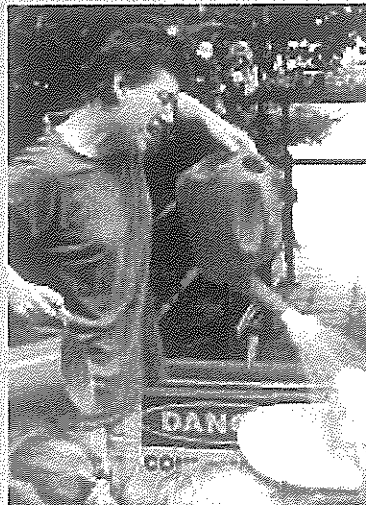
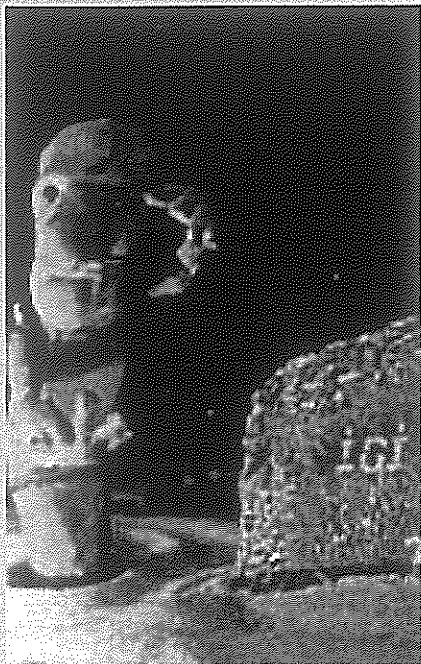
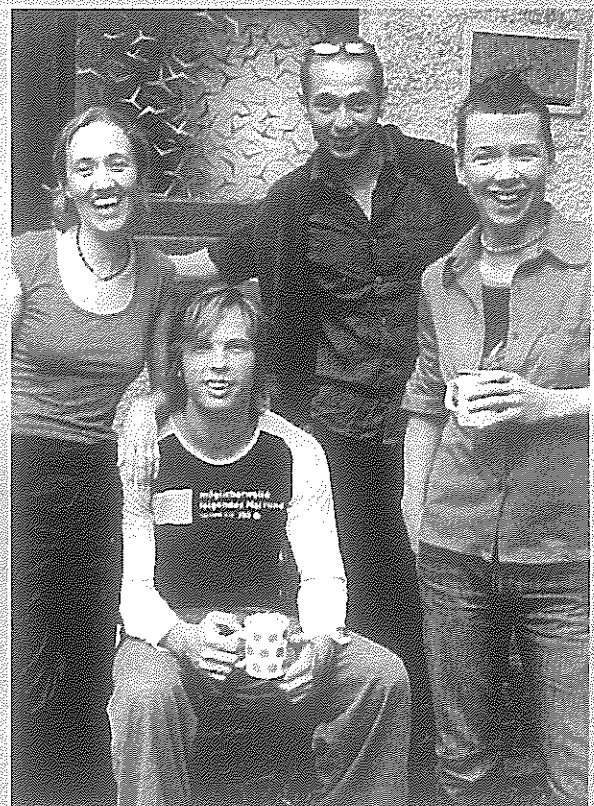
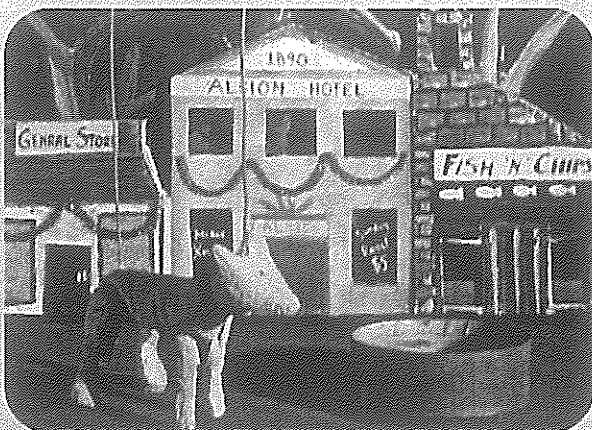


AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER



Summer



Front Cover Photos from

"Stubbies - a season of puppetry and circus shorts"

Left to right *Le Reve* (performed by Renaud Herbin) *Cry Me A River*
(Performed by Victoria Osborne) Claudia (Kronic Circus helper and
general champion) Noah Marley (Kronic Circus) Sarah Kriegler, Jeremy
Davis (sitting, from Kronic Circus) Renaud Herbin, Uta Gerbert
One Night The Dog (performed by Sarah Kriegler)

Stubbies was performed in association with Polyglot Puppet Theatre and
proudly sponsored by Stubbies Clothing Company



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

The Magazine of UNIMA Australia
Summer 03-04

Editorial

This edition, we were absolutely overwhelmed with material for the magazine! Thank you all so much for contributing and not needing to be reminded. It's been inspiring reading about all that has been going on around the country as well as the amazing journeys many Australia puppet artists have undertaken overseas during 2003. Possibly, for the first time since Philip Millar THREW this editorial job to/at me, I have had too much material to include in this quarter's edition. I am not complaining simply explaining why some people will not find their articles in this edition BUT, rest assured, they will appear in the next. Sorry about that to those concerned.

*

Thanks again to Julia for the fabulous Spring edition and a big thank you in advance to Samantha Ferris who will take on my "Winter Edition" commitments as I will be in mad rehearsal mode during the winter.

Cheers, Sarah

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Contributors

Lorrie Gardner, Lachlan Haig, Jenny Pfiefer, Heidi Callewaert, Anita Beckworth, Richard Bradshaw, Dr. Puppet, Greg Methe, Peter Wilson, Jessica Wilson, Sue Wallace, Victoria Osborne, Polyglot Puppet Theatre, Terripin Puppet Theatre, The Rock Puppet Cottage, Dennis Murphy

Please note; By submitting your letter or article to Australian Puppeteer's Magazine you agree that it may be edited for legal, space or other reasons and after publication in the magazine it may be republished on the internet or in other media.

P r e s i d e n t ' s R e p o r t

President's Report - Summer 2004 Firstly I must update our membership about the possible bid to host the UNIMA Festival and Congress in Australia in 2008. In the last issue of this magazine, I reported that UNIMA Australia had given the Victorian Arts Centre and Melbourne till February to see if possible finance and support was forthcoming to mount a bid to host the Congress and Festival in Melbourne. The bad news is that, in December, the V.A.C.. said that they would no longer support a bid. The projected costs were very high and UNIMA Australia could not guarantee enough international visitors to get Arts Victoria or the state government on side. The good news is that Philip Mitchell of Spare Parts Puppet Theatre in Western Australia, with the encouragement of the Perth Convention Bureau, wants to try to raise finance in W.A. for a bid to hold the Congress and Festival there in 2008. Time is short since this bid must be made in June 2004 and all finance and the ability of UNIMA Australia to support it must be in place by then. Philip is exploring various means of support and the linking of this Festival to other events in Perth scheduled for 2008. The most important thing that UNIMA Australia must do is to become incorporated as a non-profit association. We have been

working on a constitution based on the model rules for incorporated associations and hopefully it is either in this magazine for you to vote on or it will be sent to you shortly. We, until now, have been operating with a very simple constitution in a rather nice relaxed way. It will be sad to see this way of life go but in this day and age it would be impossible to do any large event without safeguards for membership and a more formal structure. The other change is to our councillors. Unfortunately, Peter Wilson is unable to attend the Congress in Rejeka in June 2004 due to work commitments. (However we all understand, being mostly working people ourselves.) Peter has decided to step down as a councillor in favour of Philip Mitchell, who was one of our past councillors. It was felt that it would help Philip in his negotiations with funding bodies in W.A. for a Congress and Festival 2008 bid if he had such a role to play in UNIMA. Also Philip could present the bid to the Congress on behalf on UNIMA Australia and the city of Perth, (or state of Western Australia). Peter is still standing for the UNIMA executive, however. (see next paragraph) Peter Wilson and Jennie Pfeiffer are candidates for the international executive of UNIMA and will be voted upon at the June 2004 Congress in Rejeka. It would be very nice

to have an Australian or two on the executive! It is doubly unfortunate that Peter will not be there since the newly elected executive members are sworn in and take up their new official duties at that time. Jennie is working on funding to allow her to attend as are our other two councillors, Sue Wallace and Gary Friedman. It is a constant struggle for puppeteers here to get funds to travel so far to attend functions. The will to help out our parent body is certainly here but, as ever, finance seems to be a great issue. We have a new web page address and domain name that hopefully will encourage more new readers - <www.unima.org.au>. Sorry the page was down for a short time but should be up and running by the time you read this. I have heard wonderful reports from the One Van mini Festival at Blackheath as well as the performance of "Stubbies" at Polyglot. Hopefully reviews are in this issue. I have no doubt that other things have happened over the summer in other states that I have not heard about. We await members in other parts of Australia to write about the exciting shows and events in their state. I do know that "The Lion. The Witch and The Wardrobe" has been playing in Brisbane and will be in Sydney shortly. A must see for any of you who has not seen it. "The Lion King", a Disney Theatrical

Production, is also playing in Sydney to give our Australian production some competition. I made a quick trip to Sydney to see it and was surprised at the amount of puppetry and puppetry techniques in it. I can only recommend both! The Victorian section of UNIMA entertained the puppeteers from the St. Petersburg puppet theatre in Russia one evening at the home of Anita Sinclair. The theatre was in Melbourne for three weeks doing three different productions. It was unfortunate that their one day workshop for puppeteers at Polyglot had to be cancelled due to lack of support.

