

*Compliments from Mrs M. Clarke*

AUSTRALIAN PUPPETRY GUILD

5th ANNUAL REPORT

1973

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## REPORTS FROM THE STATES FOR 1973.

### N.S.W. SECTION.

1973 has been a very active year for the N.S.W. Section of the Australian Puppetry Guild. In February, the retiring secretary, Richard Bradshaw returned to Australia after his triumphant performances at festivals in U.S.A. and France, tours in Sweden, Denmark and shows in Paris and London. At a Guild meeting that month, Richard recounted the highlights of his tour and reported on the U.N.I.M.A. Festival.

In April a new committee was elected with Norman Hetherington being elected President once again, and with John Lewis, former treasurer, being elected Secretary and Bruce Barratt being elected Treasurer.

In May the JERAL PUPPETS presented the first public performance of their new play "THE MAGIC FOX" to the Guild and the performance was followed by a "crit" session where members contributed criticisms and discussed the play which was to be presented forty times the following week at David Jones' Oriental Promotion.

In June, William Pitt, Television producer and scriptwriter for WIN-4's migrant educational program "YOU SAY THE WORD", gave a talk on "The Special Needs Of Scriptwriting for Puppets In The Media". William, assisted by Ann Davis, illustrated his lecture with sample scripts from their TV Show.

In July Guild members were invited to inspect models and plans prepared by Architecture students from Sydney University of a proposed redevelopment of The Clovelly Puppet Theatre.

In August the members of the Guild were invited to attend the "dress rehearsal" of three puppet plays to be presented by modern languages students from the

Macquarie University, under the direction of Dr. Marlene Norst, Mrs. Gerda Prior and Mr. Guy Neumann. Two of the plays were presented in German and the third in French. The French play was an adaptation of "le Petit Prince" presented with marionettes. The German plays were "Jedermann", a version of "Everyman", which was written by Herr Dennebourg, who recently visited Australia. The other play was "Bohmische Schneider", a very unusual marionette play.

In late August Peter Wilson, director of the "Tasmanian Puppet Theatre" visited Sydney prior to leaving Australia on his Churchill Fellowship study tour. He met Guild members and talked of the work of his group. Also present at this meeting were Mrs. Gerda Pinter from Queensland, who talked of the work of the very active Q.T.O.P., and Mr. Colin Drake, an American who spent many years presenting marionette shows in France, and has recently come to live in Australia.

In October, the Guild was treated to a performance of "THE FIREMAKER" by Peter Oldham's Performing Puppet Company, which has just completed a tour of the Northern Territory and South Australia playing mainly to Aboriginal audiences in outlying areas. Ross Hill, from Mildura, assisting Peter during the third term, presented one of his marionette programs at the Clovelly Puppet Theatre, and this was attended by some Guild Members.

In November Peter Scriven, the newly appointed Puppetry Advisor to the Australian Council for the Arts, talked to the Guild about the aims of his newly formed Puppetry Committee.

In December an informal Xmas party was held at the home of Richard Bradshaw. Special guests of the Guild that evening were Mr. and Mrs. Bill Nicoll, from Victoria. Mr. Nicoll was a pioneer in Australian Puppetry. The highlight of the evening was a performance by Richard

of his newest Shadow Puppet Sketches.

During the year, we were hosts to two groups of overseas puppeteers:

In May, Philippe Genty and his puppet company came to Sydney to appear in a French revue at the St. George Leagues Club. Some members of the Guild attended an evening at the home of the secretary and met them informally, arranging to see their highly polished show at the Club during its two month season,

In September, the Burtons made a brief visit to Sydney and were entertained at the home of Richard Bradshaw. They presented two short items to those members present: a dental health play and an ad lib. situation. They told us of their work in New Zealand.

In all, this appears to have been quite a successful year for the Guild and we look forward to an exciting 1974.

.... John Lewis (Hon.Sec.NSW Section)

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MRS.MARTI McCLELLAND.

Very interesting news comes from the enthusiastic and energetic puppeteer, Marti McClelland of her work in the Newcastle area. During the school terms she has been teaching for two days a week which gives her the opportunity to introduce children to the art of puppetry and, during the school holidays, she has been giving shows in two of Newcastle's big stores and an open air park show for the City Council

When conducting a course in puppetry for the Summer Creative School, she writes that she had a group of 36, which ranged from 6-year-olds to grandmas. This led to a continuation course in the Young People's Theatre.

Marti is also developing a new show using "ventrilloquial animal characters", which sounds exciting and we hope she will have the opportunity of showing this further afield than Newcastle.

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### VICTORIAN SECTION.

The Victorian Section's 19 members maintain a small interest group which meets in members' homes.

At our first meeting in April, Mr.Wm.Conyer and his two assistants performed a marionette adaptation to Danse Macabre using a small Pelham Puppet stage.

Mr.John Hipwell showed his collection of Wayang Golek and Wayang Kulit rod puppets from Indonesia. The National gallery of Victoria has recently purchased a collection to permanently display in its Asian Room.

Mr.Peter Seaborn showed a puppet head he had made using strips of hessian and P.V.C.glue, moulded over a plasticine shape and baked in an oven. This produced a stronger head than one made with surgical bandage.

Mrs.Gwen Brumhead, primary teacher, showed ingenious puppets made by 7-9 year school class for a production of "Are you my Mother?".

In May, some of our members attended a lecture on Indonesian Puppets by Mr.Hugh O'Neil, at the Council of Adult Education headquarters.

In August, we gathered at the home of our President, Mrs.Lorraine Gardner for an informal sharing of members puppets, and a performance of "The Magic Flute" by the Gardner Puppet Theatre.

