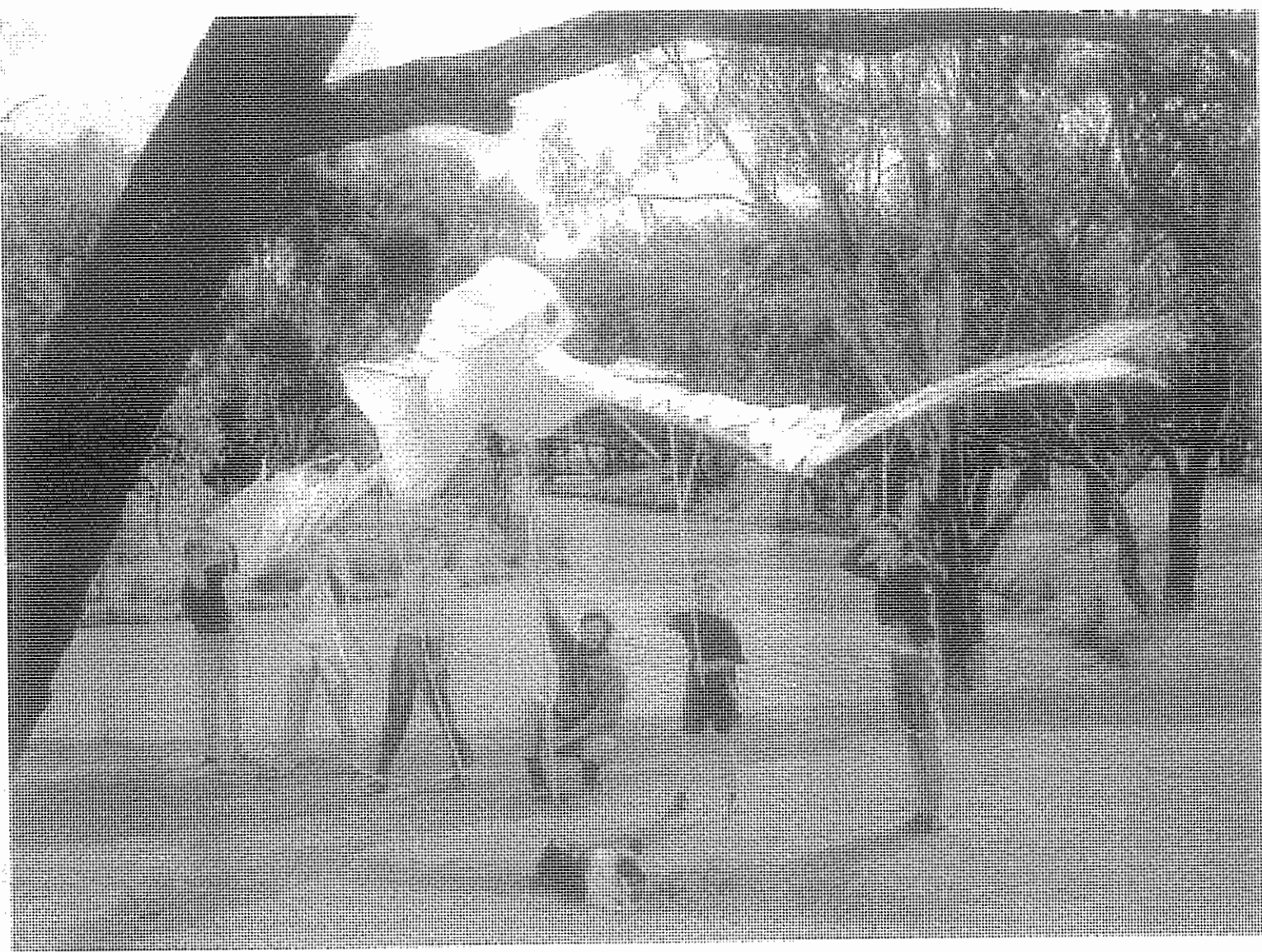

AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER

Summer 2000



In This Issue...

Millenium Resolutions; Big Puppets in Horsham

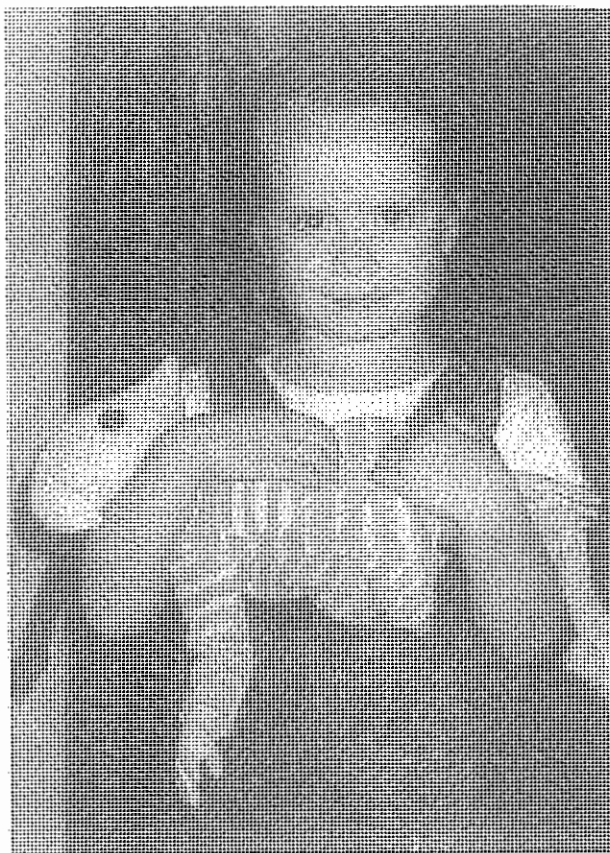
Build a Curlew; Part Two

One Van Festival Artistic Director reports

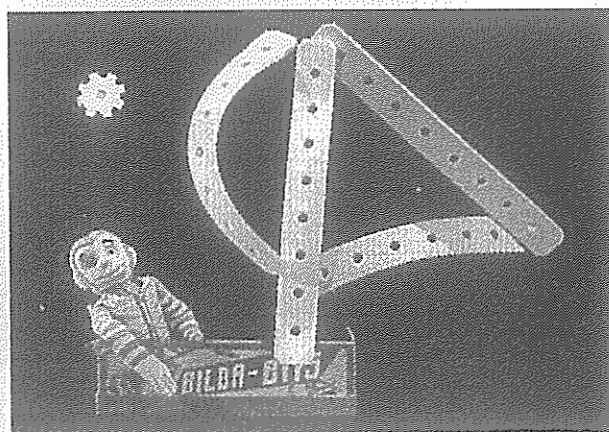
Adelaide International Festival proposal

...and more!

UNION INTERNATIONALE De La MARIONETTE



Clockwise from top left:
 -Tom E. Lewis in 'Lift 'em up socker'
 -Keen fan with 'Dreamer'
 -Polyglot's 'Black Light House'
 -Imogen Keen and Trina Gaskill
 showing the effect of excessive
 Gel-Grip consumption in 'The Hobbit'
 workshop



Front Cover:
 Giant Bird puppet on the banks of the
 Wimmera River. Photo:David Johns

Puppetrazzi

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

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 2000

Editorial

Greetings Puppet Fans,
I'm sure this is a question which has puzzled all of you from time to time. Just why is it that the Australian Dr Who Fan Club has a larger and more active membership than our own humble international organization? Puppetry has a noble history covering numerous continents and cultures, the forms puppets assume are virtually infinite from sock to cyber-animatronic full-scale Tyrannosaurus...

...but when push comes to shove, the fans of a now defunct cult TV show are both more numerous and more active. I like to think it's because all the diligent puppeteers and puppetmakers are hard at work refining their craft and can't drag themselves away to make contact with another member of their species. Or is communicating with our fellow UNIMA members just too much trouble?

In case I'm being too abstruse, this is a plea for more vehement and vocal interaction within our organisation. The ongoing success of One Van bodes extremely well and the prospect of an international puppet festival in Adelaide is enormously exciting. These events will bring our artform greater recognition and support, will provide expanded work opportunities and help us to assert the unstoppable appeal of puppetry. Or we can wait for someone else to wave the flag for us and bemoan the lack of support.

My involvement with UNIMA grows from a deeply felt belief in the power of puppetry to excite, transform and delight.

Let's go for a bit more excitement and delight for 2000.

Philip Millar

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L e t t e r s

Dear Phil,

With the 2000 Australia funding decisions in hand, I was both pleased and perplexed at the support puppetry received over the next 12 months. I was delighted to see Snuff puppets from Melbourne and 'erth' from Sydney receive support for projects in 2000. Both companies are active and building their profile in the exploration and development of the puppetry form. And congratulations to both Polyglot and Spare Parts for both receiving triennial grants for 2000-2002. I was equally disappointed with the lack of support for Adelaide's Patch Theatre.

tumblegum.com was launched in Cannes in October at MIPCOM, the marketing arm of the Cannes Film Festival. With the support of the Australian Film Commission, Skyworks Studio in association with NRS launched tumblegum to strong audience appeal. With the great interest generated, it is hoped a presale will follow allowing a 26 part series to be made in Canberra in 2000 and beyond. I'll keep The Australian Puppeteer informed.

Skyworks Studio has recently completed a series of 5 short Road Safety videos for the NRMA road safety authority. These will be launched throughout NSW and hopefully nationally in February into all schools and pre schools. The all location shoot took place in and around Canberra.

I'll be heading to Adelaide in March to perform in the 'Theft Of Sita', a new work premiering at the Adelaide Festival. The play is inspired by the great epic poem the Ramayana and transposes the story to contemporary Indonesia in the midst of the current economic and social upheaval.

The work is directed by Nigel Jamieson. The team includes a Balinese master puppeteer, Mambo designer Reg Mombassa and composer Paul Grabowski in association with five Gamelan musicians and five Australian musos. The piece combines the ancient traditions of Wayang Kulit with the latest developments in computer generated animation and video projection. The season runs from the 15-18th March.

I have a busy year ahead with my involvement in the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games. I have been invited along with 7 other Creative Directors to direct my own segment as part of the Cultural section for the Opening Ceremony. It is a great honour and privilege to be involved in such an event.

I have just recently been awarded an Asia Link to work with a puppetry and theatre company in Japan late 2000. More on that later.

Happy 2000 and best wishes to all puppetry folk.

Peter J Wilson

Skyworks.....Canberra.

Dear Australian Puppeteer,

As I have been making and operating puppets for the last six years and a UNIMA member for three, I thought it was about time I wrote a letter to both congratulate those involved in the publication (yes, all that hard work is paying off) and introduce myself.

I am about to embark on an Honours year studying Japanese theatre and cinema at the Victorian College of the Arts/ Melbourne University Bachelor of Creative Arts (Formerly Visual and Performing Arts). (What a mouthfull!) I am particularly interested in animation and puppetry.

In 1998, playwright and fellow student Lally Katz formed Rocketship Theatre. Under the Rocketship banner we have performed sell-out seasons of Lally's black comedies, most of which have required puppetry in one form or another. "The Battle" for Melbourne Fringe '98; "Tabitha to Saturn" for Melbourne University Arts Festival '99 and "Rewberry High" for Melbourne Fringe '99. For Fringe '99, Lally also wrote "Anyon Escapes The Ladder" which I performed with Darcy Neave as part of Polyglot's "Vertical Challenge" (see review in the last issue). Currently we're getting ready for our first interstate trip when we re-stage "Tabitha to Saturn" for the Adelaide fringe Festival. It's all very scary so this is a call to all puppeteers in SA to please support us! Bring your friends, family and pets and help make our interstate trip a fun one!

Nick Barlow

See "What's On" for more Rocketship info and piccie.



UNICEF International Children's Day of Broadcasting: Melbourne 12 December 1999

This year it was held on Sunday 12 December, 1999. This is a day based around giving the next generation the right to have a say.

Around the world more than 170 countries and over 2,000 TV and radio stations get involved. In the UK, Canada and Mexico, adults are banned from radio stations for the day and in the US stations give the kids a free reign at broadcasting.

