

Episode 38:

“That’s the Way to Do It!” - Or Is It?: Punch and Judy



Punch and Judy in *Aunt Louisa's National Album* ca. 1870. From George Speaight's *Punch and Judy*.

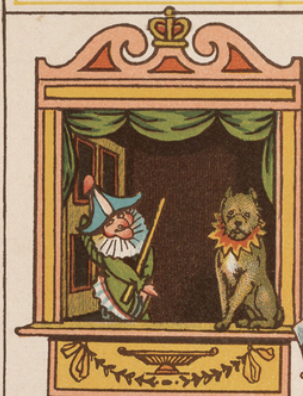


Polcinello, from the Italian commedia dell'arte. From the V & A.



"A crowd of people have gathered around a stand in the street to watch a Punch and Judy show." Engraving by J. Goodyear after T. Uwins. From The Wellcome Collection.

PUNCH · AND · JUDY



HAVE you a penny? well then, stay!
Haven't you any? don't go away!
Punch holds receptions all through the day,
Squeaking aloud to gather a crowd,
Scolding at Toby, beating his Wife,
Frightening the Constable out of his life,
And making jokes in a terrible passion,
As is Mr. Punch's peculiar fashion;
For this is his old, delightful plan
Of getting as many pence as he can.

Then away he'll jog,
With his Wife and his Dog,
New folks to meet
In the very next street.





Photo: Cassell & Co., Ltd.

A matinee performance ca. 1898 by Mr J Bland in New Oxford Street. Wikimedia.



A 1950s seaside Punch and Judy show. From The Sun.



The marker in Covent Garden. "Near this spot Punch's Puppet Show was first performed in England and witnessed by Samuel Pepys 1662."



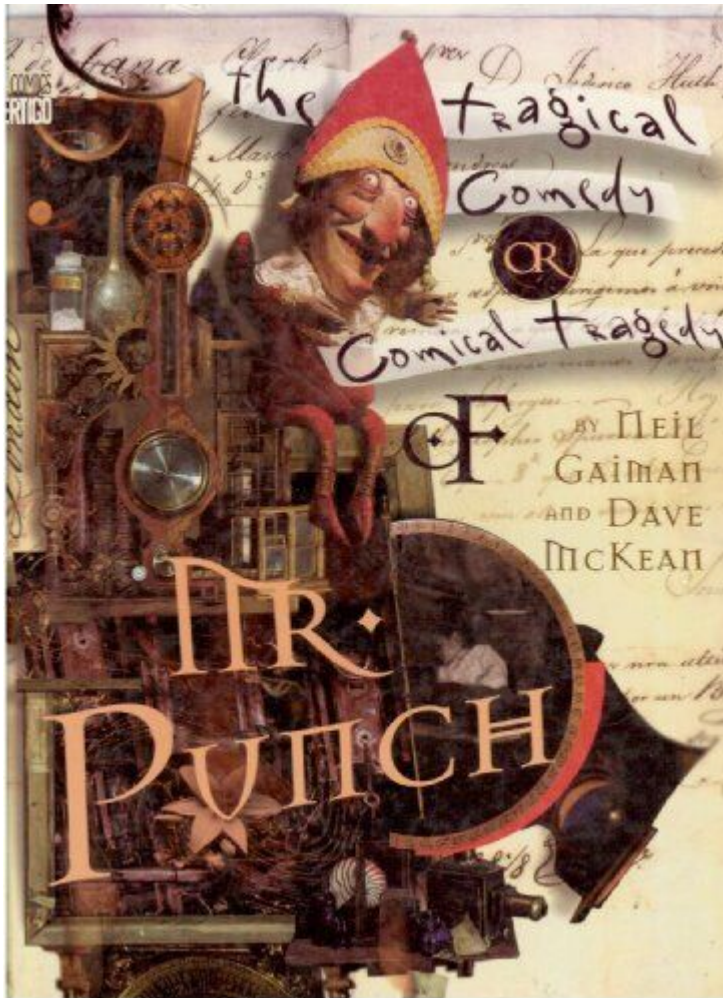
Your basic swizzle. From the V&A collection.



