

Editor: Maeve Vella

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EXHIBITION

The Marionette Theatre of Australia is organizing an exhibition of puppets from companies Australia-wide for the Exhibition Hall of the Sydney Opera House.

Puppets exhibited will be "Stars" - principal characters from traditional and contemporary puppet plays and star cabaret runs like the Grand Turk and Dissecting Skeleton.

The exhibition opens on April 2 and runs through May.

OBITUARIES

BETTY RAYNER
performer, puppeteer,
founder, with sister
Joan, of Australian
Children's Theatre, 1930
died November, 1981

DON BOYCE
arts administrator,
co-ordinator, 1979
Hobart Puppet Festival
died suddenly,
November 1981

CORRECTIONS

Training in Japan

PUK Theatre do run a training course for puppeteers, but not for foreigners. Foreigners must make special application to be admitted and must have a thorough knowledge of the Japanese language.

Peter Wilson studied the techniques of Bunraku and Kabuki Theatre at The NATIONAL THEATRE OF JAPAN, and spent four weeks participating in the PUK Training Academy Programme as well as studying Japanese Folk Festivals and NOH Theatre.

He is happy to help puppeteers travelling to Japan with contacts.

Peter Wilson can be contacted at:
SPARE PARTS PUPPET THEATRE,
P.O. Box 897, Fremantle WA 6160
Phone: (09) 335 3533

Kooka's New Nest

KOOKA PUPPET COMPANY have moved to bigger & better premises at:

44 Ivanhoe Parade,
IVANHOE VIC 3079
Phone (03) 497 2697

JOB VACANCY

VICTORIA PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL, Collingwood, would like to employ a puppeteer as artist-in residence for one week in Term II. Small school: 90 pupils, 5 teachers.
Phone: (03) 419 4230

HANDS - A NEW COMPANY IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

HANDS began in September 1981 at a two-day workshop at the Araluen Community Centre in Alice Springs. Organized by Carol Scott, Kate Pones and Peter Hughes, the workshop was lead by Wilson McCaskill, who had sparked Carol Scott's interest in puppet theatre at a Nutshell Theatre workshop in Perth two years before. It must have been an inspiring two days, because at the end of it Carol, Kate and Peter were joined by 9 others to produce their first performance and become HANDS. A grant of \$3,800 to the Araluen Trust from the Australia Council has helped them to get started, and they plan to establish a repertoire of shows to tour the Territory, and to run their own puppet theatre at the Araluen Community Centre.

PAPERBAG PUPPET CENTRE

76 Edmund Street, Unley SA 5061

Just before going to the summer recess, we had a very successful Open Day on 28th November, with hundreds of visitors going through the cottage.

The museum was overflowing: puppets made by Mrs. Hanson, Joanna Grabek, Chris Burfield and his students, and Little Patch Theatre. Alice and Carol Jarrett represented puppetry in the church, Sandra Salaman exhibited her "Aladdin" (having premiered just a week before), Caroline Strahle and Ivan Rehorek showed their designs as well as Japanese brush painting techniques, Hans Kreimer performed his shadow bits - and Mrs. Pichler sold almost all her Pelham puppets.

Most of the visitors were taken by surprise by the wide range of puppets and most of them asked for the next Open Day where the rest of the family could come as well. And after talking the whole day, we could hardly whisper on Monday afterwards.

The Centre is now completely upside-down with paint, papers and sets spread everywhere. The Japanese production is nearly finished and we are now working on the Polish story.

LETTERS

Dear Maeve ... I enjoyed your review of "Macarthur" but feel the front page heading, "MTA Resurrects" implies a messianic status for our company not yet justified. There is, of course, much more to running a puppet company than doing shows which please puppeteers. Shows such as "Smiles Away" and "Macarthur" which have been well received by puppeteers and audiences alike, have yet to prove themselves at the box office, whereas "The Magic Pudding" and "The Mysterious Potamus" have come in above budget. Of course, ideally it would be good to have a "commercial" product which pleased all.

Richard Bradshaw
Marionette Theatre of Australia

The Manipulation calendar has given us an idea - why not have an Australian calendar for 1983 with twelve puppet companies providing picture/material/layout for each month? It would be possible to ask each of the companies for \$100 contribution, as well as some money may perhaps be saved from the Festival's budget. The calendar could be sold during the 1983 Festival to the public at large, sent overseas - and maybe even UNIMA could make enough to have money for the next year's calendar as well. There cannot be a better promotion than something of this kind - otherwise there would be a lot of paper spent in the same way as we have seen it with past Come Out festivals, etc. If acceptable, we would like to be one of the companies involved.

Karel & Eva Rehorek,
Paperbag Theatre Co.

Dear Maeve ... Our last show, "Deep Space Bungle" was a success, financial and otherwise. We got lots of free publicity through the Festival of Sydney, but the Festival itself has really come downhill. Most acts were the same as last year. Everything done on the cheap and covered with ads for the sponsor. (I'm speaking about acts in the park) The layout was acoustically a carnival. Each activity/stage's sound carried over into the next area and most stages and PA's were up at the Archibald Fountain, which left the buskers the short between-show breaks to perform and be heard. Pity.

Dennis Murphy
Outlandyshe Puppet Theatre

SOME FUNDING:

At the end of '81, in the last round of State and Federal government grants, these were the amounts allocated to puppet theatre,



	FEDERAL	
	\$105,000	MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA
	\$ 50,400	LITTLE PATCH
	\$ 31,500	SPARE PARTS
	\$ 14,700	TERRAPIN
	\$ 10,500	HANDSPAN
	\$ 2,100	PUNCHTUCKER
	\$ 1,000	MANIPULATION
	<u>\$215,200</u>	
	STATE	
NSW	\$ 60,000	MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA
VIC	\$ 6,000	HANDSPAN
TAS	\$ 2,000	KOOKA
WA	\$ 21,000	TERRAPIN
SA	\$ 15,000	SPARE PARTS
	\$ 7,000	PAPERBAG
QLD	\$ 13,000	QUEENSLAND MARIONETTE THEATRE

A TERM THAT IS WIDELY MISUSED

BUNRAKU:



The word "Bunraku" comes from the stage name of a Japanese puppeteer from Awaji Island, called Masai Kahei, stage name "Bunrakken".

The art of Joruri (the real name for this type of theatre) went into decline in 1842 because of drastic government reforms. Bunrakken and his troupe were one of the few survivors and they established themselves as the most outstanding puppet troupe in Osaka.

In 1872 the troupe opened a theatre called the BUNRAKU THEATRE in Osaka, and the name "Bunraku" became synonymous with this type of theatre. A fire in 1926 destroyed the theatre and most of the puppet heads. The theatre was rebuilt, but in 1945 was again burnt down, this time completely devastating any old puppets that had survived. The Bunraku Association was formed and a new theatre was built, which is still the home of this type of theatre in Osaka.