Kirsty Boyle of acefun joined forces with Katherine Phelps and Andrew Pam of Glass Wings to celebrate with a group of children this day of broadcasting. Katherine and Kirsty organised with the Starlight Children's Foundation Australia to help children at the Royal Children's Hospital to create and perform with puppets for multi-cast over the Internet.

The children made a beautiful array of brightly coloured sock puppets, then groups would practice scripts, which they would perform upon a stage before two cameras.

Several scripts were available, but given the timing, most of the children wanted to do the story about Santa Claus.

After the day, the video was edited together and made available over the Internet at this address:
<http://kids.glasswings.com.au/UNICEF/>

Kirsty Boyle <kirsty@iii.mit.edu.au>, Katherine Phelps <muse@glasswings.com.au> and Andrew Pam <xanni@glasswings.com.au> have formed 'Acefun Glasswings', providing puppetry performance on the internet. Please contact us via email for more information, and to be placed on our mailing list.

Katherine Phelps

*What a fantastic use of the internet!
Congratulations on your initiative.*

Dear Philip,
I haven't quite retired yet as you see although I am cutting back on the number of shows per week which hasn't been too hard this past year with money harder to come by in both the kinders and schools. Next year with the GST etc is still a mystery. We intend to close down for a month over Olympic time. Thanks for taking on the Australian Puppeteer. Anita has really built it up into a very good publication and I know that to keep it that way needs the support of everyone. All the best
Lorrie Gardner

Thank you Lorrie for your support. Next issue will feature a new series of "What it means to be a puppeteer" an attempt to find a definition for ourselves and our artform. Lorrie's contribution will feature next issue and other submissions are encouraged.

Dear Australian Puppeteer,
This is a call to all Punch and Judy people. Professors, makers, collectors, whoever is out there with an interest in Mr Punch. Would anybody be interested in establishing a Punch and Judy network in Australia and New Zealand?

I envisage it being used to foster goodwill on behalf of Old Red Nose, passing on of ideas and experiences and networking. At the moment it is only a hazy idea with no firm aims in mind but I thought I would canvass your thoughts and see what happens. If anybody is interested they can contact:

Sean Manners Ph/fax 02 6334 4994
email; seanmanners@hotmail.com
regards

Sean Manners of Pelican Puppets

More from Sean next issue with an article on "Devising Celebration."

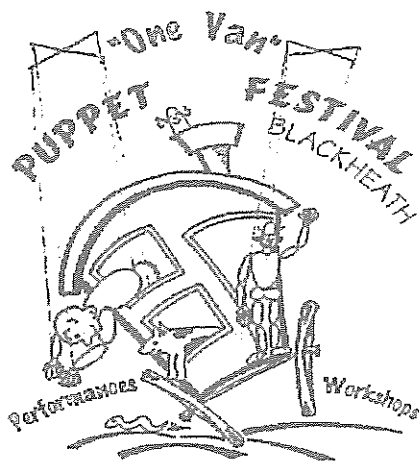
President's Report

Breathing again after another wonderfully successful Puppet Festival and the opening of our new Sydney Puppet Theatre production I have time to gather thoughts for UNIMA Australia and the coming year. The Festival reinforces for me that there is a ready and willing audience for puppetry in this country and I believe that the quality of performances and workshops on show and the warm and generous audience response indicates that our Australian puppetry is in a very healthy state.

There were no submissions for the UNIMA scholarship. I'm sure someone out there could well use \$500 toward furthering their knowledge of puppetry. Remember that the next UNIMA International festival will be held in Germany in June/July this year. Send your applications to Mary Sutherland by April 25th. You need to have been a UNIMA member for at least 2 years to be eligible.

All the best for 2000.

Sue Wallace



Secretary's Report

Secretary's Report January 2000.
Hello to all you UNIMA Members, and to those who don't already know me, I guess I'd better introduce myself. I've been working in puppetry and been involved in UNIMA for about 12 years now and worked in many different aspects but this is my first experience in an official role.

I was living in Brisbane years ago when I was first inspired by the idea of puppetry when, in 1984 I saw Phillipe Genty's "Cabaret" show, and then Handspan's "Secrets" later the same year. It was partly due to what I read in Manipulation (remember Manipulation) and partly my continuing admiration for Handspan, and my desire to work with them that I persuaded Joe (my husband) to pack up and move to Melbourne. I was able to work with Handspan eventually becoming a member, also working at Polyglot and on a number of TV projects, including "Lift Off" and "The Ferals" as well as various great "pilot" projects that never went into production. Until 1994 I always worked making puppets and sometimes co-designing but had not yet done any puppeteering. That year I auditioned for Handspan's production "The Steadfast Tin Soldier & The Paper-Bag Princess" and got my first role as a puppeteer, later that year I also performed in the return season of "Viva La Vida Frida Kahalo". Enthused by these experiences but keen to develop my own work, I applied for and received a development grant from the Australia Council, and in a collaborative project with Polyglot, produced my own show, based on Sally Morgan's children's stories, "The Flying Emu". Liss Gabb and I toured "The Flying Emu" to Victorian Schools (and some in Adelaide) for about 5 months. After all these experiences I finally came to the decision that, out of all the different hats I had worn, design was my favourite part of producing theatre, and this is the area in which I am concentrating most of my energy at present. In the past I have also con-

ducted many large-scale workshops in schools and taught professional skills to teachers and to the general public.

So you can see that my interest and experience in puppetry is long and varied. I'm hoping I can now give something useful back to the community that has given me so much pleasure over the years.

I'm happy to say that I feel that I'm taking over the position of UNIMA Australia's secretary at a time when the organisation seems happy and healthy and continuing to grow. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Richard Hart for his hard work and dedication in helping to promote and achieve this happy state. In addition to Richard we also have the previous Secretaries, as well as Anita Sinclair and our other past *Australian Puppeteer* Editors to thank. All members of the executive and especially the Magazine editor contribute a considerable amount of time, on an entirely voluntary basis and all any of us ask in return is that you communicate with us and each other and share your enthusiasm for puppetry. (And so say all of us! Ed.) I have already had a quite a number of enquires from potential new members wanting application forms and information about UNIMA and Puppetry in general, also a few enquires from current members wanting new information. As some of you probably know Joe and I are the originators and keepers of the UNIMA Australia Website, and it gives me personal satisfaction that a number of enquires have come from people who have found us through the Web. E-mail is also a boon, improving our international communication, as it now takes seconds rather than weeks to receive and respond to information and questions from the various commissions.

What is UNIMA? You will have read this on your application for membership; I'll just quickly re-cap.

UNIMA stands for "Union International de la Marionette". It is an organisation bringing together people from around the world to contribute to the develop-

ment of the Art of Puppetry. Its main objective is to use this Art in the pursuit of human values such as peace and mutual understanding between peoples. Founded in 1929, it is a member of the International Theatre Institute and UNESCO. UNIMA International has 9,000 members across 89 countries.

In pursuit of these aims there are a few initiatives I'd like to achieve during my time as Secretary. Whether they happen depend on your interest and support, but they are things which I think can help lift the profile of puppetry in Australia and improve communication amongst our members.

The first is to continue with an idea introduced by Dennis Murphy, one of our previous secretaries. The plan is to build a database with information about your areas of interest and special expertise, which would assist us to pass on, enquires about history, skills and techniques to the person best able to assist.

Next I would like you to supply me with information on performances, workshops and school touring,

which could be published as a calendar of events on the UNIMA Australia Website to help inform members and puppetry public of what's on.

A slightly longer-term plan is to produce a national membership card to re-place the International Card, which we no longer receive. I'm still in the process of finding out whether it is still produced and there is simply a communications breakdown. This is in no way intended to change our relationship with the international community but I am hoping to eventually arrange benefits such as discount tickets to public performances for members. This would have promotional value but will take some organisation and your co-operation.

I would also like to hear any suggestions that you have for ways we can improve our organisation, For example if you would like to be a state social event organiser.

Since the resignation of Michele Spooner (now Fifer) as Australian Councillor on the Council of UNIMA, there is a position vacant for one new member for the period from 2000 – 2004. You would need to have been a member of UNIMA for some time and it would be very posi-

tive if you were planning to attend the XVIIIth International Congress at Magdeburg in June 2000. The other Australian Councillors are Sue Wallace (NSW), Philip Mitchell (Tas.) and myself (Vic.), Unfortunately none of us are able to attend the Festival and Congress this year, although Michele and I received Australia Council funding to attend in 1996. Please phone me ASAP if you are interested. (03) 9525 7595.

My final call is for volunteers to assist with translation of correspondence to and from French, for communication with the Secrétariat Général de l'UNIMA, most general communications are in English as well but it would help to smooth some of the specific details I need to clarify.

Well that's enough of me for now, I'd like to finish on a note of congratulations to Sue Wallace and all who were involved in the planning and presentation of ONE VAN FESTIVAL. I have heard wonderful accounts of it being a great success, and look forward to hearing more

Mary Sutherland.

Treasurer

Many thanks to Prodos for his contribution as Treasurer for the organisation over the past two years.

Together with Anita Sinclair, Prodos has helped to stimulate and build the membership of UNIMA and expand the subscriber base for Australian Puppeteer magazine. UNIMA is now seeking a new treasurer for the organization. Enthusiastic applicants would need to be UNIMA members with some financial and/or bookkeeping skills or the desire to learn those skills. Access to a computer is extremely handy in order to maintain our subscriber database and track the organisation's financial status. Interested individuals please contact Sue, Mary, Prodos or Philip.





Pulling on the Raine...

by Virginia Weule(BJ)

"I didn't know you could do THAT with latex rubber!" was one of the first things I uttered when I met this particular young fellow.... Twelve years on I'm still saying it. Murray Raine; born and bred Newcastle NSW. Devotee of feathers, sequins, and highly strung manipulation. This man could pull strings before he could walk. At the age of nine he won a scholarship to study puppetry (what did you think we were talking about? Mmmm). He had created his own show by the time he was twelve.

The Marionette Theatre of Australia beckoned and he obliged. Murray Raine kicked up his heels and moved to Sydney. He ventured into areas such as theatre, television, theatre-in-education and radio. His credits include "The Midday Show", "Wonderworld", "Ridgy-Didge", "Foxtel", "The Morning Show", "Early Birds", and

"The Andrew Denton Show". In 1987 he was commissioned by The Life Education Center to present "Harold G. Raffe" for ATNs' "The Cartoon Connection".

Later that day...He joined forces with Peter Oldham, ("Ex-Tintookie"), and they gave birth to... "The Performing Puppets Aussie Show". This show has been toured in shopping centers, schools and in festivals throughout Australia and Asia. I met Murray while working with the Marionette Theatre on "The Magic Pudding". I joined him in "The Performing Puppets Aussie Show" following Peter Oldham's retirement from the art of puppetry. I was lovingly given the title of "Miss Fortunate – The Goddess of Australian Puppetry".(Murray Raine). As time passed, Murray increasingly felt the need to flex his "independence" muscle. He ventured forth into the world of the disturbed,

bewildered and intoxicated, bravely going where he had not gone before...CLUBS... Enter...."Adult Cabaret" a'la Murray Raine.

The show is up to thirty minutes in duration. It's a non-stop, high energy format utilizing over twenty-five vibrant marionettes, glove and rod puppets, with an average height of one metre. Each puppet is meticulously created by Murray and features truly spectacular costumes, some of which cost up to \$1500 each. So....basically....He makes 'em, bakes 'em and gyrates 'em.

Murray's "life based" humor offers a sense of the ridiculous and vulnerability. His showcase incorporates personalities such as Madonna, Tom Jones, Tina Turner, Pavrotti, Dame Joan Sutherland, Dolly Parton and The Royal Family. He finds the humor in situations "the caricature of

life", laughing at peoples' misfortunes, including his own.

Whether it be an audience from Toorak or Rooty Hill, he will be there giving his all and more. He has many techniques in which to keep the "over-the-limit" audiences awake, including gunshots, poppers, sequin reflectors and revealing body parts (fortunately not his own). However he has been spotted sporting the odd black leather and velvet thong (not footwear), so we keep our fingers crossed.

