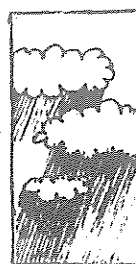


MANIPULATION



WINTER
1991



EDITORIAL	1
CREDITS	1
LIFT OFF	2
ROYAL COMMISSION	4
LETTERS	6
ARTICLES	
Bobby's Big Adventure	7
On The Road With A Flea	
Circus	7
Urgy Who?	8
COMPANY REPORTS	
Handspan	10
Polyglot	11
Sydney Puppet Theatre	11
Terrapin	12
Q-TOP	13
Paperbag	13
Leslie Trawbridge	13
Out Of The Box	14
Schools Performance	
Tours	15
Spare Parts	16
REVIEWS	
Roald Dahl's Shorts	17
The Overcoat	17
The Reading Boy	18
Not the Full Squid	19
Once a Jolly Swagman	20
MORE ARTICLES	
Alice Springs	21
A Cry For Help	22
Lithuania	24
How to Visit a Chinese	
Puppet Theatre	25
CLASSIFIEDS	26

Manipulation Winter 1991
Editing, Layout, Design:
Sean Masterson, Peter
Jagger, Leonie Higgins.

Contributors:
Many thanks to all those
that contributed.
By-lines are included.

Published by:
Spare Parts Theatre
P.O. Box 897
Fremantle WA 6061

Subscription Donation to:
"Manipulation"
c/- 108 Gertrude St
Fitzroy VIC 2016

\$10 for two editions per
year.

Advertising rates:
\$40 per full page
\$20 per half page

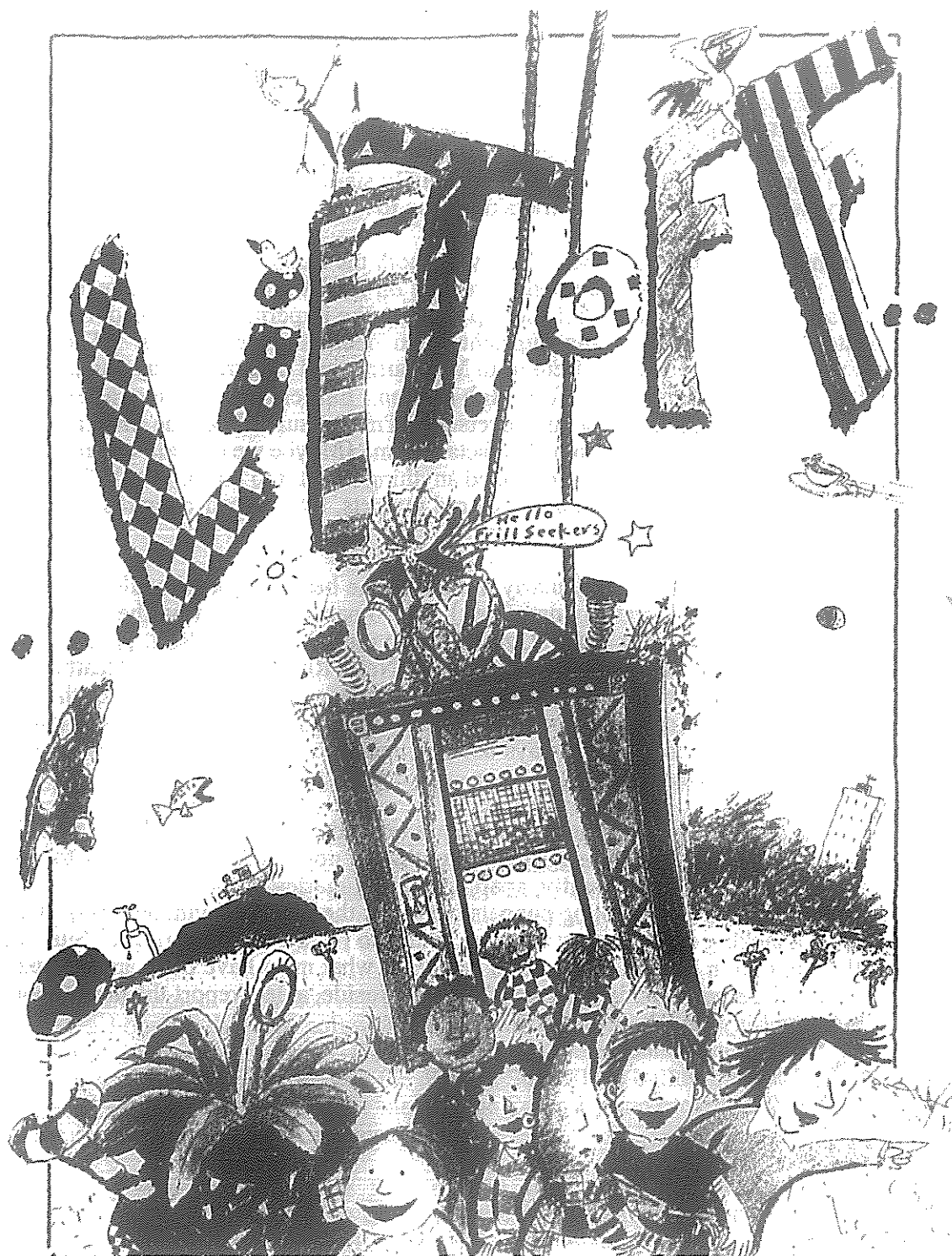
Next Edition: Summer '92

Photo's or bromides and
typed copy should be sent
to:

ISSN 0752 - 3532

EDITORIAL

Well, there you go. At last it's finished. So am I.



LIFTING THE LID ON LIFT OFF

"So, clearly my friends, this is no ordinary TV series. It's designed in fact to help lay the foundations for a new learning culture in Australia, and that is not, I believe, too ambitious a statement to make about it. And its certainly precisely the sort of program that this country needs."

I think Bob Hawke was giving the big thumbs up when he made that statement, announcing the up and coming new series 'LIFT OFF'. If you haven't heard about it, you really have been in the puppetry wilderness for the last year. What he was talking about was the 10.4 million dollar Children's Television Foundation's baby, which features a strong puppetry content, due to hit our screens on the ABC in May.

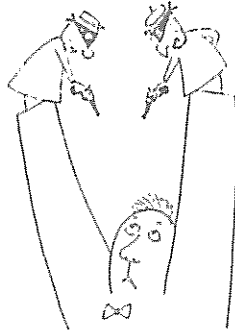
LIFT OFF is currently in production in Melbourne, but includes puppeteers, designers, directors, makers and writers from all over Australia (sorry, and actors too - but that is not our field so I won't go on about them). The shoot actually started in August and will go through until February, with post production work taking it up to its premier.

Peter J. Wilson has been directing the puppetry for both the studio and location shots that will feature in the series. The studio component centres on the 'Wakadoo Cafe', directed by Paul Nicola, the set of which was built six foot up (pardon the imperial - 'old school'), so as to accommodate the performers standing upright when operating the puppets. The puppets themselves were designed by Terry Denton in Melbourne, and constructed by Australian Ron Mueck in London, with the assistance from Rob Matsen. Earlier on there were a few rumbles of discontent about the puppets being built overseas. I'm not sure about the pro's and con's - but what the hell, I'm only here to report the facts ma'am. (Maybe we can talk about it the next issue, but this one's late and no one's mentioned anything about it to me anyway). The puppets themselves vary between one person operated rod puppets, two person operated rod puppets and combined rod/ glove technique.

I've got to mention the players, particularly in light of the heavy work schedule they're under (ten hour days and the occasional six day week). In no particular order on the front line are; Will Conyers, Phillip Millar, Liz Rule, Liza Marie Syron, Peter J. Wilson, Hugh Simpson. John Rodgers, David Collins, Janet Dagliesh, Roy McNeill, Rod Primrose and Heather Monk. The scripts were developed by Bob Ellis and Tony Watts. More power to whoever the powers that be in allowing the performers to be recorded as their own character's voices (I know it's only supposed to be the facts, but its always been a bugbear of mine; the insidious overdub or the problematic pre-recorded. Sorry).

Janet Holmes a Court, one of the main investors, has opened up the grounds to her mansion in Melbourne for the production. The location shooting is now underway and so to are the problems that accompany it. Apparently, apart from the vagaries of the city's weather and the awkward positions demanded shooting puppets outdoors, the feathered inhabitants of the local pond have been attacking cast and crew with absolutely no regard for the artform. Summing it all up was the quote from David Collins, after suffering what must have been an arduous days battle with rain and geese: "bloody hard work". All that aside, at last report the production was on schedule for its May launch. Countdown at T minus

SEAN MASTERSON



KATAN FIBOR KARIKATURAI

THE STORY OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION

You have all heard about it. Spare Parts Puppet Theatre suddenly became a household word.

