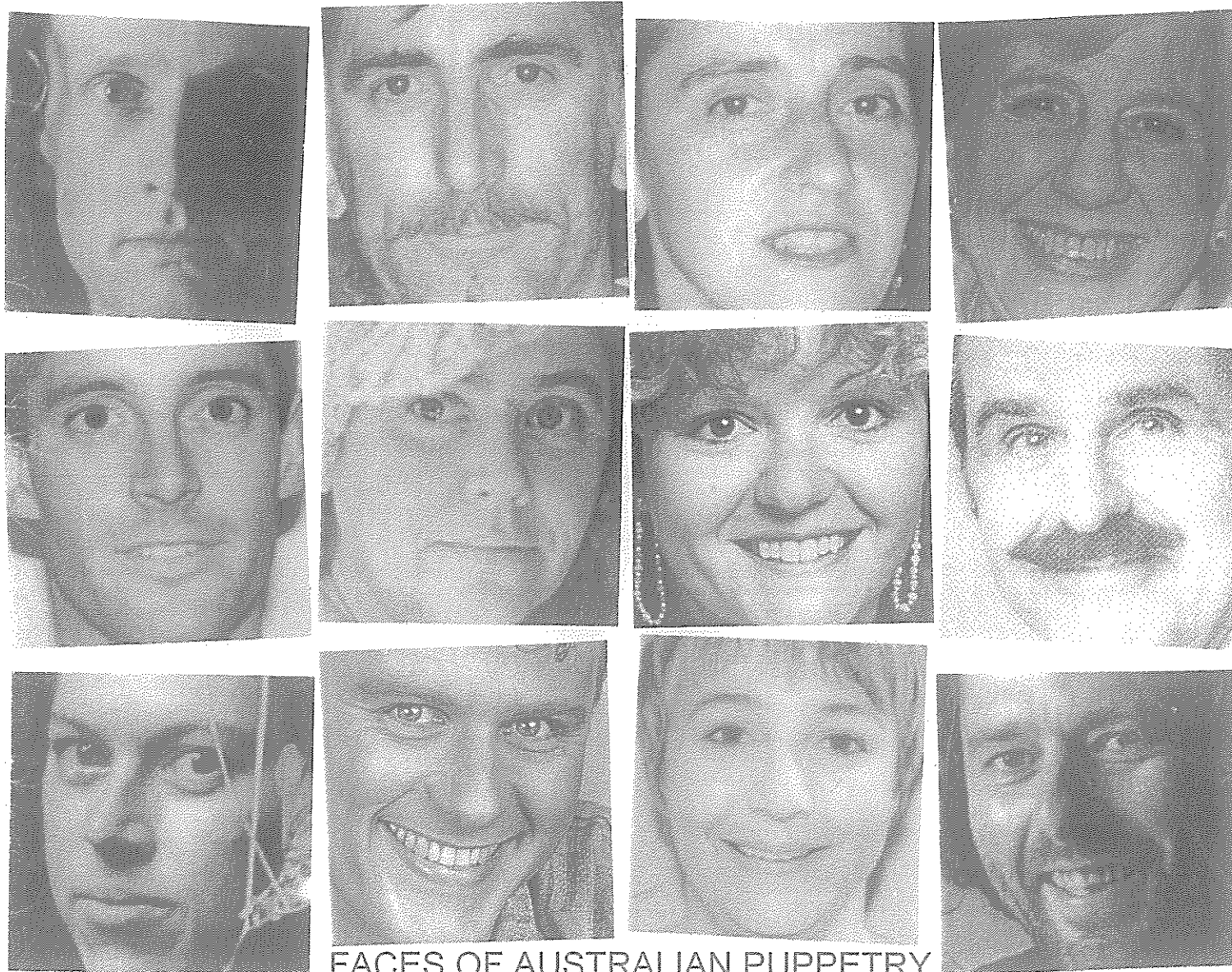


SUMMER 1997 - 1998

AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER



FACES OF AUSTRALIAN PUPPETRY

THE MAGAZINE OF UNIMA* AUSTRALIA
*UNION INTERNATIONALE DE LA MARIONNETTE

NOTE ON PUPPETS

I always hold up the wooden actors as instructive object lessons to our flesh-and-blood players. The wooden ones, though stiff and continually glaring at you with the same over-charged expression, yet move you as only the most experienced living actors can.

What really affects us in the theatre is not the muscular activities of the performers, but the feelings they awaken in us by their aspect; for the imagination of the spectator plays a far greater part there than the exertions of the actors.

The puppet is the actor in his primitive form. Its symbolic costume, from which all realistic and historically correct impertinences are banished, its unchanging stare, . . . the mimicry by which it suggests human gesture in unearthly caricature – these give to its performance an intensity to which few actors can pretend.

George Bernard Shaw

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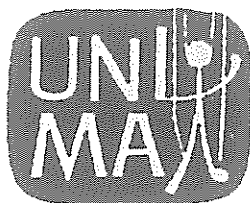
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UNION INTERNATIONALE DE LA MARIONNETTE

FOUNDED IN 1929 MEMBER OF ITI (UNESCO)

FROM THE EDITOR



Welcome to the New Year edition of AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER. Thank you so much for demonstrating your support for the 'new look' magazine. Between us we can take it further, adding features, altering formats, include a wider range of information and topics; in particular, build onto our base knowledge of our own membership, what they are aiming for and achieving, how they regard their own and other's works.

The response to requests for photographs has been great, with contributor's spontaneously including a bit of 'CV' material, in case we don't know enough about them. A wise and wonderful precaution; there's no such thing as too much information! but I trust that you will understand if all the material about you has not been published.

I'm still in love with the idea of putting your faces on the front of the magazine. What an energetic looking lot!

At this, the beginning of my work on the second AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER, let me thank those of you who have taken time to write to me personally or speak at some length on the phone. This is very energising for me. The sense that I am satisfying you and am able to call on you for help is supportive in the extreme. Your suggestions for additions or improvements are useful to me as Editor; your patience over omissions is appreciated.

I hope your plans for 1998 bear fruit and that your year is both profitable and fun.

Season's Greetings,
Anita Sinclair

LETTERS

... so inspired by the new look magazine, in particular Sue Wallace's article on the festival in Mexico City, that I had to write in with some of my own puppetry experiences in Latin America.

David Williams
Victoria

.....suggestions for the magazine: As we're getting to know the members, how about a paragraph at the end of each review giving a bit of background on the reviewer?last issue you called for contributions on floppy disk. I assume you welcome any sort of delivery medium to get the article.

Dennis Murphy
New South Wales

(Happy to include notes on contributors if they send these with their articles. Delighted to accept contributions in any form, disk, faxed, typewritten, even over the phone: just get it to me! Ed).

.....back home in NSW for the Uni break....offer anyone in NSW in puppetry who would like a show reviewed for the next AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER edition or need puppeteering help between November and February to contact me, phone (02) 49 959239.

Lucinda Watson
Tasmania

....just opened the treasure trovethe new mag! Great initiative to give it a name. I've always been in support of stating the obvious - or making the statement obvious. Looks inviting.....

Sue Wallace
New South Wales

....I've always been a firm believer that when a show is reviewed, the participants should be acknowledged as well, especially in puppetry ...I don't know how you'll manage with the credits of The Hobbit, given the huge cast! The review turned out longer than I expected....

Janet Dalglish
Victoria

(Happy to oblige with credits, and long reviews are most welcome. Ed).



THANKS AGAIN

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

To:
Annette Downe &
Members of the Board
Terrapin Puppet Theatre,
Hobart, Tasmania.



Dear Annette, Chairperson and members of the Board,

On behalf of the membership of **UNIMA Australia** I would like to thank you for your very generous donation of **\$650.00** to our national organisation. The money will be used to support and increase UNIMA's standard of communication.

Your support is more than financial. Such support encourages the membership to acknowledge the value of their organisation. I hope your example encourages other companies and individuals to contribute.

With sincere thanks on behalf of the membership,

Sue Wallace,
President.

Sitting on my front steps at 6am one morning in November, I was swiftly reminded of the benefits of being part of UNIMA. With me was Israeli puppeteer, **Naomi Yoeli**. She was waiting for a taxi to take her to the airport and on to Melbourne. She had stayed for only three frantic days and our schedules collided dramatically, so any time to talk was precious. I had had a restless sleep, my mind swimming with a new project we (*Sydney Puppets*) had just embarked upon. Problems were presenting themselves.....

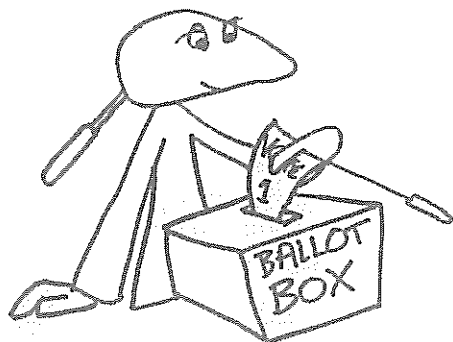
Calmly Naomi advised me on a possible direction, and her advice was guided by her extensive experience and generosity of spirit.

A week later, I was in a café in Bondi having an energising meeting with Perth based puppeteer, **Joanna Foley**. She had just returned from the enormous Charleville Festival in France (*report, this issue, Ed.*) It was a 'dam-opening' discussion about The State Of The Art and where we fit into it. I encourage all members to exchange views, communicate, let people know you are out there. This way you have a better chance of finding your cohorts and knowing that 'you are not alone'!

Sue Wallace
President.



SECRETARY'S PAGE



UNIMA ELECTION

Nominations are now open for the position of **UNIMA SECRETARY**.

The job basically entails looking after **UNIMA** correspondence, keeping communications flowing among the Executive Committee members and monitoring the Puppetry publications that come to **UNIMA AUSTRALIA**.

It is not an arduous task and it affords the opportunity to learn more about the members and about **UNIMA** itself.

Nominations are open to all members. If you would like to nominate someone, please let them know first, then send your nomination, plus the name of a seconder, to Dennis Murphy by 31st January 1998.* You may nominate yourself. The nominations will be published along with ballot forms in the Autumn issue.

If you would like more details about the job, please contact:

Dennis Murphy, at 79 Binalong Road, Old Toongabbie, NSW 2146.

***IMPORTANT:**

Mark the envelope 'UNIMA ELECTION' in the bottom left hand corner.

PINZ UNIMA NEGOTIATIONS

PINZ, the publication of New Zealand **UNIMA**, through the efforts of **Rose Beauchamp**, has been corresponding with the Executive of Australian **UNIMA** with a view to gaining access or collaboration with **AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER**.

Resolution is imminent; details will probably be clearer by next issue. If you wish to know more, you could contact **Dennis Murphy**.

MELBOURNE IN MARCH

Dennis Murphy will be traveling to Melbourne on the weekend of 14th and 15th March, 1998, and he wishes to make the most of it by calling a gathering of the clan. The proposal, is to simply meet on the Saturday evening at the **Workhouse Theatre** at 7.00pm, and walk to a Vietnamese restaurant in Victoria Street, (5 mins away).

The food is very good, the cost low and the company inevitably inspiring. The restaurants in the area can accommodate large numbers and have **BYO**. They are happy with only two day's notice on exact numbers, so, though we would like to hear from you early on this, you can get away with a last minute decision. Hope to see you there!

Sue Wallace has said in her letter that 'you are not alone'. Come and see for yourself!

If you are from out of town or interstate, the **Workhouse** can offer you **floor space** for your **BYO sleeping bag**. **YOU ARE WELCOME!**



Ring **Dennis** on: 02 9631 0613, or **Anita** and **PRODOS** on: 03 9417 1211 (The **Workhouse**) to book for the dinner or the **Workhouse** floor.



