

DECEMBER '85

M A N I P U L A T I O N

A MAGAZINE
FOR
PUPPETEERS

Kids in Stawell, Victoria, with puppets they made for the state's 150th Birthday celebrations - report from Anita Sinclair inside... also: Funding figures, Benity interview and all the news that fits!

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LETTERS.

Dear Friends

We do enjoy receiving news of other puppeteers although we have now retired. We have reverted to being amateurs. For three years now I have run a kids' film and puppet club at the Hackham South Primary School, usually after school on Fridays.

We have gradually learnt about 16mm filmmaking and are making live and animated films. Our 14-year-old son Allen recently entered a puppet animation film for the SA Young Filmmakers' Festival.

I could translate about 10 pages of French for you or read up to 100 pages and write brief descriptions of the articles. (Thanks Heather .. I'll be sending you the French UNIMA magazine for translation soon - Maeve)

We would have got out the old still camera and done slides for the NSW Craft Council, but it was just too short notice, i.e. before the magazine arrived here. Richard Bradshaw and Norman Hetherington can both tell you what John's craftsmanship is like. If Sydney-based organizations really want to include states like SA they should give suitable notice.

... We hope that you can continue with Manipulation. We realise it is very difficult for you, but whatever you manage to turn out is much appreciated.

We live in a very outer suburb. We have never ceased to do puppetry. As we have got older and things like arthritis have stopped some things, we have gone into another field - filmmaking - and we have faithfully run our little club for kids every week. We haven't seen another puppeteer now for about 2 years. We seldom see performances as there are few public ones and no-one ever remembers to tell us if there is one in a local school.

Manipulation is like a message in a bottle which is washed up on a desert island - we don't even know most of the younger people mentioned. However it is a very valuable message to us. Keep on sending it.

Yours sincerely,
Heather Giffin,
Hackham West SA.

Dear Maeve,

A couple of weeks ago I received a phone call from Axel Axelrad, who is as you know the treasurer of UNIMA Australia. He convinced me of the impracticality of UNIMA funding the magazine. He seemed very negative at the prospect and also about the commitment of UNIMA members. It sounded very much like the situation with Manipulation - lack of grass roots involvement.

I also received a copy of the National Puppetry Forum information, and it came across as addressing the

basic problem of this country, one being a lack of focus. But the irony lies in that there is a need for a focus, a gathering point, a sense of togetherness and unity, of being a group interested in an artform, but the opportunities that have been provided for this have not received grass roots support. In saying this I speak of UNIMA and Manipulation.

It is in some ways not a question of deciding a policy and then being left with the awesome and frustrating reality of how to implement it, but of changing the attitude of a lot of people regarding puppetry. The predominant attitude is not much different to other arts, "What I'm into is the most important thing." Other artforms are fragmented on an individual level, but it is unified by its inclusion in the social structure as having some prestige. Painters are the least likely to have a forum on painting, musicians as well, because in numerous ways the momentum of these artforms provides critical feedback and competition in a public arena.

The crisis of puppetry lies in its smallness, in that critical feedback and competition are not readily accessible. There is an audience that has probably not seen very much puppetry - if they enjoy a show that is seen as a measure of success and accomplishment. But there is a different dimension between going by what people like, what is acceptable (and this I think is what most puppeteers and other theatre workers gauge themselves by) and exploring the artform to the depth of discipline and discovery that would blow an audience out, expand their imaginations and respect for the artform.

I don't believe that a forum will provide the answer to this but only discuss a lot of problems which we all know exist. It could be that, as a result of this forum Manipulation and UNIMA will be seen in a different light, and as being the keys to a sense of focus and of including puppetry more into people's artistic respect.

But also Spare Parts and Terrapin are doing, on a very practical level, what really needs to be done - i.e. learning from accomplished artists who come from a tradition and discipline. We have to drop our arrogance about our own accomplishments and realise that others have accomplished more and respect it. These two theatres are, I believe, on the right path in firstly learning a discipline from someone who can teach or impart it and then building on that to produce a departure, an art rooted in depth of skill and awareness, equal to anywhere else's but expressing an individual creativity, a mastery, that which would be wonderful and inspiring and engender the respect of the Australian public, including myself.

By the way, it would be of benefit to include non-puppeteers in the forum.

love,
Richard Hart,
N. Fitzroy VIC

MORE LETTERS

BACK PAGE

What's On

SYDNEY

- Norman Hetherington's Puppets
Grace Bros. City Store, 12 - 21 Dec.
- Murphy's Puppets: "The Pram Show"
Opera House Outdoors,
Dec. 22 and 29 - 1.00pm
Jan. 5 - 2.00pm
- Sydney Puppet Theatre:
"Puppet Pieces"
The Rocks Theatre,
Dec. 18, 19, 20, - 10.30am & 12.00
Dec. 21 - 2.00pm
- Handspan Theatre:
"Smalls"
The Rocks Theatre
Jan. 29 - Feb 2
(Note - tentative at this stage,
Contact MTA in Jan. for final info.)
- Marionette Theatre of Australia:
"Catnaps"
Touring Sydney Metro schools from
Feb. 29th. Phone 273 274 to book.
- Workshops: Averil Langtry will be
conducting workshops in drama and
puppetry for children 5 - 12 years
at Jozzie's Puppet Factory,
42 Sailors Bay Rd. Northbridge
Phone 958 2795
Dec. 17 - 20 and Jan. 7 - 10
Also workshop for physically handicapped children at the Old Darling-
ton School, Sydney University, on
Jan. 14, 15 & 16. Phone Averil on
519 3164 for details.

Manipulation

Next edition - March 1986.

Deadline for material - end February.

Postal Address: c/o The Rocks Theatre,
106 George Street,
The Rocks, Sydney 2000

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Editor: Maeve Vella.

Thanks to the following people who sent articles, news items and info-leaflets: Mazz Appleton, Axel Axelrad, John Davis, Joe Gladwin, Grasshopper, Handspan, Janie Hodgson, Real Fantasy Theatre, Anita Sinclair, Rachael Stacy, Mary Travers, Peter James Wilson, and all those who sent letters and subscriptions renewals.

Thanks also to the Marionette Theatre for office facilities, Lloyd Noble for address labels and Jeni Foster for help with layout and use of her Letraset sheets.

Happy Xmas! (M)

● New Zealand ● Puppet Festival ● 28 Feb-5 March

Our Festival planning is in top gear now that the Arts Council have approved our detailed budget.

