

# Puppetropolis Chicago

Jiminy Cricket! The city of Chicago has teamed up with a slew of local agencies, cultural institutions, and theater companies to produce a puppetry festival whose offerings range from family-oriented to adult in nature and display a wide variety of styles and cultural sensibilities. Puppetropolis Chicago runs through June 24 at various locations around the city. For general festival information (including details on the workshops and exhibits that complement the performances), call 312-744-3315 or visit [www.cityofchicago.org/specialevents](http://www.cityofchicago.org/specialevents).

THURSDAY, JUNE 21

## Urban Dream Capsule

You've heard of reality TV; get ready for reality window displays at Sears's new Loop outlet, which is hosting the U.S. premiere of this "interactive window theater" piece from Australia. Four artists from down under have taken up residence in the department store's street-level windows, where they're visible nonstop, unguarded by shades or shutters from the eyes of passersby. (Not that anything they do could be as odd as what you can see on State Street any day of the week.) Sears on State, 2 N. State, running 24 hours a day (and wrapping up midmorning Monday, June 25). Free; call 773-722-5463.

## Peek-a-boo!

Very young children and their parents are the target audience for this production by Loren Kahn Puppet Theater of Albuquerque, which examines "the pleasures of being alive and the effects of domestic violence on children." Chicago Cultural Center, studio theater, 78 E. Washington (enter at 77 E. Randolph), 11 AM. Free, but reservations are required; call 312-742-2001.

## Puppet Happy Hour Cabaret

The Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs' "Thursdaysomething" series showcases short works by veteran and emerging puppet artists in an informal cafe setting. Chicago Cultural Center, Randolph Cafe, 78 E. Washington, first floor (enter at 77 E. Randolph), 6:30 PM. Free; call 312-744-6630.

## Snuffhouse Dustlouse

Great Britain's Faulty Optic Theater of Animation presents an adult-oriented puppet play about a woman whose isolation is disturbed by an intruder. Storefront Theater, Gallery 37 Center for the Arts, 66 E. Randolph, 7 PM. \$15; call 312-742-8497.

## Breathing Underwater

Running With Scissors' site-specific show, developed by the troupe in collaboration with puppet and mask designer Cynthia Von Orth and directed by Ann Boyd, focuses on "a spiritually lost young man and a wheelchair-bound old woman on their journey from loss to redemption, illness to transcendence," says a press release. Theater on the Lake, Fullerton and Lake Shore Dr., 7:30 PM. \$10; call 312-742-7994.

## Spirit

Great Britain's Improbable Theatre's family-oriented fantasy about three brothers employs improvisational comedy and inventive scenic design. Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State, 7:30 PM. \$20; call 773-722-5463.

## Iktu Blas

Michael Montenegro's puppet play, presented by the Actors Gymnasium and the Lookingglass Theatre Company, portrays a vicious despot who represents "our own infantile refusal to accept the fact of death." Said Reader critic Jennifer Vanasco when she reviewed the show's original run: "In [this] darkly funny [work], one becomes a monster by abandoning one's conscience in exchange for power, a process embodied in the interior world of the fictional Iktu Blas as he transforms himself into a dictator. Since the play has little dialogue and all six actors wear large, slightly menacing papier-mache masks, the story of Blas's rise is told almost completely in pantomime. Rick Kubes excels at the subtle gestures needed to define Blas's slimy charisma, but he founders when he needs to convey meaning--especially when the usually capable ensemble is not backing him up. More effective are the tiny puppets used to illustrate Blas's feelings and memories. . . . The play occasionally slips into cliches and sentimentality, [and] it is sometimes obscure. But that's a small price to pay for an hour of interesting issues thoughtfully raised." Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division, 8 PM. \$15; call 847-328-2795.

#### Maquina Hamlet

El Periferico de Objetos presents its adaptation of Hamletmachine, German experimental playwright Heiner Muller's deconstruction of Shakespeare's greatest hit. The adult-oriented performance, in Spanish with English subtitles, features mannequins, dolls, and hand puppets. Duncan YMCA Chernin Center for the Arts, 1001 W. Roosevelt, 8 PM. \$20; call 773-722-5463.

