Australian Puppeteer Special Edition 35 UNIMA Australia Inc. March 2008

ISSN 1835-6567

Graphic design Vicki Jaeger

Magazine Team Co-ordinator Ken Evans

> Editorial team Ken Evans Julia Davis Vicki Jaeger Penelope Bartlau

Sponsorship & Advertising Co-ordinator Jennifer Pfeiffer

Front cover image
Puppet under construction by Tim Denton and
Richard Hart for *Superbia*Photograph: Ken Evans

Printed at GEON Australia Trading as Advance Press 186 Railway Parade, Bassendean WA 6054 Australia

> UNIMA Australia Inc No A0045823T ABN 22 431 881 810

> > PO Box 121 Oakleigh VIC 3166 AUSTRALIA

All information was provided by contributors and UNIMA Australia Inc. does not endorse the information contained within.



Logo Designed by Norman Hetherington

Editorial

The announcement in 2004 that the 20th UNIMA World Congress and Puppetry Festival would be held in Perth, 2008 created momentum for the evolution of our UNIMA publication, *Australian Puppeteer*. Even though 2008 seemed so far away, it was proposed by the executive committee of UNIMA Australia, that our three editors should collaborate to produce a 'bigger, better, and colour' edition to commemorate this landmark event.

As this is the first time the Congress and Festival is being held in the Southern Hemisphere, many UNIMA representatives and puppetry enthusiasts will be travelling to Australia – also perhaps for the first time – and they will be interested to learn about our puppetry culture, its genesis and journeys.

The theme of the Festival — 'Journeys — an Australian Voice' - has inspired us to reflect on the movements and developments within the artform. Can we identify an Australian voice? How have we created our own meanings out of the influences and echoes of other voices?

We invited expressions of interest from our readers, UNIMA members and other artists, to contribute articles exploring the theme from various perspectives: historical, academic, artistic/creative, educational, public and personal. The resulting collection of papers is not a who's who of Australian puppetry, nor an attempt to epitomise aspects of the artform. It is a sampling of some of the notes that make up the chorus of many voices and many voyages which have contributed to puppetry arts in this country.

Some pertinent historical references, reflections on design, style, the creative process, community involvement, the future of the art and the structures which support it, are some of the topics encompassed in this Special Edition of *Australian Puppeteer* No. 35.

The contributions of the magazine team have been invaluable. Thank you to the other members of the editorial team, Penelope Bartlau, and Vicki Jaeger (who also undertook the massive task of design and layout), to Sarah Kriegler for her part in the planning, to Ken Evans as magazine team co-ordinator and Jennifer Pfeiffer as the Sponsorship/ Advertising Co-ordinator.

This issue would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of the UNIMA Australia executive and especially the vision and persistence of Richard Hart, Secretary, and Ken Evans, committee member.

Julia Davis

Contents

Editorial	-1
Foreword	2
Australia and Puppetry: An Historical Perspective A Brief History of Puppetry in Australia — Richard Bradshaw	3
Edith C. Murray founder of UNIMA Australia — <i>Richard Bradshaw</i>	4
The Legacy of the 1970s — Geoffrey Milne	6
The Legacy of Handspan — Helen Rickards	9
Design & Making for Puppets Lighting Design — Philip Lethlean	1 2
Meet the Maker – Al Martinez	13
Design, Turning Tricks & Telling Tales — Richard Jeziorny	14
Blacklight in Puppet Theatre – Richard Hart	15
Design — Ken Evans	16
A Spotlight on Australian Styles Playing with the Big Toys —	18
arge Scale Outdoor Spectacles — Peter J. Wilson	18
Contemporary Shadow Theatre — The Theatrical Trump Card <i>— Lynne Kent</i>	19
Being a Puppet — <i>Don Bridges</i>	20
My Darling Patricia — Clare Britton & Halcyon Macleod	22
Dispatch — Death of a Puppet: When is a Lifeless Character more than a Lifeless Object? — <i>Penelope Bartlau</i>	24
Broadening the Audience	27
Lloyd Noble and his scarf puppets - Mildred R. Clarke	27
Making One Million — <i>Daniele Goronszy</i>	28
Seagrass and the Weedy Seadragon — Ian Cuming	29
The Tale of an Australian Puppeteer Abroad: an Adventure in Puppet Wonderland — Jane Hartnell	31
ArtPlay, Melbourne – <i>Simon Spain</i>	33
Australian Puppetry: The Horizon Expands Post Graduate Diploma in Production –	34
Puppetry Masters in Production – Puppetry – Gilly McInnes	34
/CA Master of Puppetry: A Year on Fast-Forward — <i>Penelope Bartlau</i>	36
Beginnings Philosophy and Practice, a Tandem Road <i>— Jennifer Pfeiffer</i>	38
Profiles of Australian Puppeteers	41
Australian Productions at the 20 th UNIMA Congress & World Puppetry Festival	50

Foreword

For this special edition of *Australian Puppeteer*, UNIMA Australia aims to encapsulate a picture of puppetry in Australia – a portrayal of Australian 'voices'. It is a collection of articles by participants in our industry, who present their perspective on the art form: its history, design, style, audience and expansion.

Australia doesn't have a long tradition of puppetry. Instead, the Australian 'voice' has emerged through many influences and individuals. Richard Bradshaw notes that after World War II 'the tentative beginnings of a genuine 'Australian puppetry' was emerging and 'Edith Murray ... started UNIMA Australia.'

Geoffrey Milne discusses the decade of 'a sudden and urgent upsurge of interest in new Australian play-writing and a style of performance that was also suddenly, but urgently – and utterly unashamedly – Australian' which created the break away from the 'dominance of British, European and American sources'. He maintains that 'The five years between 1976 and 1980 sowed the seeds from which flourished the artform long into the future.'

Helen Rickard's article is about Handspan, 'which began in 1977 as an accidental artists' collective' and suggests that [Handspan] 'is arguably the most influential company in the history of contemporary Australian puppetry' – which adds weight to Geoffrey's statement about those years.

As in many countries, Australian puppetry embraced other forms of performance, creating hybrid styles. Australian puppetry also encompasses the mix of cultures that make up the country's population. 'With the change in the cultural make-up of Australia there has come a more international view of puppetry and increasing exchange with non-English-speaking countries. At the same time there has been an increasing involvement with indigenous people.' (Richard Bradshaw).

On the Australian scene, our designers play a significant role in the generation and creation of theatrical possibilities. As Philip Lethlean remarks in his article 'light is more than a technical tool...my on-going interest is to extend the ways in which light can manipulate, to enhance perception and shape concepts.' In his design approach, Richard Jeziorny calls on his experience in many forms of theatre to generate his vast contribution to design by avoiding 'the old bag of tricks...[and] to reinvent the trick or turn it on its head' and Richard Hart advises to keep asking, 'Could there be an even better solution?'. Puppet designer and maker, Al Martinez, gets his inspiration for puppets from recycled materials and Ken Evans believes that it is 'design [that] can lead and inspire the storyline'.

Diversity of style is open to the puppeteer in Australia and opportunities for new expression come from all directions. The Olympic Games (2000) gave Peter J. Wilson the opportunity to 'play with big toys' at sporting events, with the use of puppets on a spectacular scale. Lynne Kent became intrigued with the possibilities of using newer technological and film techniques to enhance the age-old art of shadow theatre. The advent of television exposed the Australian audience to puppetry forms from around the world giving the opportunity for puppeteers and puppet makers to flex their wings in a new arena. There are many fine examples of Australian puppetry in television of which two are mentioned here: the show, *Shirl's Neighbourhood* and puppet, 'Mr Squiggle'. *Shirl's Neighbourhood* gave birth to 'being a puppet' for Don Bridges while 'Mr Squiggle' lives on in the fond memories of several generations of Australians. Clare Britton and Halcyon Macleod describe the creative journey of the company, My Darling Patricia. Penelope Bartlau discusses the philosophy of the puppet as an object, and also describes the development of, 'Dispatch', a production created for her

Master of Puppetry at the Victorian College of the Arts.

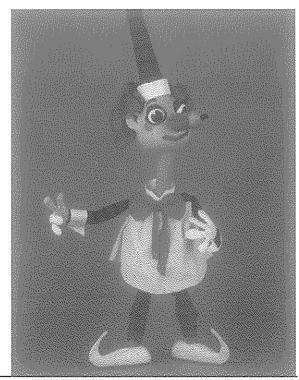
Puppeteers Lloyd Nobel, Daniele Goronszy, Ian Cuming and Jane Hartnell have reached into communities and used the art form to enrich and educate. Simon Spain talks about ArtPlay and their role in raising the bar of children's arts programming by providing collaboration with artists for children and families in Melbourne.

The Victorian College of the Arts introduced puppetry as a Graduate Diploma in Production in 2004 under the belief that 'specialists also need to be based in a familiarity with each aspect of staging a production'. Gilly McInnes looks at what the course offers, the philosophy behind it and the opportunities it presents.

Finally, Jennifer Pfeiffer re-visits a paper she wrote in 1996 — *The Power of the Object: the Potency of Puppetry*, which created a basis for the development of her current PhD project *Phenomenology of Puppet*, focusing on cross-cultural work.

Vicki Jaeger

Norman Hetherington's 'Mr Squiggle' puppet Photograph courtesy of Norman Hetherington



A Brief History of Puppetry in Australia

Richard Bradshaw President, UNIMA Australia

These days 'puppetry' could happily embrace some of the techniques used to illustrate stories by the first people in this continent. However, what is traditionally regarded as 'puppetry' didn't come here until some time after the first European settlement (Sydney, 1788). In the nineteenth century there were mechanical theatres, Punch and Judy and marionettes.

Despite the months of hazardous sea voyages to get here from Europe and America, some puppeteers came to perform and a few even settled here. Some even went 'home' again before returning.

George Peck, a musician who had recently arrived from Hull, England, presented a mechanical theatre in Tasmania in 1834–5. He was back in Hull in 1840 and returned from there to Australia in 1853 having been in California in 1851–2.

Peck's show was based on J.E. Thiodon's *Theatre of Arts* which was eventually brought to Australia from England in 1870 by Aspinall Thiodon who settled in Sydney. He had taken the show to New York in 1858 for the great showman P.T. Barnum, returning to England when the Civil War began.

Punch and Judy shows go back at least to 1842 in Sydney, and unreliable accounts suggest much earlier. They have had a continuous presence since then.

Marionettes also go back at least to 1842 when some fantoccini (variety) acts were presented in Sydney by Mr. Holland. Henry Beaufoy Merlin, who won posthumous fame for his photos of the 1872 NSW goldfields, had displayed mechanical theatre and marionettes in Sydney in 1852–3.

McDonough and Earnshaw's Royal Marionettes came from the USA in 1875 and toured in four states. Their show had its origins in Britain and followed a three-part form thought to have been introduced by Lambert D'Arc: fantocccini acts, a black minstrel show and an elaborate pantomime with a transformation scene. With them came the Englishman, Charles Webb, and his wife Jane who, with Charles Trotter, remained in Australia to form their own marionette company.

Webb's Royal Marionettes toured Australia and New Zealand in 1876–79 and 1884–86. In between they performed in Asia (including Ceylon, India and Burma) and Europe (England in 1881, and Russia in 1883). They were sometimes billed as Webb's Royal Australian and Indian Marionettes. They are probably the first puppeteers to have circumnavigated the world. In 1886 Webb's Royal Marionettes played the Perth Town Hall, where the 2008 UNIMA Congress is to be held.

A tour by the renowned marionettist Lambert D'Arc and his six children, who came from Cardiff (via India) in 1892, ended in disaster when nearly all the puppets were lost in a fire in Cooktown, in the Far North of Queensland. They stayed on for half a year to rebuild before continuing on to Asia. Lambert D'Arc died on Thursday Island, but his son, George took over, and the D'Arc puppets (most probably made in Cooktown) are understood to have been the first European marionettes seen in Japan.

Other marionette companies visited from England and America and there were also performances by marionettes from Italy (one as early as 1878) but Australia remained an outpost of England until after World War II. By then there had already been the tentative beginnings of a genuine 'Australian puppetry', notably with the marionettes of Allan and Kay Lewis in Sydney. W.D. Nicol did much to stimulate an interest in puppetry in Melbourne after World War II and other puppeteers were being nurtured in Sydney by Edith Murray, who eventually started UNIMA Australia.

Tours by the Hogarth Puppets of Jan Bussell and his wife Ann Hogarth, from England, the first in 1952, helped to revive an interest in puppetry. (Jan Bussell was President of UNIMA from 1968–76 and Busselton, south of Perth, was named after his great-uncle).

A significant development came with Peter Scriven's 'The Tintookies' in 1956. This was a big 'overhead-bridge' marionette show indirectly influenced by that of the great Italian showman, Vittoria Podrecca. The show was set in Australia, with Australian animals and people. It led to the creation of the Marionette Theatre of Australia (MTA) which toured such shows throughout Australia and over a dozen Asian countries. The last big tour, ending in 1976, even included Kabul. The MTA set a precedent for government funding of puppetry.

Television arrived here in 1956 and the great success story is that of Norman Hetherington, a prominent cartoonist who became a puppeteer. His puppet, 'Mr Squiggle', a marionette who turns 'squiggles' submitted by children into recognisable drawings using his pencil-like nose, was on national television for over forty years. Norman was UNIMA Australia's first president.

With the change in the cultural make-up of Australia there has come a more international view of puppetry and increasing exchange with non-English-speaking countries. At the same time there has been an increasing involvement with indigenous people. Australia's proximity to Asia and its rich puppet traditions has led to projects with Japan, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, etc.

As in other countries, puppetry has extended beyond the traditional forms of the nineteenth century. Notable outdoor examples are the large robot-like figures of 'Knee High' and the robust performances by Snuff Puppets. Large-scale puppetry has become an expectation in the opening and closing ceremonies of international sporting events. Life-sized dinosaurs made in Melbourne are currently performing in American arenas.

At present there are four main subsidised puppetry companies: Polyglot and Snuff Puppets in Melbourne, Terrapin in Hobart, and Spare Parts in Fremantle. There are many smaller groups and soloists some of which will be represented at UNIMA 2008. The Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne now provides courses for experienced puppeteers who get a chance to work with leading practitioners from overseas.*

^{*} For a recent detailed overview see: 'The Space Between: The Art of Puppetry and Visual Theatre in Australia' by Peter J. Wilson and Geoffrey Milne [Strawberry Hills, NSW: Currency Press, 2004]

Edith C. Murray founder of UNIMA Australia

Richard Bradshaw

Edith Constance Blackwell was born in North Sydney on 26 February 1897, in a house with the almost prophetic name 'Clovelly'. Her parents had recently returned from living under canvas in Coolgardie, in the Western Australian goldfields, where her father was a tobacconist.

At ten she became a boarder at the Woodford Academy in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney. When her parents later moved to nearby Springwood, Edith commuted daily from there to Fort Street Girls' High School (Sydney) and then, University of Sydney. She graduated in 1920 with a B.Sc., majoring in Geology. A Diploma of Education followed and later a Diploma of Social Science. The journey to Sydney by steam train took about two hours and the train became her 'study', just as in later life, when she returned to live in Springwood, it would become her 'office'.

In Springwood in 1922 she married Rowland C. Murray but in later life they separated. They were to have two sons: David, who was Crown Prosecutor in NSW (1975–1983) and Bruce, who died as a young adult.

Her real introduction to puppetry came in 1935 when she was a social worker with state wards for the Department of Child Welfare at 'Bidura' in Glebe, Sydney. After failed attempts to quell the boisterous girls she brought some glove-puppets into class with instant success. (Thirty years later she was to repeat the success with unruly thirteen year-olds in Scotland.)

In the early 1940s Edith was a member of the committee of the Folk-Lore Association of NSW. Folk-dancing was a strong interest and Edith was able to call for square dances.

In 1948 she helped to establish the Puppetry Guild of NSW in Sydney and was its energetic Secretary for many years. The Guild met in centres run by the Children's Library and Crafts Movement (later the Creative Leisure Movement).

Edith worked with the Movement and in later life became a Trustee. She introduced puppetry to its centres, one of which was solely for puppets, the Clovelly Puppet Theatre. It opened in Burnie Park, Clovelly, on 28 May 1949 and she was its Director until 1982, except for her time overseas when Bruce Barratt was in charge. I joined the Clovelly team in 1952 on the recommendation of a school-friend, Arthur Cantrill who later became an experimental film-maker and lecturer on film in Melbourne. He was one of Edith's principal puppeteers and has maintained an interest.

The Clovelly Puppet Theatre was in a corrugated iron army hut in Burnie Park in the Sydney beach-side suburb of Clovelly. The building was too hot in summer, so it was only used as a puppet theatre in cooler months. There were originally shows given on Saturday

Edith in Osaka



afternoons, with five or six short glove-puppet plays performed by children, with adults sometimes helping. After an interval, during

which the glove-puppet booth was taken aside, there would be a marionette presentation, which, once a month, was a circus.

Although they were not used as much, the puppet theatre at the Movement's Centre in Rochford Street, Erskineville and the later, architect-designed one at the purpose-built Centre in nearby Prospect Street, were superior. They were both 'combination' theatres and could be converted from a glove to rod puppet stage by raising or dropping the marionette platform into place. There was also a marionette stage at the Movement's centre at Bradfield Park, then a migrant hostel and now the genteel suburb of East Lindfield.

Edith appeared in two short Australian Instructional Films made at Clovelly, *Let's Make Puppets* (1951) and *Our First Puppet Play* (1954), and in 1956 toured a marionette show in NSW for the Arts Council. She called the company Moonahwarra Marionettes.

'Moonahwarra' was the name she gave to the small house she had built for herself in Springwood in about 1954. There she chopped her own firewood, threw 'double bungers' (exploding firecrackers) into the dark to discourage the possums from eating the climbing rose, and more than once stood guard with a hose as bushfires threatened the house. It now belongs to the grandchildren, Geoff, Sue and Jennie.

She lived simply and frugally but was remarkably generous. She made her own clothes, often from garments others had passed on to her. Perhaps a secret to her vitality was her remarkable ability to take catnaps, sometimes even mid-sentence! Once, after she had drifted off by the open fire, she woke up and studied her slippers. 'What do you think of my slippers? They're on the wrong feet. They wore out on the others.'

She was especially interested in using puppets with disadvantaged and disabled children and was a visiting lecturer in puppetry at the Occupational Therapy Training Centre in Paddington, Sydney from 1952 to 1963.

She joined British UNIMA with another Australian puppeteer, Heather Giffin, when they decided to sail to the UK and attend a UNIMA festival in Colwyn Bay, North Wales in 1963. She remained in the UK for two years, working as a teacher in Scotland and as a housekeeper near Aylesbury. With Heather Giffin she worked for the puppeteers Paul and Peta Page using 'black-light' puppets as an interlude in Christmas pantomimes in Glasgow.

When I arrived in London in 1964 Edith had already arranged for us to perform with my shadow puppets at a UNIMA Festival for amateur puppeteers in Karlovy Vary, Czechoslovakia. The following month



Outside PUK,Tokyo, late 1976. From left:Taiji Kawajiri, then President of PUK Puppet Theatre and UNIMA Japan, Edith Murray, Jean-Paul Hubert and Richard Bradshaw.

we sailed from London to Leningrad for a UNIMA Festival of USSR puppetry, returning by train from Moscow with Jan Bussell and Ann Hogarth.

When Edith returned to Australia, in 1965, her resolve to set up an Australian branch of UNIMA led to a meeting of puppeteers in Adelaide. They appointed an interim committee to establish an Australian Puppetry Guild (APG), with sections in five States, and a UNIMA centre. There were four of us on that committee.

Late in 1969 the General Secretary of UNIMA, Dr. Jan Malik, gave permission to Edith to set up an Australian Centre of UNIMA. It began in 1970, with thirteen members from five States, plus one 'collective' member (the APG of NSW). Norman Hetherington was President, Nancy Johnston (of West Perth) was Treasurer and Edith was Secretary. She was also Secretary of the APG of NSW, and continued in both roles for some years.

In 1976, when I toured with Jean-Paul Hubert for PUK Puppet Theatre in Japan, PUK generously paid for Edith to fly to Japan and organised a small tour for her that included a visit to the Bunraku Theatre in Osaka, and tourism in Kyoto. This was in recognition of her role in UNIMA as well as her influence on me. She had encouraged me in puppetry, advised me to bring shadow puppets to Europe in 1964 and recommended me to the UNIMA Festival in Charleville-Mézières in 1972. (Her encouragement was not confined to puppetry. On her advice I did Geology as one of my majors. I studied for final exams at 'Moonahwarra' and even graduated wearing Edith's B.Sc. hood of almost forty years earlier).

The Sydney puppeteer, John Lewis, was another of Edith's Clovelly puppeteers and in a warm tribute to her (*Back Soon, ECM* in *Manipulation*, October 1986) suggested that 'she must have invented recycling long before it became fashionable.' Nothing was wasted, and the wood she used for carving heads and hands was usually camphor laurel from fallen branches. Similarly the beautifully made clothes for her puppets were usually from selected and treasured off-cuts.

Edith was awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) in Sydney in 1979 and at the UNIMA Congress in Washington DC in 1980, she was made a Member of Honour of UNIMA (in absentia)*.

In 1982, Christine Woodcock made the archival film *Edith Murray*, *Puppeteer* for the Australia Council. In it, Edith is seen talking of her life in puppetry at her home in Springwood. It was the last year she lived there. The film is all the more valuable because, soon after it was made, Edith's memory began failing. When her grandson Geoff Murray (now on the board of Belvoir Street Theatre, Sydney) accompanied her to the puppetry festival in Adelaide in 1983, she was already having difficulty remembering people, although that didn't dampen her enjoyment of being among puppeteers.

Edith died at a nursing home in Waterfall, NSW on 30 January, 1986, but her memory will be with us at UNIMA 2008.

*Our other Member of Honour (Budapest, 1996) is Axel Axelrad.

The Legacy of the 1970s

Geoffrey Milne

There is a widely-held perception among theatre people of a certain age that the decade of the '1970s' was one of the most significant in the recent history of our national theatre. I do belong to that era and I put the idea up unashamedly at the head of an article, designed to try to locate the roots of a broader story about the exciting development of puppetry and visual theatre in Australia. I also acknowledge a growing swell of generally persuasive argument that there was a great deal of important theatre development happening prior to the so-called 'New Wave' of Australian theatre and drama of the 'seventies' and still more that the New Wave's achievements were limited to a rather narrow range of theatrical endeavour — white, Anglo, male, largely heterosexual and middle class, and largely in spoken-word drama — and that the changes of greater significance in our theatre didn't happen until later.²

What I want to do here, then, is to trace a pattern of many obvious and incontestable new waves of change – without the essentialising initial capital letters – in our theatre in the 'seventies' rather than to enter into yet another debate about the achievements of the New Wave as such. I deliberately place quotation-marks around the '1970s' and 'seventies' to suggest that the way that 'decade' is often talked about can sometimes indicate a degree of contingency. Mostly, theatre historians of my generation – and many who follow – discern the first signs of real change away from an Anglo – and largely British Rep-dominated theatre – in the inauguration of the Jane St Theatre in Sydney and La Mama in Melbourne. These venues saw a sudden and urgent upsurge of interest in new Australian play-writing and a style of performance that was also suddenly but urgently – and utterly unashamedly – Australian; there was no longer a felt need to act in Pommy accents in foreign plays – classical or modern, for example.