We have approximately 20 troupes representing 50 or so puppeteers, who we will bring to Wellington from all around New Zealand for the five days of the Festival.

The daytimes will be taken up with shows, seminars and discussions and evenings with new and experimental work.

Our venue is a theatre complex, not open to the public, but if we haven't filled up the 130 seats with puppeteers and puppet admirers then we'll bring school classes in when needed.

We are paying transport costs and billeting the puppeteers in Wellington, and paying a selected number (Arts Council forced us to discriminate between professionals and non-professionals in payment) a fee of \$150 for back-home expenses. There is a "puppet admirers" category and those people will be able to buy a \$60 ticket for the performances, etc.

The aims of the Festival, being New Zealand's first, will be to bring people together to meet each other, to see what each other is doing, and to share our skills and dreams. This is Stage 1 in organising the industry.

It's taken a year to this point - to find everybody, look at their shows and secure the money - now it's just tying things together.

Let's hope at our next Festival we may have some money to bring over some Australian puppeteers to enjoy our country and our puppeteering.

Cheers,
Grasshopper

Contact address for the Festival:
PO Box 2962, Wellington

● Chinese Puppeteers ● in Orange ● November-February

A group of puppet-makers and manipulators from the Hunan troupe in China has arrived in Orange NSW to begin a three-month training program with local under-25-year-olds. The project, originally timed for September to November, was delayed and will now run from 20th November to early February.

Project co-ordinator Rachael Stacy has extended an invitation to all interested puppeteers and enthusiasts to come to Orange to observe proceedings.

During the first week of the project the young trainees divided into two groups of makers and performers. The performers got into a bit of muscle-



toning with their instructors getting them to hold their arms extended vertically for longer and longer periods of time. Then they did the same with puppets, and by the end of the week they could do 20-minute stunts without too much pain. Now they are working on using the other hand to work the rods, with particular attention to using the fingers for greater control.

The makers are themselves split in two groups. One is concentrating on sculpture, making clay heads and plaster moulds in which to cast in papier mache, and later they'll be painting. The other half are doing woodwork and mechanical bits.

Rachael reports that numbers are smaller than expected, with a lot of the students only able to attend part time. There is a core of seven however, who are highly involved and come daily. All local under-25s are welcome to come along.

Rachael Stacy can be contacted at the Orange Community Centre on (063) 626 555, or you can write to her c/o The Chinese Project, Orange City Council, Orange NSW.

National Puppetry Forum Melbourne, 7-10 February

Nominations have now closed for attendance at the National Puppetry Forum, after advertisements in the national press and invitations by mail-out.

From the responses the Steering Committee will select 30-40 delegates on the basis of national spread, variety of roles (maker, performer, writer, etc.) and diversity of experience (freelance, company member, electronic media, etc.).

The focus of the debate will be on the problems facing professional puppet theatre workers - in such areas as training, communications, career opportunities and finance.

The aim of the Forum will be to set achievable targets within specific time spans. It is hoped that by limiting the size and scope of the debate it will be possible for definite plans of action to be formed and followed up.

The Theatre Board of the Australia Council has allocated \$10,000 towards costs, and other support is being sought. This money will be used for administrative expenses and travel subsidies for delegates.

Correspondence can be addressed to:
National Puppetry Forum
108 Gertrude Street
Fitzroy VIC 3068.

● Black Theatre Expert ● to Visit???

There is an idea afoot, from the agile brain of puppeteer/writer Mazz Appleton, to bring black theatre expert Rostia Cerny to Australia for a series of workshops in late 1986. I would like to hear, care of Manipulation, from puppet companies and other bodies who would be interested in having Rostia for a workshop, lecture or consultation session. An application will be made to the Theatre Board of the Australia Council for funding towards the project - any other suggestions of sources of finance would be greatly appreciated.

Now who is he, what does he do?

Rostislav Cerny grew up in Prague, Czechoslovakia and in 1962 graduated from the Puppetry Department of Prague's Academy of Dramatic Art with a BA and a degree in Directing. He then joined the Black Theatre of Prague as one of its founding members.

Compulsory military service attached him to the Czech army entertainment unit writing and producing for two years. Then followed a period as an actor with Semafor pocket-musical theatre, and freelance writing for TV, radio and fringe theatre.

In 1966 Rostia was director of one branch of the Black Theatre of Prague which was sent for one year to the US. Freelance writing, producing and performing followed on his return to Czechoslovakia, and then in 1969 he emigrated to Switzerland.

Here he founded a touring Black Theatre company which travelled to other parts of Europe and to the Middle East, Asia, South Africa and England until 1977.

From 1978 he concentrated on television production using black theatre puppetry and animation. His first was a 26-part series for Granada TV titled "Daisy, Daisy", which he wrote and performed in. This was followed up with a series in similar format - called "Once Upon a Time". He also gave lectures and demo-performances in black theatre technique.

In 1981 he started his own TV production company, co-writing and co-designing a number of black theatre-plus-animation series for English and German TV. These included "Hobbits Hobbies", "Sporting Bear" (German), "Sounds Like a Story", "Lemmi" (German) and "Pullover".

Here is a review of "Pullover" from The Times Education Supplement of July 1982:

"Pullover" is a 13-part series of 11-minute programmes for very young children. It is based on a delightful idea, nicely realised using the technique known as black theatre - essentially live animation on a black background. Whilst some programmes work better than others, on the whole the series demonstrates a terrific grasp of what delights young children.

Each programme begins with a sequence explaining that Pullover is a woolly toy made from a pullover to act as a comforter for a little boy. Each night when the boy is asleep, Pullover wanders off in search of adventure.

In "The Balloon" for example, he is wafted off up to the clouds where he meets an angel and has a brush with a storm cloud before sliding down a rainbow back to the safety of the boy's bed.

Obviously a lot of thought has been put into holding the attention of the audience. The children I watched with were enthralled. The clouds are shaped like animals, the storm cloud shoots streaks of lightning from its mouth and the angel plays a toy bat - a link with the boy's bedroom down below. Music is used very effectively.

One less successful programme was "The Banana". It followed Pullover's mainly musical adventures with a dancing banana skin, but the dance sequences were too long for young children. Next week "The Umbrella" follows Pullover on the sea and underwater. It is an example of the series at its best."

