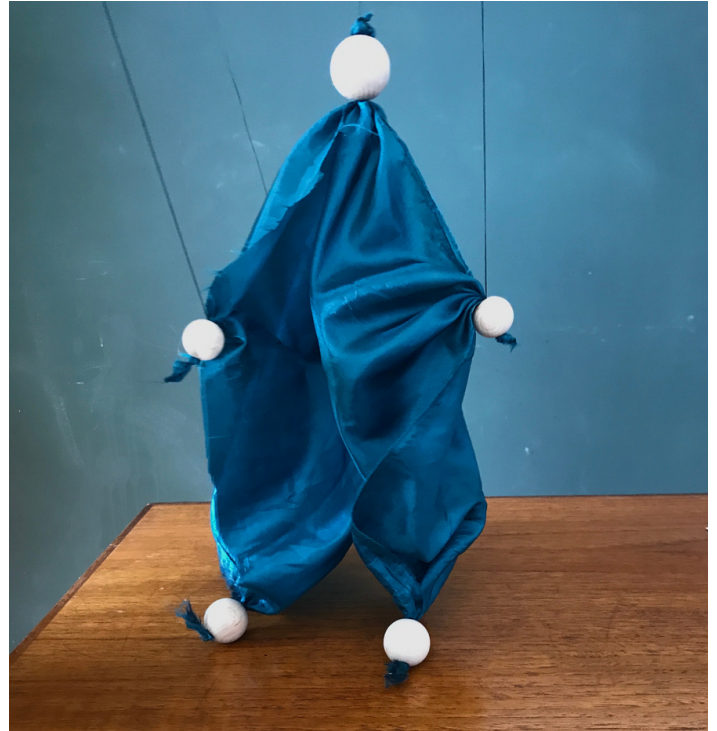# How to make... a simple cloth marionette

By Oliver Hymans
Suitable for ages 7-11

You will need:

- CLOTH - ideally 40cm x 60cm (a light and thin piece of fabric is recommended such as satin, silk or sheer as this type of material will hang/move well)
- WOODEN BEADS (x 5) - with holes through the middle (varying sizes for the puppet's head, hands and feet recommended if possible, but not essential)
- STRING or THREAD & needle (5-6 metres worth)
- WOODEN RODS (x 2) - 30-40cm long (these could be chopsticks, garden cane or strong skewers but must not be too bendy as they may snap

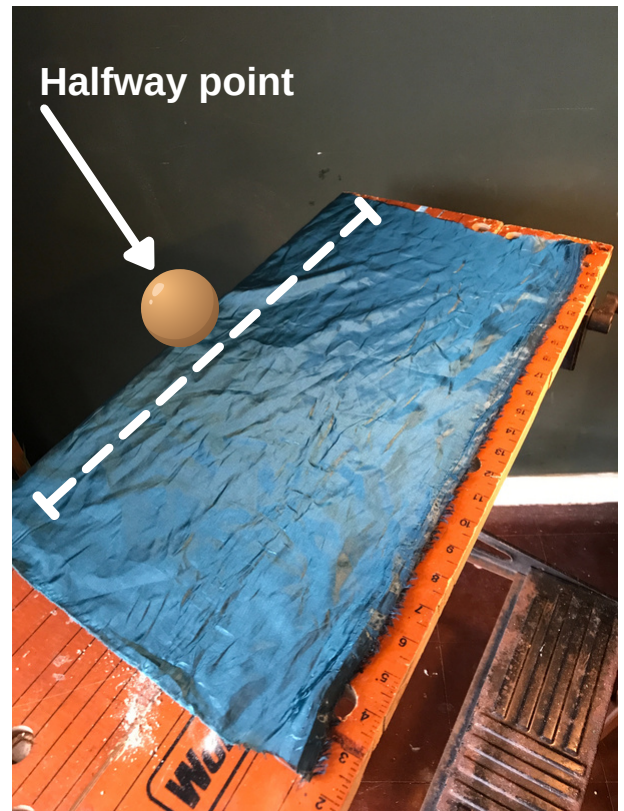
Instructions

Step 1:
Measure out and cut your piece of cloth, aiming for a rectangle of 40cm x 60cm in size. You could make the cloth piece 10-20cm larger, if you wanted to, however it should not be any smaller than 40cm x 60cm and you should aim for a rectangular shape as shown in the picture.