In 1987, Spare Parts Theatre received a substantial donation through the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust from an anonymous donor. It was understood by the Board of Directors of Spare Parts Theatre, at that time, that this support came from a Fremantle business man who had been encouraged to contribute to the arts by the then Minister for the Arts, Mr. David Parker. The amount of the donation was \$125,000.

The State Government of Western Australia, through the Department for the Arts, had developed a housing the arts policy. As part of this policy, State Government owned buildings, no longer required for Government use, were name available to various arts organisations. One such building was the disused State Ships building in Fremantle leased to Spare Parts Theatre to develop a home base for the Company and provide for a childrens theatre venue for the State of Western Australia.

In order to restore and renovate the building into workshops, theatre, rehearsal and administration centres, the State Government gave \$160,000, the private sponsor \$125,000. With this amount of funding, work commence on the first stage of the renovation - the provision of a workshop and theatre space.

The funds were not sufficient to complete the building renovations and the Company is still seeking sponsorship to provide for completion of disabled access, public facilities and air-conditioning. The building is owned by the Stage Government, not Spare Parts Theatre and therefore belongs to the people of Western Australia.

In early 1991, media reports of the first days hearing of the WA Royal Commission quoted Brian Martin QC, Legal Council assisting the Royal Commission as saying "a cash payment of \$250,000 was received by Spare Parts Theatre from the Western Continental Company".

The media ran with this story, blowing it out of all proportion and it was not until several weeks later that representation of Spare Parts Theatre were called upon to give evidence to the Royal Commission, thereby giving the opportunity for the truth to be reported. Unlike a court of law where one is presumed innocent until found guilty, a Royal Commission makes an accusation that may take weeks before the real evidence can be given. Hence the staff of Spare Parts Theatre were harassed by the media until the Company had the opportunity to give evidence.

All this took the Company by surprise and it was not until the first day of sitting of the Royal Commission that Spare Parts Theatre had any indication that their anonymous donation of four years earlier was to be the subject of part of the Royal Commission enquiry.

David Parker, the then Minister for the Arts, had made a public commitment to encourage more corporate support for the arts and worked tirelessly to promote this for a range of arts activities. Who was to know that four years later the subject of corporate support to one arts organisation was to be met with such venom from the national press.

Even the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust got into the act by releasing a press statement saying "that is was unusual for such a small arts organisation to receive such a large amount of money". (They certainly did not do this when the Marionette Theatre received its 'substantial' donation from Meadow Lea towards the refurbishing of it s building some years earlier.



WHAT STATUS?

Three cheers to Peter Oldham for raising an issue which should be dear to the hearts of all puppeteers - the status (or lack thereof) of puppetry in Australia. And although I agree with Peter about the need for proper training of puppeteers, etc., I can't help wonder how much of our lowly standing is self-imposed.

In the last issue of Manipulation (ten thousand blessings on its editors - thanks Sue and Steve), I noticed that several reviews, mostly lifted from other publications, failed to mention any of the performers by name. This may simply be lack of manners on the part of the reviewer, but I know from experience how few Companies bother to give puppeteers detailed credits or billing. Usually we're just an alphabetical list of players, rather than being credited for what we played - a situation I suspect most actors would never tolerate.

And please, if companies do want to send a glowing review of their work for reprinting in this erstwhile periodical, have the courtesy to list for us all the people involved - writer, director, designer, builder, composer, and yes, even the puppeteers.

Also in the last edition of Manipulation was more evidence of a worrying trend amongst puppet companies - the dreaded name change. I'm overjoyed for Skylark that they have new premises and continuing success, but no, I can't bring myself to say "congratulations on dropping the word 'puppet' from your name." There are very few companies left in Australia that are happy to be known as puppet theatres, and I wonder why this is. Is it a desire to "grow out of" puppetry, to be seen as a "real theatre company"? Or is it simply a way of avoiding admitting we do anything so embarrassing as puppetry?

Perhaps I'm reading too much into all this. But I do think it's time we stopped apologising for what we do. If we don't think puppetry is an artform worth taking seriously, then why on earth should anybody else?

Janet Dalglish

Dear Folks,

Please accept our sincere thanks for all the tributes to Ross. It surely has been the roughest time of my life. Special thanks to Tina Matthews, I don't think I have met Steve Coupe - remember where I live and still have the Puppet Centre with Ross's creations up the the age of 17 years. So thanks Steve, too.

Regards,

Rose

WHAT'S IN A NAME

At a Board meeting in mid 1989, a decision was made by the then Board of Directors of Spare Parts Theatre to drop the word "Puppet" from the name of the Company. At a recent planning day by staff members of the Company - the decision was debated at length, the result being a memo from staff to the Board to reconsider their decision and to re-introduce the word "Puppet" back into the title of the Company.

Whilst Spare Parts has become the abbreviated title of the Company used by practitioners, the puppetry and theatre network, there is nothing that makes the Company specific to any artform for the general public. After all, most dance companies have the word dance in their title as drama theatres have the word theatre.

The puppet is after all the driving force behind the theatre we create, and it is that which separates us from the drama, dance and music theatres.

We await the decision of the Board.

Peter Wilson
Artistic Director

BOBBY'S BIG ADVENTURE

Puppeteer Bob Parsons has been accepted in an intensive two year course in advanced manipulation techniques in the Alternative Forms and Puppet Theatre Dept of the Prague Performing Arts Academy. Bob's happy about it (dropping cartwheels at any time is a dead giveaway). The Australia Council are happy about it too - they're sponsoring the trip.

Seven years ago Bob had a good, secure job as a hairdresser in his hometown of Mudgee in NSW. OK. So what went wrong? Well, after a particularly devastating Friday night, which involved copious amounts of amber fluid (and any other liquids that are guaranteed to make you feel ill the next morning) he decided it was time to visit Tasmania - it was either that or 100 hour of community service (the judge was lenient). While walking along the docks one morning he was jumped from behind and, although he fought valiantly, succumbed to unconsciousness after a savage tweek to the left nipple. When he came to he was in a costume puppet in Terrapin's production SILENT MOVIE. For the next five years he endured the horrible party taunts of "...but what do you **really** do?!" Eventually someone left the front gate open and he escaped.

Fleeing to WA just for the hell of it, Bob realised that the world was round, and set about trying to get to the other side. While pondering the problem one morning, whilst walking along the Fremantle docks, he was jumped from behind and had his other nipple tweeked. For the second time in his life he awoke in chains. Now, that cruel mistress, fate, had turned him into a gypsy in the Spare Parts Theatre's production CARMEN. He warmed to the role quickly, gaining approval from his new masters, with his deft interpretation of flamenco dancing.



The Australia Council granted bail in April. Bob's out of here in July. School starts in October. So for the next two years the former puppet slave will become an Oz Bohemian in the court of Wenceslavs. He will be back in Australia in late '93, and looking for a job. If he is the person for your puppet theatre, invite him over to see your docks (he falls for it every time).

Good luck and safe travelling Bob!

ON THE ROAD WITH A FLEA CIRCUS

One thing that struck me during my last tour (if you don't count wallabies) was the fact that almost every small town had a branch library - usually only open one or two days a week. It seemed a shame for me to be "all the way out there" and not have something to offer the library.

Looking at my schedule I saw I would be in 27 different library regions during second and third term. So I set to work on ALLENBY'S FAMOUS FLEA CIRCUS I should say "re-work".

I wrote the original circus in 1985 and it was built by Richard Hart. I had given him a small tea chest and a vague notion about a Victorian-era flea circus using Dickensian language. He set to work and produced a beautiful outfit in just the right style. It has a see-saw that flicks back and forth as the acrobatic fleas perform on it. The "Tower of Death" shakes slightly as Fearless Francine, daredevil stunt-flea, climbs up to do her highdive. The dive produces a splash as she lands in the tank. The tightrope sages as Miss Boom Boom crosses it.

Originally it was a two-hander; the MC was a puppet and a second puppeteer operated the circus. We performed it mainly at adult parties, but there was a lot of language in the show - a shaggy dog story, a poem and a comic song, so I eventually took out the puppet and played the ringmaster's role myself to get more facial expression. I also took over operating the effects. A shorter version of the flea circus finishes off what is essentially a Storytelling Evening for country libraries.

I had lectured last year on "Puppets and Storytelling" for the State Library of New South Wales and so they were very enthusiastic about the project. The Library is providing a subsidy for the libraries in outlying areas that want to have the show or whose librarians could use the exposure to Storytelling.

The programme has two purposes. As well as bringing Storytelling to the communities, I am there to help the librarians develop their own storytelling skills and I always encourage them to include some puppetry. Judging by the bookings for it, there is a need for this sort of thing in the country.

