

WHAT IF

PUPPETS

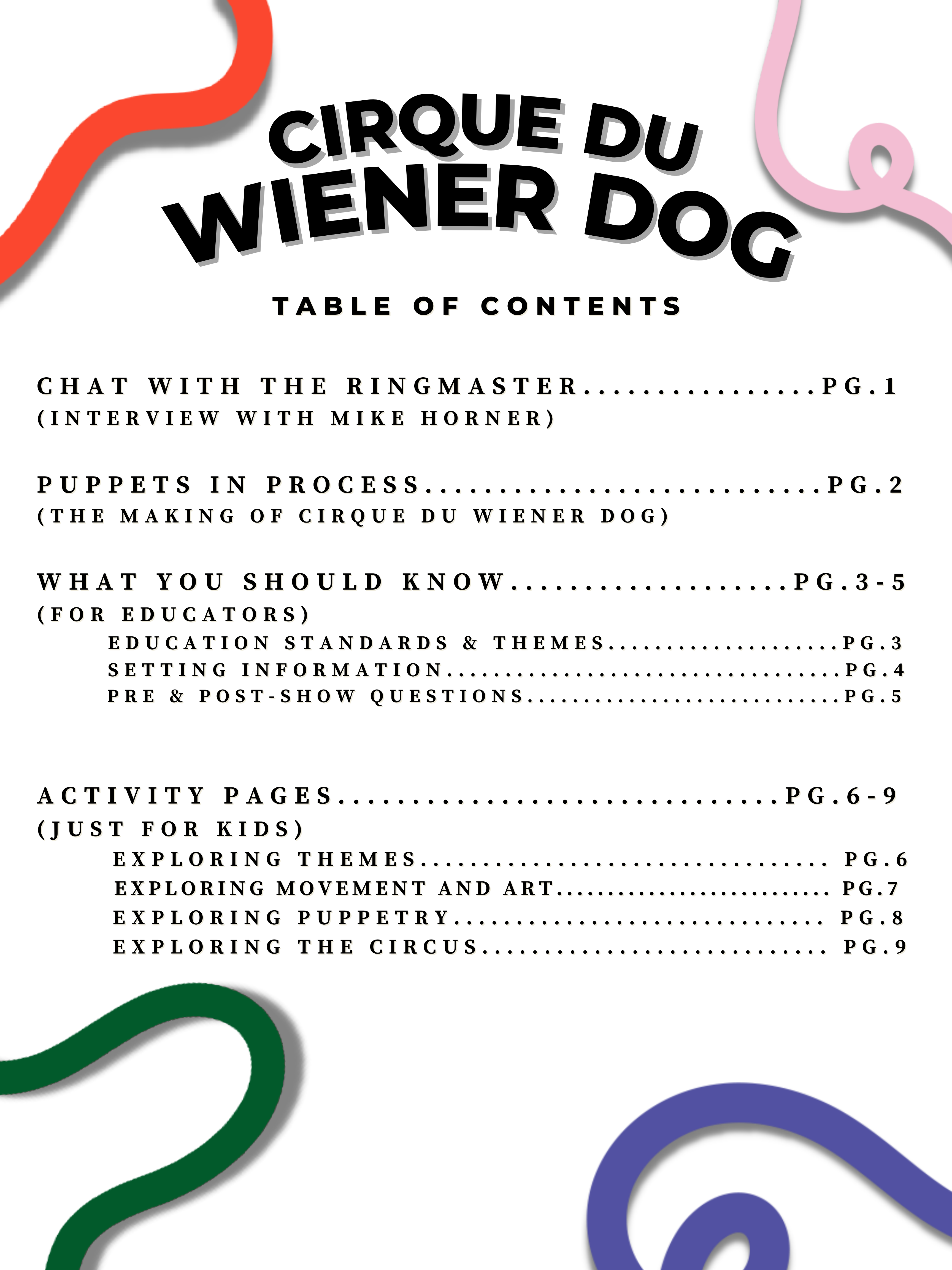
PRESENTS

CIRQUE DU  
WIENER DOG

ACTIVITY GUIDE



MIDWEST TRUST • DECEMBER 7-10



# **CIRQUE DU WIENER DOG**

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# A Chat with the Ringmaster **Mike Horner** (creator of Cirque du Wiener Dog)