We welcomed as new members, the new Dreamtime Puppeteers, Penny and John McCallum, who have been touring country areas doing school and general audience performances.

In October, we held a creative workshop at the Fitzroy Fun Factory. It was held on the second floor of a converted warehouse which has been turned into a collection point for scrap material and industrial end-cuts and called "The Reverse Garbage Truck". All had a fun time inventing puppets and being creative with the materials at hand.

Also in October, we had a social supper gathering in honour of New Zealand puppeteers, Mr. and Mrs. Burton, who shared with us colour photos of their school performances and samples of puppets and sketches of performances.

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#### W.A. SECTION

The year opened with the prospect of an Australian Festival to be held in Melbourne and with its postponement, we made plans to have interesting and informative subjects for consideration at our meetings.

The 1972 Committee was returned to office with the addition of Mrs. B. Hedge as Vice-President.

Our May meeting enjoyed a show from "Bob's Marionettes" given by our members, Bob and Barbara Hedge.

In July, a short history of puppetry was given by the Secretary, Mrs. Nancy Johnston and this was illustrated with colour slides.

"The Use of the Voice in the Puppet Show" was enthusiastically discussed by Mrs. Joyce Tate at the September meeting.

Mrs. Jean McKinlay gave us a practical session on "Aleatory Music" for a puppet performance.

A lecture-demonstration on the symbolism and epics of the Indonesian Shadow Puppets and Plays, Wayang Purwa, was given by Mr. Hardjowardojo assisted by Mr. Danoesoe-gonda. They came to us from the W.A. Institute of Technology, where they lecture in Indonesian studies. A copy of his dissertation accompanies this report.

Mr. Peter Scriven, Advisor in Puppetry to the sub-committee of the Australian Council for the Arts Theatre Board, visited us at a special meeting in December and, after short shows given by "Stringalong Puppets", (the Wilkinson family) and "Bob's Marionettes", Mr. Scriven talked with members on puppetry in Australia. Mrs. Mildred

Clarke was appointed to this sub-committee earlier in the year.

We look forward to furthering our interest and horizons in puppetry after the successes of this year.

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### QUEENSLAND THEATRE OF PUPPETRY .

Our second year has been even more exciting than our first one - more new members and more people giving their time and talents to our work.

We now have a beautiful light weight travelling glove stage, complete with lighting which has been recently constructed by Bruce Littler, helped by a grant of \$800 which we received from the Department of Cultural Activities.

Our evening group has been creating a new programme for the kindergartens with Mary Diehl as producer, while the Saturday Children's Class was at work on plays for its Christmas performance.

In September, a display and demonstration was given at Sundale Shopping Centre which was repeated at the Bellvue Kindergarten Arts and Crafts Exhibition.

In August, we were delighted to have a visit from Richard Bradshaw, who conducted a week's seminar, when many aspects of puppetry were considered.

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Surfers' Puppet Paradise.

By Richard Bradshaw.

Some nice things are happening up at the Queensland Theatre of Puppetry on the Gold Coast.

This group has built up around Kay Littler who has brought a refreshingly original approach to making puppets. What makes their work even more exciting is the talent and enthusiasm they bring to it. They have good strong direction from Gerda Pinter, good scripts, good stage management, good team work. One is impressed by the professionalism of this amateur group ... a happy reminder that "amateur" needn't be "amateurish". The true meaning of the word is apparent here; these people like what they are doing.

I was fortunate enough to be engaged by QTOP in August 1973 for a week to explore ideas on puppetry with them. The highlight for me was a specially arranged performance of "The Three Pigs".

The puppets for this production were worked at chest height behind a "wall" by operators dressed in black, one to a puppet. The wolf was a large head on one of the puppeteer's hands and a paw on the other. A rather slithery, very menacing wolf but not too frightening for the young children present at the show I saw.

The wolf's voice was very good. This was a local actor who had helped in the making of the tape. Gerda deserves special praise here for the quality of acting in the voices, notably those of the children.

The story was commendably close to the traditional tale except that the tricks devised by the wolf to lure out the third pig were omitted. For this particular production this seemed dramatically right. A clear plot, a simple dramatic form and no superfluous dialogue. Ideal for a young audience ... and the adults enjoyed it too.

The hooded operators, although in black, were not "invisible". This didn't seem to detract from the performance but I was happy to be able to refer them to a pamphlet which gives excellent advice on achieving true black theatre. ( This is "Black Theatre" by Coad Canada Puppets and is available for U.S. \$3 plus postage from The Puppetry Store, 3500 Tyler N.E., Minneapolis, MINN.55418. Luman and Arlyn/<sup>Coad</sup>are a husband and wife team from Vancouver who have worked with a variety of puppets doing particularly good work).

Another story QTOP does uses rod-puppets operated behind a higher stage front. This is "Little One-Inch", based on a Japanese story and from all accounts worth seeing. That's a pleasure in store for me.

Kay's unique way of making puppets is almost sculpting with cloth. She sews and pads until the face and body have the form she wants. The puppet is often made before the technique for working it is devised ... an unusual approach, but the results show that it is a rewarding one. It is rather like picking up a doll and seeing where to hold it so as to get the best movement from it. If necessary you add a stick, a wire, a ring etc.

Moreover, they are attractive puppets. Strong characters in strong colours and the softness of their construction helps the illusion of life. These actors are far from wooden!

QTOP conducts Saturday classes for local children and it's good to see children exposed to the group's inventive approach.