Dennis Murphy

URGY WHO

Janet Dalglish

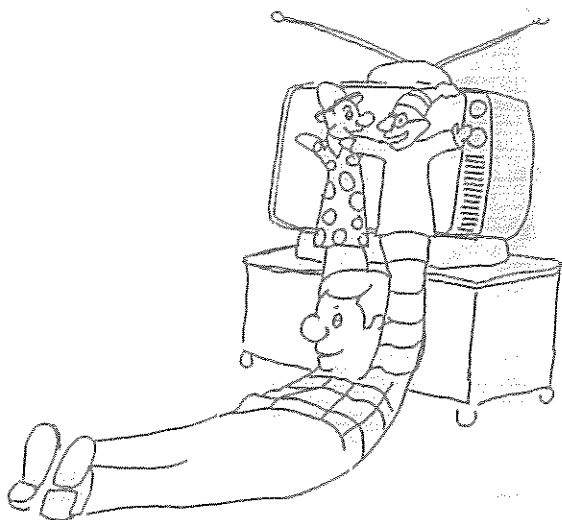
At the risk, gentle reader, of seeing your eyes glaze over as yet another buzz-word rears its ugly head, I would like to bring up the subject of ergonomics in puppetry.

Ergonomics is the study of designing equipment around the needs of its operator, rather than expecting the operator to adapt to the equipment, with the aim of increasing performance. It first came into being during World War II, when aviators were being lost by the dozen because the controls of their planes had become too complicated. Someone had the bright idea of putting the most frequently-used controls closest to the pilot, and bingo! - ergonomics was born.

These days, it's usually associated with office furniture and computer terminals, but I'd like to see puppetry exploring the concept. Before you throw your hands up in horror, dear reader, let me point out that applying efficiency theory to an artform in no way invalidates it. Since ours is a performance artform, surely anything which enhances the performance must be worth exploring. If a puppeteer has to use 50% of his/her energy simply to hold up the weight of a puppet, that only leaves 50% energy for performances; but if a way can be found of altering that puppet's controls **without sacrificing its movement**, so it only requires 25% of the puppeteer's energy to hold up - well, the mathematics I leave to you.

I saw an example of this put into practice a few years ago by Bev Campbell Jackson, when she was asked to build Mark II of her Blinky Bill puppet for the ABC-TV series. Mark I has been used for a season and was looking a little second-hand, so a duplicate was needed.

Beverley and Ross Browning, Blinky's alter-ego, spent many hours designing the control for the new puppet, so it would require far less effort to work. As a consequence, Ross had a puppet that was a joy to work - it was indistinguishable from the original in looks and movement, but could be operated for long periods without leaving Ross exhausted, an essential in day-long shoots.



And to those whose traditionalist souls shy away from considering anything so modern, consider some of the changes currently happening in the music industry. After decades of making instruments like clarinets in the same way, a huge increase in RSI-type injuries among professional musos (who work longer and harder hours than their predecessors) has encouraged instrument-makers to re-design instruments so they retain all the quality, but no longer injure the players.

Ultimately, I suppose this article is a plea from the heart (and the back, shoulders, arms, wrists...) of a humble puppeteer. I'm only too happy to have the puppet's controls between my toes, or in my teeth, if that really is the only way the puppet will work onstage; but please, all you clever and talented puppetmakers out there, take a leaf out of Bev's book and investigate the ways in which you can help protect puppeteer's bodies. Consider the best way to build controls that don't have to be gripped with white knuckles just to hold the weight; consider the balance of the puppet and the best possible placement and angle of controls so they don't pull the puppeteer off-centre; and consider whether the puppet you've built can really be worked for up to fifteen minutes at a time. And then we will love you forever - and probably not ever break you puppets again!



HANDSPAN

As you may have heard, Handspan has a new Artistic Director. Here are some excerpts from his address to the Company during Handspan's annual Dreaming held in April, 1991. (Reproduced from 'Fingerprint').

We're all getting older children (John Stephens, Somers '86)

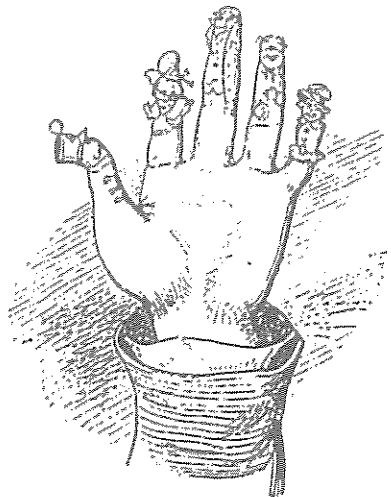
we're striving for the ideal
sacrifice, respect, returns, for my benefit,
and those around me
subsidised by glamour

A collective, collaborative partnership of full
time and associate artists, with an active
membership and occasional ensemble.

"Whatever Handspan has been and has
undergone to get here, it is today Handspan
as it stands at present, as it's funded at
present for whatever reasons, and will or
will not be funded for the future depending
upon what Handspan is to be tomorrow...."

"....It has become clear to me why I was
invited to lead the Company, and I use the
word carefully and will come back to it.
Handspan has clearly lacked an artistic
decision making process for a long time.
How does this manifest itself? All kinds of
ways. Boards, committees, manifestos,
company structure changes, sub-
committees, meetings, solo-works members
spending the majority of their year not
performing Handspan work, other
companies becoming popular through
Handspan member involvement in their
work, annual reports showing General
Manager this year, Executive Director next
year, Company Administrator and Co-
Artistic Directorship and so forth.
Meanwhile a potentially vibrant office suite,
workshop and rehearsal room in the centre
of the city gather dust and act as some form
of drop-in centre for lethargic performers
who are clearly out of sorts, are looking for
the FLASH but don't have the energy to
offer something of themselves to get it
going.

"The Handspan I have fallen for despite all
this is the Handspan in the memories of
people outside of Handspan who dedicate
their time to write theses which gather dust
in the filing cabinets of Gertrude Street, that
sit explosively on video tape or in hidden
exhibition photographs. It's the Handspan
that exists in the voices of certain individuals
who sit with me and whose eyes light up
when they reflect upon what has been and
what they'd like to be again. It's the
Handspan that draws people whose
professional lives are already over
complicated enough to trespass upon their
'private time' and who dedicate that precious
commodity for no pay, for no 'hit' out of
doing performance yet who still give
Handspan the virtue of having a splendid
Board"....."A Handspan peopled by
people, not a permanent company or
ensemble, nor a collective or co-operative
but in reality a special 'group' made up of
multi-faceted individuals locked together in a
mutual desire to create special work and if
possible (please) to earn a living along the
way."



POLYGLOT PUPPET THEATRE

DIGGER'S MATE by Helen Lunn

Polyglot will launch its new programme **DIGGER'S MATE** at the Melbourne zoo in July.

Sponsored by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation., **DIGGER'S MATE** is based on the true story of Myrtle, a baby wombat, found in the pouch of her dead mother and reared by Joyce Wilson in Foster, Victoria.

Myrtle's story is told as seen through the eyes of her jealous rival Digger, the chocolate brown Kelpie, Dragonfly, Gecko and Limbless the worm. When she is old enough to look after herself Myrtle returns to the bush.

DIGGER'S MATE reinforces issues of self esteem and self worth, initiates discussion on sibling jealousies and rivalry and targets concepts developed by the Ministry of Education's Environmental Education programme which stimulate an interest in the wildlife of the Australian bush.

The book **DIGGER'S MATE** by Helen Lunn is illustrated by Clifton Pugh. Clifton Pugh's work will compliment the production thus presenting the story in two different mediums and developing an interest in language and visual art.

Both the book and puppet play will be launched on July 28. **DIGGER'S MATE** will play in schools and pre schools until December.

SYDNEY PUPPET THEATRE

Here I am again, sitting at the computer typing information for **MANIPULATION**. It hardly seems any time at all since we were desk-top publishing the last issue.

The last half of 1991 is running at us like a bull with a red cape in its sights. We have two major projects to complete, a new creative development project to undertake, all merged with 12 weeks on the road with our current school touring show **ROALD DAHL'S SHORTS**.

We are shortly to embark on a three week tour of northern NSW. This is not a chore when we get to spend two weekends at Byron Bay. On our immediate return we fly to the Gold Coast with the choir The Cafe Of The Gate Of Salvation to participate in the National Jazz Festival. This is followed by the choir recording their first CD.

During the rest of winter we will be interned in the workshop creating 12 new marionettes for Australia's Wonderland. This year we will be sharing our workshop with designer Frances Joseph (**FORBIDDEN FRUIT**) as she works on creations for Dasha Blahova's new play for Adults **MARINA - THE MIGRATION OF AN ARTIST**. This work will premiere during Sydney's **CARNIVALE** in September 1991. Dasha has invited us to work with her on this project and we begin rehearsal in August.

Our creative development project is to work with a writer, designer (Frances Joseph), and director (Dasha Blahova) on a new theatre show for children. We thank the Australia Council for their financial assistance with this project.

