

Australian Puppeteer

N° 36 August, 2008



UNION INTERNATIONALE DE LA MARIONNETTE



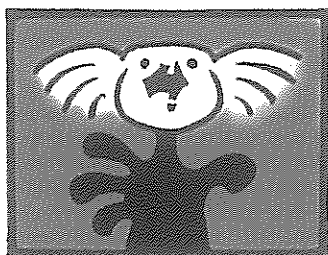
On Friday July 4 Artplay Puppet Lab Festival featured a launch of Dream Puppets' *Superbia*, created, constructed and performed by Richard Hart . (Co-writer, voices and construction - Julia Davis. Music composition and performance - John Grant.)

Australian Puppeteer No 36, Autumn, 2008

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Front cover image: Newspaper puppet hanging backstage from Handspring's *Woyzeck* on the Highveld performed at UNIMA 2008 in Perth.
Photo by Hilary Talbot

• UNIMA •



AUSTRALIA

Australian Puppeteer

No. 36 August, 2008

Editorial

In this *Australian Puppeteer* No 36 we take a look at UNIMA 2008 – the experience.

For the past four years the anticipation of this landmark event has focussed our planning, discussion about, and perspective on Australian puppetry. Now some of the participants reflect upon the journey taken, artistically, emotionally and physically – (crossing the continent as part of the Puppet Caravan!) We also have some commentary from overseas delegates, inspirational accounts of workshops and photos – lots.

I didn't attend UNIMA 2008, so as I read each submission it was a joy to share vicariously in the excitement, spirit of celebration and a little of the discussion about our chosen art form. I was disappointed, however, that we received so few reviews of performances. As we are a fairly small community of puppeteers we are often reluctant to appraise the work of our peers, but there were several renowned international companies programmed in UNIMA 2008 and reviews by *puppeteers* would have been most welcome.

A big thank you to Tamara Rewse who compiled 'Impressions' – and to Hillary Talbot who let me pilfer photos from her vast collection. See website:

www.spiritsdancing.com
and <<http://www.flickr.com/photos/spiritsdancing/collections/72157604580771423/>>

For those who did not make the journey westward – I hope you enjoy the experiences presented here, and for those who did – happy memories.

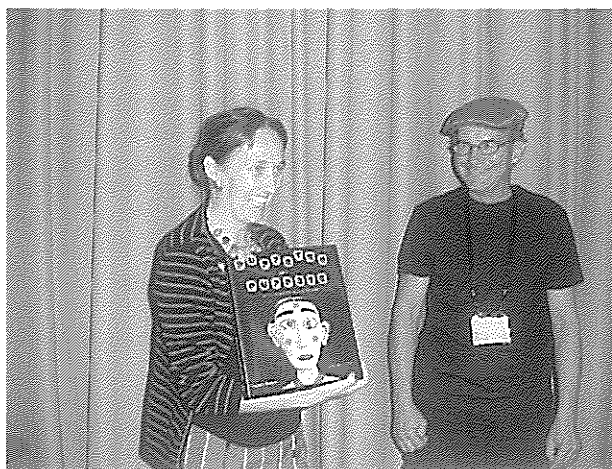
Julia Davis

We were wrong. In *Australian Puppeteer* Special Edition No. 35 the profile for Jeral Puppets contained an error concerning the date of the company's inception. It should have read "Since 1966 they have created over 1200 puppets." The error occurred during transcription. Apologies to John Lewis.

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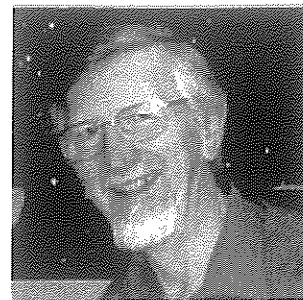


Sarah Kriegler is recognised for her contribution to *Australian Puppeteer* as editor for 6 years.

Photo by Sue Wallace taken at UNIMA 2008

President's Report

*Richard Bradshaw OAM
President, UNIMA Australia Inc.*



Our congratulations and gratitude go to Spare Parts Puppet Theatre for organising such a successful and enjoyable 20th UNIMA Congress and Festival in Perth in April. It is unlikely that Australia will host the Congress again for many years, if ever, and without the bold incentive of Spare Parts, and especially of its Artistic Director, Philip Mitchell, it would not have happened. We are hopeful that the financial loss incurred does not jeopardise the Company's future.

Delegates came from as far as Brazil, Armenia and Mali, despite the distance, the costs and the fact that the event didn't coincide with northern hemisphere summer holidays. Those that were part of the Congress were very happy with the way it went. I am delighted to congratulate Jennifer Pfeiffer, our Australian member of the Executive, on her re-election.

I have now attended ten Congresses, and this was the first in which the five days of the Congress were interrupted by a "Carnival Day", a day full of puppetry free to the public. One of the American delegates suggests "it will be remembered as a Landmark event of Australian puppetry."

At the opening session of Congress on 3 April the outgoing President of UNIMA, Massimo Schuster announced the four new Honorary Members and these included Australia's Norman Hetherington. Norman and his wife Margaret were present.

The event has helped to firmly established Australian puppetry as part of the world scene and several local companies have secured international touring as a result. I would also like to congratulate the Editorial Team who put together the impressive special edition of *Australian Puppeteer* [No 35].

The popular "professional development" part of the program was also new to Congress/Festival. In effect it was our 3rd National Puppetry Summit, which is not necessarily a UNIMA event. The idea of combining it with UNIMA 2008 was presented at the 2nd Summit in Hobart in 2005. Spare Parts was willing to stretch their budget to accommodate these workshops, talks and discussions but an application from UNIMA Australia to the Australia Council for special funding was surprisingly successful. Only weeks before it began we received the \$35,000 (approx.) we had requested!

At an informal discussion at the end of the festival a 4th Summit was envisaged to happen in 2011. With the precedent set, UNIMA Australia may be able to apply for the necessary funding and organise the event itself.

Discussion of radical changes to the Statutes and Rules to make UNIMA less "Euro-centric" were postponed. However, this aim has almost been realised by default. For the first time

both the President and General Secretary are from outside Europe. The new President, Dadi Pudumjee, lives in Delhi and the new General-Secretary, Jacques Trudeau, lives in Montreal.

As many of you will know, it was decided in Perth that the next UNIMA Congress will be held in Chengdu, China, where UNIMA China has its main office. The delegation from China included the "Vice Mayor" and other officials. On 12 May the terrible earthquake in western China had its epicentre about 100 Km from Chengdu. From around the world shocked UNIMA members sent messages of concern for the people in the area. [Simon Wong of Hong Kong was there for a UNIMA meeting in early June and reports that the city fared much better than the rural surrounds.]

At the informal meeting to discuss the Summit UNIMA Australia honoured the outstanding contribution of Noriko Nishimoto to Australian puppetry. UNIMA Australia also presented Sarah Kriegler with a signed copy of Eileen Blumenthal's splendid book on puppetry to thank her for the work she did as an editor of *Australian Puppeteer*.

13 September, 2008 has been chosen as the date for our AGM and our Secretary, Richard Hart, after six years of demanding and dedicated work, will not be continuing in this role. We are all grateful for his input into the organisation, and for the support given by his partner, Julia Davis. One of his great contributions has been UNIMA OZ, the up-to-date bulletins most of us get by e-mail. It has been going for only two years and it is now hard to see how we survived so long without it!

I, too, have decided not to continue in office. I am very grateful and proud that I have been your President at such an exciting time, but feel this is a good time to be handing over to someone new who can start the planning for the next National Summit in 2011 and the Congress in 2012. The job of President is less demanding than that of Secretary but it is frankly hard to do the job properly while I am still travelling with my show and also not based in Melbourne. UNIMA Australia Inc. was incorporated in Victoria [8 June 2004] and so far, for sound reasons, Melbourne is where Committee Meetings [at least three a year are required] and the AGM are held. It is unlikely that they will be held in other capitals in the near future. For interstate members of the Committee, especially an Office-Bearer, this is a problem. It is theoretically possible to be present by telephone or by "immediate electronic means", but that isn't very appealing. Fortunately interstate Committee members have been able to make useful contributions via e-mail discussions, but ideally a President should be present to chair all meetings.

Richard Bradshaw

NORMAN HETHERINGTON IS MADE AN HONORARY MEMBER OF UNIMA

Four new Honorary Members were announced at the Congress in Perth: Adam Kilian of Poland, Mariane Vibaek-Pasqualino of Italy, Rein Agur of Estonia and Australia's Norman Hetherington.

Norman, a former cartoonist at *The Bulletin*, was for many years the President of the Puppetry Guild of N.S.W. and for some years continued as President when it became the N.S.W. Section of the Australian Puppetry Guild.

He was the first President of the Australian Centre of UNIMA (1970-1984).

He is not nearly as well-known as his puppet "Mister Squiggle" who was on show at a special exhibition in his honour in the State Library of W.A., and attracting many visitors.

Norman has set a high standard for Australian puppeteers, and has been an inspiration to many of us. "Puppets of Australia" (1974), which he co-wrote with his wife, Margaret, was the first published survey of Australian puppetry.

Norman and Margaret were very much in evidence at the festival in Perth, and found the energy to attend the "Transit Lounge" festival club most, if not all, nights.

[Australia's two other Honorary Members have been Edith C. Murray (Washington, D.C., 1980) and Axel Axelrad (Budapest, 1996).]

R.B.

*Images from Norman Hetherington
Exhibition at UNIMA 2008 Festival Congress.
Photos by Hilary Talbot*

UNIMA Australia honours Noriko Nishimoto

At the informal meeting to discuss the Summit UNIMA Australia took the opportunity to "recognise and honour the significant contribution to Puppetry Arts by Noriko Nishimoto, and our Secretary presented her with a framed certificate.

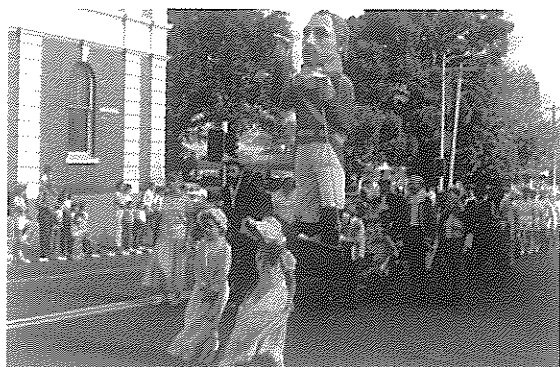


Noriko Nishimoto with her award. Photo by Sue Wallace

Noriko first came to Australia in 1981 to work on a project with L. Peter Wilson in Fremantle, the year he co-founded Spare Parts. She returned to work with the new company in 1982 and continues to live in Fremantle. She was the Artistic Director of Spare Parts from 1997 to 2002, and still occasionally works with the company. Her influence on puppetry and puppeteers in Australia has extended across Australia.

Noriko has since written to express her gratitude at getting the award which took her completely by surprise

R.B



THE EDITH C. MURRAY FUND

The successful applicants who were assisted from the Edith C. Murray Fund to attend UNIMA 2008 were Chantale Delrue (Hobart), Vanessa Ellis (Melbourne) and Ella Misso (Melbourne), each receiving \$500. A further \$500 was given to the organisers of UNIMA 2008 to assist in the living expenses of the delegates from Africa (whose international fares had been funded by UNIMA International). The remaining \$400 of this one-off fund went towards the cost of producing the special edition No. 35 of Australian Puppeteer. All of the \$2,400 in the Fund was dispersed.

Chantale is originally from Belgium and has made giant figures in the Belgian tradition for outdoor events in Launceston, Canberra and Cowra, NSW. [See photos.]

After UNIMA 2008 she wrote: "I found the conference very interesting and was delighted to meet so many interesting people from all over the world who all have a passion for puppetry. I was also surprised to find out that there is actually an organization specializing in giant puppets from around the world. I had a look at their website and have not seen any giants from Australia on their records so I am planning to send some of my images. I am also planning to go to the US (San Francisco) and Europe this year and hope to meet some of the people I met at the conference."

The committee which decided on how the money was apportioned was Richard Bradshaw (convenor), Sue Wallace and Victoria Osborne.

R.B.



*Chantale's
giants on
parade:
'Patterson' in
Launceston
and
'Miekatoen'
in Cowra
NSW*

Travelling On

with Richard Hart - Secretary

Here we are more than half way through 2008, the big year for UNIMA Australia and the quadrennial of the International UNIMA Congress and Festival. The world of puppetry has paid us a visit at last. We created a 180 degree revolution in the minds of some of the northern hemisphere delegates to the Congress and participants in the Festival; perhaps they will no longer turn their maps upside down to find Australia. At the same time, Australian puppetry had an injection of inspiration, debate, life changing experiences for some, the Congress and an array of diverse theatre productions, catering mostly for mature audiences and puppetry enthusiasts. The Festival included a range from all physical puppet productions to barely any physical puppetry, (video projected animation and actors interacting within and without the image).

[If you allow me to be a bit self indulgent on this topic, way back in 1980 when I was a fledgling puppeteer and mostly a visual artist, I created a 30 minute piece called "The Angler Fish Ballet" for my end of year project at art school in Sydney. This combined years of experimentation with multiscreen, dissolve slide projections on broken up spatial screens with my newly embraced adventure in puppetry. I even turned the puppets into screens and combined all this with blacklight and light corridors. This evolved into a production that was performed at the 1983 Adelaide International Puppet Festival, resulting in an award. 28 years later in Perth I am watching these new video projected productions and I'm in awe of the technology and skills, the cleverness of the interactions with actors and moving images. Yes, these were a moving picture book, but the opportunities for how the physical puppet, in whatever varied forms we have already, were not explored enough for me, personally. Then again, it has inspired me to revisit my previous work. In a youth focused culture, older performers may be perceived to produce little in the way of innovative works, but there can always be opportunities for youth to avail themselves of the layers of experience of older performers and for seasoned artists to be open to the experimentation and passion of youth.]

While many of us did not make the big journey to Perth, one of the most isolated cities in the world (which, by the way, is ingeniously built on sand), those who did, have their stories to tell. It is cheaper to fly to Perth from the Eastern states and takes a few hours. I had a two month school tour booked so I drove in my trusty Dream Puppets van. The Puppet Caravan and Rod Primrose are the others I know who made the road trip. To get some idea of the distance, it took me five days averaging 800 kms a day to drive straight back from Perth to Melbourne!

Incidentally, my show, *Dreamer in the Deep* was very well received in the Festival and we are planning a lot of international touring next year and beyond.

While much of the feedback in this issue focuses on the Festival in the 2008 Congress/Festival, the main reason why all this happened in the first place was because Spare Parts Puppet Theatre won the bid to host the 2008 Congress at the 2004 19th Congress in Croatia. UNIMA Australia began this long road in 2002 with a push from Lorrie Gardner, who was the president of UNIMA Australia at the time. We tried to procure the venue in Melbourne, but without success. Philip Mitchell and Spare Parts then courageously committed to the process and the rest is history.

The Congress was open to any UNIMA member if they regis-



tered for the Congress. Sue Giles, Philip Mitchell and I are current councillors and when we registered for the Congress, we could vote on policies, office bearers and any other item requiring a vote. It was like being part of a mini United Nations. There were over 100 delegates from many UNIMA centres around the World. The marriage of Congress and Festival was less than perfect with this 2008 event, however. As a registered delegate and one of three Australian councillors, my performance schedule excluded me from attending the first two days of the five!

Moving on and back to the eastern states, yes I am throwing in the towel as Secretary after six years. Sue Giles will be a more than able new secretary (see official business at the bottom of this article). And since this is my last report in *Australian Puppeteer* as Secretary of UNIMA Australia I am being as self indulgent and digressive as I can, and I will leave the official bits till last.