(Carolyn O'Grady)

Rostia has sent a video of these three Pullover episodes, which I have on file here at the Rocks Theatre.

Last year he designed puppet characters for Granada TV's "Our Backyard" series, which has recently been sold to the ABC for screening in Australia.

Mazz worked with Rostia on some live black theatre productions in London a few years ago. She comments that she found them much more exciting than the recent work of the original Black Theatre of Prague, which to her (and my own) mind is looking a bit dated and pedestrian.

A final word from Rostia himself: "Please tell them that despite my vintage I am not a bag of old bones and pre-concocted ideas, I can still run a mile and dance a night away in a disco."

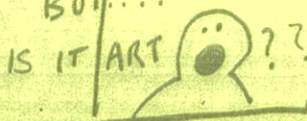
Anyone wanna dance ?

● Jozzies

Janie Hodgson started making puppets commercially from home 5 years ago. She called her label "Jozzies." They were furry hand puppets of native animals, and they were unusual amongst the others on the market in that they were made in Australia instead of Korea, Taiwan or the Philippines. They also looked a lot more like the real animals and they first saw them in the Poppy Shop in Melbourne about 1981. I remember trying them on and thinking "I must get this woman's address. I must put something in the magazine about these".

I've finally got round to doing both. This month Janie opened for business in her own premises. The address is

BUT...
IS IT ART



WELL,
IT'S PUPPETRY!

42 Sailors Bay Road in Northbridge, Sydney. The sign on the front says "Jozzie's Puppet Factory". The workshop is lined with rows of cardboard boxes labelled "Possum toes: Quantity 20; Outworker Cheryl" etc. Business has expanded enough for Janie to farm out the cutting and making up. Design and finish don't seem to be suffering from the increase in qua

The range of animals and birds has expanded. There are 16 species in Jozzie's repertoire, all the main marsupials, many varieties of birds and a shark. Soon to come is a series of endangered species, beginning with the WA Numbat. The price of these will include a donation to the Wildlife Fund. On the walls of the workshop are poster charts of native animal and bird varieties for reference in design and each puppet's label carries zoological information about the species represented. Many come in fingerpuppets and soft toys as well. All the fur is synthetic, fire resistant and non-allergenic.

As well as bulk orders, Jozzies will fill orders for one-off designs and supply off-cuts and other crafts materials for those wishing to make their own. Janie has also written and published a book of instructions and ideas for various kinds of puppet-making and playing: "The Australian Puppet Book".

The postal address is P.O. Box 318,
Split Junction.
N.S.W. 2088.
and the phone no. is (02) 958 2795.

Business hours 9-3 weekdays,
9-12 Saturdays.

● Real Fantasy Theatre

In conjunction with the Melbourne Zoo Education staff, Real Fantasy Theatre in Melbourne have devised a show about endangered species, called "Let's Not Say Goodbye".

Here is what Real Fantasy have to say about it:

"Each day one species of life becomes extinct. In Australia many animals and plants remain undiscovered. Many of these may be lost before they are found! The dominant cause of this is the destruction of habitats through wholesale forest clearing.

The show will allow children to see the nexus between needs and wants. All animal life, including humanity, has a range of basic needs essential to survival, such as food, water, shelter and mate. We will explore

the connection between humans and the web of life on earth, and the need for society to adopt new priorities and new lifestyles to live in harmony with life on earth.

The show will endeavour to develop awareness, concern and a sense of responsibility for the total environment, by inviting participation and comment, and having lots of fun.

We will also hear from the other side - the extinct species will be there. All the puppets will be larger than life, except for the dinosaurs and possibly the whale!"

Real Fantasy have also devised a workshop program for touring in 1986 which involves children in the making of a puppet production based on a fairy tale.

Roy McNeill describes the workshop as "an introduction to puppet making, manipulation, scripting and performance using recycled materials, glue and imagination."

"I have used a fairy story because they are familiar and easily adapted to puppet shows," he says. But aren't fairy stories a bit passe? Not for Roy. He quotes the heavies: "Einstein believed that the best way to produce genius was to give children fairy stories, fairy stories and more fairy stories! The German poet Schiller wrote: 'Deeper meanings reside in fairy stories told to me in my childhood than in truth that is taught by life.'"

Depends on the tale doesn't it? The tale for this project is "The Queen Bee". A king has three sons. Two go out into the world leaving the youngest, and simplest, behind. After a long time the king becomes sad and sends the young simpleton out to find his brothers... That's as far as the pre-workshop information material goes - presumably what happens next is largely determined by the kids themselves.

The quest is a recurring theme in Roy's work of the past four years. It will be interesting to see how he and the children develop it in this new project.

● Television

The ABC is currently running a repeat of the "Puppets for the Young" series. Distressingly misnamed, it is actually a collection of documentaries on the work of various Australian puppet companies.

Saturdays, 9.35am

FUNDING

Theatre Board Grants

GENERAL GRANTS

Marionette Theatre of Australia	186,000
Spare Parts Puppet Theatre	90,000
Terrapin Puppet Theatre	85,600

PROJECT GRANTS

Sydney Puppet Theatre (for production)	14,000
Chimera (for production)	14,000
Spare Parts (for visiting Czech designer)	7,100
Terrapin (for trainee)	8,000
Puppetry Forum (administration & travel)	10,000

In a surprise decision the Theatre Board of the Australia Council has refused Handspan Theatre's application for continuation of general grant funding in 1986.

Meanwhile funding to the Marionette Theatre of Australia in Sydney and Terrapin Puppet Theatre in Hobart will be maintained at this year's levels with a 7% increase for inflation. Spare Parts will receive a substantial increase. The decision is causing a furor in puppetry circles and beyond.

Letters of protest are being sent to the Theatre Board's Chairman, Gary Simpson, from puppeteers, companies, arts organizations and even the ABC. "The Age" newspaper in Melbourne complained bitterly that Victoria will be left without a major funded puppet company, and Victorian Arts Minister, Rance Matthews, accused the Theatre Board of discrimination against Victoria in its total grant allocation.

No warning was given to the company that their funding was in jeopardy. Last year they received their first general grant funding, for \$60,000. To all intents and purposes they have carried out the programme for which they were funded, mounting several new productions and touring those already in repertoire.

Only last August Handspan received extra funds direct from the Federal Government following the Prime Minister's election promise to provide supplementary funding to "companies of excellence". How else could this be viewed but as an encouragement for the work they were doing?