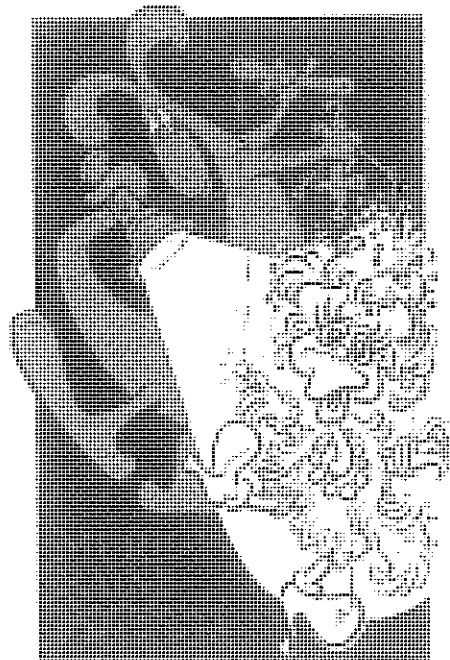
*"Devotee of feathers,
sequins and highly
strung
manipulation"*

Then one night...When the lights were low and the stage protruded less than he did, he found himself and his life size Carmen Miranda plummeting off a metre high stage and wedged firmly in the laps of two elderly and hopeful members of the audience.

Murray, being the professional that he is, picked his wounded self up, with his dolly (and her fruit), staggered up the stairs and continued, a little rattled, but intact. There are many words to describe Mr Raines performances, and "dreary" is not one of them.

As far as we know he is the only puppeteer to have won the prestigious Mo awards (and been nominated five times). Murray has also been nominated several times for the "Australian Club Entertainment" awards. He is genuinely acclaimed by his peers as the "Entertainers' Entertainer".

And do you know what? Murray Raine is a Gem. He is a mould that has been broken by none. "Special" is a word that comes to mind. And so, the master of plaster at 36 is still at it, up to his arm-pits in glue and stretched towelling. The sequined showman and his feathered frocks is still pulling at his age and certainly leaves you with a memory or two. One thing's for sure, he always leaves you wanting more.



To-da-loo.

Author Virginia Weule, Puppeteer, is currently working at Fox studios for Channel Nine on "Farscape".



ONE VAN

Report by Artistic Director Sue Wallace

It is Sunday afternoon and the last show of the 2000 "One Van" Puppet Festival is about to finish. The incomparable world shadow puppet master Richard Bradshaw comes out from behind his shadow screen to acknowledge the thunderous applause. He tells the audience that he has one more, short piece but it will take a moment to prepare and disappears back behind the screen. At once a young voice, in tones of delight and joy, pipes "Can you make it another hilarious one?" The audience laughs and the puppeteer laughs with them. This sums up better than anything else the magic that is Australia's only puppet festival.

In the beautiful village of Blackheath in the Blue Mountains just west of Sydney, a puppet festival has been taking wing each January for 3 years now. What is emerging is an audience which is really starting to know and appreciate the wonderful art of the puppet. They are discerning and generous and their numbers are growing each year.

The festival is called "One Van" to celebrate Australia's puppeteers who travel this vast land in their "one vans", transforming rooms, theatres, halls and public squares into portals of magic through which adults and children alike are transported into the world of the puppet. This is an ancient and sublime art form where a lump of wood, a string, a gathering of fabric or a piece papier mache steals the thread of reality from the onlooker. The inanimate is made animate through the breath of the puppeteer.

At this third annual festival, artistic director, Sue Wallace invited individual performers and puppet companies to present 8 shows and 7 workshops. Whilst the majority of events were for the family audience some events were exclusively for adults and they all sold out. It was an enormous artistic success. Every artistic director likes lots of money to

make the creative vision a reality. This 3 day festival was achieved on a tiny budget of less than \$10,000 and was entirely funded from the sponsorship of local businesses and local fundraising.

The Artists

19 Australian puppetry artists contributed and are listed below -

Richard Bradshaw
Norman Hetherington
Sydney Puppet Theatre
Murphy's Puppets
Black Hole Theatre
Gardner Puppet Theatre
Jonquil's Theatre Workshop
Willie Wonks Puppets
Greg Howard
Graeme Haddon
David Collins
Emma de Vries
Fleur Herscovitch
Julia Davis

The director invited expressions of interest to be part of the festival to all puppeteers through the industry magazine "Australian Puppeteer". Substantial interest in the Festival was shown from international artists. However those international artists invited had to decline because the performance fees available in the budget were nowhere near adequate.

The Cabaret

For those puppeteers who are anxious to find an adult audience for their work, the Adult Cabaret was a startling success. First introduced to the festival in 1999, people were clamouring for tickets in 2000. Double the number of tickets was sold and the "Sold Out" notice was posted one week before the festival. The audience numbered 300. There will be 2 cabaret nights at the next festival. The demand is there. This is an interesting way to divulge puppet theatre to the adult audience. Seven pieces were presented ranging from 4 to 20 minutes in length. Some were naughty, some nice,

some were hilarious and others quite seriously beautiful.

Throughout the night the audience remained curious, attentive, supportive and delighted.

The New Events

The new events for the 2000 festival included a Skill Development Day for puppeteers which recorded maximum attendance. 20 experienced and emerging artists gathered together the day before the public festival to undertake workshops in

1. Puppetry manipulation for TV with David Collins
2. The Art of the Shadow with Richard Bradshaw and
3. The Business of Puppetry, a marketing workshop conducted by Paula Opfer from The Axis Public Relations & Marketing Company

A Puppet Exhibition was mounted for the weekend with free attendance. The exhibition celebrated the work of a number of puppeteers including Ann Davis (now retired), Ross Hill (deceased) and the Sydney Puppet Theatre. This proved more popular than expected and will become a regular part of the festival. The exhibition room was a quiet space where the public had time to study and appreciate the artistry of puppet building.

There was also a short informal forum where the public jumped at the chance to meet the puppeteers behind some of Australia's much loved TV puppets including Norman Hetherington (Mr Squiggle), David Collins (Rattus - The Ferrets) and Emma de Vries (Mixy - The Ferrets and ABC Kids TV).

The Summary

As late as September 1999, the Artistic Director of the Festival contacted the festival co-producers, the Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre, and called off the festival for 2000. Why?

Although numerous grant applications had been made and every avenue for funding sought, there was NO money in the account. This is when the local businesses offered their support. The event is obviously important to this community and the artistic director takes this opportunity to acknowledge the work and commitment of the staff and volunteers of the Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre, of Rowena McGregor (Festival Co-ordinator) and the business community of Blackheath.

Daily the feedback is coming in through phone calls, emails and word of mouth. The festival was a wonderful experience for the audience and the artists alike. This success was reflected in the ticket sales – MAXIMUM ATTENDANCE.

The festival is ripe for the growing and this is squarely within the goals and the dream of the festival "to allow the festival to grow in increments so that the audience and the artists grow with it".

This is an important festival and the major forum for puppetry in Australia. It is a place for professional artists to meet and present their work, a place for the public to grow into an awareness and appreciation of the art form and for emerging artists, it is a place which offers training and encouragement.

It deserves support.

Thanks Sue for perservering!

Stay tuned, next issue will feature more ONE VAN reports and photos of the event.

Please send in any festival piccies, anecdotes ,juicy gossip or other bits and pieces for inclusion in the AUTUMN issue

When Webb's Marionettes went West

By Richard Bradshaw

In the nineteenth century Western Australia was often not included in the tours of visiting theatre companies. At a time when a major part of touring was done by coastal steamer, Perth seemed too far. Also, ships from the eastern colonies continuing on to Asia and Europe were much more likely to visit Albany.

Almost certainly the first important puppet company to visit the West was Webb's Royal Marionettes. I have written about Charles Webb (c. 1842- 87) in an earlier article. He was the grandson of the English puppeteer Charles Middleton, and he and his wife had come to Australia with McDonough and Earnshaw's Royal Marionette Theatre from the their own, and were later joined by another member of that company, Charles Trotter.

They toured in the eastern colonies of Australia and New Zealand and in 1879 left Sydney for England, apparently playing in India, Ceylon, Burma and Egypt on the way. Their pianist, Frank Fowler, travelled with them.

For the opening at Perth Town Hall the demand was so great that people were turned away

I have been able to confirm that they performed in Ceylon (1880), England (1881) and Russia (1883), but they advertised that they had also played in Germany, France, Belgium, Sweden, Norway and Finland. They left England for Australia at the end of 1883 arriving in Adelaide six weeks later. They were now joined by Webb's sister, Miss L. Webb and recommenced touring in the eastern colonies and New Zealand. (Mrs Webb died in

Sydney on 24 April, 1884, aged 40.) In Perth advertisements China and Japan were added to the list of countries toured, but I suspect the truth of this.

Early in 1886 Webb's Royal Marionettes appeared in Brisbane and Toowoomba, but in June they arrived in Perth. They had been brought there by a manager, Mr F. H. Pollock, who, with his wife, had accompanied them on a ship from Melbourne. Mr Pollock had brought a troupe of Japanese jugglers to Perth some twelve years earlier. The company seems to have consisted of Charles Webb, Miss Webb, Charles Trotter, Mr Watson and Mr Jackson.

The Perth Inquirer reported that the arrival of the company was notified in Perth by the distribution of "the finest specimens of advertising placards that have ever yet been seen in Western Australia, many of the illustrated advertisements being really works of art."

The show opened at the Perth Town Hall on Wednesday, 30 June with variety acts ("fantoceini"), black minstrels and the pantomime of "Beauty and the Beast". For the first time there, electric light was used. A week later they changed the program, and introduced the pantomime "Little Red Riding Hood", no doubt based on the show that they had first come to Australia with. [A full script for this is in the La Trobe Library, Melbourne.] After Perth the company played in Fremantle (Oddfellows' Hall), Guildford, York (Mechanics' Institute), Geraldton (Masonic Hall), Northampton, Greenough, and finally Albany (Mr Hassell's warehouse).

For the opening at Perth Town Hall the demand was so great that people were turned away. The hall was filled "to almost suffocation point by about eight hundred persons, who cheered the clever manipulation of the marionettes to the echo." By contrast, the opening in Geraldton

When Webb's Marionettes went West *continued*

was less well patronised, the local paper suggesting that it was not the best time of year for country residents to leave their farms and the shearing.

The variety acts included a girl on a tightrope, a drunken stilt-walker, a dissecting skeleton three Chinese bell-ringers and a "Grand Turk" which transformed itself into a number of little Turks.

The minstrel segment opened with six black minstrels sitting on chairs. These included "Bones", "Sambo" and "Mr Johnson" and the white-haired "Abraham" They sang popular ballads and exchanged jokes and riddles.

Webb didn't invent the dissecting skeleton, but in a letter from England to fellow theatre manager C. Williamson in Australia, dated August 1896, George Musgrove wrote "I have purchased a skeleton made to dance with strings. Manipulated well, it is capable of doing a lot of things. I do not think it has been done in Australia since Webb's Marionettes over 20 years ago."

In "Little Red Riding Hood" the wolf got many laughs. The speeches and songs of the fairy queen were provided by Miss Webb "in quite a regal manner". She also provided the "gruff guttural tone" of the grandmother and the "shrill little treble" of the girl. At times "The Babes in the Wood" was also performed, as for the original Royal Marionettes from America.

Like the live pantomimes of the time, "Beauty and the Beast" would end with a "harlequinade" and transformation scene. Reviews mention a side-splitting scene with a donkey. Comic business was provided by the Clown and Pantaloon, the latter being worked by Charles Webb. At one point they both went up in a balloon and fell down, one after the other. The scream of the Clown began faintly, gradually increasing to a yell as he hit the ground. Finally a bull tossed the Clown about and then over the butcher's shop, follow-

ing him over as the curtain fell.

The transformation scene drew great applause and was described as "a magnificent display of gorgeous and brilliant colours and artistic designs." It was lit with changing limelight, the brilliant light produced when a cylinder of quicklime was heated to incandescence by the burning of oxygen and hydrogen from jets.

Mr Jackson was with the company until Albany where the "excellent" pianist was Mr Tivey, and I suspect that his part in the earlier shows had been as pianist, the part that had for many years been Frank Fowler's.