There are a couple of regular puppet festivals in the Eastern states: One Van and the recent Federation Square/Artplay puppetlab. (We have not received any written overviews or reviews from either of these events, even weeks after the deadline for this issue.)

From my perspective The Puppetlab at Artplay/Federation Square lacked a physical cohesion with regards to the venues on offer within the region. It still makes me wonder if Federation Square is the best venue for a puppetry festival. I performed a new version of our new show, *Superbia* at the Artplay venue over four days during this event. What was most surprising to me was that I received an invitation in the mail two days before the start of the season advising me that I am invited to the launch of my new show at Artplay at a Celebration of Puppets and supper for an audience of invited colleagues and officials. There was no consultation or discussion beforehand! This was my third year in a row performing this gig.

Official business:

Our new Management Committee for 2008/9 is:

President: Jennie Pfeiffer

Secretary: Sue Giles

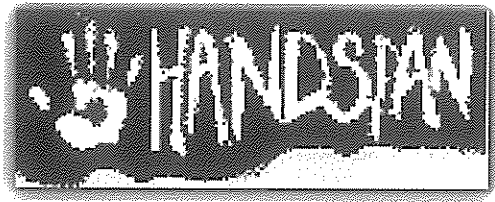
Treasurer: Michael Agar (Treasurer's assistant/ team member required to assist with some banking and record keeping).

Committee members: Sean Manners, Annie Forbes and Richard Hart.

My parting comment: Thank you members for giving me less silliness than the world I read about in the newspapers and experience in the mass media. Puppetry makes sense!

Cheers,

Richard Hart, Secretary of UNIMA Australia Inc.



HANDSPAN VISUAL THEATRE INTERNATIONAL STUDY AND TRAVEL GRANT

This is a \$2,000 grant, awarded annually to an Australian artist who works in puppetry and visual theatre, specifically for international study and travel

Handspan Visual Theatre was a Melbourne based Theatre Company which created and produced puppetry and visual theatre performance from its inception in 1977 through to 2002.

Artists who worked with Handspan Visual Theatre shared a creative spirit and passion for puppetry and visual theatre. It is this unique form of 'expression' that Handspan wishes to support in the form of an international study & travel grant. The grant is available to all practitioners of puppet arts, including puppeteers, directors, designers, writers and makers to undertake international travel or study.

The grant will be awarded annually in the amount of \$2000 for each of six years beginning in 2003 and concluding in 2008.

Eligibility: No age restrictions but applicants must be current UNIMA members

Annual Closing Date: 30th September

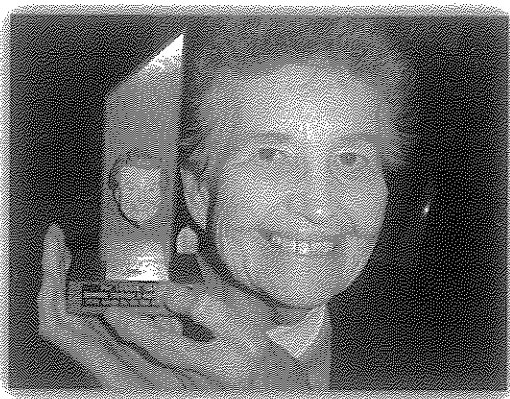
Annual Decisions Advised: 30th November

Travel May Commence: January thereafter

Enquiries: secretary@unima.org.au

LORRIE GARDNER UNIMA AUSTRALIA SCHOLARSHIP

Lorrie Gardner of Gardner Puppet Theatre was a long standing and active member of UNIMA Australia. She was president for 3 years until illness forced her to retire in 2004. In 2005 Lorrie Gardner bequeathed a substantial contribution the UNIMA Australia scholarship fund



Amount: \$800

Purpose: To help younger or newer artists to further their training and knowledge by such things as attendance at workshops, study under a specialist teacher, or other activities that the panel deem to be worthy and which help their knowledge of puppetry arts.

Eligibility: The applicant must have been a member of UNIMA Australia for the past two years.

Requirements: Please supply a CV, a short outline of how you intend to use the scholarship and information about any courses or mentorships that relate to the scholarship.

Send to: SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Sue Wallace spuppet@ozemail.com.au;

Philip Millar philip@puppetvision.com; Joanne Foley foleybergere@bigpond.com

Enquiries: secretary@unima.org.au

Annual Closing Date: 15th November

Annual Decisions Advised: 21st December

Lorrie Gardner UNIMA scholarship 2008

by Jill Grevatt.

A scholarship is a lovely thing!

I met Lorrie and Harry Gardner at One Van festival in January 2005. Sociable and encouraging, they were staying in the cabin next door to me at the Blackheath camping ground and it seems wonderful that now I have had their support in the form of the UNIMA Lorrie Gardner scholarship.

I applied for scholarship money to pay for one on one puppetry lessons to help with two existing works in progress, both being my first attempts to use puppets in performance. Previously I had worked as a musician for many years, including a touring school show, but found myself taking a new direction. I had been doing some volunteer work with Polyglot Puppet Theatre and watching makers and performers with great interest. Anita Sinclair gave me some time a few years ago where we discussed possibilities, and her book is still a great resource. I applied for the Lorrie Gardner Scholarship because I knew that a formal education approach would not suit my needs, and Sue Wallace as representative of the UNIMA Scholarship Committee allowed me to see that this was one of the reasons that the Scholarship exists.

Sue Giles at Polyglot helped me to find two very suitable puppeteers at short notice so that I could meet the grant application deadline. I wanted to be able to pay an appropriate fee for private lessons, to be able to stay at home in Melbourne and to have help with what I needed for my projects and ideas. The main general areas of work were to be character development, movement skills, lip synch, voice work, and help to perform with my existing puppetry at a higher standard. I was to have one on one sessions, one tutor at a time, over a period of about two months.

I could not have asked for better tutors. Both Keira Lyons and Jacob Williams were just what I needed. Their skills supported and complemented each other, and gave me different ways of looking at the same scenario. Being an 'older' emerging puppeteer meant that there were quite a few basics of which I was unaware and times when I expected to be able to do things and could not. I had to remind myself occasionally that I didn't need to do the teacher's job and to let them help me with those struggles.

Since I had two very different puppets we concentrated on one then the other.

After several years living in Queensland and with beginner's optimism, I made a near life size puppet of a Cassowary, an endangered bird living in the far north Queensland rainforest. Cassowaries cannot fly and are big birds similar to the Emu. Their presence in the rainforest is vital to the survival of at least eighty different trees. I wanted the bird itself to explain exactly what is happening to them. (A birds' eye view, so to speak).



Jill with Cassie the Cassowary

I liked the idea of a bird with personality, preoccupied with its own life. I wanted to give the illusion of a real bird wandering about, so that people would want to approach and find out more. I managed to perform at the one day Townsville Eco-festival in June 2004 and again in 2005, during which I realized that I really needed help!

My second puppet, Calypso Cat, in contrast, is a diminutive and definitely feral witches' cat. I had already worked in character as an environmentally inclined witch, with lots of surprises in her apron pockets. I wanted a lively familiar animal with its own strong agenda to help bring out environmental issues, to amuse by its naughty behaviour and partly so I had someone to talk to.

Cassie the Cassowary needed more character development, better movement and much better lip synch. Of course I wanted to do it all at the same time which almost made me faint with mental effort, but the tutors sorted me out, trying scenarios, telling me to slow down and think like a bird. I had done a lot of research about Cassowaries, so there were actually a lot of ideas in my mind which needed drawing out and remodelling. Probably the most confronting moment was waiting to see Jacob's short video of Cassie (and myself). Amazingly it was not too bad! And the most exhausting moment was when



Keira had us running like mad up the hallway, because Cassie was trying to relearn how to fly.

Both tutors were dubious about Calypso at first, telling me he was too small, but at the same time cute looking and appropriate to my ideas. I did not understand the implication of this, because I had not worked beyond simple actions, so after some discussion and direction I was convinced that he had to change. I went away with some good suggestions and then experimented. I did not expect, however, that I would have to cut my cat puppet in half (without anaesthetic!) and remodel him a bit. As I took up the scissors I visualized having to give back my scholarship, but the final result was that during the following lesson there was suddenly a whole range of more expressive movement possible.

After each session I needed a good lie down, and time to integrate what I had experienced. I loved doing the sessions, even though sometimes I was quite exhausted by the newness of it all.

Having these sessions helped me enormously in the advancement of both projects and has enabled me to see the path I need to follow in terms of practice and developing ideas. It seems possible to get the performances to a simple but effective standard. Calypso cat is part of a larger range of items in the apron pockets of my witch character, but now I have 3 scenarios to use and movements to refine as well as a cat with personality. I can see, also, how to make Cassie Cassowary more believable and entertaining and hopefully educational.

Thanks to all involved in the scholarship; it was much appreciated.

Jill Grevatt



Calypso Cat and Madabelle

UNIMA 2008



Spare Parts Puppet Theatre

are absolutely over the moon with the wonderful response and support we have had from hosting this crazy, huge but very fun event.

We would like to thank everyone who made the journey to Perth and trusted in our ability to pull off the event. Your participation and enthusiasm was truly valued and appreciated and I think we have made quite an impression on the world of puppetry. The feedback from around the world has been extremely positive, particularly regarding the rich experiences that were offered and the opportunity to do and see so much.

Carnival Day seemed to rate as most people's highlight. I so wish I had seen more of it!

I would like to particularly thank our out going President, Richard Bradshaw, for his unwavering support and generosity during the entire process. It is also important we remember our past President, Lorrie Gardner, who assisted in Spare Parts and UNIMA Australia embarking on this very brave journey and having the con-

fidence to allow us to represent UNIMA Australia.

We feel the event has created a significantly higher profile for puppetry and UNIMA in Australia and we hope the benefits will resonate for along time to come. Several Australian companies have secured international touring from the event and many artists have reported how the event has enriched their professional development in puppetry.

Spare Parts was supported and encouraged in this venture by a number of Government agencies and attracted a level of funding from them which was important in the overall financial planning of this event. However, a number of aspects of the festival has meant that Spare Parts has had to draw on its reserves as well as seeking short term support to maintain a positive cash flow. This, however, is balanced with overwhelmingly positive feedback and a pride in achieving something that some would say you would be 'mad' to undertake.

The Spare Parts Board was prepared to take risks in the interests of promoting puppetry and Spare Parts and is now prepared for the challenge of sustaining a viable, innovative and creative puppet theatre company and harnessing the opportunities which have arisen from UNIMA.

It is our desire to remain close partners with UNIMA through my role as a Counsellor representing Australia and through my position on the UNIMA Festivals Commission.

Thank you once again to everyone who participated and contributed to this memorable event and I hope we have many more exciting journeys ahead of us.

Philip Mitchell
Artistic Director
Spare Parts Puppet Theatre

Images taken from
I Made Sidia Workshop
UNIMA Festival/Congress
Perth 2008

Photos by Hilary Talbot

Highlights



by Vanessa Ellis



I was very fortunate to receive some funding to attend the UNIMA 2008 Festival this year as a participant. This assisted me enormously in the amount I was able to see and do during my one week at the festival.

I created a very tight schedule of workshops, keynote and panel discussions as well as performances. My only regret was not being there to see 'Diva' as I have been told it was a fabulous show.

I attended three workshops. The first was a shadow construction master class with Richard Bradshaw followed by a demonstration by Richard while we watched his technique from a vantage point behind the shadow puppet screen. I picked up some great tips but mainly marvelled and applauded the world of invention that Richard inhabits.

Frank Newman's object manipulation master class again reminded me of the value to sit with an object, play and discover. We are so quick to 'manipulate' as puppeteers and have so many habits and tricks we carry with us. It was fantastic to touch on this land of patient discovery working with objects again.

I was most curious about Duda Paiva's 'dividing the beats' technique of melding Dance with puppetry. As dance was my first love I have always tried to meld the form with puppetry. This workshop

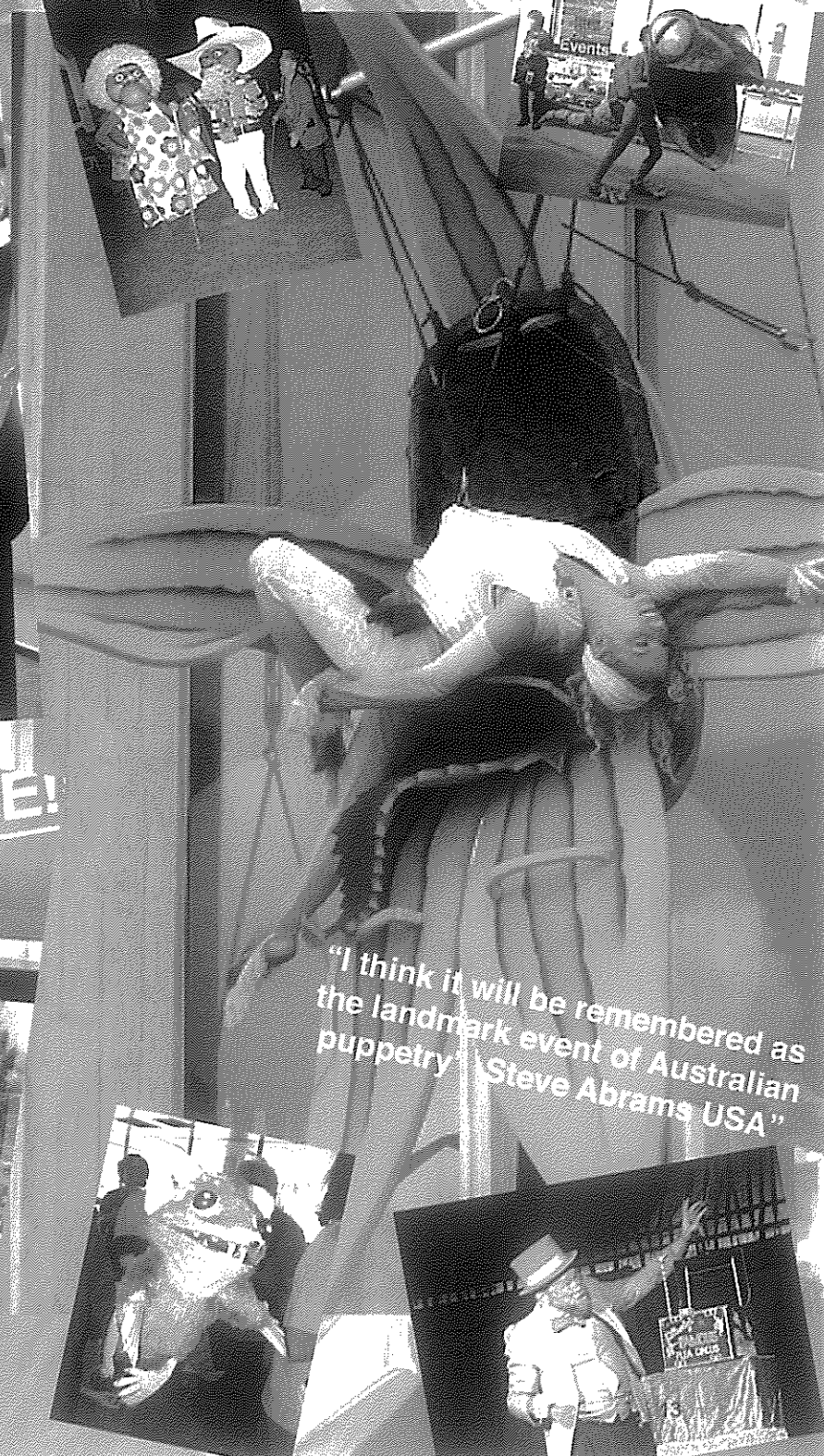
showed me a new technique using glove puppets. I don't think I ever would have experimented with a glove puppet in this way if I had not participated in this workshop. A world of possibilities awaits!