The worst thing you could do would be to dismiss the group as a bunch of dilettante housewives. Make no mistake, this is a well-disciplined, sincere and talented group, and a model for other groups which might develop

elsewhere. It is especially pleasing to note the support and personal encouragement they get from Queensland's Director of Cultural Activities. Mr. Arthur Creedy, who is actively interested and involved in what happens in his state.

The QTOP group is eager to meet puppeteers at an Australian Festival of Puppetry, and I'd like you to have a chance to see their work. ( I once cynically said "Festival"? What have we got to celebrate?" Now it looks like I'll have to relent and give in after all.)

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### Frenchmen in our Midst!

by Richard Bradshaw.

Philippe Genty visited Sydney in May, 1973 to play at the St. George League's Club for six weeks. He came with his wife Mary and two assistants and had top-billing in the revue "Ça, C'est Paris!" It was in some ways not the best time to be French and in Australia ... we were about to declare war, as I remember ... but fortunately the show survived and was a great hit.

It was Philippe's second visit here. He was in Australia in 1963 on the UNESCO-sponsored "Expedition Alexandre", a world tour in search of puppets which was recorded on film.

I met him first at the Charleville, France, festival in 1972 where he was performing and making the official film record of the international festival. Later, in Paris, he generously opened his fine studio to bus-loads of foreign puppeteers on behalf of French-UNIMA ...

and fed them too. ( You must remind me one day to give you all the details of that incredible day. ). Philippe has an ingenious solution to the puppeteer's ever-present problem of storage. The false floors of his apartment and studio are really the lids of cupboards. The floor-space is cupboard-space.

He now has two groups, and while he was in Sydney the others were at Radio City in New York.

The show uses black theatre. By long and expensive experimentation Philippe has been able to arrange the powerful spotlights to give an ideal "curtain of light". We could not detect the puppeteers in the blackness.

The 12-minute item is slightly risqué and hysterically funny. The club patrons were delighted and often made a point of telling the puppeteers so afterwards.

After a brief courtship of a feather-bird by a folding camera, three feathered offsprings emerge on photographic plates and develop into ostriches which begin dancing gracefully. One has difficulty with her panties which keep sliding down, In desperation she removes them with her beak, throws them aside and resumes dancing.

The middle ostrich does not see this but eventually suspects something of the kind, looks in the right (or wrong?) place and then, aghast, at the audience. The pantie-less ostrich folds up in embarrassment.

However, as the dance continues, the prim middle ostrich has a terrible accident. She lays an egg.

Our first ostrich doubles over in glee ... but has her own disaster. She lays a cubical egg!

The item moves into an almost surreal ending ... What a pity you weren't there to see it, eh?

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## II.

### Three Continents Linked.

By Nancy Johnston.

Dr. Roger Bensky was born in Perth, Western Australia, and he began his academic career at his home university, where he obtained his M.A. degree. He then continued his studies and research in Paris at the Sorbonne to gain a Doctorate.

He is now Associate Professor of French with tenure at Georgetown University in Washington D.C.

You may be wondering why Dr. Bensky is of interest to A.P.G. members, and you will be surprised and interested to know that his thesis "Structures Textuelles de la Marionette de Langue Francaise" has been published by A.G. Nizet, Paris 1969 and a further book "Symbolique de la Marionette" was also published by the same house in 1971.

In 1972 Dr. Bensky returned to Perth to visit his parents for the first time since his sojourn abroad and during his stay he and his family came to "The Nutshell" to see one of Norman Hetherington's shows.


The first two plays he discusses in his book "Structures Textuelles" are "The Broken Bridge" ("a simple caricature") and "The Marriage of Betinette" ("a fantastic satire"). Both these are plays for shadow puppets, which have been presented by Richard Bradshaw.

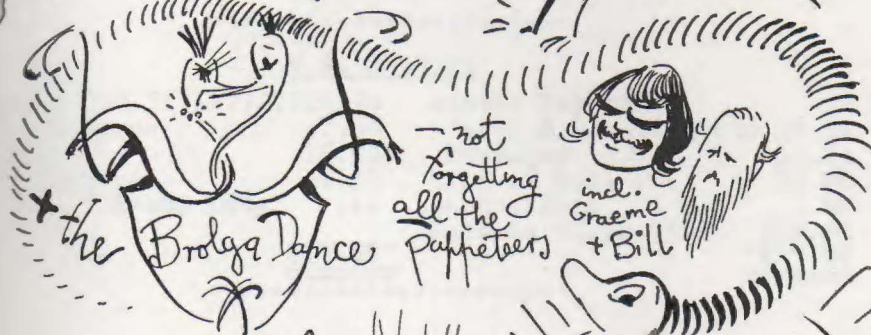
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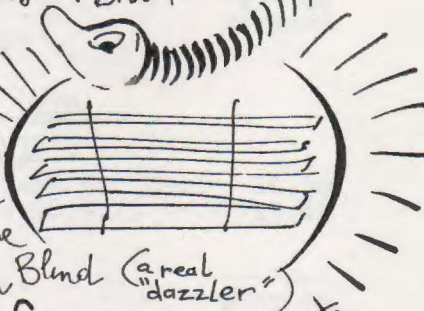
December 1973

Thousands of s + s went to

from **NO NAMEENA** written by 



and of course the Venetian Blind (a real "dazzler")



The MARIONETTE THEATRE of AUSTRALIA  
First puppet theatre to perform in the  
SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE.

THE AUSTRALIAN PUPPETRY GUILD - Financial Statements for the  
year ending 31st Dec. 1973

INCOMEEXPENDITUREN.S.W. Section

Balance fwd.31.12.72	113.96	Petty Cash	66.02
Subscriptions	112.76	Donation C.L.M.	40.00
Interest	3.51	UNIMA Fee	7.00
		Balance 31.12.1973	117.21
	<u>230.23</u>		<u>230.23</u>
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VICTORIAN Section.