The transformation scene drew great applause and was described as "a magnificent display of gorgeous and brilliant colours and artistic designs"

Although in Geraldton the company was expected to continue on to Adelaide after Western Australia, in Albany it was announced that Charles Webb had made a new arrangement with Mr F.H. Pollock and was to sail for a tour of India on 27 September, 1886.

In those days it was not uncommon for performers to tour India and other parts of the British Empire in Asia as well as Australia. Tommy Hudson, who was manager for Webb in Australia in 1884 (and was later a tour manager for Nellie Melba), took his "Surprise Parties" to India. In fact, he had plans to take Webb on a second tour of India then, but I have found no record that he ever did. After Webb's first visit to India in 1879 his performances in Cambridge, England in 1880 were advertised as "The Royal Australian and Indian Marionettes"!

As yet I don't know where Webb's Royal Marionettes performed after India until in 1887 they toured in

Java, which was then a Dutch possession. There, in the town of Probolinggo on 4 October, 1887 Charles F. Webb, aged 45, died of a liver complaint. His sister was travelling with him at the time and presumably sent word to cousins in Sydney named F.H. and R. Lyons who published the death notice in the Sydney Morning Herald. I do not know what became of Miss L. Webb, Charles Trotter, etc. ... or the puppets.

[One clearly risked one's health on such tours. The American magician Cari Hertz is remembered now for introducing cinema to Australia in 1896. This was on his second tour to Australia which ended in the gold-fields of W.A. From there he went on to perform in Geylon, India, Singapore and Manila then Java. In Batavia (now Jakarta) he fell ill with malaria and when he was better he was shown the sights of Batavia known as the actors graveyard because nearly every visiting theatrical company had left someone behind there. (His own company was luckier)

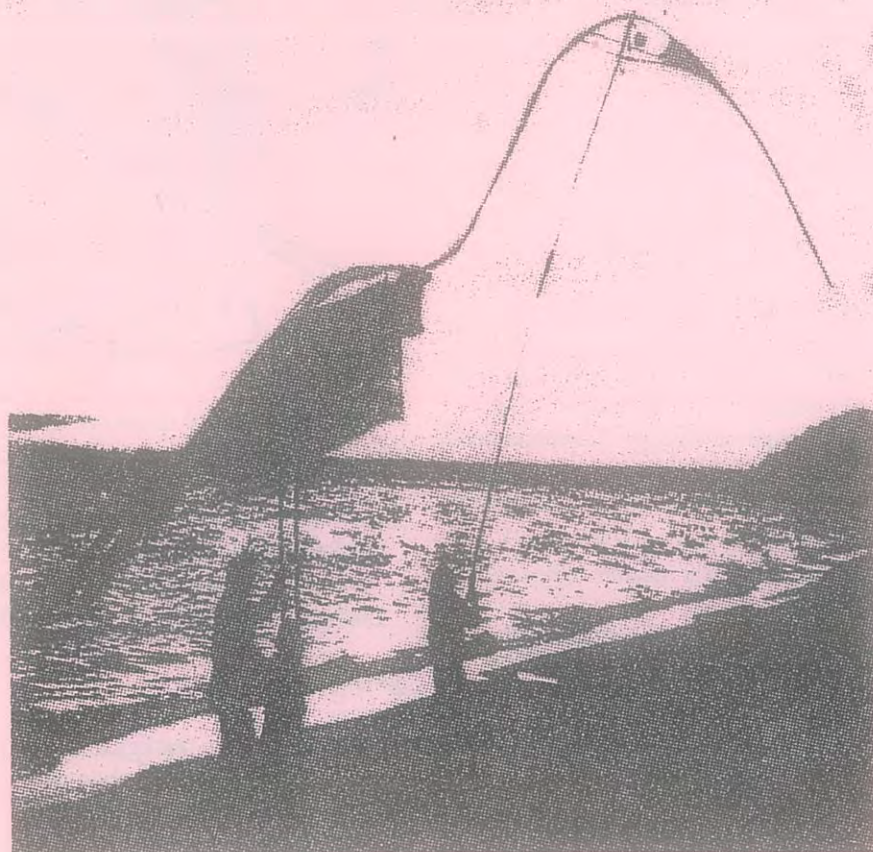
I would also like to thank Steve Howell, Senior Librarian at the J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History and Sydney based historian Dr Hilary Golder for their help in getting information for the above article.

Workshop Spread #9

CURLEW

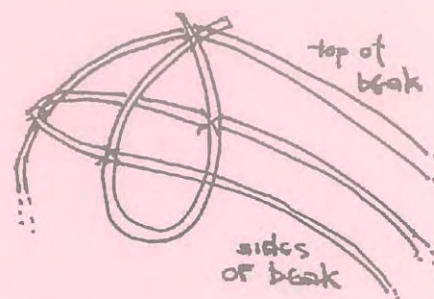
a practical guide - part two by Ian Cuming

photo by Cookie courtesy J. Blagg 1994



HEAD

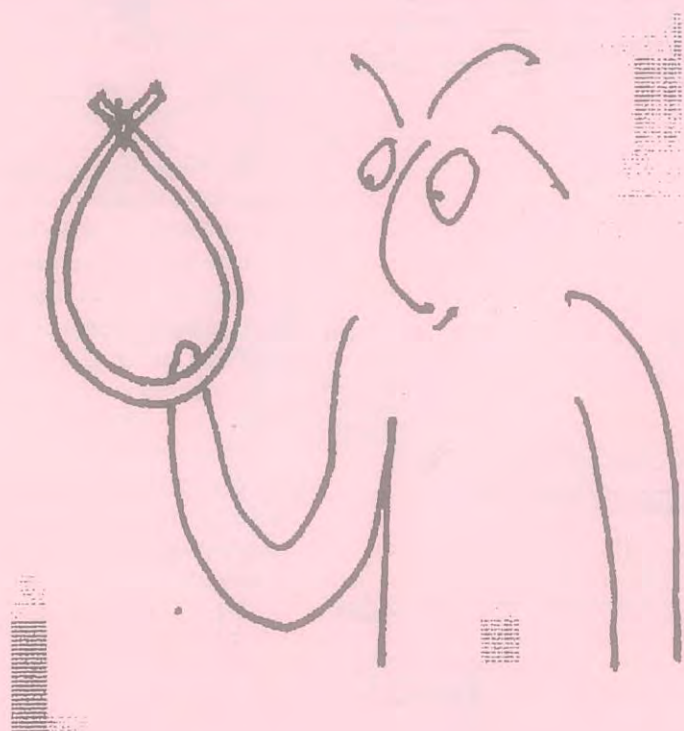
Construct a head frame with 8mm - 12mm cane. Cut a 500mm - 600mm length of this using secateurs. Form a 200mm x 300mm loop by cutting an 800mm length and crossing the ends. Tie it with fine wire and tape it with 'gaffa'. The crossed ends form the crown of the head.

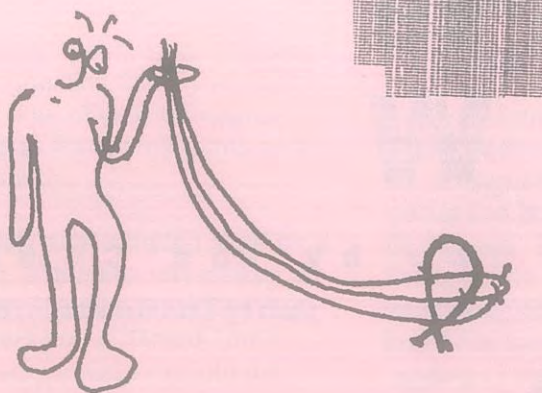


Page 18

CROWN

Select a 4m - 5m length of cane folded as it comes in the bale. Ensure that the diameter is even. This forms the back of the head and the sides of the beak. Insert the head frame 300mm along from the bend. Tie it in halfway down from the crown. Select another piece of cane 2m - 2.5m in length to form the top of the beak. Tie and tape this to the back of the head and to the crown.





CURVE

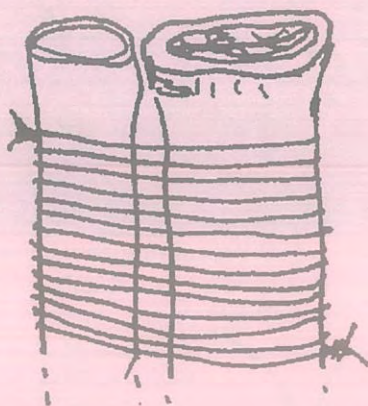
Gather the three long dangly ends together. Lift the circle end clear of the ground. Notice the curve that results. Roll it about. Lean it. Explore and create the beak shape.

FRAMES

Fix the point you have been holding once you can see the bird. This becomes the tip of the beak. Install a 30mm - 40mm triangular frame of coat-hanger wire 1m back from this point. Install a 60mm - 80mm triangular frame about 1m back from this. These frames further define the shape.

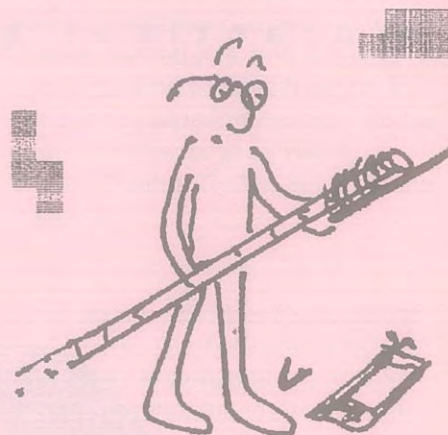
HEAD POLE

Prepare to hacksaw. Cut a 10mm diameter copper tube 150mm long. Cut a 1.5m length of 18mm - 23mm diameter bamboo. Bind the copper tightly with fine tie wire to the thick end of the bamboo.



TENTPEG

Cut the bend off an 8mm diameter tent peg. Tie it securely with fine wire to the thin end of a 3m bamboo pole of 35mm - 45mm diameter leaving a 150mm spike that fits the copper snugly.



FIBREGLASS

Clad each of these joins with fibreglass.

POLEHEAD

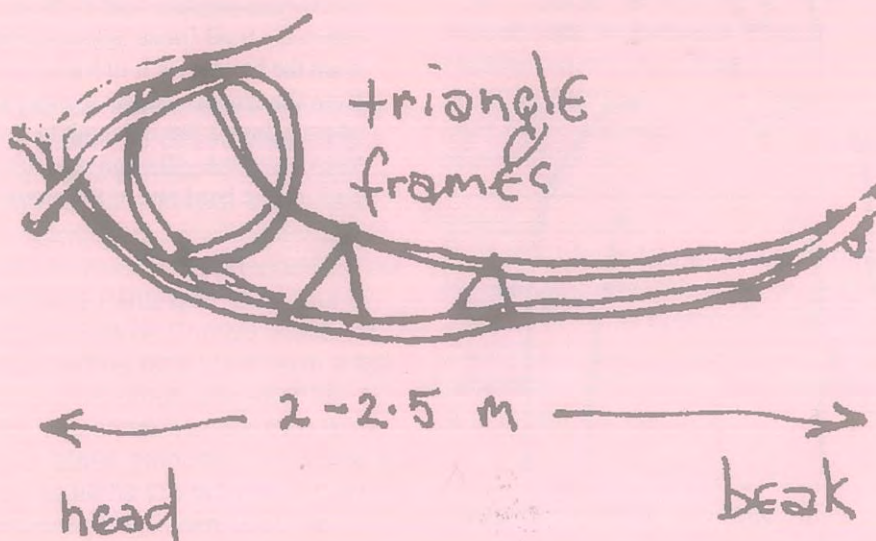
Drill a 1mm hole through a knot at the thin end of the 1.5m bamboo pole. Reinforce the bamboo with 'gaffa' either side of this hole. Tie it securely with fine wire to the crown of the head. Ensure that the pole runs behind the cane loop at the bottom.