Step 2:

Lay out your cloth flat and work out the correct placement of the wooden bead for your puppet's 'head'. This can be seen halfway along the longest side of your rectangle as shown in the picture (to the right).

Halfway point

Step 3:

Using a skewer or another rod which is long and thin, push the fabric/cloth at its halfway point through the hole of the wooden bead for the 'head' (I used the largest wooden bead for this).

Step 4:

Once the fabric has passed through the hole in the bead tie a double knot in the fabric to ensure it does not slide out of the bead.

Step 5:

On each corner of the remaining fabric, repeat the same process of pushing the fabric through the holes in the remaining four wooden beads (using the skewer/thin rod) and tie double knots at the end of each bead to fix them in place.

Note (If using a variety of bead sizes): I used the largest bead for the head, the 2x medium sized beads for the feet and the 2 x smallest beads for the hands.

Step 6:

Now it is time to string up the puppet using either a needle and thread (I like this as you can use the thinnest threads which are almost invisible to the eye) or standard string works just fine.
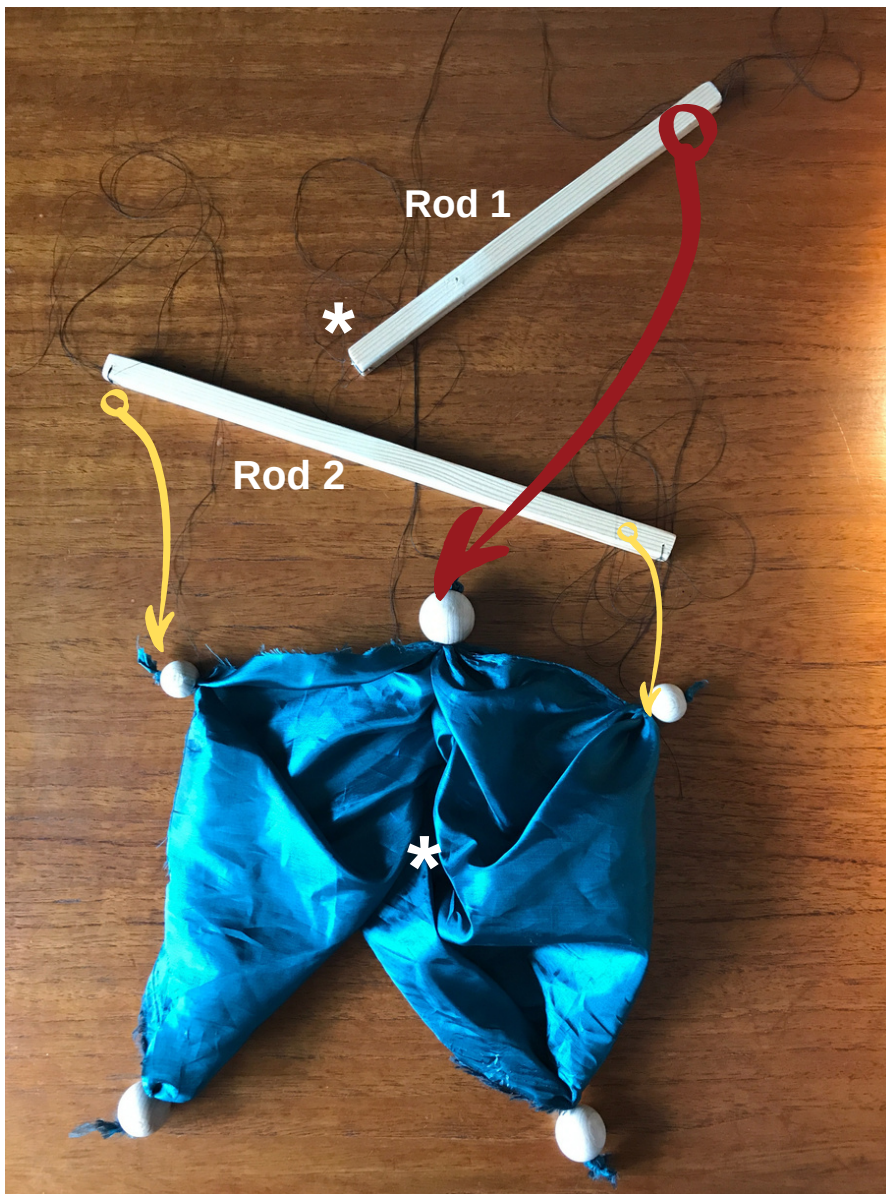
THE HEAD: Thread or tie on a single thread/string to the puppet's head. If using needle and thread this should be threaded through the knotted fabric above the head bead and if using string, this should be tied below the bead, around the puppet's neck. The other end of the string can now be attached to one end of Rod 1 (see red arrow below).