Balance fwd.31.12.72	38.99	Payments	33.00
Subscriptions	28.00	Balance 31.12.73.	35.50
Interest	1.51		
	<u>68.50</u>		<u>68.50.</u>
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W.A. Section

Balance fwd.31.12.72	326.74	Annual Report :	
Subscriptions	61.50	Paper & Printing etc.	12.84
Donations	18.00	Postages	11.24
Bank Interest	11.31	Hire of Hall	34.00
Refund of Stamp Duty	.42	Cheque Book	1.80
		Balance 31.12.73	358.09
	<u>417.97</u>		<u>417.97</u>
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THE AUSTRALIAN CENTRE OF UNIMA(Year ending 30th Sept. 1973 )

Balance Fwd.30.9.72	33.95	Petty Cash for Sec.	10.00
Subscriptions	74.00	Balance 30.9.73	99.42
Bank Interest	1.47		
	<u>\$109.42</u>		<u>\$109.42</u>
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AUSTRALIAN PUPPETRY GUILDList of members 31st Dec. 1973.N.S.W. Section.

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Mr. B. Ehmer, Queensland Theatre of Puppets.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA ( Attached to N.S.W.)

Mr. & Mrs. D. Aspland, Mr. J. Grant, Mrs. H. Grant, Mr. K. Kling.

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 Mrs. M. Don, Mr. M. Finley, Mr. A. Finley, Mrs. V. Flynn,  
 Mrs. L. Higgins, Mr. & Mrs. R. Hedge, Mr. W. Johnston,  
 Mrs. D. Kowarski, Mrs. J. McKinlay, Puppetry Guild of W.A.  
 (Inc.), Mrs. D. Smith-Ryan, Mr. & Mrs. E. Wilkinson & family.

Junior Members: Miss L. Finley, B. Kershaw, G. Kershaw,  
 G. Mentiplay.

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# THE COMPLIMENTS OF

AUSTRALIAN PUPPETRY GUILD

(W.A. Section)

Mrs. M. Clarke

## THE INDONESIAN WAYANG PLAY

### SOME NOTES BY R.P. HARDJOWARDOJO

It is a well-known fact that Indonesia has got a rich cultural heritage.<sup>1</sup> The most important reason for this phenomenon was the fact that Indonesia throughout her long history has undergone intensive cultural exchange with other advanced cultural spheres such as Hinduism and Buddhism.<sup>2</sup>

Another reason for the heterogeneous nature of Indonesian cultural tradition is to be found in the fact that Indonesia already had an advanced civilization or culture during the pre-historic period prior to the arrival of Hinduism in the 4th century A.D.<sup>3</sup> Historical process was not the only factor which had been decisive in moulding the Indonesian culture. Geographical location of the Indonesian islands played a most significant role in giving shape to the forms of Indonesian culture. Java, Sumatra, Bali, Kalimantan (Borneo) and Sulawesi (Celebes) as well as the Moluccas (Maluku) developed their own particular types of cultural manifestations.<sup>4</sup>

Generally speaking, Indonesian culture could be subdivided into two major parts: the indigenous culture and those cultural aspects imported from India, China and Arab and at present also the Western culture.<sup>5</sup> The criterion for indigenous cultural layer is as follows:

1. The time factor: those cultural aspects which had already been in existence in Indonesia prior to the arrival of foreign elements, i.e. the pre-historic layers of Indonesian culture;
2. The amount of cultural exchange: certain areas of



Indonesia such as Central Borneo or Central Celebes underwent what is known as 'cultural lag' in the sense that while other areas such as Java and Bali had gone through successive cultural layers, those areas mentioned above, due to their inaccessibility, remained culturally stagnant.<sup>6</sup>

In practice however there has been always a process of blending of the indigenous cultural aspects and the imported elements. One of the best examples of this happy blend is the WAYANG play.

Origin of the Wayang Play.

Many scholars have tried to uncover the origin of wayang or puppet play in Indonesia. So far there have been three streams among scholars trying to locate the cradle of the wayang play. The first stream maintains that the wayang play originated from India and gradually spread out to Southeast Asia. The second stream of theory tries to locate the origin of the wayang play in China. The third stream maintains that although the wayang play as it is now in Java has been influenced by elements of Hindu culture, particularly the stories, the basic origin of wayang performance originated from Indonesia. There is much to be said regarding the third theory. It is true that wayang repertory consists of stories derived from two great Indian epics, i.e. the Mahabharata and Ramayana. On the other hand it is a fact that the wayang play in Java contains certain non-Indian (or non-Sanskrit) terminologies such as BLENCONG,<sup>7</sup> <sup>TIN & CANTER</sup> GANGSA,<sup>8</sup> <sup>WEDEN</sup> and <sup>HAMPER</sup> CEMPALA.<sup>9</sup> The existence of these purely Javenese words in wayang terminology indicates the following points:

- a) That the three terms could be considered as being the earliest part of the wayang play;
- b) The tenacity of indigenous terms despite the impact of Hindu influence;
- c) The plausible fact that wayang play originated from Javanese soil.



Another supporting fact for the theory that wayang play originated from Java is to be found in the word WAYANG itself. The Javanese word WAYANG (in Indonesian BAYANG) means shadow in English. The use of the word indicates that the shadow of the puppets do play a significant role in the whole performance. Taking into consideration the fact that shadow plays such an important part, it is not too far-fetched to assume that the play might have been connected with certain religious ceremonies, particularly ancestor worship. It is a well-known fact that ancestor worship had been known as being one of the basic Indonesian cultural elements.<sup>10</sup> It is quite possible therefore that wayang was originally a kind of ceremony performed in the past which was intended as a means of worshipping the spirits of the departed ancestors.