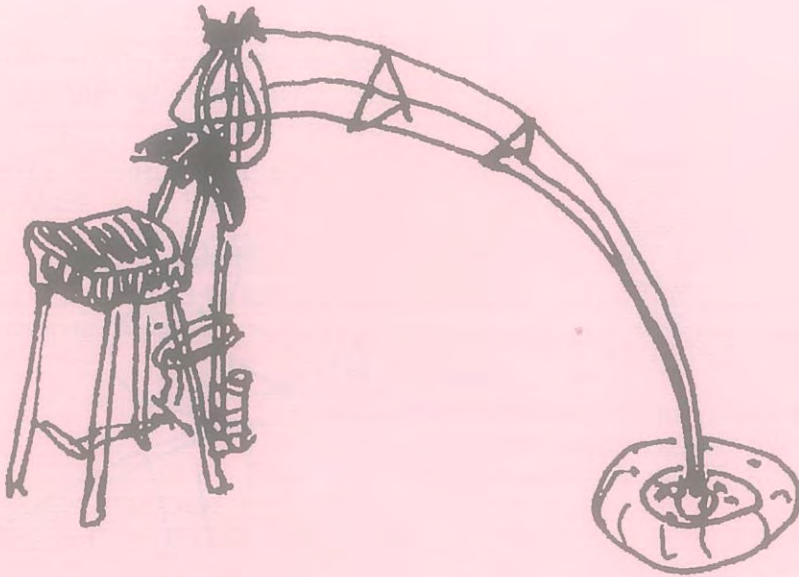
NECK

Run a single piece of cane 2.5m - 3m long from the crown of the head along the central cane at the back of the head as a neck. This is an exaggerated feature and surely not characteristic of the bird. License here affords a majesty in mobility and height.

BEAK

Select another piece of cane 2m - 2.5m in length to form the top of the beak. Tie and tape this to the back of the head and to the crown.



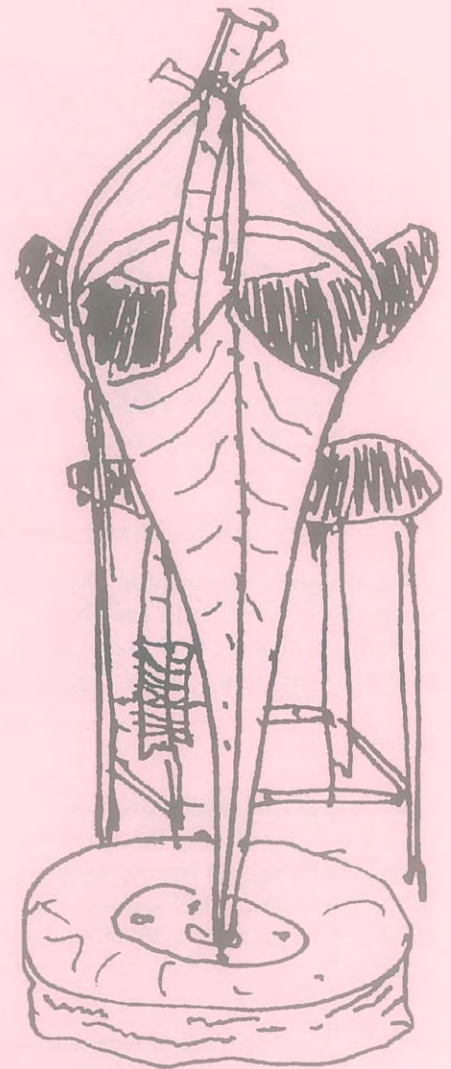
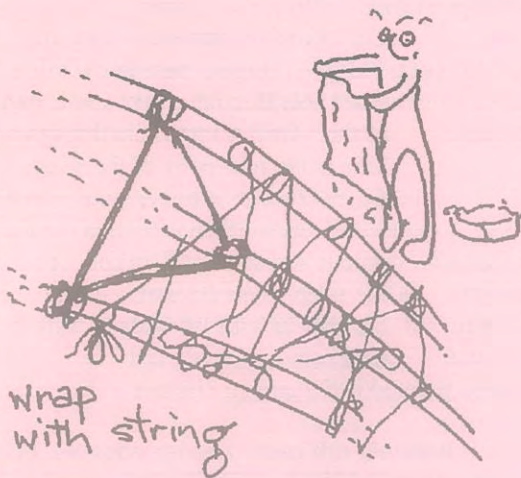


BEAKCLAD

Set this frame up now by resting or clamping the end of the beak at ground level in such a way that the head end hangs suspended at about waist height. Tie the head pole to a stool or chair temporarily and establish the curve again.

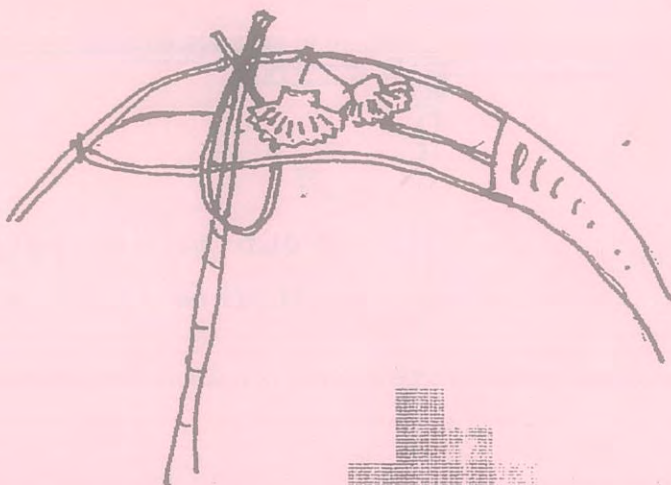
DRYING

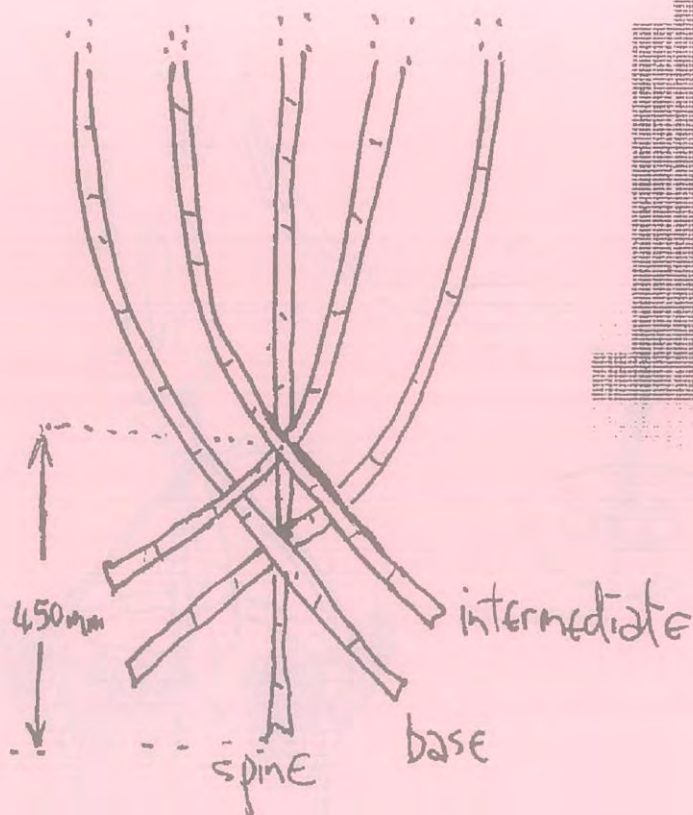
Let it dry. Ensure that the curve you were after remains when you pick it up.



EYE

Find a pair of scallop shells for eyes. Drill two 2mm holes in each shell. Cut a 600mm length of soft 12 gauge wire. Thread a shell on to each end. Wind these from the crown around the sides of the head. Bend them into an appropriate place behind the beak. Suspend them in space where they look right.





Bend each one gently in half. Thread the doubled wire through the two holes that you have already made in the wing end. Be careful with this wire as it flicks dangerously with sharp ends. Bend the ends over.



BODY

Select five sturdy 3m bamboo ribbons to make a body shape. Drill 1mm holes through a knot at the thick end of each of these. Wire them securely together.

SPINE

Select one of the bamboo ribbons to be the spine. Then identify the outer pair of bamboo ribbons to become the base of the body frame. Drill and wire the spine to the base ribbons 300mm in from the back.

BODYRIBS

Identify the intermediate pair of ribbons. Drill and wire these to the spine 450mm in from the back. Drill and wire them to the base ribbons 375mm in from the back.

WING

Construct the wing frames with bamboo ribbons and cane. Extend the thin end of a sturdy 3m bamboo ribbon with a 1m piece of cane 8 - 12mm in diameter. Overlap them by 150mm. Tape the join securely. The cane becomes the wing-tip. At the thick end of the bamboo ribbon drill two 3mm holes 15 - 20mm apart.

HOLES

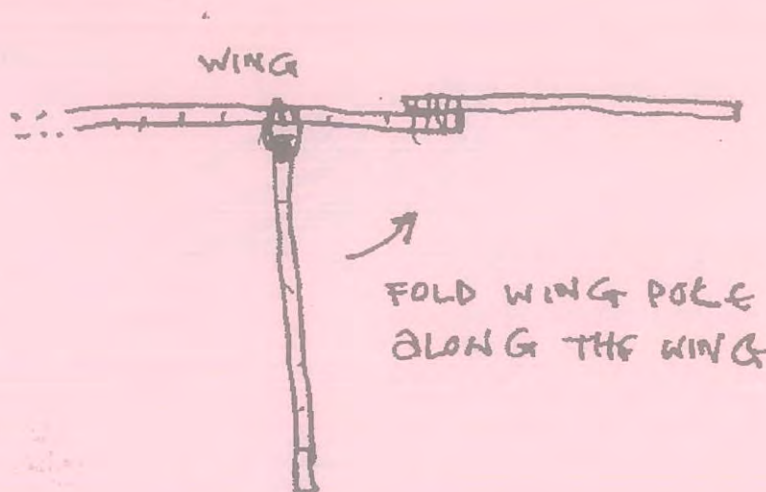
These holes take the wire that connects the wing to the body. Reinforce the bamboo either side with 'gaffa'. Strength is important where the wing meets the shoulder. Make two of these.

SHOULDER

Make a pair of shoulders using 12 gauge wire. This is thicker than coat hanger wire. Choose a softer wire so that you can bend it easily with your bare hands. Cut two pieces of this wire 1m long each using pliers or small bolt cutters.

WINGPOLE

Cut a bamboo pole 1.5m long and 18mm - 23mm in diameter. Drill a 1mm hole through a knot in the thin end of this. Drill a 1mm hole through a knot at the mid-point of the wing. Connect the pole to the wing with a wire loop loose enough to allow the pole to swing free. The pole operates the wing when the bird is in flight. Fold the pole in with the wing to walk the bird.



UNION INTERNATIONALE DE LA MARIONNETTE - UNIMA

SECRETAIRE GENERAL
Jacques FELIX

FONDEE EN 1929

B.P. 249
08103 - CHARLEVILLE-MEZIERES Cedex
FRANCE

c/c Banque Nationale de Paris
08000 - Charleville-Mézières
France
UNIMA n° 034.514.22

tél. 33.(0)3.24.33.72.50
fax. 33.(0)3.24.33.72.69
e-mail: sgi@unima.org

CONVOCAATION FOR THE XVIIIth UNIMA CONGRESS MAGDEBURG – GERMANY

From June 24th till July 2nd, 2000

Charleville-Mézières,
January 4th, 2000

N/Ref. : 7810/JF/SJ

From Jacques FELIX, General Secretary of UNIMA,
To the Councillors, National Centers and authorized Representatives of UNIMA

Dear Friends,

I have the pleasure to convoke you to the **XVIIIth UNIMA CONGRESS**. This Congress will be held in the city of **MAGDEBURG**, in **GERMANY** from June 24th till July 2nd, 2000, and will be accompanied by an international Festival.

The dates of the meetings will be :

- **June 23rd, 2000 (Friday)** : day of arrival for the members of the Executive Committee Members,
- **June 24th, 2000 (Saturday)** : Executive Committee meeting, and official opening of the Festival,
- **From June 26th (Monday) till June 30th (Friday), 2000** : Congress meetings,
- **July 1st, 2000 (Saturday)** : new Executive Committee members Meeting, and Festival Closure.