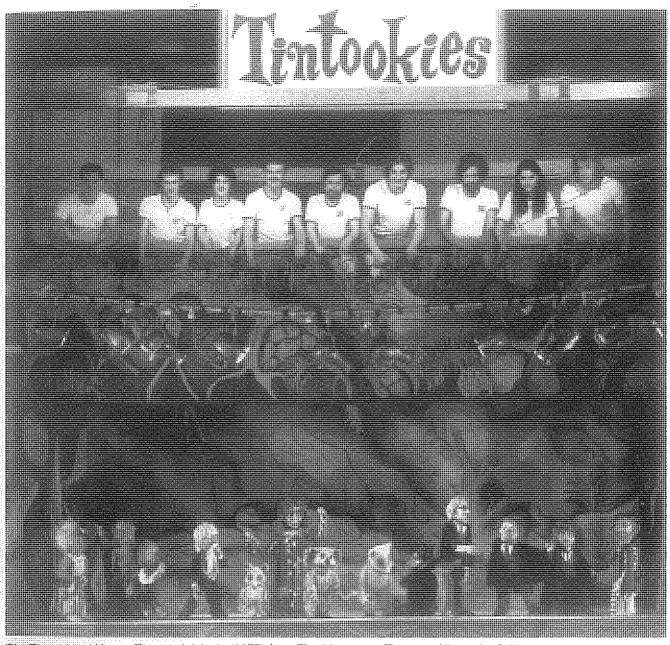
But they began life in 1966 and 1967 respectively: not in the 'seventies'! The real consolidation of those beginnings came when the Australian Performing Group (Melbourne) and the Nimrod Theatre (Sydney) established their insistent presences in 1970. So, in as much as the years between — say — 1966 and about 1981 genuinely began to 'Australianise' the Australian theatre and its repertoire, I'm happy to stretch the so-called decade of the 'seventies' into about a fifteen-year period of energetic activity and sustained growth. Not only did we begin to change forever the national character of the repertoire — shifting the dominance of British, European and American sources and the 'Classics' (upwards of 95% in the late 1960s) to an Australian-dominated one by about 1990 (Australian content has maintained a level of about 66% nation-wide since then) — but we also began a remarkable series of changes in the means, places, personnel and styles through which we enacted that changing repertoire.

To begin with places of change, few if any of the new alternative drama companies performed — or wanted to perform — in nineteenth-century proscenium arch theatres, even if any were available. Most were owned or operated by commercial operators or were later found in the growing number of state government-built centres. Former church halls, factories, community centres and other non purpose-built

venues were pressed into service and few of them utilised traditional actor-audience relationships. In NSW especially, the thrust-stage replaced the end-on stage as the preferred option; in other places, flexibility of actor-audience relationship was a prime requirement. The Pram Factory (1970 – early 1980s), for example, was rarely configured the same way from one production to the next, while the Popular Theatre Troupe in Queensland (1974–1983) almost invariably eschewed theatre buildings of any kind. What were needed were new environments for the advancement of new ways of thinking and the new dramatisation of the Australian way of life. Similarly, once the New Wave had taken root in the capital cities, we began to explore the hinterland, establishing professionally-producing companies in regional cities from Newcastle (with the Hunter Valley Theatre Company, 1976) to Wollongong (Theatre South, 1980) and many other places in between, including Geelong and the south-east of South Australia. A flourishing network of more than fifteen regional companies (as opposed to Performing Arts Centres, the aggressive building of which, by State governments, also began in the 1970s) has lately been diminished to barely a handful. The various state-based performing arts centre associations now provide their audiences with 'product' — in their invariably proscenium-arch theatres — toured from the capital city-based mainstream theatre companies.

The personnel responsible for overseeing the presentation of our theatre culture have also changed. Nearly all of the artistic directors of our major theatre companies of the 1960s – the Melbourne Theatre Company, the Old Tote et al – were English-born and/or Englishtrained. The same was true of our first national infrastructure body, the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, Englishman Hugh Hunt being its first Executive Director (1955-1960). But this pattern changed in the 1970s; the first Australian appointed to run a state theatre company was John Tasker (South Australian Theatre Company, 1965 -1967) while the last Englishman to enjoy that privilege was Alan Edwards (Queensland Theatre Company, 1969). The key personnel in most of our alternative companies of the New Wave were Australianborn, although some - like Nimrod's John Bell - no doubt gained a good deal of his appeal due to his training and experience in England. Bell, however, was, and still is, in many ways, an exception in a trend – begun in the 1970s – to entrust the direction of Australian theatre into Australian hands. The Australia Council for the Arts (our only national infrastructure body, which effectively supplanted the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust (AETT) in 1969) was also deliberately placed in Australian-born hands by the Whitlam Labor government in 1972.

What I've discussed so far relates mainly to spoken-word drama. But the New Wave – particularly at the Pram Factory and Nimrod – also revived interest in old styles of music theatre, with knockabout shows like *Marvellous Melbourne* and *Biggles* and developed an increasingly non-naturalistic approach to performance and to staging.



The Tribechies. Warner Theatre Adelaide (1975) from The Plantoneone Theatre of Australia Collection. Diprinced from Theatre of the Impossible, Popper Theatre in Australia by Plance Volla and Holon Kickards, Published by Craftmann Picana, 1969

Developments on wider fronts followed quickly. 'Deen cacus' and physical thereto. I have be number around an explaint defining artisons and physical thereto. I 1979, and thereto because the physical fronts of the original particles. The original conformation of the original performance of the original conformation of the original performance. The performance of the original performance or the performance of the original performance or the original performance. The performance of the original performance or plays like Kevin Gilbert's The Cherry Pickers (first performed 1971), Robert J. Merritt's The Cake Man (1975) and Jack Davis's Kullark (1979).

It is hardly suggesting, then, that in this entremely boady atmosphere of renovation, innovation and elforation - of a province sense of a distinctly national culture - programs also thrived in the 'severties'. As is said-life between and discurrented() arrivations the imministra-- for the pleasure of audiences young and pill and/or for the profit of the performer - has leep been precised in the Australian referres. and been in the nation of large. Augustily, however, the list neaf 'high-water mark' in Australian puppetry was reached in 1956 by Melbourne-born puppeteer Peter Scriven. Drawing on rich and eclectic influences and experiences, 4 Scriven's first big hit, with his own company Peter Scriven Puppets, was The Tintookies in Sydney in 1956 – one of the most elaborate and large-scale long-string marionette productions seen in Australia to that date and whose title was to become so widely known among several generations of Australians that it eclipsed the name of any of the companies which presented it. Nine years later (in 1965), Scriven was appointed by

the AETT to found one of its most successful attempts at a national theatre company – the Marionette Theatre of Australia (MTA).

I would argue that the MTA prosecuted the AETT's charter better than any of the contemporaneous Trust-supported companies, in that it only ever produced Australian-written, locally-inspired shows with locally-inspired ideas and with (mostly) locally-born artists. And it employed a lot of them: writers (Scriven himself, sometimes with Hal Saunders), designers and builders of extremely detailed sets and puppets (like Ross Hill, Polish-born Ygor Hyczka and others), voice-over artists (Ray Barrett, Tex Morton and others) and composers/conductors (including Jim Cotter, Hal Evans, German-born Kurt Herweg and Jim Gussey) for the pre-taped dialogue and music, and as many as nine marionettists⁵ manipulating hundreds of characters from high overhead bridges. The company also toured with great success, within Australia and abroad.

But the cost of maintaining such a big company and such high production values began to impinge and the MTA was forced to scale down the level of its work; Scriven left the company in 1970 and it was not until 1976 – when solo performer Richard Bradshaw was appointed as the new artistic director – that it regained its impetus. Meanwhile, other serious players had entered the field - notably Lorrie Gardner's Gardner Puppet Theatre (Melbourne, 1967), Paperbag Theatre Company and Patch Theatre Company (Adelaide, both in 1972) and L. Peter Wilson's and Peter Oldham's Tasmanian Puppet Theatre (TPT, Hobart, 1970–72) – and by the end of the decade, Pilgrim Puppet Theatre (Melbourne, 1975), Handspan Theatre (Melbourne, 1977), Phillip Edmiston's Tintookies-inspired Theatrestrings and Queensland Marionette Theatre (Brisbane, after 1977) and Polyglot (also Melbaurne, 1978) – among others – had joined them to create a significant critical mass of professional puppetry companies: sufficient to warrant the Australia Council's designation of a dedicated 'puppetry' funding category from within its Theatre Board by the late 1970s. Some, like Edmiston's companies and Pilgrim, prolonged the life of marionette theatre in Australia with naturalistic, narrative-driven plots and dialogue (still, often, with northern-hemisphere stories), diminutive realistic settings and animal and human characters - albeit with smaller companies and with varying degrees of success and funding. The rest all embraced change - gradually at first for some, like TPT and the MTA - but immediately for others, like Handspan, whose mission statement stressed a desire to explore all forms of puppetry - except marionettes! Needless to say, all things change over time. Since Canadian Ronnie Burkett's visit to Melbourne for its International Arts Festival in 2002, with his magnificent marionette show, Tinka's New Dress, there has been a gradual but fairly persistent, revival of interest in that form from companies like Lemony S and Aphids (in Melbourne), whose gorgeous little marionette-derived puppets in recent shows like Apples and Ladders and more particularly A Quarelling Pair have been beautifully manipulated and quite moving as characters.

But the pivotal year for renovation, innovation and affirmation was 1976. This was the year when TPT invited Nigel Triffitt to direct *Momma's Little Horror Show*, an abstract, even surreal, non-narrative show – for adults, it should be stressed – of considerable scale and breath-taking effects which changed the landscape, particularly when it hit the mainland. From that point, puppetry increasingly diversified its audience base – so much so that an adult 'drama' company like Melbourne's Playbox Theatre could confidently include puppetry productions several times in its mainstage seasons, from as early as

1978. Meanwhile, in Sydney, Richard Bradshaw took over the MTA, also in 1976, and immediately embarked on a programme of vigorous change. Out went the marionettes and diminutive representations of the naturalistic theatre, along with pre-recorded voices. In came a wide array of rod puppets, shadows, Bunraku derivatives and black theatre; puppets came in different shapes and sizes and were increasingly often seen onstage in the visible company of their manipulators, who often spoke their dialogue. Above all, there was a strong trend toward abstract image-making and away from realistic story-telling — the kinds of forms that enabled deeper explorations of the human mind and soul. In one strong link back to the early days of the MTA, it was especially the Australian psyche that became the centre of attention.

I would argue, then, that if The Tintookies represented one high-water mark for puppetry in Australia, the latter half of the 1970s was the next. The five years between 1976 and 1980 sowed the seeds from which flourished the artform long into the future.

Notes

- 1 See, for example, theatre historians like Dennis Carroll, Australian Contemporary Drama (Sydney: Currency, 1994); Peter Holloway, Contemporary Australian Drama (Sydney: Currency, 1987) and Leslie Rees' various histories of Australian drama
- 2 See, among many others, Maryrose Casey, Creating Frames: contemporary indigenous theatre (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2004); Peta Tait, Converging Realities: Feminism in Australian Theatre (Sydney: Currency, 1994) and Rachel Fensham and Denise Varney et al, The Dolls' Revolution: Australian Theatre and Cultural Imagination (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2005.
- 3 For example, in Maeve Vella and Helen Rickards, Theatre of the Impossible: Puppet Theatre in Australia. (Roseville NSW: Craftsman House, 1989); Peter J. Wilson & Geoffrey Milne, The Space Between: The Art of Puppetry and Visual Theatre in Australia (Sydney: Currency, 2004); various issues of Australasian Drama Studies, especially Number 51, October 2007 and thanks mainly to Richard Bradshaw in innumerable articles in the pages of this magazine over many years.
- 4 See, for example, David Tredinnick, 'Tintookie Man, the Last of his Tribe: A Story of Peter Scriven', Australasian Drama Studies 51 (October 2007): 57—69 and Richard Bradshaw, 'Peter Scriven' in Philip Parson's (with Victoria Chance) (eds), Companion to Theatre in Australia (Sydney: Currency, 1995) 518—19.
- 5 See photograph in Vella & Rickards 23 and text 22-29.



The Early Bird Show ATV 0 (now Network 10) - 1978 children's television show - Mr Tims & Marty Monster broadcast live from the studios.

The Legacy of Handspan

Helen Rickards

Handspan is arguably the most influential company in the history of contemporary Australian puppetry.

Contemporary Australian puppetry has its roots in a diversity of cultural and stylistic traditions. Handspan Theatre which began in 1977 as an accidental artists' collective and closed in 2002 as an established Melbourne theatre company was a significant contributor to the vitality of today's industry.

Until the late 20th century, Australia's recognised cultural landscape reflected the country's colonial past and its European, predominantly British, ties. Our own voice was expressed only through a bush-based, folksy repertoire that was itself a paternalistic expression of the colonial invasion, or expansion of Empire.

Puppetry in Australia was firmly entrenched in this mould with its practitioners specialising in specific puppetry styles and techniques, mainly glove puppets or marionettes, and telling children's stories from the European fairytale and fable canon. Few children in Australia grew up in the 1950s and 60s ignorant of Punch and Judy, but fewer had any experience of the diversity of the world medium.

The counterculture movement of the 1960s, the impact of which reached Australia in the 1970s, opened our eyes, not only to tolerance of, but respect for, cultural diversity. We embraced new ideas and new practice; we began to protest for social justice and equity; we dabbled in alternative ideologies... and we began to seek new forms and substance for our art.

Handspan Theatre began at a time of energetic and global artistic change. Experimentation and innovation were celebrated, new ideas were welcome, and new opportunities abounded.

We were not the first, but, in Australia, we collectively were the most outstanding, experimental puppetry-based company, surviving and flourishing for a quarter of a century.

From the outset, Handspan sought to 'push the boundaries' of puppetry. We were never 'Handspan Puppet Theatre', but we always animated the inanimate through live performance and retained an active curiosity and respect for the traditional roots of our artform.

We broke out of the booth, mixed puppetry styles and techniques and revealed the puppeteer to create new, hybrid, multidisciplinary work and develop an original repertoire, for which we coined the term 'visual theatre'. Rather rudely perhaps we scoffed at puppetry purists and declared that 'anything could be a puppet' and 'why use a puppet if a person can do it better? We believed we could 'go anywhere and do anything'.

Over its twenty-five years we did. Handspan's work was always image based, but its plays and collaborations explored ideas and performance arenas that covered a very broad spectrum of the industry. The company created topical, issue-based, original works for presentation in mainstream theatres, community venues, in the

street, in workplaces and schools, for national and international festivals, seasons, events and, public and private occasions. In total, Handspan created seventy-seven original theatrical works and undertook tours to five continents. Exploration of puppetry remained a key fascination and motivation, and opportunities to participate in the international puppetry industry were eagerly sought. Various works appeared in major international arts festivals worldwide, and at several UNIMA conventions, beginning with a performance of *The Bunyip of Berkeley's Creek* at the 1980 UNIMA Conference in Washington DC, and individually, company artists engaged in international cultural exchange projects. The medium of visual theatre is well-suited to cross-cultural and international collaboration and exposure, and the nuances of visual communication and visual literacy explored with different audiences across the globe kept company members 'on tour' for years.



Bunyip of Berkeley's Creek by Jenny Wagner – Handspan repertoire (1980–1982). Over 1000 performances Australia-wide; USA; U.K; Europe. Performers: Andrew Hansen, Helen Rickards and Peter Wilson Photographer: John Conte

Nigel Triffitt's *Secrets*, commissioned by Handspan in 1981, premiered at the Australian International Puppet Festival in January 1983 before embarking on five years of international touring to major international arts festivals. On one such tour, in 1984, Handspan performed in the London International Puppet Festival where Henryk Jurkowski, the then President of UNIMA International noted:

I was rather impressed by this Australian input to the achievements of the world puppet theatre. In fact, we have not known much of the Australian theatre at all ... and all of a sudden — Handspan Theatre with 'Secrets'... Beauty and menace at the same moments, feelings of understanding and feelings of loss, the traditional and the contemporary linked in rich and troubling expressions: of course the Australian won. Their performance will not be forgotten soon.\(^1\)



Palais des Glaces, Paris, April 1984 - Secrets (Company snapshot)

Handspan not only drew on contemporary theatre movements and topical issues in its work but also attracted some of Australia's most interesting practitioners to participate in its productions.

From its long-time headquarters in Gertrude St Fitzroy, Melbourne, Handspan embraced Australia's evolving alternate arts industry with its members making work with - musicians, comedians, dancers, circus artists, theatre-in-education practitioners, writers, community artists, directors, choreographers, community, indigenous and multicultural artists, and other puppeteers. Handspan members were active participants within, and advocates for, the wider Australian arts industry. The company became a hub for Australian puppetry. Company members worked as artists-in-residence and taught in schools and tertiary institutions² and community organisations; led community events and festivals; published Manipulation3; and wrote the history of Australian puppetry. For several years, Handspan's workshop was the meeting place for the Victorian Puppetry Guild and UNIMA and was the host location for numerous national and international visiting artists as well as many great parties! Richard Bradshaw was heard to say of the company, 'Handspan is a network ...'

Throughout its history, artists worked in and with Handspan, developing their own work and exploring and extending the potential of the artform. It's hard to count over all that work and time, but currently the list of those who worked actively with the company totals 3000 and includes practising artists from all disciplines and diverse cultural backgrounds.

Initially, we were a collective operating under the 'manifesto' of founding members Ken Evans, Helen Rickards, Andrew Hansen, Peter Wilson, Maeve Vella and Christine Woodcock, which in the early 1980s evolved into a company, with a constitution and a business plan, governed by its members. From 1987, when Trina Parker took on the role for the first time, artistic directors made their mark, but its membership remained a key to Handspan's direction and to its success and eventually, signalled its closure⁶.

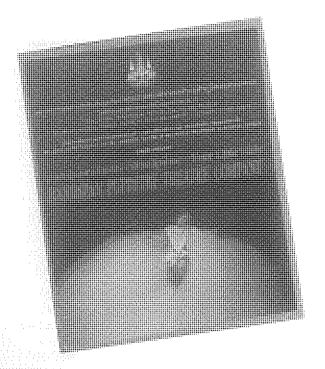
Another of the early catchphrases was that there was a 'Handspan' flash' that characterised the company and its work. Every show or undertaking at Handspan was different. We sometimes toured repertoire for years, generally stopping because we were sick of it rather than because it had run out of options. But we were never interested in repeating ourselves or following a formula. Of course, this had its disadvantages - we never really knew what we were doing; we were unpredictable and we failed sometimes, (not as often or spectacularly as we succeeded, fortunately). At its height, Handspan was a closeknit community of mutually respecting and interdependent artists, or as Andrew Bleby noted in the closing party eulogy – some times it was like a family, at others it was like chaos theory itself7. After twenty-five years, membership energy had ebbed as individual careers became prioritised, and although the company was independently corporatised, its name and its work were ours and it was better for it to close than lose 'the flash'

Handspan successfully established its visual theatre as a crossgenerational artform, creating and producing work for mainstream adult audiences as well as for children and families. During the company's existence and to a significant extent through its aegis, the medium of puppetry and design-based theatre extended beyond its traditional boundaries and made unique contributions to the wider theatre industry.

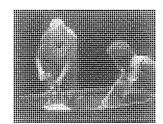
Worldwide recognition of the unique quality of Handspan's work was highlighted at the Festival Ibero Americano de Teatro in Bogota, Columbia, in 1994 where the company's production of Picasso's *Four Little Girls*, adapted and directed by Ariette Taylor, won the UNESCO Prize for the Promotion of the Arts — singled out for the technical perfection and high poetic and imaginative quality of the production.⁸

Handspan's artistic initiatives were not the company's alone, they were part of a national and world-wide movement of exploration in live theatre and their legacy is the industry's inheritance today.

The Performing Arts Museum at the Victorian Arts Centre houses the company's archives and has a collection of Handspan's puppets and memorabilia. By the end of 2008, it is planned that extracts from *A Handspan of 25 Years*, a company history⁹, with photos and video footage from the company collection, will be hosted on a website in conjunction with the Museum. Check it out!



Programme cover for Four Little Girls at the King of Thailand's Golden Jubilee, Thailand Cultural Centre, Bangkok, January 1996



Tom E. Lewis and Rod Primrose in *Lift 'Em Up Socks* for final Handspan tour to Die Macht des Staurens' Festival, Vienna, Austria, 2001 Photograph: Jeff Busby

End notes

- Hendrk Jurkowski: Festival Opinions: Handspan of Australia: Secrets, Animations Magazine, Published London Puppet Centre, U.K. September 1984
- Tertiary puppetry courses have been established by Handspan theatre founding members in Melbourne. At Swinburne University, Ken Evans ran a puppetry course in the Theatre Arts Department, and Peter James Wilson and Gilly McInnes (also a long time Handspan member) run a Masters Course in Puppetry through the Production School of the Victorian College of the Arts.
- ³ Maeve Vella: Established and edited *Manipulation* Magazine (1980 1990)
- 4 Theatre of the Impossible: Puppet Theatre in Australia, by Maeve Vella and Helen Rickards, Craftsman House, 1989
- 5 Richard Bradshaw, while Artistic Director of the Marionette Theatre of Australia, 1980s.
- ⁶ Handspan's assets on winding, have provided UNIMA Australia with a travelling scholarship fund ever since.
- Andrew Bleby: MC Handspan's 25th Birthday and Closing Night Party, 13th July, 2002
- 8 The Productions Created by Handspan Theatre catalogue by Lizz Talbot for the Performing Arts Museum, Victorian Arts Centre (2003)
- Oompiled by Helen Rickards supported by the Australia Council, Arts Victoria and the City of Melbourne for online release 2008/09



Lighting Design

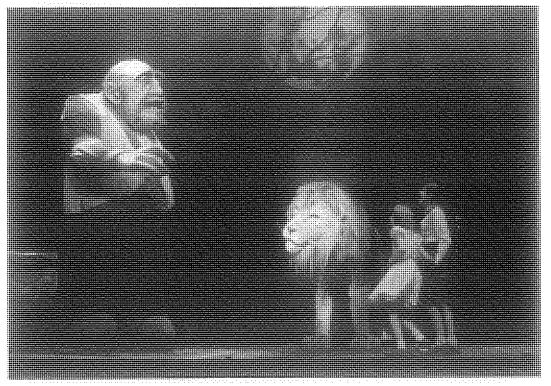
Philip Lethlean: lighting designer

My name is Philip Lethlean and for the last twenty plus years I have specialised in lighting for puppetry, lighting most of Handspan Theatre's repertoire, including *Cho Cho San*, and Picasso's *Four Little Girls*, as well as works for Polyglot Puppet Theatre, Melbourne; Terrapin Puppet Theatre, Tasmania and Skylark, Canberra. Other puppet projects have included *The Hobbit, The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Phillippe Genty's *Stowaways* and Nigel Triffitt's *The Fall of Singapore*.

The fundamental engine driving any lighting design is the deadline. The same could be said for writing articles about it. As it happens the first week of January finds me with a laptop, on a Boeing, in dot point mode:

- Lighting is as much about concealment as it is about illumination. What can be seen? What must be hidden?
- Lighting is an essential design aspect for the director, best included in the creative process from the start.
- Lighting allows seamless transformations of the stage.
- Lighting can play with the audience's visual perception, create stage atmosphere and texture emotion, whilst highlighting the puppets.
- Lighting can influence the blocking of segments to ensure the puppeteers are not masking puppets or scenery, and that puppets are not casting shadows on other puppets due to oblique side lighting.

- Lighting stock availability and choice is essential to realise the
 director's concept, as is access to the right equipment choice for
 specific moments, as well as inclusion of devices such as haze,
 blinders, smoke or a blade of light used like a scrim, objects
 internally lit, a small follow spot... or all of the above.
- The work cannot be lit until it is blocked and rehearsed and the music and choreography are complete. It's a bit like cake icing; you first need a cake before you can ice it.
- Production week is always intense. Lighting requires time within
 the production schedule that must not be cribbed by directorial
 fine tuning in order to light the work, and make a technically
 proficient show by the deadline of opening night.
- Lighting allows designers and puppeteers to maximise the visual impact of the image. During the tech run I tend to get on stage from time to time, to point out to puppeteers where the light for their puppet is coming from so they can use the light to its best advantage.
- Lighting intensifies mood and punctuates the rhythm of the
 unfolding action, as well as deceiving the eye. This is why in the
 dress rehearsal, where finally the music and scenery changes all
 happen in real time, I am usually making rapid changes to cross
 fade times of cues and adjusting intensities of lamps, painting
 the picture.
- Light is more than a technical tool. It is an element with both
 functional and aesthetic properties at play. It arrests the audience
 and underpins the emotional ambience of the performance or
 space. My ongoing interest is to extend the ways in which light
 can be manipulated, to enhance perception and shape concepts.