The name of the type of puppet used is "Kugutsu". "Bunraku" is now the modern term for the theatre form of puppet playing, Joruri or storytelling, and Samiesen playing.

Peter Wilson

FESTIVAL

This column is set aside each issue for news and discussion on the Adelaide International Puppet Festival to be held January 21 - 30, 1983. All readers are invited to contribute - all contributions will be printed.

NEWS...

Little news to date. The main task in hand at the moment is raising funding. The Australia Council and the South Australian government are willing to provide funds, but exactly how much is yet to be finalised, and is dependent on the amount of private sector funding the festival can attract. The Foreign Affairs Department is willing to assist in bringing out overseas troupes, and is particularly interested in YAKSHAGANA, an Indian troupe recommended by Richard Bradshaw. The Goethe Institute has also stated its willingness to assist in bringing out a German company. DRAK, from Czechoslovakia, has expressed interest in coming. MV

...AND VIEWS

If it's not too late I'd like to throw in my suggestion for a European company to invite to the '83 Festival, which I think would have several advantages to its visit. It is the Cannon Hill Puppet Theatre from England. This group, with an international reputation for performing excellence, has toured overseas, and I know would like to come to Australia to display its skill. The company has a wide range of performance styles which I believe would appeal to a greater proportion of the public in Australia than many other European companies, allowing greater potential for public performances, or even some kind of Australian tour. It would also provide the festival with a UNIMA presence in the form of John Blundall, and perhaps allow him to compare the current state of Australian puppetry as represented at the Festival with that he experienced in Hobart four years ago. I'm sure many would be interested in his comments on this. To finish, I'd like to wish the Festival organizers all the best in their most difficult task.

Bryce Kershaw,
Floreat Park WA

Last issue Paperbag Theatre Co. commented that the organization should not be in the hands of bureaucrats. Fair enough - ideally the responsible body should be a puppeteer organization. However, it's neither necessary nor desirable that the co-ordinator should be a puppeteer, because that job requires administrative expertise. (If you want precedent, take the last Festival in Hobart. Its co-ordinator, the late Don Boyce, appointed by the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board, was not a puppeteer, he was an experienced administrator.) But back to the question of the responsible body. An open meeting at the end of the last festival in '79 voted that there be another one in 1983, and that it be in Adelaide. And there the matter rested. When I began to make enquiries in January last year, I learned that nobody in the Guild, in UNIMA, in Adelaide or anywhere else had formulated any plans or knew who was going to organize the next festival. In the August Manipulation I asked publicly, and no-one replied. It seems that when the Carclew Board announced in October that it would take on the organization of the festival, it was stepping into a breach that puppeteers had been unable or unwilling to fill.

Maeve Vella
Editor

**In this world there are two things
that are constantly put down: Australia
and Puppetry. The Australian Puppet
Theatre's production of MOMMA'S has
seemingly achieved the impossible.
Australian puppetry has taken a place
on the world theatre scene. Did the
Europeans really take it seriously?
Cop these extracts from the Paris
season, December 1981.....**

"A disconcerting show from start to finish. One goes along expecting to see a dreary puppet show and instead of a rigid, static Punch and Judy outfit, what does one get? "Opera of the Impossible" they call it. Yes indeed! Opera of the unbelievable, even, and poetic opera also. Unquestionably, "Mamma's" is the most innovative, most original show yet around."

Litteraires Nouvelles

"Australia is a long way from us - but please, we would have more of her theatre. Like the United States, this young country is in a powerful position to surprise us with their stage works. Such is the case with the Australian Puppet Theatre from Melbourne, an amazing troupe of puppeteers who combine master puppetry traditions with advanced techniques, synthesizers, lasers, special effects, and music hall classics."

Le Quotidien de Medecine

"The Australian Puppet Theatre has come 20,000 kms to show us their work. And as there is not one word of dialogue in their show, you'll never know what language Australians speak. On the other hand, you will learn that they have not forgotten how to use creative abilities when it's a matter of creating theatre. These clever people deserve to be called 'the Grand Magic Australian Puppet Theatre'."

L'Hebdo

"With a kangaroo's pouch instead of his sack, Father Christmas (no doubt confused by international time differences) has come to Paris earlier than expected. And he's left us a present at the Palais des Glaces, a present so good, we'll still be marvelling by Christmas Day. A visual and aural fantasy with not a spoken word, to awaken our senses to that world lurking on the edge of our dreams."

Le Parisien

"Leave your worries and cares, your logic and Cartesian ideas at the door. When you go to "Momma's" you're letting yourself into two hours of dreaming, of mental and intellectual play and solid enjoyment. You slip easily into this fabulous world, then at the end, drag yourself away with the sorrowful heart caused by the brutal interruption of a wonderful dream. But "Momma's" has an advantage over a dream: you can relive the dreams created by "Momma's" whenever you wish."

France-Soir

"For this debut, loaded with talent, the whole world is one huge puppet needing but to have the strings pulled, and everything is grist for the mill of fantasy. This gives rise to consternating moments of talent that just escape 'showing off', and again to hallucinating flashes of genius. The genius carries one away, and finally, this droll tale of a pliable little puppet manages to obsess you, like a question with no answer."

Le Monde de la Musique

"Flesh and blood actors (who seem to have conjurer's abilities), giant hinged puppets, mobile stage props, (themselves containing characters), props soaring above the audience's heads on the ends of invisible long poles: complex mechanisms bring to life a type of spectre seemingly not of this world, though they are in fact made of cardboard, wood and metal."

Agence France Presse

"A slow voyage into the nocturnal zones of fantasy, with a dizzying power of suggestion."

L'Express

PHOTO: Cathy Koning



pick a rumour!

The AUSTRALIAN PUPPET THEATRE IS

1. Disbanding and winding up its affairs, due to lack of interest and nervous breakdowns. ☐
2. Doing a conservation show with Jennifer Davidson in Tasmania. ☐
3. Doing a show with Nigel Triffitt. ☐
4. Doing a new version of Momma for a USA tour in March 1983. ☐

A COMPETITION FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!! PLACE A TICK IN THE BOX YOU THINK IS THE CORRECT ONE. NEATEST CORRECT ENTRY BECOMES AN HONORARY MEMBER OF THE AUSTRALIAN PUPPET THEATRE!

5. Touring Australia with the Grande Orchestra Splendide in late 1982. ☐
6. Preparing a new work to be presented at the International Puppet Festival in January '83 and following it with a tour of Europe later in the year. ☐
7. None of the above. ☐

The Australian Puppet Theatre's registered office is Floor 1, 626 Glenferrie Rd. Hawthorn Vic.

The A.P.T. tour of "Momma" was produced by John Pinder & Roger Evans Pty. Ltd.

