

HAPPY 10th BIRTHDAY HANDSPAN!

Manipulation



"SURVIVAL
ISSUE"

AUSTRALIA'S PUPPETRY
MAGAZINE

November 1987

• Mr. Punch's 325th Birthday • Pioneers of Australian Puppetry • Happy Birthday Handspan !

MANIPULATION

**The Rocks Theatre
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Australia**

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Manipulation ... The Future?

Well, this is it - the Survival Issue of Manipulation. Maeve felt that she really couldn't carry on any longer and we wanted to find out if, when it came to the crunch, enough people cared to keep the magazine going. For those of you who subscribe but did not receive a copy of the letter we sent appealing for contributions, we are sorry that unwillingness to deplete funds prevented us contacting all individuals. We hoped to reach most of you through the larger companies, UNIMA, The NSW Guild and NSW Equity.

It has to be said that the results are not wholly encouraging, when you consider that the three Handspan articles were written for another publication and that of the 20 people/companies we contacted, only 3 or 4 came back 'voluntarily' to say they'd contribute - the rest had to be chased for copy. We could see why Maeve began to find editing more of a chore than a joy!

There is a lot of work involved, particularly as we are Puppeteers doing 2 shows a day and a Puppet-maker on a 40 hr week, but each of us taking responsibility for a different process has perhaps shown a way that the magazine could continue if other companies or groups would be prepared to take it on in rotation. Spare Parts

have agreed to produce a Festival Edition next... after that, what do you think? When puppeteers gather in West Australia for the festival, perhaps the Future of Manipulation could be added to any discussion of the Future of the Puppetry Institute (see Sue Wallace's article on the latter.)

The safe establishment of both would greatly contribute to a common sense of identity among Puppeteers. We are, after all, Parts of the Whole: Australia has a healthy mixture of large companies, small companies and individuals which we would do well to foster as a fraternity against the day when we need an effective lobby to put Puppetry's case -

Manipulation has certainly been a vehicle for this contact - thanks to Maeve, we all know a lot more about one another than would otherwise have been so.

We are very grateful to Maeve for letting us amateurs (well, some of us) have a go. Manipulation has always been her baby, and handing it over must have caused her some alarm. She has been ever-so-tactfully ringing up to enquire after our progress, advising whenever asked and giving a hand with the typing. And ultimately, supervising the operation. After the last glossy

issue, we hope this one does not seem too inglorious, but we have tried to economise on presentation (not content!) so as to bequeath half the reserve funds to Spare Parts. Subscriptions now stand at about 60, with another 10 - 15 possible renewals to help swell the coffers. (If this refers to you, you will receive a note with this copy!)

Thanks to Michael Creighton for the use of his computer, and to everyone who contributed and encouraged us to produce this issue. We think it has been worthwhile, and hope you enjoy it!

Susan Lintern Coward, Chris Barker, Rob Matson + Maddy Slabacu.

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JUNE, '88

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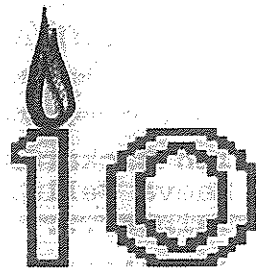
30th APRIL, '88

Copy for the next issue should be sent to: Jane Davies, Spare Parts Theatre, PO Box 897, Fremantle WA.

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Handspan turns



This year Handspan Theatre celebrates its tenth birthday. A retrospective photographic exhibition of the company's work has been mounted to mark the occasion, and will be on display in November at the Victorian Ministry for the Arts, after a short season at Handspan's studio. The exhibition will also travel to Perth next year for the Oz Puppet Festival.

Founded in Melbourne in 1977, Handspan has grown from an ensemble of six to a pool of 31 individuals, who group and re-group for different projects. Arising from the varied interests, aspirations and skills of its members, the company has developed a reputation for originality and diversity. Within the broad parameters of visual theatre it has sought to explore new styles and approaches and to produce material for a variety of audiences.

Over the past ten years Handspan has produced 26 full-length productions and numerous one-off events for specific occasions, as well as collaborating on various projects with other companies, artists and community groups. It has created works for theatre seasons, community events, theatre in education, conferences, street theatre and cabaret. A touring company, it has played in venues large and small all over Australia, from Ararat to the Alice, and has undertaken six international tours, in western Europe, the UK, Canada and the USA.

To commemorate Handspan's 10th birthday we present three articles on the company's history by three of its members. The first, by Helen Rickards, deals with the formation of the company and the evolution of

its structure. The second, by Maeve Vella, reminisces on the early years and the third, by Lizz Talbot, examines the major events and concerns of the company's middle years.

In these days of financial insecurity and artistic pragmatism it is rare for an experimental theatre company to survive so long. We wish Handspan a happy birthday, and a future.

.....

HANDSPAN Theatre began in 1977 as a partnership between Kenneth Evans, Andrew Hansen, Helen Rickards, Maeve Vella, Peter James Wilson and Christine Woodcock.

The company's first show, *Hansel and Gretel*, was commissioned by restaurant, Herman van Wichen, then of Anatoli's in Kew. The show played for family entertainment on Sunday lunchtimes.

All the founding members of Handspan were working for the Parry-Marshall Puppet Theatre at the time, and were keen to produce their own work. They believed in Puppetry as an artform that could address contemporary issues, and that the boundaries of the medium could be extended beyond their traditional framework. *Hansel and Gretel* was hardly the subject matter their hearts desired, but it

was too good an opportunity to miss!

Everyone's contract at the Parry-Marshall Puppet Theatre was abruptly terminated after the opening of *Hansel and Gretel*, which effectively banded the partnership through everyone's need to seek further work. The collective banded together in a one-room workshop in a derelict house in Richmond, ran occasional puppet workshops and devised and built a promotional show for another restaurant.

In early 1978, studio premises were found at 108 Gertrude Street - where the company still resides - and it was from there that the partnership began to operate on a full-time basis.

In Handspan's own vernacular, the company worked according to the maxims:

"Go anywhere, do anything"

"Always play the right show in the right place for the right audience"

All believed in "improvisation and adaptability" and that "ideas are currency".

In the early years, Handspan's shows were developed or adapted to suit particular performances that were arranged. The company continued to experiment with puppetry in visual theatre. Community arts, theatre - in - education, educational drama teaching, ritual theatre, surrealist art and street theatre influenced and were part of Handspan's work. Puppetry was always the basis of the company's work governed by the maxims that still hold:

"Animate the inanimate - anything can be a puppet"

"Simplicity is a virtue"

"Never use a puppet if an actor can do the role"

Partners attended classes and workshops in various disciplines and worked on projects with other performing groups and artists.

Handspan continued to operate as a partnership until 1981, and partners varied over those years including Philip Lethlean, John Rogers and Roy McNeill at various times. In late 1979, Handspan ran its first auditions, and employed performers outside the partnership to work in *The Mouth Show*.

In 1980, the partnership was Kenneth Evans, Andrew Hansen, Helen Rickards and Peter Wilson. Handspan's adaptation of *The Bunyip of Berkeley's Creek* was restaged for performance by 2 people. Ken and Helen took one version to Europe and America where they combined a tour of investigation with busking performances and an Edinburgh Fringe season, and established the groundwork for the company's later international touring.

Andrew and Peter remained in Australia where they toured the show extensively and established the company's national touring base. To facilitate these activities, Trina Parker was employed as administrator.

In 1981, needing to obtain Government funding in order to survive, Handspan was forced to incorporate as HANDSPAN THEATRE LIMITED, a non-profit making company limited by guarantee. The partners became Board members, with joint responsibility for the company's Artistic Direction, and were joined by Alastair Stevenson, company accountant, and Peter Zablud, company solicitor. Kenneth Evans was the first Chairman of the Board.

Until early 1984, Handspan operated as a performance ensemble that included Philip Lethlean, Carmelina Di Guglielmo,

John Rogers, Winston Appleyard, Paul Judd and Lizz Talbot, with the founding directors. All of the ensemble worked on all company projects, and collectively evolved the company programme through an annual Dreaming Meeting. While Handspan has remained committed to creating theatre for different audience age groups and performance venues, individuals began to specialise in skills and interest at around this time, and the working ensemble was disbanded.

Since then, the collective discussion and evolution of Handspan's work has been maintained through its membership.

New members have joined Handspan since 1981, all of whom are artists, committed to the company's objectives. Predominantly, they work frequently with the company. Since April, 1986, all members are signatories to a written manifesto developed by members.

The Board, elected annually from Handspan's membership, has sought to maintain a majority representation of members from the working company of artists. Kenneth Evans resigned from the Chair in early 1985, and was replaced by Jon Stephens. The founding Artistic Directorate, with Helen Rickards as Executive director, resigned in November 1985, and in August 1986, Trina Parker became Handspan Theatre's first Artistic Director.

In late 1986, the company secured reasonable Government funding and currently maintains a full-time administration and employs artists on a contract basis. The membership of the company meets annually for a residential Company Conference that incorporates a Dreaming session of ideas and proposals for the future.

Handspan Theatre is a unique company in Australia. It has

created new and exciting work and contributed significantly to the vitality of its specialist artform on an international level. The company's work has been the product of a dedicated core of artists who, after ten years, still work together, sometimes specialise in their own areas outside the company and continue to pass on and develop their skills in the creation of visual theatre.

Helen Rickards



I remember the beginning. The day Helen brought the paper round. There we are, all crowded over *The Age*. Helen, Peter, Xteen, Ken, Andrew and me. Was Phil there too? We're reading an ad. A restaurant in Kew wants someone to produce a puppet show for Sunday family lunchtimes. Intriguing. We always wanted to get our own show together.

We did. *Hansel and Gretel*. That's what the restaurant owner ordered. He was a nice chap, Herman. There we are in his office, bouncing about in our happiest hippy clothes, offering him every puppetry technique we'd ever heard of. Most of which we'd never done before.

I remember standing in the car park outside the restaurant on a bright windy afternoon. It's the day we are to sign the contract. We are having a hasty discussion. We haven't decided on our name yet. Time is running flat out on us. Then Helen arrives. Out of breath. "The family was sitting around last night trying to think of a name, and someone came up with 'Handspan' - what do you think?"

Oh god, that reminds me of the second workshop, the slum. A small bare wooden room in Church Lane in Richmond for which we paid something like fifteen bucks a week. Next door was a bottleyard where they smashed glass all day. I love the sound of breaking glass. Out the back was a young bloke who dyed buttons, and he was a nice chap, but his buttons emitted many nasty smells into the not-so-innocent Richmond air. I can taste the grit and the dust, see the scruffy lane late at night, feel our fatigue as we built the next show in three weeks.

And you tell that to the young people of today!!

I can see the Gertrude St. studio when the agent took Peter Pan and me to view it. Dirty, but cheap and so big. Such wide open spaces. Paradise. Ooh look, here's a darkroom. There's so much light in here, it can be the workshop. And this long room with the arched windows - beautiful rehearsal room. Pity about the stairs.

We moved in and started business. We tried hard to be an effective collective, sharing the responsibilities and having no bosses, and I think we succeeded at least as many times as we failed. There were arguments. There usually are. But we were very democratic, everyone had a turn at being scapegoat.

