



Dinosaur Zoo

Sydney Opera House
2019 Teacher Resources



About Erth Visual & Physical Inc

ERTH bring the impossible to life. Over 21 years, the company has developed a truly fantastic aesthetic and an extraordinary box of tricks, the foundations of its unique visual theatre works. The company regularly tours internationally, to every major Australian festival, and to regional and major city venues around the country.

Erth's Dinosaur Zoo™ has toured through Australia and overseas since 2009 and is now joined by I, Bunyip, and its cast of Australian Indigenous spirit creatures and their stories, touring Australia nationally in 2012. The Nargun and the Stars, an adaptation of Patricia Wrightson's novel, was commissioned by Sydney and Perth Festivals in 2009.

Recent dynamic work, *Murder*, inspired by Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds' album *Murder Ballads* was assisted by the Australian Government's Major Festivals Initiative and was performed across national festivals (2013).

"More than a million people have seen its dinosaurs museums and in performance works such as *Erth's Dinosaur Zoo™*."

Erth's works range from large-scale interactive environments, such as *The Garden*, a prehistoric landscape inhabited by giant insects which premiered at the Melbourne International Festival of Arts to more intimate in-theatre works and roving spectacles.

Beautiful new work, *The Dream of the Thylacine* premiered at Ten Days on the Island (2013) and launched its mainland premiere at Carriageworks in September 2013.

The company has also been commissioned by major museums including The Australian Museum, Auckland War Memorial Museum (New Zealand), Powerhouse Museum (Sydney), The Field Museum in Chicago, Science Museum Minnesota, Natural Museums Liverpool (UK), Naturalis (Leiden), National Museums Northern Ireland, Montreal Science Museum and the Natural History Museum in Los Angeles. Most recently Erth commissioned work and supplied hero dinosaur puppets for the Field Station Dinosaurs Theme Park.

Erth's design studio has built for a huge range of cultural institutions and commercial clients from Sydney Olympic Games Opening Ceremony, Sydney Opera House and City of Sydney.

Erth was founded in 1990 in Ballarat, Victoria and is now based at Sydney's Carriageworks contemporary arts centre

About the Puppets

The main style of puppetry used in *Erth's Dinosaur Zoo™* is a modified style of "Bunraku" (bunrah-koo), a form of puppetry that originated in Japan over 400 years ago.

In Bunraku, there are usually several puppeteers who manipulate the puppet directly and are visible throughout the play rather than being hidden.

Usually 3 puppeteers will operate 1 puppet in Bunraku- each puppeteer is responsible for moving a different part of the body

Puppetry in Japan is highly regarded. Bunraku is directly related to the "kabuki," mime theatre tradition and at one time was considered the highest form of theatre in Japan, with the greatest writers and actors of the day creating work exclusively for Bunraku performances.

Many plays were written that are similar to Shakespearean dramas, with detailed language and complex plots.

Bunraku plays are still performed today in Japan, a master puppeteer spends a lifetime perfecting manipulation of his puppet.

erth.com.au

Q&A with the Artistic Director – Scott Wright

What is Erth and what is Erth's Dinosaur Zoo™?

Erth is a visual and physical theatre company based in Sydney, at an awesome venue called Carriageworks. We have been around for about 20 years and tour shows around Australia and overseas. Erth's Dinosaur Zoo™ is a very cool show that is presented as a live animal display, like Steve Irwin would have done at Australia Zoo, but instead of crocodile and snakes we have dinosaurs.

All of the dinosaurs and prehistoric creatures are Australian and during the show we let kids come up and pat them, feed them ... and if the kids behave badly, we feed them to the dinosaurs (joking)!

When you were younger, did you ever think you would be involved in something like the type of work that Erth creates?

No, not really, but as a child I was an extrovert, and I also loved puppets and made my own puppets. The two things had to come together at some point.

How was the concept for Erth's Dinosaur Zoo™ inspired?

We do a lot of work with museums throughout the world, making life size dinosaur puppets, and we decided that we would make some of our own and promote Australia prehistoric natural history. The show is very funny but educational at the same time. We always get people coming up to us at the end of the show telling us how much they enjoyed the show, and how they didn't know what to expect but were really pleased that they came.

Aesthetically, the show looks interesting, what about the storyline? Does any plot exist?