Lorrie Gardner

UNIMA Australia Grants 2004

Unima Australia offers one grant of \$500 per year for contribution to projects, study, materials or anything else relating to the puppetry arts

Applicants must have been a current financial member for at least two years

Grant applications are judged by the Unima Australia Grant panel

Please send a one page description of your project etc. to;

Lorrie Gardner
PO BOX 208
Elsternwick
3183, Vic

**Applications due;
April 7th 2004**

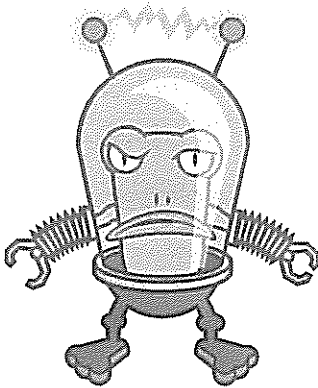
**WORLD
PUPPETRY DAY
MARCH 21ST
2004**

**CHECK THE
UNIMA WEBSITE
TO SEE WHAT'S
HAPPENING IN
YOUR STATE TO
CELEBRATE**

Strings and things

"Strings and things" is a dedicated to the goings on and smaller gigs undertaken by independent artists around the country. No matter how small or large your project is, let the magazine know - we think it's important for your work to be documented. Contact details on pg. 39

The Puppetry Course
at the Victorian
College of the Arts
has commenced with
seven new students
enrolled in the
course for 2004.



Fiona Gentle-Snow and
Mal Heap spent the
summer playing with a
delightful fluffy, yellow,
creature by the name of
"Ollie". Ollie is the first
ever Australian Sesame
St. Puppet produced in
association with
Nickelodeon Australia
and Jim Henson's
Creature Shop. Ollie can
be seen on Nick Junior
as part of "Open Sesame
from March 2004.

After four years and, most recently, a three month mini-series, Henson's *Farscape* is finally coming to an end for Peter Jagger, David Collins, Sean Masterson, Tim Mieville, Matt McCoy, Mario Halovous, Fiona Gentle-Snow and Virginia (BJ) Goodfellow. Wagging fantastic creations made by Sonny Tilders, Pete Luscombe, Philip Millar, Anton Boniface and Trevor Tighe with Creature Shop UK, these puppeteers have managed to maintain a great sense of fun despite the intense pressure of the show and the thick layer dust over everything on set. Their abilities with animatronics are extraordinary and they are indeed masters at this craft. Puppetry co-ordinator, Peter Jagger has handled this stressful position with calmness and constant gags making it a happy team.

Other puppeteers who have recently laughed and coughed on the set of *Farscape* are Russell Garbet, Ed Boyle, Adam Kronenberg, Sarah Kriegler, Michael Hamilton, Sue Wallace, Alice Osborne and Steve Coup.

Strings and things



Lachlan Haig and his "Lounge of Leisure" have returned. This time situated at Dante's in Fitzroy, the Lounge saw in the summer with a host of puppetry, circus, comedy and other delights. Featuring local and international artists, the Lounge was a fabulous way to spend a summer's evening.

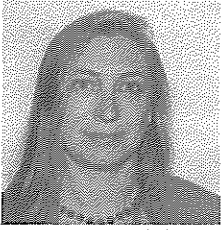
Many thanks to the marvellous Maria at Dante's for her continuous support to the Melbourne puppetry community by offering a fabulous venue to perform in accompanied by dinner and a smile. Dante's was also the venue for Black Hole's 2003 season of "Caravan"

The "Lounge of Leisure" will continue throughout the year. Interested artists should contact Lachlan Haig on 0413 145 124

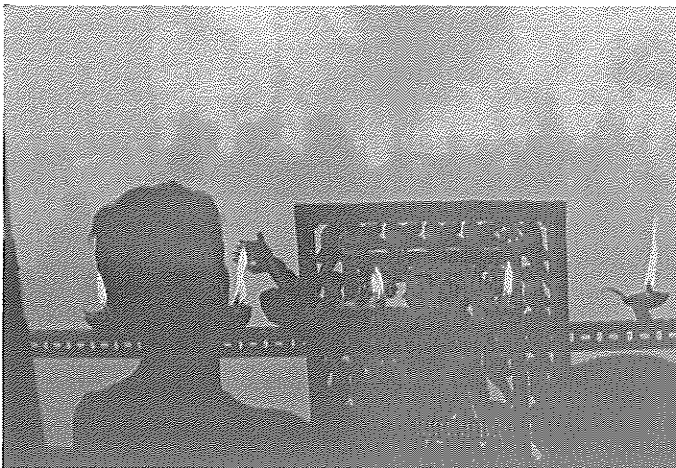
*Next Lounge;
Friday 19th March
Friday 23rd April
Friday 21st May*

Asia Pacific Report

by Jenny Pfeiffer



India is currently a popular destination. Katy Bowman recently returned from a whirlwind, and spontaneous, reconnaissance four-week trip covering northern regions of India. Katy tells me she is looking forward to her next visit, which is already in planning. Perhaps we can persuade her to write a few words about her leap of faith into the unknown.



Photos: (above) Kerala Tolpavakoothu Shadow Temple players led by G. Venu, Director of Natana Kairali.

This form has found its way from the temple to public stages. The photos were shot from behind the screen, and (below) from the audience' perspective on my Asia-Pacific Commission trip in 2002. I was amazed at the coordination of the seven puppeteers, plus musicians, weave their way around each other manipulating dozens of leather shadow puppets re-telling classical Ramayana stories from the Kerala region.

Congratulations to Andrew Hansen on the receipt of an Asialink Fellowship, which has enabled him to work with Ishara Theatre in New Delhi for three months. Out-reach

workshop sessions are scheduled for this period. The fellowship is made possible with the assistance of the Australia-India Council and Asialink, which is affiliated with the University of Melbourne. We hope to hear more of Andrew's adventures

Congratulations also to Jai Hartnell, who was recently awarded the inaugural Handspan Scholarship. She travels to Cambodia to study specific shadow puppetry forms.

Best wishes to Mr Faizan Peerzada in Lahore, Pakistan, founder of The Museum of Puppetry that was inaugurated on the 14th January 2004. The Museum has been a long-term project for Mr Peerzada. The Museums main objective is to preserve and promote disappearing puppetry forms in Pakistan via displays, puppet shows and educational programs. The Museum is offering Apprentice Residencies, to work with, and assist the Museum Curator with the Workshops, Solo Puppet Performances and General Museum Developmental Work. The Residency commences March 2004 and onwards for a period of 3 months, with a payment of local per diem, stay, food, transportation and an air fare (To and Back). Interested candidates should apply with a short CV, along with samples of their puppetry work and a recent passport size photograph, addressed to: Residency Programs, Curator Museum of Puppetry - Lahore. (I am uncertain whether the residencies are still available at this late stage, but further address details can be obtained from either myself, or Richard Hart, UNIMA Aus Secretary.)

I Made Sidia is arriving in Melbourne to teach in the new MA course at the VCA in Melbourne for six weeks from late September 2004. This has been made possible through the Simplot International Masterclass Series hosted by the VCA. There will be a public showing of material workshopped with the students during his stay

at the VCA. I Made Sidia is an active member of staff at the Arts Institute Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia, and has been involved in many transcultural productions across the world, his achievements, stellar. He has interests in the possibilities of multi-media production and computer technology. Most notably I Made Sidia is remembered by Australian audiences for his collaboration on the Theft of Sita, the stunning production that premiered in Australia (2000) and toured to New York and major European destinations (2002).

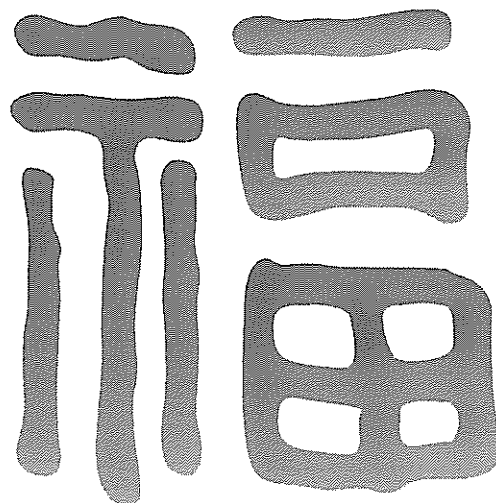
Apologies if this is repeated information. UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura proclaimed 28 cultural forms as "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity". It is my pleasure to reiterate that of candidates put forward after consultation with UNESCO NGOs, of which UNIMA was included, two puppet forms proceeded to the list: Wayang Puppet Theatre of Indonesia and Ningyo Joruri Bunraku Puppet Theatre of Japan.