During the latter part of the year, the bull (i hope) will slow down. We will be during Melbourne and Tasmania and the cape, I suspect, will turn to green as we take advantage of our spare weekends to bask in the beauty of Tasmania's wilderness.

Now to social matters. At Easter, thanks to Andrew Hansen, Steve and I spent a wonderful evening at dinner - eating, drinking, laughing playing and 'talking very very loudly' with some Melbourne puppeteer friends,

When you are visiting Sydney, puppeteers, please contact us. There is always time to spend over a meal with friends.

Congratulations to Michelle Spooner on her appointment as secretary to UNIMA and thank you to Annie Heitmann for her years of work.

Sue Wallace

TERRAPIN PUPPET THEATRE

Terrapin is proudly ten years young. On Tuesday, 16 April 1991, a cup of coffee and a piece of cake saw Terrapin Puppet Theatre celebrate a decade of puppetry.

The first production to get underway this year was an adaptation of our Black Theatre production of *IT'S NOT THE FOOL'S SQUID*. The opportunity to re-work the script for high school audiences has allowed us to tighten and refine many of the pieces as well as editing sections that we felt were not working as well as the others. The response from the schools has been very encouraging, with many complimenting the originality of the more abstract images and sequences.

On the road with *SQUID* is a new production for lower primary children by playwright, Verity Laughton. *BAD NEWS CLANCY* is about responsibility and tells of a girl infected with chicken pox looking after her Aunt Pearl's farm while Aunt Pearl is off fighting floods.

Verity Laughton worked with Terrapin for one week during the rehearsal period, re-writing and enlivening the script. The opportunity to have the playwright as a resource during the rehearsal process was an extremely exciting and enlightening experience. It gave everyone involved, insights into the script that could never be obtained from a reading.

Joining *SQUID* and *CLANCY* in second term is *GAMMER*, an original puppetry script by Heather Nimmo for lower secondary and upper primary students. Sydney choreographer Nigel Kellaway will spend one week with the performers devising all the mask and movement aspects of the production. Local Tasmanian composer Con Koukias has composed and recorded the score with musicians from the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. Heather Nimmo will join us for one week during the rehearsal process and make any adjustments to the script that seem evident.

GAMMER is set in the future and shows a sparse, harsh world of silences where people are numbers and society is ruled by the omnipresent "Speaker" and his off-siders "Listener" and "Watcher". It is an exciting script with strongly written characters and evocative images.

1991 has seen Terrapin continue the quest for new scripts for puppetry. Anne Brookman has written a script about the influence of humans in Antarctica, due to be completed for rehearsal in 1992. Darrelyn Gunsberg has been invited to work with the Company.

Terrapin has enjoyed a wide and intensive series of skills workshops over the last four months. A two week voice production workshop with Connie Kramer has injected a whole new vitality into the usual grunts of vocal warm-ups.

Rinske Ginsberg gave two one day workshops in balance, stretching and movement through weight distribution.

The whole company came together for the Jacques Templeraud workshop, an inspiring and memorable week for everyone.

Prior to the rehearsal of *GAMMER* Nigel Kellaway will hold a two week movement/dance workshop.

We are now well into a busy and productive tenth year, which like the preceding years reflects the enormous amount of commitment and energy that has sustained Terrapin. This is an achievement to be celebrated by everyone involved in building this Company to its current standing

Philip Mitchell

QUEENSLAND THEATRE OF PUPPETRY

News from Q-TOP

Q'TOP has been in disarray this year - the cause of our disruption was THE INDY RACE held at the end of March. The racing track enveloped our Park - part of which was taken over for Pit Stops, Judges Boxes, Observation and spectator stands. Worst of all, our Theatre was used as a First Aid/Hospital. Although the Races took place on only three days, the preparations prior to the race were enormous and the demolition afterwards precluded any activity by us in the Theatre. It is only during this last month (mid-April on) that we have commenced rehearsing for June school holidays. We learn with some dismay that the Indy Race will be held each year for five years!

We've had our ups and downs - down was the Kay Littler our puppet maker fell and broke her femur, but she's walking about again with the aid of a stick and someone's arm. Kay uses her enforced rest teaching and making puppets. Because she had helped David Poulson with many of his puppets, David put on a Puppet show for Q'TOP's Christmas party which we all enjoyed (except Kay who was in hospital).

We rehearse Tuesday and Thursday morning from 10am - 11.30am in the Puppet Theatre/Bandshell in Macintosh Is. Park, Southport and would always be happy to have visitors.

DANGER!
QUICKSAND



PAPERBAG THEATRE COMPANY

We have enjoyed the article written by Peter Oldham (about lost professionalism in puppetry). Actually, not a small number of schools has asked this year about the expertise or lack of it. Seems that too many freshly made artists have invaded schools recently. They cannot control audiences or keep the children's attention with half-baked products.

We are still doing what we were trained to do. This year we offer JONAH AND THE WHALE and HELEN OF TROY and we are working on 1992 shows (IRISH STORIES and BRONTOSAURUS TALE for little children).

Paperbag Theatre Company

LESLIE TRAWBRIDGE PUPPET OPERA

Leslie Trawbridge Puppet Opera has moved.
The new address is:

PO Box 71
Hari - Hari
South Westland
NEW ZEALAND

Phone: (0288) 33 142

Leslie describes moving the Puppet Opera as 'moving a mini-Covent Garden. Leslie is now busy building a new puppet opera house where he will continue his work.

Good on you Leslie - Keep up the good work.

SPARE PARTS THEATRE

Spare Parts Theatre started the year with a bang so to speak, by ranking the first mention in the WA Royal Commission (article this edition of Manipulations). Well that's past and we have been able to settle down to the business of creating art.

First off for the year was a unique production of CARMEN for the Festival of Perth. It was unique in that the drama told the story of Carmen through the eyes of Don Jose. This remarkable production was designed by Petr Matasek from the DRAK Theatre in Czechoslovakia and devised and directed by Noriko Nishimoto, with dramaturgical assistance from Peta Murray (WALLFLOWERING fame). Audiences well versed in the Carmen story did not take kindly to this adaptation, whilst those secondary schools, not so well versed, were enthralled by the interpretation. The creation of new work can be likened to walking a tightrope. Visual artists found the production a feast of visual delights, yet theatre critics longed for the Bizet opera and its story. You can't please everyone. Congratulations Noriko for taking the risk.

As our guest artist for the year we chose Takeshi Hoshino, Artistic Director of PUK Theatre in Tokyo. Takeshi had influenced the skills of Beverley Campbell Jackson, Jennifer Davidson and Ross Hill when he visited the Tasmanian Puppet Theatre in 1976. They in their turn contributed to the further development of Australian puppet theatre by adapting and building upon their experiences with him. Takeshi was to return to Australia again in 1981 to perform in the Spare Parts Theatre's premiers season in WA of DR FAUSTUS. This time he was to inspire the students at Curtin University Theatre Arts, many of whom were later to become the core ensemble members of Spare Parts Theatre.

Whilst I write he is again busy at work inspiring the future puppetmakers and designers in Western Australia. This time working with Noriko Nishimoto on the production SING A RAINBOW, seven folk stories drawn from the Asian/Pacific area.

Takeshi believes that the structure of the puppet is basic to the whole process of production in puppet theatre. The structure affects the outcome of the writing, music, aspects of production, design and performance. With 31 years experience as a visual artist, craftsman, designer, director and writer, he is one of only a few puppetmakers that, aside from his craft, is also a gifted teacher. Spare Parts Theatre thanks the Japan Foundation for his services.

MAGIC SHADOW SHOW and PAPER PLAYS are two programmes from Spare Parts Theatre's 1982 repertoire. These two smaller works have become classics in the theatre and as each generation of children pass into secondary school, these two productions find a new audience, who in time find new meaning within the works. Sean Masterson and Bob Parsons performed these two handers with enthusiasm, energy and a belief in what they were doing and who they doing it for.

As Manipulations goes to press ONCE A JOLLY SWAGMAN has opened and is playing to full houses and sold out seasons. ONCE A JOLLY SWAGMAN retells the story of "Waltzing Matilda", perhaps one of Australia's greatest folk stories. Music for this production was composed by Don Kay, a Tasmanian composer who recently was awarded an Order of Australia for his contribution to Australian music. Don Kay is head of the Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music and has composed music for the Tasmanian Puppet Theatre and Terrapin Puppet Theatre over the past twenty years. The puppets in the production were designed and constructed by the Company's trainee puppetmaker, Colleen Crapper - her first solo design since joining the Company two years ago.

Making the programmes work has been in the hands of Puppeteers Heather Monk, Sean Masterson, Bob Parsons, Peter Jagger and Trainee Puppeteer Shauna Weeks.

They have been joined by artists such as Petr Matasek from DRAK Theatre, Takeshi Hoshino from PUK Theatre, visiting artistic from the Shanghai Puppet Theatre and Jacques Templeraud from France.