The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe: produced by Malcolm Cooke and Associates and William May in association with the Victorian Arts Centre, in 2002. Set and costume Design Hugh Coleman, Puppet design by Philip Millar and Lighting Design by Philip Lethlean. Photograph David Parker.

Meet the Maker

Al Martinez

The question I am asked often is: 'How did you get started making puppets?'. My usual answer is something like this:

I grew up in East Los Angeles (USA) on the edge of an industrial area and spent lots of time with a family of five brothers. The eldest was an inspiration from whom I learned resourcefulness. We learned to use whatever we could find that had been discarded.

We made everything we needed – from anything – and tried anything to achieve our goal. If we couldn't make it, we concluded that we didn't need it. We were content with our creations, and practise just made us more adept at it. I believe practise makes perfect and making those things that don't quite work out is just part of the process. In teaching, I do my best to motivate students to create results, and then to make a decision from that result. If it's not what you want, try something different.

So here I am now, some forty plus years later, in another part of the world (Australia), and doing the same thing (except for breaking into factories and stealing). I've learned to look at other peoples' discards with the eye of a 'recycologist'. I have gone through the whole spectrum from being a successful collector, to an obsessive pack-rat who can't find what I am looking for to save my life. I found when moving from Canberra to Sydney, that when I returned 'stuff' to the tip, I found more stuff of interest to replace it. A correlation appeared in my mind. It was like a river and, 'The River' is abundant.

I started making puppets full time when I immigrated to Australia in 1984; to work with Shelly MacDonald and Marie Martine-Ferrari. We started Company Skylark, working from a house. My tools were minimal but enough to make what ever we needed. I learned to carve soft foam using an electric carving knife and barber's scissors. Watching Shelly shape foam with these tools started me on a journey to perfect the skill and I use it all the time now. I feel very confident about carving almost anything from foam. I also think my artistic background helped a lot. I was well versed in wood sculpting and working in 3D. I think visualizing in 3D is an added plus for anyone wishing to sculpt in any material. The processes are just different.

In all the time I've been making things, I've leaned towards working in solitude. Mainly due to not wanting others to comment on how I do things or what I might try. I've tried some pretty risky things while working alone, and have now come to the conclusion that, in some instances, it's neither necessary nor safe. So, after moving from Canberra to Sydney and working on the Opening and Closing ceremonies of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, I've decided that working collaboratively is best.

After supervising the build of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, I needed somewhere to store my gear. I asked the team if they would be interested in sharing the building with me. We, the build team, had enjoyed our time together so much, I thought that these people where the ones I'd like to share studio space with. Three put themselves forward to share the space under my name.



Testing the 'Eagle' costume. Photograph courtesy Al Martinez

So, we collected all our benches, machines and a variety of miscellaneous 'stuff' and started working as a collective. The then owner was very favourable to our line of work and, over the first seven months, allowed me to upgrade the space. Since then, core members have changed but we currently number seven, including me.

I have enjoyed the evolution of how our studio has worked out during the last five years and so I am currently sorting out a lease with the new owners of the building.

We do a lot of different things though we claim our specialisation in puppets and props. For instance, we've made exhibition booths for Crumpler bags Australia, done set items for award nights and costumes for events and launches. We also did the stadium props and puppets for the Opening and Closing ceremonies of the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games.

The thing I love best is teaching and learning. Those I work with teach me all the time. There is always a new way to do something. I love passing on information to those I work with, and those in the industry as well.

I have had the opportunity to teach technical skills as part of the Puppetry course at the Victorian College for the Arts. While passing on information to students who where interested to learn, I learned so much. Over the years I have also held workshops in our studio: in woodcarving, prop making and black smithing. These have been successful for all, it seems. I've been keen to teach the many different making means and methods, and workshops seem a good way to pass that on. I also have enjoyed taking secondments from various institutes. For those interested to learn, I feel this is the best I can do for them. The experience 'to make', for some, is just an interest while for others, it puts them directly into my workforce.

I'm excited about the 'recycology' workshops I've decided to hold in the studio. There is a wealth of discarded items out there that have had lots of energy manufactured into them. Teaching others to see the value and to use these items excites me. My current book of inspiration is *Makers, Breakers & Fixers* by Mark Thomson, published by Harper Collins.

I feel that networking and the sharing of information is critical to the development of the pupper industry.

Design, Turning Tricks & Telling Tales

Richard Jeziorny

I am sometimes asked to write/speak on the subject of 'design for puppetry'. It's odd, as I don't necessarily consider myself a puppet designer, having a portfolio of drama, musical theatre, dance, event, circus, opera, parade work — which also includes a growing number of small and large scale puppetry works.

But asking what it's like to design for puppetry is like asking what it's like designing kitchens or wedding dresses! It's like,...well,...designing!

Each form has its own vocabulary and I have been fortunate over the years to work with exceptionally gifted and creative directors and makers allowing me to play with puppetry in different forms and on different scales. In many cases these productions have been without spoken text so the storytelling relies heavily on the designed images created on the stage, giving them a universal voice.

A strong and involved creative team is essential in this kind of visual theatre, with each member free to contribute and comment on all aspects of the work to achieve a pleasing whole. Free and open exchange of ideas is a must. We had to abandon a recent favourite work, which was totally unsupported by its score, with no funds available to re-work it. It seemed more pragmatic to let it go rather than to perform an incomplete piece. A difficult decision...and an exception.

New works tend to fall into two categories — work created from scratch, from an idea by director or producer, or that inspired by an existing work. Collaborating with writer/artist Shaun Tan to bring his books *The Red Tree* and *The Lost Thing* to the stage was an especially rewarding experience.

Drawing on an extensive puppet vocab and tradition is essential. There is always a temptation to reach into the old bag of tricks (and yes, there are proven ways of creating an effect or image!) but the challenge must always be to reinvent the trick or turn it on its head...or invent a new one to work for the story. Many young puppeteers and graduates from the VCA course are now out there redefining this vocabulary.

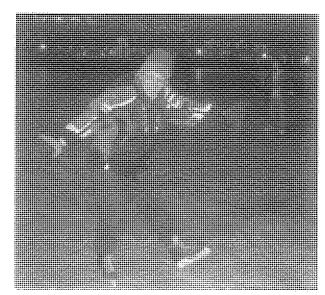
I find I now rely heavily on a visual story board to communicate ideas to performers and members of the production team. It becomes a useful tool and can be updated as changes occur.

Another useful quality in this biz is adaptability...to changing budgets, performers or, in some cases, venues. Eight weeks out from an extravagant event in Kuala Lumpur, the outdoor venue changed to the nearby city of Putrajaya, which meant the design needed a total overhaul and a radical rethink!

I am now doing a second project in China and, despite the difficulties and challenges, it is an exciting environment in which to design and very rewarding to be able to work with this theatre community and (hopefully) to pass on some good theatre practice to their young artists and performers. In these cases, especially, I find myself deeply involved with the writing, dramaturgy and direction as we try to turn the story into images that will be as relevant to a Chinese audience as to western eyes. One hopes the vision is not lost in translation.

In China one is also working against strong stereotypes of what defines a 'children's work'. (Not only in China) I think the aim should always be to provide a satisfying theatrical experience to children and adults alike and to present the visually dramatic moments that will tell the story. Children all over the world, including China, are now exposed to a barrage of complex and sophisticated images via the TV, internet and video games and will quickly be bored with big boxy headed bears. Producers and parents seem unwilling to accept that children lead complex emotional lives and are able to process more complex and abstract images.

As a designer I try to approach each project as a fresh challenge with its own set of requirements — new ways of seeing to put all the elements (set, costumes and puppets) together into their own visual world.



Richard Jeziorny - 'skating on thin ice' in China (Feb 2008)

Blacklight in Puppet Theatre – another design factor

Richard Hart

My first design class in Architecture at the University of NSW and the others that followed, shaped my approach for the following thirty-seven years. We are talking 1971, raked lecture theatre and some paper planes left over from the previous class, which were designed and made well enough to fulfil their task. The flamboyantly attired lecturer with a colourful French accent did not bother to introduce himself and paced from side to side exclaiming passionately, 'Design, design, design. What eez design!' He was not expecting an answer and we spent all the rest of the year unravelling the complexities of the design process. Yes, it is a process, rational, procedural, intelligent, intuitive. If it works, use it, but keep asking, 'Could there be an even better solution?' The process needs a purpose and the purpose needs the right design for realisation.

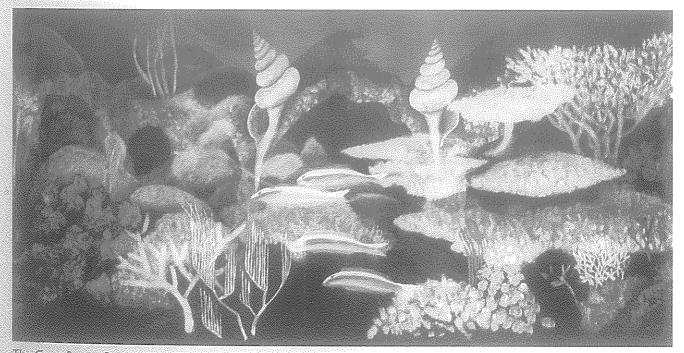
i studied graphic design and how to manipulate the viewer by manipulating imagery with the word and vice versa. Having started off designing spaces for people to do things in, and later, designing pages for people to do things for, I had a good background in designing three dimensional, visual theatre. Puppetry came along later and, after exploring different styles, I eventually embraced blacklight, or visual violet and invisible Ultra Violet light from a fluorescent light tube source.

What I love about blacklight, (all design needs a medium), is that the manipulator, performer, author or any human intervention can be visibly disconnected from the performance, allowing the world of the pupper characters to really exist for a small part of the day/night in peoples' lives. An inspired and skilfully accomplished design can serve

in this realisation. Blacklight puppetry is a three dimensional, physical, visual animation, which has the perception of depth in space as an instrument of theatricality. Perspective is achieved through the mix of colour and the manipulation of size. For me, working with blacklight is painterly, so if you have experience mixing colours from tubes of paint you can exploit the medium more effectively. Yet, it is a medium that confounds our normal experience of painted colour because only the elemental colours of the rainbow are present. The introduction of fluorescent white paint over the last decade or so has allowed for the mixing of some pastel colours, which has enriched the blacklight artists' palette. A skilfully painted flat area can look convincingly 3D.

To be successful in working with blacklight you need to pay a lot of attention to detail and use good quality black velvet to conceal ANYTHING you want to be invisible. This brings me to the design of the performance space – the booth. Often I will begin the process of creating a production by building the stage. For example, my subject matter in *Dreamer in the Deep*, the vast darkness of the deep ocean, suggested the dimensions of the production and the use of layered scrims, and so the possibilities of the stage prompted the development of the drama.

The anonymous French lecturer in my first design class never answered the question,' What is design?' But for me the designing process is about seeking the best solutions, and then, even better ones, and this is integral to the creation of good theatre.



The Great Barrier Reef - blacklight scenery by Richard Hart

Design

Ken Evans

Visual Theatre is an artform that allows one to communicate simple or complex concepts and ideas. The building of a visual language to communicate ideas is dependent upon the puppets' or image's ability to symbolise attitude or emotions.

In developing a story, or new work, the line of communication and negotiation between the Designer, Director, Manipulators, Makers, Lighting Designer and Writer is an ongoing collaboration and continual re-appraisal of the Design. In creating a show based on an existing text, or adapted book, design facilitates and illuminates the storyline. Likewise, with a new work starting with an idea or concept, Design can lead and inspire the storyline.

The aspect of designing I enjoy most is the engineering and problem solving. The first question that needs to be asked, (after, 'Why puppets?') is 'what does the object or character have to do?' From there the style of puppet and its particular staging evolves. Staging can solve direction and dramaturgical dilemmas, hide or feature puppeteers and create transitions. Darkness is the perfect canvas to evoke magic and illusion and lighting is the equally essential element to make this happen.

In all these scenarios I feel it is most important to have the time to research, draw upon the personal swamp of tried and true tricks, make links or allow the links to happen. Inspiration can come from the newspaper, a photograph or a painting and when all the fragmented ideas collected or scribbled on the backs of envelopes and in notebooks 'click' and begin to head in the same direction, the process of design can really begin. As a designer I enjoy taking an abstract idea unconfined by reality, and giving it a shape and a form, a context to exist within, engineering the object, or character, or set and then watching it, imbued with a puppeteer's care and playfulness, become real.

My formative years were in fine arts and I was blessed to be a co-founder, with five equally young and adventurous creators and performers, of one of the fastest developing Visual Theatre companies in Australia — Handspan Theatre.

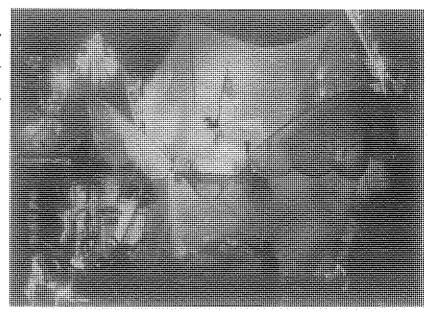
Because there are no traditional puppetry forms in Australia, we felt almost obliged to extend existing forms by borrowing and adapting for our own needs, in works for both children and adults. We learned our craft as we made it and tried not to repeat the same style or mistakes. Rather, we built upon each project, and always combined or incorporated new elements. While at Handspan, I designed forty works from small intimate pieces, large scale in theatre touring shows, outdoor and site specific productions, and my favourites — nocturnal floating spectacles on the Yarra River.

Since 2001, I have been lecturing on Visual Theatre at Swinburne University and Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology creating short works encompassing all aspects of design, fabrication, manipulation and performance with mature students. I have found that students who are new to the form, can often bend conventions and styles and re-inspire the old tricks of the trade.

Recently I have embarked upon several workshop and performance projects with children, primarily at ArtPlay in Melbourne — an Arts centre devoted to children. The workshops are conceptually based around a philosophical theme and this provides the dramatic framework for the project's performance. Children participate in a philosophical discussion around the theme, from which a final working framework and soundtrack is developed. The performances involve children working on short, but fully staged, presentations focusing on the process of artistic creation and development, as much as on their performance outcome.

While still active in the artform, it seems totally appropriate for me to pass on the rag-bag of techniques, styles and enthusiasm of creating puppetry, to a new audience and to the puppeteers of the future.

I Dreamt I Could Fly Handspan Theatre and Circus Oz co-production, Yarra River for Melbourne Moomba Festival 1994. Created by Katy Bowman & Ken Evans Photograph Sebastian Costanzo.





The fall Ship Since at the 'Beach' Commonwealth Cames Melbourne 2006 Designed and photographed by Kan Erans

Playing with the Big Toys – Large Scale Outdoor Spectacles

Peter J. Wilson

The creation of outdoor spectacles in association with sporting events happens all over the world – the bigger the event, the bigger the spectacle.

International sporting contests offer an even larger stage. The increasingly elaborate opening ceremony for the Olympic Games, for instance, blends arts and sport together in the richest way, a blend given international exposure on television.

So when Sydney won the right to host the 2000 Olympic Games, it had the opportunity to present an opening ceremony like no other.

In the post-war Olympics era, the 1980 Moscow Games set a new standard for creating an opening ceremony of epic proportions, and we remember Misha, the cuddly Russian bear. Also memorable were Los Angeles in 1984 with in excess of 150 grand pianos, Barcelona in 1992, a wild and eccentric Catalonian experience with giant puppets, and Atlanta in 1996 with its brilliant segment reflecting traditional Greek sports using fifteen metre high shadow images. Each ceremony tries to outdo its predecessor.

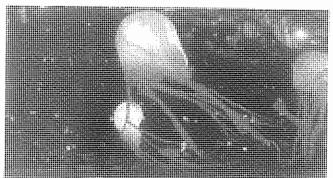
As the host nation takes the opportunity to give the world a glimpse of its cultural heart, the event attempts to portray a vibrant, energetic and creative nation.

Australia was awarded the 2000 Olympic Games in 1994, and ceremonies director/producer Ric Burch began the task of pulling together the most creative and exciting artists to present a unique opening spectacle.

Along with six other directors, I was invited to be the Director for the *Nature* segment, a portrait celebrating the diversity of the Australian flora and fauna. The ten-minute segment was full of possibilities and puppetry was the main tool I used during the creative process.

Eamon D'Arcy beautifully designed *Nature*, with a mix of large-scale puppetry and costume at its grandest scale.

Over fourteen months, we developed the designs, built proto types and workshopped the ideas constantly – often throwing out months of work for a more workable and practical solution.



The Deep Sea Dreaming segment of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony. Photograph: Kylie Melinda Smith

I rehearsed with a cast of close to one thousand performers over a period of five months.

It was a remarkable opportunity to create on a big scale and an extraordinary honour to have been selected as one of only seven Australian Directors.

The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games gave the world one of its most sustained and diverse views of Australian visual theatre on a grand scale and puppetry featured strongly throughout the opening ceremony.

In 2005, with the Melbourne Commonwealth Games only fifteen months away, I was invited to take on the role of Director of Puppetry across the opening ceremony. Puppetry featured strongly in all segments.

The 2006 students from the Victorian College for the Arts, Puppetry Post Graduate course (along with dozens of other puppeteers) were involved, providing a wonderful chance for the students to work with large-scale puppets and in front of a crowd of 100,000 plus.

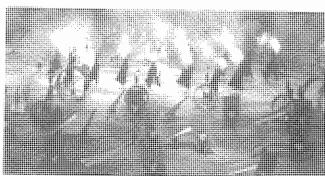
In late 2006, I was once again invited to take part in another large event, The Asia Games in Doha, Qatar. Puppetry once again featured and I was offered the role of Director of Scenic Animation and Director of several segments.

The success of working on these large scaled, very public events, has given me the chance to further develop my work in this area and I have recently directed a major street event in Kuala Lumpur, Citrawarna as part of Malaysia's 50th Anniversary of Independence celebrations.

Working with Malaysian artists from right across the fourteen states, we created a large street spectacle with puppetry featuring prominently.

Puppetry, in the broadest use of the art form, lends itself beautifully to large-scale events and Australia is very much at the forefront of presenting successful visual spectacles.

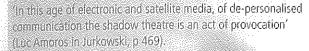
Photographs and excerpts: The Space Between: The Art of Puppetry and Visual Theatre in Australia' by Peter J. Wilson and Geoffrey Milne [Strawberry Hills, NSW: Currency Press, 2004]



The Tin Symphony segment of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony. Photograph: Kylie Melinda Smith.

Contemporary Shadow Theatre – the theatrical trump card*

Lynne Kent



Picture early caveman with children at his feet, the light from a fire flickering giant shadows on the cave wall. His hands twisted into shapes in the air as the children shout, 'Come on Dad, do the mammoth again! What can be so provocative about the practice of such an ancient form of entertainment today?

Whether the screen is a cave wall, or the side of a tent, or a computer screen with surround sound, the basic elements of Shadow Theatre—the light, the puppet or actor and the screen—have been with us since time began. Shadow Theatre is, in fact, early cinema. The 'shadows chinoise' or so-called Chinese Shadow Theatre, parlor games and magic lantern performances were popular in France around the nineteenth century, the same time and place as the birth of cinema. (Geiser, p30)

The task of the contemporary shadow artist is to continue to investigate new ways of working in this medium and to continue to reflect on the reasons why we work with shadows. Practising Shadow heatre in the West today means to subvert the predominantly negative view of shadow and darkness in the Western psyche, to transcend the faintly racist notion of Shadow Theatre as the quaint practice of traditional people of the East, and to contend with the dominant influences of the electronic media on this once powerful and popular art form.

Traditional shadow puppeteers work the puppet/object close to and up against, the screen. With the use of the halogen pin point bulb with the lens removed, it is possible to create a clear shadow some distance away from the screen; thus, space becomes a working tool to give the screen a depth never seen before in traditional shadow puppet play. Careful crafting of lighting states can produce effects (albeit crude) similar to the camera effects and editing, possible in cinema. The use of the hand held light means that the shadow puppeteer can pan and zoom, and the lighting operator can cross tade in a process which I term, "live editing"

Tec for all its innovation, contemporary Shadow Theatre cannot possibly compete with the technical sophistication, visual wizardry and broad appeal of the digital media. Herein lies the question, why bother persisting to struggle with replicating cinematic techniques in shadow?

Contemporary Shadow Theatre, pupperry and the theatre disciplines in general do have a theatrical frump card up their sleeve. The ultimate frump card theatre has up its sleeve is its 'liveness'. The live actor, and puppet/puppeteer, has the capacity to respond directly to the audience, to make subtle changes or huge ones, according to the feel of the moment. The mediatised image cannot, By the time the digitised image reaches the theatre audience, it is very far removed from the moment of creation.



If the focus is on 'liveness' as the one ontological difference between mediatised and non-mediatised performance and its application to contemporary Shadow Theatre, we are one step closer to creating work that will produce both resurgence and a new augmentation of the art form, in turn addressing the decline in cultural currency of live performance in general. In 1964, Grotowski declared in an interview with Eugenio Barba, 'There is only one element of which film and television cannot rob the theatre: the closeness of the living organism... It is therefore necessary to abolish the distance between actor and audience by eliminating the stage, removing all frontiers'. (Grotowski, p41).

If the invisible barrier between the audience and the actor is the fourth wall, then the tangible presence of the screen, often separating audience and puppeteer, becomes the fifth wall. How can we 'break the fifth wall' to optimise the live theatrical experience? Removing all barriers, as Grotowski suggests is easier in conventional theatre than in Shadow Theatre where the screen presents a very real block between audience and player. Do we allow the audience the freedom to move from in front to behind the screen at any time during the performance as in the traditional Javanese style? Do we reveal and strike the screen during the performance?

When considering the use of the screen in the theatrical space, a number of other elements are at play. Just as puppets should do what actors cannot, so too should the screen be used to create an effect beyond the capabilities of the stage space. Too much use of the projected image however, and one might as well make a film. I am convinced that working both in front of and behind the screen offers the maximum possibilities for integrating mediatised and non-mediatised performance.

If the shadow image is projected in front of the screen, in full view of the audience, attention is drawn to the live act even more. The same could be said of the electronic image. If the operator of the image is visible and the mechanics of creating the image are also shown, the electronic image becomes a live act. The call for visible lighting operators and musicians in Brecht's epic theatre, was a call to destroy the elitist nature of the theatre of the past, bridging the gap between audience and players. For different reasons today, striving for a transparency of the technical element serves to reinforce the liveness of the theatrical act. It is a play of the theatrical trump card. A provocative thumb on the nose at popular media and dominant culture.

 Excepts of Lynne Kent's Master from Arts by research exegesis, and this article have previously been published in I Par SI Muave

Grotowski (1969) Towards a Poor Theatre.

Jurkowski, H. (1998) A History of European Puppetry, Vol. 2, The 20th Century.

Geisei, J. (2004). American Theatre, 21, 50-52

Being a Puppet

Don Bridges

For four and a half years from 1979 until 1984, I worked inside a six feet tall foam and fur Kangaroo puppet called Norm. My co-stars in the show were an ex pop star 'bad boy', a succession of all singing, all acting women, including Louisa Wisselling from the New Seekers, and the multi talented Liz Rule. But for me and our audience, the real stars were a group of extraordinary puppet characters based on Australian animals. They were Old Poss, Stanley the Snake, Greenfinger the Garden Gnome, and the most hated and loved of all, Claude the Crow. The show was *Shirl's Neighbourhood*. Some out takes can be found at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-UAAIj2eMw

Filmed in the studios of Channel 7 Melbourne, we worked five or six days a week to produce the five, half-hour, daily episodes. On a Monday we shot three shows and Tuesday and Wednesday were location days for the film segments. Thursday we shot another three episodes (we were stockpiling an extra show per week), and on Friday we would shoot five or six songs with bands or artists, who would be confronted with a backing band of characters. We got to work with singing stars such as John Farnham, Joe Camilleri and Mike Brady. We broke Goanna Band and Joe Dolce among others. In fact Joe first played *Shut up your Face* on our show.