To obtain more information concerning your stay in MAGDEBURG, you can contact :

- Puppentheater Magdeburg, Warschauer Str. 25, 39104 – MAGDEBURG, GERMANY, tel./fax : +49-391-404.81.64 / 404.24.29
- Org.-Büro UNIMA 2000, Jahnring 53, 39104 – MAGDEBURG, GERMANY, tel. : +49-391-568.84.31 / 568.84.43, fax : +49-391-568.84.33
- <http://www.unima2000.de>
- e-mail : unima2000@hotmail.com

You will soon receive from the General Secretariat the « Dossier-Congrès » with documents that will help you to follow the XVIIIth UNIMA Congress, and also the proposal of the Congress Agenda. If you will go to MAGDEBURG, please don't forget to take them with you, they will be of any assistance to you...

I hope that I shall have the pleasure of meeting you again on this occasion, and I remain at your disposal.
Kind regards.

Jacques FELIX
General Secretary



ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE NON GOUVERNEMENTALE-ONG-bénéficiaire du Statut consultatif auprès de l'UNESCO

The Adelaide International Festival of Puppetry and Visual Theatre

The South Australian Folk Federation and SA puppeteers will be staging an exciting bi-annual Festival of Puppetry and Visual Theatre in the year 2001. This will be the first puppet festival of this capacity in Australia since 1988.

International, national and South Australian companies, individual artists and community groups will join together to present an array of new, experimental and traditional pieces of work. The aim of the Festival is to showcase and promote excellence in the field, and raise public awareness of this unique art-form.

The Festival will be held over nine days, incorporating two weekends, five weekdays and evenings with a special opening carnival to launch this exciting event. Performances will be situated in cosmopolitan Norwood, a short five minutes from the city of Adelaide. The streets, shopping malls, sidewalks and cafes will be bustling with support for the magnificent spectacle.

The Norwood Concert Hall and Community Center will house two theatre spaces, a cafe with an intimate performance space, a gallery, conference room, master class and workshop space, as well as festival information and a box office. The Odeon Theatre, located a block away, will offer another theatre with a workshop facility.

In addition to performances, the Festival will run workshops, seminars and master classes in order to generate discussion and critical debate to encourage the exchange of information between participants, community groups and schools. This festival is aimed for both adults and children, with venues and programming of shows appropriately placed. Arts institutions such as the State Library, the Art Gallery of

South Australia, various performing arts collectives, theatre companies, youth arts organisations, schools, community groups and councils will be encouraged to host components of the Festival with exhibitions, performances and workshops etc.

The Folk Federation is a community Arts organisation with extensive experience in running Festivals. They currently stage the Victor Harbour Folk Festival, South Australia's largest annual music event and the SA Medieval Festival at Carfick Hall.

Expressions of interest are now being sought from Puppeteers, Arts Companies and performing groups. We are interested in both professional and community projects.

Your enquiries are welcome and should be directed to: Keith Preston, Vanessa Ellis, Lachlan Haig Planning Group

The Adelaide International Festival of Puppetry and Visual Theatre
GPO Box 1601 Adelaide
South Australia 5001

Phone: (08) 8340 1069
Facsimile: (08) 8346 8506
Email: info@folk.sa.asn.au





Puppetry 'Hand in Glove' with Animation

Janette Dalglish

A few days before Christmas, Hugh Simpson and I bumped into Andrew Hansen, which was an unalloyed delight - but slightly alarming, since his innocent query "What are you doing these days?" made us realise just how long it's been since we hung out with the puppetry community in Melbourne. In fact, you could be forgiven for thinking we'd disappeared off the face of the planet! The explanation is both simple and complicated...

Many of you may know that we've been involved in a performance animation project, but not really know what that's entailed. The history can be told quite briefly - we began as unpaid consultants to an animation company who wanted to use motion capture to make their 3D animation more productive, and wanted performers who understood the concept of controlling a character other than themselves. Over time we became closely involved with the ongoing development, and happily our expertise with animatronics, learned on Babe, proved extremely useful.

For those unfamiliar with the concept of motion capture, it usually entails sticking sensors on a person (or animal), recording their movement, and then applying it to a 3D model inside a computer. Think of the animated characters in arcade sports games - usually their movement is based on a sportsperson or actor. For puppeteers, the concept is a little clumsy - like controlling a character's face by screwing up your own, or controlling a teapot by moving your body. It can be a long stretch to imagine how the movement translates, especially since you generally can't see how it's moving while you're performing. We wanted to go one step further

and have direct control of movement in real time, which had previously only been possible with very expensive hardware.

Eventually we collaborated to come up with a system which used a glove control device (imported from South Africa) to give real-time control of animated characters (think of Woody from Toy Story being manipulated like a puppet and you get the general idea). Local animators seemed very excited by the possibilities, as we were, and we decided to take the project one step further, and make it something which other people could buy. At this point we created a jointly owned company, called 3 Strings, which was able to attract some very supportive and creative investors with the help of our CEO, John Timlin (used to be Administrator of the Pram Factory, so he knows his oats.)

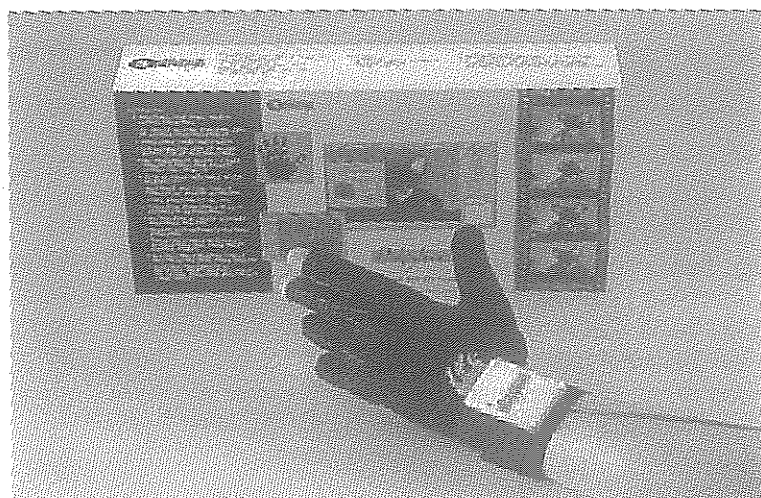
Unfortunately, the South African glove proved to be less than satisfactory, so we set to work developing an alternative based on some patented technology created by some Physics professors at Melbourne University. Suddenly Hugh and I found ourselves on the very steep learning curves of areas as diverse as research and development, manufacturing and software testing!

Our own company, Hand in Glove, has been focussing more on writing and directing, with occasional forays back into the world of physical puppetry. If you got a chance to see the Myer Christmas windows in Melbourne, you'd have seen about 15 seconds of our work in one of the Willie Wonka windows, where a character is sucked inside a television - really pretty appropriate when you think about it.

Meanwhile, of course, we've been having a ball playing with the new technology and creating our own animations. We've even found time to do some live performances with our animated characters, including co-hosting (with Tim Ferguson) the Australian Hotels Association (NSW) Awards for Excellence, at the large ballroom at the new Westin Hotel in Sydney. Six giant projection screens with an audience of around 1500 partying publicans - what a blast!

Some Melbourne puppeteers had the chance of trying the system out last year, in its earlier incarnation, but we think the time has come to put the new one through its paces. I'd like to hear from any puppeteers who are interested in having a closer look at the system - even if you already saw the previous one. You can call on my mobile 0413 135 314, or email me at home on janette@smart.net.au

And if you want to check out the company's website, you'll find it at www.3strings.com.au



Millenium Resolutions



Larger than life red and white puppets take over Buchan

The Bluff Reserve, Lousadas Road
A project of Buchan and District Art
Craft Inc.

Buchan's Millennium Resolutions celebration provided a unique opportunity for the region to come together in celebration. It also played a valuable role in rebuilding community morale that has been depleted by drought, flooding and damage to local sheep farming caused by Ovine Johnes' disease.

The celebrations combined acting, singing, dance and music with large, articulated puppets. The skills to construct these puppets was passed on by professional puppeteers Paul Doogood (Polyglot, Handspan), Nicky and Melinda Beecham and others.

Well known director and writer Carmen McCabbin (most recently Artistic Director of Shakespeare by the River Festival) wrote a puppet performance for the evening.

The celebration commenced with a banquet at the Willow Café. Then at 10.00 a street parade worked its way from the Café to the Bluff, which is the Buchan River, led by the huge red puppet which represented the evils of the 20th Century to be left behind.

At the Bluff the puppet symbolically 'burned' the messages written on red paper by the community.

The 'Release your dreams' ceremony used a huge white bird puppet which flew down the river on a flying fox in a symbolic releasing. The community messages of aspirations for the future were gathered together and placed in time capsules and a tree was planted for the new millennium.

Millennium Resolutions in Buchan was presented by the Buchan and District Arts and Craft One and the Buchan Neighbourhood House in conjunction with Arts Network East Gippsland, Regional Arts Victoria and the Melbourne International Festival of the Arts.

A giant millenium bug burns in Horsham

Local dance artist Karen Booker choreographed the performance for Millennium Eve that included all sections of the Horsham community accompanied by drums, bells and sparklers. Sawyer Park on Wimmera River

A project of Horsham Regional Arts Association Inc.

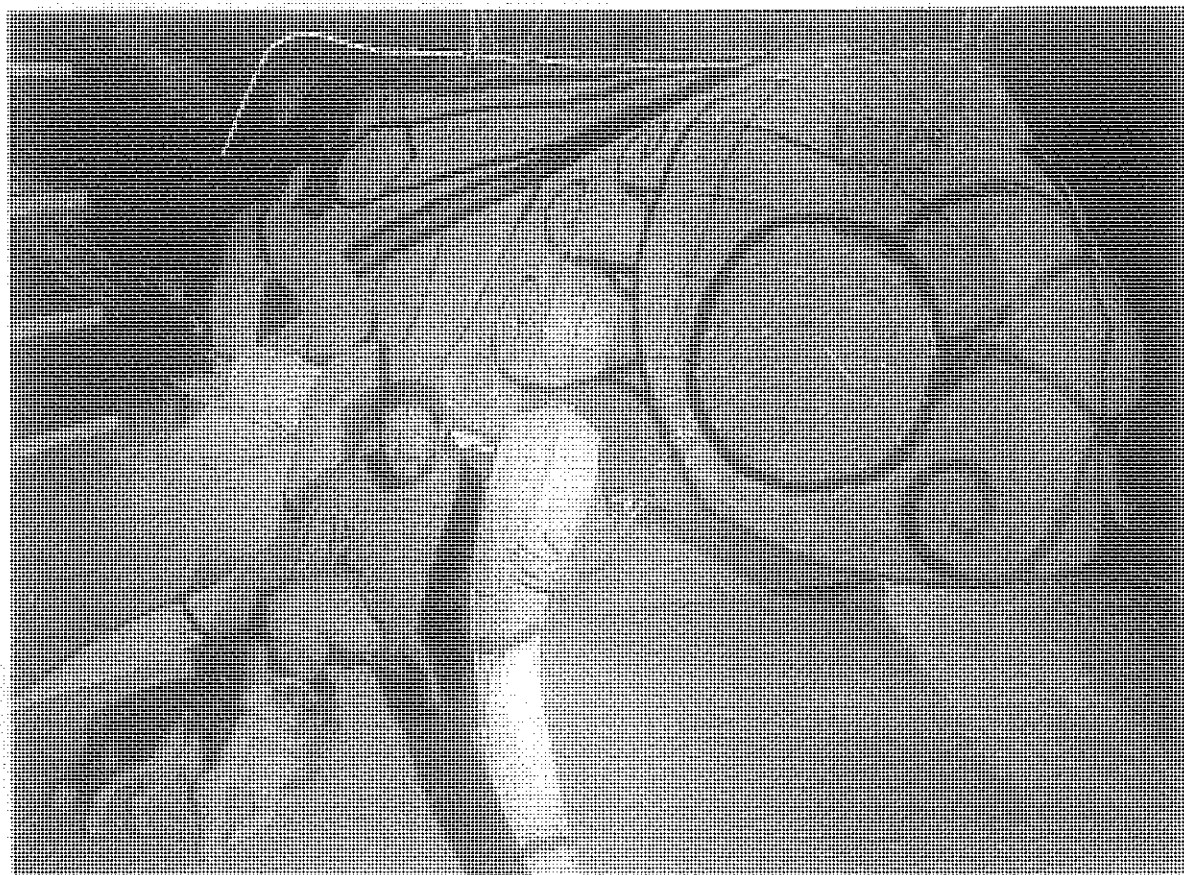
Horsham Millennium Resolutions was part of a wider community celebration "The Big Nite Out", which took place on the banks of the Wimmera River. The Resolutions concept involved a choreographed performance, dance and a giant puppet for each of the two rituals.