ROALD DAHL'S SHORTS
SYDNEY PUPPET THEATRE

Currently Touring Primary Schools

In order to gain some credibility (after all my Company does sell Sydney Puppet Theatre's shows in primary schools) perhaps its best I begin with my thoughts on Sue and Steve's previous school show UP AND JUMPING. This show I watched often in rehearsal and only once in performance at the very beginning of its run in 1988, but to my mind the script let the performers down.

With ROALD DAHL'S SHORTS there is no such problem. The script is as good as any I've seen and performance and production are superb. The ages in the show I saw ranged from 3rd grade to 6th class and Sue and Steve kept their attention throughout the fifty minutes.

It was great to watch as two confident troupers truly entertained their young audience with a variety of skills. ROALD DAHL'S SHORTS is not a puppet show it is a show that uses Music, Puppetry, Drama and that special magic that develops between two performers after almost a decade of working together.

I don't think its my job, as reviewer, to tell the show's story, apart from to say, it follows the author, Roald Dahl's life and uses a number of his childrens poems.

Get along and see it for yourself. They are touring Tasmania and Melbourne schools at the end of 1991 and Sydney is ongoing.

Greg Howard
School Performance Tours

**EUREKA! THE REHEARSAL
ROOM**
CANBERRA THEATRE
FEBRUARY

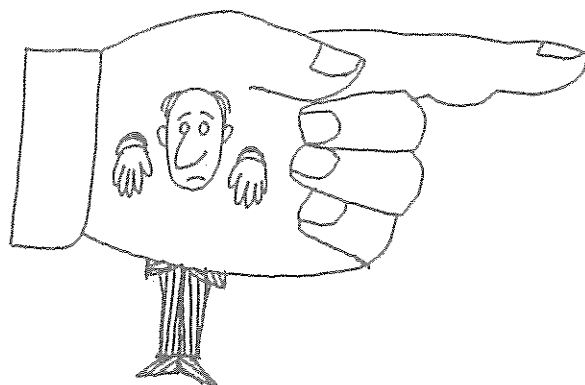
When viewing an experimental work such as P Grasshopper's performance as Akaky Akakievich in Nicolai Gogol's THE OVERCOAT it is better to leave one's preconceived notions of theatre, and knowledge of the subject matter in its original form, at home.

THE OVERCOAT contained some truly brilliant and moving moments as well as some drawn-out or repetitive sequences and would have benefitted from a little judicious pruning.

Much, but by no means all, of Gogol's storyline was fairly clearly given to us in the mime, and I imagine was part of the purpose of the exercise, it is amazing how much can be conveyed by way of setting and/or props such as an apparently simple wooden table.

Overall, I found it interested rather than rivetting or entertaining, but then, as members of audience, we're more used to being entertained than having to work at taking something away from a performance.

Bobby Saxby
MUSE - March, 1991



OUT OF THE BOX PUPPET THEATRE

I met Ronald Regan in Covent Garden, cackling and joking with the crowd: His wizard face creased into a knowing smile, exhibited the occasional twitch about the nose and winked at the giggling Scandinavian tourists (come to London for the warm weather, no doubt...) He had a tendency to strain his head a little too far, as if the advancing years had deprived the muscles in his neck of tone, although perhaps he was hearing voices, and the hand which gripped the steering column of his bathchair had a slight tremor.

Graciously accepting that his starring role as butt of humorists would eclipse his favourite performance in *Another Part*, he has agreed to spend his declining years in the courtyard of the Spitting Image Museum, and is clearly relishing his dotage. His best friend, Margaret is there too, although her capacity for graciousness has been stretched beyond its natural limits by recent events, and her manner could at best be described as waspish... She is to be discovered inside the museum, where a panel game is in progress, involving such glitterati as Her Maj, The Duke and Mr Kinnock. It is more than Maggie can bear to see our beloved Queen still in the job whilst she herself is forced to squander her talents on housework.

All this, and not a puppeteer to be seen or heard; only a gentle hissing noise and the odd click accompanies every their gesture, and gestures there are a plenty... Alarm bells ringing, I moved into 'The Workshop'. It's a fraud of course, but you can't expect anyone to do Real Work in public. Here, however, I came face to skull with the Schwarzenegger of the Puppet World - no, not a super-puppeteer, but a super-puppet - and the Mysteries of the Art were revealed:

Puppetmakers here are re-inventing the wheel, or to be precise, the Body. A 1.5 metre high 'skeleton' with all bones and joints reproduced in steel is packed about with neat pairs of 'muscles' - bags attached to a compressed-air cylinder. When co-ordinated against each other by inflation and deflation these cause a forearm to lift and turn, a writs to swivel, a finger to beckon...Pumping Iron Puppetry is the name of this game. (Remember the Devils in Henson's 'Storyteller', "The Sack"? Yep, that's how they did it - look no hands.) All this is programmed of course - nothing so archaic as a person in sight. Now for the face - well thank goodness, here's a cable, and there's a familiar old servo-motor. But how does it work? Oh, it seems it's all voice activated. Back to my Ark.

Each of these babies costs about \$150,000 before skin and costume are added. They are used specifically for conferences, where at enormous cost, you can hire a Famous person to inspire your convention of dog meat salesmen, or whatever. They are programmed by a puppeteer in the same way that one musician can multi-track a whole orchestra (and there are Big Bikkies for those specialists who spend their days and nights hunched over a console).

Members of The Public visiting the museum were clearly both amused and impressed, and whilst I can hardly be blasé about such marvels of technology, being an old-fashioned sort of puppeteer, I tend to judge things by results: I would have been more worried about my future employment prospects had these programmed figures not gone through their entire repertoire of movement with every sentence ("Nuance", wotzat?) and if the lip-synch had been more accurate. Hisses, shirrs and clicks are a drawback too, but then I doubt such considerations would bother a dog meat salesman at fifty paces...Horses for Courses.

There is no question of using these robots in the TV series; they're quite unsuitable for a topical show which has been known to be still recording the second half whilst the first is being transmitted...One wonders what Spitting Image had in mind when it ploughed all that money into New Technology? Henson is really much better positioned to make use of it in film. Indeed, the museum 'arm' has now been sold off to offset the astronomical development costs. Judging by the steep entrance fee, the new owners think they are on to a Good Thing.

Your humble correspondent, whilst impressed by so much ingenuity, was reminded of Dr Johnson's apophthegm of the dog walking on its hind legs; "It is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all". Perhaps this is a little uncharitable, but I do wonder whether the End isn't being superseded by the Means.

Susan Liutern Coward

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE TOURS

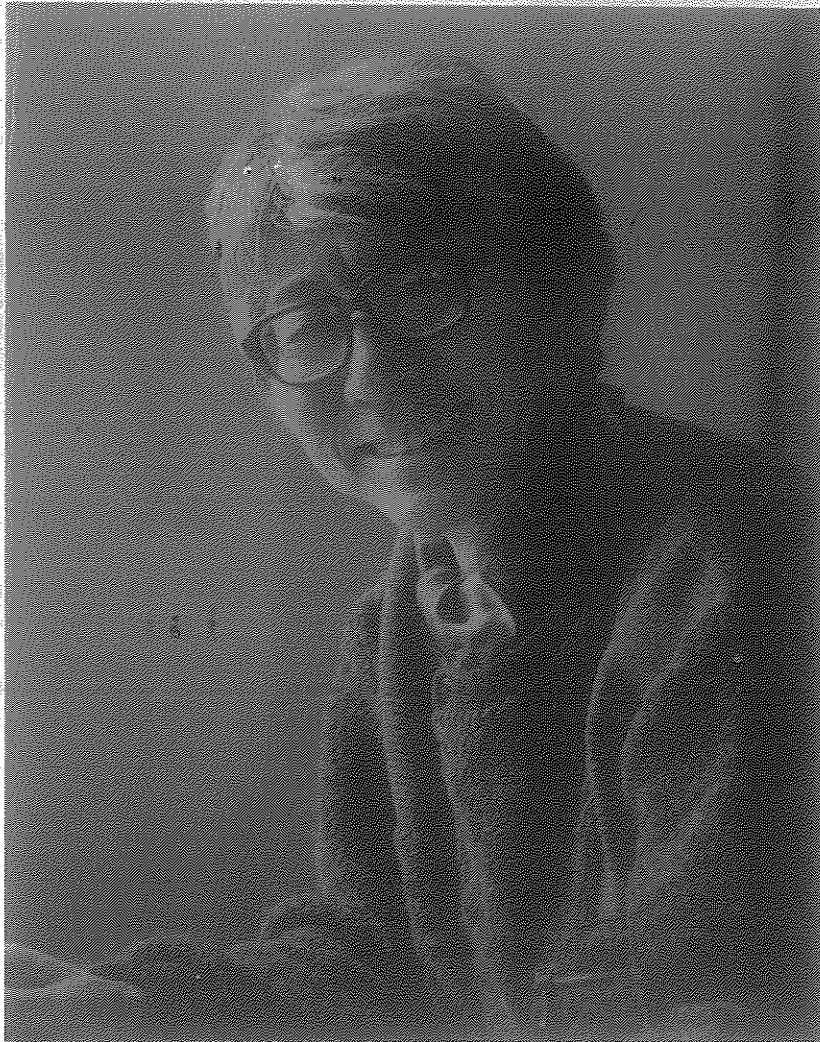
Murray Raine and Virginia Weule are busy putting the finishing touches to a new version of THE AUSSIE SHOW which will commence touring at the end of July.