We had a band consisting of monkeys, and Norm might sit in on guitar or bodhran (Irish drum), or whatever I could manage to mime or play with four fingers in a furry glove.

I occasionally operated a monkey and it was always obvious which one was mine.

I am certainly not a puppeteer and I lacked the talent to breathe life into the puppet. I was in awe of our puppeteers, Ron Mueck and Liz Rule, who made their puppets live, breathe and think. It was always hysterical to watch floor managers give direction directly to the characters rather than the puppeteers.

Norm the Kangaroo was an amalgam of Norman Gunston and Norm, from the 'Life Be In It' campaign, and as such I got to interview visiting and local celebrities. That list includes: Olivia Newton-John, Bette Midler, The Village People, George Benson, Vincent Price and Frank Thring. Great fun for us and them, when they played along and believed in the characters.

Working with puppets was sometimes tricky as all the voices, apart from Norm which was me, were provided by Ron Mueck. That meant that it was tricky to shoot more than one of his characters at a time. However, I once observed him shooting an outdoor scene between Old Poss and Stanley the Snake when he did both voices, and had one on each arm. The end result looked like two completely different characters talking to each other. Astounding really.

Let me talk about Ron Mueck for a moment. He came to the show as a young bloke pretty much straight from school. The Producers approached him and asked him to build the characters for a new kids show then known as *Someone's Neighbourhood*.

It was based on Mr Roger's Neighbourhood in the United States and there was no idea of who the host would be. Ron built the characters,

I auditioned as the host but made it clear I was an actor, and so became a kangaroo. They needed an operator for the puppets and Ron was very shy and reticent in accepting that role, but they talked him around, and he took to it like Shane Warne to a text message. His characters were beautifully made and operated and he was extremely funny, particularly as Claude the Crow. Claude collected used bandaids and toenail clippings and revelled in the filth of every day life. Claude disliked everyone and everything and wasn't afraid to tell them. Lovely, and of course kids loved him. I believe Agro was based on Claude.

When the show ended in 1984, Ron headed to New York to work with Frank Oz whom he had met when *Fragglerock* shot some stuff in Australia. Subsequently he played Ludo in *Labyrinth*, and made and operated some of the characters for a Henson production called *The Story Teller* with John Hurt and *Dream Child* a nightmarish version of *Alice in Wonderland*.

Ron still lives in London but he is now working as a sculptor and is quite famous for his work. Coincidentally, Ron is married to Cass Willing, who made many of the Henson characters including, Ludo. I was very happy when I heard Ron was doing a 'suit' character, as I knew he would be suffering the same things I had for four and a half years: heat, sweat, restricted movement and reduced vision. Ahhh, revenge is sweet.

We shot over a thousand episodes of *Shirl's Neighbourhood* and it was the first Australian show to be given a prestigious C classification. We won Logies and Penguin awards and we enjoyed wonderful success.

Now to our host, the extraordinary Graham 'Shirley' Stachan who tragically died in August 2001 when the helicopter he was piloting crashed in Queensland. Shirl had come from the band, Skyhooks, as a 'bad boy' of rock and roll and it was a huge switch for him to be working with children on a kids' TV show. However, he was a big kid at heart and it didn't take long for him to adapt to the format. What made the show work was his absolute belief in the characters when the cameras were rolling. He treated them as real. He would get very upset with parents who told their kids it was 'only a puppet' or 'a man dressed up'. He wanted the kids to have a chance to use their imaginations as he used his.

We got to do amazing things like bashing through the bush in an Army tank at 60kms an hour, skiing in the Alps, (try that in a kangaroo suit) and ironically, flying in a helicopter over Brisbane (Shirl's first time in one.) I remember him yelling to me in the tank that we got to do all the things we wanted to do as kids. And we were getting paid to do it.

Shirl's Neighbourhood was a huge part of my life and I am still in close contact with Liz and Ron and some of the crew that worked on the show. They always remember, with great fondness, our days in the studio, creating what should be remembered as a milestone in Australian TV history.



Norm the Kangaroo in front of the Gem paddle steamer on location in Swan Hill, Victoria



The Shirl's Neighbourhood official fan card with from left: Liz Rule, Oli Possum, Norm the Kangaroo, Greenfinger the Garden Gnome, Stanley the Snake, Shirley Strachan and Claude the Crow



Claude the Crow in front of an Actors Equity poster

Photographs courtesy of Don Bridges

My Darling Patricia

Clare Britton and Halcyon Macleod

Taking their name from a forty-eight year-old love letter found hidden in a discarded vanity set, My Darling Patricia have been creating high-end visual theatre since 2003. The core artists (Halcyon Macleod, Katrina Gill, Bridget Dolan and Clare Britton), approach theatre from backgrounds in dance, visual arts, circus, puppetry, film and spectacle performance, applying these skills to the creation of intimate and highly visual performance based work. The Company draws influence from the epic visuals of Robert Wilson and Romeo Castellucci as well as the animation of Jan Syankmajer.

In the five years of their practice, My Darling Patricia have created three shows, *Kissing the Mirror, Dear Pat* and *Politely Savage* and are currently developing two more, *The Night Garden* and *Posts in the Paddock. Politely Savage* performed sell-out seasons in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide and received several prestigious awards including Best Theatre at the Adelaide (2007) and Melbourne (2006) Fringe Festivals, and the Sydney Theatre Critic's Award for Best Independent Production 2006. Through their next projects they are aiming to expand their process of creating original hybrid performance work that deals with the lives and voices of Australian women.

My Darling Patricia's process of creating work involves incubating ideas over a long period of time then coming together to work intensively and engaging with other specialist artists. Their new work in progress, *The Night Garden* is an hour-long work of visual theatre for adults with an audience seated in traverse, giving each side a very different visual experience from the other.

The Night Garden revolves around multiple representations of the same fractured character. We witness a woman torn in the rip between her mundane domestic reality and her mythic imagination as memories of a traumatic event burst into her life, and won't be silenced. The woman is represented by three look-alike performers and three puppets. The puppets (made by Bryony Anderson) are a half-size puppet representation of the woman and two taxidermy inspired puppets — a goose and a fox. The animals are images of the woman's anima, and the resilient self that has a will to continue. They resonate with images from fairytale and fable, rotted road kill and memories of Australian suburban childhoods. The audience meets this woman's 'family of selves' as clusters, or as individuals on stage.

Inspired by Louise Bourgeois' Femme Maison works, the set of The Night Garden gives another image of the woman's state — she is as her house is, 'burned down' — but some pieces have survived the blaze. The mise-en-scene includes a structure of a burned house that collapses live on stage, a garden turfed with ankle-deep fur and the tarnished windows of a complete glass house. These multiple structures also become the screens for projections of the evocative film and video of Sam James which appear and recede on discreetly integrated mesh screens — ghostly, startling and strangely familiar. My Darling Patricia brings mythic, redolent images to a domestic suburban context.

Puppetry is an integral part of My Darling Patricia's storytelling. We are drawn to puppetry because it sits at the cross roads of image making and performance. The group creates metaphoric images, of which puppetry is a part. Eric Bass' eloquent article in the Contemporary Theatre Review 1999, where he talks about the essential metaphoric nature of a puppet: 'the puppet brought to life is always a metaphor' — has influenced the Group's approach. My Darling Patricia's performances seek personal investment and interaction from their audiences, immersing them 'inside' the images created. Puppets require an audience to invest life into them and the Company is interested in the way in which performers and puppets exist together; challenging each other's sincerity and demanding this investment from the audience, to create the world of the scene and story.

Taking the, typically Australian, 'irreverent' approach, the Company has worked with a range of styles: from a large scale inflatable behemoth bursting from a shipping container onto Bondi Beach, to giant co-joined twin marionettes installed in a room of mirrors. They have also worked with body puppets, glove and rod, shadow puppets, Czech style marionettes and Bunraku inspired puppets. The puppets are never in a puppet-theatre setting and appear alongside the actors as one integrated part of a multidisciplinary work.

My Darling Patricia's approach to puppetry draws its influences from the very different approaches of its members. While Katrina Gill is a founding member of the street theatre company, The Knee High Puppets, Halcyon and Clare benefited from the wealth of experience of the Slabacu sister's at Horizon Theatre's marionette training initiatives. The three met working for Sydney's Erth Visual & Physical Inc. and went on to collaborate with Bridget Dolan whose background is more in making for film. The company has an ongoing working relationship with puppet-maker Bryony Anderson, puppeteers Sam Routledge and Alice Osborne, and has enjoyed the directorial assistance of senior artists Christopher Ryan, Anne Thompson and Annie Forbes.

During 2006/2007 the My Darling Patricia company members have undertaken training and education that continues to feed the growth of this young company. Clare Britton and Halcyon Macleod participated in Philippe Genty and Mary Underwood's two-month master class at the Victorian College for the Arts (University of Melbourne, Australia) and, in December 2007, Halcyon travelled to Quebec City to undertake a month of skills development, observing Robert Lepage and Ex Machina's creation of a new work. This year will see My Darling Patricia work intensively in three residency programs: the Culture Lab at the Meat Market, the Hot House Theatre and with the Bundanon Artists' Trust. Their new show, *The Night Garden*, is due to open in October of this year (2008) as a part of the Melbourne Fringe Festival.

'My Darling Patricia is a company to watch out for.' John McCallum, *The Australian*.



Katrina Gill, Bridget Dedan, Smitch and Sam Roodedge in Politely Savage 2006



and the first entry and the base on Policy Springs 2005.



User Medeod in Policy Swage 2007



The Behemods, Katrina Gill, Clare Britton and Histogram Plachard in The Board Sat, 2004

Phentagenpha by Haideun Later

Dispatch - Death of a Puppet:

When is a lifeless character more than a lifeless object?

Penelope Bartlau

Dispatch was shown at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) as part of the Master of Puppetry programme in September 2007. Dispatch's premise was drawn from one of three tenets of Hindu philosophy, coming from the Bhagavad-Gita:

From nothingness we come. By nothingness we are sustained. To nothingness we return.

The following paper will discuss this philosophy in relation to puppetry using *Dispatch* as a model for analysis.

Dispatch evoked the story of a puppet character, Sorrel, a girl who had died, arriving at a timeless 'middle place', an island. Sorrel could not let go of the emotional and material trappings of her life. The main puppeteer/performer played Maman Brigitte, a Goddess, presiding over the island. She functioned to guide Sorrel through her journey, offering her a series of lessons and choices. Dispatch was a reflection on mortality and the art of detachment

The original Hindu philosophy was interpreted in an eclectic manner in the creation of *Dispatch*. While founded in Hindu philosophy, the interpretation looks beyond Hinduism, drawing on elements of philosophy from other religions:

From nothingness we come — we arrive into the world from ether, from a spirit world, a world not of material substance but of 'no-thing'.

By nothingness we are sustained – we are sustained, supported and held by no-thing – no object, no material possession. A Buddhist slant on this would suggest that the yearning for the material creates suffering, and expectation, the same. If we let go of our expectations and our desires, if we desire no - thing, we are free If we can be sustained by no-thing, by living with no expectation and no attachment, then we should not suffer. Failure to be sustained by no-thing creates the opposite

To nothingness we return – when we die, our body perishes, and returns to dust: "...thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." We, once again, turn out of the body, away from the material plane, to the world of spirit, to ether, to 'no-thingness'.

For *Dispatch*, the interpretation of the premise was played out in the following manner. The object, a puppet, was brought into the view of the audience, without life — from nothingness it came. The puppeteer then imbued the puppet with life. The puppet character then struggled with having no-thing: she did not wish to relinquish her material possessions and tried to satisfy emotional needs by gathering more. This gathering was in itself, an attempt at distraction from the truth, and the truth was that her body was actually, dead.

The fact that she was dead but not at rest, was symptomatic of her inability to confront the truth. Chasing these illusions, these

distractions, kept her at a distance from this truth and as a result the character continued to suffer. When the puppet character did, finally, face the truth it was when she had 'no-thing' left. She was freed from desire, liberated from suffering, and able to move on; her release from pain came with the acceptance, tacit in this case, that 'by nothingness we are sustained'. At the end of the play the character died – found rest – and was thus returned to, was liberated into, nothingness.

The interesting point about this ending of the play, with the death of the character and her return to nothingness – is what it might imply about puppetry itself.

Firstly, to define the action of puppetry: a puppet — an object, an icon of a character — lies on the tabletop and is lifeless. A puppeteer, Godlike, '...affects animation and controls action through manipulation of the puppet as the object'. The puppeteer brings to life the puppet by endowing it with soul, intelligence, feeling, breath and movement. From this perspective, a puppet only exists with life in time and space, until such time as the puppeteer puts it down — returning it to the lifeless status of mere object

In *Dispatch*, the object/puppet arrived in a boat of bones and was endowed with life when given the above-mentioned qualities. At the end of the play, the character gave way to nature's course, took her last breath in front of the audience, and died. In this moment, the death of the character was confronting for the audience as they had invested in her, had believed in her. In her death, she became not a lifeless puppet or an object, but a dead girl. Despite the fact that all the qualities that comprise a live puppet had gone: the puppet was a little dead body.

What was it then, what is the essence of that moment, when a lifeless character is more than a lifeless object?

The audience and the puppeteer had strong investments in the character Sorrel. Both had developed, and in the case of the puppeteer, practised, a relationship with her. A puppeteer's skill and art is to bring a puppet to life, but surely the puppet informs the puppeteer?

A puppet's character is generated by a transaction between puppeteer and the puppet, within the context of the work performed. It is an "...actively reciprocal relationship between the puppet and puppeteer...a pas-de-deux rather than manipulation".

A puppeteer and puppet work symbiotically to create relationship, which the audience then accepts.

This is the act of acceptance of the puppet as an icon of a character—a puppet is an object representing potential character. Added to this is a: '....shift of view from the logic of the normal, secular sphere, where things are understood to be distinct from one another, to a theatrical or play sphere, where they are accepted for what they are experienced as being and the logic 'of make-believe'—'as if.' ''.'

When viewing puppetry, we make a leap from everyday logic, to suspension of belief and engagement of the imagination, to accept

the puppet as icon of character, then to living character. Henryk Jurkowski describes this as a process that both audience and puppeteer go through:

Animation and especially animisation of human simulacra can he considered a mental process...it is a mental process for the manipulator who intends to bring life to his simulacra and for the spectator who comes to the theatre in expectation of a fictional experience. Before we can see the scenic fact of animism or animisation we have to pass through the preparatory psychic process of allowing our imagination to work." (5)

A lifeless character became more than a lifeless object in Dispatch herause both the puppeteer and audience were ready to engage in the experience of making 'nothing' into 'something'.

are skill of a puppeteer is the execution of this pas-de-deux of outputty, to create life with an object and bring something from nothingness; the audience is complicit in the experience of making nothing into something, and, in making an object or puppet, into a no maintaine e

When a puppetry performance ends, the character/s return to a lifeless state of object/s or, a state of nothingness; the audience accepts this as part of the theatrical transaction. In *Dispatch*, as with all puppetry, the object implies character, but at the end of Dispatch the character as dead, but not the object. Why? Aided by the conviction of the **Displayers, it is the sentiment** and emotion of the audience that lives our attachment to the character is all that remains, blinding us to it examinate object.

to turns of the premise; this is the cornerstone of the contradiction Disparch presents to the audience. The play provokes the audience to become attached to the puppet character, yet also asks that the middle clause of the premise, 'by nothingness we are sustained' be souressed. The play is, at the same time as provoking attachment, an paigning for non-attachment.

one of life's conundrums in a nutshell. How can we live and investigated by the sustained by Mouleuress? This sentiment and line of questioning were reflected sale following comment made by one of the Dispatch collaborators The sellall during the creative development: 'for me, Dispatch is a tale of the journey we take through the night towards light. Most often

our journey is disrupted, unexpectedly derailed, and because of the fear of death that we hold, keeps us attached to physical objects for security, we lose control of choosing when and how we make the journey."

Ironically, my own condition of 'cytoplasmic' pneumonia re-emerged during the rehearsal process. But, there are no coincidences. What am I to understand? What is Sorrel saying to me? (6)

Sorrel is unable to let go of the trappings - emotional and material - of her life, and it is this that causes her suffering. Dispatch aims to create the experience of attachment in order to focus on nonattachment, it asserts that nothingness is a natural state. Puppetry is an ideal vehicle because a living character is generated from nothingness and acts as a metaphor for the premise.

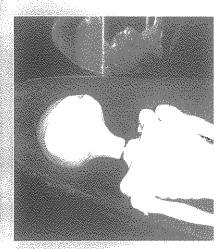
Our bodies, like Sorrel's, return to nothingness. The moment when Sorrel died, the audience witnessed the impossible death of something that was never 'really' alive. Perhaps puppetry is a metaphor for what the body is.

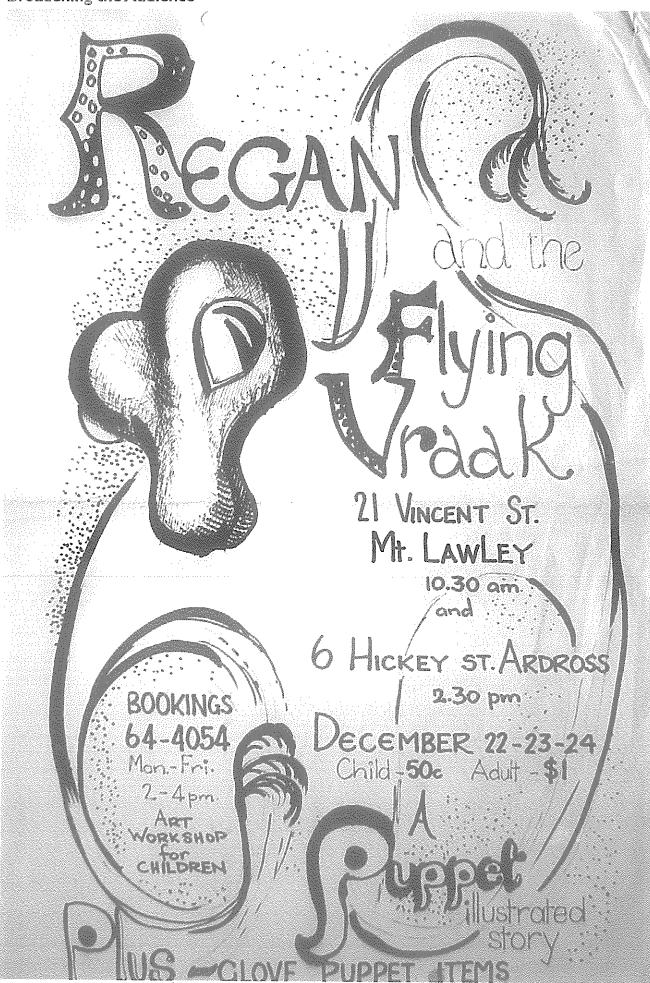
'For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return' (7).

Notes:

- (1) Bible, King James Version, Genesis 3:19
- (2) Lee, Janet, Dancing Puppetry Dance and puppetry as interdisciplinary performance, Animated Encounters - A Review of Puppetry and Related Arts, Puppet Centre Trust, 2007, p. 17
- (3) Lee, p. 17
- (4) Campbell, Joseph, Primitive Mythology The Masks of God, Arkana, 1991, pp. 21-22
- (5) Jurkowski, Henryk, The Human Among Things and Objects, UNIMA Press, 1998,
- (6) Bartlau, Penelope, (comp), Dispatch, Peer Mentor and Audience Feedback, 2007, pp. 4-5
- (7) Bible, King James Version, Genesis 3:19 Bibliography:
- Bartlau, Penelope, (comp), Dispatch, Peer Mentor and Audience Feedback,
- Bible, King James Version, Genesis 3:19
- Campbell, Joseph, Primitive Mythology The Masks of God, Arkana, 1991.
- Jurkowski, Henryk, History of European Puppetry: Volume One, From It's Origins To The End Of The 19th Century, The Edwin Mellen Press 1998
- Jurkowski, Henryk, The Human Among Things and Objects. UNIMA Press, 1998

Photographs by Penelope Bartlau





1975 Poster for one of Lloyd Noble's solo shows. Courtesy of Mildred Clarke.

Lloyd Noble and his scarf puppets

Mildred R. Clarke

Nearly forty years ago Lloyd Noble came to Western Australia from Queensland where he had been a teacher, scriptwriter and musician.

He asked if he could work with me to learn the rudiments of puppetry, as he wanted to see what reaction a child audience would have to some stories he was writing. He became my 'left hand' glove puppet for a series of Christmas shows.

Isent him to 'Daan' Kowarski, an excellent craft worker from Holland, to make his first set of glove puppets. Funding from Western Mining and the Western Australian Arts Council supported his tours into the outback of Western Australia, to tiny settlements of ten to twenty people, many Aboriginal communities and also the larger towns. From then on Lloyd was commonly known as 'The Puppetman', operating from the back of his van. The Western Australian Arts Council took a cultural tour north in 1977, the first of its kind. They visited the Northern Wheat belt with an exhibition of ninteenth century Punch & Judy, Peter Hartland's TV personalities, Indonesian shadows and a recent high school puppet theatre production; Lloyd and his scarf puppets also ran workshops.

In 1975 the famous German puppeteer, Albrecht Roser, gave a onenight performance at the University of Western Australia, including his own unique scarf puppets on a multiple control, prior to his performance in Melbourne for our National Puppet Festival.²

From his visit, Lloyd developed his own unique rod and string scarf puppers. I had the pleasure of interviewing Albrecht for the ETA Magazine's coverage of the 1975 Festival, when Mr. Roser taught me the value of balance, the essential component for successful control of the scarf pupper. I was only too happy to share with Lloyd this light and highly portable pupper, so essential when touring our vast areas.

He opened his own puppet theatre in Subiaco in 1973¹ after outback touring for over three years, writing his own material, playing his own original music and using children from his audience to operate some of his characters in his shows. Jenny Twydale was his invaluable assistant in this change of direction, being a talented illustrator and creator in her own right. Together they went to Sydney and Melbourne and chose to settle in Adelaide to form their own company, Puppetfolk² where they produced educational books for primary aged children and a regular *Puppetfolk Gazette* which included instructions for creative work.³ Lloyd also gave radio broadcasts, incorporating his own musical compositions with an educational focus and still toured in South Australia with his sixteen year old cat, Kimberley! (She was a stray who found him in the dusty outback of Western Australia when his van was overturned by a passing road train.)

What was unique about Lloyd's puppetry was his ability to create abstract forms wholly connected to our Australian psyche — each character being fully accepted and understood by children of his audience. He also created and manipulated puppets for TV shows like Here's Humphrey. Many adults (now with their own children),

will recall his little people: Mossop, Mudlock, Granny Grumbles and many others, as well as over forty traditional glove puppets that the Company produced for sale.

Unfortunately, Lloyd's personal life began to fall apart from 1985, when his mother died, followed by his father in 1986 and the break up of his partnership with Jenny. His death in 1987 robbed Australians of a talented musician, educationist and puppeteer. Australian audiences have been fortunate to participate and benefit from Lloyd's creativity.

Notes

- 1 Clarke, M.R. Tinkerbell's Scrap Book (1988) passim
- 2 ibid, p. 154
- 3 Noble, L.H., personal correspondence to M. Clarke 1987 Bibliography:

Lloyd H. Noble, *Finders Keepers, Adelaide's beginnings* (1986) Illustrated by Jenny Twydale.

Gabriel's Christmas, (1987) illustrated by Lloyd Noble



Lloyd Noble with his Scarf Puppets. Photograph courtesy of Mildred Clarke

Making One Million

Daniele Goronszy

Edited by Penelope Bartlau.