The formal set of International Conventions on Intangible heritage was adopted at the most recent 32nd session of the General Conference and is now in the process of being ratified. This is the first concrete response to meeting pressing needs to acknowledge and look after intangible heritage. The goal of this UNESCO program is to raise public awareness of the value of this heritage and to encourage governments to take legal and administrative steps to safeguard it. There are many vulnerable puppet forms, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. The next proclamation is scheduled to take place in 2005. Let us hope that more puppet forms and groups are nominated, and receive the support they deserve.

My new contact details are as follows: E-mail ienpfei@optusnet.com.au

If you have any Asia-Pacific news to relay, if you are planning a trip to the Asia-Pacific region, or would like to know more about any item mentioned, I would be delighted to hear from you.

World Puppetry Day is with us again. Promote puppetry and promote UNIMA. Let your local newspaper know about what you do, and about World Puppetry Day. If you would like to know contact details, lead in times, etc of any publication in your area, I am happy to supply information from my Media Directory.
: www.peergroup.com.pk



SIX MONTHS ON THE ROAD THEN I'M GOING HOME!

A Mixed Media Production tour of Germany and Austria by Heidi Callewaert

In August 2002 we received an invitation from a German presenter to go on a regional tour with our show "Paul the little bear has a big Christmas Wish" in December 2003. The tour would consist of 15 performances. After doing some maths it was clear that the costs would be too high. We could either turn down the offer or ... try and set up our first overseas tour since our arrival in Australia in February 2001. We came up with an idea for a new figure theatre show called "If kangaroos could fly". We promoted both shows in Germany and Austria via the web. And within a couple of months it had grown into a tour of over 50 performances from October 6th till December 19th 2003.

"Paul the little bear has a big Christmas Wish" has very few props and a minimal set. To keep the transport and production costs of the new show "If kangaroos could fly" to a minimum we decided to work partially in Tasmania and partially in Germany.

During a Writer's Residency awarded by the Tasmanian Writer's Centre I wrote the story, which would then be dramatised in collaboration with the German director. Before leaving for Europe Thomas and I decided on the music, the type of puppets and how to manipulate/animate them. Thomas also designed the set. Obviously we opted for a light and flexible set because the show had to fit in many different venues and we had lot's of bump-ins and -outs to manage.

After months of careful planning and preparation we finally embarked on our first overseas tour. We landed in London Heathrow mid July 2003. It was 5am and already 17 degrees. We had a long and hot European summer ahead of us. After 2 days of jet lag we were ready for 'action'. First we dived into London and later explored the intriguing Devonshire landscape. And yes, it rained for an entire week!

Discovering Europe

Upon our arrival in Germany 2 weeks after we landed in London we bought a car, which was much cheaper than leasing one. We were mobile again and could hardly wait to get on the road. Before starting 'work' we traveled for a couple of weeks and rediscovered Europe. And it was also great and very emotional to catch up with family, friends and colleagues.

We enjoyed the cultural, artistic and culinary diversity. We went to as much shows, concerts and exhibitions as possible. In Barcelona we strolled through the magnificent old suburbs and were on a constant Gaudí-high. In Basel we visited the Tinguely museum, a 'must' for all puppeteers and designers who like kinetic sculptures / objects. In the Black Forest we saw a beautiful exhibition of Aboriginal Art. And of course we couldn't miss out on the festival in Charleville-Mézières. You have already read all about it in the last Australian Puppeteer. No need to tell we had heaps of fun and got really inspired.

Creative development and production

After a lot of art, sun, beach and mountains we finally had to get to work. Together with German director and puppeteer Martin Bachmann we dramatised the story, developed our own style of presentation combining traditional story telling with contemporary puppetry / object theatre and live soundscape. Martin is a tremendously skilled puppeteer and a director of high profile. To work with him has been a real privilege.

According to Thomas' designs we built the puppets / objects, set and props on location. Rehearsals started and the opening performance was there in no time!

On the road for 2.5 months

On October 6th the show finally opened in Donaueschingen, a historic town in the South of Germany. This was the beginning of a long and very rewarding tour.

It is the first time we have set up such a large tour entirely online. The internet is indeed a wonderful tool! We were well prepared. Still we had some doubts whether everything would work out as planned. And it actually did.

Fellow puppeteers in Germany gave us a lot of support. They offered us to use their workshops, rehearsal spaces and technical equipment. This was of course an enormous help to us. The venues were prepared, accommodations were supplied as requested, promotion and publicity was running. Everything was taken care of by the venues, all we had to do was show up and perform. A

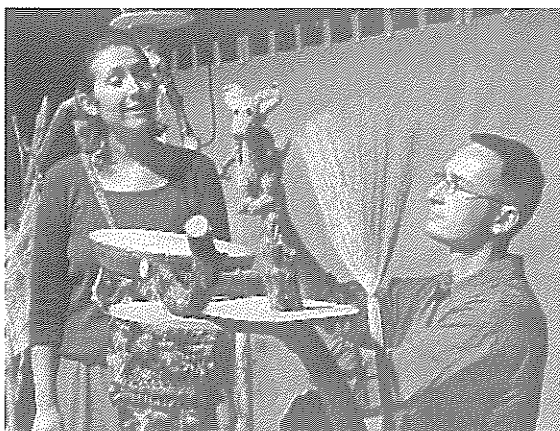
puppeteer's paradise!

We mainly performed in small theatres, cultural centres and libraries who have an extremely well organised network in Germany. We enjoyed a sold-out season with over 50 performances in as many different locations, receiving great appreciation from audiences, presenters and the media. We were very happy to experience that our theatre work is still popular in Germany although we have been away for nearly 3 years now.

Target audience

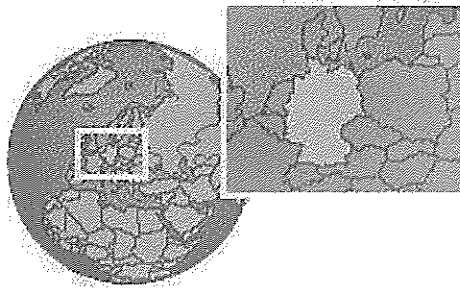
The new show had been created especially for that overseas market and it has worked well for us. Presenters and organisers were interested in seeing how our work has been influenced by living and working in Australia. Inevitably there is a huge influence, not only in regards to the content but also in the way we work or present the story.

The show is set in Australia, the whole feeling of it is very Australian (as far as we can grasp it and reflect on it as recent arrivals). The main character is a Joey and the European audience was absolutely thrilled. Where ever we performed people



Adventure Bound with Anita Beckworth

In 2003, with the help of the Ian Potter Foundation I was fortunate to embark on a marvellous European puppetry Expedition.



The trip began in Muhleim, Germany where I joined Thomas Zotz and Heidi Callewaert from Mixed Media Productions to observe rehearsals for their new show *If Kangaroos could fly*. The director was Martin Bachmann, another excellent puppeteer who has taught at the Stuttgart puppetry school and also worked with Eric Bass. I stayed at Martin's and his partner Cecile's house and benefited from their warm hospitality. Cecile was rehearsing her own puppetry piece and so the place was a hive of activity.

If Kangaroos Could Fly has a very elegant set made of branches of wood and beautiful cloths roughly woven with feathers and sticks to create an impression of the Australian Outback. The puppets are small, almost like soft toys, very appealing. Heidi wrote the script about a joey that dreams of flying and Thomas made the sets and puppets. Thomas creates a wonderful soundscape with various instruments and objects which both accompanies and layers Heidi's lively storytelling. It is a very different project from Arrivals on which I worked with them last year for the Ten Days on the Island Festival and it was interesting to experience a different side to this very flexible company.

After a week of rehearsals with Mixed Media I went to visit Frank Soehnle and Karin Erschling in Tubingen. They also extended great hospitality towards me.

Frank spoke extensively to me about his work and I sat in on rehearsals for a show he is directing named Mrs. Icarus. Although I couldn't understand too much of it, being in German, the sets and puppetry were quite ingenious with the use of pulleys and rocks to fit in with the theme of flying and weight. From what I gather the show is about the legend of Icarus and Virginia Woolf.

My next stop was in Brussels, Belgium where I was again the recipient of unbridled generosity. On a recommendation I had contacted Jean Debeve, artistic director of Theater Galafronie, a government funded children's theatre company in Brussels that has been running for about thirty years. He kindly invited me to sit in on rehearsals for their show Amazon and introduced me to many companies around Brussels. The work of Galafronie is interesting, even if it only uses puppetry occasionally. It is very professional, very dark, very funny children's theatre. There certainly wasn't a hint of cuteness. I was really inspired by the quality of the work and the lack of a patronising attitude towards children.

Interesting puppet based companies that I met in Brussels were:

Caro Bergeron: currently making very beautiful mermaids for a street festival in Portugal

Compagnie Gare Centrale (Agnes Limbos): Apparently a rising 'star', she uses unusual tiny tabletop figures.

