

AUSTRALIAN  
PUPPETEER

TARRENGOWER PUPPET FEST



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**EDITORIAL TEAM**

**EDITOR ROBERT REID**

ROBERTREID@ROBERTREID.COM.AU

**DESIGN & LAYOUT JHANA PFEIFFER-HUNT, HAPTIC MEDIA**

JHANAPFEIFFER@HAPTICMEDIA.COM.AU

**CONTRIBUTERS**

**COVER ART JHANA PFEIFFER-HUNT**

WITH THANKS TO KAY YUSAGI,

SCARLETT AND MAX KALEMBA

**WORDS**

ROBERT REID

RICHARD HART

KAY YASUGI

PENELOPE BARTLAU

JENNIFER PFEIFFER

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# WELCOME!

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

This has been a very full year, and one that has seen all of us at UNIMA stretched to capacity. We want to offer you reliable and regular communication and support, but sometimes we fail. I apologise for that. We all have full time demanding jobs, several of us (including myself) have been overseas or travelling interstate, one of us became a new mum, technology let us down when we needed it most – all of that. The trials of running a volunteer organisation!

Nevertheless, with all of the problems, since the last issue we have some solid achievements:

1. Our new website is up, and we are smoothing out its wrinkles. Keep your comments and suggestions coming in! It looks wonderful, and we owe a big thanks to the talented Ned Llewellyn Jones for his design and care!

2. At the inaugural Tarrengower Puppet Festival UNIMA supported both Richard Bradshaw's presentation of his work and the Slam Noir, that allowed a number of puppeteers to showcase work and talent.

3. Another successful Slam Noir was presented in April at the Nosh Café in Newport.

4. As a result of these, the Castlemaine Festival has invited Black Hole Theatre to present a third Slam Noir at the Festival in March 2013.

5. Beth McMahon was the successful applicant for the Lorrie Gardiner Scholarship, and will use it to travel the US and train with Yvette Edery, a specialist in marionette filmmaking. Beth will work one-on-one with Yvette and participate in

the creation of the feature film adaptation of Yvette's award-winning short film Jillian Dillon.

6. UNIMA was also thrilled to sponsor Dan Hurlin's clinics at the Summit in July, as well as the participation of Lynne Kent in Roman Paska's Masterclass. Both projects were invaluable.

We sadly farewellled both Gilly McInnes and Beth McMahon from the committee and are now looking for new members. I will send out a notification shortly. We have discovered that Skype can be a great tool for meetings – and so will welcome committee members from interstate! If you would be interested, let me know asap.

That's all for now. We are delighted to see so many of our members presenting work in this year's Melbourne Fringe Festival! Keep up the good work!

Until later,

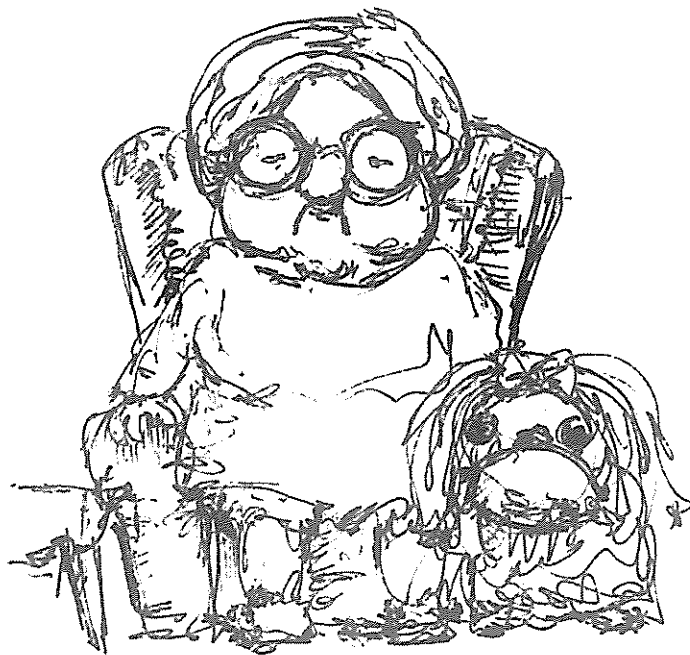


President  
UNIMA Australia

## EDITOR'S COMMENT

This year has already been an exciting one for Australian Puppetry with the Tarrengower Festival in march and, but the time this issue goes out, the 4th National Puppetry and Animatronics summit will have been held at the Victorian College of the Arts. In this issue of the magazine we focus on the Tarrengower festival, bringing you a reflection on the experience of participation from back stage by Kay Yasugi and also from the director of the festival, Richard Hart. We also bring you some fascinating insights into the coming production of the multi award winning collaboration between South Africa's Handspring Puppet command and the UK's National Theatre which comes to Australia in December this year as well as a terrific look at the Ovodda Festival in Prague from Penelope Bartlau. It's been a terrific year in puppetry so far and we're looking forward to an equally exciting second half of 2012.

Robert Reid  
Editor  
Australian Puppeteer



*"A LITTLE BIT OF BLUE"*

10<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2012

*Kay Yasugi*

# TARRENGOWER PUPPET FEST, 2012

Richard Hart

From the 9th to the 12th of March this year the small town of Maldon in central Victoria hosted the inaugural Tarrengower Puppet Fest. It was the culmination of well over a year's development with setbacks, difficulties and learning curves that all looked to be teetering on the brink a couple of weeks prior to opening due to low booking numbers. A week later, however, the small organising 'task force' was relieved to reach break-even point, but still worried about audiences for many of the performances. It was nail-biting stuff, but experienced others, who had put together Summits and festivals over the years, assured us that we just had to wait for the last moment.

The long weekend turned out to be perfect weather. Earlier in the month there were damaging downpours in nearby Castlemaine, and serious flooding further north; even the running of the Goldfields railway, a venue in the puppet festival, was in doubt. On Saturday morning, the first day, the whole town was awash with families and puppeteers. Performances started booking out, and as the weekend progressed everything booked out, and people had to be

turned away. The organisers were struggling to cope with the numbers of people. It was a spectacular baptism for Maldon's new festival.

This year's 'task force' was comprised of Janet Cropley, Philippa Schuster, Peter McKean, and myself as Artistic director, (the only person not living in Maldon). Much thanks is due for the support and resources of the Maldon Neighbourhood Centre, and the many volunteers. We are especially grateful to the sponsors, including Maldon and district Community Bank, Bendigo Bank, the State government of Victoria, Mount Alexander Shire and Maldon.

Over the long weekend there were around forty-two performances and three workshops. The aim was to display the diversity of puppet theatre to a new community eager to make the festival a regular event. I think the talent, experience and calibre of the performers, along with their wonderful generosity of spirit, helped us succeed in this aim.

Accommodation for performers varied from staying with friends, in motels, camping, hotels



and the Victorian Blue Light Youth Camp. The Youth Camp was very popular with performers and friends as they could share space, cook together, hang out, party and exchange ideas.

