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# AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER

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**Spring 2000**

**A quick  
peek at  
Li'l  
Horror\$**



**"You want how many  
fish costumes?"**

**or**

**How we built the  
Olympics stuff  
by Al Martinez**

**Never Say  
Never-Neverland again**

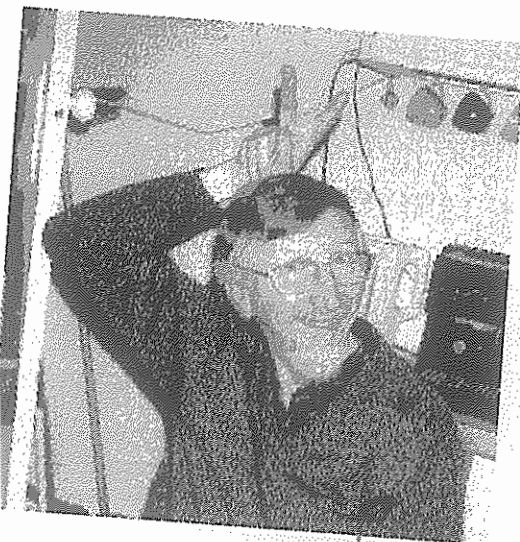
**or**

**Whatever happened to  
Pan  
by Murray Raine**

**Magdeburg Highlights  
Reports**

**by Ros Childers  
and Richard Bradshaw  
...and of course,  
heaps more...**

# P u p p e t r a z z i



**CW from top left:**

**Richard Bradshaw demonstrates correct hand position for rabbit shadow puppet.**

**Out of the Box (Susan Lintern-Coward and Rob Matson) with Paul Newcombe from Black Hole.**

**Polyglot's Sunflowers preview: Makers Nick Von de Borch and Trina Gaskell.**

**A trio of Polyglot Artistic Directors.**

**Performers Sarah Kriegler and Bruce Patterson.**



# A U S T R A L I A N P U P P E T E E R

The Magazine of UNIMA Australia ♦ SPRING 2000

## Editorial

Spring has sprung and puppets of all flavours and varieties surround us. From big budget animatronic TV extravaganzas to first time puppeteers stepping nervously onto the stage, the world of puppet arts is blooming.

The new season also heralds a new look for the magazine. Eagle-eyed subscribers may well have already noticed the change of format. This change is part of a cunning plan to save money in the production and distribution of Australian Puppeteer. I'd appreciate any feedback on the itty-bitty look. I prefer it, it seems more balanced to me and I've managed to cram in about ten extra pages for less money.

Now, having gone and mucked about with the magazine, an announcement. This is my last issue as Editor.

Editing Australian Puppeteer has been enormously rewarding, challenging, educational, frustrating and fulfilling. I have really enjoyed the opportunity and experience but in the words of an old election ad, it's time. Time for another keen, energetic puppetry aficionado to take the reins, fasten their seatbelts, steer the ship over new horizons and mix metaphors in the upcoming issues.

Thanks again to all the generous contributors, to Sarah for helping with the ads and especially to the wonderful Victoria for her support and love.

Happy puppeting,

*Philip Miller*

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# L e t t e r s

## Turkish Puppets

To the Editor,

I have just received my latest copy of Australian Puppeteer, and read with interest the letter from Turkey regarding an article which appeared in last Winter edition of Australian Puppeteer.

If I mislead any readers with the article I am sorry. I was taken to the Puppet Theatre in Istanbul and met some of the puppeteers involved. Unfortunately there was a language difficulty and I might have misunderstood their claim regarding traditional puppet theatre now in Istanbul.

My description of the process of making puppets and the facts regarding the Show Theatre to which I referred in the article is taken from a collection of Press Releases and background information in English which the director of the company gave to me together with a poster. All of which I still have.

I think the same problem might have also arisen regarding the spelling of the puppet's name, but I do agree that Hacivat is by far the most common and therefore correct.

It is good that our magazine is being read overseas, and I would look forward to knowing more about the very famous Karagoz theatre. Unfortunately, Ankara was not on my itinerary during my last visit, so I was unable to follow up any puppet theatre in that city.

With best wishes for the future of the publication.

Janet Macallister  
Glenbrook NSW 2773

7th July 2000

## Greetings from Doghouse

Hello Mary,

I am a stopmotion animator(Doghouse films) and puppetmaker. I also have a great interest in puppeteering and puppetmaking. I have sculpting, mold making skills, experience in foam latex, set building (well :) miniature set building ). I was wondering if you have any advice or contacts I should pursue to try and get work in the puppet industry and/or develop my skills in these areas.

Thank you very much for any advice or help you can offer.

Sincerely  
Neil Hughes

P.S. you can visit my animation company web site at  
[www.doghousefilms.com.au](http://www.doghousefilms.com.au)

## Trailer of the rings

Have you checked out the (very short on content & slow to load) trailer for Lord of the Rings on the quicktime site...  
[www.apple.com/trailers/new-line/lord\\_of\\_the\\_rings/some interesting glimpses/ snippets of monsters and such...](http://www.apple.com/trailers/new-line/lord_of_the_rings/some_interesting_glimpses/snippets_of_monsters_and_such...)

Just thought you'd like to take a squiz.  
How's trix?  
Subs are on their way.  
Ian Tregonning



## Nature at the Olympics

What can I say about my involvement in the Olympics? Two years out I was invited onto the creative team to take on the role of Creative Director for the Nature segment-Flora and Fauna.

A tremendous honour to be part of an extraordinary event. Ideas, design and the direction Nature went was on ongoing process. Eamon D'Arcy designed Nature and with a choreographic team of ten behind me, we began rehearsals in earnest in May of this year. A cast of 800 plus worked over 18 week-ends to create our blooming treat.

The piece was essentially a work about transformation. Shifting and changing our perceptions and our expectations.... much the same as Nature itself.

A "once were Waratah's" tee shirt was presented to me by the Waratah cast at the opening.... a night to remember. Look out for the Centenary of Federation Parade thru the streets of Sydney on Jan 1.

I will be directing the puppetry component of the floats for the procession.

I'm also looking for several Sydney based puppeteers to assist me with the parade. There is a small fee for puppeteers. 0414530418 call me if interested.

Have a great summer...

Best Wishes

Peter Pan Wilson

## Report from Festival

Dear Sue & Mary

Here at last is the promised report. We have been on the move since we left Germany and have been unable until now to find an Internet cafe that allows the use of copying from a disc and has printing facilities. Our laptop has been a bit unstable as well. I haven't written a report on the Conference, as I attended only two sessions. However, I sent you material covering the election of the new committee with the other material I collected. In fact, I think my copy was in there by mistake. You've probably already received information, anyway. I'll just set out a few points I gleaned that you may wish to use in the magazine. I'll try to send you some photos when I return.

One of the Round Table discussion topics was how to train effectively the new generation of puppeteers and assist them to earn a living. The main points covered were:

- UNIMA needs to support training initiatives worldwide;
- a six-month apprenticeship program could be set up with one country sending one or two students to another for training;
- there is a need for more festivals (as in Slovenia) so that young companies can showcase their work;
- in countries such as Brazil, where there is little current support, UNIMA needs to support initiatives to change the climate related to puppetry and training.

There was discussion related to the importance of UNIMA's providing a budget to help carry out initiatives such as these.

Two important proposals passed by the Congress were:

- that a fund-raising committee should be set up;
- that an international festival commission should be initiated.

It was agreed that the USA would host the 2002 UNIMA Council and Executive Committee meetings from June 20 to 23 at Atlanta, Georgia. This would occur during the American Showcase Festival at the Center for Puppetry Arts.

Because of the shortness of the time allotted to the Festival, it was proposed that the Executive Committee meet one day before the beginning of the Festival and stay on for an extra day afterwards.

The Center for Puppetry Arts is the home of UNIMA USA. It has three theatres and a large hall suitable for meetings. The Centre is a venue for all forms of puppetry, holding daily performances and workshops. It also contains an interactive museum.

The website address is of the Center for Puppetry Arts is: [www.puppet.org](http://www.puppet.org) and the e-mail address is: [puppet@mindspring.com](mailto:puppet@mindspring.com)

It appears that Rijeka in Croatia is to host the next UNIMA international congress in 2004.

Dear editor,  
Please find hereby some interesting information concerning Europees Figurenteatercentrum our international contest on puppettheatre graphics and our yearly international festivals Figeuro and International Puppetbuskersfestival. You would do us a great favour by publishing the information below, which could be of interest to a big part of your readers.

This year (2000) Europees Figurenteatercentrum organised Figeuro 2000 with 20 companies from 14 countries, performing 62 shows in total on 6 stages. Figeuro 2000 had 15 Belgian premieres. The international jury (under the presidency of the Polish director Arkadiusz Klucznik) dedicated the festival price Luk Vincent to the production "George and the Dragon" by Garlic Theatre from Norwich (UK). The companies 2+Koo (from Tomsk, Russia) and El Picaporte (from Milan, Italy) were nominated.

Former winners of the Luk Vincent-price were Bouldegom (France, '89), Green Ginger (U.K., '90), Fundus (Germany, '91), Zarte Hände ziehen Fäden (Germany, '92), Parachute Theatre Company (U.K., '93), Theater Credo (Bulgaria, '94), Zwei Hände (Germany, '95), Diego Stirman (France, '96), Mikropodium (Hungary, '97), Laura Kibel (Italy, '98) and Dynamogène (France, '99). Next year, Europees Figurenteatercentrum will organise the 7th edition of International

Puppetbuskersfestival. This festival is dedicated to puppetry artists from around the globe performing in open air and in the streets of Gent. The festival policy is that programmer Freek Neiryndck should have seen the show(s), before considering them for the summer festival, which will take place from 15th till 22nd July.

Companies that want to take part in next years International Puppetbuskersfestival should send their playlist or/and a (even amateur, but entirely recorded) video of their proposed show(s) to Freek Neiryndck, Europees Figurenteatercentrum Trommelstraat 1, B-9000 Gent, tel. +32 (0)9 223 12 15, fax +32 (0)9 225 45 45, e-mail eftc.gent@skynet.be

During International Puppetbuskersfestival, a special emphasis will be put on shadowtheatre, to be produced in the Zaal Henri Maeren of the Europees Figurenteatercentrum. Freek Neiryndck will make a selection together with Mr. Rainer Reusch from the specialized festival International Shadow Theatre Festival in Schwäbisch-Gmünd, Germany. Europees Figurenteatercentrum also organizes each year an international contest on puppettheatre graphics posters). Next year's theme will be "European Puppet and Figure Theatre". Previous winners were Michel Bouvet (F, 1998) with the poster "Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes 1991", Ulrich Otte (D, 1999) "Der satanarchäolü-

genialkohollische Wunschpunsch", a production by Düsseldorfer Marionettenheater and Andreas Seiter and Marcus Dürr (D, 2000) for the poster "Flamingo Bar" a production by Figurentheater Tübingen.

Companies that want to be selected by the international jury, can send their poster (2 copies at least in a well protected cylinder) to Europees Figurenteatercentrum.

So far the news. But there is more. Europees Figurenteatercentrum permanently wants to be a meeting point in Europe to international artists. If they are touring in the neighbourhood of Belgium, they can always contact Europees Figurenteatercentrum to ask for facilities.

If we can be of any help in your research for contacts in Belgium, please solicitate us. Sending you our warmest and colleagial greetings, we are looking forward to the publication of this press information. Would it be possible to send us a copy ? Yours sincerley,

Freek Neiryndck  
Myriam Bodenghien  
General Co-ordinator  
Assistant Co-ordinator

## Arlyn Award for Outstanding Design in the Puppet Theatre

A new award has been established in the puppetry world. In honour of the late Arlyn Coad, co founder and artistic director of Coad Canada Puppets.

The Arlyn Award for Outstanding Design in the Puppet Theatre will be an annual, world wide competition seeking to recognize outstanding puppet theatre design.

Any puppeteer is eligible to enter the competition by submitting a portfolio of no more than ten photographs and designs of a production. A videotape of the performance is also requested.

Deadline for submissions of productions premiered in the calendar year 2000 is 15 February, 2001.

To ensure unbiased judging, please have no identification on the photographs, designs or portfolio. On a separate page please provide the following details: Name of Designer: Production Title: Premier Date: Name of Director: Name of Puppet Troupe: Mailing Address: Only one entry per person per year will be accepted. The address for submissions is

Arlyn Award Society 2000  
Competition

c/o North Shore Arts  
Commission 148  
East 2nd Street  
North Vancouver,  
BCV7P1W7 Canada

Arlyn Award Appointed by the Directors of the Arlyn Award Society, an independent, three member jury will set their own criteria for outstanding design.

There will be no carryover concept from year to year and Jurors may only serve two years in succession. No Director may serve as a Juror. One of the Jurors must be an established puppeteer and another Juror must be a non puppeteer theatrical designer. The decision of the Jury is final and cannot be altered by the Directors. The names of the Jurors will be announced when the Arlyn Award is presented each year. A maximum of one Arlyn will be awarded each year and only when truly warranted to a single designer or production as the Award cannot be shared. A small cash prize will accompany the Arlyn Award. All entered materials will be retained by the Arlyn Award Society for a proposed research collection.

