

AUTUMN 2003

# Australian Puppeteer



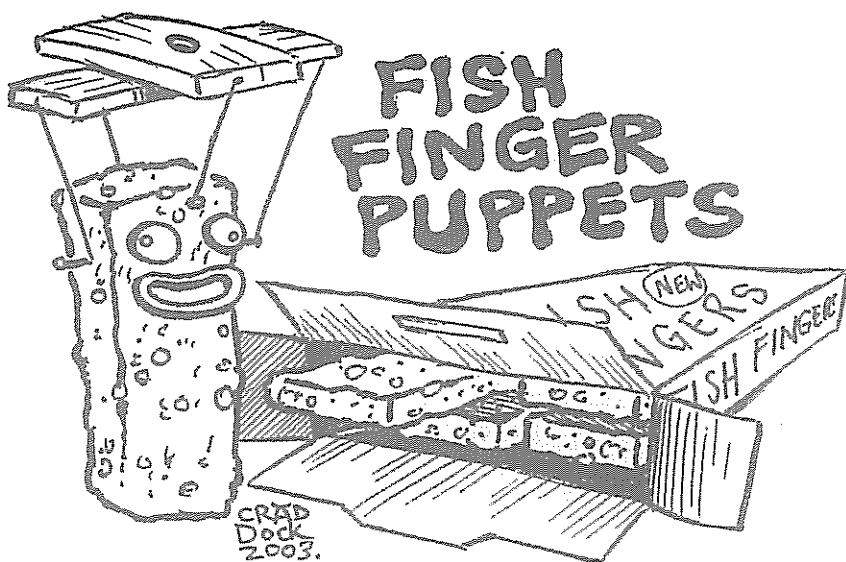
celebrating

## WORLD PUPPETRY DAY

UNION INTERNATIONALE DE LA MARIONNETTE



Front cover image from *A World of Paper*, a co-production by Windmill Theatre and Theatre Kazenoko, Kansai, Japan.



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# Australian Puppetry

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**Illustrations:** Brian Craddock, Julia Davis

A special thank you to Brian Craddock of Balderdash Puppets for his original artwork and cartoons.



# EDITORIAL

I have taken a retrograde step: I have abandoned the computer and all its layout gadgetry and have reverted to scissors, glue and paper\*. This edition of *Australian Puppeteer* is the result.

I like mess, *palpable* mess. We puppeteers like to get our hands dirty. We like to feel the connection between the impulse to control and the outcome. Let's face it: we are manipulators and the computer wrests control from us and severs our link with our product.

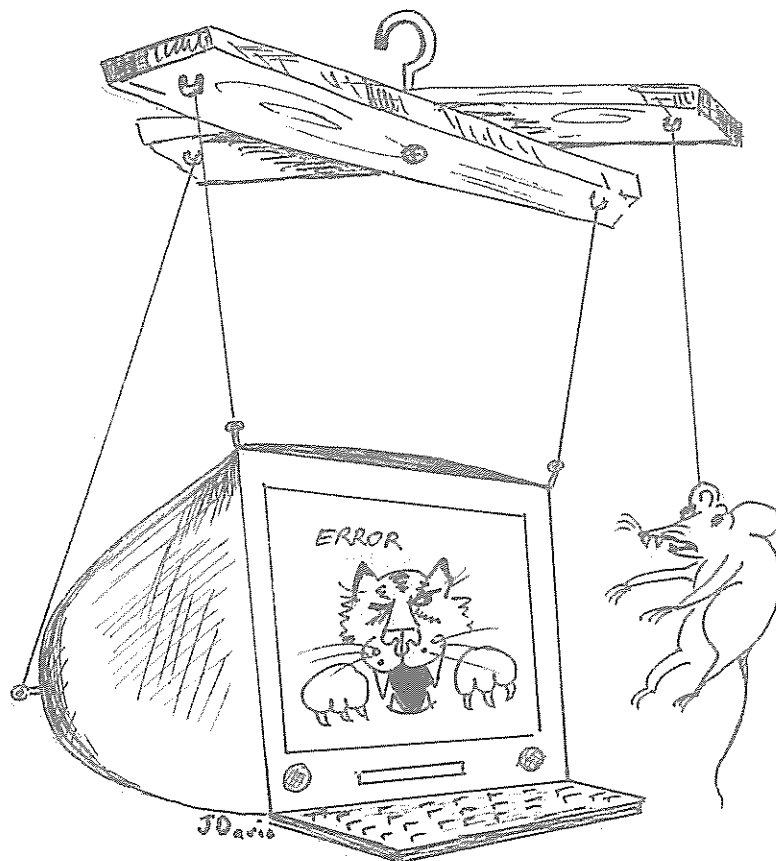
Computers *DO* have minds of their own. They like to change font and format, skew photos, eat apostrophes (see October edition of *Australian Puppeteer*) and when you think it looks fine on the screen it won't print out that way!

Computers are too temperamental. They have breakdowns, crash and contract viruses. A virus is responsible for the loss of some of the summit material which was to be printed in this issue.

So, with little thanks to my Mac, I offer you the Autumn edition of *Australian Puppeteer*.

Julia Davis

\* *paper* - an ancient word for hard copy







# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Lorrie Gardner

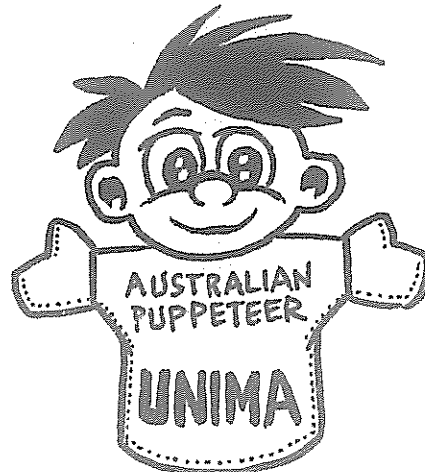
UNIMA is to promote peace and understanding between nations through the art of puppetry. Puppeteers throughout the world have a common bond - the love of the inanimate and how we, as puppeteers, can animate the inanimate and speak through it.

The war in Iraq has rightly brought out puppets that can be used to promote peace. Puppets can march in protests and puppets can show the horror of war better than mere words.

I was privileged to be part of one such emerging group - given the name of 'Expansion Performance Troop' by Helen Rickards (off the top of her head). Using a puppet man and woman from "Cho Cho San", the baby from "Smalls", and even a bird from my "Rainforest Magic"; volunteer puppeteers and their offspring, and at one show a few co-opted locals, performed a very powerful vignette to the singing of 'We are all saying: give peace a chance'. There was some humour, in my eyes, when the announcer called us the 'Circus Troop' before we could set things right. It made me feel young (and fit) again - me, a member of a circus troop!

World Puppetry Day on 21 March was also chosen by the UN as Harmony Day! This certainly is a good choice from our point of view because UNIMA wants harmony between all races, creeds and nationalities, so the two days could work together. We will try to get UNESCO to link the two days. My dream for World

Puppetry Day is that it will become known to schools, councils and the general public and generate employment for puppeteers. Until it is known better, our job is to try to advertise it. I admit it might take a few freebies (such as I confess I did with the proviso that all the school kids made their own puppets - and we had a grand parade for World Puppetry Day!) However, world events overtook us, since war had just been declared and the protest marches were in full swing. We could not even get local paper coverage.



I would like to report a very successful meeting Victorian UNIMA held in March. Dennis Murphy of Murphy's Puppets, N.S.W., was touring in Victoria and he kindly offered to give a public lecture-show for UNIMA about Commedia del Arte masks and puppets.

The program was held at the Polyglot Theatre, kindly donated to UNIMA for the night by Polyglot. Over 30 people attended; some were UNIMA members

and some non-members. Dennis gave a fascinating talk and demonstration and questions from the floor kept him talking for an additional hour! We then invited everyone to come for a meal in a nearby restaurant and 15 accepted. It is hoped that other states will do the same when touring puppeteers visit their states. I am sure other touring UNIMA members will be willing to share their knowledge and experiences.

I had lunch with Sue Blakey and Steve Scott of The Festive Factory at their home-cum-studio in Woodend recently. What an eye opener to see their puppets and catch a glimpse on a CD of what they were doing! I fell in love with a huge - over a metre long - wooden marionette preying mantis - wonderful head movement and so expressive! I am looking forward to seeing some of their work live. Actually, I did see some without knowing it. I saw their butterfly and butterfly catcher act in the Canberra Festival some time ago without knowing who was performing. My excuse was that I was in my role as new grandmother.

Peter Wilson, Director of the 2002 National Puppetry and Animatronics, has been in Japan directing "A World of Paper" for Theatre Kazenoko, a highly regarded Japanese Children's Theatre company. Melbourne audiences were able to see this in early April and I was privileged to attend and was most impressed. A lovely piece of children's theatre, exquisite - as I heard one audience member describe it. The girl in the acting role played a child very well and with such wonderful expression as the child interacted with her world of paper creatures with wonder. There were no words - only the musical sound track - but the children in the audience had no

trouble understanding what was happening.

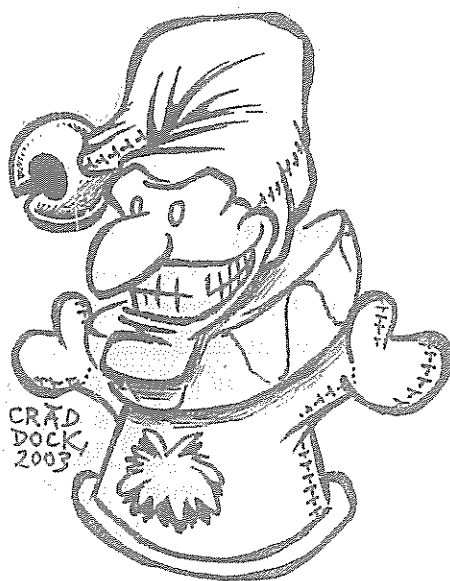
A welcome home from Seoul to Sue Wallace and Steve Coupe from the Sydney Puppet Theatre. They are enjoying the natural beauty of nature again after living for so long with 15 million people!

An informal social get together of puppeteers is planned for June 19 - 22 on the Central Coast of N.S.W. Contact Dennis Murphy for more details.

**Please do not forget about the Handspan Visual Theatre's International Study and Travel Grant. UNIMA has \$2000. to give to some lucky traveller at the end of the year. Please contact Mary Sutherland to apply.**

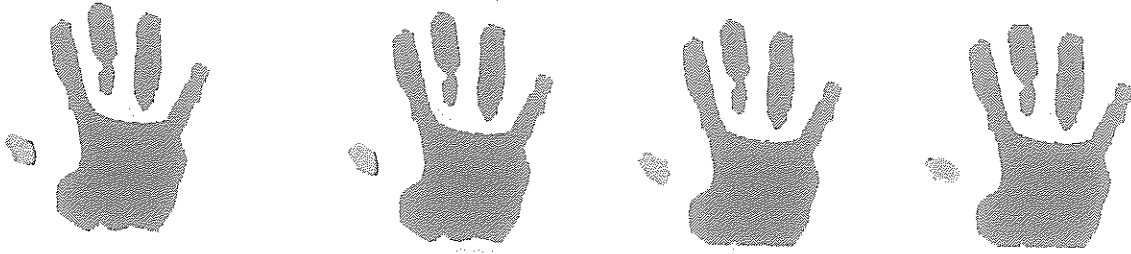
Let's hope that by the time you read this there will be lasting peace in the world.

Lorrie Gardner



# Important Announcement

## The Handspan Visual Theatre International Travel and Study Grant



A grant of \$2000 is now available to all practitioners of puppet arts, including puppeteers, directors, designers, writers and makers to undertake international travel or study.

There are no age restrictions for the grant.  
Applicants must be current UNIMA members.

For further information, please contact:

The secretary for UNIMA Australia,

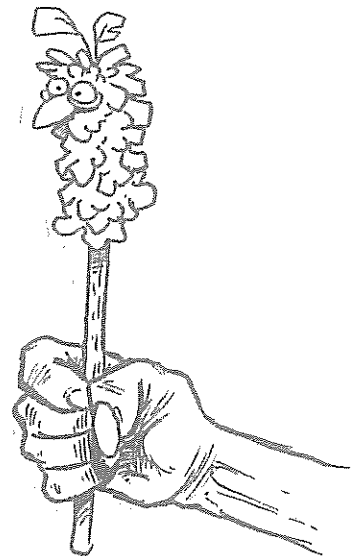
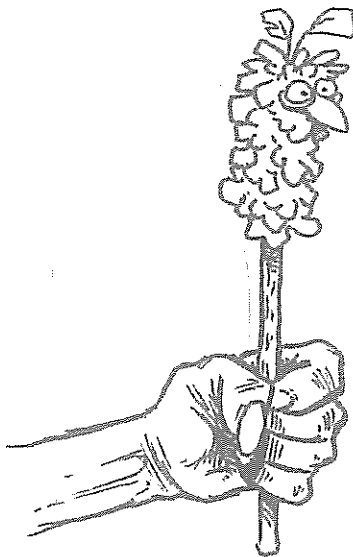
Mary Sutherland

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[msuther@ozemail.com.au](mailto:msuther@ozemail.com.au)



**A Letter to Unima Members**  
**from Dr. John Butler, Swinburne**  
**University**

Dear UNIMA members,

We are seeking your assistance in the development of an Advanced Diploma of Visual Theatre /Puppetry to be offered at Swinburne University's Prahran Campus in 2004.

This is a direct response to the National Puppetry and Animatronics Summit held at the Victorian Arts Centre in October 2002. In the plenary session there was a national call for training to address this shortfall.

In the current Diploma of Arts - Small Companies and Community Theatre course at Swinburne TAFE there is a Puppetry elective taught by Ken Evans to second year students with a total of 210 hours in which to stage a performance. This, however, does not allow enough time to develop skills in making, manipulating and creating work required of a well trained puppeteer.