Performers in the Festival were: Jenny Ellis, Kay Yasugi, Harry Gardner, Richard Hart, Julia Davis, Annie Forbes, Tim Denton, Richard Bradshaw, Sue Blakey, Steve Scott, Dennis Murphy, Lana Schwarcz, Sue Wallace, Steve Coupe, Gary Friedman, Lois Conlan, Anna Paola, Bronwyn Kamasz, Jacob Williams, Vanessa Ellis, Lachlan Plain, Rod Primrose, Jan Wozitsky, Lee Fox, Dan Goronszy, Kristen Rule, Sarah Butterfield, Rachael Guy, Janice Pezzoti, Megan Cameron, K T Prescott, Dave O'Brien, Cerise Howard, Katrina Wilson and Nicola Bell.

I would like to thank Nancy Black, Lana Schwarcz and Black Hole for providing the Slam, UNIMA Australia for generously supporting the Slam and Richard Bradshaw's PowerPoint presentation. Julia Davis deserves a special thank you for all the work in O.P.E.N, in organising accommodation at the Youth Camp, helping with communications and all sorts of behind the scenes work.

Next year we will be investigating some larger venues and multiple performances of programmed items in order to cope with the audience numbers. We are currently looking at funding options. If any one has any suggestions, please contact me at [dreampuppets@netspace.net.au](mailto:dreampuppets@netspace.net.au).

Thank you to all of the above, and the others who made the inaugural Tarrengower Puppet Fest such a great success. Please look out for updates via UNIMA and O.P.E.N as we start gearing up for the next one.

Richard Hart.  
Artistic Director of Tarrengower Puppet Fest 2012







1 MEGAN CAMERON (MR KEYS PRESENTS)  
IN 'MAX AND MORITZ.'  
TARRENGOWER PUPPET FEST, 2012  
PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW HOBBS

2 FESTIVAL ARTISTIC DIRECTOR RICHARD  
HART [LEFT] WITH DENNIS MURPHY  
(MURPHY'S PUPPETS) IN FRONT OF  
DENNIS' 'ARELCCHINO' PUPPET BOOTH.  
MALDON COMMUNITY CENTRE,  
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PHOTOGRAPH BY KAY YASUGI

3 JENNY ELLIS (LITTLE WING PUPPETS) IN  
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TARRENGOWER PUPPETFEST, 2012  
PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW HOBBS

4 STEVE COUPE (SYDNEY PUPPET THEATRE)  
PERFORMING AT FAMILY CABERET NIGHT.  
TARRENGOWER PUPPET FEST, 2012  
PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW HOBBS



# REFLECTIONS OF THE TARRENGOWER PUPPET FEST

Kay Yasugi

I went to the Puppet Fest as a volunteer stage manager/photographer, and it was an immense joy and privilege working with such talented artists. The town of Maldon is so quaintly picturesque, and was the perfect venue for the festival. The place was peppered with puppeteers in their little white vans, as well as families, tourists and many puppetry enthusiasts. The atmosphere was electric and it is a credit to Artistic Director, Richard Hart, for organising such a diverse mix of performances. There was something for all audiences with individual shows, group cabarets, Sunday Market walkabouts, site-specific experimental work (and works in progress), workshops and even puppet lectures. There were so many interesting puppet characters and stories, including miniature beat poets, anthropomorphic rabbits in mines, scrambled fairytales, stealthy avian thieves, Italian love stories with witches, and even political leaders in Speedos.

In terms of the children's shows, it was good to see puppetry that appealed to the various facets of the young and the young at heart—from the innocent, to the 'not-so-innocent'. On one end

of the spectrum there was the delightful table-top detective story *A Little Bit of Blue* by Little Wing Productions, with its cranky old lady with missing possessions, and a very remorseful and eventually redeemed winged culprit. This was a great contrast to the darker *Max and Moritz* by Mr Keys Presents, with its 'Roald Dahl-meets-vaudeville' show about two mischievous boys who get punished for their wicked ways, all while the crowd cries out "Grind them! Grind them!"). I was seated right beside the live musicians, so it was a real treat to watch them not only drum and strum, but also play as Foley artists with their 'bone-crunching' water bottles and egg-beaters.

The cabaret nights delivered delicious smorgasbords of puppetry, and a highlight for me was Dennis Murphy's side-splitting show *Allenby's Flea Circus*. His jaded ringmaster persona had everyone in stitches, and it goes to show that puppets can be hilarious even when they are tiny, or invisible!

There were shows for the adults too, and I particularly enjoyed the Puppet Slam performances that were torch-lit by members







1 LANA SCHWARCZ WITH HER TRAVELLING PEEP SHOW 'THE CURATOR' AT THE SUNDAY MARKET. MALDON NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE, TARRENGOWER PUPPET FEST, 2012  
PHOTOGRAPH BY KAY YASUGI

2 PUPPET FROM 'MAX AND MORITZ' BY MR KEYS PRESENTS (MEGAN CAMERON). MALDON VINTAGE MACHINERY MUSEUM, TARRENGOWER PUPPET FEST, 2012  
PHOTOGRAPH BY KAY YASUGI

3 JULIA DAVIS (DREAM PUPPETS) AND KAY YASUGI (PUPPEROOS) PACKING UP AND WRAPPING UP AT THE FESTIVAL. TARRENGOWER PUPPET FEST, 2012  
PHOTOGRAPH BY KAY YASUGI

3 KAY YASUGI (PUPPEROOS) IN 'BINA THE BUTTERFLY' AT THE FAMILY CABARET. TARRENGOWER PUPPET FEST, 2012  
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY KAY YASUGI

of the audience. The dance-inspired evening was filled with brooding hand puppet tangos, yoga-posing table top puppets, flying marionettes and even a dance lesson en masse!

Finally, a reflection about the festival cannot end without mentioning the incredible work of Richard Bradshaw. His shadow performances were truly spectacular, and I especially enjoyed his cabaret piece based on the traditional English folk song It's the Same the Whole World Over. The pointing finger of the unscrupulous upper-class would in one swift flick transform into a hypocritical hand grasping for money and wine. Such clever use of transformation added a layer of surprise, delight and sadness to the song about a poor girl who is repeatedly taken advantage of by men.

Seeing Richard Bradshaw's puppet backstage was another joy. His intricate puppet mechanics, meticulous stage managing and incredible sensibility to weight and timing are truly marvellous. He also very generously gave a separate presentation about his life's work that included some insights into the construction of his puppets. I was so appreciative that he had

shared such invaluable knowledge with us. I do hope that other puppeteers will also be able to share knowledge of their craft in future festivals.