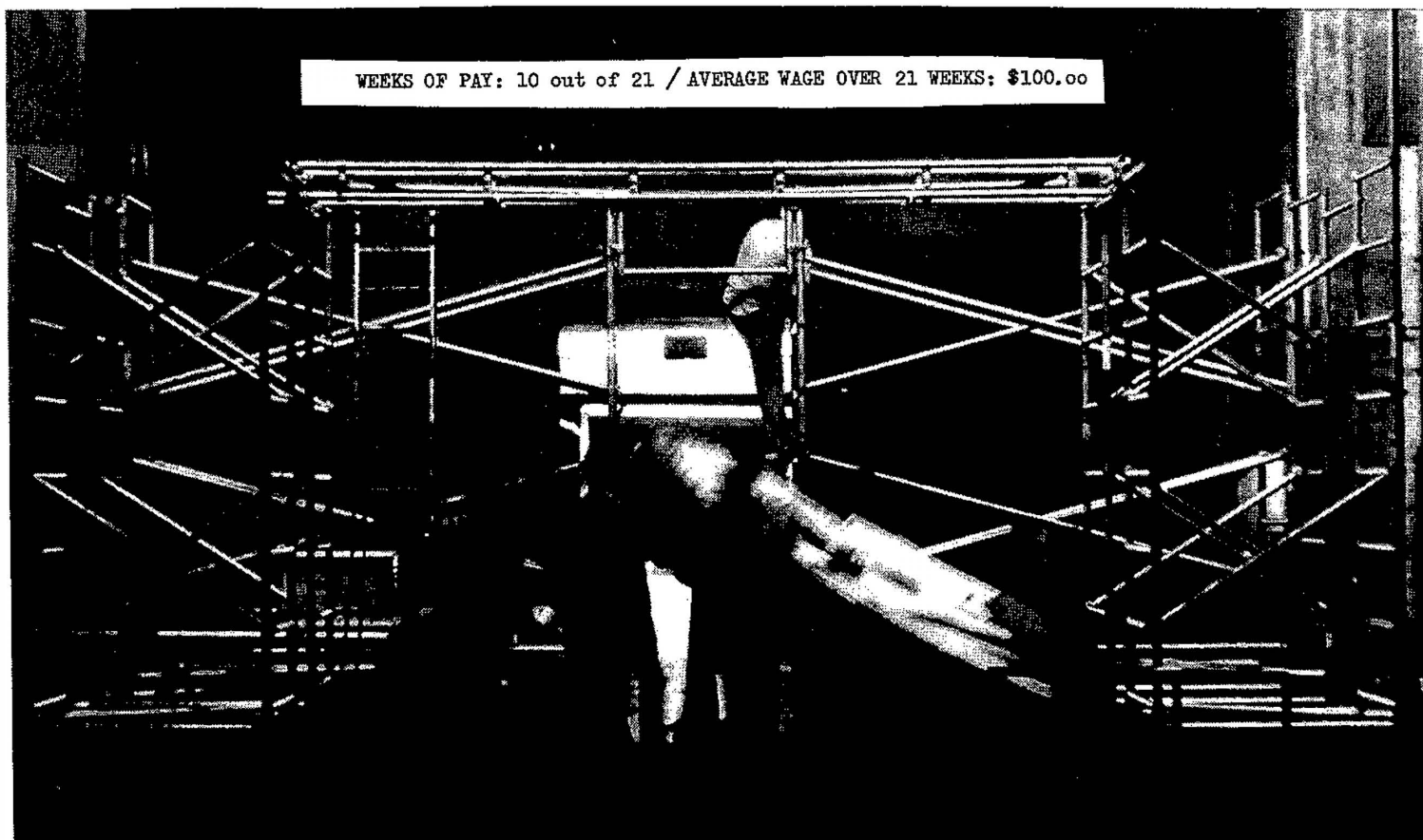
TOUR LOGISTICS

NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES: 57 / NUMBER OF THEATRES PLAYED : 13 / SLOWEST BUMP-IN : 3 DAYS (Rotterdam, August)

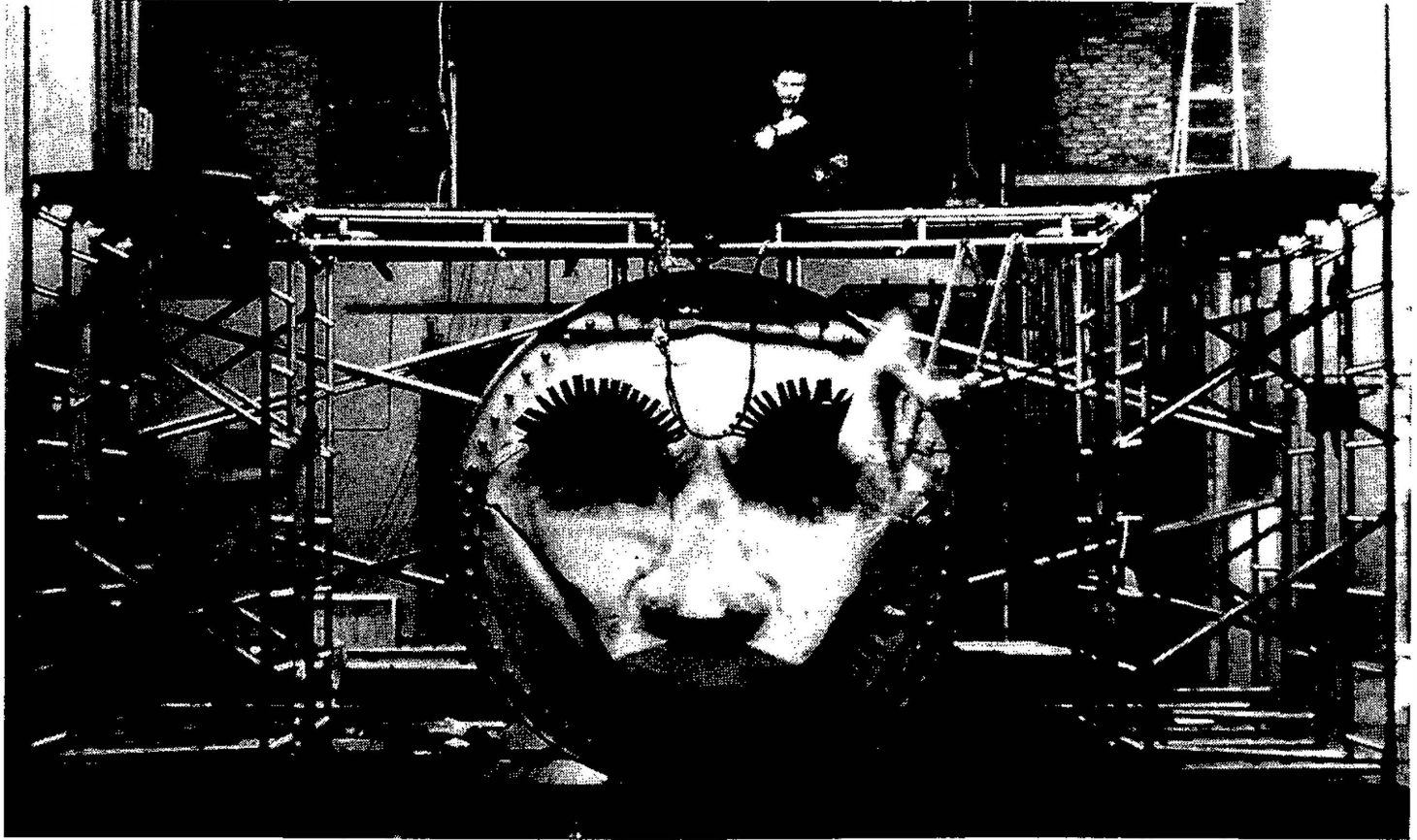
FASTEST BUMP-IN : 6 HOURS / FASTEST BUMP-OUT: 1½ HOURS (from start to packed in truck)



