

WINTER 1999

AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER



FACES OF AUSTRALIAN PUPPETRY

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

NOTE ON PUPPETS

The immediate and touching effectiveness of a puppet performance and its simple technique made it a natural for wandering minstrels. The poem 'The Runner' by Hugo von Trimberg, written in 1300, is about comedians who pulled the puppets out of their coats and made all the bystanders laugh with their jokes. . . . The minstrel was one of the few persons who brought news of the world into the towns, villages, inns, and even the most remote farmhouses. . . . Thus the puppet of the minstrel . . . was simultaneously clown, critic of reality, and announcer of a desired more beautiful world.

Rene Simmen

From:

The World of Puppets, 1972 Zurich.

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DEADLINES

SPRING issue deadline: August 24th 1999.

SUMMER issue deadline: November 24th 1999.

Front cover

*Margaret and Norman Hetherington
with daughter Rebecca and grandson Harry*



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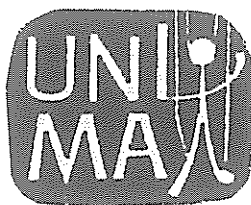
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UNION INTERNATIONALE DE LA MARIONNETTE

FOUNDED IN 1929 MEMBER OF ITI (UNESCO)

EDITOR'S PAGE

A FAREWELL - this seems a strange way to start the editing job of the *Winter* issue of *Australian puppeteer*: to use a goodbye as a beginning!

We have reached our eighth edition of the series: *'The Faces of Australian Puppetry'*, featuring as many photographs of our people as possible - the outcome influenced by the number of photographs provided, demanded or snapped on the sly. The goal was to promote a sense of the presence of colleagues and fellow conspirators; I myself like to know not only that you are out there, but also what you look like, so, selfishly, I've got a lot out of the theme. Through your writings and pictorial material I have gained a great sense of your presence; this has been re-enforced by the phone calls and letters that pour into the office in a steady stream. I thank you sincerely for that.

With the eighth edition I must retire as gracefully as possible - though it does feel sudden to me.

I am truly delighted that UNIMA Australia has landed such a skilled, dedicated and charming person as **Philip Millar** to take on the Editor's position.

Philip Millar has had so much connection with Australian puppetry over so many years. He is a highly skilled designer, builder, performer and teacher. He has worked with very many of you in a wide variety of ways. I know I will have failed to represent here the range of his experience.

Philip has already fielded some ideas he has for the magazine. I, for one, am dying to see what he does: to think that I can see developments without doing any of the work! Sounds good to me!

Over the years there has been a growth in this publication, mainly due to the efforts of one or two people per editorship. **Jenny Andersen** preceded me, and she made a significant and generous contribution to its development.

Each editor hopefully has a 'sidekick'. Mine has been **Prodos**. His has been the invisible hand helping to shape the format according to my needs. He has provided the technological skill that I lack - the scanning, the templates, the computer art for advertisements, the mailing labels. He has organized the Post Office into Bulk Mail mode and lopped one third off our mailing costs. He has bullied and charmed

Snap Printing in Richmond, Victoria into giving terrific rates for our printing.

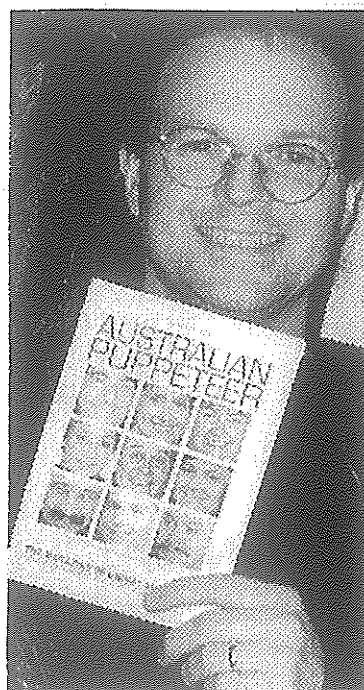
Prodos, I thank you on behalf of myself and other members of **UNIMA Australia**. You have helped to carry the organization forward from the 'wings' while I got the title and the credit.

Thank you also to the other members of our Executive: **Sue Wallace** and **Richard Hart**. They have provided great support for the Editor and lots of enthusiasm when I 'got it right'. They have been patient with my 'bloopers' - as have you, the contributors and readers. I thank also our ex-Secretary, **Dennis Murphy**, a great support for the cause. And all of our regular feature contributors, including **Richard Bradshaw** and **Ian Cuming**.

This is turning into an 'Oscars' speech, my Mum'll be getting a mention soon. I'd better stop.

Best wishes to everyone for future magazines. Thank you **Philip Millar** for picking up the baton.

Anita Sinclair.



Philip Millar.

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

UNIMA International is celebrating its Seventieth Anniversary during 1999. It is the oldest theatre organisation in the world. *Mr Squiggle* celebrates FORTY years as the star of Australia's longest running television show.

Congratulations to Norman and Peggy Hetherington and to daughter Rebecca who has been part of the Squiggle team for some years.

There are changes afoot within UNIMA Australia. Anita Sinclair is retiring as Editor of *Australian Puppeteer*, passing the banner into the able hands of Philip Millar. On behalf of the membership I would sincerely like to say thank you to Anita for her impassioned and professional approach during her time as Editor and part of the Executive.

Richard Hart has resigned as Secretary to concentrate his efforts in the creation of new work. Richard has served on the Executive for four years as Treasurer, then Secretary. Again, on behalf of the membership, I extend many thanks to Richard for his valuable contribution towards puppetry in Australia.

UNIMA has done me a great service in the last months. My partner Steve Coupe and I have been in New York and New Orleans singing with the choir *Café of the Gate of Salvation*. Although the purpose of our visit was to sing *a'capella* with various communities in the United States, we also had the opportunity to meet with representatives from *The Henson Foundation*. We were even given a view of the original *Kermit the Frog* made from Jim Henson's mother's dressing gown and an old pair of jeans!

In New Orleans we met with Nancy Staub, a powerhouse within puppetry in the USA and a very active member of UNIMA. We were also treated to that great Southern Hospitality by Karen Konnerth from *The Calliope Puppet and Mask Theatre*. Karen was hosting a Spanish company *Los Titiriteros de Binefar* and we were able to see their show and to spend some time with them.

It has been reinforced to me lately that the purpose of UNIMA is for world wide unity through our art. With so much disunity in the world I would like to close with the words of Peter Minshall* that extraordinary designer from Trinidad:

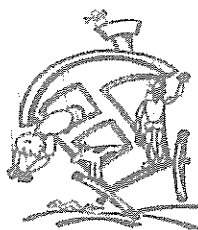
'the difference is there to add delight, not to destroy and divide'.

ONE VAN PUPPET FESTIVAL

I am receiving lots of interest from puppeteers who want to be part of the Festival 2000. The programme is not full yet so send me your videos, photos, whatever you have if you would like to be part of the event. A company from Luxembourg is joining us this year. As usual, the uphill battle is finding the funding. If anyone feels like organising a fund raiser for the festival, please let me know.

Sue Wallace.

*I recently met Minshall at the *Ceremonies and Spectacles Conference* held in Melbourne.



Sue Wallace

SECRETARY'S PAGE

I have now completed my first tour of South Australia. Several weeks ago I was in Japan performing 'Dreamer' for a festival in Kagawa on the island of Skikoku. Sometimes I fantasize that my van is the spaceship *Enterprise* discovering entirely different planets and universes on its journey.

On one particular day I performed two shows in Clare and one in Burra (S.A., Ed). The response was very enthusiastic; one incident stands out. After the last performance for the day a woman approached me saying this was the first puppet theatre she had ever seen. She had grown up on an isolated sheep station. Fortunately she left with a very favorable impression of the art form. I regularly remind myself of the responsibility school performers have. They are introducing the next generation to theatre generally and it is important that they get a favorable impression.

When children come up to you in the school yard as you load up the van, and say, 'I thought your show was fantastic!' or 'Really cool', or 'Wicked', ('wicked' means 'really cool' apparently), you feel that you've lived up to your responsibilities and that all the driving, cabins and loneliness of the long distance puppeteer has been well worth it. The money can be good, too!

In South Australia some of the almost desert terrain is stunningly powerful, it reminds me of the photos of Mars on the surface, only with low succulent vegetation scattered all over. While in Adelaide I stayed with Kalyra, Flowerpot and Bob Daley (UNIMA members). They lived in a wonderfully bohemian outfitted warehouse in the 'Paut' - Port Adelaide. I would have stayed longer only they had to leave for Queensland to work with an aboriginal community in an outdoor theatre project. They do a lot of festival outdoor work. (Richard says here that he visited more members during a later week, Ed).

It's hard to do much on the road in relation to UNIMA activities but I do attempt to communicate with the executive and other members when I feel I can afford the phone calls.

Apart from having a great time in Japan (I can see why people just fall in love and awe of the culture and environment), there was a clear communication of an organized movement in the Asia/Pacific Region to set up an alternative to what they saw as a Eurocentric UNIMA. They are keen to set up regional contacts and events involving Australia, New Zealand, Asia and the Pacific Rim. This could suggest interesting possibilities for the future in terms of festivals.

If this (letter) appears to jump between two different worlds (Japan and South Oz) it's because it's what has really happened to me. I'm not going mad yet!

But last and by no means least, it is hard to do justice in words to the enormous contribution our editor has made to Australian puppetry via and for UNIMA. Two years is a major commitment for someone to make on a venture like the magazine. Anita has matured the offspring from Jenny Andersen and has ensured it will remain a lively entity for years to come.

LATE NEWS FROM RICHARD HART

I have decided to resign as the Secretary of UNIMA Australia. I would have loved to have been on a team with Philip Millar as new Editor, but after some time of deliberation, it all boils down to my life choices. This, as all positions in the Executive, is voluntary; to make sense it must be a position I enjoy. This has been the case until fairly recently when I experienced a drastic change in lifestyle and found a need to focus more on my own work.

