Punch and Judy Bedtime Play: Punch Is Scared of the Dark

In the dark Punch hears a hooting and a scratching at the window, and a 'kind owl helps him to go and look instead of hiding.

Age
from about 3 years

Time
about 7 minutes, about 15 minutes with the talk afterwards

Puppets
3 hand puppets: Punch, Grandma, Owl; plus one child as the Light Helper

Materials
a cloth as a duvet, a small twig, a small cuddly toy, a light switch or lamp within reach of the Light Helper

Getting ready

1 person: Punch on your right hand, Grandma and the Owl one after the other on your left, plus one child as the Light Helper. With two people, the second person plays Grandma and the Owl and makes the scratching noise.

Roles

Punch
sleepy, but scared in the dark

Owl
awake at night, calm and wise

Grandma
puts Punch to bed and comes back when he calls

Light Helper
a child who switches the light off and on again when you give the signal

What you need

- ✓ cloth as a duvet
- ✓ small twig
- ✓ small cuddly toy
- ✓ light switch or lamp

Getting ready

Lean the twig against the right-hand edge of the stage (as the children see it): that's Punch's window. The cloth and the cuddly toy lie behind the stage. Choose a child to be the Light Helper and show them the switch. Check beforehand that with the light off it is still bright enough for every child to see the puppets.

Tips for the performance

1. Never make the room completely dark. If a child gets anxious, leave the light on; the play still works.
2. Make the scratching with a fingernail on the side of the stage or on the table, and the 'Twit-twoo' by hooting into cupped hands.
3. Punch whispers as soon as the light goes off. The children will start whispering too.
4. The Owl speaks slowly and in a low voice. It never laughs at Punch.
5. A lullaby your group already knows makes a good ending. Afterwards the children can go straight into a quiet time.

Script

Stage directions are in grey. The children's calls are suggestions: every answer is welcome.

Punch comes up, yawning.

Punch: *(yawns)* Hip, hop, hooray … Is everybody here today?

Children: *Yeees!*

Punch: Ooh, that's loud! I'm ever so sleepy. You see, it's evening. Grandma's going to put me to bed soon.

Grandma comes in.

Grandma: Right then, Punch. Teeth brushed?

Punch: Brushed!

Grandma: Pyjamas on?

Punch: On!

Grandma: Then snuggle down under the duvet. *(tucks Punch in with the cloth)* Night night, Punch. Sleep tight.

Punch: Night night, Grandma.

Grandma: I'm going to switch the light off now.

Grandma goes off. You give the Light Helper a signal: light off.

Punch: *(whispers)* Children? Are you still there?

Children: *(whisper) Yeees.*

Punch: Good. It's so … so dark in the dark.

You call softly: 'Twit-twoo, twit-twoo.'

Punch: *(sits bolt upright)* What was that? Did you hear that? Is it a ghost?

Let the children answer. Often some of them know the owl's call.

Children: *An owl!*

Punch: An owl? Well, if you say so … *(lies back down)*

You scratch the side of the stage with a fingernail: scratch, scratch.

Punch: *(sits bolt upright)* And what's that? Something's scratching at the window! I bet it's a monster with long claws!

Let the children react. Punch doesn't dare to look.

Punch: I'll pull the duvet over my head. Then the monster can't see me.

Punch disappears under the cloth. The Owl lands on the front of the stage.

Owl: Twit-twoo! Twit-twoo! Who's that lying there, all of a tremble?

Punch: *(under the duvet, in a shaky voice)* Nobody. There's nobody here.

Owl: Well, this nobody is trembling an awful lot. Children, who's under the duvet?

Children: *Punch!*

Punch: *(peeps out carefully)* Oh. An owl. Was that you going twit-twoo?

Owl: Of course. I'm awake at night, and I call to my friends. Did I make you jump?

Punch: A bit. And there's a monster at the window too. It's scratching!

Owl: A monster? Let's go and have a look. But we'll need some light for that.

Punch: But I don't dare.

Owl: You know, Punch, being brave doesn't mean you're not scared. Being brave means having a look even when you're scared. And it's fine to get some help, too. I'm here with you, and so are the children.

Punch: Children, are you here with me?

Children: *Yeees!*

Punch: Then you count to three, and the Light Helper switches the light on.

Children: *One, two, three!*

The Light Helper switches the light on. Punch slowly looks over at the window, where the twig is leaning.

Punch: It's just … a twig!

Owl: *(moves the twig back and forth with its head)* That's a twig from the apple tree. When the wind blows, it scratches at the window. Scratch, scratch.

Punch: Not a monster, just a twig! *(laughs)* Children, have you ever heard a noise and not known what it was?

Let the children tell their stories.

Owl: And what will help you get to sleep now, Punch?

Let the children collect ideas: a cuddly toy, a little light, a song, calling Grandma.

Punch: I'll call Grandma!

Owl: Good idea. I'm flying back to the wood now. Night night, Punch! Twit-twoo!

The Owl flies away.

Punch: Graaandma!

Grandma comes in.

Grandma: Punch, what's the matter?

Punch: I got a fright. First the owl hooted, then the twig scratched. But I went and looked! Can a little light stay on?

Grandma: Of course. I'll leave the door open a crack, then the light from the landing can come in. And here's your cuddly bunny. *(gives Punch the cuddly toy)*

Punch: Thank you, Grandma. Will you sing me a song?

Grandma: If the children sing along.

Everyone sings a lullaby the group knows. Afterwards give the Light Helper a signal: light off again.

Punch: *(whispers)* Night night, children.

Children: *(whisper) Night night, Punch.*

Punch snuggles down under the cloth with his cuddly toy. Grandma goes off. The light comes back on.

After the show: questions for the children

- What did Punch hear in the dark, and what was it really?
- What helped Punch to be brave?
- What helps you get to sleep?
- What noises can you hear outside at night?

Suitable puppets: Punch and Grandma from a set of traditional glove puppets, plus an owl hand puppet; any other night bird works too, just change its call. Traditional glove puppets at Daliono

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