Three shows rocked my world. The first was *Sleeping Beauty* which I have to say was one of the main attractions for making the trip across. The second was *Angel* and what a well-crafted and very clever work this is! It had me on a precipice of an avalanche of tears and then something would change and a new emotion would wash through me. The last was *Coop*. Finally, we see a show that has years of development, critical feedback and incarnations made in Australia. So often we get one or maybe two chances to get a show right here. It just confirms that we need to persist if we are going to make work in Australia that is extraordinary.

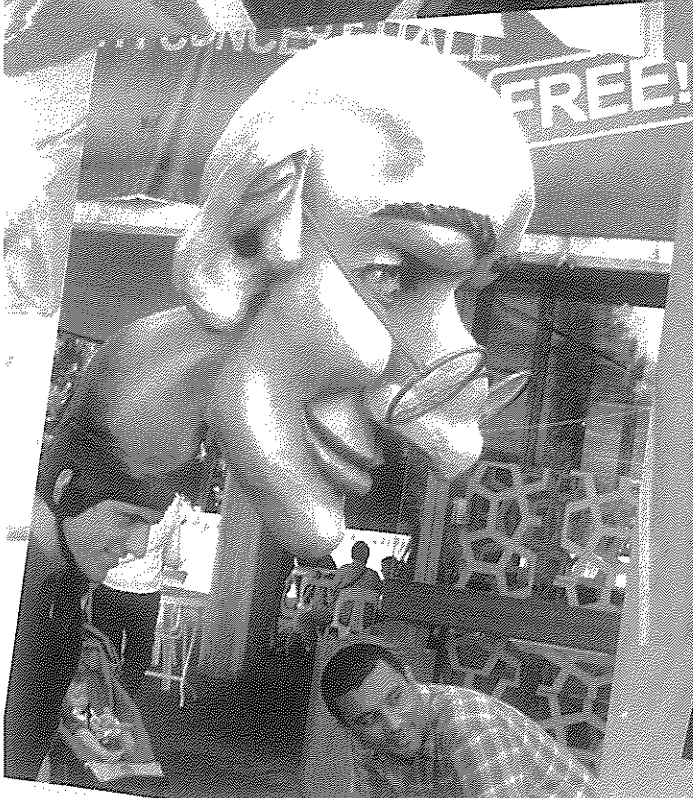
Quiet frankly, I am still digesting the amount of information I have absorbed and need to spend some time deciphering the scribble in my Moleskin. I look forward to applying what has evoked tremors of inspiration.

Vanessa was one of the recipients of the Edith Murray Scholarship Fund which en-

Carnival Day



"I think it will be remembered as the landmark event of Australian puppetry" Steve Abrams USA



Reflections cont.

Skilled conversation in Puppetry is missing, especially that which both supports and challenges the consciousness of the artistic processes.

I felt Duda's performance (*Angel - Netherlands*) thoroughly explored the whole notion of puppetry but also contained content and enormous discipline and skills. When all these things come together it is inspiring.

The skill level was really heartening in *Apples and Ladders* (Lemony S, Australia). I had a feeling was watching great ambassadors for all of us.

A Puppet in the Drawers (Belgium) I liked very much and I thought *Puppet Sports* were wonderful with so much natural skill and enjoyment present. I was really engaging to watch the sheer inventiveness of the participants. I thought it was a terrific thing for puppeteers and audience alike.

Puppet Carnival Day - it was just wonderful to see the general public enjoying it so immensely because they are the people you are doing it for. I thought it was a huge success.

Nancy Black (Director - Coop Black Hole, Australia)

I attended a few of the forums during the first week, and I thought that the topics and the people selected were very interesting and they were well organised but it was a shame those early forums were poorly attended.

For *Coop* I think the most important thing was to be programmed next to so many different styles of work and to see how it related. It was great for Black Hole to have a presence as a company to solidify the style and the kind of puppetry we are doing, and it really confirmed that the work was on the pointy end of the scale.

As a networking exercise it was interesting, I had the chance to talk to many Australian puppeteers but not much of an

opportunity to really get to speak with many of the international delegates. I did have some great conversations with Simon Wong who brought the Chinese contingent over, and I'm following up the South Africa Puppet Festival who are very interested in bringing Black Hole to South Africa.

I wanted to say how appreciative I was for the technical support that we got, and how lucky were we to be at Yirra Yaakin Theatre with those lovely people. Our technical assistant even found us a chicken, who, as a matter of fact, was a fine little actor! The houses were fantastic; they were really really good.

You know I would love to have a puppet festival of this sort in this country every five years or something, bigger than the One Van Festival, for example. Something where we could all get together to do something that could be properly curated and properly organised, because we are such a strange form and there are so many different things going on in it. It would be fantastic to be able to discuss work, with people being able to articulate their ideas. Not just people doing their work but actually discussing what they are doing.... it would be fantastic to be able to do that.

The experience has kind of stirred me on to think about going to other puppet festivals.

Sarah Krieglar

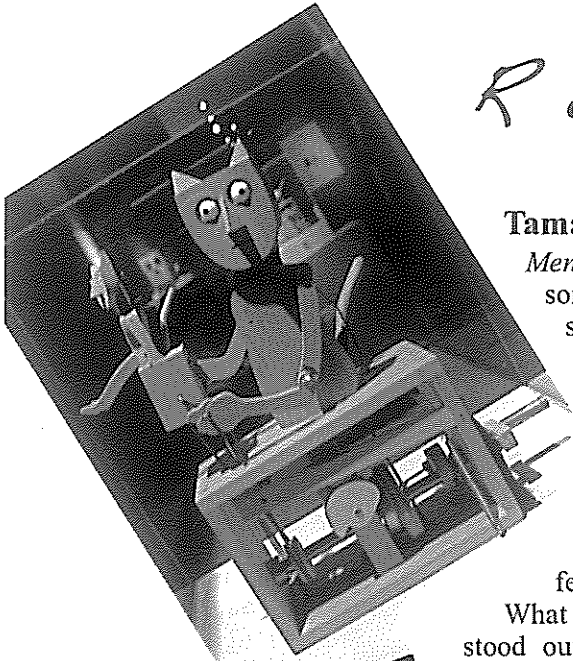
Performing our work to an international audience had to be a highlight and it was fantastic for it to be received so well. This resulted in invitations to perform internationally.

Seeing so many fabulous other shows, specifically *Angel*, *Diva* and *The Arrival* was a great opportunity.

The Mechanical exhibition was really fantastic and the million puppet project was actually extraordinary. Oh, and also the sunsets at Cortesloe beach!

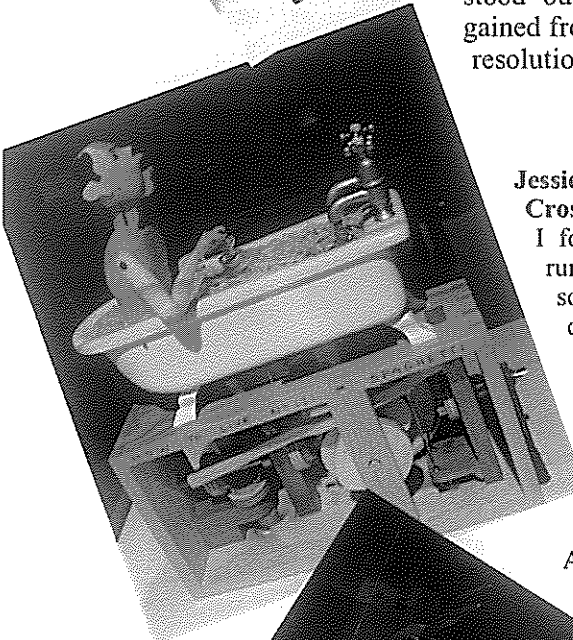
(Note that there were over thirty theatre performances and numerous outdoor presentations, free shows and transit lounge performances, even some 'invited audience only' performances. It was impossible to attend all performances presented at the festival.)

Reflections



Tamara Rewse (Puppeteer, *Men of Steel* and *Coop*) conducted some informal interviews with some puppeteers from the Eastern states who made the voyage westward to attend or participate in the UN-IMA 2008 Perth Festival/Congress.

Her questions: What was your experience of the festival/congress in Perth? What did you most enjoy? What stood out for you? What have you gained from this experience – thoughts, resolutions, inspirations....?



Jessica Wilson (Panellist Forum: 'Crossing Boundaries')

I found it really positive. The forums were really valuable. At first some presenters were very anecdotal but on nearly every panel there was at least one person who presented an interesting paper. I felt that because I had spent time preparing my own that preparing a paper for presentation should be encouraged. I enjoyed the American people and the rigour in their questioning; it meant that the discussions were really positive. The people who ran that forum were very professional.

It is just a shame that you had to pay to participate in the forums at first. I was on one of the earlier panels when you had to pay to go in and there weren't many people at mine. You want as many people as possible participating in those kinds of debates. I really admire the organisers for doing an about-face and making the forums free for the second half of the festival.

Conor Fox (Puppeteer: *Six Pack*, *Coop*)

The things that stood out:

A Spanish couple who put a show for one night. (Joan Baixas). They had a tarp strung up and recited poetry. The lady sang and the guy had a paint roller with mud and a light behind it. During the course of the song he would create an image just by moving around the dirt on the shadow screen. He played with water and sand and for me it was amazing to see the way that his images developed. He had such a nice breath, pace and time. It was such a relief from all of these perfectly made puppets to see something that was so amorphous.

I went to a Community Arts Projects talk with Sue Giles and I Made Sidia. It was really interesting to learn how he came from a tradition where his father and his father before him had been practising puppeteers. It makes you think about traditions and how they can work.

Another good thing was when the forums became free. It seemed like so many more people participated when they became accessible.

The artist bar, which was for networking, was obviously a bit of a shambles; it was the worst space.

Gilly McInnes (Lecturer in Puppetry Victorian College of the Arts Post-Graduate Diploma in Puppetry)

Much of my perspective comes from being a lecturer in puppetry so I think it was great for students to see such a wide range of styles of puppetry. When you see a wide variety of performances it lets you understand more what inspires and perhaps what doesn't particularly inspire you.

Personally, what I find satisfying is when we get to learn what the artist is actually trying to do. This is when we get past the marketing, past the gossip and see where the artists are at. It is really a wonderful layer to get into if you have the opportunity.

The talks I thought were fantastic. I really enjoyed Neville Tranter although I didn't get to do the workshop. We need more conversation. The more we can break down the Puppet Style-Nazis approach and widen our eyes to appreciate the artistic endeavours of others, the better for puppetry.

Photos by Hilary Talbot of exhibits in the *Mechanics Alive! Exhibition of automata* by Cabaret Mechanical Theatre

A Delegate's View



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(Journal of the Puppeteers of America)

BY STEVE ABRAMS

Steve Abrams serves on the Board of UNIMA-USA, but is also a past president of the Puppeteers of America and currently Associate Editor of the *Puppetry Journal* as well as the P of A's co-ordinator of online communications.

The Trip

It takes about 25 hours of flight time to reach Perth Australia, from New York City.

Two UNIMA Councilors, Manuel Moran, and myself, began by traveling 16 hours non-stop from JFK to Hong Kong, for each of us, our first time setting foot in Asia. After a stop-over stay of a few days in the modern hugely energetic gateway city to China, we crossed the equator to Australia, the third continent of our journey. The American delegation is very grateful to Jane Henson who made a generous contribution to UNIMA-USA that subsidized a substantial part of the airfare for the 4 councilors. Because of the high cost of our airfares, most of our economy minded group converged at what Australians call "backpacker accommodations" and what we call a youth hostel. Our clean but Spartan room was right next to the mainline of the railroad. Fortunately, the front desk issued earplugs. Our group of John Bell, Manuel Moran, Karen Smith, Gretchen Van Lente and myself all got along most cheerfully.

The Setting

Perth is a very pleasant city and one of the remotest on earth. It is closer to Singapore than to Sydney. Perth is about as far from the equator as Atlanta. The weather in early April is like early September in San Diego. In terms of age, population, and national status it is similar to Phoenix or Calgary. The town was settled in the Victorian era and prospered during a gold rush in the 1890's. Perth is on

the Swan River, just a few miles inland from white sand beaches on the Indian Ocean. The ocean port is at Fremantle, a lovely Victorian town, 13 miles (30 minutes by train) from Perth. The major organizer of the festival, Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, is located in Fremantle. The Congress met at Perth Town Hall.

The Congress

Our official duty was to attend the UNIMA Congress. At Perth Town Hall each day for 5 days there was a 5 hour meeting 9 AM to 2 PM. We were all faithful to our task, resisting the temptation of morning performances and workshops, or some time at the beach.

The Festival

The World Puppetry Festival offered 30 main-stage shows during the first 12 days of April 2008. The ten countries represented by performances were South Africa, Denmark, France, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Korea, Belgium (3), Canada (2), Japan (2), and Australia (17). Most of the shows played 4 to 8 times over a 2 or 3 day period. Five shows did not open until the last 3 days of the festival, after the conclusion of the Congress. Three venues were handsome theatres of various sizes right in the middle of Perth. Two other venues were a short walk across the railroad in the neighborhood of Northbridge. Northbridge has 2 museums and a lively group of Asian restaurants and pubs. Spare Parts Puppet Theatre presented 3 shows at its theatre in Fremantle. The only touring show from North America at the festival was *Cabaret Decadance* Soma International (Montreal, Canada). To attend festival shows, it was necessary to purchase individual tickets ranging in price from \$64 (US) to \$15 (US). To see all 30 shows the cost of tickets would be over \$700.

Carnival Day

Sunday April 6 was Carnival Day featuring 25-30 additional events and shows. Performances (all free) from China, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Chile and 15 additional companies from Australia were presented at outdoor plaza sites and in 5 tents around the Concert Hall of Perth. At 10 AM on a warm fall day, we were welcomed by the playing of the haunting instrument the didgeridoo and Aboriginal Australians performing a ceremonial dance.

A major highlight was the opportunity to see *Chiryu Karakuri*, an elaborate type of village ceremonial puppets from Japan. The finely crafted puppets are operated from behind and below, by strings that are hidden in long rectangular boxes. The puppeteers who presented *The Battle of Ichinotani* were amazingly generous in allowing the audience to closely examine, photograph and even operate the puppet figures.

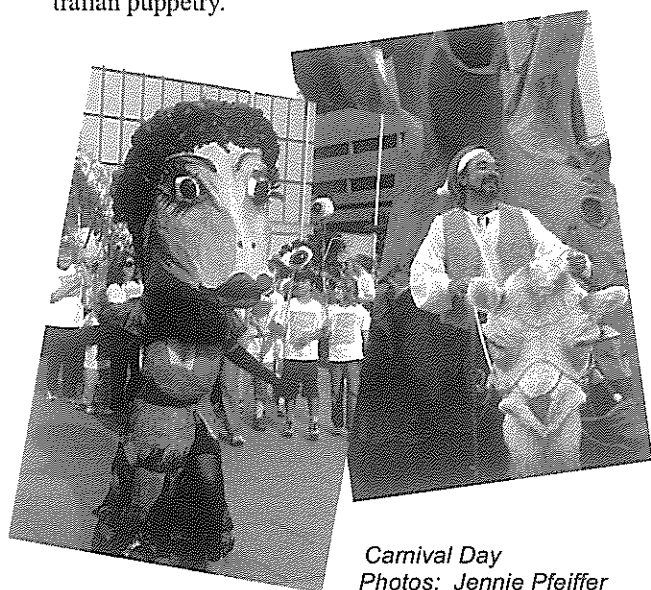
Two other rarities included performances by *Ye Dway* featuring a puppet master in his 70s from Myanmar performing with Burmese marionettes and performances by the Quanzhou Marionette Troupe of China.