THE ARMS: thread/tie your thread/string to each knot above or below the hand beads and attach each string to each ends of Rod 2 (see the yellow arrows).

Note: I used a drill to make small holes at either end of my rods which meant I could securely tie my strings into the rods. Ask an adult to supervise if you have a drill to use, but alternatively you can tie the strings onto the rod and then add some sticky tape to secure them in place.
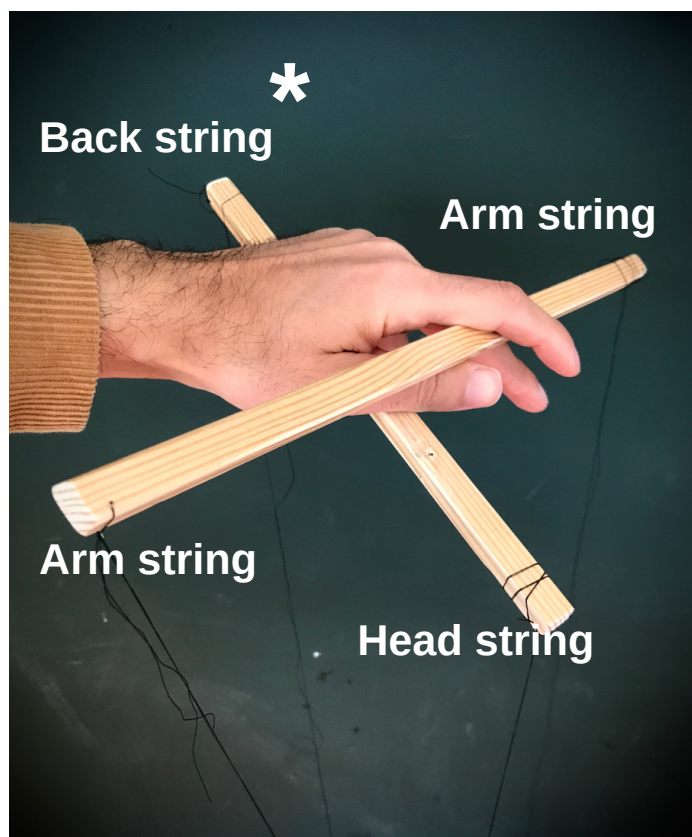

Tip : make the strings longer than you need at first, as you can always wind up the excess string length on the rods to make them shorter or longer. I like to do it this way so then I can use the puppet on a table or on the floor.