I have put four years of my time into UNIMA, most of it as an executive, the remainder as one of the editorial team during the transition from newsletter to magazine. For my own sake, I'm letting go of it. This is to give the opportunity to advertise the position in the Winter 1999 magazine.

Richard Hart.

SECRETARY UNIMA AUSTRALIA



Applications are invited for the position of Secretary of UNIMA Australia. This is an honorary position, carrying with it a responsibility to:

Communicate between the Executive and the members,
To distribute information received both locally and from overseas,

Meet with other (three) members of the Executive wherever possible,

Provide resource information in response to enquiries by phone, fax or mail.

The pleasures in the role include the contact with our marvelous members and our colleagues from over the sea. The wealth of information, news and gossip that comes the way of the executive. The sense of contribution experienced by the executive.

Would YOU enjoy this?

This ad was put together by Anita, who only knows SOME of the story. Contact Richard Hart or Sue Wallace please for finer detail (phone numbers inside front cover, this magazine, Ed).

JUST FOR THE LOVE OF IT

By Anita Sinclair.

Why the busiest puppeteers take on (almost) impossible additional responsibilities.

Richard Hart has resigned from the executive after a steady four year contribution.

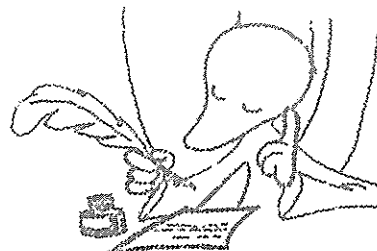
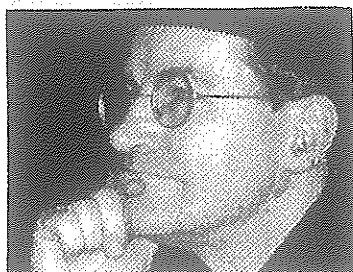
It might be thought that during that time he had 'nothing to do' and is now leaving because he has 'something' to do - but this can only be imagined by someone who doesn't know Richard. Richard is what I'm fond of calling 'a good compulsive'. I say 'Give me a good compulsive any time to work with if you want the job done'. His gorgeous show, 'Dreamer' illustrates my point. This is not the work of a man who has spare time on his hands. Every minute of months and months has gone into the creation, development and refinement of this lovely piece. So, no spare time was left even before Richard started touring around Australia, Korea and Japan.

That he has maintained his position on the executive for so long has amounted to a major act of generosity.

Of all the people currently active in UNIMA, I have felt from Richard Hart the greatest LOVE of UNIMA as an association. The first time I handed him a finished copy of a magazine I saw him react to it as if I had shown him his new baby! When talking about Australian puppetry, he glows. Richard has stayed involved from an ongoing dedication and affection for our group; I don't suppose it has been easy for him to decide to leave the formal role that he has maintained, but I also can't believe that it will be the last we'll hear from him.

So let's hear it for all the folks over the years who have stuck by the membership and contributed their emotions as well as their thinking and actions to the cause: that of moving puppetry forward both here in Australia and around the world. Particularly let's thank Richard Hart for his profound love of the art and its proponents and wish him the very best in his new projects, his touring and his ever busy life.

Richard Hart.



LETTERS

DESPERATELY SEEKING

... In July 1998 I sent *(the following)* letter regarding a puppeteer who worked in Australia. So far I haven't heard from you since then. I am wondering whether you have in fact received my letter.

I am of course still very interested in obtaining any information on this puppeteer, and hope that you can (provide) this. Thank you again for your kind assistance, John Hunter, UK.

... Dear Ms Sinclair,

I would like to obtain some information about a puppeteer who worked in Australia in I believe Sydney in the 1950s or maybe earlier. Her name was Freda Mortinson (nee Crosher) with her husband whose Christian name I do not know I understand Freda also worked in New Zealand. ...

(This letter was published in the magazine John, but here it is again. Good luck with your search, Ed).

Contact:

John Hunter

Beacon House, 7 Dock Street, London E1,
United Kingdom.

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

... Just a short scribble to let anybody who might be coming through Bathurst, New South Wales, on tour or whatever and needs somewhere to stay, that they are quite welcome at the home of Pelican Puppets AKA Sean and Mandy Manners. Our contact number is:

02 6334 4994 or write to:

PO Box 1959 Bathurst, NSW 2795.

Australian Puppeteer is doing a great job of keeping puppeteers informed on what is going on in Australia and overseas. Keep up the good work.

Just a short additional note for all *Punch and Judy* Professors, aficionados or those just plain interested in Old Red Nose and his wide and varied family 'The World Wide Friends of Punch and Judy' is a quarterly publication from the UK that keeps up with Punch and friends right round the world. Details are available from me, Sean, at my mailing address (above) or at the web:

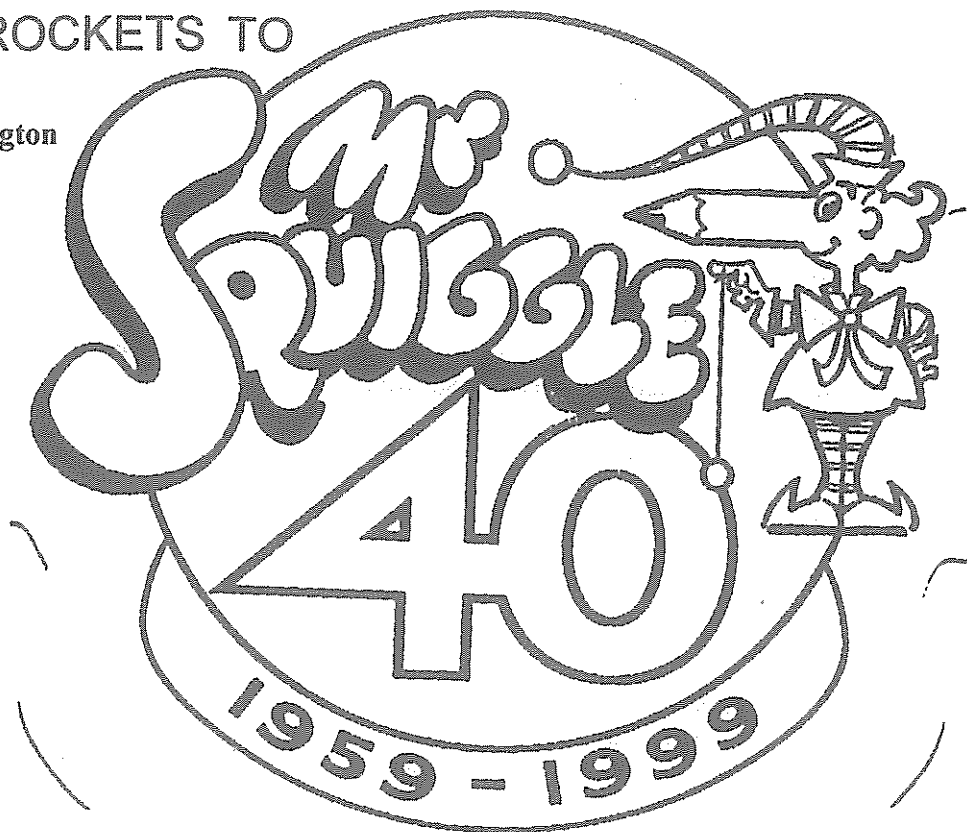
<http://www.primenet.com/~freshdle/wwwfpj.html>

Sean Manners.

Phone/Fax: 02 6334 4994

MR SQUIGGLE ROCKETS TO FORTY!

Report by Norman Hetherington



Here's Mr Squiggle

The ABC turned on a wonderful party for Mr Squiggle when he turned forty on the first of July 1999.

Norman and Margaret Hetherington, creators of *Mr Squiggle*, were amazed to hear that it was the longest-running children's TV show in the world. But if the ABC says so, we'll believe it.

Over one hundred people turned up - Brian Johns, Managing Director of the ABC, and earlier presenters and producers of the program, and lots of media people, to drink champagne and look at some of the very historic animated graphics designed and made by Norman in the early "do-it-yourself" days of television. *Mr Squiggle's* first *Rocket, Mk. 1*, was apparently made of inferior plywood and cardboard and did not survive. The second *Rocket, Mk. 2*, of ply and aluminium, has survived the rigours of space travel more successfully and was on display. There was an upside-down portrait of *Mr Squiggle* painted by the President of the *Black and White Artists Club* for the *Bald Archies Exhibition* earlier this year and even a plate of *Green Moon Cheese and Biscuits* nestling with the cakes and muffins.

One of the really nice things about the party was the number of people who had been involved with the program over the years and were able to attend, and to catch up with Norman and Margaret and with each other.

The very first presenter of the program, Gina Curtis, even travelled down from the New South Wales central coast, in spite of a recent car accident.

Another pleasant thing was the interest shown by the media. Channel 9 did a piece on it for the *"Today"* show, and among papers, *"Who"* magazine and the *Sydney Morning Herald* made quite a feature of the event. For a few days Norman also did almost non-stop radio interviews (and not all ABC stations!). He is quite interviewed out.

Mr Squiggle, on the other hand, looks as fresh as ever and enjoyed himself hugely at the party. Everyone agreed that the highlight of the party was the live performance *Mr Squiggle* and Rebecca, the current presenter, did. *Mr Squiggle* transformed a large 40 into a whale having a whale of a time, singing *Happy Birthday*, and armed with a hammer to hit the right note. And to keep the party theme going, *Mr Squiggle* also drew a Giraffe, who swallowed the birthday cake whole - without chewing, so that he wouldn't have to clean his teeth.

Even *Blackboard* joined in, telling us that he was toeing "The Party Line".