The Prince - one of Myanmar's marionettes
Photo by Jennie Pfeiffer.

A Delegate's View (cont.)

Carnival Day featured all manner of large sculptural puppets parading around the grounds. An Australian company, Swerve, presented aerialists, suspended from the side of the building, in the manner of Cirque du Soleil. Anyone lucky enough to be on the Mall in Washington DC in 1980 for the World Puppetry Festival will never forget seeing performances of Kathputli puppets of India, Sicilian Marionettes, Egyptian hand puppets, and a Bread and Puppet parade all crammed into a short space of time and attended by many of the world's finest puppeteers. Carnival Day in Perth had a similar high-energy, never to be repeated glow. I think it will be remembered as the Landmark event of Australian puppetry.



Carnival Day
Photos: Jennie Pfeiffer

Festival Performances

There was general agreement about the artistic high points of the festival. *Woyzeck on the Highveld*, Handspring Puppet Company (South Africa) is powerful theatre and merits a separate article. *Diva*, Sofie Krog Teatre (Denmark) is a remarkable solo, hand-puppet show. *Bradshaw's Shadows*, Richard Bradshaw (Australia) is a masterpiece of simplicity, wit and elegance, well known to American audiences.

Australian Puppet Theatre

Australian Puppeteer (Special Edition #35) published for the festival by UNIMA Australia offers an excellent overview featuring 22 articles, and 50 thumbnail profiles of puppeteers. Richard Bradshaw wrote, "At present there are four main subsidized puppet companies: Polyglot and Snuff Puppets in Melbourne, Terrapin in Hobart (Tasmania), and Spare Parts in Fremantle (near Perth). There are many small groups and soloists some of which will be represented at UNIMA 2008." Of the 4 companies supported by the Australia Arts Council, Terrapin is the oldest, founded in 1978 in Tasmania. The largest concentration of puppetry in Australia is in Melbourne, where the Victorian College of the Arts provides courses.

Thumbnail Reviews

Men of Steel is a show that would be excellent at a late night, or puppet slam event. One female and 2 male performance artists play with familiar cooking utensils, as well as food of all sorts (something like Paul Zaloom meets the Iron Chef). There is bit of a plot, and characters that communicate in a wonderful gibberish language. A few viewers were offended by the waste of the food, and the silly mess, while others enjoyed the high-energy, lite-weight, fun.

The Mary Surefoot Shoe Collection (Spare Parts Puppet Theatre) was a highly accomplished bit of object animation and narrative performance art performed for only 10 people at one time. Mary brings to life her obsessive shoe collection. When she places a shoe on her foot she is transported to the moon, or Japan.

Dreamer in the Deep (Dream Puppets) is a bright environmentally sensitive children's program. Richard Hart used black light puppetry, and few words to present a show that would play well to elementary schools in the USA.

Apples and Ladders (Lemony S) uses exquisitely crafted small table top puppets to visualize a bittersweet, tender tale for adults, with the marvelous mournful music of the Tiger Lilies as accompaniment. The fine manipulation and dedicated artistry of the 2 young performers would have fit right in at the University of Connecticut or the O'Neill Puppetry Conference.

For the most part, the diverse styles and themes of Australian shows parallel many of the genres currently seen in the USA. One difference discussed by the American's attending Perth is that the Australians seem bolder (less over protective) in their idea about content for school shows.

Professional Development

The Festival schedule included a "professional development" track featuring 7 keynote speakers, 10 panel discussions, 6 master classes and 14 workshops. Keynote speaker Eileen Blumenthal could have spoken about any aspect of international puppetry that appeared in her book. She noted that since there were no festival performances by companies from the USA that she would devote her talk to showing video clips of 4 artists from the United States. She made it clear that her choices were personal selections not meant to be truly representative of puppetry in the USA. She showed work by Hanne Tierney, Basil Twist, Tom Lee, and Kevin Augustine.

Behind the Scenes

National, regional, and municipal funding sources work with a national UNIMA center before an invitation and formal proposal is made. The Australian Government, Western Australia, and the City of Perth and a dozen other sponsors helped to support the festival budget which was over 3 million dollars. Philip Mitchell, artistic director of Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, served as artistic director of the festival. The choices he made reflect his point of view about current trends in puppet theatre, and his understanding of what audiences from Perth and the rest of Australia would find intriguing.

A Master Class with Neville Tranter

- a professional development event at UNIMA 2008



by Sue Wallace (observer)

In just two hours Neville Tranter dissected and revealed his technical approach to puppetry. He was able to clearly articulate and demonstrate skills that have taken him years to develop.

The tool for the master class was one puppet called Zeno, a full bodied puppet about one metre tall with a moving mouth operated by the hand directly into the mouth. Working with the bald and suited Zeno, Tranter led the seven active participants and a room of observers through two specific exercises. The seven participants were invited one at a time to work with the puppet. Their work was briefly critiqued by Tranter and in some cases part or all of the exercise was repeated or extended. The observers were also asked to respond to questions from Tranter. The two hours flew by in what was, for me, the most engaging event of UNIMA 2008.

I have been privileged to have seen three of Tranter's solo shows and was already familiar with his method of performance. However, I don't think this put novices to his style at a disadvantage since his analysis and demonstrations were so clear.

Tranter works as a solo artist with moving mouth puppets. Usually he also plays a character. Sometimes he has a puppet on each hand and maintains an exceptional disassociation with the three characters i.e. the two puppets and himself. He works in what he calls a 180 degree style where the puppets are open to the audience. He reiterated a number of times during the master class how important it was for him that the audience could see and hear what was going on. This might seem obvious but even in the brief time he had with the participants it was clear that this attention to, and respect for the audience is a skill in itself.

Tranter prefaced his master class by telling us that what he would be revealing was simply his technical approach to puppetry. This was neither an emotional nor an academic analysis. However, he showed us that the understanding and use of good technique gives the audience an immediate entry into the character and "thoughts" of the puppet.

He referred to the face of the puppet as "the mask" and explained how he needed that mask to be strong and compelling, especially the eyes. He emphasised definition and clarity of movement. By only doing what was necessary, every movement of the puppet was compelling. A puppet can move much more slowly than an actor in the same situation. As an audience we are prepared to watch the puppet thinking, realising and reacting.

Tranter used the push/pull definition of movement and one exercise was based almost entirely around this idea. Is the puppet pushing toward an object or observance or is it pulling away? This exercise began by Tranter demonstrating a scenario that he wanted the participants to copy. He only demonstrated once. Sitting on his knee, the puppet came from stillness to life, nonchalantly sitting. Then, he noticed something to his left, was curious, looked, looked closer,

saw whatever it was coming toward it, pulled back fearfully and then watched the threat go past, and was then relieved. This was entirely without sound.

This was a tough first up exercise for the participants especially since they had never had their hands in the puppet before. It seemed to me that the participants' efforts were more for the benefit of the observer than the participant. Tranter used their 'mistakes' to illuminate the techniques. Was the puppeteer pre-empting the puppets movement? Was the eyeline too high or too low? Could the audience see the puppet clearly? Was the action too slow or too fast? Could we see the puppet thinking and if not, why not?

The second exercise was a brilliant play between puppeteer and puppet. It was a Yes/No exercise. The puppet and the puppeteer were to take opposite views throughout the exercise. For example, the puppeteer indicates 'No' to the puppet. The puppet indicates 'Yes'. This parries back and forwards with both the puppet and puppeteer wanting to impress his/her own opinion or desire. The conclusion was entirely up to each participant.

We observed this exercise at least eight times with Tranter demonstrating and then the seven participants each having a go. Each time it was quite compelling to watch and every outcome was different as the participants improvised their



Rod Primrose and Zeno at Neville Tranter's masterclass



Zeno: Photo by Hilary Talbot

reaction to the puppet. Again, Tranter used the opportunity to make sure that the intimacy that was developing between the puppeteer and the puppet was shared with the audience.

Participants in masterclass. Photo by Hilary Talbot

It was a great privilege to learn from Neville Tranter. This was a well thought out and designed class from an artist who really is a Master of his art.

Sue Wallace

Masterclass with Nori Sawa

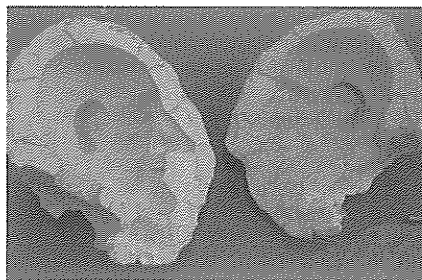
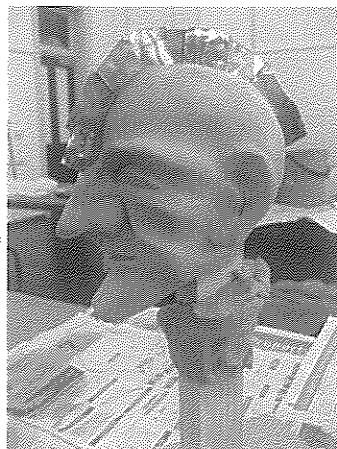
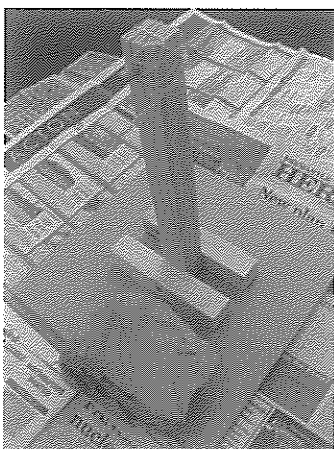
How to Make a Ningyo-Joruri Head

by Hilary Talbot



During the first 4 days of UNIMA 2008, my time revolved around the Blue Room, where Nori Sawa, a Japanese puppeteer, designer and maker who now works and teaches at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, taught us how to make a Ningyo-Joruri head.

This is essentially the same as a traditional bunraku puppet head, having a neat neck mechanism and trigger in the handle so that the head has a smooth up-and-down action, which together with a shoulder plate that sits loosely locked around the neck (we didn't have time to make this), gives the character a very flexible head and neck movement.



Masterclass with Nori Sawa (cont.)

We learnt that the tradition in these puppets is for the chin to be prominent, and the focus of the puppeteer is on the chin; it leads the action. The eyes have a flat surface that is angled down; when the face lifts up you see the whole eye this way, and it lightens the whole character and mood. The action of the puppet and each movement it makes is that of a circle or infinity, a kind of choreography which imparts grace and life.

The making process involved sculpting a fist-sized clay head; making a plaster mold; creating a hollow paper mache head by paper mache-ing inside the two halves of the mold and joining the resulting paper shells; shaping and joining the wood to make a handle, trigger and neck; stringing the trigger mechanism; and finally situating and attaching the neck into the head with an axle and elastic for return on the trigger. We used some interesting tools (my favourite was a cool Japanese saw) and techniques. I loved the moment when we sealed the two halves of the head together with white glue and a small red-hot iron – I'd never seen this before, and it still seems magical to me that that works so well! The finished puppet head had a lovely smooth action.

It was a lot to achieve in the time. We had a battle to get each stage dry and used a battery of hairdryers borrowed from our hotels, a microwave, the sun, and eventually a pie warmer to get there! Vanessa, one of the organisers, shooed us out of the room and locked it at intervals to ensure we took breaks when we worked into the night. But it was fun to settle into the festival by learning new making techniques and new friends (there were six of us - from Canberra, Sydney, Adelaide, Hobart, Melbourne and Alice Springs – how's that for a national spread?). Nori, despite looking very stern in the festival program, was delightful, and a great teacher. Sadly we didn't get to see him perform because on the way to Australia his bag of puppets became one of the 16,000 items lost in the chaos that is the new Heathrow Terminal 5. I'd love one day to see some of his contemporary puppets and shows that fuse Japanese and Czech design.

My attendance at UNIMA 2008 was supported by the ACT Government.

Hilary Talbot.

Photos on previous page : 1) Day 1: Starting out (The string on the post helps the clay grip the wood). 2) Pieces of tin foil in the clay show where the 2 parts of the mold will divide. 3) Day 3: The molds. 4) The two halves sealed together.

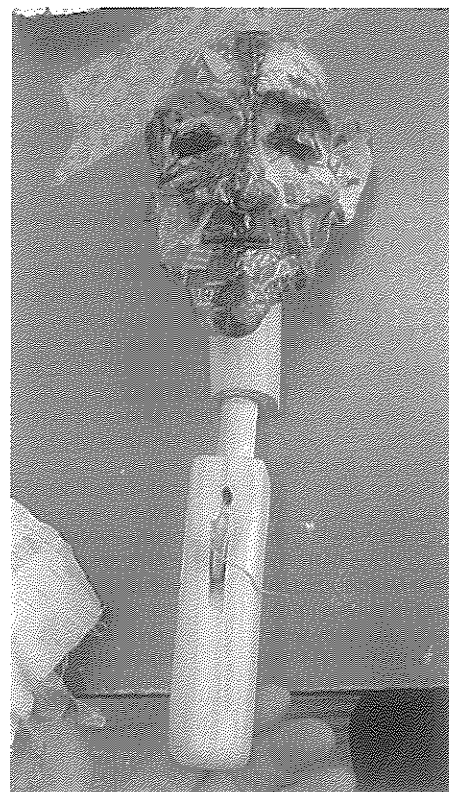
Opposite: The Finished Head. The neutral position of the head is looking down, then when you pull the trigger, it lifts up.

More photos on Hilary's website:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/spiritsdancing/collections/72157604580771423/>



Nori Sawa during the workshop



An open letter to Philip Mitchell, Artistic Director, UNIMA 2008

from Jennie Pfeiffer

Dear Philip,

Firstly, I want to say thank you, Philip.

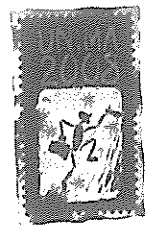
I'm so glad you didn't stop to think too hard before you took on the UNIMA Congress and Festival, because it may not have happened if you had, you mad thing. We all know that it is easy to criticise, and we are known to be a nation of knockers. I don't think we can help it, and, as always, I've heard many opinions. I've had to think of it on two levels, but the level of the event that was presented is what I speak to here. I do not want to take up the task of de-constructing the event, or comparing it to anything else now.

But again, thank you, for putting it all on the line and making it happen, for not being the lesser person who would have baulked at the enormity of it. Yes, perhaps there was glory in your eyes, but I have no doubt that reality soon corrected this.

So what did I like? The Congress ran smoothly. I've heard some ask why the Chinese delegation didn't have a translator, but you and I both know that Japanese translations were discussed and promised very early in the process, and confirmed at the Executive meeting in 2005. It was not until much later that we learned that China would be submitting a bid for the 2012 Congress, but neither had they requested a translator. After some of your preparation experiences, I am sure you now understand some of the difficulties and tricky diplomatic territory the Asia-Pacific presents to navigate through.

It was a shame, but I think not too many of the Executive found their way down to Fremantle in the first week while Congress was on, especially a shame since a few of them run prominent festivals, but Congress had to be the priority. There was a lot that I liked in the festival program, but also quite a few things I didn't get to see. Most missed things were schedule clashes with Congress, or the extra Executive meeting after Congress, or unofficial meetings with Commission members, mostly unavoidable in the circumstances, or contingency driven. In a couple of instances there were no tickets left by the time I tried to book. But I had to operate without locking everything in to stay the most flexible, so for me it had to be *C'est la vie!* Still, the shows I saw left me sated, satisfied, tickled, thrilled, and in one instance provoked.