Swinburne University has been working with puppeteers for thirteen years and now wishes to develop an independent course specifically to cater to this training need.

Ken and I would like to invite you to write back or send an e-mail back with your thoughts on what specific skills are required for the training of puppetry/animatronics. Secondly, what potential future skills may be required for this industry?

Our objective is to compile a list of employment opportunities which currently exist in this industry and potentially in the future.

In addition the course, if approved, will be seeking industry placements with a range of companies, so students can gain valuable experience 'on the job'.

We appreciate your time and effort with this letter/questionnaire. This will be used to provide evidence to both training and funding bodies. It will also document the need for training and reveal associated employment outcomes.

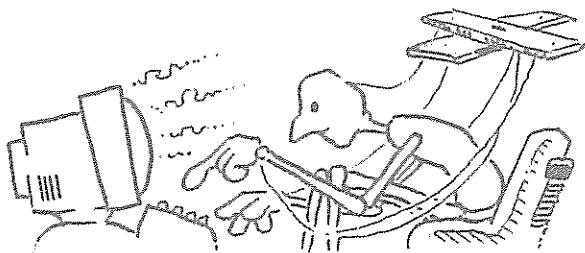
Ken Evans and John Butler will be forming a Steering Committee and may call on your expertise if you have the time.

If you have any further questions please contact me via email:  
<jbutler@swin.edu.au> or phone 9214 6719, or mobile 0402 487060. Ken Evans may be contacted via email <evansabove@optusnet.com.au>

Yours sincerely,

John Butler

Course Coordinator  
Diploma of Arts –  
Small Companies & Community Theatre  
Swinburne University



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C.R.A.D.  
DOCK

# ASIA PACIFIC NEWS

by Jennie Pfeiffer

## Festival India:

National Puppet Festival, "Putul Yatra", took place from the 17-28 March. Some 32 groups from all over India, modern and traditional, did performances, three scheduled each evening at the Meghdoot Theatre. The UNIMA Executive meeting was held at the India International Centre, Delhi, 17-21 March. Research Symposium: East West-West East washeld at the IIC from the 23-25 March at which yours truly (JP) had a paper read by ex-pat Australian and puppeteer, Karen Smith. (Following will be a brief summary and explanation of the paper, which refers to issues that require attention.) A National Puppet Exhibition from the archives of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, Delhi was held from the 21 March-4 April at Rabindra Bhavan Meghdoot complex. The celebratory parade planned for World Puppet Day was transformed into a low key opening due to the war. Two huge puppets doing a small animation based on a Mahatma Gandhi rhyme, "Ishwar Allah tero nam", (that we call him by different names, but all aspire to the same universal aspiration of peace and harmony).

Dadi Pudumjee's group's performance was based on a piece used in the film by Depa Mehta, "Earth 1947". It goes that if your heart is so large, then why are humans' hearts so small and full of war and hatred.

Dr Kapila Vatsyayan read her message in Hindi and English, then French and Spanish - the 3 UNIMA languages. The SNA hosted a dinner that night for participants and observers at the IIC. (All the above events were hosted and sponsored by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, The India International Centre, and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations).

## China:

The Golden Lion Festival will be held on 19-26 May in Guangzhou China. The Elite Chinese Puppetry Troupes Competition, the Golden Lion Award (China) National Puppetry Festival, is on 19th - 26th May, 2003, in Guangzhou and hosted by the Chinese Puppetry and Shadow Puppetry Association, (also the location of UNIMACHINA's office). An official large-scale international event held by the Chinese Cultural Ministry, and the first large-scale event in China after the inception of UNIMACHINA. The opening ceremony for UNIMACHINA's building will also be held.

In the Golden Lion Award (China) National Puppetry Festival, famous and elite Chinese puppetry troupes will present their recent work to compete for prizes. 15 fantastic puppetry shows will be selected among different elite Chinese troupes by the provincial Cultural Departments and the professional panel of the Cultural Ministry (their phrasing - JP). The puppetry masters, professionals, artists and puppet lovers from all over the world will be welcomed and invited to watch the performances. The Golden Lion Awards include: The Golden, Silver and Bronze Awards, Playwright, Director, Performance, Puppet Design, Production, Music, Stage Arts Creativity and Lifetime Achievement Awards. There is more than 2000 years of puppetry history in China. Experiencing different dynasties and changing environments, some puppetry troupes still retain traditional puppetry arts while some have modernised. Chinese Rod, Glove, Marionette, and Chinese shadow puppetry will fascinate foreigners. Selected troupes will be announced in April. This is a pilot project conducted by the Chinese puppetry industry after its membership to UNIMA. (JP I have all registration forms and more detailed information and will try to have these posted on our website. It sounds like a truly marvellous festival, (if highly structured) but I advise you to stay informed of travel warnings issued by DFAT (Dept Foreign Affairs and Trade). This advice is regularly updated and can be found at <http://www.dfat.gov.au/travel/> or you can contact me directly at [jandipfei@dodo.com.au](mailto:jandipfei@dodo.com.au) and I will forward the forms and info to you.)

## Pakistan:

While attempting to have the proposed inauguration of the Museum of Puppetry for 21st March, World Puppetry Day, work was unfortunately not finished. The opening is now scheduled for the middle of May 2003. Next year it is hoped to hold a small festival for WPD.

Faizan Peerzada, UNIMAPakistan

## Belgium:

News of other activities in Belgium is pending but hopes to organise a national event exist for the future. figuretheater Vlinders & C<sup>∞</sup> (English: theatre Butterflies & C<sup>∞</sup>) performed 'Berenverhaal' for about 160 children in Oelegem (a small village near Antwerp). After the performance Ronny Aelbrecht told the children about the inaugural World Puppet Day and to remember this occasion he all gave them all a small puppet. Ronny Aelbrecht is Artistic director and puppeteer, [www.vlinders.be](http://www.vlinders.be) UNIMA - Belgium.

## ASIA PACIFIC NEWS (cont.)

Following is a summary of the Research Paper Abstract by Jennie Pfeiffer presented at the Research Symposium, New Delhi:

### Globalisation: Negotiating the Terrain

This paper maps the changing landscape in negotiating cultural production (ie the creative arts and industries) in a global environment. The paper revisits contemporary cultural theory and overlays these concepts, the discourses in common academic currency, to puppetry practice in the broadest sense. Concentrating on Postcolonial Studies, the work signposts how academic theoretical insights may be practically applicable to puppetry cross-cultural work and practice. The paper brings forward post-colonial issues of equity and access, of ethics and exploitation and, implicitly, cultural agency and independence, and particularly of the significance of local articulations to the social fabric of local communities.

These issues are examined with particular reference to structures of policy and governance. The essay refers to the privileging of professional institutionalised structures and language in the arena of policy-making. New policies will influence all spheres of cultural production: film, music, theatre, visual arts, contemporary and traditional, and indeed, everyday life. The International Puppetry Organisation, UNIMA, is called upon to participate on behalf of puppeteers. The paper urges UNIMA to become familiar with the contemporary issues at stake in negotiating new Global Conventions for the Preservation of Cultural Diversity being brokered by UNESCO. This is important, and especially for those in the so-called 'developing world', not connected to professional institutionalised networks. This project takes on urgency as the policies in question are in the process of being drafted and are to be discussed, and perhaps formalised, at the next UNESCO General Conference, October 2003.

**\*\*ANYBODY** who would like more info about these issues please contact me. The policies will go towards making guidelines and parameters for negotiating Free Trade Agreements, which will impact on us all in within our own national boundaries. JP \*\*

# WORLD PUPPETRY DAY



The idea to establish a World Puppetry Day was first suggested at the 18th UNIMA Congress in Magdeburg in 2000. The day was proposed by the Council of UNIMA at Atlanta and it was agreed that it should be celebrated on March 21, 2003 to coincide with a puppetry festival in New Delhi, India.

Margareta Niculescu, the president of UNIMA wrote to all the national centres of UNIMA:

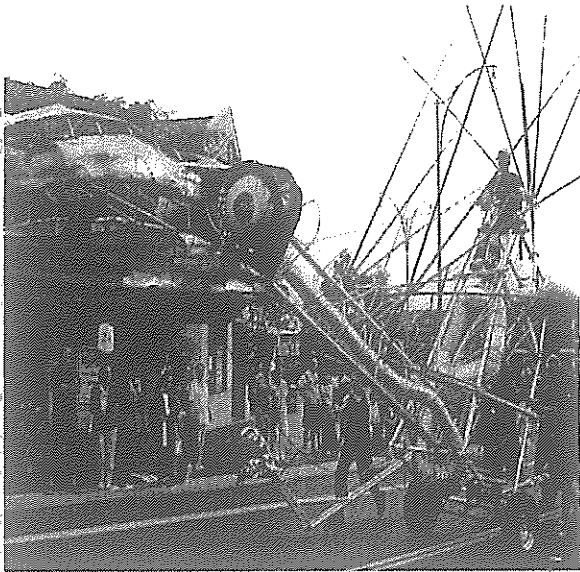
"We want this day to be a special moment to strengthen the UNIMA objectives, its compromise with the ideals of peace, solidarity and the progress of humanity, in a spirit of interchange and sharing of culture and civilisations.

"The Day is an occasion to dress up and focalise (sic) the attention of the international artistic community, of all kind of institutions and of the general public on the puppet and its creativity.

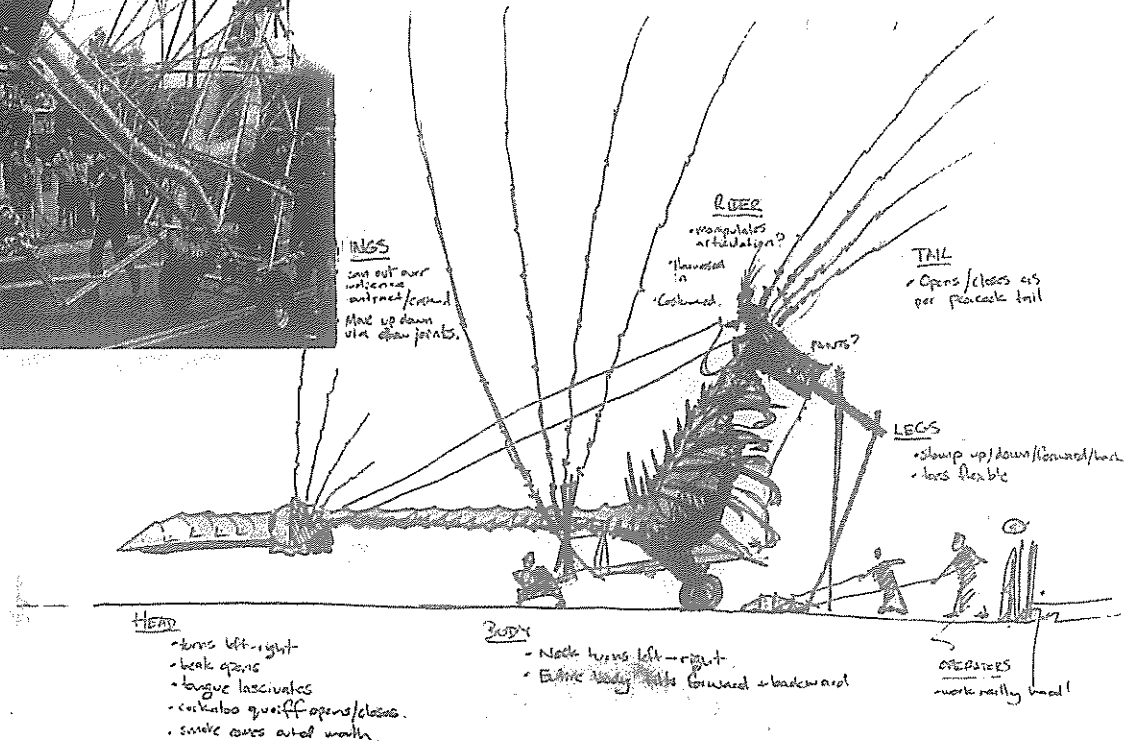
Let them discover us! Let them know us! Let them participate! Let them speak about puppets!"



# WORLD PUPPETRY DAY



Spare Parts associates, Bryan Woltjen and Karen Heathey created Wubba, the giant bird, for the Joondalup Festival. 10 manipulators operated the controls and puppeteers ran alongside to manipulate the large striding feet.



Spare Parts publicist, John Michael Swinbank (JMS), was faced with the biggest nightmare any publicist could imagine...Channel 10 cancelled coverage of the Joondalup festival....opening on World Puppetry Day...*The West Australian* cancelled front page coverage...*Sunday Times* takes photo but doesn't publish... "The war is on!"

West Australian journalist:  
JMS:  
West Australian Journalist:  
JMS:

John Michael, don't you know there is a war on!  
Yes I know, but it is World Puppetry Day tomorrow.  
(laughs) Do you expect us to stop the war coverage for World Puppetry Day?  
Yes, I do, actually.

John Michael realised that a challenge was ahead. Life was not going to stop because of a war....World Puppetry Day was tomorrow and they were going to know about it whether they liked it or not! JMS proceeded to send press releases to every media outlet and journalist in the country. Every daily, weekly monthly, paper, every television, radio station around Australia was going to know that it was World Puppetry Day.

And that's what he did: "Even if nothing gets out, at least every journalist in Australia will know it is World Puppetry Day! I'm going to clog up their e-mails with WPD information even though there is a war on!"

The response from media was great: 93.6 Radio in Perth was announcing World Puppetry Day regularly on air. Journalists rang and apologised for not being able to cover the day. Others laughed: "There is a war on!" Others went to the UNIMA website and were impressed by the world puppetry community.