Theatre du Tilleul: Well known shadow theatre company. Recently have done some interesting work with children with Downe's Syndrome.

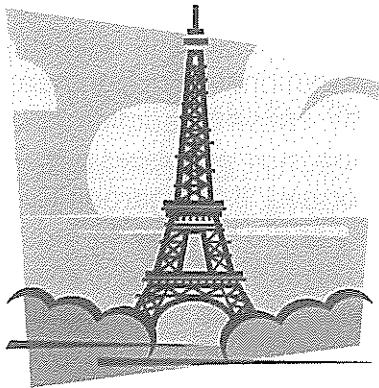
Theatre des 4 Mains: traditional hand puppets.

Next stop: The International puppetry festival in Charleville Mezieres. As mentioned in the last issue it was indeed an enormous and fantastic festival. I saw about twenty shows, some really wonderful (and some not so wonderful). There was street theatre and off programme shows

going on constantly.

Here are some of the shows I saw:

Philippe Genty (Ligne de fuite): Very beautiful, accomplished, strange, humorous....it was, in a way, what you expect from a Genty show, rather than the unexpected. There were some technical hitches the night I saw the show and I suppose this compromised some of the scenes. Looking



back on my notes I realise there was a lot about the show that I really enjoyed, many whimsical and ingenious scenes: A brigade of people in trenchcoats pushing little dolls in trenchcoats, the flying astronaut capturing the letters that spell abyss, a recurring gunshot throughout the piece which always causes someone to fall down and disappear. However, despite many engaging parts I have to say as a whole the show did not stay with me.

Ambulo (Passe Compose): This is a company from Israel. Really masterful, simple storytelling. The single performer, Hannah Yakin, works on mats on the floor and scene changes occur by changing the mats. She manipulates puppets, objects, toys. She tells the story of her family in Holland during the war with humour and simplicity. A row of children's blocks becomes a train, a christmas tree, and (with a torch) a concentration camp.

Tanit Theatro (Anatol): I just wandered in to this off program show but found it refreshing. It had a boring setup- just a brown puppetbooth on the stage and Anatol (from Spain) enters in a conventional clownish manner with his suitcase (you imagine) full of puppets. Ho hum. But from that moment on you never know what to expect: Anatol tells the story of the three little pigs in a

ridiculous, hilarious and unconventional manner. He doesn't touch the suitcase until the very end and he doesn't use the puppet booth in a conventional manner either. In the end one of his puppets eats both him and the booth. You could see he was having a lot of fun up there.

Barbara Melois (Petites histoires a l'eau de rose): Great concept, the solo performer uses rolls of toilet paper to make the set and the material from which to build all the puppets. A very lovely moment when the first puppet appears- she picks up a bunch of toilet paper and a delicate elephant is revealed. She used fans to make the very lightweight puppets dance. To my taste though she was too enclosed in her set and also a little clumsy or unrehearsed with the objects.

Theater Waidspacher (La reine des couleurs): An absolutely splendid and simple children's piece. Many people I spoke to recommended this as their favourite show. There was a very nice use of projection mixed with shadow theatre and lovely interaction between the live performers and the puppets. Two performers out the front- the court musician and the court painter are at the whim and command of the funny and demanding little princess (the shadow character) as she explores the world of colours.

Neville Tranter (Re:Frankenstein): I found every aspect of this show (script, use of puppetry, performance, sound) completely satisfying and a joy (and a horror) to watch. In this unique version of the story of Frankenstein I loved the way the monster was the only character, in the end, that the audience could empathise with. This piece was already reviewed in the last issue so I won't go on about it.

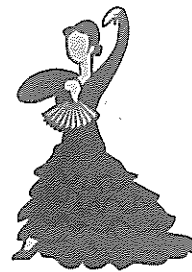
Eric Bass, Sandglass Theatre (One Way Street). This was a difficult piece, probably not to everyone's taste. The

emotions and images stayed with me and I liked it very much. It was based on the life of philosopher Walter Benjamin and it would probably make it easier to know something about him (I didn't but it made me want to look him up). Hard to describe the show as it was fairly abstract...Three performers, a small Walter Benjamin puppet, large books form the set which he traverses, interspersed with text from his writings...a piece one really has to see rather than read about. Whilst the content seemed very intellectual I think that if one allowed it, the effect was emotional.

Theatre Meschugge (Le Voyage d'hiver) It was brilliant to finish the festival on such a fantastic piece. Ilka Schonbein adapts 'The Winter's Travel' by Franz Schubert and Wilhelm Muller. There is no narrative as such, but a voiceover and a singer accompany the tableaux created. I could not understand the words as it was all in German, but it didn't matter. In each tableau the performer slipped on another 'costume'. From where I was sitting you could not tell where the body ended and the 'costume' began, they were such lifelike extensions of her body. Suddenly, you would realise she was wearing a mask and then she would appear to have two heads, or her arms would extend and be too long for her body, or she would turn and there would be a full body on the back of her own. Although I could not understand the language of the voiceover the 'story' to me was one woman passing through the ravages of a winter in her emotional world. It was exquisitely done.

After Charleville I headed down to Barcelona. There, through lucky timing, I was able to meet up with Eugenio Navarro who runs La Fanfarra.

Originally from England he has been based in Barcelona for about thirty years creating both adult and children's puppetry shows. One of his pieces is now being turned into an opera! I was able to sit in on a rehearsal for his shadow show for children, Caramante, and then watch it from the audience perspective during a performance in a town just outside Barcelona. Eugenio has developed a technique of 3D shadows where the children are instructed to put on 3D glasses at one stage for especially scary effects! The show was performed in Catalan, and there was a lot of dialogue so I couldn't fully appreciate



the text but I did enjoy the images, and being able to watch their techniques.

For the last part of my trip I joined up again with Thomas and Heidi in Mistelbach, Austria for the Internationale Puppentheaterstage Mistelbach. I have to admit that by this stage I was feeling a bit puppeted out! Thomas and Heidi performed 'If Kangaroos Could Fly' three times at the festival, to much acclaim. Thomas' use of sound is extremely original and creative, Heidi is very engaging and the two puppets, a joey and a baby eagle, Joey and Basel, seem to capture the children's imaginations, perhaps because they are so simple and accessible. The audiences were fascinated by a tale from Australia. I think Mixed Media enjoyed a very successful tour in Germany after this festival.

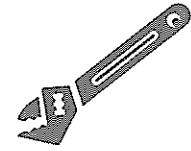
Apart from If Kangaroos could Fly I have to say that everything else I saw on the programme was quite dull. There was certainly a very different vibe to Charleville, more a focus on traditional puppet jiggling than on pushing any boundaries. In any case, it was interesting to experience another form of European puppet festival.

On returning to Melbourne I felt very encouraged and inspired by all the wonderful and talented people I met on my trip. Now it's just a matter of retaining the effect of this stimulating and special experience in order to continue with my own work. I am very grateful to the Ian Potter Foundation and to Thomas and Heidi for helping me to achieve this dream.

Ask Dr. Puppet,

No one has questions for Dr. Puppet?

Could this mean you've all solved your glue and polystyrene debacles?

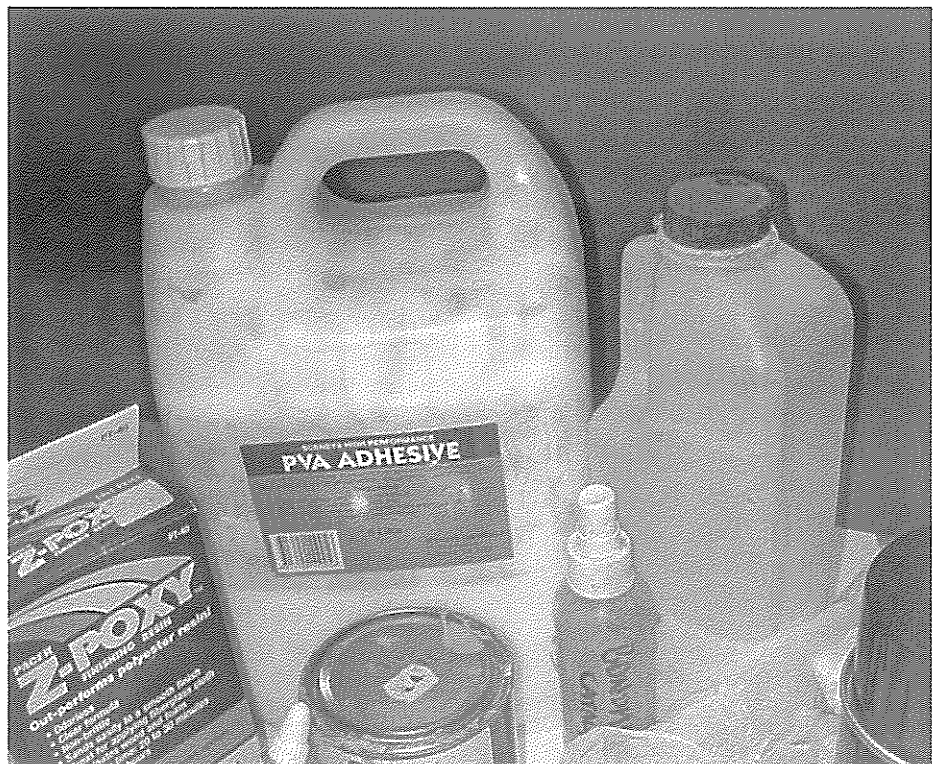
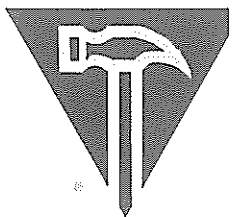
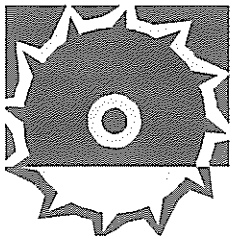
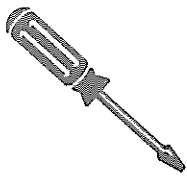
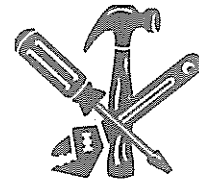