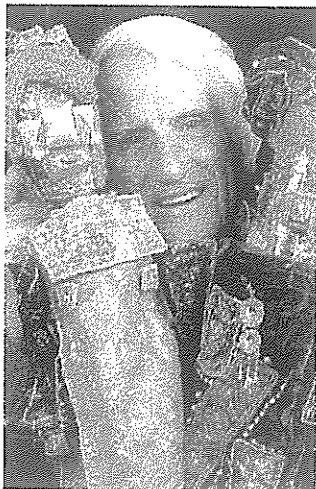
G'day Philip

Have just had a session "surfing" to try to find some wood-working plans for making string puppets. I am retired and not able to get about very much any more and try to keep gainfully occupied by wood-working. I was asked by a lady from our Police Youth Club Vacation Care Programme if I could make up some string puppets similar to that at [http://www.shopsmithhandson.com/html/dd\\_patterns.htm](http://www.shopsmithhandson.com/html/dd_patterns.htm) (The Dancin' Duck).

Unfortunately I am unable to find similar sorts of plans. Can you help out or could you steer me in the right direction, please.

Regards

Ross Anderson  
Innisfail Q 4860



## N.Z. Puppet Opera in China

Hello, hello. Leslie Trowbridge Puppet Opera has been invited to perform at the Third International Puppet Festival in Quanzhou, China. I will be performing part of the opera Jone.

I leave for China October sixth and when I come back I will send you some sort of report. It will be mind boggling!

Yours sincerely,

Leslie Trowbridge

# President's Report

## UNIMA - who cares?

In 1982, after only one year of puppetry experience working with the Marionette Theatre of Australia, I travelled for seven months in the USA and Europe. I was alone but not for long. Following up contacts that Richard Bradshaw had given me I was invited to stay with puppeteers, to go to their parties, performances and festivals. I fell in love with this extraordinary art form and with the "Club".

When I visited the International Theatre Institute office in New York, I was given pamphlets. When I visited the secretary of UNIMA USA, I was given a bed. In subsequent years, I have continued to experience this generosity of spirit from UNIMA members in many countries.

I tell this story to answer the title of this paper.

UNIMA is a union combined for the purpose of celebrating the puppetry arts. Started in 1929 in Europe, it grew out of a need for puppeteers to feel connected. It is no less essential today than it was 71 years ago. Each of us wants to feel connected, to know what's going on. A puppeteer in Australia can feel just as isolated as one in Kinshasa

Within the membership of UNIMA Australia we have people who are excellent in

their field - performers, puppet makers, designers, writers and teachers. Our resource base is great. How many of you have been able to access these people for help, tuition, advice or simply learned from watching their work? Those of you with knowledge and excellence in your field, how many of you have been able to offer help or advice?

Membership carries equal access and equal responsibility to get involved. How?

- Put your hand up for an executive position.

- Organise informal gatherings with members (and would-be members) in your area - discuss what you are doing and showcase new work for careful criticism.

- Contribute to the Scholarship Fund.

- Apply for a scholarship

- Write an article, take a photo or make a sketch for the magazine (your editor with love you.)

- Promote puppetry

- Contact the executive to find out about puppetry festivals, events and courses overseas.

- If you are visiting another country, make contact with UNIMA members there.

Most importantly, don't

sit back thinking you have nothing to offer. The membership is interested in what you are doing.

Perhaps we have to change the way we solicit help and information. Any positive suggestions? Involvement takes time and energy but the investment is very worthwhile.

My thoughts on what UNIMA Australia could do better -

- Promote puppetry more vigorously to both the Arts community and the general community.

- Raise money to organise master classes with Australian and overseas artists.

- Your suggestions?

UNIMA membership connects us with people interested in the Art of the Puppet around Australia and around the world. Use your membership. Enjoy it!

Sue Wallace

# Editor required

Hi. I've just taken on the position of UNIMA Treasurer, so maybe I should introduce myself.

I work as a computer programmer, but my interest in puppetry goes back to about 1980 when I saw "Momma's Little Horror Show", learned a bit about puppetry in a course run by Anita Sinclair and started subscribing to Manipulation. I have seen a lot of puppetry since then and have produced a few short performances and a short black & white film with a small group of amateur puppeteers. I joined Unima when Manipulation and Australian Puppeteer magazines merged.

I will be looking after the accounts and membership records. If you need to contact me, details are below

John McDonald  
(03)98187514  
john.mcdonald  
@acslink.aone.net.au

[illegible]

Putting Australian Puppeteer together could probably be done using a biro, scissors, the photocopier at the library and a glue stick but using a computer tends to speed up the whole affair considerably.

Desktop publishing experience would be handy but is not essential. I basically bought a few instruction books on Quark Xpress and Photoshop and taught myself the process.

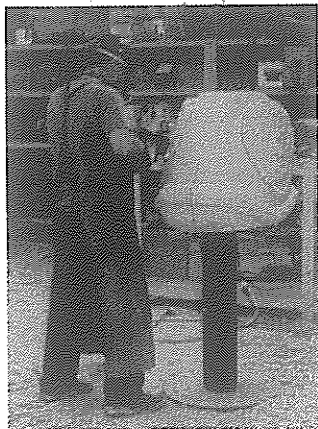
Access to the internet and the WWW is extraordinarily useful in order to quickly access tons of information and to gather material from contributors. Most of the material I use is emailed to me, it's faster and more convenient than snail mail.

Any interested potential editors please contact any or all members of the executive to discuss possibilities.

Besides an interest in puppets and quite a few hours to spare, the editor also needs to know and make use of the following guidelines:

1. Avoid clichés like the plague (They're old hat ).
2. Be more or less specific.
3. Do not be redundant, do not use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
4. Never use a big word when a diminutive one would suffice.
5. If you've heard it once, you've heard it a thousand times. resist hyperbole; not one writer in a million can use it correctly.
6. Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.
7. Even if a mixed metaphor sings, it should be derailed.
8. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
9. Also, always avoid annoying alliteration.
10. Proofread carefully to see if you any words out.

# Winning Gold in the 4 x100 marathon long jump puppet build: Al Martinez!



The number of props we made is really unclear to me.

The Welcome segment had 120 flag poles of both the Olympic and Australian flag, 240 in total.

Deep Sea dreaming had six large flying fish puppets and two costumed flying performers. The Spanish dancer and Nudibranch were costumes/props. The Squid had a performer articulating it from within. The Hook and Worm was a costumed performer also. The Sea dragon had a windscreen wiper motor for movement of the head and tail. They all had a weight restriction of 150 kg.

The Unicorn Trigger fish and Banner fish were on the same line so they both had to total less than 150kg. There was originally meant to be a third fish on the same line but we couldn't do it under the limit. All the fish were weighted so they would turn into the wind automatically and change direction

when moved in the opposite direction. The center of gravity

was one third to three quarters to the head so the head would lead in the wind or turn when the direction was changed.

One to ten scale models were tested in the wind tunnel at Sydney University with the aid of their wind specialist lecturers. All models were taken to hurricane wind speeds to see what they would do.

There were 150 School of fish costumes consisting of vacuum-formed head, backpack body, body suit with head fin and

*All models were taken to hurricane speeds to see what they would do.*

arm fins.

The Awakenings segment had five smoking drums for burning leaves and timber, five coolooms with simulated leaves.

The Wandjina Spirit was 32 meters square mounted on netting with several types of materials to create the woven affect.

The Nature segment had 100 Banksia rods and ten banksia cores to make up ten complete banksia. 140 Sturt desert pea headress with costumes. Five waratah consisting of eight segments each made of vacuum-formed PE (Polyethylene) foam and aluminium frame.

I'm currently working on the acquisition collection by the Powerhouse museum of the props and costumes of the opening and closing ceremony. I may have work for the next month if they want things remade. Lots of things were pinched by the performers after the closing ceremony. One of the athletes knocked Udo off his scooter and took off with it. The athletes were the biggest thieves of all. They stole every golf club available and anything they could get their hands on.

Two of the fish went straight to the Powerhouse museum from the stadium and the others are in the workshop in a very sad state. I think they want all of the flying fish puppets. Some will require lots of reworking as they were trashed in the bumpout.

The sea dragon was chopped up to get it into the trucks due to the short bumpout time. It was very painful to see what was done to some of these things we worked on for so many months.

As for my Staff. I started with four propmakers as the segment prop techs for each segment that had props. There were segments that were so small, props wise, they didn't warrant prop techs so I did some of the prototyping or had one of my other propmakers do the work. There were two prop techs for the closing ceremony as well.

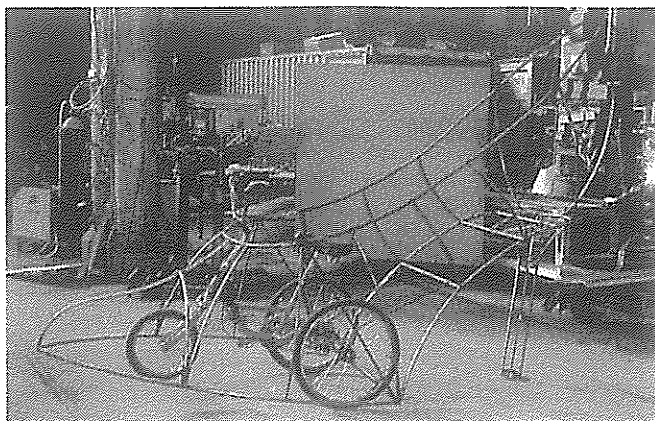
I felt like a counselor at times but that's part of keeping my crew happy and working



towards the goal we all had. The Awakenings segment had a team of three propmakers that made the 32 metre square Wandjina on the wall of the workshop. The team was headed by Kate Dickson-Beatty. The Wandjina team leader was Kristina Sundstrom who had to drop out due to RSI and had a very bad bout with the beauracratc hassles of workers comp.

The Deep Sea Dreaming segment was headed by Fleur Burrows who was one of my very first propmakers to help me with proto types in the very early stages before the workshop was chosen. We chose Fleur to do Deep Sea Dreaming because she had the biggest spectrum of skills and was there in the beginning. She could do every part of the job of making all those fish and was thrown into the deep end in overseeing the making of all her props. I watched her handle her learning curve very well aside from the tears and fears.

Fleur and I spent a month in a warehouse making a test proto type for the Sydney Harbour bridge that was meant to be in the eternity segment but was cut, whew. Ric Birch gave me the task of testing the idea of revealing the bridge in a 'drop cloth' style that was meant to be a BIG surprise. The original bridge as designed was meant to be 156 metres in length and we had to make JUST 7m of the middle with a drop of 5m. We made it in calico between a plywood sandwich with 6 pins holding it together and when you pulled the centre cord the arched thin ply



opened and dropped this curved bridge piece. We worked in this warehouse and couldn't tell anyone what we were working on. It was the SOBO headquarters and hadn't been set up yet but there were several people walking through.

*I spent a month in a warehouse making a test prototype for the Sydney Harbour bridge that was meant to be in the Eternity sequence but was cut, Whew.*

The centre section looked like a big "M" so we made up different stories of what we were making. This calico piece was about 200 mm wide with matching panels that showed the shape of the bridge struts and reinforced with nylon cord sewn into the seams to help make the exact shape

Typically on the last day we finally got it to work before a test for Nigel Triffet, David Atkins and Ric Birch to see. We were so excited when we finally got it to work in the warehouse we ran out to get the security guard to come and watch this. We had to show someone right away. During the testing before the real viewing, we broke the handle of the \$5 tinsnips I used for the release mech of the six pins but a short piece of steel rod and some gaffa saved the day. I wasn't sure if it would work but had nothing to lose. To make it even more tense, SOBO wanted to film it and John Rayment wanted it to be in a spotlight.

Geeeeeeeeeeeezzzzzz, talk about tense. I got the signal on my radio and pulled the cord, saying a silent prayer and VOILA, ta dahhhhhh! WHEW! It worked, Fleur and I jumped for joy and hugged like two crazies, while Nigel, David and Ric wondered if it should be wider or thicker and did it really look the way they thought.



We moved into the Everleigh Carriage works building in Redfern on January 10th after a short stint in the workshop of Browns Mill in Leighardt. The workshop was cleaned up of a set consisting of a small hillside in the middle of the workshop that took two weeks with front end loaders and a crew of Lock and Loaders to clean it up. during the short stint at Browns mill and the first two weeks, we were frantically working on one to ten scale models of the fish in the "Deep Sea Dreaming". The designs were a big issue in that segment and there was a whole coral reef cut from that segment, consisting of about 600 costumes to make up the reef. Meryl Tankard decided she wanted to spend her budget on the fish to make them more fantastic. The numbers of

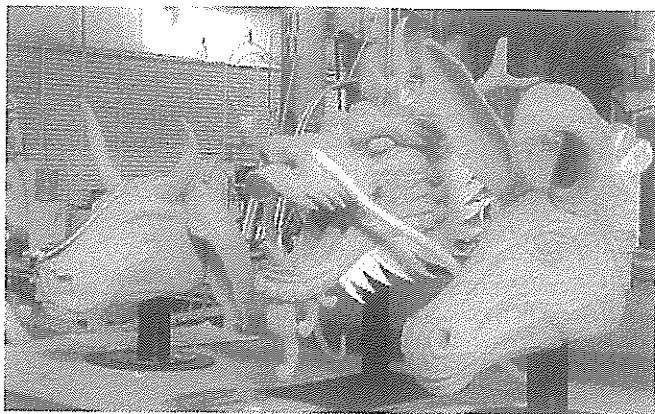
*The body went through several design changes as Meryl changed her mind each time she saw the latest and we only managed to complete them when she was away.*

fish in the ground based school of fish was cut from 400 to 150 due to budget. Of all the segments, Deep Sea Dreaming was considered the most tricky due to the fact we couldn't rehearse with the flying fish till we moved into the stadium two weeks before the show. That was always going to be a tricky factor for this

segment. In the workshop we had a one to ten scale model of the stadium with lines set up to move the models about and Meryl did some work with them so see what it would look like.