FOURTH STRING: (not essential but...) if you are using a needle and thread then you can add a fourth string to the puppet's back/'bum'. When holding the puppet, work out where its hips would be (midway below the head and base of the fabric) then thread this string through that point and attach the other end of the string to the opposite end of Rod 1 (see * on the picture below).
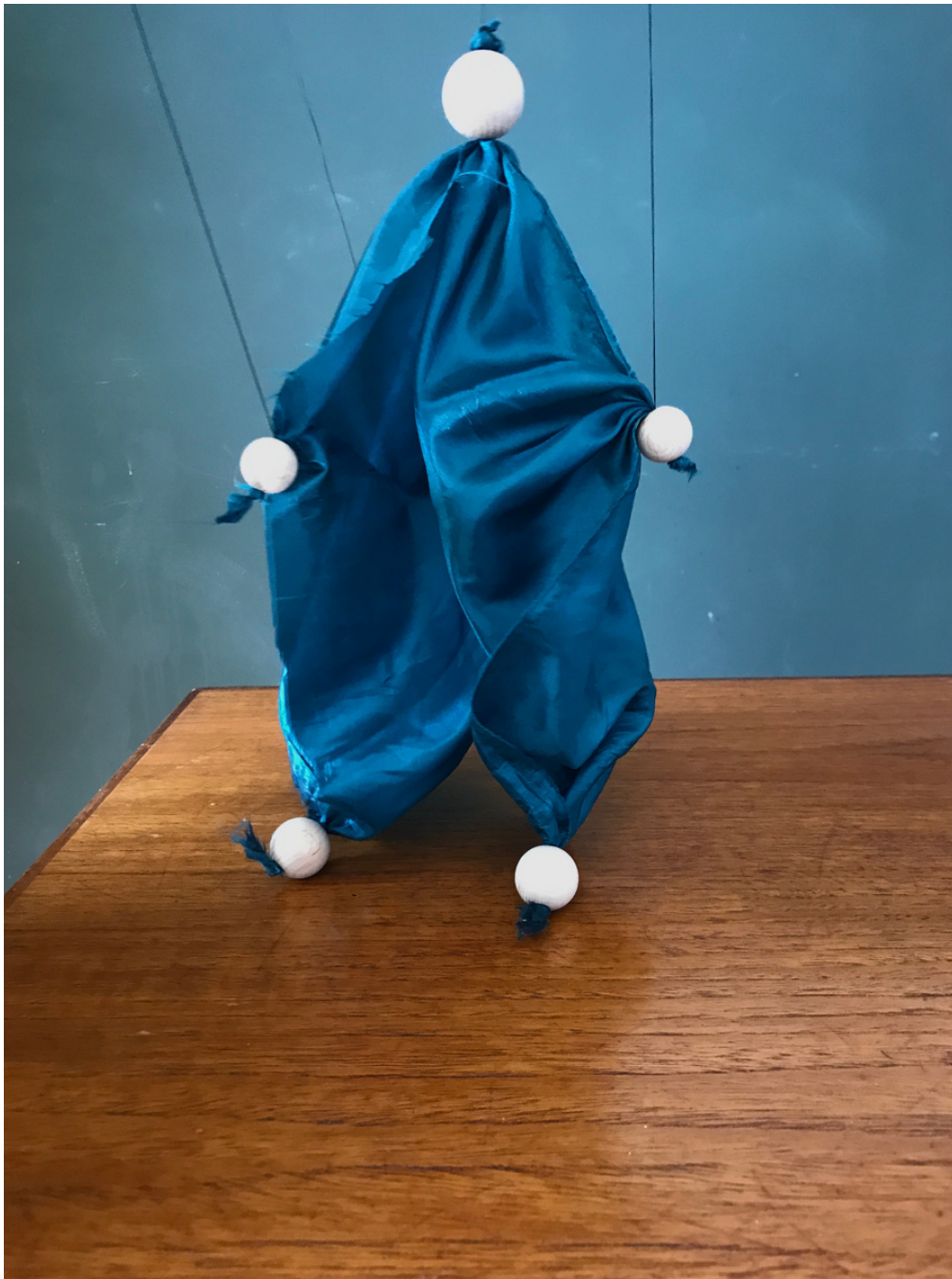
FOURTH STRING: you can see above how the fourth string (*) is threaded through the puppet's back at the midway point where its 'bum' would be. By pulling up at the rod control you can make the puppet appear to be leaning forward (above right photo).

Tip : You can hold the two rods in one hand or hold them in two separate hands - whichever way feels most comfortable and gives the puppet the most amount of movement.

And that's your simple cloth marionette! Now it's over to you to bring the puppet to life. See if you can make you puppet do the following tricks:

- Walk
- Jump
- Wave
- Dance
- Scratch its head
- Sit down
- Wake up
- Lean forward.