WEEKS OF PAY: 10 out of 21 / AVERAGE WAGE OVER 21 WEEKS: \$100.00



FREIGHT WEIGHT: 3½ TONNES / ROAD CREW: NONE / COMPANY MEMBERS: 11 (including tour management)



MOST CURTAIN CALLS: 10 (Ludwigshafen, Germany) / LEAST CURTAIN CALLS: 1 (Tilburg, Holland)

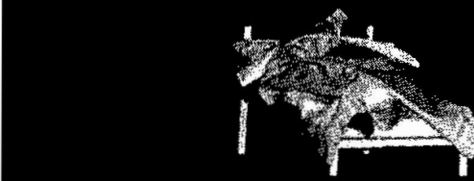


CHILDREN'S THEATRE FESTIVAL

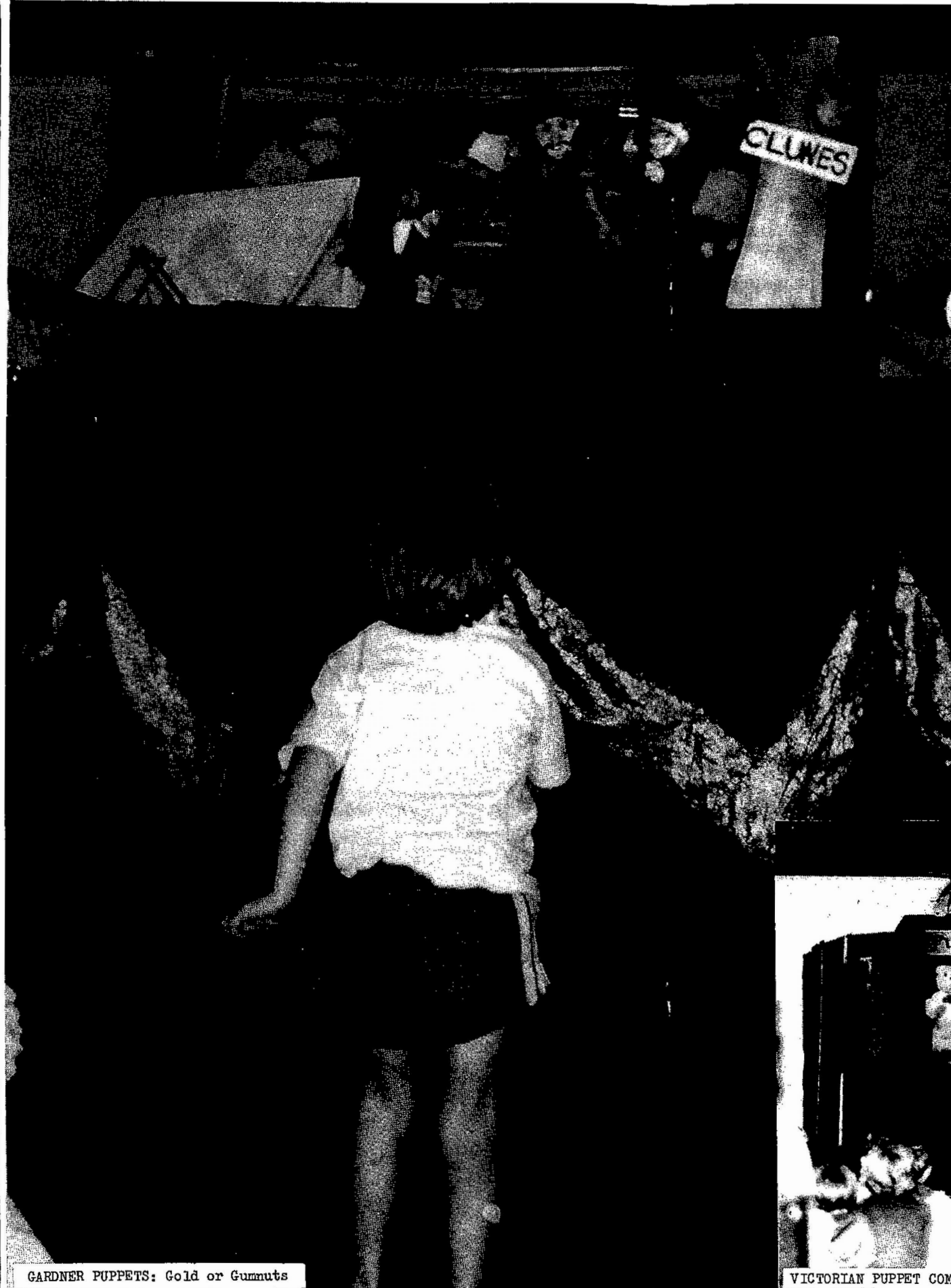
WE'RE ON!

NOV 30 - DEC 4

AT THE OPEN STAGE, MESS. STATE COLLEGE,
THE DRAMA RESOURCE CENTRE, 17 BOWEN ST. CARLTON.



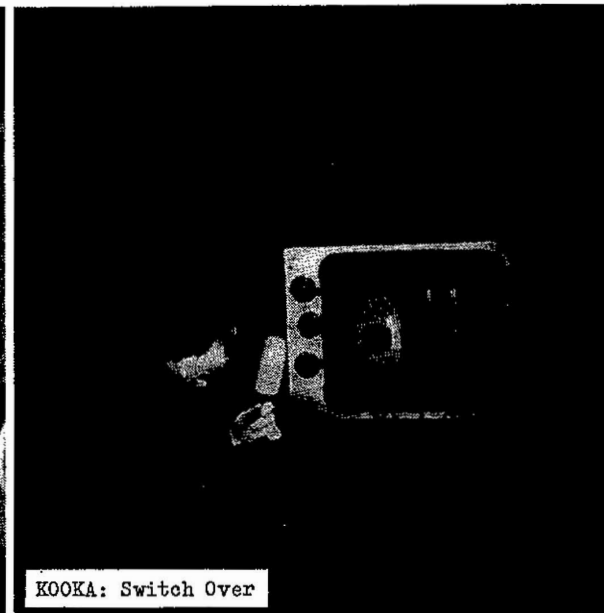
JIKA-JIKA: The Dream Gobbler



GARDNER PUPPETS: Gold or Gumnuts



VICTORIAN PUPPET COMPANY



KOOKA: Switch Over



HANDSPAN: Jandy Malone

The annual "WE'RE ON" Children's Theatre Festival is organized by the Victorian Youth Theatre Association, based at Melbourne's Drama Resource Centre.

