

Oz puppets in other lands



PUK puppet theater Wizard of Oz cast

The first *Wizard of Oz* puppet show produced in Europe to tour the US arrived from the Salzburg Marionette Theatre of Austria. Based on the book rather than the MGM film, the renowned puppet company toured with *The Wizard of Oz* in the 1950s. They were followed by the Stockholm Marionette Theatre of Fantasy in 1966. Their puppets, which were large and unusual, shared the stage with a costumed actor playing the role of the Cowardly Lion.

Selected productions from around the world include:

PUK puppet theater, also in Japan, has performed modern puppetry since 1929. They share their Tokyo building with offices of Union Internationale de la Marionnette and the Japan Modern Puppetry Center. When this company presents *The Wizard of Oz*, they fill the stage with a combination of oversized puppet, props, and people. Twirling yellow brick parasols are just one example of how choreography is integrated into the production.

Jersey Amateur Dramatic Club of St. Saviour, Jersey, the Channel Islands off the coast of France produced of *The Wizard of Oz* using costumed actors and giant Munchkin puppets. Directed by Nick Carver with choreography by Christophe Chateau, the puppets were made by Andy Heath and Lestyn Evans. Each Munchkins was about four-foot tall with its feet attached to the shoes of a puppeteer, who then moved and danced to drive the puppet. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrMWfjx__i0

Zhongguo Muou Yishutuan [China Puppet Art Troupe]. Based in Beijing and founded in 1955 the company has performed more than 300 plays, primarily for family audiences, *The Wizard of Oz*, among them. Traveling around the world they have won awards for artistic excellence at international festivals in Hungary and Yugoslavia. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/culture/2017-07/28/content_30283631.htm

Teatro Nacional de Guiñol [National Puppet Theatre] Founded in Havana, Cuba in 1963, the company is the largest and most prestigious company in Cuba performing for audiences of all ages in schools, squares, other public places, as well as in their own theatre. The company first produced *The Wizard of Oz* in 1968.



First Wizard of Oz puppet show in China.

Chengdu Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center Puppet Theater, performed a rod puppet and marionette production of *The Wizard of Oz* in July 2017 at the China Children's Theater Festival in Beijing. Although the story is familiar to Chinese children, this is believed to be the first puppet show of Baum's tale staged in the country. Alexander Volkov is sometimes believed to be the story's original author; his Russian translation of Baum's work was first translated into Chinese in 1960 and published there with no mention of Baum. <http://chinaplus.cri.cn/news/showbiz/14/20170728/11920.html>

Guizzi di Marionette (Marionette Moments), offers a 25-minute musical production of *Il Gioco del Mago di Oz* (*The Magical Game of Oz*). Puppetry and puppets by Francesco Furone and Lucia Carella, a second-generation puppeteer, follow an adaptation by Robert Cavalli. Their Oz production uses oversized marionettes, as befits the land that gave Pinocchio to the world. <http://guizzidimarionette.blogspot.com/2012/04/spettacoli-di-guizzi-di-marionette-in.html>

Augsburger Puppenkiste, (Doll Crate of Augsburg) Augsburg Germany, traces its origins to 1940. Their first theater was destroyed by bombs in 1943. Today the company and its museum operate in Heilig-Geist-Spital creating puppets for theater and television. *Der Zauberer von Oz* was adapted by the group as a radio play in 1972 with puppet shows performed in 1975 and 2013. https://www.stars-an-faeden.de/apkchronik/proddet.php?prod_id=301

Companyia Sebastià Vergés (Company Sebastia Verges) is now in the hands of third-generation Spanish puppeteer Sebastià Vergés i Martínez. The company's current Oz production, *El Fantàstic Màgic D'Oz*, is performed in Catalan and features hand puppets. It includes original music and songs by Joan B. Torrella Ibàñez <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ej35AKb9sQ>



Jeral Puppets of Sydney includes *The Wizard of Oz* in its repertoire of 123 shows. Jackie and John Lewis have performed since 1966. His great uncle was the family's first puppeteer; their son joined the company business ten years ago. With four Puppeteria theaters and their home housing more than 1,000 puppets, the Lewis family continues to bring *The Wizard of Oz* to Australia.

Theater Jo owner and puppeteer Jo Taira, is the youngest person ever to win Japan's National Puppetry Organization's Silver Award. He grew up in a performing family where he debuted as a puppeteer at age 12. His *Wizard of Oz* performance brings 30 Oz character puppets to the stage in a 2.5 hour musical production. The popular artist has his own Theater Joe and is followed by an avid fan club. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMNo--I2rRA>