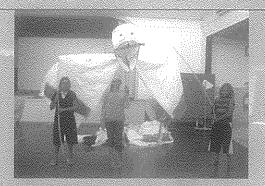
July 2007 and I found myself in Onslow, a small rural salt manufacturing and fishing town, with a mostly indigenous population, located on the central coast of Western Australia. I was there with Perth-based Spare Parts Pupper Theatre as part of the 'Million Pupper Project'*, to be presented at the 2008 UNIMA Congress. My role, on behalf of Spare Parts, was to introduce puppets and pupper making as part of a series of three week-long residencies in three different communities. Each residency was to provide an introduction to puppetry, covering design and construction, and operation and performance.

After two days in Onslow, I started to wonder, 'How will I engage the teenagers?' I'd been in the town for two days and discovered that the general teenage consensus was that, 'puppets are for little kids'. Onslow has a youth centre in the Town Shire Hall and It was here I met a fabulous youth worker named Anna Jamieson, with whom I was to work closely for the week. The youth centre is the only place for the young people to go, and being school holidays, it was the place to be. However this didn't guarantee any interest in the puppet making—there was stiff competition from the nearby pool-table.

The workshops ran from 10 am until 4 pm every day. It was impossible to predict how many kids would turn up, and no guarantees that any would stay. Most often the kids would begin to make a puppet but soon abandon the work for the pool table — or leave the youth centre all together. Younger children, two and three year olds, often left for the day in our care by their parents, had a ball with the paint. In very *Cat in the Hat Comes Back* style, the paint began in one small spot, and by the end of a day was festooning the premises. Anna and I certainly bonded over the late afternoon ritual of scrubbing the polished floorboards clean!

As for puppets, I was having trouble charming any of the kids into making one puppet — let alone one million. So I thought to lead by example and began constructing some big mask puppets. Some of the early teens started to engage, but the older teenagers then campaigned, presenting peer pressure against the younger, earlier teens, badgering them about puppets being for little kids. Also there was shame put on them for their involvement.

Worse still, we had put the puppets we had begun work on outside to dry and someone began to damage and vandalise them. Then, the older kids began threatening the younger, and the situation was turning ugly. I picked up some of the abandoned and broken mask puppets and slapped them together hoping to provide a distraction and to achieve an interesting result — and made a big pelican puppet. This was the turn-around point. Some of the girls who had walked away from the puppet-making and masks came back; they recognised the puppet as a pelican and bingo! I had them!



With a gaggle of interested kids, I introduced the idea of making a backpack puppet. Only one young teenage girl took a real interest. She worked and worked on the backpack puppet, and then once she'd succeeded in making it, suddenly all the kids wanted to have a turn in using it.

For the end of the week it was decided that there would be a performance, to accompany a slide night, showing holiday programme photos. I was excited about the idea of pulling together a show. However, if getting kids to make puppets had been difficult, getting them to perform was a whole new ball-game.

The final day of workshops, and the performance night was organised for a Sunday. During the week we had had anywhere from twenty to thirty kids in Shire Hall, but on this last day only about lifteen kids turned up. As the day progressed, and the hour of the performance drew closer, the kids dropped off like flies — disappearing. We yet needed to come up with the show. The kids, Anna and I decided that puppets would host the slide show and finish with a big puppet finale! The opening of the play was written by three girls. All the kids who made the big puppets worked out a story to incorporate everyone. We practiced twice, it was rough but everyone was happy. The plan was to turn up at five o'clock for a final rehearsal, ready for a seven o'clock show.

Five o'clock came and went, as did six. Then the message came, the kids who had written the show and made the puppets had decided not to do it. But just as we thought the worst, another group of indigenous kids showed up a little before show time. Anna and I put puppets in their hands and gave them a crash course on pupper operation. We made up a small routine, and crossed our fingers as we sent them onto the performance area. Then, nearing the end of the slideshow, the girls who were going to operate the big pelican were caught trying to sneak away! Anna convinced them to try, and put the puppet in their hands and said, 'Go', pushing them out into the hall. The routine we had devised quickly dissolved into running around the slide projector, in circles, giggling, with the puppet. Audience and participants alike thought it was hilarious!

These girls, who had nearly abandoned performing, and who had been interested, but too shy to get involved in the pupper-making, were suddenly so proud. Their fluge smiles as they walked around the hall with the giant pelican were for me, the greatest success of the week. 'Can we do the puppets again tomorrow?' they asked Anna. In Onslow we didn't make much of a dint into the million puppets for Million Puppet Project in 2008, but those kids in that community could now be inspired to create for puppets and performance in the future.

*The Million Puppet Project is proudly sponsored by WARIS, and Lottery West.

Seagrass and the Weedy Seadragon

Ian Cuming

As an image the Weedy Seadragon puppet resonates. People hold strong views about 'Weedy'. Mostly, people love him. Where ever he goes, he attracts interest. The most basic questions are asked by innocent audiences. 'What is it?' 'Where do they live?' Conversations evolve amongst the growing team of operators about Weedy Seadragons. Information is gathered and shared. Experts come out of the woodwork.

In the late 1980s the 'Seagrass Project', Hastings (Victoria) established the basis for community art/science in Australia, producing a series of community events over three years and a television documentary that won the Geography Teachers association Best Video Award, and screened internationally, raising awareness about marine eco-systems. This resulted in a variety of projects, here and overseas, celebrating endangered species such as the Orange Bellied parrot, the Shearwater and the Eastern Curlew among other migratory wading birds protected under the Ramsar Bird Migratory Bird Treaties.

In 1996 a Weedy Seadragon skeleton, found whilst cavorting on the Bear Gully beach, heralded the conception of a real baby girl and my significant personal transition into parenthood. About five or six years of dedicated parenting preceded a proposal to the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council (Victoria) to re-visit the Seagrass Project. A position manifested to direct the Australia Day parade in Mornington, in 2003. Ten community groups created a number of iconic bird and animal species, and an 'Earth Goddess' (constructed out of bamboo and cane) was joined by a local choir. This event won the inaugural Best Australia Day Celebrations award 2003 for the Mornington Peninsula Shire. One of the images was a Weedy Seadragon made to resemble the skeleton found on the beach, scaled up about twenty times.

Following that outstandingly successful project, Weedy was consigned to the ubiquitous shed where he languished, not knowing whether he would ever see the light of day or feel the warmth of loving human touch on his bamboo poles. Dust gathered and paper bleached until inst, the Frankston Festival of the Sea and then, the Blue Wedges Coalition, called him back into action. The proposal was to conduct a Council of all Beings' event in which the creatures of the sea would have the opportunity to voice their objection to the outrageous proposal to blast open the heads and dredge Port Phillip Bay (Victoria). Urgent action was required. No time for budgets. No time for protracted planning or construction. A day was set for a quick re-furb and training session for a team of novice adult operators. Poles were replaced. Framing and body shapes were restored. Fresh paper and PVA was applied. By the end of the day Weedy was ready to come to life again. The initial instruction to that team was simple From the moment you pick up the puppet to the moment you put it down, become the Weedy Seadragon.' It was a spiritual experience

that late summer's day as we raised the head, body and tail joined by nylon chord tied in granny knots, to move amongst drift and play in the driveway amongst the tea-tree and parked cars.

As the Victorian State marine emblem, Weedy was then, and is now, keenly aware that his mission is an important one. He aims to communicate on behalf of the creatures of the sea, the impacts of the choices people make on land. Central to his message is that a lot of change has occurred in the last few hundred years despite there being human occupation here for over fifty thousand years. New people have arrived and with them, new problems.

From that day to this, Weedy has been guite busy out and about communicating about the threat (not only to Port Phillip Bay but also to Westernport Bay), as proposals for port infrastructure there continue to press unreasonably. He would make an appearance accompanied by his Seagrass Flags anywhere he felt he could help to raise awareness of the precious and fragile world he knew as his home. He alerted people to the complex issues facing life below the high tide line and began to become quite specific, not only about potential catastrophe for Dolphin, Shrimp, Whiting, Eastern Curlew and the Seagrass itself, but to the historical disasters that remained unacknowledged. He referred to the draining of the Kooweerup Swamp, the build up of recreational marinas and the unexplained disappearance of seagrass in Westernport between 1972 and 1984. He let people know about the many new species calling the Bays home. He appeared at tribunal hearings, festivals and in the media. He delivered a letter to the Minister for the Environment at Spring Street (Melbourne). He gained a reputation for his strong opposition to human carelessness resulting on one occasion, in being momentarily banned from appearing at the opening of a local community arts facility.

In 2005 Weedy was invited to appear at the 'Not Just for Arts Sake' community arts conference at St Kilda Town Hall where he schmoozed with the art makers to the accompaniment of a drum He was acclaimed a highlight and rightly so, but something else happened that day. He had a conversation with Natalie Davey from Pelican Expeditions and sewed the seed for an ongoing relationship to that project.

Pelican One is a sixty foot catamaran sailing Eastern Australian waters conducting a variety of activities including community engagement with indigenous people, scientific surveys and arts projects. On Sunday the 2nd of December 2007 the Patron, Andrew Denton, launched the Two Bays Project* telling the story of a KGB defector who acted on his conscience to expose a corrupt regime. The metaphor of a single person taking on the State pertained to the kind of heroic deeds required to address the critical environmental,

social and personal challenges facing us all in the twenty-first century. Behind him, as he spoke, fluttered one of a number of rainbow coloured flags representing the seagrass. On the Docklands pier (Melbourne), hanging off every word and swimming into a stiff and sometimes swirly breeze/ current, was an eight metre Weedy Seadragon affectionately known as 'Weedy'.

Of course there is always a little more to it than that, but you get the idea. One thing leads to another. An Australia Council Fellowship now ensures that some 'research and projects' will be undertaken over the next few years in 'community arts and puppetry'. Nine other project partners — including two local government regions, two tertiary institutions and the YMCA — accompany Pelican Expeditions in deepening our appreciation of the scope of this work. Bread and Puppet Theatre, in the US, and the Dead Good Guides, in the UK, will also contribute to this most exciting development. This is a

wonderful and timely global paradigm shift in human development where we can all look forward to being seriously playful as we resolve to generate authentic and respectful policy and practice in our local government regions and beyond. We are at the beginning of re-defining culture itself and it seems that puppets are leading the way by providing us with the capacity to envision a healthy future and progressively inform ourselves of its potential.

Two Bays 2007 has been developed by Pelican Expeditions in partnership with EPA Victoria, Parks Victoria, Port Phillip and Western Port Catchment Management Authority, Melbourne Water, People and Parks Foundation, Victorian Coastal Council, Central Coastal Board, Coast Action/Coastcare, Marine and Freshwater Fisheries Research Institute, and the Association of Bayside Municipalities.



Blue Wedges Co-alition at Mt Martha Beach with Weedy - Picture from Leader Community Newspaper

The Tale of an Australian Puppeteer Abroad: an adventure in puppet wonderland

Jane Hartnell

Jane ('Jai') Hartnell, Australian puppeteer, puppet maker, community development worker and Honorary Research Associate of the Monash Asia Institute, writes from her posting in Cambodia.

Once upon a time there was a little girl with pigtalls who went on an adventure filled with puppets and people and exotic places. She traversed seas and crossed a continent. She still hasn't come back.

If all started with love. Puppet love. Muppet love, if we are to be entirely honest. The kind of love that comes with blinkers and butterflies. Labour followed love as over the years our heroine collected a mixed bag of armaments to take on her adventure. There was a Degree in Sculpture (Monash University, Melbourne), a Diploma in Small Companies and Community Theatre (Swinburne briversity, Melbourne), experience with a number of Melbourne based companies, and the support and encouragement of wonderful mentors. Then she added an enquiring mind, a quick smile and a sun hat, and set off. This is me—Jai Hartnell; My Adventure in Puppet Wonderland.

in the very beginning it was chance that found me making shadow, puppets, but this quickly developed into deep fascination. Guided by the fabulous Richard Bradshaw, I became engrossed by the mysterious and magical world of shadows, which inhabits a realm suspended between physical reality and the land of the spirits. It cannot mention each and all of the wonderful people who helped and inspired me along the way, but Mr. B cannot go unmentioned)

The real adventure began in January 2004; The girl with pigtails, me, found herself on a boat in the gulf of Thailand. With the support of the Handspan International Study and Travel grants was on my way to Cambodia to meet traditional Cambodian puppeteers whilst participating in the Cambodian Living Arts (CLA) Afinual Cultural Delegation (see Australian Puppeteer #28, 3rd Quarter 2005). CLA is a project of the NGO World Education, working in the area of cultural revitalisation.

Cambodia has five forms of puppetry, although lack of documentation means few Cambodians — let alone outsiders, know this. The most important form is Sbaek Thom (large leather shadow puppets). Sbaek Thom was recently proclaimed a masterpiece of oral and intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO. In addition, Cambodia has also been nome to Sbaek Doit (small leathers), Sbaek Por (an extinct coloured leather form). Ti Moong (body puppets) and a 3D wooden form that disappeared sometime in the 1970s, During the years of the Khmer Rouge (1975–1979) nine of the ten known artists were killed. When the Khmer Rouge was finally overthrown, there were no complete sets of Sbaek Thom puppets remaining in the country. Now these traditional forms of puppetry teeter on the edge of extinction.

After an amazing month in Cambodia I briefly returned to Australia, before journeying back to Cambodia in September 2005 to work with GLA and traditional puppeteers. This time I was an Australian Youth Ambassador for Development, a programme funded by AusAID; my project was supported by the Monash Asia Institute (I was by then an Honorary Research Associate) and Polyglot Visual Theatre. During the following year I became deeply involved in cultural heritage management, and befriended local troupes, learning from traditional puppeteers how to tan the hide, copy the puppet designs and carve puppets. My most unforgettable moments, however, were the nights spent under the stars watching the Sbaek Thom performers, where I became a time traveller.

Lying under the stars we were transported to the year 1193 — the height of the Angkorian Empire. Under the rule of the God king Jayarvarman the 7th, Cambodia is the political, social and cultural centre of SE Asia. Sbaek Thom is unique in a number of ways. Based on the *Ramayana*, the puppets are made from an entire cowhide. What is highly unusual is that the show is performed on both sides of the 10m × 3m screen, lit by a burning pile of coconut husks, with the puppeteer's bodies mimicking the movement of the puppets. In fact, at the height of passion, the puppeteers place the puppets on the ground and fight hand to hand. A Pin Peat orchestra and two narrators accompany the show. And performed today, in the open air in rice paddles, little has changed in 1000 years.

But the adventure did not stop there. In December 2006, with my position at CLA completed, where was I to go but, Jakarta, Indonesia, to attend the 1st ASEAN Symposium on Puppetry. Representatives from all ten nations attended, and the ASEAN Puppetry Association was formed with the signing, by all parties, of the association's declaration. It was an amazing opportunity to meet people, learn about the history of puppetry in the region and witness performances. The highlight of the performance programme was the Joe Louis Theatre of Inaliand performing *Hun Lakhon Lek*, a traditional form of small rod puppetry (they play every night in Bangkok if you are ever stopping over).

The next stop for the girl on a puppetry adventure had to be India, the place from which Brahmin priests set forth over 2000 years ago with their Hindu puppet shows. Brimming with colour, intrigue, war and love, it is these shows that, finally making it to Cambodia, must have formed the inspiration for the creation of the Sbaek. Thom, In India I was lucky enough to attend Dadi Pudumjee's Ishara International Puppet Festival in Delhi, Dadi was so wonderfully helpful and the Delhi puppet scene so bright, particularly his exciting band of young puppeteers with their vibrant puppet troupe. Visiting the puppeteers colony of Delhi, where Puran Bhatt's sons performed for me a traditional Rajistani puppet show on the roof of his house, was unforgettable. In Jaipun at the Heritage festival, I met S. Chidambara

Rao, a shadow puppet maker from southern India, who welcomed my suggestion that I come one day to study his puppet making technique. According to his business card, when the time comes the girl in pigtails will find him in his village at door 23/368 – next to the water tank.

These days the girl with pigtails, who is not so little anymore, is still to be found in Cambodia amidst the honking of motos and the contagious smiles. Working for Epic Arts/Cambodia (EA/C) as a VIDA, I am once again funded by AusAID and supported by the MAI, EA/C is an NGO that works with the disabled community, using arts for expression, education, empowerment and employment. In this role I both facilitate puppet projects and train members of the local disabled community to facilitate community arts workshops. I work closely with deaf youth and recently shot a pilot for a ten-minute educational puppet film. I was also lucky enough to catch a show by Ka Bong Loa, a Laotian puppet and object theatre troupe, who use natural found objects combined with clothing, cloth and the puppeteers' bodies, to create animated and highly captivating characters. This show stole my heart.

Jai (Jane Hartnell) learning to tan the hide at Sovanna Phum Theatre in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

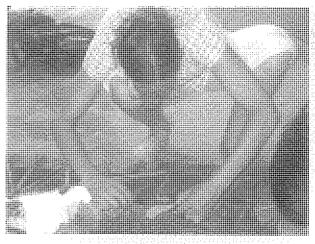
Photographs provided by Jane Hartnell

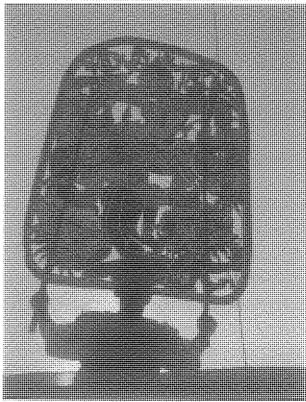


Rehearsals for *The Cleaners*, an integrated puppet show with kids with physical disabilities and deaf youth. I helped devise this with other Epic artists and the facilitated the kids in making the puppets. Siem Reap, Cambodia.

As for the girl and her big adventure, it is far from over. In late February 2008, Epic Arts/Cambodia will present SPOTLIGHT: An Asian Festival of Inclusive Arts. Funded by the Nippon Foundation, the eight day festival will showcase a range of artists working in inclusive arts from the Asian region. In this new adventure I find myself Creative Director and proudly presenting, for the first time in Cambodia, for our final whiz bang show, *Boxes* by the Hitomi Puppet Troupe of Japan. With an aura of magic and a lashing of style, this group brings together deaf and hearing actors in a puppet show with no reliance on vocal dialogue. With a year to go in my current project, who can say what will happen next on my big adventure; but I can't help but dream one day of creating my own professional deaf Cambodian puppet troupe...

If you would like any further information or may be interested in visiting/ assisting with the work that we do in Cambodia please do not hesitate to contact me (Jane Hartnell) at puppetnature@gmail.com.





3. Chidambara Rase with one of his delicious shadow puppets in Jaipur at the Heritage Festival.

ArtPlay, Melbourne

Simon Spain

It was over ten years ago that The City of Melbourne first had a vision of the precinct for children and families in the city centre: somewhere families could reconnect to the heart of the city. Now, in its fourth year of operation ArtPlay has established its presence soundly on the national stage for arts for children and families. Sitting on the banks of the Yarra River in Melbourne, adjacent to Federation Square, a turn of the century railway building has become a symbol of creative collaboration, fun and learning. ArtPlay brings artists together with children and families in a flexibly designed building with the intention of fostering a creative generation.

In partnership with the University of Melbourne and The Australia Council, ArtPlay is currently undertaking research with the intention of proving that high quality, shared, collaborative arts practice embodies key values that contribute to a higher level of cultural citizenship in our children. Combining an open workspace with artist-led programming and a commitment to high quality and meaningful encounters, ArtPlay seeks to raise the bar of children's arts programming within Australia. ArtPlay has a diverse range of workshops and performances that covers a broad range of art forms. It also has a range of significant cultural partners, from innovative programs with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra to international visual arts residencies with 'The South Project'.

It is no surprise therefore that ArtPlay has made a commitment to puppetry — in all its forms. Initially springing from a collaboration with Federation Square in the creation of the first International Puppet Carnival in 2006, ArtPlay has now established the Puppet Lab as a key element of its annual programming. Centred in the winter school holidays, the Puppet Lab offers children and adults the opportunity to get behind the scenes of the puppet show, and learn alongside

professional puppeteers. An artform with such a diverse range of skills and styles offers an ideal platform for programming at ArtPlay. It gives possibilities for work with very young children, parents and young teenagers, to learn and laugh together.

Featuring a central performance for the week, the 2007 Puppet Lab offered over thirty workshops for all ages and showcased new work from professional puppeteers and children working together funded through the ArtPlay Arts Grants Program. In 2008 the program is being expanded to include some week-long schools workshops, an after school program and also special workshops for under fives and parents. ArtPlay is keen to build on this program, to establish the Puppet Lab as both a core activity within the ArtPlay year and within the puppet community. ArtPlay is proud to have Ken Evans working in collaboration with ArtPlay staff member, Rebecca Russell, to curate the Puppet Lab 2008 and will premiere the new Dreamer show, Superbia, from Richard Hart. ArtPlay welcomes all puppeteers to be part of this annual event and to help it grow to become a major event on the UNIMA calendar.

In 2008 ArtPlay expands to open a new building for teenagers called SIGNAL — watch this space for the opportunities for presentation of puppet work with older kids too!

The Creative Producer of ArtPlay, Simon Spain, can be contacted at simon.spain@melbourne.vic.gov.au. The current ArtPlay program can be viewed at www.artplay.com.au.

Information about the ArtPlay Arts Grants Program — an annual round of grants for artists wishing to create work for, with, by or about children at ArtPlay — can be obtained from Rena Langberg at ArtPlay on 03 9664 7901.



Children working with artists at the ArtPlay centre, Melbourne. Photograph courtesy ArtPlay.

Post Graduate Diploma in Production - Puppetry Masters of Production - Puppetry

Gilly McInnes

Four years on...

The Victorian College of the Arts (VCA), now a faculty of the University of Melbourne, became home to Post-Grad Puppetry courses in 2004 with the first intake of six students.

History:

The idea of the course began earlier in 2001–2, when Peter J. Wilson first approached the VCA with an idea of offering further training for puppeteers. Associate Professor Richard Roberts, Head of the School of Production (now Discipline of Production), along with support and much fund-raising from the Dean, Professor Andrea Hull, invited Peter to create a Post-Graduate course within Production. Peter, together with Gilly McInnes, Richard Jeziorny and Al Martinez, spent some time over the next year creating the course; patrons Lyndsey Cattermole and Dame Elizabeth Murdoch provided the wherewithal to fund it and the doors opened in 2004.

During that year we also benefited from sponsorship by Simplot as part of their Masterclass series, which enabled us to bring I Made Sidia, the renowned Balinese Dalang, to come and work with us. The program and its visiting international artists over the years — I Made Sidia, Petr Matasek, Philippe Genty and Ronnie Burkett, have continued to be supported by Lyndsey Cattermole and Simplot, and also the Myer Foundation.

Philosophy:

The Discipline of Production has created courses based on a philosophy that believes that specialists also need to be based in a familiarity with each aspect of staging a production. Within the undergraduate course, those wishing to head for Stage Management or Lighting, or Sound, or Design also spend time learning the basics of every other area. We believe that for example, a stage manager who has had to plot a show and operate a lighting board, will be a better stage manager for it. They will also have a more naturally effective communication style with all the other people who have a role in staging a production, because they will know first-hand 'what it's like'.

Puppetry has been very positive in adopting this philosophy, which was naturally harmonious with our own. As a result, each student receives some tuition in, and projects that include, the areas of writing/playmaking, design, puppet making and performance. We believe a maker who has had to perform, or a writer or designer who's had to make the puppet and manipulate the image, will have a much deeper understanding of the process and will be a more effective communicator within it.

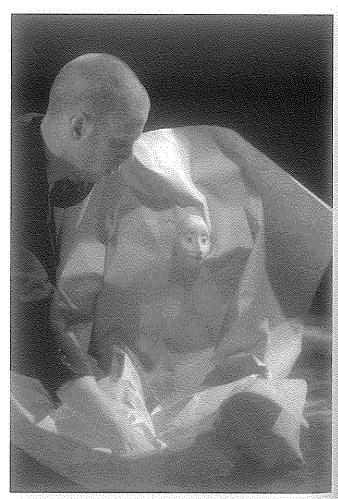
The original vision was that the course would provide puppetry practitioners with an opportunity to broaden their skills base and work more intensively to develop; to have time to reflect on and develop a deeper appreciation of their art-form; to reflect on their

own work within a wider Arts context. We also hoped the course would widen the students' knowledge of the artform and its networks within puppetry locally, nationally and internationally.