ONE VAN FESTIVAL

24th and 25th January, 1998

Blackheath, The Blue Mountains, NSW

It's actually going to happen – a 2 day regional Puppet Festival in the beautiful village of Blackheath. This is a festival for the general public with performances and workshops chosen to appeal to the family audience.

It is called **ONE VAN** (thanks to **Rod Primrose** for the name) to celebrate the number of wonderful performers in this country who carry their show(s) in a 1 tonne van. It also reflects the attitude of the festival as intimate, approachable theatre. Blackheath has halls and a wonderful park but it doesn't have theatres, so shows that are 'environment flexible' are more suitable.

There will be one event that will premiere at the Festival. It is called "*A Walk Through the Seasons*" where four young puppeteers will each create a 15 minute piece to be performed in the houses/garages/sunrooms of local residences. A local volunteer will be the tour guide for the audience of about 15 at a time, leading them from house to house.

Funding has come from the NSW Ministry for the Arts Western Sydney Regional Arts Program and will be administered by the Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre (BANC).

Because of BANC's limited resources, **Sue Wallace** (as Artistic Director) made it clear that she would do all the administration (Festivals Australia and the Blue Mountains Community Fund were also approached) to get the funding. Now that \$5,000 has been received some of that is allocated to employ a part-time administrator from Blackheath.

\$5,000 is not much but it means that the festival can begin. Artists will get paid and be given food and accommodation. Importantly, there is some money for publicity. Where possible services will be provided by people in the region eg printer, designer, administrator. This is to encourage the feel that the festival belongs to the community of Blackheath and is not an imported event.

ONE VAN PUPPET FESTIVAL is planned as an annual event.

Blackheath is set to become the puppet village of NSW. From little things, big things at least have a

chance to grow! You are all welcome. Programs will be available soon, obtain one by writing to:

Sue Wallace, Sydney Puppet Theatre, PO Box 520, Petersham NSW 2049.

Please include a stamped addressed envelope, this would really help to keep our costs down!

FESTIVAL OF PUPPETRY AND VISUAL THEATRE: UPDATE

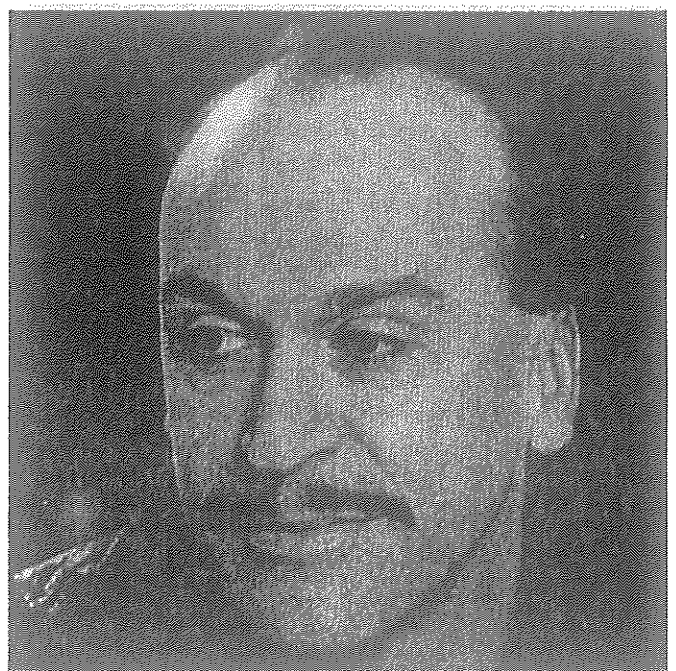
The Arts ACT through the ACT Cultural Council has, in its November 1997 funding round for Arts Activities in the ACT in 1998, contributed \$20,000 seeding money towards the development of the **Puppetry Festival, Canberra in 1999.**

This is great news. We can now start to actively generate further interest andto structure, shape and piece together the elements required to make this event possible.

A steering committee has been set up to begin throwing ideas around.

I must add, for the Festival to occur, we will require substantial Federal Funding and further support from the ACT government. I'll keep you all posted.

**With Best Wishes for a Festive, Festive Season
Peter (Pan) Wilson**





Charleville main street, busking show 'Chair'.
Photo Christophe Loiseau

CHARLEVILLE- MÉZIÈRES OR BUST!

Joanne Foley attends the World Festival, 1997

You choose to work in the performing arts, so you choose financial insecurity, highs and lows. Three years with intermittent paid work and a "cash flow" problem and now I'm at the end of a three month trip around the world! Bizarre.

In 1990 I had completed a three year diploma course in puppetry at the school in Charleville. I then stayed on in France for another three years working in Puppet Theatre. So, I'd had the opportunity to participate in the three previous Charleville Festivals. The Charleville Festival, with all of it's chaos, run by local volunteers, is one that since discovering it I would hate to miss. This year's Festival had over 500 shows programmed, not including the Street Theatre programme. 63,000 tickets were sold in the first three days. The town's population is 62,000! Added to this were exhibitors, workshop personnel and puppet people from all over the world.

There were dud shows, good shows and a few gems.

With such a huge programme, and the demands of my own work, I only had the opportunity of seeing about a dozen shows. Here are some of my thoughts on what I did manage to see:

Although I had tickets for *Faulty Optics*' (U.K.) *'Bubblybeds'*. They said at the door that there was no room, no entry. I had to argue, lie and cause a scene, eventually forcing myself in. I was glad I had. It was, as have been other *Faulty* productions I've seen, bent, funny, inventive and beautifully performed. It was played on three levels, an aquarium below, stage set in the middle and a large video screen above. This enlarged and focused the live action on the other 2 levels. Manipulators hidden, small life-like puppets.

Green Ginger (U.K.) performed their latest show *"Slaphead"*, a dark, but very funny piece.

Theatre Barbare, France, premiered her latest show *"Diaphanie"*. Using almost exclusively cellophane, (her previous show used almost exclusively aluminium) the performer exposed the trials and tribulations of being a fairy, and took us along on her Cinderella journey. Lovely stuff. A scrunched up ball of cellophane is given the fairy's breath and it magically pops up into a glass carriage!

Stuffed Puppet Theatre, Netherlands, (though Neville Trantor is Australian) performed *"Salome"*. He even sings and dances in this one! What a showman! I'm not very objective. I love his work and could watch him perform for hours on end.

Joan Baixas' show, *"Terra Prenyada"*, was beautiful! Very moving. Performed outside, with subtle, exquisite vocal accompaniment from his partner Paca, Joan created, transformed, destroyed and washed away images on a vertically hung, large piece of plastic using dirt, sand, ochres, ashes and water. Joan and Paca have spent time in Australia and this piece had definite resonance from Australian Aboriginal traditional art.

As for my show *"Chair"*, it had success. I received good press articles, positive and encouraging feedback and even invitations to perform elsewhere.

Should anyone want any more information on the Charleville Festival, or about the Puppetry Institute, please contact me on (08) 9336-5102.

Yours animatedly,
Joanne Foley

WAN SMOLBAG

REVISITED

Vanuatu's hive of activity

Ken Evans and **Carmelina Di Guglielmo** recently took up a return residency with Vanuatu's **Wan Smolbag Theatre**. Departing on the 19 October, they set off for a three week residency for which they were much better prepared than the first time. (UNIMA Magazine had run article about **Ken** and **Carmelina's** previous Vanuatu residency and **Wan Smolbag's** first venture in puppetry, *On The Reef*.)

Wan Smolbag now have their own space. **Ken** and **Carmelina** worked at the High School on their last visit. **Peter Walker**, the company's director and **Jo Dorras**, writer, look after an ensemble of around 15 actors. They work bi-lingually in English and Bislam.

They went to work on two scripts, one about malaria (*Malaria Film*) and the other about dengue fever (*It Couldn't Happen Here*). These were to be filmed on video to be distributed around the region.

Both scripts revolved around human and mosquito characters, their function being to educate about the life cycle and breeding sites of mosquitoes and safe precautionary measures, such as the use of mosquito nets that are adequately tucked in when sleeping.

The human character consisted of a Vanuatu doll adapted with latex and appropriate rods. Seven mosquitoes, approximately 18 inches long, were required that were predominantly latex built over their metal flying mechanisms. Each one took about 3 days to make. Tea strainers made effective eyes. In presenting the life cycle of the mosquito: egg, larva, mosquito, tiny eggs on rods were also used. Six miniature mosquitoes were prepared for close ups before the camera, fly by's if you like.

There were five dolls adapted for use: *dirty doll*, *clean doll*, *blinking doll* and various human body parts, the human character being the heroine of the malaria play, doing all the right things: putting a net over the baby, blocking the holes, tucking the net in.

Changing scales is one element of the plays. From a view of the doll puppet with a tiny mosquito, follows a close up of a mosquito proboscis trying to penetrate the character's skin, treated with some humour as the mosquito bends his probis when the script self

reflexively recognises the doll is plastic and without the soft skin of a human.

Ken designed the puppets which they then both made. **Carmelina** worked with the actors as puppet director and coach. **Colleen Crapper** and **Richard Hart** helped make the prototypes with the appropriate mechanisms here in Melbourne. **Colleen** with latex and **Richard** with his expertise in mechanisms.

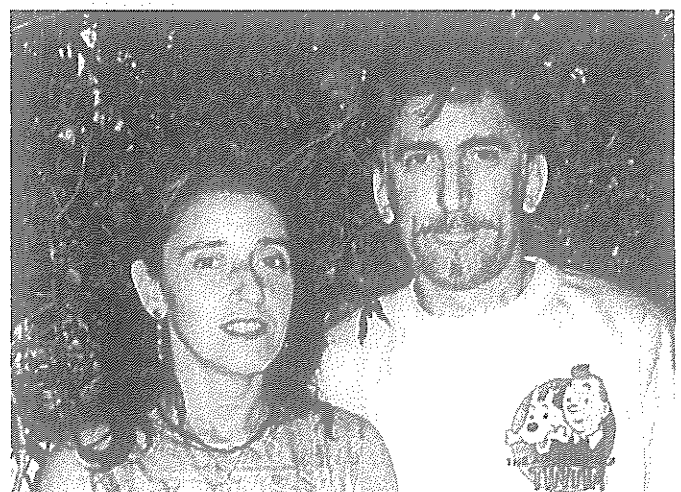
For the purposes of making video, a visit to the local TV Station's chroma-key studio was in order, with the arrival of the cameraman from Fiji. In the end **Wan Smolbag** built their own chroma key studio on their premises.

Ken and **Carmelina** were well prepared for this trip. They took four huge tubs with tools, moulds and mechanisms. Materials are very hard to come by there and nothing is wasted.

The work period was intensive. They started work at 8 am each day and worked through until 4 pm. It was hot and they slept less. On Saturdays, they worked at home, a small fibre-board flat some way out of town, that they shared with the odd ant, cockroach, mouse and spider. The video's are currently in production and are being filmed.

Ken and **Carmelina's** trip was cut several days short with the unexpected death of **Ken's** father. Our sympathy goes to him and his family. It was great to work with them again. **Wan Smolbag** were happy to have them back, and they are hoping for further developments in the future.

Jennie Pfeiffer
From an interview with
Carmelina Di Guglielmo



REVIEW



THE HOBBIT

Based on the book by J R R Tolkein

If you haven't seen this mega-production, take the next opportunity to do so. **Skylark** and **Christine Anketell** deserve much recognition for their achievements in getting this blockbuster to the stage, the biggest puppet extravaganza we've seen in this country for a couple of decades. Despite its flaws – and it has some! – it is quite unique.

It wasn't the elaborate staging or **Phil Lethlean's** pyrotechnical wizardry – both impressive enough – which stood out for me. It was the consistently high standard of performance from the team of puppeteers and the one brave actor, enhanced by excellent technical support from the crew. Great attention to manipulation and effective voicework created superbly believable characters. The provision of radio mikes freed the puppeteers from the restraints usually

imposed by the black hood and the duckwalk, enabling an exploration of character well beyond the usual.