Supporting fact does exist that wayang play had somehow been connected in the past with ancestor worship. Take for example the existence of the character SEMAR. In the wayang stories as practised in Java and Bali this Semar is considered as being the older brother of god Siwa, the highest god in the Hindu pantheon. In the wayang repertory, however, Semar occupies only the position of servant. There is, in fact, a kind of contradictory condition here - a servant but also a more powerful figure than the highest god himself. The logical conclusion is that SEMAR is a character who belongs to the original set-up of wayang play before Hindu epic stories were included into the wayang repertory in Java. This also explains why among the Javanese there is still a belief that wayang characters had actually existed as historical figures. Temples on the Dieng plateau in Central Java are named after wayang characters such as BIMA, SEMAR, GATOTKACA, PUNTADEWA and so on.<sup>11</sup>

Types of Wayang:

The most renowned of the wayang play is that particular

type called WAYANG KULIT or wayang puppets which are made of tough buffalo skin. There are however other types of wayang too in Indonesia. One of these is known as WAYANG GOLEK, which is very popular in West Java. This type of wayang is, made of wood and carved beautifully. Wayang golek puppets wear real clothes, unlike wayang kulit. There are other types of wayang in Java, such as WAYANG GEDOG, WAYANG KRUCIL and the almost extinct WAYANG BEBER.<sup>12</sup>

Among the existing types of wayang puppets, the wayang kulit or leather puppet variety is the best known. There are several reasons for the popularity of wayang kulit compared to the other types of wayang, such as the easier and less costly way of making the leather puppets, the large number of Javanese ethnic groups who look upon wayang kulit as one of their most important cultural manifestations, and because the material used, i.e. leather, makes a greater impact upon foreign visitors than the wooden puppets which somehow remind them of their own familiar Punch and Judy show.<sup>13</sup>

#### Symbolic Value of Wayang.

One foreign visitor after watching the wayang kulit performance in Java made the remark that wayang performance gave him a feeling of unreality; he felt as though he was lifted bodily from the earthly scene and was moving freely in the air. This impression might not be so strange as it seems if we consider that the whole wayang play is based on symbolism. In fact the term WAYANG which means shadow indicates that the play is supposed to be a shadow of actual life. . The word shadow is not to be used in the negative sense, but rather as a reflection of reality. One should try to evaluate the play rather than to take it literally.<sup>14</sup> Small wonder a foreign visitor could be easily carried away or, the other way round, simply be bored due to the unreality of the play.<sup>15</sup>

In order to provide a better evaluation of the symbolic value of the play, a closer look at the technical aspects of wayang is essential. What does the stage of a wayang kulit look like?

Usually wayang kulit (and the other types of wayang) performance is held at the front part of the house, known as PENDAPA in Javanese, which is open on all sides, but it has a roof.<sup>16</sup> In the centre of this PENDAPA the stage for the wayang play is set up. It consists of a white screen. The screen is hung up using wooden frames. The wayang puppets are arranged on both sides of the screen, the smaller figures in the centre and the bigger ones set up with their faces towards the outer ends of the screen. In front of the screen the puppeteer sits cross-legged on the floor. Behind him the GAMELAN players sit cross-legged too and usually there is at least one singer (lady crooner) whose job it is to provide the performance with the appropriate songs. At his left hand side (sometimes at both sides) there is a wooden box containing the wayang puppets. Above his head there is a lamp (nowadays electric but traditionally it must be an oil lamp) to illuminate the stage. This source of light is most important because it casts the shadows of the puppets on the other side of the screen so that the audience sitting on the other side (mostly women) can watch the shadows quite clearly. The audience who sit or stand behind the puppeteer can only see the puppets but not the shadows.<sup>17</sup> The traditional wayang kulit play starts at around 9 p.m. and ends at approximately 5 a.m. the next morning.<sup>18</sup> After having this brief glimpse of how the stage and the decor actually look, let us proceed with the symbolical values of wayang.

Screen: The screen forms the background for the stage. It symbolises the sky or Heaven. The sky (Heaven) occupies an important position in many cultures around the world.<sup>19</sup>

Banana stem (tree): The puppets are put on the banana stem which forms the lower part of the stage.<sup>20</sup> Why banana tree instead of any other tree? The basic reason is as follows: in Javanese culture and mythology the banana tree symbolises fertility.<sup>21</sup> Every part of a banana tree and also coconut tree can be used effectively by the people in Java and this fact explains why, for a basically agricultural community such as Java, those two trees do play an important role. Small wonder the banana stem is selected to symbolise the earth in a wayang play, because the earth represents fertility. In a wayang play the banana stem also represents the world we live in as distinct from the sky (Heaven) representing the world of the gods.<sup>22</sup> This explains why there are two rows of wayang puppets put on both sides of the screen, because the two rows of puppets represent in fact the total population of the world.