It was very much a family occasion, as Rebecca, the current presenter, is Norman and Margaret's daughter, and ABC people have been *Mr Squiggle's* extended family for years. For 40, in fact. Warmth, good feeling - thank you, everybody, on *Mr Squiggle's* behalf.

MR. SQUIGGLE ROCKETS TO 40 YEARS: FIVE DECADES ON ABC TV IN AUSTRALIA

The ABC TV series, *Mr. Squiggle*, has been on air for forty years on 1st July 1999, making the little puppet from the moon the longest running TV show in Australia and the longest-running preschool children's television program in the world.

Mr. Squiggle began on ABC TV on 1st July 1959, becoming the friend of generations of children. Kids from all over Australia have sent their squiggles to him, and for forty years he has been turning the trickiest of them into pictures - nearly 10,000 of them.

Mr. Squiggle lives on the Moon, at 93 Crater Crescent, with a very grumpy *Doormat*, and travels down to Earth in his smoky *Rocket* to visit his friends at the ABC.

While *Rocket* is off doing other things, *Mr. Squiggle* spacewalks down. Waiting for him is an impatient *Blackboard* who tells everyone to 'Hurry.,Up!'

Two particular friends live down here - *Bill Steamshovel*, who loves bad riddles and even worse jokes, and *Gus The Snail*, who solves all his problems with knocks-knocks and is aiming to take over the world.

All these characters have been helped and encouraged by ABC personalities - Gina Curtis (Miss Gina) 1959-1960, Pat Lovell (Miss Pat) 1960-1975, Jane Fennell (Miss Jane) 1975-1986, Roxanne Kimmorley (Roxanne) 1986-1989, and Rebecca Hetherington (Rebecca) 1989 to the present.

Mr. Squiggle and his creators, Norman and Margaret Hetherington, have been given two *Penguin Awards*, 1985 and 1989, for services to Australian Children's television, and in 1990 Norman was made a Member (CAM) of the *Order of Australia* for services to puppetry and children's television.

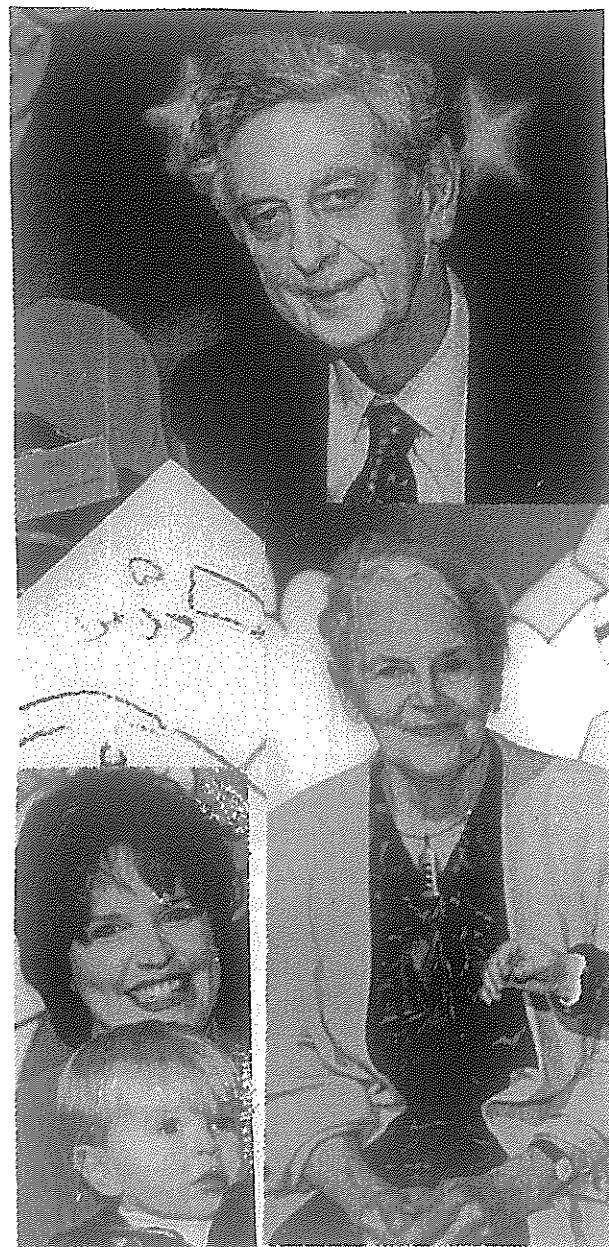
Claire Henderson, Commissioning Editor for ABC Children's television says that

'Mr. Squiggle has always had a magical simplicity, The interaction between Mr. Squiggle, the other characters and the presenter have been brought together by the creative drive and puppetry skill of Norman Hetherington, complemented by the writing skill of Margaret Hetherington. Nothing survives on TV for forty years unless it has a wonderful appeal!'

In May 1999, *Australian Children's Television* received the ultimate recognition when *Australia Post* released four Classic Children's TV stamps, one of which features *Mr. Squiggle*.

So congratulations to *Mr. Squiggle* - forty years on ABC TV, the longest running program on Australian TV, and the longest running pre-school children's television program in the world!

WINTER 1999



AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER

HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN PUPPETRY

JOAN AND BETTY RAYNER

by Richard Bradshaw

In the last issue of the *Australian Puppeteer* Anita Sinclair reported the death at ninety-nine of Joan Rayner and told of her happy memories of seeing them perform in Wangaratta in 1950. For this issue I thought it might be worthwhile to look at their involvement with puppetry.

There were actually three Rayner sisters. Between Joan and Betty there was Molly who spelt her name *Raynor*. She was an actress also and spent some time on the London stage and had played the daughter in Ken Hall's 1932 film of *"On Our Selection."*

As early as 1928 Joan and Betty Rayner were responsible for the *Theatre of Youth*, or *TOY Theatre*, in Young Street, Sydney, just up from Circular Quay. It ran for a couple of years but the Great Depression was against them. They closed the theatre and set off on their first country tour. I am not whether they used puppets at this time. I do know that one play they performed was *Punch and Judy* but I don't know if they used puppets...and knowing their strong views on life I doubt very much that it was quite true to tradition!

They toured extensively playing mainly to adults with their *"Strolling Players"* shows through Europe and the U.S.A., returning to Australia after World War II to found the *Australian Children's Theatre* in Melbourne in 1948. ACT was formed to tour their own shows, and eventually others, to schoolchildren. After a three-year probationary period it became a non-profit organisation. Joan and Betty were the Directors and there was an honorary council (which included Dame Elisabeth Murdoch).

Possibly as a result of their work in the United States they had a keen sense of publicity. Local newspapers covered their visits and I think every primary schoolchild in Australia knew them because of the page they bought in the annual Commonwealth Trades Alphabet which was distributed to us free. Many of their publicity photos were taken by the celebrated photographer Max Dupain. (They also arranged for him to take my publicity photos when I toured for them years later.)

One of their best known items was a dramatised version of the song of *"The Frog and the Mouse"*. For this they wore light-weight buckram masks. At a festival of puppetry in Melbourne in 1975 they were introduced to Rupert Hamer, the Premier of Victoria, who had come to open the festival. Joan said.. "I'm sure you don't know who we are." "Yes I do," he replied. "You're the frog and the mouse!"

They used puppets in some of their shows. For *"The Princess and the Puppet Man"* in 1958, based on stories and songs from Denmark and Holland, they had a very attractive set of glove-puppets made by Ruth Adam and they took great care to manipulate these figures effectively.

In 1961 they had seen a street puppet show in Taiwan which gave them background information for their play *"The Puppet Theatre That Walked"*. In this story the wife of a puppet man is carried off by a slave-trader (to be sold as a singer!) but is deceived with the aid of the puppets and the disguise of the puppet theatre. The puppets used were traditional Chinese glove-puppets and the puppet theatre consisted of two curtains hanging from a steel ring supported above the puppeteer's head by a structure resting on the hips.

Because this hid the puppeteer's face it was possible for Joan and Betty to double for the part. (When this play was published with others of their plays, by the *English Theatre Guild* in 1970, I regretted that nowhere was it revealed how the plays had been done by only two people. I learnt that they were not confident that another pair of actors would have done them well enough! There may even be some truth in that, because the diligence with which they tried to make such doubling seamless was painstaking.)

For another play *"The Tongue-Cut Sparrow"* based on a Japanese story, they made use of a finger-puppet sparrow.

In addition to Joan and Betty, ACT also toured shows by other performers, and these were often puppeteers. In 1952, with assistance from the *British Council*, they brought the *Hogarth Puppets* to tour in Australia. Jan Bussell came with his wife, Ann Hogarth, and their sixteen-year-old daughter, Sally. They toured for eighteen weeks giving over one hundred and fifty performances to a total of 115,000 people in forty different venues. They had a junior program, a program for teenagers, and a two-hour show for the general public. Items included their marionette circus with Muffin the Mule and for the older audiences they did scenes from *"Macbeth"* with



*Hands in Gloves, Joan and Betty Rayner presenting
The Princess and The Puppet Man, with puppets made
by Ruth Adam, 1958*

Jan and Ann did another tour with **Joan and Betty** in 1960 with "*Through Wooden Eyes*", a program which used glove puppets, rod puppets, shadow puppets and marionettes.) Many of the figures were traditional puppets from **Java, China, England, France and Sicily**, and *Muffin the Mule* appeared with some of his marionette friends from the BBC TV series.

Walter Wilkinson (1889-1970) toured for them in 1954. Before setting off for **Australia**, Wilkinson had visited the **Bussells** to get an idea of what he might be in for. Many of the roads here were corrugated gravel and motels had not yet appeared on the scene so they were a little anxious about how this frail-looking man in his sixties might cope. Apparently he and his wife, **Winifred**, who travelled with him, took the hardships in their stride, and I remember the show as being a very vigorous one with much slapping of wooden hands on the playboard. There were even glove puppets which manipulated little marionettes!