Stand-out puppet performances included **David Collins'** Bilbo, immaculate as ever; **Rod Primrose's** Thorin, an utterly congruent performance; and **Peter Seaborn's** Gollum, a *tour de force*.

Mike Bishop was the actor with the unenviable task of matching stage presence with assorted hobbits, trolls, dwarves, elves and dragons, which he pulled off extremely well. The only drawback to his performance of Gandalf was a disappointing lack of magical entrances and exits, with his wizardly nature indicated only by some well-executed but stagy magic props.

Puppeteers were also given some acting roles, but sadly with less success. There was an oddly declamatory style of acting used throughout the production, which reminded me of the worst excesses of Restoration Theatre classes at Uni. With Mike's long experience as an actor he carried it off; the puppeteers weren't so fortunate.

Several breath-takingly effective moments remain in the memory. The dragon is perhaps the most obvious – a masterly blending of set and puppet to create a powerful and believable beast, aided by convincing movement and the electronic enhancement of **Matthew McCoy's** voice. The giant spider, too, drew gasps of awe and that *frisson* of delighted horror from the audience.

Unfortunately the staging of some of the action sections of the play was decidedly limp. Pity poor **Malcolm Martin**, as the noble warrior, rolling around on the floor wrestling with a floor rug masquerading as a ferocious wolf.

The sequence with the Goblin King was also laughable, with characters lined up across the stage like an amateur production lifted straight out of a French Acting Edition. Gandalf's beheading of the King came as no surprise to the audience, only to the King's guards – who conveniently went blind for the long seconds it took Gandalf to disentangle himself from the corner of the stage where he'd been stuck.

The design was also a mixed blessing. Although the set looked good, it was obvious that at times the puppeteers were battling against it instead of being supported by it. For instance, the round door of Bilbo's house became an obstacle course for the puppeteers, making each character's entrance into Bilbo's home an apologetic shuffle, with the puppet effectively masked.

The puppets themselves looked wonderful, and the designs carried off the difficult task of bringing to reality characters which have only existed on the page for several decades. But they were obviously heavy and awkward to manipulate – perhaps not in a way evident to the general public, but in a way which made me wonder what could have been achieved with more usable puppets? Those who know me won't be surprised to hear me plead yet again for ergonomically designed and built puppets, not just for the sake of the puppeteer, but for the sake of the production.

In fact, the most disappointing aspect of this show was a tendency for characters to stand in a line and speak for long periods, which I can only assume is due to technical limitations. Perhaps in a remount, some thought could be given to adjusting both set and puppets to allow for a more free-flowing, dynamic approach to what is, essentially, an adventure story.

... which brings me to the script. Adapting Tolkein's opus for the stage was never going to be easy. An oddly structured "boys' own" tale of quests and journeys and episodic adventures, it depends for much of its drama on a complex back-story, the bane of any script-writer. Gilly McInnes has wrestled this literary demon with mostly successful results, keeping the *cogniscenti* happy while delivering a story for the stage with only a few flat spots. However, my companion at the Alexander Theatre had never read the book, and reported some trouble keeping track of characters and their place in the society of the milieu.

I did enjoy the play overall, and congratulate those involved for their sterling work. This is why those awkward moments and the problems I've mentioned were so frustrating.

On a scale of a possible ten, this production is struggling at 8 when it should be an 11.

Give the play its head – set it free from the constraints of difficult set, old-fashioned blocking and stacy acting, and it can fly!

Janet Dalgliesh

Stage play: Gilly McInnes,
 Director Christine Anketell
 Puppetry Director Peter Wilson
 Set & Costume Design Mark Thompson
 Puppet Design Philip Millar
 Cast: David Collins, Mike Bishop, Catherine Mann,
 Malcolm Martin, Matthew McCoy, Brian Parker,
 Rod Primrose, Simon T Rann, John Rogers,
 Peter Seaborn.



Reviewer, JANET DALGLIESH, began as a performer with Marionette Theatre of Australia, Sydney; toured with Richard Bradshaw, Aesop's Fables; joined Spare Parts in Perth, W.A. Moved on to the U.K. for three years. Then Melbourne for five years freelancing as performer, schools, T.V. Worked with Polyglot, Skylark and with Babe. Now writing and directing, script editing, tutoring.



Mike Bishop as Gandalf in The Hobbit

WHAT'S NEW IN 1998?

Richard Bradshaw New South Wales.



I'm busy getting ready to go off to Brussels in the middle of next month (December 1997, Ed). It's a little theatre I played in two years ago.....my agent in France is having a birthday in January. In between, we've decided to spend a few days in Lisbon! Continuing to promote and tour the Shadow puppet Show in 1998.

Terrapin Puppet Theatre, Tasmania.

Terrapin will be touring *Little Red* to Sri Lanka and Malaysia. Terrapin's annual Puppet Picnic, 14th March in Hobart. In June, *The BFG* (The Big Friendly Giant, by Roald Dahl) Royal Theatre, Hobart. *Little Red* touring Victorian and Queensland schools. *Wannabe*, primary school show; *Filth*, secondary school show. Many school puppetry workshops, Tasmania, 1998.

Gardner Puppet Theatre, Victoria.

Term 1, *The Beach Under The Sea*, lower primary and kinder. Throughout the year, *The Rainbow Serpent*, for primary. *Is That A Dinosaur's Egg?*, primary and kinder. *Wombat's Birthday*, for 3yrs and slightly older. Ending 1998 with a *Christmas Fantasy* - a regular repeat on popular demand!



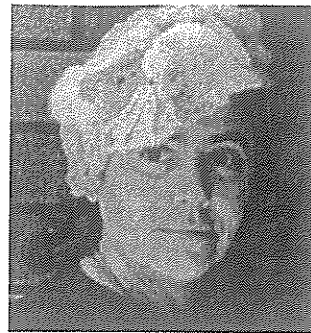
Murphy's Puppets. New South Wales.

1998 will be a year spent 'channeling' a '*Commedia dell' Arie*' troupe: the new, strictly adults only satire, *Harlequin and the Unbridled Market Forces*. Queensland, with *Harlequin and His Magic Lamp*. With the help of Sydney based Sicilian puppeteer, Giovanni Bronzino, *Harlequin Frog Prince* will be translated into Italian and polished by a Harlequin puppeteer in Italy.



Maeve Vella. Victoria.

Continuing exploration into Textile Art, works for display, wearables and glove puppets. Back to live in Victoria!



Kit Bergin, Western Australia.

In-Service for teachers: *Kit's Puppet Tricks*. Touring schools with Education shows: *Magic With The Voice* - about ventriloquism, *Watch Your Language* - how we learn to speak.

Ian Cuming, Victoria.

Promoting Crocodile Tears, Punch and Judy show, to pre-school and primary. Construction and manipulation workshops, primary, secondary. Home with baby daughter, Mayra.



Kirsty Grierson and Philip Mitchell, Tasmania.

Has formed a new performing partnership, EXTENDED PLAY. Two works performed at Taste of Tasmania Festival, 1997. March 1998, a community arts project, Tasmania Arts Council's 'Identity Distinct' programme, Hobart.

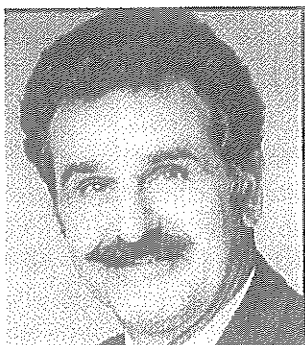


Polyglot, Victoria

From March 1998, touring new production, *Granny And The Sea Monster*. Workshops: February and March 1998, *Puppetry for The Camera*, Janet Dalglish. Jan, Feb, *Hands Up! Hands On!* '98, puppetry for beginners. Series six, '98, skills for experienced puppeteers. *Skills Bank*, voice, text, character, improvisation, etc. details later.

Bill Jackson, New South Wales.

Manufacturing a punk reindeer full body puppet for Evolve Puppet Company, Sydney. Touring Shopping Centres Throughout 1998 with *The Willy Wonk Fun Shop*, a hand puppet piece, and *The Punch and Judy Show*



Workhouse Theatre, Victoria.

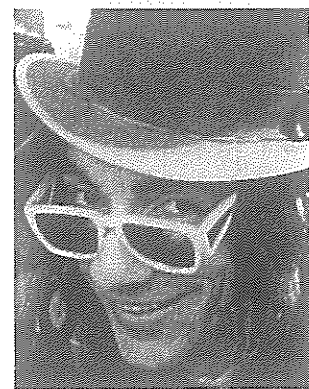
Accepts the generous offer of Dennis Murphy to perform at the Workhouse on 14th and 15th of March 1998, with all proceeds donated to the publishing costs of AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER magazine. Thanks Dennis!

Peter (Pan) Wilson, ACT.

Has just finished performing in *Love Suicides* in Melbourne. SKYLARK will be performing *The Hobbit* at the Sydney Opera House from January 1st, 1998. See reviews in this issue.

Ross Browning, New South Wales

Has been working on Little Shop Of Horrors during 1997. In 1998 will be in and around Sydney, working in television for Foxtel, a show called FUNHOUSE with a 'Letterbox' segment. Touring schools shows locally and in Perth, W.A.



PRODOS, Victoria

More articles and interviews for AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER! Exploring adventure, fantasy and mythology using puppetry, mask and original music. Researching the private enterprise side of working as an artist and how to not need Government funding ie. raising private funds.

WHAT'S NEW IN 1998?

STAMPING FRAME

A Work in Progress.....Sydney Puppet Theatre.

During October and November 1997 Sue Wallace and Steve Coupe from the Sydney Puppet Theatre and visual artist Tony Twigg have been investigating a collaboration between the Visual and Performing Arts. *STAMPING FRAME* is an exploration into a synthesis of live performance with sculpture, puppetry, video animation and high-tech music composition. The result they are working towards will be a non-text based theatre performance for adults.

Steve Coupe has devised an electronically jointed puppet whose movements randomly generate sound. He has designed software and wired the puppet so that it is linked, via MIDI, through a computer to a synthesiser. He has carefully selected sounds and manipulated the software so that the puppeteer can play the puppet like an instrument. The puppet can speak through sound. Each performance will be an improvisation within chosen parameters.

The Centre for Performance Studies has been very generous in providing studio space, loads of equipment and the wonderful human resource of Russell

Emerson. This has been extremely helpful because the work is being done without any funding.

They do not envisage being finished until January 1999.

Thank you for your contributions.

Other members who are prepared to mail or fax their plans for 1998, will see them published in the next magazine issue. Ed

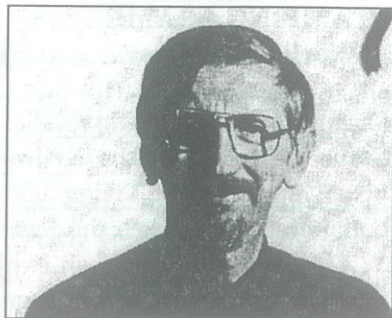
NEW MEMBERS

Christof!! (Chris Gregory), Victoria
Nick Barlow, Victoria
Zinovia Mitikakis, Victoria
Bill Molnar, Victoria
PRODOS, Victoria
Berne S A Fleming, Victoria

MORE OF THE D'ARCS

HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN PUPPETRY

By Richard Bradshaw



In the last issue I wrote about the first visit of D'Arc's Marionettes to Australia in 1892-3, which ended with the death of Lambert D'Arc on Thursday Island in June, 1893, at the age of 69.

The death certificate lists his six children, who were touring with him: George (27), Emily (26), Nellie (23), Willie (20), and Ethel (14). Nellie was actually named Petronella, after her paternal grandmother and Willie was, of course, William.