It was a true pleasure to be a part of this festival, and I am so thankful to all the people who were involved in organising it. I do hope that this festival will continue for many years to come! ☺

# OUR DARLING HALCYON

Australian Puppeteer speaks with  
Halcyon Macleod

One of the most recognisable and innovative success stories of Melbourne independent theatre of the last ten years must surely be *My Darling Patricia*. Photographs and found objects inspire their work and even their name is drawn from just such a find: a sixty-year-old secret love letter found sticky-taped inside the lining of an old vanity set. On carefully folded, yellowed, lined paper the letter began with the words "To My Darling Patricia..." Founded in 2003 by Clare Britton, Bridget Dolan, Katrina Gill and Halcyon Macleod, and joined by Sam Routledge, the company's productions fuse images of domestic degradation with epic landscapes in a unique evocation of the Australian gothic. Australian Puppeteer caught up with Co-artistic Director, Halcyon Macleod in the middle of her over-crowded schedule.

**AP: I'm most interested in MDP's approach to image and atmosphere. What's your starting point for developing a new work?**

HM: Key images and image sequences are the starting points for many of our projects. *Night Garden*, for example, was a suburban backyard at night, the key image, a woman sleepwalking with a pair of stockings tied around her head like a blindfold in a suburban backyard at 3am. Or with *Africa*, it was a series of photos of neglected family homes featured in the Australian media at the end of 2008: rooms waist-deep in domestic refuse and broken toys; descriptions of kids huddling around a TV trying to keep warm; a picture of children leaving these houses, shielding themselves from the photographers with coloured kids' blankets, like multi-coloured ghosts. Or with our most recent work *Posts in the Paddock*, (which premiered last year at Performance Space in Sydney), it was *My Darling Patricia*'s Clare Britton discovering a family

photo, a slide taken in 1968 of a ruined house on her family property in Merriwa. The ruins of the house was where members of her family were murdered by Aboriginal Bushranger, Jimmy Governor, and another photo of the same site taken in the seventies of a family friend posing in front of the ruins like a tourist snapshot at a monument; all that's left of the house are vertical hard-wood posts in the middle of a paddock in rural NSW. Those first images are like a germ that takes hold of you and it grows from there. Each process we have undertaken has been pretty different, depending on the needs of the piece and the preoccupations of the artists involved, but there are some commonalities. It's a process that takes time and, like any successful devising process, it works best when it's both playful and disciplined. Because we work with artists based in both Melbourne and Sydney, Artists Residencies have been essential to our creative developments.

**AP: What's your rehearsal process?**

HM: It's a bit different every time, and a big part of how each work is developed is determined by the opportunities and the funding that the work attracts. The funding timelines often make for a lengthy development process, but this is something that has really worked for us, as we've developed a rigorous and playful process that adapts to each opportunity but often has several phases to it. An idea has to be pretty strong to allow you to interrogate it a few times over a year or two, and that can be a good thing. In terms of working collaboratively, and inviting the key artists to co-author a work, it takes time, and so having a thorough development process supports this collaboration, allowing each artist to find their voice in the work. When someone takes a leap of faith with a work (as



Malthouse did with Africa) and puts their support behind the work from the word go, then we create faster because the support is there from the word go. Typically our process of creation has several stages, with gaps in between for reflection, writing, building, consultation, and developing partnerships for the work etc. Our most recent work, *Posts in the Paddock*, was a collaboration with Aboriginal artists and the process involved extensive consultation with Elders and family members with a relationship to the story we were working with. This kind of cultural collaboration was a first for us, and getting the process right was even more important than usual. We took several research trips throughout country NSW and interviewed lots of people with a connection to the story.

**AP: What's next for MDP after *Posts*?**

HM: We premiered *Posts in the Paddock* at Performance Space in Sydney at the end of last year, and we hope to share it with a wider audience in 2013. This work is made in collaboration with Mooghalin Performing Arts, an

Aboriginal Theatre Company based in Redfern that was formed in 2007. We have just completed a creative development on a new project called *The Piper*; it's our first work made with a mixed audience of adults and children in mind. It's an original adaptation of the story of the Pied Piper that has been inspired by Ted Hughes' poems and plays for children. We will premiere this work in 2013. As well as this, *My Darling Patricia* have a number of other works in development that will make their way into the world over the next three to five years: *Falling Woman*, an intimate physical theatre two-hander that is a collaboration with *My Darling Patricia* associate artist Alice Osborne; *Mantle*, a visual theatre work inspired by geology; *Food Garden*, a large scale public art work; and *Crawl Me Blood*, a radio play and installation that draws on the writings of Jean Rhys and is being made in collaboration with Melbourne's Aphid. I have recently received a Cultural Leadership Grant from the Theatre Board of the Australia Council and will be taking off to embark on a program of skills development and cultural exchange in Canada and France in 2013.







1 CLARE BRITTON PICTURED WITH WITH BEHEMOTH PUPPET IN 'DEAR PAT', 2004  
PHOTOGRAPHER BY HEIDRUN LOHR

2 (LEGS OF) HALCYON MACLEOD WITH TADPOLE PUPPET IN 'POLITELY SAVAGE', 2005  
PHOTOGRAPH BY HEIDRUN LOHR

3 [FROM LEFT] KATRINA GILL, BRIDGET DOLAN AND SAM ROUTLEDGE WITH SNATCH PUPPET IN 'POLITELY SAVAGE', 2005  
PHOTOGRAPH BY HEIDRUN LOHR

4 SAM ROUTLEDGE AND LERDY PARSONS IN 'POSTS IN THE PADDOCK', 2011  
PHOTOGRAPH BY HEIDRUN LOHR

**AP: How do you think about space, and how an audience moves through it to engage with your work? How does your use of space change from venue to venue, particularly when touring?**

HM: The works we have created have explored active audiences to varying degrees—from a site specific work in a historic building to a giant puppet spilling out of a shipping container at Bondi Beach, or a promenade performance set in a custom-built two-story scaffolding structure where the audience moved through a series of spaces, their perspectives shifting throughout. With the works we have made that involve installation and promenade performance, how the audience moves through the space is a big part of what the work is. You have your idea of how you think they are going to move and behave, but there's always a risk; you never really know if or how it will work until they arrive.

**AP: What do you want from theatre itself? What are you hoping/looking for when you go see a show?**

HM: I want connection. Of any kind. Intellectual. Emotional. To feel something. I want to be led

somewhere and shown something. I want to be drawn in and taken away for a moment. I want the elements of the theatre to come together and coalesce. I want intimacy and I want spectacle. I want the works and I want a simple story, skillfully told. I want electric performances and performers who don't overstate their importance in the moment, or get in the way of the image or the meaning with their affectations and ego. I want to laugh or cry or hold my breath. Not all at the same time. Just one of those things at a time might be enough. Sounds like I've got pretty low standards really just "do something to me, for me, with me".

I like to see a range of things from Live Art to classics and contemporary plays. And I like seeing theatre that I don't like. In the area of Live Art, I find that I like for something to have taken longer to make, than it takes to watch, and am wary of the artist patronising the audience. I like it when there is evidence of someone having bothered to master a craft. I like it when I feel with the audience and with the artists and you're all sort of looped up in a moment together. I like the unexpected moment, when something unintended happens. ☺



# SARAH JONES — THE WEIRD AUNT WHO LIVES IN THE BASEMENT

Sarah Jones is a puppeteer, ventriloquist and stand-up comedian who traded children's entertainment for more grown-up fare. Australian Puppeteer caught up with Sarah after her Melbourne Comedy Festival show, Sarah Jones does not play well with others.

