



# Closer Inspection

The company's adaptation of Mozart's "Magic Flute" (performed with a recorded voice track) debuted in 1983 and features these evil **handmaidens**. Their plastic jeweled eyes flash in the light, Piper says, enhancing their otherworldliness.



Debating in 1990, the **Big Bad Wolf** narrates the Puppet Co.'s "Little Red Riding Hood." His head can nod and turn; an additional trigger allows his mouth to move, too.



Created in 1998, **Theseus and Hippolyta** from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" weigh 12 to 15 pounds each, Piper estimates. The fact that they are rod puppets adds to their regality, MayField Piper says. "It gives that proper, rigid correctness."



Marionette **Barnaby**, from "Toyland," which debuted in 1987, stands more than four feet tall and is operated by 14 strings measuring eight feet.

The iconic **White Rabbit**, first seen in "Alice in Wonderland" in 2004, is made of neoprene and fur cloth.

The **dwarf** Wick, a rod puppet created this year for "Snow White and the 7 Dwarves," stands nearly 2 feet tall. A performer manipulates the puppet from a stool beneath it. A trigger on the rod moves Wick's foam nose.



"The Magic Mirror," one of the earliest shows the troupe developed (1983), features **Mudrick and Nanya**. The rod puppets' faces and hands are made of Celastic, a light plastic-infused fabric.



Stevens made **Briar Rose**, a rod puppet, two years ago for "Sleeping Beauty." His left hand holds it in place while his right manipulates its body movements.

## A world at their fingertips

Puppet Co. founders build on their imagination

BY KRIS CORONADO

**Allan Stevens** holds a Sleeping Beauty in his hands. Her hair is golden; her dress, dappled with hues of pink. "Believe it or not, I play Briar Rose," the 69-year-old says of the tale's heroine.

That's not such an unusual role for him. As the founders of the Puppet Co. ([www.thepuppetco.org](http://www.thepuppetco.org)), Stevens and husband-and-wife duo Christopher

and MayField Piper have brought such stories as "Sleeping Beauty" to life with their handmade puppets for nearly 30 years.

The three estimate that they have created more than 300 for a year-round revolving repertoire of 25 shows on their stage at Glen Echo Park. They each have additional roles as well: Christopher Piper writes the plays, his

wife makes the costumes, and Stevens directs. Shows generally feature two to three puppeteers.

"We're a puppet theater, but we're also a theater," MayField Piper says. "Some people think 'puppet' and 'theater' are different. Strong puppet theater has all the background of theater and more, because you're articulating an inanimate object."