Before moving on to Thursday Island the D'Arcs had spent six months in Cooktown rebuilding their puppets and stage after a fire in the Town Hall which destroyed almost everything.

John Phillip's research indicates that after their father's death they went on to Java, the Straits Settlements, Hong Kong and in 1894 they were in Japan. By late 1895 "*Mons. Geo Lambert D'Arc's Grands Fantoche Francaise*" were back in Cardiff, then Dublin before George returned to the East in early 1896. He finally settled in China in 1900 with his wife and a daughter and his whole show was destroyed in the Boxer Rebellion. He built D'Arc's Grand Hotel in Tientsin and ran it until his death in 1924.

Meanwhile in early 1895, Nelly had married in Hong Kong and in 1896 her husband, Mr Clitheroe, was the manager of a D'Arc Marionette company which played in Calcutta and elsewhere. The sisters E.N. and M. D'Arc were listed as the sole proprietors.

D'Arc's Marionettes had a significant influence on Japanese puppet theatre and there are publications about them in Japanese.

Suekichi Matsune, who had acted as a manager for the D'Arcs, formed his own company of Western-style marionettes which was later revived by his grandson.

John Blundall has a print showing European-style trick marionettes performing in Japan, including dissecting skeletons and a stilt-walker. During 1900 - 1902, a troupe using the name D'Arc was performing in Japan, including at the **Kabuki-za** in Tokyo. Apparently there was also a *Kabuki* production with the actors dressed in imitation of these European puppets and a photo exists of a *Kabuki* actor dressed exactly as the stilt walker in the above-mentioned print.

All this raises an intriguing question. Did marionettes made in Cooktown, Australia in 1893 influence the course of Japanese puppetry? This now seems very likely !!!

I remember sitting in the audience for a performance of the Takeda Marionettes at the UNIMA Festival in Moscow in 1976. One of the puppeteers was Sennosuke Takeda, the present President of UNIMA-Japan. During a sequence of marionettes in traditional Japanese costume, an old woman suddenly cast off her dress to reveal a dissecting skeleton.

There was a gasp of disbelief from the Europeans when they recognised this traditional 'Western' figure, but almost certainly its introduction to Japanese puppetry dates back to D'Arc's visit.

In 1903 - 4 a troupe by the name of *D'Arc's Fantoche Francaise* toured in New Zealand: Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland. The Director was **Professor F. T. Barrass** who claimed to have been the right-hand man of Mons. **George Lambert**

**There was a gasp of disbelief
from the Europeans . . .**

D'Arc . . . before his death! It was claimed that the company came directly from London; it had been founded by the

late Mons. D'Arc in 1864 and Barrass had taken the troupe through India, China, Japan and the Straits Settlements and three times to South Africa; they had performed before King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra. Some of this information is true, but Barrass seems to have confused George with Lambert.

In Auckland it was claimed that the company had been six times around the world, making its last appearance in New Zealand at the **Theatre Royal, Auckland** in 1869 with Mons. D'Arc at its head. I have checked through the Auckland papers of the time and, not surprisingly, this does not seem to have been so!

Barrass's show certainly resembled D'Arc's. There were "*fantoccini*", including a drunken *Pierrot* on

stilts, a pole balancer, "magnetic" skeletons, and a "compound Turk". There were also *Court Minstrels*, and the pantomime of "*Bluebeard*" which ended with a *harlequinade* and a "grand transformation scene". From the newspaper reviews it seems that the show was quite good. The manager was a Mr J.C. Bryant, probably the ventriloquist **Charles Bryant** who later appeared on the program with the puppets.

In 1904 the marionettes (20 minutes only) and **Bryant's Entertainers** gave a few "combined" shows which began with "*bioscopic pictures*". (These shows have been of interest to cinema historians.) Who **Barrass** was, and where these puppets came from, remains a mystery. I have found no one by the name of **D'Arc** actually involved here.

In 1912 two of the **D'Arcs** revisited Australia, 20 years after their first tour. **Lambert's** youngest children, **William and Ethel**, arrived in Melbourne from London on 10 September and opened as one act in a variety programme four days later at **Rickard's Opera House**. (**Harry Rickards** himself had died in England the previous year while recruiting new acts for his Tivoli-circuit in Australia).

The Australian magician **Charles Waller** recalled their piece, which was "*Among the Spirits*". The marionettes were portrait puppets of prominent musical hall performers such as **Vesta Victoria** and **Harry Lauder**. One of these stars was the black singer, **Amba Austa**, who had recently visited Australia in person. Her specialty was a song "*Any Oysters, Any Clams?*" After she had finished it and left the stage a little bewhiskered black man carrying a bucket would cross the stage singing the chorus. **Waller** was intrigued to see his marionette counterpart doing the same.

It is perhaps in these days of tape-recorders to remind ourselves that **William and Ethel** did the voices themselves. According to **Waller** they were "excellent mimics as well as remarkably expert puppeteers".

William and Ethel had been doing a similar act since 1905, but as early as 1910 William had advertised for a replacement for **Ethel** who apparently didn't want to continue the tour. After the Australian tour he gave only occasional performances as "*D'Arc's Marvelletes*", the last known being in Stratford, London in 1938. He died in 1946.

Richard Bradshaw

(Once again I would like to acknowledge the help of **John Phillips** of London in providing information on the **D'Arcs**).

Ethel D'Arc with two marionettes from the Melbourne journal 'Table Talk' in 1912. Ethel had been only twelve or thirteen when she first came to Australia twenty years earlier. (Note the length of the strings.) From the Newspaper Collection, STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA:



**D'ARC'S MARIONETTES OPERA HOUSE
SATURDAY NEXT**

WORKSHOP SPREAD No 1

AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER, SUMMER 1997

BY
IAN CUMING
PURELY PUPPETRY

WORKSHOP SPREAD IS A NEW REGULAR FEATURE AIMED AT TEACHERS, GROUP LEADERS AND PERFORMANCE TROUPES WHO WISH TO RUN BUILDING AND MANIPULATION ACTIVITIES.

AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER has obtained the permission of Ian Cuming for you to photocopy these two pages for teaching purposes only.

This WORKSHOP SPREAD provides a rationale and a 'first thinking' for those at the very beginning of their work in puppetry. These are the things he asks teachers to prepare (physically) and to think about.

PREPARATION

Teachers are asked to supply all puppet making materials, tools and a clear working space.

It is important that the things are clean and ready to be used to make a puppet. In addition to recycled bits and pieces from home, it helps to have access to ordinary art room materials.

The tools required include **good scissors** for cutting **fabric** and **dull scissors** for **cardboard** and **plastic** as well as **pliers** for cutting **wire**. It is not necessary to have one pair of each of these per student, but it is preferable to have about one good kit for every of five or six children on the clear understanding that these tools are shared.

Newspaper and **masking tape**, **cardboard boxes** and **cartons large and small**, **odd pieces of string** and **fine wire**, **plastic bottles** and **containers** of all shapes and sizes are useful starters.

With these things alone it is possible to construct excellent images and get quick and satisfying results as well as gaining a grasp of some of the principles of puppetry. These items are strong, light weight and malleable shape makers. You may think of others that can be joined together, scrunched, cut and bent in all

sorts of ways that create the structure of the puppets. These frames may later be finished, dressed and decorated with **fabric, paper, glue and paint**.

It is up to the makers to design the puppet they will eventually operate. This includes deciding whether to move the puppet by **hand** or whether to use **sticks, strings** or other methods of manipulation. It is worth gathering sticks of any length and odd bits of plastic pipe for making **rod puppets**. Direct hand operation is the easiest and most reliable method for young beginners.

Fabric pieces and **sheet plastic** of any colour and dimension can also be useful in a variety of ways. **Plain calico** and **hessian** are handy to clad and join parts of the body of the puppet together. **Needle and thread** is also useful for construction of soft shapes with material. **Stockings and socks** stuffed with **paper** or **dacron** may also be useful.

Natural materials such as **twigs and leaves**, pieces of **bark** and **pine cones** may also be used in combination with some of the things mentioned above to create structures around which the final product is built.



Ian is a puppet designer and performer of many years experience, including extensive work in the Theatre Industry and Community Arts throughout Australia

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

The tangible outcome for each participant will be either a puppet framework they have made on their own or one they have contributed to making.

The experiential goal is to have each student participate not only in the making of the puppet structure but in the moving of it.

This means at least mobilising the rough shapes that suggest the head, body and eyes, etc., in a small group presentation that demonstrates what the puppet is and how it moves. The extension of this show- and- tell is naturally the development of story ideas for follow-through later.

DISCUSSION

Much of the joy comes in covering the bare shapes with paper mache and painting details, eyes and fine decorations. This can add strength as well as personality to the finished product. We will not however be gluing or painting puppets within the workshop because the puppets must be ready for immediate use. This is not to say that the structures or frameworks created in the session may not be worked on further in future working sessions. Ways of finishing may be discussed with individuals and students may learn from each other. Sharing ideas is thoroughly encouraged.

You may have a definite plan to follow through into a full puppet production with scripted stories and set action. You may have a festival parade coming up where you want to feature the puppets. You may be making a puppet video. Whatever your longer term intention, the emphasis in the workshop will be on exploring the possibilities for movement of each puppet and improvising action. This can extend into some guided play where the puppets interact with each other and with their audience in a strictly informal way. This approach ensures you have the building blocks to develop in any direction. The focus will be on finding life in the puppet.

OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

Puppetry is a unique craft in that it links so many art forms. From the writing and drawing of ideas to the sculpting and performing with the puppets themselves, there are many ways to be involved. Music always goes well with puppets. Making and playing with puppets provides an opportunity for people to express

themselves. This alone contributes to a warming of our lives whether it be in quiet and reflective play or in formal settings with a bit of pomp and ceremony. It is an enlivening activity.

Humour is often the result, however the puppet can also reveal greater depths of feeling. Surprising things happen in playing with puppets. A piece of old cardboard that seemed to be useless may transform into a whacky clown, a beautiful dancer or a mythical creature. It is this changing of one thing into another that makes it so special. We benefit from being able to do this in our lives. Puppetry is one very good way to practise optimism.

Self-esteem can improve directly as we discover a crazy new character that makes someone else laugh. Quiet people can excel at puppetry given the right atmosphere. Truly spectacular and unexpected results may come with just a little labour. Many of the world's messages discourage us from being 'slapdash' and taking a 'near enough is good enough' approach. Puppetry enables us to take this risk and that of being original and responsible for the result.

Making things out of 'next-to-nothing' at virtually no cost means we should always be able to produce a

Puppetry is one very good way to practise optimism.