As far as one of the most difficult props were concerned, the school of fish cossies were a real headache. I suggested the cost be \$700 per cossie and it was slashed to \$500 so we had to make it as simple as possible and still look great. I and one of my propmakers carved the vacuum mold from MDF and worked on it till the pulls worked for the two halves in high impact styrene. Because they were going to be worn by kids 10-12 yrs old, we made them as light as possible and designed them around the child of one of our CAD workers. The body went through several design changes as Meryl

changed her mind each time she saw the latest and we only managed to complete them when she was away. We had a problem in the subcontracting of the cossies as well. When we realized that there were so many, we wanted to have them made elsewhere and sought a supplier to make them for us. We showed this to whoever was interested and found only one man, who should have sold used cars instead of making props that would do the job for the money. He complained from the time he knew the deadline date right through the whole time till I took the job away from him because he couldn't do it. I went to the place where he was making the heads and I was shocked to discover he was working on the stage of a church with one propmaker. He was complaining of how badly the halves fit together and how was he expected to make these in the time allocated. I went back to the workshop and told the segment manager to find out if we could break the contract and take the job back inhouse. It was the only way we would get them done. He was more than happy to give up the job, finding out it wasn't going to be the money making piece of cake he thought. We started to assemble the heads and found another person who worked in wardrobe with a small studio that I convinced could do the job with our help. We supplied the assembled heads and she did the details of harness clips and such. We even painted them to save time. In the end we got them



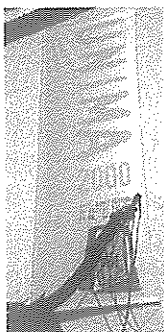
done and figured we would try and save them in rehearsal by using just a few and made rehearsal bodies. We soon discovered they were very fragile in the hands of bored kids during rehearsal and planned how to beef them up so we didnt have a total

*We soon discovered the costumes were very fragile in the hands of bored children during rehearsal...*

remake after each session. After the first dress rehearsal in the stadium we knew we were in trouble because we had 250 damaged parts of 300 and had to figure out a way to stop this. We decided to put the names and number of each kid on each part so if they broke it and we couldn't fix it they weren't in the show. This worked and the damages were reduced to a minimal amount and the kids stopped head-butting each other with their costumes. It got to the point of them not

even telling us when they were broken and would do anything to stay in the show. We had to look and really tell them to let us fix them for the show. We had set up a "Fast Action Response Team" for each entrance to repair any damaged props before it went out. On the first dress rehearsal for an audience there was one little girl that finally admitted her fish had a broken head. We snatched it away from her and there were four of us drilling, cutting bits of plastic and pop-rivetting it back together in the four minutes I decided we had before they had to go out. The performers around us cheered when we finished and handed it back to the girl. There were lots of heads with gaffa tape repairs on the night of the show. I was in the audience watching behind the Midnight Oil stage in the second row. It was overwhelming to be in the audience and feel the energy among the thousands there and the world watching. I great many tear came to my eyes knowing I was part of all of this

# MAGDEBURG 2000



## REPORT BY ROS CHILDERS

The 2000 UNIMA Congress and World Festival of Puppet Theatre was held from 24 June to 2 July in Magdeburg, Germany. My husband and I attended the festival while on a business trip to the UK and Europe, but I was also asked to "stand in" for the Australian delegate, Sue Wallace, who was unable to attend.

The conference organisation was chaotic and the web site totally inadequate; for example, not even a map of Magdeburg was provided to locate the various venues or even the location of the Conference headquarters and there were no links to accommodation or transport information. E-mails sent were often lost or ignored and information about the pricing of tickets was grossly misleading. I thought that I would be able to attend the shows of my choice with my 200 Deutschmark (approx. A \$200) Festival

Ticket, which I'd ordered by e-mail. Alas, I discovered that this could not be guaranteed, and I ended up queueing for tickets. Having not arrived until 28 June, I missed out on some excellent performances! However, the advantage was that Hugh and I were both able to attend shows and the venues were all excellent!

Happily, the Festival turned out to be both enriching and entertaining. I managed to see eleven performances, including some on the Off-off Program, but here I'll simply try to provide my impressions of a few.

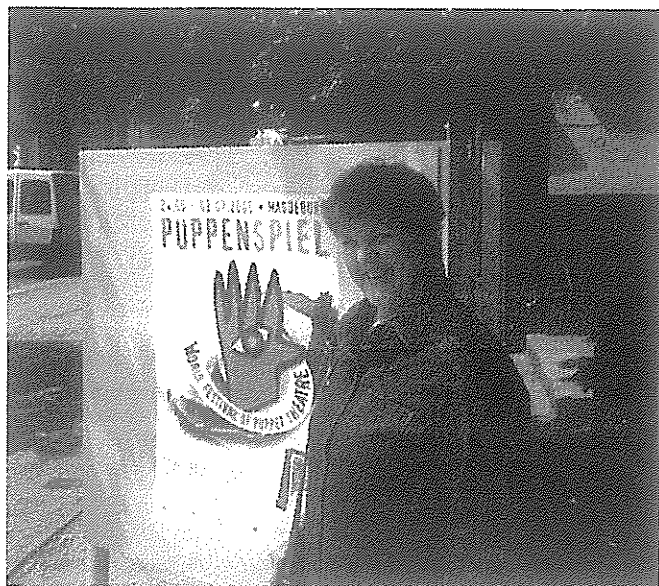
### *Happily, the festival turned out to be both enriching and entertaining*

Canadian Ronnie Burkett's show, "Tinka's New Dress", is a real "tour de force", as it demonstrates the way in which the art of puppetry may be used to examine important human issues. Burkett draws on Czech puppetry theatre during the Nazi occupation to present a universal story that challenges the audience to reflect on the issues of artistic integrity in conflict with the enforced orthodoxy of the modern State. This artistic integrity relates, in particular, to the expression of ideas possibly threatening to "the common good"

Throughout the two-hour long performance, Burkett sustains animation for more than twenty different characters, requiring subtle vocal distinctions.

The animation and lighting is so wonderful that one often has to pinch oneself to realise that these characters are, in fact, puppets. On the night I attended, Burkett "worked" an especially attentive audience consisting largely of native or near-native English speakers. In contrast to previous audiences, they were able to appreciate his sharp satire, throw-away lines, incorporation of the English pantomime tradition and references to contemporary issues - even the organisation of the Festival and the kinds of audiences he had had. He made jokes about the frequency of camera flashing and audience walkouts.

This raises one criticism of his performance in the context of an international festival. The complexity of the language and the concentration required to handle the length of the performance prevented many audience members from accessing the ideas and values underlying the production. Another criticism relates to festival organisation - the audience should be informed at the beginning of each performance that flash photography is not permitted. This was done at only one or two of the performances I saw.



The whole question of language and the way it complements the puppeteer's art should be an important one for international festival organisers. I attended a number of performances in German, which I was able to follow fairly well, however, I wondered how other members of the audience with little or no German fared - certainly they could appreciate the puppeteers' art, but would be unable to respond fully to the production

The shadow play, "Mahabharata", is performed in Indonesian and English by the Balinese puppeteer, Iwayan Wijaya, an outstanding exponent of traditional Indonesian shadow theatre. Traditional gamelan music and the flickering light provided by lamps and braziers behind the screen help provide an authentic atmosphere for the unfolding of one of the classic myths from the Hindu tradi-

tion. However, when short sections in English are interspersed and Australian animals included, the play loses coherence. The slapstick element, for which Iwayan Wijaya is famous, is not entirely successful either.

Unfortunately, the performer's English is not sufficiently fluent for the overall task. In sharp contrast, though, the segments performed in Indonesian are absolutely brilliant - particularly the fight scenes.

One show that could be appreciated without some knowledge of German is "The Ugly Duckling" by Theater Passpartu. The well-known Hans Christian Andersen story is presented as a puppet play in German and sign language. The fairytale, with its theme of exclusion, was deliberately chosen for a project that would bring together deaf

and hearing audience members in the same theatre. The play begins with the performer standing, clad in a simple white dress, with her back to the audience, on high scaffolding above the stage. This seems to symbolise the feeling of alienation that a deaf person might suffer. However, with the right form of communication and goodwill from other members of society, this feeling can be turned into one of belonging - and this is communicated to the audience as the puppeteer descends and begins to tell the story in an intimate way

*Thus begins an hour of fascinating and strangely lyrical theatre - given the weirdly shaped and garishly coloured giant body puppets*

The performer's rapport with the audience is sustained with the aid of colourful and effective "table-top" rod puppets, appropriate music and ingeniously simple sets consisting of a number of reversible screens, portable tables and rotating surfaces smoothly managed by the puppeteer. This production has definitely achieved the intended purpose

"Zwielicht" ("Take Care and Stay Awake") was another production that transcended the barrier of language. Directed by Frank Soehnle, it

is performed, without speech but with highly effective noises, wonderful facial expression and brilliant movement by Christoph Bodansky.

The piece is a metaphor to describe a journey of discovery of the imagination - a world far removed from the everyday humdrum though successful existence of the protagonist (a man in a suit). The first stage of his journey is cleverly symbolised by the inflation of one of the sausage-like objects on the stage that suddenly catapults this brave man into another world.

Thus begins an hour of fascinating and strangely lyrical theatre - given the weirdly shaped and garishly coloured giant body puppets. The atmosphere of mostly gentle exploration of the variety of forest entities - some shaped like huge trees, some like giant mushrooms or other vegetables - is heightened by the delicate interpretation of selected piano movements of Robert Schumann.

In this report, I have outlined my impressions of just a few of the wonderful performances given at the Magdeburg Festival.

Despite the shortcomings in the festival organisation, I believe that the quality of the offerings was extremely high, and, certainly, the main aim was achieved.

"The central idea of this World Festival of Puppet Theatre is cultural pluralism (the foundation for a modern culture of puppetry)... The organisers want to maintain and emphasise the peculiarities and typical characteristics of the many puppet theatres from all over the world ... but not reduce them to the smallest common denominator."





## **Puppetry in Australia A brief overview written by Sue Wallace, President UNIMA Australia**

(Paper presented at  
Magdeburg)

We have a few national puppetry treasures in Australia. There's Mr Squiggle, the creation of Norman and Peggy Hetherington and the star of one of the longest running television shows anywhere in the world and Super Kangaroo, that shadowy, underdog crusader created by Richard Bradshaw. But scratch the surface and you will see a lot of diverse puppetry activity going on down under.

Despite a lack of coverage in any arts publications or broadcasts, puppetry in Australia is on the rise again, growing in popularity. As technology advances into the home and the classroom, the interactivity of the puppet show is once more coming into its own. Here parents see their kids in a social environment being enlivened and stimulated by the magic world of the puppet. Certainly, in Australia, there is a lot more puppetry being created for children and families than specifically for adults. This is an economic reality. However, adults are still there, at the edge of willingness to enter into the light and dark possibilities of the puppetry realm and puppet companies are responding with new works created especially for this audience.

To our knowledge the indigenous population did not (and generally still do not) practise any puppetry tradition. Their culture is disseminated through song, storytelling and art. So puppetry in Australia is an imported medium. Over the centuries the Australian puppeteer has been influenced by many cultures – Anglo, European and more recently, Asian. Artistic trends play a role in determining the types of puppets that will be dominant at any one time. However, contemporary shows continue to display a wide range of puppetry styles.

### *Scratch the surface and you'll see a lot of diverse puppetry activity going on down under.*

The puppetry activity in Australia is greatly affected by the geography. We have a vast land mass (nearly the size of the USA) and a population of only 20 million. Most of the population is city based and the major cities are around 1000km apart. A touring puppeteer will spend many more hours driving than performing.

To give you a snap shot of puppetry in Australia we'll look at events around the country in the last year. "The Hobbit" (a live puppetry interpretation of the Tolkein tale) with a cast of 11 puppeteers performed 200 times around the country.

Dozens of companies performed thousands of shows in theatre-in-education programs in towns big and small. Puppet companies around the country have created a number of new shows; some based on well known stories, most with original scenarios. In fact, it is quite characteristic of Australian puppetry to write original stories often based on the talents and design preference of each particular company or individual.