Terry Ryan has just opened his new show STORIES TO GO. And from all reports its been well received.

Jonquil Temple is hard at it getting together two new shows for 1992. One to go into High Schools and one for the Primary.

The Sydney Puppet Theatre is touring ROALD DAHL'S SHORT S, and my WHO LET THE PUPPETS OUT is still selling well. I even drag out OUT OF THE BAG occasionally and force those tired, four year old puppets to earn their keep. I just remind them that I'm a LOT older than they are.

Greg Howard



TAKESHI HOSHINO

HANDSPAN THEATRE

READING BOY

READING BOY is a lovely piece of children's theatre that successfully combines many styles of puppetry. The story centres around a young boy, played with endearing obsession by Hugh Weyland, who seeks to regain his favourite book, *ENQUIRE WITHIN ABOUT EVERYTHING*, from the paper mill where it has accidentally been taken. Central to the piece and acting as ringmaster/narrator is Crow. Played by John Rogers, Crow has the air of an Australian larrikin and the charm of the born raconteur. There is an enthralling small object theatre moment played within Crow's rubbish bin that accompanies that characters tale of why crows are black and not white.

Rod Primrose and Annie Wylie complete the team with their portrayal of, Industrial Bin and Book, a melancholy century old tome that is looking forward to having a new lease of life through re-cycling. At all times the manipulation is decisive, focused and moves with the fluidity that one has come to expect of a Handspan production.

Designer Richard Jeziourny created some brilliant moments with the flying scene and events inside the paper mill being the favourites with the young audience. The movement of the huge newspaper cloth being shepherded by the robot produced many cries of delight. These scenes were further enhanced by the lighting of Phil Lethlean, who created the impression of a symbiotic relationship between light and sound. Without the music of Boris Conley a number of moments would have been too slow in transition. A situation that will improve as the run continues.

This brings one to question the necessity of John Romeril's text. The story was told so well by the visual progressions that much of the dialogue was rendered superfluous. The definition of the moral at the end was unnecessary as the audience had grasped it's meaning from the tale and further clarification hung like an adult reprimand.

Peter J. Wilson had a great idea and he has directed it into a production that deserves to have a long lease of life.

Christine Anketell
Artistic Director
Patch Theatre, Adelaide

Excerpt from the Adelaide Advertiser.
May, 1991 "Come Out" Feature.

AN HOUR WELL SPENT WITH THIS OLD BOOK... John Romeril's script, based on an idea by director Peter J Wilson, provides a clear and witty outline for the action and sneaks in a couple of Aboriginal myths for street level show and tell.

It's the magic of Handspan that makes it all work. Using the familiar devices of black light theatre, simple visual images and a highly mobile and very flashy robot, the story is a three-dimensional cartoon reminiscent of Maurice Sendak's *MAGIC KITCHEN*...

Anne Wylie gives Book a sensible reading, Rod Primrose finds a lot of life in his robot but John Roger's streetwise crow flies off with the animation honours in his beak.

Hugh Wayland, as Reading Boy, is wonderfully convincing; and you can't see his strings. Richard Jeziorny can take lots of credit for creating characters as well as environment. Boris Conley's songs and music add unifying support....

Ewart Shaw

TERRAPIN PUPPET THEATRE

IT'S NOT THE FOOL'S SQUID

Devised by the Company

Performers: Liz Ertler, Phillip Mitchell
Kirsty Grierson, Bob Parsons.

Director: Greg Methé
Designer: Greg Methé

Terrapin are not an unadventurous company but in the past some of their gamier exploits have not been rewarded with the success that they perhaps deserved to have.

The recent company-devised piece of black theatre, **IT'S NOT THE FOOL'S SQUID** was a gamble that paid off - not so much at the box office, which was disappointing, but by being an almost complete success artistically. It was clever, unpretentious, visually attractive and displayed a warm, gentle humour aimed at no particular age group.

IT'S NOT THE FOOL'S SQUID was intended to be for adult and secondary audiences when it opened in the Peacock Theatre last October, but appealed to a wider age range than expected.

This piece is pure entertainment - it's not about anything; there is no story to speak of, no dialogue and the nearest thing to a theme is the occasional reappearance of the squid and other objects. The set is a rectangular black hole in a black screen.

But the narrow beams of hidden light from either side allows coloured objects floating in a black seas to flame out with the brilliance of neon. Recognisable things fly apart or transform themselves amazingly. The simplest blobs of colour can become very funny given the puppeteers precision and sense of comic timing.

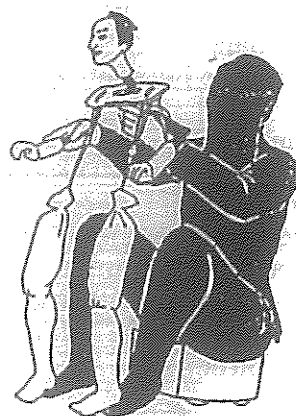
There are basically only two small stories (such as the hapless little man trying to sleep despite a berserk cuckoo clock) and a series of purely visual rhythmic pieces which can be surprisingly humorous - or surprisingly like an electronic effect on a video screen.

Meanwhile the taped music, written and performed by the puppeteers, rolls inexorably on, leaving no room for missed cues or searching for dropped objects in the dark. Each effect or device has an unobtrusive but appropriate musical theme that keeps the show moving like a bizarre cabaret. The music controls the pace and flow of the piece.

Terrapin's publicity states that the Company has a commitment to furthering puppetry as an artform. **IT'S NOT THE FOOL'S SQUID** may not have been faultless, but given that it was their first full group-devised piece and their first full-length adventure with black theatre, it was very close and certainly exemplified their commitment to the pursuit of excellence.

Reviewed by

Tony Ryan



ONCE A JOLLY SWAGMAN

SPARE PARTS THEATRE

Reviewed by Peter Laud

As a piece of national folk lore, the unfortunate swagman in *Waltzing Matilda*, who plunged into a lake to avoid the cops, stands alongside the story of the dog who sat on the tucker box on the Gundagai road.

Both are immediately recognisable as Australian folklore. And despite its miserable ending - it was suicide, after all - it's not surprising that *Waltzing Matilda* is regarded as an unofficial national anthem. It's a rollicking song with just a touch of mystery. Was the jolly swagman really guilty? And what was the cause of his joy? But you won't hear a tub-thumping version of the nation's most famous bush-ballad in Spare Parts Theatre's family musical ONCE A JOLLY SWAGMAN.

What you will discover is a gently-haunting piece about life and death - with just a hint of an environmental message - which features a magpie as the swagman.

Any why not? An enduring story like *Waltzing Matilda* can surely bear a new face now and then and even one with a beak. Most magpies seem to be little more than aerial tramps after all.

But Artistic Director Peter Wilson has preserved the ultimate end of the swaggie in a scene which should bring a lump to the throat and a tear to the eye of even the most forceful advocate of law'n' order in the bush.

But the most telling indication this unusual interpretation of *Waltzing Matilda* works as a piece of theatre came at one performance this week when a reluctant father set out to watch it while listening to a radio sports broadcast of a game featuring the West Coast Eagles. After 10 minutes he turned his radio off. Live theatre and the lone magpie won hands down.



ALICE SPRINGS

I have just completed a five week residency in Alice Springs, running workshops with Primary School students and teachers.

The five week period was shared amongst three Primary Schools; Bradshaw Primary, Ross Park Primary and Yipirinya Primary. I prepared a workshop schedule which catered for lower-primary/middle/and upper primary classes...Each class would participate in a series of sessions which included; construction, manipulation and shared performances. I wanted the students to experience the whole process. It was difficult to convince them at time to leave the puppets at school...but somehow we managed.

I was well prepared for the first week of 'workshopping' (materials ready, etc, etc)...but not prepared for the stamina one needs, working directly with children all day. On average 20 students participated in each session, accompanied by their class teacher.

By the end of the 2 weeks we had constructed; wooden spoon puppets, paper puppets, finger puppets, eye puppets, plastic milk container puppets clothed in old shirts, and sponge foam puppets (Eric Bass style). Each class progressed through basic manipulation exercises, theatre games, physical warm-ups and voice games.