Right and Left Division: One thing which usually attracts the attention of the observer is the division of the wayang puppets into two groups, the right and left groups respectively. The origin of this division could be traced back to the belief in cosmic duality and unity which forms the basis of most Oriental cultures. The fact that there are men-women, sun-moon, young-old, day-night, mountain-sea, all these contrasts made people think that the universe must exist on a duality basis. On the other hand, people also realised from the very beginning that men cannot exist without women, that being young is only the preliminary of getting old, that the sun and the moon work as a team illuminating the earth. This kind of realisation led to the basic belief that although there is duality in the universe, the essence is still unity; in other words, duality in unity. One basic feature of this belief in cosmic unity is that the balance of nature must be retained or kept at all times because otherwise an imbalanced



situation will cause disaster or calamity. Subsequently it is quite understandable why this cosmic unity belief always stresses that people must live harmoniously with nature in order not to cause an imbalance.<sup>23</sup>

Consequently the division of two groups in a wayang play also symbolises this concept of duality. The right hand of the puppeteer represents the good while the left hand represents the evil side.<sup>24</sup> The right hand side of the screen consists of Ksatriya's figures while the left hand side consists of Bhuta's.<sup>25</sup>

Gunungan: It has been mentioned above that the two divisions of the screen (right and left) are based on the cosmic duality principle. The question arises: where does the cosmic unity come in? The cosmic unity is represented by the figure occupying the central position, right in front of the puppeteer. This figure is known as GUNUNGAN, in Javanese meaning a mountain. The form is rather triangular, with rounded base and sharply pointed top.<sup>26</sup> The GUNUNGAN is adorned with various pictures, such as a royal palace, a jungle with wild animals, a mountain with hermitage, a burning flame and so on. The variety of pictures depicted on both sides of the gunungan indicate that the gunungan is in fact used as decor to provide appropriate illustration. If the puppeteer, for example, wants to describe a particular scene comprising the king having audience with his ministers, he can use the gunungan depicting the main gate of a royal palace. Apart from the technical side as being a visual aid to the play, the gunungan has a more important aspect, to wit the symbolical value. To counterbalance the cosmic duality as depicted by the division of two groups of wayang, right and left, the gunungan symbolises the cosmic unity as the Universe itself.<sup>27</sup> In most Oriental philosophies and culture this principle of cosmic unity occupies a central position.



DALANG: The Javanese word for the puppeteer is DALANG. What is a dalang actually?.. Apart from the technical aspect as being the one who operates the puppets, a dalang in Javanese culture has a more important aspect. Basically speaking, a dalang is a teacher as well as a priest. In his position as a teacher he teaches the public important aspects of the Javanese culture as included in the wayang, such as religion, way of life, social etiquette, music, ethics and so on.<sup>28</sup> As a priest the dalang officiates at the performance because a wayang play, as has been mentioned above, could be considered as being a religious ceremony to worship the spirits of deceased ancestors.<sup>29</sup> As far as the general public is concerned, the dalang-teacher position is more important than the dalang-priest role. Small wonder that not everyone can become a dalang because a good dalang should know and master several branches of 'wayang knowledge' such as SABETAN (how to operate the puppets), ANTAWACANA (different voices of the different characters), SULUK (music), PRENESAN (humour), BASA (proper usage of the language), UNGGAH-UNGGUH (social etiquette), BUDAYA (culture) and so on. In bygone days the profession of a dalang was usually handed down from father to son or through a system of apprenticeship. At present however one can enrol at a special school for puppeteers in Surakarta or Jaogyakarta in Central Java. The position of a dalang in Java is still considered rather important - even now when mechanisation and industrialisation have started taking their 'toll' as regards the traditional Javanese culture.

BLENCONG: Blencong is the name given by the Javanese to the lamp illuminating the screen. Traditionally it is made of bronze and uses oil (coconut oil) as fuel, although in recent years people have started using electric bulbs for this purpose. The traditional oil lamp is considered better

because the flickering of the flame blown by the wind enables the shadows of the puppets to become 'alive', particularly if seen from behind the screen. The BLENCONG in fact symbolises the sun. Like the sun which not only illuminates the world but also gives life to it, so the blencong is supposed to cover those two aspects, i.e. as illumination and as a life-giving source.<sup>30</sup>

KOTAK: This is the Javanese term for the large wooden box which contains the remainder of the puppets not used or displayed on the screen. It is also the place where the puppeteer deposits the puppet after it has finished its role in a particular story. The kotak could also be considered as a symbol of the eternal circle of life and death or SAMSARA in Hindu mythology.<sup>31</sup> The puppets are taken from the kotak and put back into it after the performance.

CEMPALA: This is the name given to a wooden hammer used by the puppeteer for giving signs to the NIYAGA (gamelan players). So the CEMPALA could be compared with the baton wielded by a drum-band master. The cempala however has more to it than *merely a baton. It is also a symbol of the rhythm of life.* What is the rhythm of life? Events in human life such as birth, marriage, sickness, death, sorrow, joy and so on, form the rhythm of life.

GAMELAN: Gamelan means the musical instruments or orchestra which accompany the wayang performance. The rhythm of the gamelan is determined by the CEMPALA played by the dalang. So in fact the gamelan is also part of the rhythm of life. The gamelan orchestra however has one aspect which is not available in the cempl - to wit the sound of music. The gamelan orchestra could also be considered as being the symbol of universal sound. The sound of universe means the accumulation of natural sounds such as the howling of the wind, water gushing

down a waterfall, fire crackling, children laughing and crying, sound made by the various animals in the woods etc.<sup>32</sup>

**NIYAGA:** This is the term used to indicate the players of the gamelan. In Javanese mythology, which was influenced by Hindu mythology, the Heavenly gamelan known as LOKANANTA<sup>33</sup> is capable of playing by itself without the assistance of human hands. The niyaga consequently occupies a different position from that of the dalang. While the dalang is an integral part of the play, the niyaga's is supplementary.<sup>34</sup>

**PASINDEN:** Pasinden is the term used for denoting the lady-crooner or singer, who accompanies the dalang with appropriate songs. It is quite possible that the pasinden is a later innovation to the wayang play. Like the niyaga or gamelan player, the pasinden is in fact supplementary in the sense of not really having a symbolical value.