**SJ:** I started my career as a performer doing children's parties during university. I initially performed mostly magic and storytelling, but gradually added other skills including puppetry. I attended a Children's Entertainer convention in the United States and met a fantastic ventriloquist called Mark Wade, who inspired me to give ventriloquism a shot. I discovered that the children loved seeing the puppets talk, but the adults loved it even more! By this time I'd been performing for kids for over a decade and was ready for a change. I've always loved comedy and decided to try an open-mic night. I thought it would be a bit of a fun challenge, but I absolutely loved it and within a year I'd closed down my kid's party business and was working exclusively as a ventriloquist/stand-up comedian, mainly on cruise ships and for corporate events. I took my first solo show to Melbourne Fringe and Adelaide Fringe and am currently working on my second.

**AP:** Tell us about the puppet/s.  
**What are their characters?**

**SJ:** I have a whole bunch of puppets. My current show, Sarah Jones does not play well with others features Kitten (an angry cat with abandonment issues), Uncle Bruce (who is well meaning but absolutely hopeless), and a dirty sock puppet and pillow case that turns into a puppet version of Yoda. I love making puppets out of unusual objects as it can come as a nice creative surprise to the audience. I use soft puppets, rather than the hard old fashioned wooden dummies as they allow for more movement, and are easier to transport.

**AP:** How did you get into ventriloquism?

**What attracted you to it?**

**SJ:** I was really attracted to the creative potential of ventriloquism. I love the playfulness of being able to create a talking character that has its own life and personality. The puppet can often get away with jokes that wouldn't suit my personality. I also love playing with self referential humour. The audience tends to suspend disbelief, so any jokes that suddenly break that illusion and remind them they are watching a woman talk to herself tend to be very funny.

**AP:** How do you structure your shows and develop the text? Is it built around character or gags?

**SJ:** I write a lot, pretty much every day. I host a night called The Variety Collective every month, which is a good impetus for me to write new scripts. I usually write five to ten minute scripts that have some form of narrative or plot. What I do is essentially a double act, so I think about what my character wants to achieve, and what my puppet's character wants to achieve and some humour usually comes from this opposition. I often sit down and write a bunch of jokes about anything that springs to mind and these can be added to scripts where they fit, but usually the best jokes are the ones that come naturally from the characters/plot.

**AP:** There will be purists out there who say ventriloquist dummy work isn't true puppetry, whatever that is. What's your opinion about that?

**SJ:** I do understand the complaints. I've seen my fair share of awful ventriloquists who focus completely on not moving their lips at the expense of any puppet manipulation or comedy skills. I'd practiced puppetry before I learnt ventriloquism so I've always seen the importance of bringing the puppet to life. I'm really keen to connect and collaborate with the puppetry community. I've just started meeting some puppeteers, and you've all been very welcoming. I hope you will accept me into your family (even if it's as the weird aunt that lives in the basement). ☺

SARAH JONES  
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY  
SHANE AMBRY PHOTOGRAPHY

# THIS WONDERFUL MOMENT WE HAVE TOGETHER

An interview with Stephane Georis

Robert Reid

Belgian Street performer and puppeteer, Stephane Georis, visited Australia late in 2011 to perform at La Mama in Melbourne, and Spare Parts Puppet Theatre in Perth. Stephane spent three years studying Fine Arts at St Lukes Liege after a year at the Institut des Arts de Diffusion in Louvain-La-Neuve. He's worked as a roving performer with Les Balladins du Mirror and as a clown for Bread & Puppet Theatre. He founded the puppet theatre Chemins de Terre with his wife, Genevieve Cabodi, and has since performed in over twenty five different countries. Australian Puppeteer caught up with him over coffee and ice cream after his performance of A Puppet in the Drawers at La Mama in November.

**AP: You've done so much study in some great schools, and worked with some very respected companies. What did you take away from your studies?**

SG: (Laughs) I didn't study so much, I must say. When I was sixteen or seventeen years old I wanted to do shows. Just play. Then I started by going to a circus school to learn how to juggle, ride a unicycle, walk on stilts, pantomime and all these kinds of things. Then my father heard that if you want to play, then there is a theatre school. But this was 'real theatre'. At this kind of school you have to read Moliere and then do it on the stage—not my kind of thing really, but I learned lots of things about the voice, about body and how to move, and so on. After one year—it was supposed to be a four year course—and after one year the teachers said, "Okay Stephane, stop." There were thirteen in the class, and only three went on to the second year, so it was quite hard. I was not alone; ten of us were out, but I decided to go on. I wanted

to play, that's all, so I went on performing in the street, using my circus and clowning skills. After I went to a fine art school to learn to build myself puppets and masks, and things like that, and see what I could do with my hands, drawing and so on. That's also an interesting point of view on the same things and it gave me a door into puppets. Traditional puppets, I mean.

**AP: And after your time training?**

SG: At the time I met my wife at the school and I saw some object theatre shows. My wife was also an actress so we made something between theatre/street art/circus/tap dance—lots of different things, burlesque and so on. We've made theatre for fifteen years, travelling in a caravan, and we have three kids, like a little European circus troupe. When the oldest of our kids was thirteen he said, "Listen, I want to stop travelling so much. I would like to stay home." So my wife said, "Okay, I can stay at home with you," and I decided, okay, I can do a solo show, why not? I didn't want to do a solo show like stand up comedy or something, so I came back to this idea of puppets and objects; that's quite cheap and easy for traveling. I wrote this show with the director. Her name is Fracine Burgasse, and as I was working with her, we decided to work on something quite universal. If you talk about the rainforests, for example, it touches here, but it works even better in South America, so that's quite universal. If you speak about love, and that's what I want to do, I want it to be very easy to understand anywhere around the world. So this show is created in Swedish, which is not Swedish. It's gibberish, and only the key words are translated into the audience's language. That's my experience. I'm almost a clown, a street performer, so I am alive on the stage.





**AP: And your three shows, the teacher of philosophy, literature and history, they're all object manipulation?**

SG: Yeah. I like to make the object talk. That's the definition my son gave when friends asked him, "What's your daddy's job?" "Oh, my daddy makes the vegetables talk."