I saw the show at the **Chatswood Town Hall**, and just before it began there was a buzz as **Joan and Betty** entered to take their seats. They were wearing fur capes, and the next time I saw those capes was in 1969. They were going to visit someone in hospital on a cool **Melbourne** night, and were wearing the capes over brightly coloured Hawaiian muu-muus, a combination that somehow worked!

After the 1960 tour of the *Hogarth Puppets*, **Joan and Betty** directed a show performed by the dancer **Vola Young** with the puppeteer **Ann Davis** and her sister **Jayne**. There were two puppet items, "*The Girl Who Became a Bird*" and "*Hats for Cats*". The first story is based on an **Aboriginal** legend about the brolga, and Ann made very nice marionettes for this. "*Hats for Cats*" was a glove-puppet item that I had seen Ann do earlier. It was a delightful piece, originally to music from the "*Facade Suite*" during which a cat visits a milliner and tries on all possible hats eventually settling on the feather duster with which the milliner cat had dusted the stage at the outset.

This tour was followed by one with **Rae and Freda Griffiths** performing in a show written and directed by **Joan and Betty**.

I doubt that any puppeteer has benefited more from their association with **Joan and Betty** than I have and my gratitude is unbounded. There are lines in some of the items in my present show which still call to mind the voice of **Joan** as she sat out front directing the version of thirty years ago!

They had heard of me from **Edith Murray**, of the *Clovelly Puppet Theatre* which I had joined in 1952 and also from their friend, **Lorna Wright**. In me they saw their work coming full circle. I had seen **Joan and Betty** perform at the *Kingsford Odeon* in **Sydney** in 1949 or 1950. I had seen the *Hogarth Puppets* when they presented them at the *Empire* in **Sydney** in 1952, and in 1964 I had spent five weeks working with the *Hogarth Puppets* in their caravan theatre when they toured London parks.

They were also pleased that (prompted by **Edith Murray**) I had performed as an amateur at puppetry festivals in **Europe** in 1965 and 1966. They preferred their performers to have had some overseas experience. (I had also recorded a few Shadow-Puppet items for the A.B.C.'s "*Play School*" in 1967, but they were less impressed by television!)

So, late in 1967, **Joan and Betty** invited me to prepare a show for schools which they would direct. I continued teaching mathematics until the end of 1968, and in 1969-70 I toured for ACT throughout **Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania** and the **North Island of New Zealand**. Wonderful, relaxed tours booked by two people who understood the difficulties...and the joys ... of touring.

The rehearsals in early 1969 had been quite thorough affairs, and every action, every word, was considered. It was an excellent experience for me, and one I benefited from when I worked with the MTA. I was left in no doubt of their skill and professionalism, as well as their deep commitment to children's theatre. They took a deep interest in the work of other companies too, such as *Polyglot*. They were also great fun to be with.

The last time I visited **Joan** was about four years ago. She was still living by herself in **Vermont**, an outer suburb of **Melbourne**, but just over a year ago she phoned and I gathered she had moved into a retirement home. Until quite recently she had been picked up every week-day by a man who drove her to the house in **Vermont**, where she would spend the day writing and sorting through her papers. She had not been ill and apparently simply slowed down and stopped.

Richard Bradshaw.





Photo: Leslie Trowbridge from New Zealand with characters from his Puppet Opera.

WINTER 1999

AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER

WORKSHOP

SPREAD No 7

AUSTRALIAN PUPPETEER
WINTER 1999

SUGAR ANT MARIONETTE

BY

IAN CUMING

IAN TAKES US THROUGH THE NUMBERED STEPS THAT WILL LEAD TO THE CREATION OF A LARGE WOODEN SUGAR ANT MARIONETTE. For **SENIOR STUDENTS** only.



STEP#1

Find a Sugar Ant. These are the orange and black ones. They measure between 20 and 30 mm. Spend some time with it. Learn what you can about it first hand. Do so without interfering with the creature itself. Make mental notes of its behaviour. Record your impressions. Draw it from memory. Draw the moment. File it.

STEP#2

Read about ants. What food do they eat? How do they reproduce? Are they nocturnal? What else is known about them? Just ask. See what is known. Sift the information for clues. A clue is anything that interests you. Clues give you something to go on.

STEP#3

Return to the place where you first found the ant. Take a glass jar with a lid and a plastic ruler as well as a notebook and pencil. With great care, catch the ant and put it in the jar. Measure the length, height and breadth of every part through the jar. Note any features. How many body parts? What is the scope of movement in each joint of each leg? Note the colours, textures and shapes in every detail. This is detail that will help you make choices about the puppet you create. Release the ant exactly where you found it. Honour the moment with silent wonder. As it leaves you may make a note of any emotional observations of the experience. Record your own feelings. All of this will feed into the total process. It will!

STEP#4

Make a model in newspaper first. Remember always with this process that the creature itself is magnificent and the best you will ever do is to approximate the living thing. Let this be the case. Accept that the object of the exercise is to express something for yourself. The greatest result

might be to create in your puppet the illusion of life. If you attempt to imitate the ant then you will surely be disappointed. You will have failed before you began.

STEP#5

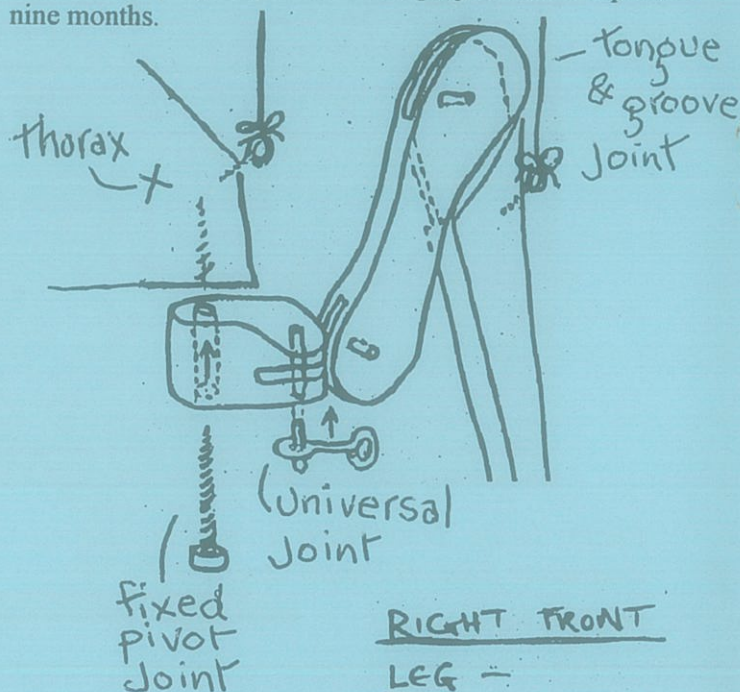
Set yourself up with a large piece of paper on the kitchen table. Rework your field drawings. Scale them up sixty times. Do it perfectly. Include all of your measured detail. Rewrite your notes so that they can be clearly read. Pin all of this to the wall. Ponder it.

STEP#6

Go to the Botanic gardens and tell them what you are doing. Ask to look in the prunings pile. Find a piece of wood big enough to make body parts. Hardwood will be necessary for the smallest leg segments. Pine will do for the rest of the legs. Transpose the information contained in your drawings onto the log and the other timber. Pencil in the lines of your proposed cuts. Cut the shapes with a band saw. Cut boldly. Work steadily and cut all the pieces you need. Take your time. Leave the cuts rough. Live with the choices you have now made. Hollow the head and the abdomen with a pneumatic chisel. Reduce the weight as much as you can without losing strength. Leave the thorax solid as this is where the legs attach. Lay the freshly cut shapes out on the floor.

STEP#7

Join the segments according to your diagram. There are also specific grooves to be cut, and holes to be drilled. Design each one as a reduction of the actual ant's joints, with a view to replicating the movement you observed. Read through this process three times at your leisure until you settle into a steady flow with it all. Follow through with just one stage and accomplish a single step. Let the movement be free at first as long as the joint itself is strong. Limiting the scope of movement in each joint will be necessary in the end to get clarity of movement. Return to the ant itself. Be guided by your feelings. Puppetry is an emotional occupation. Develop a tolerance for mystery. Step by step. The initial project for me spanned nine months.



STEP#8

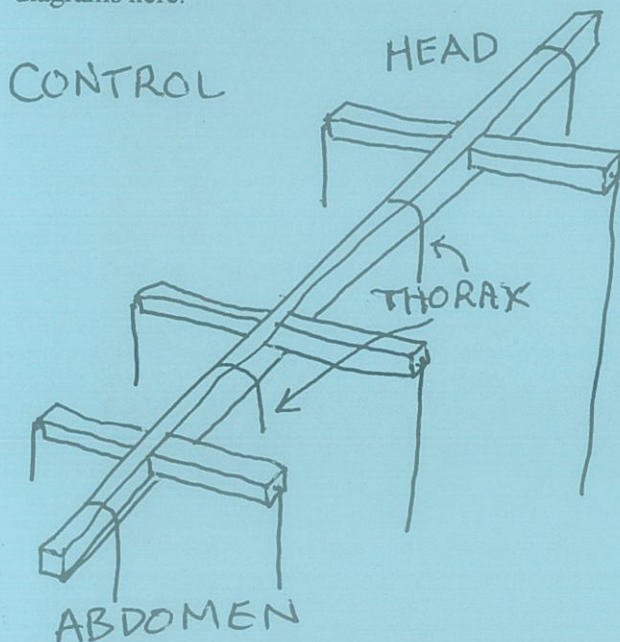
Along the way you may begin to talk to people about ants, and find that everyone has a story to tell. Ant mythology is global and every culture has some way of referring to them.