The Course, the Students:

At the Post Graduate Diploma level the course is divided into classwork and projects. In terms One and Three, the work is studio based and consists of three broad subjects. Performance Techniques covers tuition and class exercises and assignments in Manipulation, Design, Writing and Making. Manipulation covers all types of puppetry styles.

Performance Approaches includes all of the Post Graduate cohort within Production. This subject consists of a critical perspective on historic and contemporary theatre practice including cross-cultural, interdisciplinary and contextual perspectives.



Benjamin Woods participating in the *Philippe Genty* Workshop, 2006. Photograph Jeff Busby.

It also includes the planning of a production through all of its phases of development, taking into account organisation, (pre-production planning), the relationship with the producer (budgets, etc.) and the relationship to the audience (publicity, PR etc.). In term Three, History of Puppetry is taught and researched with the puppetry students.

Terms Two and Four are when 'Performance Projects' are undertaken. In the first project each student creates a short solo piece which they write, design, make and perform. This is a big challenge, as most people are performing outside their usual skill level and comfort zone in at least one of these areas. It can also be the work that lifts a practitioner to where they wanted to go, but had not dared. The work is mentored by the staff, and learning by doing, on a steep and intense curve, takes place. The projects are also supported by the Production students, which opens up another learning area within theatre and the marvellous opportunity to have your idea lit, and soundtracks created.

The end of year project has often been directed by a visiting artist and can also include a number of independent artists as participants, along with the students. The structure of this will vary from artist to artist, but there has always been a strong play-making and performance component. Peter Wilson and Gilly McInnes led this in 2007.

In all these projects, journals and diaries are produced and reflective papers written. These account for a sizeable percentage of the assessment, which ranges across participation in process, quality of product and quality of reflection.

The Students:

To end 2007, seventeen students have completed the Post Graduate Diploma, two have completed the Masters by Coursework and another twenty have participated in major projects. Our alumni are making their own work with some success, or continuing their making or designing or writing within the industry. Some of their present work began at VCA as an idea in class or a solo project or small assignment, and grew from there. Their new networks found them a creative team. Our alumni are found working internationally, nationally and locally. They work on original, individual work or in collaborations; in theatres and on film, in large festivals and ceremonies, and small get-togethers; in schools, libraries and workshops and the community. Graduates are acknowledged as contributing in no small way to the extraordinary body of puppetry work that is developed and produced in Australia by puppetry artists everywhere.

"...the art of puppetry has reached critical mass in Melbourne.

Doubtless the VCA Post Graduate Puppetry course has helped to fuel this spectacular rise ..." Cameron Woodhead, *The Age* 28 Sept 2007

info: www.vca.unimelb.edu.au/production/productioncourses

www.vca.unimelb.edu.au/production/puppetry

call: (03) 9685 9252 (course admin)

(03) 9685 9376 (puppetry office)

email: vca-production@unimelb.edu.au pwilson@unimelb.edu.a gmcinnes@unimelb.edu.au



Living Things, 2007. Left to right: Leonie Van Eyk, Beth McMahon and Jenny Ellis. Photograph Jeff Busby.

VCA Master of Puppetry: A Year on Fast-Forward

Penelope Bartlau

I began the first year of Puppetry, the Post-Graduate Diploma, at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) at the beginning of 2006. The year forms the first half of a Master of Puppetry. In this first year, different forms of puppetry are introduced, with classes in performance techniques, design, making, writing, and history. At the end of 2006, I had well and truly sunk my teeth into the art form. But if this year had been the tapas plate, I was ready for the main course. Bring on the Masters.

A Master of Puppetry degree from VCA is assessed by coursework and requires that you develop and produce a piece of puppet theatre of approximately thirty minutes length. There are no limitations to the style, scale or genre, provided you can achieve what you have proposed within the given time frame, and the budgetry constraints. Through the course there are various papers and assignments set, concluding with a 10,000-word paper: an analysis and reflection of the work you have produced.

At the beginning of 2007, I came back from touring *Hatch* in India with fellow Masters student, Jacob Boehme, where we both had our thinking altered on the shape our Masters pieces would take. On the plane trip home, we concurred; we were both petrified, as the first pitch of our Masters ideas was scheduled for ten days after our arrival. We unpacked from the tour, and the year on fast-forward began.

The first pitch was to our lecturers — Gilly McInnes: script development & dramaturgy; Annie Forbes: production, and Dale Ferguson: design. Jacob and I were given support and feedback for our ideas, with suggestions for directions to further explore and develop them. The feedback sessions in first term were held weekly, and we had to generate the initial concept and a first draft of a script within a matter of weeks. We were working towards a two-week creative development (CD) period and a CD presentation at the end of May.

The pressure to generate the first draft was great, but so was the support our lecturers gave — particularly Gilly, who has the unique ability to dig out the nasty spots in a script — but without causing undue pain. Ronnie Burkett arrived at the VCA, to lead a Master-class for both the Masters and Post-Grad puppetry students. As Masters students, we each had one-on-one development sessions with Ronnie. His input was invaluable. Ronnie prompted fresh ideas and provoked strong stories and design concepts from each of us, by guiding us to establish firm parameters. Armed with all these ideas, Jacob and I then took a house in the bush for three days, barricading ourselves from distraction, and finished our first drafts.

With these initial scripts, we went into our first creative development session. Masters students are not expected to go it alone, but to pull together a creative team of their choosing. I had Tim Denton come on board as my 'outside eye' designer and director, and Justine Warner and Dan Goronszi as makers and collaborators. Vanessa Ellis and Keira

Lyons helped with the construction of my puppet, and actress Caroline Bock came in and played with the mocked-up set and puppets. For the last week of the CD we had VCA students assisting as well. The CDs were, again, well supported by VCA lecturers, who checked in on the processes along the way and were always available to trouble-shoot. The CD showing in May was gruelling — as most showings are. Both Jacob and I came out with fresh insights and perspectives on how to move forward with our pieces.

A week after the CD showing, I jumped on a plane with my family, bound for the Czech Republic, to participate in the Prague Quadrennial. The Prague Quadrennial is an international exhibition of scenography and theatre architecture accompanied by a bounty of puppetry (and other) workshops. The opportunity to go to Prague came through the VCA Production School. A group of students and VCA lecturers attended, including Head of Puppetry, Peter J. Wilson. This was not an official part of the Masters, but much from the experience subsequently fed into my work.

In conjunction with Petr Matasek and his puppetry/design students at the DAMU School in Prague, the VCA group developed three theatre pieces. I collaborated on a work called *Windows*, where we integrated traditional rod puppetry with interactive digital projection, using the elements of glass and sand. The works were presented as part of the Quadrennial Performance Programme. Also, as part of the Quadrennial programme, I had the opportunity to take Master Classes with some of the 'big lights' in puppetry: Peter Schumann of Bread and Puppet Theatre (US), Nori Sawa (Japan & Czech Republic), and Kazunori Watanabe/Miyako Kurotani (Japan).

Back to Australia, I returned to the VCA for 2nd semester, the dates for the shows were set, venues locked in and work on the Season began in earnest. I went into a second CD with Tim, Justine and Dan, Gilly had great input during this time in her role as lecturer overseeing the dramaturgy. I also invited composer Robert (Rob) Vincs to become involved. The VCA provided a sound designer, bringing Angela (Angie) Grant on board. Rob and Angie dived straight into the work and, accessing the VCA recording studios, generated some amazing sounds which Angie built into the soundtrack.

As part of their assessment, the VCA puppetry post-graduate students built some of the props, overseen by Al Martinez. It was a great privilege to be able to access this assistance. The results perfectly matched my design briefs and were beautifully done.

Everything assembled, we went into a four-week rehearsal period. The VCA provided a rehearsal space that Jacob and I shared. This could have been awkward but I did daytime rehearsals and Jacob, evening. During the rehearsal period Gilly McInnes and Peter Wilson, who offered regular and constructive feedback on our progress, again oversaw us.

For the last ten days of rehearsal (which includes production week), the VCA production students were assigned to us, completing the teams. Some of the students, although busy on other productions, had volunteered to begin work on Jacob's and my pieces before their 'official' time — which was a godsend. Without them, the lighting design could not have been managed for either production in the time allocated, nor the audio-visual design for my show achieved. The VCA supplied the venues, lighting and sound gear, publicist, stills photographer and the filming and editing of the two shows — a huge contribution on top of everything else.

The two shows went on in the same week, promoted together. Both were performed at VCA theatres — a stone's throw from each other. Although developed side-by-side, the works were very different. Jacob's work *Idja* (held in the Grant Street Theatre) is based strongly in movement and dance and is a contemporary indigenous story presenting a personal journey toward home. It is about belonging and accepting the skin you are in. Dialogue and lyrics were spoken and sung in the Narangga language with local choir, *fIRST cHORUS* performing live as part of the show. My show, *Dispatch*, performed

in the tiny Shed Theatre, was about a puppet character 'Sorrel', a girl who arrived in a leaky boat at 'the middle place' — an island. Keeper of the island was 'Maman Brigitte', who I played. On the island were abandoned suitcases — Sorrel went through these, seeking shelter and refuge. She received stories and lessons from the contents she found within. *Dispatch* was a reflection on mortality and the art of detachment.

The Seasons ran for a week and, after bump-out, we had six weeks to produce the final analysis and reflection paper. To analyse a work so fresh out of production was certainly challenging. The demand being: to take an objective view of the work whilst remaining insensitive to feedback — good, bad, sublime or ugly. But once the paper was in, the Masters was complete.

Although the Masters has been an enormous amount of work, Jacob and I are both proud of the results. The Masters is a year on 'fast-forward'. From an initial concept in February, to full production in September, takes a lot of push. Fortunately, the support and guidance provided at the VCA made the goal achievable.



Penelope Bartlau and Sorrel during creative development of Dispatch.
Photograph Justine Warner

Beginnings... Philosophy and practice, a tandem road

Jennifer Pfeiffer

The following is an excerpt from a 1996 paper, 'The Power of the Object: The Potency of Puppetry', an important step in my development as a puppetry interlocutor. It was an exploration of what gives puppetry its capacity in relation to other forms, and a first attempt at theorisation of puppetry linked to discourse outside of the immediate field. This section of the paper was a meditation on puppetry viewed through a prism of Walter Benjamin's writing, German philosopher of the Frankfurt school. The rest of the paper speaks to other aspects of puppet theatre and its audiences: the subversive potential of puppetry, its folk roots and archetypal characters. Unbeknownst to me at the time, it became a progenitor of my current PhD project at the Victorian College of the Arts, which takes a more applied approach, specifically geared towards cross-cultural work. I re-visit it now, to see what filtered through as consistent lines of interest.

To analyse puppetry as a representational form requires examining other forms of theatre conventions that it has evolved and developed alongside, in order to isolate distinctive attributes that might advantage the use of objects over other media. Commonalities of technique and device, defy categorization, nor is it productive to attempt to verify precedence of origins. As Roman Paska has pointed out, the definition of puppetry, and what constitutes the puppet, is particularly elusive and is hindered by existing taxonomies that relegate puppetry to a marginal or sub-genre area in theatrical discourse, and this itself is mostly confined to a discourse of Western traditions.

Within those traditions we have inherited a legacy emanating from classical Greek tragedy. Aristotelian theatre is described as a theatre of naturalism or catharsis. What is intrinsic to this style of theatre is that the spectator is moved to emotional transitions and feelings of empathy through identification with the acting character. Walter Benjamin outlines the difference between Aristotelian theatre and epic theatre such as that brought to contemporary prominence by Bertolt Brecht. Brecht's theatre sought to eliminate empathy by rupturing the contract of suspension of disbelief for the spectator, thereby creating a distancing effect that engaged the intellectual capacities of the spectator.²

To attempt categorising the 'effectivities' of puppet theatre will remain arbitrary. It exhibits both Aristotelian principles and follows epic models, both means of production and reception, operating concatenously.

By simple definition, puppetry is a form of visual theatre that involves the manipulation of objects in a way that constructs a set of visual sign systems that are read by the spectators. The scope of puppetry historically and regionally is too vast and diverse to enumerate here, but forms range from very sophisticated puppets such as the Bunraku of Japan that are small scale human figures often having elaborate mechanisms to move mouths, eyelids, fingers and even toes, to the



Puppetry Carnival Federation Square 2006. Jennifer setting up an exhibition in Fractal Gallery (inside glass wall of upper Atrium). A Polyglot puppet. Photograph Jhana Pfeiffer-Hunt.

marotte puppet, which is no more than a symbolic item positioned and carried on the end of a stick.³ Increasingly we see household items, or food, being used as puppets – the very appearance of things out of context giving an edge to the performance. Nevertheless, while puppetry in most cultures has been considered a marginal, or folk, form, it has survived through many centuries.

The puppet itself as described by Henryk Jurkowksi, is an oxymoron. Its very existence is a continual reminder of the suspension of reality and a separation from phenomenological everyday reality because the spectator will always be aware that what they are witnessing, is not a representation of the real but only a stylised re-representation. At the same time, the spectator is invited to suspend disbelief, and to make allegorical connections with human social or political relationships. Jurkowksi leans towards semiotics, elaborating views that range from the restive puppet as a passive icon, a potential signifier, and that of the 'puppet-ness' of an object being that which is determined by use rather than latency.¹

Roman Paska tends to emphasise the 'unclassifiability' of the puppet. He views 'puppet' as an object that hovers around the definition of fetish; it is always 'other' and exists between two realities, that of the concrete and the imaginary, or the object that it is, and the character that it is conjuring. In spite of its constant flirtation with the human form, it offers a glimpse of life unshackled from the real, and is always concealing that it lacks life. Its defiance in this respect marks it as intrinsically subversive. For Paska, the puppet body is more than a representational form but a unit of language, that commands a space in perception more aligned to the interior life of mind and imagination, than social artifice's.

It is possible to trace the cultural use of objects to long and primitive traditions that include their use for the purposes of healing, magic and sorcery. John Mack describes the fetish as something that

exists in a space between cultures. He focuses on the power objects (minkisi) commonly found and widespread throughout Central Africa, and their various uses and composition. The figures are thought of by the Kongo people as containers for power, or spirit, that emanate from the world of the dead and to be manipulated by those belonging to a class of priest (nganga) in ritualised sequences.⁶ Mack points out that Western interpretations of such cultural practices have always been read through European discourses and epistemology and, therefore, perhaps misunderstood, owing to a long congress of Christian missionary activity in the region, and a consequent disavowal of local symbolic meanings.⁷

There are many means of combining visual and dramatic elements in puppetry theatre. It has a long tradition of story-telling. In the 1930s Walter Benjamin outlines storytelling as an art that is being lost and associated this with a decline in the value of experience.

As contemporary society gears more towards transmission of information than stories, some wouldn't agree that there is less room for interpretation and imaginative play, as Benjamin suggests. However, in our times it is difficult to deny that the value of information displaces the value of experience. Benjamin describes storytelling as emanating from a tradition of transience, rooted in a society composed mainly of rural people, traders and urban dwellers, who benefited from trade and free exchange. Storytelling is a tradition in exchange of 'Other-ness': embellished, polished and made memorable.

A retained attachment to the story from the oral traditions of fairytales as a socially educative medium, is attributed to the recounting of stories and experiences by memory — the lineage of fairytales, in probability, being a transition from myth. Such stories as the fairytale include elements that engage a sense of the marvellous, such as allegorised characters and events that are recognised as being invested with qualities of 'human-ness'. As in the fairytale, puppetry theatre will often involve the anthropomorphising of an effigy constructed as a representation of a human, animal or other imaginary creature.

Gesture is an important feature of the 'communicability' of the puppet and is a language that can be culturally specific; a nod can have opposite meanings in different cultures. The puppet's reception is interpreted through clearly established gestures. While being aware of the materiality of the object, the spectator can read, and perhaps identify with, or recognise, behavioural elements of its animation. The subversiveness and freedom of the puppet by virtue of its 'puppet-ness', as described by Paska, may mean that these behavioural elements might include recognition of desires, lacks, transgressive or socially repressed feelings. This transgression occurs through audiences being participants in a mutually understood social contract. It is through cognisance of the very framework of laws and codes a culture possesses, that puppetry is enabled to facilitate an allegorical function and to transcend the 'normalcy' of being 'culturally' or 'self'-censored.

The allegory presents features of human social relationships and behaviours as a display within the context of an imagined narrative or fragments of narrative. By examining the particular features of allegory, it becomes apparent that puppetry lends itself well to an allegorical function. Craig Owens concentrates on allegory in *The*

Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism.111 His definitions of allegory are described in rhetorical and structural terms that subtend in the use of the metaphor and its relationship to metonymy, being a 'projection of a metaphoric axis of language onto its metonymic dimension'. Among the properties that Owens attributes to the allegory is that of having a 'pictogrammatical nature'12 that forces reception 'through thinking incorrespondences'13. This implies a distance between the signifier and the signified, or sign from meaning. Given the physical materiality of the object or image of the puppet, and indeed that the puppet itself is a metaphor, clearly the moving puppet, or set of objects, cannot avoid an allegorical function. This does, in effect, place the spectator in the active role of interpreter, or giver of meaning. It is of interest to note that Owens points out that the allegorical form has 'demonstrated a widespread popular appeal' throughout its long history¹⁴ that has dropped out of favour or popularity with the prominence of a modernist aesthetic. 13 This is compatible with Walter Benjamin's account of storytelling and the decline in the value of experience.

Endnotes

- Roman Paska in New Lunar Taxonomies of the Puppet in Aspects of Puppet Theatre, (Puppet Centre Trust: London 1988), pgs 105-108.
- Walter Benjamin in What is Epic Theatre?, Illuminations, pgs 144-151 Both Benjamin and Brecht worked in a political climate where the Nazist propaganda machine engineered grand spectacles that carried spectators along in waves of emotional, nationalistic fervour.
- 3 The origins of this particular type of puppet has some relation to the staff or parodic representation of the king's sceptre carried by the buffoon.
- 4 Henryk Jurkowski in The Acting Puppet as Figure of Speech in Aspects of Puppet Theatre, (Puppet Centre Trust: London 1988), pgs 98-102.
- 5 *Paska*, pg 107
- 6 John Mack, Fetish?: Magic Figures in Central Africa in Fetishism: Visualising Power and Desire ed Anthony Shelton, (South Bank Centre: London, 1995) pgs 56-62.
- 7 ibid, pa 53
- 8 Walter Benjamin, The Storyteller in Illuminations, pg 83, ed Flannah Arendt, (Fontana:London, 1992)
- 9 ibid,, pgs 96-101
- Craig Owens, The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism in Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation, (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984)
- 11 ibid,, pg 208
- 12 ibid,, pg 208-9
- 13 ibid,, pg 216. Owens here refers to Anson Rabinbach's assessment of Walter Benjamin's work that he suggests proceeds through allegorical images rather than expository prose.
- 14 ibid, pg 229
- 15 ibid,, pg 203



Windows - Penelope Barthus, Frague (see p.16), Photograph Penelope Barthus.



Puppetry Carnival Federation Square 2006, exhibition in Fractal Gallery (inside glass wall of upper Atrium). Snuff puppets Skullys. Photograph Jhana Pfeiffer-Hunt.



Puppetry workshop at ArtPlay, Melbourne. Photograph courtesy of ArtPlay.



Anita Sinclair

Anita Sinclair's experierice has ranged from her original training in Art and Design, to teaching others at all levels, and includes thirty years training Drama and Theatre students in Australia. She has designed, directed and performed in large scale productions, and is currently enjoying solo performing with puppets and masks for adult cabaret.

Anita Sinclair is the author of *The Puppetry Handbook*, still selling around the world after twelve years, having gone to a larger second edition in 2000. The Mask Handbook, a companion volume, is into its one hundredth page of text at the time of writing these notes

Details not provided



Annie Forbes - Co-Director AboutFace Productions

Widely respected for her contribution to the puppetry arts in Australia and NZ for over 25 years, Annie has had a distinguished career primarily in NZ, where she was Founder and Artistic Director of the NZ Puppet Theatre. From 2004—2007 Annie was Artistic Director of Terrapin Puppet Theatre and the 2nd National Puppet Summit in Hobart. Annie has created over 40 puppetry productions ranging from solo work to large scale extravaganzas that have loured nationally and internationally to critical acclaim. Currently she lectures at the VCA Post-Graduate Puppetry Course in Melbourne and works freelance as a director and designer

contact: Annie Forbes



Asphyxia

Puppeteer, acrobat, trapeze artist and adagio flyer, Asphyxia is one of Melbourne's leading circus practitioners.

After a chance encounter with an exquisite manionette show on the streets of Guatemala in 2006, Asphyxia was privileged to learn from Chile an pupper master Sergio Barrios the art of making and articulating a manonette. Since then, Asphyxia has created the wonderful show & short film The Paint Factory... Through The Window, and is currently putting the final touches on her second manonette show The Grimstones, a gothic fairytale told with giant books, beautiful old-world marionettes, and sign language.



Barking Spider Visual Theatre Inc

This independent and vibrant visual theatre company aims to challenge and enrich audiences of all ages, through a combination of visual and performing artforms.

In 2007, Barking Spider toured festivals in India and Prague and won a R E Ross Playwinght's Development Award. In 2008, Barking Spider will showcase its new work, *Dispatch*, at the ASSITEJ International Conference in Adelaide



Becken Projects - Children working with artists as artists

Backen Projects are a unique experience. Children work with practising artists to engage as artists in the process of creating and performing visual theatre to express their own ideas. Children work alongside Designer Ken Evans and Director Rebecca Russell.

Becken Projects involve participants in creative artistic practice and enable young people to communicate their ideas through fully staged visual theatre performance. The workshops focus on the artistic and creative process of the artist as much as on the performance outcome



Black Hole Theatre

New Production: COOP - Director' Nancy Black Performers: Conor Fox, Rod Primrose, Tamara Revise Designer Ben Cobham Sound Design Kelly Ryalf Venue Yirra Yakin Studio

COOP tells a visceral, darkly humorous tale about shifting forces between a father and two children. An old man, looked after by his Daughter and sinking into dementia, lives in a chicken coop with his favourite hen. He thinks he's God, but as the piece unfolds, we see another view. When his Son returns after a long time away, old emotions reignite. Lust, love, incest revenge and murder families are so difficult! Even the chicken wants to fiv!

Details not provided



Camp Quality Puppets

The McDonald's Camp Quality Puppets are unrealf it's an education program for Primary School children, that delivers free "Fun Therapy". The program is suitable for all primary schools, is accredited in a number of states and delivers a fun, lively, inter-active puppet show using cheeky and mischievous puppets. Its key message is: "It's uncool to be cruel"

The puppets have been an integral part of Camp Quality's services for children living with cancer for nearly twenty years. Over 3.5 million Australian children have seen the program which regularly visits over 1000 Australian schools per year. Education, Entertainment, Empathy.

web; www.campquality.org.nu



Chantale Delrue

Working in the Belgium tradition, the country where she was born and raised, visual artist and freelance puppet maker, Chantale Defrue, specializes in building giant puppets for performances and parades.

Since 1985, Chantale has made giants for the Launceston Foundation Festival, the Cowra (NSW) Festival for International Understanding, the Hobart Mountain Festival, the Federation Parade, the "Wedding of the Giants" for the National Multicultural Festival in Canberra, "Illuminations" performances with Tasdance.

Chantale lives in Hobart, Tasmania, and is willing to work anywhere she is invited to built giant puppets or run community workshops. She loves taking part in festivities!



Darren Varley - Puppets 'N' Stuff

Puppeteer & Prop Maker

Companies — Skylark, Storytellers Theatre, Gary Ginivan, Disney Special Events, Cornerbox, Malcolm Cooke & Assoc.