Wubba, the giant puppet, went ahead. The festival was a huge success and now there is a greater awareness of puppetry, at least amongst journalists, that puppetry is an important, integral part of Australian culture and of its significance nationally and globally.

Philip Mitchell  
Spare Parts Puppet Theatre



Spare Parts celebrated World Puppetry Day across the breadth of Western Australia.

In a small town called Carnarvon performers Gibson Nolte and Simon Clarke performed Hare Brain.

Later that afternoon, in the City of Joondalup, what is believed to be the largest puppet in the Southern Hemisphere went for its inaugural flight. Spare Parts Company Associates, Bryan Woltjen and Karen Heathley created Wubba, the giant bird, for the Joondalup Festival.

Wubba is constructed on a trailer axle base using scaffolding pipe as a skeletal structure, push bike mechanisms to manipulate heads, necks and an exquisite rolling tongue - inspired by workshop designer, Cecile Williams. 10 manipulators were required to operate it. A spectacular puppet for a spectacular day.

# WORLD PUPPETRY DAY

World Puppetry Day in Rockhampton, was also part of Harmony Day celebrations and the reopening of the Walter Reid Arts Centre. Brian Craddock organised several events to celebrate World Puppetry Day.

He set up a puppet display in the foyer of the Walter Reid Arts Centre for their official reopening.

Brian, and his assistant Jonathon Wright, took part in the Harmony Day celebrations by constructing a six-foot high foam puppet, Patchwork the Harmony Puppet. Children decorated the base with coloured fabrics, ping-pong balls, and soft craft foam. Brian and Jonathon then performed a puppet show.



## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Adelaide - The cast of *The Lion, Witch and the Wardrobe* organised flyers and a voice over dedication by Joanne Foley to World Puppetry Day prior to Friday's show. Jo used UNIMA info and Margaret's letter to write the flyer, which were put out by the ushers/ettes on all the seats for Friday evening's performance.

Sally Chance, director of Come Out Festival for young people also promoted World Puppetry Day.

The Gardner Puppet Theatre offered a show to Hobson's Bay Primary School in Newport in exchange for helping UNIMA celebrate World Puppetry Day.

Ian Cumming performed his solo puppet show "Crocodile Tears" to an audience of about 200 appreciative children and adults at Rosebud Primary School. A rolling workshop followed that ran to 7.00pm.

## VICTORIA

Melbourne's Dream Puppets celebrated World Puppetry by offering a free performance of Richard Hart's *Dreamer in Space* to the neighbourhood and local community. Due to wet weather the show was held in Dream Puppets' garage-cum-studio space in Oakleigh. Julia Davis organised a display of 27 of her Celebrity puppets at McKinnon Secondary College.

Swinburne University Prahran Campus, Melbourne 'Puppetry Awareness at Swinburne' - discussion generated with students regarding puppetry and pe...



# WORLD PUPPETRY DAY

## VICTORIA

### Ian Cumming (cont.)

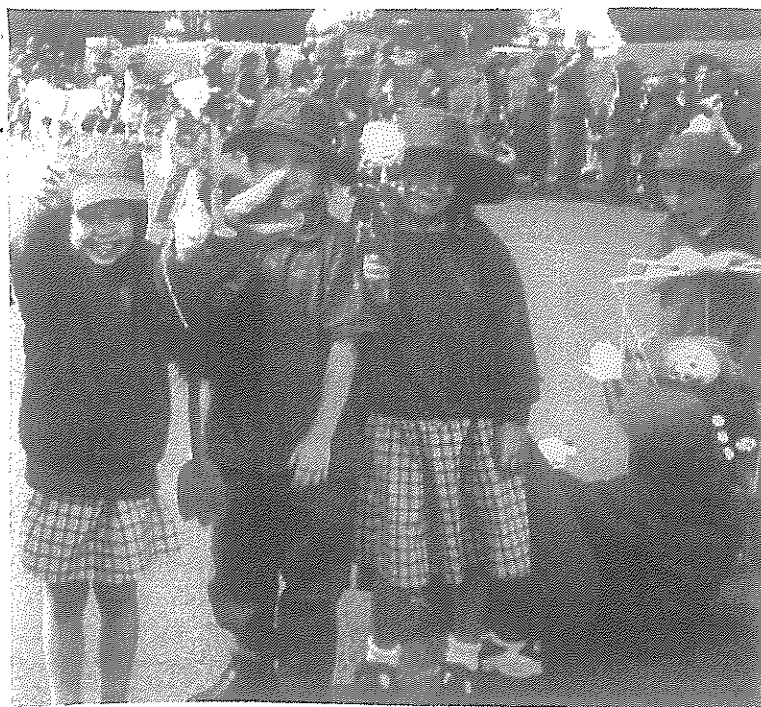
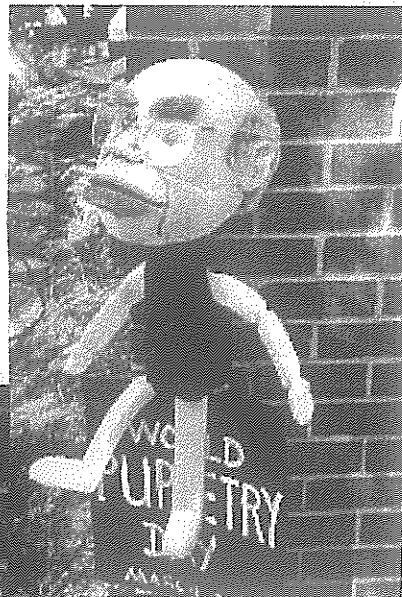
The children constructed small paper birds decorated and flown on a string on the end of a stick. Ian also supplied 'Rainbow Banners' (four metre long vertical flags of various bright polycotton colours mounted on a bamboo pole with a flexible cane top). The kids assembled them to take outside with a 3 metre Ibis puppet made of bamboo and cane that walked and flew progressively from one group of operators to the next. The atmosphere was really harmonious and the weather was kind.

### Gardner Puppet Theatre (cont.)

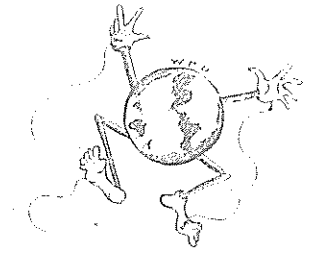
Allan Frost, the Principal, had the day well organized and the school really took puppets on board and when the day came each child had made a puppet. Some older children arrived with the banner they had made: "Hobson's Bay Primary School celebrates World Puppet Day". The Rainbow Serpent of Gardner Puppets led the parade and all the grades paraded around a grade at a time to show their puppets and then together in a parade to lead the children into the multipurpose room where we had set up our "Rainforest Magic" show.

## CANBERRA

Hilary Talbot made this captivating little fellow for WPD celebrations in Canberra



# WORLD PUPPETRY DAY



## QUEENSLAND

### Brian Craddock (cont.)

It doesn't stop there.

On Saturday, Brian performed three shows beside the puppet exhibit billed as Sub Puppets (a breakaway from Balderdash). The show was a combination of two performances and lots of interaction with the audience. The infamous Uncle Scuzz (the bane of puppeteers at the One Van Festival in 2002) led the show, who stirred the audience up and made way for a surreal piece called *Eye For An Eye* (two puppets but only three eyeballs). The kids especially enjoyed Uncle Scuzz's rebellious and offensive personality.

On Sunday 23rd, Brian then conducted Day 2 of workshops for the BEEF 2003 Street Sizzle Festival. Community participants are helping to construct a series of puppets for a performance (called *Odds and Sods*) on May 3rd in an historic building along the riverfront of Rockhampton.

Bigger and better things are planned for next year in Rockhampton.

Students at McKinnon  
Secondary College in  
Melbourne enjoy the  
company of *Celebrities*  
on WORLD PUPPETRY  
Day

## KIDS UP THE ROAD Christchurch, New Zealand

Kids up the Road is a disability awareness programme run by CCS. The programme uses Banraku puppets to educate children about disabilities and the issues children face.

For World Puppetry Day, Kids up the Road in Canterbury visited 2 Christchurch libraries during their weekly Story Time sessions. This gave more children a chance to interact with the puppets and learn more about disabilities in a fun and entertaining way.

We also had a display at a local shopping mall, where the puppets entranced children and adults alike. This was shown on regional television, and depicted in 2 local newspapers.

Check out our website:  
[www.canterburyccs.org.nz/kuir](http://www.canterburyccs.org.nz/kuir)

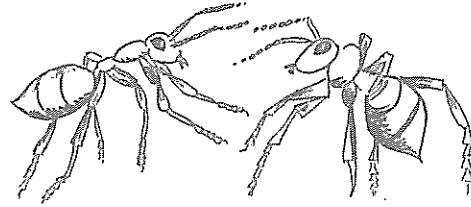
## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Sue Harris of Adelaide reports: "World Puppetry Day was very much overshadowed by student protest re. the war & media coverage of same at the school we performed in. Nevertheless, during performances the puppets "ruled" and for the duration of shows, young people were transported to other cultures & were enthralled by the variety of puppets & puppetry. It was good to perform our Multi-cultural show on World Harmony Day - not planned that way, but just one of those treasured "gifts" from life."



# PUPPETRY - ANT FARM OR.....

by John McDonald



Richard Bradshaw and Penny Francis spoke at the Puppetry Summit on the topic, Puppetry - Art form or Add-On. The session was introduced by Geoffrey Milne.

Richard spoke about the image of puppetry in the general community, particularly its image as being just for the children. Someone he met recently thought he should take his son to see Richard's show --the son was ten months old! He mentioned his experiences of trying to raise the age level of audiences, and how he'd almost given up on this. He also spoke of improvements in the perceptions of puppetry among other performing artists in the last 20 years.

He then discussed the concept of an art form, and what it is that makes something art. He referred to examples of a woman working in a factory, a man making noodles in Tokyo, and other situations where he had seen people working with amazing skill, in ways that were fascinating to watch, but didn't quite qualify as art. He compared these with the skills of a juggler, Michael Moschen, who works with four crystal balls in each hand, moving them in an exquisite way, creating a kind of dance performance. He was sure that this should be classified as art. He wondered whether what makes it art is that it appeals on another level, that it transcends just the idea of a skill, that it has some other reference, not necessarily a rational reference. He found watching the man making noodles fascinating to watch, but the juggler's performance had something more, beauty perhaps, but that becomes a matter of taste.

He argued that comedy should also be considered an art form but was generally not regarded as such. Brilliant comedians like Spike Milligan were great artists, but were normally not viewed that way. He wondered whether if you make light of life's problems it is not art, and if you dwell on life's problems, that's art.

He accepted, though, that what is art is largely determined by the public perception, and that can be very hard to change. He thought that puppetry was more likely to be perceived as an art form in the context of an arts festival, when a performance receives the endorsement of being selected as part of a festival. He also spoke about how particular performances, such as Peter Wilson's performance of 'Cho Cho San', could change people's thinking about puppetry.

Penny considered that art was based on craft and craftsmen who somehow transcended their craft, moving into a space which people recognise as part of their innermost spiritual existence. She believed, for example, that most actors were just practising a craft, but some actors like Laurence Olivier, who had mastered their craft, were at times able to transcend that, and create art.

Similarly, Mozart was more than a competent musician; he was able to transcend the craft of composing and produce works which have delighted the world for centuries.

She referred to Ronnie Burkett, who has mastered the craft of the marionette to the most extraordinary degree, by hard work, and a certain amount of talent, of course, but ... in some performances... goes that extra mile; he is lost in a realm where it is very difficult to follow him and it is only possible to sit with your mouth open. And it is because of the great artists of any given so-called art form that we know it's an art form, because even if most people practising it don't get to that extra realm of artistry, it does exist to be aspired to.



She described how, in England in the Victorian era, puppeteers were generally hard working artisans, who copied from live theatre, and made no pretence at being in the realm of art. With the romantic movement, there was a bit more interest in puppetry from the rest of the arts world, but it got bogged down again in the realist period at the end of the century. Then, with modernism, many artists started taking an interest in puppetry, including Picasso and writers, Maeterlinck and Lorca. They started to experiment with puppetry, in interesting and sometimes impractical ways.

Puppetry, during the 20th century has become increasingly recognised as a possible channel of artistic inspiration. She thought that there was not enough yet to say that it's unquestionably an art form, but there is more and more happening all the time.

Both Richard and Penny spoke about the restrictions on overseas artists performing in Australia. Both argued that we did not get to see

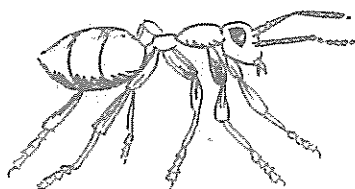
## .PUPPETRY - Ant Farm or... (cont.)

enough good puppetry from overseas in Australia. The restrictions are designed to protect local performing arts, but both Richard and Penny considered that these policies were limiting the art form, and that allowing more overseas artists to perform in Australia would result in more opportunities for local artists.

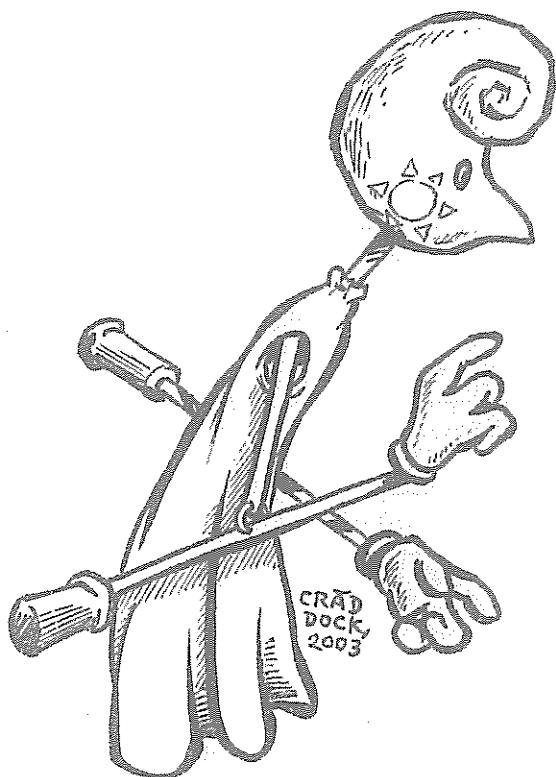
In brief:

Penny - Puppetry is an emerging art form, but it ain't there yet as a discipline,  
Richard - Is this an art form or.... who cares, as long as you do it.

