puppets in Prague.

### **4.3 Creating the Promotional Video**

We determined that creating a video would be the most effective for the puppeteering organization we were assisting, Puppets in Prague, as they already had a website and a Facebook page. Their greatest needs were in creating engaging media content for these two platforms. While they have been able to create fliers and routinely share images and information, one area they have not attempted was creating a promotional video for their workshops. Both interviewees jumped in excitement at the idea of a video.

The video created consisted of spliced together testimonials, that were shared to us by Leah Gaffen, of three previous students of the Puppets in Prague workshops, as well as shots of recordings from the workshops. These enthusiastic testimonials give the watcher an engaging experience, while also informing them about what one could expect from attending a workshop. Care was taken to make sure the process of how the workshops work was explained in sufficient detail, as well as to get the opinions and feelings of each of the students. In addition, each testimonial builds off of the last, giving the viewer the impression of multiple people talking in one cohesive string of thoughts.

### 4.3.1 Survey Results on Video

Through the results of our survey, we were able to ascertain that people found the video overwhelmingly engaging with two-thirds of respondents giving it a 10 out of 10 when asked “On a scale of 1 to 10, how engaging/interesting did you find the video?”. The responses can be seen below in Figure 7. Additionally, 100% of responses were given at least an 8 on this scale. These results indicate that we successfully created an engaging video that could pique potential clients’ interests. Another result from the survey that further proves this point is that all respondents answered they were either likely or very likely to share the video with friends or family, which is a sign that the video leaves the viewer excited about the topic, as they want to share it with people they know. The responses to this question can be seen below as well in Figure 8. Note how all of the responses were ranked at least a 4 out of 5.

On a scale of 1 to 10, how engaging/interesting did you find the video?

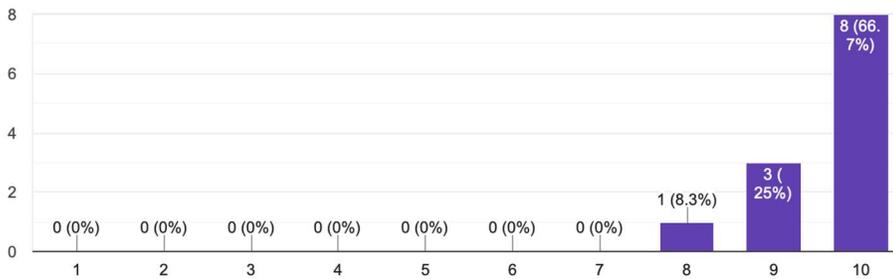


Figure 7: Survey Response for Question 1

How likely is it that you would share this video with someone, like a family member or friend?

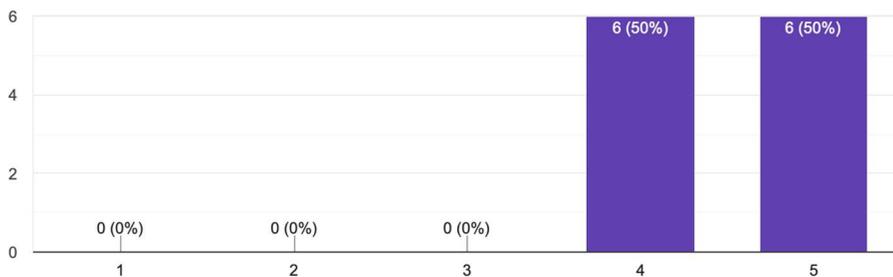


Figure 8: Survey Response for Question 5

The coherency of the video was also rated very highly by the survey respondents. All respondents answered “Yes” to the questions “Would you say the quality of the video is good (no choppy edits, no problem with the audio, etc.)?” and “Is it clear what the purpose of the video is?” which is an indication that our video has a logical flow to it. This interpretation is confirmed in the short answers where two respondents specifically mentioned the flow of the

video as a major positive. Overall, the survey responses were overwhelmingly positive. The survey questions can be found in Appendix F, while the full survey responses can be found in Appendix G.