The 1981 festival involved thirty-four professional children's theatre companies, mostly Victorian, with a few interstate companies from NSW, Queensland and Tasmania.

Melbourne puppeteers were there in force, and this article reviews some of their performances.

"STAR-CHILD GOES BUSH" Polyglot's latest show mixes various languages in a single story. Actually it's not so much a story with plot as a tour of the environment with a conservation message equally as strong as the cultural tolerance message that is Polyglot's raison d'etre. The show's best points are the backlit scenery: clear, fresh images of city



JIKA-JIKA: 4 Chinese Bros.



POLYGLOT: Star-Child goes Bush

bush and beach; the vigorous humour of the script; and the irresistible vitality of the puppeteers, especially when they're working out front of the set. Behind the set they are struggling to deal with the show's two weaknesses - puppets too tiny for the set, and taped snatches of foreign dialogue between which they must sandwich their own live (English) dialogue. The mix of taped and live speech creates too many problems. It makes the foreign language component stiff and sterile in comparison with the energy and immediacy of the English, causes embarrassing overlapping when the timing is not spot-on, and hampers the excellent opportunities for ad-libbing offered by the script. The puppets are the usual exquisite Polyglot characters, soft-sculpture glove and rod puppets in various ethnic costumes and Star-Child, the silver glove puppet, but they tend to look a bit lost in the vast new set. The set doesn't really come into its own until the end, when kids are invited in to work puppets themselves.

VICTORIAN PUPPET COMPANY (formerly DREAMTIME PUPPET THEATRE) Considering the fact that this company has been in operation for ten years, and purports to be teaching the elements of puppetry, the poor quality of the performance they gave is particularly reprehensible. It was a selection of segments from their various shows, and it was mostly trash. The out-front conversations with the audience were condescending and dictatorial, insecure schoolteacher stuff. The manipulation of the various glove, mouth, string and shadow puppets had no grace or precision. The content showed an alarming poverty of imagination. Most of the material is plagiarised wholesale from old Parry-Marshall shows, and done with far less charming puppets. The shadow sequence had some good ideas, but they had to be repeated to fill out the rest of the taped song.

"GOLD OR GUMNUTS" Gardner Puppets continue to make the most of the traditional glove puppet booth format. This show uses the same combination of historical fact, personal drama and glimpses of fantasy worlds as the earlier "Under Shark Bay", but this time with a tighter story and lots more pizzazz. There's a credible plot of a girl searching for her father in the Victorian goldfields, augmented by a visit underground to a glittering world peopled by singing nuggets and some very serious gumtree roots with conservation on their minds. There are clever staging devices, like shadows inside the tiny tent, and a crowd of picks on a multiple control hacking their way round stage to Pink Floyd's "Money". Musical segments were always humorous and up-beat - far from fragmenting the narrative as musical interludes can sometimes do, they complemented it through careful timing and taste, and kept the energy high. A full, fascinating, enjoyable show.

"THE DREAM GOBBLER" Jika-Jika like to mix it with their audience. In "Four Chinese Brothers" they invite some of them into the set to operate puppets and props. In "The Dream Gobbler" they spread the set to the front and back of the room, and performers and puppets travel along a central aisle through the audience. This open layout was refreshing and comfortable and largely saved "The Dream Gobbler" from becoming just another cute fairy tale. The beginning and end of the show were interesting, but in between it was mostly mush. The story begins at centre front, in a beautiful applique'd village-scape peopled by great loudmouthed finger puppets. There's a princess who has nightmares, and we are treated to a glimpse of them as she sleeps. Around her little white bed, alone in an all-black set, hover mad tea-cups and wobbly green demons, worked from rods through slits in the black screen behind. They're a bit menacing, a bit whimsical, and the

scene works very well. After that, nothing much happens, and the sets are never so appealing or integral to the action, as the show wanders round the room in quest of the Dream Gobbler. Near the end, things pick up when he's found in the icy trees behind the audience, because he's a wild, spiky puppet played with a good sense of the manic, and because his trees light up with a strange cold glow that makes you shiver.

I think Jika-Jika would do well to throw out the soft centre of the kings, queens, once-upon-a-time-land stuff and take the princess herself on the perilous journey. She's a good, strong puppet who could carry the load much better than her wishy-washy mum and dad do. I'd also like to see her dreaming some sweet dreams at the very end, rather than the dull, dreamless sleep she appears to settle into. It hardly seems worth all the trouble, otherwise.

UNIMA BLUES

An organization is only as good as its communication channels. UNIMA Australia's are pitifully under-used, to the extent that many people now prefer to join the British, German or American Centres to keep in touch with what the organization is doing around the world. There are training programmes, scholarships and publications; every year a list of the world's puppet festivals is released; every year a Bulletin of some 60 pages reviews UNIMA activities — but for some reason, none of this reaches Australian members.

What few members are left, that is. From a peak of 70 in 1979, membership dropped to 40 in mid-1981. Elections were called last year for the positions of Australian president, secretary and treasurer — and only 19 people bothered to vote, meaning, in effect, that there are now only 19 active members left in the association.

President Norman Hetherington believes the problem is that the membership is apathetic. I suggest the problem is not apathy, but alienation. When members wait ten months from one newsletter to the next; when financial statements are issued two years late, not through UNIMA, but through the Puppetry Guild's Annual Report; when letters to the secretary go unanswered; when new members (this is going back a bit, to 1979 and 1980) are forgotten from the mailing list, which happened twice to me during that period; when information from the parent organization is not distributed, and members must make their own contacts to get it — when communication is so erratic and uncertain, people become disenchanted.

UNIMA Australia has lost credibility badly over the last three years. Whatever potential it had to promote solidarity among Australian puppeteers has been squandered. Its links with the rest of the world have become weaker, not stronger. If it's to survive, the executive are going to have to do some heavy mailouts to Oz puppeteers to woo new members and invite old ones back; the parent organization will have to step up its supply of information and publications, and get them to us before they're out of date, as is often the case with announcements of training programmes and scholarships. All of us will have to start thinking a little more collectively. UNIMA is an intelligent and forward-looking international association, and it was the very first international theatrical organization in cultural history. It's a pity we're not part of it.

MV

The GREAT MUPPET CAPER



Hoyts' promo material would have it that "The Great Muppet Caper" has a "Distinctive best-of-the movies" look about it, but "Tackiest-of-the-movies" would be a more accurate description. As the Muppet Show parodied the style of TV variety shows, this second Muppet film sends up classic movie clichés.