It was worth getting up early on Sunday morning to get to this, the first session of the day.



The reference to the Ant Farm of Puppetry is from Richard's anecdote about a recent show, directed by Adam Kronenberg, which was dedicated in the program to "... Philippe Genty, who has moved the ant farm forward". It was apparently a typo, but Richard thinks it might become internationally known as 'the ant farm of puppetry'.



## NATIONAL PUPPETRY AND ANIMATRONICS SUMMIT

*Report by Anita Beckman, one of the two recipients of UNIMA scholarships awarded to enable emerging puppetry artists to attend the Summit.*

The National Puppetry and Animatronics Summit was held at the Victorian Arts Centre from 25-27 October, 2002. Thanks to a UNIMA Scholarship I eagerly attended.

Judging by the buzz around the lamingtons at the end of the weekend it was a very successful event.

The keynote speeches were a highlight. Nigel Triffit was an inspiring start, daring people to go beyond the boundaries in creating new work. Penny Francis then spoke and she too was very enlivening, encouraging us all to up the ante in order to raise the level of puppetry in Australia.

I then attended the Writing for Puppetry forum with Gilly McInnes, Richard Bradshaw and John Romeril. Romeril's bird impression made this forum worthwhile. He sang a song and gave us a surprising and memorable image. This is probably just as relevant in demonstrating how to give an engaging talk as in how to write a puppetry script.

The Design Concept to Realisation forum was taken by Richard Jeziorny, Greg Methe, Zoe Atkinson and Ken Evans. With all the speakers coming from different areas this was an interesting forum, whether you had much experience in design or not. I think it was Ms Atkinson who commented that puppetry is the ultimate for theatre designers because one gets to design the performers as well. Another interesting anecdote was how, in one show, the design came to influence how the story was told rather than the other way around. (Apologies, I've forgotten who said that).

Roger Law of *Spitting Image* spoke and showed a collection of his work at the Treasury Place cinema on Friday evening. The audience really enjoyed the brilliant caricatures and timeless satire that is *Spitting Image* (and it was nice to get up and walk to Treasury Place after sitting down all day).

A Summit club was held on Friday and Saturday night. I was only able to attend on Friday night. Richard Bradshaw and Richard Hart performed as usual to much applause. It



**NATIONAL PUPPETRY AND  
ANIMATRONICS SUMMIT - Report by  
Anita Beckman (cont.)**

was wonderful to see some funny, fresh new work by Mixed Media Productions (Thomas Zotz and Heidi Callewert) from Tasmania. Their quirky show, *Brushstrikes*, involved corrugated iron, a variety of brushes, and a most unusual soundtrack..

On Saturday morning David Kemper, Andrew Prowse and Gigi Edgely spoke about their experiences with *Farscape*. To those not familiar with it, Film/TV puppetry is quite another world. It was particularly interesting to hear about the relationship between the live actors, the puppeteers and the puppets. Ronnie Burkett then spoke, coming again from a different area of puppetry. He is a very charismatic speaker and without any marionettes managed to entrance and entertain the audience for the duration of his speech. I did not get to see *Tinka's new dress* but it is hard not to be inspired by someone so passionate about their work.

Saturday afternoon I participated in the Advanced manipulation masterclass with David Collins. I'm not quite sure why this was the title on the program. There were all sorts of levels in there and David did mention he would have preferred to call it 'Using A Puppet To Tell A Story' (or something to that effect). Anyway, it was a good, fun, relaxed class. David has an excellent manner and we were given an exercise which could interest people at any level.

On Sunday morning Penny Francis and Richard Bradshaw spoke about Puppetry: Artform or Add on.

Gary Friedman gave the final keynote speech. He too was a very stimulating

speaker, with fascinating stories of the work he has been doing in South Africa in Aids education and political commentary.

I attended the emerging artists' forum on Sunday afternoon with Pauline Cady, Philip Mitchel and Heath McIvor. Whilst doing her spiel Pauline removed her clothes down to her underwear and then, with Snuff Puppet attitude, calmly dressed again. I think her point was that, no matter who you are or what you've done previously, as a performer you're in your underwear before an audience. Anyway, she got our attention. Snuff Puppets seem to be very aware of themselves politically and artistically even if what they are producing (as she claimed) is not high brow. I think Pauline's message was important for anyone aspiring to produce work: knowing why you are doing it and why you are choosing to do it in that way.

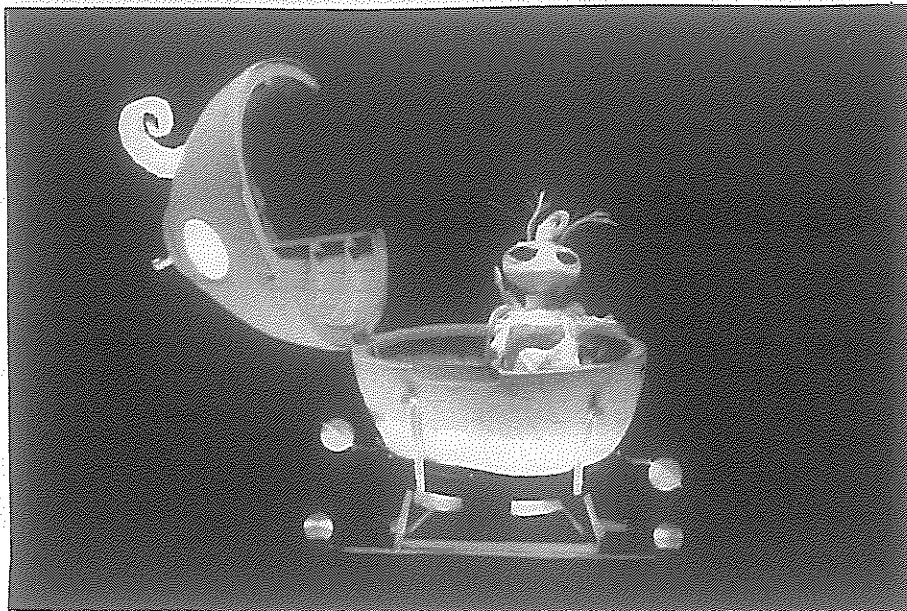
Philip Mitchel of Spare Parts spoke about puppetry training that's starting up in WA which sounds fantastic. Heath McIvor, who worked on *Tyrannosaurus Sex* was also a very enthused and encouraging speaker.

After the speakers, this forum became a bit muddled as is bound to happen with a large room of people offering opinions and thoughts on what felt like, no fixed topic.

It would have been good for people doing new stuff to have a chance to show what they're doing in an informal, supportive environment and get some feedback.

Overall the summit was a fantastic opportunity to meet like-minded people, become inspired by others and gain encouragement and spirit to just keep plugging away.

So, thank you to the Summit organisers and to UNIMA for this wonderful opportunity.



Alien  
from  
*Dreamer  
in Space*  
by  
Richard  
Hart

# THE ΔΑΨ ΟΦ THE ΤΡΙΦΦΙΤ

(THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIT)

It was a strange era on the planet Earth. Nothing of artistic importance was happening, when suddenly, one night or day (I can't remember - which is proof I was there at the time) a wild star rained down on Sesame Street, the Squiggledom empire, Philippe Genty's backyard, Velo, Triangle Theatre, Bunraku, the whole of the European puppetry tradition, the whole of the Asian tradition and the emerging Australian tradition and said: "Here I am; it's all based on Dada, all things plastic and elastic, futurism, vast quantities of marijuana and manipulation of everything, including the media." So they all got down on their knees and thanked him.

The wild star then deconstructed what was there before. He was asked, "Why are you doing this?" He replied, "Because I do not give the arse of a rat! I want to take my expanded concept of puppetry to a larger adult audience."

They asked him, "What is puppetry? Is it any inanimate object that can be given life like the humble penis, still warm and apparently attached?"

And the Wild Star said, "God, I wish I had thought of that one!"

And one of the ordinary people had a child who was apparently ill and ventured forth to touch the mantle of the Wild Star. He said, "This child exists in a small enclosed world, devoid of real critical comment and assessment. He is awestruck by children's puppet shows which lack the rigour that exposure to the grownup world provides."

And the Wild Star said, "That's why I say the adult general public don't give a rat's arse about it. 'Cos they don't. It's an invisible subsidiary artform."

And they asked, "You mean, like masturbation?"

And the Wild Star replied, "Nay, I always break new ground with my seed and they all grow up as bent as buggery."

By Richard Hart



## Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Fish

by Lachlan Haig

"Broadway here we come" was the familiar cry amongst the cast and crew of *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Fish* after braving temperatures of -35 degrees centigrade in Montréal to attend the 25th Annual International Showcase of Performing Arts for Young People. A week in Montréal was great to adjust to the time zone difference and jet lag, but I am afraid it would take a life time to adjust to such extreme temperatures - a sentiment that I'm sure was shared by the entire cast and crew.

We arrived in New York amid an atmosphere of suspicion and tension as war loomed, a factor which during our stay became more acute. And who was to know that the "blizzard of 2003" was also just around the corner! There was quite an array of environmental and social obstacles to surmount! But as they say, though: "The show (or should I say 'the snow') must go on!"

We performed at the beautifully restored and oldest theatre on 42nd Street, The New Victory. Our accommodation, The Olcott Hotel (West 72nd Street), was equally historic. There were moments staying there when you felt a mac-wearing Bogart-looking character was going to knock on the door, investigating a B & W movie homicide! Back to the theatre though. The New Victory was opened in 1900 by Oscar Hammerstein I (grandfather of the famous lyricist) and in its hey day has had some of the most famous players tread its boards - Mary Pickford & Charlie Chaplin, to name a couple.

The show was received well, with wonderful turn outs, although some of the sellout houses only presented with 80% attendances because of the loom of terrorism and impending war which was unfortunate.

*Twinkle Fish* did receive an equally warm reception from the reviewing press which was most heartening - especially because we were an Australian company turning American heads. The season was a great success, a credit to all involved. The theatre staff also provided a great support team who were friendly and helpful in every way - the sort you'd like to some day visit again.

In summation, another great adventure for Australian Puppetry!

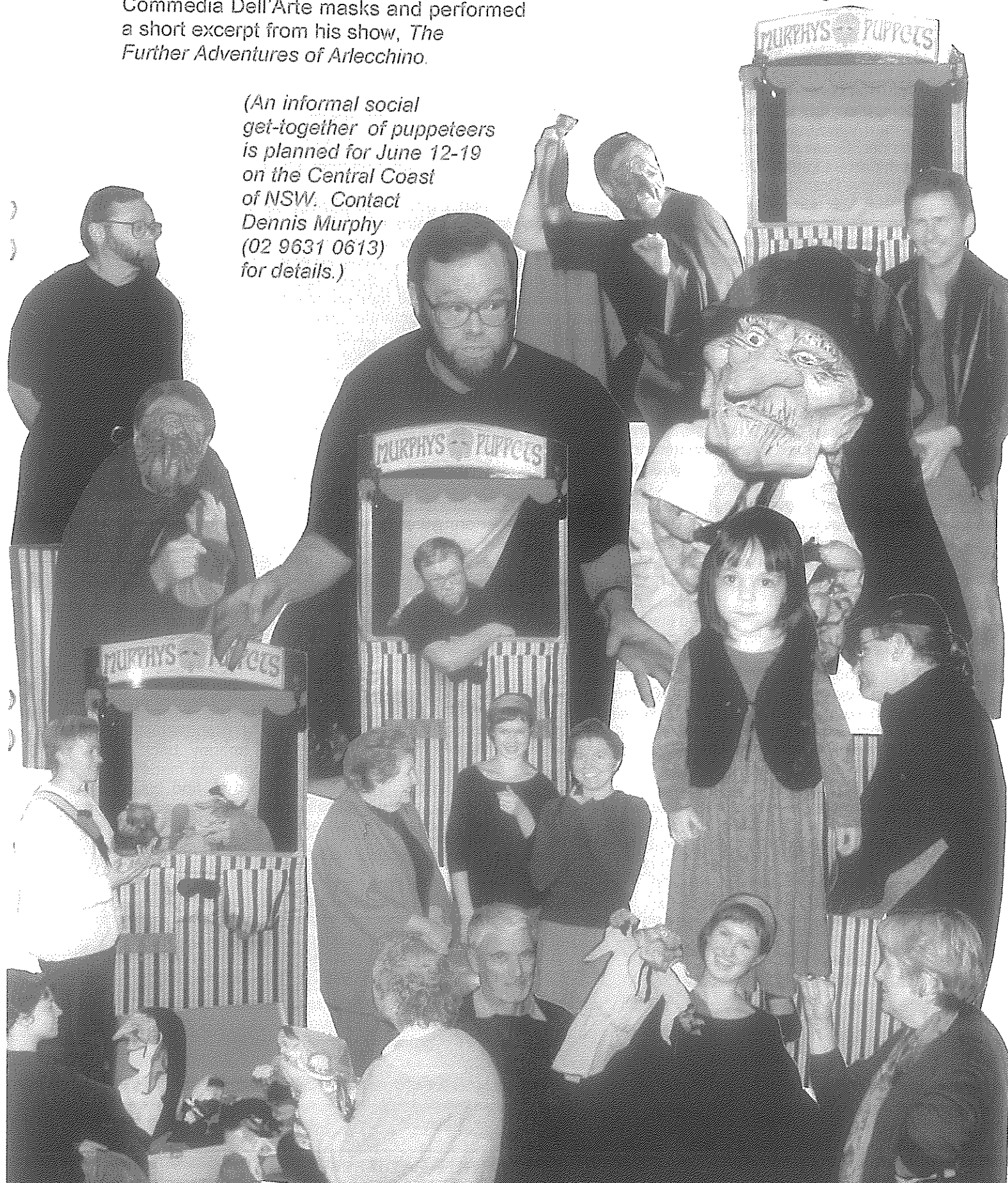
Opposite photo: Norman Hatherington and Mr. Squiggle



## A Night of Commedia dell'Arte with Dennis Murphy

On Sunday March 2, 2003 over 30 Victorian members of UNIMA gathered for a meeting at Polyglot Puppet Theatre where they were treated to a presentation by Dennis Murphy of Sydney's *Murphy's Puppets*. Dennis demonstrated a range of Commedia Dell'Arte masks and performed a short excerpt from his show, *The Further Adventures of Arlecchino*.