### **4.3.2 Editing the Video Based on Feedback**

There were a few small suggestions that were offered as constructive feedback in the short answers of the survey. An example is that one of the cuts was jarring and needed to be adjusted. We were able to use this critique to go back and fix it for the final version. Feedback from people who are not actively engaged in the project is useful, as sometimes small things are overlooked by those working on it.

In addition to the feedback from the surveys, we also got feedback from the owners of Puppets in Prague directly, allowing us to continue to tailor the video until they were completely happy with it. Some of their suggestions included changing the music and adding titles for each of the people speaking in the video. Continuously refining and editing the video with feedback from multiple perspectives was vital to creating a professional promotional video. The final video product will be available on our project website:

<https://sites.google.com/view/promotingpuppetryinpragueiqp/home>.

## **4.4 Outlining Promotional Strategies for Future Puppeteers**

From what we've learned through our secondary research, interviews, and making our own promotional campaign for a puppeteering group, we have created a guide that future puppeteers can use to promote their art. We outlined four steps that we thought were essential for making a promotional campaign, mainly following the process we used in order to create our promotional video for Puppeteers in Prague. Our intent was to provide puppeteers actionable steps they could use for any promotional strategy, whether it was creating a series of social media posts or making flyers. The major steps can be seen below in Table 1.

<b>Step 1</b>	Identify your audience.	Before you begin marketing, you must think about the people who come to your shows (and the people who don't). Certain people may be more engaged in your material, like an older audience or foreign artists.
<b>Step 2</b>	Pick your promotional strategy.	Decide on how you want to promote your puppetry. Consider your skills and capability, and the best way to engage the audience you identified. For example, if you are comfortable with video editing, a promotional video may be a viable marketing option.
<b>Step 3</b>	Get feedback on your campaign.	Make sure to get other people's opinions on the campaign. Possible ways to get feedback include surveys or focus groups.
<b>Step 4</b>	Create your final promotional campaign.	After getting feedback, you can now release your final promotional campaign, whether it's a video, social media posts, or passing out flyers! For your campaign, we highly recommend including examples of your own work in puppetry.

Table 1: Actionable Steps for Promoting Puppetry for Future Puppeteers

As mentioned in the methods section, an infographic was created and outlines these steps (Appendix H). This infographic will be available on our project website <https://sites.google.com/view/promotingpuppetryinpragueiqp/for-puppeteers>, for future puppeteers and arts organizations to use. The infographic is not copyrighted, as we want everyone who is curious about promoting puppetry to access this document (Krauss, 2012).

## **5.0 Conclusion**

Due to the increase in popularity for digital media in the present day, it is clear that action needs to be taken to help preserve certain art forms such as puppetry. Our project goes from establishing the issues puppeteers are having in Prague, to doing research on promotional techniques, to finally creating a plan and video that future puppeteers can use for their benefit. Two interviews were conducted with puppeteers in Prague that gave us information on their particular struggles and experiences. Both puppeteers are also open to working with WPI students again in the future. Additionally, we created a website to showcase the project as well as all of the content we produced that connects with the other IQP projects in Prague.

## **5.1 Recommendations**

While we had a great experience throughout the course of this project, it is important to give recommendations to make the project as effective as it can be in the future. Assuming the next group will be going abroad to Prague, we would recommend getting a first hand account of the struggles the puppeteers are going through. Whether this includes contacting more puppeteers or visiting different shows and shops, broadening the reach of the students will benefit the specificity and immersiveness of the project as they will witness the coveted artform of puppetry first hand. This can open up new promotional campaigns for puppeteers that can be researched and pursued in the future. Working with a tourism board also may be beneficial to a group continuing our work. Additionally, Leah Gaffen seemed receptive to a future IQP group improving the Puppets in Prague current website.

## **5.2 Final Remarks**

Puppetry is a cultural artform for all ages to enjoy that needs to be continuously preserved. It allows puppeteers to express themselves effectively through an inanimate object while entertaining and influencing those around them. A puppeteer can impact one's view on society through just the movement of a hand and the tilt of a head. In conclusion, puppetry is an art form that is struggling around the world and through promotional strategies we believe that WPI IQP students can help one global place at a time, starting in Prague.