There's no real storyline. It really is a live animal presentation. Of course, each dinosaur comes with a back story about where it came from, what it eats, etc.

Who are some of the most popular characters?

The baby dinosaurs and the big scary carnivores. One truly amazing thing about their popularity is that we have many dinosaurs that have appeared on various YouTube clips. We totalled the amount of hits the other day and discovered that our dinosaurs have amassed over 5 million hits collectively. One dino in particular has 3 million to herself!

The puppet designs are amazing! Who creates them and how?

We have a team of amazing artists in Erth's Studio where everything is created for the show, from making the puppets to creating the sound effects for each dinosaur.

Where have you toured? Where haven't we been?

Robert Irwin's birthday in Queensland, one of the oldest theatres in Wellington (New Zealand), the halls of the Los Angeles Natural History Museum. The show has been so many places and will continue travelling.

Would this show only appeal to artists or to a wider audience?

This show appeals to anybody between the ages of 5 and 500.

Who are your team?

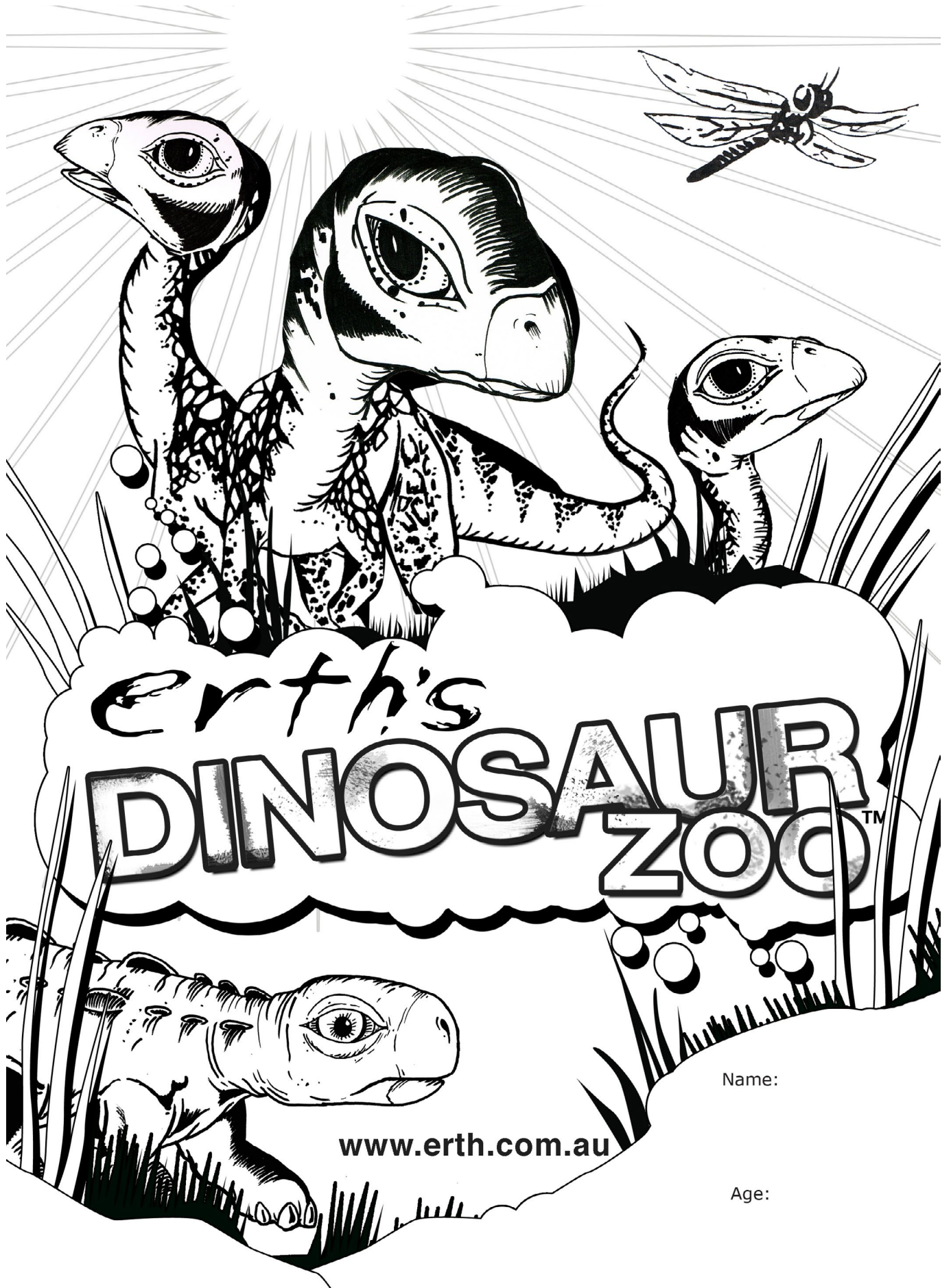
The Erth team/crew sometimes changes, depending on where we are performing. They are always great people and all have vast amounts of skill and experience. I have performed in the show as the presenter, we also like to work with real zoo-keepers and use them to present the show. It's really cool when a real zookeeper works with us to present the show because they really do look after animals.