STEP#9

Stringing starts with a main bar that is as long as the puppet. The body suspends from this. Three crossbars are secured to this for the leg strings. The main bar is one simple piece that is held in one hand or two. It is an extension of your hand.

STEP#10

Screw-eyes are fixed into position for *balance* on the body and for *lift* on the legs. Springs on the underbelly (of the puppet) provide an automatic return swing in the leg movement. Trial and error is the way to go. Locate approximate positions by referring to the various diagrams here.



GENERAL INDICATION
(apologies for errors in Anita's
interpretation of Ian's drawing)

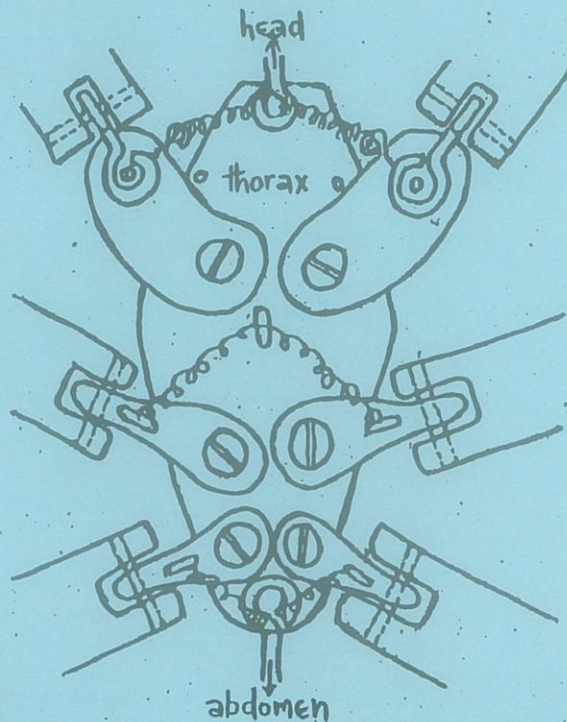
STEP#11

Cut grooves around the main bar and at the end of each crossbar. Suspend the body parts using waxed linen thread. Determine the length of the strings now, starting with the head. Hold the main bar at shoulder height and tie one string that drops double to the screw-eyes either side of the head. Repeat this at the front of the thorax. Tie a single string to the back of the thorax. Double one again for the abdomen. Attach the six leg strings to the legs; draw up the knee of each as you set the length, and tie them off. The middle leg-strings cross. Fiddle and adjust until you are happy. The horizontal body floats just above the ground. The legs, when at rest, touch the ground.

WINTER 1999

STEP#12

Fine tuning is an on-going process. Limit unwieldy movement in any way you can. Play with springs and pins. Persevere with functional problem solving. Move things around for balance and ease of movement. Play with the puppet and revere the life that is there. Enjoy discovering how it hangs. Dangle and drag it. Rock it. Roll it. Tangle it. Explore it. Put it away.



STEP#13

Complete the construction with small wire toe-nails for grip on carpet and earth. Install antennae of coat-hanger wire being sure to bend the ends around for safety. Oil the whole thing with linseed. Acquire a trunk to house the ant. Take it to a market and walk it. 'Release' the ant every time you play. Follow the ant wherever it goes. Sustain the attention you give it from the moment you take the weight to the moment you put it down. Critical observations made by the maker will serve the player. Respect the play as life itself. Honour your own and other people's ability to wonder at a miracle. Much of the work is letting go.

Ian Cuming has specialised in puppetry for twenty years. He is a skilled performer, builder and teacher, working extensively in community arts and education. Contact him on: 03 5977 4392

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



Photo: 'Suleika' a marionette made by Julia Davis, a new member of UNIMA Australia. Suleika is one of many puppets in the cast of Julia's work in progress.

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL PUPPET FESTIVAL PAKISTAN

OCTOBER 1998

By Rose Beauchamp.

'As we can encounter turbulence unexpectedly, we begin our flight with a Koranic prayer of the prophet' ... and later 'Due to turbulence we will not be able to serve you tea or coffee!'

... So began the flight from **Delhi** to **Lahore** when I went to attend the festival as a performer, despite the cancellation of the *Asia/Pacific Region* meeting. A journey that friends and relatives warned me against – but turned out to be a trip on a magic carpet, to a page of the *Arabian Nights* with all the poverty, grandeur, despair and beauty imaginable.

(My apologies to the author for editing out her lovely descriptions of local colour, Ed).

In **Lahore**, the puppeteers stay in the opulence of the **Pearl Continental Hotel** with a cool garden and pigeon house, swimming pool, glass elevators, and doormen in extravagant yellow and orange hats. The local people are very friendly. Coming from **New Zealand** was a bonus for me thanks to our cricket team.

The puppetry festival is held in the **Alhamra Cultural Complex** comprising two theatres plus an open air theatre, where the organizers of the festival, the **Peerzada** family, stage their biannual modern puppetry extravaganzas, this year a Chinese story called, '*The Magic Paintbrush*'. There are eight enormous marquees for the majority of puppet theatre performances.

The **Peersadas** also host international Dance and Drama Festivals in **Lahore** alternate years to the Puppet Festivals. Their father, **Rafi Peerzada**, worked with **Max Reinhardt** and **Bertholt Brecht** before the Second World War, and his sons, **Faizaan**, **Saadan** and **Usmani** carry on the work as film and theatre actors, directors and entrepreneurs. Their mother, sister and families are all wonderfully part of the festival.

Participants perform two shows in the late afternoon/evening (as the daytime is too hot!) to packed crowds of **Pakistani** people. Soldiers guard each tent and the compound. When the Governor comes to open the festival, he is accompanied by a one hundred-strong bodyguard through the fantastic **Punjabi** puppet horsemen and their wild dancing and drumming. The festival gains commercial sponsorship but is also supported by the **Lahore** public, or those that have enough money to attend.

The quality of work and experience of puppeteers is varied. Some represent ancient traditions, others are premiering something that they just dreamed up. There is **DISHA** from **India** who work, with the help of **UNICEF** and other international donor agencies, in villages of **India** with puppet plays on subjects such as **AIDS**, **Reproductive Health**, **Child Survival**, **Nutrition** and **Peace Education**. The *Arepp Education Trust* from **South Africa** with educational puppet shows also doing energetic work integrating puppetry in social development programmes. There is the art theatre of *Karin Schafer Figurin Theatre* from **Austria**, *Pomme d'Or Shadow Theatre* from **France** and *Three Fingers Circus*, **Italy**. *Punch and Judy* with **Keith Preston** from **Australia** and *Karagoz Shadow Puppetry* from **Haluk Yuce**, the **Turkish Asia/Pacific Representative**. Puppeteers from **South Africa**, **Egypt**, **Russia**, **Spain**, **Japan**, **Sri Lanka**, **Scotland**, **Vietnam**, **Argentina**, **India** and of course **Pakistan**.

Most distinctive and unique for me was the troupe from **Tajikistan** with '*Reflections about War and Peace*'. The Tajik group comprises ten performers who use Islamic style puppets – with no features on the puppets – mask, dance and stilt work as well as traditional songs, poems and music on Tajik instruments. The performance is like the original circus.

I was amazed when a boa-constrictor joined in the act! I took it to be the best puppet I'd ever seen for the first five seconds!

I also really enjoyed the work of the **Portuguese** puppeteer, **Manuel Costa Diaz**. In one of his sketches he danced **Tina Turner** in '*What's Love Got To Do With It?*', to an elated audience of Moslem schoolgirls. **Margret Gysin** of **Switzerland** was great in her original production of the '*Seven Ravens*'. She showed the transformation of the brothers so completely that her raven finger puppets were stolen by a woman in full purdah, perhaps for her own attempts at self transformation.

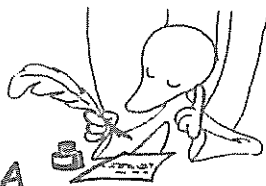
The theme of the festival is peace. A touchy subject in a country wracked with financial corruption, assassinations, poverty and eighty percent illiteracy. ... but in general there was not any formal discussion about the role of puppetry and puppeteers in peace education.

Perhaps I'll make it to the next puppet festival in **October** next year (2000, Ed) but my main objective now is to visit my new friends in **Duchanbe**, **Tajikistan**. Some other puppeteers are planning to come too. Any other puppeteers interested in joining us? I think we need a film maker too.

Contact us on : rosebeauchamp@hotmail.com or write to: 41 Maida Vale Road, Wellington 1, New Zealand.

Rose Beauchamp.

LETTERS



ROVING IN THE USA

... Having a great time, barely have enough time to see/do all I want. Staying with **Maria Bodmann**, she's the *LA Puppetry Guild* President. Have some info on her Shadow Puppets, they are beautiful.

Basil Twist's show was extraordinary – am looking forward to writing all this up for **UNIMA** when I get back. Have been busy trying to convince Basil and Maria to bring their shows out to Australia! Sorry I couldn't get back in touch with you before I left, am still very keen to help all I can with **UNIMA** when I return.

Kirsty Boyle.

(You're about due back, now, Kirsty. Let's have your photos and notes, eh?, Ed).

TURKISH CONNECTION

... I recently received an email from Turkey ... Can you email the following puppeteer who wants to contact anyone working in the **Turkish Karagoz** style here in Oz? I've a feeling there's someone in **Sydney**? I enclose a greyscale image of one of his puppets which as you see he creates in the old traditional way.

The puppeteer is:

Alpay Ekler, his home address is:

**Rumi Mehmet Pasa mh.Bostan sk.33/9 81160
USKUDAR/ISTANBUL**

His email address is: karagoz@vestelnet.com

Mildred Clarke.

AND FROM ALPAY HIMSELF to Mildred

... Thanks for your interest. ... I made the *Shadow Puppet* image on the page as is written: animal skin (calf), holed by special knives called **nevrekan**, and dyed using plants for yellow, cochineal insect for red and special Indian bluestone for dirty green (all natural). That's the tradition that a **Karagoz** performer must sing all his songs, use only his own voice when performing and make his own figures.