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## **Appendix A: Informed Consent Letter**

### **Informed Consent Agreement for Participation in a Research Study**

**Investigator:** Bland Addison, Alex Mondro, Meghan McCudden, Abby O'Connor, Kevin

**Ramos Contact Information:** CzechPuppetryA20@wpi.edu

**Title of Research Study:** Promoting Puppetry in Prague

**Sponsor:** Marie Keller

#### **Introduction**

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you agree, however, you must be fully informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and any benefits, risks or discomfort that you may experience as a result of your participation. This form presents information about the study so that you may make a fully informed decision regarding your participation.

**Purpose of the study:** Though puppetry is a historical art form in the Czech Republic, puppeteers in Prague and all over the world are struggling to attract audiences due to competition from modern entertainment. Our project goal is to provide actionable strategies to raise awareness of the cultural traditions around puppetry in Prague.

**Procedures to be followed:** In order to understand the needs of the puppeteers in Prague, a brief interview will be conducted with you over Zoom. This will take around 30 mins to an hour to complete. You will simply be asked about your own experiences and opinions about puppetry in Prague. The questions will be sent in advance, but there may be a few follow up questions not a part of those questions if the interviewers wish for you to elaborate on an answer.

**Risks to study participants:** One area that could possibly bring some discomfort is when you are asked to share about your personal struggles. Care has been taken to craft the questions and send the questions ahead of time to you so you are not caught off guard.

**Benefits to research participants and others:** While there is not direct compensation, we will be using their responses to help create actionable steps that puppeteers like yourself can use to promote puppetry in the future. This would be of ultimate benefit to you the interviewee.

**Record keeping and confidentiality:** At the start of the interview, the interviewers will ask for permission to take notes and record the conversation so that it can be referred to later. If you choose to allow this the notes/recording of the conversation will only be accessible locally by the research team and its advisors and will not be publicly released or shared. Records of your participation in this study will be held confidential so far as permitted by law. However, the study investigators, the sponsor or it's designee and, under certain circumstances, the Worcester Polytechnic Institute Institutional Review Board (WPI IRB) will be able to inspect and have access to confidential data that identify you by name. Any publication or presentation of the data will not identify you.

**Compensation or treatment in the event of injury:** There is little to no chance of an injury resulting from participating in this research. As such, there is not any way of receiving compensation for such an injury. You do not give up any of your legal rights by

signing this statement.

**For more information about this research or about the rights of research participants, or in case of research-related injury, contact:** Any further questions should be sent to CzechPuppetryA20@wpi.edu

To contact the IRB Manager: Ruth McKeogh, Tel. 508 831- 6699, Email: [irb@wpi.edu](mailto:irb@wpi.edu)

To contact the Human Protection Administrator: Gabriel Johnson, Tel. 508-831-4989, Email: [gjohnson@wpi.edu](mailto:gjohnson@wpi.edu)

**Your participation in this research is voluntary.** Your refusal to participate will not result in any penalty to you or any loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled. You may decide to stop participating in the research at any time without penalty or loss of other benefits. The project investigators retain the right to cancel or postpone the experimental procedures at any time they see fit.

**By signing below,** you acknowledge that you have been informed about and consent to be a participant in the study described above. Make sure that your questions are answered to your satisfaction before signing. You are entitled to retain a copy of this consent agreement.

Study Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Study Participant Name (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_ Signature

of Person who explained this study: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B: Interview Questions for a Puppet Artisan**

- A. Tell us how you got involved in/your experience with puppetry.
- B. Do you think engaging young people in making puppets helps preserve the art form?
- C. How do you think modern entertainment is competing with puppetry?
- D. How do you promote the art of puppetry or puppet shows? Do you have a Facebook, Instagram, etc.? Would you say that your promotion techniques are successful in engaging audiences?
  - a. Do you think that puppet building workshops are a good way to promote puppetry?
- E. How do you feel about using social media or websites to engage a wider audience? For example, would you prefer using Twitter or Facebook to post puppetry videos?
  - a. Or, would you rather your website to appeal to more people?
- F. How do you think puppetry will play a role in tourism in the future?
  - a. What are the challenges of promoting puppetry to people outside of the Czech Republic?