The best show we did in my two-year span was the Mouth Show. I was very proud of it. There were four of us at that time. We developed the script together, with a little help from visiting friends. We shared the administration. The Mouth Show was the first production we made at Gertrude Street.

Our set was a big soft sculpture mouth on the front wall of a three-sided canvas booth. It opened up in the first bars of

music, revealing two people crouched on the floor inside wearing black hoods and black velvet suits. Me and Helen. And another in a white coat and a very silly rubber nose examining the mouth's teeth with a magnifying glass. This was the Dentist. Ken. He was great at loony characters.

We'd been commissioned by the community health centre around the corner to make a show for a schoolchildren's dental health campaign. One of our tasks was to show the dentist in a positive light, so children wouldn't be scared of him or her.

We were given a short song the dePaul people had written to the tune of "Sugar in the Morning". We made a sugar figure to sing it, a plump lump of candy pink fabrics, with ice cream breasts and a trayful of milk shakes and Mars bars. Xteen operated her. We made the Mouth a tongue to taste the sugar. The teeth were horrified. They knew what was going to happen. Nasty-coloured objects entered the mouth and squatted on the teeth. They were the villains - the Plaque and Germs. They looked a lot like oven mitts. Soon the teeth began to fall out. But they called for help and lo! at the back of the room was Ken, out of costume, holding a giant carrot. What? Yes. We had been asked to feature the foods that can help clean plaque off teeth, so we made a carrot big enough for the mouth to bite. Ken got the kids to pass it to the front to rescue the teeth. There was a giant toothbrush later on. My boyfriend Jon Murray made the bristles for it as I recall.

The show ended with a fight, which I wouldn't do today in these times of urgent pacifism. But we didn't think then of the sub-text. We wanted the kids to take note of the dental health messages, so we structured the story like a comic book, with superheroes and punch-ups, to keep them interested.

I remember working all over Xmas 1978 to finish a new show in time for the Puppet Festival in Hobart. I always regret that we took an untried show to the festival instead of the Mouth Show, which was very tight by then. Guess we had a mania for novelty or something.

I was 26 when we started Handspan. It realised many long-standing dreams for me. To work for no bosses. To live off making art. To perform before an audience. To be bonded to a group of people.

My strongest memories of those days are always in the workshop. The parties and the arguments. The all-night work binges. The great ideas. The endless cleaning up. The bright light coming in the big windows in the afternoons and the city lights there late at night. The view from the roof! The stairs. Selling shows on the phone, groan. All the visitors and cuppas. Sleeping there when you were homeless. The time I was working late and the cops banged on the door thinking they'd found a sly gambling joint. My quavering voice telling them through the door that I wasn't going to open it and I was but a lone humble puppeteer making a foam dog for a puppet show so they didn't need to worry. They went away.

As I write I see lots of blue paint, brilliant blue, Handspan blue. Musta been our blue period.

Love Maeve.



It was Ken who first interested me in working with HANDSPAN. I'd been working in Theatre in Education and fringe theatre in Melbourne for about 4 years, so I'd heard of the company and seen the work. It was 1984. At that stage SECRETS had premiered in Adelaide, played in Melbourne where it had been picked up by Jean Carlo Menotti to represent Australia at the Spoleto Festival in Italy in 1983, and had played at the Sydney Festival in the summer of '84. Carmelina, as the original Fanlady was vacating the part. Ken told me about the role ...

At the audition, I nursed my co-auditionee's baby for her while she completed her audition. This was Avril McQueen, a woman with whom I have since worked many shows and Bill her son, who became Handspan's mascot on the World Tour of SECRETS we were auditioning for.

Carmelina taught me the role in a manic four day onslaught, in performance at the Geelong Performing Arts Centre. A fast and thorough introduction to black theatre. By the last night Carmelina sat in the audience and was able to watch the show she'd worked on for the last 18 months. I had become the Fanlady. I also inherited the part of Manipulator/ Mother/ Rosa in Handspan's school show of STREETWISE.

The rehearsal process, a combination of running scenes, doing 'pullouts' to perfect manipulation and making objects in the black studio that was Handspan on the 3rd floor of 108 Gertrude St. was directed by Helen. It was punctuated by the intermittent visitations of the technical director, Philip, with a never - ending stream of new technical solutions. Everything was crowded onto the top floor in those days : The office was sandwiched between the workshop and the rehearsal studio. Helen would scream at Phil

or Ken to turn off the power tools so she could confirm details of the World Tour. "It's Paris on the 'phone for God's sake!!!"

Occupying the third floor has always meant a strong connection for me between Handspan and THE STAIRS. Loading a show into the truck in the street or returning a show to the studio has always meant lugging lots of gear up 3 full flights. They're a wonderful leveller ... no matter what's gone on in the rehearsal room, there is no way you can shift the set without having to co-operate!

The black studio itself is a wonderful space, full of endless transformations. No sooner had the STREETWISE set been packed and carted and lugged down the stairs, but the black space became the site of the press conference and less formal farewells for the company's World Tour. When I left with the company for Paris in April of 1984 (although I didn't know it at the time) I stepped into a three year phase of 'life on the road'; of living out of a suitcase, of hotel rooms and all the glamour and plain hard work of international touring.

As a cast member of SECRETS I have toured to Paris, London, Quebec, New York, Charleston South Carolina, New York, Berlin, Edinburgh, Belgium, Switzerland, parts of Germany, Italy and Sicily over 3 separate international tours in '84, '85 and '86.

In Australia, SECRETS played Melbourne, Mildura, Wagga Wagga, Canberra, Newcastle, Orange, Scone, Brisbane and Alice Springs. I have bumped that show in and out of so many theatres and have had innumerable opening nights. There are many incidents that come to mind:

... The night Winston fainted on stage and in true black theatre style, disappeared from view "as if by magic" to almost collide with me as I dashed into position for the Fanlady routine ...

... The finale of the show in Bari, Italy played in the Petrochelli, a theatre modelled on La Scala, when the audience was lit for the encore and tiers of applauding Italians 2000 strong reached layer by layer to the 'Gods'...

... The opening at the Spoleto Festival in South Carolina, where an enraged theatre goer stood in the audience and shouted abuse at the stage, "Your art is sacrilege!", whilst others stood applauding and we quaked waiting for the bullet..

... The nightmare gigs in antiquated theatres with no proper equipment and enormous language barriers. Philip making gobos for lights with no focus, with crushed coke cans, Philip surrounded by the spaghetti of lighting cords and patch boards ..

... The freight dramas, where boxes of equipment were left on the tarmac at Tullamarine or lost en route to London. Festival bars, cafes in strange cities and the chance to view an extraordinary range of work from a myriad of other contemporaries...

... The send-offs at the airport, where the company, friends and family came out in full force. The disorientation of arriving home and climbing the stairs to find a new place inside Handspan and the work generated in one's absence.

SECRETS has formed the backbone of my work at Handspan, but it is far from my only work with the company.

By the time we were rehearsing CHO CHO SAN, large changes were afoot in the company. Handspan had expanded in almost every sense of the word. We'd taken over the 2nd floor of 108 and had shifted the office downstairs and created the white studio. The workshop had finally won in the battle for space upstairs. Desks had been replaced by sewing tables and foam sculpting areas. Masses of fabric and materials were taking the shape of puppets and sets for the show. The place was full of people .. the 7 in the cast, Geoff Hooke as director, Boris Connelly

and Dal Babare as musical director/composers, Ken Evans as designer, Phil Lethlean as lighting designer, Helen Rickards as producer, Michele Spooner as puppet-maker and on occasion, Dan Keene, the writer. This pre-production and rehearsal phase was on the largest scale ever attempted by the company. The atmosphere was optimistic - everyone loved the work. Ideas became currency. We worked our guts out to make CHO CHO SAN; the rehearsal room full of song, puppets and actors. The white-on-white design directly challenging the black theatre flow of Handspan's previous work. The Design also met the challenge of running the show along the length of the Universal 2 Theatre, instead of end-on, as is the norm. Song by song, the piece took shape. We moved into the theatre. Problems became obvious. Some were solved, others never resolved. That pre-Christmas 5-week season was a wonderful meld of various theatrical forces in Melbourne at that time. Daniel Keene's writing, Handspan's design and skill in puppetry and performance, Dal and Boris' wonderful music and great performances by Danny Nash and Ruth Schoenheimer in the lead roles. The ground swell created by the performances lingers even now 3 years later, when the combined forces of the Vic. State Opera and The Playbox have given a new and very different voice to the piece.

The story of how Handspan lost CHO CHO is a complex one, involving differing artistic opinion, money, legalities and finally a no-win situation. In retrospect we all learned valuable lessons. It was the first time the company got its fingers burned. Up until now, adventure and risk had been met with appreciation and success. In hindsight however, stronger bonds and firmer commitments were forged through the loss. We understood more about risk taking and breaking new ground. In a

strange way it matured us as a company. A language in which to discuss the work began to emerge. We forged on, another international tour of SECRETS and, on return, the creation of a work aiming to reflect our own country's confused heritage.

I'd only just unpacked from overseas when I found myself up and off again, this time to the central desert region of Australia. This two week cultural exchange with Nganyintja and the Pitjanjara people at Angatja was another experience of a lifetime. The mystery and beauty of the desert; the confrontation in realising the genocide of the aboriginal people and culture by non-aboriginal Australians; the wonderful sharing of our work and the traditional stories and ways of life have made this journey one of great personal significance. Many impressions accompany this experience:

... Sleeping in swags around campfires with the night sky studded with stars.

... The sheer space - vistas that empty your lungs of breath and fill your eyes.

... Running with Nganyintja in the river bed as she played out the story of the seven sisters with Phil, traditional black bun head-dress woven into his fair hair, persuing us as Wadi Neru.

... Giggling and screaming under the shower after two weeks of crotch and armpit jobs, watching the water run red from the dust.

Lizz Talbot



Handspan's '88 programme

HANDSPAN Theatre's planned programme for 1988 includes:

FOUR LITTLE GIRLS

March - Adelaide Festival

April - Perth Puppet Festival

April - York Theatre, Sydney

May - Next Wave Festival, Melbourne

WAVES OF CHANGE

October - Castlemaine Festival

November - Melbourne

December - Victorian country tour

OUT FOR A DUCK

Term 1 - Melbourne primary schools tour

PLUS development of new works and various short seasons of works in repertoire.

HANDSPAN THEATRE,
108, Gertrude St, Fitzroy, Victoria
3065 Tel: 03 417 5978



MTA: What's on in 1988

Jan - Apr. The Magic Pudding

Apr - May. The Wind in the Willows

May - Jun. Kakadu

Jun - Jul. The Magic Pudding

Aug - Sep. The Sydney Coves

Sep - Oct. Pinocchio

Oct - Nov. The Magic Pudding

Nov - Dec. The Jungle Books

The Marionette Theatre of Australia, 106 George St, Sydney 2000, NSW
Box Office tel: (02) 273 274
for details.

The Marionette Theatre of Australia

Bears are not only prowling Wall Street!