No? Well, in that case, send your questions to;

"Ask Dr Puppet"

(please imagine this said in a deeply dramatic voice)

PO BOX 208
Elsternwick 3185



Puppet History

by Richard Bradshaw

Yang Feng Remebered

One of the great memories of the international puppetry festival in Hobart in January 1979 was the performance of the Longxi Hand Puppet Troupe from Fujian [Fukien], China. When early in the show one of the puppets jumped from stage-level to the top of a building there was a gasp of surprise, but that was just the first of the wonders of the night. Those of us seated in the balcony at the rear of the theatre had seen how the puppet had been tossed from one hand of the puppeteer to the other in order to achieve the effect.

After the performance local puppeteers flooded backstage where the puppets were laid out on tables. The Chinese encouraged the Australians to handle the figures and try some of the tricks such as juggling a wooden rod, doing a ribbon dance with long silk ribbons on each of the puppet's hands and even tossing a figure up and catching it on the hand again. They did not seem too worried about what might happen to the wooden heads and finely carved hands of their splendid puppets.

The Artistic Director of the festival was Peter Wilson; not the VCA one, but the Peter Wilson who was responsible

for the Tasmanian Puppet Theatre, Spare Parts Puppet Theatre and is now based at Capital E in Wellington, N.Z. The very presence of the troupe at the festival was something of a coup because it was not long after the Cultural Revolution and theatre groups in China were still recovering after years in which they were unable to perform. Having been frustrated by attempts to invite puppeteers through the Chinese Embassy and the Department of Foreign Affairs, the administrator had written directly to China and secured the visit. Then the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Chinese Embassy and the Australia Council gave their valuable support.

The troupe of ten or so had travelled for several days to get to Hobart and arrived in time for New Year's Eve festivities at the Tasmanian Puppet Theatre's home in Salamanca Place. It was a time when all of them still wore the uniform Mao-jackets but it was soon apparent that they were eager to enter the spirit of things. I remember women in the troupe gathering in a corner as midnight approached and giggling as they put on make-up.

After the festival in Hobart the troupe had a season at the Playbox in Melbourne and then at the Sydney Festival. It was originally scheduled to perform in a tent in Hyde Park in Sydney but urgent messages were sent from some of us in Hobart to the Festival Director, Stephen Hall, who happily found a more suitable venue, a theatre in the office block of the State Government.

In Sydney the company visited the Zoo, had banquets in Dixon Street and was given a special reception at the Australia Council by its chief officer, Dr Jean Battersby. We had a visit from them at the workshop of the Marionette Theatre of Australia where they did a few repairs. I remember the man whose puppet juggled a wooden bar selecting a new piece of dowel to replace the old one which had split. Working without the puppet he manipulated that dowel with enviable dexterity.

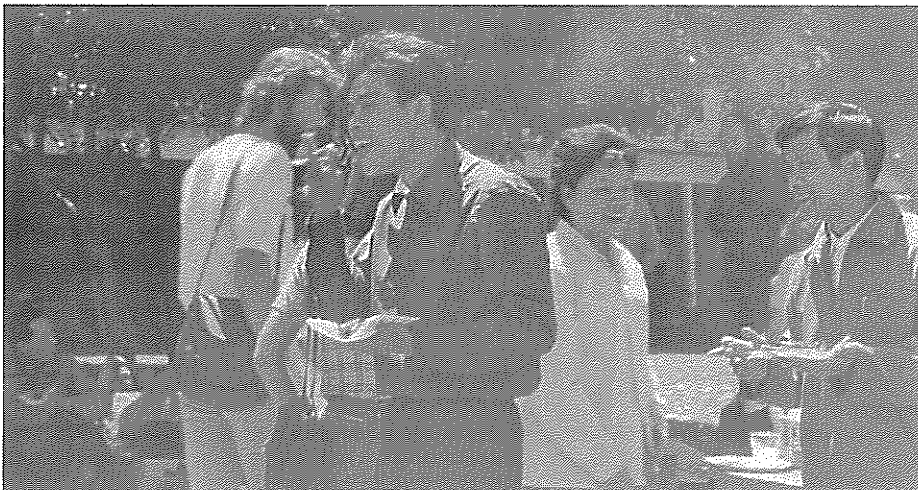
The leader of the troupe was Yang Feng. At lunch one day, through an interpreter, he asked if I had ever seen this kind of puppet. I told him I had seen a Mr Lee perform in Sydney a few years earlier as

part of a promotion for the Mirimar Hotel in Hong Kong. "He is from my town." Then he added with a grin: "He is only a fourth generation puppeteer, but I am a fifth generation one!"

In her book "China's Puppets" [San Francisco: China Books, 1984] Roberta Stalberg tells how Yang Feng's father, Yang Sheng, was seen by his own father to have a special aptitude for puppetry when he was only four. At seven the father took him out on performance tours and at fourteen he was invited to join a northern Fujian troupe as "chief master puppeteer". Eventually he became

to exercise them until they were warm again. By the age of twelve Yang Feng was already accomplished and would practice until his arms throbbed with pain and his hand trembled when he used chopsticks.

Under the Communist government puppet troupes grew in size and training was formalised. Starting from the age of about fourteen students do a basic three-year-course on performance subjects as well as receiving a wide-ranging education in language, mathematics, science and arts. The hand-puppeteer must also study the local opera form,



attached to a troupe in southern Fujian whose veteran leader passed on his greatest secrets to Yang Sheng on his deathbed. Yang Sheng thus was able to combine the best of two strong hand-puppet traditions.

Yang Feng attributed his own success as a puppeteer to the severe training he had from his father. In mid-winter his hands would be plunged into a barrel of icy water until numb and then he would have

and there may be special short-term training at other institutions.

All this training had stopped during the years of the Cultural Revolution. In 1978, when the country was still recovering, I went to China on a theatre people's tour led by Carrillo Gantner (of Playbox Theatre, Melbourne) and we learnt first-hand of the age gap in the continuum in training for the different opera forms, where much is

taught by an older performer to a younger one by example. In Shanghai we met the charming Director of the Conservatorium of Music who was able to tell us, in excellent English because she had spent some of her younger years in the U.S.A., how she had had to work in the fields and how she would be punished if she dared to sing as she worked. Yang Feng was quite angry about the treatment his father received at this time, and spoke of the beatings which contributed to his father's poor health.

In Australia Yang Feng would carry his puppet of a tiger with him in a bag to show at lunches etc. He used this in a play "Lei Wanchun Fights the Tiger". When the Tiger appears it displays great ferocity, then pauses to deal with a flea, finally resting and tapping its tail contentedly against its ear. A scholar, pursued by an inn-keeper intent on robbing him, rushes in and is confronted by the Tiger whose mood quickly changes. Our hero Lei Wanchun arrives to do battle with the Tiger, finally killing it with his spear. During the heat of battle Lei Wanchun takes off his coat!

Both Lei Wanchun and the Tiger were manipulated by Yang Feng, and the action of the battle was a joy to watch. Roberta Stalberg tells how once, when Yang Sheng was performing this battle in Paris in 1956, the foot of the lion got trapped in the puppet stage. Stalling for

time, he made the the two combatants pause and pant for breath. The audience applauded with delight and that pause for breath became incorporated into the routine.

In one of Yang Feng's items a plump little smiling man carrying a basket on his back dances in. He spots a couple of objects on the ground and pauses to take off the basket. The puppeteer's hand is briefly visible as the puppets arms are freed from the straps to the basket. The man then picks up each of the objects between both hands and drops them in turn into the basket. Then, with his right hand, which can open and close, he picks up a towel draped over the edge of the basket. The left hand lifts the end of the towel to drape it over the right arm, and the man mops his head and face. Then he takes hold of one end of the towel with his left hand, and stretching the towel out with both his hands he throws it over his head in order to wipe the back of his head and neck by pulling the towel from side to side. Finally he returns the towel to the basket, puts the basket on his back again, and dances off. [The dance has a vigour quite impossible for a marionette, because the only downward forces on a marionette's parts are due to gravity, so the fastest descent of a marionette's feet and arms is that of free fall.]