Other productions produced this year used puppetry elements like "Grandma's Shoes" a new opera for children created by Theatre of Image with Opera Australia and "The Theft of Sita", a cultural dialogue between Australian and Balinese puppeteers, which was created for the Adelaide International Arts Festival. This production was recently seen in Hanover.

There have been three new television series incorporating puppets produced in Sydney and Melbourne. Henson's Creature Workshop has recently been involved in creating puppets for a major stage show and a sci-fi television series. Although this is not promoting the skills of Australian puppet makers, some work has been generated for makers and extensive work has been given to Australian puppeteers and it means that there is an international dialogue developing. Although, some dedicated and proud puppeteers have been disappointed that they are now called "creature actors"

Apparently, the word 'puppeteer' is considered derogatory in some parts of the world. In fact, it has been interesting to watch the usage of the word 'puppet' as puppet companies endeavour to market themselves in the most attractive way. During the late 90's it was often replaced with "visual theatre". Currently, that puppet word is back in favour.

Although full-time puppet venues are rare in Australia, The Rock's Puppet Cottage, under the direction of the Sydney Puppet Theatre, has 6 performances every weekend promoting one and two person shows. Other venues, Polyglot in Melbourne and Spare Parts Puppet Theatre (in Fremantle on the West Coast) have performances

mostly in the school holidays.

The "One Van" International Puppet Festival is our first regular puppet festival. It happens every January in Blackheath, a beautiful village just west of Sydney. The festival is growing stronger every year with capacity box office recorded at the 2000 festival. A new bi-annual festival is also being planned for the city of Adelaide in May 2001.

Puppetry training is hard to come by in Australia. There are no regular courses nor schools which focus on the complete art form from concept to design, construction and performance. This kind of intense study must be undertaken in other countries. Most training is gained in-house through the few, largely government funded companies

or by voluntary mentoring programs where individual puppeteers assume the responsibility of helping aspiring young artists. Periodically, master classes are organised with highly skilled national and international puppeteers.

The Olympics and the Paralympics will, we have heard, be using puppets in their opening ceremonies but the details of this are being carefully kept under a few hats.

UNIMA Australia is growing stronger every year and its quarterly publication is the primary method of communication for puppeteers in Australia. The magazine is unambiguously called "Australian Puppeteer".



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# Puppets at NIDA

Report by Nerissa Box

For two weeks I undertook a Puppetry course with correspondence to my Prop Making, Theatre Crafts Diploma at NIDA. The tutor was Tina Mathews who is known for work such as *The Ferals*, which is broadcast on the ABC.

Puppetry is something that I have always been intrigued by through my childhood and adulthood relationship to one of the world's most inspiring human beings, Jim Henson. He and his creative team showed me the joy and love in numbers and words through *Sesame Street*, encouraged my imagination with *Fraggle Rock* and *The Muppets* then blossomed my belief in the world of fantasy through *The Dark Crystal* and *Labyrinth*.

When we were given the opportunity to undertake this challenge, I embraced it with open arms. The few secrets and knowledge I was about to gain on how to bring to life an image, a piece of my own creative mind. Finding a character inside me was not at all difficult and knowing I was about to embark on a development of this 'thing' was what I believed to resemble the joys of childbirth. Creating something from within and watching it grow before your eyes. Gathering inspiration from the great Brian Froud who is part of the creative force behind Henson, I finalised my design

through a fantasy level and the creature became pixie like with bat shaped wings...very interesting!

Tina offering guidance when needed throughout the whole event, taught me the basic assemblance of a puppet, a foam body, foam legs, and arms shaped with a pair of scissors and a head that was sculpted out of clay and then finalised in latex.

When it came to putting the

*But the most amazing parts were his eyes. Once I had completed those, I stood back and BOOM!*

puppet together, whilst also keeping into consideration the way in which the creature's mobility would be achieved, I started to feel a deep connection with the puppet. In some ways, you could see a reflection of my personality encompassing its being.

Once he became whole, I felt it necessary to give him a name. Where the name came from, I have no idea, so Zen was brought to life.

He then needed clothing. I scrouged up some material from the Wardrobe Dept of NIDA and stitched away.

Colouring him was also important, tying everything together so the puppet came together as a piece. But the most amazing part were his eyes.

Once I had completed those, I stood back and BOOM!!! Like a surge of electricity through my body, Zen was real.

I picked him up and put my hand up through his back and into his head and filled his mouth with a handful of fingers. Holding him, it felt like he had control over me, not I in control of him. With no hesitation Zen's little head turned to look at me, his movements so likelike, so comfortable, so perfect...

Following those two weeks with Tina, I have been given more opportunities to expand my puppetry experience. In the final term of school in 1999, the 3rd year production was *The Libertine* and they were in demand of an Organ Grinding Monkey. The director requested a monkey that was to appear lifelike but did not have to move more than the actor giving him a little shake.

Unfortunately his appearance on stage was a mere 15 secs. The second year production was *A Midsummer Nights Dream* where I was required to make a Dog that had a moveable jaw and barked. So I went ahead and spent the hours trying to perfect my next challenge. Within the tech week the dog's barking and movable

jaw were cut and there went all the hard work!  
My final piece of puppeteering is upon me as of now. It is a Barrie Kosky self devised production for the Olympic Arts festival called 'There is No Need To Wake Up'. I have made a 3/4 scale John Howard whose clothes are removed to reveal an old Montgomery Burns (Simpsons) style body with a penis that stretches around 3 metres in length. Building this puppet was my

hardest feat as Howard the 2nd has a moving jaw which the actor operates from behind. The biggest issue with this puppet was everyone's interpretation of what John Howard looks like. An icon is hard to perfect but I think that the results weren't too far off. Puppetry appears easy to achieve, but when you bring in the technicalities of it all you are left with a mission to succeed. Without the developed

knowledge in the correct procedure, I found that problems arose in trying to make the puppets workable by the actors, as you tend to make them workable by you. I have enjoyed my splash in the field and welcome the next challenge in the small but amazing world of Puppetry.

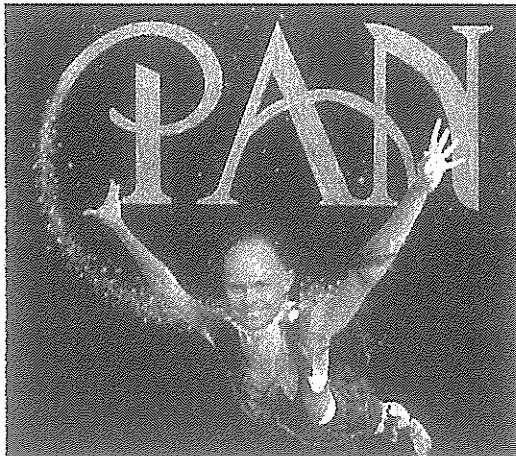
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# SURVIVING THE

# T



# IC

Welcome aboard Australia's most expensive and lavish pantomime, but secure your lifebelts girls, for it's a bumpy ride ahead! (Should have been our warning).

In January this year I was offered a contract that seemed just too good to be true - and indeed it was!

Three years work as a crocodile, good money, great venues and a chance to work for the Henson Organisation. So I hung up my feathers and sequins, said good-bye to my intoxicated RSL and Leagues Club punters and signed my contract for the run of the Australasian tour. This was to be a real challenge: a three hour marathon performance, eight shows a week and doing it sober - well most of the time.

*Pan*: a ten million dollar stage spectacular, employing a staff of over 140 including eleven puppeteers opened on 14 May 2000 at the *Capitol Theatre* following an eight week intensive rehearsal period and directed by Michelan Sisti from Henson's.

*This was to be a real challenge: a three hour marathon performance, eight shows a week...*

Two weeks prior to our previews opening we struck the iceberg! *M.E.A.G.*, the German-based co-producers and funders sacked the Australian producer, Kerry Jewel.

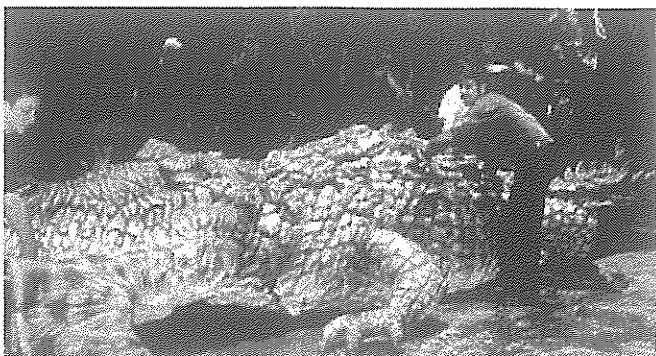
We were assured by the new co-producer, Kevin Jacobsen, that we could stay afloat even though the sets were far too large and cumbersome to fit in any other theatre except the magnificent *Capitol Theatre* in Sydney.

Apart from the five performances each week-end, which were sold out, we struggled to fill the 2000 seats mid-week partly to do with the ticket prices i.e. \$99 for A-Reserve to \$49.90 for children.

On Sunday 25 June at 5:00 p.m. a notice was pinned up back-stage informing us that on Sunday 16 July we would be unemployed and thanking us for our hard work - *Pan* had finally sunk.

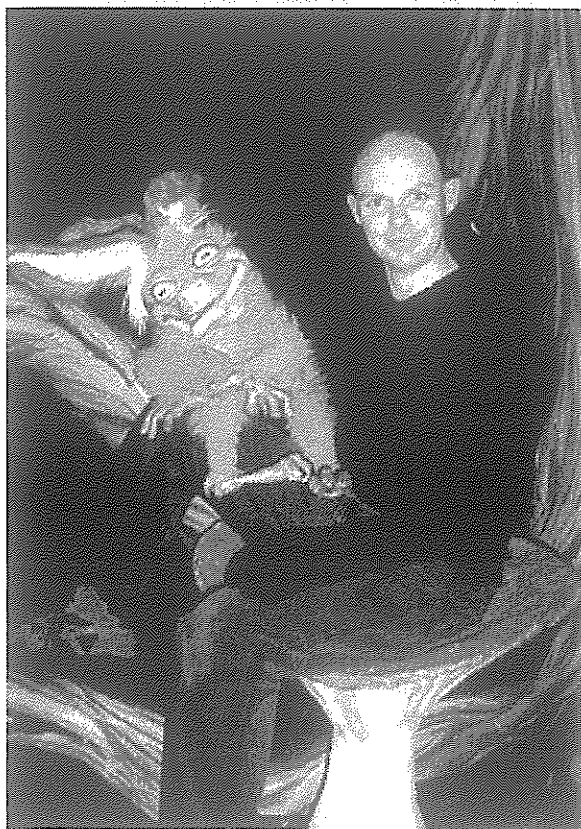


By far one of the most interesting and irritating aspects of being aboard this extravaganza was the fact that all crew, actors and even the program, referred to puppeteers as *creature actors*. I would turn like a chook on a rotisserie each time I was referred to as *Mr Raine - the creature actor*. I eventually asked somebody *in the know* - why? "Well, we don't want to be associated with that typical image of the puppeteer, somebody standing in a tacky box, glove puppet on each hand, shaking them around to a pre-recorded fairy story. This is real theatre!"



*I would turn like a chook on a rotisserie each time I was referred to as Mr Raine - the creature actor*

I found their idea of the *typical* puppeteer very offensive. Unfortunately, I could not change this, apart from a few wary actors who quickly learnt that it was best to call us puppeteers - even though it was said in a hushed tone.



Another remarkable event happened during the second week of rehearsals when our puppet director, Mr Sisti, inquired if anyone owned a full black velvet costume. "Ooh, yes! I have quite a few in storage", I retorted. "Good! Could we use them in the show?" he asked. I found this unbelievable that a show of this size and budget could spend \$600 on a pair of shoes for Philip Quast just for the opening scene but could not afford to costume its so-called *creature actors*. Consequently, I did not supply the puppeteers' wardrobe. However, the management tastefully organised black tracksuit pants and sloppy joes for its talented crew.

I suggested that if we are to wear tracksuits, it may be very fitting to also wear thongs (the foot wear variety) and push our puppets on in a shopping trolley for the finale. This was not appreciated or incorporated in the final performance. Please note, I did not appear on the stage of *The Capitol* in a tracksuit. I organised my own costume.

I have now returned to the glamorous cabaret circuit. Looking back over my time with *Pan*, I have no regrets. I have almost forgotten the stress, the uncomfortable, cumbersome, heavy puppets and props that we shook, waved, wheeled, pushed and beautifully manipulated around those enormous sets.

I will never forget the laughs and pleasure I received working with my talented fellow-puppeteers, especially our head puppeteer, Graeme Haddon, who no matter what disaster, remained cool and calm and would say, "Just remember, we're doing show business - not f\*\*\*ing brain surgery!" True words of wisdom!

*Pan* was truly a fantastical journey for all concerned. Unfortunately, it was far too big and too expensive. But it was a wonderful experience for cast, crew and audience alike.