*(An informal social  
get-together of puppeteers  
is planned for June 12-19  
on the Central Coast  
of NSW. Contact  
Dennis Murphy  
(02 9631 0613)  
for details.)*



# VICTORIA

## Polyglot Puppet Theatre

The creative development of *Baggy Pants* started in March and was a 3-week process working with a group of fantastic artists: Sue Giles (Polyglot) – Writer/ Director, Philip Adams (BalletLad) – Choreographer, Vanessa Beck – Designer, Jennie Swain – Composer, Colin Sneesby – Puppeteer, Gerard Van Dyck (KAGE Physical Theatre) – Dancer, Graeme Davis – Puppet Maker, Phil Lethlean – Lighting Designer and Julian O'Brien – Dramaturg.

The creative development process also involved kids from several schools and groups in the research and development of the style and story. Told with puppetry, dance and masses and masses of clothing this show is a collaboration between Polyglot and BalletLab. Venturing into dark places at the bottom of cupboards, transforming the space and creating a brave new world. Rehearsal process and public performance will occur in 2004. Watch out for this one!

The second stage of development from our exciting site specific show, *Stop That House* begins in May. This year we work on the script and build the puppets, ready for rehearsal and performance in 2004. *Stop That House* is a partnership between Polyglot, City of Stonnington and the National Trust property of Como Historic House and Garden.

Rehearsals start in June for our schools touring show, *Muckheap*. This show toured in Singapore last year as part of the Esplanade On the Bay Opening Ceremony and in August/ September this year will tour regional and metropolitan schools in Victoria. *Muckheap* is part of Regional Arts Victoria's arts-2-go schools touring program.

Other exciting news is that Sue Giles was selected to be part of the International Directors' Seminar in Hanover organised by Germany ASSITEJ. Sue is the Australian delegated for this seminar in June.

Polyglot also has a new website and email address. You can find us at [www.polyglotpuppets.com.au](http://www.polyglotpuppets.com.au) & [info@polyglotpuppets.com.au](mailto:info@polyglotpuppets.com.au)

## DREAM PUPPETS IN SINGAPORE

by Richard Hart

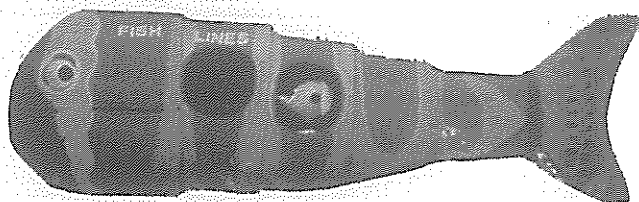
With the dark clouds of war gathering over Iraq and occasional terrorist threats throughout the region, I set off with 43 KGs of *Dreamer* to the tropical city of Singapore. It was the middle of march, so I had missed out on the excessive humidity of the wet season. I was also suffering from a bad cold.

When I arrived at Changi airport, there was transport already waiting for me and all my baggage was processed and ready in the shortest time I have experienced. My lodging for the next 9 days was the Raffles' Town Club, (not the famous hotel). It was incredibly posh in a romantic, post British way and very comfortable. Clubs are a big thing in Singapore as there is not a lot of empty recreational space.

After a year of e-mails I finally met Phyllis, who had brilliantly organised the whole season and had turned it into a complete sell-out by the end of it. The theatre was a little large, (320 capacity), very comfortable and air-conditioned. With the exception of two performances with 250 audience members, the maximum audience was capped to 160 due to the size of the show. Blacklight reads very well from a distance but there is a limit. The theatre was located in yet another club: the Ulu Pandan Community Club in the Ghim Moh district, the "Heartland" as they described it.

The response was fantastic, including offers of more tours. There were a few strong reactions, however, including a grandfather with two children wanting his money back because the show had no dialogue. He made a big fuss but was embarrassed to find his two children were really enjoying it and wanted to see it to the end.

I had a great time and would have liked to see more of the place. I had watched a live broadcast of Bush's ultimatum, was questioned about Australia's role in Iraq and became very selfconscious about coughing a lot where SARS was becoming a major fear. I arrived back on the 20th, just before things went crazy.





# WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## NEWS FROM SPARE PARTS - PERTH

2003 is going to be a huge and exciting year for Spare Parts. Our General Manager, Olly Williams, started the year off in Canada, busy selling shows at the CINTARS Arts Market.

The School of Digital and Traditional Puppetry is proving to be a huge success with an intriguing cross section of projects in development. One of particular interest is the Live and Digital project, directed by Sandy McKendrick with a collaborative team of animators, writers, performers designers and the Didgi glove.

Ramon Rivero visited as part of the Spare Parts FTI partnership and we were all inspired by his work and approaches to new technology and live performance. Not to mention the amazing *Lord of the Rings* process and innovations. Tom Lubin, Head of Training at FTI, with Ian Tregonning and Philip Mitchell are working towards accreditation of this course, making it the first accredited puppetry training course in Australia. We are certainly hopeful that this course will augment and compliment the course proposed for the VCA.

**Granny is an Alien** is our first show for the year, written by Michael Barlow in collaboration with Philip Mitchell and directed by Michael. Sandy McKendrick will perform the one person show, exploring the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. Tish Oldham is designing and the show opens on the 7th April.

The success of *Hare Brain* continues with a regional schools tour in March/April to the Pilbra Gasgoyne area and we have our fingers crossed for a National tour next year!

Gibson Nolte is our newest puppeteer to the team and he is a natural. Gibson has just returned from a season of *Savage Grace*, presented by Performing Lines in Sydney.

**Spellbound**, inspired by the Stravinsky Ballet *Petrushka*, will open in June - (directed by Philip Mitchell, designed by Zoe Atkinson, composer Lee Buddle and written as a collaboration by Humphrey Bower). Performers, Michael Barlow, Rachael Whitworth and Simon Clarke will be the animators behind the exquisite marionettes made by Jiri Zmitko. It will be an exciting

exploration of marionettes and black theatre.

*The Deep* directed by Noriko (she will never leave Spare Parts) is then packed and sent off for an eight week eastern states tour.

Back in our theatre we will be re staging Jane Davies' beautiful *Fortunata*, first performed in 1999 then toured internationally in 2000. Jane and Sanjiva Margio will be performing in the October season. Then...yes there's more.. *The Midnight Gang*, an adaptation of the Margaret Wild book, will be staged in the Playhouse theatre with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra in late October.

Noriko will be directing both *The Deep* and *Midnight Gang* while Philip is developing the most challenging work Spare Parts has ever undertaken: H2O. It will be performed in an Olympic Swimming pool, telling a regional Australian story paralleling the preciousness of water and the preciousness of a child. Set in a desert, the pool will be animated, transformed from desert to beach to underwater worlds to streams of water in the sky. It is Spare Parts' first adventure into large scale site specific work and will be presented as part of the Perth International Arts Festival in 2004. We are then hoping it will tour to swimming pools throughout Australia.

Our Puppet Ed programme is growing, our School of Puppetry is underway and *Vaporise*, our stilt walking puppets, are out again for 2003 doing festivals and events. Our building has been chaos with new disabled access, new box office; the old foyer has been gutted and a new display will be installed. Rising and falling damp has been dealt with plus many other simple and not so simple improvements.

So if you are in Perth, please pop in and say hello!!! It will be exhausting for us all but an extremely rewarding year!



# TASMANIA

## TERRAPIN PUPPET THEATRE

### *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*

"...an enthralling evening awaits those venturing to Terrapin's latest puppetry creation...the beautiful, and sometimes terrible, grace of Terrapin's puppets is awe-inspiring." Elizabeth Bailes, *The Mercury*

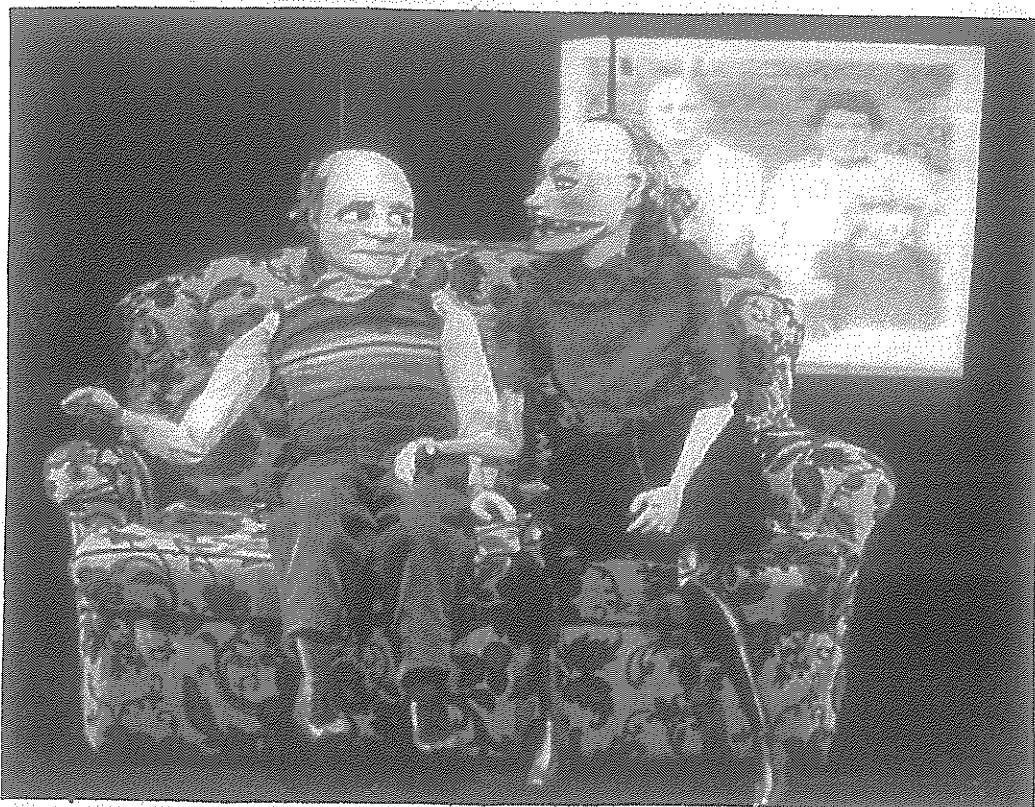
Terrapin has just concluded a highly successful season of its acclaimed production, *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*, in Launceston and Hobart during the Ten Days on the Island festival.

This intriguing and evocative production, first mounted in 2000, won the admiration of critics and audiences alike during its sold out premiere season. Robyn Archer described the production as, "the best work Terrapin has produced in recent years".

Significantly redeveloped in 2003, *The Dark* is an exploration of a mind affected by fear. A very adult production, it navigates the wilderness of the imagination seamlessly integrating puppetry with projected image, physical performance, and original music. Terrapin were particularly delighted to be able to present *The Dark* in Launceston. Whilst

numerous primary school shows have toured to regional Tasmania, this is the first time an adult work has been presented in the north of Tasmania.

The season concluded in Hobart with four sell-out performances.