"Lord Grade presents" says the opening title (will the next one be "Robert Holmes a Court presents"?), and under it Animal growls as he eats the MGM lion hoop around him. Zoom in through the fast-disappearing set to blue skies and a hot-air balloon bearing Fozzie Bear and Kermit the Frog. "Does this have anything to do with the story?" asks Fozzie. "No" says Kermit, "but it makes a great opening shot." The titles roll on. "Why are there so many credits?" "Well, I guess they all have families."

Before moving on to England, where the film was made, the story begins on an American city street, a sweet and palpably false set described by Frank Oz as "Directly out of Singin' in the Rain". It's complete with nice old ladies, genial cops, fire hydrants and man-hole covers (man-holes are excellent places from which to manipulate puppets).

Amongst the milling humans wander Kermit, Fozzie and Gonzo, three reporters in search of a story. They don't get one, and their bawling-out from the archetypal angry editor takes place under that arch-archetypal half-moon window we know from Hollywood is standard equipment in every bustling newspaper office (except Manipulation's).

Later on, in London and further into the plot, which concerns a jewel robbery, things get a lot more lavish. There are high-fashion houses and stately homes and nightclubs teeming with tuxedos and tap-dancing. There's also the Happiness Hotel; outdoor shots show it's one of those big, sagging old doss-houses in Holland Park favoured by poor American travellers; inside it's full of poor American Muppets, the whole lurching, looning gang.

Funny thing, in this movie all the Americans, even humans like Peter Falk, are poor - little Yankee battlers with innocent souls - and all the English are rich, with posh accents. It's Hollywood's England.

Miss Piggy's big scene is an Esther Williams style water ballet. Accompanied by a brace of human bathing beauties, amidst fountains, lights, soaring harmonies and one live goldfish, she goes through all kinds of complex choreography, her famous nostrils blazing bubbles. Poor Frank Oz! How he must have suffered, to manipulate his pig underwater in that enormous pool, 80 feet long and 8 feet deep. (Gee, this promo material is interesting. Did you know that this sequence was filmed on the same sound stage at EMI's Elmslee studios that housed Stanley Kubrick's maze set for "The Shining" AND

the final confrontation between Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader in "The Empire Strikes Back"? Wow.) It's heartening for those involved in rather less big-budget puppet productions to note that the crowning effect of this elaborate scene was a halo of 50¢ sparklers sputtering around Miss Piggy's head. Even in 14 million dollar enterprises, the Simple Things are not forgotten.

The puppets (I've stopped reading the promo material now and can call a spade a spade) are very mobile in this movie, spending a lot of their time getting around in vehicles. Walking them everywhere would look pretty boring, and it's not so interesting for the Props Dept. There's a little yellow cab (the black ones don't pick up puppets), an Authentic London bus, and the Happiness Hotel's hippie-coated Courtesy Vehicle, in a continuous state of backfire. Miss Piggy hijacks a cement mixer equipped with CB radio ("Hamhock here, any Smokies out there?"), and later rides to the rescue of her friends on a nifty stunt bike, which she crashes through windows a la James Bond, with blood-curdling Bruce Lee yells (or are they Bunsen yells?). There are also bicycles, in a slickly orchestrated ride through Battersea Park with a crowd of human children cycling along behind.

Back to the promo material again. I thought you might like to know who does what in the Muppet cast. The credits on the TV show always roll by too fast to pick up that information, so : ----

JIM HENSON does Kermit, Rowlf, Dr. Teeth, Waldorf and the Swedish Chef ;

FRANK OZ does Miss Piggy, Fozzie Bear, Animal and Sam the Eagle ;

DAVE GOELZ does The Great Gonzo, Beauregard, Zoot and DR. Bunsen Honeydew ;

JERRY NELSON does Floyd, Pops and Lew Zealand (who?) ;

RICHARD HUNT does Scooter, Statler, Sweetums, Janice and Beaker ;

STEVE WHITMIRE does Rizzo the Rat and Lips ;

there are also extra manipulators Bob Payne, Brian Muehl, Mike Quinn, Robert Barnett, Hugh Spight, Brian Henson, Louise Gold and Kathryn Muller. CAROL SPINNEY, from Sesame St., made a guest appearance with Oscar the Grouch.

Only three female puppeteers? Oh baby, it's tough at the top!

"Welcome to Stuffed Puppets new one-man show..."

The one man is NEVILLE TRANTER, and STUFFED PUPPETS is the company he started in Melbourne in 1978. The show was his first solo performance, and the first tryout of a series of new pieces he has been developing over the past year.

Judging by the response of the 90 guests who crowded Handspan's studio on December 20th for the preview, the show is a winner, and the move to solo is the right one. Sadly,

Australian audiences won't be seeing it, as Neville is returning to Amsterdam, where he has made his home for the last three years.

This article by CATE SHARP draws on her reactions to the show and interview material to give an insight into Neville's working methods and the sources of his inspiration. Photos by PUNCH HAWKES.©



Neville has been in Melbourne since last May, performing in "Fairground Snapz" at the Last Laugh, presenting with his partner Wouter Swart segments from Stuffed's puppetry repertoire.

"Snapz" long 8-month run afforded him the time and money to work on his own show without the pressures of touring he normally experiences in Holland.

It also required him to sing and dance, without puppets, and the opportunity to develop his own stage presence has encouraged him to add more out-front acts to his own show.

... "I'd like eventually to have a show where I don't go behind a screen at all - doing "Fairground Snapz" has given me confidence in not just making the puppet the strong thing on stage, but in me as well having a strong presence at times. To me, the puppeteer has always been just as important as the puppet."

When considering new material Neville regards contrast and balance as primarily important. Pieces are tried, and if they don't work in the context of the performance they are dropped. The rhythm of the whole show must remain constant. Therefore, when a serious piece is dropped it is replaced by a serious piece, and similarly with a comic piece.

... "New material comes into the show for different reasons. Most performers have a new show every one or two years. It's a pressured routine. Most of this show is new material, because I felt I had to take a new show back with me to Holland."

One of Neville's major fears is becoming predictable. He likes to build up an audience's expectations and then add something to really surprise them. Between acts he is visible preparing for the next piece. This gives relief to the intensity of his performance while building up expectation about the act to follow.

... "I'm always terrified of finding no new ideas, that a reviewer will say you don't get surprised anymore."

The set used is all black. All attention is focussed on the puppet and/or

the puppeteer. There are no distractions. Each puppet, mask, costume must be strong enough to hold the imagination without scenery. Colours are carefully considered, to give each act its own style.

..."The colours of 'The Tango' had to be red and black, passionate, with white masks to add anonymity, and an androgynous quality. I find really stylistic things work well in just two colours."

"The Seduction", on the other hand, is multi-coloured. The Seducer is dressed in raw, garish yellows, greens and red - using everything she's got to achieve her aim.

When Neville appears out front as puppeteer he is dressed in a white body-stocking, starkly visible against the black background.

The strength of the imagery begins on paper. Neville begins always with the eyes when designing a puppet or mask. The sketches develop until the essence of the character is grasped. He makes all his own puppets, never limiting himself to any particular medium or style of manipulation. Often the result is physically different to the drawings, but the essence is always preserved.