Commendations to *Apples and Ladders* – that's one small show I've seen more than once and like better each time. Delicate, sensitive and simple storytelling, a little old-fashioned and quaint but that is something of its charm, and so thought others from the European contingent on seeing it. I had one remark from another international visitor about it being like a student work, but then discovered that I had absolutely contrary views on nearly everything with this critical viewer. So we must agree to disagree and call it a matter of differing aesthetics. But I've discovered my tastes



consistently match those of most of the festival programmers I've met over the last few years, which has been a revelation to me since taking on the Executive work. It has given me so much confidence. But it makes me think of Lorrie Gardner who was very supportive of the both of us, who, when President of UNIMA Australia, endorsed the Executive nomination for me, and backed your preparation of a Congress bid when the attempt didn't go forward in Melbourne. I thought of her many times during the Congress, and she would have loved to have been there, had she only lived long enough to see it. But I digress.

I loved *Cabaret Decadance* – nothing too hi fallutin' about it, but wonderful energy, and brilliantly executed; it was a lot of fun. It kept a smile on my face the whole way through and a few wicked good laughs. One highlight was the special performance by Joan Baixis; what a treat, and worth waiting to see. Messily elegant, earthy, visual narrative; if only I'd had the resources and time to participate in the workshop, the chance of a lifetime. But the UNIMA duties had to prevail. You would be in the same position, it's like throwing any good party; the host never rests and is always making sure the guests are having a good time.

Diva was also one I favoured highly for its innovative staging, articulate storytelling, and its humour that was just a little off-colour and bent. One young woman, Sophie Krog, manipulating that very versatile set was one of its wonders. The tale was full and busy, its elements stylistically and visually contrasting, and yet its narrative knitting together its various parts. It wasn't a work that explored any depth of character, yet it was both comic and tragic. I loved it. My friend from Perth went to see it and I think she may be one who has certain assumptions about puppetry. I don't think she knew how to read it. She has a pretty good sense of humour. She has spent the best part of the last two decades living in the middle-east, but that is no explanation for why she thought it so odd and strange, aside from the fact that it was not what she was expecting. It makes me wonder, working cross-culturally there have been many lectures, seminars and even conferences about needing a vocabulary to read cross-cultural work. Do you think, Philip, that it might be true of puppetry? That we understand our specialised forms because we have learned a vocabulary and are well-practised at this particular kind of metaphorical visual communication. If we judge by looking at cinema, TV, and what about computer and video games, society is more visually determined and savvy than it ever was. It is a puzzle.

Other shows I liked were Anpu's *Romeo and Julia*. You remember, I first saw it on the Forman Brothers' barge in Prague. I remember it a little differently; the ambience of the Barge is fabulous, yet I still liked this Rechabite's Hall version very much. Their work is always solid; I saw their *Hunchback of Notre Dame* in

2007, also in Prague. It was fabulous, incorporating the use of the traditional Czech marionettes into the framework of physical theatre with a Commedia influence and a brilliant design that did a lot of work in the show. What more can you ask for? *Sleeping Beauty* won me over. I had heard it was quite dialogue driven, but the actor, Collette Garrigan, with charm, wit, and charisma, took us on a journey that confounded expectations of the fairy-tale namesake, that was quite literally a gritty yarn of the reality of life on public housing estates: longing, boredom, and substance fuelled recklessness, the sleeping beauty so-named after a character's vehicle wreck hospital coma. The means of telling this tale was part narration, using objects that made the scenes at once both gritty and real, yet surreal, a kind of theatrical magic-realism. One could argue that's what puppets do and there were no puppet's here. Yet I think it was a masterful performance that seamlessly blended its elements, which included using objects in ways that pushed them far beyond props, and including a number of shadow sequences, so there were puppets, if you want to be technical.

Angel – what a polarising show this one was. I have heard many say that it was the highlight of the program for them although I haven't heard too many qualifications as to why. The actor was physically articulate and dancery, the puppet was brilliantly manipulated and no argument about that. I do observe that the puppet had a lot of life in it, (I think this came from its eyes and the fluid quality of its body, just as flesh). I found the acting was not of a style that's to my taste, I found Duda Paiva a narcissistic, bullying kind of performer, the kind who pulls an audience member from the audience and proceeds to enact some humiliation on them, one who tricks the audience into throwing money for children onto the stage followed by the revelation that they were conned. "This is life!" you might say. Paiva's blurb reads "haunting experience of intense beauty and restraint", but where was the restraint? The actor's relationship with a cemetery cherub shifts into one that indicates a real boy, or persona, and with obvious sexual connection. Of course ambiguity can be said to exist, even though at times I felt as if I was complicit in a voyeuristic act, of watching a paedophile. But it's a puppet. See how masterful he is then? No, I thought, more self-indulgent. Poetic? How? It's like taking a cheap shot, like shooting fish in a barrel – "Oh I know, I'll be provocative for the sake of it - that will bring me lots of attention". Yes it will bring attention, but it doesn't make it artful, nor intensely beautiful, and certainly not restrained. Aesthetic taste maybe, but I don't like such manipulative, or emoting kind of acting. So that was the provocation for me.

The One Million Puppets, marvellous. And very popular. I still didn't get to see all of it, as every time I was there, so was a crowd. The Mechanics Alive Exhibition, another winner. I went to see it twice. The panel sessions were good value, and as with all such events there is sometimes unevenness in the presentations. I know I threw my prepared paper to the side when I saw the crowd glazing over at the very dry academic delivery from a fellow panellist. So being mindful of audience is important. But I'm glad the sessions were programmed, but would love to see a bigger turn out and interest by puppeteers in forums and lectures one day in Australia.

I was disappointed in the Asian component which I had expected to be featured, (and consulted more about), that you first indicated at the outset of Congress/Festival planning. Many of the Asian works, especially those performed in tents on Carnival Day, seemed, to me, like add-ons and for me that was disappointing. This tent presentation model finds some heavy criticism in a number of volumes and articles written by cultural critics, and activists, describing it as part tokenism, and part exploitation of a 'feaux' – national identity which doesn't really exist (any-more) except in National PR Imaginary(ies). This is attributed to a failing World Festival culture that follows increasingly homogenised and predictable patterns that both invent and commodify national identity. (see Bharucha's *Theatre and the World*, and *In the Name of the Secular*, who, I think, initiated this discussion in the 80s, and it's since been taken up by many more.) Mmm, harsh! It goes like this: the State trots out 'the folk' for 'the people', but 'the people', and 'the State', are not necessarily for 'the folk' aside from as 'exotic ephemera' that provide 'movement and colour'. I've read many of these accounts now, and I can't help but look with new eyes. The presentations on Carnival Day didn't stray too far from the formula described in the use of traditional forms to prop up images of national identity. No context. I ask myself, and in the midst of a PhD about these issues, I have to ask: how does such a display deepen my knowledge of the culture represented? This isn't a personal criticism of you, but it is a phenomenon that not many people consider at the present. But in certain spheres it is as hot an issue as climate change. It is, of course, debatable. Is any exposure better than no exposure? I'm still considering and a definitive opinion is still in the forming, but definitely worth consideration.

I did visit ASSITEJ, which was wonderful for the few days I was there. From all accounts, it went really well. The second World Congress in Australia in a month, in a field with overlapping goals and aims, in fact theirs the bigger pool, as most puppetry practitioners work with children and young people, in some form. That would have been hard to work with, just as the not quite synchronised programming dates. I admit that is possibly easier to convince sponsors to see the value of theatre for children and young people, which is more obvious, than to win them to the special qualities that puppets have, especially when in the broadest public, including those in charge of corporate philanthropy (is that an oxymoron? Or am I now being harsh?) anyway, there are any number of pedestrian assumptions about what puppetry is floating about the place. And yet there also seems to be a new surge of interest in puppetry that I hope we can make the most of. For the Europeans, April-May would have been in the peak of working season, and not easy to get away for any length of time, certainly not for two Con-gri? [sic] almost, but not quite, back-to-back. Still I hope that our European friends—I especially mention, as it was mainly they who complained of jet-lag, and their 33+ hour trips to get to this Antipodean up-side down world—now better understand what a commitment we make when we leave the country for our various activities, in both costs and energy.

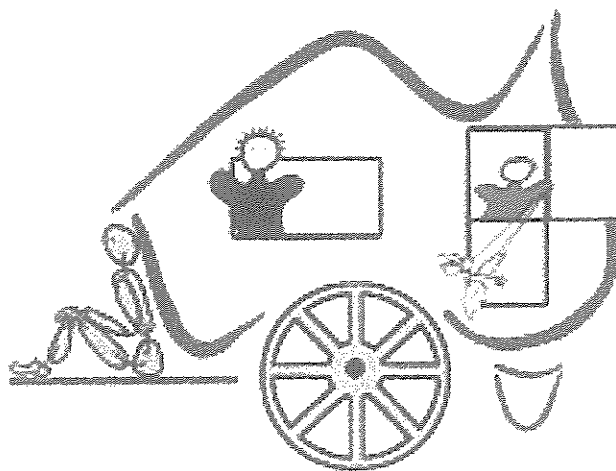
Regards,

Your friend
Jennie.

The Long Haul



THE PUPPET CARAVAN 2008



Lara Cruickshank

The Puppet Caravan is a concept that Sue Wallace and Steve Coupe from Sydney Puppet Theatre have been talking about for many years and has been in official planning for the past 2 years.

It was a convoy of Puppeteers travelling in Caravan from the East Coast to the West Coast of Australia. Planned to arrive in Perth, WA in time for UNIMA 2008.

Sean Manners (Pelican Puppets), Sue Wallace (Sydney Puppet Theatre), Padi Bolliger and myself Lara Cruickshank (Krinkl Theatre) joined together as the Puppet Caravan committee.

The Puppet Caravan was a great opportunity to bring Puppetry to communities in Regional, remote and isolated areas. It was also a great opportunity to collaborate with other puppeteers and exchange skills between Puppeteers on the tour. The Puppet Caravan comprised: Sydney Puppet Theatre, The Two Frocks, Krinkl Theatre, LightnUp Inc and Gabrielle Griffin from Australia and Anita Bertolami from Switzerland. All up there were nine Puppeteers on tour: six of us leaving from Lismore, two from Sydney, NSW and one who joined us in Adelaide.

We covered 6,500 km of land in four and a half weeks, visiting twenty-six towns and eighty-five workshops and performances with 732 puppets made with communities for the Million Puppet Project.

The communities we visited along the way were very welcoming and rapt we came to visit. We camped, were billeted and stayed in a couple of units and motel rooms. Here are a few of the many highlights on The Puppet Caravan:

Carinda

In Carinda Emma and I had a whole day at Carinda Public School. It took one and a half hours on a dirt road with plenty of ruts to get there.

We performed a show about Global warming, conducted a sock Puppet making workshop and stomped around the school grounds with a life size Bull Puppet who blew smoke and urinated.

Four schools came together for the day, one of which had only three students. When we finished Cathy, the principal of the school, gave us both a huge hug and thanked us for the opportunity to have other schools come to them, as they usually have to travel two to three hours and for the first time they came to Carinda.

Bourke/Engonnia

In Bourke, Bec and Stef from Lighten Up Inc and Padi from Krinkl arrived (after a 400km drive) at the Bourke bowling club, which still had a lot of sun spill in the venue at seven p.m. Since they were performing with lantern and shadow puppets the show would not be at its full strength, with quite a washed out look. So Andrew from the Bourke Arts Council stood up on stage and took a vote from the audience saying: "Well we've got a choice here: We can go ahead now or we can wait 30-40 minutes for a better effect and you can go and have something to eat and drink while you wait." It was great community consultation. Everyone was quite happy to wait, which reflects the openness and flexibility of regional areas.

The next morning Bec and Stef travelled north a further 135 km to do a puppet making workshop with

kitchen utensils for thirteen children and five adults. A teacher said in relation to one of her students, "I don't

know what's going on with him today, He's off his head with excitement."

Eucla

In Eucla, WA (Population 30); right in the centre of the Nullarbor Plain there is a group called Little Wombats of the Nullarbor, which is a collective of families who get together once a month, so their children have the opportunity to play with others. Families travelled from as far as 400 km to come and take part in the sock puppet workshop, the annual Easter egg rolling game and a Puppet show.

The egg rolling was a highlight for us. This is where the local community, Puppeteers and tourists stop-ping at the road house for the night all gathered together and participated. The eggs are painted by the children, rolled down a PVC pipe cut in half. If you hit someone else's egg they have to pay you fifty cents.

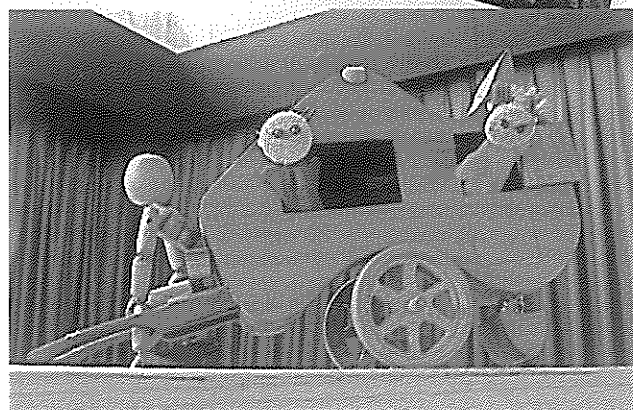
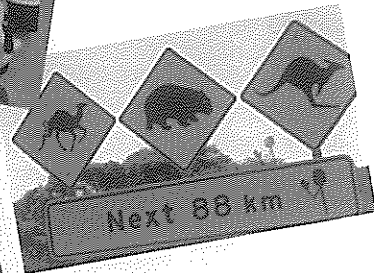
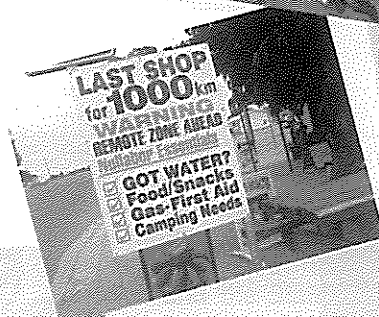
The show in the evening was in the local fire shed, where two fire trucks and an ambulance were driven out and the concrete floor swept and mopped. It was an exciting event to watch the community of Eucla go to so much effort to have us there.

Perth

When we all arrived in Perth we were greeted by the whole team @ UNIMA 2008. There were 20 or more there cheering, letting off party pop-pers and passing around much needed Chips & Beer. We had finally made it!

Thanks to all on the Puppet Caravan, the people we visited and all at UNIMA 2008, who made it all possible.

If you want to see the Puppet Caravan Journals, visit www.krinkl.com.au or www.puppetryaustralia.info



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MILLION PUPPET PROJECT

Photos by Lara Cruickshank: Nyngan School, Sign at Penong, Road signs, Ferry Wallaroo with PC participants, Carinda Public School, Dubbo School. Photo by Hilary Talbot of Caravan model at Million Puppet Display, Perth.

UNIMA 2008

- A Report

by Karen Smith

Karen Smith was recently elected President of UNIMA-USA.

Originally from Australia, Karen worked in India as a puppeteer (with Dadi Pudumjee and other master puppeteers) and she now resides with her husband in California. She attended Perth 2008 as one of the USA delegates and has compiled a comprehensive (47 page) report of the event, covering an account of the Congress, the festival, reviews of performances, exhibitions, masterclasses, workshops and panel discussions.

With her kind permission some excerpts from her report are reproduced here.

THE CONGRESS

Presently made up of 65 National Centres, a Council of 164 members, and an 18-member Executive Committee, the 2008 UNIMA World Congress, the 20th held since UNIMA was formed in Prague in 1929, was held this April in Perth, Australia. This was only the third time that a Congress has been held outside of Europe (the first was in Washington, D.C., USA, in 1980, and the second in Nagoya, Japan, in 1988), and the first time it has been held in the southern hemisphere. It was the second time it has been held in an English-speaking country.