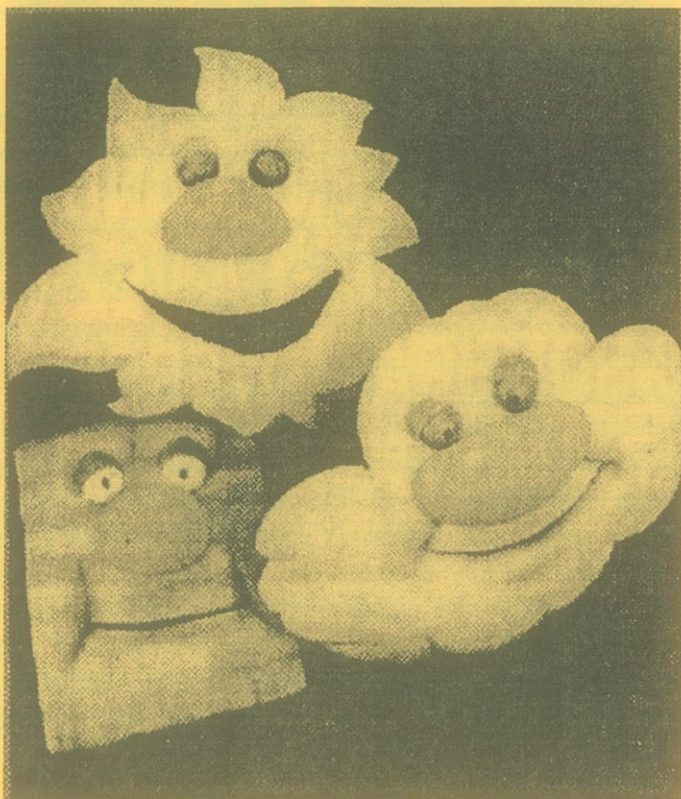
puppet out of whatever is available. The primary tools necessary are an open mind in combination with willing hands and keen eyes. Success

in puppet making can lead to greater enjoyment of other activities in life. Studying the movement of a bird can take you outside to see flight first hand. It can also take you to the library to read and look for pictures. It may take you to the museum to study the bones and the history. Some people may begin alone and link with a group project. Others may begin with a group and end up on a solo creation. The important thing is that everyone gets a go at it.

Good luck with your preparations!
Ian Cuming

Subsequent WORKSHOP SPREADS will contain specific construction and handling suggestions for activity leaders.

PORTEÑO PUPPETRY



By David Williams

Earlier this year I was backpacking around Chile and Argentina without a single thought of puppetry in my head.

Then, in the psychotic, glamorous capital of Argentina, Buenos Aires, I came upon a children's puppet show, *The Grand Circus*. The show was spectacular, with thirty puppet characters of all sizes and styles; skillful puppetry on a grand scale! I laughed, I cried. I decided to look for some more of the same. After snooping around the city's puppetry scene, I can report on the following fantastic performances:

At the **Teatro General de San Martín**, *The Grand Circus* is performed every weekend. It is the Municipality of Buenos Aires' cultural centre and theatre. It supports a troupe of around twenty puppeteers and a puppetry school, which offers a three-year full-time course in puppetry. I wheedled my way into a few classes, employing sign language and bad Spanish. The students study Tai-chi, music, drama, mime, writing, manipulation and puppet-building, many different styles of puppetry, glove, bunraku, marionette and shadow.

The students were very disciplined and had incredible control over their movements. I saw my first bunraku

style manipulation and was amazed by the unspoken communication passing between the three manipulators as they brought their puppet to life.

The *Grand Circus* is a show originally designed by the late **Ariel Bufani**, the patriarch of Argentinian puppetry. It was his vision that created the puppet troupe and school at Teatro San Martín. Many of the puppeteers and groups I met had trained with him, and I was told that he was an extraordinary man: kind, dedicated, visionary, and highly-skilled.

One of the groups that trained under **Bufani** is **El Periférico de Objetos** (The Periphery of Objects??). I saw a very powerful show of theirs, *Máquina Hamlet*. It was the grungiest puppets-for-adults thing I'd seen since *Snuffpuppets*, and much more serious. Loosely based on Hamlet, the action involved an interplay of life-sized puppets with masked and unmasked actors.

Themes of fascism, dictatorship and corruption made up a thinly-veiled protest against the current 'democratic' regime. Afterwards, a friend pointed out to me that a puppet can often say things that would have any other actor shot or tortured, referring to Argentina's fairly recent history of political repression.

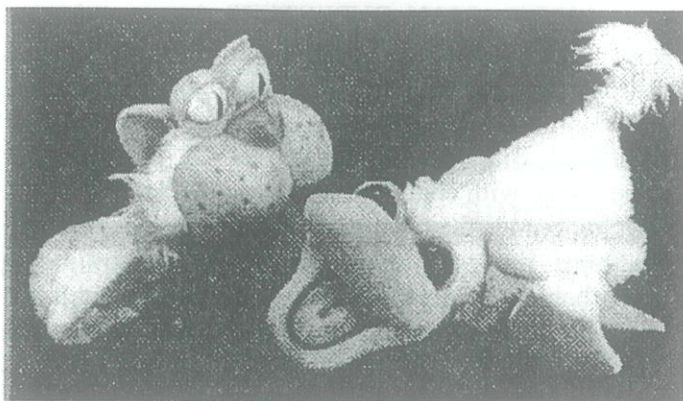
On a lighter note, I was lucky to be in a picturesque inner-city plaza on a balmy Sunday afternoon when a whole flock of puppeteers descended on the playground to busk. After each show, the performers passed around a hat, and were surprisingly well-rewarded for their efforts.

Another terrific show I caught was *Cuentos sin Cuento* (Stories Without Reason??), by the group **Arte Fusión**, which was a collection of fables for children using an impressive cast of very expressive snipped foam 'muppets' by **Marcelo Fernandez**.

This was my first experience of puppetry overseas, and it was so exciting to be surrounded by people who were able to be completely absorbed in their art.

I think a number of factors operate in favour of puppetry over there. One is the sheer size and density of their urban populations; Greater Buenos Aires alone is home to 22 million people.

I think another factor is their great enthusiasm for live entertainment for children. I also suspect that the thirst for Spanish language entertainment strengthens local performing arts in the face of the often resented onslaught of U.S. English language culture.



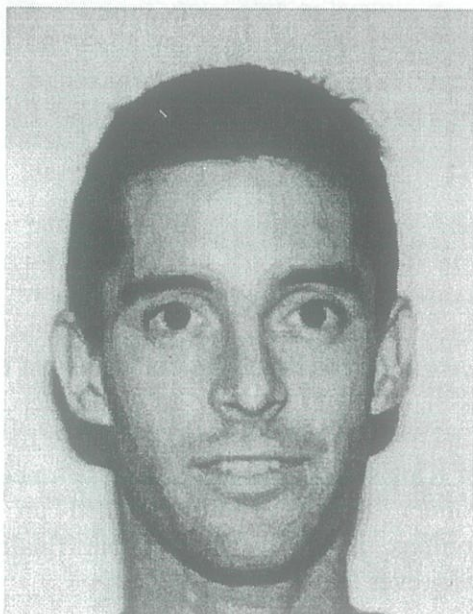
All three photographs are from the show "Cuentos sin Cuento" written and performed by Arte Fusion



So there you go. Any puppeteers traveling to South America should think about a stopover in Buenos Aires. Aside from the puppetry, it's a relatively safe and organised city in which to experience Latin culture shock. I have some addresses which might be useful there and in other South American countries. You can contact me through the editor.

David Williams

PS. Porteño = resident of Buenos Aires



AN UNEDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

About 18 months ago the NSW Education Department Performing Arts Unit hinted that they might try to solve some of their financial problems by getting school performers to pay the salaries of their (*the Performing Arts Unit's*) staff.

In 1997 the hint became a threat: Pay up or we'll blacklist you.

I was told School Performance Tours and Young Australia Workshop, with Actor's Equity (MEAA), arranged a meeting to register their protest, but caved in to the threats and told their performers to pay.

Well, it's not over. Many didn't pay and Actors Equity is still trying to get a more just result at my request. Mr Phil Daniels in the Ministry of Education has connections with the Director General. If he received more complaints, it might add weight to his stand. In the hope that some of you will register your protest, the following is a summary of my objections to the concept:

We are contractors – no other contractors pay school / Department expenses!

The approval system exists for the **benefit of the schools**, not for the performers.

We do not need the PFS articles to advertise our shows. It takes good brochures and hours on the phone to gain bookings.

PFS Program does **not** organise our performance venues

PFS claims to have people available for advice on production etc. **Do we have to pay every organisation that decides to set up a service for 'our benefit'?**

"Is that the plumber? I've decided to tell 10 people how good you are. You owe me \$85."

If you perform in schools, I hope you will seriously consider supporting the stand for a fair go. Perhaps you can join Actors' Equity and have the support of people who have the time and experience we lack for standing up to situations such as this.

Lynda Buxton
Shadowy Tales Theatre
PO Box 1385, Strawberry Hills 2012, NSW

REVIEW



LOVE SUICIDES

A Playbox and Company Skylark Co-production

Reviewer: Jennie Pfeiffer

As many of you will know, from your association with me as UNIMA Asia-Pacific representative, I have a special interest in Asian performance.

LOVE SUICIDES IS INTERESTING AS A CROSS-CULTURAL & INTERDISCIPLINARY EXPERIMENT.

There is a problem in discussing the work as to how to contextualise it, since it attempts to bridge many divides. I feel the necessity to point out just how many divides there are.

John Romeril adapted *Love Suicides* from a work of the 18th century Japanese playwright **Chikamatsu Monzaemon**. It is specifically the 1703 work, *Sonezaki Shinju*. This Japanese Shakespeare invented the double suicide play. **Chikamatsu**, wrote for *kabuki* and puppet theatre.

Romeril set the play in modern day Perth, with a high powered but fallen Australian businessman as the focus of attention for a young Japanese girl, who is visiting the city with her parents before dutifully committing to an arranged marriage.

Since **AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER** is a publication for people interested specifically in puppetry, it might be appropriate to discuss puppetry as the first order.

Traditional **Bunraku**, or *yoruri*, has a playboard or puppet-stage with chanters and musicians located to the side. Sometimes the chanters and musicians are visible; sometimes they are removed from sight by being placed behind bamboo screens. The chanters tell the story while the puppets work together with appropriate actions.

This mode or form was mirrored in the production of *Love Suicides*. Musicians were visible, located to both sides of the playing area. Actors and puppets exchanged focus as the actors set up a scene, then removed themselves to the side to continue the dialogue, performing the role of chanters, while the puppets acted. There were times when the work of the chanters did detract from the puppet manipulation. The actors weren't as neutral as *yoruri* chanters. (Members of the cast told me that this dynamic changed from performance to performance, as energy levels and the responsiveness of the audience fluctuated).

Puppets were identifiable as the characters by the emblematic use of items of clothing such as a raincoat or the colour of a skirt and blouse.

The puppets were very simply frames or shells of a Bunraku style puppet, consisting of just hands, heads, arms and a very minimal upper torso. They were possibly larger in scale than most **Bunraku** puppets and were manipulated in a variety of ways. Several different types of puppet were used at various times. The puppeteers were visible and occasionally took on character roles themselves.

I am always in awe every time I watch **Peter Wilson's** skill as a puppet manipulator. The style that I have come to associate particularly with him, is that of the puppet's head being manipulated by the puppeteers' mouth.

The set installation was a modular construction that was multi-functional and used in many diverse ways, including rotating it 180° to use the reverse side. Action took place on different levels, including a setting that gave the illusion of the bottom of an empty swimming pool. A giant lace kimono was lowered that was multi-functional, suggesting at one time the tree roof bower of King's Park. The *piece de resistance* was a car set on rollers, that eventually opened up like a fold-out toolbox in which the couple finally consummated whatever IT was... Love/Death.

It was a treat to see Satsuki Odamura play the koto and other traditional Japanese instruments. Yumi Umiumare, playing Keika the Ghost character, has a very strong stage presence that is mesmerising.

The premise of the narrative was very complex and took a long time for the exposition. The play came in at two and a half hours.

I might just say here that *yoruri* (traditional Japanese puppet) performances were often planned as day long events and entailed five primary plot patterns along with a horizontal and vertical plot-line. This included elements pertaining to house-strife (usually concerning problems of inheritance or family hierarchy), revenge, *onryo* (ghosts, mostly of persons who died a violent or passionate death), *keisei* (courtesans and prostitutes), *hito-kami* (god-man).

Aspects of these elements were apparent in *Love Suicides*, which perhaps created the necessity for such a long exposition. The second half seemed particularly long and wordy, having more emphasis on dialogue with less puppetry and stage action.