Sound is sometimes taped music, sometimes live voice. Often the sound of breathing is used to build up interest in the approaching puppet. Or in the case of "The Beast" Neville is seated, holding the puppet in his lap and joined to it by a clear plastic tube; through the tube he is actually breathing for the beast and breathing into it the excitement of the act.

Neville stresses the importance of pace to complement the imagery.

..."Sometimes I do an act for 2 years. It's working all right, then one night I'll pace it differently and it's so much better. ...It takes time to create some moods - aiming for a feeling of mystery, for example, needs almost slow motion."

One of his maxims of pace and rhythm is to balance movement with stillness to give strength to both.

Neville produces material that is universal in content, visually assaulting and emotive; he is not into politics or verbosity. Working this way he is not limited to the type or nationality of audience to whom he can perform.

His motivation for devising pieces is various. "The Beast" climaxes in self-destruction and is performed blind-folded.

..."I love horror. I wanted to terrify an audience. The puppet is so alive, so menacing, and the audience can see I'm blind. I'm controlling it, but I can't see what I'm doing. That was the idea I wanted to play with."



And it works. The puppet is tied down. The puppeteer is oblivious, seemingly, as it gnaws at itself, chewing itself to pieces to gain freedom. Finally, unable to bear it any longer, the beast leaps, pulling the tube from the puppeteer's mouth. The breathing being done for the puppet is stopped: instant death.

"The Suicide" is a consciously devised piece of black comedy. A Leunig-inspired man on a bridge contemplating suicide is joined by a cat with the same idea. The man has a weight tied to his neck, the cat, tins of pet food.

..."I had been reading 'The Official Cat-Haters Book'..."

The act involves the cat attempting suicide and failing, greatly distressing the man, who feels he may also fail. When he does attempt it he grabs hold of the set and won't let go. The cat comes to the rescue, picks him up and drops him into the water. The cat looks at the audience, resigned, and walks away as depressed as when it arrived.

"Matilda" is a piece of social comment about old age and dying. It's a monologue delivered by an old woman puppet. The pace is slow as she talks about the "old persons home" where she waits for death, and fantasizes about a lover who is an angel. Comic lines are delivered quickly and crisply, adding contrast to the pathos and slowness.

..."Some things are planned, others come only when I'm in front of an audience. I worked a long time on Matilda. I watched old people, studied mannerisms, until I had a script, but I had no voice for her. The voice just came of its own accord in performance, and it felt right, so I'll keep it."

When Neville returns to Amsterdam he will continue to work on the show, tightening and adding material, keeping it to the roughly one-hour length he prefers.

As a one-man show with a simple, basic set, he hopes to be a good economic proposition for "legit theatre". His first engagement in "one of those theatres" is in March, 1982. Hopefully, the new show will attract press reviews nationally, something which has rarely happened in the last three years.

Before this visit to Australia Neville worked with various partners performing in fringe theatres and youth clubs all over Holland. Dutch government policy allows foreign artists to work there without a work permit, as is necessary in most other countries. With his manager he established a network for publicity and getting work which included Gail Pilgrim's agency, Kinesis (see October issue), the Schaffy Theatre in Amsterdam and the Viekoehr. The Schaffy assists new performing groups by mailing out their publicity material free for two years. The Viekoehr publishes a free bi-annual magazine which lists, also for free, children's and adult's theatre groups & their fees and requirements, for distribution to youth clubs and schools.

Now, as before, Neville and his manager will handle the publicity, but with a difference. A little more money means better looking, better quality publicity. Already a continuity of work has been organized for Neville's return, and the future looks promising.

..."I've always wanted to work solo, but never before felt I was ready. Circumstance has forced me into it, because my partner wanted to leave."

Well done circumstance !

Cate Sharp



Professor Technocat and King Ozone of the planet Rectangular - "Deep Space Bungle".

In January the OUTLANDYSHE PUPPET THEATRE presented "Deep Space Bungle", in which the audience was kidnapped by a renegade computer. We used the Star Ceiling Theatre, the Life Education Centre's "classroom of the future", at the Wayside Chapel in Sydney.

The theatre's layout and teaching technology suggested the idea of a space-flight simulation. The room has a pit for the audience to sit in, an optic fibre star ceiling, a superb sound system and a double slide projector/variable dissolve unit.

The Chapel's sound studio, where we produced the soundtrack, is equipped with some of the latest sound effect gear. A stereo equalizer modified sounds to simulate voices on the telephone and music from a transistor radio. An analog delay "mechanised" voices to create the kind of computer voices used on the BBC's "Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Galaxy". Delays and repeats could be varied to produce bizarre effects, such as when the computer's power ran down. The advantage of the analog was that any character voice could be given to the computer without having to adopt the flat monotone usually associated with computer voices.

Combining technology and puppetry we were able to transport a puppet seen in a slide on a screen down from the screen and into a teleportation booth from which the real puppet entered for live performance. The physical layout of the building often disorients people leaving the room, and we used this to advantage for a surprise ending.

It was interesting to be able to experiment with all the technology, but having once produced a puppet play about run-away technology, I think for the next production we might just go back to kazoes and whistles on harmonica holders.

Dennis Murphy

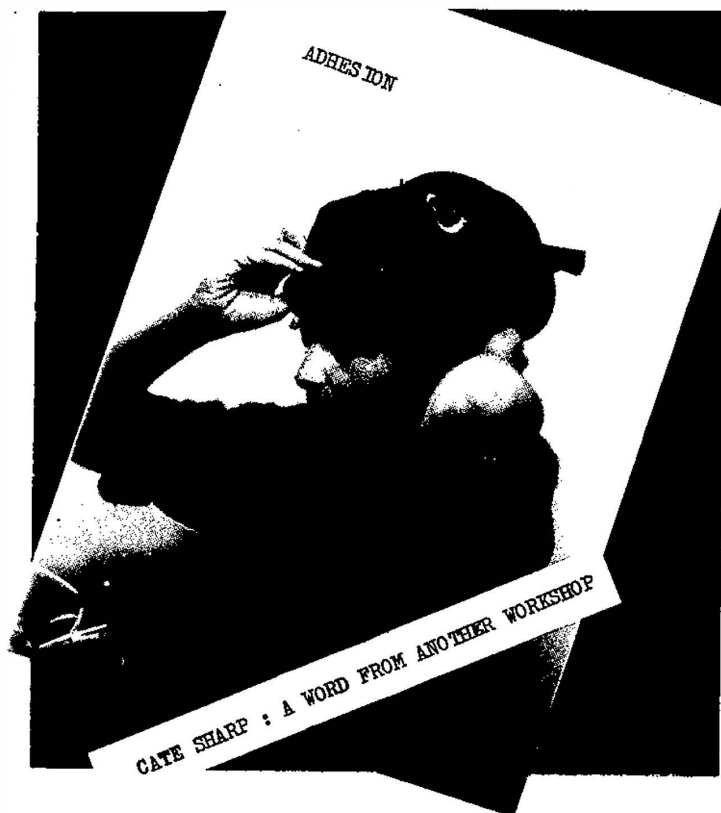


Miss Piggy's message to the puppeteers of the world broke up the Vic Guild meeting last wednesday. We were watching "HERE COME THE PUPPETS!" a TV special made by station WQED Pittsburgh during the 1980 Washington Festival. A copy was very kindly sent to Axel Axelrad by Jim Henson, for screening to Australian puppeteers. The tape is available for loan to other Guild branches and interested groups. It's a well-made documentary of many of the performances seen at the festival, and also contains some thoughtful interviews with leading puppeteers. It's got TRIANGEL, BABSINHAZ, BREAD & PUPPETS, SHARI LEWIS, BURR TILSTROM, DRAK, PUK, BRUCE SCHWARTZ, PERCY PRESS and as they say on TV - many others.