Two years ago the MTA had reached a financial nadir. Over the past twelve months the entire basis on which this Company was operating has changed. In the past the company operated in a range of areas ... mounting childrens theatre, TIE productions and pieces aimed at the adult market. This is no longer the case, and the entire focus of the company is now directed into the production of family entertainment in theatre venues, primarily at The Rocks Theatre but with a substantial touring component. Any other activities the company becomes involved with are first assessed in terms of their value in supporting this primary focus.

The company is developing a repertoire based on the classics of children's literature. Two new productions have been mounted, *The Wind in the Willows* and *Pinocchio*. These productions have between them clocked up over 500 performances in the past year, playing in Sydney and at over a dozen other venues on the East Coast. New productions of *The Magic Pudding* and *Kipling's Jungle Book* are being planned as part of the Classics Programme. A solid reputation is being established with our audience and media exposure for the Company's activities has been greatly increased. Audience figures for The Rocks Theatre have tripled and earned income is substantially increased. Employment opportunities were created for 11 performers throughout this period; two puppetmakers have been engaged on a full-time basis, with seven other individuals finding part-time employment in the workshops. On the surface it looks good. Yet the problems are immense ... ask anyone who has worked at the MTA during this period!

I would like to restate my frequently expressed concern at the huge problems this company faces arising from its tenancy at 106 George Street. During this year we have seen yet again that the maintenance and development of such a property currently places an unrealistic burden on the human and financial resources of the company, diverting resources from our very *raison-d'être*. The nub of the problem is terribly simple ... theatre is a low-profit activity, whereas the building is a high-cost responsibility. To express the problem another way ... the MTA, with a Marrickville income, decided to buy into a Vaucluse property.

Government support is not the solution and will, I believe, become increasingly problematic and limiting in the foreseeable future. We need to develop usages of the building and of the skills within the company that can take the MTA into areas with a higher potential income. If the Company fails to do so in the near future, it will quite simply collapse. And that would be a tragedy, not only for the Company and the core of committed staff who sustain it, but for the rapidly increasing audience who attend productions at The Rocks and in other venues.

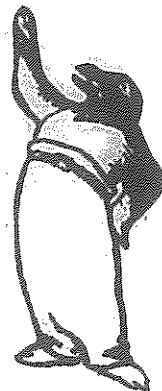
The Rocks Theatre presents puppetry with a unique opportunity. The challenge is clear. Have we got the guts to do anything about it?

Michael Creighton - Artistic Director.



Joe Gladwin, in the course of a career as a puppeteer that has been divided between the UK and Australia, has often worked with the eminent British performer / director, Barry Smith. Like many puppeteers in the UK, Barry 'does' a Punch show, in which Joe assisted in time-honoured tradition as frontman or Bottler. When on tour in Japan in 1984, Barry introduced his show with a dramatic monologue taken from the interview by Henry Mayhew of a Punchman, Harold Pike, in the 1840's and printed in *"London Labour, London Poor"*.

Joe was inspired with the idea of further developing this characterisation into a full-length work, and, back in Australia, was encouraged by the Marionette Theatre to apply for a grant to create the show. Mary Travers, Project Officer for the Australia Council suggested asking David Allen to write the play. After some discussion, Joe passed his collection of reference work on Punch and Judy over to David, and gave him free rein. Although the original intention had been to expand and adapt the Mayhew character; gaslamps, London fog et al, the result is something with a very different flavour: Australian, and more Freudian than Dickensian:



Terrapin puppet theatre



Mailing Address: P.O. Box 23, Sandy Bay, Tasmania

Location: 77 Salamanca Place, Hobart

Telephone: Salamanca Centre 002 34 6086

"Professor" Harold Pike has been modernised by 100 years or so and transplanted half way around the world. As the practitioner of a popular folk-art form, he finds himself adrift from the roots of that tradition. However, in his personal life he is only too close to those underlying forces that give Punch his dynamism.

David Allen has obviously had great fun with this character - the use of language, with snippets of showman's patter and intrusive English seaside humour, is a delight. He has also fully realised the potential Puppetry has for making the imaginary real, and thus we are entertained by some outrageously concrete manifestations of Pike's not-so-subconscious symbolism.

This is a well-crafted play - a demanding and superb vehicle for a talented actor/puppeteer. It has pathos and comedy, both verbal and visual.

The show will be of great interest to puppeteers, and a Revelation to their friends! It will hopefully be seen by the Puppetry Fraternity outside Sydney in the near future. This is perfect Festival material. Look out for it!

Susan Lintern Coward



"Puppeteers Perspective"

STOP PRESS ... -- dot dot dash dot
..Tasmania 'carrier pigeoning' thru'
to Manipulation in Sydney....

It really seems like we are a long way away down here and I was glad to hear that MTA Associates have offered to resurrect Manipulation. There's nothing more welcome down here in Tasmania than a dose of Australian Puppetry news.

October has arrived suddenly and Terrapin has just opened its third major production. The 1987 programming has enabled the puppeteers to participate in varying degrees, in all areas of the Terrapin's artistic development. As a team, all company members have workshopped 87 performance scripts, initiated and developed ideas for future shows, participated in two valuable workshops held by Peter J. Wilson and Noriko Nishimoto, contributed to and discussed the long term profile of the company and in between times we have put together three major touring productions, "Down Under", "Home is where the house is" and "Paper Plays Part II - Oukiler and Chrisaler." WHAT A YEAR! ... and it is not over yet.

The first two productions mentioned above were written by Tasmanians; "Down Under" by Jennifer Davidson and "Home is where the house is" by Allen Harvey. The team of puppeteers, Bob Parsons, Brianne Cuthbert et moi, plus Road Manager, Jill English and Resident Musician, Jackie Verhaar, toured the State with these two successful shows for Terms 1 and 11.

"Paper Plays, Part II - Oukiler and Chisaler", written and directed by Noriko Nishimoto, opened at the Salamanca Arts Festival in September. Noriko spent six weeks with the company to devise this piece. Who could ever forget that beaming smile and never-ending flow of positive energy which bubbled through the company while Noriko worked with us?

This production time was certainly one of the highlights of the puppeteer's year.

Over the past three years, Terrapin has developed and maintained a healthy balance of performance work and skills development opportunities. In addition to Noriko Nishimoto's visit, we also worked with Peter J. Wilson, developing individual concepts, designing and making puppets and realising the pieces to a point which culminated in a semi-formal 'in-house' viewing of our work. 1988 will see the next opportunity to develop these pieces into a formal presentation.

The coming year for Terrapin promises to be very exciting. Preparation for our bi-centennial production, "Antarctica" will continue on throughout January, followed by participation in the Australian Puppetry Festival in Perth, then some company members are heading off to Japan for the International Puppetry Festival.

It has been a difficult task to truthfully encapsulate Terrapin's year in a few paragraphs at 11.15 pm on a Wednesday night, with an 8 am departure for Nubeena Primary School becoming a closer prospect as the minutes tick by. However, that's all the up-to-date information from the Tasmanian Puppeteers contingent.

I hope this sketchy, but enthusiastic and colourful description of our work down here will initiate some interest amongst the "Puppeteer Collective" in Australia.

So if you feel like a dose of clean fresh air, if you need to be re-energised and re-vitalised, think about a sojourn in Tasmania and drop in to see us at Terrapin. We have established a very creative, talented, skilled team of professionals which welcome input and participation of our unseen, mysteriously unheard of, puppeteer comrades.

'Til the NEXT Manipulation (not an osteopathic one, I hope!)

Heather Monk



QUEENSLAND THEATRE OF PUPPETRY

P.O. Box 437,
Southport, 4215.

Production Committee Report:

QTOP is made up of a very loyal and gifted group of non-professionals. This gives great stability to the rehearsals and performances. This year performances given included:

Surprise, Surprise. Circus Clown. The Little School Hat. Magic Words. The Bouncer Family grow a Carrot. Too much Noise! Red Ridinghood. Rocky the Octopus.

There is always an audience participation time as well.

Beth Jackson, Chairperson for Production.

"Dear Friends,

Our theatre is flourishing strongly and into our 16th year of well-attended productions. Progress has been made with new ideas in our presentations and interesting, experimental new work in puppet construction. The puppeteers and backstage crew are talented and enthusiastic and special ones are experienced in script-writing, lighting and sound and the 'tailoring' of curtains and drapes.

During the year it became urgent we find a permanent safe home for our 200 puppets. These important characters are now housed in specially built cupboards in my home where I also have room for my paints and work-materials. ...

This year, QTOP decided to assist in the worthy cause of Cancer Research. With this in mind and as puppet maker of the Theatre, I was inspired to make a beautiful ballerina doll, "Juanita" which I sculptured in silk. Juanita has been presented to the Queensland Cancer Fund to be raffled later in the year to help raise funds for the great work they are doing.

We were invited to exhibit our puppets in 'The Centre Gallery' from 2nd to 10th September and feel honoured and thrilled to be able to display some of the characters that bring magic to our shows."

Kay Littler, President.

Lloyd H. Noble

It is with regret that we relay the sad news of the sudden death of Lloyd H. Noble of Puppetfolk in South Australia.

Lloyd was a Puppeteer who started Puppetfolk back in 1975, when he toured around W. Aust. Puppetfolk moved to Adelaide in 1979 where Lloyd continued to write, design and make puppets for the Puppetfolk performances.

To use his own words, "I am an independent, non-funded Puppeteer, who works almost exclusively in primary schools, where my material is geared to fit in with language, drama and social studies programs, such as multi culturalism, ageism conservation and European colonization".

He will be sadly missed.....

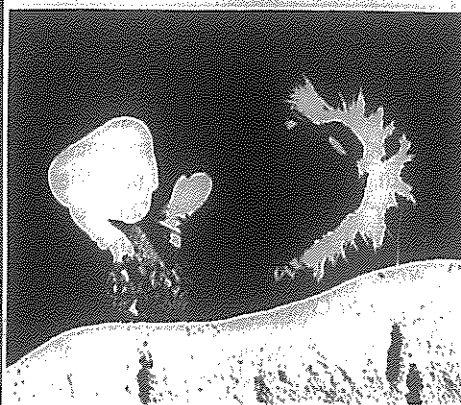


Photo courtesy of Puppetfolk.

Sydney Puppet Theatre - now, then and later ...

1987 has been a busy year for the S.P.T. and things don't look like letting up.

The big news is - we've moved premises. After over two years of rent free, run down building bliss, the Housing Commission gave notice. This time it's for real - the building is coming down. We're now in Redfern: 1st Floor, 103 Regent St. REDFERN. The postal address remains P.O. Box 39, DARLINGHURST NSW 2010 but the telephone number has changed to (02) 699 7475.

As we unpack it's hard to remember why we couldn't part with some of that "precious" junk!

After months of work, Australia's Wonderland has 7 new marionette items for the 1987/88 season's show, "Huckleberry Hounds Follies". The Park's management is very pleased with the new show and audiences have been enthusiastic. The show has 3 Hanna Barbera characters (the puppet theatre is in Hanna Barbera Land) Huckleberry rides a unicycle, Snagglepuss is a magician producing tricks from his magic table, and a bunch of flowers from 'mid air' and Magilla Gorilla is a trapeze artist. Other characters include Dolly Parrot (Parton), 3 strawberries, 2 Rockabilly Crocodiles, Mo as a convict built as a come-apart puppet and the Fantastic Elastic which is a rod and string puppet with a mouth, arms, hands, nose and moving eyes.

