



Audience Guide

Leonardo, A Wonderful Show About a Terrible Monster

Welcome to Portland Ovations! I'm so excited to welcome you to Westbrook Performing Arts Center for *Leonardo, A Wonderful Show About a Terrible Monster* created and performed by Manual Cinema from Chicago. As the title says, this truly is a wonderful show, featuring my absolute favorite Mo Willems character, Leonardo the terrible monster (but very good friend). Manual Cinema have a unique, exciting way of telling stories. Using tools like overhead projectors, cameras, thousands of paper puppets, hand and rod puppets, and live sound effects they bring Mo Willems' story to life right before your eyes.

Audience members like you play an important role in the performance. In fact, live performance doesn't happen without you! So, we invite you to express yourself. The cast of *Leonardo, A Wonderful Story About a Terrible Monster* highly encourage clapping and laughing at parts of the performance you enjoy.

Thank you so much for joining Portland Ovations to experience live theater today. I hope you have a wonderful time. After the show, don't forget to tell us about your experience! Find us on social media @portlandovations, or email us at offstage@portlandovations.org. I can't wait to hear from you.

Enjoy the show!

Liz



MEET MO WILLEMS

Mo Willems is a children's book author, artist, animator, and playwright. Among the many beloved characters he's created are Knuffle Bunny, Elephant & Piggie, the Pigeon, and of course, Leonardo, Sam, and their friends. Mo Willems was born Maurice Charles Willems on February 11, 1968 in Des Plaines, Illinois, and grew up in New Orleans. Mo drew cartoons all during his childhood and was a big fan of the Peanuts cartoons by Charles Schultz. He also acted and did stand-up comedy in high school. After travelling for a while and living in London as a comedian, Mo returned to the States and went to college, studying film and animation, earning a degree from New York University. He then worked for the Children's Television Workshop as an award-winning writer and animator for Sesame Street from 1994 to 2002. In 2003, Mo wrote his first children's picture book, *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*, which went on to receive his first Caldecott Honor Award and was the inaugural induction into the Picture Book Hall of Fame.



A few quick facts about Mo:

- **Birthday:** February 11
- **Best Friend:** Mo's Wife, Cheryl
- **Favorite Color:** Rust
- **Favorite Food:** Kimchi
- **Hobby:** Doodling

Mo has published more than 70 children's books — more than 50 of them New York Times bestselling titles — with over 26 foreign language translations. In addition to his Caldecott honors, he's earned 11 Emmy nominations, and won 6 Emmy Awards for his writing on Sesame Street, where he began his remarkable career. Mo also has created 3 television specials, 6 animated series, 7 musical adaptations, 5 licensed theater productions, and 3 touring exhibits.

MEET MANUAL CINEMA

Manual Cinema is an Emmy Award-winning performance collective, design studio, and film/video production company founded in 2010 by Drew Dir, Sarah Fornace, Ben Kauffman, Julia Miller, and Kyle Vegter. Manual Cinema combines handmade puppetry, cinematic techniques, and innovative sound and music to create immersive stories for stage and screen.

Using vintage overhead projectors, multiple screens, puppets, actors, live feed cameras, multi-channel sound design, and live music, Manual Cinema transforms the experience of attending the cinema and imbues it with liveness, ingenuity, and theatricality. The company was awarded an Emmy in 2017 for [“The Forger,”](#) a video created for The New York Times and named Chicago Artists of the Year in 2018 by the Chicago Tribune. Their shadow puppet animations were featured in the 2021 film remake of [Candyman](#), directed by Nia DaCosta and produced by Jordan Peele's Monkeypaw Productions.

MEET LEONARDO

Leonardo is a terrible monster—terrible at being a monster, that is. Leonardo can't seem to scare the tuna salad out of anyone . . . until he meets Sam, the most scaredycat kid in the whole world.

A few quick facts about Leonardo:

- **Birthday:** October 31
- **Best Friend:** Sam
- **Favorite Color:** Orange
- **Favorite Food:** Tuna Salad
- **Hobby:** Reading Scary People Magazine



ACTIVITY

Paper Puppet Portraits

Manual Cinema handmade all of the puppets that appear in *Leonardo*. Follow these instructions to create self-portrait paper puppets like the ones Manual Cinema used in the performance.

Materials:

- Paper
- Scissors
- Markers, crayons, and/or colored pencils
- Cardboard or a cereal box
- Glue stick
- Tape
- A small dowel or chopstick

Procedure:

1. Draw a full-body self portrait on a blank piece of paper. As you create your self portrait think about the puppets you saw in *Leonardo*. What made them interesting to look at? How did they move? Try out some of Manual Cinema's techniques as you design your own puppet.
2. Cut out your self-portrait and trace the shape onto a piece of cardboard. This will serve as backing to help keep the puppet standing upright. Glue all the pieces together.
3. Tape a small dowel or chopstick to the back of the puppet. The puppet is complete!
4. Now that you've created your puppet, use it to create short scenes. Need some ideas? Try showing your puppet being brave or trying something new or showing your puppet being a good friend.

Want to create more Leonardo art? Join us in the lobby before the performance to learn to draw Leonardo!

QUESTIONS FOR THE JOURNEY HOME

After you watch the performance, consider these questions.

- What did you notice about the performance?
- What moments of the performance surprised you?
- How did the puppets' movements help to tell the story and show the emotions they feel?
- How does Leonardo find the most scaredycat kid in the whole world? What do you do when you're looking for the answer to a confusing or difficult question or problem, a "conundrum"?
- Can you think of a time when a friend helped you feel less scared? How did they help?

WHO WE ARE

Portland Ovations is a nonprofit cultural organization based in Southern Maine dedicated to gathering communities to share in the power of live performance. Ovations connects artists and audiences both onstage and off — making the arts an integral part of community life.

Our unique array of live performances for the public and school audiences are curated to delight, inspire and educate. Venues used throughout greater Portland include historic and modern theaters, clubs, galleries, and classrooms — chosen carefully to ensure the best possible experience for both audiences and artists.

Our Vision

To inspire a curious and imaginative community where the experience of the performing arts is a vital part of every day life.

Our Mission

Portland Ovations propels the artistic, social, educational and economic wellbeing of communities through the power of the performing arts.

RACIAL EQUITY STATEMENT

At Ovations, we recognize that promoting racial equity and anti-racism in the arts and culture sector is essential to showcasing the brilliance and artistry of diverse and multicultural communities from around the globe. Our commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity and access extends to all aspects of our operations, including governance, programming and community engagement. We aim to include all voices, stories and perspectives in our programs and inspire similar efforts in the Portland, Maine area, resulting in a more just and equitable society where everyone's contributions are valued.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Portland Ovations' programs are presented on Wabanaki land, home of the Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, Abenaki and Penobscot Nations, their elders past and present, and future generations.

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