From "company of excellence" to mud in a few short months. Why? Why have



HANDSPAN'S FUNDING AXED

Handspan been singled out and cut off from the funding lifeline? If funds to puppetry have to be cut, why not spread the burden across the industry?

It is surprising that funding to the Marionette Theatre is being maintained at the same time as Handspan's is being eliminated. The difficulties in administration, the uncertainties of artistic policy and the drastic curtailment of production and employment at the MTA in the past year are well known. I don't suggest that the MTA be deprived of the chance to recover its former vitality. It is patently unfair, however, that Handspan, with a record of much greater activity in the past year should be penalised for difficulties that are certainly no worse than the MTA's.

There are as many definitions of what is and what isn't puppetry as there are puppeteers. Handspan is generally regarded in the industry as a company devoted to experiment. Handspan see themselves as developing puppetry in new directions, beyond the known and the expected. The bottom line for them is that puppetry is the animation of inanimate objects.

Some will argue about precisely what objects - but generally puppeteers the world over agree that that is as far as definition can go. What matters then is how you move the objects and what you say with them.

Let me quote John Phillips, writing in "Animations", the English puppetry journal, earlier this year:

"The very multiplicity of puppet forms will always defeat attempts at an encapsulated definition. With my back against the wall, a situation most of us find ourselves in from time to time, my thumbnail definition of puppetry is that it is the animation of the inanimate. The impulse to give life to a stick, a pebble or a rag is basic to the human mind and seems to have always been so.

... Ultimately does it matter where the boundaries are drawn? We all carry within us our own image of where we consider the central core of puppetry to be and whilst not necessarily liking the values that others choose to pursue should defend their right to pursue them."

Losing Handspan would be losing our most daring and innovative puppet company. Now, when through their successes and failures they are forming a clearer vision of the directions in which they can change puppetry and fuse it with other artforms, now, when they are finding the voice to say through visual imagery those things that must be said, now, when the company is on the brink of artistic maturity - now is not the time to hold them back.

MAEVE VELLA

INTERVIEW:

Phillippe Genty

Part 1

Earlier this year Peter James Wilson and Michelle Spooner attended a seven-week workshop with the renowned puppeteer Phillippe Genty at the International Puppetry Institute in Charleville-Mezieres, France. Here is the first part of an interview Pete did with M. Genty

W.: Apart from one workshop in 1972, you have never conducted workshops outside your own company. What do you personally feel you have achieved from this seven-week course at Charleville-Mezieres?

G.: First, you have to clear yourself up with your own theories, try to synthesise what you have been working on instinctively, so when giving information you have to think why you did this or that, why you went into a particular direction. It is good in terms of trying to clear yourself.

It was very interesting how the workshop was oriented. I was trying to give everyone the conditions to create and express their creativity.

It was interesting to see all the directions people took. It was surprising for me to see directions that I personally would never take my company in.

On certain days I had to see six projects one after the other to discuss and analyse and try to synthesise each project. This was terribly exhausting, because you have to switch your mind from one project to another and be very inventive and get into the spirit of each project. It was quite an incredible exercise, trying to feel what was being said, the rich part of the project, and sometimes trying to alter something that was not very structural and which was lacking in reason and progression and conflict.

I was surprised to see how little the people were aware of dramatic construction. This was lacking in most people around. On the other hand, it was interesting in the movement and animation - people had a certain timing for the animation and the general level of this workshop was quite high - so we had not to go back through the basics.

The other thing was the human experience, which was very important. The group was pretty dynamic. Mixing latin people with anglo-saxon people was quite interesting; a lot of emotions went on between people.

W.: Would you do another workshop?

G.: I have been asked by Margareta Niculescu (Director of the Institute) to think about setting up a permanent school at Charleville. Firstly I told her I don't like the word school - if anything could be done it would be more at a laboratory level.

Secondly it takes so much time. I'm not through with what I have to say on stage.

As far as the workshop goes, it was quite demanding, although a very good experience. I'm glad to have gone through it, with the demands that were made, especially when you are continually questioning yourself.

I think I fulfilled the contract in my view as best I could. I must add it was also very good to have different proposals by the people, for example several members of the group were responsible for the warm-ups and exercises each day. This enriched the whole thing, and also in a certain way dimmed a little bit this tremendous authority one has directing a workshop like this.

I've never done workshops apart from the one in 1972, but I've seen the results of a lot of workshops and they were pretty clumsy. Especially in an area like this where you touch on so many fields - fabrication, modelling, movement and writing - it's definitely too short - seven weeks was too short. I've been asked to do workshops for 15 days and have always refused because you can't get anything done.

There were many areas to cover in the course. I think we could have tackled manipulation much earlier in the project, but on the other hand I don't think manipulation was the weakest point of everyone. I think the main weakness was in putting together an idea and trying to find out what was puppetry and what makes the originality of the identity.

I think among the puppeteers at the workshop it will take time for the information to flourish. It is impossible in such a short time to grab all this information and digest it.

W.: Do you like the authority a teacher holds?

G.: The authority I'm scared of. I think someone who holds the truth and he alone holds the truth - I don't think that exists. I'm always scared about the authority which can be held over someone. I dimmed this authority to see someone else at the workshop give information and direct to a certain point - this was very important. It was good to see everyone had responsibilities and was needed in the group.

W.: What do you consider to be the most important aspect of the Object?

G.: The fact that it relates to the subconscious and the animism in us all. At the beginning of humanity we had animism, we believed that there was spirit in trees, spirit in stones, in the moon, the planets - and children below 7 years relate to this spirit in movement. We definitely need somewhere to feed this part of our subconscious which is full of animism. Somewhere with the form, it feeds the subconscious of ourselves and the subconscious likes to believe there is a soul in everything.

The fact that the human being through the object is considering himself with a certain derisive look - it has a cosmic aspect when the manipulator is manipulating something of himself, but also is having a sort of distance regarding the things being manipulated.

P.W.: How important do you consider it is for the manipulator to observe movement?

G.: I think it is important to study the rhythm of things, the beat. Also in any form of expression you definitely draw your inspiration from the environment and in movement we definitely need to have good life. It is very important to take daily life sketches.

W.: When did you get into puppetry?

G.: I would say I had the impression that I did puppetry accidentally. After all, I studied Graphic Art. →

When I came out I had the possibility of making and building things. I thought for a while I came to the area of puppetry because I wanted to go round the world and I had no means of paying for the trip so I decided to take puppets rather than something else; but actually over the years I realised it was not as innocent as I thought - why puppetry rather than any other means of expression?