BRIDGING DIVIDES

In adapting a classical *yoruri* play written for Tokugawa period audiences in Japan to a contemporary Western Australian setting, many divides become apparent. Not only is there a cultural divide, the divide between eastern dramatic forms and western, but the very critical historical divide.

The problem arises. How do you adapt a text written nearly three hundred years ago in a period of decline, where the essential values of the society at the source of the text are changing from one of honour and pride to that of unquestioning loyalty and obedience, to a society whose primary drive is economics and spectacle?

In a world of high-power economics, certain qualities are deemed useful, advantageous and desirable. We in Australia in 1997 have a totally different set of values from those depicted in the original play. It may be that there is always going to be something odd, something incommensurable, in the translation of the material, because there are no equivalencies.

What to do?

I am always in awe every time I watch Peter Wilson's skill as a puppet manipulator

Find the essence? Look for universal truths?

I know many who would consider the very idea and possibility contentious, even impossible.

I don't know how faithfully John Romeril adhered to the narrative line of *Sonezaki Shinju*, but aspects of the narrative seemed decidedly

odd.

While I find the work profoundly interesting, and it did make me ponder long and hard about *why* it seemed so odd (in my opinion a mark of success in itself), I think it was flawed at a very fundamental point. I'm not sure the choice of the male protagonist's character was the best one. Because there is no equivalence in the cultural and historical divides, there is bound to be a certain amount of leeway in making such choices.

I might have found the narrative more believable if, for example, the protagonist was an internationally famous television star or a rock star.

In that case, he would be somebody who has made a conquest of the masses, and lives in the glaring light of the power of the media. It could be argued that the character of *Paris*, bankrupt money power broker, is just such a figure, but it doesn't totally explain to me why a young Japanese girl, *Ohatsu*, who has spent several years in New York, would make the bankrupt, estranged *Paris* an obsessive love object.

Of course *Ohatsu's* own troubled soul and situation add to the complexity of the *mis en scene* and exposition. But the fact of *Paris's* continued ambivalence towards her, her continued persistence in what amounts to almost stalking him, his continued cruelty as he pretends to abandon her very close to the end of the play, bound and gagged in King's Park, pushed the limits, for me, of credibility. (I had to seriously ask myself if perhaps there were any issues of

male fantasy at work here) Character, the writer having made a commitment to it, is very difficult to go back and change.

At times the natural realism employed by the actors undercuts the stylised nature of many sequences of the production, and perhaps contributed to the sense of oddity, although that was broken from time to time.

How do you adapt a text written nearly three hundred years ago . . . ?

As in opera, the characters would break into song (incongruously) at a moment of high drama.

There were some fabulous moments.

I found it a brave and laudable attempt at a task of some enormity. I recommend seeing this work if at some stage a production comes your way. Although it cannot be described as puppet theatre, it is ensemble work in the truest sense; the whole is reliant on all of its parts. However, the puppetry is very competent, and how the puppetry is incorporated into the production would be of interest to most puppet enthusiasts and practitioners.

Jennie Pfeiffer

Writer - **John Romeril**
Cast: **Simon Wilton,**
Asako Izawa, Miki
Oikawa
Puppetry Director -
Peter J Wilson
Puppeteers: **Peter**
Wilson, John Hunt
Designer - **Richard**
Jeziorny



Line drawing on page 18 by Anita Sinclair based on photograph provided by Skylark: Satsuki Odamura, musician.



*Cartoon by Anita Sinclair
Inspired by anecdote in British UNIMA Magazine*

UNIMA SITES ON THE NET

by **Lucinda Watson**

BRAZIL

<http://www.geocities.com/BROADWAY/6402>

DENMARK

<http://zitech.dk/userwebs/unima/unima.htm>

NEW ZEALAND

email only: sr&@pinz.org.nz

QUEBEC

www.aei.ca/~AQM/

USA: www-Ieland.stanford.edu/~rosesage/puppetry/UNIMA/unima.html

And don't forget **The Puppetry Homepage** - an excellent resource at
<http://www.sagecraft.com/puppry/>

OVERSEAS CONTACTS

The Puppet Centre & Animations Magazine
BAC
Lavender Hill
London SW11 5TN
UK
Phone: 0171 228 5335

PUPPETEERS OF AMERICA
With Audio Visual Library
Gayle Schluter
Membership Officer
5 Cricklewood Path
Pasadena CA 91107
USA

UNIMA USA, Centre for Puppetry Arts
Vincent Anthony, Secretary
1404 Spring Street NW
Atlanta GA 30309-2820
Phone: 404 8733089

Ray Da Sylva: BRITISH UNIMA & Ray Da Sylva Puppet Books
63 Kennedy Road
Bicester
Oxfordshire OX6 8BE
UK
Phone: 01869 245793

By **Dennis Murphy**, who has many more contacts!

TRAINING INFORMATION

FEEDBACK FROM TWO WORKSHOPS

In July and August, 1997, Polyglot Puppet Theatre held a series of workshops for puppeteers:

SERIES 6 WORKSHOPS

with Heather Monk.

Making and learning to manipulate some simple rod puppets derived from those used by Eric Bass. Other puppets concentrated on were cardboard puppets, based on the work of Noriko Nishimoto.

Nick Barlow: *I really enjoyed it. It was especially good that we had time to go over fine details. The Eric Bass puppets were beautiful to work with.*

Emma Pryce: *I really enjoyed making contact with other puppeteers.*

Kym Tonkin: *Well run, set at a good pace that gave time to explore. Eric Bass puppets were a highlight.*



David Williams: *I learnt a lot about the communication of ideas through actions . . . had a strong influence on my animations puppet designs....insights into group dynamics . . . focus, body strength and body flexibility.*

HANDS UP! HANDS ON!

Workshop for new puppeteers with Paul Doogood

Fiona Mcleod: *For me, this was an appropriate introduction to puppetry, as I had no experience at the time. Paul is an experienced puppeteer who.... helped me understand that every puppet is different. It has to be lovingly explored, watched, felt, and through this process a character evolves.*

David Williams: *It was good to work with sturdy, well-designed puppets. Our first improvisation exercise was geared a little high for beginners....Perhaps beginning at the very beginning would have been more helpful*

Fiona Mcleod: *We were able to work on a play-board and in a black puppetry set with a corridor of light. Paul stressed the importance of a thorough warm-up*

Compiled by Jennie Pfeiffer

KENNETH MYER MEDALLION FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

Polyglot



PRESENTED TO NAOMI TIPPET

Congratulations Naomi! On Tuesday 14th October 1997 Naomi Tippet received the prestigious **Kenneth Myer Award** in recognition of her long and devoted service to **Polyglot Puppet Theatre**. The presentation, with some pomp and ceremony, was a gracious affair held in the Ancor Lounge of the Victorian Arts Centre.

Naomi Tippet's acceptance speech was equally gracious, reminding us of her long and consistent work, with her colleagues, to develop **Polyglot Puppet Theatre** from a small outfit with a single project Seeding Grant, through a change of premises and on to the reputable company **Polyglot** has become.

Naomi reminded us of her commitment to theatre for children and young people, aiming to stimulate interest, while neither patronising nor prescribing, but striving to instill philosophical, intellectual, and social regard in her young audiences.

Jennie Pfeiffer.

EXTRACT FROM VICTORIAN ARTS CENTRE MEDIA RELEASE, SEPTEMBER 1997:

Naomi Tippet spent almost two decades at the helm of Polyglot Puppet Theatre . . . Its record now stands at twenty-four different works, many of which have toured around Victoria and interstate, plus....workshops in writing, performing and puppet making . . . Although Ms Tippet retired as General Manager last year, she continues her involvement as a Board member of the company which she helped found.

The **Kenneth Myer Medallion** is presented each year for outstanding and distinguished services to the performing arts.

PUPPETRY RELATED ARTS

CLOWNING AND PERFORMING TO CHILDREN



PRODOS TALKS TO CHRISTOF!! ON MELBOURNE RADIO 97.4 FM BLUFF AND 20 YEARS OF 'STUFF'

PRODOS: *Christof!! you've been going around handing out these T-shirts; there's a list of some of the different 'stuff' you've done over the years. Everything from Here's Humphrey to Mission Impossible, A Country Practice, Blue Heelers, Barnum The Musical, ah! and Suitcase Theatre.*

CHRISTOF!!: Suitcase Theatre was a very small group, six people, all of whom were multi-skilled. I had one day walked into the office of a company called FEIP, "Free Entertainment In The Parks", and said: 'I have a theatre company, we're all improvisers and we can provide you with a different show every week'. A gentleman called Bob King Crawford said 'We'll book you!' So I THEN called my friends and said, 'Listen, I've just told this bloke we've got a theatre company so we've got to put one together'. A bit of bluff goes a long way. I was a bit surprised that I did it!

P: *We're you a bit surprised you got away with it?*

C!! Extremely surprised. However, the fact was we WERE improvisers. So we started to ask ourselves what can we do that will create theatre that is portable? The whole idea was to create theatre outdoors and it was that which then got me interested in the theatricality of clowning

CLOWN COMMUNICATION

C!!: In those days I did the big boots and wig and fright make-up and those sorts of things.

P: *'Fright'? Is that the word you used?*

C!!: It comes from 'fright wigs'. A fright wig is a wig that flaps up when you pull the strings, as in, 'when you get a fright your hair stands on end'.

This type of 'clown look' arose late last century. It came about because of the relationship the clown had with the audience in a circus; where he might be a couple of hundred metres away from the audience, so he needed to exaggerate his appearance. My point is, that if you're working close up with an audience why on earth would you wear all that frightFUL make-up! So I don't.

P: *This is an interesting point, because as a performer, one of the most important considerations is to work with the actual audience you have in the actual space you have.*

C!! Well, it's communication!

EPIC PUPPETRY

I asked Christof!! to comment on his involvement in the 1977 puppetry production of Gilgamesh at The Open Stage Theatre in Melbourne.

C!!: Around that time the theatre world was very dynamic. People were taking massive risks.

With *Gilgamesh* . . . the idea was to create a piece of epic puppet theatre and to do what puppetry can do. Human beings are very good at being human beings. They're very good at dance, they're very good at song, but if you want to create a Forest Giant or a half-man-half-scorpion, the sorts of things that are in the story of *Gilgamesh*, you will need something more than human.

This brings me to a very important part of MY work. People ask 'How do you be creative?' I believe you can't just walk into a vacuum and be creative. In order to be creative you need to set yourself a problem, and the more insoluble the problem, the more exciting the creative process will be. So, you want to create a half-man-half-scorpion? there's your problem!

Saying "I just want to make a fantastic puppet " is too vague.

P: *So before you actually became a clown, a physical comedian, you were exploring the limits of puppetry?*

C!!: Yes!

CHILD AUDIENCES

P: *WHEN is a child?*

C!!: A child is when you are open. A child is when you are vulnerable. A child is when you don't put limits on your understanding. A child is when you play. A child is when to a certain extent your intellect doesn't quite so much interfere with your emotions. We all have a part of us that is a child.

P: *And is that the part you aim for as a performer Christof!!?*

C!!: I do a lot of work, not only for children, but for adults. I work in the corporate field, and I do specific work for kids. The thinking behind my work is twofold: to encourage people to play, and to bring out the hero in people. Almost everything I do is audience participatory.

P: *This idea of bringing out the hero. Do you think that is a special requirement of performing with children or with the child in a person?*

C!!: I think the heroic, to discover the hero, is to discover the POTENTIAL of the person. If I invite you and your 5-year-old up onto stage to play and you have a shocking experience, I humiliate you, I'm mean to you. It's all right to be mean to people - but in a piece of theatre you have to bring things full circle, you have to finish what you started. When the person who comes up on stage feels humiliated, it can be very funny for the audience, but that person has not discovered their hero. They've discovered a vulnerable part of themselves that's been opened up and displayed to the audience.