It was particularly difficult to persuade the students to use their 'playground' voices while manipulating their puppets. The loud, clear, projected voices heard in the playground seemed to mysteriously disappear when the students performed short pieces for the class. Some simple voice games using 'tongue twisters', songs and rhymes they already know, loosened vocal chords and improved the voice work in performance.

At the end of each day I reviewed our progress and adjusted the next days plans accordingly. Two of the most important principles of workshopping appeared and were tested from day one:

a) Better to be 'over-prepared' than 'under'....(always keep extra/spare materials at hand).

- b) When planning sessions, make sure they are flexible. If possible, plan activities for students who finish 'FIRST'. Break up the session into a variety of activities;
- i) demonstration of a particular style of puppet.
 - ii) video snippets of the style of performance.
 - iii) construction
 - iv) manipulation
 - v) divide into small groups to devise short scenarios.

The session plans may not always be followed strictly, but a logical structure helps the session run smoothly and keeps the students actively involved.

I spent my fifth week at Yipirinya Primary School. Yipirinya is funded by the Northern Territory Government and co-ordinated by an independent School Council. The school established specifically for the educational needs of local Aboriginal students. Nearly all the students at this school are attending classes in at least two languages - English is their second language. The school is currently divided into classrooms which accommodate students who speak Western Arrernte, Walpiri, Luritja and Central Arrernte. This is only a small selection of the many Central Australian languages.

I adjusted by programme to fit all the students into the one wee. Each class made a different style of puppet and were encouraged to pass on their knowledge to the others at a later date.

The residency has been fun, refreshing and full of learning for me as well as the students. The 'pace' in the classroom is definitely different to the 'rehearsal room' rhythm.

I'm looking forward to my next round of 'life in the theatre' - wherever that may take me.

So.....as the Territorians would say.....

'Catch you mob later!'

Heather Monk

A CRY FOR HELP

Janet Dalglish has sent us the following article, reprinted by kind permission of Amnesty International Australia. It concerns one of Amnesty's adopted prisoners of conscience. These are people who have been arrested because of their religious or political beliefs, colour, sex, ethnic origin or language. (Note: Amnesty does not adopt anyone who has either used or advocated violence.) These people's continuing detention is a violation of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. International appeals can help to secure the release of these prisoners or to improve their detention conditions. The most powerful method of appeal is letters written by individuals all over the world; people like the readers of Manipulation. In the interest of the prisoners, letters to the authorities should be worded carefully and courteously. You should stress that your concern for human rights is not in any way politically partisan. In no circumstances should communications be sent to the prisoner.

MYANMAR

Ma Theingee: a painter and art teacher in her early 40's, she was arrested on July 20, 1989 with many other leaders of the National League for Democracy (NLD).

Ma Theingee served as the personal secretary to NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi. They were both arrested in a mass crackdown on the opposition in Myanmar (formerly Burma) in July 1989. Aung San Suu Kyi has been held under house arrest since 20 July, 1989.

Ma Theingee taught art at Yangon's (Rangoon) International School before her arrest. She has also written a book on the tradition of Burmese puppet theatre, which is awaiting publication in Bangkok and has worked as a translator. She speaks English, French, Japanese and Burmese.

Although many NLD leaders were detained at the time, the party won over 80% of the seats in the May, 1990 parliamentary elections. However, the State Law and Order Restoration Council, Myanmar's ruling military authorities, have not yet convened the National Assembly or said when they will do so. Hundreds of political activists remain in prison, held for their opposition to military rule. Four more NLD leaders were detained on January 6, 1991.

Ms Theingee was reportedly sentenced "for breach of existing laws", but Amnesty International has no further information about the date of her sentencing or the exact nature of the charges against her. Nor is it clear when and before which court she was tried, though it seems likely that she may have appeared before one of the military tribunals established by the State Law and Order Restoration Council, whose procedures fall far short of international fair trial standards. She is believed to be held in solitary confinement in the women's wing at Insein Prison near Yangon.

Please send courteous appeals for her immediate and unconditional release to:

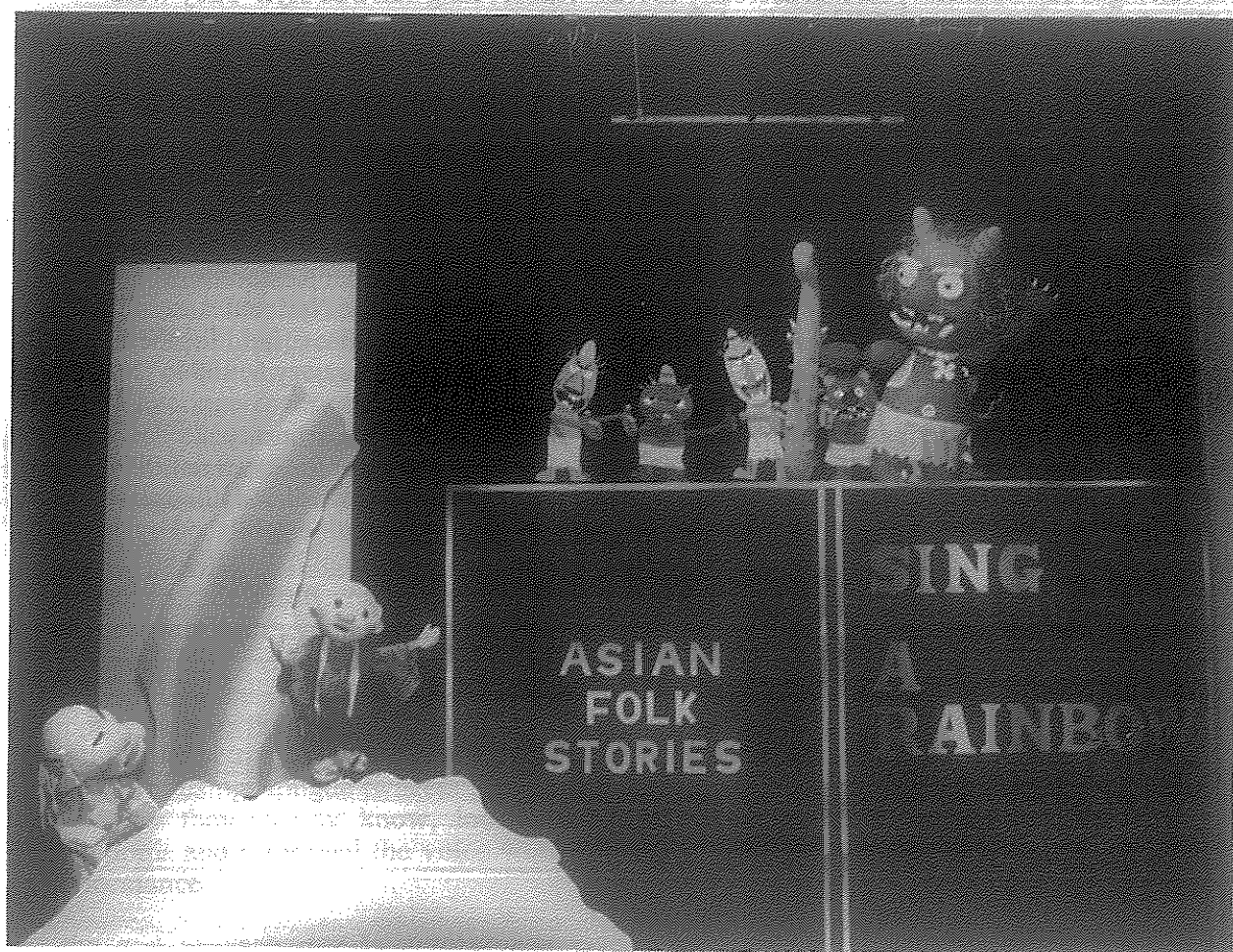
General Saw Maung
Chairman
State Law and Order Restoration Council
Yangon (Rangoon)
Union of Myanmar (Burma)

Please also send a photocopy of your letter and a covering note to:

His Excellency Mr Tuane Myint
Ambassador
Embassy of the Union of Myanmar
22 Arkarna Street
Yarralumla ACT 2600

Janet has added the following plea:

To any readers of this publication who have ever participated in puppet theatre, painted anything, taught anyone, or enjoyed the luxury of criticizing the government - please take the ten minutes you'll need to write a short letter appealing for this fellow artist's release. It is often the bulk of letters that will tip the scales for these people, yours could be the proverbial camel-breaker. If you do write, please let me know so I can pass numbers (not names) on the Amnesty. My phone number is (03) 482 3098, and you can leave a message on my answering machine. Thank you in advance for your help.



February 13, 1991

Dear Dennis,

It's difficult to remember today what has recently happened and still is going on in Lithuania. We think that we must inform everybody who is acquainted with us, who is well disposed towards us and especially to inform our colleagues.