Productions — Hands On Hands Up. The Jungle Books, Possum Magic, The Hobbit, Dr Snuggles, Plane Crazy, Coca Cola's 75th Anniversary in Japan, The Wild Blue, Godspell, Little Shop of Horrors, Marry Me, Toon Town



David Logan

David Logan is an experienced Speech and Drama and Theatre Arts Educator. He majored in Drama as part of his Bachelor of Education at Victoria College, Melbourne. He is a Licentiate of Trinity College, London and holds a Master of Theatre Arts from the University of Newcastle. David has undertaken Doctoral studies through the Fox Foundation in the United Kingdom. He has a particular interest in puppetry, writing for young people and direction.

David has studied with professional puppeteers in Australia and the Czech Republic. He was invited by the 6th Congress of the International Drama and Theatre Education Association to hold a workshop on Puppetry In Education

Details not provided



David Morgan

David Morgan is an accomplished young diversiform artist, living and working in Moss Vale, NSW. Born in 1982, he has won several awards for his work, exhibited seventeen times since 1991 and collaborated with other artists on seven public works. Highlights of his burgeoning career thus far include: having his work exhibited in both a commercial and major gallery in Paris, visiting the world-famous puppetry festival in Charleville-Mézières and relentlessly developing his passion for puppetry with Richard Bradshaw, Trevor Wilson and many other esteemed individuals and companies worldwide.



Dream Puppets

With performances ranging from spectacular black light visual theatre to Shakespeare, the internationally acclaimed Dream Puppets productions have inspired the imaginations of all age groups, since 1996.

Richard Hari, artistic director of Dream Puppets, is the creator, designer and performer of the 'Dreamer' productions: Dreamer, Dreamer in Space, Dreamer in the Deep and Superbia. He is also Secretary of UNIMA Australia.

Julia Davis has worked as an opera singer, sculptor, teacher and puppeteer and is the creator/performer of Macbeth, a puppet production, touring schools since 2005.

John Grant is composer/performer of all Dream Puppets' original soundtracks.

web: www.dreampuppers.com.



Foley Bergere

Specialising in puppet theatre, Joanne Foley has worked internationally and extensively in France and Australia. Companies include. Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, Compagnie L'Olifant, Malcolm C. Cooke and Associates, La Pension du Gai Hasard and her own Foley Bergere. As well as performing, her experience includes directing, devising, and training. Joanne is a graduate of the Ecole Superieure Nationale des Arts de la Marionnette, France, holds a BA English/Theatre Arts, Curtin University, Australia and a certificate in Chinese Traditional Theatre, Central Theatre Institute, People's Republic of China.

connect | Jeanne Folley | | Jean | Www.geopix.net/folleybeirgere



Gabrielle Griffin

Gabrielle Griffin is an independent puppeteer and theatre maker (based in Adelaide), currently working in comedy as 1950s housewifely object manipulators *The Two Frocks*, and with two solo puppetry performances: *Sunshine* and *Ciel.* She has previously worked with Krinkl Theatre, and toured nationally and internationally to Asia and Europe with several of their shows including the award-winning *Tightrope*. She most recently co-directed a show with adults with disabilities containing large-scale puppet imagery, and is passionately committed to exposing unsuspecting adult audiences to the wonder of puppetry.



Gary Friedman

In the 1980s, Gary Friedman started 'Puppets Against Aids' to educate communities throughout Africa, which soon spread through Africa, Canada, Europe, Australia and the Pacific Islands. In the 1990s, Friedman launched 'Puppets for Democracy' interviewing south Africa's past and future leaders, including Nelson Mandela, live on television. This was followed by 'Puppets in Prison', an education programme in South African prisons and 'Puppets Against Corruption' and 'Puppets Against Abuse'. In Australia, Friedman began teaching 'Puppetry for Film and Television' at Sydney Film School in 2003. Together with therapist, Sharon Gelber, Friedman recently conducted puppetry/creativity workshops throughout Europe, Canada and the United States, while completing a documentary film 'Looking for a Monster'.

webs www.africanpuppet.com



Hartstrings

Hartstrings keeps alive the tradition of the marionette theatre, performing from a portable, traditional marionette booth stage, as well as handcrafting its inhabitants. Though working primarily with the long stringed marionettes, Hartstrings also incorporates varying styles of puppets. Formed in late 2006 by a group of friends with a common interest in puppets, and through a generous donation of a personal collection by one of Australia's pioneering puppeteers, Peter Hartland, Hartstrings continues to bring to life Peter's creations, as well as adding new creations to an ever growing family of miniature performers.

Helen Evans

Helen Evans, writer, storyteller and puppeteer for the very young, in Armidate NSW.

web; www.nelenevans-storyteller.com



Helen Rickards

Helen Rickards has a thirty-five year career in arts management and theatrical production including work as a director, producer, performer and manager of small and large arts organisations, for many years in visual theatre.

In 1977, she co-founded Melbourne's Handspan Theatre. As Executive Artistic Director and General Manager until 1986, she produced its signature works Secrets, Cho Cho San and Four Little Girls; and established Handspan's national and international touring circuit. She established the 1983 Australian International Puppet Festival in Adetaide; researched and co-authored 'Theatre of the Impossible' (1989), and is currently compiling the history of Handspan Theatre for publication.



Hilary Talbot is a Canberra-based freelance maker and designer of puppets, theatre and display props, masks and set elements. She began her professional making career with Company Skylark in 1995 and has since collaborated with a wide range of theatre companies, performance artists, cultural institutions and festivals. Some productions in which she has been involved have toured or received recognition nationally or internationally: The Lost Thing and Arborio (Jigsaw Theatre Company); The Electronic Big Top (Skadada); Twinkle Twinkle Little Fish (QPAC and Windmill Performing Arts Company); The Hobbit (Company Skylark).

web: www.spiritsdancing.com

Ingrid Maganov, puppeteer/puppet maker, costume designer/costume maker for humans and puppets, has created puppets and costumes for theatre, film, television and parades. Her 'Audrey 2' puppets have been in many Little Shop of Horror productions in Victoria over the past twelve years and continue to be available for future

Ingrid runs puppet-making workshops for schools and community groups.

She has previously toured theatre-in-education shows with Polyglot Puppet Theatre and has been a puppeteer for film, stage and television.

More recently, Ingrid has created cabaret shows combining puppetry and singing.

Jacob Boehme is an Indigenous Puppeteer of Narangga and Kaurna heritage (South Australia). Jacob is also a trained dancer and choreographer of ballet, contemporary styles and traditional aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dance and has a ten year history of working with remote and urban Indigenous communities to create visual story through body work. More recently, this has involved using dance (especially traditional) as a platform for the creation of an Australian hybrid of puppetry that encompasses and celebrates Indigenous Arts, Culture and Lore.



Jennifer Pfeiffer is a freelance dramaturge, writer, editor, & offers project and event consultancy services. Trained as a performer and visual artist with twenty years practice, she is closely aligned to cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural work. Her current PhD project, entitled Phenomenology of Puppet: cross cultural collaboration, ethics, and dramaturgical rendering at The University of Melbourne, Faculty of the VCA, follows this work through to a deeper level. Her rather different project is scheduled for 2009. She welcomes hearing of case studies detailing discussion of production with the challenges of cross-cultural projects and collaborative experiences. Available for select commissions. Photograph: Lionel Lauer-Image Noir



Jackie and John Lewis's 'Jeral Puppets', Australia's longest running and most successful commercial puppet company, now operate Sydney's two permanent full-time, non-subsidized puppet theatres. Since 1968 they have created over 1200 puppet characters. Their repertoire includes 110 stories and 140 variety items. They have appeared on over 600 television shows, forty TV Commercials and received the Frater Award for thirty-one and a half years performing in NSW schools.

John, a puppeteer for fifty-two years, started aged five at Edith Murray's 'Clovelly Puppet Theatre'. Since 1935 four generations of the Lewis family have been puppeteers, including Kay and Allan Lewis, the first Australian professional puppeteers.

Details not provided



Jill Grevatt has been a member of UNIMA for a few years, but is new to puppetry, with a strong interest in environment and education. She Jill Grevatt mainly worked in music performance since 1985, in bands, a school show, and as Manager and Principal of the 'Brazil Nuts' (Latin) trio from 1995; as vocalist and some percussion. "Cassie the Cassowary" puppet was made and performed for Townsville Eco Festival (Queensland) in June 2004 and again in 2005. Cassie is a roving big bird with quite a few words to say about being on the endangered list.



Kay Yasugi

Kay Yasugi is a young puppet enthusiast who lives in Sydney. She runs her own business called 'Pupperoos', which is dedicated to delivering quality puppetry, entertainment and educational resources. She has also recently been accepted to study the Puppetry in Education, Training and Therapy course at the London School of Puppetry from March 2008. Other than puppeteering, Kay has completed a Bachelor of Primary Education at Sydney University. She is also trained in children's book illustration.

Pupperoos web: www.pupperoos.com email: info@pupperoos.com



Keira Lyons

Puppeteer, physical theatre performer, mask, voice overs, stage management, tour management, artist in residence (qualified and registered (Vic) teacher - primary through to tertiary), director. Training: Lecoq/Suzuki/Butoh/Viewpoints/Trestle Mask/Improv dance/Total Theatre. Experienced in: body puppets, talking head, shadow puppets, black light, puppets for TV and Bunraku. Also experienced in writing and developing work for stage.



Keith Preston

Preston's Historic Punch and Judy presented by 'Professor' Keith Preston. Presenting traditional Punch and Judy both solo and/or with live music accompaniment. Specialising in performances for families and also adult audiences, Preston's Punch has performed at venues, events and festivals around Australia as well as in Pakistan & USA.

Keith Preston is an actor, puppeteer, musician and arts events coordinator with a keen interest in all forms of traditional culture.

web: www.prestonspunch.folkaustralia.com



Krinkl Theatre

Multi award winning Krinkl Theatre crinkle, wrap and sticky tape newspaper, plastic bags, coloured paper and other discarded objects to create delightful visual images and puppets before your eyes; innovative and engaging puppet theatre directed to adults, accessible to children. Krinkl keeps its audience sitting on the knife-edge between the fantasy of animated objects and the reality of rubbish.

With the absence of dialogue Krinkl breaks away from traditional forms of puppetry. Through the abstract forms it creates, materials it uses and various manipulation techniques, Krinkl leaves audiences in love with the malformed creatures created before their eyes.

contact Lara Cruickshank and Padi Bolliger web: www.krinkl.com.au

email: info@krinkl.com.au



Larissa Deak

A puppeteer who delights in theatrical play, Larissa has manipulated many puppet creatures during her career as performer, maker, teacher and director. Some on stilts, some on strings, some on rods, some remote controlled for TV and film and puppet gigantuans have swallowed her whole as she stepped inside their bellies to play onstage.

Larissa's solo shadow play Firebird has been put aside to create the next instalment in a triptych of Russian folktales, Baba Yaga's Chicken Legged Hut (working title). Currently Brisbane-based

www.myspace.com/puppetparamour



Lizz Talbot Lethlean

Lizz has a twenty plus years experience in theatre, specializing in puppetry. Currently working with Light Designs Australia, the business she shares with her partner, lighting designer Philip Lethlean, Lizz is a past member of Handspan Theatre, where she worked as a puppeteer from 1984-1999. National and international touring formed the backbone of her experience.

With Light Designs, Lizz continues to work on projects fusing her performance teaching and administrative skills to create theatrical experiences for schools, festivals and the wider community. Her current project is entitled NOTE TO SELF.



Lemony S

Lemony S, so named after the first dog in space. Like her, we are brave and bold in the face of whatever life presents us. Our repertoire includes the critically acclaimed Apples and Ladders, One Night the Dog, Jesus Crisis, Foxy House of Horrors (created with Kalki Heneberg) and most recently. The Lichtenstein Nursing Home Massacre (created with Kristzian Bagin). We use puppetry in our work to disarm the audience and go deep to the core of what it is to be human – to attach meaning to symbols and signs, to empathise and to access the innate human ability to "suspend one's disbelief."

Photo Jeff Busby

website; lemonys nacau



Mana Puppets - 'first for educational puppetry in Australia'

Mana Puppets offer the following educational, lively, entertaining, puppet shows for pre-school to lower secondary school students:

- · DIE DREI KLEINEN SCHWEINCHEN for German language education
- · BLAZER TO THE RESCUE for fire safety education
- THE THREE LITTLE PIGS GO BUSH for environmental awareness education
- · THE THREE LITTLE PIGS the traditional story with a modern twist

contact; Ros & Hugh Childers Mans Puppers

emaii: info@manapuppets.com.au

veb) www.manapuppets.com.au.



Men of Steel

The Men of Steel are a shining example of the burgeoning independent puppetry scene in Melbourne, Featuring Hamish Fletcher, Tamara Rewse and Sam Routledge, with sound design by Jared Lewis and Aaron Cuthbert, they are known for combining extraordinary manipulation skills with a vicious sense of humour. The result is anarchic object theatre that is closer to 'Jackass' than 'Pinnochio'. Since winning the Festival Directors award at the 2006 Melbourne International Comedy Festival, they have played in every major city in Australia as well as in London, Edinburgh, Dublin, Beijing and Hong Kong.

contact: Strut & Fret



Mitchy Mayhem's Puppet Patrol

Beware the sick, the twisted and the unemployed!!!

Mitchy Mayhem's Puppet Patrol is operated by Brisbane puppeteer Mitch Humphrys. Mitch and his misfits have entertained audiences since 2004. Mitch has designed and presented his own workshops, and held shows all over Queensland. He's also created puppets for reowned Psychobilly band, 'Zomble Ghost Train'. While most of his characters are based on the mouth and rod design, Mitch is still on a journey to create a style of his own.

MMPP is available to perform in your festival, town or film.

contact: Mitch

web: www.myspace.com/mitchy_mayhem



Murphy's Puppets

Dennis Murphy is the driven force behind Sydney's international award-winning puppet company, MURPHYS PUPPETS. With a stable of weird characters, eleven current productions and countless puppet acts, Dennis's after egos have earned him wide acclaim in Australia and the 'Ural Citation for Excellence' in Russia. He is probably best known for adapting Commedia del'Arte puppetry for modern Australian audiences, Dennis had the unique distinction of taking his Italian-style puppetry back to Italy, performing at TEATRI DEL MONDO, Europe's largest International Children's Theatre Festival. The drama critic of the Italian national newspaper. L'Unita, called Dennis 'one of the world's finest glove-puppeteers'.

web) www.murphyspuopeus.com.au



Murray Raine Puppet Cabaret

Australia's multi-award winning, Murray Raine, presents his international caberet revue, It's Vegas On A Stringt, featuring a star-studded cast of outrageous marionettes, rod and glove puppets.

From Pavarotti to Madonna you can expect the unexpected in a kaleidoscope of dazzling costumes, music and sounds from the fab '60s to the new millennium.

Murray is the only puppeteer to have twice won the prestigious Australian Entertainment Industry's "Mo Award" for best visual act in Australia.

contact: Judy at A.A.C. Sydney: (02) 9529 5777

international, +61 2 9571 4011



Philip Mitchell

Philip Mitchell joined Spare Parts Puppet Theatre as Artistic Director in October 2001. In this time he has directed a huge body of work including the award winning The Arrival and H20 (designed for Olympic swimming pools).

Prior to this, Philip worked extensively with Terrapin Puppet Theatre for over ten years as a performer, director, and co-devisor. Between 1995 & 1997 he was the TPT Associate Artistic Director, alongside Annette Downs. In addition to this work, Philip ran his own independent production company, Extended Play. As a director, devisor and performer of puppetry Philip possesses a diverse skill base in voice, movement and physical theatre.

emial:ad@sppt.asn.au



Polyglot Puppet Theatre

Melbourne-based Polyglot Puppet Theatre actively connects with children through their art, their play and their ideas, to create original puppet theatre for a diverse audience. Polyglot is recognised for inventive and memorable children's puppetry performance, nationally and internation ally. Polyglot is a centre of exploration; a place where kids are central, their play and ideas drive the making of original non-text based or visual new Australian plays.

veb: www.polyglotpuppers.com.au-

email: infp@polygiotpuppets.com.au



Richard Bradshaw - Living Dodo Puppets

Richard Bradshaw is best known for the solo shadow show he has presented in Europe, Asia, North America and locally for some forty years. An appearance in the first series of *The Muppet Show* and inclusion in the series *Jim Henson Presents The World Of Puppetry* did much to further his international reputation. For eight years from 1976 he was Artistic Director of a major puppet company based in Sydney, and since that time, he done extensive research into the early history of puppetry in Australia. Living Dodo Puppets is a partnership he has with his wife, Margaret Williams.

Details not provided



Sandy McKendrick - Sandpiper Productions

Based in Fremantle Western Australia, Sandy is a designer, director and puppeteer. She has created and directed community performances for festivals in Australia. Her own company Sandpiper Productions, has performed *Indigo Sand and The Cry of the Seadragon* as far afield as Zanzibar, Arnhemland and Zambia. Highlights include co-directing *Slow Tucker*, Long Yarn collaborative performances with indigenous communities in Arnhemland, directing of *Island Shadows* for the Christmas Island and *Walyalup Dreaming* — the traditional Noongar creation story of our coast. Currently Sandy is in production for *Turtle and the Trade Winds* for UNIMA 2008

Details not provided



Spare Parts Puppet Theatre

Spare Parts Puppet Theatre has been creating and teaching puppetry for over twenty-six years. As a result there is an enormous quantity and quality to their work, fuelled by their life-blood, the SPPT Company Associates.

Spare Parts aims to be a centre of excellence as one of Australia's leading creators and exponents of puppetry for young people and their families. While their focus is on young people, they create work with the awareness that puppetry is not the exclusive zone of children but the child in us all

Most importantly they are known for delivering puppetry performances of excellence

web: www.sppt.asn.au



Sydney Puppet Theatre

Sue Wallace and Sleve Coupe, from the Sydney Puppet Theatre, both fell into the world of puppetry after careers in theatre and music Discovering they liked this world and its people so much, they decided to stay and grow up as puppeteers. Working in all puppetry styles the company continues to create original works for children and adults.

For ten years they directed the Rocks Puppet Cottage, a charming venue in the heart of Sydney. In 1998, they instigated the 'One Van' International Festival of Puppetry and continued its direction for seven years. The next project is to make a National Puppet Centre for puppeteers and their audience. Photo by Alex Craig

web: www.sydneypuppertheatre.inet.net.au email: spuppet@ezemail.com.au



Tales with a Twist

Tales with a Twist has been delighting children, their teachers and families with puppets since 2002. They specialise in performing fairytales and German Kasper Theatre communicating messages relevant to today's children. The puppeteers, hidden from view, use colourful hand and rod puppets and special effects to provide fast moving, interactive and hilarious shows that transport the children into the magical world of puppets. An important part of shows in schools is a demonstration of puppet making from readily available materials. With their mobile puppet theatre Tales with a Twist can perform at most venues.

contact: Lee and Thomas Graf email: info@tales.com.au



Terrapin Puppet Theatre

Terrapin Puppet Theatre has a reputation for producing high quality theatre. Under Artistic Director Frank Newman, the company is exploring new technologies and cross platform practice to continually challenge and redefine puppetry as a visual theatre form. Terrapin creates new works through research and developmental processes that are designed specifically for each work. Whilst Terrapin reaches to the future in its exploration of form and story telling styles, it does so with its feet firmly grounded in the age-old craft of puppetry and theatre's rich traditions. Terrapin's productions engage all age groups and are designed to tour.

web: www.terrapin.org.au



Tim Denton, Co-Director of AboutFace Productions

Based in Melbourne, Tim is a designer, performer, teacher and director in the arts on projects as diverse as community events, schools programs, TV, theatre, parades and street performance. With twenty-seven years of professional experience as an image-maker, puppeteer, mask, and physical theatre performer, Tim has toured nationally and internationally to major festivals and theatre venues. Most recently he has devised, designed, and directed projects for Terrapin Puppet Theatre, SYTE (Adelaide), Moomba Parade, the VCA and Flying Fruitfly Circus. Currently he is the recipient of a City of Melbourne grant to create a multi-arts project with children for ArtPlay.

contact: Annie Forbes



Vanessa Ellis

Vanessa works for theatre, film and television as a Performer, Puppeteer, Choreographer and Puppet Maker. She has been fortunate to work with many companies in Australia who incorporate puppetry.

Companies have included; Windmill Performing Arts, Patch Theatre Company, Terrapin, Polyglot, Puppet Vision and Out Of The Box Festival. Vanessa's independent work is a mix of dance, puppetry and visual based story telling. In 2006 Vanessa participated in a nine-week Master class with Phillipe Genty and Mary Underwood; this culminated in a public season.

Vanessa is also a core member of Al Martinez Studios, specialising in creating puppets and props.

Disclaimer: The profiles were submitted by the companies/individuals represented and Australian Puppeteer (UNIMA Australia Inc.) does not take responsibility for any errors in fact.

Join UNIMA AUSTRALIA

Subscription Increase

At the Annual General Meeting in 2007 a proposal to increase the UNIMA membership subscription was moved, discussed and accepted. There has not been a fee increase since November, 2002 and it was agreed that an increase would be appropriate to assist in defraying the rising costs of service to members. The increase would apply to 2008 subscriptions. Those who have already paid for 2008 do not need to pay the extra amount.

One year: Couples: New Members \$45

New Members

Renewals Renewals

\$40 \$55

Companies

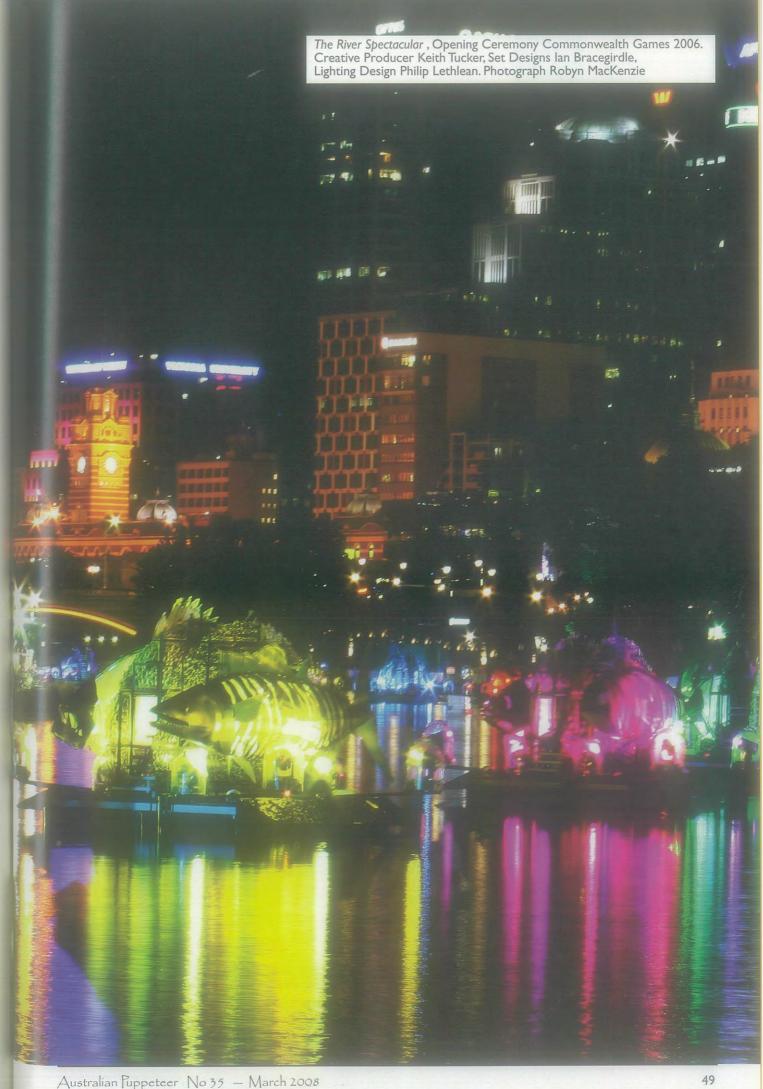
\$90

*UNIMA membership includes your subscription to Australian Puppeteer, UNIMA Oz and on-line 'What's On' updates.