### Murray Raine

*Those who missed the show may like to check out [www.pan.com.au](http://www.pan.com.au). The site is quite sophisticated but is now a little out of date. It also fails to mention the creature actors, sorry, puppeteers in the show.*

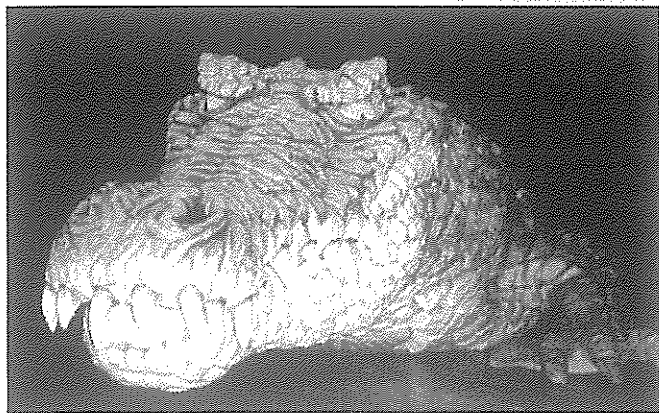
*They were:  
Graeme Haddon  
David Collins  
Murray Raine  
Ingrid Maganov  
Gavin Sainsbury  
Alex Cape  
Luke Ede  
Ben Frost  
Matthews Nicholls  
Anthony Woolcott  
Melissa King*

Without question this is the biggest theatrical event ever to come out of Australia.

In every sense this is awesome. It will go around the world for the next ten years and it will put Australia in the spotlight on the theatrical world's stage.

Michael Bollingbroke,  
Senior Vice President  
Operations,  
Jim Henson's Creature  
Shop

Quote from [www.pan.com.au](http://www.pan.com.au)  
Website designed by Amnesia



# Thiodon's Wonders

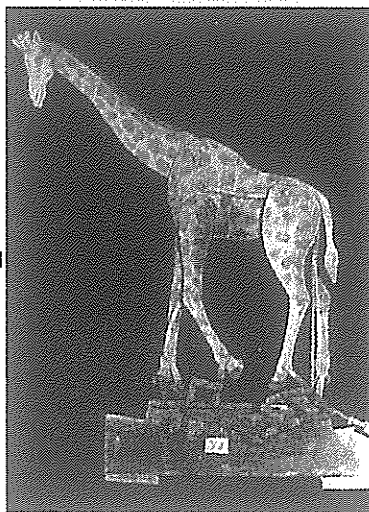
## Part Two

by Richard Bradshaw

Thomas Henry Aspinall was born in England in circa 1823 and became a professional engraver. He also found work as a mechanist for Mons. Joseph Thiodon's show and married Thiodon's daughter Josephine in 1847. (She was about 5 years older than Aspinall.) When his father-in-law died Aspinall became the proprietor, through his wife, and adopted the name "Mons. Aspinall Thiodon". P.T. Barnum, the great American showman, saw Aspinall Thiodon's show in Southampton where I've found that other members of the Thiodon family lived and arranged for it to appear at his American Museum in New York in 1858. In 1859 it was again in New York, but this time not at Barnum's.

Recently Robyn Lake of Launceston passed on to me a copy of an article which had been sent to her by an English researcher, Ralph Hyde. This was written by a Dr. Judd in the U.S. in 1903 and tells how he had gone to England to fetch Thiodon's show for Barnum and then travelled with it in the U.S.A. Judd tells us that the figures were "very nicely" cut from sheet brass, and painted on one side. The figures were hooked into holes in a revolving leather belt running below the front of the scenery, and as they were dragged across, cogwheels fitted to them ran over a strip of felt and this set the figures in motion.

The show toured for at least two years in the U.S. and, according to Judd, was eventually sold to a man in Providence, R.I. who divided it into smaller shows. The American Civil War began in 1861, and almost certainly Aspinall returned to England with his wife and their three



A giraffe from a Saxon mechanical theatre circa 1830. When the cog-wheel turns the linkages make the giraffe walk.

children. Here he apparently rebuilt the show. It was the Melbourne entrepreneur George Coppin who brought Aspinall Thiodon from England to Australia in 187C. Aspinall was then 48 and was accompanied by his wife Josephine and two children, Rosa (16) and Tom (11). An older son, Alfred, remained in England where he became a theatre manager. The ship had been slowed down by unusually severe gales and some of the scenery was damaged.

A week or so after arriving Thiodon's Exhibition of Arts and Wonders began a six-week season at Weston's Opera House on 29 August, 1870. It was originally to have been in the Apollo Hall but at the last moment Coppin put Robert Helier there for his second Melbourne season [Helier was the subject of an earlier article].

The opening program was fairly typical. There was a series of scenes and in the intervals singers and a band provided music. The first scene was Gibraltar showing "The Rock", the town with fortifications and boats at anchor. The moving figures included men and women, a camel-driver whose camel had a lively monkey on its back, an elephant with a trunk that twisted and curled, etc. A paddle steamer puffing smoke passed by and then two warships saluted each other with cannons, and this was answered with a cannon at the fort. Dr Judd explains that the operators were able to puff smoke through the cannons and a bass drum provided the booming.

The scene was followed by "Washington and his Generals at Valley Forge", which seems to have been a painted drop scene, followed by an "apotheosis" of Washington (possibly based on a well-known painting). The Argus thought this "was poorly painted, and only suited to an audience composed of citizens of the United States."

By contrast The Argus found the second animated scene, Niagara Falls with Biondin performing on the tight-rope, charming. The effect of falling water was apparently very effective.

The scene included a variety of other figures including a sportsman with a pointer dog in pursuit of a hare, an item from the original Thiodon's show which George Peck had copied in Tasmania. The dog pointed, the man took aim, shot the hare, then carried it joyfully home vigorously. When Biondin crossed the tightrope the audience applauded. Next the Palace of Versailles. It was to have had holiday-makers climbing a greased pole (as for the scene of Paris in Thiodon's 1858 New York show) but this was cut on the opening night.

The moving figures, about 10 cm high, included people running or walking, a lady who put up her parasol, dogs, horse-drawn vehicles with horses prancing, trotting or tossing their heads, a surprisingly mobile swan in a pond, a man on a donkey, a beggar etc.

The audience applauded almost as if the figures had been alive. Then came the slack-rope dancer whose antics quite eclipsed the earlier performance of Biondin. This act was so well received that it had to be repeated. It had been in New York in 1858 and remained a feature of the show until 1889.

The figure, male, seems to have been about 60 cm high and the audience was quite

unable to see how it was worked. It was capable of life-like movements and could hang by one hand. My guess is that it was a marionette, the strings of which were difficult to discern when theatre lighting used gas. In one ad Thiodon claims that his figure surpasses the original created by Maeizel.

This Maeizel was the inventor of the metronome and had made an ear-trumpet for his one-time friend Beethoven. He is best remembered for his Great Chess Automaton, a mechanical figure made to look like a Turk which was operated by a cunningly concealed man.

This and two Rope Dancers, a clown and his companion, were part of a show which Maeizel took to America where Edgar Allan Poe described the Rope Dancers as "inimitable"!

Poe also tells how the figures were passed amongst the audience before they performed on the rope, but I suspect these were duplicates ... without strings.

The program ended with the mandatory "Storm at Sea". This began with the signs of a storm brewing over a rocky shore. The darkness increased, the waves got higher and ships could be seen heading for harbour. When the violent storm broke a steamer was wrecked and the crew could be seen climbing on to the rocks. As they were saved the band played "Man the Lifeboat" and the audience cheered!

Thiodon's Wonders were back in Melbourne in 1871, and then ran for over two months

at the School of Arts in Sydney. This season was under the management of John Bennett who was to tour McDonough and Earnshaw's Royal Marionettes from America a few years later. They had a second good season in Sydney in 1873 then toured to Brisbane, Maryborough, Rockhampton, Gladstone and Toowoomba. At the end of 1874 they were in Hobart and early in 1875 played in Greenponds and Longford, Tasmania. In 1876 they were at Port Adelaide and Glenelg. An incomplete handbill is in the Mortlock Library.

Robyn Lake has found that Aspinall made a brief trip back to England in 1875 returning with a Josephine Thiodon, aged 16. This is a little mystery, but it may be significant that young Tom was about the same age. (it is likely that Tom was born in America.)

Over these years there were changes in the program. These included scenes of The Alps, Rome, Tangiers (probably Gibraltar in disguise!), Genoa, London with Waterloo Bridge, and the streets of Plymouth.

Sometimes there were also illusions such as the Box Mystery and the Talking and Singing Head. I suspect that young Tom who later worked as a magician was behind these. Sometimes there were two Scotch Dwarfs, which may have been "humanettes" and "Gog and Magog".

At times Master (or Mr.) T. Thiodon (Aspinall's son Thomas) would be a vocalist or lecturer. Sometimes Mile Thiodon (Aspinall's daughter Rosa) "Pupil of the

Conservatoire de Musique, Paris") would be at the piano. Both Thomas and Rosa later taught music.

In 1880 Aspinall Thiodon took over Spencer's Royal Polytechnic, opposite Farmer's (now Grace Bros) in Pitt Street. Here for a shilling you could see "Mechanical Wonders Models of Ships, Curios, Scientific Illusions, Electric Battery..." Thiodon's Royal Polytechnic remained until 1881 when he announced his retirement. For a time Aspinall Thiodon, "engraver", lived in Evans Street, Balmain. His son, Thomas, had a fancy goods and magic depot in the Royal Arcade [a nice old arcade that went when the Hilton Hotel was built] and here his wife also gave music lessons. Then in 1885 Aspinall moved to "Eastview", at 8 Gordon Street, Petersham, where he was living when he died in 1897.

In November 1885 "Thiodon's Crystal Palace Fairy" was listed among entertainments at the Sydney Exhibition. There was a brief reappearance of Thiodon's Wonders at the Gaiety Theatre in Sydney in 1889. Gibraltar was there (followed by Washington at Valley Forge) as was Napoleon crossing the Alps, Biondin at Niagara, the Slack-Rope Vaulter and the Storm at Sea. One new item was "Allegory of Australia, or the Dream of Captain Cook". Robyn Lake has found Thiodon's show was in Launceston in 1890.

The Sydney showing coincided with performances by Saiici's Imperial Marionettes from

Italy but it looks like both shows came to an abrupt end when the death from typhoid fever of young Henry Ernest Searle, "the best oarsman who ever sat in a boat", brought the nation to a halt.



A hunter with a hare, from a Saxon mechanical theatre of the second half of the 19th century. A duck-hunting scene had been a feature of Miller's mechanical theatre in London before Joseph Thiodon took it over in 1819 and introduced his(?) hare-hunting scene. A duck-hunting scene had also been a feature of shadow shows in London in the previous century.

Aspinall Thiodon died in 1897 aged 74, and was buried at Rookwood Cemetery. For years he had suffered from gout, but his death was due to "congestion of the lungs". His wife Josephine died in 1904 aged 86, and is buried alongside him. I have visited their graves, but the headstones have gone. Records show that their daughter Rosa Cleary who died in 1923 aged 75 is also there, as is her daughter Mabel Cleary who died in Sydney in 1970 aged 88. (5 names of nieces and nephews were listed in the death notice. Rosa had at least 12 children

a couple of whom died in infancy.) A notice I placed in the Sydney Morning Herald was unable to trace any descendants of Aspinall Thiodon.

In 1888 Mons. T. Thiodon (Tom) had been performing as a magician in Coogee, Manly, St Leonards and Parramatta, but he was living in Broken Hill when his father died in the following year. It seems likely that he was responsible for Thiodon's World-Renowned Animated Cyclorama advertised for Sydney on Saturday March 22, 1902.

That was a disastrous night for the city because Her Majesty's Theatre, near the former site of Thiodon's Royal Polytechnic, was the centre of a huge fire. So far I have found no further mention of such a show.

Thomas Thiodon died in Sydney in 1915. There is no doubt that Aspinall Thiodon knew the marionettist Charles Webb. His other son Alfred [Aspinall Thiodon became a theatrical manager in England, and was the manager for Webb's Royal Australian and Indian Marionettes when they performed in Cambridge and Norwich in 1880.

# PUPPETRY IN ARGENTINA

Sarah Kriegler

Buenos Aires. Beautiful Buenos Aires. Ugly Buenos Aires - a city of contradictions. Even the city's name - Good Air - is a contradiction for the air of Buenos Aires is thick, humid and filled with diesel fumes. It is a passionate place - passionate for the tango, for culture, for justice, yet it is also complacent. It is a place where 30,000 people disappeared in the Military Dictatorship of the 70's and an

*It is an incredibly rich city yet 12,000 people live on its streets...*

amnesty was granted to those who murdered the children of Argentina. The city is filled with statues of their triumphant past but no one speaks of the disappeared, there are no monuments, no museums, no official recognition of its dirty past. Statues of Justice stand erect in the city plazas but the people accept the corruption that has crippled their country for decades. It is a city for lovers - people kiss on every corner. Every greeting and farewell, is a kiss on the left cheek yet it is a great city of sadness and loneliness where people are swamped by the relentless pace of it all. It boasts of a South American ease but it never sleeps. At five o'clock

in the morning, hundreds of the cities restaurants offer meals. It is an incredibly rich city with magnificent buildings and houses yet 12,000 people live on its streets and shanty towns fill the spaces between

Argentina was originally colonised by the Spanish through blood-thirsty and violent clashes with the Indigenous people.



the affluent suburbs. Families go through the rubbish nightly looking for food. It is like no where I have ever been before. It is a marvelous, wonderful, tragic, heart-wrenching place. It is Buenos Aires.