MIKE BEGAN WORKING WITH PUPPETS BEFORE HE ENTERED KINDERGARTEN, AND HE'S BEEN MAKING THEM AND BRINGING THEM TO LIFE EVER SINCE. CREATING PUPPETS AND PUPPET SHOWS CAN BE VERY CHALLENGING, AND MUCH LIKE MOMENTS IN CIRQUE DU WIENER DOG, THE PROCESS CAN BE SOMETIMES FRUSTRATING. HERE IS A LITTLE PEEK INSIDE THE MIND OF MIKE:

**Q: WHAT WAS YOUR INSPIRATION, OR INITIAL IDEA, FOR CREATING CIRQUE DU WIENER DOG?**

**MIKE:** WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, MY FAMILY HAD A DACHSHUND NAMED WALDI. WALDI COULD STAND UP ON HIS HIND LEGS WHEN HE WANTED A TREAT, AND I ALWAYS THOUGHT HE LOOKED SO FUNNY WHEN HE DID THAT. SEVERAL YEARS AGO I WAS THINKING ABOUT IDEAS FOR A NEW SHOW, AND I THOUGHT A BUNCH OF WIENER DOGS STANDING UP ON THEIR HIND LEGS DOING CIRCUS TRICKS MIGHT BE QUITE FUNNY.



**Q: WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU GET FRUSTRATED WHEN MAKING PUPPETS?**

**MIKE:** SOMETIMES WHEN I'M STRUGGLING WITH A PUPPET-BUILDING PROBLEM, I FIND IT'S HELPFUL TO WALK AWAY FROM THE WORKBENCH AND DO SOMETHING TOTALLY DIFFERENT, LIKE GO FOR A WALK. OFTEN WHEN I SWITCH GEARS AND GET SOME EXERCISE, THE SOLUTION TO MY PROBLEM WILL SUDDENLY POP INTO MY HEAD

**Q: WHAT ARE SOME SKILLS YOU USE WHEN MAKING PUPPETS? WHAT SKILLS DID YOU NEED TO STRENGTHEN SO YOU COULD MAKE YOUR PUPPETS EVEN BETTER?**

**MIKE:** PUPPET-MAKING USES ALL KINDS OF CREATIVE SKILLS! DRAWING, PAINTING, SCULPTING, SEWING AND SO MUCH MORE CAN BE USED FOR MAKING PUPPETS. I FIND THAT TRYING OUT A BRAND NEW CREATIVE SKILL CAN GIVE ME NEW IDEAS AND MAKE MY PUPPETS BETTER.

# Puppets in Process

## The Making of Cirque du Wiener Dog

1.

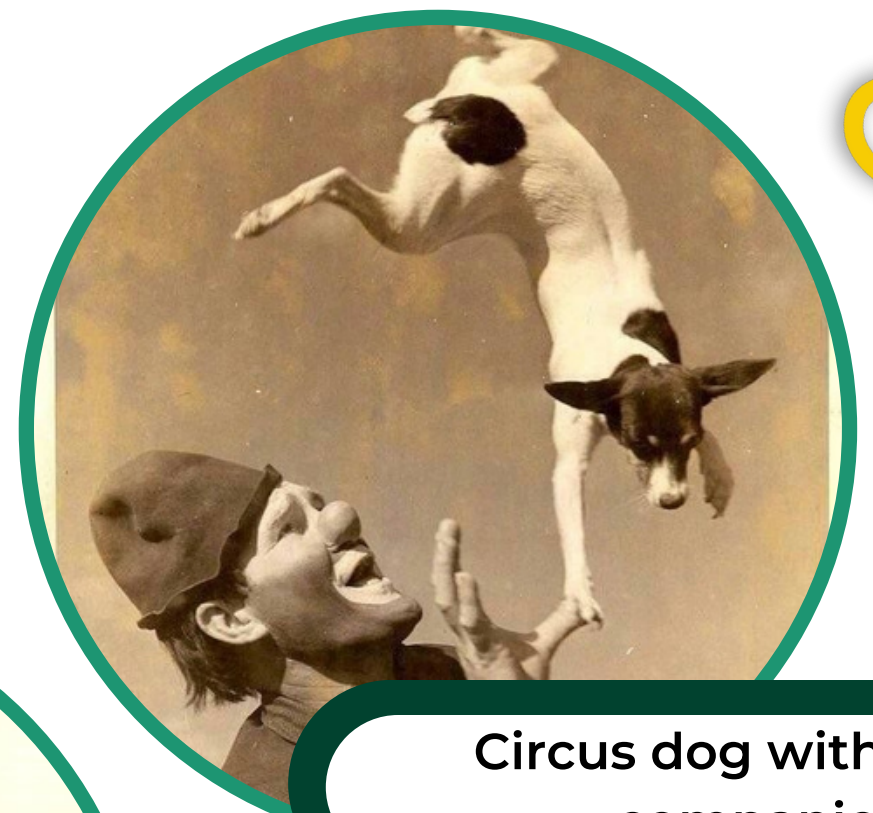
All puppets start out as ideas and sketches, like the ones below



Sketches of Schnitzel, Pretzel, and Lil' Dumpling

2.