I had difficulties communicating with people when I was a child and had tremendous social problems. I was sort of a problem child. Puppetry was a way of communicating with people through an object, rather than communicating directly with people and even for a long time I did not communicate through words. I was constantly trying to communicate through images without words and it has also been one of the major directions of the company - very visual.

More recent productions are different. "Sigmund's Follies" is based completely on words. I went right in the opposite direction this time - it was quite a challenge to try new areas and I was glad I did it.

And now I think I have overcome, more or less, certain inner problems. I think for me my Animiste part is very strong also because a very important trauma happened to me when I was six years old. Some parts froze with me and I kept in the subconscious a very important part of the early childhood. I think this is the reason I went into puppetry.

I did my first show at 13 and it was very successful. I put a puppet behind a blackboard in the classroom attached with a string from my desk to the platform of the teacher. When the teacher would talk to us I would pull the string of the puppet and it would appear from behind the blackboard and make a tremendous success. Every time the teacher would turn to see where the laugh was coming from the puppet would disappear behind the blackboard. This went on for quite a while until the string got caught and the puppet stayed out. The teacher saw it, and I got expelled from another school. 18 schools in 10 years.

W.: Did you try the same trick in every school?

G.: No, I had a bunch of tricks. I was a devil. This is why I handle the teacher authority badly.

NEXT ISSUE:

Part 2 of Genty Interview

Report on Puppetry Forum

&

Whatever you send in!

WORKSHOPS:

Artist-in-Residency at Stawell

Anita Sinclair here reports on a project she was engaged in recently in Stawell, VIC. Overleaf she offers some ground rules for people involved in similar projects

STRUCTURE: Groups from several schools spending one day each with me, building the initial pieces, then continuing work in whatever way suits their intentions, eg. placards, accessories for human figures.

Venue: In all cases but one, the group's own school. The usual Art Room facilities.

Materials: A large supply of foam rubber, contact adhesive, dowel rods, wire, collected useful junk, and for shadow puppets, card, cellophane, string, white sheeting, high wattage light - porta-flood, use of cassette player. Some of these provided by me. Black paint.

PARADE FIGURES....

Construction of these (usually large) figures in one day only is a demanding business, and work proceeds at a ripping pace, that is, once the starting discussion is over. The groups in this instance were expected to make their own decisions as to the actual nature of the figures eg. human, animal, future, past, relevance to the theme - Victoria's Anniversary.

The children also had to opt to work either as a whole group or individually. They were left to make this decision themselves... this did not present a problem to any of them once they realized that both of the above decisions were theirs.

Patterns were marked on the foam, cut, and pieces glued. Children varied in their needs for technical assistance, not necessarily according to age. Interest was sustained very well, considering the fact that the students are not usually accustomed to working all day on the one project.

Much construction was completed on the days that I worked with the groups, but in all cases, as planned, further work was required. Teachers who had accompanied the children showed enormous forbearance in helping with the follow-up building, giving the necessary support as the students finished the job. Without this care, it would have been hard for the kids to keep up the work. I very much appreciate the efforts made.

After the real work, the building, organisation of the parade was relatively simple... assembly on a school oval, a 'pep' talk about handling the figures, relating to

an audience, how not to trample each other... then OFF, up the Mall. Harnesses were put on the folk carrying huge figures, but, as usual, they all tired very quickly. The 'assistant carriers' who ran alongside were absolutely essential.

There was a bit of confusion and delay in the procession, largely due to fatigue, and the ensuing swapping of personnel, but nothing was lost when the children's pleasure (FAME!) was counted. On this note, mention should be made of the ease with which the Pleasant Creek students joined in the activity, and the thrill for everyone when all the others from the school showed their enormous appreciation. A highlight for me was the sight of Pleasant Creek's resident puppetry buff being photographed with a huge and wonderful rod puppet, made by some High School students. I found myself measuring success in terms of smiles. I felt pretty happy myself.

SHADOW PUPPETS....

Stawell West students were given a different experience... to prepare and rehearse a performance in Shadow Puppetry for the Masked Ball in the Town Hall. At this same Ball, some of the Parade figures enjoyed a brief exposure also... more later....

The pressure of a public performance made extra demands on both myself and the children. This had to be balanced carefully, undue ambition on anyone's part could lead to farce or disaster. It was important to me that the children should work, and be seen to work, at their own level; thus I did not want to intervene more than I could help, in the creation of the show. The children gave me a good deal of information about Stawell (and gold mining). We discussed the early days of the area, and a rough guideline was set up. Shadow puppets were then made by the children. Several repetitive hours later, during which the children learned to be an orderly rabble backstage, a reasonably cohesive performance was born. What this lacked in polish (on the night - it was much smoother in rehearsal, when the kids were not 'high') it made up for in fun. I hope the audience had some idea of the work the children put in. A great support in this work was the teacher from Stawell West, John, we would have had a rotten time managing without him, if only for his modified lighting stand.

ANITA SINCLAIR

WORKSHOPS:

GENERAL GROUND RULES FOR SHORT TERM RESIDENCIES IN COUNTRY TOWNS

... OR ANY WORK INVOLVING, SAY, LIAISON
BETWEEN ARTIST, ARTS COUNCIL AND SCHOOLS.

• INITIAL PHONE ENQUIRY:

Introductions. Information exchange. Backgrounds (Artist's workstyle, Arts Council's requirements, information about the town or city relevant to the project). Fee. Accommodation. Expenses.

• SUMMARY OF ABOVE IN A LETTER TO THE ARTIST, requesting officially that the residency occur and requesting a written confirmation in reply.

• DESIRABLE:

Booking of a day visit to the town by the artist for an initial planning meeting. This enables interested parties to discuss: a THEME, methods of working, budget considerations, support personnel where appropriate, accumulation of materials and establishment of venue.

• SECOND LETTER EXCHANGE:

Summary of the above to the artist. Reply confirming same.

• SUBSEQUENT PHONE ENQUIRIES:

As the time approaches for the actual visit and residency, a letter exchange confirming all telephone conversations and any alterations to plans or material requirements should be made. This is particularly necessary where a lot of time has elapsed between the initial contacts and the commencement of the project, or where different interest groups need to be informed. These would be given copies of this letter to avoid conflicting expectations.