"I just want to say I think it's wonderful what you do with those little dollies"

It's also got a lot of laughs, and it's hosted by Henson and Kermit. Axel has dubbed it from the American system onto VHF tape.

Borrowers to cover freight costs.
Contact Axel Axelrad: Coonara Road,
OLINDA VIC 3788
Phone (03) 751 1144



SOME GLUES AND OTHER ADHESIVES
FOR MAKING PUPPETS AND MASKS :

M.A.C.

Packaged in 50ml tubes. A very effective glue on wood, leather, perspex, card and celluloid. Dries to a clear, hard finish. The tube should always be kept sealed, as the glue goes off very quickly. Very good for instant mending and sealing off string, cotton, etc.

Price: \$1.10 per 50ml tube.
Availability : Model Dockyard,
216 Swanston St. MELB.
Phone 663 3505 or 663 4792

450

Following on Kim Royle's notes on 450 in the June issue:

In Melbourne it is available in 50ml and 100ml tubes, and in 500ml tins.

The Textile Factory, Cecil St. Fitzroy always have the tubes. Phone 419 8188.

Cyril J. Preston (wholesaler) at 258 Flinders Lane also carries it. Phone 63 7062.

Price: 500ml tin - \$6.30 + 17½% tax
100ml tube - approx. \$2.99
50ml tube - " \$2.00

In Sydney 450 is manufactured by the Metropolitan Chemical Co. (Metrochem) in Alexandria. They are always helpful as to outlets.

Gel-grip

Made by Selley's, this is another effective contact adhesive which is readily available. It has similar properties to Kwik-Grip, but is easier to handle because, as the name implies, it is a gel. Very good for bonding smooth surfaces - plastic, rubber, masonite, perspex, felt, etc. It is not absorbed by heavy fabrics as easily as Kwik-Grip.

Price: \$1.50 / 50ml tube
Availability: Hardware & dept. stores

Liquid Nails

Another Selley's product. This glue makes an excellent bond under stress. It can be used to join polystyrene and urethane foams, aluminium, hard-board - in fact, most anything I have come across. Not overly priced for its capabilities. Requires 24 hours to come to full strength. Excess can be cleaned away with acetone.

Price: \$2.25 / 100ml tube
Availability: Hardware & dept. stores

Viledon M

Also known as fusible webbing or spider's web. Available in sheets size 40 x 88 cm.

Effective, tough bond for fabric to fabric in most cases. Washable. Useful for applique, ribbon trims, joining pieces of fabric (abutting two pieces with a joining piece at the back).

If you have a fabric that is too flimsy, a piece of calico can be fused onto the back. Fusing is achieved with a hot iron.

Price: \$2.99 / 40 x 88cm sheet
Availability: Most haberdasheries

Viledon M: Hemming Tape

Same as for above. Comes in 5metre lengths by approximately 1 inch. Useful in finishing raw edges, and stiffening edges.

Price: \$1.37 / pkt.
Availability: most haberdasheries.

Wholesale:
Birch Haberdashery Wholesalers
153 Bridge Road Richmond Vic.
Phone: 429 4944

Price: Viledon M \$1.86 / sheet
Hemming tape \$0.86 each
(available in boxes of 10)

Resins

Daystar make several useful resins. They are available in 250ml, 500ml, 1 litre and 4 litre containers.

Resin is excellent for sealing hard surfaces and for composite glueing. For example, resin can be used instead of Aquadhere in building up the final surface of tissue or fabric over a mould. This gives a harder, less pliable surface when removing.

Care should be taken when using resin, as it is necessary to use a catalyst. Too much or too little will cause problems. Excessive use of catalyst can cause the resin to explode.

Solvent (acetone) is necessary for cleaning equipment when using resin.

Prices:*

RESIN	CATALYST
250ml / \$2.66	25ml / \$1.20
500ml / \$4.49	100ml / \$3.30
4 litres / 26.55	

SOLVENT : 500ml / \$2.90
4 litres / \$10.50

Availability: Daystar Pty. Ltd.,
55 Little LaTrobe St.
MELBOURNE
Phone: 347 8677

*all Daystar products are about to increase in price.

WHAT'S ON

Melbourne

Handspan Theatre & Mushroom Troupe:
BOMBORA
opening 13 March, two-week season
Alexander Theatre, Monash University
Enquiries: 376 7364

Handspan Theatre:
AHEAD OF TIME - ETERNITY (working title)
Late Show, 11.00pm,
April 28 - May 8 Wed. - Sat.
Anthill Theatre,
199 Napier St. South Melbourne
Enquiries: 699 3253

Handspan Theatre:
JANDY MALONE & THE 9 O'CLOCK TIGER
2.00pm Sat. May 8, 15 and 22
11.00pm and 2.00pm May 10 - 21, Mon. - Fri.
Anthill Theatre,
199 Napier St. South Melbourne
Enquiries: 699 3253

Sydney

Outlandyshe Puppet Theatre:
ANGLERFISH BALLETT
2.00pm commencing March 13,
indefinite season, Sats. only
Wayside Chapel Theatre,
29 Hughes St. Potts Point
Enquiries: 358 6148

Adelaide

CIRCUS OZ:
8.00pm March 6, 7, 10 - 14, 17 - 21
Rymill Park

Jika-Jika
FOUR CHINESE BROTHERS
2.00pm Suns. March 7, 14, 21
Elder Park
10.30am Sats. March 13 and 20
T-Tree Plaza

Handspan Theatre:
THE BUNYIP OF BERKELEY'S CREEK
11.00am Weds. March 10 and 17
Elder Park

JANDY MALONE & THE 9 O'CLOCK TIGER
1.30pm March 10 - 10
AMP Theatre,ette,
AMP Building, 1 King William St.

B'SPELL Performance Troupe
11.00am Thurs. March 11 and 18
Elder Park

Hobart

BLACK THEATRE OF PRAGUE
March 8 - 13
Theatre Royal, Hobart

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