Then we hit the books and research different historical facts to get an idea of the style in time we want the puppets to look like.



Circus dog with clown companion

3.

After gathering all the materials and putting the pieces together, our puppets are tested and ready to perform!!



We be sure to find the perfect finishing touches to bring these pups to life!



Postcard by Wolf Erlbruch



We build each wiener dog from scratch!



Once assembled we practice, practice, practice, to bring these pups to life!



Circus dogs in action at Circus World in Wisconsin

# What You Should Know About **Cirque du Wiener Dog**

## Show Themes

**Resilience**  
(bouncing back and trying again)

**Doing Your Best**

**Rising to the Occasion**

## Educational SEL Standards

### Missouri

Self Concept

Being a  
Contributing  
Member of a  
Diverse Global  
Community

Quality  
Relationships

Respect for Self and  
Others

Personal  
Responsibility in  
Relationships

Coping Skills

### Kansas:

Character  
Development

Personal  
Development

Self-Management

Self-Awareness  
Social  
Development

Social Awareness

Interpersonal Skill

# What You Should Know About **Cirque du Wiener Dog**



## Setting Information

The setting for Cirque du Wiener Dog is a circus.

While circuses still travel the country today, they were at one time a much more popular form of entertainment.

At circuses, you could see wild animals, acrobats, and clowns.

## Key Characters

### Lil' Dumpling Schnitzel Pretzel



## More Circus Fun!

### Circus Video Links!

Circus Day in Our Town, 1949  
[Click Here](#)

"Cirque du Wiener Dog" is a play on a famous circus company called Cirque du Soleil.

[Click Here For a Peek Inside  
Cirque du Soleil](#)

Mike uses wiener dog puppets, and here's a wiener dog circus act using REAL dogs!

[Watch a clip HERE!](#)

Alexander Calder was a famous artist who created his own whimsical circus.

[Click here for a clip of the magic!](#)

### Circus Books!

Peter Spier's Circus  
by Peter Spier

Circus  
by Lois Ehlert

Olivia Saves the Circus  
by Ian Falconer

The Circus Ship  
by Chris Van Dusen

Sandy's Circus: A Story About  
Alexander Calder  
by Tanya Lee Stone

## Pre-Show Questions



For Educators

### Leading Questions (things to think about before you see the show!)

1. What does it feel like to not be able to do things others can do?
2. What is something you had to learn to get better at doing? How did you get better at it?
3. What is something you'd like to do, but might need to wait until you're older to do it?

### Reflection Questions

(things to think about after you've seen the show!)

1. What were Lil' Dumpling strengths? Weaknesses?
2. How did Lil' Dumpling not let their weaknesses define them?
3. How did they push through and work on their weaknesses?
4. How did Schnitzel and Pretzel treat Lil' Dumpling throughout the story?
5. How do you think they felt when they saw Lil' Dumpling succeed at the end?
6. How would the show have been different without Lil' Dumpling?

## Post Show Questions

# Cirque du Wiener Dog

## Exploring Themes -Activity Page

### Trying Our Best! (No matter our strengths or weaknesses)

#### Let's Talk Strengths!

Just like humans, all the dogs in Cirque du Wiener Dog have strengths and weaknesses. It's good to know your strengths, so you can use them when needed.

Below, write three of your strengths.

How did you get those strengths?

How do you use them?

How can you improve on them even more?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**DRAW HERE!**

#### What About Weaknesses?

Lil' Dumpling wasn't good at everything, but that didn't stop them from trying their best and hardest! Knowing that our weaknesses can become strengths if we work on them, spend some time thinking about some parts of you that you'd like to strengthen.

How can you strengthen your weakness?

What help might you need to get from others?

What are ways you'll use your new strength?

Just like with strengths, write your ideas below.

Everyone has weaknesses.

That's just being a human...or dog!