**THE WAYANG STORIES:** The wayang story is known as LAKON in Javanese.<sup>35</sup> Basically there are two kinds of wayang stories as follows:

1. Pakem,
2. Carangan.

**PAKEM:** This is the term used to indicate stories taken from the two major Hindu epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.<sup>36</sup>

**CARANGAN:** is the term used to indicate new stories invented by the dalang, although the basic frame-work of the story is still derived from the two major Hindu epics.

Both pakem and carangan stories have symbolical values in the sense that wayang lakons are considered as symbols of reflections of human life on earth. Wayang lakons usually contain the following patterns:

- a) Initiation process;
- b) Eternal struggle between good and evil, ending with the good triumphant over evil.

It is obvious that virtually every wayang story or LAKON is, and should be, considered as being symbolic - conveying certain values - and not meant as concrete black and white reproductions of real life.<sup>37</sup>

COLOUR IN THE WAYANG PUPPETS. The part of the wayang puppets which never fails to attract attention from foreign observers is the variety of colours used in painting the faces of the puppets. What does this colour difference indicate? Let us have a closer look at these colours. Red. This colour is usually painted on the faces of giants and certain other types of wayang characters. The colour of red in wayang terminology symbolises greed, avarice, hot temperament, jealousy - in short the negative aspect of human character.<sup>38</sup>

Black indicates human character such as perseverance, wisdom, courage.

Golden colour indicates certain aspects of human nature such as vanity and arrogance.

Blue: a puppet with blue colour painted on its face means that it symbolises stubbornness and haughtiness.

The variety of colours of the puppets consequently forms a clear-cut indication to the audience about the character of a particular wayang puppet.

#### WAYANG AND THE SOCIETY:

A foreign observer once made the remark that for a people such as the Javanese who like rhetoric, wayang can never perish. In other words, wayang will always survive. As a matter of fact, wayang has got its roots deep in the cultural layer of the people of Java. Although some of the conditions which form the background for the wayang play have changed in the course of history, the deeply imbedded roots cannot be easily demolished. As regards the position of wayang in the Javanese society a few things should be kept in mind.



First, wayang is still basically a Javanese cultural heritage in spite of the fact that it has become more popular outside the Javanese cultural sphere,<sup>39</sup> but the language barrier still exists. Unless the onlooker knows Javanese it would be hard to get a real understanding of the play.<sup>40</sup> On top of that, the cultural background of the wayang is still based on the traditional feudalistic society in Java, which is not quite compatible with modern conditions in Indonesia.

Secondly, wayang play is rather restricted to the ABANGAN or conformist group of Javanese society. The orthodox or the SANTRI group of Javanese society usually considers wayang performance as not 'good' Islamic expression because of the Hindu-Javanese background.<sup>41</sup> A visitor might well ask why the wayang play is still popular, particularly in Java and Bali. There are several reasons for this phenomenon:

1. Historically, wayang is part of the rich cultural heritage of Java and Bali.
2. The wayang play is still surrounded by a certain religious belief. In fact wayang performance is considered as being a kind of initiation ritual. Wayang performance is held only on certain occasions, such as the marriage ceremony, the celebration of the Indonesian Independence Day (17th August 1945), and moving into a new building. The wayang play is definitely not an everyday entertainment.<sup>42</sup>
3. Wayang performance in fact is a vast store of Javanese value system. The understanding of the wayang world enables the onlookers to get valuable information on the traditional Javanese value system.
4. For the average Javanese or Balinese, a wayang performance gives valuable information concerning the morals and the ethics of his ethnic group.
5. For parents wayang could be used as a kind of spiritual guidance to educate the children by using examples of



wayang characters.<sup>43</sup>

Keeping all these features in mind it is not surprising that, despite the changes within the wayang culture in recent times, the wayang play itself will continue to provide moral teaching and entertainment for the people of Indonesia in the days ahead.

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1. See further Holt, C. Art in Indonesia, Cornell Univ. Press, 1967.
2. On Hinduism and Buddhism see Basham, A.L., The Wonder that was India, London, Sedgwick & Jackson, 1968, Ch. VII. About the 'penetration pacifique' of Hinduism in Indonesia, see Coedes, G., The Indianized States of Southeast Asia, Canberra, A.N.U. Press, 1968, Ch.II.
3. On the pre-historic layers of the Indonesian culture, see Coedes, G. op. cit., Ch.I. See also Bernet Kempers, A.J., Ancient Indonesian Art, Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A., 1959, particularly the Introduction.
4. Indonesia is an archipelago consisting of around 3,000 islands. Up to the 20th century, direct and frequent contact between the islands was lacking due to the difficulty of transport or communication. Even now certain areas of Indonesia such as Maluku (the Moluccas) and Nusa Tenggara (the Lesser Sunda islands) are rather 'isolated' from Java the main island of Indonesia where the central government is situated.
5. Although many cultural expressions, including the wayang, are in fact a good example of blending between Indian and Indonesian concepts. The significance of mentioning the indigenous and 'alien' sub-division of Indonesian culture is purely academic, i.e. from the historical point of view.
6. The use of the term 'stagnant' does not convey the meaning of being static or standing still completely. Cultural modifications do occur in those areas but in a much slower way.
7. The purely Javanese word BLENCONG means lamp. The traditional form of the lamp is as follows: hanging lamp made of bronze, using coconut oil as fuel and cotton pit. Virtually all wayang accessories have got symbolical values. In recent years however more people have started using modern electrical bulbs for lighting the stage.
8. The term GANGSA means the musical instruments accompanying the wayang performance. Literally translated the word means an alloy of two metals used for making the instruments, to wit, tin and copper.
9. The Javanese word CEMPALA means a wooden hammer used by the dalang or puppeteer to signal the rhythm of the music to the NIYAGA or musicians.
10. Cf. Coedes, G., The Indianized States of Southeast Asia, Canberra, A.N.U. Press, Ch.I.
11. Cf. Bernet Kempers, A.J., Ancient Indonesian Art, Cambridge, Mass., 1959, Plates 25-32.