Whereas whenever I do it, I'm just a theatre director who knows a lot about dinosaurs ... even though a lot of people think I'm a palaeontologist! We also work with a team of puppeteers who are all great at bringing our dinosaurs to life.

What's the best thing about taking this production on tour?

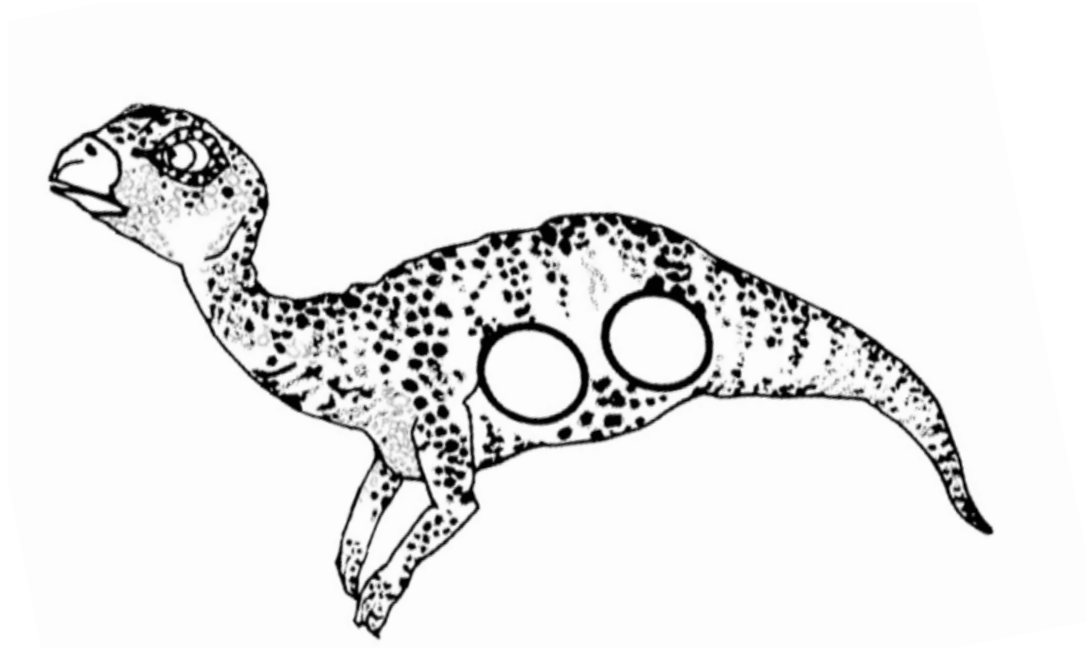
One of the endearing things about touring the show is performing the work in more and more regional towns. The audiences are so warm and appreciative. The show really does appeal to so many people and it's always great to do the show for new audiences. The response and enthusiasm is wonderful, and you feel like the show evolves with every thank you and round of applause.

Post Performance Activities



Make Your Own Mini Dinosaur Puppets

- Print the images on to white card.
- Colour and cut out the dinosaur shape.
- Cut out the 2 large holes and push 2 of your fingers through to make the legs of your dinosaur!



Have a go at designing your own dinosaur puppet character. Draw your design on to white card, colour it in and cut out. Remember to include holes where you will put your fingers to make the legs!