Photos  
by  
Eddie  
Safarik

## TASMANIA

### Mixed Media Productions--ARRIVALS

*"Powerful, sweeping story of courage, hardship and hope....It's about crossing borders but the theme is always humanity." (from review by Wal Eastman, MERCURY, 7.4.03)*

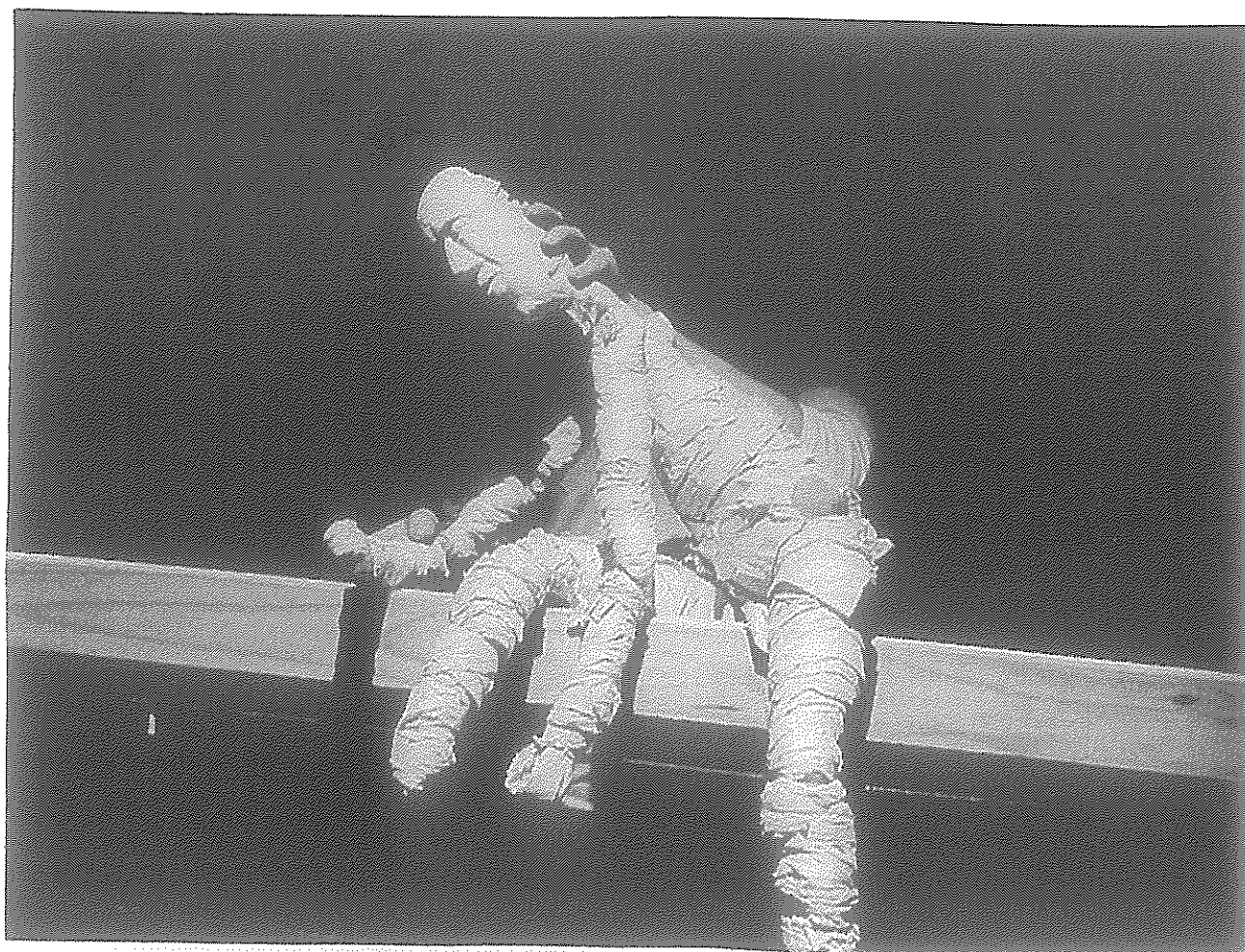
Since arriving in Australia in 2001 *Arrivals* is our first major interdisciplinary theatre work produced outside of Europe. *Arrivals* is an evocative presentation from stories of those who have crossed borders. The show takes the audience on a voyage of impressions and emotions exploring borders, migration, peace, war and the impact on the human spirit. The show does not tell one particular story of arrival nor does it refer to one specific period in time. It is connected to all the stories throughout the centuries and across the globe and is deeply rooted in our history as a species.

We have explored the interaction of puppetry, dance and live video projection in order to create a different way of telling a story or a

content. The form we have chosen to work with is more abstract and fragmentary rather than the classical narrative. We communicate primarily via images and movement and hardly use any English although we do use sounds and artificial languages. The live music has been composed during the devising process and is an integral part of the story telling. Our main material was paper; part of the set was made of paper and the puppets as well. Creating *Arrivals* gave us the opportunity of working intensively with highly skilled and motivated Australian artists. It was an exciting and amazing process.

We finally presented the show during the 10 Days On The Island festival in Tasmania, which took place from 28th March till 6th April 2003. We performed in Deloraine, Devonport and Hobart for very different audiences in very different venues. The support from the local communities to set up the venues and bump in and out was just incredible. And we had a great audience response as well. Now we are totally exhausted but very happy with the outcome.

*Heidi Callewaert, Mixed Media Productions*





## David Hamilton Puppets

David has been performing for his usual two weeks in Victoria at Easter. I catch David and his wonderful trick marionettes whenever I can over Easter - for me Easter can be difficult because Harry and I, always attend the National Folk Festival in Canberra and catch up with our Canberra grandchild.

This year it was visiting David at his Keilor motel, having a meal and talking puppets non-stop. I was honoured to be the first to see his newly completed lion, brought down especially to show to friends; it will join the troupe in the future. David puts so much thought into how to make each puppet do what he wants and with only one manipulator! The marionette is a large Chinese Lion - gold fringing fur and a rust mane with gold through it. The trick ending I will not give away, but it was brilliant! For Easter 2004, David has promised a talk and demo for UNIMA Victoria if we can organise it. Given a year, we should do!

David does some school touring for the Queensland Arts Council. He also does shopping centre work, club cabaret work,

festivals etc. He showed me his touring trailer and described how he can turn it into a full outside stage for Festival work, complete with velvet curtains, sound and lights. His skill and training in singing is used well when hesings live with a taped puppet character at times.

Solo touring can be lonely work and when driving David puzzles out how to make his next creation do what he dreams about. The making, which can take months for a three minute spot, is usually done in downtime. Does this sound familiar? David must be commercial in order to live - he gives the audiences what they want, he is versatile and is always invited back.

David could not attend the Puppetry and Animatronics Summit due to work commitments and was disappointed. However, he was very happy to receive the last issue of *Australian Puppeteer* with such a good Summit coverage.

The picture is from David's new poster.

Lorrie Gardner



# DO IT YOURSELF

by *Kassandra Bossell*

As with many of my commission and job opportunities, my most recent puppetry project was self-initiated. However, the seed of the commission began growing a good two years earlier...

In 2001, the actions of the Howard Government, particularly in relation to immigration issues and the Tampa affair left me feeling ashamed and embarrassed to call myself an Australian. As the Federal Election loomed and Beazley's so-called 'Left' offered no real alternative, I found my frustration and disgust only grew.

Wanting to employ my creative skills to express my dissent, I came up with the idea to make wearable, latex masks of John Howard and Kim Beazley. I then invited performers, writers, 3D painters and other activists I knew to meet and form an action plan. After rehearsing and making costumes we embarked on several street performances at various locations around Sydney coming up to the Federal election. The heads proved a great success and were total media magnets! Someone from the ABC's *Election Chaser* even bought the masks for one of its satirical segments. Of course, I'd made moulds so multiples weren't a problem.



In the interim, the notoriety of the Howard head grew as it was hired out for a May Day 2001 anti globalization protest at Martin Place in Sydney's CBD and lent out for several other satirical street and stage performances.

In October 2002, I even took a Howard head (now painted-up as a pimp) to New York with me packed appropriately in a big, dirty, black garbage bag. I was secretly hoping (in vain) that the customs officials would ask me what was in the bag. However, I later got

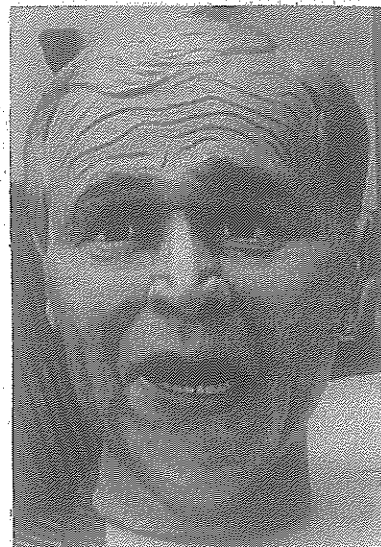
immense satisfaction from giving the head to a wicked street performer and magician who started the Freakatorium in New York, called Johnny Fox. Evidently Johnny had no idea who John Howard was. When he first saw the mask, he crewed, "Excellent! I need a head for my three-legged man!" Needless to say, I didn't argue!

On a recent and more sobering note, the Coalition's imminent invasion of Iraq earlier this year saw Australia and the rest of the world explode with massive street protests, the like of which we haven't seen since the Vietnam War. Again, wanting to express my dissent, a group of performers and I came up with an idea we hoped would manifest themes and images already firmly lodged in people's minds.

We arranged a performance at that first really massive Sydney anti-war march on 14th February in Hyde park. The theatre piece depicted George Bush puppeteering John Howard on marionette strings. 'Justice' followed in their wake wearing a black blind-fold – her classical robes shot through with bullet holes, her sword bloodied, her scales laden with oil barrels and splattered babies! No time for subtlety.

Having seen the performance, Greenpeace Australia commissioned me to create another ten latex masks of John Howard and another five of George Bush. The heads have since been seen at actions and protests across the country and in New Zealand and have made primetime news coverage on almost every major Australian TV station.

For me, the entire experience of the heads has been an exhilarating, albeit dark one, as I ended up sculpting the George Bush head on the day the US forces attacked Iraq.



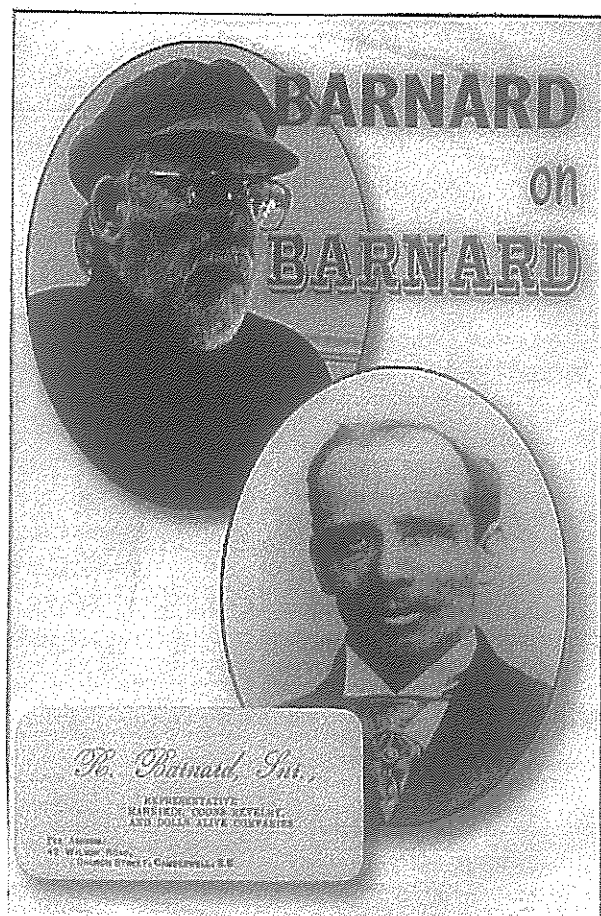
# PUPPET HISTORY

*By Richard Bradshaw*

## THE WORLDWIDE WEBBS

I have already written about the marionettist, Charles Webb (see September 1996 and Summer 2000). Also on Barnard's Marionettes which came to Australia in late 1905, and 1908 (see Winter 1998). There is a connection.

The Barnard show had been started by Richard Barnard, and was brought to Australia by four of his children, three sons and a daughter. This Richard Barnard had worked in England with Charles Webb, for the marionette showman Charles Middleton. Charles Middleton was Charles Webb's grandfather, and his brother James Middleton was Richard Barnard's grandfather, so Webb and Barnard were second cousins. Barnard's memoirs were published by the Society for Theatre Research in 1981 and give information on Webb's life as a puppeteer before he went to America with Bullock's Royal Marionettes and became one of the group that abandoned Bullock to create a duplicate show for McDonough and Earnshaw.



Charles Webb and his wife came to Australia with McDonough and Earnshaw's Royal Marionettes from the U.S.A. in 1875. They left the company in Adelaide, during the tour, and formed Webb's Royal Marionettes. A third member of the American company, Charles Trotter, who seems to have been with them until Webb's death, later joined them. Webb's Royal Marionettes were then based in Australia in 1876-1879 and again in 1884-1886, with tours to New Zealand in 1876, 1878 and 1885.

In late 1879 Webb's small company left Australia for England. They later advertised that on the way they performed in India, Ceylon, the Straits Settlements, Burma and Egypt. In 1881 they were at the Guildhall, Cambridge as "The Royal Australian and Indian Marionettes". They claimed to have then performed in Germany, France, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Russia. I have certainly been able to confirm performances in Ceylon in 1880 and in St. Petersburg and Moscow in the first months of 1883. While Webb's Marionettes were travelling in Europe, their contact address was c/o Mrs Wiggins, in Maldon, Essex. She was Charles Webb's mother-in-law.

When they returned to Australia in 1884 they arrived in Adelaide. After a season there, they played in Melbourne, Sydney, Newcastle and Maitland, and Brisbane. On 24 April, during the Sydney season, Mrs Webb died.

I had been frustrated in my research in not knowing the first name of Mrs Charles Webb. In his memoirs Richard Barnard writes that Charles Webb had married a Miss Wiggins in Southborough, Kent. They were working with Charles Middleton's company at the time. Miss Wiggins had joined the company "for her health", and worked as a singer.

I applied for a copy of the death certificate of Mrs Charles Webb. Jane Webb, wife of Charles Webb, died at their residence at 232 Forbes Street, Sydney on 24 April 1884 aged 40 from "phthisis pulmonalis". Her father was John Wiggins, farmer, and her mother Emma Pond. She was born in Essex, and arrived in Australia about 9 years earlier. She married Charles in Kent, England at the age of 25, which would

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mean in about 1869. They had no children.

She was buried in Waverley Cemetery on 27 April. I have located the grave and the headstone is in good condition. Although the show went on without a hiccup, despite her death and funeral, the inscription leaves little doubt that she was a treasured wife.

Touring in those days was a fairly gruelling experience and travelling, whether by sea or by land, was often hazardous. Richard Barnard's memoirs, which tell of his own travels to America, and in Europe from Russia to Spain, give some idea of the hardships. He had been born in 1854 but retired in 1898 at the age of 44 and spent his last years as an invalid. Jane Webb, who had initially joined Middleton's marionette show "for her health", had experienced all climates from the tropics to the Russian winter, as well as voyages across the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Indian Ocean. It is not surprising that her health suffered.