#### Tedium

Chicago's experimental, directorless Theater Oobleck presents a puppet play, created by playwright Mickle Maher and puppet designer Shoshanna Utchenik, about a small theater company whose terrible show turns into a surprise hit. Live Bait Theater, 3914 N. Clark, 8 PM. \$10, "more if you've got it, free if you're broke"; call 773-561-3039.

#### Galway's Shadow

Redmoon Theater's new show, created by Jim Lasko and designer Cherise Mericle, uses the windows of the Museum of Contemporary Art facade as giant screens for a display of shadow puppetry. The production also features music by Mark Messing and MaestroMatic, which will be broadcast over antique radios encircling the museum's plaza. Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago, 9 PM. Free; call 312-280-2660.

#### FRIDAY, JUNE 22

#### Urban Dream Capsule

See listing for Thursday, June 21. Sears on State, 2 N. State, running 24 hours a day. Free; call 773-722-5463.

#### Puppets From Scratch

This performance is the culmination of a four-day workshop in which children learned how to make and manipulate puppets. Chicago Cultural Center, Preston Bradley Hall, 78 E. Washington, 11 AM. Free; call 312-742-2001.

#### Ramayana

Tamara and the Shadow Theater of Java, based in Northport, New York, employs Indonesian shadow theater techniques to retell an ancient Hindu legend. Field Museum of Natural History, Roosevelt at Lake Shore Dr., 2 PM. \$4 plus museum admission (\$8; \$4 for children); call 312-665-7400.

#### Summer Solstice Celebration

This year's edition of the Museum of Contemporary Art's seasonal fete is linked to Puppetropolis Chicago; there'll be late-night performances as well as puppet stages and puppetry workshops around the museum grounds. Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago, from 6 PM tonight until 6 PM on Saturday, June 23. Free; call 312-280-2660.

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#### Combustible Puppet Cabaret

Local and out-of-town puppet artists demonstrate their work in what the festival promises will be "an intimate and experimental environment." Storefront Theater, Gallery 37 Center for the Arts, 66 E. Randolph, 10 PM. \$12; call 312-742-8497.

#### SATURDAY, JUNE 23

#### Urban Dream Capsule

See listing for Thursday, June 21. Sears on State, 2 N. State, running 24 hours a day. Free; call 773-722-5463.

#### The Selfish Giant

New York actor William Hubner and a cast of local youngsters perform an adaptation of Oscar Wilde's children's story. Chicago Cultural Center, Claudia Cassidy Theater, 78 E. Washington, 11 AM. Free, but reservations are required; call 312-742-2001

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See listing for Thursday, June 21. Storefront Theater, Gallery 37 Center for the Arts, 66 E. Randolph, 3 and 7 PM. \$15; call 312-742-8497.

## Street Stages

The Museum of Contemporary Art's Summer Solstice minifest presents an "homage to the itinerant street puppeteer" featuring ten portable puppet stages. The program includes New York's Blackbird Theater in Judy Judith, which draws on the traditional Punch and Judy show and the story of Judith and Holofernes; the Chicago-based troupe En Fuego in Faustina: Little Angel of the Sea, about a woman from the Dominican Republic who set sail for Puerto Rico in a homemade boat; Chicago's Environmental Encroachment company in Astropuppets; the Gogogirl for President Theater from Glover, Vermont, in Dancehall True Story Automatic Completely Live Cantastoria Booth; Great Small Works, a group of Bread and Puppet Theater veterans from Brooklyn; Chicagoan Ben Majchrzak in a solo version of Jack the Giant Killer; Sadari, a company based in Seoul, in The Colorful Dream, about an artist whose imagination offers a retreat from war and dictatorship; Teatro del Corvo, a troupe of street performers based in Milan; and Punch and Jimmy, a gay update of the Punch and Judy tradition, by Paul Zaloom of West Hollywood, California. Museum of Contemporary Art, front plaza, 220 E. Chicago, 3 to 6 PM. Free; call 312-280-2660.

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## SUNDAY, JUNE 24

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### The Selfish Giant

See listing for Saturday, June 23. Field Museum of Natural History, Roosevelt at Lake Shore Dr., 3:30 PM. \$2 plus museum admission (\$8; \$4 for children); call 312-665-7400.

### Snuffhouse Dustlouse

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