## Appendix C: Interview Answers from a Puppet Artisan

- A. As children, my sister and I would collect marionettes from the United Kingdom. While I was in college, I helped with a children's puppet theater in New Haven. There, I focused on writing and making puppets. I also interned at the Kennedy Center in D.C. After I graduated college, I wanted to continue working in puppetry. I went to Prague, where I taught students English using theater involving puppets. I met my partner while doing this, and we started our puppet workshop together after organizing an exhibition in an arts festival in Macau. Since then, we've had puppet workshops all over the world - Singapore, the United States, New Zealand, and even virtually.
- B. I think that children in the Czech Republic view puppetry differently here than in America, where they really only associate puppets with Sesame Street or the Muppets. Puppetry is popular amongst children here.
- C. Puppeteers I know have said that children don't have as much of an attention span for watching puppet shows and have limited knowledge on fairy tales. The current trend is that there's more alternate options of entertainment compared to puppet shows. Another issue is there is a limited amount of grants going to theaters.
- D. We have the website for our organization. I frequently post on it and promote puppet shows and such. We also have a Facebook page that I try to post on regularly. Currently, our page has 4.5k followers, but I don't know how many people I'm actually engaging in my feed. I also post workshop videos on Vimeo; these videos are password protected and need to be paid for.
- a. I think that online workshops open up another audience. After the pandemic ends, I would like to continue these online workshops.
- E. I like your idea of making a short video to promote puppetry. I also like the idea of making a before and after image of carved puppets on Facebook.
- a. I think our website needs to be revamped. I would be open to a future IQP group helping us update the website.
- F. A lot of puppetry is promoted to tourists, but it's commercialized. One good promotion of puppet theater to tourists is a local festival that features more niche theater forms like puppetry. A lot of tourists and foreigners will go to this festival, as shows done by the festival company are well-marketed to tourists. Also, COVID has obviously impacted tourism.
- a. I think there is a small target audience of tourists who would actually be interested in puppetry, specifically people interested in arts and culture or "deeper" tourism. The puppet shows in English here are very "touristy," or they are not accessible to tourists/not well-promoted. Puppet shows targeted towards tourists are also very expensive. Another issue is that not a lot of theater companies focus solely on puppet theater; theater groups will perform in repertoires. Finally, there is not a puppet museum in Prague, and there is not a lot of information about puppets available in English.

## **Appendix D: Interview Questions for a Puppet Performer**

- A. What inspired you to go into puppetry and start your own puppet company? Tell us about your company.
  - a. How do you go about promoting your company and the shows you put on?
- B. We were told you used to do street puppetry. What was that like?
  - a. How does street puppetry differ from classic theater puppetry?
- C. For the festival you ran, how did you promote it? What did you plan to achieve with this festival?
- D. What have you learned from your experiences of teaching people all over the world about puppetry?
- E. What is something that Americans presume about puppetry that you wish you could correct or change?
- F. What do you believe is the future of puppetry? We would like to know in general and in terms of being affected by COVID-19.
  - a. Do you believe social media is the next step for promoting puppetry and engaging a wider audience?