Puppet Party

Designosaurs



Puppet Template Instructions

Materials

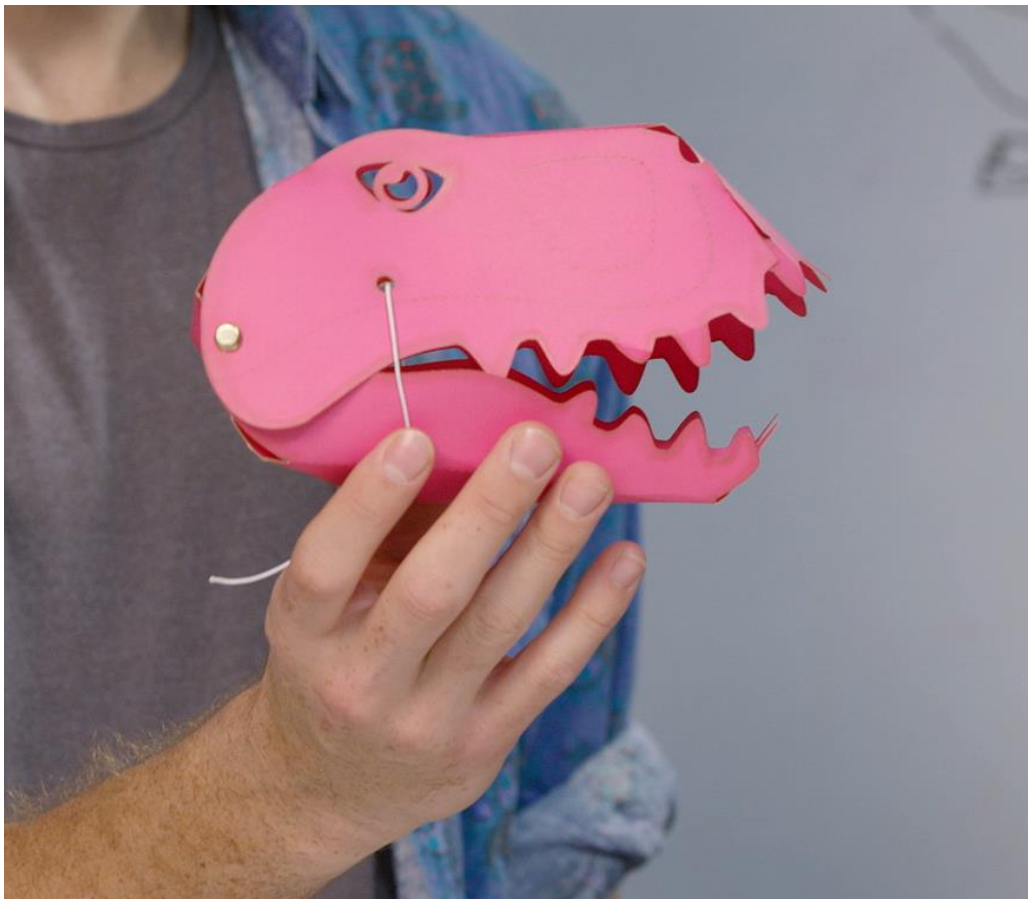
You will need the following items:

- Scissors
- Hole punch or sharp pencil
- 2 x spilt pins (also called clock pins)
- Puppet template printed on card
- 40 cm elastic
- 7cm piece of straw

Getting Started

Follow the steps below to create a puppet head using the puppet template provided. See the next page for the steps to create your puppet's head.

Begin by cutting along all the lines that have a scissors icon. You will need an adult to use sharp scissors or a Stanley knife to cut out the slots near the eyes and the nostrils.