The 20th Congress was held for five days, April 3, 4, 5, 7, 8. A meeting of the Executive Committee took place on April 2. The official opening of the Congress by the President, Massimo Schuster was followed by a welcoming address by the Right Honourable, the Lord Mayor of Perth, Lisa Scaffidi. The local organisers then paid a tribute to the Noongar, the local Indigenous people of the Perth region of Western Australia, and that was followed by a special welcome played on the didgeridoo by a representative of the Noongar.

UNIMA business began with the election of the President of the Congress and two Secretaries. This was followed by the election of the supplementary independent councillors. On behalf of the outgoing Executive Committee, its President, Massimo Schuster, presented the list of new Honorary Members and their national centres: Adam Kilian (Poland), Mariane Vibaek-Pasqualino (Italy) Rein Agur (Estonia), Norman Hetherington (Australia), Vincent Anthony (USA), and Edi Majaron (Slovenia). After the welcome and report of the Executive Committee from General Secretary Miguel Arreche,

the various Commissions began presenting their reports. On the following day, reports from presidents of Commissions, National Centres and International Groups were presented.

Two issues that were quite hotly debated were the need for possible modifications of the Statutes and the Rules of Procedure, and a change of the fee system with a proposal of a membership fee to UNIMA at Euro 3/- per member. The former could not be resolved during this Congress and so a special assembly will be held in a year's time to further discuss this complex issue. As for the second issue, Euro 3/- was agreed upon as the annual fee. A third issue that attracted some debate was the status of the World Encyclopaedia of Puppetry Arts (WEPA). As it now stands, only a hard copy French version is underway (to come out in 2009). Led by Penny Francis of the UK and John Bell of the US, a group was formed to work on an English edition, at minimum to be online. Perhaps other members will consider collaborating on additional language versions.

Two elections took place on Day 3: the election of the new Executive Committee for 2008-2012, and the election of the city and country that will host the next Congress. The delegations from Chengdu, China and Ekaterinburg, Russia presented their candidacies for hosting the next Congress and Festival in 2012. Chengdu, China won the election. (Since then, of course, the devastating earthquake in Sichuan and its aftermath has captured world attention and sympathy. It is too early to tell what the more long-term effects of this disaster will be on the region and on Chengdu, the provincial capital of Sichuan.)

The following is the newly elected Executive Committee members and the Presidents of Commissions for 2008-2012.

Dadi Pudumjee (India) President, Jacques Trudeau (Canada) General Secretary, Annette Dabs (Germany) Vice President and President of the Finance Commission, Stanislav Doubrava (Czech Republic) Vice President and President of the Festival Commission, Knut Alfsen (Norway) President of the Statutes Commission, Ronny Aelbrecht (Belgium) President of the Amateurs Commission, Angel Casado (Spain) President of the Cultural Exchange Commission, Susanita Freire (Brazil) President of the Latin America Commission, Ljivja Krofelin (Croatia) President of the Education, Development and Therapy Commission, Alain Lecucq (France) President of the Publication Commission, Nina Monova (Russia) President of the Europe Commission, Manuel Moran (USA) President of the North America Commission, Tamiko Onagi (Japan) President of the Women Commission, Jennie Pfeiffer (Australia) President of the Asia Pacific Commission, Pierre Alain Rolle (Switzerland) President of the Cooperation Commission, Mamadou Samake (Mali) President of the Africa Commission, Marek Waszkiel (Poland) President of the Professional Training Commission, Simon Wong (China) Member of the Asia Pacific Commission. Ida Hledikova (Slovakia) is not part of the Executive Committee, but was elected President of the Research Commission by the Congress.

What is historic about this election is that, for the first time, neither of the positions of President and General Secretary is held by a European.

The business of the final two days revolved around programmes for the next four years, proposals of projects, and

discussions about the new commissions: the International Cooperation Commission, the Women Commission, and the Africa Commission, which exists again after a gap of eight years.

THE FESTIVAL

THEATRE

The ticketed theatre segment of the Festival showcased thirty productions from ten countries. From host country Australia there were seventeen shows. From Belgium three shows; two shows from Japan and Canada; one show each from Korea, South Africa, Netherlands, France, Czech Republic, and Denmark. Ticket prices ranged from (in Australian dollars) \$16 to \$68. Most shows cost \$30.

It is a daunting challenge to put on an international puppet theatre festival, especially in the matter of selection of theatre productions. It is not possible to please everyone all of the time. The Artistic Director, Philip Mitchell, chose to reflect the more avant-garde and edgy, the cutting edge kind of puppetry, with a preponderance of actor-dominated, object theatre productions, a fair share employing film and digital technologies. This selection may not have pleased everyone attending the festival.

One of the realities that was recognised at this Congress was that the world of UNIMA is changing. For instance, no longer is UNIMA dominated by Europe, although Europe continues to hold a predominant place in the organisation. There is a slow but steady rise in the number of countries from Asia, the Pacific region, Africa, the Middle East and South America that are joining UNIMA, and this demographic factor will further shape the future of the organisation. And yet the Festival theatre productions remained Western-dominated. There were no shows from Australia's closer neighbours in South or Southeast Asia, nor from Latin America, not even from the UK or US.

What was unique about the festival, of course, was that Australian puppet theatre could be showcased. Although the dominating culture is decidedly European/British/Western in emphasis, a young country like Australia today has a growing recognition of the Aboriginal, Indigenous cultures of the continent and an awakened understanding of the country's place and role in the region. There are now more voices and visions being heard and acknowledged in Australia, and some of these we did hear and witness at this festival. By and large, the seventeen theatre offerings from Australia reflected a young and dynamic culture, with an outlook that is global as well as local. Traditional puppetry was not much in evidence, rather the newer, more international experiments with a focus on the creative mingling of technology, the animated object and the broader role of the human actor within a puppetry performance, dominated the Australian stage in April.

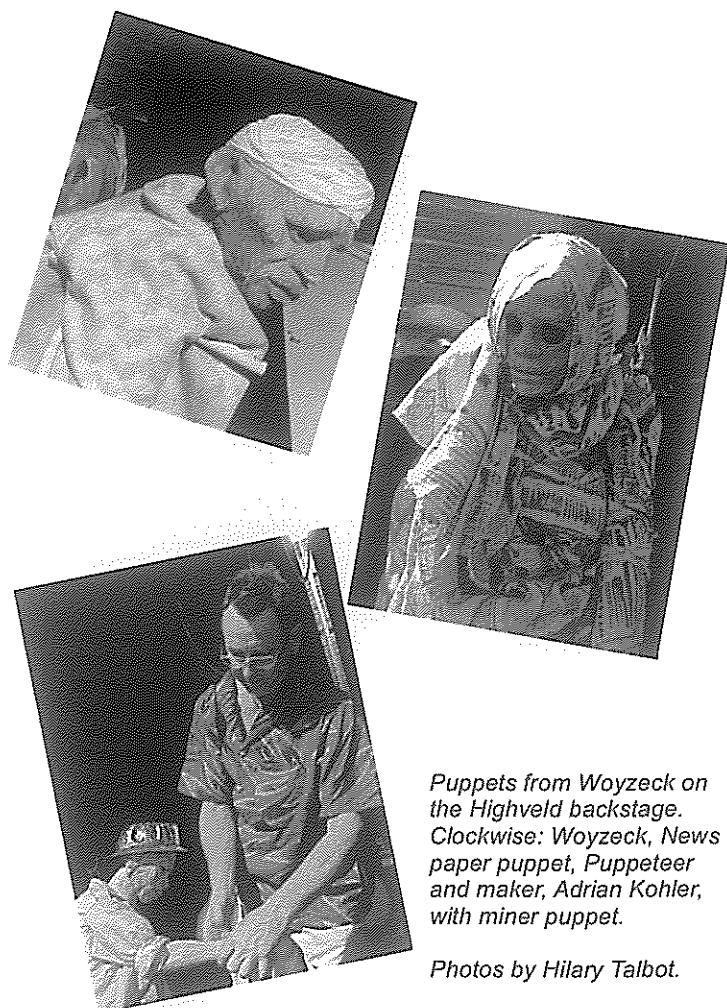
The following are some observations of the theatre productions I saw, with information drawn from the *UNIMA 2008 Journal* and individual programme handouts as well as feedback from other viewers, in particular, Gretchen Van Lente, President of UNIMA-USA. Of course, when my views dominate they should not be taken as representative opinion.

(Editor's note: Although Karen described and reviewed most of the puppet performances in the Theatre program, I have chosen to reproduce her commentary on 3 international productions: 'Woyzeck on the Highveld' and 'Diva', both acclaimed as artistic highlights in the festival and 'Angel' which provoked mixed responses, ranging from delight to revulsion.)

Woyzeck on the Highveld by Handspring Puppet Company (South Africa)

A complex production that utilises the space and resources of a theatre and the talents of a large company, this highly acclaimed production directed and designed by South African artist and filmmaker William Kentridge was undeniably the highpoint of the Perth Festival. As an example of outstanding cutting edge theatre combining puppetry and film animation, *Woyzeck on the Highveld* unites an artist's vision and an insider's social and political insight of a brutal and brutalising system with compelling story telling, a high standard of puppetry and use of technology to create an artistic whole.

A restaging of the highly successful 1991 production of Handspring, *Woyzeck on the Highveld* was Kentridge's first collaboration between himself and Handspring Puppet Company. William Kentridge's career merges two forms; he is a visual artist and he is active in theatre, film and opera as an actor, writer, director, and set designer. Adrian Kohler is Handspring's master puppet designer and maker. Along with Basil Jones, master puppeteer and producer, Jill Joubert and Jon Weinberg, Kohler started Handspring in 1981 in Cape Town.



Puppets from Woyzeck on the Highveld backstage. Clockwise: Woyzeck, News paper puppet, Puppeteer and maker, Adrian Kohler, with miner puppet.

Photos by Hilary Talbot.

Based upon the early nineteenth century play by Georg Buchner, *Woyzeck* is the story of a German army private condemned to death for the murder of his common law wife. In Handspring's production, *Woyzeck on the Highveld* is a story of jealousy and murder set in Apartheid-era South Africa. It is 1956 in Johannesburg, and Woyzeck is a black migrant worker, a servant in the household of a white master. Woyzeck is an innocent who is powerless to save himself in a brutalised, "abnormal" society as he falls victim to jealousy that turns him into a murderer.

Kentridge sees Buchner's play as "an unfinished series of fragments". And it is this "mixture of fragmentation, rationality and irrationality" that resonated in twentieth century theatre. This "abbreviated, fragmentary form", writes Kentridge, suits both puppetry and animation, which Kentridge considers are "short forms: Puppetry because of the conflict between the weight of a puppet and the strength of an arm, animation because of the hours in labour needed to draw even short sequences". Combining film animation with puppetry, the company discovered in their *Woyzeck of the Highveld* "that in moments of stillness, the animation allowed the audience to become witness to the puppet's thoughts." The animated film "graphically illustrate Woyzeck's tortured mind as he tries to make sense of his external circumstances."

Kentridge's animated charcoal drawings combine seamlessly with the masterfully manipulated rod puppets, ensemble performances, complex characterisation and a deeply moving story. The video projection of Kentridge's images of a blighted industrial landscape is possibly the most beautiful element in this powerful production.

***Diva* by Sofie Krog Teater (Denmark)**
Director and Performer: Sofie Krog

Awesome! WOW!! And other exclamations of amazement and delighted surprise reflect the effect this one-woman virtuoso performance had on its audiences in Perth. So skilful! Such amazing dexterity! Just the incredibly deft hand changing of puppets or the turning of the velvet-covered puppet booth, "a transforming, revolving theatre featuring seven stages and twenty-one curtains", is a wonder. Plus, "Everything can be moved, opened, closed, hoisted and lowered." It is a truly magical production! And how does Sophie Krog manage to do all the manipulation on her own, some of it so minute and fiddly, and so complicated and difficult to figure out how it actually works?!! Krog's is a unique vision and take on the world.

Currently based in Spain, the Danish Sophie Krog is one of the younger director-performers featured at the Perth Festival. Born in 1977 she is a self-taught actor, puppet maker and puppeteer. In 2003 she established her own solo company, the Sofie Krog Teater. Her passion for animation theatre is apparent in her idiosyncratic puppets with their wide range of physical movement: rotating eyes, moveable eyebrows, wiggling ears; and sets that have a life force of their own.

The setting of *Diva* is a theatre, with its stage, attic and basement, separate realms for the three main characters, separate little universes created by each inhabitant. The performer's skill for mime, gesture and manipulating hand and finger puppets, such as the Butler and the traveling circus brothers August and Carlos, is yet another delightful theatrical ingredient of *Diva*.

I like how the *UNIMA 2008 Journal* describes the plot of *Diva*. "In the depths of a decrepit theatre a beautiful Diva, her lovesick butler, mischievous lab assistant and a mad scientist are about to collide. Be lured into an inferno of evil schemes, love and obsession, as each character endures an ill-fated night that may well be their last!" The seeming random nature and absurdity of parts of this production are wonderful! It all works. As the director-performer states, "The wonderful thing about puppets is that once the audience 'believes' in them and accepts them as being 'alive', there are no more limits or rules -- only my universe." The world Sofie Krog creates is a world of its own, and we marvel at it and its creator.

Perhaps theme-wise not the deepest -- unless you read into *Diva* notions about loneliness and becoming whole, or about finding freedom, finding friendship and love -- the resolution of this remarkable production comes as a surprise that seems right, even if prosaic, given the wonderful madness of this unique world. In his basement laboratory, the mad and terrifyingly deformed Professor (he is only a head, his body having been blown apart during an earlier chemical experiment) forces his servant Eddie (a terrorized rat-like creature) to work the little levers and bellows and feed the machine with living matter he has been forced to pilfer for the scientist from the theatre in order to concoct a magic formula that would give the Professor a perfect, new body. But just as the elixir is complete, there is an accident, and it all backfires on the Professor (thanks to the clumsiness of the harassed assistant). And instead of getting his new body, the Professor goes up in smoke. But no worries! Others (more deserving?) will soon benefit from the magic elixir: Diva gets a beautiful, sexy body (Sofie Krog's own). And little Eddie gets a mate and a romantic holiday on a tropical island. Too easy? Too happy endingish? Who cares! This funky show is just too much fun and too wonderfully weird and marvellous to worry about irrelevant things like rights and wrongs.

***Angel* by Duda Paiva Puppetry and Dance (Netherlands)**

Duda Paiva (Eduardo de Paiva Souza) is undeniably a highly skilled dancer and puppeteer. With Neville Tranter as his puppetry coach, the performer can carry a complex one-man show like a master. The production is described in the programme as, "A cry out of the darkness... *Angel* depicts the fall from grace of a drunken tramp who encounters an angel in a graveyard and sets up home with him." We are transported "to an ambivalent world of dreams, curses and revelation."

On stage are a puppet graveyard cherub and a live male actor playing the tramp. The puppet Gregory, the angel, is decidedly one of the more compelling, and chillingly so, creations on stage in Perth during those twelve festival days. Duda Paiva as the tramp is a pretty awesome sight to watch, but his angel demanded and held centre stage. This was a symbiotic relationship full of disturbing antagonisms, of an "unholy love", that was really very spooky. The life-size hand puppet manipulated so deftly by Paiva is frighteningly, devilishly alive, expressing an alarming range of emotions that belie a body of rubbery cherubic chubbiness.

Angel was one of the virtuoso performances that received mixed reviews; it had its avid admirers and those not so impressed with the quality of puppetry or its dramatic concept.