• THE VISIT:

Accommodation should be provided for the artist on the night preceding the project's, starting day, to allow rest time after travel. This also allows for a brief meeting between the organizers and the artist to re-confirm timetables, material supplies and any areas of flexibility or unpredictability. This is essential, and not to be confused with a social meeting, although it is naturally very pleasant for the visiting artist to be made to feel welcome on a personal level. The artist may need to provide typed details/information for distribution.

• CO-ORDINATION:

This is the responsibility of the relevant (Arts) organizers, not the visitor, unless so stated in the arrangements. Therefore liaison, phone calls about activities, etc. will tend to be made by the project co-ordinator. This person will also visit the venue(s) from time to time and oversee additional issues such as media coverage, ensuring that this does not undermine the working situation and is in fact of benefit to the organizing body, the artist and the project. The artist, for their part, may supply such curriculum vitae material as might be relevant to assist in the publicity surrounding the project as is seen to be necessary and, within reason, make themselves available for media interviews.

• REFLECTION:

It is generally desirable that interested parties provide a written report or review of the project. Photographic material is of great value for future reference, and all documentation proves useful to those immediately interested and also to other persons/groups planning a similar project.

Finally a "Thank You" letter to the artist becomes a very useful addition to the curriculum vitae.

ANITA SINCLAIR

CORRECTION

The Puppetry Course at the WA Performing Arts Academy in Perth described in last issue is not, in fact, a foregone conclusion. The Academy held a pilot puppetry course earlier this year, with a view to implementing a wider course at some time in the future.

More details when they are to hand.

dimensions and potentials of the puppet theatre. By the suggestion of Albrecht Roser and under the guidance of Margo Rose, Frank Ballard (Director of the University of Connecticut Puppetry Program), Marjorie Smith Roccoberon (Pandemonium Puppet Company), Lynn Britt (Director of the National Theatre Institute) and myself, the O'Neill was examined as a potential site for such study.

Proposals were developed as to purpose, program, faculty and calendar. These ideas were presented to a group of invited professionals. Thoughts were exchanged and tailored to develop a program which would truly serve the puppet theatre.

Those people have now been established as the Institute's Board of Overseers. They include: Vince Anthony, Bill Baird, Frank Ballard, Lynn Britt, Michael Graham, Ingrid Hoefler, Allelu Kurten, Ruby Turner Morris, John O'Strout, Bart Roccoberon, Marjorie Roccoberon, Margo Rose, Jim Rose, Albrecht Roser, Nancy Staub, Richard Termine, Burr Tilstrom, Paul Vincent-Davis and George White.

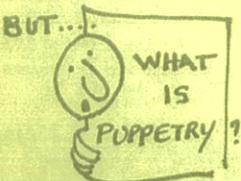
The goal of the Institute of Professional Puppetry Arts is to increase the perception, growth and quality of the puppet theatre by offering programs for the student, the professional and the general public.

To serve the student we will be offering two programs:

The Introductory Program is intended to help the student understand the various elements involved in puppetry. Courses will be offered to develop the student's theatrical abilities with the study of acting, directing, design movement and voice skills. There will also be a focus on playwrighting and the creative use of materials. Puppetry and its applications will be explored as an extension of these theatre skills. This program is 14 weeks long and will have its premiere in January of 1986. A semester of undergraduate theatre credit is awarded by Connecticut College to the students who successfully complete the work.

The Training Program will be four semesters long and will start in September of 1985. Classes in acting, directing, design, movement, voice and playwrighting will focus on the development of body, voice and mind. Each semester will concentrate on different elements of the puppet theatre. The students will explore and perform hand puppetry, masks, rod puppetry, marionettes and shadow figures. Various media presentation methods will be incorporated as well as courses for sustaining the professional. These will include administration, publicity, booking, grantsmanship, budgeting, contracts, etc.

Close attention will be paid to the students' own work in order to cultivate specific talents and interests. Their training will be supplemented with associated skills such as storytelling, clowning, ballooning, circus techniques, magic, etc. Those completing this program will have a broad, firm foundation by which to become professional puppeteers.



TRAINING: NEW COURSE IN U.S.A.

The Eugene O'Neill Theatre Centre has established a full-scale programme of training for professional puppeteers and beginners in the profession. For further information write to: Institute of Professional Puppetry Art,

Eugene O'Neill Theatre Centre,
305 Great Neck Road,
Waterford, Connecticut 06385.

In May of 1984 the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Centre announced the establishment of the Institute of Professional Puppetry Arts, offering an intensive puppetry training program for career-oriented students.

As word has spread we have received letters from all over the globe - offering congratulations, asking for more information and seeking enrolment. Dialogue and discussion with prospective students, artists, business people and officials from several countries has brought us to realise that, in order to truly serve the future of puppet theatre, we must offer more than just a career training program. Established professional puppet artists should have the opportunity to support their craft with special study. The person curious about puppetry should be able to explore the form with quality instructors. As well, the general public deserves the chance to see quality puppet theatre and exhibits.

The dimensions of what we need to do are staggering, and the challenges are enormous. However, the O'Neill Centre has a strong track record for making such dreams come true.

The Eugene O'Neill Theatre Centre was established through the hard work of our president, Charles C. Whitto, a graduate of the Yale School of Drama. In 1964 he learned, to his dismay, that the 24-room mansion, barn and cottages on the old Hammond farm in Waterford were to be razed as practice for the local fire brigade. Surely the site could be put to better use.

With the help of Waterford and New London residents and representatives of the theatre world, Mr. White was

able to secure the buildings and acreage. Renovation started immediately. Several theatre spaces were created, as well as offices and dormitory rooms. At the same time, the Centre gave birth to the National Playwrights' Conference.

As the Playwrights' Conference grew and its influence expanded it became clear that a commitment was needed to training the talented people who would be the performers, directors and critics of the future. To serve these needs other programs were developed: the National Theatre of the Deaf, the National Critics Institute, Creative Arts in Education, the National Theatre Institute, the Monte Cristo Cottage Library and Museum, New Drama for Television, the National Opera/Music Theatre Conference and the Media Arts Project. With these programs and its concern for quality the O'Neill Centre has become an important contributor to the theatre.