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

#### Time to Visualize!

Now that you've spent time thinking about strengths and weaknesses, draw a picture of you when you are succeeding, and another of you working to strengthen a weakness. You can hang these up somewhere as a visual reminder

Draw your picture in the blank space to the right!



Just for Kids!

# Cirque du Wiener Dog

Exploring Movement and Art- Activity Page

## Listening with Our Eyes?

There are many moments in the show that are **non-verbal**, meaning the characters use just actions to communicate and not words.

**Pantomime**, or the act of pretending to use an object that is only imagined, is related to the non-verbal theater in that they both communicate only through visual cues.

Below are some clips on non-verbal theater and pantomime. As you watch, notice how the characters are moving their bodies and faces to help communicate what is happening and how they are feeling.

*Figura Theatre - Sense of Beauty*  
[Click This Link To Watch](#)

**GEAR**  
(a non-verbal production)  
[Click This Link to Watch](#)

## Pantomime (with Friends!)

Communicating non-verbally can also be a great way to challenge yourself and have fun guessing with your friends!

Below is a video that gives you some tips on non-verbal communication and pantomime.

**1-2-3 Pantomime**  
with Jamie Hipp  
(Kennedy Center)

## Art Connection Art as Communication

Paintings are similar to non-verbal theater in that you rely on your eyes to find the story.

Take a look at these famous circus-themed paintings, and see what stories appear.

*Seurat's The Circus*  
[Click to View](#)

*Picasso's Family of Saltimbanques*  
[Click to View](#)

*Daumier's The Strong Man:*  
[Click to View](#)

*Degas' Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando*  
[Click to View](#)

# Cirque du Wiener Dog

Exploring Puppetry - Make Your Own Puppet!

Just for Kids!



## Wiener Dog Finger Puppet Instructions

### Materials Needed:

Fabric Glove or Felt  
Needle and thick thread  
Scissors  
Permanent Marker/Felt Marker  
Decorations (felt, pom poms, googly eyes, etc.)  
Glue/Hot Glue



### Step 1:

#### Glove Instructions:

Using scissors, carefully cut each finger off of the glove.

#### Felt Instructions:

Fold your felt in half and trace your hand onto the felt (facing towards the fold) with a permanent marker. Cut out hand drawing and then cut each finger off at the base.



### Step 2:

#### GET A GROWN UP'S HELP FOR THIS STEP

#### Glove Instructions:

Finish the edge around open hole with some yarn/thread to prevent fraying.

#### Felt Instructions:

Take the needle and thread and stitch around the curve of the finger leaving the bottom open.



### Step 3:

Use glue/hot glue to decorate your finger puppet with decorations, other pieces of felt, felt/permanent markers, and googly eyes to complete the puppet.

Bring it to life by slipping it onto your finger and bending and wiggling it around!