**AP: Watching you work, it struck me very much to be about play..**

SG: When I was in the actors school lots of the teachers would say, "Theatre is the text. Let's tell the text to the audience." With my experience, I would say, "No, that's not the text; theatre is playing." Play is just like kids; let's have fun; let's enjoy this wonderful moment we have together. That's play for me, that's pretend, like the kids,

they do. Let's play, as we cry; let's play as we are married; let's pretend to. There is something very interesting, I discovered. We have in French, maybe you have the same in English, the fourth wall. It's like in cinema, theatre, and playing, you have someone to watch you. You pretend to do something. That's all, but there is someone in front of you, and we are here together. Isn't that a great moment to be together? For me that's something essential in the kind of theatre I want to do. Theatre is not cinema; it's not a movie; it's not just lights. We are here, now, with the audience, with the people in front of you, and that's very important. With these roots of street theatre, and I do make them do some participation, but at least watch them, at least look at them, make them smile, laugh or cry. ☺

STEPHANE GEORIS OUTSIDE LA MAMA THEATRE FOR HIS PERFORMANCE OF 'A PUPPET IN THE DRAWERS.'

LA MAMA, 2011

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT REID

# ONCE UPON A TIME...

Once Upon A Time... was presented at the Recital Centre's Elisabeth Murdoch Hall for one night only on Wednesday May 23rd. The programme for Once Upon A Time... was developed with Ensemble Liaison, an innovative musical group with an unusual make-up: David Griffiths—clarinet, Svetlana Bogosavljevic—cello, and Timothy Young—piano. Unlike a typical trio or quartet, there is a limited range of music available for the group's repertoire, so instead, they took an alternative approach, looking at other art forms for collaboration and inspiration. Svetlana approached Peter Wilson about the idea for collaboration about eighteen months ago, and Peter began to develop initial ideas. Peter then enlisted seasoned puppeteers, Annie Forbes and Tim Denton, to join him in the creative development and presentation of Once Upon A Time...

The evening's programme began with Arvo Part's "Spiegel im Spiegel", a deceptively simple piece of music, which was haunting, breathtaking and profoundly melancholic in tone. This was immediately pursued by a work by Paul Moravec's "Tempest Fantasy", a little-known 1957 work, which was, as a composition, a bit hard on the ear. After interval we were treated to an arrangement of Edvard Grieg's "Peer Gynt" Suite No.1 and No.2, a well-known and popular work.

The challenges faced by Peter and the team were fairly sizeable; they had very little rehearsal time with the musicians, and developed the puppetry material from CD recordings of the works. From 'go to whoa', Peter, Annie and Tim had six days to develop and then present the work, and this was done on a very tight budget (I have it on good authority that the budget would have extended to buying each performer one Four & Twenty Pie, without the sauce). The Elisabeth Murdoch Hall is a large venue with a big stage, which the puppeteers had to fill. The set-up was that the musicians sat stage left for the performance, and centre stage across to stage right was the puppetry play area. Additionally, as the Recital Centre is as an auditorium—not a theatre per se—it's acoustics are phenomenally sensitive; the puppeteers had to work with an intense delicacy to minimise sound impacting on the music. As Peter commented afterwards, it was impossible to communicate verbally on stage without the whole audience hearing—and

we all know that in puppetry talking to each other while performing is one of the great benefits of this form over other theatre forms.

So, the puppetry team worked with challenges. How did they pull it off? How did they fare? To get around limited time and budget they used puppets from their repertoire and puppet libraries; we saw the enormous plastic sheet employed at VCA in the 2006 Genty show; masks that Tim had created and worked with in past roving performances; the puppet "Ladies", also from Genty; little puppet heads, moulded from the "Spider-Man" puppet Genty introduced to VCA in his teaching of Bunraku puppetry; the silk-sock puppets on long extendable fibreglass rods used in the 2006 Commonwealth Games Opening that Peter had directed, and other assorted puppets and props. Each piece of music had a well choreographed and thought out visual/puppetry accompaniment. The array of puppets meant that the scale of puppetry was well played; the plastic sheet took up a great portion of the stage with a slow, undulating rhythm. The sock puppets flew up into the ceiling, soaring over the musicians, devouring space playfully, flitting, skipping and circling like fish and like birds. The smaller puppets offered a great contrast; the little head puppets were both menacing and playful, and ever-quizzical. There was one point during the performance where these little head puppets were manipulated on and around the musicians increasing the risk factor of a musical stuff up, which excited the audience no end (and of course the musicians didn't falter). The elegant "Ladies" played out a romance with some very fine and clever puppetry by Peter and Annie. Tim's use of mask was masterful, and it was fantastic to see masks and puppets combined—they are natural theatrical sisters. I feel that on only two occasions the puppetry form was not in harmony with the music; the Arvo Part work would have been better served by the plastic sheet manipulation, but the sound the plastic generates must have made this impossible. This was a shame, as the undulating, sea-like movement of the plastic would have suited the vast and melancholy sensibility of the Part piece better than the 'tails and hats' transforming into characters puppetry that it was accompanied by, as clever and accomplished as this puppetry was. Secondly, Paul Moravec's disturbing work, which was



rhythmically and tonally unpredictable, would have been better served by more menace from the puppets employed. As this work was louder in volume, the plastic sheet was used, in addition to and in conjunction with, the little head puppets. The smooth, water-like quality and grace of the plastic sheet was, for the most part, at odds with the music's furious mood. The puppetry for the Grieg work was breathtaking and had the audience transfixed. The music was much more accessible, which made it easier for the audience to "go with the puppetry", and as the music was romantic both in period and in feel, it must also have been more accessible for the puppeteers to develop the work.

Audiences were delighted—even astonished—by the puppetry. This was a Recital Hall crowd who were unfamiliar with puppetry. I eavesdropped on many conversations at interval, and afterwards, and directly approached people in the audience asking for their experience of the night. It was an event that this audience will not forget. Bravo! Recital Centre for programming a cross-platform work.

Bravo! to Ensemble Liaison for taking the initiative in approaching Peter Wilson with the concept. And Bravo! to Peter, Tim and Annie, for biting off something so ambitious and delivering it with such success. ©

ANNIE FORBES AND PETER WILSON IN  
'ONCE UPON A TIME.'  
ELISABETH MURDOCH HALL, MELBOURNE  
RECITAL CENTRE, 2012  
PHOTOGRAPH BY LYNNE BENDER

# WARHORSE COMES TO AUSTRALIA

Robert Reid

After years on the West End and Broadway, and taking home six Tony Awards, Warhorse, by Handspring Puppet Company and the Royal National Theatre of London, is coming to Australia in December, 2012. Finn Caldwell, Associate Puppet Director for Warhorse, came to Melbourne for the Arts Centre launch and talked about the production and the show's central character, the horse, Joey. The following are excerpts from his address.

I've worked with Handspring on several productions. I was actually in the original production of Warhorse, I was the front legs of Tophorn, and also the goose. I'm now directing the puppetry in London, and I'm so excited and honoured to be coming here later in the year.

Handspring started in 1981. It was a really humble beginning, just four art school graduates in a van travelling around South Africa, Botswana and Swaziland, performing children's theatre. After four years of working together, they decided maybe they'd be ready to do an adult piece of theatre. They put together—at an extremely risky political time it should be said—a delicate political drama for marionettes. Straight away people were talking about the elements of the puppetry design, and the sophistication and subtlety of the manipulation. A bit later, in 2004, Handspring started working on a much larger scale, and by this stage Basil and Adrian, the original founders and who are still very much at the heart of the company today, wanted to connect with one of the oldest puppetry traditions in South Africa. The story they decided to tell was a true story about a giraffe being shipped to Paris as a gift to avoid war. Believe it or not, this story was called Tall Horse.