George White had the good fortune to grow up in the town that was the home of the Margo and Rufus Rose Marionettes. As a friend of the Rose's sons he was around their studio home as productions were mounted and figures were built. The Roses were among the Waterford residents who later helped create the O'Neill Centre, and saw to it that there was puppetry at the O'Neill from its beginning. They taught classes for several programs. In 1976 the Puppeteers of America Festival was co-hosted by the O'Neill and Connecticut University. The Centre has also sponsored performances of Albrecht Roser's "Gustaf and His Ensemble" several times.

For many years professional puppet artists have spoken of a need for a focussed program which studies the

There is no degree requirement to participate in the Training Program. Students will be accepted on the basis of audition and interview.

Those who have agreed to teach in the programs include, to date, Vincent Anthony, Bill Baird, Frank Ballard, Lynn Britt, Paul Vincent-Davis, Peter Lobdell, Jim Henson, Bart Rocco Barton, Margo Rose, Rudi Shelly, Richard Ter-mine, George White and Brad Williams.

In response to the needs of the est-
ablished professional puppet artist,
we are creating a series of seminars
to inform, cultivate and support that
work which is ongoing. We have heard
from many who would like to come for
study and "invigoration", but who
would not be able to take two years
away from their work. The first sem-
inars will focus on middle-management
problems: booking, publicity, con-
tracts, fund-raising, budgeting,
computers, etc. They will be presented
on the O'Neill grounds in two to three
day sessions. We will then arrange for
the seminar to travel to other puppet-
ry centres around the country.

It is understood that all of our good
work will have little effect if the
general public is left out of our
plans. To this end, the Institute will
sponsor programs, performances and
exhibits both regionally and nation-
ally.

Based on the Experimental Puppet
Theatre (XPT) of Atlanta's Centre for
Puppetry Arts, the Institute is in-
troducing a program to involve artists
and lay people of the community. The
Puppet Experiment is intended to give
participants the opportunity to apply
their own knowledge and skills to an
exploration of puppet theatre, to work
cooperatively in an ensemble under
professional guidance and to enrich
and expand the field of puppetry.

We are currently gathering material
for a library, in particular we are
seeking copies of scripts and public-
ity material generated by puppet per-
formers, which we will use to create
a Contemporary Performers Reference
File.

By the existence of the Institute we
look forward to initiating research
and development in the puppet theatre.
Guest artists and students will be
encouraged to experiment with and
expand those known quantities of
puppetry. Materials and techniques
will be studied, developed and pre-
sented for general use. Theoretical
and practical information will be
published as books, pamphlets and
articles.

As was stated earlier, the dimensions
are staggering and the challenges are
enormous. The support we have re-
ceived in terms of donations, time and
ideas have been gratefully accepted.
We would appreciate hearing from
others who would like to express their
interests and concerns. May the
establishment of the Institute of
Professional Puppetry Arts mark the
beginning of a new era for puppetry.

BART P. ROCCO BARTON JR.
Director.

Letters cont.

Dear Maeva

Pleased to get Manipulation ... This
is to wish you well in all your end-
eavours and also to tell you that many
letters should be arriving from grades
1, 2 and 6 from Errol St. Primary
School. I take the newsletter to the
classes.

Melbourne Museum decided to do a Mem-
orabilia show - relics of stamps,
clothes, food, music, etc. Jenny Fer-
ber the assistant curator rang me
after seeing an article in the North-
cote paper about me and recreation for
women in which my puppet-making was
mentioned. She thought it would be
good to have the kids come in to do
puppets as part of "old activities".
The school was agreeable - each grade
spent from 9.30 to 3.15 out of school
so no other teachers were involved.
Some mums and grandmums came. The
grades were split in two lots of 10
(a) puppets, (b) viewing museum and
reversed after lunch.

A room with all the "Sullivans" dining
furniture, fireplace, tables, etc. was
set up in which there were changing
activities. The kids were thrilled to
be in "The Sullivans" dining room,
working on "their tables" and sitting
on "their chairs". We had three days
there, a grade a day.

I arranged a puppet "Box" facade out-
side the room so they could do their
puppet plays. We do a lot of on-the-
spot verbal play-making. The kids are
good at this. The Grade 6 made their
scripts beforehand and we blu-tacked
them to the surrounds. They had also
designed on paper the puppets they
would make, and we blu-tacked them up
too. I let them break into their own
grouping and their own themes. They
enjoyed the activity. Murray Walker
the curator was very pleased - he
brought people in over the three days
to see the kids working. The school
got a letter of thanks and apprecia-
tion which said it was one of the best
activities in the "room". I also got
a thankyou from the museum and another
from the School Council.

All this was part of the English lang-
uage and creative development of each
class. Grade 6 was the only one to
write scripts - the groups write their
scripts collectively. They also use a
video camera, which is better than per-
forming in front of a mirror to see
their puppets' movement. They make
their own scenery - mostly backdrops.

The puppets from the museum project
were viewed at a special assembly at
the school, and now they are on dis-
play in the main corridor.

This was written in trams and trains
- hope you can interpret.

Love,
Marjorie Oke,
Northcote VIC.

Hi Maeva

Still having school groups, etc. down
to my Puppet Centre and at present
involved with Electric Light Theatre
for Youth - making large puppets for
ultra-violet light segment. Rehearsals
all over school hols and performance
first week in February. Am off to
Bali now ...

Ross has finished working on the film
"Labyrinth" in England - has seen
previews in New York and very happy
with results. Was having holiday on
Fiery Island N.Y. and had to be evac-
uated during hurricane. Now installed
on First Avenue - only 10 minutes
walk from Muppet Workshop, where he
will be working on a Muppet special
till next year.

Regards to all,
Rose Hill,
Mildura VIC.

Dear Maeva

We are doing our new school show "Bad
Habits" and just finishing our repeat
season of "Gold or Gumnuts". Our
Christmas kindergarten play opens in
another week! (Hardly seems possible
that time is here again.)

So good to see you back behind Manip-
ulation again, Maeva.

All the best,
Lorrie Gardner,
Ringwood VIC.

Maeva,

Thanks for the latest Manipulation -
the Future sounds very promising ...

I've started work on the second
"Blinky Bill" TV series. We will be
taping four 1/2-hour episodes before
Christmas and four more in the new
year. I have written my first TV
script in this series and can tell you
it's a whole new world. Took me a few
drafts and about 4 weeks, however it
was certainly worth it 'cause I learnt
heaps. Allan and Janet have also
written scripts and they are getting
to be old hands, having written 3 or 4
scripts each over the last two series.