\$60

Please make your cheques payable to UNIMA Australia and send to The Membership Secretary,

UNIMA Australia Inc. P.O. Box 121, Oakleigh, VIC 3166





Australian Productions at the zoth UNIMA congress & World Puppetry Festival

Perth, Western Australia, 2nd - 12th April 2008



A Garden of Aussie Delights - SWERVE Assoc. Inc.

An interactive puppetry experience for all the family. From 10am – 4pm on Sunday 6th April the Perth Concert Hall will be transformed into a surreal fantastical Australian landscape, featuring large scale roving animals and landforms unique to WA. *Artwork Sanjiva Margio*



Apples and Ladders - Lemony S

A twisted fable of loss and redemption in which the sordid meets the suburban and stories of sadness and broken dreams are fused with the melodrama of cabaret. Featuring the music of UK gypsy trio, *The Tiger Lillies, Apples and Ladders* is bitter sweet puppetry for adults. *Photograph Jeff Busby*



Headhunter – Polyglot Puppet Theatre, Ilbijerri Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Theatre Co-op. Created in collaboration with the Ilbijerri Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Theatre Cooperative, this award winning production will take you on a road trip around an Australia you didn't know existed. Headhunter is a new indigenous tale, set firmly in the present but honouring the importance of the past. This is fast-paced fun for the whole family. Photograph Peter Marshall



The Arrival - Spare Parts Puppet Theatre

Adapted from Shaun Tan's highly acclaimed book, *The Arrival* will take you on one man's moving journey to an unknown world. A poignant piece about separation, acceptance and love that will touch the hearts of the whole family, this award winning production is an exquisite fusion of puppetry, theatre and digital animation in an exquisite combination. *Photograph Nigel Etherington*



Allenby's FAMOUS Flea Circus - Murphy's Puppets

A tongue in cheek performance presented by Artemus Allenby – a character based on 1850's comic orator, Artemis Ward - Allenby's FAMOUS Flea Circus is comedy that will enthral young and old. Be delighted by the death defying acrobatic feats of these miniature performers, and by Murphy's ingenious characterisation.



Bradshaw's Shadows - Richard Bradshaw

An award winning shadow show filled with whimsical visual jokes and surreal twists, Bradshaw's Shadows is a timeless theatrical rarity. With evocative light, silhouettes and shadows accompanied by live singing, Richard Bradshaw astonishes and enchants audiences of all ages.

Photograph Richard Bradshaw



COOP - Black Hole Theatre

Three performers (and a chicken) use a range of puppetry forms to tell a provocative, visceral and humorous tale about a father sinking into dementia and his two incestuous children. Set in a chicken coop this postmodern piece unfolds with black humour not for the faint hearted. *Photograph Ben Cobham*



Dreamer in the Deep - Dream Puppets

In this highly-acclaimed black light puppet theatre production, Richard Hart transports us to worlds of exquisite beauty, illusion and fun. A golden seahorse, an accordion-playing crab and an opera singing shrimp are just some of the exotic sea creatures that Dreamer encounters on this enchanting deep sea voyage. *Photography Richard Hart*



Explosion Therapy - Terrapin Puppet Theatre

Puppets, digital animation and some seriously silly people erupt in synchronised explosions. This is an intoxicating world, a mix of cartoons and vaudeville which will appeal to all age groups. As the theatre 'explodes' with life we learn about accepting one's lot in life and using weaknesses as strengths. Artwork Jody Miller



Journeys of the Happy Buddha – Performing Hearts Project in collaboration with Edith Cowan University and Spare Parts Puppet Theatre

In this world premiere promenade production spectators are invited to make their own 'journey around the world' to explore the most burning questions of our time Can we find deeper love for life? Perhaps the Happy Buddha can save our hearts. Presented by contemporary performance students, School of Communications and Arts and Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. *Photograph Merit Fakler*



The Mary Surefoot Shoe Collection – Spare Parts Puppet Theatre and the Western Australian Museum Ten people inside a shoe box with one very obsessive collector. Stilettos morph into opera singers, boots turn into boats and runners into space ships. Put your foot in another's shoe as Mary takes you on her journey, sharing a little of the personalities that fill each pair of shoes. Photograph Norman Baley courtesy of the Western Australian Museum



Men of Steel - Men of Steel

Three mad chefs animate two cookie cutters, a host of familiar kitchen utensils and food in an object theatre extravaganza, featuring explosive popcorn, watermelon killing and the felling of a broccoli forest. Men of Steel are renowned for inventive object theatre combined with a vicious sense of humour which appeals to all ages. *Photograph Sarah Reed*



Red Lashes – Michelle Anderson, Oda Aunan, Brendan Ewing, Sharney Nougher, Jeffrey Jay Fowler & Tim Watts This is a dark and moving tale about a red, red girl in a blue world. As Annie cares day in, day out for her intoxicated father, she pines for love in strange places. *Red Lashes* is a site-specific performance which folds dramatic imagery and song with object puppetry and improvisation. *Photograph Jon Green*



Riders – Edith Cowan University, Spare Parts Puppet Theatre & Public Transport Authority of Western Australia

When travelling on public transport prepare to be delightfully surprised; the Riders may board at any station, at any time...Riders capture the ebb and flow of time and how travelling transforms us. In Riders public and theatre space converge through subtle interventions with spectators. With each journey, another story unfolds.



SIXPACK - The Indirect Object

SIXPACK is an assemblage of six irreverent contemporary Australian works devised by graduates from the Victorian College of the Arts. With youthful wit and loads of clowning around, The Indirect Object presents a lineup of visually rich performances full of tragedy, humour and a little craziness!



Skylab - Barking Gecko Theatre Company

Skylab is based on the true story of a NASA space station which plummeted to Earth in 1979 and scattered electronic space debris over rural Western Australia. In Skylab, animatronic characters, space stations, robots and pets are made from an endless list of suburban refuse. Welcome to the future of electronic junk and modern recycling. *Artwork Mark Welsh*



Turtle and the Trade Winds – Sandpiper Productions

Some believe the world is built on a turtle's back. *Turtle and the Trade Winds* fuses fragments of Indigenous myths and legends with Australia's rich maritime history and Indonesian heritage. Original music and song from North West Indigenous coastal communities intertwine different aspects of the turtle's life in a journey of discovery. *Photograph Sandy & Julie McKendrick*



Weather Which Way - Perth College & Spare Parts Puppet Theatre

In this whimsical world of dreams and revelations, ordinary objects, illuminated fish, giant insects and dragons inhabit an environment brought to life by the imagination of young performers. Combining contemporary dance, puppetry and large scale image making, *Weather Which Way* is created and performed by more than eighty students from Perth College. *Artwork Michael Barlow*



Z for Giraffe - Sydney Puppet Theatre

In the Age of Enlightenment, a young giraffe is captured in Africa and sent as a gift from the Pasha of Egypt to the King of France, where she creates quite a stir wherever she goes! Based on a true story, this beautifully crafted production alternates between different style of puppetry and features live music. *Photograph Alexander Craig*

Barnes

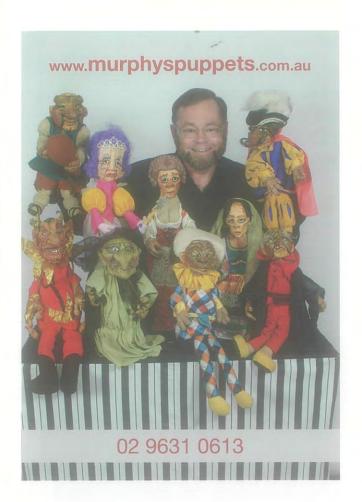
Sydney 02 9557 9056 Melbourne 03 9428 5511 Mail Order 1300 731 497

- Trade prices at convenient city locations
- Large range of Sculpting clays
- RTV Silicone moulding rubbers
- Resins, pigments and metal paints
- Latex and foam latex supplies
- Puppet making materials
- Large range of Plaster and Paper Maché supplies





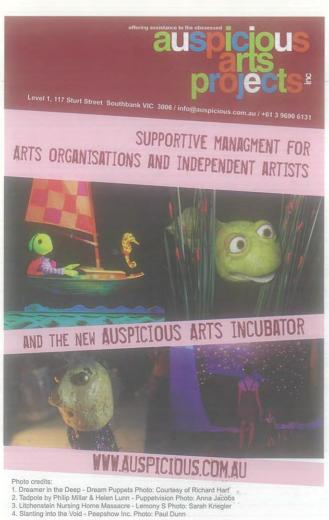


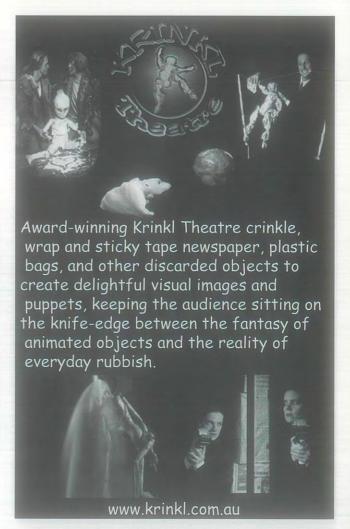












Exploring the World C



Spare Parts Puppet Theatre is recognised as Australia's champions of puppetry. We tour regularly both regionally and interstate taking the magic of puppetry to audiences from remote areas of Western Australia to the Sydney Opera House.

Spare Parts Puppet Theatre is an internationally recognised theatre company having toured to Japan, Singapore, China, North America and the Czech Republic. For more information and to see our touring repertoire visit our website at www.sppt.asn.au.

Within our current repertoire we have two outstanding non-verbal works both perfectly suited to overseas travel:



The Arrival

This is theatre and digital animation at its most exquisite.

Enter a strange and fantastical metropolis of floating ships, mysterious lights, alien symbols and curious animals.

Adapted from Shaun Tan's multi-award winning book, *The Arrival* is a fusion of Tan's beautiful and surreal illustrations with exquisite puppetry, haunting music and fine acting. This groundbreaking, award winning production blurs the boundaries of performance, digital animation and puppetry.

...watching The Arrival is such a pleasure and it's not hard to explain why...a soulful and richly imaginative show of refreshing excellence. Victoria Laurie The Australian July 2006

FIRM

Through our hero's eyes & lots of paint and paper, enter a colourful & imaginative world of circus, clowning, puppets with rocket rides to the moon...crazy aliens

This is a creative splattery fun filled journey of imagination and play...where anything & everything is possible.

Puppets, black theatre, circus and dance... art as you have never seen it before!

Splat! credits its audience with intelligence and at the same time knows what it takes to elicit a thrilled response.

Smartly there are also salient messages.



Tel: +61 9335 5044 or Web: www.sppt.asn.au | Spare Parts Puppet Theatre PO Box 897 Fremantle 6959







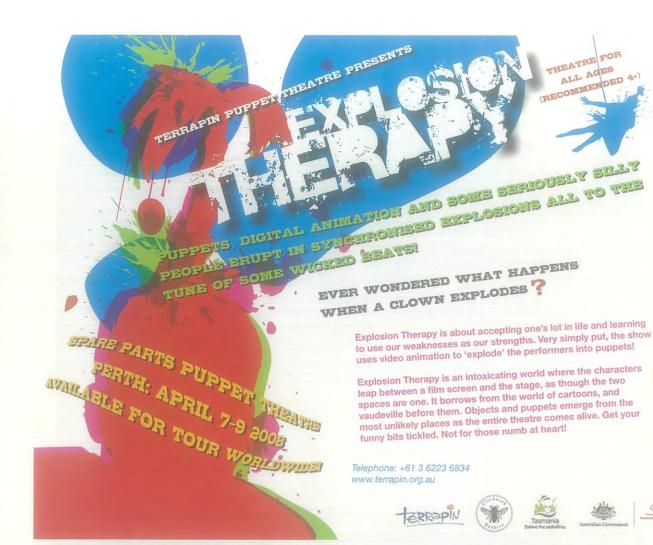














NEW
Product Lines!!!
www.dalchem.com.au

The Monster Makers range now available

The **Monster Makers Foam Latex System** is considered the finest foam latex by industry professionals. Suitable for a wide range of applications including puppets, prosthetic makeup-appliances, creature suits to large animatronic characters.

Australian Distributors for

The Monster Makers

and leading suppliers of **Foam Latex**, Polyurethane's, RTV2 Silicones, Silicone Sealants, Polyester, Latex, Alginates, Plasticine and Clays, Epoxy, Gypsum, Adhesives, Release Agents to name a few...

Call us and ask about the exciting range of moulding, casting and modelling supplies for your next puppetry project or visit our website.

We are super competitive and deliver to your door!

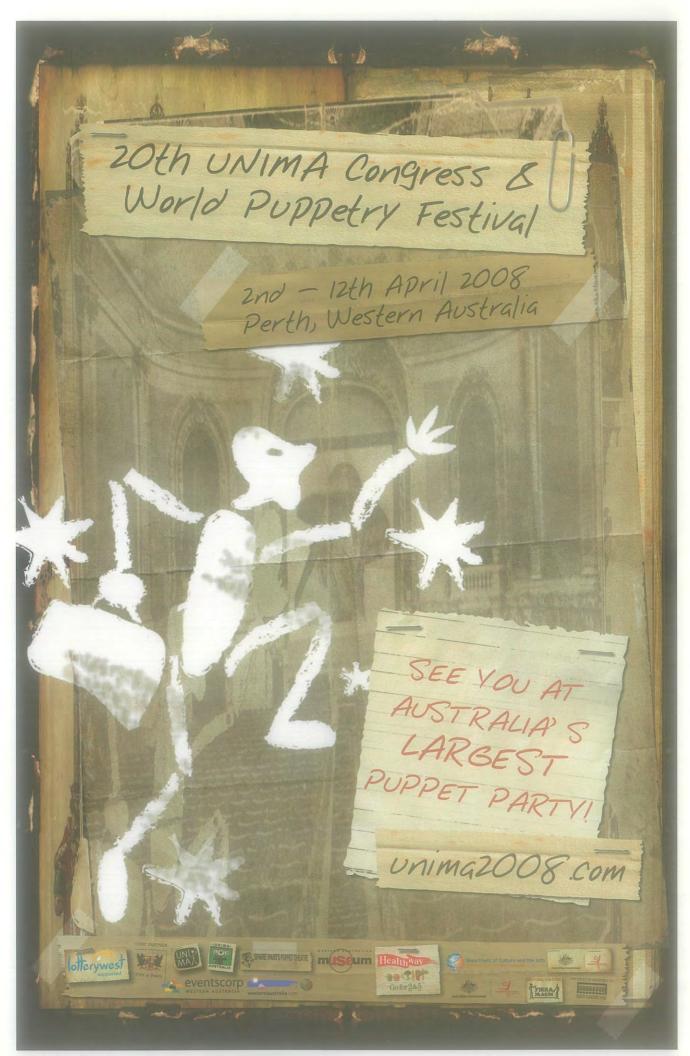
So call (03) 9553 7040 You'll be pleased you did!

Monster Maker Products and Online Tutorials, TDS, MSDS... All at www.dalchem.com.au

141 Herald Street Cheltenham Vic 3192. Email: sales@dalchem.com.au



1005 fenstar.com.au



AUSTRALIA'S ONLY ONLY PERFORMING ARTS MAGAZINE

Subscribe to
Lowdown for only
\$49.50 (inc GST) and
receive a free copy of
Directions, providing
comprehensive
information on
performing arts
courses from
tertiary institutions,

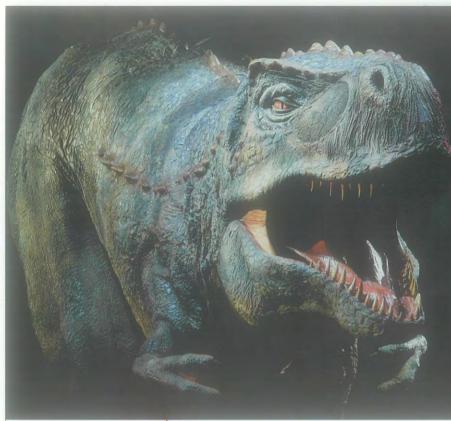
As Australia's only
youth performing arts
magazine, Lowdown
is essential reading
for anyone wanting to
stay up-to-date in a
professional, vibrant and
ever-changing sector.

owdown is Australia's
routh performing arts
magazine, providing a
forum for practitioners
in the youth arts sector
to have their say,
profiles major events
and outstanding work,
packed with reviews
from across Australia
as well as reports on
innovation and emerging
artists in theatre, music,
dance, puppetry, circus
and a whole lot more!

circles throughout
Australia and the
world, Lowdown
reflects the incredible
diversity of youth arts
around Australia.



to subscribe to Lowdown Magazine, or for a copy of our competitive advertising rates, phone (08) 8267 5111, email lowdown@carclew.org.au or visit http://www.carclew.com.au/programs/lowdown/



"...nothing I write
can do justice
to the scale and
awesome detail of
these life-size dinosaurs.
You will have to
see them for yourself."

from review of Walking With Dinosaursthe Live Experience The Age March 07



www.creaturetechnology.com

STUDY PUPPETRY AT THE VCA

Australia's first graduate puppetry course

Year One: Postgraduate Diploma in Production – Puppetry **Year Two:** Master of Production – Puppetry

- Learn from leading puppetry practitioners and international guest artists
- · Extend your skills and develop your personal creative work
- Enjoy the VCA's unique artistic environment, encompassing Art, Dance, Drama, Production, Film & Television and Music students on the one campus in the heart of Melbourne's arts precinct, Southbank.

Now taking enquiries and applications for commencement in February 2009. For more information, contact the VCA.



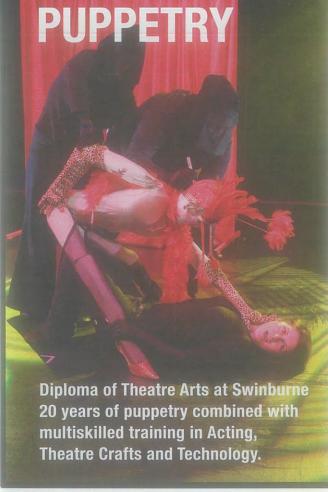
VCA Production Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts The University of Melbourne 234 St Kilda Road. Southbank, VIC 3006 Australia T 03 9685 9419 E vca-production@unimelb.edu.a





RICOS CODE 00116K



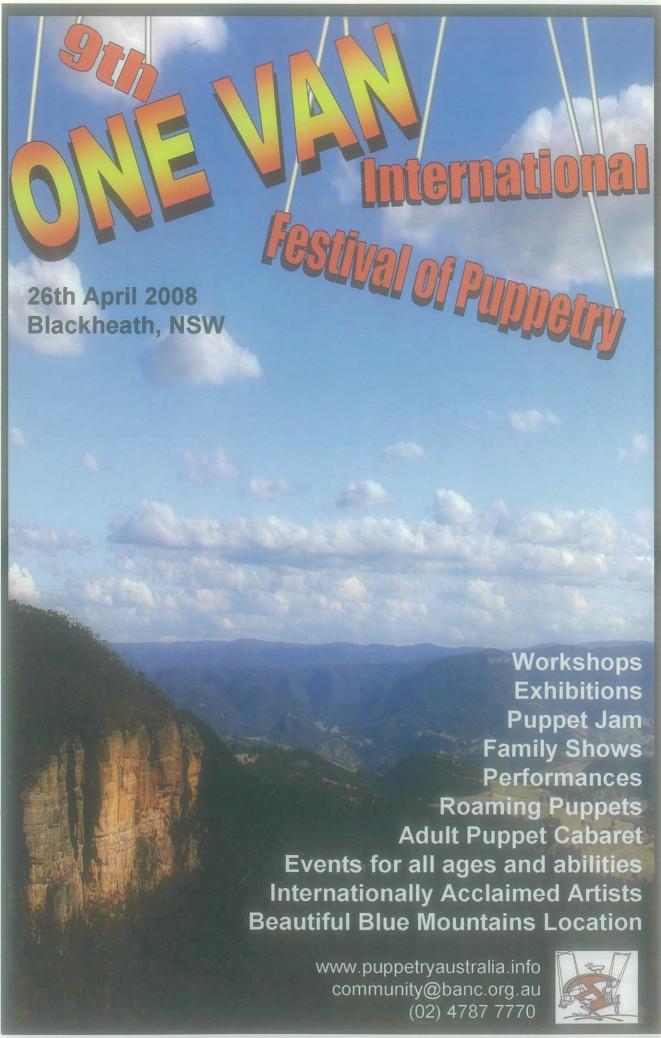




Swinburne Library, Prahran Campus has a wide selection of puppetry resources available for loan to current UNIMA members. Check our catalogue at www.swin.edu.au/lib/

Call in, or for more details contact Mary Thorney (03)9214 6940 mthorney@swin.edu.au

photo by Belinda www.artsphotography.net.au





Australia's centre of excellence for professional training in contemporary circus arts

TRAINING A NEW BRAND OF PERFORMERS AUSTRALIA'S FINEST YOUNG CIRCUS ARTISTS

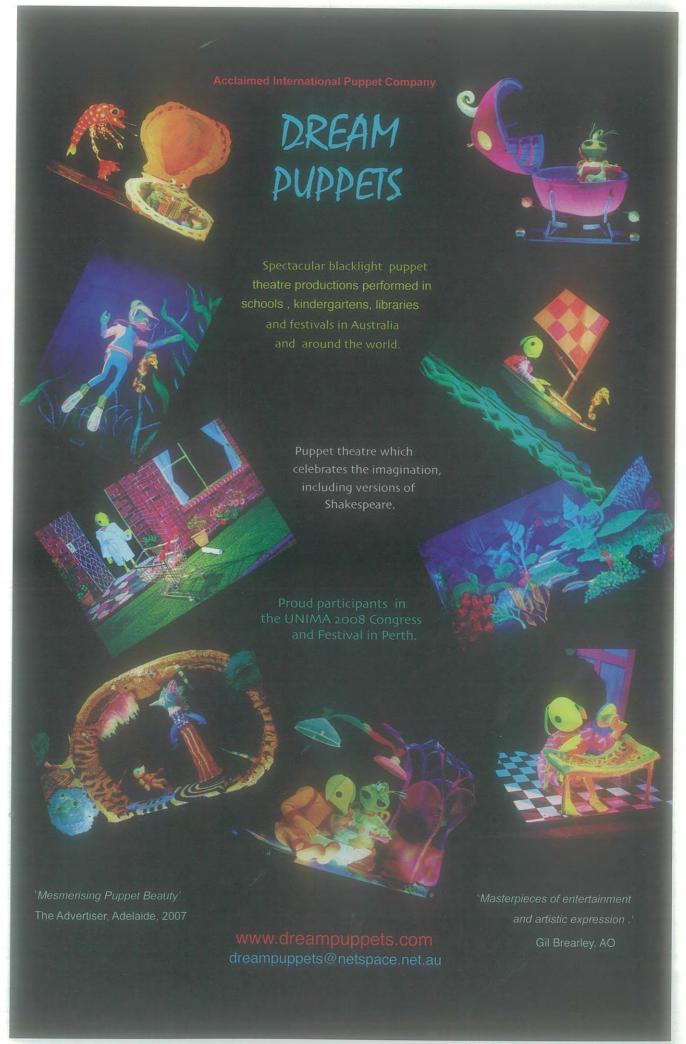


National Institute of Circus Arts is proudly supported by the Australian Government





www.nica.com.au



ARTPLAY

ArtPlay's Puppet Lab The annual Melbourne Puppet event

26 Jun - 6 Jul 2008

Workshops for kids of all ages and featuring the premiere of the new Dreamer show Superbia from Richard Hart.

The PuppetLab program at ArtPlay gives children of all ages the opportunity to work alongside professional puppeteers to make, range of different forms of puppetry.











ArtPlay Birrarung Marr www.artplay.com.au 03 9664 7900







great performance, great time no strings attached



100 St Kilda Road Melbourne Victoria theartscentre.com.au

the Arts Centre