The show is performed by one puppeteer 6 times a day and lasts 14 minutes.

In December...

Margaret RoadKnight and the Sydney Puppet Theatre

A CABARET

is happening at THE LOFT, 1st Floor cnr. Darling & Rowntree Sts. in Balmain.

Spare Parts

puppet theatre

The Loft is a new performance venue - a coffee shop that welcomes entertainers.

Performers are not charged rent and are paid the door takings.

This project has been funded by the Theatre and Literature Boards of the Australia Council.

In 1988 we will be touring 3 school shows - the ever popular "Eggscuse the Emus" and two new shows, "Out of the Bag" to be written, built and performed by Greg, and "Up and Jumping" which Steve and Sue are devising and building.

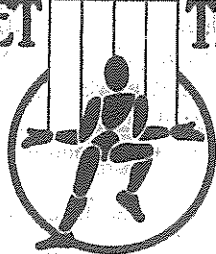
With the computer now installed, we will be booking our own shows for the next year, having amicably withdrawn from our booking agent.

That's our news. Hope to see you at The Loft.

The Sydney Puppet Theatre would like to thank John Catlin, Peter Wilson and all others for their efforts in organising the 1988 Puppet Festival. We look forward to participating in the Master Classes.

The Sydney Puppet Theatre is Steve Coupe, Greg Howard, Sue Wallace.

NEW ZEALAND PUPPET THEATRE



The Art of all Ages

PO Box 6893 Wellesley St
305 Queen St Ph: 395-755
Auckland

Spare Parts Puppet Theatre has planned a most exciting year during 1988.

The year commences with a new production by Noriko Nishimoto, "Kaguyahime" - the story of the Moon Queen. The oldest creation myth from Japanese folklore, "Kaguyahime" is about the destiny of women born into a traditional society. The story is as relevant today as when it was first written, over 2000 years ago.

The production will premiere at the 1988 Festival of Perth. An interesting line-up of artists has been assembled, to create this exciting work. Devised and directed by Noriko Nishimoto, designed by Tolis Papazoglou, a Greek designer now resident in Perth, with music by Indian composer, Wency De Sousa.

Spare Parts Puppet Theatre is now making full use of the many ethnic artists who have become residents in Australia over the past year. Eastern States puppeteers may remember the remarkable music and song in "Pied Piper" created by Israeli artist, Helena Hendel.

Eric Bass from New York joins the company in February to devise and direct "The Girl Whose Father Was A Rabbit", a work by Swedish playwright, Gosta Kjellin, which will open Spare Parts Puppet Theatre's new complex in Fremantle, in 'The Short Street Theatre'.

Spare Parts Puppet Theatre then departs on a six-week tour of Canada and the USA, commencing with a week's season of "Pied Piper" at the Vancouver Children's Festival and culminating with a two week season in New York at the Kennedy Centre.

Returning to Perth in late June, the company will continue

performances of "Kaguyahime" and "The Girl Whose Father Was A Rabbit" before embarking on the rest of its overseas touring.

A small delegation will attend the World Puppet Festival in Nagoya, Iida and Tokyo with performances of "The Overcoat". The company will also perform in Osaka, Kagashima and Yakosuka, the sister cities of Perth and Fremantle.

Following on from Japan, senior artists from Spare Parts Puppet Theatre will begin a tour of China, part of a two-year cultural exchange between Spare Parts Puppet Theatre and Chinese Puppeteers.

Back in Perth, Frank Italiano and Ken Kelso will commence working on "The Hoist", a new production that looks at life-cycles through the eyes of a Hills Hoist - most favoured washing line in suburban back-yards. Ken Kelso has been working on "The Hoist" with the company over the last two years.

The final production for the year will be an Australian version of "Alice through the Looking Glass", devised and directed by Peter Wilson.

A busy year ahead for Spare Parts Puppet Theatre and a challenge for its staff and its audiences.

Peter Wilson, Artistic Director

Spare Parts Puppet Theatre,
1 Short Street Fremantle WA 6160
Tel: (09) 335 5044



1988 Oz Puppet Festival

All has been quiet on the Western Front regarding the "Oz Puppet" Festival.

Behind the scenes, the Fremantle Arts Foundation has been busy raising the funds, organising venues writing submissions and generally preparing to launch the Oz Puppet Festival onto the rest of Australia.

The Festival Programme is still being pieced together, but will be made up from among the following: Handspan Theatre; Terrapin; Sky Lark; Marionette Theatre; Spare Parts; Queensland Theatre of Puppets; Richard Bradshaw; Joe Gladwin; Peter Oldham; Eric Bass and the Vietnamese Water Puppets.

It is happening! "The Oz Puppet Festival" is now an official Bicentennial event and part of their National Arts Programme.

Currently the team of workers is working on cheaper packages for transport to facilitate more economical ways for Eastern States practitioners to attend. Put it in your diary now:

"Oz Puppet Festival"
Fremantle, Western Australia.

Masterclasses:
March 26 to April 1 1988
Performance Programme:
April 2 to 9 1988

Enquiries to:
Amanda Jolly, The Administrator,
Oz Puppet Festival,
Fremantle Arts Foundation,
PO Box 897
FREMANTLE
'phone (09) 335 2992.



Puppetry Guild

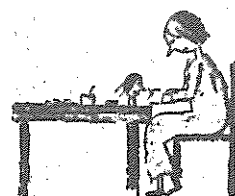
Recent workshops and performances by the members of the NSW branch of the Australian Puppetry Guild have covered a wide variety of aspects of puppetry ...

Haim Navarro: After working for many years in Israel using puppets for therapy with children and adults, Haim came to Australia last year. He has already given workshops for workers at Marrickville Council, for Kids Week at Bondi Pavilion and for Taronga Park Zoo - these included hand and face-painting. T. 02 360 2071

Jonquil Temple: Jonquil was on WIN 4 TV Wollongong, doing a puppet and mask-making workshop as well as appearing on "ACE" children's programme. Her televised workshop will be made into a short film, and Jonquil's puppets and workshop will soon grace the wavelengths of Sydney's Channel 10. Since December she has held 40 workshops - The Secrets of Puppetry demonstration/workshop and 3 term-length workshops for adults and for children. T: 02 817 5320

Averil Langtry: Averil was invited by the Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre to run a 2-day workshop in puppetmaking and performance for developmentally disabled teenagers culminating in "Life and Times of Ned Kelly" and "The Wizard of Oz". Her particular interests are Puppetry as therapy, pre-school children and the disabled. T: 02 519 3164

Ann Davis: Ann is a puppeteer well-known for working with marionettes. Her new show will include glove-puppets. Shows for children and adults T: 02 455 2004



Jan Paton: has run puppetmaking workshops for children in the school holiday Library Programme and a workshop for developmentally disabled teenagers making large puppets. Particular interest in working with developmentally disabled adults and children. T: 02 908 4995

Dennis and Jan Murphy:
New show;
"Murphy's Mob". T: 02 558 8424.

The above members are available for shows &/or workshops.

The Guild, an organisation of professional and interested puppeteers, holds regular monthly meetings at the M.T.A. Members are involved in a wide range of activities, with many community groups, increasing the public's awareness of puppetry styles through performance, teaching and discussion.

Contact: Dennis Murphy, President
T. 02 558 8424 or Averil Langtry,
Secretary, 10 Clara St. Erskineville
2043 NSW. T: 02 519 3164

Patch Theatre Centre's

"piece de resistance"

Patch Theatre Centre,
20, Tarlton Street,
Somerton Park 5044 SA.
Tel: 294 3287

Allan M. Lewis

A Pioneer of Australian Puppetry

After reading an interesting article in the Puppeteers of America's "PUPPETRY JOURNAL" late last year, concerning the tape-recording of "oral histories" of old and retired puppeteers, I made a mental note that this was something I must do. I set aside a day, Monday, 23rd March 1987. That day I was due to do a show at Falconbridge Infants' School. The year before, when I had been to this school I had called in on my father's uncle, Allan M. Lewis, who lived near there.

As it was many years since I had last seen him, I was not sure what to expect. To my surprise, I was confronted by an unbelievably spritely and mentally alert 90 year old! We talked at length about how he and Kay Lewis had presented puppet shows in the 1930's and 1940's. He told me how his interest in puppetry had begun after seeing the marionettes of Emily Langer at the Phillip Street Theatre very early in the 1930's, with a production of "Joseph and his Coat of Many Colours". He remembered the appearance of a seemingly gigantic hand adjusting the strings of the puppets, breaking the spell that the puppets had obviously created!

Prior to his involvement with puppets, Allan had been a successful artist, both in watercolours and as a Commercial Artist in Sydney designing such things as the ETA Peanut Butter logo. In later years he designed all the labels for "Masterfords" products for Henry Lewis & Sons - his brother's firm.

Initially, Allan's interest in puppetry was hampered by a lack of technical knowledge. He and Kay apparently drove all the way to Melbourne from Sydney especially to see an American puppeteer who was working at Melbourne's Luna Park, because they wanted to find out what a control looked like. They were told "You can look but you can't copy!"

Whether they copied or adapted, I am not quite sure, but the horizontal double - aeroplane type control they developed and used, gave their puppets a different style of movement to that given by the vertical controls of the English puppeteers of that period. It also meant that one puppeteer could successfully control two puppets at the same time. The major technical input was from English puppet books by Whanslaw etc., and some American books.

While they saw themselves as "struggling in the wilderness" the wonderful vitality of Allan's carving, and his careful attention to technical details, coupled with Kay's exquisite costumes, resulted in marionettes which in many ways may have even outshone their English counterparts. In fact, Allan, on seeing the Bussell's perform in Australia in the 1950's, was extremely impressed with their show, but amazed at the comparatively roughly carved puppets, which were none the less very effective. He said he began to wonder whether being a perfectionist regarding making the puppets was necessary and perhaps they had spent too much time making the puppets, since it took roughly 14 days to complete each puppet. (The puppets are beautifully jointed with tongue and groove joints even in the waist!)

It was during the war that Kay and Allan came into contact with American puppeteers, while working with the American Red Cross. At one stage they met an American puppeteer whose fabric puppets could be packed into a rucksack in contrast with their very heavy equipment. This meeting obviously lead to experimenting with different forms of puppets.

In the article from "Australia Home" in 1947 Allan is working a Lion puppet that he had devised, which is obviously a "Muppet-type" mouth puppet with rod arms - certainly ahead of it's time!

Their two full-scale marionette productions were quite elaborate. People who I have met who saw "All Aboard For Happiness" were extremely impressed with the manipulation. Kay and Allan were the first "indigenous" fully-professional puppeteers in Australia - which in the thirties, in a country recovering from the Depression where the Arts were barely recognised and where very few people knew what a marionette was, must really have been difficult!