I had some work as a Showground Barker
& M.C. for Atlas Copco in Sydney, Mel-
bourne and Brisbane. Three nights work
at a Product Trade Night performing
with four beautiful models to audienc-
es of around 150 businessmen. Oh joy
oh rapture!

About a month ago I finished work on
the "Galoot" project. This was Stage 1
in development of a play for family
audiences using remote control puppets
built by Russell Emerson and directed
by Derek Nicholson. VIC., SA and WA
television viewers may happen to catch
me operating Russell's Punch puppet
from this show in a commercial for an
orange juice called "Punch & Juicy".
"Galoot" had 5 weeks' rehearsal and
eight or nine performances. The last
of them marked the end of the Theatre
Workshop's ten-year reign in the
Seymour Downstairs Theatre.

Also been doing some band work playing
piano. Working on ideas for children's
TV using puppets.

Keep on truckin'
Ross Browning,
Pymble NSW

UNIMA

Many thanks for all the replies so far to the Festival Questionnaire. There's no further news on the Festival so far, but we'll keep you informed. There should be more feedback in the New Year.

Apologies to UNIMA members for the delay in the newsletter. I've been in hospital. However, the final newsletter for the year is almost complete and should be in your letterbox very soon.

Happy Xmas,
Annie Heitmamm
Secretary.

UNIMA is the international association of puppeteers. The letters stand for Union International de la Marionette.

Membership enquiries to:
The Secretary, UNIMA Australia,
R.M.B. Glen's Creek Rd.
Nymboida NSW 2460

Review

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

Co-production by Jigsaw Theatre Co. and Skylark Puppet & Mask Theatre.

Adapted by Don Quimm from the novel by C.S. Lewis.

Director: Caryl Woodrow
Designer: Judith Hoddnott

Canberra Playhouse, November 1985

I found this a disappointing production, although the parents, teachers and kids who went seemed to enjoy it a lot.

The book is packed with magical events and strange creatures. There are extremes of good and evil and a few shades in between, and many dramatic confrontations.

Four children discover the fantastic land of Narnia when they stumble through the coats in an old wardrobe.

Is it here, in the passing from the real world to a fantasy one, that I feel the company missed the opportunity to create a strong sense of wonder. Narnia was represented by a set that occupied the entire stage and was present and visible throughout the play. There was a full-length backdrop, sliding screens and wings, which all painted a subdued green with twisting tree-trunk patterns. The real world was represented by a small platform on wheels, with a chair and a set of wardrobe doors. This was standing in front of the Narnia set for the opening scene, then wheeled off and on as the children came and went from Narnia. A dress-rack on wheels carried the overcoats through which the children passed. Narnia was quite visible in the light spill whenever the wardrobe was onstage and the children were in the real world. The wardrobe set was quite small in relation to the Narnia set. In real space it existed in Narnia, and so the feeling of transition was lost. I felt Narnia should have been a surprise.

Narnia is dominated by the White Witch. She can turn its creatures to stone if they disobey her. While she rains - sorry - reigns it is always winter, and always snowing. Here the set design failed to create any feeling of winter and of cold. Apart from the green flats described above, there were simply occasional dribbles of styrene crumbs from a perforated bag above the stage. For my taste there was just not enough snow!

The side of good, of summer and of peace, is led by Aslan, a lion. He is a charismatic figure, a kind of warrior Christ with the power to restore life as well as take it away. His costume was beautiful. The suit was a rich tan velvet, and its contours fitted the actor's body perfectly. Excellent tailoring. The mask had dark, gentle eyes and a generous mane of fur tassels and wool strands.

The actor moved with grace, but the script and direction seemed to have robbed the character of dignity rather than empowered him. Early characters built up expectations of majesty and miracle, but when his entrance came, it was matter-of-fact. I think the main problem was that Aslan moved about the stage in the same way as any of the other creatures. He did not have his own space like the Witch did. She always appeared in her icy sleigh, taller than anyone else because she was a puppet, and attended by a (puppet) dwarf.

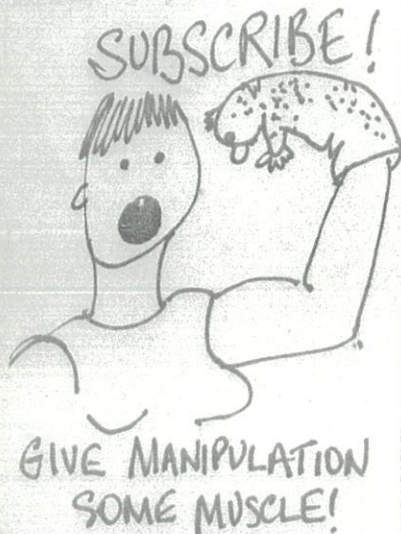
If Aslan could have been positioned from time to time in some way that reinforced his status it would have helped. Say as the focus of a triangular grouping of characters, or a semi-circle. A feeling of ceremony could have raised him from being simply a man in a lion suit. There was one moment that achieved this, and it was done through sound. When Aslan came to breathe life into the stone creatures a rich, rumbling breath was heard over the soundtrack, and he became, briefly, an extraordinary being.

The White Witch was a puppet, as was the Professor, the Dwarf, and a few minor characters. All the other characters were masked, except for the children. There was an inconsistency in the masks. The main creatures wore naturalistic masks, but in crowd scenes other animals joining them wore very stylised masks that looked like they'd come from another production.

The Witch, the Professor and, in for a quick visit, Santa Claus, were all life-size puppets. They were held in the head just above the puppeteer's head, which is a difficult position to maintain. Maintain it they did, however, without a single sagging. The mouths moved in good synchrony to the (live) dialogue. Eye-focus was always spot on. Having attained this level of competence it is now time for the puppeteers to develop skill in giving the puppet gestures. There were many times when gestures were unclear, or repetitive. A wider vocabulary of gestures and a cutting back on arm motion for motion's sake is needed so that the puppet's movement supports the text every moment. There is no crime in a puppet sometimes being still, either.

MAEVE VELLA

More reviews are desperately needed! Constructive criticism, considered responses and encouraging feedback - write 'em, send 'em, I'll print 'em!



Do you look over other puppeteer's biceps to read Manipulation?

Do you lift the company copy when you want to know what's going on in the puppetry scene?

Don't be a dumbbell!

Manipulation cannot survive next year without lots more subscribers.

Exercise your writing hand and send off for your own copy.

No 'arm can come of it.