Many wondered what the production meant or implied. Although we are warned ahead of time, if we had read the programme notes in the brown *UNIMA 2008 Journal* that puts the questions, "Does the angel bring a message, a judgment, or the kiss of death? Has the drunken tramp had one too many?", it still doesn't help us much in understanding the drama on stage. We are not always clear about what is going on between Gregory and the tramp, and most people want to know what is going on (we don't like to be confused or appear too stupid).

But should we expect to literally understand all that goes on in this agonizingly hypnotic drama? For instance, are we correct in thinking, or doesn't it matter, that the relationship between the two characters suggests pedophilia? And if so, we are still not sure how we should respond to this. And who or what is Gregory, the "angel" with the body of a child and the face and experiences of a deviously clever, tormented adult being? When the angel kisses the tramp, sucking on to his face with a ferocity that is unsettling, is he sucking out the tramp's soul, or is he sucking out the money, the coins that pay the Ferryman for his services in the Underworld so that his, that is Gregory's, soul can be released and thereby stop wandering the world as a lost, bitter shade? But, then, is it the angel who wishes to be released from purgatory or is it the tramp? Or is the angel the other half of the tramp? And what do the references to mythic types really mean in the context of the drama on stage? This is certainly "an ambivalent world of dreams".

I found myself switching off more and more during the scene when the tramp pulls off the angel's wings and then pins Gregory to the back wall, after which the tramp rants on about a lot of stuff that is very confusing and contradictory. This is one of the least satisfactory parts of the production. And then there is a scene that breaks the tension and the focus of the drama, when the actor steps out of character and invites a woman from the audience on stage, and Gregory latches on to her breasts. And does the angel then talk about wanting a real human life and being reborn as a baby to this woman? (Or was something of the sort said earlier to the tramp, just before he tries to suck off the man's face?) The audience interaction scene only adds to the confusion in meaning, and I, personally, thought it cheapened the drama.

As programme notes inform us, "Duda Paiva compellingly blends dance, puppetry and confessions into a magical tale of unholy love." And this is what *Angel* does nevertheless achieve.

To conclude, UNIMA 2008 had a lot going for it and certainly something for everyone. It was very expensive if you hoped to do full justice to the scheduled programming, and impossible to do so even if you had the means to see and do it all. Perhaps fewer offerings might have made the Festival less frustrating (and expensive). It would be interesting to hear from other delegates who attended the 20th UNIMA Congress and World Puppetry Festival as to what they now think about that massive undertaking back in April.

Congratulations, of course, to Philip Mitchell and the incredible team at Spare Parts Puppet Theatre and to all the many, many workers and volunteers that made UNIMA 2008 possible. Thank you to UNIMA Australia. And to all the Western Australian entities that financially and otherwise supported the event, many thanks!

Karen Smith, 2008

Review of 'ANGEL' by Duda Paiva Puppetry and Dance- by Gabrielle Griffin

A one-man show set in a children's graveyard, where plots are marked with piles of autumn leaves; sounds of static come from a beaten radio; and shafts of light illuminate a toy piano. A carved stone cherub angel sits centre stage, head bowed, with a missing arm. The set is immediately evocative, disturbing, and engaging. Not to mention so easy to travel with internationally. This show has been touring since 2004, and I have been lucky enough to see it three times, twice in Perth, and the first time in Slovenia 2006.

Conceived and performed by Duda Paiva, with puppetry coaching by Neville Tranter, and direction and script by Paul Selwyn Norton, it is a seamless blend of dance, spoken word, puppetry and puppet/character interaction. What's it about? I don't definitively know, and I don't care. I don't know if the main character sees the fallen angel puppet as his son, as himself, or just as a spirit talking to him. I don't know if he is a drunken tramp fallen on hard times, a murderer reliving his crime, a father lamenting his lost child, or the symbol of despair and loss within us all. These were all feasible scenarios offered to me as I questioned fellow audience members on their reactions to this show.

'Angel' satisfies me on all important levels: visually, emotionally, technically and spiritually. I will never forget the image of Gregory the angel puppet dragging Duda's tramp character around the stage by the mouth. During the Question and Answer session I attended after one performance in Perth, Duda explained he was inspired to explore the puppet/character relationship through movement and voice, and how he could create specific choreography within that. He was driven, focussed, determined; clearly revelling in his chosen creative challenge. His director, Paul, elaborated on their use of structured improvisation within the show, explaining that there are specific points Duda must hit for lighting/sound cues, but that he has a freedom to improvise as he feels in each performance, in each venue. Indeed, the two shows I saw in Perth had very different dance and movement choreography within them, as well as different text delivery and changed lines, while still retaining the overall structure.

For me, the benefit of seeing this performance was to affirm the fascination I have with the puppet/puppeteer interaction, and the generosity of the audience to 'suspend their disbelief' time and time again. We clearly witnessed Duda making Gregory talk, yet still believed in the voice and opinions of the puppet. The opportunity to see a high-calibre European show (usually based in The Netherlands) exposed me to a different style and content I found inspiring; the success of this sold-out show was just one more fantastic achievement by the Puppet Festival organising committee, and I cannot thank them enough for giving the puppetry community such a variety of national and international works to absorb and enjoy such as 'Angel'.

Thank you Spare Parts Puppet Theatre and UNIMA 2008!

Gabrielle Griffin is an independent puppeteer and performer, currently based in South Australia.

Photo underlay of puppet by Duda, taken by Gabrielle during Question and Answer Session

UNIMA Asia-Pacific Report/UNIMA Congress

Jennifer Pfeiffer

It has been a while since I have had time to take breath to detail news of the Asia-Pacific. The UNIMA World Congress in Perth gave a wonderful opportunity to catch up with old friends and to make new ones. For the first time the election of main office bearers, General Secretary, Jacques Trudeau and President, Dadi Pudumjee, are based outside of Europe. This gives UNIMA new opportunities to seek support further field, extend operations, share responsibilities, accountabilities and allow UNIMA to grow.

The Congress also saw my re-election onto the UNIMA Executive Committee, and as president of the UNIMA Asia-Pacific Commission. This is an honour, a thrill and a big responsibility. Having spent 2 terms following Dadi Pudumjee's lead, from '04 to the present learning the ropes as Head of a Commission, I am poised ready to act upon all that I've learned. In Asia this requires an accumulated knowledge of culture, of balancing the interests of the ancient with the most contemporary, of geo-regional politics and navigating the tricky paths of diplomacy. The proposed changes to the rules and Statutes of UNIMA are put on hold for the time being pending consultation with UNIMA members everywhere. The changes essentially mean that there will be more responsibility going to the heads of Commissions, who will have allocated budgets for which they are responsible. To clarify, the possibility of funding for Commission projects already exists, and it is at the behest of the Commissions to draw up suitable proposals and submit them to UNIMA. Because the bulk of UNIMA's project budget over a period of years has been allocated to the World Encyclopaedia of Puppetry Arts (WEPA), with the finalisation of WEPA in sight, it is now crucial that UNIMA have project proposals aligned to the goals and aims of the organisation.

For the Asia-Pacific Commission, the challenges are many. The region is very large, diverse and with many competing agendas. Not least is that representatives of centres that are supported by government can be compromised in an 'independence of action' on the Commission. Commissioners need to be international workers, not representatives of their national centre's interests, nor servants of national policies, but to serve the artform, just as this applies to the UNIMA International Executive. This can be a very sticky and sometimes fluid line as international activity is always tangled in cultural policy at some level. Importantly, there are large numbers of puppeteers in Asia who are unaware of UNIMA and its functions, nor the scope of UNIMA. This includes numerous traditional and indigenous performers. Documentation is a priority for the Commission during this term of action. It has to be, given the rapid development in Asia. A 'needs analysis' and introduction to the UNIMA network can be of service to puppetry and the communities who practise it. It is not merely a rationale of 'making all members feel included', as one new Executive member announced to the Assembly in Perth. This happens because of lack of understanding of the cultural specificities and diversity of thought and action within the region. So in saying, there is also perhaps need of making these situations clear and educating people in other parts of the world about it. It is also good to remind ourselves that we are also subject to changing sets of forces and pressures: that see the arts pushed further along into corporate models: branding,

scoping and risk management. I ask a rhetorical question: is this leading our art and work away from risk-taking, or anything that might be provocative. What is the function of art? And the other question then: is puppetry art? What else is it then, and what direction is policy tilting in our own country? These questions examined points us towards directions set for practice, exchange, thematic content of work, and all manner of things, even so far as self-identity.

When I think of the Asia-Pacific region, it is more with the sense that an international organisation should understand the situations for cultural groups in the circumstances of rapid change and development, especially the more marginalised groups. Surely these are the people UNIMA exist for. I do not suggest for a second that we take the responsibility of speaking for them, but that we enable a space for them to have a voice. I want to hear from them about what they perceive their needs to be. I don't want the main function of the UNIMAAP Commission to be as Puppetry Morticians, to document the old forms before they are put to bed permanently.

It is with these issues in mind, that I commenced a PhD project at the VCA College of the Arts. I look to ethical practices of collaboration with traditional and indigenous puppeteers in Asia, with models of best practice in mind, and for which I have sought UNIMA support as one of the projects in our four year Asia-Pacific program, along with multiple other sources, another item of example setting, that is to seek partners and linkages etc. My active project is with Indian puppeteers as I have learned more of India through my residencies there over the last several years, but the broad principles apply regionally. The 'Ethics Project' is large and ambitious. With the prospect of numerous partners, and the value of the project easily recognised, I have the support of the Macgeorge Bequest (a joint Ian Potter Cultural Trust and the University of Melbourne legacy). A Macgeorge Scholar for 2008 is a highly competitive distinction that provides me with a research trip back to India later this year to select collaborative partners for the project and to bring in support for the participating Indian artists. The project, as a trial pilot and as a research resource, has potential benefits in other areas such as for artists working with migrant and ethnic community groups; for testing the feasibility of touring circuits in Asia—an item on the AP Commission's long-term agenda for many years—and to suggest models for reciprocal cultural exchange.

Other priority areas for the Commission in the four year program are research and documentation, to ensure that the old Masters are documented. Earlier this year we had the terrible news of Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, and earthquakes in Chengdu. My colleague on the Asia Commission, Mr Simon Wong, was very quick to rally for assistance for therapeutic performances in the Chengdu region, which is the location for UNIMA's 2012 Congress, and home base for UNIMA China. UNIMA China assured us that it was far too soon to contemplate bringing people in, nor was it yet safe, but they assure us that the plans for UNIMA Congress will proceed on track. Simon now plans a 'performance tour' one year after the event for which the AP Commission will nominally support. I have also requested seeding funds for a 'needs analysis' in Myanmar, and in consecutive years for research and documentation in other Asian centres, bringing SE Asia in, or back in, as the case may be.

(cont. page 34)

Quality Fun!

Camp Quality Puppets..... by Angela Carroll,
Camp Quality National Puppet Programs Manager

Nine hundred children are diagnosed with cancer every year. For the past 20 years the life sized puppets, Matt, Kylie, Dean and Melissa, have been visiting schools to teach tolerance and acceptance, helping kids across the country understand what their friends are going through.

One of the major challenges facing children living with cancer is returning to school after treatment. They leave a safe and understanding healthcare environment and venture back out into the wider community. Whilst the majority of kids are excited to get back to school, the physical and psychological effects of treatment can make the transition difficult and lack of peer support can make it even harder. Kids can be less sympathetic and sometimes cruel simply because they don't understand why their friend looks or feels different.

Camp Quality believes that laughter is the best medicine and demonstrates the power of fun therapy in everything they do. The McDonald's Camp Quality Puppet program is no exception, entertaining children

whilst addressing various aspects of cancer treatment. The two 45 minute performances creates an imaginary world which helps children make sense of their real world in a fun and safe way.

We give the kids a safe forum to openly discuss their fears and concerns. It can be quite amazing to hear the questions

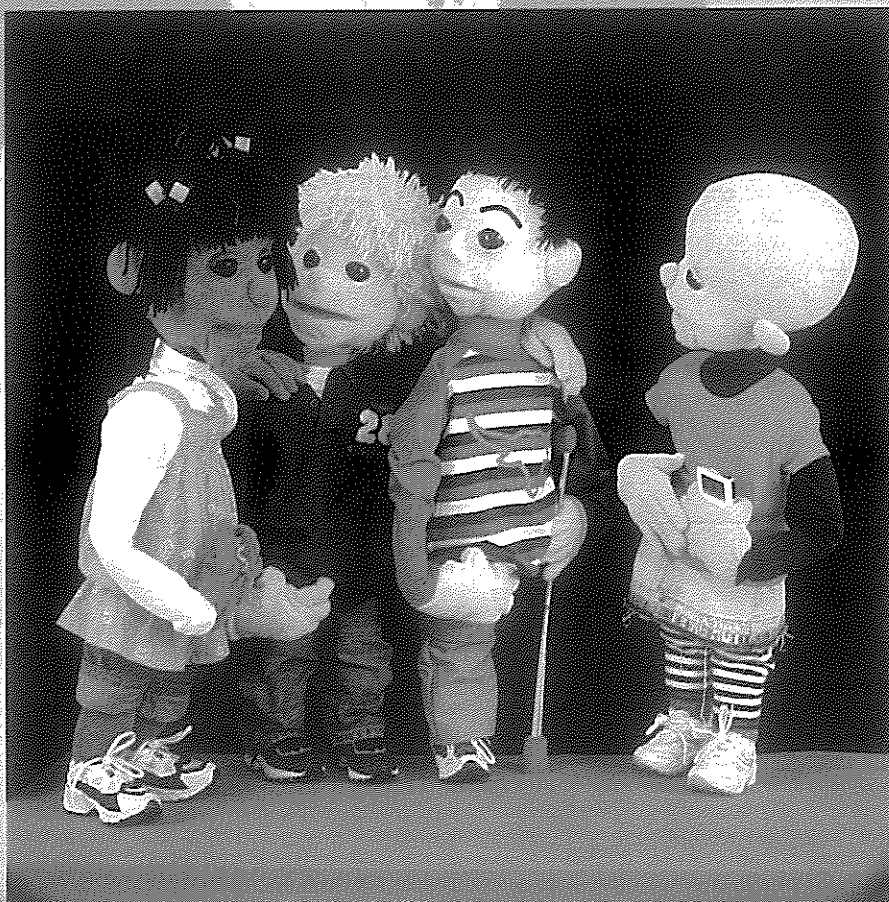
from kids... Things that we as adults take for granted; 'Can I catch cancer?', 'Why does my friend look different?', 'Will their hair grow back?' 'Isn't it only adults that can get cancer?'