Allan never saw himself as a businessman, and much that didn't succeed was attributed to "bad luck", but none the less he and Kay persevered and used the media of the day; newspapers, radio and film to further the cause of puppetry, and hence make their own living a little more secure. In about 1946 they made a film "Cinderella on Strings" for the Dept. of Information. I saw this film about 15 years ago and it was very interesting to see the very coy way puppets were introduced to an audience, which it was assumed had never seen them before. It was also fascinating to see the large range of characters which they had created, which no longer exist. The second part of the film was a brief mimed-to-music version of "Cinderella", which incorporated seven new marionettes made especially for the film. These puppets were later used to present a live half-hour version of "Cinderella".

I asked Allan where they used to perform, since to operate from year to year puppeteers need a network of audiences, and obviously they had to do it the hard way, all the time trying to convince proprietors, authorities etc. of the benefits of puppetry.

Their puppets appeared in schools; Department Stores; and places such as the Luna Park and Manly Fun Pier. The

also played for adults in "Music Societies" which flourished in Sydney at the time. Strangely Allan recalled playing at the Rose Bay Music Society to an audience dressed in "tie and tails", where they were roundly applauded and asked to repeat the show! He remarked that they were a little snobbish at Rose Bay - I didn't have the heart to let him know that Rose Bay is where we live now.

I gather they quickly had made the connection between performing and teaching, and they spent many years teaching puppetry to children and in particular in workshop situations with teachers. After the war they did a great deal to popularise puppetry, especially through Kay's connection with the Junior Red Cross movement, who I understand sponsored and distributed a book they wrote on puppetry, which was the first Australian pamphlet which accompanied a series of radio talks Allan did on the ABC.

They also created the concept of a "Children's Section" in Newspapers, writing and illustrating the "Sunbeams" section of the 'Sydney Morning Herald', which later moved to the 'Sun'. Here they often wrote about puppets and gave instructions on preparing and producing puppet shows (incidentally, Jackie and I, quite by coincidence wrote and illustrated this same children's column in the Sun in 1984!)

Allan never really told me why he and Kay stopped being puppeteers, although this must have been early in the 1950's. From what remains of their correspondence to possible sponsors, it seems that in the faster pace of the post-war period it was not possible to tour for many years with the same show, and they needed to create a new programme.

They tried, it would seem unsuccessfully to get sponsors for both "Alice in Wonderland" and "A History of Australia". While the projects sound wonderful on paper,

and it is a pity they never happened, from a business point of view they were very much 'pie in the sky', because the sponsor unless a total philanthropist, would never justify the expense. (For example, they wanted 470 pounds to create a show which would be presented for 2 weeks when the average wage was about 7 or 8 pounds!)

According to what Edith Murray told me, Allan had become very cynical about puppetry's chances to flourish, when the NSW Puppetry Guild was forming, but it seems that what had happened is that, having laid the groundwork and, in concert with Edith Murray and Bill Nicoll, all operating independently, they had interested a whole new generation of puppeteers, such as Peter Scriven etc., who were able to adapt more readily to the conditions of the '50's.

By the time I went to the Clovelly Puppet Theatre in the mid 50's, the memory of Kay and Allan's puppetry was still very strong and Edith would introduce me to visiting puppeteers as Allan Lewis's great-nephew. And when I first met them, at the age of about 8, puppetry to them was just a part of their interesting past, one of the many things they had done. It was about this time that they decided to sell off the puppets. Peter Scriven had in about 1950 bought many of the best variety items for use in his early shows. They were destroyed in the 1969 Elizabethan Trust fire, unfortunately. Strangely, his stage and scenery which he had given to Edith Murray was destroyed very soon after in the fire at the Bradfield Park Creative Leisure Centre!

Allan thought he had found a purchaser for the puppets in about 1958 (?) and shipped the many boxes down from Faulconbridge in the Blue Mountains, but the sale fell through and he convinced my father to store all the gear under our house until a new purchaser could be found. You can imagine my delight as an eight year - old puppeteer having all these

wonderful puppets there !!! Nothing happened to the equipment and puppets until about 1961 or 1962 when, on behalf of some of her friends, Edith bought a lot of the remaining puppets: the samisen girl; the chinese magician; the piano player and of course, Mr and Mrs Corncobb. The remaining puppets were given to me: the two guardsmen; the seal; and four of the Cinderella set. Allan kept the two ugly sisters and the Cinderella-in-rags. I had the Cinderella-in-riches puppet and when I visited him last year, I was surprised to see the very sad expression on the Cinderella-in-rags puppet's face, which I had always assumed would have been the exact duplicate of the one I had!

It had surprised me that in Peter Seaborn's paper for the Melbourne Puppet Conference, when talking about the History of Puppets in Australia, he did not mention, and possibly was not aware of Kay and Allan's work. And so to rectify this lack of knowledge of many modern puppeteers, and also as I had said at the start of this article, I had intended to tape record Allan's reminiscences on the 23rd of March. However, he passed away on the 13th of March 1987, aged 91.

I think fittingly, when writing about their work, Kay and Allan described themselves as "Pioneers of Australian Puppetry!"

C. John R. Lewis B Sc(Arch) BArch (Hons) 30.3.87



Punch's Birthday Bash

The irrepressable Mr. Punch is 325 years old. Whilst his appearances in Australia are few and far between these days and tend to be looked on as a bit of a curiosity, he seems as popular as ever in the old country. In fact, if anything he's experiencing a renaissance! Perhaps it's a sign of the times - after all, Punch has always flourished in the hard times... and the times in Britain are certainly hard.

Every Spring in the yard of the Actors Church in Covent Garden, a "May Fayre" takes place, attracting Punch and Judy 'Professors' from all over the British Isles and sometimes from abroad. The May Fayre is held in the churchyard because it was here in 1662 that the famous diarist, Samuel Pepys recorded a Punch show for the first time in England.

The churchyard is only small and when filled with 20 or more gaily coloured booths with respective Punches and Judies, Bottlers and assorted other buskers all competing for the same customers, it becomes a wonderful Bedlam. The air is full with shrieks of laughter, squeaks of swazzles, toots, whistles and the resounding thwack of slapstick on wood. At my first May Fayre in 1984, the shows varied from the tedious to the memorable.

One of my favourites was Prof. Martin Bridle who has a regular pitch on the beach at Broadstairs every summer. Kulture Klub's "Karma Chameleon" was charting well and Martin, ever with his finger on the pulse of popular culture, had included a Boy George puppet with a silly extending neck in his show.

John Styles, another usually virtuoso Punch performer I saw that day wasn't on form and Punch's head falling off was the last straw - he packed it in. But

I've seen John's show on two other occasions and it was hysterically funny and very polished.

Professor Styles is a walking illustration of the saying, "It's not what you do, it's how you do it". Audible groans can be heard from the audience as he embarks on one of those terrible balloon sculpture routines, but it is made irresistible by a slick patter. During this patter I saw him ask one audience of children "What's my name?" at least four times, and each time the reply was louder. Far from being the popular image of the Penniless Professor, Styles' well-deserved reputation has won him pitches in places like "Liberty" at Christmas, Television spots and Festival dates all over the world - and enabled him to drive a Jaguar and send his two sons to Public School!

Other features of that year's Fayre were a book-stall run by the Puppet Centre; a glove puppet show by the charming Violet Philpott; trying to buy a swazzle from a very secretive Prof. who wouldn't let me see what I was supposed to pay three quid for; and a show by our very own David Poulton.

This year being Punch's 325th birthday, was an even grander event, and one which I'm very sorry to have missed. The main festivities happened on Sat. May 9th on a warm sunny Spring afternoon...

First there was a grand procession around Covent Garden Piazza led by the Bournemouth Carnival Band dressed as Punches and accompanied by a dog Toby, and following them, Punch's cousins; Petrouchka of Russia, Vitez Laszlo of Hungary, Kasper of Germany, Guignol of France, Puns of South Africa and Pulcinella of Naples. Then came Samuel Pepys - George Speaight in wig, jabot and knee-breeches, with quill in hand - followed finally by the British

Professors. Samuel Pepys then introduced a giant booth with about 100 Punches who popped up on cue to wave to all the onlookers.

Two birthday cakes were provided by Selfridges - one was big and flat with 325 candles and the other was in the shape of a Punch booth complete with icing figures. The cakes were cut up and sold and the icing Punch figure auctioned for the benefit of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (as were all proceeds from the 'bottle' that day) A group of young bidders in the 'grandstand' - the balcony of the "Punch and Judy" pub which overlooks the Piazza bid up to 100 pounds. When Punch sold for 105 pounds, they went to the NSPCC stall and gave them the money anyway, and one of their number paid 45pounds for the icing Judy! While the cakes were being cut up, the British profs. formed an archway with Punches held aloft for Samuel Pepys to pass through, so that the plaque commemorating Pepy's seeing of the Punch show in 1662, could be re-dedicated.

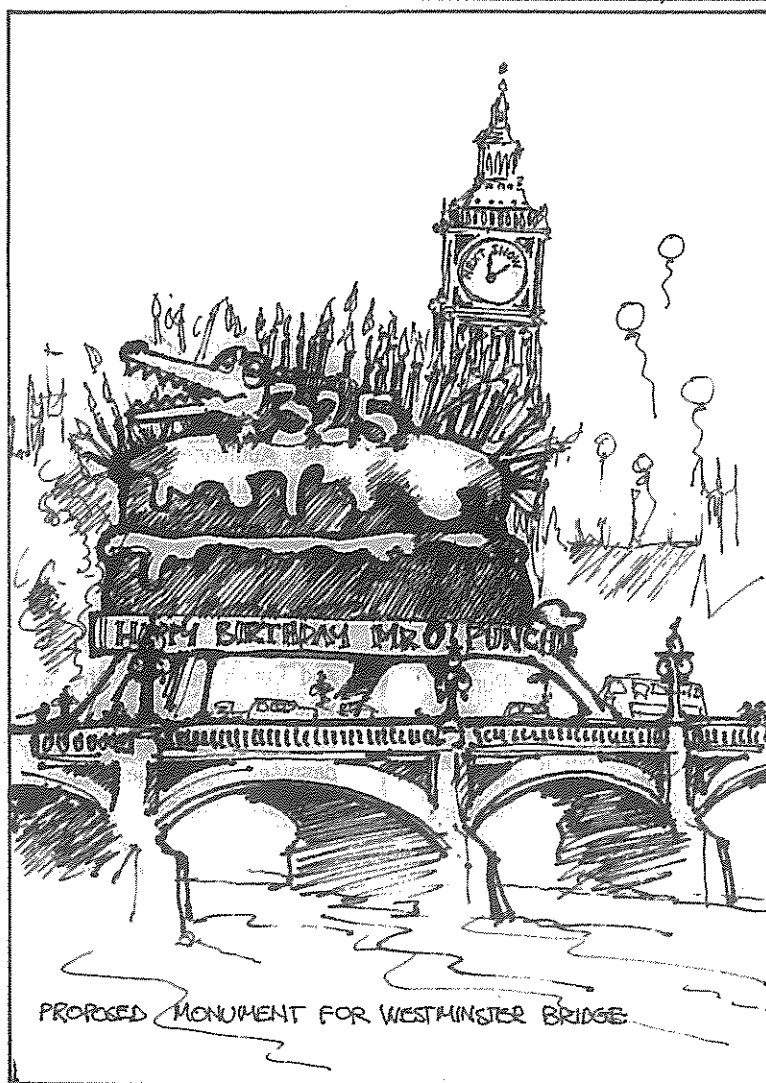
Finally the band led everyone back to the Piazza for the shows to begin in earnest. Among these were Bruno Leone's version of the Neapolitan Pulchinella (now almost extinct) and Drak's "How Petrouchka got married", which was a big success at the Adelaide Puppet Festival in 1983.