I'll be very pleased about (receiving) the magazines and ... if ... **Karagoz** plays there! Surprising! Who plays (*performs Karagoz*) can I make contact with him/her, also the other members of **UNIMA Turkey**, would you help me?

(Mildred invites others to assist Alpay with contact and information, please respond, Ed).

A POSTCARD FROM SCOTLAND

From **Shona Reppe.**

... I chatted to **Ray DaSilva** (*of DaSilva Puppet Books, UK*) last week, what a lovely man! We of course discussed 'the book' and he is eager to get hold of the new edition*. It's lovely to get the *Australian Puppeteer* – and to see myself on the front, an honour indeed! (*Shona attended the One Van Festival in New South Wales in January and was on the cover of our Festival edition, Ed*). I do believe I know more about what is going on in the Australian puppet scene than I do in Britain!

I'm working very hard this summer and am relieved that being absent from 'the scene' for eight months hasn't meant losing contacts or struggling to find work. The '*Little Red Hen*' is pretty exhausted so I'll be devising a new show to help her out! A project I worked on last year, '*The Magic Flute*' – a collaboration with musicians/actors/puppeteers has been awarded (*big bucks, Ed*) by the **Scottish Arts Council** – a rare event indeed! But fantastic news and very encouraging.

Shona Reppe.

**(This is embarrassing, I'm still working on it; 'it' being 'The Puppetry Handbook' which is temporarily unavailable, though I understand Ray DaSilva still has some copies, Anita).*

PITTSBURG TO NEW ZEALAND

Tim Kaulen writes to **Ramon Rivera** of **PINZ**.

... as a member of the *Industrial Arts Co-op*, a **Pittsburg, Pennsylvania** based collective, I am researching possible puppet troupes for a Summer Festival. Ideally we are looking for puppeteers or groups that are 'experimental' in nature and operate within moderate budgets. This is the first time for us to host an event such as this, so any input that you might have would be helpful. If you know of any group or organisation that I could approach, please let me know.

Contact: **Tim Kaulen**, 2131 Sarah Street, Pittsburg Pennsylvania 15203. Tel: 412 431 5890.

Email: tkaulen@hotmail.com

Web: <http://www.hotmail.com>

NEW EDITOR

Please address all correspondence for *Australian Puppeteer* magazine to **Philip Millar**, our new Editor at: 8 Green Street, St. Kilda East,

Victoria, Australia 3183.

Phone: 03 9525 8537 or Mob: 0419 316 186.

UNIMA USA to UNIMA AUSTRALIA

Vince Anthony to Sue Wallace.

Thank you so much for sending me your very informative *Australian Puppeteer* magazine. I always enjoy the issues and love keeping up with colleagues down under.

I was particularly interested in the details of Peter Scriven's death and the interest in a memorial to his work in puppetry mentioned in your most recent issue. I met this extraordinary man at our 1968 *Puppeteers of America National Festival* in St. Louis, Missouri. He came representing Australia so I assume that he was there in an official capacity. A clique formed around Peter; so I, plus a half-dozen other people, spent much of the week together. We all had a great time and I still have a beautiful charcoal print of puppetry on my wall, given to me by Peter.

I would love to see more in print on his career and life and I would be happy to contribute to a memorial commemorating his accomplishments. Please keep me posted on this possibility.

Again, thank you for the great magazine. I always forward them to our Editor to review.

Vince Anthony, General Secretary, UNIMA USA.

SEÑOR WENCES AND PEDRO

Señor Wences, the World famous ventriloquist has died at his home in Spain. He emigrated to the USA in 1934 and began playing the vaudeville circuit, 'another ventriloquist with a dummy', as he put it.

Two years later, in one of those show business 'lucky accidents', his dummy, *Pedro*, was damaged on the way to a performance.

Wences put the head in a box and took it on stage. It was so unusual that it created a sensation.

The *Head-in-a-Box* stayed in the act and with a *Fist Puppet* called *Johnny* and some plate spinning, Wences began to appear on US Television in 1948, doing his act nearly fifty times on the very popular *Ed Sullivan Show*. Catch-phrases from the act were picked up and used by people all over America.

After nearly two decades with the one act, Wences developed a second act featuring a chicken. His full repertoire was used when he guest-starred on *The Muppet Show*.

He was one hundred and three years old.

Dennis Murphy, New South Wales.

LETTERS

FROM NEW ZEALAND

... The One Van Festival sounded exciting. ... Another hat I wear is as chairman of the *Westshore Community Arts Council*. We have recently taken over three shops in the *Northcote Shopping Centre* and are turning them into an Arts Centre. One shop is for classes and Performing Arts and is suitable for puppet shows.

Alan Whiting.

FROM QUEENSLAND

A Queensland teacher, having just seen a puppet performance at her Primary School wrote the following comment on the Feedback form:

'Excellent in all aspects. Good for students to experience a dying artform' !!!!!

SNIPPETS FROM SOUTHLAND.

Douglas Hayward and his *Abbots Bromley Puppet Museum* is now housed at:

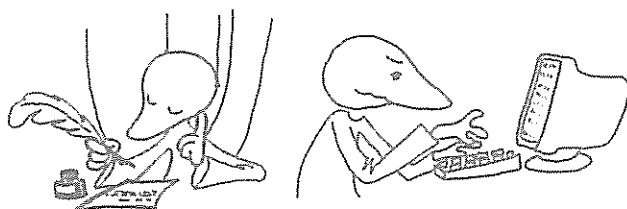
Lord Lichfield's Shugborough Estate Mansion, Milford, Near Stafford ST190XB

Tel: Little Hayward (01889) 881 388 Fax: (01889) 881 323, UK.

Edward (Ted) Leach, *New England Marionette Opera*, *Petersborough*, near Boston USA – on New Years day this year they had just done *Porgy and Bess* when an electrical fire destroyed the theatre – two hundred marionettes, etc destroyed, plus the stage (letter box type). They gave eighty to one hundred performances a year. I (Leslie Trowbridge, Ed) wrote to Bill Fosse in Chicago (Puppet Opera), asking what we can do to help.

Professor Michael Meschke, from *Marionett Muscet*, *Brunsgarten*, Stockholm Sweden, has handed over the leadership of the theatre (*Marionetteatern?*, Ed) to Helena Alvarez. I last met Professor Meschke at the *Pakistan Puppet Festival* (see page 19, Ed) – he is spending summer in Greece as head of a festival there (*Professor Meschke mounts the festival every summer on the island of Hydra, near Athens*, Ed).

Leslie Trowbridge, New Zealand.



REPORT

GREETINGS FROM CANBERRA

By Peter Wilson.

During Autumn I was working in Brisbane with *Queensland Theatre Company* on a production of *Butterfly* for their education programme, which opened at the *Lyric Theatre* for four performances in May.

The work, labelled MODD (Music, Opera, Dance and Drama) involved the *Queensland Theatre Company*, the *Queensland Opera*, the *Queensland Symphony Orchestra* and the *Queensland Ballet*, with myself on puppetry, presented a contemporary look at the *Madama Butterfly* story – very different from *Cho Cho San* (an earlier adaptation of the 'Madam Butterfly' story, using puppets, originally produced by *Handspan Theatre* in Melbourne, Ed).

It involved elements from *Cho Cho San*, *Belasco's* play and *Puccini's* opera, with some new text and original music.

The reviews said, 'It is bold', 'It is radical', 'It succeeds triumphantly'.

SKYLARK UPDATE

The final court case for charges against the ex-General Manager of *Skylark Theatre Company* have been carried out. *Soulsby* pleaded guilty in the A.C.T. Magistrates Court to thirty-two charges of stealing and forging and use of false audit reports.

The court imposed a three year suspended jail term, a five year good behaviour bond and an order to pay compensation to *Skylark*, which is now in the hands of the liquidator.

What lies ahead for Skyworks?

(*Skyworks Theatre Company*, Canberra, A.C.T., Ed).

We are in production mode for the development of a pilot for a kids' TV series: *Planet Oz* (working title). Puppets are currently being made – rehearsals commence in early July with filming taking place in mid July. The series is aimed at children three to nine years of age. It is set around a group of puppet characters based on familiar Australian animals. There is one human character involved who is a computer whiz. She introduces the animals to the Internet and www. They realize that this wondrous machine can help them tell the world about themselves and their concerns.

Skyworks and *National Recording Studios*, a production house in Canberra, have teamed up to produce the pilot which will be launched in Caane in October. It is hoped a 13-part-plus series will result from the pilot.

PS. I received an *Australia Council* grant – Individual Development, to spend three months in Perth, Western Australia, With *Spare Parts Theatre Company*. I will be running a Residency programme at WAAPA, training classes with *Spare Parts*, and creating a piece of Street Theatre with the company for the *Awesome Festival* in November. So busy times ahead!

Peter Wilson.

A VISIT TO A TURKISH PUPPET THEATRE

By Janet Macallister.

A highlight of my recent trip to Turkey was a Saturday morning performance of *Karagoz* (Shadow play) and a chance to meet the puppeteers.

This particular performance, presented by the *Show Theatre* of Istanbul, is the only regular puppet theatre now in the city. It is made up of two parts; the first part of about three quarters of an hour is pure *Karagoz*, and includes the traditional confrontation between *Karagoz* the blacksmith and *Howza* the mason as well as a variety of different traditional characters.

The audience, largely of young children, was obviously well acquainted with the play and enthusiastically greeted each character's theme music which introduced each one before they appeared on the screen.

The show consists of a number of different basic parts or skits. The puppeteer chooses which of these he will use in performance. So each week the children see a different show.