## Appendix E: Interview Answers from a Puppet Performer

- A. I thought about making a puppet theater when I was a teenager. At the time, under communist rule, I was unable to follow this idea because of my parents' positions. After the Velvet Revolution, I met fellow puppeteers. We started a group together called Bouty a Loutky thirty years ago. The company is independent, but we are still able to collect grants and funds from the Czech government.
- a. My company has two PR managers. These two run the email list and the Facebook page, and they are the ones who collect the grants and funds. Additionally, they help us put on live streams. I've found that we are able to get a bigger audience by performing shows online.
- B. I am not really a fan of street puppetry - you can make good money from it, but it takes a lot of effort and time to do so. I used to travel to Amsterdam and Poland to perform in the streets there, as the government allowed us to travel to Western countries.
- a. Street puppetry is very different from classic theater puppetry. On the street, people aren't expecting for you to put on a performance and to pay you for said performance (unlike when people buy tickets to see a show). It's a lot harder to engage an audience on the street than it is on stage.
- C. The festival I ran was in the 90's, so a lot of promotion came from word of mouth, flyers, and ads in the newspaper. The festival was about having fun, at the beginning. The city hall pays for the festival and rents us a space, and the festival is free of charge. Because the festival is free, a lot of people come. Now, the festival works like a promotion for the beginning of the puppet theater season.
- D. People are simultaneously different and similar at the same time. I've faced some cultural differences and language barriers, but people are very open to learning about puppetry, because you can say anything using puppet theater. A lot of people are surprised that they can put on a show for adults.
- E. Puppetry performances are a form of traditional theater; many Americans assume that puppet performances are like sketches and puppet shows. They also tend to think puppet shows are just something for children. Also, there are many different forms of puppet theater - it can be simple hand puppets, people on stage with puppets, or object theater (an example would be having a cup talk to a shoe).
- F. I honestly have no idea how the future of puppetry looks, but I know the future is the younger generation of puppeteers and the ideas they put out into the world.
- a. I am a little wary of social media because it invades our privacy. However, the younger generation seems really addicted to their phones and social media, so it could be the future of puppetry and other things. Right now, more people have been using the internet to put on puppet shows because of COVID.

## Appendix F: Survey Questions About Our Promotional Video

### Puppetry Promotion Video

Hello! We are a group of WPI students completing their IQP. We would like a moment of your time to gain feedback on a promotional video we created for a puppetry organization in Prague. The link to the video is here.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qAjjYzjHLr28QIOAqN1wHT193KUyHBiK/view?usp=sharing>

Thank you!

\*\*\*All responses will remain anonymous.\*\*\*

\* Required

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how engaging/interesting did you find the video? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>									

2. Would you say the quality of the video is good (no choppy edits, no problem with the audio, etc.)? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't know

3. Tell us what you liked and didn't like about the video. \*

---

4. Is it clear what the purpose of the video is? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

5. How likely is it that you would share this video with someone, like a family member or friend? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not likely at all	<input type="radio"/>	Very likely				

6. Additional Comments

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**Google Forms**

## Appendix G: Full Survey Results

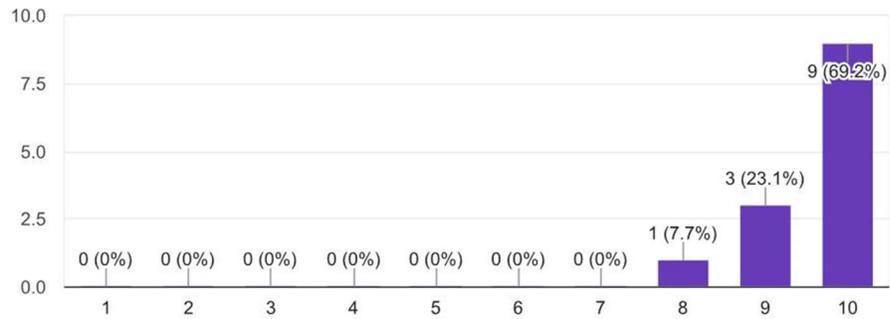
### Puppetry Promotion Video

13 responses

[Publish analytics](#)

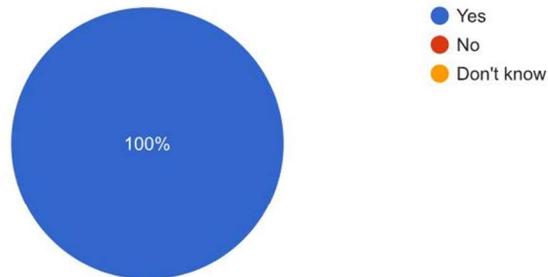
On a scale of 1 to 10, how engaging/interesting did you find the video?