This year I spent six months studying on a Churchill Fellowship at a puppet school in Buenos Aires, Argentina. I learnt a great many things during my stay. I learnt about puppets, I learnt how to gossip in Spanish, I learnt what a marvelous place Australia is, I learnt to dance the Charcarita, I learnt the world is a small and wonderful place and I learnt, with a little bit of courage, one can make a shape in most societies exactly your size

It was settled by in 1580 and in 1816, it was liberated from Spain by General San Martin and his army. I studied at a puppet school within a theatre complex named after their great liberator, San Martin.

Puppetry was introduced to Argentina first through the Spanish immigrants and then later reinforced by the influx of Italian migrants who relocated to Argentina after the first-world war. Booth puppetry with glove puppets are the traditional form of puppetry in Argentina. Throughout South America people drink a very strong herbal tea called maté (pronounced "martay") The tea is drunk through a metal straw from a small, hollowed-out, pumpkin shell. These pumpkin shells were also

traditionally used as puppet heads with puppeteers taking advantage of the strange nobles and dints sometimes found in the shells and using them for noses and eyes. Nowadays, all forms of puppetry are practiced in

school attached to it (see [www.teatrosanmartin.com.ar](http://www.teatrosanmartin.com.ar)) It really is an extraordinary place. The puppet company of Teatro San Martin began in 1977 under the direction of Ariel Bufano - one of Argentina's most celebrated

and composers for the group as well as puppeteers. Like Australian companies, the Puppet Group's style varies according to the director and designers involved in the projects.

My time in Buenos Aires was mainly spent attending the Puppet School (Escuela de Titeres) of Teatro San Martin. It's hard to find a superlative great enough to describe my experiences at the puppet school. The most fitting word, I think, is generosity. It is an amazing place. It is one room on the third floor of a grand theatre complex. It is general-

*Most of the company members are multi-skilled, working as directors, makers and composers for the group as well as puppeteers*

ly dusty and grubby, with bits of polystyrene in odd shapes on the shelves that line the walls, bags of material scrapes spilling onto the floor but it is one of the most exciting and passion-filled places I have ever studied in.

The school accepts seventeen students every three years and here is where the contradiction of Argentina shows itself again. In Argentina, unemployment rides at 17%. There is virtually no funding for arts projects - government tends to fund theatre buildings

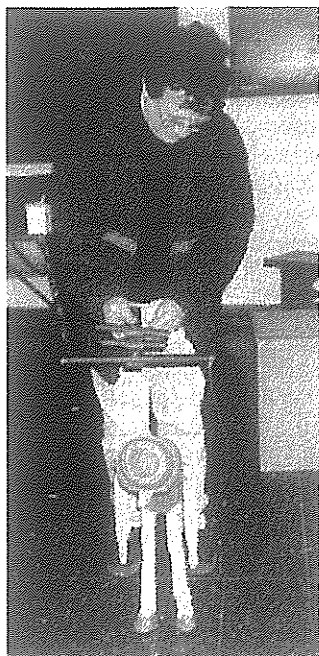


Argentina but Booth Puppetry remains the most common form. ( by-the-way, if an Argentine ever offers you a slurp of maté, try to stomach at least one sip as it is considered to be a symbolic drink of friendship)

Teatro San Martin is one of Argentina's most important theatres and home to the country's only full-time puppet company. The theatre complex is what the Argentine government calls a "Cultural Centre" This means literally, it is a place of culture. Teatro San Martin employs over 1,000 people. It has three theatre spaces, a full-time dance company, acting company, symphony orchestra, full-time puppet company, a ballet school and a puppet

puppeteers. Although puppetry has been an Argentine tradition for many, many years, a large number of Argentine puppeteers say it was Bufano who really excited Argentina about puppetry and his work has since inspired hundreds of puppeteers. The Puppet Group of Teatro San Martin is a full-time company, producing works every school holidays as well as shows most weekends throughout the year. At least once a year, the company produces works for adult audiences too. There are seventeen full time puppeteers involved with the group. As far as I could gather, it is the only fully-funded puppet company in the country. Most of the company members are multi-skilled, working as directors, makers

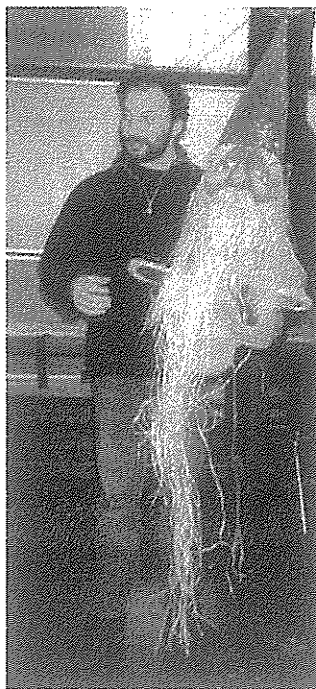




**Roberto DeCampo**

and administration rather than individual projects or artists - but, even with such low employment prospects for their graduates, the school still insists on training puppeteers. One would think that such low prospects of employment in any field, let alone one such as puppetry, would dampen people's desire to commit three years to a course but it actually has a contrary effect. The students and teachers are incredibly passionate about their art. Their dedication and commitment is inspiring and every three years, five times as many people as there are places in the school, arrive for the auditions. As one of the puppet makers for the Puppet Group said to me "In Argentina, we don't have much, but we do have passion for our art and we make our art our lives"

There are nine teachers who teach voice, music, interpretation (manipulation), construction, writing, history, acting, movement and philosophy - all with a focus on puppetry. All of the teachers (with the



**Tito Lorrefico**

exception of Marta Sanchez the voice teacher who is now retired) are practicing artists in their field and most of them work within Teatro San Martin. I was the first international student the school had ever accepted. I joined the students for the first six months of their second year. It really was an utterly extraordinary experience. I was welcomed with open arms by the students and teachers. When I first arrived at the school, my Spanish was pretty basic to

say the very least. The patience of the students and staff was quite wonderful. The first two years of the course focused on skills training in all the for-mentioned areas and because the teachers are the same throughout the course, there is a very clear rite of passage laid out for the students within each subject. In the third year, each student is required to create a puppet performance, using the skills of manipulation, construction, writing, composition etc. they have acquired over the two previous years. The staff are on call each week throughout the project to assist with any problems etc. A great example of the rite of passages each class follows to lead the students to creating their own work is the construction class taken by Roberto DeCampo.

#### **Busker in Plaza Dorrego**





In the first year, Roberto divides the students into small groups. He gives the groups a collection of everyday objects and inspired by the objects, the students write a story, each creating a different character in the story. They then perform their object theatre piece for the rest of the class. Next, he instructs them on the history of shadow puppetry and shows them how to make Balinese shadow puppets. The students are required to take the characters from their object theatre piece and design and construct a two-dimensional shadow puppet version of them. On completion of the shadow puppets, again the stories are performed. For the rest of the two years, the construction class continue to follow this pattern until at the end of the second year, the students have learnt how to make shadow puppets, glove puppets, Indonesian rod puppets, marionettes and banraku style puppets as well as being instructed in model making and sculpture. The point of creating the same characters in all the different puppetry styles is to determine which style best fits which character and story. The students then take the completed puppets into the interpretation classes with Tito Lorrefico and learn how to manipulate them. Because Argentina is a poor country materials used elsewhere for puppet construction can be hard to come by or incredible expensive. As a result, Roberto teaches the students how to make puppets out accessible materials such

as "carta pesta" - a type of paper clay made from newspaper, glue and powdered chalk. He insists on using archaic tools like a piece of wire heated up in a flame to burn holes rather than using an electric drill. His philosophy is a puppet can be made out of anything, with or without money or sophisticated tools.

I think, the main thing I learnt during my time at the school was how much there is to learn about puppetry. The teachers at the school are so knowledgeable in their fields and their patience and dedication to passing on their knowledge is remarkable. In so many of the classes, the air buzzed with the excitement of learning and the teachers generally got a real kick when the students "got it". There were heated debates about styles of work, tears of frustration, heaps and heaps of laughs, songs and maté. It is a wonderful place with wonderful people. At the puppet school of Teatro San Martin, I learnt, in the words of Tito Lorrefico

"to put my soul into my hands" and look upon my chosen art form with a new pride. To be surrounded with such traditions and passion for puppetry was a very uplifting and confidence-building experience. Mind you, it wasn't easy, being in a foreign country, alone, with (at first) no language, trying to learn about puppetry and often, when I walked past beggars in the street or stepped over people sleeping in doorways, it felt horribly wrong to be on a scholarship to learn about puppets while some people around me were so poor. However, even in a place like Argentina, with so many social problems, art has its place - much more so than in Australia - and can and does, alter people's lives but I'll save that story for next time.

**Sarah with fellow students.**



# REVIEWS

POPULAR PUPPET THE-  
ATRE IN EUROPE, 1800-  
1914. (Cambridge University  
Press, 1998)

This is a comprehensive overview of puppetry when it was a major form of entertainment for the 'subordinate' classes. The authors look at who the showpeople were and who their audiences were. They examine the physical aspects of the puppets and staging as well as looking at the personalities of the puppet characters. Three chapters deal with the repertoires used.

Annual fairs were a main source of livelihood for puppeteers and the book goes into fascinating detail as to how it was all organised. Work had to be found between fairs so resorts, cafes and streets became the venues and these are described.

Europe is covered from Polish crib stages to the Greek shadow puppets and the marionette traditions in Belgium. Glove puppetry is covered in a deservedly large section tracing the evolution of the *Commedia dell'Arte* clowns into local folkhero characters. The travelling mechanical shows (Mechanikuses) are also described.

The puppeteers' material was a balance between feeding folktales back to the folk adapting new stories that came along with the introduc-

tion of cheap books; and the individual creativity, wit and spontaneity of the artist.

Puppeteer's improvised shows were suspected of containing 'subversive elements' and so censorship became heavier and council permits harder to get. Puppeteers were generally distrusted for their nomadic lifestyle. A Prague decree in 1802 classified them with gypsies and bandits.

Censorship, adverse legislation, social snobbery and generally hard economic times meant a difficult, marginalised life. One Saxony puppeteer, to prove his respectability, pointed out on his posters that he was a homeowner and Potsdam burgher.

History always repeats itself and it's fascinating to read about 19th century puppeteers trying to move away from the term "Puppet" seeing it as having a low status. (*Sound familiar?*) Even Laurent Mourguet, creator of the famous Guignol character, never put "Puppeteer" down as his occupation.

The social hierarchy had the street glove puppeteer at the bottom. His audience was the casual passers-by in the streets. On permit applications he would describe himself as a "marionettist", the next higher rung. The marionettists worked indoors and had a degree of social respectability

conferred by aristocratic and middle-class patronage. Nevertheless, the marionettists would register as higher status "mechanikuses". There's nothing new here, either. I remember a conversation a few years ago with a puppeteer who was lamenting that theatre actors tended to dismiss Puppetry out of hand as not worthy of consideration. A few minutes later when I raised the subject of Ventriloquism the puppeteer dismissed Ventriloquism out of hand as not worthy of consideration.

Plus ça change ...

Dennis Murphy

## RELATED WORKS:

BURKE, Peter. POPULAR CULTURE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE. London, Temple Smith, 1978  
Theories on the development of Tradition. Comprehensive section on Carnivale elements and themes, 'ideologies', inns and piazzas, class stratification, the attitudes of the 'educated' toward popular culture.

CAPUTI, Anthony. BUFFO - THE GENIUS OF VULGAR COMEDY. Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1978  
Excellent survey of the six categories that made up Vulgar Comedy with secondary characteristics.

KELLY, Catriona. PETRUSHKA The Russian Carnival Puppet Theatre. Cambridge University Press, 1990  
Wonderful descriptions of the Russian Fairground. A full history of the Petrushka puppet Character

PIERCE, Glenn Palen. THE CARATTERISTA AND COMIC REFORM from Mag i to @ @g. Goldoni, Napoli, Societa' Editrice Napoletana, 1986 The evolution of the zanni of the declining Commedia dell'Arte into the caratterista, the non-masked local character that spoke true dialect and reflected social realities and emerging regionalism. Comparison of Milanese Maggi's Meneghino with Venetian Goldoni's Pantalone

SHERSHOW, Scott Cutler. PUPPETS AND POPULAR CULTURE. Ithaca & London, Cornell University Press, 1995 Extremely academic and difficult to read.

SHERZER, Dina & Joel eds. HUMOR AND COMEDY IN PUPPETRY. Ohio, Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1987 Popular Comedy. Double image of the Puppet. That puppets are inherently humorous, cannot be serious. Survey of Italian puppetry as well as that of Bali, Belgium, Hawaii and Java. Comic attendants and Clown figure. The Co-Creation of the comic.

# FESTIVAL REVIEW

## THE UNIMA FESTIVAL IN MAGDEBURG

There are always problems with getting to see shows at the big UNIMA festivals, so I won't bore you with those.

