

# THE DRAGON KING

## a Sensory-Friendly Guide/Social Story

### CENTER FOR PUPPETRY ARTS, Atlanta

Show running time: 50 minutes

THE DRAGON KING, from Tanglewood Marionettes (Ware, MA), is an underwater adventure based on Chinese folklore. A kindly but overlooked Grandmother ventures out in search of the legendary Dragon King, oceanic ruler of all waters, to figure out why he hasn't sent rain to her village. Along the way, the Grandmother helps a crab find confidence, solves a solitude squid's sullenness, and ultimately wins the day through storytelling, bravery, and friendliness.

#### CONTENT

THE DRAGON KING is a marionette show, meaning all the puppet characters are controlled by string from above. This impressive technical feat can give the impression that the puppets are moving on their own, but if you follow the strings up to the top of the stage, you'll see the friendly and awesome puppeteers from Tanglewood Marionettes!

The Grandmother, granted the power to breathe underwater, spends most of her time searching for the Dragon King under the ocean. This means plenty of detailed, colorful, somewhat cartoonish sea-critter puppets (eel, crab, squid, fish, jellyfish). There is no sense of menace or danger from these critters, or from the underwater situation, as the Grandmother's confidence and friendliness make every strange encounter reassuring and fun.



The Dragon King himself only has a few minutes of stage-time, but it is a very impressive puppet: a rod-controlled, two-person, stylized Chinese dragon mounted atop the performers' shoulders, standing about six feet tall and is about ten feet long. The sheer size of the puppet might take you by surprise if you're not prepared, but don't worry! It's not a nasty, scary, mean dragon -- it's a colorful, almost cat-like critter, played as a sad, friendless, isolated king rather than a dangerous monster.

At the end of the play, the Dragon King, ruler of all waters, celebrates the return of his missing magic pearl by "swimming" out into the audience and spouting a little bit of water from his mouth. The seats closer to the aisle will get water spray, so choose a seat closer to the wall (the seats on the left as you face the stage) if you wish to be farther away from the Dragon King when he makes his short journey through the audience.



## **LIGHT AND DARK**

The show uses a little bit of shadow puppetry to illustrate the Grandmother's stories -- this means a few times during the show, the lights will lower and shadows will appear on the stage. These shapes are neat, not spooky; the darkness is only temporary.

Another (super cool) instance of darkness occurs when the Grandmother swims deeper into the ocean: the backdrop gets darker blue, representing the darker colors of the deep; the lights go down a bit; and then... neon jellyfish! Watch for the wavy, floaty movement of the marionettes glowing in the blacklight.

## **ABOUT THE VENUE**

THE DRAGON KING is showing on our Downstairs Theater, which you can find from the ticket office by taking your first right and heading down the staircase or the elevator to the first floor. Once on the first floor, follow the hallway to the left (away from the parking lot, past the vending machines), round the corner, and voila! You'll know you're there when you see the big light-up sign proclaiming "DOWNSTAIRS THEATRE"!

Restrooms and vending machines are back out the way you came, and remember once your show is over: second floor has the museum and exits to the parking lot, and the third floor has the Create-a-Puppet Workshop (where you can build a radical giant blue dragon string puppet after the show)!

The Downstairs Theatre has individual seating, and rows are accessible through the aisle closest to the doors – if you're likely to need a break during the show, just sit on the end closest to the aisle. There are stairs on just one side of the theater, but exiting the theater is super simple: just walk up to the top and head out the door on your left! These stairs will lead you back to the atrium on the second floor.

The theater will open about a half-hour before show time, at which point you're welcome to come find a seat. The overhead "house lights" will be on at about half-brightness, and there may be some pre-show music playing softly from the speakers. Once the show starts, those lights will be off and sound will be live from the stage and speakers.

If you arrive after the show has started, Center staff members will help you to find a seat! We have fidget toys to keep hands busy and noise-reducing headphones for anyone who needs the show to be a bit quieter -- just ask a Center staff member!

## **THE PUPPETEERS**

The puppeteers for THE DRAGON KING are Peter Schaefer and Jenn Tebo Hofmeister.