On the 13-th of January Lithuania became the country where the Soviet tanks tried to kill democracy, publicity and first of all the Lithuanian government and parliament, re-creating the independence of our republic. That Sunday Lithuania became alike Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, Afghanistan in 1979. Soviet Army was shooting at unarmed people. It occupied Lithuanian Printing House, the Committee of Radio and TV, the tower TV. 14 persons were killed and about 600 peaceful unarmed persons were wounded. These people came to protect above-mentioned buildings. Today landing-forces soldiers are still conducting tanks in like pasters in Vilnius: they are driving their tanks in the streets, they are organizing various provocations and attacks against our elected Lithuanian Government and civil people.

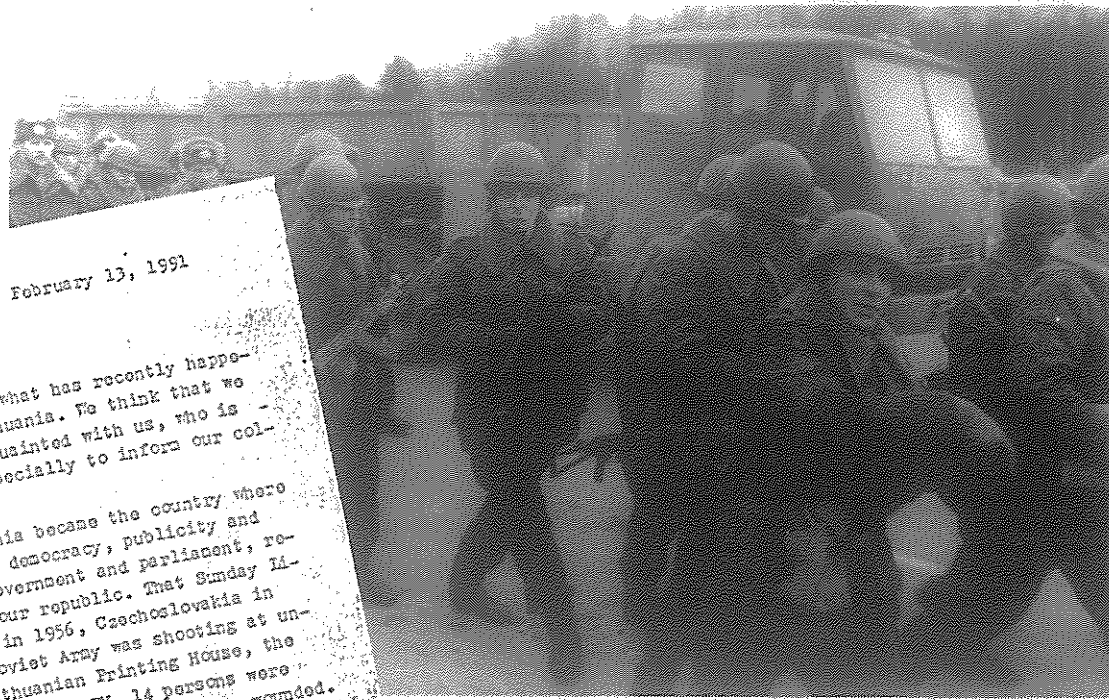
We are spending sleepless nights and nobody knows how long it will last. Day and night people protect Lithuanian Parliament House and are ready again, if it is necessary, to sacrifice their lives.

The fate of Lithuanian Republic and development of the events will depend on democratic forces of Russia and official reaction of Western Countries. Lithuania has already received such support and we hope that so it will be in the future. We are glad at the fact that many Western Countries do not recognize the annexation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. This is source of our hopes. The second source is the readiness of our people at any price to attain a deci-

sive recognition of Lithuania's independence de jure. It is difficult to believe that in the days of the 20th century people must die for freedom in Europe. I suppose it is clear to you now in what difficult situation we are working and creating today. We are planning new stagings and we are trying to keep in touch with our theatres, producers and painters in order to maintain our creative ties. In February we hope to send a small troupe to Italy to take part in the festival which will be held in Pisa. In autumn we are waiting for the producer from Slovakia who is going to stage a play in our theatre. We feel that we are necessary to our small performances, especially in the provinces. So we do not avoid spectators in other towns and districts. Now we have 17 performances in our repertory. This year we are planning four premieres and are looking for new contacts with puppet theatres. We wish to have as much information as possible about the life of all puppet theatres in performances, repertory. We send best wishes to you from all actors and actresses of our theatre. We wish you a success in your work and in your life. We hope that in future no compulsory forces will disturb the cooperation of our theatres.

Sincerely yours

Sigitas Klėbavičius
Manager of Kaunas Puppet Theatre



HOW TO VISIT A CHINESE PUPPET THEATRE

By Dennis Murphy

DAY ONE. Proceed to Beijing's China International Travel Service (CITS). They are the 'host' for individual travellers, i.e. non-guided tourists. Ask when there will be a puppet show and be immediately and authoritatively told there isn't any; but you can buy Beijing Opera tickets. Grow suspicious as she answered so quickly without consulting a theatre guide. Give her the benefit of the doubt; perhaps she's an avid puppet fan and knows the shows. Tell her you are an Australian puppeteer and would like to visit a puppet company. Be immediately informed that Beijing has no puppet theatre

Inform the nice clerk that the Chinese Embassy in Canberra told you there definitely is. (Any equally blatant lie will do) In order to save face the clerk cannot admit she is wrong. So without admitting the existence of a puppet theatre, she indicates it is forbidden to visit one. Give up and go eat Szechuan-style food.

DAY TWO - Front up again at CITS. Ask a different clerk "Where the puppet theatre is?" He draws a circle on your public transport map of Beijing. This narrows your search to two square km's of a city of 8 million people. Armed with a phrase-book or Chinese characters, you set off. Flashing the phrase "Where is the puppet theatre?" at passers-by, you are directed to the Puppet Troupe of China (PTC). You present the director with a letter of introduction you had the foresight to get translated into Chinese. One of the puppeteers speaks English and things are looking good.

You are assured the PTC welcomes you and would be most happy to show you through the theatre and even give you a small performance. HOWEVER they would need the permission of the Chinese Performance Company (CPC) which supervises them. You are asked to ring them the CPC for permission then return anytime. You thank them profusely and return to your hotel to make the call.

At the hotel you meet the arrogant, insolent sort of person whom only hotels employ. You ask for the number of the CPC. Her facial and vocal grimaces in response to your request rival those seen in the Beijing Operas. You get a repeat performance when you ask her to ring them to determine if there is anyone there who speaks European language. The line is busy and you must ask her to try again, you get a third performance and a transfer to another clerk.

You explain your life history to him and he phones. He is given another number to ring. When you ask him to ring this number he totally baulks asking "Who is in charge of your reception?" Eventually you discover he means "Who is your tour guide?" When you tell him you are an individual traveller he says CITS is your host and responsible for you, not his hotel. You retire to your room and ring the CPC yourself!

When they answer you say repeatedly "Do you speak English?" and someone who does comes to the phone. You pour out your pitiful story only to learn that the Puppet Troupe is not their responsibility. You must contact the Beijing Municipal Cultural Bureau (BMCB). No, sh does have the number, but suggests you contact CITS.

Now familiar with the phone system, you ring CITS and bring them up-to-date in your progress and ask them to ring the BMCB. They refuse on the grounds that they have never done that before. Through your quiet persistence (and their inability to understand your mumbled curses), they condescend to give you the BMCB's phone number - but not the address as "They will give you the address if you need it".

Your then ring the BMCB but no one speaks a foreign language. Ring CITS back to learn they are closing. Go and have some Szechuan food and some beer.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

SPARE PARTS THEATRE

Requires

A Senior Puppetmaker

**For 2 years contract
Commencing January, 1992**

Duties include the supervision and making of puppets and props. The supervision of trainee puppetmakers conducting advanced workshops in puppetmaking and participating in the long term artistic goals of the Company.

Spare Parts Theatre is housed in its own premises "The Short Street Theatre" in Fremantle. The premises have a fully equipped workshop and production studio, rehearsal room, 250 seat theatre, exhibition area and administration centre.

All enquiries should be directed to:

Peter Wilson
Artistic Director
Spare Parts Theatre
PO Box 897
FREMANTLE 6160

PUPPETEER AVAILABLE - SHORT TERM ENGAGEMENTS

Peter Grasshopper is available to work with Companies or other puppeteers for short term periods of up to two months.

With twelve years experience throughout Australia, New Zealand, SE Asia and Europe, in addition to the four main areas of puppetry, his skills include: mime and movement, circus and clown, acting, woodcarving and sculpture, puppetmaking, drawing, design, music, teaching and some directing.

He is a member of Actor's Equity, UNIMA (Aust) and Australian Puppetry Guild.

Enquiries to: P Grasshopper
PO Box 155
BRAIDWOOD 2622

Telephone: (048) 422 148