A giant Millennium bug sited on a pontoon, constructed by local artist Bruce McInnes, was anchored in the river early in the evening and lit from

within. The bug made from bamboo, metal materials and tissue paper and roughly 2 metres high and 6 metres long floated on the river, with lots of smaller glitter bugs in attendance. Rowing shells along the river banks were decorated with fluorescent and reflective patterning. Red tokens with people's written farewells of what they wish to leave behind were collected and placed under the bug at 10.30pm. These became the main fuel source as the bug first glowed then burst into flame to reveal its skeleton.

While the Millennium bug burnt on the river, two cockatoo puppets accompanied by children performed a dance of expectation. A large white dream bird operated by four to six people appeared and released the balloons laden with the new resolutions into the sky.

The release of the balloons signaled the start of a celebratory dance and the lighting of the fireworks leading up to the big night. A workshop was held for the construction of both the Millennium bug and the giant bird puppet by school children and local groups. Local school children made small silver bird puppets, and these birds accompanied the great white bird in performance.



REVIEWS

The Hobbit

Reviewed by Julia Davis

I went to see *The Hobbit* at The Playhouse with great expectations, having missed the first season eighteen months ago. This is one of the few full-scale elaborate puppet productions I have seen and for some time I have marvelled at the photographs and publicity shots of the assembled puppets, the intricacy of the modelled faces and the imaginative rendering of Tolkien's characters.

I was disappointed - not in the puppets for they were wonderful, and visually the production was spectacular, even breath-taking in places. But *The Hobbit* might have worked just as well as a series of tableaux - a Myers Christmas window for each scene.

It seems to me that in bringing Tolkien's fabulous world alive for the audience, the challenge for the director would be similar to those faced by an opera director. Opera directors today are very aware of the theatrical limitations of the static productions of the past (tableaux with music); they know they cannot rely on the beauty of the composer's music alone to create a theatrical experience and meaning for the audience. Too often in this production

of *The Hobbit* the puppets stood around, looking good, not doing anything - like members of an unresponsive chorus.

This was particularly the case with the dwarves, who tended to huddle in lines and did not present as distinct individuals. From where I was sitting each dwarf was only distinguishable by the colour of his cloak. Thorin Oakenshield, the dwarf king, did not stand out as a character and consequently I did not feel engaged with the drama of his death. (The falling snow flakes told me it was supposed to be a poignant moment!)

The initial effect of the puppets' emergence on stage is stunning, but I would have liked to have seen more idiosyncratic movement from these puppets as individuals, some imaginative choreography in their appearance as a group and far greater variation and dynamics in the vocal range of the puppeteers. Perhaps the manipulators were too concerned with being unobtrusive (which they were) and with maintaining vocal/lip synchronization.

There is always a problem with miked productions in that the emission of sound (two speakers placed either side of the stage) lends a uniformity to the sound quality and vol-

ume of the voices. They were all too similar in tessitura, dynamics and inflections and there was little vocal differentiation in some of the long conversations between puppets.

The problems in the direction were compounded by a script which needed more precise editing and a lighter, more whimsical touch. The writer, Gilly McInnes, was faithful to the text of *The Hobbit* - too faithful, perhaps - and in places the writing was laboured and contained too much information for the audience to assimilate. It is part of the fun of *The Hobbit* that Bilbo Baggins is so unsuited to the heroic mission imposed upon him by Gandalf (this is obvious in his physiognomy) but I think more humour might have developed from his artlessness and longing for the comforts of his burrow. Maybe some of these problems would have been less alienating for the audience if the character of Gandalf (one of two human characters in the play) had been more beguiling. Henry Szeps' realisation was fairly one dimensional - lordly and declamatory - and he did not establish intimacy with the audience in his direct invitations to share the Hobbit's journey. Tolkien's Gandalf is an elusive, mysterious figure and the characterisation might have conveyed a hint of the powerful character he was to become in *The Lord of the*



Being John Malcovich

Film review by Philip Millar

Rings. Henry Szep's strident recitations were ultimately monotonous and I detected some signs of vocal strain towards the end of the performance.

Yet, for all these reservations, the possibilities of puppetry's charm was evident in the memorable portrayal of Gollum (played by Terry Ryan) in his agile writhings, whimpering and squalling: "What has it got in its pockets?". This was puppetry at its best, exploring and doing what a mere human actor could not do.

This production did not live up to my expectations and was disappointing because its flaws were so obvious and so correctable. With more rigorous direction, imaginative handling and choreography The Hobbit might have shown more than the potential for a great theatrical experience.

.....
For other reviews of The Hobbit,
try exploring
<http://www.thehobbit-onstage.com>
.....

It seems ironic that while many of Hollywood's biggest hits utilise puppetry in some form to animate their stars, few if any films discuss puppetry, the puppeteer or even acknowledge the existence of the art-form. 'Being John Malcovich' flies in the face of convention and deals head on with many of the central issues that motivate puppeteers. What is it like to play God? To create life? The illusion of life? How does the puppet respond to the control of its creator?

The film simultaneously appears to celebrate and mock the ambitions of the central character, the earnest, talented but rather lost puppeteer, Craig Schwartz (played by John Cusack.) He throws himself into his art with desperate intensity as he explores notions of control, free will, despair and lust. Sadly, as a puppeteer exploring these ideas in an art form continually dismissed as a cheap and cheerful diversion for children, he cannot find an audience much less a paying one. He is the quintessential underappreciated serious artist.

The film gleefully leads the viewer into increasingly more bizarre territory as the puppeteer finds a job as a filing clerk on the seven and a half floor of an old office building. Here, in odd surroundings he discovers a mysterious portal, a doorway into the unknown. The doorway leads into the body of actor John Malcovich, allowing the intruder fifteen minutes to experience everything their host experiences.

Without divulging too much more of the weird but engaging plot, the puppeteer learns to extend his craft to actually controlling another human. His manipulation skills, his ability to place himself into the thoughts and the skin of another identity allow him to completely control his host and to realise his fantasy of fame as a pup-

peteer. Using Malcovich's profile as a springboard Schwartz molds Malcovich into the acclaimed puppet artist he has always dreamed of being. Malcovich, slowly transforming into the image of his controller, is simply his puppet. Malcovich's early attempts to reclaim the portal to his own head creates a bizarre inversion, sort of like going back in time and meeting yourself only much worse.

'Being John Malcovich' documents the transformation of the puppeteer from object of ridicule ("You play with dolls", sneers co-worker Maxine) to artistic genius, receiving a standing ovation for his interpretation of "Swan Lake". It touches on the big issues that puppetry explores and makes comedy from the juxtaposition of these ideas into American pop culture. The notion that the actor would surrender fame and fortune to pursue puppetry is very cleverly portrayed in documentary style and is all the more ludicrous as a result. That pure puppetry for adults would receive mass acceptance (the dream of some puppeteers) is gently mocked even as it is portrayed.

Eventually, despite his success, the sadder more insecure parts of Schwartz's character begin to dominate. He craves adulation and can only find it vicariously. In the end he must surrender his host but as it turns out to an older and more accomplished controller. Malcovich is permitted one plaintive "I'm free..." before his body is once again overtaken by others. He remains a puppet, his free will a forgotten dream.

'Being John Malcovich' is an extremely enjoyable and bizarre romp which squeezes in numerous interesting and provocative ideas throughout. Unlike so many movies which collapse on close analysis, 'Being John Malcovich', the first feature for both director Spike Jonze and screenwriter Charlie Kaufman, rewards close and detailed examination.

What's On

POLYGLOT 2000.

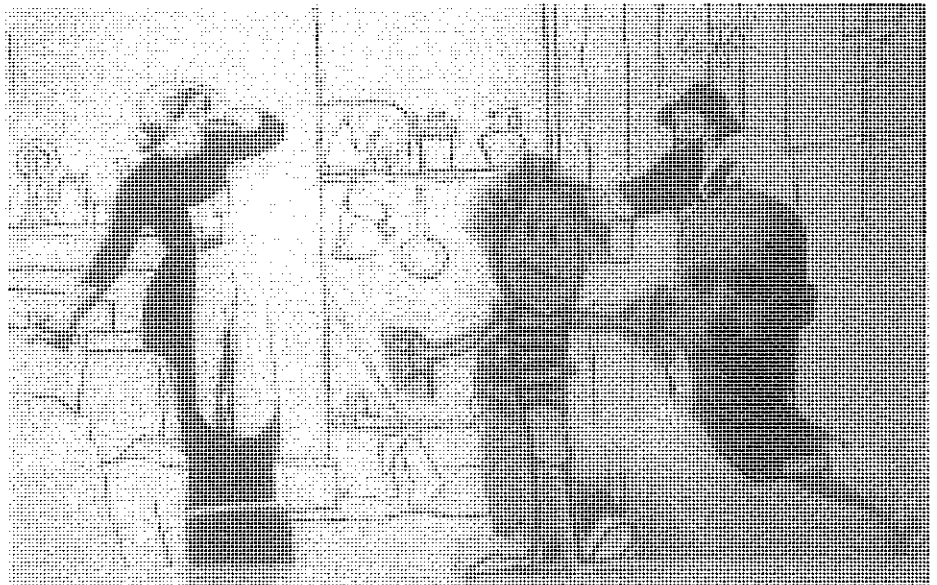
Polyglot's program for 2000 kicks off with a vigorous re-working of *The Black Light House* for touring in Victoria and Queensland. The show attracted superlative feedback from teachers as it went from strength to strength over its schools tour in Victoria, Term 4 1999, and is set for further refinement before setting off this year.

Our in-theatre piece, *Sunflowers* will be directed by Ariette Taylor and produced later in the year. The story of the effect of four paintings on a young boy's life, *Sunflowers* premiere Victorian season will be at the Victorian Arts Centre's Fairfax Studio in November. The piece is being created in collaboration with the National Gallery of Victoria.

Also in the program will be a return of the season of short works in puppetry by artists around the company. Under the auspices of Studiopolyglot this program was performed in the Melbourne Fringe Festival in 1999, to very good reviews.

One of Polyglot's goals for the triennium is "To deepen the audience's ability to respond to the artform of Puppetry." To this end we will be offering Teacher Previews; Follow-up Workshops in schools; Masterclasses; and Skills Workshops for new and experienced puppeteers. We are also making ourselves more available in the community for lecture/demonstrations on puppetry and the company's work. We are also making sure that puppetry notes now accompany all our Teacher Resource Kits. (Contact us if you are interested in any of the above. We'll be advertising dates when they're confirmed)

2000 also includes research and development of a new work for kinder to grade 2 to be produced in 2001.



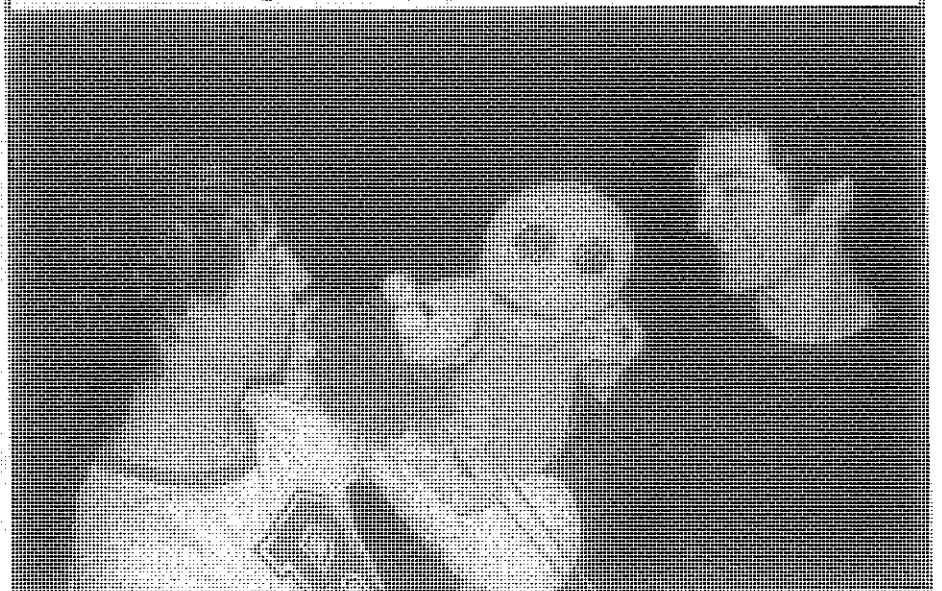
Simon Rann during *SUNFLOWERS* creative development

Gardner Puppets

Gardner Puppet's new show for Kinders and lower primary is called "The Fairy Ring." It is about magic: fairies, elves wizards and the Australian rain-forest! It will be available to schools in 2000 along with a rewritten version of "The Ring Of Trees" which is about rainforests of the world and is for an older audience the "The Fairy Ring."