Although the children know the stories, they don't know which ones will be presented on any one day. Some speeches in the shadow theatre repertoire and certain scenes are set, and these never vary, others, especially the comic pieces and topical bits, are added and changed.

The puppet figures are flat clean cut silhouettes in colour, usually made from animal skin. The skin is soaked, dried in the sun, then smoothed out and treated until it is almost transparent. Broken glass is used to remove the hair. Finally it is rubbed and polished.

A mould or pattern is traced onto the skin and cut with a small curved knife called a *nevrekani*. The cut is stained with translucent vegetable dyes.

Jointing is done with a piece of gut threaded through each of the two pieces at the point where they overlap, and then knotted on both sides. Each has a hole somewhere in the upper part of the body, which is reinforced by a double leather piece, forming a socket into which the control rod is inserted from either side.

A second rod gives *Karagoz* his distinctive action. Puppets range in size from approximately 20cms to over 35cms.

Although I didn't follow all the comedy, the expertise of the puppeteer was obvious, and the reaction of the audience ample proof that this special form of shadow puppetry is a popular and much loved entertainment in its home town. And from the press reviews I have seen of its participation in European festivals, it has been a great success elsewhere as well.

The second half of the performance I saw consisted of some very simple topical puppets performing small cameo pieces designed very much to entertain the children, and could have been found in any regular puppet theatre.

'*Turkish Shadow Theatre* is coming to Sydney and Melbourne', - this was an exciting piece of news which I learnt while in Istanbul.

The Show Theatre, a well known and popular puppet theatre group will be performing in Sydney between 9th and 11th July 1999 and in Melbourne on 18th and 19th July.

They will be performing mainly for the enthusiastic Turkish community, and performances are planned for each evening of their stay, but they are happy to provide workshops and discussion groups, and to visit other venues.

Janet Macallister.

MAGDEBURG

2000

24th JUNE - 2nd JULY 2000

INVITATION

To submit applications for participation in the International Off-Programme of the World Festival of Puppet Theatre UNIMA 2000 in Magdeburg, Germany.

In addition to the official programme of the World Festival of Puppet Theatre UNIMA 2000 in Magdeburg, there will be an Off-Programme.

While productions and theatres in the festivals main programme will be selected by a **Selection Committee** and proposed for invitation, and while the costs of these guest performances will be borne by the organisers, the productions and the theatres in the **Festival's Off-Programme** will be selected by the Chairman of the Preparatory committee from amongst the applications that are sent in. The theatres which perform in the Off-Programme will do so without receiving a fee for their artists, and they will take over their travelling and transportation expenses.

(There is more detail here on the form given to the Editor by Richard Hart. He now has this form again, Ed).

The following is to be submitted together with the application:

- A brief description of the concept of the production (in German or English).
- A video tape of the production.
- Materials and photos in respect of the production.

The applications are to be sent by 31st August 1999 to:
Dr Gerd Taube

Vorsitzender des Vorbereitungskomitees
UNIMA 2000

C/o Kinder-und Jugendtheaterzentrum in der
Bundesrepublik Deutschland
Schuetzenstrasse 12. D-60311 Frankfurt am Main

Phone: + 49/69/29 66 61

Fax: + 49/69/29 23 54

email: G. Taube@kjz.f.shuttle.de

OBITUARY

ARLYN COAD

Arlyn and her husband, Luman Coad, established the *Coad Canada Puppets* in Vancouver in 1966.

They were in Australia for three months in 1975 and their work influenced the development of *Black Theatre* techniques here. They also taught local puppeteers their version of a rod-puppet head control, based on ones used by the large companies of eastern Europe, which became known here as "*The Coad Control*"!

Arlyn Coad was born in England and studied art there. (A fellow student was the cartoonist-musician Gerard Hoffnung.) Already interested in puppet theatre she met Luman when he was running the puppet theatre at *Children's Fairyland* in Oakland, California. He had studied theatre at San Francisco State University and their joint talents made an ideal blend, establishing a puppet company which won international praise for design and performance.

Besides North America and Australia, they performed in various European countries, Brazil, Israel and Japan. Early shows were quite big: *Master Peter's Puppet Show* was presented with the *Vancouver Symphony Orchestra* in a three thousand-seat theatre!

However, rather than subject themselves to the capricious world of grant applications, they usually chase to do small shows that could pay their own way.

These splendid little shows, using different kinds of puppets, were performed solo by Luman. For much of the year the couple would tour to schools in British Columbia in their large mobile home, fully equipped with kitchen, shower, toilet ... and furnace!

They brought one such show, *The Box? A Show of Feelings*, with them to Australia. Manipulated from below, and mimed to recorded music, it was a series of amusing sketches about a dog, and people here were delighted by the precision of design and performance.

Part of the reason for their visit to Australia, which was funded by the *Australian Council for the Arts* and

organised by the *Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust*, was to provide work experience for three "puppetry trainees" who were doing a two year course that was, regrettably, never repeated. The trainees were Sue Bradbury, Michael Creighton and Mary Travers, and their training involved attachment to other companies, courses at *NIDA*, and work with specialist tutors.

The trainees toured with the *Black Theatre* version of *The Tinderbox* which inspired several puppeteers here to experiment with *Black Theatre*, notably Gwen and (the late) Peter Iliffe who worked with Beverley Campbell-Jackson on *Bees Hey!* (1975) and *Spring* (1979).

The Coads have also published several monographs on puppetry and in 1987 set up *Charlemagne Press* which has published about twenty books on puppetry by various authors.

Seven years ago Arlyn was found to have myelofibrosis. In May this year she learnt that this had developed into leukaemia, and she didn't have long to live.

We had arrived in Vancouver to visit them a day later, and were impressed by the way she accepted the diagnosis. With a beaming smile she greeted us from her bed with. "What do you think of my Camille act?" We spent a very happy afternoon with her, looking through photos and sharing memories. At one point she said she had had a wonderful life. A week later, on 27th May 1999, we heard that she had died, calmly fading away at home.

Arlyn had three children from an earlier marriage, Sasha, Tanya (who has two daughters) and Katya. All live in Vancouver, and have been a great support for Luman, to whom they are devoted.

Luman plans to set up an award in memory of Arlyn, which will be offered internationally for excellence in design for puppet theatre performance.

Richard Bradshaw



Two Puppets by Arlyn Coad of Coad Canada Puppets, Vancouver.

REPORT ON PIG'S BREAKFAST

By Philip Millar

Philip reports on a long term project involving the creation and manipulation of puppets for a television series.

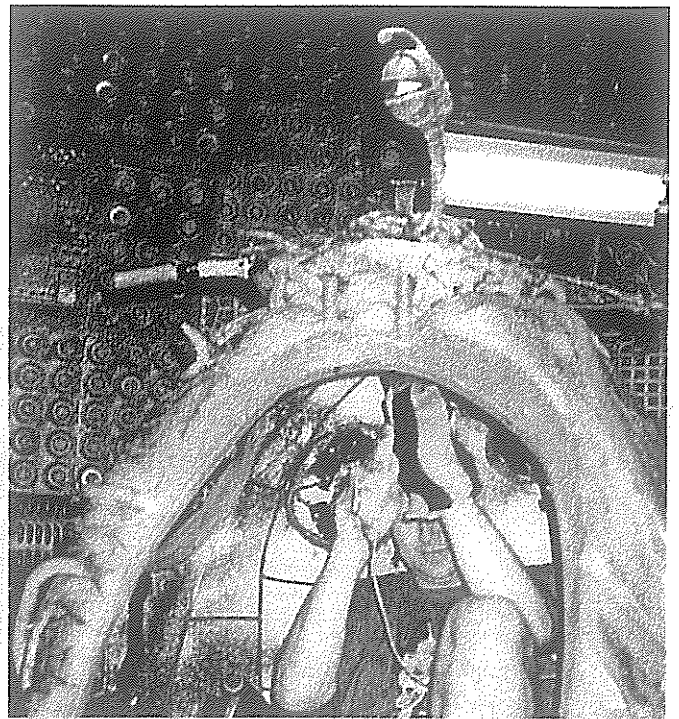
Mechanism design for puppetry all too often ends where it begins: at the prototype stage. Due to pressing time and money constraints, puppets are sometimes delivered with barely tested mechs and barely dry paint jobs. On *'Pig's Breakfast'* I've had the rare opportunity (rare for me anyway) to keep working on a set of puppets for many months, repairing and rebuilding.

Our two main characters, *Grob* and *Meeba*, are **Suits or Body Puppets**, each with facial mechanisms. The other puppet, *Queegle*, is a **Rod and Cable** controlled talking brain (me!). On *Pig's Breakfast* we shoot for fifty hours per week to complete two half-hour episodes every five days. It is a fast and furious shooting schedule.

The demands on the suits are strenuous, some of which were predictable, others totally unexpected. A main concern which has effected the mechanism design is the live recording of the performers' voices within the suits. As the mechanisms and microphones are right beside one another, the mechanism must be virtually silent. This has meant hours of testing various lubricants, teflon washers, foam padding, gaffer tape and frustration. We have doubles for both suits so an alteration in one means changing both. The demand for quiet has meant the replacement of most moving metal parts with nylon or other hard plastics.

The mouth control in *Meeba* uses an air control similar to the eyeblink mechanism found in the *Spitting Image* puppets from England. The slight pulsing noise from the small rubber bellows is fortunately not dissimilar to a breathing sound. The demand for usable sound from the suits on set is intense (the puppets have returned to the workshop several times to eradicate tiny squeaks or clicks from mouth and eye mechanisms which would normally be entirely acceptable).