12. Wayang GEDOG and wayang KRUCIL tell episodes taken from the Panji and Menak stories. Panji stories deal with the adventures of Raden Panji (12th century Kadiri kingdom in East Java), while Menak stories depict the adventures of Amir Hamzah, an uncle of the Prophet Muhammad.
13. Apart from the wayang puppets which are played by the dalang or puppeteer there is also the wayang orang. This is a wayang play performed by living actors and actresses. In spite of the existence of a dalang, the actors are not restricted from making improvisation in the play. This particular type of wayang is a new innovation, dating back no more than approximately 50 years.
14. This particular point puts the wayang play in a vastly different genre from the movies.
15. In order to overcome this drawback, there have been efforts recently in Indonesia to use English as a medium rather than Javanese. This particular type of wayang play (usually for the duration of only 2-3 hours) is meant for the tourists.
16. In case no suitable pendopo is available, any ordinary building with a rather large frontage will do.
17. The significance of the shadows in a wayang performance might have indicated that the shadow part of the screen was the most important part of the show. At present however this part is reserved for the ladies while the male members of the audience sit behind the dalang watching the puppets. Obviously there had been a change of position because females were originally barred from this religious ceremony of paying homage to the departed ancestors.
18. There have been efforts made to reduce the duration of the wayang play to about 2 hours from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. or from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. This is, however, meant for foreign tourists who might have difficulty in following a full length performance.
19. Generally the Sky is referred to as being the Father and the Earth as the Mother. The marriage between Heaven and Earth is an important pattern in mythology all over the world.
20. The puppets have a sharp pointed holder to enable the dalang to put the puppets firmly on the banana stem.
21. Apart from the banana, there is another tree which occupies the same position as a fertility symbol - the coconut tree. In Javanese marriage ceremonies parts of banana and coconut trees are commonly used as appropriate fertility symbols for the newly married couple. In Madura



(off the coast of Surabaya in East Java) some puppeteers use coconut tree instead of banana stem for putting the puppets into.

22. Strictly speaking wayang play is based on polytheism and this explains why in strongly orthodox Islamic areas such as Aceh, wayang play is still socially and religiously not quite acceptable.
23. As an example, according to this belief sickness is caused by an imbalanced condition in the human body. The Chinese method of acupuncture for example is also based on this natural balance theory.
24. Consequently every Indonesian child is taught not to use his or her left hand for giving something, particularly if it concerns an older or higher placed person because the left hand represents the evil side of the cosmic duality.
25. Ksatria or warrior represents the good side while Bhuta or demons form the evil side of nature.
26. The Balinese gunungan has a rather different form, more elongated.
27. This explains why before the play commences the gunungan is put right in the centre of the screen and after the performance is ended it will be put back in the same place but with an angle of about 40° to the right. The gesture of the dalang to pull and to put the gunungan before and after the performance symbolises the fact that the whole performance is considered as being part of the universal play of keeping the balance in nature.
28. In short a dalang teaches his public the traditional Javanese value system. The Javanese society however is undergoing certain changes or modification due to the impact of Western influence and consequently the traditional values of a wayang play are not always accepted blindly by the public, particularly the younger generation. People still flock to watch a wayang play because somehow the wayang play still offers a good entertainment.
29. Before commencing the play, the dalang always burns incense to pacify the spirits.
30. This explains why the traditional lamp is better because the open flame will flicker and sway to and fro, making the puppets more alive.
31. Basically the wayang play is based on the traditional Hindu philosophy of SAMSARA and KARAMA, i.e. the belief in life after death, rebirth and the ultimate deliverance of moksha. Cf. Basham, A.L., The Wonder that was India, 1958, London, Ch. VII.
32. This sound of Universe is not usually felt or heard by everybody. People practising YOGA or other mental exercise however are familiar with this sound of the universe being part of the sound of Self.

33. LOKANANTA is the brand name of the record factory in Surakarta, Central Java. This factory is government owned and produces records of Javanese as well as Indonesian music.
34. The wayang BEBER performance for example does not need any gamelan or niyaga background. The dalang recites the stories. This particular type of wayang is now almost extinct.
35. Derived from the root laku + suffix an = lakuan = lakon. Literally it means sequence or part of human life. It also means method or way of attaining aims.
36. About these Hindu epics, see further, Basham, A.L., The Wonder that was India, London, 1958, Ch. IX.
37. The Javanese term is SEMU and it means pretending or acting like something. A better translation however is reflection.
38. The colours of the puppets in fact symbolise the various personalities of human beings.
39. There is a possibility that wayang will in due course become widely accepted as an Indonesian culture by the Indonesians themselves.
40. The recent efforts made to use English is meant for tourist consumption, particularly the foreign tourists, and is not designed for the non-Javanese ethnic groups in Indonesia.
41. About the ABANGAN and the SANTRI division, see further Geertz, C., The Religion of Java, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1958.
42. Apart from the fact that staging a wayang performance is linked with religion, it is also an expensive enterprise.
43. That is to say by making comparison between the good and the evil aspects of human nature. Unfortunately the younger generation in Indonesia are not really susceptible to the traditional wayang ethics. This is due to the impact of the Western type of education which is based on logic and materialism.

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