A lot of Handspring's shows had toured internationally, and they were developing a network of people who were interested in their work all around the world. Not least of which was Tom Morris, Associate Director at the National Theatre. He took Nick Starr, the Executive Producer of the National over to South Africa to see Tall Horse. They loved the puppetry, were just blown away by it, but they loved the story a little bit less. However, Tom was still really keen to find a project to work with Handspring on, and fortuitously, Tom's mother asked him if he'd read War Horse. Now, everyone thinks Warhorse was a house hold name, that it was this hit waiting to happen... It really wasn't. The book had been around for a long time and, though it was still being published, it wasn't easy to find.

About a year later we had the first workshops for Warhorse. We had no puppets because puppets take a long time to build. We were just making the shapes and sizes of these puppets with bits of cardboard and paper. Just testing these ideas out on the Olivier Stage and, really quickly, we began to realise the necessary scale of this project. We needed to make a puppet that could hold the attention of an audience for two-plus hours, so it needed to be a really extraordinary puppet. We couldn't just make something pretty. Ploughing is an essential theme in the play, so we knew this puppet was going to have to pull things. It would have to maybe take a rider; there's a war in the book and in the play, so how on earth do we create a full-scale cavalry charge on stage? It seemed pretty impossible." The original puppet was operated by two people. There's one person in the back and one person in the front. The problem with that was that when the horse was walking the person in the





front had to operate the head and the front legs. While he's walking, the head is just elasticated and nodding, so he's not really acting. Then when he stops, and the puppeteer can lift his hands up and operate the head, suddenly the head comes alive. This wasn't good enough, because this is our central character. The horse has got to be alive and interested in things all the time, so we came up with the idea of the third puppeteer, outside the horse operating the head, which allowed it to be alive all the time.

The heart puppeteer has the technical task of telling us about the weight of the horse. There's no weight going through the legs of the horse—all the weight goes through the puppeteer's legs, so every step the puppeteer takes has to tell us about the weight of the horse, about the power and muscle of the animal moving through him.

The emotional indicator that the heart has is one of the smallest mechanisms on the horse but probably one of the most important. He has the axle that connects those two legs, lives in a slot in the body, so that when the puppeteer is bending his knees you can see the horse breathing. The breath is the thing that really gives life to the horse. It tells us about the physical state of the horse, so his breath might be deep and raggedy, which might show us that he's tired or exhausted, or his breath might get high, held and tense, which might tell us about the horse being in a state of fear; and the other two puppeteers back up that move that the breath is telling us about.

The breath is also doing something else. The breath is really at the heart of Handspring's philosophy about puppetry. As Basil Jones is fond

of asking me, "What's the difference between a puppet walking on stage and an actor walking on stage?" Basil would say that for an actor walking on stage, the first job they have to do is to start telling you about their character and about the story, but a when a puppet comes on stage the first thing a puppet has to do is "be alive." The puppet has this struggle where it's constantly "trying to be alive", and you as the audience are part and parcel of that. You're willing it to be alive as well, which makes you involved in it. It's that fragility that makes it magic. If the puppeteers were to leave the horse it would drop to the ground and it would die, so we're all invested in keeping it alive.

People often say to me, "Why do you think people have such an emotionally powerful response to the horses?" and I guess I would suggest that when you put a really beautiful puppet like this on stage, you're subliminally saying to the audience, "Do you want to play?" Do you remember when we were kids and we'd have something between the two of us, a toy, and we'd agree that it was alive together. Whether you're aware of it or not we're transforming you into children. We're taking you to a place where you have access to a much greater emotional range, and you're in an imaginative state where people feel like anything is possible. ☺

# 21ST UNIMA WORLD CONGRESS, 2012, CHENGDU, CHINA

Jennifer Pfeiffer

For ten days in the city of Chengdu puppetry aficionados from all over the world met for the biggest event on the UNIMA calendar. Eee Gads! The opening ceremony was a stupendous spectacle in which was evident many levels of investment. Outdone only by the closing ceremony, which again was precision and technological 'grandiosity' – only such a word seems to catch the magnificence – some part Olympics for puppets, some part Los Angeles Academy Awards or Bollywood red carpet, the Congress organisers were determined to display to the world the esteem in which puppetry is held in China. The festival had a vast and interesting program. The problem was – how to get to see it all? Theatres were quite some distance from each other, and from the central point at Jinjiang Hotel, the venue for the Congress. Arranged buses travelled to two performances per day, of which there was a selection, the Congress registration usually being the ticket required. But if your chosen performance was outside of the bus program, it was a matter of taxis, or public transport if you knew to negotiate it. There were daily performances in the Intangible Cultural Heritage Park, where the opening ceremony was held, and at which there was a substantial exhibition of Chinese puppets, ancient and contemporary. Keeping a view on the big picture, at the Congress itself it was clear that the Europeans are keen to engage with China; China's display of wealth fed that perception. I am no longer a member of the UNIMA Executive, pipped by a few votes. There were strong voting blocs and agendas. Ironically, discussion concentrated on notions of representation of all continents, and yet, neither the African delegates, nor I, were voted onto the Executive. Australia did not seem to weigh in the minds of those present, now that our own Congress is over. There seemed to be

an assumption that because we are a developed country, we have no special issues or needs – that our physical and cultural isolation presents no challenges. I emphasised that it is so, especially for young and emerging puppeteers, to have contact, stimulation, and experiences beyond our shores is important. Also of the precarious levels of support puppetry receives, in spite of some marvellous success stories. I believe many were preoccupied with their own emerging financial crises, for most, a new experience. Many assumed that in a developed country like Australia, puppetry is supported as it is in other places, as many countries have funded UNIMA offices. People are shocked to hear otherwise, unable to contemplate what their future will be if they lose their supports. I highlight the Netherlands, and Switzerland is fighting for survival, with petition letters circulating. However, the members who were voted onto the Executive, on the whole, make a strong and vibrant group, which I am sure will continue the development and growth of UNIMA activity. Projects that are before the Committee are the World Encyclopaedia of Puppetry Arts being translated into English and Spanish for online circulation and printed versions. While there is no confirmed date for completion, this work is well underway by the Publications and Communications Commission. Closely related to this project is the new UNIMA website presently in the design stage after consultation with the Executive, and other selected UNIMA members. NEW – The Arts of Puppetry Portal (P.A.M), is a new online puppetry portal website and digital repository offers free Internet consultation almost 30,000 documents (photographs, posters, videos, engravings, drawings, notes of stage direction, publications, thematic files) which permit an exploration of the heritage and the contemporary puppetry arts. Currently in French, it is expected to be





available in other languages in the future– [www.artsdelamarionnette.eu](http://www.artsdelamarionnette.eu). Puppetring–is a new online global puppetry magazine that aims to be a meeting place, and more, for the diversity of puppet activities, professional and enthusiast. The subscription is 30 Euro per year. More information is at [www.puppetring.com](http://www.puppetring.com). A new ‘couch-surfing’ service is being devised, so that travelling puppeteers on a budget can be connected to puppeteers willing to temporarily ‘put them up’ on their journey. Awareness for the UNIMA travelling fund, its purpose and how to donate to it needs to be promoted. There will be more to come about these things via our own UNIMA Australia website, where I will place links.