Modern Punch and Judy puppets from The World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts. Credit: Punch, Judy and Baby, in Punch and Judy (1979, 1990) by Storybox Theatre (Bristol, UK), direction: Tanya Landman, design/construction: Rod Burnett. Glove puppets, height: 50 cm. Photo: Rod Burnett



The Australian film, *Judy & Punch* is written and directed by Mirrah Foulkes, and starring Mia Wasikowska. It's a feminist black comedy retelling, with Judy out for revenge.



The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy of Mr. Punch by Neil Gaiman

P&J today: Two sides of the story. Should Punch professors retain the traditional show, or should it be revised to reflect modern times? Here are arguments from many sources, compiled by Mares:

<i>Keep Punch the way he is.</i>	<i>Punch should adapt to the times:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Punch is a trickster - he's supposed to be naughty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Punch's violence is over the top.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's a traditional form of art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Society has progressed a lot in the last several centuries - maybe it's time for Punch to evolve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Punch is satire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It started out as an adult show. Satire is best appreciated by adults.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional fairy tales are very violent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional tales have evolved - for example, Cinderella's stepsisters self mutilate to fit into the shoe. Not anymore
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's no worse than Tom and Jerry, The Simpsons, and other cartoons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's different because the violence is directed at a woman and a child, mirroring domestic abuse. Homer Simpson doesn't hit Marge or the kids
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's over-the-top exaggeration. The silly voices and wooden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These are very complex issues. Triggers are real. Some kids, sadly, have seen women and children being abused,

expressions take away any reality. It's just pretend.	or have been abused themselves. This could trigger trauma.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why should Punch have to be politically correct? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because we don't laugh at or glorify abuse anymore.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The format of the show is traditional. Why change something that has existed for centuries? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other art forms, such as Shakespeare's plays, have been reenvisioned to great effect. Stagnation leads to irrelevance. Can we be creative enough to make a show in which Punch retains his rebellious and naughty nature, but maybe shows it by making tricks, pranks, wordplay, or pratfalls instead of hitting?

Books, videos, and articles:

Books:

Punch & Judy: A History by George Speaight, 1955.

The Punch & Judy Show: History, Tradition, and Meaning by Robert Leach, 1985.

Punch and Judy by Peter Fraser, 1979. Contains scripts and patterns for making puppets or theatres.

Charlotte: Being a True Account of an Actress's Flamboyant Adventures in 18th-Century London's Wild and Wicked Theatrical World by Kathryn Shevelow, 2006.

[*A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke*](#), by Charlotte Charke, 1755.

Articles:

[That's the Way to Do It!: A History of Punch and Judy](#) from the Victoria and Albert Museum

[Judy Gets the Last Laugh as Slapstick Show Presents a Less Violent Punch](#) by Patrick Sawyer in The Telegraph 11 September 2021

[Are Punch and Judy Shows Finally Outdated?](#): For a wife-beating, baby-squashing scofflaw, Mr. Punch has done pretty well for himself by Linda Rodriguez McRobbie in Smithsonian 4 Feb 2013

When Puppet Shows Were Too Violent For Kids by Livia Gershon. Accessed via JSTOR

Women Pull the Strings: Mirrah Foulkes and Mia Wasikowska discuss *Judy & Punch*, a bold feminist fairy-tale that reinvents the classic puppet show by Sophie Monks Kaufman in Sight & Sound., Jan2020,

Charlotte Charke in The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

[Performing the Laboring Class: The Evolution of Punch and Judy Performance](#). Masters thesis by Kathryn Meehan, 2014.

Websites and blogs:

[PunchandJudy.org](#) "The Punch and Judy College of Professors"

[The Punch and Judy Fellowship](#) "The oldest Punch and Judy organisation on earth"

[Punch and Judy Online](#). "The home of the Great British Punch and Judy show"

[Blog article](#) from Terri Windlig's bloch, Myth & Moor

And...

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