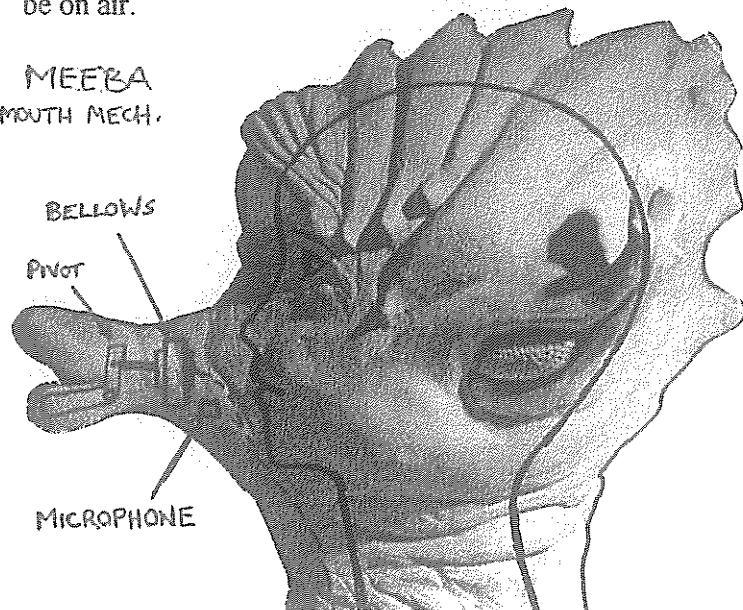
Beyond the technical demands of the Sound Department, additional time with my puppet has meant tweaking the mechanisms to permit a greater range of expressive possibilities. Initial limits to time and budget meant that *Queegle* started life with an eyeblink, a retractable neck and a small nodding action. Six months later he has a new eye mech, a new



universal neck joint with three cable control, a new pulsing brain operated with a foot control and a new set of foam latex tentacles. As the puppet is almost exclusively fixed to one spot in the set, this additional range has been very useful.

Alongside the main characters, the show demands a range of additional cable controlled tentacles, radio controlled stunt double brains, robots and the occasional guest alien. These include the evil shape-shifting *Plaag* and the smelliest creatures in the universe, the *K-Kharligahs*. By the time this article appears in print we'll have shot fifty-two episodes and will know whether series two is happening. It may even be on air.

MEEBA
MOUTH MECH.



CATCH 'PIG'S BREAKFAST' on CHANNEL
NINE, MON - WED at 4.00pm in Melbourne.

Philip Millar.

MORE PORTENO PUPPETRY

David Williams.

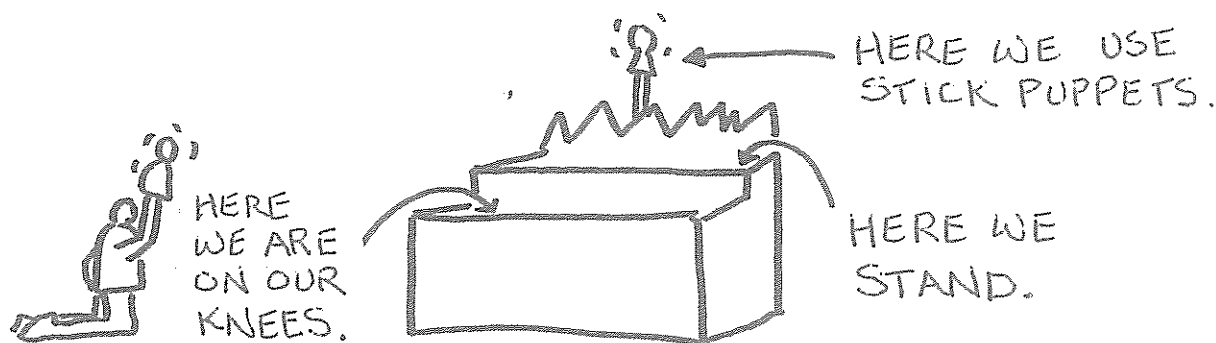
I'm writing this as an extension of the article on Argentinian puppetry in the Summer 1997 issue.

Paula Dayan is a graduate of the school at *Teatro General San Martin* (T.G.S.M.) in Buenos Aires. She was recently in Melbourne studying English, so I took the opportunity to talk to her about her career so far...

Paula began working with puppets as a way of overcoming shyness: "When I was nineteen I found it very hard to express my feelings, to show other people how I was. I didn't want to go to the psychoanalyst, as I felt the solution should be through art. I thought of the theatre, but it was too much for me. I found I could hide behind a puppet at the same time as letting my feelings flow."

Having experimented with short courses, Paula auditioned for the puppetry school at T.G.S.M. The course is three years long, the first two years being devoted to the study of vocal work, music, interpretation, dramaturgy, 'workshop' (puppet construction), corporeal expression and 'actuation'. In the final year the students form into groups to create a show.

Often these groups and shows endure beyond the end of formal study. Paula is now director of her graduating group "*Tinñaruña*". "We are seven girls, two of us musicians. We chose a story together and made a work called "*The Death, The Fairest*". It's based on a Latin American legend. We use a puppet theatre made by ourselves that is like this' (see sketch below):



I asked if she has traveled much with her shows. "Yes! I've been going to the outback of my country for five years now, to a place called *Iruya*. It's a very little colonial village, situated next to *Bolivia*, in the Andes. To get there, I walk seven hours through the mountains and valleys to get to the school, where I can stay. In the last three trips I went with friends from the puppet school and the university. At the moment, we're a troupe, one puppeteer (me), two musicians and one juggler. We go there and stay about ten days, living in the school, and playing and doing activities with the children. I think that one of the most important things is that there are children there who have never seen a puppet in their whole life! You can't imagine what they are feeling until you go there. It's very important for them, and of course, for us."

Paula has her own characters outside of her group work. Her favourite puppets are 'titeres de la boca', which are constructed in the muppet-style (hand-in-mouth) and made of foam. I was fortunate to meet *Zuli*, her Cuban 'lady of the night' who is anything but shy. She's so bold, in fact, that she sometimes puts Paula herself on the back foot: "Well, one night I was playing with *Zuli* in front of a mirror and I couldn't see my face, only hers, and she was challenging me a lot... she was looking at me and speaking to me and I had to understand that she had a lot of things to complain about. (Finally, I wondered if I was a schizophrenic)".

One of the central philosophies of Paula's training is that very loss of self. "A puppeteer is the person who shuts his eyes and gives his heart to the puppet, who lets the love flow from his body to the puppet's body. A puppeteer is the person who forgets his name for an instant and becomes a king, a prostitute, a fish, or whatever he wants in a new world, with its new laws and its new time."

I wish I'd said that.

David Williams.

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YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS ON FLOPPY DISK WOULD BE APPRECIATED. PLEASE INCLUDE A HARD COPY PRINT-OUT AS WELL.

REVIEWS INVITED

Thank you to all the reviewers and reporters for this issue. EVERY item was volunteered. Can you imagine what a boon this is to an editor. All the 'Hints' came in without prompting from me; CV material keeps flowing, letters to the editor, international news. Our regular features were ALL filled early from offers made, or by writers whose work I know to expect. Thank you very much for this welcome support.

If I have a problem now, it's where to fit it all! Note that the number of pages has risen in these three issues of *Australian Puppeteer* to 32 plus cover.

Your contributions are taken very seriously. I am still trying to include them in the issue for which they arrived, that is, not carrying-over any copy to the next issue if I can possibly avoid it. This keeps our magazine as close to current as a three month publication can be.

Keep it coming! Don't forget the photographs!

BACK COPIES

Members have been seeking back copies of *Australian Puppeteer*. New members may wish to do so in order to complete their set of, say, the *Workshop Spread*, the *Puppetry Related Arts* or the *Histories*, all of which have a logical sequence to them.

If you wish to acquire back copies in whatever quantity, would you please write a cheque payable to **UNIMA Australia** to the amount of \$5.00 per copy, stating clearly exactly the edition required (eg. 'Spring 1997'), the number of copies required and your address details. Mail this to **Anita Sinclair**, so that I will be sure to post the magazine to you. I will forward your cheque on to Prodos. New Zealand subscribers, please allow \$3.00 postage for one back copy. Please check current postal rates if ordering more than one copy.

DEADLINES

After this issue's late appearance, you must wonder if the deadlines mean anything. Yes they do.

Where-as late submissions are treated generously (especially if they report recent important news), the submission of regular features or large articles ON DEADLINE mean that work can start early on formatting and editing. Ring Anita if there is a problem, otherwise do YOUR bit by complying with deadlines, please!

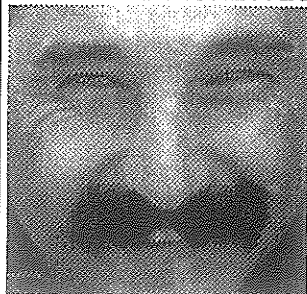
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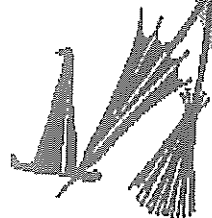
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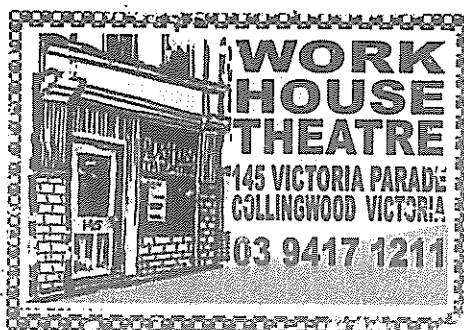


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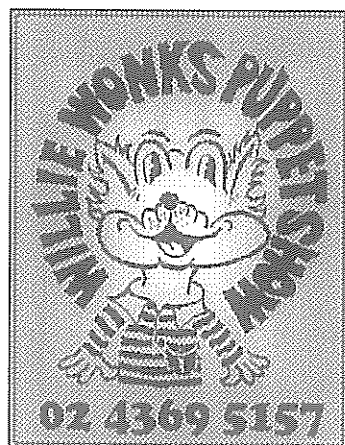
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