After seeing the show parents and teachers can see a noticeable difference in their children. It opens conversations at home about accepting change and understanding differences in people. Children

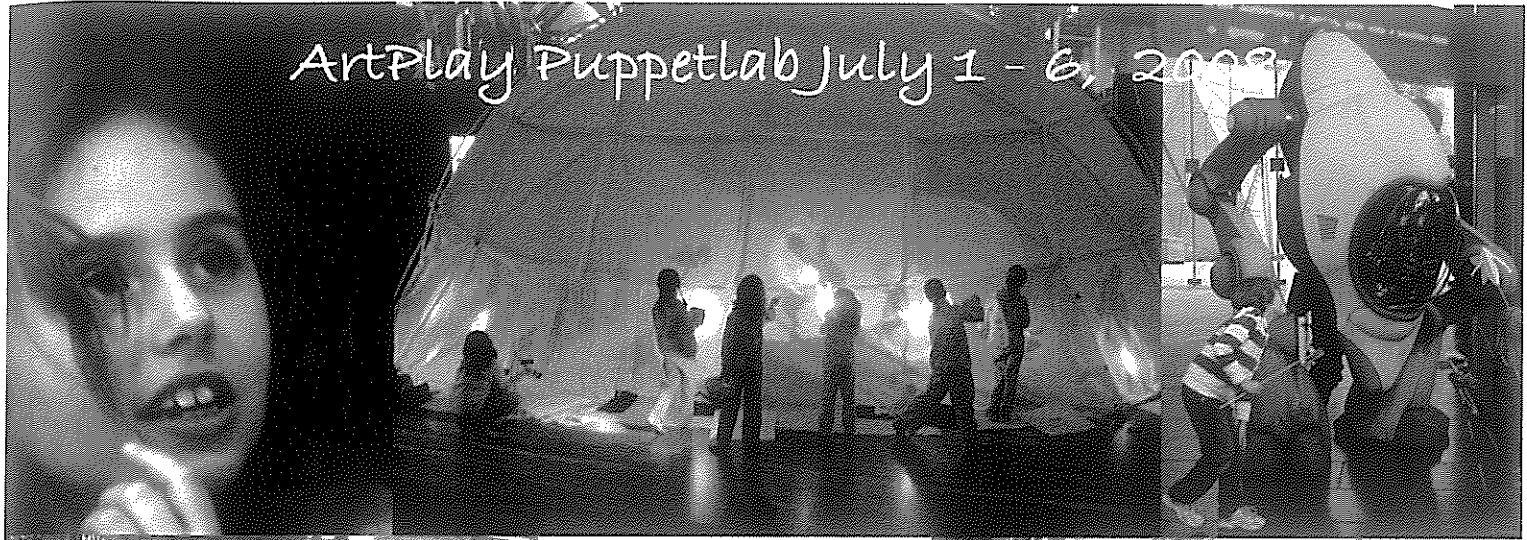
have been seen to retain the information well, forming a long lasting grasp of the idea of tolerance of others. Kids will open up and talk to a Puppet when they would not do so to an adult or teacher.

Our Program is run by Puppet Program Coordinators in each State, and supported by 75 volunteer puppeteers nationally.

Angela Carroll



ArtPlay Puppetlab July 1 - 6, 2008



Photos by Eelin Cheah, courtesy of ArtPlay - featuring Puppet Dome, Alien, Conference for the Birds, various workshop activities.

Obituary

Kostas Zouganelis [1935-2008]

Shadows with a Smile

Earlier this year the free fortnightly Greek Australian magazine "Epsilon" [Vol.3- Issue 3 6 Feb 2008] published an interview of Kostas by Savvas Limnatis ["Karagiozis Down Under"] in which he spoke of his life with shadow puppets.

He tells of his introduction to the traditional shadow theatre of Greece through a well-known player Dimitris Moras, whose father Yiannis had created Stavrakas, the "tough guy" of Piraeus who became a stock character in the Greek shadow plays. When Kostas was 11-years-old Moras asked him to promote a performance by ringing a bell and carrying a sign through the streets of Kaminia, the poor suburb of Piraeus where Kostas grew up. To Moras's delight 700 people came that night.

A few weeks later Moras asked the young Kostas to provide the handclaps for the sound of Karagiozis hitting his pal Hatziaivatis. Kostas became apprenticed to Moras and over the coming years learnt the necessary skills for the shadow play. Times were becoming tough for shadow-players and Moras was very understanding when the 16-year-old Kostas decided to leave. An attempt to put on his own show with a couple of friends failed because they hadn't the funds to hire chairs etc.

[To students at UNSW he once described how he made "blades" for cutting out figures by putting coins on tramlines so that they would be flattened to a sharp edge as the wheels went over.]

Life in post-war Greece was hard, especially for the Zouganelis family since Kostas had thirteen sisters all needing dowries before they could marry. To earn money he worked in a variety of jobs, finally serving in the Merchant and Royal Navy. In 1962 this brought him to Sydney, where he decided to stay. Here he found work as a boiler attendant and met his future wife, Julie, also from Greece.

In 1964 he had the opportunity to perform "Karagiozis the Migrant" at the Migrant Centre in Castlereagh Street using someone else's figures and the positive response of the big Greek-Australian audience made him realise that Karagiozis may have found a new home. A year later he was sought out to help Korfiatis, a leading player visiting from Greece and in 1978 assisted two other visiting players, Antonakos and 'Gianaros' ['Yiannaros'].



Anna Chatzinikolaou in "The Oxford Companion to Australian Folklore" [1993] tells how Kostas made his own puppets in 1978, with the help of a younger Sydney-sider, Takis Constantopedos [who introduced him to the puppet community]. For the next ten years he gave performances around Sydney and in some country towns. In 1979-85 he gave regular weekend shows in the Marrickville Uniting Church Hall assisted by his wife and their two children. Any money made was donated to the Greek community.

In 1981 he switched from using leather to a frosted acrylic which he would colour with inks. He often gave classes for young people using this technique. Joints were made with studs for leather belts. In the 1980s he successfully began using fluorescent tubes as a light source to replace the traditional row of lamps behind the wide screen.

In 1979 he gave performances at an exhibition of puppets in the Opera House and at the International Festival of Puppetry in Adelaide in 1983. Later that year he performed at a children's festival in Edmonton, Canada, and provided figures for a segment in the M.T.A.'s "Aussie Rules". In 1985 he performed at the Sydney Sailors' Home Theatre and at festivals in Auckland and Wellington. Remembering that visit Rose Beauchamp writes:

He came and performed at the first New Zealand puppet festival 23 years ago and was such a marvellous man and shadow puppeteer. He also did performances for the Greek Community in Wellington which was great. (They had sponsored him.)

Dennis Murphy had called by to see him at his Dolls Point home on Tuesday, 24 July, but that was the day the family had taken him to hospital where he died next day. Sue Wallace and Steve Coupe attended his funeral on the Monday.

Obituary

Although his cancer had spread, Kostas had been determined to see the exhibition of his puppets at the Perth Concert Hall for UNIMA 2008 last April. By then he was in a wheelchair but his wife, son, daughter and grandchildren made it possible and accompanied him. (John, his son, is the popular Store Manager of the Eastgardens Big W, and Haroula, his daughter, a valued teacher at Leichhardt Primary School.)

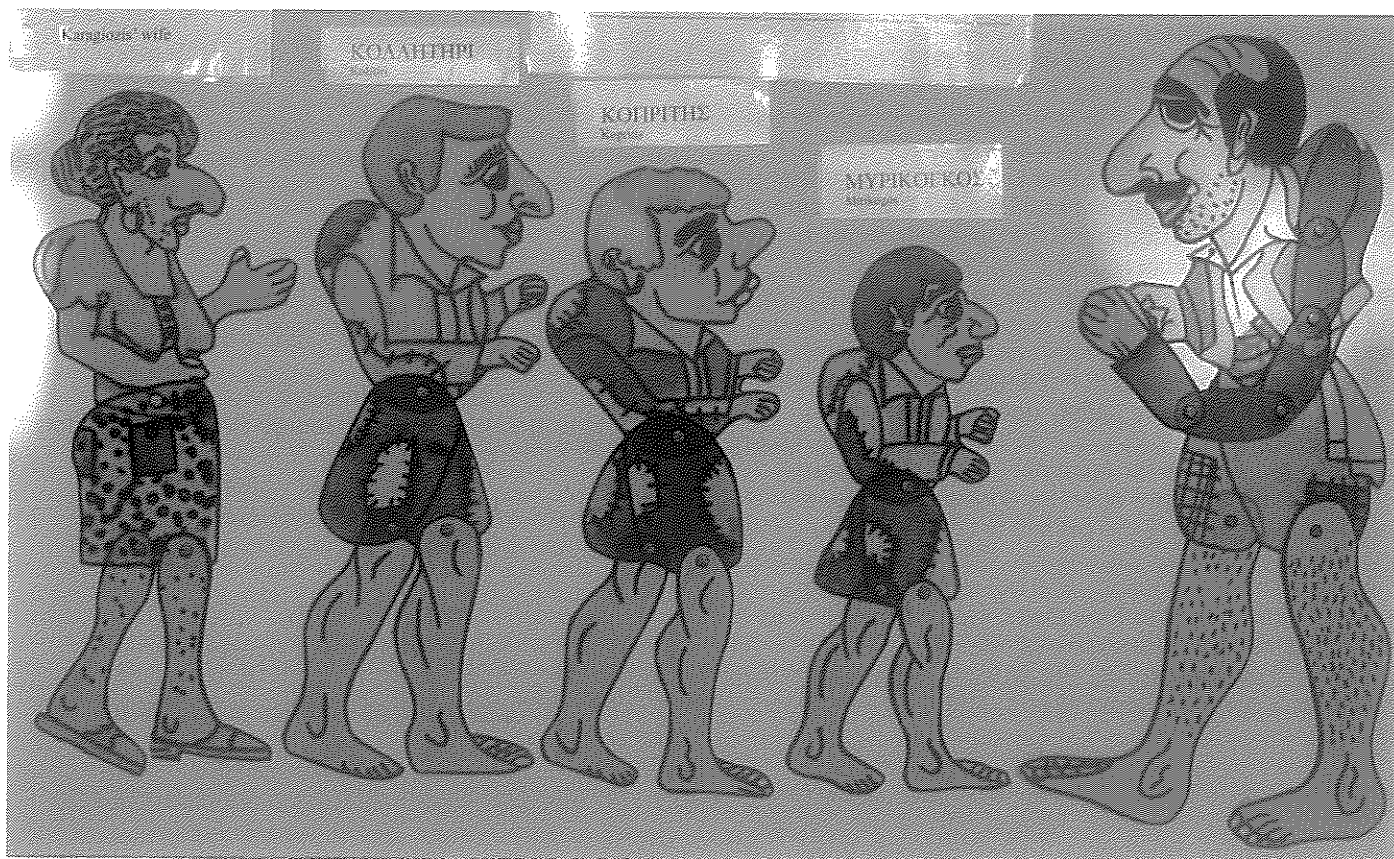
A warm, generous and much-loved person, Kostas will be sorely missed. His Karagiozis shows were comparable in quality with the professional shows in Greece, but there was a local flavour. The way Karagiozis spoke to his children reflected the way Greek Australian parents spoke to theirs, and Captain Cook also got a mention!

In the Epsilon article Kostas is quoted as saying: "When I was performing my soul was that of a little child. But when Karagiozis is performing he is also educating. ... Karagiozis is the mirror of the humanity of our people. He offers us his smile and encouragement."

Thank you Kostas for offering us your wonderful smile.

Richard Bradshaw

[Postscript: John Zouganelis has indicated that the puppets, already mounted and labelled, can be made available for exhibition and the family is hopeful that a permanent home can be found for them.]



*Puppets made by Kostas Zouganelis exhibited at the Perth Concert Hall during UNIMA 2008.
Photo by Sue Wallace*

Karaghiozis is seen with his nagging wife, Aglaia [note the hairy legs!], and his three street-urchin sons: Kollitiri (pest), Kopritis (loafer) and Mirikogos.

An obituary for Kermit Love [1916-2008] appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald in July. He helped to create the Muppet characters of Big Bird, Mr Snuffleupagus and Oscar the Grouch. [Kermit the Frog was created before Kermit Love started to work with Jim Henson and was named after someone else, Kermit Scott!] Love had designed costumes for Orson Welles's Mercury Theatre, the Paris Lido and for the choreographer George Balanchine. He came to Perth at the invitation of L. Peter Wilson of Spare Parts as one of the international tutors who gave masterclasses for the 1988 OZ Puppet Festival in Fremantle. R.B.

As a result of the two catastrophic events, I seek support to establish a professional development award for a puppeteer to research and consult with the world's best health professionals in post-disaster therapy, with the view of setting up puppetry-based programs, not repeating the work of 'clown doctors', an existing program doing good work, but to look at some of the deeper mental health implications of trauma, and attending to regional specificities. I am currently in dialogue with UNESCO Asian regional head-office regarding support for this initiative, and other potential programs for puppeteers.

One challenge of the AP Commission is to people it with members who are good communicators and workers. There are, of course, issues of language, but most of the Commissioners understand that their participation is required, not merely at the large gatherings every several years, but ongoing. The last task the Commission group committed to has still not been realised and this was a project requiring no budget. We all understand that in a world where the pace of life and work seems to accelerate continuously that we must allow for the busyness in people's lives. But there is an expectation of consistency and signs of progress, for the morale of the Commission, and for UNIMA. Since Perth afforded such wonderful opportunities to expand the potential pool of AP Commissioners, it will be something that I will review more frequently. I think it most urgent to fill the AP Commission with people who are dedicated and willing to work, as well as giving equitable regional representation. I continue to offer to commissioners the chance to contribute and suggest projects that they can manage and execute, and to take a collaborative approach to problem-solving with a view to harnessing our collective energies in advancing our artform and satisfy needs in the region.

Several opportunities for Australia puppeteers through Asialink residencies are open for applications. Having been fortunate to have the benefit of such a residency I highly recommend the experience. One is with the LATT Children's Theatre in Seoul, and the other with Ishara Puppet Theatre Trust in New Delhi. More information is available through the Asialink website at <http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/artsresidencies> and applications close on September 5, 2008, for a residency for 2009.

Another welcome piece of news was to hear of Lachlan Haig's new company Pooka, formed with Ninian Donald. They are currently developing a work *The Man Who Planted Trees* by Jean Giono, about re-forestation and the change that just one person can effect in the world. Good work! They do this with a group of young puppeteers that they're training in Adelaide. When I first met Lachy, he was himself a young puppeteer, although having already travelled to London and apprenticing himself to a Punch & Judy man at 16. This is of no surprise to those of us who know him. He hasn't had a smooth run and I'm delighted to hear of his fortunes and hard work. I will look forward to seeing the play, and I say: It's about time you took on the responsibility of a company, Lachy. He undertakes this current project with the support of Carclew's Odeon Theatre "Artist in Residency" programme, and the Department for Environment and Heritage in partnership with the Adelaide & Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board. I wish him the very best.

Jennifer Pfeiffer

What's On

Compagnie Philippe Genty

Land's End

August 12 - 16

Victorian Arts Centre

Book: theartscentre.com.au or
1300 136 166 or at Ticketmaster outlets

La Mama for Kids

The Ducks Guts - Scenes from our Loungeroom

August 16

Teapot Ensemble of Australia

August 23

Dream Puppets - Superbia

September 20

Curious Legends - The Haunted House

October 18

All shows at 2 p.m. La Mama Theatre
205 Faraday Street, Carlton
Bookings 9347 6142

Dream Puppets *Macbeth*

South Australian Folk Centre
Cnr. South Road and George Streets Thebarton
Sat. 16 August - evening
Sun. 17 August - afternoon
Enquiries: aribeatkp@aol.com

Murphy's Puppets

ARLECCHINO and His Magic Lamp

The Art Gallery of NSW
Monday - Friday 29 Sept to 3 October at 1.30
Also at The Ferragosto Festival
Five Dock, 17 August.

Polyglot Puppet Theatre in association with the Melbourne International Arts Festival presents:

The Big Game

Interactive performance for children and families
Arts House, Meat Market,
5 Blackwood Street North Melbourne
FREE
Friday 10 Oct 10 a.m.
performance followed by play space
Sat 11 & Sun 12 Oct 10 a.m.
performance followed by play space
and 3.30 performance followed by play space.
www.melbournefestival.com.au

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DEADLINE for *Australian Puppeteer* No. 37: Check website and UNIMA OZ newsletter.

Please Note: By submitting your letter or article to *AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER* you agree that it may be republished on the internet or in other media.

The 2008 Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 13 September at 2.00 p.m.
Venue to be advised.

Back Page Photo: Children at ArtPlay PuppetLab workshop July, 2008
Photo by Eelin Cheah, courtesy of ArtPlay.