Several presentations came for bids for the 2016 UNIMA Congress, which the Congress vote determined will be in Tolosa/San Sebastian, Spain. I am sure it will be wonderful, and I know it will be well organised. And yet I cannot help but feel that the bid should have gone to Ekaterinburg, Russia, who bid for the second time, and who hosted a UNIMA Executive meeting in 2009, an investment in the future. It is no small thing to put together a bid, a fact I am sure our WA colleagues can confirm. International diplomacy fell here, as ‘blocs of votes’ were manoeuvred. Also, for the first time, there were two bids to host the 2014 UNIMA Council, which the new Executive Committee

were charged to select. In this, Cuba won the vote over the city of Sofia in Bulgaria. I expect to be working closely with Executive members–in a working group attached to the new position of Treasurer, who is Lucille Bodsén, Director of the International School for Puppetry Arts in Charleville. Her invitation is a compliment and expression of faith in me, but there is an implicit understanding that this also represents a message: that we cannot be too reliant on French government funding in perpetuity, especially in these uncertain times. It has been hinted at for some years, couched in language referring to a de-centralising of UNIMA, but which has financial implications beyond the ideal. I think it is wise to pay attention to this more than previously. It was therefore no surprise that heads were turning to Asia and the rising economy of China, and it seems that UNIMA seeks a way in. It is with this in mind that Mrs. Tang Dayu, organiser of the Congress, and also unsuccessful in her bid to be elected onto the UNIMA Executive Committee, was proposed for leadership of the UNIMA Asia-Pacific Commission, and for which I made no challenge. China certainly has the supports in place to be able to do more than I, or my predecessors. I will be working closely with her, to pass on accumulated knowledge, and to help facilitate the kind of communication between member countries that has so far eluded us. She is in a position to organise

some valuable programs. After our one meeting together, I can say that her priorities centre on intangible heritage (the next big thing), and in educating children to social values with puppets. We have ideas in common, but there is potential for deviation, so let us see. Relinquishing this large responsibility frees me to concentrate on my own program of work, largely inspired by my years on the Commission, so I have much to be thankful for in the learning the Commission enabled, even for a life direction. I also work on a new Heritage Commission headed by Miguel Arreche, former Secretary General of UNIMA.

I had the pleasure of seeing the famous Peter Schumann (of Bread & Puppet Theatre), perform in a collaboration with New York group, Chinese Theatre Works, in *Songs from the Yellow Earth*, an adaptation of segments from classic Chinese opera, and poetic works from the Book of Songs. I enjoyed this very much and was taken especially with the mytho-poetic visual aesthetic in a treatment that could be interpreted as a critique of Chinese history, or even of national character. It was a simple shadow play, with figures before and behind the screen, some use of projection, and live musicians and 'sound-makers' to the sides, including the man himself, tall, white-haired and wild-looking. There was nothing terribly new, and that hadn't been done or seen before, but it was in the simplicity and combination of elements, the way that repetition was used, and the poetic narration using simple technology that made it a special

experience, and that presented to me, at least, a double-layered 'kind-of' narrative that offered recognition for Chinese audiences of its originary basis, Chinese opera, in epic historical tales of empire-making, and at the same time a critique of the war-like character that gives rise to such a history. In this way it functioned as a kind of allegory, and I thought it was beautiful. However, viewing pleasure was hindered by the poor theatre etiquette of audiences, especially Chinese children, who seem to be much indulged, having few boundaries. This was a common criticism throughout the festival. I would add to this the use of mobile phones, and cameras taking unauthorised footage, this last by Chinese and international guests alike. Not only was it a disruptive annoyance, but I think it shows a great disrespect for the performers. It is the artists who often get the raw-est deal from the festival industry, and it is an industry. In our few possible interactions with artists in Chengdu, as unless they were also Congress delegates it seems they were largely quarantined from us, reports were coming that conditions were far from ideal. Behind the glamour of the Congress and its events, we heard about accommodations that were not satisfactory, and groups being split up. I cannot comment about fees, but did hear that some agreements were in dispute. My last word is that I think UNIMA should oblige and promote the mandate claimed in its Aims and Means and encourage festival organisers to meet a set of standards required for artists, in UNIMA endorsed festivals in particular. ☉

1 CLOSING CEREMONY OF UNIMA WORLD CONGRESS, CHENGDU, CHINA 2012  
PHOTOGRAPH BY JENNIFER PFEIFFER

2 CLOSING CEREMONY OF UNIMA WORLD CONGRESS, CHENGDU, CHINA 2012  
PHOTOGRAPH BY JENNIFER PFEIFFER

3 OPENING CEREMONY OF UNIMA WORLD CONGRESS, CHENGDU, CHINA 2012  
PHOTOGRAPH BY JENNIFER PFEIFFER







# OVODDA FESTIVAL: A LARGE PUPPET AT A WEIRD FESTIVAL IN A SMALL SARDEGNIAN TOWN

Penelope Bartlau reports on her experience of Ovodda Festival, Sardinia, Italy.

In February this year, Jason (my newlywed husband) and I trotted off to Italy, specifically to visit Sardinia, which is a part of Europe with very old, and intact traditions and festivals.

Sardinians are very proud of their traditions, and none more so than in central Sardinia. This part of the country was the least plundered and disrupted by the various invasions by other countries/cultures, which occurred continuously to Sardinia over centuries. One of the festivals we discovered was high in the mountains, taking place in a tiny village called Ovodda. The centerpiece of the festival each year is a giant parade puppet, wherein the puppet is carted up and down the main street, and then thrown into the river and burned at sunset. We were not disappointed. However, our Sardinian hosts had warned us that everyone in Ovodda would be pissed out of their brains, and that the minute we arrived we would have our faces painted black. This was all true.

Out of festival time, Ovodda is quiet and small, with few people and fewer cars. Like any small town in Sardinia, the sound of bells - sheep and goat bells - from the animals grazing on rocky outcrops is familiar and haunting - if not frightening when a herd barrels towards you down the town's main street. Many people are born, raised and remain in their towns - some never venturing further than to a neighbouring village. The streets of Ovodda are like creek

beds in their meandering, and with their stony paving, narrow and damp, they carry the smells of whatever wafts through them: onions cooking, burning wood-fires, tobacco, laundry drying.