I saw Yang Feng again at the UNIMA Festival in Nagoya, Japan in 1988. He was part of

a Chinese performing delegation. He seemed eager to say something, but in the absence of a common language communication was frustrated.

In September 1990 Nancy Staub, who had organised the UNIMA Festival In Washington D.C. in 1980, and was studying at the University of Hawaii, received a letter in Chinese from Yang Feng in La Paz, Bolivia, which was then translated into English. Yang Feng introduced himself as the vice-president of the Chinese Puppet Association and artistic director and deputy chief of the Zhangzhou Puppet Troupe in Fujian.

He had met Nancy in the U.S. in 1980 and she had visited his theatre in Fujian with Roberta Stalberg that same year. Two letters he had since written to her had been returned because she had moved. For "freedom of art" he and two brothers had left China and had been in La Paz since February. He was hopeful that he and his two brothers could visit the U.S., with the help of the Asian Cultural Council, for some kind of cultural exchange with puppeteers.

He also revealed that in May he had applied to immigrate to Australia, but the local authorities in Zhangzhou refused to supply copies of the necessary certificates because they were not happy with his leaving. He asked

Nancy to write on his behalf to the Australian Embassy in Chile. She did so, and forwarded copies of the correspondence to me. I wrote to Canberra, the Embassy in Chile and to Yang Feng in La Paz.

He sent me a typed reply in English; not perfect English, but easily understandable. He was frustrated that we had been unable to talk together in Japan because he had no English then, but back home he had begun to study it hard. When he left China he had to choose somewhere else quickly and ended up in Bolivia, which he was now anxious to leave. He was living on money sent from home in China.

Early in 1991 Nancy received another letter in Chinese from Yang Feng. She carried it around for a while and finally found someone to translate it for her. She was told that Yang Feng was in a detention centre in Denver!

Yang Feng himself told us the next part of the story. He had had to leave La Paz and the flight back to China took him via Alaska where he refused to reboard. He was flown to Denver, Colorado where he was put in detention as an illegal immigrant. There the local Chinese community and local puppeteers set to work on his behalf. He went to court on 1 April, 1991 and at the end of an hour the judge accepted his application for political asylum and he

was free to go, although he was not to travel from the U.S. for a year.

We exchanged letters, and in June he wrote of his concern for his two brothers, Yang Hui and Yang Hua [or Huang?], who had both applied from La Paz to our Embassy in Chile for immigration to Australia and were waiting for interviews. I wrote to the Embassy and in August they replied that the June interview in La Paz had been cancelled because of airline problems, but another trip was planned for September. A note from Yang Feng on 1 January 1992 said the Embassy had been in contact with his younger brother. I do not know the final outcome.

As luck would have it we caught up with Yang Feng a few months later, in Seattle. He and I were both performing at a children's festival there. UNIMA-U.S.A. had given him financial backing to get a puppet stage made in China and he was able to do a wonderful solo show. I still remember a young kid in front of us turning to his teacher to say: "Amazing!" And it was.

Margaret and I had lunch at the waterside in Seattle with Yang Feng and we were joined by Luman and Arlyn Coad from Vancouver. There, as two old yellow-and-green trams from Melbourne (yes!) shuttled back and forth along the tourist strip, Yang Feng told us the above story. He was looking then for help to get his wife out of

China.

He was later joined in the U.S. by his daughter, Yang Xie Zheng who performed with him. Yang Feng also worked on shows with the Carter Family of puppeteers of Seattle, who were very supportive and interested in intercultural exchange. He went to Europe to give performances and master-classes. In fact, it was an Italian puppeteer in Turin in early October who told us Yang Feng had died. We didn't want to believe this.

Allelu Kurten the former representative of UNIMA-

*It's rare to see such
precision in the
manipulation of
puppets*

U.S.A. knew nothing about it when she visited us in November but promised to check it out. In December Lettie Schubert of the San Francisco Bay area e-mailed to Allelu in Hyde Park, N.Y.:

"I was at the Northwest Puppet Theater in Seattle last week, talking to Stephen and Chris Carter and their son Dimitri who is married to Feng's daughter. I asked about Feng and they told me he died of cancer a few months ago. He had returned to China to care for his ailing mother, and had some tests which were clear. A month later he was tested again, still clear, but the third time it was bad news. His daughter was able to go to China to see

him before he died. I think Dimitri went along, and they probably took their son along too. Dimitri is working on a memorial piece for the Puppetry Journal."

I've since learnt he died in June.

Australia must have looked wonderful to those Chinese puppeteers in 1979, so recently emerging from the bizarre Cultural Revolution under the Gang of Four. The weather in Hobart for the festival was idyllic, and I particularly remember them all in their grey Mao-jackets looking wonderfully relaxed at a leisurely barbecue on a green hillside with a splendid view. I'm not surprised Yang Feng might choose it over La Paz. But he was better placed in the U.S.A., and more easily able to travel to Europe. The American puppetry community was generous in its support ... and now his grandson is American, and will possibly be a seventh generation puppeteer!

It is rare to see such precision in the manipulation of puppets, and while it isn't always vital for the success of a puppet play, such a combination of dexterity and art has a fascination of its own.

The world has lost a great puppeteer.

secretary's

Hello again . I have been totally absorbed for the last few months working on a new show. I still took time out, however, to see the wonderful St. Petersburg Marionettes twice and some excellent short performances at Polyglot over the summer break, (for others, not me). I could give you a very accurate and up to date report on the condition and layout of my workshop, but little else I am afraid. I have been forwarded information about some festivals, forums and workshops which are still current for this issue. I have summarised them below. If you are interested, contact me and I will give you more details.

Till next time,
Richard Hart.

International Puppet Festival, HOLON, ISRAEL.
21st to 24th of July, 2004. Invitations for performances with no or few words, aimed at

children/ family audiences.

International Forum, LYON, FRANCE.
4th to 6th of April, 2004. April harvest Biennale des Marionettes.

The Woodford Folk Festival, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA. are looking for acts of puppetry. Unfortunately, I have no other details.

A web site to investigate if you want to buy puppetry stuff: czechmarionettes.com/published/photogallery.aspx

Sandglass Theatre, (Eric Bass is artistic director), at Marlboro College, Vermont, USA. Intensive three week training in puppetry, July 11 to July 31, 2004.

THE MUSEUM OF PUPPETRY, LAHORE, PAKISTAN. This wonderful new facility opened on the 14th of January, 2004. It is also

the new UNIMA centre of Pakistan. It contains exhibitions, theatres, workshop and training facilities , residency programs, etc.

They are also open for more puppets, posters, etc. to exhibit. Web site:

www.peergroup.com.pk



The 6th One Van Festival 2004

by Sue Wallace Festival Artistic Director

"...the audience embraced the art of the puppet and began to play!"

2004 was mini-fest year with 7 fabulous puppetry events over 2 days.

There were 2 Puppet Making workshops, 3 shows for all ages and the famous Adult Puppet Cabaret (so popular it had to be repeated over 2 nights)

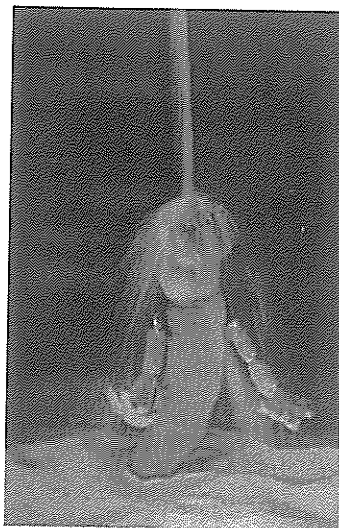
This Puppet Festival in the beautiful village of Blackheath in the world Heritage listed Blue Mountains west of Sydney was the only chance in Australia this year to see so many puppeteers and puppets performing in the one place.

The workshops (directed Greg Howard and Krinkl Theatre) were a hands-on experience where kids and their parents took the festival experience home with them in the form of their very own character constructed during the workshop.

The family shows by Puppetease, Greg Howard and Mirror Productions were in turn funny, clever and moving. The audience met the smallest stunt man in the world, unruly dinosaurs and an old digger with a pocket full of stories and a big heart. It was fantastic to experience the young audience literally screaming for MORE as Greg Howard unwrapped himself from his dinosaur at the end of "Who Let the Puppets Out?".

The Adult Puppet Cabaret was like no other theatrical event available. The audience was encouraged to bring food and enjoy a cornucopia of puppetry entertainment. Some performances were

dark and thoughtful others were hilarious.



Le Reve
Renaud Herbin

The outstanding puppeteers were Dennis Murphy (Sydney), Philip Millar (Melbourne), Sarah Kriegler (Melbourne), Krinkl Theatre (Northern New South Wales), Renaud Herbin (France) and Uta Gebert (Germany)

During the evening every table was given tape and newspaper and encouraged to make a puppet with a surprise. They came up with amazing creations and even took the stage to give impromptu performances. This represented a great measure of success for the festival where the audience embraced the art of the puppet and began to play!