There are always shows one would have liked to have seen, but either didn't know about, or couldn't get to. And there are always many shows one would have been happier to miss! I won't go into that.

Instead, I'll pick out a few highlights, or at least what I felt were highlights.

For years I have been wanting to see any show by Ronnie Burkett from Calgary, Canada. We have mutual friends, and I have been to perform in Calgary four times, yet we have never met. We had seen a documentary on him and his work, but that is never the same as a show. After missing him in Calgary last year we got back to Australia and discovered that Libbie Turner, who lives not far from us, had just seen one of his shows in London! We had a copy of the script, but that's not the same.

It was this show that he was to perform in Magdeburg, "Tinka's New Dress". And we did have tickets! We had heard so much in praise of his show that we were a bit taken aback when just before we went a European friend said the puppets were good but the show was bad! Fortunately when we saw the show we

didn't agree.

The show was in Magdeburg's largest theatre. The big set was like a carousel, with puppets hanging from it. The 20-or-so puppets were nicely made marionettes of fairly conventional design. Ronnie Burkett appeared on stage and selected the marionettes, usually one in each hand, for which he talked. The dialogue was rapid, sharp-witted, and I'm sure it was often lost even on those foreigners whose English is good. [That made up for a lot of German dialogue we had not followed in other shows!] Burkett's play, inspired by Czechoslovakia under Nazi occupation but not in itself so specific of time and place, centres on a gay puppeteer who joins a community of the society's rejects ... and eventually dies when the community is attacked. [The play is considerably more involved than that summary suggests.] It is intentionally anti "red-neck"

Despite the serious content, there were some very funny moments, such as those provided by the fat-lady puppet in the show-within-the-show who orchestrated the audience into chanting: "Can it be? Can it be? Nodge, nodge! It is!! It is!!" as she made her grand entrance. The evil member of a clown duo welcomed everybody to the ENEMA Festival, which apparently offended some people

It was an extraordinary performance presented at a rattling pace and lasting two hours without an interval. We were stunned. I was told that Burkett was going on to Hanover where he would be doing a different show, and he will be doing a third, different, show at the Henson Festival in New York later this year!

[I think Burkett has already played at the Perth Festival some years ago, and there is a rumour that he may be in Australia in 2002. If so, try not to miss him.]

"The Steadfast Tin Soldier" was a wonderful shadow-and-dance show from a German company. The presenter welcomed us wearing a white suit and top-hat. Behind him a large circle of white cloth was inflated into a big dome into which we, the audience were invited. We sat alongside one wall of the dome as the presenter in the middle told us the H.C. Andersen story with images He projected on to the walls. These images were augmented by other shadows projected from outside, and also some filmed underwater segments. (There was also a brief appearance by a live ballerina.)

"Zwielicht" or "Twilight - Take care and stay awake", by Cristoph Bochdansky of Austria was an hour-long one-man show that we thoroughly enjoyed, although we were

disappointed by the rather restrained reception it seemed to get. To a background of Schumann piano music the actor "discovered" a range of bizarre creatures, not necessarily animal or vegetable. He sometimes disappeared inside them as they came to life. A piece would emerge from one creature to become another. How can I describe a show like this? A wonderful sequence of fantastic creations from stuffed knitted coloured fabric shapes, often wonderfully absurd. An extraordinarily demanding

*A wonderful  
sequence of fantastic  
creations from  
stuffed knitted fabric  
shapes, often wonderfully  
absurd.*

piece for the performer, but a revelation of another universe for the audience.

Frank Soehnie, a puppeteer whose work made a great impact at Budapest, helped create this show, and directed it. I am amazed that the audience didn't respond with thunderous applause.

There was also "The (female) Tamer and the Archangel" by the talented husband-and-wife team of Coatimundi from Avignon. This is an outdoor show culminating in the surprise arrival of a huge snail. It

was also seen in Budapest.

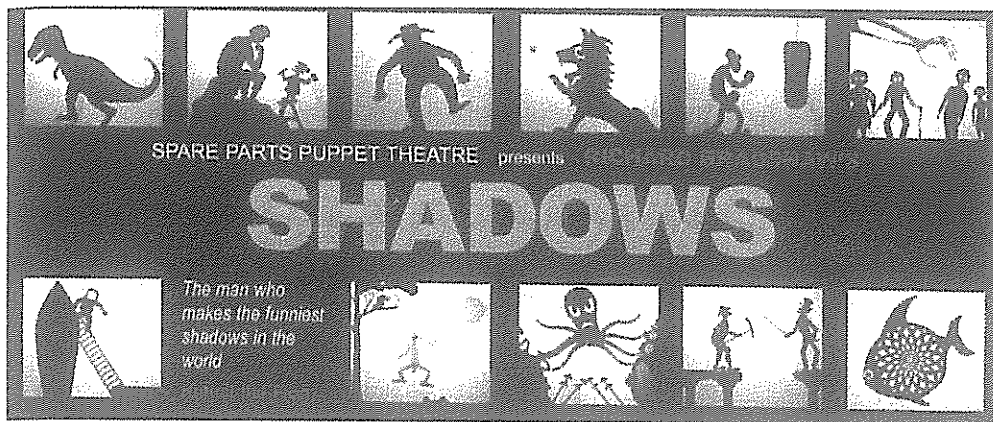
There were two shows from French-speaking Africa, Togo and Mali, both using marionettes. They were nicely presented and full of good humour. But we had to watch the one from Togo in the cold rain in an open-air theatre! In fact, it was warmer in Sydney when we got back in July than it had been nearly all week in Magdeburg.

One treat for me was seeing a performance of "handshadowgraphy" by the 83-year-old Prasanna Rao who divides his time between Bombay and Hamburg, and has performed at the Lido in Paris. A famous master of the art, he also will be at the Henson festival in New York.

I attended some of the Congress and was dismayed when Massimo Schuster, as acting chairman, could not persuade the Council to accept the General-Secretary's report, which had been posted to all Councillors some time earlier, without obliging Jacques Felix to read it aloud from beginning to end. These Congress meetings are not for the impatient!

The new General-Secretary of UNIMA is Miquel Arreche of Tolosa, near Bilbao, in Spain. He speaks good English and French. UNIMA's headquarters will remain in Charleville-Mezieres.

# W h a t ' s O n



## PUPPET MAKING WORKSHOPS FOR ADULTS

Immerse yourself in illusion - get creative with your hands and mind! For 6 weeks, from September 30, Spare Parts Puppet Theatre is running a series of Saturday afternoon puppet making workshops for people between the ages of 14 & 99 years. Jiri Zmitko and Sanjiva Margio lead the workshops in the creation of Marionette puppets with rods (Czech/ Sicilian style) utilising wood craft and paper pulp techniques.

Puppets created during this workshop will be exhibited at Spare Parts Puppet Theatre for the 2000 Fremantle Festival. After that you get to take them home forever.

Dates: Saturday afternoons from September 30 to November 4

Time: 1 00pm - 5 00pm Price: \$150 per person (\$130 members)

All Bookings Call 9335 5044

## Black Hole

Black Hole Theatre is back at the Fringe with another visual Art project in the window of Scally and Trombone in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy. Called 70 x 70, the team of artists are given buckets of squares of paper, each with a different icon on it, and the improvisation begins. In no order, at random, the squares of paper are fastened to

boards in the window and within an hour a beautiful work of art appears. This stays up for a week and the next week-end the papers are taken down and a new art work created. And then a week later the same things occurs again.

Black Hole are gearing up to the launch of Paul Newcombe's pulp fiction table-

top show, CARAVAN. Some of you may have seen parts one and two at the Commercial Hotel at Standing Room Only last year. In five parts, this searing story of sordid characters in the underworld of some Raymond-Chandler-type murder mystery will be presented at a venue yet to be announced at a time not yet decided upon. We will keep you posted

## UNIMA Meeting held on August 12th 2000 at Polyglot.

Report by Sue Giles

It was a very interesting group of people that gathered in the foyer at Polyglot. People who had been in the industry for years and people who had only just begun. It was an indication of the breadth of experience and styles that we have at hand in this city alone. Food and wine flowed like... food and wine. Philip had an imposing list of agenda items and we ploughed through them with gusto. The biggest item was the need for a volunteer treasurer; someone who can make a commitment to the organisation, who can help keep track of members and the financial status of memberships. We discussed the GST issue and Australian Puppeteer's need to get an ABN. The membership data base is in the process of becoming organised – all members present were asked to check their addresses and email. There is an issue of members not receiving their magazines on time and that is being addressed by the overworked editor. The company and individual joining fee was brought into question – should companies have a separate fee or should there be one joining fee for all?

The issue of International Membership Cards was brought up and Mary has produced an Australian Card Prototype for members to think about.

The biggest issue in the room was whether UNIMA and Australian Puppeteer were needed or sought after out there in the industry. Much discussion. The idea of a community of puppeteers and people who work in visual theatre was one that people at the meeting liked the idea of even though the reality of that feels very different day to day.

*The biggest issue in the room was whether UNIMA and Australian Puppeteer were needed or sought after out there in the industry.*

There was talk of a guild of Puppeteers that used to exist and Sarah Kriegler talked of the Argentinian example of a community of artists in the one building, talking, creating art, fighting, arguing, communicating. The fact that our funding bodies in Australia are not focussing on Puppetry as a viable force in the arts was brought up and we discussed ways of harnessing their attention and the arts dollar for visual theatre. The need for us to keep a sense of community was felt. The usefulness of creating lists of pup-

peteers, makers, directors, designers that could be a regular resource.

We talked of the possibility of seeking funding for an infrastructure to help run the magazine. Of attracting advertising to the magazine. Of introducing discounts for members. The question was posed in opposition: What would be the advantage of that for companies?

The issue of getting regular input from companies was raised and Philip will be sending out envelopes for each company that they can put newsclippings, press releases etc in as they come up and Philip will collate the information.

The meeting ended with the creation of a dob list – people who were dobbed in or volunteered to be available for extra jobs that came up around the running of the magazine as Philip Millar is looking pale and thin. Anyone interested in being part of that select group should call Philip.

The jobs are small and varied and it may be just a matter of getting on the phone for an hour or helping collate the information sent in.



## AGENDA

- **Treasurer**
- **GST status:** ABN? Implications for organization?
- **Membership database:** Updates in progress
- **Membership cards, discounts:** Suggestion for ID card, Mary preparing prototype
- **Scholarship:** Availability, amounts,
- **Magazine**
- **Newsletter/Magazine size:** A4, B5? Number of pages?
- **Frequency:** Quarterly? More/less frequent?
- **Support committee:** Individuals to assist in aspects of magazine production
- **Advertising:** Offset cost of magazine
- **Hair-raising stories:** encouraging wider input from membership
- **News:** What's on, stuff in production, upcoming etc
- **Membership:** Delete company memberships, simplify rates
- **New members/ Find lost subscribers**
- **Subscription methods/costs**
- **Web site:** Information about membership, emails available?
- **Jobs available/Wanted**
- **Show and tell:** Videos, puppets, photos, works in progress
- **Group bookings for Melbourne Festival shows?:**  
Maquina Hamlet and Theft of Sita

## Polyglot

Sunflowers has just had its preview showing and is going into the George Fairfax Studio in the Victorian Arts Centre in November. It's a tender story of a little boy who is trying to come to terms with his re-structured family and does so through paintings which magically come alive in his lounge room.

Sunflowers is written by Gilly McInnes and directed by Ariette Taylor. Set and puppets are designed by Adrienne Chisholm and Lighting by Efterpi Soropos. David Chesworth is the composer. GP date Saturday the 11th November.

Studio Polyglot is on and is going to be a great night out – fantastic work from the artists involved. Come and see some amazing effects and concepts. If you want to be involved in this project ring us on 9827 9667.

Polyglot are about to go into a big Artist in Residence project with Malvern Central School and designer/maker Vanessa Beck. She's working with prep, grade one and two to make carnival parade puppets big and small, culminating in a performance day in their local park. The school is really enthusiastic and ready for anything.

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# W I N N E R !

H A L F - P R I N T I N G - S T Y L E - I L L U S T R A T I O N

## **My Strangest Gig** by Ralph Baker

Minimalist puppetry is not new. The naked human hand itself makes a very good puppet- not to mention other human parts! However my strangest gig reversed this situation.

Binky, my monkey puppet, who introduces the show with me, insisted we were performing for a birthday party, as is often our wont. There they were, rows of children sitting cross-legged on the floor in front of us, and their parents, grandparents etc. sitting on chairs behind. "It's just a family social occasion Binky", I said, "Not a birthday party." "But it must be", said Binky, "They're all in their birthday suits!" And indeed they were. The occasion was a naturalist social function - not a stitch of clothing anywhere apart from my wife and myself. (I still maintain I had to have somewhere to clip my microphone!) Mind you, the venue, a swimming centre, was so hot that divesting myself of my garments would have been a welcome relief. But, clothed or unclothed, we were warmly received and the atmosphere was relaxed and friendly.

The organiser told me that any performers who react too eagerly on hearing that it is for a naturalist group, don't get the gig!