I have found another marriage of a Charles Webb to a Miss Wiggins, registered in Abingdon, Oxfordshire in 1868, but this was a Mary Anne Wiggins! A strange coincidence, unless the two Charles Webbs and the two Miss Wiggins were related.

In 1886, after a tour of Western Australia, Webb's company left for India. Charles Webb died aged 45 in Probolinggo, Java on 4 October, 1887 from a liver complaint. A death notice appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald saying that he was travelling with his sister when he died, and that he was a cousin of "F.H. and R. Lyons" of Sydney. The sister was Miss L. Webb.

The first mention of a Miss Webb I have found was in a shipping list from Melbourne to Sydney in 1879. (There is also an E. Webb listed, in addition to Mr and Mrs Webb and the company's musician, Frank Fowler, but I have not yet found another mention of an E. Webb) Miss Webb certainly wasn't with the puppet company when they left for England later that year, nor did she arrive with them in Adelaide from London in 1884. Yet she travels with them from Adelaide to Melbourne and from then on is regularly on the shipping lists, at times as "Miss L. Webb".

In 2002 I wrote to Richard Barnard's grandson, Ken Barnard. I have met Ken once only, and that was at a British Puppet and Model Theatre weekend in 1964. He did not become a puppet-maker until he was 34, but has childhood memories of his invalid grandfather, Richard, and was behind the publication of his memoirs. I sent Ken copies of the articles I

had written on the Barnards in Australia, and on Charles Webb.

In return Ken sent me photocopies of letters, notes and documents which have helped me flesh out the Webb story. The originals had belonged to an Australian lady who had made contact with him when she was doing family research and was trying to find out about the puppeteer Charles Webb. One of the photocopied pieces was the death notice for Charles Webb that had appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald. Ken had mislaid her address, and for the moment could only remember that her name was "Ailsa" and that she came from Western Australia, possibly near Pemberton. Ken said Ailsa had been married to a clergyman who died on a visit to Switzerland.



That was a lead to follow. I began by calling the Uniting Church in Pemberton and left a message. Next day I had a call back from the minister who knows Ailsa, and so I was able to make contact. She is Ailsa Maley, and one of her daughters turns out to be a long-time friend of Peter J. Wilson!!! She lives near Busselton. (I said that I had once taught someone who is now a dentist there. "You don't mean David MacDonald, do you?" I did. They know each other. David and I had exchanged letters several years ago. He is the older brother of the actor Garry...and, although he is a dentist,

he is not a bit like Henry Szeps in "Mother and Son".)



Ailsa's great-grandfather was Frederick Laming Lyons (died 1883), and when Charles and Jane Webb arrived in Sydney in 1875 he had the Old Lion Inn at 6 Elizabeth Street, Redfern. Frederick Lyons' wife had also been a Jane Webb, and her father, William Cooper Webb was living at the Inn with them. Jane Lyons had a sister living in Sydney, Mrs Sarah E. Lyons, who died in 1887, and the death of her husband, James Lyons, was registered at St Leonard's, Sydney in 1875. She is possibly the older sister because she is the informant on her father William's death certificate. Frederick Lyons died in 1883.

William C. Webb died at the inn on Christmas Day, 1876. He was 89 and had been in N.S.W. for about 20 years. Before that he had lived in Goswell Street, Islington. It seems very likely that the puppeteer, Charles Webb, was his nephew. This would make "F.L. and J. Lyons" cousins by marriage to Charles Webb. Perhaps handwritten initials had been wrongly read as "F.H. and R. Lyons" for the 1887 published death notice. An "F.H. Lyons" is

listed at Greenwich Rd, N. Willoughby in an 1883 directory, but Mrs Lyons is listed instead the following year, and F.L. Lyons died in 1883 which makes me suspect F.L. and F.H. are the same person. It's worth noting that in 1876 a Charles Webb was listed living in Botany Road, Redfern, not too far from the Inn.

Amongst Ailsa's papers there is a sad letter written to Mrs William C. Webb of Islington from California in 1850. It is from a friend of her son Edward. Both young men had sailed separately from "Sidney" to California (where gold had been discovered in 1849) arriving within a few weeks of each other. They teamed up and worked together on a ship. A few days after coming ashore and living in a tent, "Ned" had died of dysentery. So Edward, Charles Webb's cousin, had been in Sydney even before his father.

The fact that he had an uncle and cousins in Sydney is likely to have influenced Charles's decision to leave the American company of McDonough and Earnshaw's Royal Marionettes and stay in Australia. It is possible that this also influenced his sister's decision to come to Australia, and suggests how she may have been living here, "unattached", while her brother and his wife went back to England in 1879-84

It may also be significant that a fellow passenger on the ship that took the Webbs from Adelaide when they left the American company in 1875 was the Rev. Allan W. Webb of Sydney. (On the departure list Mrs. Webb is wrongly listed as his wife. She is listed with Charles on arrival in Melbourne!) Webb is a fairly common name so we have to be cautious about assuming a relationship.





Ailsa's notes refer to property willed to a Charles Webb which passed instead to his son. It seems possible that this Charles Webb was a son of old William Webb, and maybe the Charles Webb who married the other Miss Wiggins.

I don't know what happened to Charles Webb's sister, Charles Trotter or the marionettes after Charles Webb's death in Java in 1887.

Richard Bradshaw

#### Footnote:

Some of Richard Barnard's figures survive. After Barnard's children stopped doing the show, and after Barnard's death, the puppets which had been kept in skips at the family home in Camberwell, London were auctioned off. They were bought by Waldo Lanchester and exhibited by him at his puppet shop in Stratford-on-Avon. [Waldo was the brother of the actress Elsa Lanchester, wife of actor Charles Laughton. Ann Hogarth believed that as a boy Waldo had been the model for Millais' famous painting of "Bubbles" used to advertise Pear's Soap. ]

When Waldo and Muriel Lanchester retired from their shop their puppets were given to Richard Gill of Polka Children's Theatre in Wimbledon. Sue Lintern-Coward (Mrs Rob Matson) will remember them from when she worked there.

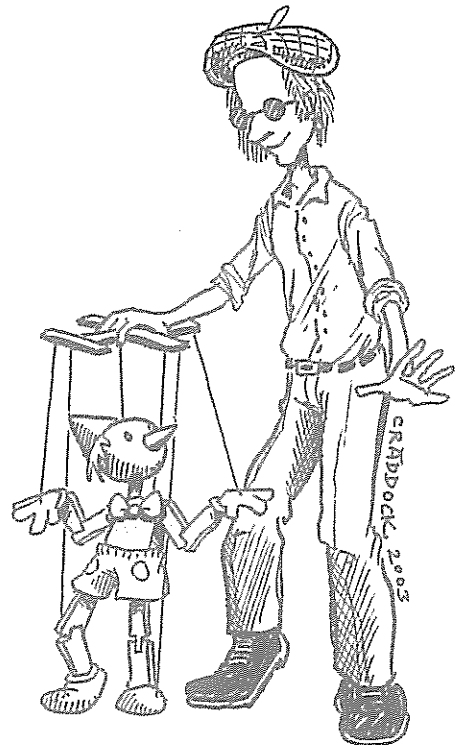
Eventually Richard Gill had the puppets auctioned by Sotheby's. These included Harlequin and Columbine and a splendid pair of clowns. Ken Barnard went along to the auction hoping to pick up something of his grandfather's but was sadly outbid. However he contacted Richard Gill and was able to buy a number of things that weren't offered at the auction: playbills, puppets etc.

One of the figures Ken owns has always been in the family, and this is an elegantly dressed black man who used to sit on the edge of the stage until he was frightened off by the dissecting skeleton. Ken had always thought that another fine Italian-looking contortionist had been purchased by his grandfather from an Italian showman in Vauxhall Gardens, until he found engraved on its wooden shoulder-piece that it was made by Barnard in Paris in 1889.

R.B.

#### Photos:

1. Cover for a video of a talk Ken Barnard gave to the British Puppet and Model Theatre Guild in January 2001 in which he talked about his grandfather Richard Barnard, the Victorian Marionette Proprietor who began work as a puppeteer with his second cousin, Charles Webb.
2. Ken Barnard in his workshop in about 1985.
3. Ken Barnard made this figure of Punch for the Scottish Mask and Puppet Centre in Glasgow. It is featured on their poster.
4. Ailsa Maley made contact with Ken Barnard when she was trying to find out something about Charles Webb, to whom she is distantly related. She commissioned some puppets from him including this Harlequin and Columbine set being shown by her daughter Kirsty.



# REVIEWS

## *World of Paper*

*Windmill Theatre and Theatre Kazenoko  
Kansai, Japan.*

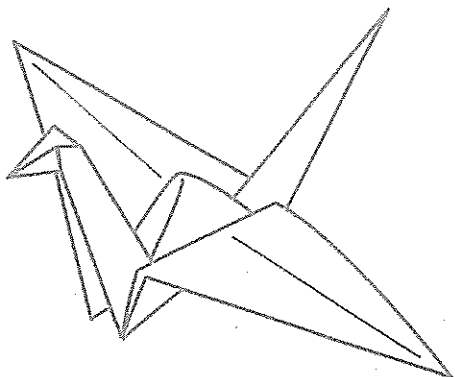
Review by John Barcham

Children participating in the ArtEd 2003 program of educative performances for Victorian school students who found themselves in the Victorian Arts Centre's George Fairfax Theatre during March were fortunate indeed to see a remarkable piece of puppet theatre.

The piece, *A World of Paper* (Hello Maru-Chan) is an international co production involving South Australia's Windmill Theatre and Theatre Kazenoko Kansai, Japan's acclaimed children's performing troupe. Performed in both Japan and Australia the piece was developed and directed by Peter Wilson with Verity Laughton as dramaturg.

The combination of puppetry and live actors combined with minimalist sets and exquisite music by Japanese composer, Yoshie Shimamura, blends seamlessly in a transcendental work of simplicity, innocence and beauty. *World of Paper* transports its audience on a monotone journey through the four elements, thoughtfully introducing its audience to universal truths and themes. The journey culminates in a burst of colour that brings together these ideas in a satisfying and logical conclusion.

*World of Paper* finds Wilson once again pushing the boundaries of where puppetry begins and ends. The work, without dialogue, seamlessly combines performance, music, constantly moving sets and the manipulation of a myriad of 3D paper creations into a work that conveys its audience on a journey of simplicity and beauty. The look on the faces of the primary school audience of the performance I attended is testament enough to the gentle power and intelligence of *World of Paper*.



## *10 Minutes Max*

Performed at Polyglot, South Yarra, Victoria.  
Feb. 5th to 8th, 2003.

Review by Richard Hart

Another of the Studio Polyglot series which has been held annually for the past few years, this one had six 10 minute pieces, all the original creations of the participating artists.

*Wrapped* by George Filev, Nick Barlow, Michael Firth and Amanda Armstrong.

This needed someone watching them in development to suggest some interesting things these paper shapes could do. Something wonderful could and should have happened, but sadly didn't. Promising idea.

*Spanky* by Graeme Davis. This comprised two puppets, one a hand puppet: Bunny, the other Bunraku style: Spanky. The overriding problem was a clear need for more puppetry training and theatricality. How much direction and help with performing was put into this one?

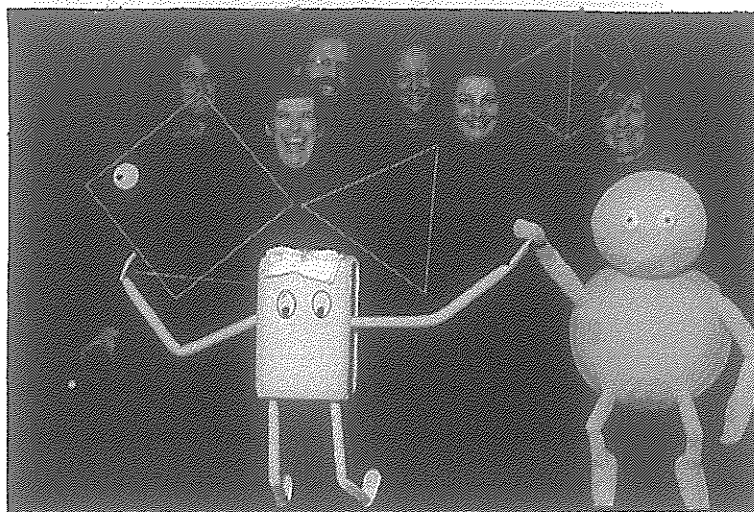
*Perhaps She'll Die* by Amanda Armstrong and Andrew Livingston. One of the two strongest and best resolved works of the evening, Amanda's performance was very polished and cleverly used shadow puppets for the interior of her stomach.

*I Beat The Bogeyman* by Joe Blank. This piece worked due to its clumsy naivety. A small boy dreams of a monster that is chased away by a super-hero. Shows promise.

*Purely Platonic* by John Macdonald. The other strong and well resolved piece which I enjoyed. Good use of black light, images and soundtrack and had the most number of performers. A very successful effort.

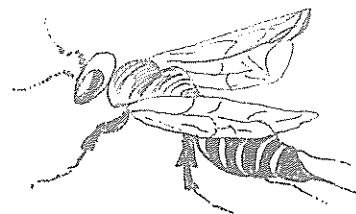
*Swish* by Christie Nieman, Glen Moore and Jai Hartnell. Shadow puppetry. Some nice ideas but a bit confusing. It would have worked better if it was more surreal.

Clearly, many of the performers had little experience in puppetry but all produced entertaining works to some extent. Great concept, but a need for more clarity from Polyglot about its purpose.