The next festival in January 2005 will be a bigger event with Australian and international artists. If you would like to be on our mailing list send you details to;

Puppet Festival Mailing List
Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre
Gardiner Crescent
Blackheath NSW 2785
Australia
Email: banc@lisp.com.au

The Creative Idea

by Jessica Wilson

A report on investigating artistic choices

Where does the first spark of your ideas come from? What influences drive your artistic choices? And what guides the way you structure your work? I am interested in how other people generate and shape their ideas. As most Puppeteer readers know, it is especially challenging to shape concepts in the making of puppetry and theatre without text. In the absence of a written text, choices become infinite and with the collaboration that the form demands, processes become very involved. Between August and October 2003, I went on a journey to visit companies in the USA and Europe to see what makes them tick and how they make working order to contextualise the way that we do things in Australia. My research was focused on conceptual development process for the creation of non-text based work. It mainly involved interviews and observation of rehearsal and development processes used by other directors, in combination with a healthy dose of sitting in the audience enjoying finished products. In the United States I spent three weeks in New York interacting with artists such as Dan Hurlin, Theodora Skipitares and Roman Paska before moving to Chicago to Red Moon Theatre. I then travelled to the New England area visiting Sandglass

Theatre, Figures of Speech, Great Small Works and the famous Bread and Puppet Theatre. American theatre process, particularly in New York, seemed to be heavily influenced by the absence of government subsidy. The puppet companies that I visited were mainly driven by individual artists' who developed complicated rehearsal schedules around their performers' other commitments. Much of the work was fragmentary in style and was conceived by directors with visual arts backgrounds. Most of the performances were conceived on paper, some with very detailed storyboards, built and then rehearsed in sections. The success of major Broadway productions, 'The Lion King' and 'Avenue Q' was considered a real coup for puppetry in America and a sign of the form's growing popularity. There seems, however, to be no middle ground between these major commercial works, and individual artists making their own work. There certainly are no companies with continuing subsidy like Terrapin, Snuff Puppets and Polyglot, which are charged with the roles of innovation and consistency. Though it is misleading to generalise about the content of work in New York and the New England area, I can say that many of the productions I

saw were explorations of a respected individual artist's work (a visual artist or a writer) linked in with threads of that artists life. Chicago's Red Moon Theatre was certainly the highlight of my trip to the USA. Red Moon creates a unique style of spectacle theatre utilising masks, objects, puppetry and performance. This huge and thriving company create mainstage, spectacle and community based theatre. They have a complex management structure and work out of a massive warehouse. Director, Jim Lasko articulated his creative development process clearly and I observed two weeks of rehearsal for a large spectacle piece involving around 20 performers. The conceptual development style employed by the Company draws on a team of core creators who take ideas back to design teams before they bounce back for another stage of development. Red Moon's hallmark is its complex moving machines and bicycles and its use of ritual. The scale of each work and the scale of the companies operations, with an income generated entirely from philanthropy, was awe inspiring. The processes in France, with its supportive arts environment, created a strong contrast with the USA. The common conception method that I observed relied

on the informal and gradual development of ideas. Most puppet theatre artists conceive, build and perform their own work. Many artists create a puppet first, not yet knowing where they will go with the production. They then let the thematics, narrative and visual concepts evolve from the movement and evocation of this figure. The result of this, and other organic processes, is that distinctive style of European theatre; visually simple, thematically rich and full of beautiful unexpected moments. I found it interesting to compare these processes with the style used in Australia. Due to funding requirements it is often necessary to articulate, well in advance, the conceptual content of a work before you begin making it. This makes it difficult for organic concept development process to be undertaken if they rely funded in the early stages. I was very inspired by some of the work presented at the festival in Charleville Mezieres, France in September, particularly by Neville Tranter of Stuffed Puppet Theatre. Neville is an Australian puppeteer living in Amsterdam. His shows often deal with the meeting of the monster and the innocent with the most stunning example of distancing I have ever seen. Neville successfully speaks for the puppet in his hand, moving its mouth etc whilst also playing a different character himself. I suspended my disbelief as did the whole audience. He performs his work to critical

acclaim all over Europe. To develop his shows, Neville works with a writer after identifying his thematic interests in a work. He then makes the puppets, before the writing and puppets collide in a last stage before rehearsal. It would be fantastic to see Neville performing again in Australia as he has not performed here since he left 20 years ago. I also visited Green Ginger (who create their ideas stoned), and Faulty Optic (who found the idea for their last show when they were mucking around with a little bird doll in the workshop one day). Both of these puppet companies are British and spend most of the year touring Europe. Like many

enough to support this way of operating. It was an inspiring two month journey that brought me home acknowledging once again, how economics and culture affect development processes. It also brought me home eager to challenge my own models of development and find ways to break the moulds imposed by current funding structures. I am more than happy to discuss any part of this trip or research. If you have a question or interest please feel free to email me info@terrapiin.org.au or call Terrapin 03 62346086.



*Photo Neville Tranter's
Stuffed Puppets*

companies in Europe, they create one new show around every two years. The touring sustains their income for the rest of the time. I wonder if the Australian population, even if they did value the arts more highly, would never be large

Jennifer Mary Davidson

31 July 1929 - 2 January 2004

The Puppet World is a sadder place with the recent death of one of Australia's leading Puppet designers/makers in Jenny Davidson but left with the riches and memories of her wonderful contribution to puppetry over the past 35 years. It is through working with The Tasmanian Puppet Theatre and Terrapin Puppet Theatre that Jenny established a strong reputation.

Jenny's interest in puppetry began in fact at school when making puppets with a school colleague. The school had a puppet theatre and Jenny and a male friend student created a play based on the 'Sorcerer's Apprentice'. The school was rather unusual in that this particular school taught metal work and wood work to all students, girl students included. So I guess we could say Jenny became hooked on puppetry from an early age.

Jenny Trained as an artist in England. She had always wanted to be a designer of sets and trained at the Old Vic in London..While in London, Jenny also went to the Bellrick Theatre School and then worked for a local repertory theatre company.

During her time in London, she also worked at the BBC on a puppetry program with a couple from New Zealand.

Jenny then got married and

moved to Dorset, 'Darkest Dorset' as Jenny would often refer to. After a challenging 7 years in Dorset, a very lonely time for her, Jenny and family moved to Australia in 1960.

As the small family income made times tough, , Jenny went back to art school in Hobart and acquired her Tasmanian qualifications so she would be able to teach and have a second income for raising her kids.

Jenny taught for several years as an art teacher and during that time was seconded from the education department to work with the recreation division, which included The Tasmanian Puppet Theatre.

Part of her role was to run puppetry workshops in schools and playgroups and establish a holiday and after school activity program in puppetry.After a year working in the recreation division of the education department, Jenny resigned and took up a full time position as designer with the TPT.

Her designs and making stamped a clear style on the company throughout the 70s. Jenny designed and made many of the productions including, Momma's Little Horror Show which went onto great international success, Tiger Peter (with John Blundell-UK), Big Nose with

Takeshi from Japan, Rub a Dub Dub and Kidstuff.

In 1981, 18 months after the collapse of the Tasmanian Puppet Theatre, Jenny went about forming Terrapin. Like all of us, Jenny was very disappointed in the demise of Tasmanian Puppet Theatre.Her passion for puppet Theatre and her drive to keep a puppetry company in Tasmania gave birth to a new company in Terrapin Puppet Theatre.

Jenny worked tirelessly over the next few years initially attracting support from the Tasmania Arts Advisory Board and later the Australia Council. Jenny's passion for puppetry attracted many other colleagues to come on board and assist in whatever ways to get the company established.

Many of you would not be aware that Jenny did not take a salary from Terrapin for several years. Funding was small so Jenny lived off here widows pension. The money the company received from subsidies and box office went into running the company and puppeteers salaries. This was an extraordinarily generous gift. Jenny was only interested in establishing a company of the highest standards. She was interested in every detail of construction and form as of

the management of the company. This proved to be an enduring characteristic of her work over many years. He first of many productions by Terrapin, Stravinsky's 'The Soldier's Tale' opened in 1981, designed and made by Jenny. Jenny worked tirelessly over the next 15 years to keep Terrapin at the forefront in the development of Puppetry in Australia. Her determination to run a successful Puppet company led her into occasional conflict with fellow artists. Her strict ethical code caused her to speak her mind forcefully.

At times when she thought things were not right. She did not suffer fools gladly. She may have created caution or even trepidation in the hearts of some but she was respected by all.

Her commitment to training was second to none. Over the years, many puppet artists trained or worked thru Terrapin and have gone onto have tremendously successful careers.

Jenny was active in adapting elements of puppet traditions to help create a new Australian vocabulary of puppetry. She would invite international directors to train and teach in the company and developed programs that would allow developing artists access to many of the leading practitioners throughout the world.

Jenny was unique. She was a

mentor and friend to many artists.

Her work will be long remembered.

May Jenny's work live on in her puppets, the wisdom she shared with many of us, her many ideas she generously passed on to her colleagues and her wonderful bellowing laugh.