P: *But that's not what you do.*

C!!: No, not what I aim to do. If a person has a very positive experience on stage THEY then become the hero of the piece.

P: *This is the "Christof!! Principle" of course.*

C!!: (laughs) Hopefully, you treat the audience member with respect and affection and you guide them through a framework. If they get creative, that's fine.

P: *That suggests to me, Christof!!, that after 20 years of performing you can see what's coming next. I wonder if it's possible to be a successful performer if you don't introspect quite intensely and often.*

C!!: It's important not to get involved in your own ego too much. In order to learn you have to look at what

you did, the way you felt about it and the actual mechanics of what you did, and be able to say things like "that didn't work so well". You have to certainly know when an audience is difficult, that's fine. But your job is to entertain the audience. So if you've got a difficult audience, it's like being a plumber. You don't come along and say, 'Er, that's too hard. I can't fix that sink', you say, 'This is a difficult sink to fix. This is my skill area and I have an idea how to go about it'.

P: *Right. And that's part of 'service'.*

C!!: It's part of service, absolutely.

P: *What about little boys versus little girls? Do they behave differently? Do they react differently to your performing?*

C!!: OK let's divide them that way. Little boys - little girls. Sure. Then let's divide them another way. Children who've been to school - children who haven't been to school. OK, they react differently. Children

with wealthy parents - children with parents who are living hand-to-mouth, react differently. Children who eat sugar - children who don't eat sugar, they react

differently. Children with what we would normally call a disability or a challenge, and children who don't - they react differently. So you divide in all sorts of ways

P: *Until you've finally got individuals, is that what you're telling me?*

C!!: Funny that! You see the audience as a group of individuals; that's the key. You've got to know who you're talking to. And if we're going to talk about the one important thing in a piece of children's theatre is: **know who you are talking to!**

In a piece of theatre you have to bring things full circle, you have to finish what you started.

PRODOS



GET THE HINT



Kit Bergin, ventriloquist, Western Australia

Tricks of the trade: **Ventriloquism!** After a bout of vocal gymnastics using a variety of voices from low gruff to soft high pitch during my ventriloquist act, I have found that by using my thumb and index finger to gently massage in a circular motion either side of my larynx (voice box) for a few minutes, I can relieve and restore my strained vocal cords quite rapidly.

Helen Crawford, Terrapin Puppets, Tasmania:

It can be difficult to find **black theatre gloves** that grip and fit well, yet still breathe and have the flexibility to allow fine movement. We have found that black leather gloves turned inside-out are excellent. The inner suede is non-reflective and the gloves can be bought to fit the performer. They are a bit expensive but have a good life span to counter this problem.

Maeve Vella, co-author (with Helen Rickards), Theatre of the Impossible, NSW

If you're working with fabric, a cheap source of fabric paint is the **T-SHIRT PAINTING** kit put out by DERIVAN and sold in the toy section at K-mart. For about \$8.00, you get eight little pots of colour, which go a long way when diluted. Dampening the fabric first will give lovely mottling/bleeding effects. These paints don't have an objectionable smell or the scratchy texture that occurs with some products.

Mary Sutherland, Designer & Performer, Victoria

To make a good Shadow Puppet there are a number of things that are important to remember...the shape must be interesting; the figure needs to be flat. Like an Egyptian painting, with the profile or side view of the face, front view of the body and the feet turned sideways; extra card at the joints to overlap, so fasteners can go through as hinges; any details or decorations have to be made by cutting out sections; the joints must move freely.

MOUTH MECHANISM FOR THE HOBBIT, SKYLARK

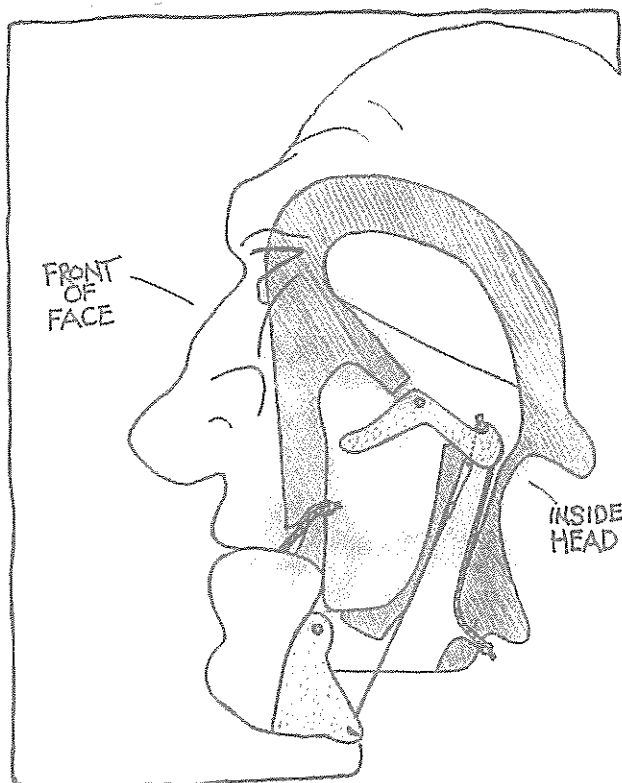
The size and shape of the heads favoured a trigger-style mechanism, rather than a simple glove puppet style (direct hand-in-mouth action). We attempted to keep all moving parts enclosed within the handle, to eliminate extraneous fiddly bits, where fingers can get caught.

The triggers and mouth pieces were cut from 6mm polyethylene chopping boards, a strong, slippery, cheap plastic. The body of the control is 6mm plywood with balsa-wood blocks to shape the handle. 5mm elastic card provides spring return. All bearings are short lengths of brass tubing. Hobby-shop bits provide the linkages: **Kwick Links** joined with threaded rod and split pins.

The template for the mechanism is taken directly from the latex/foam head. The lower lip (and chin) is cast in **Friendly Plastic**, a thermo-plastic modelling material. The finished Mechanisms are held together by a few screws, so that they can be fairly easily disassembled for maintenance or, Heaven forbid, major repairs.

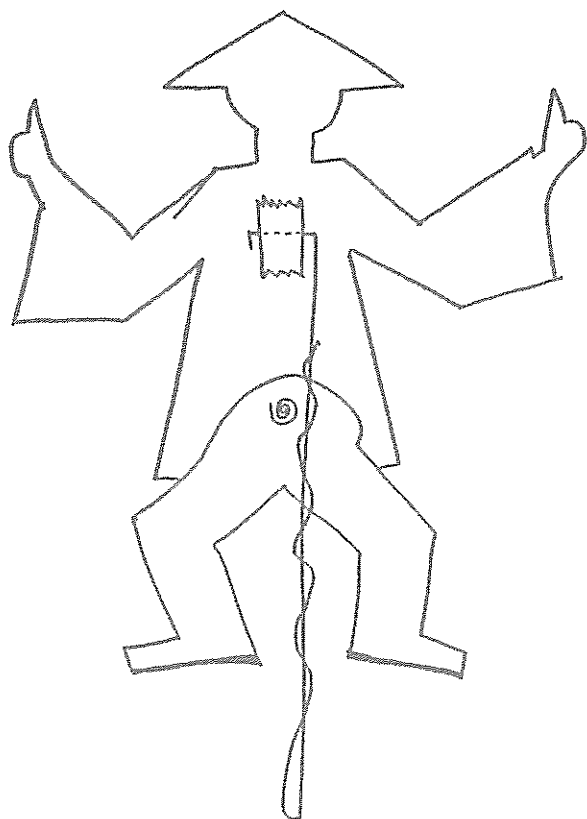
Philip Millar, Designer
Queensland

Many thanks to our 'HINTS' contributors for their generosity in sharing their professional secrets, Ed.



GET THE HINT

RICHARD BRADSHAW'S SHADOW PUPPET ROD



Cut a length of wire about 60 to 75 cms long. With a pair of pliers, bend one end into a square hook. Then bend over the other end, winding it around to make a stronger rod and a better handle.

Alternatively, use a shorter piece of wire, bending one end into a square hook, and gluing the other end into a bamboo or dowel handle.

You can use either one rod per puppet, placed fairly high on the figure so that it hangs easily, or two rods, one in each hand. In the case of the horse (or four legged animal) if you are using one rod, it should be fixed to the body with the legs hanging freely. If two rods are to be used (for the human figure), they should be put on the legs near the joints. Try to avoid attaching them in such a way that the puppet is top heavy.

When you have decided the best position attach with a strip of cardboard and strong glue. The rod lies flat across the puppet when you are storing it, but to work the puppet the rod should be held out at right angles to the plane of the puppet.

Extract from Christie's Beach High School Introduction To Puppetry, 1975, compiled by Greg Temple. Above drawing by Richard Bradshaw.

HOCUS POCUS PUPPETS

Recently discovered by your eagle-eyed Editor – pointed out by someone else – a puppet shop in Camberwell, run by a lively gentleman by the name of **Bill Molnar**. He describes his business thus:

***HOCUS POCUS PUPPETS** is a unique place stocking over five hundred different puppets from Australia and around the world. An added feature is our in-house Puppet Theatre where birthday parties are held...a special range of 'state of the art' finger, hand, glove, plush and performance puppets....crafted by leading puppet makers.*

The quality of the local and imported goods in Bill's shop is truly impressive. Teachers and therapists can purchase immediately usable puppets, the design of which would be hard to improve upon.

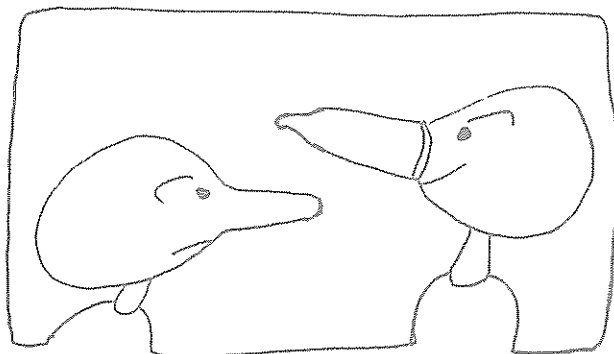
The shop has its share of the bright, zany, quick-hit puppets that are less useful for the professional performer, but do not be deceived, there are puppets ready-made for immediate use that are fully professional, stunning. The shop has a terrific energy about it, obviously generated by Bill's enthusiasm and also provides a Mail Order Service.

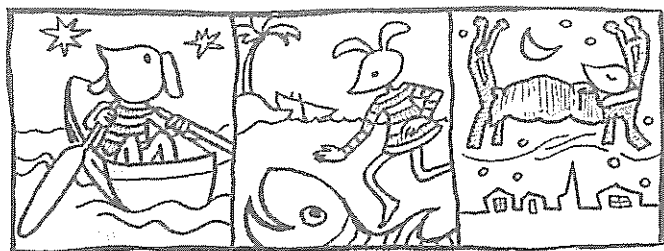
Hocus Pocus Puppets is at **788 Burke Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124.** Phone: 03 9882 9911

ODD SPOT

There's a new educational video out called *Johnny Condom*. Johnny is a singing puppet with a safer-sex line: "my friend is *Wicked Willy* – together we're a team . . ." The film has received an impressive array of commendations, including from the World Health Organization.

(Source: British UNIMA Magazine, November 1997)





AWARD

The Melbourne Times newspaper selected from among the performances in **The Melbourne Fringe Festival, 1997**, Richard Hart's Black Light Puppet show, *Dreamer*, as 'the Best Children's Show of the festival', and, as the 'Best Pre-Show Entertainment', PRODOS of The Workhouse Theatre.