Punch's birthday was also marked this year by the making of "As Pleased As Punch" - a documentary by Central T.V. in his honour. It includes glimpses of the 325th birthday celebrations, interviews with various profs. and also with Alan Coren, editor of "Punch" magazine. It is presented by the well-known prof. Glyn Edwards, also an editor of the regular "Punchlines" page in the British Puppetry Journal, "Animations". Glyn is also a member of the Punch and Judy College of Professors.

Some controversy occurred with the foundation of the 'College' about 18 months ago, with the members of the older, and it was felt, more egalitarian "Punch and Judy Fellowship" having their noses put out of joint because half-a-dozen or so of these upstarts were forming a sort of exclusive splinter group. (New members can only join the College by invitation if they are deemed by the other members to be of the highest standard ...) There followed a heated exchange of 'letters to the Editor' which raged for months.

The Punch and Judy show is itself a continuing controversy. The British have a very healthy attitude to old things; for instance, in some countries, if an old building is no longer serving the purpose for which it was built, they knock it down and start again. In Britain, they tend to change the old one a bit so it will go on doing the job. The same attitude is applied to many things - the Parliamentary system, Shakespeare and the humble Punch and Judy show. Occasionally, the changes get up someone's nose, but then, arguments are all part of the democratic process ...

The most interesting development with Punch is a swing back to the type of show you might have seen in the first half of the 19th Century: People have forgotten that Punch was not always a rather insipid entertainment for children's parties. In fact, such bespoke performances were quite unusual before the middle of the century, when repressive laws like the 1839 Metropolitan Police Act which governed performances in public places, and the lure of more money began to drive Punchmen in from the cold to seek shelter in the drawing rooms of the wealthy. It was here that Punch first found he had to be on his best behaviour and to moderate his language, but above all it was here that he began to be looked on as exclusively a children's entertainer.



But Punch was born on the streets. His was an adult show full of bawdy double-entendres and biting political and social satire - the preserve of poor itinerant showmen, vagabonds working alone or with a bottler, performing on street corners or at village fairs. It was an entertainment which mostly attracted audiences of the poor labouring classes and Punch was a wicked radical. After all, neither the showman nor his audience was interested in preserving the status quo and it showed! Punch, the scourge of respectability, offered a temporary escape from the miseries of poverty and the shackles of Law and Church. The representatives of authority felt themselves subtly undermined by the Punchmen whom they couldn't understand, let alone trust. So the

Punchmen were given a hard time and frequently found themselves being moved on by the Peeler.

One of the show's most powerful drawcards was its potent topical satire. Jack Ketch the hangman, for example, really existed - he was a notorious Public Executioner at Tyburn in the 17th century. Punch's game where he outwits the hangman may well be a reference to Ketch's fabled inefficiency; for instance he took 8 strokes of the axe to behead one client, the Duke of Monmouth, in 1685! Gallows humour was very popular in the 19th century and the introduction of this scene was Punch's contribution.

Many people dismiss Punch and Judy as irrelevant, arguing for example, that the hanging scene is

merely arbitrary in an age when the death sentence has been withdrawn. Perhaps in the narrow sense this is true, but the show's survival suggests that "relevance" isn't the only (or even the most important measure) of good entertainment.

Perhaps the show's continuing fascination has something to do with its thinly disguised sexual symbolism.... noses and humps, sticks, nooses and the gaping jaws of the crocodile ... Prof. Gaz. (Caroline Frost) remarks, "my crocodile is actually a lady crocodile. And I think she should be; she swallows Mr Punch's sausages." Whatever the main attraction, it seems to be more fundamental than up-to-dateness. Nevertheless, other performers are once again using the show as a vehicle for social comment: Di Seaney, for example has shifted the focus in her show from Punch to Judy in an attempt to reverse what she sees as the entrenched sexism of the show. She calls hers, "Judy and Punch"; Wendy Wharam does what she calls a "Pacifist and Feminist" show at Swanage; Nick Palmer, (son of Ray and Joan da Silva) and Lynne Porter do a show called 'Punk and Judy' with bunraku-style puppets. As the name suggests, our hero is decked out in leathers and a spiky haircut.

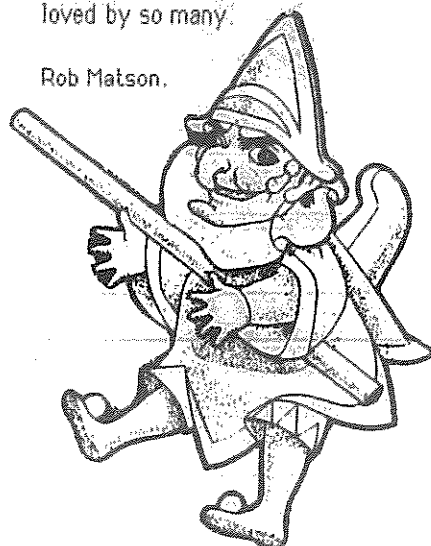
Punch is busking again too. Many performers, especially the younger ones have regular pitches on the streets, and there are quite a number of regular beach performers. Many of these shows are accompanied by a Bottler - as opposed to the more antiseptic approach of having (for example) the local council pay the performer a set fee.

No doubt the street is the best place for Punch to discharge his social responsibilities: Punch, like many folk art traditions, fulfills a need for ritual - and this aspect of

the show is being played up. In England, children grow up familiar not only with the plot, but with the actions or phrases which are meant to trigger a set response - and if the show is any good, they don't need much encouragement: "He's behind you", "Oh no you didn't!" The audience are given licence to take part - to play a role.

This 'Audience Participation' is an opportunity to reaffirm your tribal membership - rather like children's rhymes or drinking songs - and provides at the same time, a kind of catharsis. In this atmosphere, morality is temporarily set aside and Punch becomes the anti-hero who does all those things we can only dream of. Which is why he is despised by some and yet still loved by so many.

Rob Matson.



The Fate of the Puppetry Institute

What follows is an undetailed and informal summary of events - Ross Browning has the statistics.

At the National Forum of Puppeteers, (held early 1986) Forum participants agreed to the idea of forming a national puppetry organisation with the objects of facilitating communication and providing an organisational focus for the industry.

An interim committee was formed to investigate all aspects of forming such an organisation, including formulating a constitution. This committee volunteered their services and worked diligently towards submitting the findings of their investigations to puppeteers around Australia.

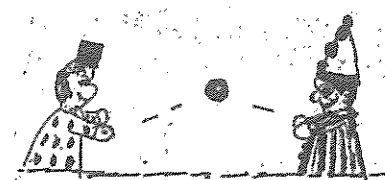
As many will be aware, there are a number of problems to solve before forming an organisation with such geographically and idealistically diverse members. Such decisions as -

- who should be eligible to join?
- amount of joining and annual fees?
- organisational structure - Presidents, treasurers etc.?
- voting procedure?
- where should the organisation be centred?
- should that centre rotate around Australia?
- should NZ puppeteers be invited to join?
- should it be registered as an association, a corporation, co-operative or company?

A rather lengthy document detailing these and other questions was compiled and distributed nationally. The response was minimal. The interim committee was not given power to make and implement decisions, only to report and make recommendations. It was considered by the committee that such a small response indicated a lack of interest in the idea of the Puppetry Institute of Australia (which incidentally was only a working title.) Without support they could go no further.

Perhaps this matter can be tabled at the 1988 Puppet Festival and resolved.

Sue Wallace



Puppets and Gargoyles

Teaching Puppetry at the University of Sydney

1987 has marked a significant step forward in the study of puppetry in the Department of Teaching and Curriculum studies at the University of Sydney. In the past the course has been an elective component of the degree, but this year Puppetry has been scheduled as a core subject, compulsory for all 2nd year students. Contact hours have been increased to 14 from the previous 10.

As an assistant lecturer, I have devised a course that exposes the students to the use of puppets as tools to learning rather than emphasising the art of the theatre. In the 14 hours available, I try to give an overview of international puppetry - particularly Australian - demonstrate many different sorts of puppets suitable for professional use in classrooms and their simplified forms for construction in children's workshops. Manipulation and the staging of amateur puppet plays is also covered.

Fairly traditional in its approach to children's puppetry, the course concentrates on glove puppets as the basic tool. The major 'in class' construction is the classic paper mache head and cloth body, although simple sock puppets, shadow puppets and rod puppets are also made.

Time is of the essence and manipulation is taught first miming action with neutral character glove puppets, then voices are added in the sock puppet workshop. Improvisation and blocking of action are covered in group performances of given fairy tales with the glove neutral characters. This happens over a number of weeks and takes the form of individual and group presentations - much of the simple construction being done as home assignments.

Along the way, some advice is given about practical management of art materials, integration of puppetry across a whole syllabus of study and the inevitable tips on crowd control and safety when all this theory hits a crowd of children in a small classroom. Once 'on the road' so to speak, it's a graduation from the school of hard knocks.

I use the 'Edith Murray - Puppeteer' film as my introduction and as the producer of the film, I can truly say - "this one's made for you!". Edith Murray is an inspiration to a group of student teachers and she is a most convincing authority on the power of puppetry in the classroom. I show a lot of slides from my collection and hope, next year, to include "A Puppet Pudding" and "Rubbish" in the audio-visual components.

An excursion to whatever the M.T.A. is staging is also squeezed into the 14 hours as most of the students have never seen a live puppet show. Experiencing the atmosphere in the theatre with a school holiday audience regardless of the production showing is certainly seeing theatre in education at the front line.

So it is to be hoped that the 14 hours are well spent. At least the course will ensure that in a few years time we will continue to see classrooms full of puppets, theatres full of children and teachers manipulating learning, as the practise of puppetry continues.

Christine Woodcock.



Australian Film, Television and Radio School Puppetry Workshop - a report

Course Director: Ross Browning

Ross writes; "Please find information as promised about the April TV Puppet Workshop offered to our industry as a Pilot Workshop. In my initial proposal for the course, I created the need and then proceeded to demonstrate to the A.F.T.R.S. that we indeed wanted training in the Television arena. So they responded. The A.F.T.R.S. will create similar short courses in other states where there is a clear industry need - ie 15 - 20 committed Puppetry people willing to pay for the privilege."

The preamble for the course read as follows:

"The aim of the course is to bring together the existing pool of experienced Directors, Puppeteers, Camera Operators of major Television and Film programs completed recently, to share their insights and develop new directions and possibilities for communicating with puppets.

Lectures will be given by leading Directors, Puppeteers and Scriptwriters analysing videos past and present, participation in discussions with particular attention to studio workshopping, culminating in the group producing several short puppet sketches.

The course will cover the following:

Scripting for Puppets: What works? What doesn't? Some of the ways we could improve visual literacy with dialogue or lack of dialogue.