Mind you, concentration is essential. You mustn't let yourself be distracted. And always when talking to people before or after the show, maintain eye contact! Bumping out did give us a few problems. We had to negotiate our way among groups of people having supper with our staging that seemed to stick out at all angles. A young man saw our plight and said, "Follow me, I'll clear a path." All we did then was to make sure we followed the right pair of buttocks!

In my 22 years with The Gardner Puppet Theatre, Lorrie and I have had many strange experiences, but it was with my own show as The Pinnacle Puppet Theatre that I got my strangest one!

Ralph Baker

## **Terrapin Theatre**

It has been too long since Terrapin's last contribution to Australian Puppeteer. So, it's time to drag our minds and hands out of the melting pot of our latest work and fill you in on our activities.

In the Terrapin office, General Manager Kristen Molhuysen has left the company to join the team of Ten Days on the Island festival. New General Manager, Alicia James is very excited to be taking over at such an interesting time in the company's program.

Terrapin is delighted to receive a new round of triennial funding from both the Australia Council and Arts Tasmania for 2001 - 2003. This consolidates the company's exciting move into the production of more work for adult audiences. This year, Terrapin will premiere 'The Dark at the Top of the Stairs', written by Noëlle Janaczewska. The Dark is theatre that invades the senses, puppetry that's not for kids. It is the first adult work produced by Terrapin since Desires in 1995 and begins this new journey. Keep an eye out for a review!

### **Competition for next issue: "It just broke."**

This time, tell us about the most extreme, funny, clumsy, unbelievable puppet breakage story. Sort of like the time one of the performers returned a blowfly puppet in a few pieces with the "It just broke" line, only to later reveal it had been slammed in the van door.

Once again, an exciting and intriguing prize could be yours.



Peta Murray won an AWGIE (Australian Writers Guild) award for her adaptation to puppetry of 'Blueback' from the novel by Tim Winton. This is exciting recognition for Peta as well as for Terrapin and the artists involved. 'Blueback' has recently finished a three and a half month tour to New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. Puppeteers Philip Mitchell and Kirsty Grierson performed to thousands of children and their families during a long and busy tour through the three states.

On the training front, Hobart Junction will run for its second year in 2001. This small training festival is aimed at skill development across artforms for professional and semi-professional artists. The program will bring together an eclectic mix of artists from different backgrounds to run four intensive workshops combining puppetry, large scale projected image, directing and music in performance. The program aims to stimulate the development of local cross-artform work through providing new skills, diversifying interactions between artists and exploring collaborative working methods.

Terrapin is collaborating with Polyglot Puppet Theatre in 2001 in the production of a primary school touring show 'The Mighty How'. The work will bring the spirit of invention and gadgetry into the classroom in a fascinating new puppet based work. Inspired by the satirical cartoonist Heath Robinson, this new show explores the famous drawings of bizarre and wildly complex machinery performing the simplest of daily tasks.

Touring to Tasmanian primary schools in Term 2, 2001 followed by a tour to Victorian schools, Terrapin and Polyglot conspire to further exploit puppetry's potential to delight, challenge and express the unexpected.

Terrapin's activities are keeping us all on our toes. The adrenalin rush and ideas are flowing and the workshop is a buzz with the sound of saws and chisels. If you are in Tassie in November, don't miss 'The Dark at the Top of the Stairs' at the Peacock Theatre, 8 - 18 November.



*On the edge of the forest Carlo hesitates. She stares into the dark. From the blackness emerges a tangle of memories; family secrets whispered behind closed doors... unsettling images of her sister Bridie who disappeared long ago...*

Terrapin navigates the wilderness of the imagination to create arresting visual theatre. Thrust into the smelter are puppetry, music, projected image and evocative design; amalgamated and reduced to form a potent alloy; a new brand of puppetry that's not for kids.

Writer	Noëlle Janaczewska
Director	Jessica Wilson
Designer	Julia Christie
Performers	Kirsty Grierson, Philip Mitchell, Michael O'Donoghue and Gavin Sainsbury
Composer	Ben Sibson
Lighting Designer	Philip Lethlean
Projected Image	Leigh Carmichael

Bookings Theatre Royal ph: 6233 2290  
 Centerlainment ph: 6234 5998  
 door sales open 30 minutes before each show  
 \$19 / \$12 concession



## HANDSPAN

Arts Access, Handspan Visual Theatre and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Present Nabokov's *Butterflies - The Synesthesia Project*, a work-in-progress as part of *Behind the Scenes 2000* Melbourne Festival

Saturday 21st October 2000  
at 2pm  
Gasworks, 21 Graham Street,  
Albert Park  
NO ENTRY CHARGE

If you fly high over the tropical forest, you may notice what looks like shimmering little light-blue mirrors – Morpho butterflies flying above the trees”

Vladimir Nabokov, author, lepidopterist and synesthete

Art and science dance an elaborate pas de deux in this intense amalgam of music, literature, dance and visual theatre. Beautiful, strange and thrilling - a work that opens a doorway into an extraordinary world. Known as a mixing of the senses, synesthesia is the capacity to hear colours, taste shapes, or experience other equally startling sensory blendings whose quality seems difficult for most of us to imagine.

The work weaves music, dance and visual theatre to investigate the strange phenomenon of synesthesia. Director David Bell and internationally acclaimed choreographer Simone Clifford will work with sound artist Dave Franksi, dancers with and without physical disabilities, Handspan puppeteers/makers



Michele Fifer and Trina Gaskell and members of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra to create intense imaginative experiences that transcend physical boundaries.

## NOVEMBER

*Lift Em Up Socks* at CINARS 2000

CINARS in Montreal is the important performing arts market anywhere in the world today. Selection into the official program is highly competitive and Handspan is the only Australian company to have been accepted to showcase in 2000.

*Lift Em Up Socks* features Aboriginal actor and musician Tom E Lewis with Handspan puppeteer Rod Primrose and premiered at the Fairfax, Victorian Arts Centre in April this year, with David Bell directing, Mary Sutherland designing, and Heather Monk as puppetry director. The showcase excerpt at CINARS will be presented on Friday 1st December, preceded by a two-week re-rehearsal period in Melbourne. The project is being supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

FEBRUARY 2001

The long awaited premiere of Miss Tanaka – a major new co-production with Playbox:

Sunset. A giant turtle hauls itself across the sand. The sound of Fred Astaire floats across the water. An old man plays poker with two frogs. Giant pearls and fleets of boats appear out of thin air. Digeridoo and Japanese drums whip up a storm of spirals, dragons, cockfights and sumo. Welcome to Australia's own Wild West.

From John Romeril, author of the masterpiece The Floating World and based on a yarn by Xavier Herbert, Miss Tanaka is a bittersweet comedy set in the brawling township of Broome in the 1930's. Two rival pearl divers – one from Japan, one a Malay – fall in love with the same woman: the beautiful and mysterious Miss Tanaka. But are they the only suitors?

As unpredictable as the weather, this cock-eyed tale of mistaken identity weaves an astonishing blend of folk tales, magic and spectacle as it races to its wild conclusion.

Director David Bell  
Puppetry Consultant/Original Concept Noriko Nishimoto  
Composer Darrin Verhagen  
Designer Greg Clarke  
Lighting Designer David Walters

Season opens Merlyn Theatre  
21 February 2001. Full info in Playbox 2001 Program available now.

## Snuff Puppets

cruelty of the body, forum with the browne brothers  
Trades Hall, Carlton, Melbourne

10-21 October

dancing cows

Paralympics, Sydney

22-29 October

<http://www.snuffpuppets.com>

## L'I'L HORRORS - NIGHTMARE COME TRUE.

Two years after December Films piloted, with the help of the Commercial Television Production Fund and Beyond Distribution, the series L'I'l Monsters (now know as L'I'l Horrors) is in production. The show for Channel 7 consists of 52 twelve and half minute episodes. The series was finally financed through the Channel 7 pre-sale and overseas investors through Beyond International. L'I'l Horrors is a puppet sitcom that stretches the boundaries of the imagination and is billed to set some new standards in international children's entertainment.

The target age group for the series is 4 - 7 years old. This is an age group who are currently not well catered for. Much programming is created for pre-schoolers and for 9 years olds and older, but this is an in between age group.

L'I'l Horrors presents puppet characters with attributes and characteristics that will be immediately recognisable to this age group. Comic situations that the main characters find themselves in reflect the audience's experiences and emotions.

L'I'l Horrors celebrates difference. The characters are all physically very different from each other. Each character has his or her own unique and individual way of viewing the world too. Often ways that clash with the other characters. The target audience will recognise in them characteristics in either themselves, or their friends.

The puppets have been developed to be light and agile to maintain a sense of life and animation in the series. Each contains only as much mech work as is vital to the key attributes of the character.

Being a puppet sitcom it presents some real challenges in all areas of production from lighting, shooting, voice play back, staging and especially in puppeteering. The set has great depth often requiring characters to enter from deep upstage. Having created a level of reality the challenge is not to break this by sighting such things as rods which is difficult in such deep shots. But innovations are yielding great results.

The series will have sneak a preview of six episodes in pairs over three Saturday mornings during the Christmas period. The series starts screening in earnest (or silliness) in April 2001.

Tony Wright  
Producer  
December Films Pty Ltd

# Ardent Shorts

Lighting design: Bec Bennell  
Sound and Lighting Technicians: Tam Pay and Bec Bennell  
Stage Management: Tam Pay  
Lighting Consultant: Phil Lethlean

1. **Nine Lives of Rugby** by Jacqui Cane  
Puppeteers Jacqui Cane and Anna Laverick
2. **Some Day My Prince Will Come** by Amanda Armstrong.  
Thanks to Andrew Livingston, Adrienne Chisholm, Jocelyn Evans.
3. **Business Relations** by Krinkl Theatre.  
Puppeteers Lara Cruickshank and Padi Bolliger.  
Soundscape by Jayson Cooper.
4. **Desert** by Jessie Willow Tucker.  
Music by Nell Pay  
Thanks to Lake Mungo and the whale.  
Also Josh Dain, Simon Bailey and Kate Tucker for lending us gear.
5. **Deus Ex Machina** by Graeme Davis  
Puppeteers Graeme Davis, Astrid Davis, Kyle Davis, Franceynee.
6. **Catwalk Chaos**  
Puppeteers Kelly Smith, Chris Hill, Emma Buckley.
7. **In the Foyer: The Shy Environmentalist** by Peter George  
Peter is happy to conduct guided tours of the Giant Playpus  
and demonstrate the internal workings.

Studio Polyglot thanks the artists involved and their imagination, zeal and obsessional dedication in presenting these plays tonight.

Big Thanks to Tamaryn Pay, Bec Bennell and Pat Kearney for their invaluable help in many, many ways. Thanks to Ballarat SMB small companies course for training such excellent people and leading us stuff. Thanks to Eloise Gooding; to Sarah Kriegler and Heather Monk for being on hand for puppetry advice. Thanks to Ian and Zac and Rose for being so understanding. We would also like to heartily thank the Fringe.

Arts Victoria and the Australia Council for supporting the company in seeking out new work.

## Ardent Shorts: a short review

by Philip Millar  
Studio Polyglot's latest presentation of new short works made for an interesting, diverting and generally entertaining evening's puppetry.

**The Nine Lives of Rugby** was a hoot. The fast-moving structure of the piece was underpinned by some very convincing cat puppetry and a gleefully black sense of humour. **One Day My Prince Will Come** presented some enjoyable scale twists and neat effects.

**Business Relations** took a familiar puppet exercise and played out the scenario with strong clear intentions and actions. Very focussed. **Desert** employed a powerful live electric violin with a life-size dancing figure against a range of projected backdrops. The initially intriguing set-up became over-stretched as the puppet's limitations became more obvious.

**Deus Ex Machina** was black theatre as a blend of dream like states and experimental show and tell. The piece features some beautiful puppets and looks set to develop further. The multi-layered soundtrack at times drew attention to the need for greater dynamic variation in the puppet's actions.

**Catwalk Chaos** didn't really fulfill the promise in the title. The puppets were intriguing but a little too timid to provoke chaos. Further development of their movement potential may do the trick.

**The Shy Environmentalist** on the other hand means what it says. Lovely Platypus too.

### Handy hint from Richard Hart of Dream Puppets:

Next time you're about to throw out your empty roll-on deodorant bottle, stop and look at it carefully. Yes, that's right, it wants to be reincarnated as an eye mechanism.

Some brands also have flip-top lids which can be made into eyelids to match the eye.

A little fiddling about is required to fix controls to the ball but as a functional mech which doesn't demand hours of careful machining, it has enormous potential.

Thanks to Richard for the suggestion. Other technical ideas, plans, mechanical devices or whatever can be shared with the membership via this magazine. Start writing now! Photos too!

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Next Issue is **SUMMER**. Please flood the Australian Puppeteer mailbox with exciting articles, photos, details of your latest masterwork, addresses of your puppet-making materials suppliers, entries to the competition, stimulating debate on anything puppetry and support the new editor. Thanks.

**03 5977 4392**

**Building the  
Opening and  
Closing  
Ceremonies:  
Workshop  
manager  
Al Martinez  
reveals the  
dramas behind  
the scenes**

Full story starts page 10