Puppet Party

Designosaurs

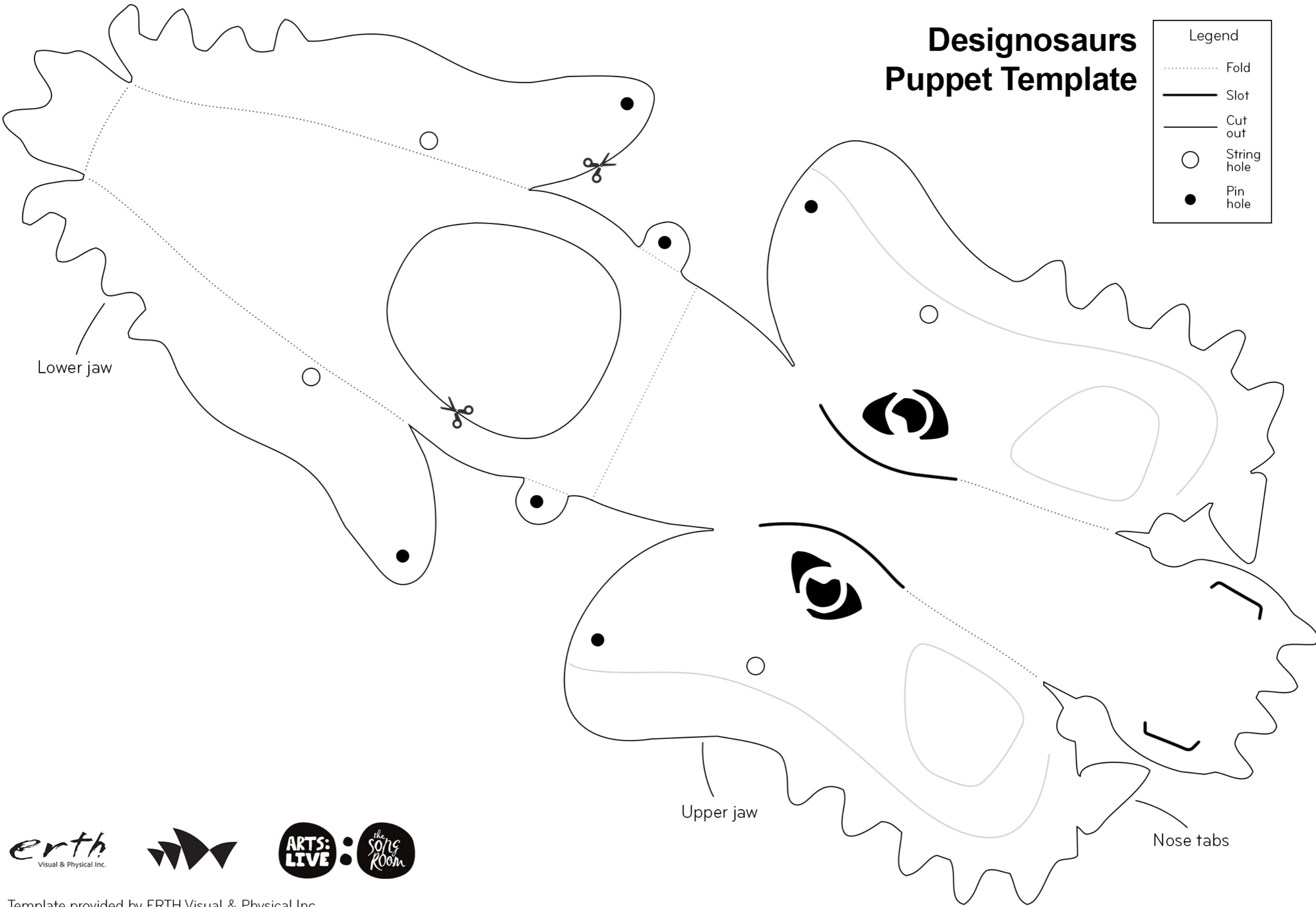


Steps

| | | |
|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |
| <p>1. Using a large hole punch or tip of a pencil, punch out the string holes and the pin holes then fold along all the dotted fold lines.</p> | <p>There are three pin holes on each side of the jaw. Gather them together so they overlap then push the split pins through and fasten. This will allow the jaw to move.</p> | <p>2. On the snout, push and fasten the two nose tips into the pre-cut slots.</p> |
|  |  |  |
| <p>3. Feed the elastic through the straw.</p> | <p>4. Place the straw inside the upper jaw and then feed the elastic out through the upper jaw string holes then in through the lower jaw string holes.</p> | <p>5. Tie the ends of the elastic together so that the jaws are pulled together tight.</p> |

Designosaurs Puppet Template

| Legend | |
|--------|-------------|
| | Fold |
| — | Slot |
| — | Cut out |
| ○ | String hole |
| ● | Pin hole |



Keep in touch

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