## A Hornet's Nest or...



Elsewhere in *Australian Puppeteer* puppetry is referred to as an 'ant farm'. Ian Tregonning of Western Australia received a range of responses to his email about World Puppetry Day and stirred up a hornet's nest.....Ed.

**From: ian**

Over here in Perth I will be celebrating World Puppetry day by being unemployed. I would like to suggest a new day of celebration :

March 21, 2003 - **World Puppeteer Unemployment Day** not sponsored by UNION INTERNATIONALE DE LA MARIONNETTE

All puppeteers who will be not employed as puppeteers (ie. actually paid for their time in some way ) on that day could email me back?



**From: jp**

Just let me see if I have this straight: You don't want to participate in World Puppetry Day, or UNIMA, unless you are paid for it? Well, of course that is your choice and UNIMA is by its invocation a voluntary non-profit organisation and not a labour union.

UNIMA (generally) cannot directly facilitate employment opportunities. However, UNIMA does work towards raising the profile of puppetry, and educating the public about it as an artform for the transmission of ethical values such as cooperation and mutual understanding. In this way, as a consequence, perhaps more employment opportunities may present themselves... I urge you to reconsider and to get behind World Puppetry Day.

**From: cg**

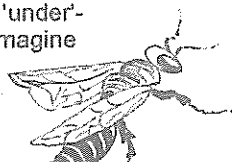
Ian! With great affection, empathy and care: I am sad to hear you identify yourself (humorously I hope) as unemployed. Since when was anything in the Arts a JOB? If you don't like it, it is not compulsory. I put it to you that there is no such thing as an unemployed artist. It is not about being paid, though I am not silly enough to suggest that the work has no value, or that it should not be remunerated. Your art is your vocation; if it isn't, then you are probably mistaken in calling yourself a puppeteer.

**From: ff**

Long before I had received my first cheque as payment for a puppet show, my 'bush-bloke' dad said that "...there will always be a feed here for you..." I thought I knew more about puppetry than him, but he knew more about the world than me.

The only reason I am working on WPD (21st March) is that I learnt from Dad that to persist in an obscure profession, I would need to tighten the belt and market my-self more than IBM or BHP.

Puppeteers are never un-employed, only 'under'-employed.....usually for a good reason. Imagine being an unemployed Doctor....



**From: rh**

I appreciate your provocative sense of humour. I think it is great to have a day to celebrate puppeteers and their art, whether paid or not. I will be celebrating it by doing a free performance on my front lawn for the neighbourhood, who will not be strangers to me or my artform afterwards. Cheers. Thanks for tossing a stone into the pond.

Ian's reply:

**Oh the vitriol! Oh, the eloquence!**  
**Once upon a time puppeteers had a sense of humour....**

Thank you for your almost instantaneous and incendiary responses to my small challenge. It is almost worth the scar left on my pseudonym to have got the blood of the docile puppetry community pumping - if only for just a short time and over such a insignificant comment. You all leap to defend. What? A principle? A way of life? Whom do you think that I attack? I was only suggesting that people in our profession would rather be Puppeteers - what they are trained for, and where their heart is, on this World Puppetry Day, rather than - er.. stacking shelves at Coles (as one acquaintance of mine is) or teaching model making, as I find myself doing. Where is the harm in questioning what being a "Puppeteer" actually is in the real world on this special day for "Puppeteers"?

I am a professional Puppeteer - as any one who knows me could tell you. That means that I get paid for my work. That is because I am very good at it. I am not apologetic about that. I have done my fair share of free work - start out companies, co-op companies, charities and my own projects. I am a great ambassador for the art form of Puppetry. - including being a founding member in a school here in Perth. What appals me is the way people are so quick to leap to conclusions and judge me, without knowing a thing about me! I am a supporting member of UNIMA. I even actually support the concept of World Puppeteers Days and all that. I just thought it would be interesting to do a survey of who is actually working on that day (and not free performances.)

## A Hornet's Nest (cont.)

Consider this. People who work puppets for nothing are making it harder for puppeteers who need to get paid from charging a proper amount! (Oh, that should get a reply! ) If you try to run a puppet company as a business, and you cost out the component parts - the true cost of productions and running the business - you need to charge a high fee to cover costs. Who is going to pay you that amount when they know that another company down the road will "perform for the love of it" and undercut you by 300%, 400%? THIS IS REAL WORLD STUFF. Why should "World Puppetry Day" not address some of these issues?

I have a family and a mortgage. Some puppeteers have different circumstances - spouses with good jobs, family money. Some are just plain insane. Good on them. I am not stopping them from doing what they love. But if puppetry is going to be confined to an amateur profession, then we are all worse off. Professionalism breeds excellence, excellence breeds respect, and professionals (by definition) have to be paid. Puppeteers should be paid a lot because it is a really hard

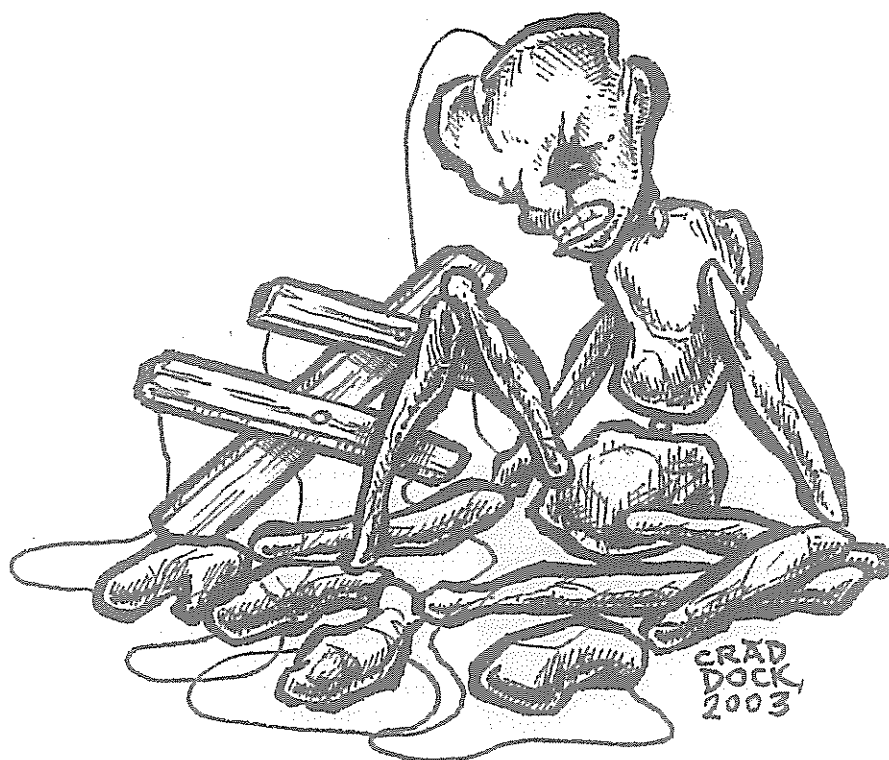
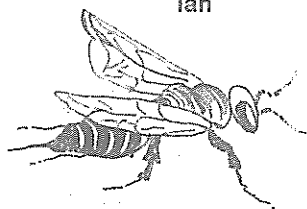
job to do well. If puppetry is done well the results are magical, and that is why we all get out of bed in the morning.

I suppose I want to say : Even though an international organization like UNIMA - or even the local branch in Australia - like to think they speak for all puppeteers, they don't. And they can not possibly. Puppetry is a wide church. There are many factions and chapters. There are many styles and levels of commitment. Listening to some of my critics I would be lead to believe that UNIMA only is for the fanatical amateurs for whom puppetry is like a religion, and all others aren't welcome - especially if you want to dirty your hands with money. That is crap. Some of the best puppeteers I know are millionaires.

All UNIMA can do is speak about common ground. Points where we all agree. There are many of them. The next best thing is to propose things that most puppeteers agree on. That is more likely.

Look how much good material I got out of one small criticism. Chaos is creative. Order is stagnation. Thanks . Great stuff.

Ian



# What's On

## New South Wales

**A puppet in every pot!** Sydney gets a second bite of political puppet theatre to titillate both the mind and the taste buds,

**The puppet project: Oz re-stages: Stone Soup: a Farce about Famine by Paul Thain.**

**The Puppet Project: oZ** presents a darkly comic vision of the tension between first-world greed and the third-world bottom line in its unique puppet production of Paul Thain's *Stone Soup*. This fast-paced puppet show for grown-ups incorporates live music, stilt-walking puppeteers as well as a variety of innovative puppet techniques adapted from theatrical traditions from around the world.

**The Puppet Project: oZ** is a dynamic group of young performing and visual artists based in Sydney, that was formed as a sister troupe to the Canadian **Projet Marionnette**, a not-for-profit professional puppet theatre company based in Montreal, Quebec. The two groups share the same two-tiered mandate: firstly, to produce innovative theatrical productions through a process of artistic collaboration, and secondly, to promote community development through art.

**Plot:** When the wise Sophia suddenly arrives in a starving village built out of discarded cooking pots, and declares that she will feed everyone with her magical stone soup, absolutely no one believes her! Eventually she is able to convince the pot-dwellers to give her a chance, and the brew begins to boil. But when Mr and Mrs Gotalot exercise their monopoly on the only giant cooking pot and try to gain control of the soup and Sophia is labelled a subversive by the autocratic General Mayhem -- sparks fly!

From 8.4.03 to 12.4.03 at Io Myers Theatre, University of New South Wales.



## Tasmania

Terrapin Puppet Theatre

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Hobart Junction is an annual program of skill development in puppetry and related artforms. Workshops are created for both professional and emerging artists, attracting practitioners from a range of disciplines.

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IF VAMPIRES CAST  
NO REFLECTION,  
DO VAMPIRE  
SHADOW PUPPETS  
CAST NO SHADE?



# UNIMA



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Please make cheques payable to  
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Paul French (Vic)  
John Hunt (NSW)  
Heath McIvor (Vic)  
Smiley Williams (Vic)  
Katherine Byrnes (Vic)  
Geoffrey Milne (Vic)  
Stephanie Brown (NSW)  
Camp Quality Puppets (NSW)  
Felicity Wiecek (NSW)  
Rodney Lock (QLD)  
Amanda Pound (QLD)  
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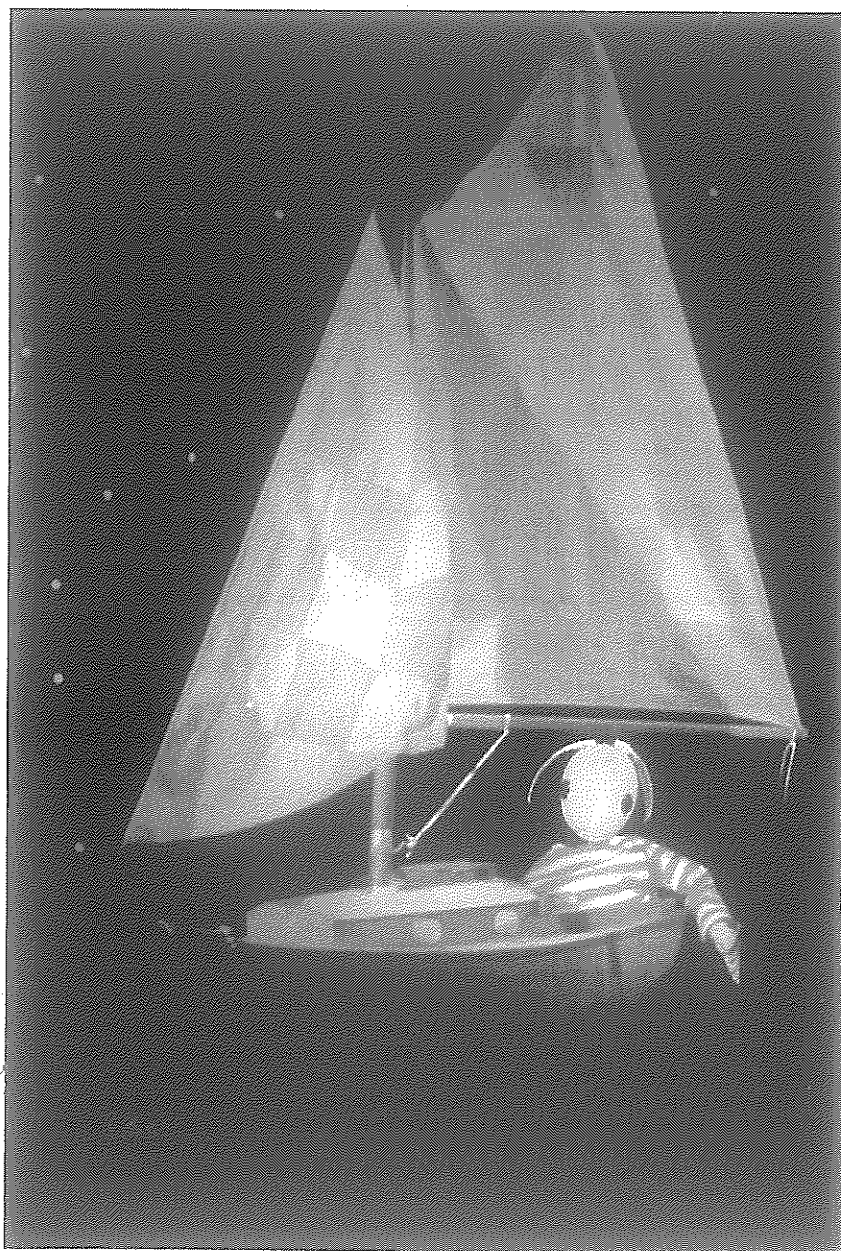
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**DEADLINE** for Winter edition is June 16  
**Thank you for your contributions.**







Inside back cover photo page:  
Dreamer sails away on another adventure  
- this time into the depths of the ocean in  
*Dreamer in the Deep*,  
a work in progress by Richard Hart.