Visual Literacy: What are current research trends telling us? What elements do we need to be aware of? How will this affect our approach?

Design

Puppeteers Needs: Space, Ergonomics, Headsets/Microphones /Monitors.

Directors Needs: Pre-production, Production, Puppetry language-styles and techniques. Continuity of characterisation.

Director/Puppeteer/1st assistant: Roles and Relationships.

Framing for Puppets and Actors with 1, 2 and 3 Cameras : Misconceptions/Depth of Field/Allusion.

Monitors: Positioning, Back-up and support for Puppeteer.

On-Set Communication

Contracts and Copyright: Arts Law and how to create your own contract.

Ross is very keen to see something similar happen in 1988 and says that if you'd like to know more, please don't hesitate to contact him.

Ross has also initiated the production of a 23 minute training film in TV Puppet Techniques - it is about the making of one episode of "Blinky Bill". Contact him for details: (02) 455 867

NSW Puppeteers Sub-committee of Actors Equity

- a selective synopsis of the topics covered in the past year.

A principal concern has been to nominate Puppeteers as a separate category within the Federal Actors Award - this is a long overdue amendment which we feel would give recognition to the special skills of the puppeteer and establish our status within the profession.

National Wage Case - 2nd tier increases: Following the general expression of feeling within the acting profession that the "minimum" award rate for Theatre is ludicrously low, Equity is currently negotiating for a substantial increase in the minimum rates of pay rather than for an across-the-board increase. In Film and Television, Equity is going for a combination of Supplementary Payments and Restructuring and Efficiency.

Superannuation: The scheme which was to have been implemented in June 1987 and was

delayed whilst a dispute with the Screen Producers Assn. was resolved, is now to come into operation from January 1st 1988. Advice on possible employee or self-employed contributions and on how existing schemes will be affected will be sent to all Equity members.

Contracts: Members of Equity must insist that they are employed under a Standard Contract in all areas of work (with particular reference to Commercials and In - House Training Films) Members should find out from Equity what the correct provisions are if they are offered such work, otherwise your residual and roll-over payments are at risk and you may not even receive the proper rate for the work.

Non-Members: The NSW Puppeteers sub-committee called on the Federal Theatre Organiser to make concerted efforts to make non-member professional Puppeteers join the union and to charge at least the minimum Award

Hey Max, Howabout telling everyone about our new Magic in '88.



Well yes Watkins, it starts at the M.T.A. on Jan. 23rd.



Ahhh! Cut the crap you two and put me down, I'm sick of sittin up here.



Puppets made by Chris Barker & Michael FitzGerald.

rates for Speciality Artistes, and to direct members, in line with Union rules, not to:

1. Refer work to non-member performers.
2. Give technical or business assistance to non-member performers.
3. Work with, appear on the same Bill or Advertising or Promotion with non-member performers.

A letter has been sent to Shire Councils reminding them of the legal obligation to offer at least the minimum Award rate for Speciality Artistes, which should help reduce undercutting.

Health and Safety: John Lewis of the NSW sub-committee has compiled a very comprehensive Report with recommendations on Health and Safety for Puppeteers. There are numerous points of concern raised in the report, which covers both performers and puppetmakers - from RSI and back injuries (Heavy, over-sized puppets? Over-long working hours?) to safe design of puppet workshops (Heat versus Solvents). Equity will now work in conjunction with the ATAFA and using John's report and other Occupational Health and Safety material, formulate a Health and Safety Code for Puppeteers. This Code will be made available to all puppeteers and employers of puppeteers.

Import Application: We were specifically asked our advice over the proposal to bring Eric Bass from the USA to perform at the Perth Puppet Festival - and were able to confirm that he is indeed a puppeteer of International Distinction and Merit, and warmly supported the application from Peter Wilson on behalf of the Fremantle Arts Foundation.

Jonathan Mill, Federal Theatre Organiser has been the Equity representative on the

sub-committee this year, and he is clearly keen to further the interests of puppeteers. His knowledge of the structures that exist to enhance our conditions as performers has been of great value. Despite problems of attendance due to touring etc., it is unanimously felt that the sub-committee is very important to Puppeteers and should continue - and hopefully expand its membership. Any puppeteer who is a member of Equity and who is or has been regularly employed is welcome to come along to the next meeting to observe (and participate!) and perhaps to join the committee. Anyone thinking of starting a sub-committee in another state? We find the NSW meetings a very useful forum for airing concerns and ideas.

Meetings are bi-monthly and the next will be held at the office of Actors Equity, 32, Orwell St. Potts Point 2011 on Monday 7th December at 6.00pm. (side entrance)

Compiled from minutes of meetings by Susan Lintern Coward.

Views and Reviews

"The Professor"

A solo performance by Joe Gladwin.

"The Professor" - a play for one actor and a multitude of puppets - is a dark, bawdy piece of Grand Guignol, revealing moments from the life and psyche of Harold Pike, old time "Punch and Judy" man and alcoholic fantasist, as he journeys across a bizarre Australian landscape of improbable memories, lost hopes and future imaginings.

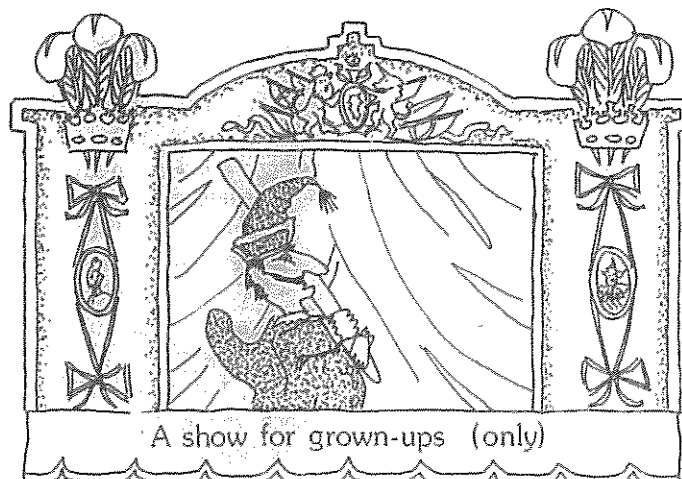
"The Professor", a new play by David Allen, performed by Joe Gladwin and directed by Stuart Chalmers.

A SHOW FOR GROWN-UPS ONLY!

This show has been funded by the Theatre Board of the Australia Council.

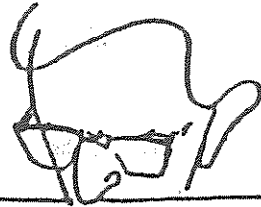
MEET HAROLD PIKE

A Punch and Judy man adrift in the twentieth century



PUPILLA PUPPET THEATRE

WELS, AUSTRIA



Review

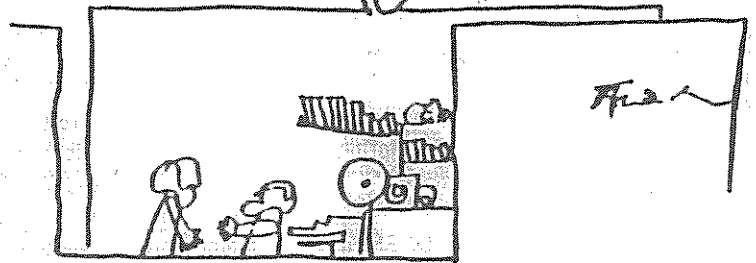
Prof. Gustav Dubelowski-Gellhorn
at the Marionette Theatre of
Australia, Sydney: Oct 12,13,14
1987.

The Marionette Theatre was fortunate to host 3 remarkable performances by Professor Gustav Dubelowski-Gellhorn with his delightfully amusing Faust play.

The Guinness Book of Records quotes him as having "The Smallest Standing Puppets on the Smallest Stage in the World". Despite this truth, the Professor has performed to over 40,000 people during the last 16 years - not counting several million Chinese who watched a television broadcast from Quanzhou last year! Since the audience must be limited to 50 people, judge for yourself the number of times Professor Gellhorn has manipulated these curious puppets.

Professor Gellhorn has earned his title from the Austrian Government who bestowed it in recognition for his research on the various Faust Plays - so I shall restrict this review to the puppetry, not the merits of the text!

I have to admit a prejudice. I have always loved the "Miniature" Theatre and as an English child with a passion for all things theatrical, I had my own "Penny Plain Twopence Coloured" from Pollocks. I pored over library editions of Whanslaw's Model theatre series and I saw Clifford Heap's Miniature Theatre on several occasions. Heap's theatre was slightly larger and all backstage work concealed, though they both share a charming love of detail.



**GUINNESS BOOK OF RECORDS.
THE SMALLEST FAUST THEATRE
PRODUCTION IN THE WORLD.**

Prof. Gellhorn's casual unhurried style didn't detract from the quick-silver operation of his figures. In particular his scene changes, performed in full view were fascinating; the deft twist to turn on a minute light bulb in a chandelier, the adjustment of a prop pen were executed with the unhurried pace of a man who know his show backwards.

The figures, barely five inches high, were microscopically dressed with buttons, braids, swords and even garters of gold thread. The demons were amusingly carved and Brueghel-like. A crow (messenger of Pluto) swooped down and siezed Faustus' Blood Pact in its claws. Pages literally flew out of a miniature book and Mephistopheles made a final exit amidst Real Flames!

The performance lasted about 50 minutes and apparently was the complete text of an old puppet play by Geisselbrecht - the author who was Goethe's inspiration.

Scene 1. Faustus' Study, introduced an amusing sub-plot between Wagner the servant and the comic Kasper, Austria's equivalent to Mr Punch who mistakes the scientist's workshop for a pub. Faustus, desperate to find "The Stone of

Wisdom" goes into "ze Block Forest" to conjour dark forces. For a curious reason best known to Prof. Gellhorn, we find ourselves at an 18th century crossroads, complete with signpost. It reminded me of The Moonlit Heaths of "The High Toby", "Oliver Twist", "The Miller and his Men" and other scenic favourites of the Toy Theatre.

As with all good showmen, effects were well-placed. Just as restlessness began we were treated to forks of lightning cleverly concealed in the backcloth and so on: Helen of Troy unveiled herself and revealed all; fires flickered in grates and Faust certainly entered Hell spectacularly.

My only reservation is Gellhorn's use of a tape-recorder instead of speaking direct. The Professor had done an excellent job with the different character voices and used simple effects such as a kazoo for the Monsters' exit. Most of the period music came from commercial recordings. I understand that the tape was recorded in stereo and required different equipment than that provided to be fully appreciated. Despite this, the play spoken live would have been the icing on the cake.

At the end of his show, Prof. Gellhorn showed us how his intricate puppets worked, by levers and fine threads from underneath, not above. His generosity in this respect shows him the fine artist he is. I shall remember this strange performance for many years and as a final note would like to say Thank-you to Axel Axelrad, whose idea it was to tour Pupilla Puppet

The practice of Miniature Theatre performance is rarely seen in the busy film and television world of the eighties. It was great to share the performance with a spellbound audience, without the remorseless screams of 6 month-old babies so often present at puppet shows, and as a puppeteer, to be reminded one does not need huge, cumbersome puppets and hefty scenery to delight your public.