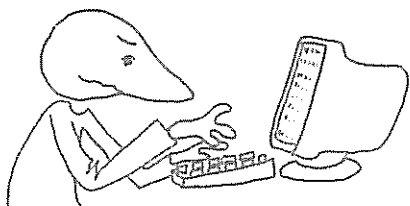
DEADLINES

AUTUMN issue deadline: **February 24th 1998**

WINTER issue deadline: **May 24th 1998**

Thank you to those able to send copy on disk, but, if you can't, send it any way you can! More photographs please, plus a brief resume; let us know about you. Sketches and (puppetry) cartoons are very welcome.

Note: The postal service tends not to be too destructive, but you increase my chances of returning photographs to you in good order if you slip cardboard in with the mailing. Label the front 'Do Not Bend' - I've just about got them trained at the post box. *Ed.*



REVIEWS INVITED

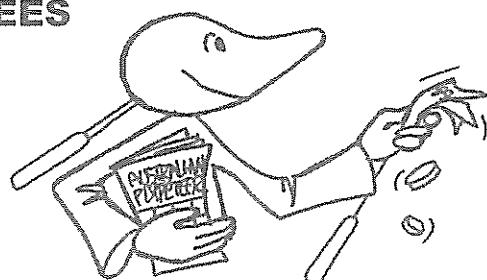
This issue of AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER features reviews of performances, both Skylark productions. Both reviewed in Victoria. All productions around Australia are of interest to myself, as Editor, and to the reader. The review gives your work serious scrutiny and the dignity of informed assessment. Please assist in the accumulation of review material by either: OFFERING to review a piece, or NOTIFYING the Editor of any future production that could be reviewed. Please don't just wait for me to ring you!

As we enlarge our subscription to include more community leaders and teachers, this will prove a valuable source of information, and thereby assist them to make commitments to see the material or to employ the company concerned.

Anita

LOCAL AND

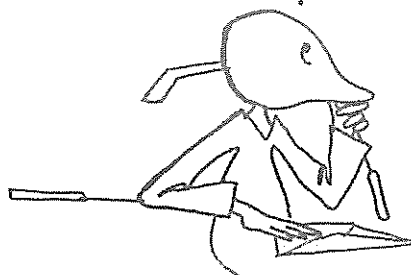
UNIMA FEES



This message was to begin 'you know who you are', but perhaps you don't.

Some happy recipients of AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER MAGAZINE received as part of their last mail-out, a reminder to pay their overdue UNIMA subs.

On the off-chance that your reminder went missing, let us persuade you to double check your financial status, and perhaps post a cheque to the treasurer. This constitutes a major support to the organisation and through that, to the magazine.



WHERE ARE YOU?

Please notify UNIMA if you have changed - or about to change - your mailing address or phone/fax/email details.

Contact Richard Hart, The Treasurer on: 03 9489 8337
Post: 20 Coleman Street, North Fitzroy, Victoria 3068

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YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS ON FLOPPY
DISK COMPATIBLE WITH THIS
SYSTEM WOULD BE APPRECIATED.

PLEASE ALSO INCLUDE A HARD
COPY PRINT OUT OF YOUR WORK.

OVERSEAS

FESTIVAL INFORMATION

There is a fair amount of festival news published in such magazines as *Puppeteers of America* and *British UNIMA Magazine*. PINZ (New Zealand) UNIMA magazine, *Gesture*, gives quite a lot of festival news. The latter two publications permit us to reproduce their copy as we wish, but, since this information may be found readily, I prefer to direct you to contact either your Secretary, **Dennis Murphy** or myself, **Anita**, for more detail.

PUPPETEERS OF AMERICA

SOUTHEAST REGIONAL FESTIVAL, 1998
JUNE 25th to 28th 1998, Centre For Puppetry Arts,
Atlanta. GA. I have a registration form. *Ed.*

CHARLEVILLE-MEZIERES

I have received a letter and pamphlet in French, publicising the 1998 seminar 'Pulcinella and Co: The Adventures of a Popular Hero Around Europe'. Festival dates: from Saturday 31st January to Sunday 1st February 1998. Please enquire if interested. *Ed.*

UNIMA WORLD FESTIVAL 2000

The city of Magdaburg, Germany, is to host the next UNIMA World Festival and Congress in the year **2000**. Pamphlet material available. *Ed.*

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE NEWS

The Institute International de la Marionnette in Charleville Mezieres, France, announces a new publication: Puck No. 10 (*In the French copy this reads as Polchinelle, so they mean Punch, I have used 'Puck' in case you go looking for it, Ed*): "The Child At (sic) Theatre". Also announced, is an International Bibliography on Puppetry.

(I have a small pamphlet with more detail, and am happy to copy or fax this to you if you need it. It's in French, but I, or perhaps Jenny Andersen, can translate for you if necessary, Ed).

They offer a catalogue of their publications. If you are interested to acquire this, write to: **Guillaume Desanges**, Communication Manager, Institute International de la Marionnette, 7 Place Winston Churchill, 08000 Charleville/Mezieres, France.
Email: inst.marionnette@ardennes.com



A LETTER FROM GENT

Freek Neirynck has written to remind us of the EUROPEAN PUPPET THEATRE FESTIVAL GRAPHICS COMPETITION.

He has enclosed a report on the results of the previous contest. This is to be a yearly event and he asks that our members contribute their poster graphics as entries.

The theme for the next competition is:
"Puppet Theatre Productions For Children". Entrants must send 3 copies of their posters to the address below before 15th June 1998:

Freek Neirynck
Europees Figurenteatercentrum
Trommelstraat 1 B-9000 Gent,
Belgium
Phone: 32 0 9 223 12 15
Fax: 32 0 9 225 45 45

The winner of first prize, 1997, was **Michel Bouvet**, France, for his poster 'Festival Mondial de Teatres de Marionnettes a Charleville-Mezieres 1991'.

I can fax copies of M. Neirynck's letter to interested members.

Ed.

AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER

WHAT'S AHEAD IN 1998

For those who are interested in specific developments with our magazine, the plans are as follows.

To continue to attract pictorial and written material that introduces the people, the 'faces', involved in Australian UNIMA. Puppetry has a very 'human' face!

To attract advertisers from within and outside of our membership: this will achieve a dual purpose: that of channeling funds into the publication, and of generating information about members' skills and services.

To circulate publicity to Arts and Community leaders, teachers and other related persons, with the idea of increasing subscription.

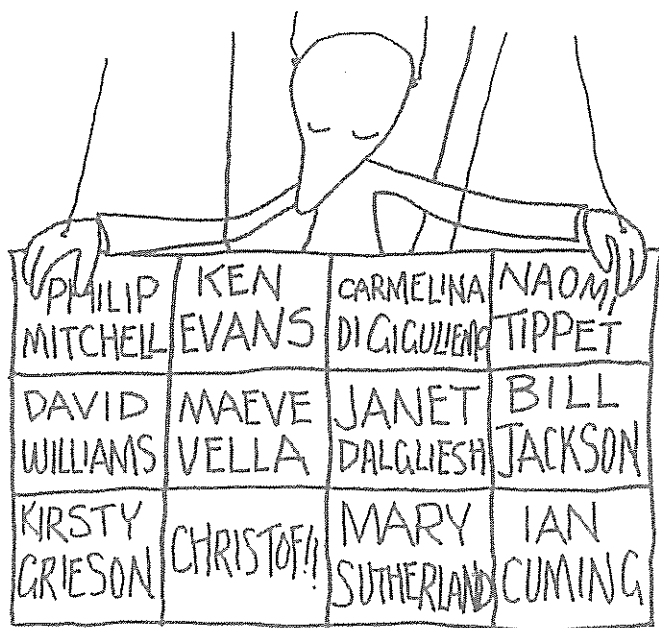
AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER is for professionals at all levels, and should continue to serve the puppeteer first.

This does not prevent it from being of interest to teachers and community leaders; in fact, it is very likely that our 'inside' information will be of particular relevance for them. A prospective customer, the teacher in a school, may find show reviews and display advertisements useful. The group leader who introduces puppetry will be able to use the **WORKSHOP SPREAD** and the **GET THE HINT** feature to their advantage in their teaching. This issue features brief notes on 1998 Activities planned by our members.

Our advertising page, inside the back cover, is looking good already, with our own advertisers and some outside sponsors supporting us. (*PRODOS has been generous with his time, creating the art for some of the ads, some provided their own. Ed*).

I remind you that a donation can put you in the picture as an advertiser. The magazine goes not only to all the states of Australia but also to a number of overseas destinations. Check the back page to find out how you may advertise in our great and growing magazine.

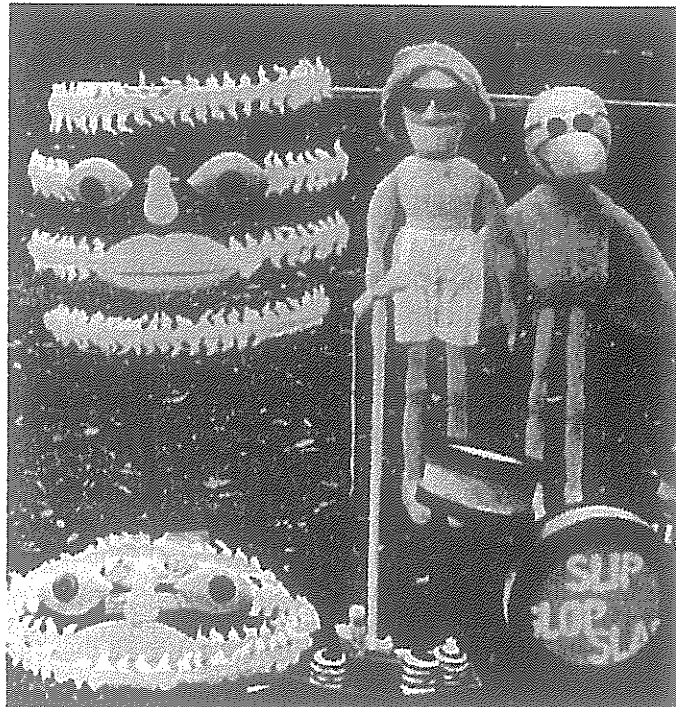
Anita Sinclair, Editor



KEY TO FRONT COVER

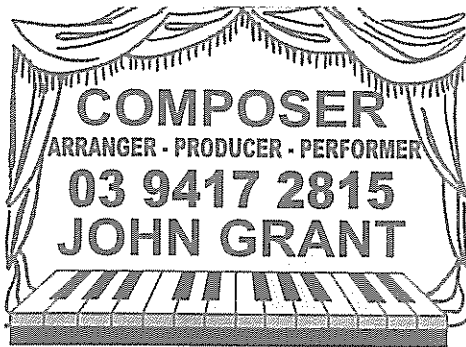
BACKGROUND ON A FRONT COVER PERSONALITY

BILL JACKSON, known as Willie Wonks from New South Wales. Originally from England, he worked as an aircraft finisher in 1962, became the company children's entertainment manager and was smitten with the puppet bug. Nowadays performing *Punch and Judy* and his own shows: shopping centres, ocean liners, fetes, schools and more. Various TV commercials: *Police Rescue*, *Burke and Wills*, films.



An example of Bill Jackson's design and construction

The improvements to this edition of AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER have been paid for entirely by the donations of our sponsors below. May their advertisements bring them good fortune!




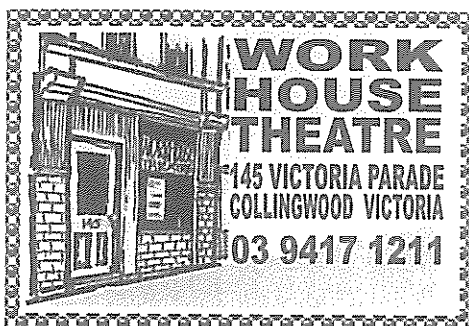
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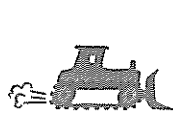
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