# Cirque du Wiener Dog

## Exploring the Circus - Activity Page



Tightrope Walker



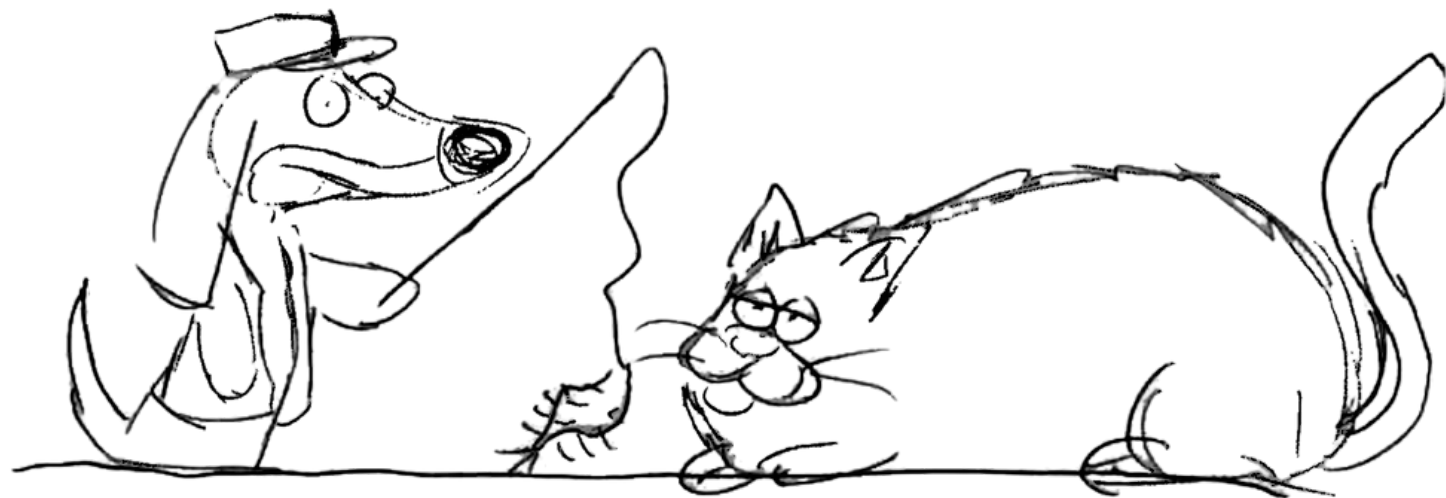
Flying Trapeze

### Creating your Own Circus

Take a look at Mike's act sketches, and see how you can safely recreate the acts. What things around your house could you use to make a lightweight dumbbell, for you to use your acting skills and pretend it's 200 hundred pounds? Could a stuffed animal become your ferocious lion to be tamed? Remember...safety is the key!

*Example: To be a tightrope walker, put a long piece of masking tape on the ground as your tightrope, and imagine you are high above the crowd as you balance your way from one end of the rope to the other!*

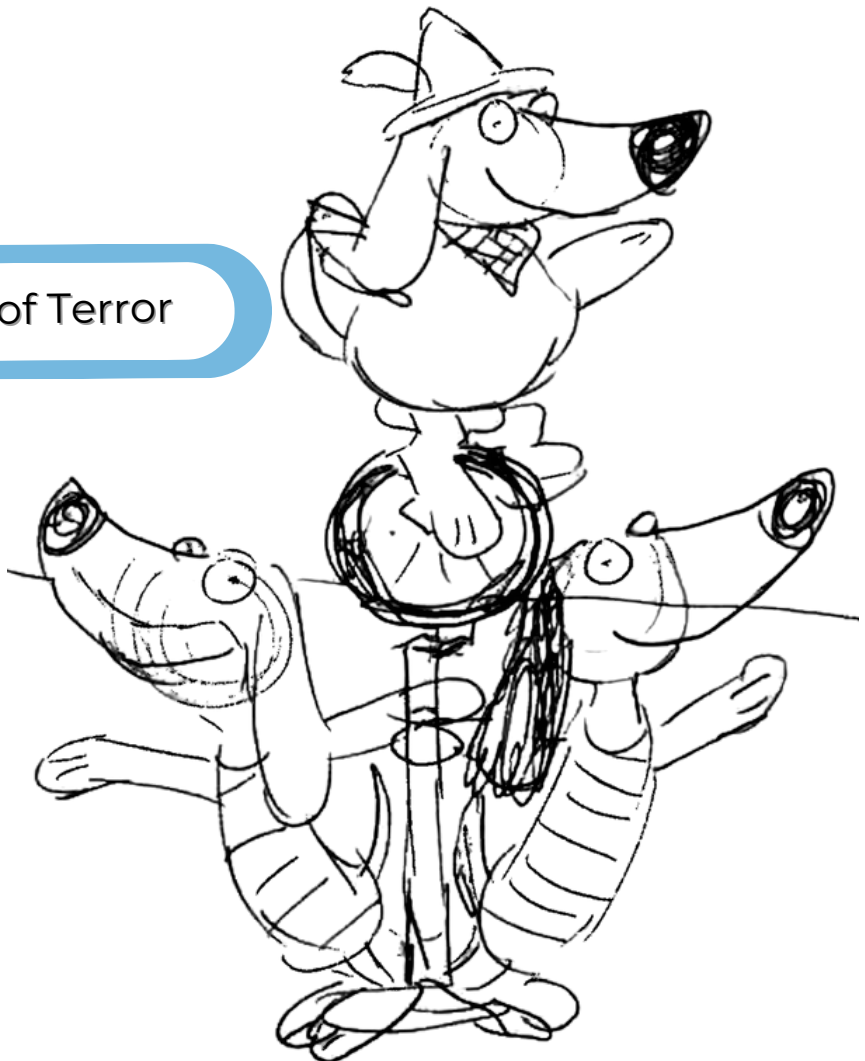
*How could you safely bring the lion-tamer sketch (below) to life with your puppet or with friends?*



Acrobats/Teeter Totter



Tightrope of Terror



Strongman