Joe Gladwin.



Heather Monk, Noriko Nishimoto, Bob Parsons, Brianne Cuthbert in "Paper Plays" Part II. Oukiler & Chisalen l.to r. Photo by Terrapin Puppet Theatre.

Noticeboard

Changes of Address:

Richard + Margaret Bradshaw,
19 Balfour Road, Kensington, NSW
2033. Tel: 02 663 1021

Rob Matson+Susan Lintern Coward,
c/o Ozbods, 24 Haughton St., Red
Hill, Brisbane 4059 Q'land.
also c/o 22 McArthur Road, East
Ivanhoe, 3079 Victoria.

Maeve Vella will be moving to
Melbourne in December when she
should be contacted c/o Handspan
until further notice.

Change of Phone Number only:
Sydney Puppet Theatre
02 699 7475



Puppet Books

Ray da Silva's latest comprehensive catalogue of over 220 New and Secondhand Puppet Books is now available - He is happy to try to find books or magazines as well, or to sell or exchange on your behalf. Contact him at The Limes, Norwich Road, Marsham, Norwich NR10 5PS. U.K.

Films

Two films of particular interest to Puppeteers are currently showing around and about:

'Into the Labyrinth' by Jim Henson -love it or hate it, at least it has more humour than Dark Crystal and is even more 'state of the art'.

'The Magic Toyshop' based on the book by Angela Carter (of gothic imagination) features a strange puppeteer and his collection ... recommended by Joe Gladwin

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Perth "OZ PUPPET" Festival Masterclasses:

"Applications are invited for experienced professional puppeteers, writers, directors and designers of puppet theatre to participate in residential masterclasses between March 25 and April 1 1988.

Fee : \$400.00 per person. All accommodation, meals and class costs are included.

Tutors:

PHILIPPE GENTY - Compagnie Philippe Genty, France.
ERIC BASS - Puppeteer, Director, Writer, USA.
JOSEPH KROFTA - Director, Drak Theatre, Czechoslovakia.

(this replaces Margareta Niculescu's masterclass)

There is also to be a masterclass in Puppetry in Film and Television - Tutor to be confirmed.

Each tutor will conduct a 7-day class for a maximum of 15 artists, focussing on a single scenario as a basis for the development of a puppet theatre work-in-progress. The emphasis is on exposing each student to the developmental process of a leading puppet theatre director.

If you would like an application form, please contact Peter Wilson, Festival Director, PO Box 999, Fremantle 6160.

UNIMA JAPAN FESTIVAL - WORKSHOPS.

"The Unima Committee for Vocational Training and the organising committee of the 1988 World Festival of Puppetry in Japan are offering three workshops around Japanese masters, from 26 - 30 July 1988. Their aim will be to initiate to and acquaint with the art of Kuruma Ningyo, Bunraku Osaka and Bunraku Otome.

There will also be two workshops around western masters:

- meeting with JIM HENSON and his characters
- workshop led by ALBRECHT ROSER, founder of the "Gustav und sein Ensemble" of Stuttgart."

For further information, apply to: Committee for the Organisation of the 15th UNIMA congress and the UNIMA JAPAN Festival, - official in charge of courses and workshops: 2-12-3 Yoyogi, Shibuya Ku, Tokyo 151 Japan.

INSTITUTE INTERNATIONAL DE LA MARIONETTE - Training Courses

July 4 - July 22 1988: PLAYWRITING AND STAGING

This course is for writers wishing to enter the realm of the puppet, to theatre practitioners (directors, actors, musicians) and to those working in puppet companies presently searching for answers to the problems of going from a literary language to a theatre one. The course includes a theoretical approach (the history and semiotics of the classical puppet theatre repertory) but it is intended primarily as a practical workshop for creative writing leading to performance.

With: HENRYK JURKOWSKI, JOSEPH KROFTA and GERARD LEPINOIS

Cost of participation : 6,000 Ffrs.

Aug. 16. - Sep. 10 : TADEUSZ KANTOR WORKSHOP - HOUSEHOLD OBJECTS CRICOTAGE WITH PUPPETS, SCULPTURES, OBJECTS AND MACHINERY.

"The origins of 'cricotage' are to be found in the Cricot 2 Theater experiments and the acting method invented and practised by that theater. It constitutes an autonomous language, untranslatable into narrative verbal language".

"I have always been interested in the Object. I realized that the object alone cannot be grasped and is inaccessible. Reproduced to form a naturalist-type image, it becomes a more or less naive fetish. The color which strives to touch it immediately becomes entangled in an enthralling adventure of light, material and fancies. And the object continues to exist, distant and foreign. Is there no way to 'fashion' it differently?" - Tadeusz Kantor. (Whose "Dead Class" some of you may have seen at the Adelaide Festival)

Cost 8,000 Ffrs.

Sep. 11 - Oct. 4 : AFRICAN PUPPET EUROPEAN PUPPET

"Invested with magic powers, present in the secret of initiation rites, the African puppet exercises a disquieting fascination on the western world which is little familiar with this phenomenon: hence our fascination is mingled with curiosity and numerous questions. In turn, the African puppet provokes an ever greater desire to discover the European puppet, in the diversity of its languages and techniques.

It is our keenest wish to make these two worlds meet .. to encourage the sharing of theatrical experience and to enrich our reciprocal cultural acquisitions.

European Puppet - Practical work on the techniques of creation and animation of characters. Acting, Voice, Movement, Staging, Space.

African Puppet - Demonstration of traditional puppetry performance. Acting with masks. Specific initiation to African theatre practice, involving movement, music, voice, handling.

With: MARGARETA NICULESCU and a team of African and European puppeteers, creators and researchers.

Cost: 6,000 Ffrs.

For further details of enrollment and grants available, please contact the Institute at 7, Place Winston Churchill, 08000, Charleville Mezieres, France.

NIGEL TRIFFITT'S

THE FALL OF

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DRAGONS, MADNESS, TORTURE,

SHAME AND TEARS



Nigel Triffitt's latest work, "The Fall of Singapore" premiered at the Spoleto Festival in Melbourne in September. Melbourne's theatre critics named it the hit of the Spoleto Festival, and hopefully, it will soon be taken up for further seasons.

Nigel Triffitt devised, designed and directed the show with Philip Lethlean as Production Manager and Lighting Designer. There were seven performers - Peter James Wilson, Winston Appleyard, Anderw Hansen, Ian Cuming, Bob Burton, Darryl Pellezer and Katie Bowman. Sets, puppets and props were made in Handspan Theatre's workshop.

The venue was the Melbourne Town Hall. Too big for the stage, "Singapore" was set lengthways against one wall of the auditorium.

The publicity flyer promised "Dragons, Madness, Torture, Shame and Tears" and that's exactly what the show delivered. After beginning with images evoking the jungle, the culture of the island and the advent of the British colonists, the show settled into its main subject, the experience of Australian prisoners in Changi concentration camp during World War II.

Voice-overs punctuated the music soundtrack - the voices of men and women recounting their memories of the Japanese invasion. There was much in the staging that was a continuation of techniques used in "Mamma's Little Horror Show" and "Secrets", but "Singapore" added a much stronger human element. As well as manipulating puppets and moving complicated constructions, the performers also featured as people and the show's greatest strength, for me, was its powerful evocation of human suffering. Where "Mommies" was spectacular, but left me baffled, and "Secrets" was spectacular but left me cold, in Singapore, Triffitt has finally hit me where it counts. In the heart. And yes, it's spectacular too.

Maeve Vella



PUPPETS IN EDUCATION

I first began using puppets 9 years ago in an infant classroom. Ernie, my very first puppet had such an endearing personality that I found myself tucking him into our suitcase when we left for three years in Singapore. Some weeks later he found himself in a small dingy dark room later called "The Reading Clinic" in the N.Z. Force School in Sembawang. The room gradually changed with a good coat of paint, large batik cushions, colourful curtains and large posters. Ernie had pride of place near the tropical fish tank and his grin seemed to widen day by day, as he made more friends. With relentless honesty army children aged from 6 - 12 years told him all about themselves, their feelings and their reading problems.

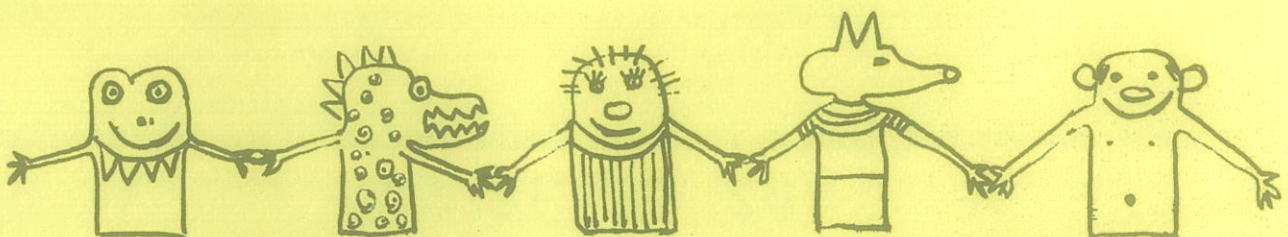
The children were given diagnostic reading tests, grouped and started on special programmes designed to tackle their reading problems. I needn't have worried about trying to make the programme exciting, Ernie did all that and more. Ernie usually sat on my knee, listening to stories, but gradually made interjections and predictions about what might happen. He helped by asking questions about the picture or what may happen. He even had a guess at some words but couldn't have done so without the child's help. His next task was to read to the children from either enlarged text or a blown up book. He had the basics but was his memory shocking! He would have a guess at a word but forget to use sense or initial consonants. He left himself wide open to encouragement. Invariably there were gales of laughter at his feeble attempts. The children piped in to help him in his predicaments and within a short time they were using all the important skills of unlocking print without feeling threatened.

It wasn't long before I added another and another puppet to my collection their activities were many and varied. From one idea grew another and I soon began to realise their potential was limitless. The children would come into the clinic, take a puppet from the line up and start to read. They competed for turns and when the magic moment came they never made a mistake, the puppet did! The children immediately became supportive and encouraging, verbalising techniques, which became internalised as they practised.

As the puppets submitted themselves, the inarticulate began to express themselves. All children made phenomenal strides in their reading. The puppets were personal friends, like pets they demanded nothing.

Now Kermit, Ernie and all their friends are used in an ordinary classroom and play similar roles. Their style and movement always reflects the thruth as their 'player' sees it. Their feelings are accepted, acknowledged and enlarged upon. The player gains not only greater knowledge of his or herself and others, but academic success as well.

Leigh Cook,
Assistant Principal,
Pukerua Bay School,
New Zealand.



The Marionette Theatre of Australia

K·A·K·A·D·U

A NEW PRODUCTION FOR 1988

from May 31 to June 24



at

THE ROCKS THEATRE

106 George Street, The Rocks , Sydney.

The Marionette Theatre of Australia's premiere season of KAKADU is assisted by
The Aboriginal Arts Board of The Australia Council, The Federal Government's arts funding and
advisory body.

Book now by telephoning The Marionette Theatre of Australia on
(02) 27. 3274
during school hours