Rocketship Theatre

Rocketship Theatre of Melbourne is touring "Tabitha in Sabana" to the Adelaide Fringe Festival 2000. Writer Lolly Katz, director Melinda Heisel and puppet designer Nick Easlow combine puppetry, dialogue, music and movement to create a surreal, comic and disturbing world inhabited by zombies, a spider-like thing, a friendly old woman and a lost king. Check Adelaide Fringe Festival program for details.



Handspan 2000

After taking 1992 out from performing to concentrate on developing a range of projects in different media (stage, television, animation, visual art projects) Handspan is now welcoming many of these ideas come to fruition. This year sees two new theatre shows Lin 'n up social and Miss Tanaka, an outdoor event for Moomins and a revival and tour of The Cone Project.

The Cone Project was the first development piece to go into production. This large-scale combination of installations and performances about transformation and change was first seen at Southgate and the Victorian Arts Centre over a seven-week period in May/June 1993. The project will tour to Guelph in late February and to the performing Arts Market in Adelaide as well as the Festival Fringe.

The project was a bold experiment. Not only was the work itself about an experiment in transformation and change, but it was an experiment for all the producing partners, none of whom had worked together nor produced such a work in this manner. For Handspan, it was both an artistic experiment in form and content as well as an experiment in the way the company created, produced and marketed new work. As the first major production to come from the 1993 Creative Development program itself a radical departure in the way the company's funds are deployed. The Cone Project was a steep learning curve which tested all concerned but one which ultimately proved a successful and rewarding experience.

Following a period of six weeks spent in early 1997 by Handspan member Paul Brown, a detailed seed funding concept document was submitted to Handspan's creative development program in 1998 after artistic director David Red was approached by an entrepreneur and producer for further development and production of the piece. Following Festival Fringe success in 1999,

opportunities to develop the work and 'road test' an early version. Satisfied that the project was conceptually strong enough for a large-scale application, the company began discussions with Southgate and the Victorian Arts Centre with a view to presenting the project in 1999. This long-term development enabled Handspan, Southgate and the VAC to develop a working relationship and sense of joint ownership by witnessing the project's evolution. Most importantly, it gave Kelly the time to explore the richness of the concept, often with limited resources, to the point where rapid creative decisions could be made taking the bulk of the production funds which in place had their production and limitations were more apparent with greater ease. The seeds of the project went through many changes during the 12-month period, growing and shrinking with each year and end of the funding period and being in place. The thing in all this was that until the exact scale of the budget was known it was difficult to work on concrete details of the project past these broad brush strokes. However as no time during that process were we asked to modify the project in cutting pre-developed sections of what constitutes her personal work. Hence the approach was one with Southgate and VAC wanting to commission new work that was important to the community and maintained its integrity, this being more able to have a significant immediate season.

Because the core of the project was about change and development, the installation, events and performance as well as the tour to further develop the work, were designed to be a process which continued to evolve between development and performance. The first Cone development rehearsal for the performance and event that made up the 2nd part of the work, as well as other processes, this structure allowed Kelly and the performers to develop a work which evolved in the overall concept, was in line with the reality of the development, and audience response and the weather.

During the course of the 7 week season, the project gained exponentially in confidence and quickly found its style, often promising in its audience responses ranging from bemusement to delight, curiosity to active interest and analysis. Indeed, because the project was conceived to be both 'unscripted' by the audience as well as having set performance schedules, this allowed the audience and performers to interact in a variety of ways. Often, during touring performances, audience members would ask questions. The performers, in character, were then able to discuss what they were doing and why. This regularly led to extraordinarily profound discussions that were quite unexpected in such an environment. The project's quirky charm and playful character appealed to many, especially children and young people who seemed to intuitively click onto the other meanings inherent in the work.

The full development, research and performances were documented extensively through still photography and many hours of video. These in turn were edited into two 'video postcards' that were sent to funding bodies, partners and those unable to witness the breadth of the project as it evolved. Consequently the Ararat Festival, Play Space Festival (Guelph) and Brisbane City Council (Qld) became aware and interested in the project when it was still happening. Even to this have come as a direct result of the length of the project. This not only enabled the artists to explore and further develop the work in a way which would have been impossible in a normal 4 week rehearsal period and 7 week season but allowed it to be sold to producers in 2000. The Cone Project will feature Guelph and Adelaide (as part of the spotlight program of the Performing Arts Market and Festival Fringe) this short tour will enable it to further refine the project in performance and gain a more national and international focus in preparation for further national and international sales.

Lin 'n up social is a new theatre show featuring Tom Chivers and Rod Pharesch that will open at the

George Fairfax Studio at the Victorian Arts centre on April 5. This production developed after Tom received a small grant from Arts Victoria to work with the company to restore some historic marionettes. The work is about a life in progress - about the balancing act of living across two cultures without being pulled under by the pressures and influences of modern life.

The production uses incidents from Tom's life as a central spine: from young kid in Amhem Land, to movie star after being discovered at an airport, to alcohol abuse and estrangement from his family through to self-discovery and reclamation of his life and traditions. The production further uses dreaming stories from his people, music, outback yarns and urban stories to build rich and complex images that transcend the personal and deliver universal themes. Now over 12-months alcohol free, Tom is an inspiring example of someone living daily to keep his life in balance.

The title comes from an incident in Tom's childhood. One day, important visitors from 'the government' visited Tom's tiny school. The teacher lined up his students and told them to "lift 'em up socks!" so that they would all look neat and tidy for the visitors. The incident has long remained with Tom and it's other meaning not lost on him when, at a low personal moment on Port Melbourne pier, he decided to 'lift 'em up socks' and get his life together.

The production has two performers - Tom and Rod Primrose, a white performer/puppeteer who plays Tom's 'spirit'. In a sense, the journey of the show reflects their turbulent relationship - the games, the struggles, the fights, the joy.

Tom and Rod play all the characters often using puppets fashioned from natural objects, direct address, visual storytelling and physical performance, flashing from situation to situation with lightning speed. Objects are strewn about the stage seemingly at random. It is only when Tom walks through them, bending down to pick up a pebble or use a pandanus leaf as a brolga wing, do we

realise we are inside a giant 'map' of his life. A long, moving wall acts as a screen for projections, lighting and shadow play. As the action unfolds and objects are used and discarded, text and images drawn on the wall in pigment, the space is completely transformed and a new 'living map' of Tom's life appears - a traditional dot painting come to life. The show is geared at adults and young adults.

Also in April Handspan will be contributing a piece to the Moomba 'tram parade' Artist Darryl Cordell has designed a huge whale inside a tram. Manipulated by puppeteers, the whale moves its tail and flippers, watches the audience and spurts jets of water into the crowd. Fun for all the family!

In November, the company premieres a major new work *Miss Tanaka* at QPAC in Brisbane before its transfer to the Malthouse in conjunction with Playbox. Directors David Bell and Noriko Nishimoto will work with composer Darrin Verhagen and two Japanese drummers to bring this hilarious comedy of mistaken identity to the stage.

Based on a yarn by Xavier Herbert adapted by John Romeril, *Miss Tanaka* is a bittersweet comedy set in Broome during the late 1930's. The story centres on a group of rival pearl divers from Japan, Malaysia and Australia. Their isolation drives each of them to fall in love with the same woman - the beautiful and mysterious *Miss Tanaka*, recently arrived in town. As unpredictable as the weather, *Miss Tanaka's* cock-eyed tale of pursuit and escape weaves an astonishing blend of folk tales, dreams, magic and spectacle as it races to its wild conclusion.

All in all 2000 promises to be a bumper year for Handspan, one in which two years of research and development, both artistically and financially, shows further fruit.

Winner!

"Is It Going To Stay That Colour?" (competition)

The most absurd thing that happened to me as a puppeteer took place years ago at a large Christmas event in Sydney. I was appearing there with my puppet character Lady Hortense. I sit or stand behind her and am in full view as I operate her. I don't try to hide myself as the characterisation is such that no-one ever seems to notice me.

The event was being covered by a Sydney commercial radio station. (I mention no names). A celebrity (let's just say she was famous for being well-known and well-known for being famous) had the roving microphone.

Lady Hortense was on the programme to do a recitation of "The night before Christmas." The celebrity who had seen my act earlier, came over to cover the recitation. She introduced Lady H. to the audience.....

.....and then held the microphone up to the puppet's mouth.

Many thanks and our exciting hot glue prize to Lady Hortense's close friend, Dennis Murphy.



...and the next competition...

"Are you sure this is a shortcut?"

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Your name here?

Editor

Philip Millar

PO Box 208

Elsternwick, VIC 3185

03 9525 8537

puppetvision@ozemail.com.au

President

Sue Wallace

75 Palace Street

Petersham, NSW 2049

02 9550 6457

spuppet@ozemail.com.au

Secretary

Mary Sutherland

PO Box 208

Elsternwick, VIC 3185

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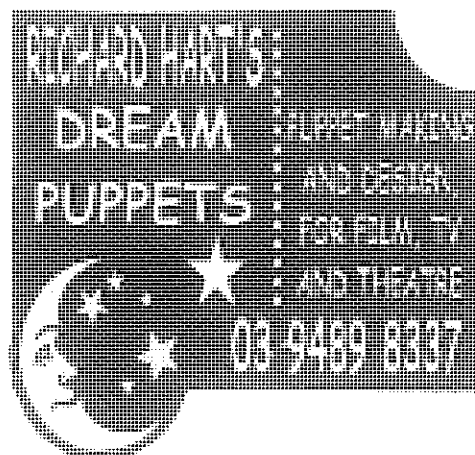
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D E A D L I N E S

Thank you very much to the wonderful and supportive contributors who sent in a range of interesting bits and pieces for this issue. My apologies that not all the material made it in, next issue will feature those items.

The next deadline, for the Autumn 2000 issue is...
(Drumroll)

APRIL 25th

Your time starts now.

I'm particularly looking for more articles on "What it means to be a puppeteer" Just what is it that makes puppetry unique? And send lots of photos. Please.

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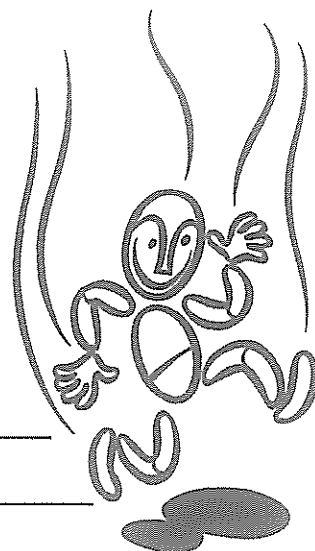
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AUSTRALIAN UNIMA EXECUTIVE

President

Sue Wallace
75 Palace Street
Petersham, NSW 2049
02 9550 6457
spuppet@ozemail.com.au

Secretary

Mary Sutherland
PO Box 208
Elsternwick, VIC 3185
03 9525 7595
msuther@ozemail.com.au

Treasurer

Prodos
PO Box 2165
Richmond South, VIC 3121
03 9416 1616
prodos@prodos.com

Editor

Philip Millar
PO Box 208
Elsternwick, VIC 3185
03 9525 8537
puppetvision@ozemail.com.au

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