In any small town, festival time is not so quiet - quite a different matter altogether in fact. Rooted in Dionysian ritual, the Ovodda Festival is a celebration and ritualisation of the ending of winter - winter being represented by blackness (hence the black face-painting), and associated with death. After Lent, the arrival of spring brings colour back into the mountains, as flowers burst into bloom and lambs and kids are born, and the wintry darkness abates for another nine months.

My observation of the Ovodda Festival is, that this may be what Venice Carnevale might have been like four hundred years or so ago, (before Venice became really fancy). Ovodda Festival is back to basics. It's a bunch of villagers letting go. This is the only town in Sardinia to have a festival after the beginning of Lent. The church and town hall close their doors (and eyes and ears; God and the 'pollies' get the day off), and there is public "release" to absolute abandonment. Needless to say the Carabinieri (cops) were parked in their cars around the town, waiting for action, just in case.

A word about navigation in Sardinia. The road signs work like this - if you have a dirt road leading one kilometre to your house, and you're likely to be the only one, ever, to drive on the dirt road, the local council will have placed four to five signs warning that there are rocks, a hilly bit, a narrow bit, and a bit where someone can overtake you.

1 PARADE PUPPET IN SARDEGNA  
OVODDA FESTIVAL, 2012  
PHOTOGRAPH BY PENELOPE BARTLAU

2 PARADE PUPPET IN SARDEGNA  
OVODDA FESTIVAL, 2012  
PHOTOGRAPH BY PENELOPE BARTLAU

If, however, you're on a major road or freeway and wish to find a town, the signage is somewhat less than generous. Additionally, in central Sardinia, the rule of thumb is that if you want to eat it, you shoot it first. Bored folk, after they've already shot their pig, cow, wild sheep or goat, run around with rifles shooting every road sign for entertainment. So, the highly infrequent road signs are totally illegible as they're riddled with bullet-holes, which made navigating even more of a challenge.

After a very confusing, long, winding, snowy, slow and car-sick-ey drive, we arrived in Ovodda. We got out of the car, and immediately two very drunk girls wobbled up calling "Ciao! But you two are so white!" and lavished us both Italian kisses on the cheeks, smearing us with black greasy paint from their own cheeks. A goat wandered past. The girls wobbled off.

We followed the goat and walked up the main street, where a level of chaos ensued. Donkeys dressed in hats were 'stubborning' themselves, as drunk men dressed in horns, sheep heads & skins, goat pelvises made into masks, coloured wigs, flashing sunglasses and an assortment of kooky and kitsch costumes tried to pull and steer the hapless animals up and down the street. Usually these poor beasts were carrying a wagon of some sort; one had a home made BBQ on-board so the owner could give out hot bread, pecorino cheese and wine; another had a cage on the back made out of sticks with a guy inside dressed in goat-skins pretending to be a gorilla (albeit very drunk one). Everyone's faces were blacked up, even little babies in prams.

Tradition dictates that the giant puppet on the float is always male, but with some sexual perversion. This year, the puppet had a huge

penis that had been engineered to urinate red wine. Around the puppet, people were carousing and cavorting, carrying blocks of pecorino cheese and drinking (what turned out to be the vilest) red wine, which they shared with anyone and everyone, often drinking out of sheep or goat horns, which they'd filled from the big penis. There were children running everywhere, and assorted animals—alive and dead—all over the place. At sunset, the float was set alight, and aflame, it rumbled down the street before being pushed into the river.

There is no doubt that it was an incredible experience to be able to witness and take part in a festival like this. The experience was made all the more extraordinary by the fact that, with ourselves as exceptions, there were simply no tourists. This is a festival belonging to a different time, which remarkably, still exists, in a country that is famous for its incredible sophistication—and sophisticated this was not. This was gritty, ribald and raw.

The puppet was the centerpiece. For its creation, the puppet would have been a focus for the townspeople for a long period before the festival night. The puppet is, and always is, the year's pivotal point of communal creativity in Ovodda. Ovodda, with its giant puppet may be one of the last remaining, truly Dionysian festivals remaining in Europe.

Of course, we got very lost on the way home.

See a forty second clip of the festival on Barking Spider Visual Theatre's You Tube channel:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2WiCITzmIO>



# UNIMA WOMEN'S COMMISSION AWARDS NORIKO NISHIMOTO

Spare Parts Puppet Theatre were thrilled that master puppeteer Noriko Nishimoto has been awarded one of the highest international awards in the world of puppetry. The UNIMA (Union Internationale de la Marionette) Women's Commission will acknowledge Noriko's outstanding international contribution to puppetry at the 21st UNIMA World Congress and Puppet Festival in Perth's sister city Chengdu, China, in May 2012. Noriko was involved with the Spare Parts for nineteen years beginning in 1981, when she was invited from Japan as guest artist in the company's first show, *Faust*, for the 1981 Festival of Perth (PIAF). She was then engaged as Master Puppeteer and Technique Master in 1982, becoming Associate Artistic Director in 1987, and Artistic Director from 1997 to 2001. During her time as Artistic Director of Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, she created and directed many shows which have become classics in the company's repertoire, such as *The Bugalugs*, *Bum Thief* and *The Bunyip of Berkeley's Creek*. For the company's 2012 program, Noriko will direct two of her most beloved works, *The Deep* in April and *Cat Balloon* in October. Current Artistic Director of Spare Parts, Philip Mitchell said he was thrilled by the international recognition for Noriko's outstanding contribution to puppetry. "Long have we known that Noriko has had a major influence on the development of contemporary puppetry in Australia—her legacy is extraordinary and outstanding," he said. "On behalf of everyone at Spare Parts, in particular the many artists who have been inspired by her and all the wonderful puppets she has brought to life, we congratulate Noriko on this very special award—an acknowledgement of a great artist on the world stage." Noriko's acclaimed production of Tim

Winton's, *The Deep*, will be presented at the company's Fremantle home theatre for the April School Holidays. Set in a typical Winton world of beach and sea, *The Deep* is about a little girl, Alice, whose fear of the ocean is conquered through an out-of-the-blue swim with a friendly dolphin. Sharing her adventure is her belly-flopping mum and dad, 'bombie' obsessed brothers, and a puppet cast of sea creatures: of beautiful fish, a fabulous octopus, wacky crabs, and an over-excitable Ruffy the Dog. Adapted by Justin Cheek in partnership with Nishimoto and performer Rachael Whitworth, *The Deep* mixes beach culture comedy and exquisite puppetry in a highly entertaining live theatre experience. A huge range of puppetry styles from hand to costume puppets are utilised by the experienced performing talents of Katya Shevtsov, Michael Barlow, Shirley Van Sanden and Jacob Lehrer. ☺



1 NORIKO NISHIMOTO,  
PHOTOGRAPH BY PENELOPE BARTLAU

2 *THE DEEP*, SPARE PARTS PUPPET  
THEATRE, 2012  
PHOTOGRAPH BY PENELOPE BARTLAU