Written by Greg Methe & Peter Wilson

Jennifer Davidson, founding Director of Terrapin Puppet Theatre, artistic designer, puppet maker and playwright, died in her sleep on January 2 2004 aged 74. Since its establishment in 1981 Terrapin has become the most successful and longest lasting (funded) puppet company in Australia.

This is in no small measure due to Jennifer's single minded approach to gathering and inspiring people to contribute to her vision of puppetry. For 14 years, between 1981 to 1994, Jennifer lived and breathed puppetry bringing to Terrapin the best playwrights, directors and designers and utilised a wide range of traditions from around the world (for example shadow puppets from Indonesia and black theatre from Czechoslovakia). She also held writers and puppet making workshops for those who wanted to hone their skills.

Between 1975 and 1994 Jennifer played a major role in

the production of approximately 40 puppet productions designed for a wide range of audiences. Many were designed for primary school audiences and were presented in classrooms of schools throughout Tasmania. There were also plays for teenage and adult audiences. Invariably the performances of the Terrapin Puppet Company were give outstanding reviews.

As well as being Director of Terrapin she held positions as National President of UNIMA (Union International de la Marionette), Board Member of the Salamanca Community Arts Centre Foundation, and was instrumental in the establishment of the Australian Script Centre (a national archive of theatre scripts). Jenny played a key role in organising the National Puppetry Festival in Hobart in 1979. Other companies that Jenny designed for include Salamanca Theatre Company, the Tasmanian Theatre Company and the Tasmanian Ballet Company.

Jennifer made a major contribution to the arts and more particularly puppetry in Tasmania over a 20-year period. Her energy, enthusiasm, skills and beautiful designs will be greatly missed. Some of her puppets are permanently display in the Tasmania Museum and Art Gallery.

My Summer Holidays

My summer holidays actually seemed to begin in France, during the European summer at the International Puppet Festival in Charleville. There, through Jessica Wilson, I meant Renaud Herbin a puppeteer from France and Uta Gerbet, puppeteer from Germany - both graduates from the Puppet Institute in Charleville and friends of Jessica's from long ago.

One night as we danced to Mani Chau and swallow yet another glass of champagne (French of course) I said, "You guys should come to Australia for the summer."

A quick glance at each other, a smile and it was decided - more or less.

The result was, three months later, I was standing at Tullamarine airport in Melbourne. Waiting at "Arrivals".

Uta arrived first. She came to Australia via America NON-STOP. Over thirty hours flying later, she stumbled off the plane in Melbourne, minus her luggage - INCLUDING HER SHOW - which had disappeared somewhere on route. After two stressful days of waiting for news, finally the airline found her bags and we returned to the airport. She exploded her bags onto the floor and flung clothes everywhere to check out her puppet. All was thankfully fine.

Next, Renaud arrived. At the crack of dawn (or very late at night depending on how you look at it) he bounced off the plane with his new red trunk, lit up a "ciggie" and cheered for the balmy Melbourne night and the Southern Hemisphere.

Their arrival began a two-month adventure filled with many laughs, gin and tonics, a few little fights and a lot of puppetry. We squashed our camping gear, food, wine and three shows into a station

wagon and took off across three states, from the beautiful isle of Tasmania to the wheat belt of Victoria, to the Little Desert, the stunning coast line of New South Wales and the majestic Blue Mountains.

Their first gig was on the night of the day Renaud arrived. In a filled to the brim Old Bar, Renaud performed his one-man show *Le Reve* and Uta, her beautiful work *Jakush*. Shortly after, other bits of Melbourne saw their work at Lachlan Haig's fabulous *Lounge of Leisure*.

In Tasmania, Uta and Renaud stayed and played with Jessica Wilson and performed their work at the Peacock Theatre.

On our return to Victoria, we headed North, eventually arriving at the One Van Puppet Festival in Balckheath via desert, coast and wheat belt. This time, I performed with them with my one-person show *One Night The Dog*. Back to Melbourne again and we joined forces with Victoria Osborne and Jeremy Davis and Noah Marley from *Kronic Circus* to present *Stubbies - a season of puppetry and circus shorts* at Polyglot Puppet Theatre.

On Sunday Febuary 1st, we performed our last show of *Stubbies*, packed down the theatre and called a cab. The cab arrived and into it we bundled Renaud's red trunk, destination Tullamarine. Renau,d Uta and I stood in the street, looking from one to another, tears rolling down our faces. We had had a wild time together. We had immersed ourselves in a journey of a lifetime, expanded our heads and leant an awful lot about ourselves, each other and quite a bit about puppets too.

REVIEWS

ST. PETERSBURG PUPPET THEATRE

Reviewed by
Victoria Osborne

Walking into the Forum Theatre in Melbourne is always like walking into another time. Those encrusted cave walls topped with that eerie sky light. Those strange sculptures borrowed from some forgotten recesses of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Most theatre seen here seems out of place, modern, ridiculous. Not so the St Petersburg Puppet House Marionette Theatre. The three shows, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Thumbelina* and *Carnival*¹ brought to Melbourne during the January school holidays literally gleamed in our strange venue.

Now, now, just because some marionette company has come all the way from St Petersburg doesn't mean it's good, does it?

Sleeping Beauty - Thank you very much, Lachlan Haig for treating UNIMA members to free seats for this one. We walked into the Forum-other-world and gasped in awe to see the pre-set. It was a sculpture of fabric and embroidery spun into icicles, a glowing blue castle focussed

into a whirl of golden thread that unfurled into the story. The extremely talented Tatiana Melnikova designed and built the sets and most of the puppets for the company. Tatiana was also responsible for this script.

The fable was performed by a solo puppeteer, Elina Ageeva, in a fluid loving Russian accent that covered and coloured the story we all knew anyway so who cared if you missed a word or three.

The set was most remarkable for a Lazy Susan spinning tabletop that utilised the short string marionettes and posed puppets brilliantly. So many wonderful moments.

The strange merriment of the irrepressible Queen dancing until she felt like having a baby. Her lump which popped out into the magnificent rocking cradle. The pleasure of the funny little King with his outrageous neck as he greeted his daughter. The turning stage as the beautiful fairies gathered to grant the child her various assets. Beauty was built piece by piece before us, a stunning shaply female with divinelong hair.

Then the arrival of the wicked witch who foretold Beauty's short life - the witch a wonderful puppet manipulated by the top of her head like Mr

Squiggle. The Beauty was protected in life by a unicorn who watched her being wooed by several animalistic suitors. Most unsuitable of all, the Beauty was wooed and won by a raggamuffin on a proud horse. Then inevitably, the Beauty stumbled into the house of the spinning witch (a wonderful dramatic puppet with outstretched talon hands used for spinning not only thread but also evil spells). The elegant table petal-folds that enveloped Sleeping Beauty were a tour de force of set design, transformation and soft sculpture.

As Beauty slept, one hundred years passed and Elina took on the skeletal form of Death, toying with a pair of lovers, a baby and an old man until their disposal. The moment when Death extinguishes the candles was most effective.

A hunting party was heard, and a trio of delightful sniffing dogs comes joyfully through the forest of sharp vines followed, of course, by the handsome prince. The rest is history.

What a splendid theatrical rollercoaster this production provided. It was a privilege to see Elina Ageeva's skill, talent and artistry as she handled a considerable number of puppets in a completely believable and lucid

What's On

VICTORIA

Polyglot

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When: April 5 - 8

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At: Como House

crn Lechlade Ave &
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NEW SOUTH WALES

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Show Times 11am,
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March
6 & 7

Puppet Network News
Sydney Puppet Theatre

13 & 14

Puppet Network News
Sydney Puppet Theatre

20 & 21

Z For Giraffe
Sydney Puppet Theatre

27 & 28

Z For Giraffe

Sydney Puppet Theatre

29 & 30

Z For Giraffe
Sydney Puppet Theatre

The Rocks Puppet Cottage is an initiative of the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority. Artistic Direction is by the Sydney Puppet Theatre.

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A d v e r t i s e m e n t s

PUPPETRY AUSTRALIA

Puppetry Australia is a free website that has been set up to provide an easily accessible place where information that is about, or pertinent to, puppetry in Australia is available, including listings of puppeteers & puppet companies, what's on, links to funding bodies, arts organisations, puppets for sale, and lots more.

To keep the site up to date input from the puppetry community is needed.

Do you have anything new happening that you would like to tell people about? Or would you like to add photo's or a profile about yourself or company? How about material resources, do you have any good tips where to obtain particular things?

Communication is a very important part of puppetry and this is what this site is setting out to achieve. Communication between puppeteers, builders, writers, schools, training institutions, in fact anybody that has an interest in puppetry in Australia.

The site will be updated as new links, news, profiles, articles are found or emailed in.

So if you would like to be part of it then have a look at www.puppetryaustralia.info and any feedback and additions would be welcomed

Sean Manners

Puppeteer and webmaster of Puppetry Australia

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To know the history of these tiny actors is to know the whole story of the drama and that is the history of all the peoples in the world. From the beginning of time the puppets have been treading the boards; wherever and whenever the living drama has existed, there have been the little wooden players too.

-Madge Anderson

The Heroes of the Puppet Stage