13 responses



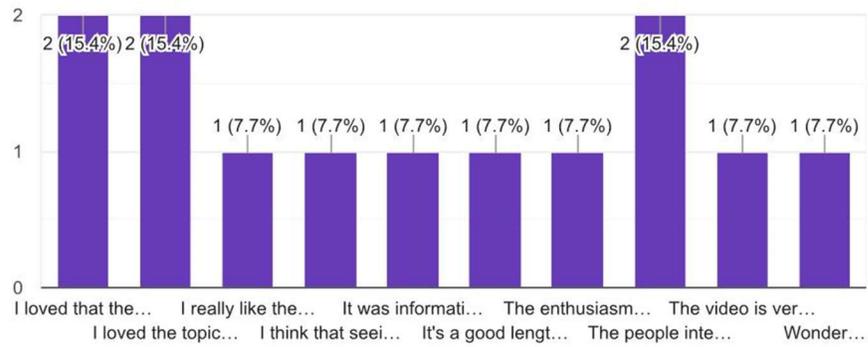
Would you say the quality of the video is good (no choppy edits, no problem with the audio, etc.)?

13 responses



Tell us what you liked and didn't like about the video.

13 responses



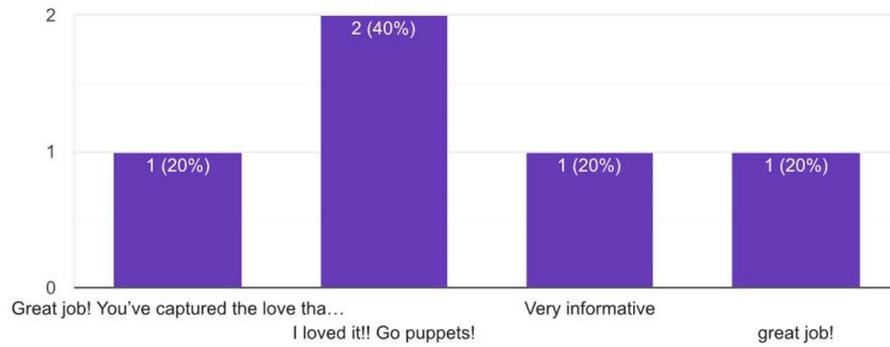
Is it clear what the purpose of the video is?

13 responses



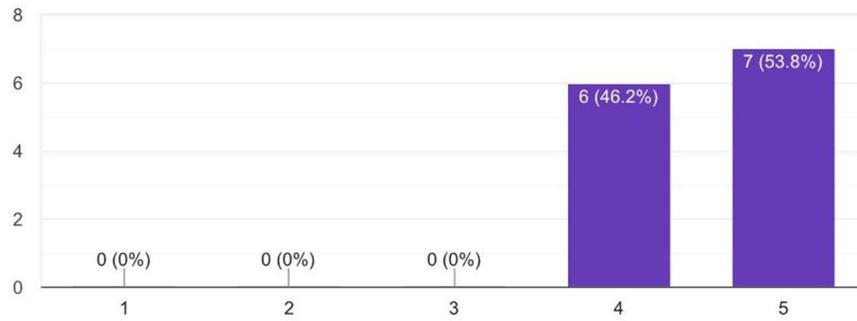
### Additional Comments

5 responses



How likely is it that you would share this video with someone, like a family member or friend?

13 responses



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## Google Forms



## Appendix H: Infographic Guide Outlining Steps for Promotion for Puppeteers

# A PUPPETEER'S GUIDE TO A PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN

### IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE.

Before you begin marketing, you must think about the people who come to your shows (and the people who don't). Certain people may be more engaged in your material, like an older audience or foreign artists.



### PICK YOUR PROMOTIONAL STRATEGY.



Decide on how you want to promote your puppetry. Consider your skills and capability, and the best way to engage a new audience. For example, if you are comfortable with video editing, a marketing video may be a viable option for promotion..

### GET FEEDBACK ON YOUR CAMPAIGN.

Make sure to get other people's opinions on the campaign. Possible ways to get feedback include surveys or focus groups.



### CREATE YOUR FINAL PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN.



After getting feedback, you can now release your final promotional campaign, whether it's a video, social media posts, or passing out flyers! For your campaign, we highly recommend demonstrating your own work (such as a video clip of your performances or a picture of a puppet you made).

Created by a group of WPI students for their Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP).